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CANNIBALISM IN FILM AS REFLECTION ON SOCIETY

Subversion of the Notion of Difference in *Week End* and *Dans ma Peau*

MA Thesis

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"I hereby confirm that I am the sole author of the thesis submitted. All the works and conceptual viewpoints by other authors that I have used, as well as data deriving from sources have been appropriately attributed."

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Introduction

Cannibals do not belong to modern Western societies. They belong to a less developed past, to places far away, or locked away in mental asylums. They are different from the ordinary person. They are uncivilized, irrational, insane, and unhinged. In short, they are everything the modern person is not supposed to be. As such, cannibals are horrifying negative examples of a world that regards itself as civilized. However, they also fascinate and arouse longings for a world or time that is devoid of overtly societal control and prohibitions. They become projection screens for the fantasy of another possible world. They belong to the fictional worlds of novels, fairy tales, paintings, and films. As fictionalized figures, cannibals do indeed belong to modern Western societies.

Confronted with the feeling of alienation in a thoroughly rationalized world, modernist artists struggled to overcome the neurotic psychic make-up built into the structure of civilization – as described by Freud ([1930] 1962) – by turning to sources that they perceived to be more primal and pure. In the art of so-called primitive cultures, of the insane and criminal as well as of children, artists of the primitivist movement hoped to find that kind of originality and naturalness that they deemed lost in modern society. Thus finding a new form for their art, the content also often encompassed transgressive topics of a sexual, violent and heretic nature. By taking the detour to the works, habits and rituals of othered people, the artists could express their own suppressed desires.[1]

Similarly, one can understand the figure of the cannibal other (that is prevalent in art and thought from the antiquity on to the present day) not as a real person but as a projection screen that due to its externalization can be condemned but at the same time serve as a means to fulfil otherwise unacknowledged desires. While cannibalism has been used in colonial contexts as a label for the native subaltern people in order to justify stealing their land, resources, and workforce, in this further move it is their perceived or constructed identity that is used to stabilize one's own identity to conform to societal standards while enjoying the fictional excesses of the cannibal other.

[1] For an overview on primitivist art, see Goldwater ([1938] 1986) and Gombrich (2006).

Cannibalism functions as a cultural marker of difference. Robert Stam writes that it 'has often been the "name of the other", the ultimate marker of difference in a coded opposition of light/dark, rational/irrational, civilized/savage' (1992: 125). It might say more about those who establish this difference than giving a description of actual cannibalism. Moser (2005: 7-14) distinguishes two Western positions in regards to cannibals: the primitivist and the culturalistic view. The former can be traced back to antiquity and is found in Herodotus' *Histories* where he describes a tribe of cannibals:

> [North] of [the Borysthenes] the land is uninhabited for a long way; after which desert is the country of the Man-eaters, who are a nation by themselves and by no means Scythian; and beyond them is true desert, wherein no nation of men dwells, as far as we know. […] The Man-eaters are of all men the most savage in their manner of life; they know no justice and obey no law. They are nomads, wearing a dress like the Scythian, but speaking a language of their own; they are the only people of all these that eat men. ([430 BC] 1928: 219, 307)

Living at the edge of the known world, the cannibals are geographically removed, but they are also removed historically. They know no culture and are still nomadic. Their difference to the civilized world is seen as a fundamental one.

Contrary to that view is the culturalistic one that can be observed in Michel de Montaigne's writings about cannibals:

> I do not believe, from what I have been told about this people, that there is anything barbarous or savage about them, except that we call barbarous anything that is contrary to our own habits. Indeed we seem to have no other criterion of truth and reason than the type and kind of opinions and customs current in the land where we live. ([1580] 1993: 108-109)

While being distinct from Europeans in their habits and rituals, the cannibals are not described as fundamentally different. They merely appear so as seen from a Western lens that overemphasizes everything that is foreign and tends to overlook everything that is common. In that regard, descriptions of the other tend to reflect more one's own attitudes and beliefs.

Both these viewpoints relate to the society in which they are prevalent. Cannibalism as seen from a primitivist standpoint establishes a negative image of the own society. It emphasizes the difference in a prescriptive manner of how civilization is supposed not to be. In turn, he

culturalistic standpoint postulates a common core around which foreign behaviours are merely products grown out of a different history and its associated perspective. Each viewpoint can shed a light on the society in which it is prevalent. In my study of filmic depictions of cannibalism I take up this idea insofar as I regard these depictions of the cannibal other as a reflection of Western society. Rather than painting an authentic image of the other, I see them as depictions of a negative mirror image that reflects back to us so that we can observe ourselves from an unusual point of view. Despite the almost universal rejection of actual cannibalism, the fictive fantasies of cannibalism are not uncommon in cultural products concerned with establishing difference whereby cannibalism serves as a strong marker of difference.

The question I aim to answer in this thesis is how cannibalism in film is used as a marker of difference in order to give a self-description of the state of society. Rather than focusing on differences regarding identities that are often discussed in cannibal films such as differences of gender or class, I aim to head to what I consider the fundament of the issue and examine films that point to the threshold between human and non-human as well as self and non-self. To this end, I will refer to Sigmund Freud's primal horde theory, which postulates an act of cannibalism as the origin of civilization, and to Julia Kristeva's theory of abjection that is concerned with the development of the self in the pre-Oedipal phase.

In preparation for this thesis, I watched and re-watched a corpus of just over one hundred films depicting cannibalism. I did so not only to gain a general overview over the material but to find specific examples that are primarily concerned with the fundamental issues of difference as described before. As my two case studies I chose the films *Week End* (1967) by Jean-Luc Godard and *Dans ma peau* (2002) by Marina de Van. More by chance than on purpose, both are French films that are associated with specific filmic waves: the *nouvelle vague* and the *cinéma du corps*. Both may be a surprising choice at the first glance as the act of cannibalism – or self-cannibalism in the latter case – only makes up a small portion of the respective movies. However, rather than just being a marginal topic among others, I am convinced that the depictions of cannibalism are essential to the interpretation of both. Furthermore, they fit the criteria I set myself. *Week End* explicitly refers to Freud's primal horde theory and puts cannibalism in the context of a reflection on human progress and the

psychic make-up of people living in a civilized world. It thus deals with the difference between human and non-human. *Dans ma peau* rather points back to the early stages of an individual human's development and situates its cannibalistic scenes in the borderland between self and non-self.

The thesis develops this argument as follows: In chapter one, I will give an overview over the literature that has been written about cannibalism in film. In chapter two, I will examine the first case study *Week End*. Three points will be the main focus of the analysis: First, the carnivalesque-cannibalistic strategy employed by the film, second, its reflection on ideas of progress, and, third, its expression of a cannibalistic psychic make-up that comes to the fore in the contemporary political situation. Chapter three is concerned with the second case study *Dans ma peau*. I will analyse how it portrays the modern human as being caught in a restrictive society and how the return to a pre-Oedipal stage is presented as possible escape. To that avail, I will examine how a central scene of social dining is contrasted with a scene of the protagonist's self-cannibalization. Furthermore, I will relate the self-cannibalization in the film to Kristeva's concept of abjection.

In examining films that are concerned with fundamental issues of difference, I hope to provide a basis for the further study of films dealing with cannibalism to provide a reflection on difference in identities.

1. Literary Review

Cannibalism has been a motif and topic widely employed in myths, legends, fairy tales, eposes, novels, and short stories. Therefore it is not surprising that it is also used in numerous films. Michaela Krützen compiled a filmography of more than 150 films in 2001 (2001: 516-531). Since she restricted the list to mostly European and North-American feature films and in the last two decades productions containing cannibalism have even increased, one can assume that the number of cannibal films is actually far higher: a keyword search for 'cannibalism' at the Internet Movie Database reveals no less than 1226 films.[2]

Given the amount of films, it is not surprising that most academic writing is limited to a single film or a few connected films. Studies that try to give a (however limited) overview of the whole phenomenon are rare, and the interrelation of the cannibal motif across different genres or between high-brow and low-brow films is hardly examined. In this chapter, I provide an overview over the whole bandwidth of different filmic approaches to cannibalism by reviewing the academic literature written on the topic.

The most comprehensive overview about cannibalism in film up until its release is given in Mikita Brottman's *Meat is Murder!* (1998). Before focusing on film representations, she distinguishes types of cannibalism: its dietary form, in which cannibalism serves as 'an important part of [the] dietary regime' (1998: 7), symbolic cannibalism that puts it in a ritualistic context (*ibid.*, 9-13), hunger cannibalism where it serves as a necessary means of survival in emergency situations such as famine, disasters, and warfare (*ibid.*, 13-18), and psychotic cannibalism that is related to mental illness and criminal behaviour (*ibid.*, 18-20). Organizing the films into clusters based on genre or theme – the latter loosely based on her categorization of cannibalism –, Brottman looks at the films in each of these clusters chronologically. Some of the groupings of films are analytically useful, while others seem just to provide a means to provide some information on the films.

Thus, Brottman groups together shockumentaries of the classical exploitation film era and mondo documentaries – exotic (pseudo-)documentary films and sensationalist travelogues

[2] https://www.imdb.com/search/keyword/?keywords=cannibalism&ref_=ttkw_kw_15 (last accessed: 12/02/2021)

that often mix authentic footage with staged material to heighten the sense of both authenticity and sensation – of the 1960s and 70s, Brazilian carnivalesque films, and counter-culture/arthouse films as distinct and unrelated categories (1998: 75-91). Some of the shockumentaries and mondo films suggest or promise human cannibalism but either do not show it – e.g. *Cannibal Island* (David F. Friedman, 1956) – or show it in clearly faked sequences – e.g. *Guinea Ama* (Akira Ide, 1974).[3] Although Brottman acknowledges the influence of the mondo documentary genre on the cycle of (mostly) Italian-made exotic cannibal films of the 70s and 80s and especially *Cannibal Holocaust* (Ruggero Deodato, 1980) (1998: 136; 2005: 113-114), an influence that is widely accepted by other authors (Waddell 2017: 67; Krützen 2001: 492), she does not explore this influence in depth. At least in relation to *Cannibal Holocaust*, Waddell shows how the mondo film and *Africa Addio* (Gualtiero Jacopetti and Franco Prosperi, 1966) in particular uses similar strategies in fabricating an exotic Other (2017: 75).

Brottman's discussion of hunger cannibalism as portrayed in the film *Alive* (Frank Marshall, 1993) is more in depth. The film is based on the real event of a plane crash in the Andes in 1972 that made the survivors retort to cannibalism in order not to starve to death. Brottman compares the depiction in the film to how the events actually unfolded and notes a romanticizing and harmonization (1998: 98-101). It would be interesting to contrast this Hollywood approach to this disaster to the approach and strategies used in an earlier film version of the events – the Mexican exploitation film *Supervivientes de los Andes* (René Cardona, 1976) – in order to distinguish strategies in dealing with cannibalism. Several films dealing with fictional cases of hunger cannibalism perpetuate the notion that an involuntary act of cannibalism potentially leads to a personality change, marking the act as a radical event that causes a person to be different than before.[4]

[3] For a more thorough and more general analysis of classic era shockumentaries, see Schaefer 1999: 265-285; the mondo film is treated in-depth in Kerekes & Slater 2016: 106-204 and in Goodall 2006.

[4] That notion is central in the narrative of Antonia Bird's *Ravenous* (1999). It also provides the reason for Hannibal Lecter's psychopathology in the film that provides his backstory, Peter Webber's *Hannibal Rising* (2007).

Brottman further groups together films with cannibal families and subsequently analyses them by comparing them to the structure and functions of fairy tales as laid out by Bruno Bettelheim. She states:

> Most traditional horror films share the functions of the fairy tale in that they serve to teach their mainly teenage audiences of the dangerous consequences of inappropriate sexual (and other) behaviour, thereby serving as a ritual process of acculturation for the modern adolescent, just as the fairy tale helps the child to come to terms with many of the psychological problems of growing up. (1998: 105-106)

The narratives involving cannibalism thereby provide a means to differentiate between what is considered desirable in society and the undesirability of a deviant lifestyle that is associated with cannibalism. The cannibal families take on the function of the negative examples prone to disturb the societal order. In regards to *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* (Tobe Hooper, 1974) and other films with families indulging in cannibalism, Brottman points out how its narrative structure corresponds to fairy tales (1998: 112-117), how there are similar character constellations (*ibid.*, 118-119), and how elements such as archetypal houses (*ibid.*, 120-123) and topics like generational shifts (*ibid.*, 124-127) are common to both these films and fairy tales. She concludes by positing that the usage of these structures, elements, and topics in the films make 'kinds of inverted fairy tales' as their 'narrative disorder, illogical sequences of action and apocalyptic sense of destruction are ritualistic, but without the regenerative or collective functions usually associated with ritualistic violence' (*ibid.*, 130).[5] Cannibalism in these film is therefore a means to confront the social order and question it by means of having it invaded by those who do not fit in it.

Brottman puts together the wave of Italian-made cannibal films that started in the early 70s into a category (1998: 131-160) where her main focus is an analysis of *Cannibal Holocaust* – to which I will return later – and she closes with an overview over psychotic cannibals in film spanning from the pre-code Hollywood film *Doctor X* (Michael Curtiz, 1932) over a multitude of slasher films to *The Silence of the Lambs* (Jonathan Demme, 1991) (*ibid.*, 161-195). The latter film and its cannibal figure Hannibal Lector is also at the heart of Michaela Krützen's (2001) analysis of cannibal films.

[5] Brottman (2005) later revisits this argumentation focusing solely on *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* in another book (2005: 96-112).

While Michaela Krützen focusses on the figure of Hannibal Lector and its narrative function in the film adaptions of the novels in which he appears, she also puts the figure into perspective with an historical overview of cannibals in films outside of the Hollywood system prior to Lector's first appearance in film and provides a brief outlook as to how Lector might influence other cannibal figures and develops a broad classification of films with cannibals. Acknowledging that cannibalism was a topic in film almost since its beginning – with the first being *Bringing a Friend Home for Dinner* (1899) –, Krützen's corpus focusses on European and North American films made after a 1960. She first takes a look at films outside of classical Hollywood cinema and puts them into a broad classification: cannibalism occurs within *auteur* cinema, camp films, and slasher movies (2001: 484-486).

During the new waves of filmmaking in the '60s, cannibalism has been an element of *auteur* films in Italy – *Porcile* (Pier Paolo Pasolini, 1969) and *Fellini – Satyricon* (Federico Fellini, 1969) – as well as in France – Godard's *Week End*. Krützen's overview shows that also in later productions encompassing the Western sphere, cannibalism can be found, but it has also been a marginal topic of the respective films. One exception is the French film *Delicatessen* (1991) where the focus on cannibalism is more central (2001: 487-488). One might add that the corpus of *auteur* films with cannibalism that started in the late '60s and is related to waves of new approaches to filmmaking in the respective countries share other common traits. They reflect on history, often drawing on mythological motifs, to stress the influence the past still has on the present. They tend to also comment on contemporary activism and social movements whereby cannibalism is figuratively posited as a revolutionary act. Out of this corpus of films, *Week End* will be the first case study of this thesis in the next chapter.

In reference to Susan Sontag's essay 'Notes on "Camp"', Krützen defines camp as a special kind of aesthetics that is contains a high degree of artifice and stylization with an emphasis on exaggeration and oftentimes kitsch. In contrast to the *auteur* cinema, cannibalism is more often at the centre of camp films.[6] While some examples – such as *Parents* (Bob Balaban, 1989) and *Eat the Rich* (Peter Richardson, 1987) – employ cannibalism as a means of

[6] However, there are also films in which cannibalism is only one element among other provocative ones – such as in John Water's 1972 film *Pink Flamingos* or Jim Sharman's 1975 musical film *Rocky Horror Picture Show*.

provocation, Krützen points out that others that deliberately show off their low production values are more aimed at the amusement of the audience – examples are trashy films such as *Alferd Packer: The Musical* (Trey Parker, 1993) and *Cannibal Women in the Avocado Jungle of Death* (J.F. Lawton, 1989) (2001: 489-491). While these films can be subsumed under their respective aim to shock or to amuse, I would like to stretch that they are widely diverse in their general topics that range from tackling the difference between children and their parents, class relationships, personality changes after cases of hunger cannibalism, and gender difference. Cannibalism serves as an important marker of difference in dealing with these issues.

The intention to amuse is detrimental to the intention to frighten that Krützen relates to the horror film and therefore she distinguishes camp from horror, although camp might also contain horror elements they are often merely parodied. Regarding horror films, she refers to Andrew Tudor's narrative scheme: the introduction by a monstrous threat into a stable situation leading to a fight to destroy the monster after which the order is restored again. The cannibal is one of the examples of typical monsters. Using David J. Russel's systematization of monsters in horror films, she distinguishes between different man-eating human-like monsters: the zombie belongs to the supernatural realm, the human cannibal to the natural one. Based on this distinction, she classifies horror films with human cannibals as belonging to the slasher sub-genre (2001: 491-493). She thereby uses the definition of the term that is used by Carol J. Clover:

> the slasher (or spatter or shocker) film: the immensely generative story of a psycho-killer who slashes to death a string of mostly female victims, one by one, until he is himself subdued or killed, usually by the one girl who has survived. (1987: 187)[7]

This definition, however, fits only part of the films Krützen subsumes under the header of slasher film: most of the Italian productions that were part of what she calls a cannibal boom in the 70s and early 80s (2001: 492) follow a different narrative pattern, albeit the serial depiction of violence – aimed indeed predominantly at women – makes up a significant part of them. The antagonistic characters, however, are often groups – the horde of zombies in

[7] Note that numerous cannibal films such as *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* and its sequel are part of the corpus Clover analyses.

the supernatural horror films, and exotic cannibal tribes in the natural ones – instead of a psycho-killer, and these films often lack the character of the *final girl*. I would like to add that Clover (1987) discusses the slasher film in regard to its depiction of gender whereby she argues that the male killer is usually portrayed as effeminate and the victim-hero girl that ultimately fights back is provided with typically male attributes. They thereby confuse traditional concepts of gender difference.

As a prototypical and distinct cannibal figure, Krützen identifies Leatherface from *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* (1974) and its sequels whose iconic status not only influenced pop-culture[8] but also *auteur* films such as Christoph Schlingensief's *Das deutsche Kettensägen Massaker* (1990, *Blackest Heart*, literal translation: The German Chainsaw Massacre). This also points to the fact that there are numerous points of contact between *auteur* films, camp, and horror films: John Waters, a director of camp films, and Roger Corman, who specialized in horror films for a while, are also often considered as *auteurs*, while *Fellini – Satyricon* can also be described as camp. Krützen thus acknowledges the fuzziness of the boundaries between the categories she chose. She states that cannibalism is usually used as a form of breaking a taboo in these films that is employed with different intentions: to unsettle, to amuse, to disgust, or to frighten (2001: 493-494). In that regard, Krützen mirrors the approach to bodily sensations that Linda Williams lays out in regards to what she refers to as *body genres* – pornographic films, horror films, and melodrama – the success of which 'often seems to be measured by the degree to which the audience sensation mimics what is seen on the screen' (2013: 163). The affective reaction to the films thereby becomes a criteria for genre categorization.

After the discussion of cannibal films outside of the Hollywood system, Krützen turns to cannibals in classical Hollywood productions that are either native jungle inhabitants or cannibals living within a civilized society.[9] The latter category is divided into three sub-categories: people unknowingly eating human meat – as in *Fried Green Tomatoes* (Jon Avnet, 1991) –, people knowingly but unwillingly becoming cannibals for reasons of

[8] For example, when the rapper Eminem uses a Leatherface costume during his stage shows.

[9] She acknowledges that the distinction between primitive and civilized societies is more and more called into question in Hollywood films of the late 20th century – her example is *Dances with Wolves* (Kevin Costner, 1990) – and the so-called civilized world is depicted as being more savage.

survival – as in *Alive* –, and people being cannibals willingly and knowingly. The last of these cannibals often are part of serial killer films where they are antagonistic to the main characters who often hunt them. But there are also some fewer examples where these cannibals are the protagonists: Patrick Bateman in *American Psycho* (Mary Harron, 2000), who becomes a cannibal out of boredom, and Hannibal Lector who is the only protagonist within classical Hollywood cinema to be a cannibal for reasons of culinary pleasure (2001: 495-496).

Krützen focusses her discussion of Lector in terms of the figure's narrative function. The figure originates from the novels by Thomas Harris and found its way into three filmic adaptations at the time of Krützen's writing: *Manhunter* (Michael Mann, 1986), *The Silence of the Lambs* (Jonathan Demme, 1991), and *Hannibal* (Ridley Scott, 2001) (2001: 497). While in his first filmic appearance in *Manhunter* Lector is not portrayed as cannibal (*ibid.*, 499-500), in his second appearance in film, in *The Silence of the Lambs* (1991), the character is more akin to the literary source: he is portrayed as sophisticated and intelligent and his taste for human meat is constantly mentioned. In his sophistication and control of his desires, Hannibal can be described as an antitype to the uneducated and uninhibited Leatherface from *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*. Krützen uses Algirdas J. Greimas' actantial model[10] and Joseph Campbell's narratological concept of the hero's journey to classify Hannibal's function in the film as that of a helper. Thus, he is shown as a sympathetic, positive figure – facilitated by the fact that his cruel acts are rarely shown or given a connotation of justification (2001: 503-508). That again changes in the sequel *Hannibal* (2001) that shows Hannibal's cruelty in detail and in an aestheticized manner, a fact that triggered many critics' assentation that the film is to be located within the horror genre. Krützen argues that although Hannibal takes centre stage in the film, he cannot be considered as a classical hero as he stays a static figure without any development; that also due to the omission of Hannibal's backstory wound that is described in the source novel (2001: 511-512). Krützen posits that Hannibal Lector emerges as the first distinct cannibal figure within mainstream cinema. Thus, the cannibal figure has found its place within classical cinema. However, Hannibal as figure is also prone to overshadow all other cannibal figures, thereby inhibiting the

[10] It distinguishing characters by their narrative roles into subject, object, helper, opponent, sender, and receiver.

possibility of more general cannibal figures and the establishing of a distinct cannibal film genre in the future (*ibid.*, 516). It is certainly true that Lector became an even more established figure in Hollywood in the years after the publication of Krützen's text: He is part of a second adaptation of Harris' first novel with him, *Red Dragon* (Brett Ratner, 2002), wherein the divergent depiction of the figure in the first adaptation, *Manhunter*, was corrected and Lector put more into the focus. The backstory wound of Lector, which has been omitted in *Hannibal*, is finally explored in the prequel *Hannibal Rising* (Peter Webber, 2007). Additionally, Lector is also at the centre of the TV series *Hannibal* (creator: Bryan Fuller, three seasons from 2013 to 2015), thereby also reflecting the medial shift from cinema to television in the last decade. The figure of Hannibal Lector as a positive character in mainstream cinema provides also a good example for the strength of cannibalism as an identity marker. In order to counterweigh the negative impact of his cannibalistic tendencies, he has to be portrayed as especially sophisticated, controlled, and intelligent to neutralize the negative attributes usually assigned to cannibals.[11]

However, contrary to Krützen's prediction the figure of Hannibal did not displace other cannibal figures. On the contrary, I would argue that the last two decades saw another rise in the filmic depiction of cannibal figures in horror films with the re-emergence of familiar cannibals – such as Leatherface in the 2003 remake *The Chainsaw Massacre* (Marcus Nispel) and its sequels as well as the cannibal family from *The Hills Have Eyes* (Wes Craven, 1977) in its 2006 remake by Alexandre Aja (and their respective sequels) – and the emergence of new cannibals – e.g. in the *Wrong Turn* series that started in 2003. Furthermore, cannibals also had an increased presence in films other than horror films in the last twenty years which is why I would call this period another peak time of the film cannibal

[11] Lector therefore would also provide material for a case study of difference in cannibal films. Already his first appearance in film demonstrates how this figure subverts stereotypical images of cannibals in Western culture. In *The Silence of the Lambs* he is contrasted with his cell neighbour Miggs. Miggs is shown in a crouched position as he shouts at the film's protagonist Starling: 'I can smell your cunt.' Lector, in contrast, is shown standing almost comically upright as he reflects on Miggs' utterance in saying: 'I myself cannot. You use Evyan skin cream, and sometimes you wear L'Air du Temps, but not today.' Lector's sensual ability pertains to cultured connoisseurship, while in the case of Miggs it is an expression of animalistic sexuality. This contrast relates to Freud's distinction in the development of civilization where he speculates that the upright position of humans coincides with a decline in olfactory ability and therefore to smell the genitals of others ([1930] 1962: 46-47). Miggs is portrayed as being considerably more primitive than Lector despite the latter being the cannibal.

akin to rough period spanning from the late '60s to the early '80s. At the very least, it demonstrates that the prevalence of the cannibal in Western culture is unbroken.

In regards to this earlier period there exist numerous academic works dealing with individual films. A special focus is given to *Cannibal Holocaust* that has been analysed widely.[12] Brottman utilizes the concept of gift-exchange in her analysis of the different levels or films-within-film and concludes that the film is one 'of restoration and redistribution rather than a film of chaos and destruction' (2005: 130). Christian Moser describes the film as staging the cannibalistic acts and other tribal rituals as rituals of cleansing aimed at restituting the balance of nature and therefore fulfilling a cathartic function. He refers to it as a 'ritual of expiation: the excessive consumption of violent images is supposed to return the viewer to a state of wild innocence to bring him/her in contact with the true natural self' (2005: 107, own translation). In exposing the viewer to these images, the film purges him/her of his/her cannibalistic desire and satisfies it. Moser concludes that Cannibal Holocaust does not criticize modern consumer culture, but affirms it in its message that uninhibited consumption is the means to self-cleansing – in a kind of 'aesthetic neoliberalism' (*ibid.*, 108). Andrew DeVos analyses the history of the distribution and reception of *Cannibal Holocaust* to account for both its censorship and rising popularity. He relates it to the film's ambiguity and complexity and concludes that to 'understand such a complex and convoluted film requires dialectic, not diatribe, for *Cannibal Holocaust* is both trash and treasure' (2010: 95). Neil Jackson analyses the films in terms of its realist-reflexive approach as 'the film persists in its claims to a level veracity' (2002: 37). He concludes that the film 'condemns both itself and its consumers. It pits monster against monster, neutralizing the comforting assurances of a moral secure universe' (*ibid.*, 43). Calum Waddell looks at *Cannibal Holocaust* in terms of its exoticising construction of the location where it was filmed (2017: 29-47), its relation to the Vietnam War and other wars of national liberation (*ibid.*, 49-65), its realist approach (*ibid.*, 67-83) – similar to Jackson but not referring to him -, and its defence of patriarchy (*ibid.*, 85-97). In relation to the latter, Jackson argues that the purported overcoming of the

[12] See Brottman (1998: 136-150 and 2005: 113-132), Moser (2005: 83-108), DeVos (2010), Jackson (2002), and Waddell (2017).

difference between the civilized and the foreign native world is just an alibi to perpetuate gender differences.

The phase of cannibal films starting in the late '60s not only brought with a surge of cannibal motifs in *auteur* films in Europe but was also central to Brazilian filmmaking. The third wave of the Brazilian new wave, the *cinema novo*, starting around 1968 is often referred to as the 'cannibal-tropicalist' (Stam 1992: 145) phase as it often combines the tropicalist idea of a language of revolt with metaphors and images of cannibalism. Robert Stam traces the roots of this phase to Brazilian modernist literature and describes it in the terms of the Bakhtinian concept of the carnivalesque (1992: 122-156). The carnivesque is also applicable to other cannibal films: in an overview he relates it to – among others – 'films that adapt carnivalesque or Menippean literary texts' (*ibid.*, 110) and gives *Fellini – Satyricon* as an example.[13] He also relates the carnivalesque to 'films that aggressively overturn a classical aesthetic based on formal harmony and good taste' (*ibid.*). One of his examples is *Pink Flamingos* (John Waters, 1972). I will discuss Stam's concept of the cannibal-carnivalesque in relation to *Week End* in chapter two. As to the Brazilian cannibal film, Randal Johnson (1995) gives an in-depth analysis of *Macunaíma* (Joaquim Pedro de Andrade, 1969), one of the key films of the third phase of the *cinema novo* that employs cannibalism metaphorically and literally throughout. Richard Peña (1995) takes a look at a film that is based on Brazilian history, *Como Era Gostoso o Meu Francês* (Nelson Pereira dos Santos, 1971), and analyses it in terms of the captive outsider narrative that dates back to Hans Staden's account of his encounters with a cannibal tribe and is often used in literary works depicting cannibalism in a colonial context.

Of the films made in more recent years, especially a cycle of French films with female cannibals that are related to the wave of *cinéma du corps – Trouble Every Day* (Claire Denis, 2001), *Dans ma peau* (Marina de Van, 2002), and *Grave* (Julia Ducournau, 2016) – have spawned research interest. Kath Dooley (2019) examines all these three films in terms of the divide of the body and mind and argues that by utilizing the trope of the monstrous-feminine – as theorized by Barbara Creed -, these films constitute a reflection on sexual difference (2019: 57). Dooley concludes that, 'however, by subverting generic conventions, all three

[13] Note that the cannibal episode in *Fellini – Satyricon* is not part of the adapted source text.

interrogate the gender politics of horror' (*ibid.*, 64). Ursula de Leeuw (2020) focusses solely on *Grave* by employing Gerorges Bataille's theory of general economy and reading the film utilizing notions of transgression, sacrifice, and the death drive.[14] De Leeuw describes how the film's protagonist Justine in moments of transgression – sanctioned rituals, cannibalism – can experience moments of sovereignty (2020: 226). However, she concludes that in *Grave* 'the institutional transgressive economy, and that of the familial order, complete the prohibition at play. Justine is not ultimately liberated from her profane existence, but rather remains stuck in a system of repression' (*ibid.*). Out of this cycle of films, *Dans ma peau* will be the second case study of this thesis. I will examine it in chapter three where I will also provide an overview over the academic literature that deals with it.

[14] De Leeuw (2020) also discusses the latter in recurrence to Sigmund Freud and Sabina Spielrein (223).

2. The Beginning and (Week-)End of Civilization

In Jean-Luc Godard's film *Week End* (1967), a bourgeois couple – Corinne and Roland Durand – travel from Paris to the rural village of Oinville in order to prevent Corinne's ill father from changing his will and thus secure their inheritance. Faced with multiple deadly accidents that cause traffic jams and ultimately force the two to abandon their vehicle and continue on foot, they arrive too late: Corinne's father has died and her mother claims the whole inheritance for herself. Corinne and Roland kill her and place her body at one of the accident sites that litter the countryside. On their way back to Paris, the couple is captured by a band of guerrillas. Roland is killed during an escape attempt, and Corinne joins the group and partakes in a cannibalistic meal in the end.

Week End is part of a film corpus that of the *nouvelle vague*, the French new wave of filmmaking that set out to break with established traditions in cinema. Godard was one of the key figures in that movement that reflected on the medium in film practice and theoretical writing in the magazine *Cahiers du cinéma*.[15] As Bernd Kiefer (2006) points out the goal of Godard's films is to reflect modernity and as such they became more and more political with reflections on the Algerian war in *Le petit soldat* (1963) and on Western revolutionary movements in *La chinoise* (1967) and *Week End*. James Roy Macbean (1968) also describes *Week End* as a continuation of the political agenda set in *La chinoise* and stresses the stylistic approaches. He describes them as Brechtian in *La chinoise* and inspired by Antonin Artaud's *Theatre of Cruelty* in *Week End.* I agree that the latter film was influenced by Artaud, but I think that it only one among many approaches Godard experiments with in the film. Given that it incorporates a multitude of different styles and intertextual references, I would consider it as cannibalistic-carnivalesque film in the sense that Rorbert Stam uses the term in recurrence to the writings by Mikhail Bakthin. Therefore, I will start with an examination of that approach in *Week End*.

The final act of cannibalism in the *Week End* shall be the further focus of this chapter. My aim is to show how it relates to the numerous implicit and explicit intertextual references utilized in the film. Especially of interest are the references to Friedrich Engels' theory of

[15] For a history of the *nouvelle vague* movement as well as its aims, theories, and politics, see Frisch (2007).

human progress and to Freud's *Totem and Taboo* ([1913] 2001). There, Freud formulates his primal horde theory that postulates an act of patricide combined with cannibalism as the point of evolution that marks the difference between animal and human. I will explore the significance of the cannibalistic act in this development and show how *Week End* reflects the notion of the development of civilization.

2.1 The cannibal-carnivalesque approach of *Week End*

At one point during their journey while passing the landscape of the countryside, Corinne asks Roland: 'When did civilization start?' She asks this question seemingly out of the blue and does not dwell further on it, not really expecting an answer. But given how the film paints the state of civilization right from the outset, one is tempted to reformulate the question into 'When did civilization end?' or 'Did civilization start at all?'

Both Corinne and Roland talk with their respective lovers about the possibility to get rid of each other. All that seems to hold together their marriage is the prospect of a huge inheritance when Corinne's father dies. Until then, they simply fantasize about the other's and the father's demise in a car crashes. And indeed, the car journey they embark together to fetch Corinne's father from the hospital at the weekend is a journey in which they encounter numerous deadly car accidents and road rage in a world that seems to be dominated by materialist egotism and the utter lack of empathy. But their subsequent encounter with a band of anti-materialist guerrillas does not really provide a counter-point as this gang engages in acts of debauchery, treat hostages as objects in their sexual exploitation and a failed prisoner exchange, and are ultimately shown as being cannibals.

Thus, *Week End* resist utopian ideas both in regards to civilizational progress as to an idealized idyll of returning to nature. Instead, through monologues, intertitles, and encounters with historical and fictive persons, the film provides a rich web of intertextual references to the writings by thinkers of revolution such as Malcolm X and Frantz Fanon, to the ideals of the French Revolution, to literature, film and art in general. In relation to the incorporation of all this material, David Sterritt writes that Godard becomes 'a carnivalistic cannibal, devouring alien materials – like the Hollywood-style ingredients in the [film's]

early scenes […] – that become increasingly unrecognizable as the movie digests them and appropriates their energy' (2008: 127). He likens this approach of the film to the strategies employed in anticolonial Brazilian films that Robert Stam describes as the cannibal-carnivalesque. Stam (1992: 122-156) describes this approach as combining the cultural anthropophagy of the Brazilian modernist of the 1920s with the Bakhtinian concept of the carnivalesque. He describes cultural anthropophagy as 'a devouring of the techniques and information of the superdeveloped countries undertaken in an effort to struggle against colonist domination' (*ibid.*, 124). Products of the dominant foreign culture are synthesised and transformed in order to turn it against this dominant culture of the colonizer. Stam points out that

> [t]he "cannibalist" and "carnivalist" metaphors have certain features in common. Both refer to "oral" rituals of resistance, one literal, the other figurative. Both evoke a kind of dissolving of the boundaries of the self through the physical or spiritual commingling of self and other. […] Modernist cannibalism argues for the critical "devouring" of the scientific technique and artistic information of the superdeveloped metropolitan countries in order to reelaborate them autonomy, while parodic carnivalism defended the absorption of metropolitan culture, but in an ironic, "double-voiced" mode. (1992: 126)

Through incorporation and rearrangement of the ideas and cultural products of the dominant culture or the ruling class are critically reflected to gain autonomy. The difference between the colonizer and the colonized is temporarily suspended in this way in order to utilize the dominant cultural products to make a mockery of the colonizing culture. *Week End* also takes up a multitude of material of different ideas and styles to combine it in an unusual way. The material is devoured and mixed, the finished film is presented as the end product of this process. To keep in line with the metaphor of a cannibalizing digestive process, the film is consequently announced in a title card as 'a film found in a dump'. To understand how this approach works it is useful to identify the film's elements that correspond to the concept of the carnivalesque that Bakhtin developed in his writings about Fyodor Dostoevsky and François Rabelais. Bakthin examines the features of works belonging to the serio-comical genres that he describes as 'a result of the transforming influence of a carnival sense of the world'. He identifies among its characteristics that it is of a 'deliberate multi-styled and heterovoiced nature' and situated in the 'living *present*' ([1963] 1984: 108, emphasis in original) whereby possibly appearing mythical or historical figures are put in a contemporary

setting. *Week End* is very much situated in the present with its numerous allusions to the contemporary political situation in the world. Furthermore, the historical figures in the film are shown to be alive and communicate with the other characters in an unmediated way. Furthermore, Bakhtin's description of the multi-styled approach seems very much like a description of the film's approach:

> Characteristic of these genres are a multi-toned narration, the mixing of high and low, serious and comic; they make wide use of inserted genres – letters, found manuscripts, retold dialogues, parodies on the high genres, parodically reinterpreted citations; in some of them we observe a mixing of prosaic and poetic speech, living dialects and jargons […] are introduced, and various authorial masks make their appearance. ([1963] 1984: 108)

Week End makes also use of different film genres from thriller to road movie, mixes political monologues with crude jokes and anecdotes, puts historical figures in a different context, and makes a mockery of theoretical concepts. Furthermore, the episodic structure of the film that is presented like an adventure is reminiscent of the carnivalesque structure of the Menippean satire that Bakhtin describes as containing 'a mode for searching after truth, provoking it, and most important, *testing* it' ([1963] 1984: 114, emphasis in original). They are thus 'adventures of an *idea* or a *truth* in the world [in which the] man of the idea – the wise man – collides with worldly evil, depravity, baseness, and vulgarity in their most extreme expression' (*ibid.*, 115, emphasis in original). Corinne and Roland in *Week End* are these persons embodying an idea that is tested through the encounters they have during their adventurous journey. As members of the modern bourgeoisie they are representative of the idea of civilization. In all their encounters of cruelty and accidents they are react either listlessly or cruelly themselves. The idea of civilization cannot counter the evils of the world and rather contributes its own evils. The journey of the idea of civilization inevitably leads to the final act of cannibalism.

The final scene of *Week End* where Corinne is shown as indulging in cannibalism thus illustrates the overall approach of the film. It figuratively cannibalises material, chews it, and defecates so that it can be finally be found in a dump. More concretely, it uses filmic conventions to turn them upside-down and ultimately destroy them. The end title of the film proclaims the 'end of cinema'. *Week End* sets out to kill the dominant mainstream cinema by employing its strategies in a way that Stam describes as the cannibal-carnivalesque.

Furthermore, on its way it also subverts ideas of progress that are related to the final scene of cannibalism and are put together in a carnivalesque way to crash into each other. They will be the topic of section 2.3.

2.2 Killing and Eating

Week End ends with an act of cannibalism. And while Michaela Krützen (2001: 488) shows that it is the case with cannibalism in *auteur* cinema that it is usually merely a marginal episode at the end of a longer odyssey. This is also the case in *Week End* where the final scene of cannibalism is rather tame and downplayed – especially considering the more spectacular scenes of bloody car accidents and sexual debauchery that are shown throughout the rest of the film.

At the guerrilla camp amidst the natural environment, Corinna sits together with other guerrillas by the grill and is given a piece of meat that she starts eating. She comments that it is not bad and is informed that it is a mixture of the meat of a pig and an English tourist. Furthermore, she is told that there are still left-overs from her husband to which she replies that she would not mind a bit more after she is finished. Apart from the content of the content of the conversation, there is nothing that would distinguish this scene from an every-day barbecue meal (Figure 1). The real horror takes place before when the killing of Roland is shown and his cutting up is hinted at to take place off-camera. At that occasion, Corinne verbalized her disgust, but while eating she is calm and almost indifferent. In another transgression from what is usually shown in cinema, *Week End* shows the real butchering of a pig and a goose.[16] The act of eating is therefore, at one hand, dissociated from the killing, because the cooked meat does not resemble the creature being eaten anymore. On the other hand, the film does not spare the viewers from the image of the killing.

[16] Real animal killings would later become a staple in the subgenre of the Italian cannibal film stirring controversy (see for example Brottmann 1998: 138-7).

Figure 1: Corinne as cannibal in *Week End*

Robert A. Paul points out in relation to eating regulations at Passover that

> cutting up meat to cook it disguises the fact that what is being eaten is an animal. Cooking the whole animal serves to emphasize the fact that a fellow creature is being cannibalized. […] The Bible specifies that one is to eat the "head, legs, entrails" (Exod. 12:9) of the victim. These parts forcibly remind the eater that he or she is eating what was a living being, not some affectively distanced "food". (1996: 126)

In the restrained and distanced depiction of eating the cut up and cooked meat, *Week End* thus tones down the cannibalistic act. This becomes more apparent, if one compares this depiction with other filmic portrayals of cannibalism – such as in *Cannibal Holocaust* – in which the flesh is often ripped from the distinguishable corpse (or sometimes the still living human) and directly eaten raw, and easily recognizable body parts are shown being cooked. Still, by including the scenes of actual animal killings, when – as James Roy Macbean puts it – 'the *image* and the *thing itself* are one' (1968: 41, emphasis in original), *Week End* provides a more mediated connection between killing and eating. This connection is nonetheless easily discernible and counteracts the abstract nature of eating meat in modern societies where it usually is bought pre-cut and pre-packed – hence removed from the act of killing itself. Modern society's graving for the consumption of meat necessitates the killing

of animals but does not want to have to do anything with the actual act of killing. But *Week End* presents the viewer with a mirror that shows that the desire for meat has deadly consequences for the slaughtered animals. This is further exemplified by the scene in which Corinne's mother is killed. She is killed off-screen, but her blood is shown being splattered on the carcass of a rabbit (Figure 2). This scene directly conflates the urge to eat meat with Corinne and Roland's desire to get their inheritance immediately and shows the inevitable consequences for their fulfilment. Thus, *Week End* shows the hidden carnivorous tendencies of the consumer society coming to the fore.

Figure 2: Blood splatters on the dead rabbit during the matricide (Week End)

2.3 Progress and Cannibalism

Godard always had a keen interest in anthropology. As his biographer Colin MacCabe points out, in 1949 he even enrolled in the Sorbonne to study it. Although focusing wholly on filmmaking shortly thereafter, his fascination with the subject lingered especially in regards to the output of ethnographic films by Jean Rouch (2003: 36-37). Therefore, the centrality of anthropological ideas in *Week End* should hardly be surprising.

The act of slaughter in *Week End* that is removed from where it usually takes place in modern society – at a slaughterhouse – points to the idea that what is depicted there is a fallback to a pre-modern time. Other elements of the film also frame the later, more archaic scenes within the context of human development. Firstly, at one point Friedrich Engels' concept of the stages of human civilization is recounted in a voice-over. Secondly, the phrase 'Totem and Taboo' is shown multiple times when the guerillas first appear in the movie, thus pointing to Freud's book of the same title wherein he lays out his primal horde theory that involves the cannibalization of the patriarch. Both concepts are incorporated into the film corpus to subvert them in a carnivalesque way. They are put into the narrative in an unexpected way that deviate from the traditional practice of mainstream cinema. They are prone to clash with each other and the other material in the film, most notably the final scene of cannibalism.

I will devote the following sub-chapters to these two concepts and show how they are subverted in the context of the film.

2.3.1 Progressional Inversion and Overlap

In regards to Engels, *Week End* provides a short introduction to his materialistic conception of the development of civilization as laid out in his book *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* ([1884] 2010). In it, Engels takes up on the research by Lewis H. Morgan that is based mostly on American natives. Morgan develops a succession of stages in human development from the period of savagery to the period of barbarism before humankind reaches the status of civilization (1877: 9-13).

In *Week End*, the lecture-like voice-over on this developmental model by Morgan and Engels is the last of a series of revolutionary monologues provided by two garbage men with whom Corinne and Roland travel just prior to arriving in Oinville where they commit matricide. Filmed unremarkably with static images not even showing the person delivering the respective monologue, the sequence of monologues basically brings the film narrative to a halt and confronts the viewer with a block of theory that seemed out of place for many contemporary critics (Macbean 1968: 40-1). The two monologues by the garbage men – an

Arab and a Black person – speak on each other's behalf while the other is shown are about ideas of the civil rights movement in the US and African liberation.

Figure 3: The first appearance of the guerrillas in *Week End*.

The voice-over about ideas of human progression as laid out by Morgan and Engels fits into this sequence as its content likewise does not seem to have a direct connection to the narrative and the addressee of the speeches is unclear. While in the monologues it is clear who is talking, the voice-over is not explicitly assigned to a specific person within the film. Godard's latter film *Le gai savoir* (1969), a filmic reflection on words and images and their ideological content, provides a key to Godard's approach to film this scene in this way. In *Le gai savoir*, Patricia, one of the two protagonists, insists: 'In every image, we must know who speaks.' Later, she laments: 'In movies, we always see people talking, never listening.' To get to the core of the ideological content and implications of both images and words, one has to contemplate not only where they are coming from, but also who it is addressed to. Godard often leaves the questions of who is talking and who this person is talking to unanswered and for the audience to contemplate. During the voice-over lecturing on Morgana and Engels' ideas of progress, Corinne and Roland are shown sitting listlessly in the grass. It is unclear, however, if they are listening and even if the voice-over is part of the

film's diegesis. During the scene, some flashbacks to earlier scenes of the film and one flash-forward are inserted. These inserts relating to other moments of the diegetic time vaguely correspond to what is said.[17] For example, when the voice-over refers to the exploitation of man by man, a farmer and his horse-carriage amidst a traffic jam caused by urbanite weekenders is shown; the bourgeois enjoy their leisure time, while the farmer cannot halt his work. The flash-forward points to the guerrillas that have not yet been part of the film, while the advanced developmental stage of the 19th century Iroquois is referenced in the monologue. The guerrillas are clothed in hippie-style garment that mimics a clichéd take on traditional Native American attire but also reflects the contemporary fashion (Figure 3). Thus, in one way, the shown image corresponds to the spoken text about the Iroquois. In another way, the guerrillas as they are portrayed cannot be easily subsumed under one developmental stage.

Gary Indiana argues that Godard takes the developmental scheme as laid out by Morgan and Engels – from savagery to barbarism to civilization – as a structuring principle for the whole film, but that 'these stages are set in reverse: a dominant class, […] devoted to mindless consumerism, is shown regressing to a state of savagery' (2012: 10). I concur that *Week End* follows this general outline as a tendency, and might add that the usage of flash-backs and a flash-forward during the Engels/Morgan voice-over also underline this connection to the rest of the film. The direct reference made during one scene to Luis Buñuel's surrealist film *El ángel exterminador* (1962) seems to further underpin this assessment. In this film, a group of upper-class people get trapped inexplicably within a room in a luxurious mansion while attending a dinner party. While they start off enjoying a lush feast, they soon run out of the basic necessities. Subsequently, they are forced to slaughter one of the sheep roaming through the mansion to cook its meat over a makeshift campfire. Ultimately, when the host of the party decides to sacrifice himself for the others but before he can do so, they realize that they missed the point to leave the party and by re-enacting an event from the party night they can finally leave. Marsha Kinder describes the fate of the party guests in the film as a 'descent into brutal savagery' and points out that Buñuel once mentioned in an interview that he regrets that 'he had not pushed the savagery of the guests all the way to cannibalism'

[17] At the end of *Le gai savoir*, vagueness is suggested as a strategy to make the audience think.

(2009). *Week End* does go all the way and ends the seeming descent to savagery with an act of cannibalism. The critic Roger Ebert stresses that *El ángel exterminador* makes a point to show that 'so close to civilization is the cave' and that the party guests are 'trapped in their own bourgeois cul-de-sac' (1997). And Kinder rightfully points out that it is 'a trivial breach of etiquette' – the guest not leaving when it is deemed the right time – that transforms 'into the destruction of civilization'. In other words, rather than exemplifying an inverted progress the film shows the breaking down of the façade of civilization that brings to light what is already there all along. The animosities between the party guests are there from the beginning. They merely drop the pretence and social phrases after being trapped for a while. The same can be said for *Week End*.

Although *Week End* references the developmental stages as laid out by Morgan and Engels and implies a connection to other scenes using flash-backs and a flash-forward, the stages as thus presented in the film are not shown as very distinct and show considerate overlap. It is important to point out that Morgan's goal in developing his concept of human progress is exactly to avoid such an overlap in specific regions as he explicates in regards to his reservation about the Three-Age System (Ages of Stone, of Bronze, and of Iron): 'since the period of stone implements overlaps those of bronze and of iron, and since that of bronze also overlaps that of iron, they are not capable of a circumscription that would leave each independent and distinct' (1877: 9). In the film, the portrayed guerrillas should adhere to the stage of savagery in an inverted developmental model, yet – additionally to donning fashionable modern clothes such as mini-skirts – they wield advanced weaponry. *Week End* builds up a resistance against the concept of human progress. It does not simply invert the model but constantly mixes different stages together. *Week End* is not simply a tale of advancing bourgeois collapse into savagery. The behaviour of the bourgeois is shown as rather savage from the get-go in scenes of uninhibited road rage and calculated aggressions that make a mockery of any idea of a civilized cohabitation. And the portrayal of supposedly savage cannibals at the end unites elements that belong into different stages of development as laid out by Morgan and Engels: they lead a nomadic lifestyle in the midst of nature, but use modern weapons and radios, dress in fashionable garment, recite poetry and have even a fully equipped modern drum set. The guerrillas are thus equipped with contradictory insignia. Some are usually attributed to savages, others to a cultured civilization. The

portrayal of the guerrillas in *Week End* stands in opposition to any model of progress in distinct phases. These models are used to mask the fact that the film clearly states by showing the guerrillas as cannibals: the civilized is the savage. The notion of a fundamental difference between the savage cannibal and the civilized modern human is thereby negated.

To further the point, I will now continue to examine the final scene of cannibalism in regards to Freud's *Totem and Taboo* that is referenced by the film in connection with the guerrilla group. Freud's theory formulated therein clashes with the idea of progress insofar as it postulates that the cannibalistic nature of humans is merely sublimated in modern society.

2.3.2 Cannibalism as Revolution in Evolution

Week End positions cannibalism at its very end. In that way it serves as a contrast to Sigmund Freud's theory of human development that posits an act of cannibalism at the beginning of civilization. The film explicitly references the book *Totem and Taboo* ([1913] 2001), in which Freud develops this theory, in an intertitle during the first appearances of the cannibalistic cannibals. In the book, Freud examines parallels between the mental lives of neurotic patients as he encounters them in his practice and those of people living in totemistic societies. Being especially interested in the correlation between totemism and exogamy – resp. the incest taboos wherein Freud sees the root for exogamy ([1913] 2001:141) –, he proposes a common origin for both. Constructing a state of early men from the writings of Charles Darwin and J.J. Atkinson, Freud postulates that 'Darwin deduced from the habits of the higher apes that men, too, originally lived in comparatively small groups or hordes within which the jealousy of the oldest and strongest male prevented sexual promiscuity' (*ibid.*, 145).[18] Freud calls this group 'primal horde' (*ibid.*, 146) (*Urhorde*) and postulates that it is made up of a father and his harem of females, while the sons are made to leave upon reaching maturity. They wander about in the vicinity as a band of brothers.

Freud then speculates that an event took place that led to the formation of totemism – with its ritual of the totem meal – and the institutionalization of the incest taboo:

[18] Richard J. Smith (2016) shows that Freud here uses Darwin's concept detrimental to Darwin's intention (2016: 838-840).

> One day the brothers who had been driven out came together, killed and devoured their father and so made an end to the patriarchal horde. […] Cannibal savages as they were, it goes without saying that they devoured their victim as well as killing him. The violent primal father had doubtless been the feared and envied model of each one of the company of brothers: and in the act of devouring him they accomplished their identification with him, and each one of them acquired a portion of his strength. The totem meal, which is perhaps mankind's earliest festival, would thus be a repetition and a commemoration of this memorable and criminal deed, which was the beginning of so many things – of social organization, of moral restrictions and of religion. ([1913] 2001: 164-5)

It is obvious that *Week End* does not show cannibalism in the way Freud describes it in this passage. There is no band of brothers in the film, but a band of guerrillas consisting of both women and men. Although they seem to be outcasts of society, their act of cannibalism does not start a new era in which they take over the power. The killing of Corinne's husband can be considered the murder of a patriarchal figure, but the only parricide in the film is that of Corinne's mother, not her father. The reason for killing her is not to gain access to sexual gratification but to get money. Furthermore, it is not a group of men that are shown engaging in cannibalism but only Corinne. Lastly, it is made clear by the dialogue that the killing and cannibalizing of a human is not a singular act in the film, but there are more victims to be eaten. It is thus clear that *Week End* does not copy what Freud has postulated as the primal crime, but that it brings Freud's account into considerable disarray.

Especially the singularity of the event is important for Freud's theory as Freud sets the act of patricide and cannibalism as the origin of the development of civilization. He describes it as the starting point for both totemism and exogamy, hence the establishment of primal law. It is an event that left a mark on the psychic make-up of humans and therefore an event that Freud repeatedly refers to in other works. Maria Vyrgioti (2019: 77-92) traces the allusions to cannibalism and the primal crime in Freud's works and analyses its meaning for his psychoanalytic model. She argues that in *Totem and Taboo* 'Freud associates the origins of civilization and religion with the withdrawal from cannibalism', but that he goes beyond the colonial dichotomy in borrowing 'the cannibal trope from narratives that attach it to the Aboriginal to describe the cruelty and violence of the modern, civilized, white subject' (2019: 79). Both the guilt imposed by the primal crime as well as the cannibalistic urges live on within the psychic build of the civilized subject as the preservation of 'an ambiguous

legacy of racist, colonial thought' (*ibid.*). It is the ambiguity of the psyche that is caught between destructive urges and the imperative to abide by some kind of law to ensure the social co-existence of humans. According to Jacqueline Rose, Freud regards this 'social tie' as being inherently violent: 'For Freud, collective identity is unavoidably violent (you unite by placing the enemy outside, but the violence will also be yours)' (1999: 53). The social unity, thus, is a fragile one that is dependent on an outer enemy upon which to direct the inner violence.

Week End takes up on this notion of an inherently violent society with its portrayal of animosities, murder schemes as well as allusions to wars around the world. However, the film clearly counters the idea that civilization has withdrawn from cannibalism. Macbean describes that *Week End* shows society as being immersed in figurative cannibalism by the

> [j]uxtaposition of the bourgeois ritual of consumption with the hippie[19] ritual of consumption [that] points to a dead-end in which the only movement is in vicious circles of endless exploitation and destruction. The hippies feed off the bourgeoisie and the bourgeoisie nourishes within itself the future hippies. The bourgeoisie fails to recognize the internal contradictions of its existence, but so do the hippies fail to recognize the internal contradictions of their existence. Moreover, the hippie way of life ironically seems to attract the most blatantly fascist of the young bourgeoisie […]. (1968: 38)

In that way, *Week End* shows caught up in what Atkinson describes as a potential 'vicious circle [following the primal crime], where we found an ever-recurring violent succession to the solitary paternal tyrant, by sons whose parricidal hands were soon again clenched in fratricidal strife' (1903: 228). The question is why the band of brothers should stop fighting for the women in the group after the successful killing of the patriarch. According to Freud, this vicious circle is broken because the ambivalent feelings the brothers have for their father: they fear him as much as they revere him. The feelings of reverence lead them to the urge to

[19] Macbean refers to the group that I call the guerillas as hippies which is not uncommon in literature about the film. However, Godard himself retrospectively said that he prefers to call them yippies because of their inhibition to violent protest (see Cott [1969] 2012: 30). Yippies were the members of the US organization Youth International Party, a radical leftist group that staged theatrical protests influenced by the *Beat* movement, Dadaism, Bertolt Brecht, and Herbert Marcuse (see Holloway 2000). Since the Youth International Party was founded in 1968 – hence after the filming of *Week End* –, Godard could not have had this specific group in mind while making the film. Rather, it is a certain similar type of protesters that incorporates guerilla tactics and militancy into their form of protest on which he likely based the portrayal of the guerillas in the film.

incorporate him in order to become like him, but ultimately makes them regret the act of violence ([1913] 2001:166, 172) which leads to the establishment of primal law to prevent the repetition of such an event. However, as Freud elaborates in *Civilization and Its Discontents*, neither the sexual nor the aggressive desires simply disappear, but are repressed and forced to be expressed in acts of sublimation through science, art, or ideology ([1930] 1962: 44). He sees therein the reason for 'the psychological misery of the masses'[20] ([1930] 1997: 80, own translation) in modern societies. Freud explicates in recurrence to the primal horde:

> If civilization imposes such great sacrifices not only on man's sexuality but on his aggressivity, we can understand better why it is hard for him to be happy in that civilization. In fact, primitive man was better off in knowing no restrictions of instinct. To counterbalance this, his prospects of enjoying this happiness for any length of time were very slender. Civilized man has exchanged a portion of his possibilities of happiness for a portion of security. We must not forget, however, that in the primal family only the head of it enjoyed this instinctual freedom; the rest lived in slavish suppression. In that primal period of civilization, the contrast between a minority who enjoyed the advantages of civilization and a majority who were robbed of those advantages was, therefore, carried to extremes. ([1930] 1962: 62)

In the partial repression of his instincts in civilization, humans trade in the achievement of utmost happiness for the security of not being subjected to the aggressive desires of their fellow humans. In primal societies, few were privileged to live according to their instincts, while the majority was suppressed. In modern societies, this evens out in a way that a larger portion of humankind gains more liberties, but no one is in the position to live out their instincts to the fullest. However, in the world shown in *Week End*, this sublimation of the inner urges does not seem to work anymore. The murderous and cannibalistic instincts are no longer suppressed and acted out. That raises the question of the film's view of society differs from Freud's model. I will devote the next section to answering this question.

[20] In the original, the phrase is 'das psychologische Elend der Masse' (Freud [1930] 1997: 80). James Strachey translates it as 'the psychological poverty of groups' (Freud [1930] 1962: 62).

2.3.3 *Week End* and the Legacy of the Primal Horde

Freud explains that his writings should not be misconstrued as being hostile to civilization per se, but that his aim is to gradually alter it for the better despite the underlying difficulties that may render any reform attempt futile ([1930] 1962: 62). *Week End* can be regarded as an attempt for some such alteration as well as a re-assessment of Freud's description of the psychological development of humankind in relation to the modern psychic make-up. Other than Freud's description of the primal act of cannibalism as a starting point for civilization and its limitation of feral instincts, *Week End* shows cannibalism as the end point and consequence of modern society. And contrary to Freud's assessment, the film does not show the act of cannibalism as a radical event bound to lead to a fundamental re-structuring of human society. On the contrary, the pronounced casualness of its portrayal suggests that it is neither an act inducing a sense of guilt nor, consequently, something that is prone to inspire a rethinking of one's violent desires and behaviours. It seems to be more like the establishment of a new habit that will be carried out regularly and informally from now on, thus as a direct opposite to the totem meal that is restricted to a specific occasion and deeply regulated. *Week End* shows cannibalism as a consequential expression of modern consumer society.

The society shown in *Week End* is dominated by hostility even within the family unit. Corinne and Roland work on killing each other with poison; a way of constant killing little by little. Thus, the immanent destructive forces are continually at work. The couple only unites to achieve the immediate goal of inheriting the wealth of Corinne's parents by killing her mother. The desire thereby satisfied is one of achieving money, not to quench the sexual or aggressive instincts. The consumerist thirst for goods that characterizes the bourgeoisie has replaced the natural instincts; only in connection with consumer goods do they find their outlet. The first act openly aggressive behaviour is shown when people are fighting after a minor car collision. And also Corinne and Roland's uninhibited aggressions are mainly confined to scenes with their car. Another car collision is the reason for a violent altercation with their neighbours, and Roland's driving style is best be described as violent and reckless including one scene in which he deliberately and without provocation runs over a cyclist. The multitude of car wrecks and bloody accidents shown throughout the film further make

a mockery of the idea that modern society replaces the uninhibited acting out of instincts with safety. Aggression is channelled through the commodity of the car leading to a dominance of perceived or actual accidents. In his reflection on accidents, Paul Virilio asserts that 'the accident is an unconscious oeuvre, an *invention* in the sense of uncovering what was hidden, just waiting to happen' (2007: 9). The invention of the automobile is at the same time the invention of the car accident, an artificial rather than a natural accident. It is less a side-effect than rather inherent in the invention of the motor itself from the very beginning. In the same vein, the consumer society uncovers that what is hidden within modern humans, namely their violent nature that is unleashed in connection with their artificial desire for consumer goods.

This connection is further illustrated after Corinne and Roland kill Corinne's mother. In order to hide her body, they place it at the scene of an accident. Placing it amidst the wreckage of a plane, they thereby inevitably reveal the deep-lying cause of her death: The death of Corinne's mother is the result of the artificial accident that consumer society created, namely the uninhibited strife for access to consumer goods. She stands in the way of Corinne and Roland achieving it and therefore has to be moved out of the way just like cyclist run over by Roland has to be moved out of the way as to not block the lane Roland wants to drive on undisturbed. In that regard, the ultimate act of cannibalism is not a going back to a pre-civilized state of progress, but the inevitable consequence of uninhibited consumerism. Rather than killing humans as a means to satisfy the consumerist desire indirectly, the human is killed and consumed directly. The cannibalistic guerrillas are therefore not really removed from consumer society, but have its principles deeply ingrained in themselves. This is also exemplified by the group's sexual habits.

Like in Freud's primal horde, the women captured by the guerrilla group are subject to the captor's sexual access without any own agency. They are merely passive receivers in the crude sexual rituals perpetrated by the group. These rituals stress said passivity but also serve as a parody of the sublimation of sexuality. One of the women has her nude body painted on in a way that is reminiscent of Yves Klein's *Anthropometry* performance where the nude bodies of women are used as brushes. The objectification of the woman's body is carried further in the film as she is reduced to a mere canvas with the active part of her putting the

paint on an actual canvas being omitted. Thus, the scene stresses the passive role the woman is pushed into but also points to the sublimation of sexual instincts onto an act of art. Another especially weird scene shows a woman that has a large fish and two eggs put between her opened thighs by a guerrilla. Sterritt identifies two purposes of the scene:

> For once, it pungently exposes the flamboyant irrationality of the libidinal energies held tenuously in check by social conventions. For another, it points to male sexuality as primary breeding ground for those energies, and for the aggression and violence they produce. (2008: 123)

In other words, this scene also is concerned with sublimation and female passivity as a counterpart for male activeness. Sterritt interprets the scene in Freudian terms as the 'repairing [of] the "universal wound" of the "castrated" female' (2008: 123) as the fish and the eggs are reminiscent of the male genitalia. As such, the scene can also be interpreted as a substitution of actual sexual intercourse: Instead of the act of penetration with an actual penis an ersatz-object is put on the woman's crotch. The scene echoes another one from almost the beginning of *Week End*: Corinne recounts a threesome to her lover that she supposedly experienced with a married couple. This sexual encounter is loosely based on the first chapters of Georges Batailles's *Story of the Eye* ([1928] 2001)[21] and similarly involves the usage of several food items that are integrated into the erotic play. The inclusion of food in a sexual setting ultimately makes place for a total substitution of the sex act in the guerrilla's ritual. Despite living in the nature and conjuring up ideas of a more primal social organisation, the guerrillas are also in this regards shown as a continuation and intensification of bourgeois sentiments in consumer culture.

Another scene in *Week End* explicitly deals with the condition of bourgeois desires in the consumer society. Referencing the aforementioned Buñuel film *El ángel exterminador* in a title card, the scene takes up rudimentary elements from it to give it its own spin. Corinne and Roland are still on their way in their car when they stop for a hitchhiking couple. The couple takes them hostage and forces them at gunpoint to change their route. Instead of a mansion room, Corinne and Roland are thus trapped in their own car, the expression of their

[21] For example: 'Simone put the saucer on a small bench, planted herself before me, and, with her eyes fixed on me, she sat down without my being able to see her burning buttocks under the skirt, dipping into the cool milk' (Bataille [1928] 2001: 10)

materialistic desire. Ultimately and similarly to the Buñuel film, the appearance of a flock of sheep signals their immediate escape. During their capture, the male part of the hitchhiking couple presents himself as a magician. He proves his magical abilities by using very simple film tricks, among them a disappearing effect using a substitution splice, an effect done in film editing that has been used almost since the beginning of cinema. In exchange for taking them to London the magician offers Corinne and Roland to fulfil their wishes. The wish list – Sterritt describes it as a 'mindlessly materialistic catalog' (2008: 104) – consists of the following: a big Mercedes sports car, a Miami Beach hotel, and a squadron of Mirage IVs 'like the yids used to thrash the wogs'[22] for Roland as well as an Yves St. Laurent evening dress, natural blonde hair, and a weekend with James Bond for Corinne.

These wishes seem to come straight out of Hollywood movies that contains shiny big cars, elegant and expensive dresses, lush filming locations, blonde heroines, and high-tech war scenes. The wish for a meeting with James Bond makes the connection all the more explicit. And in conjunction with the reference to Buñuel and the magician who uses film tricks and formulates a brief vision for the future of cinema – in regards to its illusionary effect, Freud describes art as the field that retains magical thinking ([1913] 2001: 105) – a correlation between the cinema and the artificial desires in consumer culture is established. In this way, *Week End* connects to the critique of the culture industry that Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno formulated in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*: 'The culture industry endlessly cheats its consumers out of what it endlessly promises' ([1944] 2002: 111). In film and other mass media, desires are evoked that are ultimately not satisfied. Godard subverts this idea of the cinematic promise also in another scene: In her parents' house, Corinne is shown taking a bath. Prominently placed behind her is the painting of a nude woman, but Corinne's breasts are kept out of the film frame.[23] Godard deliberately refuses to fulfill the promise for on-screen nudity at this instance, while simultaneously pointing it out by showing the painting. This scene refers to the fact that both the painted as well as the cinematic image is merely

[22] Roland references the Six-Day War between Israel and its Arab neighbours that took place in June 1967. The Israelis were equipped with an air force consisting of planes made in France.

[23] Macbean describes this scene and Corinne's retelling of her sexual encounter with a couple as Godard's strategy to counter the visual spectacle with the spectacle of the word (1968: 37-38). This counter-strategy also accounts for the two revolutionary monologues and the voice-over about Morgan and Engels that are accompanied by noticeably unspectacular images.

mediated, the painting on the wall even doubly so. The promise for visual sexual stimulation is denied in a reflective way. Horkheimer and Adorno go further to claim:

> The culture industry does not sublimate: it suppresses. By constantly exhibiting the object of desire, the breasts beneath the sweater, the naked torso of the sporting hero, it merely goads the unsublimated anticipation of pleasure, which through the habit of denial has long since been mutilated as masochism. ([1944] 2002: 111)

The culture industry enslaves the consumers by promises it cannot keep. It does not even sublimate their desires, but keeps on flaunting them with the further promise that next time, with the next film, there might be the possibility for gratification. That way the culture industry advertises itself and creates an endless interplay of anticipation and disappointment. The next film will also not provide gratification, but will still conjure up its possibility. 'In each performance of the culture industry the permanent denial imposed by civilization is once more inflicted on and unmistakably demonstrated to its victims' (Horkheimer, Adorno [1944] 2002: 113). The consumers become the victims of the culture industry baited by the possibility to overcome the restrictions of society: 'while all needs should be presented to individuals as capable of fulfilment by the culture industry, they should be so set up in advance that individuals experience themselves through their needs only as eternal consumers' (*ibid.*). The consumers are trapped by the culture industry's evocation of desires that it is not willing to fulfil as it does not want to lose its always returning customers. Likewise, Corinne and Roland are trapped in their car by the filmmaker-magician who does not grant their wishes. Albeit, in the scene in *Week End*, the filmmaker-magician is portrayed as visionary, ambitious, and even revolutionary who does not want to be a part of the culture industry. He is more reminiscent of Buñuel or Godard who proclaims at the end of *Week End* the 'end of cinema'. Therefore, he is more surprised by Corinne and Roland's wish list and asks them unbelievingly: 'Is that all you want?' Just like the party guests in *El ángel exterminador*, Corinne and Roland are trapped in a cul-de-sac where they are far removed from their natural instincts and they do not even recognize the possibility of breaking out when they are offered the granting of any wish. Herein lies the reason why Freud's model of civilization is not working. Freud describes the sublimation of instincts as the trade-off for living in relative security, but the consumer society and the culture industry do not provide sublimation as that would release the consumers from their entrapment. Figuratively

speaking, they create a constant appetite, but the consumer goods and culture products cannot still the hunger. That is what Horkeimer and Adorno call describe as the unsublimated desire that the culture industry creates. At some point, this artificially more and more piled up desire has to explode in an act of cannibalism that combines violence and consumption. Consequently, the cannibalistic guerrilla group provides a feasible alternative to still that desire in a more direct way.

The guerrillas also provide a justification in their ideology of solidarity. Contrary to the promise of a more egalitarian society that develops during the civilization process, the world portrayed in *Week End* is not only self-enslaving due to its consumerist stance, it also points to different struggles in the world and the society: the suppression of African Americans in the USA, the liberation struggle in Africa, the Six-Day War in the Middle East, the oppression of women, and class conflicts. The latter is exemplified by a scene introduced by a title card that reads 'The Class Struggle'. It shows a violent altercation between a farmer and a bourgeois woman after a car crash that killed the woman's boyfriend. Different onlookers observe the quarrel indifferently. When Corinne and Roland pass the two, they are asked to take side which they refuse brusquely. The farmer and the woman then unite as they have now a new enemy upon which they focus their violent hate. The inner-group peace and seeming security is brought by the need to segregate and find another outlet for the inner aggression. The woman in the altercation is later shown as a part of the guerrilla group. As I have shown before, despite the romantic notion of a noble savage that the group seemingly emulates, it is still bound to the consumerism. The lack of restraint the members exercise is not in relation to their natural instinct but to artificial desires of consumption. The guerrilla group is made up of members of the bourgeoisie and at its core it remains bourgeois. The formation of the group merely allows them to do what they did before in secret: to kill others that do not belong to the group. Their aspiration is, as the leader of the group puts it, to fight the 'horror of the bourgeoisie with even more horror'. In that regard they are not unlike real movements in the Western countries of the 60s that revered Third World guerrillas (like those headed by Che Guevara or Ho Chi Minh) and incorporated guerrilla-style tactics into

their forms of protest.[24] Often, this was justified by the notion to bring the horror of the Third World to the West. This notion was popularized among Western leftists by Che Guevara's 'Message to the Tricontinental', a letter to the Tricontinental Conference 1966, in which he wrote:

> How close we could look into a bright future should two, three or many Vietnams flourish throughout the world with their share of deaths and their immense tragedies, their everyday heroism and their repeated blows against imperialism, impelled to disperse its forces under the sudden attack and the increasing hatred of all peoples of the world! (Guevara 1968: 423)

Guevara calls for solidarity with the Third World and asks to create more battlefields against imperialism. However, in *Week End*, the guerrilla group is not shown as acting in solidarity with Third World struggles. It rather seems like it indulges in a form of mimicry. Their attire they wear is in a clichéd style of traditional Native American attire, they hide in the woods, arm themselves, and fight with no discernible goal. In a way, it is like an inversion of the ceremony of the Hauka tribe in Ghana as documented in the ethnographic film *Les maîtres fous* (1955) by Jean Rouch, one of the filmmakers who was valued by Godard. In their ceremony, the Hauka mimicked the colonisers and their military protocol. In *Week End*, the guerrillas mimic the colonised. That includes the cannibalistic behaviour ascribed to them.[25] In a fake solidarity and for a higher goal, they feel justified to delve into the horror of cannibalism. They thereby also figuratively cannibalise the Third World movements that they use for their own means. The act of cannibalism is not revolutionary as might be deduced from the primal horde theory. The repetition of the primal crime does not lead to a social change, but is prone to repeat itself over and over again. In reality, the cannibalism in *Week End* merely constitutes an extreme form and exaggerated continuation of Western consumerism.

[24] In *La chinoise* (1967), Godard also thematises the fascination of the radical left for Third World struggles and its desire to import them to Europe. Brian de Palma's film *Hi, Mom!* (1970) also satirizes the guerilla theatre and urban guerilla warfare in the US and the bourgeois admiration for them.

[25] Also in regards to the civil and proxy wars in the course of decolonization. For instance, in the documentary *Africa addio* (1966), which takes a clear Western stance in its racist portrayal of the African continent, both members of the Mau Mau rebels in Kenya and of the Simba rebels in the Congo are accused of cannibalism.

2.4 Conclusion: Subversion of Difference in *Week End*

Week End utilizes a cannibal-carnivalesque approach to reflect on modern society. It incorporates a multitude of material that in their combination calls into question its validity. Part of this material is Engels' concept of progress and Freud's primal horde theory. Especially in regards to the final scene of cannibalism, both are subverted. Engels postulates a development with distinct stages from savagery to civilization. Freud speculates on a primal crime involving cannibalism that marks the starting point of humankind. Both these ideas are turned upside-down and mixed together. Neither does *Week End* accept the division of history in distinct stages, nor does it allow for an act of cannibalism to end the animalistic urges. On the contrary, it describes a continuity of the cannibalistic urges in humans that are prone to come to fore at any time. The belief that civilization has left behind these urges is a mere façade veiling the inner reality. Theories of progress and difference provide the means to cover up that at the core of modern consumer society still linger the primal instincts. That modern man is fundamentally different from the primitive cannibal is exposed as a fantasy of self-denial in *Week End*. Furthermore, the final act of cannibalism in the film does also not constitute a difference, but merely an exaggeration of the status quo.

3. The Consumer Surveys her Self: Cannibalistic Exploration in *Dans ma peau*

After a minor incident injuring her leg, Esther, the protagonist of Marina de Van's *Dans ma peau* (2002) played by the director herself, develops a fascination with her body and its wounds. Being portrayed as a successful woman climbing the career ladder, she starts to lose control over her body and is drawn more and more towards secretly injuring and cannibalising herself which seems to jeopardize both her business and private relations. Ultimately, in the last scene that refuses closure to the narrative, she is shown alone in a hotel room, separated from the rest of the world, with visible wounds covering her whole body.

Critics and academics place *Dans ma peau* within a corpus of French films that are connected in their transgressive depiction of violence and sexuality. James Quandt calls this wave of films 'the New French Extremity' ([2004] 2011: 18) and deposits Gaspar Noé's short film *Carne* (1991) as its 'ur-text' (*ibid.*, 21). He, however, argues that due to the disparity in regards to the intention and vision of the individual filmmakers, one cannot speak of a movement (24). Tim Palmer stresses the emphasis on corporality that the films of this corpus share and refers to them as belonging to the '*cinéma du corps*, whose basic agenda is an on-screen interrogation of physicality in brutally intimate terms' (2011: 57). He posits the filmmakers Claire Denis, Bruno Dumont, and Gaspar Noé as the key figures of this new wave whose connection in terms of content and technique he observes (2006: 22). Others have described the renewed interest in bodily transgressions in film as a trans-European phenomenon naming filmmakers such as Lars von Trier and Ulrich Seidl (Coulthardt, Birks 2015). Palmer also stresses the impulse the *cinéma du corps* has provided for new developments in world cinema through its tactics of notoriety that serves to cause a commotion at international film festivals (2006: 23,25).

Palmer points out that with the *cinéma du corps* 'the subversive practices of the 1950s and 1960s once deployed against classical film norms are, in certain sectors of twenty-first century French filmmaking, being meticulously revived' (2006: 28). Quandt, however, contrasts this new film wave to earlier film movements, when he laments that '[t]he authentic, liberating outrage – political, social, sexual – that fuelled such apocalyptic visions as *Salò* and *Weekend* now seems impossible, replaced by an aggressiveness that is really a

grandiose form of passivity' ([2004] 2011: 25). The reference to the films of the *nouvelle vague* and other film movements suggests a connecting line that can also been drawn between *Week End* and *Dans ma peau*. In my opinion, the comparison between those two films reveals a movement more inwards from the first to the latter. That which Quandt describes as the passivity in the aggressiveness of the more recent film wave is what I regard as changed orientation away from the global political upheavals to an introspection of the self that is source and recipient of violence. I do not concur with Quandt to regard this as a form of passivity, rather an inner, intimate activity that can only be discerned in the transgressive imagery of sexuality and violence.

The examination of cannibalism in *Week End* in the last chapter is concerned with the historical development of civilization in which – by the transition from animal to human – a system of laws was established to hold the natural instincts of humans at bay. *Week End* reveals the nature of these social regulations that serve merely as a fig leaf to conceal the inner violent nature of humans that ultimately breaks through as the film progresses in a visualisation of that which is at all times inherent in the social organisation. The film is, thus, concerned with the inner workings of society and how it developed in human history. *Dans ma peau* could then be described as being related to the inner workings of the individual and how it developed in the infertile stages of the formation of the self. The portrayal of cannibalism is therefore linked to another fundamental difference. While I examine *Week End* under the premise that it deals with the difference between human and animal – pointing back to that point in history that Freud speculated was the beginning of this difference –, I see the self-cannibalistic act in *Dans ma peau* as a reintegration of the body into the wholeness of the self and thus reinforcing the demarcation line between the self and others. As such, the film is also concerned with the surroundings its protagonist, in this case the corporate world. But Esther switches from her profession of preparing consumer surveys to the survey of her own body through consumption.

While the psychological conditions shaped by the primal crime, that *Week End* pointed to, can be linked to the psychosexual developmental stages leading to the Oedipal complex, the issues of selfhood that *Dans ma peau* deals with are frequently linked to the pre-oedipal

process of abjection.[26] The concept of the abject and abjection – that I will explicate later in my interpretation of the film – is laid out in Julia Kristeva's *Powers of Horror*. Barbara Creed (1986) utilizes this concept that was originally used for literary analysis in her study of horror films to develop the idea of the abject monstrous-feminine. As Lisa Coulthard and Chelsea Birks (2015) point out that the films of the new wave of extreme cinema in general have a tendency to appropriate and subvert the conventions of horror films in general, it is no wonder that *Dans ma peau* was also looked at from that perspective. Coulthard and Birks themselves point out that there is a connection between this film and the horror genre (2015: 2). In general, they argue that in '[e]xposing contradictions and letting ambiguities stand, these films [of the wave of extreme cinema] address the ambivalences of ideology's relation to gendered violence and interrogate the ways these are resolved in conventional horror cinema' (*ibid.*, 3). While conventional horror films restore the order that was brought into disarray by the intrusion of a monster, the films of the *cinéma du corps* tend to omit such a resolve. One of the films that Coulthard and Birks focus their study on is Claire Denis' *Trouble Every Day* (2001) that – like *Dans ma peau* – also deals with cannibalism. Kath Dooley puts these two film together with Julia Ducournau's *Grave* (2016) in her study of female cannibals in French films directed by women. She points out that the latter deviates from the other two and breaks the pattern of the majority of the films of the *cinéma du corps* in that its protagonist Justine actively seeks companionship and that it provides a closure more akin to conventional horror films (2019: 54, 64). To me, that shows that there seems to be a development away from the more extreme forms of the *cinéma du corps* to an incorporation into the mainstream. Like Dooley, Romain Chareyron (2013) examines *Dans ma peau* from an horror angle and describes its filmic strategies as a reworking of the techniques of horror films. And Carrie Tarr (2006) refers explicitly to Creed's concept of the monstrous-feminine to describe the film. There are also other ways to look at *Dans ma peau* apart from its relationship to the horror film. To Greg Hainge (2012), the film works as a reflection of spectatorship. Martine Beugnet (2007: 158-162) mainly focusses on the film's portrayal of the corporate world and the question of the utilitarian use of the body. And Palmer (2007) examines *Dans ma Peau* in relation to the oeuvre of the *cinéma du corps* and

[26] Tarr (2006), Hainge (2012), and Dooley (2019) mention this connection to the film.

de Van's earlier films to draw out topical, narrative and technical similarities. None of the literature I am aware of, however, places a specific emphasis on the act of self-cannibalization in the film. That is the aspect I will focus on in this chapter.

3.1 Exploration beneath the Skin

The beginning of *Dans ma peau* already establishes the thematic emphasis of the whole film. During the credits split screens are shown that depict architectural sites of an urban corporate world. The right side of the split screen shows a similar image as the left one, only in inverse, negative colours (Figure 4). The last in the series of split screen images is that of a keyboard before it switches to a single screen that shows Esther's face in a close-up while she is working in front of a laptop. Her boyfriend Vincent enters the screen and they talk about the prospect of buying a flat together. After that there is a cut to a shot panning along Esther's uncovered right leg – with all its imperfections – to her torso. Then the film returns to the credits over another collage of split screen images that depict office supplies – among them scissors – this time.

Figure 4. Split screen during opening credits of *Dans ma peau*.

Dooley interprets the split screen during the opening as exemplifying the 'split between the surface and the inner realities of this corporate world, suggesting disorder' (2019: 58-9). Indeed, the splitting of similar images implies a dissonance, a split in the perception where the two images perceived by the two eyes cannot be cognitively matched. It is therefore the expression of a distorted sensuality. According to Hainge, in its malfunction it therefore reflects the 'embodied sensory mechanisms' that unconsciously 'conflate two separate images in the interests of depth' (2012: 572). To Chareyron, the split screen signifies simultaneity and separation at the same time. He asserts that this emphasis on a pronounced film technique in conjunction with the pan over the skin of Esther's flesh 'establishes a parallel between the "skin" of the film – the reel – and the actual human skin – the epidermis – that Esther subsequently will cut' (2013: 73). But for now the cutting is limited to film editing that separates the close-up of Esther's face and the panning over her body by a film cut, implying a disconnect between mind and body (*ibid.*, 72). Also, as Beugnet points out, her body in its immobility appears more like an extension of the laptop than a useful independent entity (2007: 159).

With this opening, *Dans ma peau* frames Esther within the corporate world. Shots of commercial buildings and shots of office supplies encompass the first shot of Esther. In the frame her head is shown she is further constricted when her boyfriend arrives. She is defined by her work and her relationship, both being shown as an entrapment by filmic means. Furthermore, the opening establishes a dissociation, both in perception and in the division between body and mind. Her mind is at work to finish a job, while the rest of the body is rendered passive, not really regarded by her.

Later that evening, she visits a party where she is told from the get-go by a friend that it might be a good idea to flirt with one of the guests as it might help the advancement of her career. Although the friend says that she was only joking, Esther immediately asks for ways how the can advance at the agency. At the core it reveals a thinking that is deeply embedded in Esther's life and that of the people around her. Firstly, even events supposedly for entertainment have a business relation, and, secondly, the body is a presentable object that is to be utilized solely for career purposes. During that party, Esther strolls into the darkness outside of the house to explore the surroundings. During that stroll, she trips at a hole where

construction work is going on and injures her right leg by stumbling into a tool. She does not realize at first that she is wounded and only discovers it later back in the house in the bathroom when she sees drops of blood on the floor. To see the fluids that had leaked from her body seemingly makes her realize her body for the first time. Following that event, she assures multiple people that she does not feel the sensation of the pain.[27] There is obviously an insurmountable gap between her body and her mind. This experience leads to a curiosity of her body. In multiple solitary sessions, she starts to poke the wound, cut new wounds, removes parts of her skin and flesh to either eat them immediately or keep them with her at all times. She becomes obsessed with her body, especially with what lies beneath the skin, and uses this self-explorative sessions as an escape from her routine life that is shown in stark contrast in the film.

The events and surrounding the first accidental injury are of significance. The party Esther attends is not thinkable outside of the context of her work where there is fierce competition. As everybody is replaceable, the job requires to put in effort around the clock (also exemplified by the late night sessions Esther has to put in to meet her deadlines) and at any occasion. Esther hurts herself by tripping into a tool that she cannot identify in the dark. Tools are usually made for a specific utilitarian purpose, but in this instance it does not matter which specific tool causes the injury. Later, Esther misuses a lot of diverse tools to inflict injuries to herself.[28] The more Esther takes recluse from the business world in her unique endeavours, the more the tools become replaceable. The self-explorations are a stumble into the dark as Esther's tried and tested method of approaching things, namely her thinking, proves insufficient. When the doctor treating her accidental wound asks her why she did not feel that she injured herself, she answers: 'I guess I wasn't thinking.' That shows that she also wants to feel her body by thinking which seems contradictory. Later, after she has experienced her body by inflicting a second wound on her leg voluntarily, she afterwards states that she did it without thinking. She has learned: Instead of approaching her body with

[27] Palmer (2007: 175) points out that this idea is based on a childhood experience of de Van where she was wounded in a car accident and could not feel her leg for a time afterwards.

[28] It is a common trope of gory horror films – especially slashers – to use a wide and creative array of tools to kill and injure which is already exemplified only by the titles of some of them, such as *The Toolbox Murders* (1978), *The Driller Killer* (1979), or *The Nail Gun Massacre* (1985).

her mind, she relies on sensuous perception. The separating line between body and mind is severed at the same time as Esther severs her skin.

While she shares the experience of her first self-injuring action with a friend and colleague and the new wound is obvious to her boyfriend, she behaves more secretly later. That is because their reaction is repellent, leads to their scrutiny and control and a complication of the interactions. Her behaviour after that evokes association with that of a drug addict prone to cover-ups: She hides away in a hotel room and stages a car accident to account for newly self-inflicted wounds. Furthermore, a scene before her first self-cutting points in that direction. She meets a colleague in the break room who swallows a pill with a sip of water. Esther's gaze is fixed upon something out of frame and the scene lingers on for a while before it is cut away. This suggests to me that she was focussed on her workmate's pill box and thinks of another way to facilitate her work. She then seeks privacy in a storage room and begins to cut a new wound. When she returns to her work place, she appears considerably more relaxed, almost like having a high. But it relates more to an unquenchable desire than to an addiction, a desire for herself.

Figure 5: Esther's embrace while self-cannibalizing (*Dans ma peau*)

Esther's secretive behaviour also relates to having an affair that her boyfriend is not supposed to know about. She talks about it with her friend and workmate, but her boyfriend has to find out about it himself. Furthermore, taking a hotel room in one's home town is more akin to account for a secretive meeting with a lover. Hainge points out that the scenes of self-injury follow the conventions of the erotic cinema and that Esther is turned into 'her own lover, kissing, sucking, caressing, and exploring the most intimate and innermost recesses of her flesh as only a lover can' (2012: 570). Indeed, she is shown in a way that appears like she is embracing herself (Figure 5), French kissing a gaping wound at her arm, and sprinkling her face with blood as if she was receiving a facial[29] or taking part in an act of urophilia. Her acts of self-injury thereby gain a sexual component. In that regard, these scenes are reminiscent of the love-making scenes in Monique Wittig's poetic novel *The Lesbian Body*. These scenes are explorations of the other's body that transgress the boundaries of the skin and involve the sensual perception – vision, smell, haptic, taste – of her inner and outer organs as well as her body fluids. Skin, flesh, muscles, and intestines are ripped from the body, elongated fingers inserted into each orifice reaching the innermost parts of the body, and parts are chewed, swallowed, and puked out. The act of love and sex thereby becomes a thorough exploration of the other with no regards to conventional – or even realistic – borders. Similarly, Marian Dora's film *Cannibal* (2006), which is based on the real-life cannibal Armin Meiwes, depicts the cannibalistic sexual act between two men as an intimate bodily investigation that disregards any notion of corporeal integrity.[30] While both this film and Wittig's novel are concerned with intimacy of a couple, in *Dans ma peau*, Esther practices her intimacy with herself in solitude. But all these works create a complex of bodily exploration, intimacy, violation, and cannibalism. This latter aspect shall be the focus of my further analysis of *Dans ma peau*.

[29] Hainge (2012) calls it a 'Full Face Bright Red Money Shot' in the title of his paper.

[30] Hisayasu Satô's film *Naked Blood* (*女虐*, 1996) also combines scenes of self-injury with self-cannibalisation when a woman is shown eating her own finger, labium, nipple, and eye. Therefore, it produces images similar to the other examples I have given. However, as the acts are caused by a drug-induced effect that replaces pain with pleasure, I consider it thematically different from them and more of a reflection on pain and masochism. The film is a remake of Satô's earlier film *Pleasure Kill* (*暴行本番*, 1987) that is also about self-injuring behaviour but without cannibalism. In it, the connection to masochism is clearer as the sensation of pain is replaced with sexual excitement by the drug.

3.2 The Civilizing and Utilizing of Social Eating

Dans ma peau shows Esther engaging in extended acts of self-cannibalism during one of her sessions of self-injury. This scene follows a prolonged scene of a business dinner she attends almost exactly in the middle of the film. Both of this scenes are connected, and it is important to have a closer look at how the dinner scene is staged to understand the meaning of Esther's subsequent self-cannibalisation. The dinner is portrayed as an event dominated by social rules and social scrutiny that are formalized by culturally accepted table manners. Furthermore, it subsumes bodily necessities and sensual enjoyment under the obligations of the corporate world.

After being promoted to project manager and attending a meeting, Esther joins her boss and two new clients in a business dinner in a fine restaurant. The male client offers her red wine which Esther initially refuses but accepts after being persuaded of its fine quality. Whereas she first says she will only drink water, she then corrects herself in saying: 'I'll do without water.' The beginning of the scenes, thus, already establishes that the aim of the dinner is not to satisfy basic needs for food or water, but has other reasons. After complimenting the taste of the wine at first, Esther starts gulping down the wine without any observable enjoyment. That is the first sign of Esther's odd behaviour that she shows during the dinner. Everything begins as one would expect from a business dinner that might best be characterized as being subjected to an informal formality. The attendees exchange anecdotes from their business experience in global advertisement and stress the importance of paying attention to cultural differences in countries such as Japan. Additionally, they recount their experiences of staying in different international cities. When talking about their personal preferences for European cities, the male client laments the lack of manners in Rome and states that he dislikes its lack of night life, although it is not really his scene. The talks about different cultural codes and manners is important for the interpretation of the scene. Similarly, the fact that the male client criticizes the absence of bars and clubs in Rome in his personal assessment, although he does not even want to visit them himself, is telling. It all points to a life determined by others: He dislikes the Roman night life, because his friends do.

Esther does not take part in the conversation as she is distracted by her body that seems to develop a life of its own. While the others talk, she battles with her own body. Her left hand grabs the food directly from the plate, and is put back in place beside the plate by Esther using her right hand. The left arm stays there and is shown as being literally detached from the rest of the body in a surreal way like the limb of a puppet (Figure 6). Shown re-attached again, Esther puts the left arm under the table where she begins to poke and cut it with a knife. She then dips her finger in the wound and licks the blood from the finger. Then, she sticks the fork into her left hand, while holding the fork in her clenched fist. She goes on to tear her pantyhose and scratch the skin beneath it. The close-up of her legs covered only by the pantyhose is all the more confusing as Esther is shown wearing trousers before and after this scene. This is made the more obvious as she excuses herself after tearing the pantyhose and leaves the table, while her whole body is shown.

Figure 6: Esther's detached arm (*Dans ma peau*)

Even when one takes away the instances of self-harming from Esther's behaviour at the table, everything she does can be considered as a breach of eating etiquette. This fact is accentuated by the talk about social norms and manners the others engage in during Esther's struggle. Manners in general and table manners in particular are the focus of the sociologist Norbert Elias' study of the civilizing process in which he collects and comments texts about

eating etiquette from the Middle Ages to the 19th century ([1939] 2000: 72-109). He describes the process of the development of table manners as a 'social mechanism of standardization' in which '[e]very movement of the hand – for example, the way in which one holds and moves knife, spoon or fork – was standardized only step by step' (*ibid.*, 92). These steps lead to an elaborate system of a socially expected behaviours at the table upon which Esther infringes incessantly during the business dinner scene. The prohibitions described by the texts Elias uses as examples that encompass the touching of the meat on the plate by hand (*ibid.*, 101), the licking of one's fingers (*ibid.*, 108), and holding cutlery with the whole hand (*ibid.*, 82). Even the issue of scratching and touching parts of the body during a meal is dealt with in manuals for good manners, which are often aimed at children. For example, the 1703 text *The Rules of Christian Decorum and Civility* by the French priest and educator John Baptist de La Salle states:

> As much as possible, carefully avoid touching with your bare hand those parts of the body that are ordinarily kept covered, and if you are obliged to touch them, do so with caution. […] It is proper to accustom yourself to put up with various slight discomforts without twisting yourself, rubbing, scratching, fidgeting, or assuming any unbecoming posture. This kind of behaviour and these improper postures are entirely contrary to reserve and to self-control. ([1703] 2007: 60)

It seems like Esther is following the guidelines for proper eating etiquette to the point down to the prohibition to touch oneself under the clothes, but she does so only in a negative way. Gradually loosing reserve and self-control, every prohibition is broken by her during the business dinner. There is, however, one noticeable exception: During the time her left arm is shown as being detached from the rest of her body, it rests neatly on the left side of the plate. According to common Western table manners, the hand and wrist – but not the elbow – should rest on the table, when not used for eating. In this instance, her arm is forced into passive immobility by the social conventions. As the guideline by de La Salle makes clear, one is supposed to suppress bodily impulses and to suffer 'slight discomforts' to abide by the rules. The detachment of Esther's arm, then, points to the divide between bodily needs and social control. This divide is accentuated by the way the dinner scene in *Dans ma peau* is filmed. The stark image of the detached hand alone may symbolize this, but there is a shift that can be observed during the whole scene. At the beginning, the attendees of the dinner are filmed conventionally in medium close-ups with a relaxed rhythm of editing. However,

the more Esther is drawn to her strange behaviour, the more the others are filmed in close-ups accentuated their inquiring side glances to Esther, and these close-ups are shown in more rapid succession. They are interspersed with close-ups of Esther's self-harming and close-ups of the food on the plates of the others properly handled by them using cutlery. Thus, on the one hand, the close-ups of the faces stress the social control and the tension in the situation, while, on the other hand, the others' table manners are contrasted with Esther's misbehaving. The close-up of the others' plates also point to the coded organisation of the formal dinner situation in which each piece of cutlery has a specific function that, depending on the specific occasion, can be quite elaborate, as Elias describes:

> In the upper class more and more, a special implement is used for each kind of food. Soup-spoons, fish knives, and meat knives are on one side of the plate. Forks for the hors d'oeuvre, fish and meat on the other. Above the plate are fork, spoon or knife – according to the custom of the country – for sweet foods. And for the dessert and fruit yet another implement is brought in. All these utensils are differently shaped and equipped. ([1939] 2000: 90)

In that way, the cutlery can be seen akin to the above mentioned tools that have a specific usage, albeit its usage is more socially formalized and not universally known across all classes. As such, the right usage of table utensils is a means of class distinction, but it is also something that distinguishes the adult world from that of children who still have to learn to eat with knife and fork. Apart from being a marker for being cultivated, it furthermore is a marker for being civilized in a succession of human progress. In a similar vein, the usage of tools is regarded as an important stepping stone of humankind. The question why the usage of cutlery is regarded as more civilized (at least in Western societies) than using one's fingers is also one that Elias asks himself:

> What is the real use of the fork? It serves to lift food that has been cut up to the mouth. Why do we need a fork for this? Why do we not use our fingers? Because it is "cannibal", as the […] anonymous author of *The Habits of Good Society* said in 1859. Why is it "cannibal" to eat with one's fingers? That is not a question; it is self-evidently cannibal, barbaric, uncivilized or whatever else it is called. ([1939] 2000: 107)

Elias does not agree with the referenced author that the distinction established by the use of forks is self-evident. He relates it to the notion not to dirty oneself for hygienic reasons, but finds this notion on itself also too simplistic. His reasoning for changes in eating habits points

to something much more profound, to ‘a change in the economy of drives and emotions’ ([1939] 2000: 107). As is made clear by the numerous treatises on civilized behaviour, the goal is to restrain the inner impulses and bodily movements in order to appear in a certain desirable manner. Esther fails to do so during the business dinner. She breaks almost any rule in the book and she does not take part in the conversation as is expected by her boss. On the next day in the office, he tells her that he was embarrassed for her and explicates: ‘That kind of dinner is not for fun, or to have a good meal. It’s work.’ That opens up a complex surrounding the social event of eating together that relates to bodily needs of nourishment, the leisurely enjoyment of *haute cuisine,* and its utilitarian annexation for work-related issues.

First of all, Hannah Smith-Drehlich points out:

> The act of dining occupies a somewhat ambiguous position in the realm of human behavior: eating is a fundamentally corporal activity, and of the several fundamental bodily functions, it is the only one that is carried out primarily in the company of others, including strangers. (2019: 630)

In contrast to other activities related to the body – such as defecation, copulation, and personal hygiene – that are situated in the intimate realm to be hidden away from others, eating takes a centre spot in the social interaction with other, oftentimes even meant to be done openly with others. As such, it is subsumed under a regime of rules as to not embarrass oneself or others in a situation that is primarily a matter of the body. The body has to be governed to a point that it is neutralized. Therefore, Esther’s left arm is rendered immobile and detached in its well-behaved state.

Secondly, social eating – especially in fine restaurants – marks a shift from the pure necessity of food intake to a leisure activity with elaborate food creations that are aimed more at satisfying exquisite takes than mere hunger. Richard N. Manning writes about the *haute cuisine*:

> Luxury dining typically involves the extraordinary use of animals, for arguably frivolous human pleasures. It can also involve uses of land and energy resources that are inefficient, unjust, and unsustainable. Luxury dining arguably involves a very inefficient use of human capital as well, consuming countless labor hours that might be better spent helping to solve real problems, in order to tantalize a lucky few. (2019: 741)

Rather than efficiently using the available resources just to satisfy basic human needs, an elaborate system is established that renders eating into an extravagant pastime. On the one hand, like the multitude of specialized cutlery, the intake of luxury food is also related to class distinction as the use of expensive ingredients and manpower makes it unaffordable to members of the lower classes. On the other hand, on the issue of resource economy and labour, it also relates to a general development of humankind that Georges Bataille describes in his reflection on prehistoric artworks, namely the cave paintings of Lascaux:

> In every case, they imply what has always been art's purpose: to create a sensible reality whereby the ordinary world is modified in response to the desire for the extraordinary, for the marvelous, a desire implicit in the human being's very essence. […] Only play, and not some practical purpose, could have prompted these clearly gratuitous doodlings. [T]he anthropologists' *Homo faber* (Man who works) never set foot on the road play would have led him to take. Only his successor, *Homo sapiens* (Man who discerns) struck out resolutely along it. […] Huizinga's excellent term, *Homo ludens* (Man who plays, plays above all the admirable game of art), would surely suit him better, and perhaps alone suits him. […] "Homo ludens", Huizinga shows, is not exclusively applicable to the man whose works gave human truth the virtue and brilliancy of art; the term befits all of mankind. And, furthermore, *ludens* is the one word which, to *faber*, designating a subordinate activity, opposes an element, play, that exists independently and for its own sake. (1955: 34-35)

Art is thus something that is detached from the necessity to work. The man who can devote time to art and play (*Homo ludens*) is distinct from the man from an earlier period that is solely devoted to the procurement of resources to fulfil basic needs (*Homo faber*). In the playfulness of art, humans delve in an activity that is devoid from the necessities of satisfying basic needs. Bataille clearly distinguishes the domain of work from that of purposeless play. In that sense, the playful creations of the *haute cuisine* also go well beyond the pure satisfaction of hunger. Like other creations of art they provide sensual stimuli and – as Manning puts it – are quite inefficient from a perspective of resource management. Those who can afford luxury dining can thus delve in an activity that is far removed from the struggle of survival and therefore an act that is performed for its own sake. However, and that leads to the third point in the complex of social eating as introduced by *Dans ma peau*, the *haute cuisine* is not really removed from the utilitarian economic sphere. Apart from being integrated into the restaurant and catering business, the dining occasions are also utilized by the corporate world. The business dinner is an essential part in the interaction

with clients. It is not done – as Esther's boss rightly points out – for entertainment reasons or to sensually enjoy an artfully made meal. It is again removed from any notion of playfulness and reintroduced into the professional sphere of necessities. Even the curiosity for the other persons is constricted to the formalized talks at the table that only appear to be informal. To return to the beginning of the scene, when the male client offers wine to Esther, it is the enforced politeness that makes her accept. She dutifully praises his expertise after taking the first sip. Then, she just gulps the rest of the wine down almost mechanically. Neither enjoyment nor curiosity for the sensual sensations caused by the exquisite wine are supposed to be at the centre of attention.

The act of self-cannibalization performed by Esther after the business dinner provides the negative image of this highly controlled social event incorporated into the domain of work. Already during the dinner, her body is hardly controllable except when parts of it are literally detached and rendered to absolute passivity. Still, Esther tries to restrain herself at least so much as to not cause a significant uproar. She hides her acts of self-injury under the table and just takes a quick lick of her own blood. Only when she is removed from the table, in privacy, can the real bodily transgressions take place.

3.3 Cannibalistic Negation

During the business dinner, Esther's behaviour constitutes a negation of the proper and accepted forms of social eating. After excusing herself from the table and leaving to the restaurant's cellar, she starts to bite into her arm. She is, however, interrupted by one of the restaurant staff who discovers blood and a knife on the floor to which she reacts alarmed. Esther is not caught as she hides away successfully. Only after the dinner, when she checks into a hotel room, can she attain the level of privacy, away from social scrutiny, to indulge fully in her cannibalistic urges. Shielded from the outside view, Esther is free to give in to her inner urges. The hotel room, thereby, becomes a negative space that is defined by the absence of restrictions and distinctions that ordinarily govern Esther's life. In that sense, this room becomes the negative image to the corporate world that is shown in the split screen sequence during the opening credits of *Dans ma peau*. During a later session of self-injury, Esther also visibly hurts the part of her face around her right eye, hence the organ that is

connected to the perception of the right part of the field of view where the negative image is positioned in the split screen.

As a starting point, it is useful to identify the dichotomies that can be extracted from the discussion of the dinner scene. The first one is that of active and passive behaviour. Although Esther is seemingly taking up an active role in her work life, the dinner scene and especially the rendering immobile of her left arm show that she is put in a situation that is controlled by social rules and professional expectations, hence rendering her body passive. The second dichotomy is between necessity and play. Eating is a corporeal need that gains the status of leisure in fine dining when the focus is shifted from the mere satisfaction of hunger to the sensual experience. That, in turn, is utilized again for corporate needs in the setting of a business dinner. The third one, finally, is between uncivilized and civilized that is determined by the following of the established rules of eating etiquette. As table manners are usually internalized by the adult of a specific society, one can also refer to this dichotomy as that between infantile and grown-up. Manuals for the right behaviour during dinner are usually aimed at children who still have to learn them, except when they are concerned with special forms of dining in high society. The scene of self-cannibalization in *Dans ma peau* is a reflection on this set of dichotomies.

The director de Van herself describes that during Esther's sessions of self-mutilation she 'gets into a very childish and primal area' (quoted in Tarr 2006: 84). The childishness of Esther's acts of self-injury in general and of self-cannibalism immediately following the business dinner is an expression of the urge to take control of a situation that inhibits one's activity. As to the relation between activity and passivity in infantile behaviour, Freud writes:

> It can easily be observed that […] when a child receives a passive impression it has a tendency to produce an active reaction. It tries to do itself what has just been done to it. This is part of the work imposed on it of mastering the external world and can even lead to its endeavouring to repeat an impression which it would have reason to avoid on account of its distressing content. Children's play, too, is made to serve this purpose of supplementing a passive experience with an active piece of behaviour and of thus, as it were, annulling it. (Freud [1931] 1981: 236)

He gives the example of a child that was forced to endure the treatment of a medical doctor and that then takes up the role of the doctor in play, thereby rendering a passive experience into an active one. Freud regards this mechanism as 'an unmistakable revolt against passivity

and a preference for the active role' ([1931] 1981: 236). The suppression of Esther's bodily impulses at the dinner table and the substitution of expressions of her personality for functional small-talk is experienced as distressing. The subsequent act of self-cannibalism is the repetition of this unpleasant situation under Esther's own terms. It is not devoid of pain as evidenced by her distorted facial expressions, but at the same time it puts the sole focus on the body. In the repetition of the act of eating away from society's prying eyes, its corporeal aspect is emphasized. Esther feels, tastes, and examines the pieces of flesh she cuts from her arm. She experiences them with her senses. It is an exaggeration of the active elements of the eating experience that is normally subdued by social restrictions. In her act of self-cannibalisation, Esther completely reverses the social conventions of a meal. She is crouching on the floor rather than sitting upright at the table. Her movements are uncontrolled. She is constantly touching herself and the pieces of flesh that constitutes her food. She soils herself completely by deliberately sprinkling blood all over herself. During the dining scene, the food is shown in a close-up as being put inside well-defined borders with the meat on the plate and the dip within a small bowl (Figure 7). However, Esther in the hotel room does not respect any borders, least of all that of her own body. She bites and cuts through her own skin that defines the boundaries of her corporeal self. In that way, the scenes of self-injury in *Dans ma peau* point to Julia Kristeva's concept of abjection. Kristeva explicates that it is 'not the lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection but what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite' (1982: 4). Similarly to Elias' argument that the use of fork has less to do with cleanliness than with the economy of drives and emotions, abjection relates to the psychic make-up of society that is built upon fixed social norms. Abjection is an emotional response to an object or situation that defies this standardized system. The anthropologist Mary Douglas ([1966] 2002: 208-214) who influenced Kristeva's writings illustrates this point using the example of the pangolin cult of the Lele. She describes the pangolin as a 'being [that] contradicts all the most obvious animal categories. It is scaly like a fish, but it climbs trees. It is more like an egg-laying lizard than a mammal, yet it suckles its young' (*ibid.*, 208). It is uncategorizable and therefore monstrous for the Lele. Douglas argues that the Lele who 'are preoccupied with form' in ritually eating the this monstrous animal 'confront the categories on which their whole

surrounding culture has been built up and […] recognise them for the fictive, man-made, arbitrary creations they are' (*ibid.*, 209). The ritualistic transgressions are a reflection on the symbolic order that humans established and prone to break them up temporarily. In self-cannibalising in the way as shown in *Dans ma peau*, Esther suspends the strict social order in which she is caught in particular during the business dinner.

Figure 7: Meal within its allocated border (*Dans ma peau*)

Because eating is situated in the area of tension between corporeal activity and social function, it is especially prone to social control. Kristeva develops her argument about abjection along the lines of food prohibitions in the bible and among different people in the world.[31] According to her, '[f]ood loathing is perhaps the most elementary and most archaic form of abjection' (1982: 2). Her starting point is the aversion against the skin atop of milk. There is a contradiction between nourishment that is provided by one's parents who offer this milk and the strong bodily reaction that is caused by the loathing of it. It induces nausea and leads to its exclusion through vomiting. The abject 'is radically excluded and draws me toward the place where meaning collapses' (*ibid.*). It is beyond the symbolic and older than language. Kristeva expands this idea:

[31] For a discussion of abjection and food, see also Oliver (2019).

> A wound with blood and pus, or the sickly, acrid smell of sweat, of decay, does not *signify* death. In the presence of signified death – a flat encephalograph, for instance – I would understand, react, or accept. No, as in true theatre, without makeup or masks, refuse and corpses *show me* what I permanently thrust aside in order to live. (1982: 3, emphasis in original)

In the confrontation with her wound at the beginning of *Dans ma peau*, Esther is made aware of the reality of her corporeal being. That reality is ordinarily thrust aside and veiled. After her first involuntary injury, her doctor also recommends Esther to have cosmetic surgery to render the scar invisible. Esther refuses such a surgery. She has found a reality beyond the usual structures that restrict her and define her body. In the scenes of self-mutilation, *Dans ma peau* draws and what Kristeva calls the true theatre. It is noteworthy that Tarr compares the film to the performances of the body artist Orlan that involve real self-harming (2006: 86). One could also point to the performances of Marina Abramović in which she violently tortured her own body – most notably the self-cutting in *Rhythm O* (1974) – or the real cutting of the skin under the fingernails in Valie Export's experimental short film ...*Remote*... *Remote*... (1973). It is true that in *Dans ma peau*, the wounds are actually make-up effects, but the emotional reactions evoked by the fake scenes of self-injury touch on the same psychological complex. They conjure up a sense of uneasiness beyond intellectual processing. They confront the viewer with the abject.

Kristeva traces the feeling aroused by the confrontation with the abject back to the pre-Oedipal and hence pre-symbolic stage of infantile development that is dominated by the bond between mother and child: 'The abject confronts us […] with our earliest attempts to release the hold of *maternal* entity even before ex-isting outside of her, thanks to the autonomy of language' (1982: 13, emphasis in original). This phase is dominated by the maternal authority that is opposed to and ultimately replaced by the fantasy of the loving father – as the child is being drawn to language. Thus, Kristeva distinguishes

> between the *semiotic*, which consists of drive-related and affective *meaning* organized according to primary processes whose sensory aspects are often non-verbal (sound, and melody, rhythm, colours, odours, and so forth), on the one hand, and *linguistic signification* that is manifested in linguistic signs and their logico-syntactic organization on the other. (Kristeva 1995: 104; emphasis in original)

As shown above, the dinner scene in *Dans ma peau* is dominated by language and organized by a rigid code at the expense of sensory aspects. The only remnants of sensual pleasure exist to exemplify one's own connoisseurship as cultural capital as is the case in the client's wine recommendation. In contrast, the self-cannibalization scene – as the scenes of self-injury in general – is characterized by a loss of linguistic signification where Esther experiences herself by smell, touch, sight, and smell. Furthermore, the sounds in the scene are slightly exaggerated. In putting the dinner scene and the self-cannibalization scene against each other, the film draws attention to the distinction between the domain of linguistic organization and that of affective meaning that Kristeva calls semiotic. Thus, scenes in which Esther harms herself mark a return or reenactment of the pre-Oedipal phase in children's development.

According to Kristeva, during this semiotic phase the maternal authority 'shapes the body into a *territory* having areas, orifices, points and lines, surfaces and hollows, where the archaic power of mastery and neglect, of the differentiation of proper-clean and improper-dirty […] is impressed and exerted', or in other words: 'Maternal authority is the trustee of that mapping of the self's clean and proper body' (1982: 72, emphasis in original). Thus, the border of the self is defined. That which is excreted from the body is declared as improper and categorized as the non-self. Through the mapping of the body and the exclusion of the excreted the self is formed: 'During that course in which "I" become, I give birth to myself amid the violence of sobs, of vomit' (*ibid.*, 3). The primal mapping of the body is accompanied by the frustrations and violence of learning to master the bodily functions as is the case during the sphincter training that marks a boundary of the body. Esther's violation of the border of her body takes a specific form in a later scene when she uses a pen to mark a specific portion of her skin that she subsequently cuts out of herself. She re-maps her body in a revision of the primal maternal mapping. Rather than establishing the border of the clean and proper body, she turns her body into a map of wounds soiled by her blood (Figure 8).

Figure 8: Esther marked by wounds and spoiled with blood (*Dans ma peau*)

In the context of a return to the pre-Oedipal stage, eating and self-cannibalism gains a meaning that encompasses the ambiguities of what has been discussed so far. Freud describes the oral stage as the first phase of infantile sexual development. In a reference to early animal organization he also calls it the

> cannibalistic pregenital sexual organization. Here sexual activity has not yet been seperated from the ingestion of food; nor are opposite currents within the activity differentiated. The *object* of both activities is the same; the sexual *aim* consists in the incorporation of the object – the prototype of a process which, in the form of identification, is later to play such an important psychological part. ([1905] 1981: 198)

It is a phase that is characterized by a lack of differentiation. The sucking of the mother's breast is associated both with nourishment and the desire to incorporate the maternal body. The borders between the self and the mother are not yet defined. As Kristeva puts it, only the process of abjection whereby the mother is figuratively vomited constitutes 'the first authentic feeling of a subject in the process of constituting itself as such' (1982: 47). Abjection is necessary for the process that defines the self. It does so at the expense of the desire to be one with the mother and thereby establishes the ambiguity of the abject that conjures up feelings of horror and fascination. Thus, Esther's eating of her own flesh is

situated in the ambiguous space of nourishment and the harmful desire to incorporate her body in a transgression of well-established borders. These borders are necessitated in social organisation to prevent the food from becoming a polluting object that threatens the social order. Kristeva points out this special status of food:

> When food appears as a polluting object, it does so as oral object only to the extent that orality signifies a boundary of the self's clean and proper body. Food becomes abject only if it is a border between two distinct entities or territories. A boundary between nature and culture, between the human and the non-human. (1982: 75)

Being situated in the vicinity of corporeal boundaries, eating has to be socially codified to uphold the social distinctions. Just like the pangolin threatens the Lele's system of categories, Esther's first wound threatens her bodily integrity when she first becomes aware of the spilled blood. The Lele counteract the threat by a conscious transgression of the taboo in their ritual by eating that abject food that the meat of the pangolin constitutes in their cultural order. Similarly, Esther transgresses the notion of the clean and proper body by re-enacting an infantile phase of the psychic development that predates this differentiation. It is a fantasy of incorporating the mother who is substituted by her own body just like a child might substitute the maternal breast by sucking its own thumb (cf. Freud [1905] 1981: 179-180).[32] The self-caressing during her sessions of self-injury are in that sense less akin to a lover's touch – as described above – but more a form of mimicry of a mother's caress. Her acts disturb the categories that are in place in her every-day life and are exemplified by the business dinner in *Dans ma peau*. However, it seems that Esther's self-harming helps to uphold the order of her corporate life, just like the ritual transgressions help the Lele to uphold the form of their day-to-day life. After each instance of her cutting through her skin, she is shown as highly productive in her work. Self-harming thereby becomes a functional act that helps her keep up in her job. Therefore, it is not a purposeless activity. It thereby becomes also an act that is subsumed under the logic of the corporate world. Furthermore, it becomes an extension of her work experience. After a stressful situation that is figuratively eating her up and swallows her body, she is drawn to literally eating herself up. In that sense, both her self-injuries and self-cannibalism are exaggerated continuations of her work life.

[32] Freud uses, among others, the curious and by no means common word *wonnesaugen* to describe thumb-sucking. Strachely translates it rightly as 'sensual sucking' ([1905] 1981: 179). In analogy, one could describes Esther's self-injuring as 'sensual harming'.

Her job involves collecting data in consumer survey whereby she blurs the lines between the surveyed individuals in statistics. Likewise, the blurring of the borders of her body leads to its dissolution of herself as she cuts it away piece for piece. She reverses the process of self-definition. Instead of vomiting – of abjecting – her mother to distinguish her self from her non-self, she swallows her body that has become the mother's substitute. Esther negates herself.

3.4 Conclusion: Subversions of Difference in *Dans ma peau*

In the act of self-cannibalism, Esther seemingly negates the experiences she makes during her work life. She returns to a stage of development that is prior to the formation of the self. At first, as sensual experience it seems like an act of liberation from the ordered work life, but it leads her to an ambiguous space in which all categories begin to blur. She is the active eater, but also passive in being eating. She incorporates her own body as a substitute of her mother with whom she merges in a reversal of the developmental phase of the ego-constitution. Through the act of nourishing herself, Esther also harms herself. And the purposeless playful act of self-cannibalism is utilized to gain renewed energy for her job. Rather than marking a difference, self-cannibalism becomes an exaggerated continuation of her everyday life that is dominated by her work. Just as the self-exploitation in the corporate world leads to a dissolution of the self, she dissolves herself in her cannibalistic violation of the borders of her body. Ultimately, the self-cannibalism is just the illustration of her eating herself up in the competitive business world. In that regard, *Dans ma peau* is similar to *Week End*. It just has another reference point. It points back to a phase in the individual's development, while *Week End* points to the development of civilization. In both cases, the difference that is purported by the acts of cannibalism turns out to be an illusionary one. Cannibalism is not shown as a contrast to the temporary world but an exaggeration of it.

Summary

Embarking on this study of the world of cannibalism in film, I took a specific look at how difference was constructed in movies that deal with cannibalism. My goal was to show how cannibalism in film is used as a marker of difference in order to give a self-description of the state of society. However, my aim was not to compile a list of a multitude of examples that illustrate how cannibalism is employed as a marker of specific differences in identity (gender, class, colonizer – colonized). What I wanted was to deal with the fundaments of difference in the development of humankind and the human individual. My two case studies proved to be good examples to examine the constructed difference between human and animal as well as between self and non-self. *Week End* reflects the psychical condition of civilization in harking back to history, and *Dans ma peau* brings on a return to infantile stage to contrast it with the modern corporate world. Thus, both films relate the act of cannibalism to a point of origin of difference to present their respective viewers with a mirror of the society in which they are enclosed. The civilizing and the educational process are shown as merely taming that which lies within us. Our carnivorous nature thus suppressed finds other outlets for aggression that lead to a collective dead end. In *Week End*, both the bourgeoisie and the supposedly idealistic guerrillas are portrayed as trapped in their reproduction of behavioural patterns that are harmful to others and themselves. The protagonist of *Dans ma peau*, Esther, is likewise caught in an illusion of the advantage of professional success that is imposed on her by society. In both cases, the act of cannibalism is the logically consequence of and the alluring escape from the alienated condition of society. Both refuse a resolution at the end. With their distinctive approaches, both leave a lasting impression: *Week End* intellectually and *Dans ma peau* emotionally.

After giving an overview over what has already been written about the broad topic of cannibalism in movies in chapter one, I turned to my case studies to examine how the acts of cannibalism therein point to the origin of difference.

In the chapter two, I explored the significance of cannibalism in the first case study, Godard's *Week End*. The approach of the film is analysed as cannibal-carnivalesque. Due to its intertextuality, it incorporates a multitude of concepts and ideas that it combines and puts

against each other. The film ends with an act of cannibalism that is put in connection with its other elements to comment on them.

Firstly, its portrayal is of a pronounced casualness, which is akin to a harmless barbecue scene, is contrasted with the more horrific killing of the man to be eaten and with the real slaughter of a pig. This contrast points to the truth that underlies the consumption of meat and is often disguised since the act of killing is usually hidden from the consumer who buys the meat products pre-cut and pre-packed. By combining scenes of eating with scenes of killing, *Week End* comments on the carnivorous tendencies of modern consumer society and brings its underlying cruelty to the fore.

Secondly, *Week End* makes explicit references to theories that deal with human progress: the conception of the development of civilization by Engels and Freud's primal horde theory. The general outline of *Week End* suggests an inversion of Engels' development schema from civilization to cannibalistic barbarism. However, the film constantly undermines such a neat portrayal by encounters with various historical figures and an overlap of technology that defies any notion of an easily separable periodicity. It is rather implied that the underlying psychic structure of the bourgeoisie is barbaric from the beginning and merely veiled by a seemingly civilized façade.

Freud's primal horde theory postulates an act of cannibalism as a historic break that marks the difference between animal and human and has a continued effect on the psychic makeup of modern humans. *Week End* puts the cannibalistic act at the end, but there is no indication that it marks a significant break. Rather the film posits it as a mimicry of revolution as the guerrillas copy the behaviour and outfits of contemporary militant Third World movements. The act of cannibalism is shown as a consequence of the state of mind of the bourgeoisie that symbolically cannibalises the guerrilla movements of the world to justify their inner drive to violence. *Week End*, thus, illustrates the cannibalistic urges of the consumer society.

In chapter three, I analysed the self-cannibalism of the second case study *Dans ma peau*. Its protagonist, Esther, engages in sessions of self-injuries that are filmed as if they are encounters with a lover that are shown as corporeal explorations. A central scene showing a business dinner provides a stark contrast to the self-cannibalism that follows. The scene establishes the difference between the social norms and the inner drives by showing Esther

failing to adhere to the expected behaviour. The suppression of bodily functions in social situations is a key issue in the civilizing process described by the sociologist Norbert Elias. He draws specific attention to the development of table manners. As an event belonging both to the realm of bodily activity and that of social function, the business dinner opens up a complex of bodily needs, culinary pleasure, and business function. The latter subsumes the other in the modern corporate world. Esther's self-cannibalism, then, opens up a negation of contemporary society that points back to a primal and infantile state. Kristeva's concept of abjection describes a pre-Oedipal stage in a child's development that is related to distinguishing the self from the non-self. The self-cannibalism is an act of nourishment and an expression of the drive to incorporate the mother. The dissolution of the borders of the self is both an element of liberation and a continuation of her work. Her destruction of her own body illustrates her eating herself up figuratively in her work life.

Although both films use a different reference point, they demonstrate the difference that is purported by the acts of cannibalism turns out to be an illusionary one. Cannibalism is not shown as a contrast to the temporary world but an exaggeration of it. Therefore, the notion of difference is subverted and exposed as a fantasy. The contemporary world is shown as being cannibalistic at its core and all ideas that cannibalism belongs to the realm of the other merely provide a façade to hide that awful truth.

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Kokkuvõte eesti keeles

Kannibalism filmis kui mõtisklus ühiskonnast

Erinevuse idee kummutamine filmides „Week End“ ja „Dans ma Peau“

Käesoleva lõputöö eesmärgiks on vaadelda, kuidas kasutatakse filmides erinevuse markerina kannibalismi, et kirjeldada ühiskonna seisukorda. See põhineb veendumusel, et kannibalist Teise troopi kasutatakse lääne kultuuritoodetes mitte mistahes päriseluliste kannibalide täpseks kirjeldamiseks, vaid selleks, et luua Läänele vastand, mille abil saab kahtluse alla seada nii selle uskumused kui rituaalid.

Põhirõhk on filmidel, mis kasutavad kannibalismi selleks, et mõtiskleda fundamentaalsete erinevuste üle: erinevuse üle inimese ja mitte-inimese ning mina ja mitte-mina vahel. Seetõttu on juhtumiuuringuteks valitud kaks filmi, mis mõlemad osutavad ühele neist erinevustest. Esimene juhtumiuuring, Jean-Luc Godardi film „Week End“ (1967), viitab selgesõnaliselt Sigmund Freudi primitiivse hordi teooriale, mis spekuleerib, et areng loomast inimeseks algas kannibalismiga seotud sündmusest. Teise juhtumiuuringuga, Marina de Van'i filmiga „Dans ma peau“ (2002), viidatakse inimese arengu infantiilsele etapile, mis on mina ja mitte-mina vahelise erinevuse määratlemisel kriitilise tähtsusega. Mõlemad filmid paigutavad kannibalismiakti (või enesekannibalismi) kaasaegsesse raamistikku, et kajastada seeläbi tänapäevast Lääne ühiskonda.

Esimeses peatükis tutvustatakse akadeemilist kirjandust, mis räägib suurest hulgast kannibalismi sisaldavate filmide kogust.

Teises peatükis käsitletakse kannibalismi tähtsust esimeses juhtumiuuringus, Godardi filmis „Week End“. Filmi käsitlusviisi analüüsitakse kui karnevali Bahtini ja Robert Stami mõistes. Intertekstuaalsuse tõttu sisaldab see paljusid kontseptsioone ja ideid, mida see nii ühendab kui üksteisele vastandab. Film lõpeb kannibalismiaktiga, mis asetatakse kommentaaride andmiseks suhtesse teiste elementidega.

Esmalt vastandatakse teema rõhutatud pealiskaudset kujutamist, mis oleks kui lihtne grillimissteen, ära söödava mehe rohkem õudustäratava mõrva ja tegeliku seatapuga. See kontrast osutab liha tarbimises peituvale tõele, mis on sageli varjatud, sest tapatöö on tavaliselt valmislõigatud ja eelpakendatud lihatooteid ostva tarbija eest peidetud. Kombineerides söömisstseenid tapmisstseenidega kommenteerib „Week End“ kaasaegse tarbimisühiskonna lihatoidulisi tendentse ja toob esile nendes peituva julmuse.

Teiseks viitab „Week End“ selgesõnaliselt inimese arengut käsitlevatele teooriatele: Friedrich Engelsi tsivilisatsiooni arengu materialistlikule kontseptsioonile ja Freudi primitiivse hordi teooriale. Lewis H. Morgani uuringute kohaselt tuli Engels välja ajaloolise arengu etappide teooriaga, mida tutvustatakse lühidalt filmi otsustava tähtsusega stseenis pealelugemise teel. Üldjoontes vihjab „Week End“ selle arengu ümberpöördele tsivilisatsioonist kannibalistliku barbaarsuseni. Film aga õõnestab sellist lihtsat portreteerimist pidevalt kohtumistega erinevate ajalooliste tegelastega ja tehnoloogia pealetungiga, mis trotsib mistahes ideed hõlpsasti eristatavast perioodilisusest. Pigem vihjatakse sellele, et keskklassi aluseks olev psüühiline struktuur on algusest peale barbaarne ja pelgalt näiliselt tsiviliseeritud fassaadiga varjatud. Nii õõnestab see ajaloo teleoloogia ideed.

„Week End“ vastandab Engelsi kontseptsiooni Freudi primitiivse hordi teooriaga, mida Freud tutvustas esmakordselt oma teoses „Tootem ja tabu“, ning postuleerib ajaloos esineva murdepunkti, mis tähistab looma ja inimese erinevust ja millel on jätkuv mõju tänapäeva inimeste psüühilisele loomusele. Teooria põhineb oletataval ürgkuriteol, kus salk vendi tapab oma isa, et pääseda ligi hordi naistele. Freud seab kannibalismiakti totemismi ja intsesti tabu tekke põhjendamiseks isatapu järele, postuleerides nii jätkuva mõju. „Week End“ tutvustab kannibalistlike partisanide rühma, viidates vahetiitris „Tootemile ja tabule“. Kuigi kannibalismiakt on pandud filmi lõppu, ei viita miski sellele, et see tähistab olulist murdepunkti. Pigem esitleb film seda kui revolutsiooni matkingut, sest partisanid kopeerivad tänapäeva kolmanda maailma sõjakate liikumiste käitumist ja riietust. Kannibalismiakti kajastatakse kui oma sisemise vägivallatungi õigustamiseks sümboolselt maailma partisaniliikumisi kannibaliseeriva keskklassi meeleseisundi tagajärge. „Week End“

illustreerib tarbimisühiskonna kannibalistlikke tunge. See pöörab pahupidi teleoloogilise idee arengust ideaalse ühiskonna poole ja rõhutab ajaloo korduvat jätkumist.

Kolmandas peatükis analüüsitakse teises juhtumiuuringus, filmis „Dans ma peau“, toimuvat enesekannibalismi. Selle peategelast Estherit hakkab pärast õnnetust paeluma tema enda keha. See viib enesevigastuste tekitamiseni, mida filmitakse justkui kohtumistena armukesega ja mida kajastatakse kehaliste avastusretkedena. Äriõhtusööki kajastav keskne stseen on sellele järgnevale enesekannibalismile ränk kontrast. Stseen kehtestab sellega, et Esther ei käitu nagu temalt oodatakse, sotsiaalsete normide ja sisemiste tungide vahelise erinevuse. Esther ei suuda oma enesevigastava käitumisega rõhutatavaid kehalisi vajadusi maha suruda. Sotsiaalsetes situatsioonides kehaliste funktsioonide mahasurumine on sotsioloogi Norbert Eliase poolt kirjeldatud tsivilisatsiooniprotsessis olulise tähtsusega. Ta juhib erilist tähelepanu lauakommete arengule. Äriõhtusöök kui sündmus, mis kuulub nii kehalise tegevuse kui sotsiaalse funktsiooni valdkonda, avab kehaliste vajaduste, kulinaarse naudingu ja ärifunktsioonide kompleksi. Viimane hõlmab kaasaegses ärimaailmas ülejäänud kaht. Estheri enesekannibalism eitab seega kaasaegset ühiskonda, osutades nii tagasi primitiivse ja infantiilse seisundi poole. Kristeva kontseptsioon abjektsioonist kirjeldab lapse arengus Oidipuse-eelset etappi, mis on seotud mina eristamisega mitte-minast. Enesekannibalism on nii toitumisakt kui ema enese sisse haaramise tungi väljendus. Mina piiride lagunemine on nii vabanemise kui tema töö jätkumise element. Selle mitmetähenduslikus teoga pääseb Esther pärsitud moel oma keha poole pöördudes sotsiaalsetest piirangutest välja. Ent samal ajal illustreerib oma keha hävitamine seda, et piltlikult öeldes õgib ta end tööelus.

„Week End“ kajastab tsivilisatsiooni psüühilist seisundit algusajaloo juurde tagasi pöördumisel ning „Dans ma peau“ toob esile tagasipöördumise enesekujunemise infantiilsesse seisundisse, et vastandada see kaasaegse ärimaailmaga. Seega seovad mõlemad filmid kannibalismiakti erinevuse lähtepunktiga, et esitleda oma vaatajatele neid raamiva ühiskonna peegelpilti. Tsiviliseerimis- ja haridusprotsessi kujutakse kui pelgalt meie sees toimuvat taltsutamist. Ühiskonna selliselt maha surutud lihatoiduline loomus leiab teisi agressiooniväljundeid, mis toovad kaasa kollektiivse tupiku, mida kumbki film keeldub lahendamast. Erinevuse kirjeldusi esitletakse enesesalgamise aktidena, mille sunnib peale

omaenda sisemise loomuse mahasurumine. Kannibalism, nagu filmid „Week End“ ja „Dans ma peau“ demonstreerivad, ei kujuta endast mitte erinevust, vaid *status quo* liialdust.