

# Dogs, Meat and Douglas Mawson

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When the *Aurora*, the ship used to convey the Australasian Antarctic Expedition (AAE), left London on the first leg of its journey in late July 1911, its departure was accompanied by an unsettling sound. One of those on board, Lieutenant B.E.S. Ninnis, described the event evocatively: ‘No soul but a solitary dock policeman witnessed our departure, and although noise we had in plenty, it did not originate from the enthusiastic outpourings of a patriotic populace, but from the forty-eight Greenland sledge dogs, which swarmed about our decks and made the sultry July night hideous with [their] din ... as they voiced their protest at the unaccustomed heat and confinement’ (1). Although unusual, the accompaniment was not inappropriate, for dogs were to play a pivotal role in the expedition, and six of them would die alongside Ninnis the following year.

During the Australasian Antarctic Expedition, dogs and men were thrown into several different, sometimes contradictory relationships. The Greenland dogs were considered to be ‘semi-wolves’ who required thrashings to keep them in line (Madigan 146), but were also at times treated as pets and were certainly loved. They were working dogs on whose muscle the success of the expedition partly depended, but no one had any prior expertise in caring for or training them. These contradictions came to a head in the Far Eastern sledging journey undertaken by the expedition leader, Douglas Mawson, along with the dog-handlers Ninnis and Xavier Mertz. Its main events are well known to polar enthusiasts: Ninnis’s sudden plunge into a crevasse with the healthiest dogs and most of the supplies; Mawson and Mertz’s desperate flight back towards base; Mertz’s mysterious death; and Mawson’s astonishing—to some, suspicious—completion of the journey on next to no rations. The remaining dogs, who until Ninnis’s death had been partly fed on native Antarctic animals (as well as each other), suddenly found themselves fodder for the men, with unpredictable results. In this essay, we examine the relationship between dogs and men during the AAE, and in particular on the Far Eastern sledging journey, looking at who ate whom on the journey, and what the consequences were of eating—or not eating—meat.

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The Australasian Antarctic Expedition was one of many attempts to explore the far south that took place in the early twentieth century—the period that polar historians often refer to as the ‘Heroic Era’ of the continent’s exploration. Mawson had been a member of Ernest Shackleton’s *Nimrod* expedition (1907-

09), and Robert F. Scott, whose expedition left in 1910, had offered him a place in his polar party—the small sledging team that aimed to reach 90 degrees south. Mawson, more intent on scientific research than reaching this geographical goal, chose instead to lead his own expedition south, to the then largely unexplored region of the continent that lies approximately south of Australia. His expedition established three bases (including one on Macquarie Island) and produced significant scientific, geographical and political results, playing an important role in the later establishment of a British claim to the region (which then became part of the Australian Antarctic Territory). However, Mawson's own sledging journey—usually referred to as the Far Eastern journey—was disastrous, with his only compensation for its traumatic events being his own remarkable survival: his return to the Main Base is recognized as an epic journey of the period, with one historian terming it 'the ultimate Antarctic saga' (Pyne 147). Central to his sledging expedition's proposed success and its actual failure were its seventeen sledge-dogs.

The wider story of the AAE dogs is not a pleasant one. Of the 50 dogs who left Greenland,<sup>1</sup> at least 48 died during the voyage south or in Antarctica, and over 60 pups born during the expedition also perished. The care of the dogs was placed in the hands of two expeditioners travelling from Europe to join the largely Australasian team: Ninnis, a soldier in the Royal Fusiliers, and Mertz, a Swiss law graduate, mountaineer and world-class skier. Neither was an expert on dogs, although Ninnis was considered to be 'good with animals' (Bickel 2). They struggled with their duties on the voyage to Hobart: the dogs found the ceaselessly wet, crowded on-deck conditions extremely uncomfortable, especially as they passed through the tropics, and their diet (largely cod liver oil biscuits) disagreed with them. A number were lost through disease or washed overboard, and one who was exhibiting symptoms of madness had to be shot (Mertz, 18-20 Oct. 1911).<sup>2</sup>

In Hobart, where the dogs were quarantined, Mertz was able to talk to Ernest Joyce, dog-handler on Ernest Shackleton's *Nimrod* expedition (and also a veteran of Scott's first expedition). He had originally been included in Mawson's expedition but was dismissed in Tasmania; according to one historian he 'spent too much time in the hotels and drank too much' (Jones 432). As the journey

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1 The dogs had been purchased in Greenland by the Danish agent C.A. Bang, with the assistance of Ernest Joyce (see below). Two dogs died before the party reached London, one washed overboard and the other bitten to death by its fellows. Showing some prescience, a third absconded in Greenland, and was replaced at an expense of around 1 pound 2 shillings (Bang, Letter; List of Expenses).

2 The location of Mertz's original diary (in German) is not known, but a typed transcription is available in the Mawson Collection. Here we have used an English translation of this typescript by Gabrielle Eisner, arranged and deposited in the collection by Robyn Mundy. This has been supplemented where necessary by examination of the German typescript and an earlier translation of part of the diary by Marian Hill, held in the Southcott files in the Mawson collection. All quotations are from Eisner's translation, except where otherwise indicated.

south continued problems still beset the dogs, with one ‘savage brute’ being abandoned among the ‘abundant food’ on Macquarie Island (Laseron 40), and ten more dogs dying en route. Mertz’s and Ninnis’s trials were far from over once the dogs were established in Winter Quarters.<sup>3</sup> If let off the chain, they created havoc amongst the Antarctic wildlife, and also got into the men’s store of mutton. The cold weather and constant gales made keeping them outside problematic—they would become so covered in snow that they could not be located, and would sometimes freeze to the ground and have to be dug out. Occasionally they were kept in the air-tractor hangar, but more often in the veranda space, from which they continually escaped. One dog was mysteriously wounded with a cord, and had to be anaesthetized and operated upon. There were desultory attempts to segregate the female dogs, for whom special kennels were built, but numerous puppies were nonetheless born, few of whom survived the first year. Early sledging journeys created further hazards, with Grandmother dying after a group of dogs was accidentally abandoned, and Scott<sup>4</sup> falling down a crevasse.

But the worst fate lay in store for the seventeen who left with the Far Eastern party in November 1912. On the eve of departure, three female dogs were about to give birth, and the men could not afford to do without their pulling power. Not long into the journey Pavlova (named after the dancer) produced a litter of puppies, all of whom were eaten by her or other dogs (Mertz 15 Nov. 1912)—something that occurred fairly commonly throughout the expedition. A couple of days later Gadget was shot as ‘her pups had tired her too much’ (Mertz 17 Nov. 1912). She was ‘cut up into 24 rations counting 7 pups’, but the other dogs did not enjoy the meal (Mawson *Diaries* 17 Nov. 1912). She was soon followed by Jappy, then six days later by Fusilier, and two days after that by Blizzard, who as a pup had been a ‘great favourite’ with the men (Mawson, *Home* 70; Mertz 20, 26 and 28 Nov. 1912). Meanwhile, Ginger Bitch<sup>5</sup> had given birth to 14 puppies who, along with Jappy, were fed to the remaining dogs (Mawson, *Diaries* 21 Nov. 1912). As this summary makes clear, from the start Mawson (like the Norwegian explorer Roald Amundsen) had a policy of feeding dog to dog to maximize the possible distance covered. In his account of the expedition, *The Home of the Blizzard*, Mawson states that he expected that at least six dogs would survive the journey (164); expedition secretary Conrad Eitel told the press that the plan was for three of a proposed 18 to return (‘The Mawson Expedition’).

In mid-December came the event that changed the fate of the party. Ninnis, bringing up the rear, disappeared down a crevasse, along with the six strongest

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3 According to *The Home of the Blizzard*, nineteen of the surviving dogs were deposited at the Main Base with Mawson, and the other nine went on to the Western Base (61, 262). Of these nine, at least seven died. We have been unable to track the fate of the two remaining Western Base dogs (the only possible survivors of the original group of 50), Amundsen and Zip.

4 A number of the AAE dogs were named after well-known polar explorers.

5 Ginger Bitch and Ginger were two different dogs, both female.

dogs, the tent, most of the supplies and all of the dog food. That night, instead of their usual diet of seal meat, blubber and pemmican, the remaining dogs were thrown some of the worn out wolf-skin mitts, reindeer-skin finnesko boots and leather straps, all of which they consumed avidly. The devastated men knew that they themselves would have to survive largely on dog meat.

The next day they shot George and fried him for breakfast (Mawson, *Diaries* 15 Dec. 1912). One by one the remaining dogs collapsed, were carried on the sledge and then shot. Eventually the rifle had to be discarded to save weight, so the penultimate dog, Pavlova, was dispatched with a knife, 'a revolting and depressing operation' (Mawson *Home* 174). The last dog, Ginger, gave in on 28 December, and according to Mawson they had a 'great breakfast off [her] skull—thyroids and brain' (*Diaries* 29 Dec. 1912). Mertz, however, was not so convinced, noting that he got up an hour earlier than usual to cook the dog meat, 'otherwise it wouldn't be edible' (29 Dec. 1912). The last sentence in his diary, made on New Year's Day 1913, reads, 'The dog meat looks indigestible to me, because yesterday I felt a little weak [etwas flau]'.

The events that followed are often recounted and their causes much debated. Mertz rapidly grew ill, suffering from stomach pain, diarrhoea, nausea, dizziness, hair and skin loss, and delirium. Putting his own survival at very serious risk, Mawson nursed Mertz until he died about a week later, then faced the long journey home alone, eventually arriving in terrible shape but alive.

Speculation has reigned ever since over the cause of Mertz's death, with the dog-diet central to the theories that have emerged. In 1969, an article in the *Medical Journal of Australia* suggested that Mertz's symptoms were consistent with Vitamin A poisoning, due to the consumption of the dogs' livers (Cleland and Southcott). This theory became part of received wisdom but is still subject to periodic debate. Denise Carrington-Smith in a 2005 article in the same journal argues against the Vitamin A theory, suggesting instead that Mertz died of starvation, aggravated by the change from his 'usual vegetarian diet' and the 'psychological stress of being forced to eat the dogs he had cared for for 18 months' (638).

Striking in this recent account is Mertz's labelling as a vegetarian—a very unusual and certainly a problematic thing for a Heroic-Era Antarctic explorer to be. Carrington extrapolates from an earlier source in the *British Medical Journal* that terms Mertz a 'near-vegetarian', and this article in turn provides no evidence for the claim (Shearman 285). The original source is probably Mawson. In a letter to Mertz's father, he stated that Mertz 'believed my greater capability to deal with [dog meat] was probably due to the fact that Swiss people are not used to a large meat diet, whereas English people and especially Australians eat a large proportion of meat'. To the press Mawson was more specific, stating that

Mertz's Swiss diet consisted of meat three times a week, while meat made up about fifty per cent of the Australian diet ('Alone in the Antarctic').<sup>6</sup> Whether or not this claim is accurate, it elides the fact that Mertz had been with the expedition for a year and a half when he died. He ate with the other men, whose diet included mutton on Sundays, penguin on Mondays and Thursdays, and seal on Tuesdays and Fridays (Mawson, *Diaries* 28 Feb. 1912). His diary shows that, while cognisant of possible dietary issues, he experienced none: he found English cooking bland, but noted that 'Fortunately I am not having trouble digesting, otherwise it would be difficult for me to eat seal or penguin meat and grilled sausages' (7 April 1912).

Diary evidence is also against the psychological impact on Mertz of eating dog. Carrington-Smith argues that Mertz 'had lost seven friends, one human and six animals.... In addition to witnessing their suffering, he then had to assist in their final killing and to eat their flesh' (641). Although this situation was from any perspective horrific, Mertz was by then well accustomed to the gruesome deaths of his canine charges. Scores of them had been lost in one way or another, and he had repeatedly witnessed pups being devoured by or fed to adult dogs. His diaries show strong affection and concern for the dogs,<sup>7</sup> but his descriptions of killing and consuming them during the sledging journeys are fairly matter-of-fact, the only emotive phrase occurring at the death of their 'dear last dog' ('unser lieber letzter Hund'), Ginger.<sup>8</sup> Whatever the causes of Mertz's death, his distress at the death of his dogs and supposed vegetarianism should be low on the list.

While the last of the Main Base's original Greenland dogs died with Ginger, their story does not end there. Three pups, born to Ginger in May 1912 and the subjects of 'much petting' (Madigan 144), survived into 1913. They were joined by twenty-one dogs brought down by ship on the relief journey, donated by Amundsen in Hobart on his triumphant return from the Pole. After a second winter, eleven dogs eventually arrived in Australia when the expedition returned. They were quarantined in Adelaide Zoo, in cages near the bears ('Mawson Expedition: The Official Reception'), where they were 'admired and petted to the general satisfaction of visitors' ('Gallant Antarctic Survivors'). Members of the expedition were invited to adopt them as pets. Mawson kept his 'favourite dog' Admiral D'Urville, who was soon entertaining guests at a reception held by his fiancée's family ('To Meet Dr. Douglas Mawson'). The irony

6 Most of the contemporary newspaper articles cited in this chapter can be found in the scrapbooks of press cuttings held in the Mawson collection. Page numbers are rarely provided, but the articles can be located through the call numbers of the scrapbooks, included in the Works cited.

7 At one point (3 Oct. 1912) Mertz writes of his 'love' for two missing dogs. He was particular attached to one of them, the pack leader Basilisk, writing a poem about him in his diary. The dog had been named after the mythological creature that is an emblem of Mertz's home town, Basel.

8 Hill's rather than Eisner's translation ('our good last dog') is used here. As Hill notes, Mertz's description in this entry of Ginger as a male dog is incorrect.

of this choice of pet—Mawson had after all eaten the dog's mother, Ginger—was not lost on the Australian media. A gossip piece in the form of a letter published in the *Bulletin* describes Admiral D'Urville as 'a cross between a lion and a sheep-dog', adding, 'I suppose the Mawsons will give an Antarctic dinner some night and feed their guests on it' ('Melbourne Chatter').

What the *Bulletin* took as an opportunity for black humour others considered a moral wrong. A long letter to the editor of the *Animal's Guardian* in 1914 condemns the use of animals in polar exploration. The anonymous writer finds it 'positively sickening to read how Dr. Mawson (lately returned) worked his dumb, long-suffering canine team'. Given the lack of any 'practical usefulness' of the polar regions, the writer suggests desisting from further exploration, but adds that if men still insist on it 'by all means let them do so, being creatures of freewill ... but, in the name of humanity, let them leave the dogs behind, and not drag these brave, patient martyrs to the horrible, undeserved fate described by Dr. Mawson, and also by former explorers' ('Antarctic Expeditions').

Given reactions such as this, it would be no surprise if Mawson were careful about the way events were described in official accounts of the expedition. As the *Animal's Guardian* letter shows, his expedition took place at a time when cultural attitudes towards the treatment and killing of animals were undergoing a shift. Historians such as Hilda Kean have outlined the ways in which issues surrounding animal cruelty, animal slaughter and meat-eating came to public attention during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. While in certain contexts animals were becoming increasingly visible—recall Mawson's surviving dogs displayed in the zoo—their slaughter was becoming increasingly invisible. The killing of animals for food was moving out of public view, considered something to be 'hidden from sight' (Kean 130), sanctioned only 'outside the public field of vision' (Burt 208). Mawson thus had reason to be careful how the animal killings which took place during his expedition were transmitted to the reading (and viewing) public.<sup>9</sup> One planned publication was the expedition newspaper, the 'Adelie Blizzard',<sup>10</sup> which featured an article, 'Our Dogs', written by Cecil Madigan, who took over the role of dog-handler during the winter of 1913. After giving lengthy descriptions of both the breed and the individual dogs, Madigan concludes, 'The Esquimo dog never gives in. He will

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9 The film of the expedition *The Home of the Blizzard*, shows no dog deaths, which is not surprising given that cinematographer Frank Hurley was not part of the Far Eastern party. More significantly, it shows no scenes of the slaughter of native Antarctic animals, although many were killed for food or scientific research. This is true also of the film of Scott's second expedition, *90° South*, and that of Ernest Shackleton's *Endurance* expedition, *South*. Unusually, the film of Amundsen's Norwegian Antarctic expedition does include a scene of a seal being shot, as well as a pig being slaughtered onboard ship, which may indicate different cultural attitudes towards the public visibility of animal slaughter at the time.

10 We have drawn here both on the marked-up original newspaper and an edited version of it prepared for publication. Neither version was published in Mawson's day, but the original has recently appeared in a facsimile edition.

pull, starved and exhausted, until he drops dead in his harness. Many Polar explorers have written of the brave struggles of their hardy little companions, and the pity of it' (147). This was not allowed to stand when the newspaper was edited for publication by the expedition doctor, Archie McLean. 'Drops dead' was changed first to 'drops absolutely exhausted' and then to 'drops worn out'. The final sentence was removed, to be replaced by a more stirring—and startlingly anthropocentric—one: 'Polar exploration has done its best work by the aid of the courageous breed, and in many tales the magnificence of a dog's courage and its pertinacity even to death has almost humanised it' (95).

Mawson need not have worried too much, however, as for the most part the media was less interested in questions of the dogs' welfare than in opportunities for gruesome sensationalism. This was particularly the case in the U.S., which produced newspaper headlines such as 'Boiled Dog Jelly Fine, Says Explorer' and 'Dog Meat as Delicious as Chocolate'. Some reports were particularly creative, replacing canine cannibalism with an even more sensational topic. In early 1915, the *New York Evening Globe* published an article under the unlikely headline 'Mawson Tells of Horrors of the Antarctic / Companions Die, and Explorer After Two Days Decides Not to Eat One of Them'. The following quotation is attributed to Mawson: 'I thought for two days about eating Merz [sic]. I was awfully short of food and about 100 miles away from the base. But finally I decided that if I did get back to civilization it would always leave a bad taste in my mouth, so I buried him and went on'. The same version of events, with minor variations, appeared in a number of North American papers.

Mawson officially denied these reports ('Mawson Had No Idea'), but the rumours have continued to the present day: posterity, which turned Mertz into a vegetarian, seemed determined to turn Mawson into a cannibal. Thomas Keneally's 1969 novel *The Survivor* tells of an Antarctic explorer with striking similarities to Mawson who is tortured by a secret from his past, which most of those around him assume to be cannibalism. Mawson's great-granddaughter Emma McEwin recalls that the book upset the explorer's wife, Paquita (96); yet McEwin accepts that the possibility of cannibalism would likely have occurred to Mawson, who was no stranger to the concept. She points out that in the 1880s the *Aurora* had transported the infamously cannibalistic Greely expedition, and that Mawson himself had lived amongst cannibalistic tribes in the New Hebrides (94, 97). The press noted at the time of the controversy that he had spent months among 'the cannibals in the New Hebrides' (Olmsted). As a young man Mawson had even dressed up as a cannibal about to cook a missionary on a float in a university procession (Ayres 9). One of his dogs was called Franklin, a famous polar name with its own cannibalistic associations. And according to some reports, the day before Mertz died Mawson had witnessed his companion biting off one of his own frostbitten fingers and spitting it onto the ground (Bickel

129)—an act of self-treatment which had obvious cannibalistic associations. But our purpose here is not to contribute to debates about Mawson's possible cannibalism; rather, it is to point to the connection between these speculations and the actual breaking of meat-eating taboos that took place on the journey. With dogs eating dogs, and men eating dogs, the accepted hierarchies of who might eat whom had well and truly broken down by the time Mawson was confronted with his friend's dead body.

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Close to a century later, in the summer of 2006-7, Australian environmental scientist and adventurer Tim Jarvis set out to recreate (as best he could under very changed Antarctic circumstances) the Far Eastern sledging party expedition from the point where Ninnis died to where Mawson found a depot of food left for him by an advance rescue party—a journey of around 500 kilometres. With the 1991 Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty having banned the presence of alien organisms other than humans on the continent (the last dogs were removed in early 1994), dog-sledging was not an option for Jarvis; neither could he retrace the exact route because of the changing topography of the area. Moreover, although Jarvis would make a large part of the trek alone, the companion standing in for Mertz leaving him at the point where the dog-handler died, he would still be accompanied by a camera crew filming the undertaking. Perhaps most importantly, he would not have to suffer the psychological trauma of having to watch his fellows die, and would know that he himself could always be rescued (he would be periodically monitored by a doctor).

Given these rather significant differences, one needs to ask the purpose of Jarvis' reenactment, at least as he saw it. Despite the unavailability of dogs (as both transport and fodder), Jarvis attempted to scrupulously recreate ounce for ounce Mawson's diet, substituting dried kangaroo meat for dog. That this equivalence should be an exact one was crucial to Jarvis' purpose, for he wanted to see if he 'could accomplish the journey without having to eat supplementary food—which would have been the equivalent of cannibalising Mertz's body'. The 'hypothesis behind [the] journey', according to Jarvis, was similar to that of Thor Heyerdahl's famous *Kontiki* voyage: 'Like him, if I successfully completed the journey, I would prove that it *could* have happened but (significantly) not that it definitely *did*' (136; original emphasis). But as the going got tougher for Jarvis his purpose appeared to crystallize:

On polar expeditions ... you play all sorts of mental tricks to keep yourself going, operating for much of the time in a very altered reality. ... I convinced myself ... that it was down to me to try to protect Mawson's

honour by making it. No one was going to pin cannibalism on him. ... I knew then and there I had hit on something I could use to bolster my mental resolve and I felt Mawson would have approved. (139)

Later, with head pounding and listening to the driving wind of the Antarctic night, he did not find it difficult 'to imagine Mawson up there on the plateau right now, lying there beside the cadaver of his fallen colleague and considering his options'. Jarvis concludes his speculation by deciding that Mawson would have felt 'an overwhelming sense of loyalty' towards his companion, and would have buried rather than eaten him (226). The word choice is significant here, with 'fallen' invoking the exigencies of war, and 'loyalty' the faithfulness of dogs (a line from the BBC series *Absolute Power* runs, 'If you want loyalty, buy a dog').

During the imperial era of conquest and exploration cannibalism was significant as that which ultimately drew the line between the 'civilised' and the 'savage' (see e.g. Hulme 1-3). The act was thought to put individuals beyond the pale of the human, relegating them to the realm of the beast (where the 'last resort' is actually considered rare, except in terms of survival in extremes). As has often been observed, although cannibalism is the very act that literally renders self and other 'same', it has had a central place demarcating the line between self and absolute other. Yet almost a hundred years separated Mawson's and Jarvis' treks—a period which saw two world wars (during the latter of which 'long-pig'<sup>11</sup> was resorted to in survival situations), the Holocaust, and perhaps most significant of all in this context, the football-team air disaster in the Andes in which survivors were forced to eat their dead fellows to save their own lives. Survival cannibalism in 1913 would no longer seem in 2007 to need such a complicated 'proof' or refutation as Jarvis' journey. One could of course argue cynically that there is still nothing like the frisson of cannibalism to sell books and DVDs and publicise one's journey; and that Jarvis' initial position of not quite closing off the possibility of Mawson's cannibalism, despite his own survival on similarly limited rations, supports this view. There are, however, other reasons why the spectre of cannibalism still 'dogs' our view of polar exploration.

While the so-called species boundary between humans and non-human animals may seem an inviolable one, there are, as Nick Fiddes observes (132-43), exceptions. We have already noted that dogs on Antarctic journeys were placed in several different and sometimes contradictory relationships with humans—as loyal friends, as beasts of burden, and as food. As many commentators have noted, our (i.e. human) attitudes to animals—or even to vertebrates or mammals, to restrict the absurdist category of 'animal' (i.e. the not-us)—are in any case

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11 The *OED* glosses this term as a translation of 'a cannibal's name for human flesh'.

wildly inconsistent and contradictory; they have to be, or we could not live in the world in the way in which we do. But, as Fiddes has argued, while the species boundary—us and them—seems an obdurate one, we occasionally allow individual and even certain categories of animals to cross that line, to become part of the ‘club’, just as, conversely we have historically relegated slaves or enemies in war to the category of ‘animal’. Just where beings are placed across this line is of great consequence. Cary Wolfe, drawing on the work of Jacques Derrida and Georges Bataille, argues:

the humanist concept of subjectivity is inseparable from the discourse and *institution* of speciesism, which relies on the tacit acceptance ... that the full transcendence of the ‘human’ requires the sacrifice of the ‘animal’ and the animalistic, which in turn makes possible a symbolic economy in which we can engage in a ‘non-criminal putting to death’ (as Derrida puts it) not only of animals, but other *humans* as well by marking *them* as animal. (43; original emphasis)

Dogs in Western society, however, are frequently marked as human—not only as ‘man’s best friend’, but as valued members of human families. Working sledge dogs may perhaps be regarded in a different light, akin to that of working kelpies or cattle dogs, though farmers’ actual lives rarely depend on the work of the dog in the way those of Antarctic explorers did. But the according of quasi-human status to the dog means, at least in the West, that we do not eat them.<sup>12</sup> As Fiddes argues, exceptions to what we will regard as food are made for very different reasons, and can be grouped into three categories: pets, primates and carnivores. Dogs, as both pets and carnivores, seem thus doubly prohibited for us as food; and in their being eaten by humans and by other dogs, a kind of doubled or reinforced cannibalism is evoked. Just as humans eating dog, as in the survival case of Mawson and Mertz, while quite understandable, violated a cherished taboo, dogs being fed dogs can be considered similarly ‘against nature’.<sup>13</sup>

Early Antarctic explorers were well aware of the disturbing nature of using dogs as working fodder on sledging journeys, as it had been addressed by Scott in his account of the *Discovery* expedition of 1901-04. Scott was deeply affected by their having to be fed to each other on his first attempt on the Pole. Contrary

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12 The question of which animals are permitted to cross the species boundary is, of course, historically and culturally specific, with the result that dog-eating has long been a ‘basis for discriminating against others’ (McHugh 36). Like cannibalism, then, dog-eating can be employed by one cultural group to label another as ‘savage’ (see e.g. Griffith, Wolch and Lassiter, particularly 3-4). Certainly in late nineteenth-century Britain, where Mawson spent his formative years, the eating of dogs and other carnivores ‘constituted the dividing line between civilization and barbarism’ (Ritvo 208).

13 Many people interviewed in Britain about mad cow disease and their own meat eating were inclined to regard the human contraction of ‘mad cow’ as a kind of punishment for violating the natural order of things since the disease was transmitted (it was thought) by feeding cows the ground-up remains of so-called downed cows and other livestock (Tiffin 18).

to popular opinion, he considered the issue of dog treatment not through the lens of excessive 'sentiment', but in a sympathetic yet rational way, pointing to our constant inconsistencies in the treatment of dogs and those animals we do consume, such as sheep. It was the animals' pain rather than their slaughter that 'weighed heavily' on him (466).<sup>14</sup> His refusal to employ this strategy on his second, fatal expedition, and Amundsen's willingness to do so on his successful attempt on the Pole, was a point of controversy at the time and has remained so ever since.<sup>15</sup> By Amundsen's account of his expedition (published in 1912), his dogs had a far better time than Mawson's on their shipboard journey south in 1910, but shared a similarly gruesome fate during the polar journey, with the explorers vowing to 'shrink from nothing' in their determination to reach their destination. Dogs were fed to both men and each other; Amundsen describes how he looked forward to a tasty meal of dog steaks and cutlets (2: 57, 63-4), but his dogs were not always so keen. Even though they were beaten and starving,<sup>16</sup> some showed reluctance to eat their slain fellows, and at one point had to be 'entic[ed]' to abandon their 'scruples' (2: 63-4). Thus, Mawson's possible (if unlikely) survival cannibalism of Mertz entered an arena of cannibal taboo already invoked in the Heroic Era of Antarctic exploration by both deliberate and forced dog consumption by humans and other dogs.

The relations between men and dogs in Antarctic exploration, therefore, suggests their imbrication in what Peter Hulme has termed the 'cannibal complex' (31): our acute sensitivity to what and whom we eat, our cultural taboos in relation to edibility, as well as our extreme psycho-cultural fear of being eaten. And it is not absurd to speculate that one reason the issue of cannibalism continued to dog Mawson and to catalyse Jarvis' reenactment is that, as Fiddes notes, eating pets or 'loyal companions' is (and was) regarded by most Westerners as a kind of cannibalism in itself. Even after the last dogs had departed from Australian and other territories, the deed that could not be named as such continued to haunt Antarctic exploration.

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14 Scott knew that dogs could increase the reach of a sledging trip, but only if they were worked to exhaustion and then consumed by their fellows: 'To say that they do not greatly increase the radius of action is absurd; to pretend that they can be worked to this end without pain, suffering, and death is equally futile' (467).

15 For detailed discussion of Scott's and Amundsen's attitudes towards the use of dogs, see Murray; and for criticism of the negative connotations of 'sentimentality' as applied to animals, see Armstrong. Controversy also surrounds Scott's use of ponies, who were worked and then used for meat on his second expedition; for different views see Barczewski, *Antarctic Destinies 2*, and Fiennes, *Captain Scott* 265-6, 276-8.

16 They were given a 'hiding' if they 'failed to do their duty' in sledge-pulling, and were so hungry that they would eat 'whips, ski-bindings, lashings, etc.' (Amundsen 2: 21, 40).

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