

# LYING, TIGERS, AND CANNIBALS! OH MY!

**Dr. Roger Davis**  
Red Deer College, Canada

## **Abstract**

*This paper proposes a reading of two novels, the American Edgar Allan Poe's *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket* (1837) and the Canadian James De Mille's *A Strange Manuscript Found in a Copper Cylinder* (1888) to demonstrate the East-West thematic of cannibalism and the North-South thematic of Arctic and Antarctic exploration. Using these themes, the paper will argue that both novels' treatments of cannibalism and the expression of cannibalism represent a paradoxical repression of capitalist colonial expansion. The bodies of criticism surrounding both novels have noted the thematic, structural, and historical similarities as well as the ostensible plagiarism by De Mille of Poe's text. Despite the texts' similarities, this paper will focus on the differences between the texts, particularly in relation to the treatment of cannibalism. On the one hand, De Mille's later novel establishes a conventional travel narrative where the protagonist Adam More encounters a dark and savage cannibal Other; on the other hand; Poe's earlier novel figures the white protagonist as the cannibal rather than the savages. Somewhat curiously, Poe's novel almost entirely glosses over the act of the white cannibal Pym, which is in direct contrast to De Mille's Adam More who seems consumed by the horrors of the dark cannibal Other. The critical responses represent a similarly contradictory discomfort with cannibalism: critics of De Mille delight in expounding upon cannibal themes; critics of Poe largely neglect, like the novel, the cannibal theme, preferring to subsume it under other thematic categories. The intersection of East-West cannibal myths with North-South explorer accounts encapsulates the troubling metaphor of colonial cannibalism that remains largely unspoken yet voiced in the representative contradictions between these two texts.*