



# Animal Money

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**A living form of money results in the unraveling of the world.**

*"The bank is there to save and lend."*

*"Workers work and customers spend."*

## Animal Money Details

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Author : Michael Cisco

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## From Reader Review Animal Money for online ebook

### Ronald Morton says

We discuss each paper, even the latter. In the criss--cross of our conversation the idea of *animal money* appears. None of us can account for it, none of us can take credit for it.

The idea silences us for a while, as we try to grasp it, each within ourselves. It really is only a chance coupling of two words, but they seem to call to each other. It is immediately obvious to us that animal money does not refer to the age-old practice of rating wealth in head of cattle or otherwise using livestock as money; there is something new in our minds.

As far as I can tell, Cisco is the best of all authors currently active in the long-form Weird Fiction / New Weird space.

And there are a ton of qualifiers and retractions and specifications that go along with that, most of them actually unimportant. But I will say that the general speculative scene has over the years become progressively less interesting and compelling to me, to the point that it receives little of my attention or passion, and that has been the case for at least a few years now. There are a few authors I still pay attention to, and Cisco is high on that list. Truthfully, only Reza Negarestani is higher, and he has still not followed up *Cyclonopedia* yet, so he might not actually count for these purposes.

And even with Cisco being high on the list I've still got his last three sitting unread on a shelf - this sounded too good to skip though, so I gave it a shot.

As the rating belies, I greatly enjoyed this, though I will say that I still feel *The Narrator* is his best work. He seems to have evolved a bit over the last few years - where in the past I felt his voice was only his own, at times here he sounds a bit like Miéville (via his earliest works or maybe *Embassytown*), Eco (via Foucault's *Pendulum*), and a bit like a less theory driven (not as versed in Deleuze, Guattari, Brassier) Negarestani - but the evolution suits the story he's trying to tell, so it's difficult to tell if he has a writer has changed or if he only adapted for the needs of the narrative. Even all that said, his voice is still firmly his own, just *influenced*.

At 780 pages this book felt a bit too long at times, but Cisco is doing a lot here, and covering a lot of ground - he's really telling at least four to five different narratives all wound together, so while there is some bloat : : and it's likely what put this behind the more crystalline *The Narrator* for me - what I've noted as bloat is surprisingly minimal for a book of this size.

All that said, I'm not sure who I would recommend this to outside of people who are already fans of Cisco. It is more difficult that mostly anything currently circulating in the Speculative space, but it's too Speculative (there are aspects of this particular book that make it more *genre* than anything he's done prior) to really push off on those who like dense literary experimentation (unless they also overlap into some Speculative tastes).

But it's good, and reinforces for me that Cisco is an author to continue to stay aware of (and hell, maybe I'll read those three I've got sitting at some point).

## Remi says

Before the imposing Edinburgh castle gates, sits the statue of Adam Smith, the father of modern Capitalism. Keeping a watchful eye on tourists, tourism representatives, street performers and the odd vagrant scuffling through the crowd, hoping someone will lend them a fiver. Although, should you find yourself overwhelmed by the number of people, all gnashing for the same photo of the cathedral and the litany of selfie sticks, a refuge is just a short walk around the corner.

Blackwell books, Edinburgh's oldest bookshop and one that I found myself in an absolute awe of the selection. With my hands already overflowing with a number of finds that have been on the backlog for quite some time; spotting *Animal Money* was like some dirty trick played by the employees. It sat in the horror section, with a staff recommendation that absolutely thrilled my imagination, coupled with the eye-catching artwork and to make matters worse, a doorstopper, seemed to check all the boxes of all my literary weaknesses in one fell swoop. So the armful was dropped and the tome (along with two other separate smaller novels for balance sake...) brought to the til.

The novel itself is a beguiling cascade of Lovecraftian divination of cultists, nightmare logic and unknown horror wrapping itself behind every page. But, not just limited to HP, for economic theory pervades the book, and one could be forgiven for thinking that it is a treatise against Capitalism. If anything the novel concerns itself with a new form of capital, rather than standard paper or credit systems that the developed world utilizes, one of growth and with a rhizomatic sensibility takes over. What comes after capitalism, and how the world will change, and within the novel, the world literally changes employing a strange foreign pervading every step.

While it is an alternative reality, the world in which *Animal Money* exists is very much like our own, and the current pitfalls of late-stage capitalism. The revere of businessmen and economists as some sort of gods or wizards who steer the world, the destruction of Earth and resources to benefit a few; I could go on but anyone familiar with the current arguments against the system, have heard these time and time again. Though while critical of the "source material", Cisco does employ the arguments for the current system, and why/how people squeezed by its tendrils.

*"...opening the book is like bursting a chaotic evil puffball in your face. A gush of malignantly psychedelic invective inundates your head whirling in the brain to form mental twisters that are autonomous hate elementals herding the thoughts, driving the thoughts before them, raking the mental air with alarms and searchlights and snarling police dogs that send hapless fantasies, emotions and other mental personnel scrambling for safe places to hide.*

If you're a fan of New Weird, economic/social capital theory, which itself is a strange melange of elements, then this novel will completely take you to another thousand plateaus altogether.

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## David Wegehaupt says

By far the craziest book I've ever read! What in the bizarro weird world just happened for 780 pages? *Animal Money* contains so many fantastic passages, and often has some wonderful narrative momentum. It's some of the most fun I've had reading in years. I also would be hard pressed to describe a plot to someone without sounding like a lunatic. There were chunks of the book where I had no idea what in the hell I was reading but decided to just go along, enjoy the ride, and not insist on clarity or anything being easy.

The book starts in a bizarre fictional future where a bunch of economists traveling to a conference all

coincidentally(?) get (hilarious) head injuries. As they recover together, they find their recent work has common themes and the collaboratively develop a new, bizarre and fascinating economic system... and it gets them in a lot of trouble with the powers that be. The book becomes an adventure/conspiracy, with all sorts of powerful forces trying to suppress their treatise on Animal Money .... and it gets weirder as it goes, including aliens and space travel, extra dimensions, at least one dead ghost narrator, a heavy drinking journalist controlled by his louse-infested tongue, a giant spider who runs an island that appears from nowhere and communicates by people drinking her venom (or something), a scientist who may or may not be a fictional creation of other characters to distract from their economic theories that threaten to change the world as it is known, etc etc etc ... Also, one of my all-time favorite characters, SuperAesop. It's a helluva lot of fun and insanely imaginative. Half the time I just was wondering how Cisco's mind conjured this phantasmagorical adventure.

There was a while in the middle of this where I had to take a break for a week or two. Overall it was fairly slow going, but I also never wanted it to end ... It'd be hard to recommend to anybody whose reading preferences I am not super familiar with. Think Pynchon, Wallace, some David Lynch (and/or Cronenberg as suggested by some Amazon reviewer), and then get (a lot) weirder. 95% of the time I was really enjoying each wonderful scene. Losing coherence and clarity of plot as the book got weirder is not problematic for my reading tastes, but surely would be for others. I'm definitely looking forward to reading more Michael Cisco once I've recovered from the mind-melting fun that is Animal Money. I don't think I'll be able to get this book out of my head for a really long time. As soon as it's gone, I might have to read it again...

And if you want a more authoritative recommendation, weird maestro/expert Jeff VanderMeer says of it "not just possibly the finest weird novel of the modern era, but also an uncanny Infinite Jest by way of early Pynchon and Robert Bolaño's 2666. This novel requires your full and undivided attention, but will not come away from the experience unchanged." <https://electricliterature.com/jeff-v...>

Thanks to Lazy Fascist Press for consistently introducing me to amazingly creative and fun to read contemporary authors!

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### **Jeff Clark says**

Threaded by confusion that compels you to wander until you ... reach the end. Lovely words, ideas mingle, brackishness throughout. So many things, so many of them amazing, so many confounding. Interpretation is critical and it is only yours. We are all economists of our own reality yet slaves to a tongue louse.

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### **Jon Hilty says**

I don't know what of the events in the book actually happened, how many narrators there were, how many of them actually existed, how many were alive or dead, when it was, when it wasn't, what it was or wasn't, or even why it was. But I do know it was funny, bizarre, occasionally lucid, interesting, confounding, complex, and all sorts of other adjectives. Four stars to begin with. A fifth added because of the exceptional amount of confusing material, and then one subtracted because of the exceptional amount of confusing material. Michael Cisco still has not done wrong by me. A very difficult book to get through, but worth it to me.

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## Vincenzo Bilof says

VOICE: "What can you tell us about Animal Money?"

Assiyeh awoke after the conference and began to wonder if all of her revolutionary technologies had made a difference, but it is not the difference that she wondered about, but rather, the idea of the technologies being revolutionary and what it meant for those technologies to be revolutionary. There is a sort of awareness that occurs for Assiyeh while reflecting upon the definition of a revolution and whether or not something can be revolutionary, and her mind began to consider the idea that a revolution is a movement that can only exist in opposition to stagnation and that same movement might better be understood during her attempt to create a state of absolute rest. Assiyeh began to experiment, and her conclusion that we are always moving to search for something that is better than ourselves by constantly creating materials that will enhance our state of existence—whether it is a brand new television set or a new way to have sex by using only your fingertips—each new idea both a quantitative and qualitative doubling from nonexistence to existence. Through discussing the idea or the awareness of the idea there is a doubling that occurs between all individuals who partake in the exchange, for if they did not have the idea before they now have the idea. When you consider what you know about Animal Money and then begin to learn about it, your experience with the very literature that discusses Animal Money doubles your knowledge from zero to something more than zero, which is a sort of doubling. There is always a sort of self-awareness that the exchange is taking place; that an author of a book, for example, knows they are composing a piece that becomes a medium of exchange with the reader, because the reader starts with zero experience with that book and upon completing it becomes the beneficiary or inheritor of a type of currency that is qualitative relative to the reader and the author; the book need not be about Animal Money, but it could be a science fiction novel in which the idea of Animal Money becomes a sort of metaphor for those people or characters who first talked about the idea of Animal Money but could not exactly determine where the idea came from, because their own knowledge of Animal Money became itself an exchange of experiences and ideas.... and the only way to review such a book is to ask what Animal Money is and to wonder whether or not we should expect a certain kind of answer or whether or not there is an answer, or maybe whether or not we are capable of understanding that the question itself exists and we are aware of the question...

(Note: I don't think you can actually review the book, on a philosophical level, but it is very good, interesting, a challenge to read, with aliens or maybe not aliens, with ideas, some action or maybe not action depending on whether or not everything is a dream, and if it is a dream or not a dream then what is fiction if not Animal Money...?)

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## Jacob Wren says

Michael Cisco writes:

"It isn't authority, it's the look you see on a child's face when she is in an unfamiliar situation and fiercely understanding everything she sees. It's what patronizing adults call the exaggerated seriousness of the child. They say that because adult seriousness is not serious but just a hollow meringue of affect. That hard, hard understanding look is the real seriousness."

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## Shawn Gates says

Psilocybin in book form.

## **K.H. Vaughan says**

This is a difficult book to review, and I think it will be a five-star book for a small number of people. On the one hand, I enjoyed the writing enough to continue through to the end. Cisco has a strong voice and can create compelling imagery. He has a wicked sense of humor and the occasionally graphic or explicit content stands out in contrast to the rest of the text to good effect. I think I did not ultimately enjoy the book as a whole because of several issues:

Animal Money is willfully non-linear, with the narrative jumping perspectives, times, and in and out of hallucinatory episodes without any warning or roadmap. I can live with this; I'm a big fan of David Lynch, and I am more than willing to do the work to try and meet a work on its own terms. However, I didn't have a sense of this technique reflecting any underlying coherence. It too often reads as surrealism for its own sake. If you enjoy the disorienting long strange trip for its own sake, then you might get more mileage out of this than I did. I don't need to read nearly 800 pages to get the point that things don't necessarily conform to our preconceptions of what narratives or reality are supposed to be. It's old news. If that is the only goal of Animal Money, it isn't enough. Besides, Hunter Thomson does a better job of describing drug-induced experiences. (Besides, if you want to experience that terrain, reading is a very indirect and poor substitute.)

Animal Money is intentionally obscure. There is a thesis, of sorts, about economics and its relationship to reality in the text, but Cisco goes out of his way to hide that point. Every once in a while, he seems to get to some sort of more explicit statement (the closest he comes, really is "end money"), but why all the obfuscation? He is brutally critical of academic institutions and the absurdity that often goes with the ritual orthodoxy of the Academy, and I agree with his views there - so much of academic writing is nothing more than fancy verbiage that hides a lack of rigor or meaning. Yet Cisco critiques obscurantism only to double down on it in the book. If he has a real thesis about the things he is concerned about, then why hide it?

He offers hints that may explain it - comments about the need for teachers to communicate the message over and over again in as many ways as are possible in order to disrupt the complacent understanding of the unenlightened. The un-woke masses are consistently referred to as dupes in various ways. It's the sort of thing common in Leftist revolutionary theory: the masses must be dragged into revolution against their will as they will never get there on their own. It's a very elitist philosophy for all the alleged glorification of the worker. I also have a sense that Cisco may be entertaining the idea that the medium is the message: that by disrupting expectations and generating dissonance, the reader will somehow be forced to question all. In the book, the release of an economics treatise (also called Animal Money) disrupts the economy of the world and the shape of history. I just disagree with that perspective. A meaningful point or idea can be expressed plainly, and I don't think this kind of exercise will have any sort of impact on any individual not already on board with the ideology. Again, if you are already there, you may enjoy it, but a text like this can only preach to the choir.

Last, as a critique of capitalism, Animal Money fails in the most important respect: it offers no alternative. No one in the text is able to offer a coherent explanation of what Animal Money is, or how it actually functions. It's fine to talk about the failings of capitalism - it has many. But the text offers no more than magical wish-fulfillment about what might replace it. Capitalism sucks, then, I don't know... a miracle... maybe aliens or something... and then we are in a brave new post-capitalist economic utopia, isn't an alternative. If that's all Animal Money can accomplish then it is a profoundly nihilistic text, stating that the system sucks but there is no way out. I don't think that was Cisco's intention, which would make the book a failure on its own terms.

If you like the writing, and can take the trip at face value, then you might enjoy the ride. Otherwise, I think this is going to be a tough sell. I don't think the Emperor is actually naked, but the elaborate suit he is wearing doesn't actually cover the bits it is supposed to. That is, the naive boy would point and say "his junk is still showing!"

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### **Tobias says**

Sort of like the surreal offspring of Julio Cortazar's THE WINNERS, Samuel R. Delany's THE EINSTEIN INTERSECTION, and Renee Gladman's Ravicka novels. By which I mean that I enjoyed this a whole lot.

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### **Matthew Hall says**

There might be a pretty good sf allegory here, but it's buried beneath 780 pages of bloated, hysterical, masturbatory dream sequences. This was touted as a brilliant archetype of what New Weird fiction can accomplish, but it's so laden with the desire to impress you with its prose and knack for metanarrative gaming that any meaningful point feels completely lost.

Were there a few great lines? Yeah, here and there.

Were there salient criticisms about the way we think of economics? Totally.

Could those few moments surpass the rest of this mess? Nope.

It is, however, an excellent example the way in which MFA-style writers have been trying to co-opt the language and toolbox of sf in order to create a *sui generis* Literature-with-a-capital-L but get lost in a lexicographic mire because they're too in love with their own vocabularies, and only passingly interested in substance.

Maybe I'm just really tired of white guys competing for world's longest/most esoteric work of fiction.

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### **Autumn Christian says**

Economic professors come up with the concept of Animal Money - which begins to insinuate itself into their lives, and transform the way that human beings interact with each other. A star taken off because the middle of the book begins to slog, taking away from a brilliant and engaging beginning.

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### **Tade Thompson says**

This is an excellent, if disturbing read.

It is a surrealistic narrative organised around four economists who attend a conference and come up with the concept of animal currency or animal money. Except, it's not that simple. In this reality economists (like other academics) are almost mystical and certainly cultish, with esoteric aspects to their learning, swearing-in and continued existence. They have identifying tattoos on their faces, for example.

The idea of animal money which takes root in their imagination is disturbing to the rest of the world, and a series of strange events begins to unfold. Lest you think this is boring, there are batsh\*t goings-on simultaneously. Think of a vampiric disembodied head trailing intestines while a physicist hunts her down with plans to re-encephalise the head with the body, and that's just one example.

The writing is lush and enjoyable, with surprises on every other page.

Animal Money is a book I will read again. Highly recommended.

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## **Caulen says**

*Does the reader want the incidents the reader fantasized?*

**Yes**

*Does the reader want to escape from the incidents the reader fantasized?*

**Yes**

*Does the reader want to have not lived those incidents?*

**No**

*Does the reader want to live incidents of an entirely different kind, without going into the details of the difference?*

**Yes**

*Does the reader want things to change or things to freeze?*

**I prefer change, but both, really.**

*Does the reader want to escape from these questions?*

**No, thanks for asking.**

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## **Axolotl says**

So far it is a lot of hilarious non-sense and I love it! There is more to hold onto than I feel Cisco usually allows.

There was an early narrator switch that I think was just a mistake as right now Ronald Crest appears to be the man in charge.

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