

V&R **unipress**

Representations & Reflections
Studies in Anglophone Literatures and Cultures

Volume 1

Edited by

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The Pleasures and Horrors of Eating

The Cultural History of Eating
in Anglophone Literature

In cooperation with Klaus Scheunemann

With 7 figures

V&R unipress

Bonn University Press



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Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available in the Internet at <http://dnb.d-nb.de>.

ISBN 978-3-89971-775-4

Publications of Bonn University Press
are published by V&R unipress GmbH.

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Printed in Germany

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Introduction

Browsing through books, TV channels, the internet in general and conference web sites in particular, one is struck by the fact that a vast number of people nowadays seem to be pre-occupied with eating, cooking, competing with chefs and participating in the modern holy war between *haute cuisine* and fast food, in the battle between high culture and low popular culture transferred into the arena of the kitchen. Campaigns against the horrors of bad food and malnutrition are currently being led by figureheads that could not be more different: on the one hand, Jamie Oliver and his Ministry of Food struggling against obstreperous people from Rotherham who insist on feeding their children with chips and burgers and thus defying the crusaders of healthy and organic food; and, on the other hand, a little blue rat called Rémy inspired by cookery programmes on TV and defending the refinement of a ratatouille against the voraciousness of the other rats that, like so many human beings in and outside of Rotherham, prefer swilling garbage, junk food and mass-produced foodstuffs like imitation cheese.

While post-modern culture is marked by the clash of these two stereotyped philosophies – that of the Frenchified connoisseur of *haute cuisine* versus the Americanised devourer of mass products – early modern life, exemplified by Pieter Breughel's painting *The Battle between Carnival and Lent* (1559), was marked by a different culinary antagonism: that of saturnalian feasting and austere fasting, of baroque plenty and dearth super-imposed by (non-conformist) theology.

Seen from this perspective, the lavish banquets hinted at by Shakespeare (cf. the contribution by Draudt), the abundance of food and drink displayed in paintings by Jordaens, Rubens or in the countless Flemish 'banketjes', the various representations of carnivalesque dissipation from Gargantua to Falstaff and Sir Epicure Mammon (cf. the contribution by Müller) underline the fact that early modern man's indulgence in food was more than simply utilitarian nourishment or the display of lifestyle; it is abundantly clear that early modern man's excessive arrangement and consumption of food was predominantly an

acknowledgement of the cornucopia of God-given life, a repudiation of Puritan fundamentalism with its scepticism about anything corporeal, but also a reminder of the transience of life and the constant threat of its inherent rottenness (*mors in vita*).

I.

To what extent concepts of eating, of actively consuming and being passively consumed determined early modern man's life can only be ascertained when one takes into account the fact that the major ontological concerns, love, religion and death, were seen in terms of eating, devouring, and consumption. Out-balancing the dread of both the flesh eater, the sarcophagus, and the jaws of hell with the "supernatural food" of religion,¹ seventeenth-century man was never reluctant to enjoy the pleasures of erotic banquets in which the roles were, however, clearly distributed: men were the patriarchal hosts who insisted on the privilege of defining sexual intercourse as the "carving"² of the best and juiciest meat, whereas women were reduced to the status of lascivious and self-sacrificing titbits. What these amorous banquets, however, reveal is that, in seventeenth-century cultural history, considerable shifts of paradigm affected man's attitude not only towards love, but also towards food.³ In the wake of Don Juan's mass-consumption of women, seventeenth-century libertines tended to see the female sex as erotic fast food that was ravenously devoured and consequently thrown up. A first indication of this bulimic idea of loving and eating is given by Emilia in Shakespeare's *Othello* (1604), when she reflects on the lopsided cannibalising relationship between men and women:

They [= men] are all but stomachs, and we all but food:
They eat us hungerly, and when they are full
They belch us. (*Othello*, III.iv.105 – 107)

This quotation starts off a long tradition not only of disordered amorous consumption, but also of representations of the horrors of eating, which no longer have anything in common with the variegated medieval depictions of gluttony and the vices of the 'bellygods'. To what extent seventeenth-century man's bu-

1 DONNE, John. "The First Anniversary. An Anatomy of the World." l. 188. *Poetical Works*. Edited by Herbert J.C. Grierson. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979. 213.

2 Cf. WILLIAMS, Gordon. *A Glossary of Shakespeare's Sexual Language*. London: Athlone, 1997. 66.

3 For the wider context, see LENNARTZ, Norbert. 'My Unwasht Muse' – (De-)Konstruktionen der Erotik in der englischen Literatur des 17. Jahrhunderts. Tübingen: Niemeyer/De Gruyter, 2009. 246 ff.



“Der Kampf zwischen Fasching und Fasten”, bildarchiv preussischer kulturbesitz, No: 00014347, bpk / Hermann Buresch

limic attitude towards love is instrumental in bringing about modern eating disorders still has to be investigated, but the countless representations of hunger, fasting, nausea, cannibalism and the horrors of eating since the seventeenth century (cf. the contributions by Müller and Baumann) have amply testified to the fact that the pagan trinity of Ceres, Bacchus and Venus had ceased to exist even before the dawn of the Age of the Enlightenment.⁴

Thus, it is one of the aims of this volume to pinpoint the cultural period in which eating and drinking change from being a delight to a necessity (or a perversion) which the body nauseatingly has to undergo and which painfully reminds man of the base materialism of the human condition. A landmark in this cultural history of eating is, apart from Jonathan Swift's works of anthropological disgust, Lord Byron's *Don Juan*, an epic poem that, in the wake of eighteenth-century scepticism (cf. the contribution by Volk-Birke), not only compels us to re-think categories of high and popular culture, but also induces us to come to terms with the shockingly modern re-formulations of concepts such as fighting, loving – and eating. Despite the fact that Byron's *Don Juan* is worlds apart from the Spanish *burlador de Sevilla*, he is meant to make it patently obvious that, on the one hand, there is a vast dichotomy between love and food and, on the other hand, that man is at the mercy of nature, which forces him to devour all that he can get hold of and even to turn into a bestialised cannibal (cf. the contribution by Lennartz).

When in the scandalous Canto II *Don Juan* takes his pathetic farewell of Spain and pompously quotes from Julia's love letter, his amorous effusions are suddenly cut short by the convulsions of sea-sickness. Thus, the narrator laconically states that love's worst enemy is "nausea or a pain / About the lower regions of the bowels" (*Don Juan* II, 23, 177–76). When the love letter figures again in the canto, *Don Juan* is shown sitting in a longboat drawing lots (made out of Julia's letter) to determine who is the first victim to gratify the bodily desires of the shipwrecked men whom fate has turned into cannibals. The only information we are given is that "nature gnawed them to this resolution" (*Don Juan* II, 75, 598.). As will be argued in this volume, it is this almost mechanistic approach to anthropology which, by the beginning of the nineteenth century, recaptured the early modern idea of religion as supernatural food (cf. the contribution by Fetzer) and subjected the fundament of Christianity – the Eucharist – to a "grisly reworking of the Last Supper."⁵ When on the seventh day, *Don Juan*'s tutor,

4 Cf. GUTIERREZ, Nancy A. "Double Standard in the Flesh: Gender, Fasting, and Power in English Renaissance Drama." In: Lilian R. Furst and Peter W. Graham (eds.). *Disorderly Eaters. Texts in Self-Empowerment*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004. 79–93.

5 WILSON, Carol Shiner. "Stuffing the Verdant Goose: Culinary Esthetics in *Don Juan*." In:

Pedrillo, is parcelled out into morsels of food, the Christian concept of the *theophagia* is given an ironic twist; but, what is more, the image of man as a *homo rationalis* and ontological gourmet is replaced by the proto-Darwinian discovery that man is a monstrously gourmandising beast which is completely alienated from two essential alliances: that between love and food and that between food and religion. The fact that, in the end, man can only be saved from the horrors of cannibalism by a venereal disease is the peak of the absurdity of Byron's universe, which is neither indebted to the Romantics' concepts of vegetarianism, nor to the boisterously carnivalesque *Noctes Ambrosianae* (cf. the contribution by Lessenich), but rather to post-Restoration ideas of society as a Hobbesian community in which people either devour or are devoured.

II.

In other nineteenth- and twentieth-century contexts, there is a conjunction between eating and disease (consumption in a twofold sense) or between eating and ontological pessimism which reveals that it is no longer the pleasure of food, but the horror of eating that provides modern culture with one of its prevalent semantic fields (cf. the contributions by Sielke, Drautzburg and Halfmann). While Dickens's hearty eaters and participants of the Pickwickian conviviality are relics of the eighteenth century conjured up to stave off Malthus's economisation of food (cf. the contribution by Paroissien), there is a tradition of indigestion and nausea that surprisingly starts with Keats and eventually culminates in Beckett's and Sartre's portrayals of nausea. As Denise Gigante convincingly argues, in Keats's fragmentary poems *Hyperion* and *The Fall of Hyperion* the Romantic poet conjures up a kind of nausea that "hypostatizes certain elements of the existentialist condition".⁶ Thus, *Hyperion's* nausea, brought about by the "[s]avour of poisonous brass and metal sick" (*Hyperion* l. 189),⁷ is not dissimilar to the bouts of indigestion and dyspepsia that constantly afflict Wells's and Gissing's characters in their turn-of-the-century novels. Epitomising modern man's disgust at the world in which he is doomed to live, dyspepsia is the somatic response of a new generation of anti-heroes who translate their feeling of dislocation into a "nauseous feel" and aversion to eating. In *New Grub Street*,

Evelyn J. Hinz (ed.). Special Issue *Mosaic, Diet and Discourse: Eating, Drinking and Literature* 24 (1991): 33 – 52. 41.

6 GIGANTE, Denise. "The Endgame of Taste: Keats, Sartre, Beckett." In: Timothy Morton (ed.). *Cultures of Taste/Theories of Appetite. Eating Romanticism*. New York/Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2004. 183 – 201. 184 – 85.

7 KEATS, John. "Hyperion. A Fragment." In: *The Complete Poems*. Edited by John Barnard. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987. 288.

dyspepsia is even referred to as the disease “that literary flesh is heir to”;⁸ as ‘martyrs to dyspepsia’, characters like Alfred Yule and his daughter Marian toil in the reading rooms of libraries that are compared to infernal dens where myriads of intellectuals are relentlessly reduced to prey, to ‘hapless flies caught in a huge web’ waiting to be devoured and annihilated by the mechanisms of academic life.

While in the Naturalist novels the dyspeptic characters are relentlessly pitted against the *bêtes humaines* (cf. the contribution by Lennartz), the urban jungle of the late nineteenth-century novel is also inhabited by dandies who are averse to the traditional ways of eating, since they encroach upon their idea of man as a *tableau vivant*. Apart from a few cucumber sandwiches, the dandies tend to see eating as a reminder of their odious corporeality. The fact that Dorian Gray leaves Lady Narborough’s dinner untasted is not only an indication of the guilt that weighs him down after murdering Basil Hallward, it is also expressive of a late nineteenth-century lifestyle that induces people to refrain from bodily pleasure, to develop “mad hungers” (*Dorian Gray* 105) for aestheticist matters and to glut their *ennui* in a Keatsian manner on an orchid. Although Lord Henry Wotton’s gospel of New Hedonism is based on sensuality and on the re-discovery of the senses versus the Victorians’ philosophy of austerity, the sense of taste is given less and less prominence and is clearly subservient to the sense of sight.⁹ The long list of dandies ranging from Byron (himself afflicted with severe eating disorders)¹⁰ to Dorian Gray and Floressas des Esseintes is rather made up of representatives of an ideology of non-consumption, of a “culture of anorexia”¹¹ that supplies the entire Victorian age with an “anorexic logic”¹² and gives both feminised men and women (most prominently Christina Rossetti in “Goblin Market”¹³) the illusion that the negation of bodily pleasures has an aesthetic and intellectual quality.

While nineteenth-century anorexia has its reverberations in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, it is also intriguing to see to what extent the Victorian heritage competes with or initiates the various re-inventions of both the gourmet

8 GISSING, George. *New Grub Street*. Edited by John Goode. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998. 92.

9 For the Victorians’ approach to the senses see also COHEN, William A. *Embodied. Victorian Literature and the Senses*. Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 2009.

10 On Byron’s excessive habit of taking weight-reducing medication, see MACCARTHY, Fiona. *Byron. Life and Legend*. London: Faber and Faber, 2002. 479

11 SILVER, Anna Krugovoy. *Victorian Literature and the Anorexic Body*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002. 37.

12 SILVER. *Victorian Literature and the Anorexic Body*. 37.

13 THOMPSON, Deborah Ann. “Anorexia as a Lived Trope: Christina Rossetti’s ‘Goblin Market.’” Evelyn J. Hinz (ed.). Special Issue *Mosaic, Diet and Discourse: Eating, Drinking and Literature* 24 (1991): 89–106.

and the gourmand in the twentieth century. It was D.H. Lawrence who accused the Victorians of having castrated the subsequent generation.¹⁴ In this respect, the gamekeeper Mellors in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928) reflects the twentieth-century tendency to re-discover the body in the same way as Joyce's Leopold Bloom, who relishes fried kidneys with a strong taste of urine, enjoys the process of defecation in a truly Rabelaisian manner and re-defines the time-honoured, but forgotten procreative triangle of sex, death and eating. Having mused on the tantalising and culinary effect of sex in a cemetery for the dead and compared it to the "[s]mell of grilled beefsteaks to the starving gnawing their vitals" (*Ulysses* 104), Leopold comes to the conclusion that "[a] corpse is meat gone bad" (*Ulysses* 110). These modernist revaluations of the eating body stand in stark contrast both to the *cucina futurista* (cf. the contribution by Hollington) and to the various anti-heroes who fatuously measure their time with coffee spoons and hardly dare to eat a peach. What is more, the anti-Victorian proliferation of food in twentieth-century novels, theatre and film invites comparisons with the representations of the abundance of food in the early modern period. But while the revellers in the works of Rubens, Jordaens and van Dyck eat and drink in the presence of God, the twentieth-century re-invention of eating is illustrative of the lack of a deeper religious meaning in life. The cynic Warburton in George Orwell's 1935 *A Clergyman's Daughter* pinpoints the twentieth-century dissociation of eating and religion, when he says: "When I eat my dinner I don't do it to the greater glory of God; I do it because I enjoy it."¹⁵ While the character in Orwell's novel seems to enjoy the fact that eating is no longer related to the Jesuit principle of living *ad gloriam majorem Dei*, the majority of evidence in the twentieth-century arts show that the joy of eating and food has vanished. The sheer repetitiveness and ostentation of food in Pop Art (Warhol's series of Campbell's tomato soup, which lack the haptic visuality of Chardin's painted food), the debris of food glued to the panels in Daniel Spoerri's re-definition of the still life in his *tableaux pièges* and the constant references to eating as art rather seem to emphasise the fact that the consumption of either fast food or *haute cuisine* is, as in Marc Ferreri's *La Grande Bouffe* (1973), part of a new iconography of decadence (cf. the contribution by Pankratz), a new branch of symbolism which is meant to express less (post-) modern man's delight in life than his boredom and *horror vacui*. Consumption of food suddenly becomes an activity which Vladimir and carrot-nibbling Estragon revert to as a means to kill time and to make man briefly forget that he was born "astride of a grave"¹⁶ and

14 LAWRENCE, D.H. "The Deadly Victorian." In: *The Complete Poems of D.H. Lawrence*. Edited by Vivian de Sola Pinto and Warren Roberts. London: Heinemann, 1964. II, 627.

15 ORWELL, George. *A Clergyman's Daughter*. Edited by Peter Davison. London: Penguin, 2000. 275.

16 BECKETT, Samuel. *Waiting for Godot*. New York: Grove, 1954. 58.

that death, as Byron's "[g]aunt gourmand" (*Don Juan* XV, 9, 69), is constantly waiting for him.

III.

Considering the fact that the semantics of eating can be found in all areas of life and death, one hardly finds it surprising to see that eating also used to have political connotations. The chain of being was reflected not only in the animals that people were allowed to hunt,¹⁷ but also in the food they were allowed to eat. As Penny Bradshaw argues in her essay "The Politics of the Platter: Charlotte Smith and the 'Science of Eating'", the political implications of food can be traced right to the Age of Romanticism, which was marked by the clash between the Prince of Wales's obesity ("great George weighs twenty stone", *Don Juan* VIII, 126, 1008) and the people's malnutrition: "The Prince's dietary excesses function as a symbol of other kinds of excess and depravity, both sexual and economic."¹⁸ The Romantics' inclination for vegetarianism can thus also be understood as a protest against the dissipation of the *ancien régime*, as an accusation of a system in which, as Thomas Rowlandson was to show, power and egotism were defined by over-indulgence in food. In this context, it is even more evident why the Romantics were so fascinated by Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. On the one hand, as Gigante suggests, *Hamlet* provides Keats with the image of the chameleon that feeds on air and thus helps to enact the poet's idea of "ethereal feasting".¹⁹ On the other hand, the Romantics were intrigued by the way *Hamlet* deconstructed ideas of hierarchical order and reversed the chain of being by using the concept of eating. The provocative idea that a "fat king" (Byron's Fum the Fourth?) and a "lean beggar" are just "two dishes to one table" (*Hamlet*, IV.iii.23 – 24)²⁰ is elaborated upon by the chain-like image of a man who has eaten of a fish that swallowed the worm fattened on the corpse of a king. The consequence is that the early modern myth of the chain of being is about to be replaced by a radically modern egalitarian food chain and that in a world in which "a king may go a progress through the guts of a beggar" (*Hamlet*, IV.iii.29 –

17 Cf. LENNARTZ, Norbert. "'Of Hawks and Men': The Love-Hunt as a Sign of Cultural Change in Shakespeare and Cavalier Poetry." In: Matthias Bauer and Angelika Zirker (eds.). *Drama and Cultural Change: Turning Around Shakespeare*. Trier: WVT, 2009. 121 – 34.

18 BRADSHAW, Penny. "The Politics of the Platter: Charlotte Smith and the 'Science of Eating'." In: Timothy Morton (ed.). *Cultures of Taste/Theories of Appetite. Eating Romanticism*. New York/Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2004. 59 – 76. 63.

19 GIGANTE. "The Endgame of Taste: Keats, Sartre, Beckett." 185.

20 SHAKESPEARE, William. *Hamlet*. Edited by Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor. The Arden Shakespeare. London: Thomson Learning, 2006. 363.

30) concepts of high and low are about to be subjected to a relentless process of revolutionary digestion. This scene anticipates the gravedigger scene in act V, where Hamlet explicitly talks about “fine revolution” (*Hamlet*, V.i.85) and once more sees the death of a nobleman in close relationship with consumption, when he imagines “the noble dust of Alexander [...] stopping a bung-hole” (*Hamlet*, V.i.193 – 94).

The political aspect of eating is also touched upon in the “skirmish of wit” which Benedick and Beatrice engage in in *Much Ado about Nothing*. In order to show her initial disregard for patriarchal society and its rituals of war, Beatrice disparages Benedick as a *miles gloriosus*, a ‘valiant trencherman’ who is more interested in eating than in killing and that, as a true-bred virago, she promised ‘to eat all of his killing’. Although Beatrice insinuates that her hunger for Benedick’s victims will remain unsatisfied, the metaphor that the shrewish young woman uses is more than striking and suggestive of her subversive potential. Referring to herself as a scoffing man-eater, she is ready to level all gender distinctions and, in this respect, she represents a threat to Leonato’s court that is both more savage, but also more carnivalesque than Lady Macbeth’s decisive disruption of the state banquet. In both cases, images of eating and banqueting have eminently political connotations and show that ideas of revolution are indissolubly connected with transgressive forms of consumption or the negation of court etiquette. What eventually happens to a body politic when all hierarchies and degrees are repudiated and crude appetite runs riot is, in *Troilus and Cressida*, illustrated by the image of a wolf that cannibalises itself:

And appetite, an universal wolf,
So doubly seconded with will and power,
Must make perforce an universal prey
And last eat up himself. (*Troilus and Cressida*, I.iii.120 – 24)²¹

The danger of the body politic turning into a ferocious monster, into a dystopia where young women eat men’s “heart[s] in the marketplace”, is staved off in comedies like *Much Ado about Nothing* by the idea of an amorous banquet in which the shrew’s voracious mouth is stopped by a kiss (V.iv.97). In tragedies, the transformation of the world is more often than not described in terms of devouring and gourmandising. Thus, King Lear, who brought about the downfall of his kingdom by conjuring up the apocalyptic image of the “barbarous Scythian” who “makes his generation messes / To gorge his appetite” (*King Lear*, I.i.117 – 19),²² finally clings to the illusion that his daughters’ tyranny will culminate and

21 SHAKESPEARE, William. *Troilus and Cressida*. Edited by David Bevington. The Arden Shakespeare. London: Thomson Learning, 2006. 164 – 65.

22 SHAKESPEARE, William. *King Lear*. Edited by R.A. Foakes. The Arden Shakespeare. London: Thomas Nelson, 1997. 165 – 66.

end in a restorative act of mastication and eating: “The good years shall devour them, flesh and fell.” (*King Lear*, V.iii.24)

Approximately 200 years later, Blake returned to the idea of political turmoil and revolution not only as an act of eating, but also as a re-enactment of the Eucharist. Considering the fact that “in the winepresses the human grapes sing not nor dance”²³ and that the corn in Urizen’s stores must be ground and crushed relentlessly, Blake was painfully aware of the horrors that his millennial visions were based on; but while Hamlet’s and Lear’s ideas of revolution were essentially moored in the egalitarian notion of devouring and being devoured, Blake’s revolutionary Eucharist is motivated by a teleological impetus, by the vision of a world in which “the golden armour of science” and “intellectual war”²⁴ have made Beatrice’s cruel ideas of war as ritualistic cannibalism, as killing and eating obsolete.

IV.

As is evident from the previous sections, the semantics of eating and consuming are ubiquitous. Even thinking and writing are more often than not understood in terms of eating and consuming. When George Eliot uses the metaphor of the brain as the ‘intellectual stomach’ in *Mill on the Floss*, she is in line with a tradition that represented all sorts of intellectual activities as masticating, ruminating (in the etymological sense of chewing) and digesting. It was not only playwrights like Jonson and Chapman who drew extensively on the analogy between the poet and the cook (cf. the contribution by Klawitter); it was always the habit of writers and artists to regard themselves as cooks, chefs, as creators of delicious farces (cf. the contribution by Seeber) and distributors of sophisticated meals challenging and trying to transcend the arts of cooking since Apicius. But with the early modern ideas of the pleasures of eating, of the carnivalesque abundance of food changing into visions of horror, cannibalism and bulimia, post eighteenth-century literature, like various other arts, seems to have undergone a tremendous shift of paradigm in this area as well: no longer defined as a sequence of exquisite courses, literature eschews all culinary frills and faces the readership with cruder forms of eating and digesting. Thus, it is quite consistent with the end of literary *haute cuisine* that Byron defines his own parody of epic poetry, *Don Juan*, as an *olla podrida*,²⁵ as a stew in which all ingredients, high and

23 BLAKE, William. *Vala, or the Four Zoas* IX, 745. *The Complete Poems*. Edited by W.H. Stevenson. London/New York: Longman, 1989. 459.

24 BLAKE. *Vala, or the Four Zoas* IX, 745. 850 – 51.

25 The *olla podrida* is also a dish which was eaten by all classes, which “peasant, poor knight and

pop culture, pathos and obscenity, are mixed and the pleasures of eating are constantly in danger of being eclipsed by the horrors of cannibalism and vomiting. Arguing in the same vein, the narrator in Charlotte Brontë's novel *The Professor* (1846) is reluctant to cater to his readers' craving for the lusciousness of textual honey and considers it necessary to familiarise them with the unpalatable aspects of life, "a little gall",²⁶ which, in the middle of the Victorian age, is administered only in small quantities, "just a drop, by way of change", but which was to dominate literary menus by the end of the nineteenth century and also affected the self-understanding of poets like Gerard Manley Hopkins, who saw himself as the embodiment of indigestion: "I am gall, I am heartburn."²⁷

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26 BRONTË, Charlotte. *The Professor*. Edited by Margaret Smith and Herbert Rosengarten. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987. 227.

27 HOPKINS, Gerard Manley. "I wake and feel the fell of dark" l. 9. *Selected Poetry*. Edited by Catherine Philips. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996. 151. See also COHEN, William A. *Embodied. Victorian Literature and the Senses*. Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 2009. 127–30.

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“Schollers are Bad Caruers” – Analogies of Reading and/as Eating in Tudor Physiology and Fiction

I.

The Renaissance with its different social, economic, as well as political structures had its own consumption theories and practices, as can be shown in a comparative approach to the respective eating and reading codes. Recent research within the fields of cultural studies has focused on aristocratic forms of eating (banqueting) as exponents of early modern food culture (1500 – 1800) and the semiotic contexts of writing, reading, and eating.¹ Both food and books (printed or otherwise) became more and more parts of a consumer society, even in circles below the social rank of nobility. Therefore, Naomi Conn Liebler’s statement that “[r]eading for pleasure made books into commodities and readers into consumers”² implies not only the semantic proximity of reading, consuming and digesting, but it also highlights the continuous nature of this process which is in full swing in the 1570s and 1580s, the time largely covered by the following argument.

With reference to the changing discourse of eating in the transition from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance, Ken Albala talks of “familiar classical topoi” which covered the early modern table, and suggests the colourful variety of heavily laden tables. Yet often it was not the result of an exclusive variety of dishes made from numerous ingredients, but the maximal exploitation of rela-

1 Cf. ALBALA, Ken. *The Banquet: Dining in the Great Courts of Late Renaissance Europe*. Urbana/Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2007; and TOMASIĆ, Timothy J. and Juliann M. VITULLO (eds.). *At the Table: Metaphorical and Material Cultures of Food in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*. Turnhout: Brepols, 2007. A specific English background is surveyed in WILSON, Anne C. (ed.). ‘Banqueting Stufe’: *The Fare and Social Background of the Tudor and Stuart Banquet* (Papers from the First Leeds Symposium on Food and Traditions, April 1986). Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1989. SIM includes in her account the planning and organization, as well as conventions at and after table (SIM, Alison. *Food and Feast in Tudor England*. Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1997).

2 LIEBLER, Naomi Conn. “Introduction.” In: Naomi Conn Liebler (ed.). *Early Modern Prose Fiction: The Cultural Politics of Reading*. London: Routledge. 1 – 17, 2007. 5.

tively few items.³ Although many contemporary representations of heavily charged dinner tables (with their edible as well as edificatory items) implicitly include the rhetorical ‘copia’, written into commonplace books, or carved into wax-tables, as well as the critique of such abundance: One need only remember the case of Petrarchist sonnet-poetry with its ‘grammar’ of a limited set of images combined in an abundance of poetical variations which, in its negations, inversions and perversions, could conveniently be re-cycled in Anti-Petrarchist poetry: The one, as well as the other, might serve as celebrated entertainments at a meal, and like the elaborate fabrications of sweets, poems were meant to evoke surprise and astonishment (a typical example of the classical ideal of *celare artem*, or the contemporary Italianate *sprezzatura*).

Quite fittingly Albala, as well as Jean-Louis Flandrin, point at the occasionally imaginary, indeed fantastic quality in verbal as well as visual representations of food.⁴ The literary representation of abundant masses of food and drink, supposedly available to the consumer, stood still in sharp contrast even to the comparatively advanced early modern everyday routine, governed by moral codes which reflected the actual economic realities. Such aspects have been shown in several monographs, particularly with reference to the staging of food

3 ALBALA describes the “scenario” for a menu of a wealthy Italian household, deduced from the information given by Giovanni Battista Rossetti, marshal at the court of Urbino, in his treatise *Dello Scalco* (Ferrara, 1584). I shall only quote here the selection offered for the first course at a dinner held during Lent in March 1584 (cf. ALBALA. *The Banquet*. 12): “The meal began with the head [of a sturgeon] cooked in a white sauce sprinkled with pomegranate seeds. This was followed by sturgeon meatballs in a sauce served on slices of bread. Then slices of sturgeon in a pistachio sauce arrived. [...] Next came sturgeon pies, then sturgeon under cherries and jujubes – a small date-like fruit. Then another kind of sturgeon pie, a soup of sturgeon ‘milk’ (milt of fresh semen) with herbs, white cabbage with sturgeon belly, crushed chickpeas with salted sturgeon, sturgeon tripe on German bread, sturgeon removed from its pastry shell with spicy sauce, sturgeon eggs and beaten sturgeon in a thick soup with sops, pieces of sturgeon in the German fashion with French mustard, fresh caviar, and lastly sturgeon meatballs cooked in a baking tin.” (ALBALA. *The Banquet*. 13) A similar plenitude may be expected in England, considering the equally stunning variety of drinks yielded from a limited set of elementary ingredients: Beverages not being in the central focus of the present context, a pamphlet, authored by the late George GASCOIGNE, titled *A Delicate Dyet for Daintiemouthed Droonkards* (London, 1576) may suffice as an illustration: Giving his criticism rhetorical emphasis by means of the figure *copia*, the author attacks the insatiable thirst for spirits, and eloquently complains that “[...] we [English] must haue March beere, dooble dooble Beere, Dagger ale, Bragget, Renish wine, White wine, French wine, Gascoyne wine, Sack, Hollocke, Canaria wine, *Vino greco: Vinu amabile*, & al the wines that may be gotten: yea wine of it selfe is not sufficient, but Suger, Limons, & su[n]dry sortes of Spices, must be drowned therin.” (pag. [20])

4 Cf. FLANDRIN, Jean-Louis. “Distinction Through Taste.” In: Roger Chartier (ed.), Arthur Goldhammer (transl.). *A History of Private Life, vol. III: Passions of the Renaissance*. Cambridge, Mass/London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1989. 265 – 309. 279. Cf. also ALBALA. *The Banquet*. 3.

in Shakespeare's plays.⁵ Other significant writers of this time have been more or less neglected, such as those of slightly earlier contemporary courtly narratives which eventually will become the focus of this paper.⁶

This chapter unfolds a few of the multiple layers within the early modern consumerist textures in Tudor England. Although one might distinguish at least two kinds of classical traditions on the representation of meals, I shall concentrate on the philosophical one which has its most important ancient representative in Plato's *Symposion*. The other, satirical tradition of Petronius' *Cena Trimalchionis* will only marginally be dealt with here.⁷ Ultimately I shall survey a necessarily limited, but paradigmatic range of early modern textual witnesses in medicine (physiology), educational treatises and dietary books. My argument will unravel the principal correlations of these discourses as social (public rather than private, or individual) formations, and then survey reading and eating techniques as well as the (physio-)logical consumption and cognitive appropriation theories current in the late sixteenth century. I will conclude with a tentative explanation of the paradoxical presence of discursive elements of reading and eating and the absence of close descriptions of meals in contemporary prose narratives.

II.

Eating, unlike reading, was accepted by the early moderns as a necessary evil; but, like reading, it was held in disregard and often suspected of idleness. The frequency, quantity and substance of meals, as well as books, were closely monitored. Various secular and clerical authorities encoded these activities with moral implications, directed against their excessive consumption. Their quantitative limitation in a largely neo-Stoicist climate was vindicated by a reasoning

5 Cf. FITZPATRICK, Joan. *Food in Shakespeare: Early Modern Dietaries and the Plays*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007; O'MAHONEY, Katherine and Elizabeth O'MAHONEY. *Shakespeare on Food and Drink*. London: Prion, 2002; and CATON, Mary Ann (ed.). *Fooles and Fricassees: Food in Shakespeare's England*. Washington, DC: The Folger Library, 1999. See also Chapter 4 in a less savoury study by EGAN, Gabriel. *Green Shakespeare: From Ecopolitics to Ecocriticism*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2006.

6 Rather for reasons of space and focus than for those of subject and method, this sample excludes poetry and plays, but one may, of course, expect correspondences to the results presented here. As for (Jacobean) plays, cf. Wolfgang G. Müller's, Matthias Bauer's and Uwe Klawitter's respective contributions in this volume.

7 Even this dichotomy may be criticized as far too reductive for the early modern context. Apart from the two traditions mentioned, we would have – in an extensive and systematic approach – to take into account books of housekeeping as well as books of hunting, gardening (botany) and related publications which 'feed' the discourse of consumption.

which was based on the Judeo-Christian hierarchy of mind over matter, or (eternal) spirituality and (transient) materiality.

Thus, with respect to eating, Andrew Boorde, physician to the late Henry VIII, points out in chapter IX of his *Compendyous Regyment or Dietary of healthe* (1547) that “two meales a daye is suffycyent for a reste man, and a labourer maye eate thre tymes a day, & he that doth eate after lyueth a beastly lyfe.” And he insists that “is is nat good to syt longe at dyner and supper. An houre is suffycyent to syt at dyner, and nat so longe a supper. England hath an euyl vse in syttinge longe at dyner and at supper.” (*A Compendyous Regyment*, sigs. [C.iv]-[C.iv.v])⁸ In a like manner, Thomas Twynne, in his treatise *The Schoolmaster, or Teacher of Table Philosophy* (1583), confirms that one meal “between one day and a night, or at the most [two meals] in one day, or which is more temperate [three meals] in two days” (*The Schoolmaster, or Teacher of Table Philosophy*, pag. 8).⁹ Particularly the reading of court fiction or poetry in the emerging environment of leisure time activities among the nobility was confined to a small daily dosage. John Lyly, author of two highly successful prose-narratives, only repeats a contemporary medical truth in *Euphues, Or the Anatomy of Wit* (1578), when he refers to the damaging physiological effect of reading, which is relative to its quantity: “Too much studie doth intoxicate the[-] braynes”.¹⁰ Nor is it surprising that one of the prefatory letters in the anthology *The Posies of George Gascoigne, Esq.* (1575) warns of an all too rapid and ‘greedy’ reading as a form of excess: “Mary you must take heede how you vse the[se poems].”¹¹

It goes without saying that, if ‘the many’ were excluded from such pleasures and regulated in their intake of words and letters, there were proportional exceptions for ‘the chosen few’. A highly codified, fashionable and “self-fashion-

8 Every Short Title Catalogue text quoted or discussed in this chapter will be quoted from the ones made available by *Early English Books Online* (EEBO), URL <http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home>.

9 This guide itself refers back to the late medieval tradition of the *Mensa philosophia*, a thirteenth-century treatise. Cf. JEANNERET, Michel. *A Feast of Words: Banquets and Table Talk in the Renaissance*. Translated by Jeremy Whately and Emma Hughes. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991 [1987]. 92–94.

10 LYL, John. *Euphues, Or the Anatomy of Wit*. London, 1578. pag. 8. Lyly’s phrase echoes Sir Thomas ELYOT’s dedicatory letter to Thomas Cromwell, introducing the 1536 edition of *The Castel of Healthe*. His addressee, Elyot says, “is so charged with studye continuall, and travayle of mynde, specially about matters of weighty importance, nedes must his body be somtyme subject to syknesse [...]” (quoted from BISHOP, Louise M. *Words, Stones and Herbs: The Healing Word in Medieval and Early Modern England*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2007. 206).

11 “To al yong Gentlemen, and generally to the youth of England.” (In: GASCOIGNE, George. *The Posies of George Gascoigne*. 1575. sig. ¶¶.iiij^v – [¶¶.iiij^r].) *The Posies* were published first anonymously and in a different arrangement under the title *A Hundreth Sundrie Flowres* in 1573.

ing” visual culture such as the early modern looked upon many occasions of eating as theatrical performances – banquets had a highly symbolic quality, and carried an intrinsic semiotic value.¹² An aristocratic banquet, just as a merchant’s dinner, bore the significance of a political show: it stood for power, glory and charity. In a similar way the communal reading of a book was regarded as an intellectual sharing (out) of food for thought. Especially among contemporary trend-setters, such as the various patrons and their circles at the courts of Henry VIII and of Elizabeth I, two kinds of convivial sophistication – poetry and pastry – were held in particularly high regard. Hardly surprisingly, banquets turn out to be in fact carefully designed multimedial and synaesthetic events:

The scent of various dishes and drinks inevitably enlivened the diners’ palates, which were further perfumed with aromatic spices, plants, and flowers. Images from tapestry-adorned walls as well as brightly colored foods and ornate dishes undoubtedly provided a multicolored visual display to tempt and inform the eye of invited guests. The ear was certainly not forgotten in the proceedings of a banquet, in that music from itinerant or court-appointed musicians often accompanied the serving of food. Short plays and poetry further entertained those at the table who were obliged to wait between courses for dishes. Finally, in the general absence of individual fork use and in the sharing of communal bowls and utensils, the medieval and early modern banquet was a tactile experience of the first order. By engaging the five senses of the body, banquets became privileged arbiters in the construction of identities, whether personal or political.¹³

Eating and entertainment went hand in hand, either (at smaller occasions) as table-talk in the tradition of the ancient *sermones conviviales*, or (at bigger ones) in the shape of visual spectacles performed in interludes between the courses of a meal, not to mention the musical performances. Yet the indulgence in sensory and sensual pleasures was readily followed by the doctor’s admonition and as quickly condemned by censorious moralists who suspected any inadequate revelling in carnal pleasures of *luxuria* and *gula*. Since both the ingredients of food and the contents of books entered the body, they effected a physiological alteration in the consumer – a digest.¹⁴

12 Cf. ALBALA. *The Banquet*. 4.

13 TOMASIK and VITULLO. *At the Table*. xvi. Cf. also STEAD, Jennifer. “Bowers of Bliss: The Banquet Setting.” In: Anne C. Wilson (ed.). *‘Banqueting Stufe’: The Fare and Social Background of the Tudor and Stuart Banquet*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1989. 115–57. 120.

14 Cf. HAMPTON, Timothy. “Strange Alterations: Physiology and Psychology from Galen to Rabelais.” In: Gail Kern Paster, Katherine Rowe and Mary Floyd-Wilson (eds.). *Reading the Early Modern Passions: Essays in the History of Emotion*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004. 272–93.

III.

A host of semantic derivations of “digest” feature as sub-entries in Thomas Cooper’s *Thesaurus Linguae Romanae & Britannicae* (1565), signifying the “Deuices placed and sette in order in a reckening booke” nearby such connotations as “Breake or diuide the meat” and “to resolue and consume an humour” (*Thesaurus* 223). Sir Francis Bacon’s essay “Of Studies” (1597) distinguishes three different grades of readerly attentiveness and reading pace: “Some bookes are to bee tasted, others to bee swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested [*sic*]: That is, some bookes are to be read only in partes; others to be read, but cursorily, and some few to be read wholly and with diligence and attention.” (“Of Studies”, sig. B^v)¹⁵

According to the contemporary models of anatomy, the brain, the organs of sensual perception and the intestines were connected by the veins and the nerves, all of them conceived as hollow channels filled with the humours, or vapours of their constitutive elements. In the process of digestion the composite substances of food were dissolved in “good” or “yll juices” (as Elyot terms them), consisting of the four natural elementary aggregates (hot, dry, wet, airy). In like fashion, the written or spoken word could trigger an increase of concentration of one of these humours in the individual organism: Due to the psycho-mechanic model of early modern physiology, reading and eating could have analogous effects on body and mind. In agreement with the contemporary complementarity of *carpe diem* and *memento mori*, eating and reading were both considered an ambivalent practice: If they did not positively add to the consumer’s well-being, they could well work as potential dangers in the organism instead, both in its physical as well as mental and even spiritual dimensions.

In short, consumers of either food or words were considered patients. In Thomas Elyot’s dietary *The Castel of Healthe* (1539) we find in the first two of four parts (“books”) the explanations of the various kinds of food, whereas the two concluding books give hints and suggestions as to how to alleviate the effects of unhealthy and/or excessive meals or hangovers. Chapter VI of Timothy Bright’s *Treatise of Melancholy* (1586) details not only the diet a person of melancholic disposition should keep (avoiding a host of various meats, vegetables, herbs, and drinks), but also warns of “ouer vehement studies” (*Treatise of Melancholy* 30). The physiological products generated by vegetative and perceptive digestion entered the first ventricle of the brain, thus affecting the

15 Although he is very much aware of the digestive analogies in textual consumerism, BACON creates a double focus in his reference to the vegetative system and to the brains, housing the capability of reason and judgment: “Read not to contradict and confute; nor to believe and take for granted; nor to find talk and discourse; but to weigh and consider” (“Of Studies”, sig. B^v).

imagination and causing images which then affected the second ventricle, that of judgment. Thomas Lambrit, alias Thomas Geminus, explains the mechanical ‘channels’ in his *Compendios a totius anatomiae*:

[...] it is to be noted that from the foremost figure or ventricle of the brayne, spryngen seuen payre of sensitiue or feling synowes, called in Latyne *Nerui*, whiche are from thence produced and conueyed forth to the Eyes, the Eares, the Tongue, and the Stomacke, and in lyke maner to dyuerse and sondrye partes of the bodye [...]. (*Compendios* (first English edition), sig. B.ii.)¹⁶

As people were always exposed to good and bad influences, religious zealots were anxious to filter out the evil resident in any aspect of life. “Anglophile Eutheo” (probably the pamphleteer’s mask of romance-writer and playwright Anthony Munday) warns in the *Second and Third Blast against the theatres* (1580: pag. 155) of “Maygames, Stageplaies, & such the like”: “yf we be carefull that no pollution of idoles enter by the mouth into our bodies, how diligent, how circumspect, how wary ought we to be, that no corruption of idols, enter by the passage of our eyes & eares into our soules?” But what exactly was so risky about the reading gaze that Bacon, anticipating Harold Bloom and Jonathan Culler by four hundred years, managed to conceptualize his own ‘map of misreading’ by identifying a “contract of Errour betweene the Deliuierer and the Receiuer” in the second book of his *Advancement of Learning* (1605)?

A bifocal glance at George Gascoigne’s anthology *The Posies* and at *The Arte of English Poesie* (1589), presumably the work of George Puttenham, may help to answer this question. Gascoigne’s anthology consists of more than the short mottoes which *The Arte* suggests: This treatise covers in its first book the various genres of poetry performed at a large variety of occasions, and the author points out that such one- or two-line mottoes or “Posies” were “Printed or put vpon their banketting dishes of suger plate or of march paines [i.e., marzipane, JM], & such other dainty meates as by the curtesie & custome” (*The Arte* 47). Gascoigne’s anthology thus reflects this context (apart from the obvious ‘hortographical’), considering the allusion to the treats offered after a meal: “Posies” were part of the sweet “banquetting stufte” which finished a more or less formal dinner, and corresponded to the more copious entertainments during the main courses. Gascoigne divides his works into three sections ‘Flowers’, ‘Herbes’ and

16 The *Compendios* is itself a fascinating object of study, being, in its first (Latin) edition dedicated to the late Henry VIII, a plagiarized collation of two anatomical works by Andreas Vesalius: It combines the illustrations of *De fabrica corporis humani septem libri* (1543) with the text of the much shorter, earlier collection of seven anatomical tables (1537). The first English edition, dedicated to Edward VI, was presented by Nicholas Udall; it deviates from the Vesalian principles, and – though still using his illustrations – relapses into many concepts of the ancient Galenic anatomy. In 1559, the second edition appeared, now dedicated to Elizabeth I.

‘Weedes’. These sections contain two plays (‘Iocasta’ and ‘Supposes’), two narratives (‘Dan Bartholomewe of Bath’ in verse and ‘The Pleasaunt Fable of Ferdinando Ieronimo and Leonora di Vascolo’ as prosimetrum) and a host of poems. ‘Herbes’, of course, may be used both in cooking and in medicine, whilst the ‘Flowres’-section represents all-too pleasant Epicurean texts, and ‘Weedes’ suggests the seeds of illicit carnal lust and excessive growth of vicious ideas. With these categories Gascoigne alludes to the moral edification transported by the individual texts. He instructs his young gentlemen readers not to peruse his volume, or any of its sections, all at once, but bit by bit, like picking flowers in a field, or trying items on a set table. He explains the uses of application: “[...] I have not ment that onely the floures are to bee smelled vnto, nor that onely the Weedes are to be reiected. [...] as many weedes are right medicinable, so may you find in this none so vile or stinking, but that it hath in it some virtue if it be rightly handled.” (*The Posies*, sig. ¶¶.iiij) Addressing the “youth of England”, he finally insists on the crucial aspect of a proper, i. e. carefully measured (‘carved-up’) consumption of his works. In the end this application is in the reader’s responsibility: “To speake English, it is your vsing (my lustie Gallants) or misvsing of these Posies that make me prayed or dispraised for publishing of the same” (*The Posies*, sig. [¶¶.iiij.]). Other authors even express in their disclaimer a sense of resignation, as Stephen Gosson does in his reader address of *Playes confuted in fiue actions*, emphasizing the tempo-spatial gap in print communication: “I haue my bokes in my study at commandement: you are out of my walke & your owne men.” (*Playes* s.p.)

IV.

Despite all the admonitions for the proper use of a book, and despite all the words of caution, books were also regarded as a therapeutic medium against such illnesses as a melancholic distemper. Fashioned as subjects rather than as legitimately autonomous individuals, readers imbibed Platonic “pharmakon”, in both its senses of the word as poison as well as cure. Writers, as physicians or cooks (or gardeners), provided the necessary instructions and adequate tools for reading properly, i. e. adequately: Some chose ancient Hippocratic and Galenic models, others preferred modern medical codes such as Paracelsian and Vesalian approaches to the human organism in order to describe the physiological processes in the cognitive act. Indeed, Puttenham, in a chapter titled “The Forme of Poeticall Lamentations” (Book I: XXIV), ascribes the sympathetic Paracelsian physiology to “noble poets”, whereas the rest procures a less inspired *pharmakon* in accordance with the old-fashioned principles of Galenic medicine:

Therefore of deaths and burials, of th'aduersities by warres, and of true loue lost or ill bestowed are th'onely sorrowes that the noble Poets sought by their arte to remoue or appease, not with any medicament of a contrary temper, as the *Galenistes* vse cure [*contraria contrariis*], but as the *Paracelsians*, who cure [*similia similibus*], making one dolour to expell another, and, in this case, one short sorrowing the remedie of a long and grieuous sorrow. (*The Arte* 39)

It was for these physiological models that reading was, like eating, predominantly a social performance, with the communal 'digest' or discussion following the reading proper, as Richard Rainolde puts it in the *Foundations of Rhetoricke* (1563): "First, ye shall recite the fable, as the aucthore telleth it. [...] There in the second place, you shall praise the aucthore who made the fable [...]. Then thirdly place the morall, which is the interpretation annexed to the fable, for the Fable was invented for the moralles sake." (*Foundations*, sig. iv^v) The recipients' comments are not mentioned explicitly, but the reference to an instructive/instructed interpretation pouring from the reciter's mouth makes clear that it prevented the individual listener from construing 'his' or 'her own' meaning of the text, not intended by the author or his representative.

The regulations of eating, as well as those of reading, were highly dependent on "syxe thynges", as Elyot points out in *The Castle of Healthe*: "Substance, / Quantitie, / Qualitie, / Custome, / Tyme, / Order" (*The Castle of Healthe* 12^v). These structural categories are analogous to the five elements of rhetorics (*inventio, dispositio, elocutio, memoria, actio*), and they suggest how to arrange, and deliver, the substance and the courses of a meal, just as a rhetorical instruction helps to arrange a speech in its argumentative structure, and – according to subject and occasion – to deliver it in an orderly, convincing mode: The dish becomes a text, *vice versa*, the text a dish.

Whereas Elyot refers to the physiological effects of a large variety of meat, fish, grocery, fruit and drinks, other dietary books also consider the environmental conditions, the atmosphere of eating, and establish a specifically dietary semiotic system. Boorde reflects in the first nine out of 40 chapters of his *Compendyous Regyment* the proper location of a mansion before he enters his discussion of food proper – this approach throwing a light upon the generally holistic dimension of eating which took into account the location of the eating place, the substance of the food, the physiology of the body, and all their effects on the diner's mind. Referring more closely to communal eating practises, *Table Philosopher* Twynne points out that, if considered a pleasant social activity, eating required to be spiced up by delightful table talk: "either concerning the nature and quality of the meates and drinckes wherof we feede, or els touching their condition, and manners with whome we meete at the table: or lastly of such merimentes and honest deuices wherwith we may be refreshed and delighted at our meate" (*The Schoolmaster, or Teacher of Table Philosophy*, sig. A2^v).

Table talk included well-informed conversation about the food proper, social performances such as the reading of manuscript poetry or debates wittily exhausting a set topic (e. g., the habit of discussing love in the Italian fashion of *questioni d'amore* in courtly fiction, as well as the philosophical arguments exchanged in didactic literature). As Jeanneret has pointed out, “this ideal of easily digestible and apparently artless speech goes beyond the field of table talk; it reflects the search for gentlemanliness and the model of wit which became accepted as norms of elegance even before the seventeenth century.”¹⁷

V.

The crucial question about reading and eating was one of vegetative and intellectual control. Therefore Renaissance writers took recourse to the typical ancient (Platonic) roles of cook, physician or pharmacologist, which warrant for a high degree of control over the reader, and they express the hierarchy between the elevated position of the writer over that of the reader who, in principle, needs assistance by the producer of a text – the simple command over deciphering printed letters is not sufficient in the act of reading, what is needed goes beyond and implies the strategic anticipation of readers’ internal activities and capacities, just as any cook has to anticipate the consumer’s appetites, and the host his guests’ needs and expectations. Stephen Gosson, in his anti-histrionic invective titled *The Schoole of Abuse* (1579), dedicates his argument to the young Philip Sidney. The author fashions himself as a cook and bids Sidney “to Dinner, not to loke for a feast fit for the curious taste of a perfect Courtier: [...] I trust it your Worshippe feede sparingly on this, (to comferte your poore Hoste) in hope of a better course hereafter, though the Dishes bee fewe that I set before you, they shall for this time suffice your selfe and a great many moe” (*The Schoole of Abuse* 5).¹⁸

Henry Butts’ *Dyets Dry Dinner* (1599) is a prime example of how table talk was medially pre-conceived and conducted. It provides another view of the contemporary holism which attempts to establish a sound balance of microcosm and macrocosm, of the humours and the elements. Distinguished into eight groups of ingredients, the individual items are represented for the cook who prepares the dishes according to their dietary value and physiological effects (always minding the balance of the humours, or its restoration), and for the

17 JEANNERET. *A Feast of Words*. 95.

18 *The Schoole* was presumably commissioned by the London magistrate, turning against the increasing acceptance of theatres in the London of the late 1570s, addressing men and women alike. The treatise preceded those of the “Anglophile Eutheo” quoted below, and was the first “blow against the theatres”, but attacks also dancing and fencing.

carver who serves the dishes. Each entry comments on their good quality in a respective “Story for Table-talk”, and referring to their cultural history, or etymology.¹⁹ Butts, providing a “code” with the “content”,²⁰ splits his *cook-persona* even into a self-same company of four: a “Cater”, a “Taster”, a “Cooke” proper, and a “Caruer”. However, he points out that, as a scholar, he can offer nothing like a “banquet, but a byt rather of each dish *Scholler-likely*, that is, badly carued. For *Schollers are bad Caruers*”. Therefore, in the end, he assumes the role of the reader’s “Cup-bearer” (*Dyets Dry Dinner* 10). This functional differentiation implies a writer who does not present himself as the kitchen chef, but also as a waiter delivering his badly carved cuts, and serving beverages to the readers/guests. Of course, there is a hierarchy in the enumeration of these offices: Only the carver and the cup-bearer were exposed to the public opinion and possible criticism; and yet the success of the whole meal depends on them and their method of delivering the dish to the diners. Moreover, Butts’ *Dyets* displays the social dimension of food (especially in its preparatory stages) even in its design and layout: The two orders of recipients are indicated by a different type-face; whereas the cook would have to read the commonly known Roman letters, the carver was treated to a technically more refined, socially more prestigious, and financially more expensive Antiqua font.

Of course, like the fixed structure of a meal as demanded by Elyot, this quasi-institutional arrangement can be seen as a correlative to that of the publication business with author, printer, publisher, and reciter; the first two of whom are involved in the production of the text, whilst the two latter deliver it to the public. One important aspect for early modern readers was thus to ‘configure’ their readers, anticipating not only various strategies of consumption and digestion, but also providing technical aids which helped to carve the text according to its substance. In order to account as well as possible for a successful reception, book-producers (writers, as well as printers) prepared in spite of themselves some technical aids especially for silent readers, although there always remained the risk of ‘misconstruction’ (misreading), and they tried to minimize their own share in the responsibility. We can find them also in other, less directly appellative paratextual “search tools”, such as the title-pages, table of contents, headlines, printed marginalia, appendices, and indexes, all of which may commodify the process of repeated, i. e. habitual silent reading. Reading historians, such as William Slights in his study *Managing Readers*,²¹ have analysed the technical tools which served early modern readers as metaphorical cutlery and

19 Cf. BUTTS, Henry. *Dyets Dry Dinner*. London, 1599. sig. B4^v/B5.

20 Cf. JEANNERET. *A Feast of Words*. 95.

21 SLIGHTS, William W.E. *Managing Readers: Printed Marginalia in English Renaissance Books*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001.

helped them “carve” the book into its “sections”. The equipment of a book enabled readers to achieve the ideal end of all reading – which was, long before the much more elaborate critical discourse of the eighteenth century, the perfection of a the communicative (dialogue-based) capacity rather than the development of an aesthetic ‘taste’.

Still, George Gascoigne suggests in the first prefatory letter of *The Posies* that the earlier collection of his poems, *A Hundreth Sundrie Flowres*, had mismatched the taste and sensitivities of his readers. As a result it had been “misconstrued, and therefore [been considered] scandalous”. In his apologetic epistle addressing the Royal Commissioners (“The reuerend diuines”), Gascoigne adds that he found out that when “talking vvith .xx. of them one after another, there haue not been tvvo [readers] agreed in one coniecture”.²² Thus it was mainly the uncontrollable influx of bad ideas and images which might flood the reader’s imagination and which, like any vapour rising from the stomach after too copious consumption of food and drink, might also affect the sanity of the mind. Reading, understood *verbatim* as part of the diet and agent of physiological processes, might trigger a detrimental reaction in the first ventricle of the brain, conceived as a seat of the imagination. The pseudonymous author of the *Second and Third Blast* gives his recipients this fair warning: “There cometh much euil in at the eares, but more at the eies, by these two open windows death breaketh into the soule.” (*Second and Third Blast* pag. 96) This might result in a delusive overflow of false images, and therefore a quasi-Icarian mind of talented poetic disposition, according to Philip Sidney, needed to be governed by a Daedalian spirit.²³ Bright points out that intensive reading, or studying, might be particularly dangerous for a melancholy person’s state: “In studie I comprehend [...] all actions of internall senses, which are ministers and seruantes of studie, whether it be of learning, or of meditation, and inuention: which later kinde, farre more toyleth the bodie, then the former, and therefore farther off is it to be remoued.” (*A Treatise of Melancholy* 238)

According to the limitations in the codified eating times and quantities, the intake of letters depended on the quality of contents. To illustrate this maxim, we may refer to the beginning of the second book in Stephen Gosson’s anti-Romance *The Ephemerides of Phialo* (1579). Gosson introduces Ieraldi, an occasional silent reader who is eager to profess his preference for any form of interactive conversation to a book. Upon Philotimo’s elaborate apologies for disturbing him at this inconvenient hour of his leisure and solitude, “graue father” Ieraldi answers:

22 “To the reuerende Diuines.” (*The Posies*, sigs. ¶.ij.^r and ¶¶.^r)

23 Cf. SIDNEY, Philip. *The Defense of Poetry*. London, 1596. sig. H.3. – For Sidney, it should be emphasised, inspiration is a control element rather than the liberation of the individual wit.

No Sir, [...] excepte you iudge me to be a Cato, whose eyes were continually fixed on his Booke, his minde asmuche busied in Ciuill gouernmente. That which I reade, is onely to shunne idlenesse, when I lacke such good company [as you]. My learning is small, my iudgement as slender in matters of weight; therefore, haue I chosen a booke to peruse, as rather delighteth mee with pleasant conceites, than troubles my wittes with constringing of things beyond my reach. (*The Ephemerides of Phialo*, pag. [22^v]-23^r)

Philotimo and Ieraldi display various historical attitudes towards reading – the former (modern) one recognises it as a solitary meditative activity in quiet which deserves to be respected, the latter (traditional) other distinguishes between reading of serious matters, i.e. those of the state, the body politic. For these, only a few readers are by office entitled and by intellect qualified to understand, which includes the necessity of publicly construed meaning. This serious method of reading is opposed to its light counterpart, which should not exceed, but rather be adapted in proportion to the reader's capacities.

If Gosson seems to weigh two reading strategies, it is John Lyly who builds up a contrast between casting a text with ancient or modern reading performances and strategies in *Euphues and His England* (1580). Euphues' companion, Philautus, falls in love with Camilla shortly after their arrival in England. Her reaction builds a contrast to the unfaithful Neapolitan girl Lucilla featured in the first Euphues-narrative, *The Anatomy of Wit*: Camilla represents the female pride of England. She remains faithful to her fiancée and turns down the unexpected and unsuitable suitor from the very beginning. Philautus, in turn, becomes an early modern 'stalker', sending her one love-letter after the next, and he only stops as Camilla threatens to make his words public. One of his supposedly witty inventions is to hollow out a pomegranate and to fill its centre with one of his love-letters – the letter hidden in the drug supposedly representing the potential effect of its contents on its reader – it is supposed to lure Camilla into an affair with Philautus. But Camilla remains firm, and is in fact revolted by her suitor's conduct: "In faith, Philautus, [the pomegranate] had a fair coat but a rotten kernell; which so much offended my weak stomach, that the very sight caused me to loath it, and the sent to throw it into the fire" (*Euphues or His England* pag. 72). Camilla does not consume the letter, nor is she taken in by Philautus' ensnarements, and does not play his game of 'eating his cake'.

Having performatively taken recourse to classical mythological symbolism (the Persephone myth) by choosing a pomegranate as a medium for a message to his adored object of desire, Philautus must realise that Camilla is much better disposed towards a more modern and fashionable poetic discourse. All she would be willing to accept is a game with fixed rules that warranted for a safe and decent distance between love-poet and his mistress: Adhering to Petrarch, she sews her reply in a volume of his poetry, which is found by Philautus, whom she makes read out from this very text, and desires him to interpret a passage for

her.²⁴ As a true-born Italian, Philautus should have known this game better and played it accordingly – but at this stage of the narrative he is not yet the honourable ‘Anglicized Italian’ into which he develops later on. Indeed, Lyly’s Philautus is the positive counterpart to Ascham’s notorious “Inglese italiano”, a de-humanized monster constructed in a long anti-Italian passage of *The Schoolmaster*.

VI.

The following analysis will consider the representation of food and consumption in early modern narratives, with a particular focus on court fiction and humanist dialogues rather than satires and popular fiction. We will mainly encounter scenes of communal eating as daily routine. However, although eating is referred to in many of these texts, exact and mimetic representations of food are rather an uncommon device in early modern court narratives. At first glance this is hardly surprising, since any kind of realistic (mimetic) description of persons, spatial objects (e.g., gardens, interiors of houses, etc.) or temporal processes (travels, passages of time) is rarely found in the literature of this age. Indeed, it would probably have been inconceivable for any early modern writer of reputable symposiac literature to indulge in such a detailed description of a set table as the one a modernist writer such as James Joyce in his minute account of the Christmas dinner table described in “The Dead” (1914), celebrating not only the dishes and drinks served, but also their artistic preparation and the architectonic geometry in their arrangements on the table. For the sake of elucidating the discursive differences the whole passage may be quoted here at length:

A fat brown goose lay at one end of the table and at the other end, on a bed of creased paper strewn with sprigs of parsley, lay a great ham, stripped of its outer skin and peppered over with crust of crumbs, a neat paper frill round its shin and beside this was a round of spiced beef. Between these rival ends ran parallel lines of side-dishes: two little ministers of jelly, red and yellow; a shallow dish full of blocks of blancmange and red jam, a large green leaf-shaped dish with a stalk-shaped handle, on which lay bunches of purple raisins and peeled almonds, a companion dish on which lay a solid rectangle of Smyrna figs, a dish of custard topped with grated nutmeg, a small bowl full of chocolates and sweets wrapped in gold and silver paper and a glass vase in which stood some tall celery stalks. In the centre of the table there stood, as sentries to a fruit-stand which up-held a pyramid of oranges and American apples, two squat old-fashioned decanters of cut glass, one containing port and the other dark sherry. On the closed square piano a pudding in a huge yellow dish lay in waiting and behind it were three squads of bottles of stout and ale and minerals, drawn up according to the colours

24 Cf. LYLY. *Euphues and His England*. pag. 72.

of their uniforms, the first two black, with brown and red labels, the third and smallest white, with transverse green sashes. (*Dubliners* 224)

Compare this to the following example: in *Utopia*, the three conversation partners Thomas More, Peter Giles and Raphael Hythloday interrupt their discourse on the ideal state: “So we went in and dined.” Without any further ado, the text continues: “Whe[n] dinner was done we came into y^e same place again and sate vs downe vpon the same benche, commaunding oure seruantes that no man should trowble vs,” and at the end of this afternoon discussion in an Antwerp garden, the narrator More “took him [Hythloday] by the hand and led him in to supper” (*Utopia*, sigs. G.iiiij.^v and S.iii.^v).²⁵ Again, the laconic references to the meals reveal nothing about the food or drinks served inside More’s lodgings; they are, it seems, merely structural devices delineating a deictic frame within the two parts of the narrative: They do not only indicate the time (“dinner”, i. e. the modern lunch, and “supper”, i. e., today’s dinner), but also create the spatial dichotomy of ‘without’ and ‘within’ (the lodgings), and even the social group-definition by way of inclusion and exclusion. For on the level of More’s frame, the figures exclude, as it were, their readers from the intimate table talk within; they cannot interfere with the ‘privacy’ in the house – neither does Hythloday, in Book I of *Utopia*, dwell on the meal served at Cardinal John Morton’s which he had attended years before and which had been the occasion of a lengthy discussion about social welfare and the possible means to abolish both unlawfulness and injustice in England. Like More in the frame, Hythloday does not detail the individual courses, but it is clear that this dinner was large, formal and politic. Yet in his subsequent embedded account (Book II), he refers to the Utopian production of food and drinks, as well as to their table manners – these pieces of information belong to the general survey of the foreign country; they are ‘public’ rather than ‘private’ subject matter:

They sowe corne onely for bread; ffor their drynke is other wyne made of grapes, or els of apples, or pearces: or els it is cleane water. And many tymes methe made of honey or liqueresse sodde in water, for therof they haue great store. And though they knowe certeynlye [...] how much victayles the cytie with the hole cuntry or shiere rounde a boutte it dothe spe[e]de; yet they sowe much more corne, and bryed vp much more cattell, then serueth for their own vse. (*Utopia*, sig. [G.viii.^v])

In the section “Of their luying and mutual conuersation together” of his account, Hythloday describes the Amaurotian markets and the goods handed out to the stewards of every household, this passage introducing that of the eating habits, the sitting order, and table manners in general. Despite its emphasis on the

25 I shall argue here on the basis of the English translation, which followed the Latin editio princeps (1516) by three and a half decades.

abundance of food, this account is free from intimations of luxury and exotic treats. Correlative to English practice, eating alone at home rather than in the communal halls is, although not forbidden, considered “a pointe of smalle honestie” (*Utopia*, sig. [I.viii.^v]). Like with the English, table talk is common enough a habit among the Utopians. Although there is no fixed order, Hythloday points out that they “begin euerye dynner & supper of reading sumthing y^t pertaineth to good maners & vertue”. Then the elderly “take occasion of honest co[m]munication, but nother sad nor vnpleasaut”, and lest their conversation turn too tedious, they encourage the young to give a “profe of euery ma[n]s wit & towardnes or disposition to vertue” (*Utopia*, sig. K.ii.).

By a look at other early modern narratives with their emphasis on symposiac dialogues it remains a fact that mimetic representations of food are no primary subject matter of the narrative proper: As in More’s humanist dialogue, in court romances too “the mouth that speaks and the mouth that eats are dissociated”.²⁶ Usually, the first of the daily two meals is largely a narrative absence, whilst dinner (which could start early in the afternoon and continue until late in the evening) or supper are substantial enough to be mentioned, if rarely in detail. John Lyly, in *Euphues and His England* (1580), places a comparatively large number of references to eating, and occasionally goes beyond the usual scarcity of description if he refers to “the table being couered, and the meate serued in”, or – in one of the occasional meta-narrative comments which add to the self-reflexivity of the text – to the “coleworts twice sodden” (*Euphues and His England*, pag. 92 and 87 – 88).²⁷ The discussions in which Philautus, the object of his desires, Camilla, her fiancée Surlius and Philautus’ own later wife, Frances, as well as Euphues partake, are all table talks in a merchant’s home – like the ones at the home of Lucilla’s father in *The Anatomy of Wit*. Even though we do not learn anything about the actual dishes served, there is no doubt about the plenitude of the meals in Camilla’s home, and it is attributed specifically to a habit among wealthy merchants: “the feast [...] was very sumptuous, as Merchauntes neuer spare for cost, when they haue full Coffers” (*Euphues and His England*, 107).

In contrast to this, Lyly’s slightly earlier fellow-writer Gascoigne situates various discussions in his narrative about Master F.J. in a still grander environment: the dining hall of the host with whom Ferdinando Ieronimo stays for the duration of his affair with Eleonora di Vascolo.²⁸ Again, there is no narra-

26 JEANNERET. *A Feast of Words*. 114.

27 Coleworts is cabbage, thus rather lowly vegetable which has no place in a courtly fiction as this, especially if rehashed. Cf. the annotation to this passage in the apparatus to the one-volume edition of John Lyly: “*Euphues: The Anatomy of Wit*” and “*Euphues and His England*” edited by Leah SCRAGG (Manchester/New York: Manchester University Press, 2003. 290).

28 In the first version of the text, “A Discourse of the Adventures of Master F.J.” in *A Hundreth Sundrie Flowres* (1573), Elinor is the wife of the anonymous landlord, whilst in the second

torial substantiation of the dishes served at the table of the landlord, but in each case the meals are indicated as obligatory communal occasions which have to be attended, and which are enriched by artistic performances such as “musicke well tuned” (including dancing) and poetry-readings: “with prety nyppes, they passed ouer their supper: which ended, the Lord of the house required Ferdinando Ieronimo to daunce and passe the tyme with the gentlewomen, which he refused not to doe.” (*A Hundreth Sundrie Flowres* 207) Lack of appetite at a full table, however, or even one’s absention from a communal meal, is considered offensive and scandalous;²⁹ it is therefore carefully registered and requires an explanation to the landlord (who, after all, is responsible for the well-being of his guests), such as in various occasions referring to Ferdinando’s love-sickness:

[...] at supper time, the Lord of Velasco [sic] finding fault y^e his gestic stomacke serued him no better, began to accuse the grosnesse of his vyands, to whom one of the ge[n]tlewomen which had passed the afternoone in his company, aunswered. Nay sir, quod she, this gentleman hath a passion, the which once in a daye at least doth kill his appetite. Are you so well acquainted with the disposition[n] of his body (quod the Lord of y^e house?) by his owne saying, quod she, & not otherwise. (*A Hundreth Sundrie Flowres* 206)

Although in this scene Ferdinando is present and is able to defend himself, the narrative points at his (and Eleonora’s) impoliteness when they repeatedly absent themselves from the dinner table without a good reason. Feeling sick is intolerable with the current code of conviviality. It seems to necessitate a communal visit to the respective individual, and if the official meal is missed out by someone, the house-community appears to be responsible to compensate the loss of nurture, nutrition, and entertainment: The social activities may be reduced in scope (simple verbal rather than more elaborate musical performances), but it is almost impossible to call them off. Thus, when Eleonora pretends to feel sick and keeps herself to her own chamber, Ferdinando and a few maids attend her, playing conversation games with the patient. Later, after the two adulterers have split up, Ferdinando’s chamber becomes the scene of a series of

version of *The Posies* (1575), “A Pleasaunt Fable of Ferdinando Ieronimo and Eleonora di Vascalo”, she is daughter of the host. Also the setting is different: The first creates the illusion of a past event in the North of England, the second turns this illusion into a tale of the past, located in Italy.

29 After splitting up with Leonora, Ferdinando Ieronimo does not attend any of the meals served during the day. Eventually, the unassuming “master of the house demaunded of his daughter Fraunces howe Fardinando did?” Frances answers that he “dyd eate some what at dyner, and sithens I sawe him not. The more to blame quod he, and nowe I would haue al you gentlewomen take of the best meates and goe suppe with him, for company driues away carefulnesse [i.e., worries]” (*A Hundreth Sundrie Flowres*, pag. 260).

tales within, suggested by one of the ladies, and meant as an edificatory, educative amusement.

As in the case of More's *Utopia*, none of these occasions in either Gosson, Lyly or Gascoigne evoke the narrator's (and, for that matter, the author's) need to describe what items exactly are on the menu. A look at further – in the widest sense – narrative texts shows the same authorial hesitation at giving away the details of the dinners, which turn out to be the occasion for discussions on education and philosophy: Roger Ascham's *Scholemaster* (1570) sets a frame with a table talk on the use of physical punishment at school, dated 10 December in the plague-year 1563; Giordano Bruno's *Ash Wednesday Supper* relates, in its second of five dialogues, Bruno's walk to Fulke Greville's mansion and the company set at his dinner table, including the dedicatee of the work: an idealised paragon of knighthood, Philip Sidney, along with Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, and Francis Walsingham. Bruno's representation of this event pays homage to Sidney and creates an (ambivalent) image of the meeting of eminent courtiers and academics. However, there is again no description of the meals served – the persons mentioned form an exquisite frame around the full table which remains an empty semiotic space which, in the course of the text, is both consumed and filled by words rather than dishes. Even the prefatory epistle does not particularise on anything but the time and the occasion at which this meal was given – the first day of Lent. The introductory references to mythical dishes (e. g., Zeus' nectar and ambrosia) and their distinction in good or evil place the Ash Wednesday Supper in its human, humane and humanistic frame – at the same time, Bruno clearly identifies his dialogues as allegory, which has to be read in a fourfold sense.

Elizabeth I's former precept Ascham mentions in his introductory epistle a few of the highest courtiers, such as Richard Sackville, the Treasurer of the Exchequer, along with Sir Walter Mildmay, Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Christopher Haddon, Master of Requests, and other important political figures of the day.³⁰ In both cases, the narrative representation of the respective personalities bears testimony to the significance of the subject matters discussed in their presence – in relation to which the physical well-being accounted for by the food served falls back as a minute detail, barely worth commenting on beyond the sheer mentioning of it: In such instances, the contemporary preference of 'food for thought' over physical nutrition, the religious dominance of mind (or even spirit) over matter, becomes once again obvious.

30 Cf. ASCHAM. *The Scholemaster*. sig. B.i.

VII.

Finally, I will suggest two explanations which take into account the medial and the moral dimension of contemporary court narratives: The first aspect refers to authorial tactfulness towards a possible performance on the occasion at one's patron's banquet. Texts were often performed orally, and thus had an effect of immediacy which a text such as the quote from Joyce's had not, written for a solitary and silent reader at the beginning of the twentieth century. Four centuries earlier, the supply of quality food was a highly insecure affair, and the copious verbal representation of a set table might have been (mis-)construed as a denigration of the host's own efforts to deliver a copious meal – the real dishes might have fallen back in comparison to the imaginary ones. Such a mortifying effect on a host's hospitality would, of course, have been undesirable, and therefore it was a narrative convention to employ (at most) clearly marked indecencies, served as a deliberate trespassing of limits in such genres as Rabelaisian narratives. For this reason, general adjectives like Lyly's allusion to the "sumptuous" dinner at Camilla's sufficed to indicate the richness of the imaginary table. We find further traces of this medial (and communal) aspect in the narrator's indicative meta-fictional comments which not only serve to break the mimetic illusion of the plot, but refer directly to the situation in which his second *Euphues*-narrative was designed to be performed: The narrator eventually arrives at the moment when his characters "went to their dinner, where I omit their table-talk, lest I lose mine" (*Euphues and His England*, pag. 73^v).

The second aspect, beyond the medial, refers to the moral value of fiction. Due to its problematic status as a set of possible lies, fiction would have evoked further anti-poetic sentiment by indulgent representations of food: Narrative excesses might have given occasion for complaints not only about the delusive character as fiction, but also about the celebration of luxury and greed. A final look at William Baldwin's *Beware the Cat* (published 1570) will confirm this suggestion by its contrast to the preceding examples: In the second part of the text, the embedded narrator, Master Streamer, dwells at large on the gross ingredients of the magical pie and potion he concocts in order to 'understand' the feline language. After reading a recipe in a book by Albertus Magnus, he collects a fox, a hare, an urchin, a hedgehog and a cat. With white wine, balm, rosemary and various other ingredients he "made a broth and set it on fire and boyled it", just to take afterwards "a peece of the Cats liuer, & a peece of the kidney, a peece of y^e milt & the whole hart, the Foxes hart and lights [i.e., eyes], the Hares brain, the kites mawe, and the Irchin's kidneys, all these beat I in a mortar together & then made a cake of it [...]" (*Beware the Cat*, s.p. [EEBO-image 20–21])³¹

31 Every Short Title Catalogue text quoted or discussed in this article will be quoted from the

Preparations continue, and Streamer purports to increase the effect of his efforts by quoting incomprehensible slogans which he considers magical – in fact, all his secretive reading and cooking are associated with black magic. When everything is done and Streamer tries the result, the psychedelic effect of his labour is enormous; not only does he imagine that he can hear everything in the circumference of a hundred miles (which adds up to a terrible din), mistakes his companions for devils (which he experiences as a horrible sight), and it is only when the effect fades that he actually claims to understand the cats in the neighbourhood, as he had hoped to: a phantasmagoric cat trial is the centre of the third and final part of the narrative.

Baldwin makes sure to indicate that the ‘bad reader’ Master Streamer is under the effect of a delusion without any truth value, thus not only showing the results of sinful practice, but also the effects of illicit reading matter, and wrong reading strategies. Streamer epitomises the Cat-holic who believes in superstitious literature, and by devouring the immaterial meaning of the Albertine text first and then the physical pie and potion (which, according to a more reliable commentator in the text, tastes like “a Cats toord [turd]”; *Beware the Cat*, n.p. [EEBO-image 23]), he becomes the victim of fantastic images. Like many of his early modern fellow-writers in their own individual formal and stylistic ways, Baldwin uses his satirical narrative, framed within a properly reasonable (if satirical) humanist dialogue, to criticise two things at once and turns against the circulation of the ‘wrong’ kinds of literature and their reception by naïve readers, as well as against the uncritical devouring of revolting food.

This reading of early modern narratives has shown that the consumption of food for body and mind was considered to engender excessive reactions in the physiological balance. This was especially so if people did not share their books or dishes with others, but ‘devoured’ them in solitude or even secrecy. Early modern representations of eating and reading were reflections of the contemporary medical state of the art, and were considered predominantly communal affairs, whilst the emerging practices of solitary and silent reading were still eyed with suspicion: Particularly eating in private was considered an ‘impolite’ violation of the social code, and accordingly private reading is marked as ‘idle’. Dramatic and narrative fiction, as well as poetry, were considered a source of potentially false images and were therefore under close administrative observation and censorship. This negative attitude towards the ‘*belles lettres*’ (a much later coinage emphasising the code of aesthetics) reflects the one-sided reception of Platonic ideas: They purported the opposition of phantastic vs. eikastic images; the distance of poetic images from the (ideal) reality; the rep-

ones made available by *Early English Books Online* (EEBO), URL <http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home>.

utation of poets as seducers, and they supported the (political) idea of their expulsion from the state. Thus, moments of consumption in solitude lacked the epistemological potential of the Platonic dialogue with its hierarchical but direct interaction of performer and audience or, still more desirable, scholarly precept and ignorant disciple.

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Eating Words: Some Notes on a Metaphor and its Use in *Much Ado About Nothing*

It is a familiar fact that Shakespeare's audience went to hear (rather than see) a play.¹ Still, even though (or because) those who attended a performance stood or sat listening to words, they were witnesses to actual events taking place on the stage. Like Horatio, they were thus able to attest to "the sensible and true avouch" of their "own eyes" (*Hamlet* 1.1.60 – 61). Furthermore, when listeners were told, for example, to think that they were seeing horses as the actors spoke of them,² they were reminded of their ability to transform the spoken word into a *res*; to turn the 'sign' into a 'thing'.³ The pictures appearing before the eyes of the listeners' minds are products of the words spoken on the stage, just as much as the dramatic characters themselves, and the way they act and interact with each other and handle physical objects, originate in the words uttered by their author. The stage is unique among the mimetic arts in having words produce a reality to be perceived (at least potentially) by all the senses as well as the imagination. To Shakespeare, this 'magic' quality is a cause of wonder⁴ and linguistic self-re-

1 See e.g. the Chorus (Prologue to Act 1) in *Henry V*: "Admit me Chorus to this history;/ Who, Prologue-like, your humble patience pray,/ Gently to hear, kindly to judge, our play" (*Henry V*, Prologue 32 – 34), or Ben Jonson's *The Staple of News*, where the "Maker" (i. e. the poet) bids the Prologue say, "Would you were come to hear, not see a Play" ("Prologue for the Stage" 1–2).

2 The Chorus (Prologue to Act 1) in *Henry V* tells the audience, "Think, when we talk of horses, that you see them" (*Henry V*, Prologue 26).

3 The relation between words and things is a vast topic, branching out from Plato's *Cratylus* and Aristotle's *De interpretatione*, and defies brief annotation. For a survey of debates immediately relevant to Shakespeare's time, see COUDERT, Allison. "Some Theories of a Natural Language from the Renaissance to the Seventeenth Century." In: Albert Heinekamp and Dieter Mettler (eds.). *Magia Naturalis und die Entstehung der modernen Naturwissenschaften*. Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1978. 56 – 118. See also VICKERS, who emphasizes the influence of the Aristotelian distinction between word, concept and thing (VICKERS, Brian. "'Words and Things' – or 'Words, Concepts, and Things'? Rhetorical and Linguistic Categories in the Renaissance." In: Eckhard Kessler and Ian Maclean (eds.). *Res et Verba in der Renaissance*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2002. 287 – 335).

4 Cf. *The Tempest*, where Shakespeare has, for example, "Admired Miranda" (*The Tempest* 3.1.37) and Ferdinand wonder at the magic of an author, Prospero, producing events (and

flection; Shakespeare's stage, as the Chorus of *Henry V* shows, is thoroughly aware of its own mode of existence. And just as the familiar comparison of the world to a stage is so convincing because the stage 'is' the world, the close link between *verba* and *res* characteristic of drama carries conviction because it is relevant to language use in general. In other words, we can believe that it is Don Pedro of Aragon whose visit is announced at the beginning of *Much Ado About Nothing* because we believe in the referential function of words, and vice versa.⁵ In fact, the "Don Pedro" of the stage is created by the very announcement of his name;⁶ conversely, when we remember that the man we are going to meet is not 'really' Don Pedro of Aragon we may become aware of the fact that the relation of *verba* and *res* is a precarious and possibly a deceptive one.

In these notes, I would like to focus on one specific example of the way in which Shakespeare reflects, by means of his characters and their speech, on the notion of *verba* being either different from or identical with *res*, the latter including persons, material and immaterial things, as well as actions, i. e. everything that is not language. One of the methods by which this reflection is brought about is to use metaphors which suggest the materiality of language (or rather utterance) itself.⁷ The metaphor of *eating words* belongs to a larger group of figurative expressions which serve to do so, as they connect language in the abstract with the act of enunciation, which is human, physical, and concrete. The writer's "hand"⁸ and the poet's "breath"⁹ are examples of these expressions;

characters) by means of his words (and Ariel's song). Ferdinand, who is under Prospero's spell, is presented to Miranda like a performer on the stage: she is to "advance" (i. e. lift) the "fringed curtains" of her eyes to see him (*The Tempest* 1.2.409), and Prospero is delighted that the action develops just as his "soul prompts it" (*The Tempest* 1.2.421).

5 Cf. the first words of the play, spoken by Leonato: "I learn in this letter that Don Pedro of Aragon comes this night to Messina" (*Much Ado About Nothing* 1.1.1–2).

6 Speech acts are part of the picture; on the stage, they are endowed with an illocutionary and perlocutionary force that both testifies to and derives its credibility from its existence in the real world. Nevertheless, they are to be distinguished from the fact that words, in a play, produce the reality of things and events. For the whole complex, see ch. 4, e. g. 177 in ELAM, Keir. *Shakespeare's Universe of Discourse. Language Games in the Comedies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984: "It is only the conversation whereby characters *talk* themselves and their world into existence that allows us to explore the dialogic exchange as a form of *praxis*."

7 VICKERS ("Words and Things.") reminds us of the difference between the rhetorical distinction of *res* (subject matter) and *verba* (style, verbal dress of thought) on the one hand, and the linguistic or philosophical distinction of language and reality. While this is doubtlessly correct, it is the very play with both fields that characterizes Shakespeare's poetic reflection on the use of language in *Much Ado About Nothing* and elsewhere. Thus the question of (rhetorically) empty or appropriate words is (metaphorically, comically) linked to the question of words being substantial or insubstantial.

8 While still pretending not to be foolishly in love, Benedick (*Much Ado About Nothing* 5.4.91–92) admits that Beatrice's and his own "hands" (i. e. actions as well as the sonnets they have

metaphors which are in fact metonymies if the written or spoken utterance is regarded as a process in which the body is involved, and not to be separated from the verbal statement as the result of that process. They suggest that the author's words are actions and that they have, when spoken, an – albeit fleeting – material presence. In Sonnet 85, for instance, the poet only seemingly contradicts this view when he comes to the conclusion: “Then others for the breath of words respect, / Me for my dumb thoughts, speaking in effect.” I do not take this to mean that being silent is better than speaking but that words which are (merely) breath are to be contrasted with a form of speaking that comprises both thinking and doing.¹⁰ In a comical form, stress is laid on “effect” by Benedick in *Much Ado About Nothing* when he says of Beatrice, “She speaks poniards, and every word stabs. If her breath were as terrible as her terminations, there were no living near her, she would infect to the North Star.” (*Much Ado About Nothing* 2.1.226 – 29)¹¹

Metaphors, as we know, may lose some of their rhetorical energy when becoming too familiar and conventional.¹² Of particular interest in this respect is

written) have established facts: “A miracle! Here's our own hands against our hearts.” HUNT, who stresses ethical aspects of language use in the play, comments on the passage as follows: “Rather than showing their hands *against* their hearts [...], Beatrice's and Benedick's amorous handwriting complies with the hidden yearnings of their hearts” (HUNT, Maurice. “The Reclamation of Language in *Much Ado About Nothing*.” In: *Studies in Philology* 97,2 (2000): 165 – 91. 184). GOLDBERG, writing about *Hamlet*, discusses the issue of (social) character-formation by handwriting (GOLDBERG, Jonathan. “Hamlet's Hand.” In: *Shakespeare's Hand*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003. 105 – 31).

- 9 Most exaltedly, Gallus in Ben Jonson's *Poetaster* speaks of “the sacred breath of a true poet” (*Poetaster* 4.2.32 – 33).
- 10 On the one hand, the effect of the dumb thoughts can be regarded as the (only) way in which they speak; on the other hand, the dumb thoughts are by no means silent but speak in an effective manner. It is also possible to regard “speaking” as dependent on “me” rather than “thoughts”; in this case the “speaking in effect” is contrasted with the (mere) “breath of words”; the effect is made possible by the dumb thoughts.
- 11 The serious variant of this is Hamlet's “I will speak daggers to her, but use none” (*Hamlet* 3.2.387). Curiously, Beatrice's “infecting” speech (or breath) echoes Latin “infectus” (according to COOPER, Thomas. *Thesaurus Linguae Romanae et Britannicae*. Hildesheim: Olms, 1975 [1578], “undone: unmade: not finished”; under “factum” he cites Virgil, “Facta atque infecta canebat [...]. To report things as well that be done, as that be not done”). This is quite pertinent to a rather dark comedy focusing on slander, i. e. the report of something not done as something done.
- 12 LAKOFF and TURNER, in their chapter on “The Dead Metaphor Theory” (LAKOFF, George and Mark TURNER. *More Than Cool Reason. A Field Guide to Poetic Metaphor*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989. 129 – 31) refute the notion that “those things in our cognition that are most alive and most active are those that are conscious” (129). To LAKOFF and TURNER, however, “alive” is synonymous with “deeply entrenched” and “automatic”. This may be true; nevertheless a metaphor may have a completely different, striking effect for being anything but automatic; cf. QUINTILIANUS, Marcus Fabius. *Institutio oratoria. Ausbildung des Redners*. Edited and translated by Helmut Rahn. 2 vols. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1988. 8.6.4 on metaphor both being used unconsciously and being “iucunda atque nitida”.

the sphere of food and eating, which comprises the senses of smell and taste. It is quite fruitful when it comes to linking the material and the immaterial, body and mind in the field of language and thought, but many of the metaphors hardly attract any notice any more. We speak of *food for thought*, for example, or of *devouring* a book.¹³ The *sweetness* of a sound or singer¹⁴ is well known; applied to verbal utterances or poets, however, the expression is less common today than when Shakespeare was praised as “mellifluous, & hony-tongued”¹⁵ or simply called “sweetest”.¹⁶ Shakespeare himself makes fun of this metaphor in *Twelfth Night* when Sir Andrew and Sir Toby comment on Feste’s song, calling his voice “mellifluous” and his breath “Very sweet and contagious”; they even allude parodically to Shakespeare’s own famous dictum in Sonnet 23, “To hear with eyes belongs to love’s fine wit”, when they claim “To hear by the nose, it is dulcet in contagion.” (*Twelfth Night* 2.3.52–55)¹⁷ Analogous to the poet spreading the sweetness of his words, gathering honey is a familiar image of poetic imitation and the search for inspiration.¹⁸

Among the images of language as something nourishing, tasty, or odoriferous entering or leaving the mouth, the notion of *eating words* seems to be less common than, for example, the sweetness of song or discourse; accordingly, we

13 See the other examples in LAKOFF, George and Mark JOHNSON. *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980. 46–47. For eating and drinking as sources of metaphor, see NEWMAN, who does not reserve a section for the target domain of language but includes it under the heading of “intellectual nourishment” (NEWMAN, John. “Eating and Drinking as Sources of Metaphor in English.” In: *Cuadernos de Filología Inglesa* 6,2 (1997): 213–31. 219–20).

14 See OED “sweet,” *a.* and *adv.* 4.

15 MERES, Francis. *Palladis Tamia*. London, 1598. STC 217:07. fol. 281^v. Honey is a traditional image of eloquence; a striking example is SPENSER’s Belphoebe (“Sweet words, like dropping honny, she did shed”; *The Faerie Queene* 2.3.24).

16 MILTON, “L’Allegro” l. 133 (“Or sweetest Shakespeare fancy’s child”). The relevant entry in the OED, “sweet,” *a.* and *adv.* 5.c., starts with Chaucer’s “General Prologue” (“Somwhat he lipped for his wantownesse To make his englissh sweete vp on his tonge”) and ends with a quotation from Francis’s 1748 translation of Horace.

17 Elam, the Arden editor, mentions the possible allusion to Meres but omits to refer to Shakespeare’s own synaesthetic model in Sonnet 23 (on this, see LEIMBERG, Inge. *What may words say...?: A Reading of The Merchant of Venice*. Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, forthcoming 2010; and BAUER, Matthias. “‘A Litanie’: John Donne and the Speaking Ear.” In: Norbert Lennartz (ed.). *The Senses’ Festival: Inszenierungen der Sinne und der Sinnlichkeit in der Literatur und Kunst des Barock*. Trier: WVT, 2005. 111–27. 113).

18 A classic example is HORACE’s *Carmina* IV.2.27–32, “ego apud Matinae more modoque [...] carmina fingo”; cf. George HERBERT’s “Oh Book! infinite sweetness! let my heart/ Suck ev’ry letter and a hony gain” (“The H. Scriptures I”, lines 1–2; HERBERT, George. *The English Poems of George Herbert*. Edited by C.A. Patrides. London: Dent, 1974. 76). For a modern instance, see Robert BLY’s poem “Words Rising”: “We are bees then; our honey is language” (BLY, Robert. *Eating the Honey of Words: New and Selected Poems*. New York: Perennial, 2000. 181).

tend to be much more aware of what the speaker says. The very absurdity of the action literally described by this expression makes it graphic and concrete. My case in point is the famous moment in Act four of *Much Ado About Nothing* when Benedick and Beatrice for the first time confess their love to each other. This pair of master linguists is suddenly confronted with the question of how to link their love of bandying words to something quite real, i. e. a loving union of their lives. In short, Shakespeare dramatizes the very problem I have just addressed.

- BENEDICK I do love nothing in the world so well as you. Is not that strange?
 BEATRICE As strange as the thing I know not. It were as possible for me to say I loved nothing so well as you. But believe me not – and yet I lie not. I confess nothing, nor I deny nothing. I am sorry for my cousin.
 BENEDICK By my sword, Beatrice, thou lovest me.
 BEATRICE Do not swear and eat it.
 BENEDICK I will swear by it that you love me, and I will make him eat it that says I love not you.
 BEATRICE Will you not eat your word?
 BENEDICK With no sauce that can be devised to it. I protest I love thee.
 BEATRICE Why then God forgive me!
 BENEDICK What offense, sweet Beatrice?
 BEATRICE You have stayed me in a happy hour, I was about to protest I loved you.
 BENEDICK And do it, with all thy heart.
 BEATRICE I love you with so much of my heart that none is left to protest.
 BENEDICK Come, bid me do anything for thee.
 BEATRICE Kill Claudio. (*Much Ado About Nothing* 4.1.267 – 88)

If things, *res*, and actions, *acta*, are proverbially defined as *non verba* – in sayings such as “Facta, non verba!”¹⁹ – then “nothing”, *non res*, is “words”. Benedick and Beatrice love words (one of the two being actually named after the definition of rhetoric, which is *ars bene dicendi*)²⁰ but that means that they love ‘no things’,

19 COOPER (*Thesaurus*) defines “Factum” as “A deede: a thyng done or made”, indicating the proximity of thing and action. WALTHER’s and SCHMIDT’s collection of proverbs is full of examples contrasting facts with words. The example cited is from WALTER, Hans and Paul Gerhard SCHMIDT (eds.). *Proverbia sententiaeque Latinitatis medii ac recentioris aevi. Nova series*. 3 vols. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1982–86. 7: 801, no. 36831; others include “Non verbis, sed factis opus est” (WALTHER, Hans (ed.). *Proverbia sententiaeque Latinitatis medii aevi*. 6 vols. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1963–69. 3: 413, no. 18697a, with a reference to Ovid), “Non ex verbis res, sed verba e rebus prudens estimate” (WALTHER and SCHMIDT. *Proverbia*. 8: 735, no. 38912b) or “Non verbis, sed factis spectari vult Grecia” (WALTHER and SCHMIDT. *Proverbia*. 8: 810, no. 39013).

20 See QUINTILIAN 2.17.32; ISIDORE 2.1.1; LAUSBERG, Heinrich. *Handbuch der literarischen Rhetorik*. 2 vols. Munich: Hueber, 1960. § 32. HUNT (“The Reclamation of Language.” 191) suggests “Speak Well” as the “secondary etymology of his name” but does not refer to the standard definition of rhetoric. To HUNT, Benedick’s use of language is paradigmatic of a development or learning process shown in *Much Ado About Nothing*; language as a tool used for the selfish pursuit of power is to be replaced with “a palpable new understanding refined in the crucible of hearsay and slander” (HUNT. “The Reclamation of Language.” 191).

and make much ado about them. In fact, the exchange makes us realize that the title of the play juggles with the notion of doing versus speaking.²¹ Accordingly, it is not surprising that Beatrice is (or pretends to be) a little distrustful of Benedick's claiming that he loves "nothing" in the world so well as her. The innuendo, familiar from Shakespeare's Sonnet 20, is obvious; at the same time the modern reader is reminded of Alice in *Through the Looking-Glass*, who is admired by the King for being able to see "nobody" on the road.²² Shakespeare's use of "nothing" is too complex to be treated briefly; but we are familiar with its potentially threatening quality of meaning actually "something" from Iago's equivocation "Nay, yet be wise; yet we see nothing done" (*Othello* 3.3.435), which prepares the undoing of Desdemona.

In her response to Benedick, Beatrice equates "nothing" with "the thing I know not", which evokes the context of Antonio's initial speech in *The Merchant of Venice*, in which he admits "That I have much ado to know myself" (*The Merchant of Venice* 1.1.7).²³ Love, as a step from words to deeds, to actual commitment, is what Beatrice indeed does not know yet. Beatrice is speaking the truth when she says that she is what he is, since she loves words as much as he does; accordingly, she confesses "nothing" and does not deny it. Her cousin is uppermost in her mind: Hero has been the victim of slander, i. e. one of the most serious cases of words deviating from things. A "breath", as Leonato says to Borachio, has "killed" his "innocent child" (*Much Ado About Nothing* 5.1.253–54). Words, in Hero's case, have not been loved but misused. Benedick, ignoring what Beatrice says, does not help closing the gap, for he protests too much.²⁴ His

21 See OED "ado" n. 1., 3. and 4. Moreover, it is a critical commonplace to regard the word "Nothing" of the title as a paronomasia of *noting*, which hints at the role played by (misleading) perception and observation, causing e. g. the slander of Hero. See DAWSON, who identifies Hockey as "the first critic to discuss the pun in any detail" and points out that, in "the world the play creates [...] attention is directed as much to the way meaning is produced as to what the meaning is" (DAWSON, Anthony B. "Much Ado About Signifying." In: *SEL* 22 (1982): 211–21. 211). HUNT points out Claudio's words in 4.1.17–18 ("O, what men dare do! What men may do! What men daily do, not knowing what they do!"), which "incidentally describe Leonato's presumptuous theft of his own speech as much as they do Borachio's bold stealing Hero's honor" (HUNT. "The Reclamation of Language." 178). In fact, Claudio's words are an example of "a-do" about nothing, or of nothing(s) about doing – "interjections", as Benedick calls them (18).

22 "'I see nobody on the road,' said Alice. 'I only wish I had such eyes,' the King remarked in a fretful tone. 'To be able to see Nobody! And at such distance too! Why, it's as much as I can do to see real people, by this light!'" (CARROLL, Lewis. *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass*. Edited by Roger Lancelyn Green. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998. 198–99).

23 On the complex of words in Antonio's speech (the interplay of *knowing*, *owing*, *doing* and *ado*), see LEIMBERG's commentary on the speech in 'What may words say...?'

24 The comedy of the scene is stressed by LENGELER, Rainer. *Shakespeare's Much Ado About Nothing als Komödie*. Rheinisch-Westfälische Akademie der Wissenschaften. Vorträge G

oath, “By my sword,” immediately awakens Beatrice’s distrust. We remember that in Act one she made fun of him when she said that she promised “to eat all of his killing” (*Much Ado About Nothing* 1.1.41–42), a proverbial phrase²⁵ indicating that she holds him to be a braggart rather than a valiant soldier. She moreover called him a “valiant trencher-man” and “no less than a stuffed man” who “hath an excellent stomach” (*Much Ado About Nothing* 1.1.48, 55, 48–49). Accordingly, she now associates the sword with eating rather than with valiant action when she says “Do not swear and eat it”. Here she already implies that Benedick may be going to eat his words, i. e. “retract in a humiliating manner”,²⁶ but he manages to shift the ground slightly and links the eating to the sword, “I will make him eat it that says I love you not”. Thereby he makes another attempt to dispel Beatrice’s doubts and to insist on the proximity of word and thing, ‘thing’ here meaning ‘deed’; the mouth emitting a slanderous word will be punished by having to eat Benedick’s sword. Eating is what in this scene links “sword” and “word”, which could still be used as a proper rhyme in Shakespeare’s time;²⁷ the two words are furthermore linked in the proverb, first documented in the *Ancrene Riwe* around 1200, “Words cut (hurt) more than swords” (*OEDP*). In addition, the audience remembers Benedick’s earlier exclamation that Beatrice “speaks poniards” (*Much Ado About Nothing* 2.1.227). We see here unfold a conceptual triangle of eating, speaking and hurting, which in spite of the serious claims for which it is used never loses its comic potential. Cooper’s 1578 *Thesaurus* cites Plautus for a similar metaphorical link between eating and beating, “Edere pugnos”, and provides what to a modern ear sounds like an ingeniously punning English equivalent: “To be buffeted”;²⁸ John Donne in his third Satire holds up to ridicule those who are courageous only for worldly

314. Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1992. 25–26. SMITH regards the command “Kill Claudio” as a turning point in Benedick’s and Beatrice’s development (cf. SMITH, Denzell S. “The Command ‘Kill Claudio’ in *Much Ado About Nothing*.” In: *English Language Notes* 4 (1967): 181–83).

25 See McEachern’s note in the Arden Edition.

26 *OED* “eat” v. 2.c.

27 See Dobson, E.J. *English Pronunciation 1500–1700*. 2 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968. § 16 note 2. Cf. *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* 2.2.105–06, where Lysander says: “Where is Demetrius? O, how fit a word/ Is that vile name to perish on my sword!” and later Thisbe in 5.1.329–30: “Tongue, not a word!/ Come, trusty sword, / [...]”. Another example is Shallow’s question in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* 3.1.39–40: “What, the sword and the word? Do you study them both, Master Parson?”

28 On Edward Lear’s nonsensical fusion of eating and beating, see Angelika Zirker’s essay in this volume. The word *buffet*, in the sense of “A sideboard table” (*OED* “buffet” n.³ 1.a.) appears as an English word only in the early eighteenth century and as a form of serving a meal only in the nineteenth (1.b.). But then the French expression exists much longer; cf. the interesting reference to drink in COTGRAVE, “Buffeté”: “Wrought rough, or shagge, like Buffe; also, buffeted, or well cuffed; also, deaded, as wine that hath taken wind, or hath been mingled with water.”

ends: “and must every he/ Which cries not, ‘Goddess!’ to thy Mistresse, draw,/ Or eat thy poysonous words? courage of straw!” (26–28).

Accordingly, Beatrice does not know whether she is to take Benedick seriously but becomes quite serious herself when she now directly asks “Will you not eat your word?” She seems anxious to discover *res* in his words, something to trust and rely upon. Whereas in her first statement, she has still been non-committal (“I confess nothing, nor I deny nothing”), she now, by her very question, admits that Benedick’s words have become some thing. She looks for food, and he provides it, but she is honestly afraid that he might, after all, eat it up himself (somewhat in the manner of Petruchio in *The Taming of the Shrew*, who has the dishes removed so that Katherina fears that she will be fed “with the very name of meat” – *The Taming of the Shrew* 4.3.32.). Beatrice wants to devour Benedick’s words, i.e. follow the examples from Plautus and Cicero given by Cooper, “Deuorare dicta alicuius [...] To take good heede vnto wordes” and “Verbum ipsum omnibus modis animi & corporis deuorabat” (he devoured that word with body and soul, or as Cooper translates the phrase, “he tooke that worde marueylous gladly & with great delight”)²⁹. But she is not yet quite sure whether he has really given his word or just words that may be taken back. Implicitly, she states that Benedick has done much more than utter nothings, for you can only arrive at the idea of eating words when you believe in their being something. Words, Beatrice’s anxious question implies, may be real food, as in Emily Dickinson’s marvellous line “He ate and drank the precious Words”,³⁰ or they may be some *Ersatz* that does not still your hunger at all.

No one is less aware of this than Benedick, who reflects on the change Claudio’s speech underwent when he fell in love: “now is he turned orthography; his words are a very fantastical banquet, just so many strange dishes” (*Much Ado About Nothing* 2.3.19–21). Whereas he leaves it open as to whether this is nourishing or not, other Shakespearean characters have no illusions about this. Costard and Moth, for example, who work for the braggart Don Adriano de Armado in *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, view Moth’s master and his fellow word-monger Holofernes quite skeptically when they say,

MOTH [*to* They have been at a great feast of languages, and stolen the scraps.
Costard.]

29 Cf. COOPER, Thomas. “Deuoro.” In: *Thesaurus Linguae Romanae et Britannicae*. Hildesheim: Olms, 1975 [1578].

30 DICKINSON, Emily. *The Poems of Emily Dickinson*. Edited by Ralph W. Franklin. 3 vols. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998. no. 1715. Emily Dickinson repeatedly takes up the notion of the nourishing word; cf. e.g. the poem “A word made Flesh is seldom / And tremblingly partook” (ibid. no. 1715); see BAUER, Matthias. “‘A word made Flesh’: Anmerkungen zum lebendigen Wort bei Emily Dickinson.” In: Volker Kapp and Dorothea Scholl (eds.). *Bibeldichtung*. Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2006. 373–92.

COSTARD O, they have lived long on the alms-basket of words! I marvel thy master hath not eaten thee for a word, for thou art not so long by the head as *honorificabilitudinitatibus*. Thou art easier swallowed than a flap-dragon. (*Love's Labour's Lost* 5.1.35–41)

The editors have noticed that Costard (or Shakespeare) puns here “on the pronunciation of Moth’s name as Fr. *mot*”, and we might add that this underlines the rather decrepit state of Armado, who lives on words and feeds others with them; for Costard’s suggestion makes us realize that he is not only an eater of ‘mot(h)s’ but appears to be rather moth-eaten. One might say that the very nature of comedy consists in eating such words, and that we, the audience, partake in the great feast of language(s)³¹ when we devour the words of the actors marvelously gladly and with great delight. Bottom, for example, senses this instinctively, when he desires the comedy of Pyramus and Thisbe to be sweet – which is why his fellow-actors are to mind their diet:

And most dear actors, eat no onions nor garlic, for we are to utter sweet breath; and I do not doubt but to hear them say, it is a sweet comedy. No more words. Away! Go, away! (*A Midsummer Night's Dream* 4.2.39–43)

One really suspects some schoolboy’s joke (on Shakespeare’s part) behind this excessive literalism, or some dog-Latin (on Bottom’s part), for of course anyone looking for “comedi(e)” in a Latin dictionary would find nothing but the past tense of *comedere*, “I have eaten”.

Benedick goes on to dress his metaphor by imagining sauces to his word, none of which will make him eat it, and immediately moves to dangerous grounds again, for when he says “I protest I love thee” he uses a Latin word, *protestari*, that means, according to Cooper, “To denounce or declare openly that a thing is not to be done”.³² Beatrice immediately takes him up on this when she asks God’s forgiveness for having almost done the same. But the ambiguity is manifold here, for “to denounce or declare openly” is the synonym of another word, which means, according to Cooper, “To utter or put forth: to publish or set

31 On language in *Love's Labour's Lost*, see CARROLL, William C. (*The Great Feast of Language in Love's Labour's Lost*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976; especially ch. 1, 11–64), who does not, however, consider closely the metaphor that has provided the title of his book. Elam, in *Shakespeare's Universe of Discourse*, stresses “the extraordinary theatricalization in *LLL* of the material (or precisely, *plastic*) qualities of language” which “finds its main thematic expression in the equation between the phonemic-morphemic features of speech and the human body and its alimentary functions” (ELAM, Keir. *Shakespeare's Universe of Discourse: Language Games in the Comedies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984. 258).

32 In *Romeo and Juliet* (2.4.168–75), Romeo tells the Nurse “commend me to thy lady and mistress. I protest unto thee–”, an utterance which is taken up by the Nurse in a (perhaps unwittingly) ironic fashion, as she regards it as a cause of joy to Juliet: “I will tell her, sir, that you do protest – which, as I take it, is a gentleman-like offer.”

abrode”, and this word is *edo*, just the same as *edo* ‘I eat’, even though the preterite is different: *edidi* instead of *edi*. Interestingly, Cooper goes on in his definition of *edo*, *edis* by adding the meaning “to bring forth, to execute, or doe, or to cause to be done”: *edo* in this sense is synonymous with *do* and *ado* and thus the exact opposite of *nothing* and of eating one’s words; it refers to a declaration which is also an action – the very thing Benedick has in mind. The relationship of speaking and acting will be brought home to the audience only a few seconds later, when the scene suddenly takes a serious and potentially tragic turn. Beatrice will ask Benedick to *execute, or do something*: “Kill Claudio”.

This seriousness, however, is not completely unanticipated. It already came in when Benedick swore his oath, “By my sword”. Similarly, Beatrice’s “God forgive me” introduces, together with its mocking playfulness, a quite earnest note. The Arden editor suggests that Benedick may “pun on the more serious oath, ‘God’s word’, which contracts to ‘sword’” and cites Pistol in *Henry V* as a parallel: “Sword is an oath, and oaths must have their course” (*Henry V* 2.1.101). Benedick’s and Beatrice’s exchange which shows, and reflects on, wordplay becoming serious commitment, takes religion into account.

And this is the point where some further investigation into the history of the expression “To eat one’s words” is called for. In particular, the first examples listed by the *ODEP* are quite revealing. One of them, which is also listed by the *OED* as the very first example, is from Arthur Golding’s 1571 translation of Calvin’s commentary on the 62nd Psalm. The verse “Once hath God spoken it, I have heard it twice, that power belongeth unto God” (62:12; 62:11 in the AV) is explained in the commentary as “God eateth not his word when he hath once spoken it” (fol. 236^v). In this perspective, the word *not* eaten by the speaker is the divine word, and we are surely right in assuming that Golding chose this metaphor for his translation because it alludes to the notion that we are the ones to eat God’s words, not God himself (remember Cooper’s “*Deuorare dicta alicuius*”), and because the Psalms themselves offer the concept of eating words. “Taste and see,” as Psalm 34 has it, and in Psalm 119: “how sweet are thy words to my taste”; we are also reminded of Revelation (10:10) where John eats up the angel’s “little book” that tastes “sweet as honey” in his mouth and enables him to speak the prophetic word.³³

If we are still doubtful about the religious origin of the proverbial phrase, “to eat one’s words”, however, we should look once more into the *ODEP* and follow up the very first reference (which is not in the *OED*). This is from 1551 and is to be found in Thomas Cranmer’s treatise called *An Answer [...] vnto a crafty and sophisticall cauillation deuised by Stephen Gardiner [...] against the trewe and godly doctrine of the most holy sacrament of the body and blood of our sauour*

33 Cf. “And have tasted the good word of God” in Hebr. 6:5 (AV).

Iesu Christe. Cranmer defends himself against his opponent's attack by telling him, "Brynge you forthe some place in my booke, where I saye, that the lordes supper is but a bare signification without anye effecte or operation of god in the same, or else eate your woordes agayne".³⁴ Cranmer's sarcasm is here based on the very fact that he wants to stress, namely that to him the lord's supper is not, as his Roman Catholic antagonist has held him to have maintained, a mere word without any *res*, a "bare signification". Eating the host is eating the Word that was made flesh (John 1:14). Cranmer uses the metaphor (to eat one's words) sarcastically in order to remind his reader of the literal truth of eating the divine word, which is a synonym, and not a metaphor, of being "fedde and nourished with CHRISTES verye fleshe and bloode" (172). At the same time, he emphasizes that the *res* is not a material object but an action or operation, a "ministration and receiuyng".

This mystery, alluded to by the invocation of "God" in the context of eating words, becomes the model for the exchange between Benedick and Beatrice. Words are not to be insubstantial nothings. Nor are they, as Beatrice makes clear, to be physical substances that can be eaten again by the speaker. They become food only in the process of ministration and receiving, and that means when they do something. We see this first when the issue is Benedick's and Beatrice's mutual confession of love, and later when Beatrice demands punishment (or revenge) for the murderous slander of Hero. As regards the declaration of love, we see this most clearly when Beatrice says "I was about to protest that I loved you" and Benedick replies "And do it" (*Much Ado About Nothing* 4.1.284–85), implying that she should do both, protest and love him, that *res* and *verba* should be one.

The word 'eaten' in this sacramental sense must be internalized; it should not, as the false Angelo in *Measure for Measure* confesses to himself, stay just in the speaker's mouth: "Heaven in my mouth," says Angelo, "As if I did but only chew his [i.e. heaven's] name,/ And in my heart the strong and swelling evil/ Of my conception" (*Measure for Measure* 2.4.4–7). In our scene it is Benedick who introduces the heart, albeit quite conventionally: "And do it, with all thy heart." Beatrice's answer takes away the conventional note, as it is clad both in a breathtakingly simple phrase and an ingenious paradox: "I love you with so much of my heart that none is left to protest." The remarkable sequence of 14 monosyllabic words (followed by the disyllabic "protest") is the appropriate verbal expression of the plain earnestness which has replaced earlier role-

34 CRANMER, Thomas. *An Answer of the Most Reuerend Father in God Thomas Archbishop of Canterburye, primate of all England and metropolitan vnto a crafty and sophisticall cauil-lation deuised by Stephen Gardiner doctour of law, late byshop of Winchester, against the trewe and godly doctrine of the most holy sacrament of the body and blood of our sauour Iesu Christe*. London, 1551. STC 211:05. 172.

playing.³⁵ Beatrice does the very thing she says she cannot do (protest, in the sense of affirming solemnly) while at the same time she does not protest (i. e. “declare openly that a thing is not to be done”) but has totally absorbed Benedick’s words of love. For a moment, the border line between word and thing seems to have vanished;³⁶ the word in the mouth is at one with the conception somewhere inside.

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35 I would thus like to complement HUNT’s view, who stresses that Benedick “becomes disposed to woo Beatrice in plain, direct, unequivocal language” (HUNT. “The Reclamation of Language.” 189).

36 VICKERS cites Thomas Sprat’s *History of the Royal Society of London* (1667) as an example of “the classical belief in a proper economy of style, ‘when men deliver’d so many things, almost in an equal number of words’” (VICKERS. “‘Words and Things.’” 303).

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Food, Famine, Appetites and Eroticism in Plays by William Shakespeare and his Contemporaries

I. Prologue

When Marion Gymnich and Norbert Lennartz approached me and asked whether I would be prepared to participate in a symposium on the “Pleasures and Horrors of Eating” my spontaneous reply, driven to some extent by a practically adolescent levity as well as the timely occurrence of a sabbatical between my acceptance and the actual event itself, was a positive one. The initial idea was to present a short paper on the metaphors of eating and banqueting, as well as their contextual function in a selection of exemplary Tudor and Stuart plays, primarily revenge tragedies. In retrospect, it appears that I was not quite aware just what implications this positive response of mine would have.

Several weeks after my committal to participate in this symposium, and in a strange twist of fate, I was asked to act as scholarly advisor to an episode of the television series “Royal Dinner”, aired by TV Gusto. The episode in question focussed on a grand banquet, hosted by Cleopatra in honour of Julius Caesar. As ever, there was little to no time for me to prepare the 35 minutes of spoken contributions the directors demanded. My primary concern therefore had to be the fundamental choice between an Alexandrine banquet, entirely in the Ptolemaic-Hellenistic tradition, or a banquet held at Rome according to Roman customs. This led to the realisation, and admission, that I knew far less of the recipes, dishes, cooking rituals and serving traditions of Ptolemaic Alexandria than of those in the Roman imperial tradition. Even relatively familiar sources such as Apicius’ collection of recipes and the banqueting anecdotes in the biography of Antony by Plutarch¹ are difficult to evaluate, as it is unclear to what extent they reflect the reality of Antiquity. After all, it is equally possible that they merely highlight proven preconceptions and/or interesting differences to everyday life.

1 Cf. Plutarch, Antony. 28–29. Cf. also BAUMANN, Uwe. *Kleopatra*. Reinbek: Rowohlt, 2003; esp. 67–69.

An ancient royal banquet, however, included much more than merely delicious food and drink – opulence of furnishings, grandeur of setting and seating arrangements of guests, as well as dinner-conversation, entertainment, gifts and prayers all played an important part in the success of such an event. In short, ‘elite dining’ constituted a carefully choreographed and primarily political form of theatre. The cultural varieties and complexities of this form of entertainment have recently been summed up in the Habilitation’s Thesis of Konrad Vössing, entitled *Mensa Regia. Das Bankett beim Hellenistischen König und beim Römischen Kaiser* and published in Munich in 2004.² Any practical issues that arose before the actual recording of this episode of “Royal Dinner” were quickly resolved by the excellent cook and her suggested menu, specific highlights of which included ‘Lucan sausages’, roast piglet covered in garlic and savoury spices and Egyptian red wine. All in all, the banquet gave a convincingly positive impression of ‘ancient’ culinary delights and left me – a somewhat unintentional by-product of the event – with a series of methodical pointers of direct relevance to this paper: this is particularly true in terms of the degree of accuracy to which English Renaissance Drama portrays dining habits and practices of that time.

While the actual purpose of my sabbatical was the preparation of a monograph on political thought in the English Renaissance and its classical traditions, this involved the detailed scrutiny of roughly 150 tragedies and histories, primarily of the Stuart period. This research increased my collection of dining metaphors, food-imagery and banqueting scenes so substantially that I was forced to completely distance myself from the original – and spontaneously formulated – topic of this paper.

The following will therefore take the form of a series of insights into a work in progress, rather than present refined theses or even succinct analyses of the dramatic representations and functions of banquets and dining references in a selection of dramas. The paper formulates a series of questions and aspects that, ideally, have the potential to constitute a research programme, building on and extending recent research such as Chris Meads’ interesting and exemplary study *Banquets Set Forth. Banqueting in English Renaissance Drama*.³

2 Cf. VÖSSING, Konrad. *Mensa Regia. Das Bankett beim hellenistischen König und beim römischen Kaiser*. München/Leipzig: K. G. Saur, 2004; esp. 92 sqq. (“Hellenistic Kings”), and 265 sqq. (“Roman Principes”).

3 MEADS, Chris. *Banquets Set Forth. Banqueting in English Renaissance Drama*. Manchester/ New York: Manchester University Press, 2001.

II. Food and Banquets: Exploring Masculinity

Shakespeare's problem comedy *Troilus and Cressida*⁴ portrays a male environment dominated by violence, destructive irrationality and competition for sexual ownership. All four female characters are spectators to these struggles at best, but primarily take the role of victims or manipulated objects.⁵ Shakespeare portrays a clear interrelationship between power and sexual desire that actively destroys this world. This is highlighted by an extensive dining metaphor in Ulysses' *degree*-speech in the early stages of the play:

Then everything include itself in power,
Power into will, will into appetite.
And appetite, an universal wolf,
So doubly seconded with will and power,
Must make perforce an universal prey
And last eat up himself. (*Troilus and Cressida* I,3,119 – 124)

During a lull in the battle – which actively devours man after man – both parties treat the cause of strife, Helena, as little more than a 'Spartan whore'. Menelaos' desire to retrieve Helena from the Trojans is phrased to contain clear sexual connotations and draws a parallel to the desire to empty the dregs of an old, long opened vat of wine (*Troilus and Cressida* IV,1,61 – 62: "He [...] would drink up / The lees and dregs of a flat tamèd piece").

The transfer of Cressida to the Greek camp coincides with preparations for a formal banquet, held by Achilles for a small circle of Greeks and Trojans. This dinner is apparently designed to be a display of honourable and chivalrous behaviour – values shared by all parties. Achilles, however, uses this event for a specific aim, namely to assess Hector – his enemy of the following day. This is explicitly stated before the festivities, during a scene set in Agamemnon's tent (*Troilus and Cressida* IV,1,230 – 232): "Now, Hector, I have fed mine eyes on thee; / I have with exact view perused thee, Hector, / And quoted joint by joint". Achilles describes the anticipated severing of the enemy's limbs in the tones of a livestock merchant or anatomist,⁶ thereby transgressing the boundaries of the

4 All Shakespeare references are to *The Norton Shakespeare*. Edited by Stephen GREENBLATT et al. New York/London: W.W. Norton, 1997.

5 Cf. in general KRIPPENDORF, Ekkehart. *Politik in Shakespeares Dramen. Historien – Römerdramen – Tragödien*. Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 1992; esp. 67 sqq.; and BAUMANN, Uwe. *Shakespeare und seine Zeit*. Stuttgart/Düsseldorf/Leipzig: Klett, 1998; esp. 46 sqq.; cf. also BRITLAND, Karen. "Circe's Cup: Wine and Women in Early Modern Drama." In: Adam Smyth (ed.). *A Pleasing Sinne: Drink and Conviviality in Seventeenth-Century England*. Cambridge: Brewer, 2004. 109 – 25.

6 Cf. on the intricate relationship between anatomy and Renaissance drama NEILL, Michael. *Issues of Death. Mortality and Identity in English Renaissance Tragedy*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997; esp. 102 – 40.

socially acceptable, the decorum. Nonetheless, all of the invitees, including Hector, do attend to Achilles' tent – with the actual banquet taking place *off stage*.

Coincidental to these events, Diomedes is shown at a private dinner with Calchas, where he appears smitten by Cressida. A subsequent night-time visit – witnessed by Troilus under the guidance of Ulysses – shows that his courting meets with success. This turns the phrase “sweet love is food for fortune's tooth” (*Troilus and Cressida* IV,5,292), formulated by Troilus at an earlier stage in the play, into fatal certainty whilst also highlighting his youthful naivety; his bond with Cressida was not, after all, ‘sweet love’, nor were the teeth or hands of Fortune responsible – events were, in fact, dictated by the primarily male protagonists of this defunct and unhinged warrior-society.

In summary, the above examples show the following: as both the intimate dinner of Diomedes and Cressida and the banquet in Achilles' tent take place *off stage* and no details are stated in the play, both require imagined contexts. In English Renaissance Drama, contexts of this nature – namely dining or banqueting scenes – are repeatedly highlighted and presented with slight variations. This creates a dense pattern of staged banqueting scenes – and connotations – as shown, for example, by the complex meaning of ‘appetite’,⁷ which links dining or banqueting directly with love, erotic desire and seduction.⁸

The dinner guests of Achilles, as well as his explicitly stated aims, however, provide further information that must be included in any ‘typology’ of dining scenes in English stage plays – after all, more than 100 English plays from the period up to 1642 contain banqueting scenes!⁹ This scene in particular highlights that motives and aims of different characters in dining scenes can vary greatly and may include the ostentatious display of power and wealth, reconciliation, seduction, revenge and murder.

The above outline may suggest that Achilles' banquet would have been dominated by a verbal assessment of his opposite number, a kind of rhetorically staged agonal version of the coming slaughter witnessed in subsequent scenes.

7 Cf. the lemma ‘appetite(s)’ in the *OED*; cf. also my favourite references: Shakespeare, *Oth.* III,3,272 – 274 [Othello]: “O curse of marriage,/ That we can call these delicate creatures ours/ And not their appetites!”, and Thomas MIDDLETON and William ROWLEY. *The Changeling*. Edited by Joost Daalder. New Mermaids. London: A & C Black, 1990. V,1,1 – 7 [Beatrice]: “One struck, and yet she lies by't! – O my fears!/ This strumpet serves her own ends, 'tis apparent now,/ Devours the pleasure with a greedy appetite,/ And never minds my honour or my peace,/ Makes havoc of my right. But she pays dearly for't:/ No trusting of her life with such a secret,/ That cannot rule her blood to keep her promise”.

8 Cf. ANDERSON, Donald K. Jr. “The Banquet of Love in English Drama, 1595 – 1642.” In: *Journal of English and German Philology* 65 (1964): 422 – 32 (a brief survey of the variety of tropes in Renaissance plays which equate love with banquetry), and MEADS. *Banquets Set Forth*; esp. 1 – 7.

9 Cf. the appendix in MEADS. *Banquets Set Forth*; esp. 240 sqq.

The fact that this event is left to the imagination of the audience, and must therefore be rooted in its judgement of characters based on the language used by the play's protagonists, however, underlines once more how deeply these characters are bound by their world – an endless cycle of violence, blood and dehumanisation. They are all characterised by the war they live in (many modern productions extend or modify this to read: all wars), which forces them to adopt its laws – apparently without any other option.

The conversations during a banquet held on Sextus Pompey's flagship in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*¹⁰ display a thematic concentration on questions of power, missed opportunities, and military or political enemies and their removal – unsurprising topics amongst a purely male group of diners consisting primarily of soldiers and generals. While excessive collective drinking, in which only Octavius Caesar refuses to participate, appears to momentarily drown political differences. Cleopatra is identified as a delicacy or dainty – an “Egyptian dish” (*Antony and Cleopatra* II,6,123). The Egyptian queen represents an erotic fascination that affects Antony as much as the remainder of the men. Enobarbus evokes this in memorable verses, explicitly defining Cleopatra, and women in general, “in terms of banqueting food”¹¹:

Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale
Her infinite variety: other women cloy
The appetites they feed, but she makes hungry,
Where most she satisfies. (*Antony and Cleopatra* II,2,235 – 238)

Regardless of its specific dramatic function,¹² this clear contrasting of the feminine, or even effeminate Egyptian-orientalising luxury lifestyle with the masculine, rough world of Roman soldiers and men takes direct reference to the gender discourses of Shakespearean England. Once again, this serves to highlight the consequences of an author's specific choice of guests, as well as the variations in motives of those organising such dinners – important for any typology of banqueting scenes.

Indeed, exclusively male banquets, especially where the guests are mainly soldiers or warriors, appear to be used primarily to portray traditionally male interests, or appetites: wealth, power, glory, honour or revenge. Women are seen as delicacies or objects of desire – at best they are portrayed as subjects of male

10 Cf. in general BAUMANN, Uwe. *Vorausdeutung und Tod im englischen Römerdrama der Renaissance (1564–1642)*. Tübingen/Basel: Francke, 1996; esp. 187 sqq.; cf. also PAROLIN, Peter A. “‘Cloyless Sauce’: The Pleasurable Politics of Food in *Antony and Cleopatra*.” In: Sara M. Deats (ed.). *Antony and Cleopatra: New Critical Essays*. New York: Routledge, 2005. 213–29.

11 MEADS. *Banquets Set Forth*. 146.

12 Cf. MEADS. *Banquets Set Forth*. Esp. 145–47.

competition. A good example of this is a fatal bet in Heywood's *The Rape of Lucrece* as to who has the most faithful and virtuous wife.¹³ The imagery of Sextus' challenge evokes not only the contrast between domestic bliss and martial duty, but also declares women generally to be an imagined object of pleasure:

is't possible thinke you, that
 Women of younge spirit and Full age, of
 Fluent wit, that can both sing and dance,
 Reade, write, such as feede well and taste choice cates,
 That straight dissolve to puritie of blood,
 That keepe the veines full, and enflame the appetite
 Making the spirit able, strong, and prone,
 Can such as these, their husbands being away
 Emploid in foreign sieges or else where,
 Deny such as importune them at home? (*The Rape of Lucrece* 1474–83)

This conceptualisation may furthermore explain why modern productions tend to stage the famous scene from Shakespeare's *Cymbeline* that leads to Posthumus' fatal bet regarding the virtues of Imogen (I,5) as a dinner or banquet. In so doing, these productions turn the dialogue into a dinner conversation, a typically male discourse fuelled by excessive alcohol consumption. The actual text, however, does not give any indicators of such a situational context – although it might help to understand but not to excuse Posthumus' vain and foolish attempts to impress, as well as Iachimo's perfidious, albeit brilliantly executed, baseness.

III. Famine, Food and Banquets: Exploring Gender, Eroticism, and Love

It is not only women, however, who are portrayed as a delicacy or dainty – and who are often cannibalised.¹⁴ Men, too, can be found depicted as an object of desire, albeit in the female imagination. In a conversation with Pandarus, ripe with sexual and erotic ambiguities, Cressida, for example, defines the man as a “minced man; and then to be baked with no date in the pie, for then the man's

13 Cf. HOLADAY, Alan (ed.). *Thomas Heywood's The Rape of Lucrece*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1950. Cf. in general BAUMANN. *Vorausdeutung und Tod*. Esp. 50 sqq., and MEADS. *Banquets Set Forth*. Esp. 114–16. Cf. also BELLING, Catherine. “Infectious Rape, Therapeutic Revenge: Bloodletting and the Health of Rome's Body.” In: Kaara L. Peterson (ed.). *Disease, Diagnosis, and Cure on the Early Modern Stage*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004. 113–32.

14 Cf. Wolfgang G. Müller's contribution to this book.

date is out⁹ (*Troilus and Cressida* I,2,241 – 242). *The Travels of the Three English Brothers*¹⁵ maintains continued food and dining metaphors throughout,¹⁶ culminating in a playful dialogue between the Sophy's niece and her chambermaid full of bawdy puns:

Niece: [...] What dost thou think of the two English brothers?

Dalibra: I think Madam, if they be as pleasant in taste, as they are fair to the eye, they are a dish worth eating.

Niece: A cannibal Dalibra? Wouldst eat men?

Dalibra: Why not Madam? Fine men cannot choose but be fine meat.

Niece: Ay, but they are a filling meat.

Dalibra: Why so are most of your sweet meats, but if a woman have a true appetite to them they'll venture that. (*The Travels of the Three English Brothers* 3,2 – 12)

The situational background of the Sophy's niece's falling in love with the brother of the protagonist, Sir Anthony Shirley, may explain the familiar tone of this frivolous exchange. At the same time, however, it evokes almost classical connections between dining and rare delicacies on the one hand and love and eroticism on the other. This – unspoken – connection can be found throughout English Renaissance drama, for example in the ambiguity of the term 'appetites' or the understanding of several types of foods, especially sweets and spices, acting as aphrodisiacs.¹⁷ All this followed an existing ancient tradition, that of Seneca's and Ovid's banquets, although this link has seen far less research to date.¹⁸ This classical tradition¹⁹ includes several passages from the *Song of Solomon* or *Song of Songs* (II,3 – 4; IV,10 – 11) and Ovid's *Banquet of the Senses*, as well as Achilles Tatius' Hellenistic novel *Clitophon and Leucippe* – first published in an English translation in 1597.²⁰ These sources, and the latter in particular,

15 Cf. DAY, John, William ROWLEY and George WILKINS. *The Travels of the Three English Brothers*. In: Anthony Parr (ed.). *Three Renaissance Travel Plays*. The Revels Plays. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995.

16 Cf. MEADS. *Banquets Set Forth*. 111 – 13.

17 Cf. e.g. HAYNES, Alan. *Sex in Elizabethan England*. London: Sutton Publishing, 2007. 76 – 77; WILSON, C. Anne. *Food and Drink in Britain. From the Stone Age to Recent Times*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973. 194, 309, 312 and 315.

18 Cf. MEADS. *Banquets Set Forth*. 22 – 35 (a brief, but brilliant summary). Cf. also CLUCAS, Stephen. "Banquets of the Senses: Elizabethan Ovidianism and its Discontents." In: *EnterText* 3 (2003): 31 – 58; and O'KEAFE, John J. *An Analysis of Jasper Heywood's Translations of Seneca's Troas, Thyestes, and Hercules Furens*. Diss. Loyola University Chicago, 1974.

19 Cf. in general e.g. BETTENWORTH, Anja. *Gastmahlszenen in der antiken Epik von Homer bis Claudian. Diachrone Untersuchungen zur Szenentypik*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004.

20 Cf. ACHILLES TATIUS. *The Most Delectable and Pleasaunt History of Clitophon and Leucippe*. Translated by W. Burton. London, 1597. Cf. GREENHALGH, Darlene C. "Love, Chastity, and Woman's Erotic Power: Greek Romance in Elizabethan and Jacobean Contexts." In: Con-

form the ancient *locus classicus* for literary food metaphors, as can be seen in the following excerpt from the 5th Book of *Clitophon and Leucippe*, a description of a banquet held in honour of the narrator by Melite (N 2):

[...] as soone as she sawe mee, ranne presently to meete me, receiving mee with many kinde embracings and sweet kisses, Shee truly was both comely and faire, her very body did carrie such a maiestie, as if that she hadde beene Venus her selfe, her colour and her cheekes was so pure and perfect [...] in the meane season a sumptuous supper was prepared, and beeing sette upon the table wee sate downe. But Melite did take a little of every thing which was sette down, feeding of nought but love, earnestly with fired eyes did beholde mee, for there is nothing so pleasant or delightfull unto lovers, as to beholde the thing which they love [...]. I pray you said I, why do not you also eate of these delicates which you have prepared? Truly you seeme to me as if you were a painted guest. Then answered shee: what meate can bee more daintie, what wine more precious than your sight? With these words embracing mee in her arms, shee kissed mee, than oft repeated this, Thou art my joy, my food, and whole delight.

While I am not aware of any direct references to the novel by Achilles Tatius in English Renaissance Drama that pre-date 1629 (and, therefore, Ben Jonson's *The New Inn*, III,2,203),²¹ the typical – and topical – lack of appetite commonly found in petrarchistic lovers of the genre seems to link back to the classical tradition of imagining a lover as a delicacy or dainty.²² Indeed, love and affection appear to effectively dispel nagging hunger in a dramatic reality, as seen in the case of Beaumont and Fletcher's Albert, who finds nourishment in Aminta's embrace (*The Sea Voyage* I,1,37 – 39)²³: "Though hunger gripes my croaking entrails / Yet, when I kiss these rubies, methinks / I'm at a banquet, a refreshing banquet."

There is, therefore, a direct interconnection between the consumption of food and drink and erotic or sexual pleasure, or rather: desire is the common property of English Renaissance drama. This does, of course, frequently involve

stance C. Relihan and Goran V. Stanivukovic (eds.). *Prose Fiction and Early Modern Sexualities in England, 1570 – 1640*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004. 15 – 42.

- 21 Cf. MEADS. *Banquets Set Forth*. 31: "[...] Achilles Tatius's account of *Clitophon and Leucippe* must be enlisted as a possible general influence before 1629, when *The New Inn* appeared, and can be added to the contribution of Ovid, as another model or 'love's father' from antiquity."
- 22 Cf. e. g. Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis*, 445 – 50 [Venus]: "But O, what banquet wert thou to the taste,/ Being nurse and feeder of the other four!// Would they not wish the feast might ever last/ And bid suspicion double-lock the door/ Lest jealousy, that sour unwelcome guest,/ Should by his stealing-in disturb the feast?" Cf. also Edmund Spenser's *Amoretti* (Sonnet LXXVII), George Herbert's "The Banquet", and John Donne's "Epithalamion at the Marriage of the Earl of Somerset". Cf. in general on the dramatical representation of desire ZIMMERMAN, Susan. (ed.). *Erotic Politics. Desire on the Renaissance Stage*. New York/London: Routledge, 1992.
- 23 BEAUMONT, Francis and John FLETCHER. *The Sea Voyage*. In: Anthony Parr (ed.). *Three Renaissance Travel Plays*. The Revels Plays. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995.

a kind of 'hierarchisation' of desire and its gratification. The insatiable servant Penurio in Beaumont and Fletcher's *Women Pleased*, for example, appears to forget his original desire for culinary pleasures such as fine foods, turkey, lobster and exquisite sauces or delicate Greek wines once he, somewhat intensely, tastes the sweet fruits of love.

While such culinary details may belong to the imagined lexical world of the trade metropolis of London and her flourishing imports,²⁴ in cultural terms the relationship between such imagined delicacies and the everyday lives of theatre-audiences remains little more than an interesting question; aside from isolated pioneering studies in recent years, there has been little research in this direction: there has not even been a detailed comparison of the dramatic presentation of dishes with contemporary culinary sources such as cookery or account books, medical or physiological treatises, religious tracts and sermons or other printed or iconographic matter.²⁵

The longest dining scene in English Renaissance drama alone, which can be found in Thomas Middleton's *Women Beware Women*,²⁶ would constitute an interesting starting point for such a study; its continuous food-imagery repeatedly utilises dishes and banqueting elements to conjure up not just ironic images, but also elements of desire and seduction. To date, however, research has focussed – no doubt deservedly so – solely on the dramatic functions of this ingenious scene.²⁷ While a cultural study of this scene would no doubt present interesting results, these would inevitably prove to be somewhat secondary details for any understanding of the scene and the tragedy as a whole. This, however, would not be the case for a similar analysis of Thomas Heywood's *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, a domestic tragedy which frequently uses advanced food-imagery.²⁸ Initially glorified as a model of a virtuous wife, Anne Frankfort, its protagonist, attempts to atone for her infidelity by starving herself

24 Cf. in general HAMMERSCHMIDT, Hildegard. *Die Importgüter der Handelsstadt London als Sprach- und Bildbereich des elisabethanischen Dramas*. Heidelberg: Winter, 1979; esp. 131 sqq.

25 Cf. MEADS. *Banquets Set Forth*. 8–21.

26 Cf. MIDDLETON, Thomas. *Women Beware Women*. Edited by James Ronald Mulryne. The Revels Plays. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1975. III,3 sqq. Cf. also MEADS. *Banquets Set Forth*. 151–54. Cf. BROMHAM, A.A. "‘A Plague Will Come’: Art, Rape, and Venereal Disease in Middleton's *Women Beware Women*." In: *EnterText* 3 (2003): 145–60; COLE, J.A. "Sunday Dinners and Thursday Suppers: Social and Moral Contexts of the Food Imagery in *Women Beware Women*." In: James Hogg (ed.). *Jacobean Miscellany* 4. Salzburg, 1984. 86–98.

27 Cf. MEADS. *Banquets Set Forth*. 151: "Women Beware Women involves the complex interweaving of two interrelated plots, throughout which images taken from food, banqueting, and appetite are bywords for all insatiable desires of which lust predominates."

28 Cf. HEYWOOD, Thomas. *A Woman Killed with Kindness*. Edited by Richard W. Van Fossen. The Revels Plays. London: Methuen & Co. 1961.

to death. This consistent refusal to partake of food, coupled with her clearly stated retreat into prayer, needs to be put in its wider context – after all, it explicitly and purposely contravenes the statutes of the established English Church.²⁹

As has frequently been shown in past scholarship, however, the protagonist's very behaviour as well as the overall conception of sin, repentance and atonement itself, they are all deeply rooted in the concepts and ideologies of Puritanism – although it must be remembered that this group was by no means homogenous. Before any conceptual consequences of such contextual roots in Puritan or anti-Puritan ideology may be discussed further, it is necessary to include a further source of evidence that has been sadly neglected in such discussions to date: a series of contemporary treatises and pamphlets dedicated to virgins called *Miracle Maidens*, who often spent years without partaking of food.³⁰ In practically all cases, such pamphlets saw this abstinence entirely positively. These texts and their explicit moral stances as well as theological treatises, pamphlets and sermons constitute the religious discursive context that leads a dramatic *persona* to an individual, but subjective decision. The question to what extent such underlying contexts would have been evident to a con-

- 29 Cf. e.g. BRYAN, Margaret B. "Food Symbolism in *A Woman Killed with Kindness*." In: *Renaissance Papers* (1974): 9–17; CHRISTENSEN, Ann. "Business, Pleasure, and the Domestic Economy in Heywood's *A Woman Killed with Kindness*." In: *Exemplaria: A Journal of Theory in Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 9 (1997): 315–40; FREY, Christopher. "'My Breasts Sear'd': The Self-Starved Female Body and *A Woman Killed with Kindness*." In: *Early Theatre* 7 (2004): 45–66; GREEN, Reina. "Open Ears, Appetite, and Adultery in *A Woman Killed with Kindness*." In: *English Studies in Canada* 31 (2005): 53–74; GUTIERREZ, Nancy. "The Irresolution of Melodrama: The Meaning of Adultery in *A Woman Killed with Kindness*." In: *Exemplaria: A Journal of Theory in Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 1 (1989): 265–91; GUTIERREZ, Nancy. "Exorcism by Fasting in *A Woman Killed with Kindness*: A Paradigm of Puritan Resistance?" In: *Research Opportunities in Renaissance Drama* 33 (1994): 43–62; HASLEM, Lori Schroeder. "Tragedy and the Female Body: A Materialist Approach to Heywood's *A Woman Killed with Kindness* and Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*." In: Karen Bamford and Alexander Leggatt (eds.). *Approaches to Teaching English Renaissance Drama*. New York: MLA, 2002. 142–49; McQUADE, Paula. "'A Labyrinth of Sin': Marriage and Moral Capacity in Thomas Heywood's *A Woman Killed with Kindness*." In: *Modern Philology* 98 (2000): 231–50; PANEK, Jennifer. "Punishing Adultery in *A Woman Killed with Kindness*." In: *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 34 (1994): 357–78; RICHARDSON, Catherine. "Properties of Domestic Life: The Table in Heywood's *A Woman Killed with Kindness*." In: Jonathan G. Harris and Natasha Korda (eds.). *Staged Properties in Early Modern English Drama*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002. 129–52; SEBEK, Barbara. "'By Gift of My Chaste Body': Female Chastity and Exchange Value in *Measure for Measure* and *A Woman Killed with Kindness*." In: *Journal x: A Journal in Culture and Criticism* 5 (2000): 51–85.
- 30 Cf. GUTIERREZ, Nancy A. *'Shall She Famish Then?' Female Food Refusal in Early Modern England*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003. Compare esp. Appendix III (117 sqq.): a chronological listing of Descriptions of Miracle Maidens, published in England between 1589 and 1677. Cf. also EASTMAN, Nathaniel. *Cultures of Famine in Early Modern England*. Diss. Lehigh University, 2007.

temporary audience, or at least parts thereof, however, leads back to the everlasting question of the accurate estimation of the cultural awareness of any contemporary audience.

IV. Epilogue

The title page of the 1639 quarto edition attributes *The Bloody Banquet* to ‘T. D.’³¹. If this tragedy really is of such a late date, it may be seen as “a splendid summation of the trends and tropes of all banquet scenes in tragedy up to that point. [...] The final [eponymous bloody] banquet scene in particular is a graphic and sweeping success, laden with portents and full of bloody spectacle, redolent of many banquet scenes in the years from 1585 onwards”.³² The setting of the banquet in a room decorated with the severed parts of the quartered torso of Tymethes, the unfaithful lover of the tyrant Armatrites’ wife, clearly evokes similar cannibalistic scenes from plays such as Shakespeare’s *Titus Andronicus*.³³ Interestingly the lustful crime itself was initiated during a *secret banquet* portrayed in the third act of the play and its subsequent orgy of intrigue and deceit. This and the author’s stage directions, equally reminiscent of *Titus Andronicus*, also form a direct link to John Marston’s *Antonio’s Revenge* (*The Bloody Banquet* G4): “*Soft Musicke. Enter the Tyrant with the Queene, her haire loose, she makes a Curtsie to the Table. Sertorio brings in the flesh with a skull all bloody, they all wonder.*” Both scenery and the verses Armatrites uses to recount the various crimes of his lascivious wife and vent his deep-seated desire for revenge act as a gruesome and almost grotesque summation of the all-important link between pleasures of the palate and pleasures of the flesh (and, in this case, the pleasures of revenge):

31 Cf. DRUE, Thomas. 1961. *The Bloody Banquet*. Edited by Samuel Schoenbaum. Malone Society Reprints. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

32 MEADS. *Banquets Set Forth*. 154.

33 Cf. e.g. LUGO, Jessica. “Blood, Barbarism, and Belly Laughs: Shakespeare’s Titus and Ovid’s Philomela.” In: *English Studies* 88 (2007): 401–17; NOBLE, Louise. “‘And Make Two Pasties of Your Shameful Heads’: Medicinal Cannibalism and Healing the Body Politic in *Titus Andronicus*.” In: *English Literary History* 70 (2003): 677–708. Cf. also RICE, Raymond J. “Cannibalism and the Act of Revenge in Tudor-Stuart Drama.” In: *Studies in English Literature 1500–1900* 44 (2004): 297–316, and WALTER, Melissa. “Drinking from Skulls and the Politics of Incorporation in Early Stuart Drama.” In: Timothy J. Tomasik and Juliann M. Vitello (eds.). *At the Table. Metaphorical and Material Cultures of Food in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*. Turnhout/Belgium: Brepols Publishers, 2007. 93–105.

This as a pennance I enjoy'd her to
 To taste no other sustenance; no nor dares
 Till her loves body be consum'd in hers [...]
 The Letcher must be swallowed rib by rib,
 His flesh is sweete, it melts, and goes downe merrily. (*The Bloody Banquet*
 G4^v-H1)

In structural terms, this leaves the following observations: motives and topics of banqueting scenes, as well as their dramatic function, have been researched to some degree in recent decades.³⁴ Current syntheses, such as that presented by Chris Meads do, however, require some degree of refinement and addition, particularly in terms of detail. This is especially true of the banqueting scenes in Thomas Heywood, who included at least 18 such scenes in his work and therefore surely merits more detailed analysis. The same can be said with regard to questions of contouring in individual banqueting scenes set against a backdrop of contemporary literary conventions (particularly so in relation to certain genres such as revenge tragedies, love tragedies, tragicomedies and comedies).

Another topic that ought to see further analysis are specific references or contrasts to classical or contemporary models of banqueting scenes. Such analyses would then produce an – admittedly artificially constructed – overview that could highlight a historic development of general commonalities (i. e. topoi) as well as help to understand the individual creative achievements of specific dramatists.³⁵

Such research could then be developed further to address questions regarding the on-stage presentation of such banqueting scenes, both in Renaissance the-

34 Cf. esp. MEADS, *Banquets Set Forth*. Passim (a very stimulating survey). Cf. also HAMMERSCHMIDT, Hildegard. *Die Importgüter der Handelsstadt London*. Esp. 204 sqq.; MITSU, Efterpi. "The 'popular philosopher': Plato, Poetry, and Food in Tudor Aesthetics." In: *Early Modern Literary Studies* 9,2 (2003): 21 – 23.

35 Cf. e. g. ANDERSON, Donald K. Jr. "The Heart and the Banquet: Imagery in Ford's 'Tis Pity and The Broken Heart." In: *Studies in English Literature 1500 – 1900* 2 (1962): 209 – 17; CANDIDO, Joseph. "Dining Out in Ephesus: Food in *The Comedy of Errors*." In: *Studies in English Literature 1500 – 1900* 30 (1990): 217 – 41; CARY, Cecile Williamson. "The Iconography of Food and the Motif of World Order in *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*." In: *Comparative Drama* 13 (1979): 150 – 63; GUTIERREZ, Nancy A. "Double Standard in the Flesh: Gender, Fasting, and Power in English Renaissance Drama." In: Lilian R. Furst and Peter W. Graham (eds.). *Disorderly Eaters. Texts in Self-Empowerment*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004. 79 – 93; JOWITT, Claire. "'Her flesh must serve you': Gender, Commerce and the New World in Fletcher's and Massinger's *The Sea Voyage* and Massinger's *The City Madam*." In: *Parergon* 18 (2001): 93 – 117; MARSCHALL, Brigitte. "Vom Schau-Gericht zur Eat-Art. Die Inszenierung der Sinne." In: *Maske und Kothurn* 44 (1998): 1 – 25; OLSEN, Flemming. "The Banquet Scene in *Macbeth*. Variations upon a Topos." In: Graham D. Caie and Holger Norgaard (eds.). *A Literary Miscellany Presented to Eric Jacobsen*. Copenhagen: Copenhagen University Press, 1988. 108 – 32; TAYLOR, Valerie. "Banquet Plate and Renaissance Culture: A Day in the Life." *Renaissance Studies* 19 (2005): 621 – 33.

atre and in modern productions. To date, these issues have only been addressed sporadically in studies focussed on individual plays or small selections of plays.³⁶

The broader study of food-imagery in general – although this is hardly surprising, is in a significantly worse state. The few existing studies in this field are concentrated on the canonised dramatists such as William Shakespeare, Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher, Ben Jonson, John Marston, Thomas Middleton, John Ford and Philip Massinger, as well as the specific genre of revenge tragedies. It is clear, however, that less well-known playwrights or anonymous plays could provide just as interesting insights regarding possible commonalities of style and type of food-imagery and their functions.

It is not just from the perspective of cultural research, therefore, that a major *desideratum* in this respect is the analysis of specific contemporary contexts, both with regard to daily rituals of dining and drinking and the use of recipes and foodstuffs contemporarily seen as aphrodisiacs. This ought also to include the study of medicinal or theological treatises and pamphlets that deal with the meaning of food and drink, as well as their consumption and misuse, on the basis of different motives.³⁷

It is my hope, therefore, that this particular *entrée* may lead on to turn the earlier papers and subsequent contributions of this volume into a veritable feast of research that no single chef could hope to produce – including the addition of further chosen foodstuffs, rare spices and refined tastes.

Not so much in the way of a summary, but rather in direct reference to the contribution by my colleague Uwe Klawitter³⁸ and as justification for the repeated use of this type of metaphor, I should therefore like to close with a quotation from the prologue of *The Travels of the Three English Brothers* (1607):

36 Cf. esp. MEADS. *Banquets Set Forth*. 36 sqq.

37 Cf. ALBALA, Ken. *Eating Right in the Renaissance*. Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002; BALKWILL, Richard. *Food & Feasts in Tudor Times*. Parsippany: New Discovery Books, 1995; HAMMERSCHMIDT, Hildegard. *Die Importgüter der Handelsstadt London*. Esp. 27 sqq.; MEADS. *Banquets Set Forth*. Passim; SCULLY, Terence. *The Art of Cookery in the Middle Ages*. Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1995; SMYTH, Adam (ed.). *A Pleasing Sinne. Drink and Conviviality in Seventeenth-Century England*. Cambridge: Brewer, 2004; TOMASIK, Timothy J. and Juliann M. VITULLO (eds.). *At the Table. Metaphorical and Material Cultures of Food in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*. Turnhout/Belgium: Brepols Publishers, 2007; WEISS, Susan F. “Medieval and Renaissance Wedding Banquets and Other Feasts.” In: Martha Carlin and Joel T. Rosenthal (eds.). *Food and Eating in Medieval Europe*. London: Hambledon, 1998. 159–74; WILSON, Anne C. *Food and Drink in Britain*. Passim; WOOLGAR, Christopher Michael, Dale SERJEANTSON and Tony WALDRON (eds.). *Food in Medieval England. Diet and Nutrition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.

38 Cf. Uwe Klawitter’s contribution to this book.

Our scene is mantled in the robe of truth,
 Yet must we crave (by law of poesy),
 To give our history an ornament;
 But equalling this definition, thus:
 Who gives a foul unto his cook to dress
 Likewise expects to have a foul again;
 Though in the cook's laborious workmanship
 Much may be diminished, somewhat added
 (The loss of feathers and the gain of sauce),
 Yet in the back-surrender of this dish
 It is, and may be truly called, the same.
 Such are our acts.

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Eating, Drinking and Genre in Shakespeare

Essen und Trinken auf der Bühne kann nie [...] Vorwurf einer Kunstbehandlung werden. [...] diese grob-sinnlichen Handlungen [sollen] [...] möglichst von der Bühne entfernt bleiben [...], als gänzlich unstatthaft und zwecklos aus der Darstellung verbannt werden.¹

In its article on eating and drinking on stage, a German encyclopaedia of the theatre published in 1839 expresses a view that now seems outdated but that reflects attitudes widespread in Germany and even in England almost until World War II. Citing the tradition of classic Greek drama, representatives of this conservative view maintain that such mundane matters as eating and drinking are incompatible with the serious concerns and moral conflicts of tragedy and are suitable only for comedy, particularly for satirical low comedy and farce. And it may be worthy of note that both *farce* and *satire* are in origin cooking terms, connected with eating: *farce* meaning ‘stuff(ing)’ and *satire* ‘medley’ or ‘mish-mash’.

However, frequency counts of some key words in Shakespeare’s plays, such as *drink*, *eat*, *feed* and *food*, yield unexpected results. It is not the comedies that are found in top positions but mostly tragedies and histories. Top in the frequency of *drink* and inflected forms comes *Hamlet* (18 instances), with *Antony and Cleopatra* close behind in third place (16 instances). Less surprising are places two and four (with 17 and 15 instances respectively) for two histories in which Falstaff features, *2* and *1 Henry IV*. In joint fourth place comes *The Tempest*, beating *Twelfth Night* by one instance before two more tragedies, *Timon of Athens* and *Othello*, appear (11 and 9 instances respectively), the latter joint ninth with *The Taming of the Shrew*; it is also noteworthy that *Macbeth* contains as many references to *drink* as *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (8).

¹ Z. FUNK, pseudonym for Karl Friedrich Kunz. In: Robert Blum, K. Herloßsohn, H. Marggraf et al. (eds.). *Allgemeines Theater-Lexikon oder Encyklopädie alles Wissenwerthen für Bühnenkünstler, Dilettanten und Theaterfreunde*, 7 vols. Altenburg/Leipzig: Expedition des Theater-Lexikons, 1846 [1839]. III, 204.

Equally unexpected are the results for *eat* (including inflected forms) with a history and a tragedy, *Henry V* (18 instances) and *Timon* (13) in the first two places. *2 Henry IV* shares third place with *As You Like It* and *Much Ado about Nothing*, with 11 references each; but *Hamlet* again comes high in the list, in sixth place, jointly with *2 Henry VI* and *Taming* (9 instances each).

With *food* and *feed* a comedy takes the lead, *As You Like It* (12 and 11 instances respectively), but in both lists tragedies follow hard on its heels: in the list for *feed*, *Titus Andronicus* comes second, followed by *Hamlet*, *Timon of Athens* and *2 Henry IV* jointly in third place (9 references each). The frequency count for *food* presents a similar picture: again two tragedies, *King Lear* and *Timon of Athens*, come second and third.

Statistics about the frequency of these key words should be taken with the proverbial pinch of salt because they do not take account, for example, of references to specific kinds of food and drink, such as bread, meat, Rhenish or ale. Nevertheless, the remarkable prominence of eating and drinking in the tragedies seems to confirm the argument that Shakespeare is an unconventional playwright who frequently transgresses the conservative limits of genre. The fact that comedy and comic characters have extraordinary significance in most of his tragedies has been explored more and more deeply,² and in the case of *Othello*, for instance, critics have argued that the tragedy is built on a comic structure.³ Conversely, the complexity of the comedies is increased by seemingly serious or near-tragic situations.

Yet the conclusion suggested by the frequency count does not mean that Shakespeare is necessarily always unconventional. *The Comedy of Errors*, his ingenious reworking of Plautus's *Menaechmi* with motifs from another of his plays, *Amphitruo*, meets traditional expectations associated with comedy with the record-breaking number of 41 references to *dine* (including inflected forms) and *dinner*. Allusions to food and eating are central to the plot of the play and linked with other ordinary concerns, money and gold. Mistaking Antipholus of Syracuse for his own master, Dromio of Ephesus calls him home to dinner in terms that vividly evoke the routine in an Elizabethan household:

The capon burns, the pig falls from the spit.
The clock hath stricken twelve upon the bell;

2 See, for example, SNYDER, Susan. *The Comic Matrix of Shakespeare's Tragedies: Romeo and Juliet, Hamlet, Othello, and King Lear* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), and DRAUDT, Manfred. "The Comedy of *Hamlet*." In: *Atlantis* 24,1 (2002): 71–83.

3 Cf. DE MENDOÇA, Barbara Heliodora C. "Othello: A Tragedy Built on a Comic Structure." In: *Shakespeare Survey* 21 (1968): 31–38.

My mistress [...] is so hot because the meat is cold. (*The Comedy of Errors*, I.ii.44 – 47)⁴

In Dromio's report of the stereotypical response of his supposed master the incongruous mixing up of eating and money (another mundane matter) points to the absurd cross-purposes of the situation:

'Tis dinner-time,' quoth I. 'My gold,' quoth he.
 'Your meat doth burn,' quoth I. 'My gold,' quoth he.
 [...]
 'The pig,' quoth I, 'is burned.' 'My gold!' quoth he. (*The Comedy of Errors*, II.i.61 – 65)

Antipholus's eventual acceptance of Adriana's invitation to dinner brings about the play's pivotal complication, the locking out of her real husband. For Dromio of Syracuse, who has been accompanying his master, the encounter with the kitchen wench Nell becomes a traumatic experience, not only because she claims she is engaged to him but also because she shows the negative effects of cooking and eating, being "all grease" and "spherical, like a globe" (*The Comedy of Errors*, III.ii.95, 113).

From the fat Nell it is only a short way to the notorious glutton Falstaff, perhaps Shakespeare's best-known character apart from Hamlet. Even if food is not necessarily shown on stage, it features, together with drink, in the very first words Hal addresses to Falstaff in *1 Henry IV*: "Thou art so fat-witted with drinking of old sack [...]. What the devil hast thou to do with the time of the day? / Unless hours were cups of sack, and minutes capons" (I.ii.2–7). At his favourite inns, the Boar's Head Tavern in *1 Henry IV* and the Garter Inn in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, Falstaff consoles himself with sack⁵ (see II.v.105–8 and III.v.3) after being beaten and humiliated, i. e. after the Gadshill robbery and after being ditched into the Thames. There is a subtle difference between the tavern scenes in the two parts of *Henry IV*: whereas in Part One there is an outrageous excess of sack on Falstaff's bill – more than two gallons as against one capon and "one half-pennyworth of bread" (II.v.487–93) –, in the Second Part Mistress Quickly, who wants to have him arrested for debt, accuses him of having "eaten [...] [her] out of house and home. / He hath put all my substance into that

4 All references are to *The Norton Shakespeare*. Edited by Stephen GREENBLATT et al. New York/London: W.W. Norton, 1997.

5 It may be noted that the translation of *sack* as 'Sekt' in the Berlin production of *1 Henry IV* in the 1830s coined the present meaning of the German word. Derived from the Italian 'vino secco', *Sekt* originally designated a still wine from southern countries made from dry grapes, but from then on changed its meaning to 'sparkling wine' (s.v. *Sekt*, PAUL, Hermann. *Deutsches Wörterbuch*. Halle: Niemeyer, 1897). In Goethe's *Faust*, Brandner, addressing Mephistopheles, refers to 'sparkling wine' as "Champagner-Wein, und recht moussierend soll er sein".

fat belly of his" (II.i.67–68). Furthermore, the kind of food and drink he consumes is indicative of his social status as a knight (even if a run-down one), because poorer people mostly lived on dark bread, cheese and vegetables.

If the tavern scenes⁶ featuring Falstaff epitomise a characteristic function of food and drink as a social signifier,⁷ the same function is also apparent in *Twelfth Night*, where a close relative of Falstaff's and another spokesman for vitality, Sir Toby, pleads for enjoyment of food and drink by putting the "affectionate ass" Malvolio in his place: "Dost thou think because thou art virtuous there shall be no more cakes and ale?" He also shows contempt for the puritanical steward by telling him to "rub [...] [his] chain [of office] with crumbs" (*Twelfth Night*, II.iii.103–08).

The pleasures of convivial gatherings over food and drink in sociable company ("merry", a keyword in all the plays in question, is central in *2 Henry IV*) are enjoyed particularly by Hal, and they underscore the pressures of the bleak court, from which the Prince escapes to the tavern, as well as the freedom he enjoys there, virtually a fool's licence. "I am sworn brother to a leash of drawers", Hal claims, and he continues: "though I be but Prince of Wales yet I am [...] but a Corinthian [i.e. a drinking companion] [...] I can drink with any tinker in his own language" (*2 Henry IV*, II.iv.6–17). Though he mixes freely with the lower classes, Hal is strongly aware of his future role as monarch, as is particularly evident in his soliloquy "I know you all, and will a while uphold / The unyoked humour of your idleness" (*2 Henry IV*, I.ii.173–95). Yet Falstaff, too, similarly oscillates between the two extremes, addressing him as "Hal" and "lad" on their very first appearance (*2 Henry IV*, I.ii.1), while being conscious of his high position: "were it not here apparent that thou art heir apparent – but I prithee, sweet wag, shall there be gallows standing in England when thou art king?" (*2 Henry IV*, I.ii.50–57). It is not surprising that hierarchy is made an issue in the tavern scenes, because dining frequently relates to position, rank or order, as we shall also see in other plays. A climax in this respect, with a reversal of conventional order, comes in the two impersonations when Falstaff, as Lord Misrule, with dagger and cushion, first turns into a mock king ("Harry, now I do not speak to thee in drink, but in tears"; *2 Henry IV*, II.v.379) and then poses as the Prince, while Hal does not just "play [his] father" but anticipates the time when he himself will be monarch and reject "that reverend Vice, that grey Iniquity, that father Ruffian, that Vanity in Years. / Wherein is he good, but to

6 "Eastcheap. This street noted for its meat-markets provides an appropriate background for numerous references to food and feasting", the editors of *1 Henry IV*, Herbert and Judith WEIL, note at the beginning of Act II, Scene 4 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

7 Even the number of courses one might eat depended on status. Whereas a cardinal was permitted nine courses at a meal, those whose income was below £ 40 a year were allowed only two.

taste sack and drink it? / Wherein neat and cleanly, but to carve a capon and eat it?" (2 *Henry IV*, 413–16). Perfectly poised between seriousness and absurdity, these scenes of feasting are highlights of Shakespeare's dramatic craft.

The King's criticism of his son's "lewd" escapades and the "rude society" he mixes with (*Henry IV*, III.ii.13–4) anticipates the tone of bitter censure of a daughter for her royal father:

Here do you keep a hundred knights and squires;
Men so disordered, so deboshed and bold,
That this our court [...]
Shows like a riotous inn. Epicurism and lust
Make it more like a tavern or a brothel. (*Henry IV*, I.4.216–20)

Although Goneril's accusation of Lear sounds as if it were reminiscent of the tavern scenes of *Henry IV*, it should be borne in mind that her claim is unsubstantiated. Nevertheless, many modern directors of the play prefer to show the knights not only feasting but also with outrageous table manners, which are meant to illustrate their questionable social status and to justify Goneril's rage.

The prominence of the word *food* in the play has nothing to do with feasting but relates directly to existential issues and questions. If the sharing of food signifies togetherness and hospitality, the references in *King Lear* point to disrupted order, to isolation and to being cast out from the family or from human society in general. The sarcastic bitterness shown to Regan by Lear before he storms away from the castle, "On my knees I beg/ That you'll vouchsafe me raiment, bed and food" (*King Lear*, II.iv.148–49), epitomises the reversal of the father-child relationship and anticipates the heath, where he is going to miss these basic necessities. It also anticipates his association with another pitiable outcast, the disguised Edgar, who visualises the sufferings of a Bedlam beggar: "Poor Tom, that eats the swimming frog, the toad, the tadpole, the wall-newt and the water; that [...] eats cow-dung for sallets; swallows the old rat and the ditch-dog; drinks the green mantle of the standing pool" (*King Lear*, III.iv.119–23). Gloucester, attempting to show pity and sympathy to his monarch by "bring[ing him] [...] where both fire and food is ready" (*King Lear*, III.iv.141), will pay dearly for his kindness. The tragedy *King Lear* and the Falstaff plays suggest the extraordinarily wide range that the references to food can cover in Shakespeare.

Drinking, which the word frequency count has shown to be central to *Hamlet*, is made an issue from the start when, after Hamlet has consented not to return to Wittenberg, Claudius presents himself as a jovial, if pompous, king who is so pleased with his stepson's affability that he pledges:

No jocund health that Denmark drinks today
 But the great cannon to the clouds shall tell,
 And the King's rouse the heavens shall bruit again,
 Re-speaking earthly thunder. (*Hamlet*, I.ii.125–28)

50 lines later Hamlet's irony addressed to Horatio, "We'll teach you to drink deep ere you depart", shows the King's joviality in a different light; significantly, it is followed by a sarcastic comment on the speed of his mother's re-marriage and on the new dining habits: "The funeral baked meats / Did coldly furnish forth the marriage tables" (*Hamlet*, I.ii.174–80). Two scenes later, with the watch on the battlements, Hamlet's criticism of the King turns into outright contempt:⁸

The King doth wake tonight and takes his rouse,
 [...]
 And as he drains his draughts of Rhenish down
 The kettle-drum and trumpet thus bray out
 The triumph of his pledge.

To Horatio's question as to whether this is customary he replies:

[...] though I am a native here
 And to the manner born, it is a custom
 More honoured in the breach than the observance. (*Hamlet*, I.iv.9–18)

For Claudius's excessive drinking Shakespeare may have drawn on two sources: Thomas Nashe⁹ repeatedly describes the Danes as drunkards,¹⁰ and he may also have been aware that King Christian IV of Denmark, the brother of Queen Anne (married to James since 1589), was a heavy drinker.¹¹ More important than these details, however, is the dramatic function of the motif. It may be added that wine was the drink of the upper classes, from the country gentleman upwards, and is therefore consumed at court (as it is also at Macbeth's), whereas the First Gravedigger, asking his mate to "fetch [...] [him] a stoup of liquor" (*Hamlet*, V.1.55–56), would drink ale, like other labourers or craftsmen.¹²

8 Compare Hamlet's deliberate misinterpretation of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern's intimation that the king is "marvellous distempered", i. e. angry after the performance, by insinuating that he is distempered "with drink" (*Hamlet*, III.ii.311).

9 According to Gary Taylor, Nashe appears to have collaborated with Shakespeare on *1 Henry VI* (cf. VICKERS, Brian. *Shakespeare, Co-Author*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002. 145–46).

10 For instance in *The Unfortunate Traveller*: "[...] the Dane and the Dutchman [...] do nothing but fill bottomless tubs and will be drunk and snort in the midst of dinner" (NASHE, Thomas. *The Unfortunate Traveller*. Edited by J.B. Steane. London: Penguin, 1972. 345).

11 In 1606 he even visited England.

12 See the tinker Sly in *The Taming of the Shrew*, who protests that he "ne'er drank sack in [his] [...] life" but has been "on the score for sheer ale" (2.6–21).

Claudius's wining and feasting with his court¹³ keeps up the pretence (which the Prince sees through) that he is a jolly good fellow, whereas Hamlet's violent condemnation of this habit characterises him as a stern and almost puritanical outsider (in some respects a counterpart to Malvolio). To him, Claudius's "Rhenish" epitomises the court's corruption, and this contributes to the deep-rooted antagonism between himself and the King. It is therefore not surprising that in the end the poisoned wine will be instrumental in Claudius's intrigue, in which also Gertrude is accidentally killed; it will even be the instrument by which Hamlet exacts his own revenge, as he forces the King to empty the poisoned cup himself: "Here, thou incestuous, murd'rous, damnèd Dane,/ Drink off this potion." The comment of the dying Laertes, "He is justly served./ It is a poison tempered by himself" (*Hamlet*, V.ii.267–70), points to the irony that the cunning Claudius has become a deceiver deceived, whose plot has backfired, since the Prince has always been immune to his show of generosity and kindness.

Noteworthy is not only the prominence of drink (underlined by ten repetitions of the word within fewer than 60 lines) in the deadly confrontation, but also the fact that Claudius's drinking and pretended kindness to the Prince echo almost verbatim Act One, Scene Two, their very first confrontation, so that his drinking habits provide a frame to the play:

Set me the stoups of wine upon that table.
If Hamlet give the first or second hit,
[...]
The King shall drink to Hamlet's better breath,
And in the cup an union shall he throw
[...] Give me the cups,
And let the kettle to the trumpet speak,
The trumpet to the cannoneer without,
The cannons to the heavens, the heaven to earth,
'Now the King drinks to Hamlet'. (*Hamlet*, V.ii.204–16)

Although the final duel seems to take place during or after a banquet, metaphorical allusions to food in Hamlet's attacks on the King are probably more significant.¹⁴ In his macabre answer about the whereabouts of Polonius's corpse, the Prince exploits repulsive details of eating and digestion in order to confront the King with his own mortality:

At supper [...] Not where he eats, but where he is eaten. [...] We fat all creatures else to fat us, and we fat ourselves for maggots. Your fat king and your lean beggar is but

13 Compare Polonius's suggestion that Reynaldo should insinuate that Laertes enjoys "drinking" as well as various other petty vices (*Hamlet*, II.i.26).

14 Compare Hamlet's riddling reply to Claudius's question how he fares, "I eat the air [punning on 'heir'], promise-crammed. / You cannot feed capons so" (*Hamlet*, III.ii.85–86).

variable service – two dishes, but to one table. [...] A man may fish with the worm that hath eat of a king, and eat of the fish that hath fed of this worm, [which means that] [...] a king may go a progress through the guts of a beggar (*Hamlet*, IV.iii.18 – 31).

Claudius correctly interprets this as a direct threat to his life and responds by dispatching Hamlet to England and to what he thinks will be his certain death.

Drinking is even more central to the plot in *Othello*, where it is the trigger of Iago's intrigue. Despite Cassio's reluctance, Iago insists that he must drink "[b]ut one cup" (*Othello*, II.iii.32) to Othello's health to celebrate his wedding, because Iago knows that Cassio will start to quarrel and disgrace himself. Just as in *Hamlet*, the seeming cheerfulness associated with drinking and an ostensibly convivial scene with songs (see *Othello*, II.iii.25 – 103), which invites comparison with Sir Toby and *Twelfth Night*,¹⁵ serve both to cloak and to advance the fatal intrigue. All the characters involved – Cassio, Roderigo and Othello – react as Iago has planned and expected: Othello relieves Cassio of his post, and at Iago's suggestion Cassio pleads with Desdemona to intercede for him. In his soliloquy, Iago then not only gloats over the success of his intrigue but also anticipates the ultimately deadly consequences of Cassio's drunkenness:

[...] for whiles this honest fool
 Plies Desdemona to repair his fortune,
 And she for him pleads strongly to the Moor,
 I'll pour this pestilence into his ear:
 That she repeals him for her body's lust,
 [...]
 So will I turn her virtue into pitch,
 And out of her own goodness make a net
 That shall enmesh them all. (*Othello*, II.iii.327 – 36)

Finally I should like to point to a highly original variant of feasting and dining, the disruption of festivities, which we find not only in the tragedies, as may be expected, as well as in one history,¹⁶ but also in comedy. In *As You Like It*, Orlando disrupts the Duke's banquet as he bursts in and, with sword drawn, cries out: "Forbear, and eat no more!" (II.vii.88). The absurdity of his rude demand for food is brought out by Jaques, who mildly ridicules him,¹⁷ as well as

15 For close links between *Othello* and *Twelfth Night* see DRAUDT, Manfred. "The Same Within: Intertextuality in *Twelfth Night*." In: Ruth Parkin-Gounelas (ed.). *The Other Within*, vol. 1: *Literature and Culture* (Selected Papers from the Third International Conference of the Hellenic Association for the Study of English). Thessaloniki: A. Altintzis, 2001. 191 – 200.

16 In *All is True*, or *Henry VIII*, King Henry and his party arrive disguised as shepherds and interrupt the lavish dining at Cardinal Wolsey's, who remarks: "You have now a broken banquet, but we'll mend it" (I.iv.62).

17 "Why, I have eat none yet. [...] An you will not be answered with reason, I must die" (*As You Like It*, II.vii.88 – 100).

by the irony of the situation, since the Duke generously offers hospitality and “welcome[s him] to [their][...] table” (*As You Like It*, II.vii.104). Nevertheless, there is also a serious aspect to this scene, because Orlando’s desperate move to get food for the starving old Adam is not dissimilar from the existential issues of *King Lear*. And Adam’s disappearance – like that of the Fool – after this scene suggests that both faithful attendants are also possibly linked by the same fate: they die after too much deprivation and suffering.¹⁸

The Taming of the Shrew has even more dramatic examples of frustrated gratification. I do not mean Sly’s being thrown out of an alehouse in the Induction, but rather the traumatic experiences to which Katherina is subjected. Before, during and after the wedding Petruchio violates every social convention, including the hospitality expected of a bridegroom. At first disguising the outrage with mock politeness –

I know you think to dine with me today,
And have prepared great store of wedding cheer.
But so it is, my haste doth call me hence (*The Taming of the Shrew*,
III.iii.58 – 60)

– he later shocks the wedding party with offensive abuse before taking Kate away with him by force:

Go to the feast, revel, and domineer,
Carouse full measure to her maidenhead.
Be mad and merry, or go hang yourselves. (*The Taming of the Shrew*,
III.iii.95 – 97)

A similar pattern can be observed at Petruchio’s house. After the nightmarish journey he plays the part of a generous host and husband by seemingly providing a warm welcome to his bride and requesting the servants to “fetch [...] [the] supper in”: “Sit down, Kate, and welcome”. Yet when it is served, despite Kate’s protestations that the meat is good, he pretends to find fault with it (“‘twas burnt and dried away”), throwing it at the attendants and insisting that “for this night we’ll fast for company” (*The Taming of the Shrew*, IV.i.120 – 58). Peter’s comment and Petruchio’s soliloquy then confirm the centrality of this scene and reveal his strategy: he is deliberately subjecting Kate to privations in order to demonstrate to her the absurdity of her own former behaviour:

My falcon now is sharp and passing empty,
[...]
She ate no meat today, nor none shall eat.

18 Compare Adam’s distressed words, “I can go no further. O, I die for food. / Here lie I down and measure out my grave”, while Orlando, promising him to “bring [...] something to eat”, assures him “thou shalt not die for lack of a dinner” (*As You Like It*, II.vi.1 – 13).

[...]
 As with the meat, some undeservèd fault
 I'll find about the making of the bed,
 [...]
 Ay, and amid this hurly I intend
 That all is done in reverend care of her,
 [...]
 This is a way to kill a wife with kindness,
 And thus I'll curb her mad and headstrong humour. (*The Taming of the Shrew*, IV.i.171–90)

A mock banquet, again with a didactic moral point, also occurs in *The Tempest* when the spirits controlled by Prospero first provide a banquet for the stranded party¹⁹ but Ariel, disguised “*like a harpy, claps his wings upon the table, and, with a quaint device, [makes] the banquet vanish*” (III.iii.52, SD) before reminding the hungry men of their transgressions.

Disrupted dining is of even greater significance in the tragedies. A supper, not where Tamora's sons Chiron and Demetrius eat, but where they are eaten, forms the climax of the denouement of *Titus Andronicus*. What turns into a cannibal feast of revenge has begun as a formal banquet, in which Titus appears in the double function of host and cook.²⁰ The cook, a traditional comic figure in classic drama, underlines the fact that this gruesome tragedy, too, has characteristics of mixed genre:

Hautboys. A table brought in. Enter TITUS like a cook, placing the dishes.
 Welcome, my gracious lord, welcome, dread queen;
 [...]
 And welcome, all. Although the cheer be poor
 'Twill fill your stomachs. Please you, eat of it.
 [...] I would be sure to have all well
 To entertain your highness and your Empress. (*Titus Andronicus*, V.iii.25–32)

The way a ceremonial occasion – Tamora speaks of “thy solemn feast” – is turned into chaos and massacre anticipates both the play scene and the ending of *Hamlet*, although Titus's cynicism and sardonic humour are even more bitter than Hamlet's:

Why, there they are [the sons], both bakèd in this pie,
 Whereof their mother daintily hath fed,
 Eating the flesh that she herself hath bred. (*Titus Andronicus*, V.iii.59–61)

19 The faithful Gonzalo echoes Adam in *As You Like It* when whimpering “I can go no further, sir” (*The Tempest*, III.iii.1).

20 The stage direction reads: “*Trumpets sounding, a table brought in. Enter TITUS like a cook, placing the dishes*” (*Titus Andronicus*, V.iii.25, SD).

The breakdown of hierarchy plays an important role not only in this banquet scene, as the Queen and the Emperor are slaughtered by Titus and his son Lucius, but even more so in *Macbeth* when Banquo's Ghost, by "sitt[ing] in *Macbeth's place*" (*Macbeth*, III.4.37, SD), symbolically claims the throne and suggests that his children will be the future kings of Scotland. That hierarchy is already an issue at the formal opening of the scene is implicitly signalled in the stage direction "*Banquet prepared. Enter MACBETH [as King], Lady MACBETH [as Queen], [...] and attendants*" and in the first words of Macbeth: "You know your own degrees; sit down. At first and last/ The hearty welcome" (*Macbeth*, III.iv.1–2). Like Claudius, Macbeth plays the role of jovial host: "Be large in mirth. Anon we'll drink a measure/ The table round. [...] Now good digestion wait on appetite,/ And health on both" (*Macbeth*, III.iv.10–11, 37–38). The scene is highly charged with multiple ironies: Macbeth, who has formally invited Banquo, "Tonight we hold a solemn supper, sir,/ And I'll request your presence" and has reminded him, "Fail not our feast" (*Macbeth*, III.i.14–29), commands his friend's murder immediately after his exit and even drinks a toast to him at the banquet²¹ (to which the name 'Banquo' may obliquely refer). Macbeth is not just flabbergasted when he finds Banquo's Ghost sitting again in his own chair; what should have been the crowning event of his rise to power ends in chaos with his public mental breakdown, which anticipates his wife's collapse in the sleepwalking scene. It should be noted that the Queen's quick dismissal of the dinner guests again alludes to hierarchy and its breakdown: "Stand not upon the order of your going,/ But go at once" (*Macbeth*, III.iv.118–19).

Ironies also characterise the earlier scene of entertainment which marks the turning point in Macbeth's life and is fatal for the royal guest. On Macbeth's information that "Duncan comes here tonight", his wife ominously observes: "He that's coming/ Must be provided for" (*Macbeth*, I.v.57–65). The subtext of what suggests a formal welcome of the King in fact anticipates his assassination. Duncan's frequent repetition of "host" or "hostess" (four times within 21 lines; *Macbeth*, I.vi.10–31), also designated "honoured", "fair" and "noble", points to the polite and ceremonious nature of the welcome, but Lady Macbeth's convoluted courtly language has the ring of flattery.²² The insincerity of the hosts is

21 [...] Give me some wine. Fill full.

I drink to th'general joy of th'whole table,
And to our dear friend Banquo, whom we miss.
Would he were here. To all and him we thirst. (*Macbeth*, III.iv.87–90)

22 All our service,

In every point twice done, and then done double,
Were poor and singly business, to contend
Against the honours deep and broad wherewith
Your majesty loads our house. (*Macbeth*, I.vi.14–19)

confirmed by the ironic juxtaposition of preparations for a lavish dinner with Macbeth's resolution to kill his guest. In his soliloquy beginning "If it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well/ It were done quickly" Macbeth, considering points speaking against the assassination, is very much aware of the irony: "as his host/ Who should against his murderer shut the door, / [I should] Not bear the knife myself" (*Macbeth*, I.vii.1 – 16). It is noteworthy that the opening stage direction of this scene, "*Hautboys. Torches. Enter a sewer and divers servants with dishes and service crossing over the stage. [...] Then enter MACBETH*" (*Macbeth*, I.vii), almost recalls the preparation of the torch-lit feast at Capulet's house. There Peter and the other servants "*come forth with napkins*", refer to the "trencher", i. e. the wooden plate, and "the plate", i. e. the silverware, before Old Capulet enters showing warmth and genuine hospitality in the style of comedy. Three times he repeats "welcome, gentlemen" and requests "Come, musicians, play" (*Romeo and Juliet*, I.v.1 – 23). Were it not for Tybalt and his threats against Romeo, the feast in *Romeo and Juliet* would reflect the genuine spirit of comedy. In *Macbeth*, by contrast, the banquet is relegated to the area off-stage,²³ and King Duncan receives the opposite of hospitality. Not unlike Iago, who gets Cassio drunk as the first step in his scheme, Lady Macbeth maps out her strategy: "his two chamberlains/ Will I with wine and wassail so convince/²⁴ That [...] / His spongy officers [...] shall bear the guilt/ Of our great quell [i.e. slaughter]" (*Macbeth*, I.vii.63 – 72). An aspect of the murder that is generally overlooked is that both Macbeth and his wife give themselves Dutch courage before executing their bloody plan. The very bell which signals to Macbeth that his "drink is ready" (*Macbeth*, II.i.31) sounds the "knell/ That summons [...] [Duncan] to heaven or to hell" (*ibid.* 63–4), and Lady Macbeth explicitly links her fatal decision with drinking:

That which hath made them [Duncan's servants] drunk hath made me bold.
What hath quenched them hath given me fire. (*Macbeth*, II.ii.1–2)

Banquets, mock as well as real ones, feature most prominently in *Timon of Athens*, as the stage direction in Act One, Scene Two shows: "*Hautboys playing loud music. A great banquet served in, and then enter [Lord] TIMON, the States [i.e. Senators], the Athenian LORDS [...]*". Characteristic is again the ceremonious entrance with the emphasis on social hierarchy and particularly Timon's demonstration of hospitality and wealth, not only in the sumptuousness of the feast but also in redeeming his friend from prison. Yet from the start doubt is cast on this seemingly model banquet by the scathing comments of Apemantus, who refuses to join the company. He exposes the feast and its guests as

²³ Lady Macbeth just remarks, "He has almost supped" (*Macbeth*, I.vii.29).

²⁴ Another ominous euphemism of hers.

an occasion “to see meat fill knaves, and wine heat fools” (*Timon of Athens*, I.i.261),²⁵ and he warns Timon that “[t]hose healths will make thee and thy state look poor” (*Timon of Athens*, I.ii.55), suggesting that his generosity is nothing but foolish prodigality and that the sociable and good company are in reality a pack of greedy flatterers – a truth Timon is soon going to learn the hard way. Bitter, bankrupt and disillusioned, Timon once again invites his seeming friends (“I’ll once more feast the rascals”) and instructs his servant: “Let in the tide/ Of knaves once more. My cook and I’ll provide” (*Timon of Athens*, III.v.9 – 14) – his “provide” being almost as ominous as that of Lady Macbeth. Although not killing his guests, he too surprises them – with a mock banquet, at which (just as in *Macbeth*) the upset seating order reflects the upset social order, when he scoffs at them: “Each man to his stool with that spur as he would to the lip of his mistress. Your diet shall be in all places alike. Make not a [formal] city feast of it, to let the meat cool ere we can agree upon the first place. Sit, sit” (*Timon of Athens*, III.vii.61 – 64). The covered dishes prove as empty or hollow as the false friends who are confronted only with hot water and stones. Timon now turns into a grotesque travesty of a host, insulting his guests with a mock grace, “For these my present friends, as they are to me nothing, so in nothing bless them; and to nothing are they welcome. – Uncover, dogs” (*Timon of Athens*, III.vii.75 – 77), and he even beats the guests as they leave in panic.²⁶ The consequences of Timon’s inversion of his former role as a host are seen in his solitary retirement to a cave in the woods: “Therefore be abhorred/ All feasts, societies, and throngs of men” (*Timon of Athens*, IV.iii.20 – 1). There, in a third scene where eating is at issue, he is digging for roots but instead discovers gold, with which he intends to corrupt mankind. When he eventually does find one root, he prays to Mother Earth, “Dry up thy marrows, vines, and plough-torn leas [i.e. fields]”, and associates it – much like Edgar – with poisonous “black toad and adder blue,/ The gilded newt and eyeless venom’d worm” (*Timon of Athens*, IV.iii.181 – 93).

To sum up, eating and drinking have numerous functions in the plays of Shakespeare. They are central to many plots and intrigues, contribute to characterisation and frequently suggest vitality, particularly in comedies. In tragedies, by contrast, food, drink and festivities can be fatal. As basic human needs

25 The Athenian captain Alcibiades, who is also entertained by Timon, shows his preference for a metaphorical feast, confirming Timon’s suggestion that he “had rather be at a breakfast of enemies than a dinner of friends”. “[T]here’s no meat like ‘em [the enemies]”, he jokes, “I could wish my best friend at such a feast” (*Timon of Athens*, I.ii.74 – 7). The same euphemistic comparison of a military triumph with eating opponents characterises other valiant soldiers. Prince Hal mocks his rival Hotspur, “he that kills me some six or seven dozen of Scots at a breakfast” (*1 Henry IV*, II.iv.102), and Cominius pays tribute to the bravery of Coriolanus: “Yet cam’st thou to a morsel of this feast,/ Having fully dined before” (*Coriolanus*, I.ix.10 – 11).

26 “Soft, take thy physic first” (*Timon of Athens*, III.vii.92).

they relate to existential issues, to life and death, to disrupted order, isolation, and to being cast out from family or society. Furthermore, eating and drinking frequently contribute to the antagonism between characters and to sharpening contrasts, not only between good and evil but also between sociability and solitariness, or between order and hierarchy on the one hand, and disorder and anarchy on the other. While eating and drinking always relate to a character's social status (telling details are not only how but also what kind of food or drink is consumed), banquets and feasts – accompanied by music – were formal, ceremonial or even ritualistic social occasions. Therefore they frequently have a structural function in drama, marking climaxes, turning points and denouements. Representative of society, its structure and its conflicts, many scenes featuring banquets and festivities turn out to be catalysts of tensions, clashes and struggles for power rather than harmonious and convivial gatherings.

In some of Shakespeare's comedies and in many of his tragedies, the scenes involving consumption and disrupted feasts may well baffle those with traditional expectations. Yet my initial point needs some qualification. Despite the relative prominence of scenes of (disturbed) consumption in the tragedies, it cannot be questioned that repetitive allusions to excessive eating and drinking belong chiefly to the realm of (low) comedy. They were, indeed, hallmarks of later transformations of the tragedies into burlesques. I have shown elsewhere that nineteenth-century burlesques of *Hamlet* and *Othello*, for example, are characterised essentially by localisation and debasement.²⁷ The counterparts of the tragic protagonists frequent numerous local inns, enjoy local dishes and entertainment and cannot resist the temptation of local drinks – each point depicted with closely observed sensual detail. Drinking therefore shows its effect even on the trivialised Laertes- and Othello-figures. And in a Viennese burlesque, Giesecke's *Der travestirte Hamlet* (1798) – a bit over the top, compared to analogous London plays – the melancholy Prince laments his lack of appetite not only for wine, tobacco and girls but also for roast meat, a goose or a sucking

27 See DRAUDT, Manfred. “‘Committing Outrage against the Bard’: Nineteenth-Century Travesties of Shakespeare in England and Austria.” In: *Modern Language Review* 88 (1993): 102–09; “Nineteenth-Century Burlesques of *Hamlet* in London and Vienna.” In: Marta Gibinska and Jerzy Limon (eds.). *Hamlet East – West*. Gdansk: Theatrum Gedanense Foundation, 1998. 64–84; “*The Real Thing?* Adaptations, Transformations and Burlesques of Shakespeare, Historic and Post-modern.” In: José Roberto O’Shea, Daniela Lapoli Guimaraes and Stephan Arnolf Baumgärtel (eds.). *Ilha do Desterro, A Journal of English Language, Literatures in English and Cultural Studies* (‘Mixed with Other Matter: Shakespeare’s Drama Appropriated’) 49 (2005): 289–314; and “Zum Lokalkolorit in den Shakespeare-Parodien von Perinet, Kringsteiner und Meisl.” In: W. Edgar Yates and Ulrike Tanzer (eds.). *Theater und Gesellschaft im Wien des 19. Jahrhunderts*. Vienna: Verlag Mag. Johann Lehner, 2006. 113–35.

fig.²⁸ The play in fact ends with general drinking, singing and merrymaking, with Guildenstern, the Polonius-figure, the King and the Queen, and even Hamlet joining in. Yet in Poole's *Hamlet Travestie* (1810), too, the King comforts the Prince with the invitation: "Cheer up [...] We'll [...] all get drunk together" (19). So in respect of the prominence of eating and drinking, Shakespeare, despite all his originality, cannot compete with the later burlesque transformations of his plays.

Appendix

| Frequency count of key words: | Place | (tragedies, <u>histories</u> , comedies) |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|--|
| | | Instances |
| <i>drink</i> (and inflected forms) | 1 <i>Hamlet</i> | 18 |
| | 2 <i>2 Henry IV</i> | 17 |
| | 3 <i>Antony and Cleopatra</i> | 16 |
| | 4 <i>1 Henry IV</i> | 15 |
| | 4 <i>The Tempest</i> | 15 |
| | 6 <i>2 Henry VI</i> | 14 |
| | 6 <i>Twelfth Night</i> | 14 |
| | 8 <i>Timon of Athens</i> | 11 |
| | 9 <i>Othello</i> | 9 |
| | 9 <i>The Taming of the Shrew</i> | 9 |
| | 11 <i>Macbeth</i> | 8 |
| 11 <i>The Merry Wives of Windsor</i> | 8 | |
| 11 <i>Measure for Measure</i> | 8 | |
| <i>eat</i> (and inflected forms) | 1 <i>Henry V</i> | 18 |
| | 2 <i>Timon of Athens</i> | 13 |
| | 3 <i>2 Henry IV</i> | 11 |
| | 3 <i>As You Like It</i> | 11 |
| | 3 <i>Much Ado about Nothing</i> | 11 |
| | 6 <i>Hamlet</i> | 9 |
| | 6 <i>2 Henry VI</i> | 9 |
| | 6 <i>The Taming of the Shrew</i> | 9 |
| | ... | |
| | 11 <i>Antony and Cleopatra</i> | 6 |
| 12 <i>1 Henry IV</i> | 6 | |
| <i>feed</i> (and inflected forms) | 1 <i>As You Like It</i> | 12 |
| | 2 <i>Titus Andronicus</i> | 11 |
| | 3 <i>Hamlet</i> | 9 |

28 Mir schmeckt kein Wein, kein Taback, kein Madel,
Kein Pfeiferl ..., kein Bratel – nicht einmahl ein Gans oder Spannfadl [Spanferkel].
(GIESECKE, Carl Ludwig von. *Der travestirte Hamlet*. Wien: Bibz, 1798. 324)

| | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|----|
| | 3 <i>Timon of Athens</i> | 9 |
| | 3 <u>2 Henry IV</u> | 9 |
| | 6 <i>Antony and Cleopatra</i> | 8 |
| | 6 <i>The Merchant of Venice</i> | 8 |
| | ... | |
| | 10 <u>1 Henry IV</u> | 5 |
| | 10 <i>The Taming of the Shrew</i> | 5 |
| | 10 <i>The Two Gentlemen of Verona</i> | 5 |
| <i>food</i> | 1 <i>As You Like It</i> | 11 |
| | 2 <i>King Lear</i> | 6 |
| | 3 <i>Timon of Athens</i> | 4 |
| | 3 <i>The Noble Kinsmen</i> | 4 |
| | 5 <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> | 3 |
| | 5 <u>1 Henry IV</u> | 3 |
| | 5 <i>The Taming of the Shrew</i> | 3 |
| | 5 <i>The Two Gentlemen of Verona</i> | 3 |
| <i>dine</i> (and inflected forms) and <i>dinner</i> | 1 <i>The Comedy of Errors</i> | 41 |
| | 2 <i>The Merchant of Venice</i> | 14 |
| | 3 <i>Timon of Athens</i> | 10 |
| | 3 <u>2 Henry IV</u> | 10 |
| | 5 <i>The Taming of the Shrew</i> | 8 |
| | 5 <i>The Merry Wives of Windsor</i> | 8 |

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Alimentary Metaphors and their Political Context in Shakespeare's Plays

In many of his plays, Shakespeare evinces a keen interest in and an astute understanding of political questions. In this context, he employs a wide array of metaphors, amongst others those of gardening – as in the famous Garden Scene in *Richard II* – or of falconry – for instance in *Henry VI, Part 2*. Another important semantic field Shakespeare draws on in connection with political issues is that of food. In *Antony and Cleopatra*, for example, the description of the Egyptian feasts serves on the one hand to strengthen notions of alterity, but on the other hand it implicitly emphasizes the political conflict between Egypt and Rome.¹ Another play in which eating is politically charged is of course *Titus Andronicus*. When Titus serves Tamora her sons Demetrius and Chiron during a banquet in a pie, this not only constitutes the climax of Titus' revenge, but it also has tremendous political repercussions as it leads to the extinction of the royal family of the Goths. While these examples illustrate explicit, almost literal connections between food and politics, this essay will focus on a more implicit nexus between the two by analyzing Shakespeare's use of alimentary metaphors, that is metaphors of eating, food, food preparation, digestion, and – by extension – of the body. Generally speaking, they work on two levels: On a first, more superficial level they are used to vividly clarify or emphasize political concepts and issues; on a second level, they can develop a subversive potential. Furthermore, these metaphors can operate locally as well as globally. In *Hamlet* and *Julius Caesar*, for instance, the alimentary imagery remains limited: In the first play, the subversive potential created is bound to a specific context, in the latter, the metaphor is also constrained, but touches upon the central political issue of the play. *Coriolanus*, however, is saturated with the imagery of food and eating. Alimentary metaphors operate here much more globally and the imagery

1 Cf. CHARNEY, Maurice. *Shakespeare's Roman Plays. The Function of Imagery in the Drama*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968 [1961]. 102. For a detailed discussion of eating and drinking in *Antony and Cleopatra* see PAROLIN, Peter A. "‘Cloyless Sauce’: The Pleasurable Politics of Food in *Antony and Cleopatra*." In: Sara Munson Deats (ed.). *Antony and Cleopatra. New Critical Essays*. New York/London: Routledge, 2005. 213–29.

strongly influences the characters' language and emphasizes the dichotomy between plebeians and patricians.²

I.

Hamlet is a case in point where the alimentary metaphor in a political context works on a locally very restricted frame. This is due to the play's character since political issues play an important, albeit not the major role. Politically relevant is particularly the conflict between Hamlet and Claudius.³ Even though Shakespeare portrays Denmark as an elective monarchy, Hamlet as the king's son would have been first choice to succeed his father to the throne. By marrying Gertrude, however, Claudius managed to position himself as a potential pretender and was elected legitimately. Nevertheless, it is vital for his claim that Hamlet accepts him as father. Hamlet's refusal to do so implies his refusal to accept Claudius as the legitimate successor to the Danish throne.⁴ Only as the new king's nephew can Hamlet maintain his own claim to the throne; as his son he would remain the potential heir.⁵ At the same time, Hamlet's hesitation to avenge his father's death has a political dimension, because killing Claudius would make him a regicide. Only Hamlet and the audience know of Old Hamlet's murder and Claudius' usurpation; to the characters on stage, Claudius appears as the legitimate monarch. Furthermore, Hamlet cannot separate his private from his political considerations (*Hamlet* 5.2.63–70) and thus lacks the grounds for legitimate resistance and a politically and publically acceptable assassination. In this dilemma, the prince resorts to a desperately vicious criticism of Claudius personally and of the monarchical, in fact, autocratic rule he represents.

Throughout the play, Hamlet's resistance to Claudius remains on a primarily verbal level although it grows in vehemence and is towards the end more openly

2 The following editions will be used: *Coriolanus*. Edited by Philip Brockbank. The Arden Shakespeare, 2nd Series. London: Thomson, 2006 [1976]; *Hamlet*. Edited by Harold Jenkins. The Arden Shakespeare, 2nd Series. London: Thomson, 2000 [1982]; *Julius Caesar*. Edited by David Daniell. The Arden Shakespeare, 3rd Series. London: Thomson, 2003 [1998].

3 In this respect see MÜLLER, Wolfgang G. "Claudius und Hamlet. Der Herrscher und sein Gegenspieler in Shakespeares *Hamlet*." In: Uwe Baumann (ed.). *Basileus und Tyrann. Herrscherbilder und Bilder von Herrschaft in der englischen Renaissance*. Frankfurt/Main: Peter Lang, 1999. 347–62.

4 Much of the dialogue between Hamlet and Claudius in 1.2 revolves around this point. The King tries constantly to make Hamlet accept him as father, calling him for instance "my cousin Hamlet, and my son" (*Hamlet* 1.2.64) and claiming that the prince is "the most immediate to our throne" (*Hamlet* 1.2.109).

5 Cf. JARDINE, Lisa. *Reading Shakespeare Historically*. London/New York: Routledge, 1996. 44.

articulated. From the beginning, the prince shows himself disgusted by Claudius' habits. Interestingly, quite a few of Hamlet's remarks centre around the eating and drinking customs at Elsinore. He is outraged that "[t]he funeral bak'd meats / Did coldly furnish forth the marriage tables" (*Hamlet* 1.2.180–81), hinting at the overly speedy wedding of Claudius to Gertrude. At the same time, this statement does not only link both events temporally, but creates an even more awkward connection between them. The idea of food served at a funeral being re-served at a wedding taints the wedding meal, implying indecency and inappropriateness. It is, however, particularly Claudius' drinking which Hamlet feels repulsed by. Many a time he comments on it negatively, painting the image of frequent alcohol abuse.⁶ To Hamlet, Claudius' drinking is not strictly a personal question, but may have much graver consequences as he points out to Horatio:

The King doth wake tonight and takes his rouse,
Keeps wassail, and the swagg'ring upspring reels;
And as he drains his draughts of Rhenish down,
The kettle-drum and trumpet thus bray out
The triumph of his pledge.
[...]
This heavy-headed revel east and west
Makes us traduc'd and tax'd of other nations –
They clepe us drunkards, and with swinish phrase
Soil our addition; and indeed it takes
From our achievements, though perform'd at height,
The pith and marrow of our attribute.
(*Hamlet* 1.4.8–12, 17–22)

For Hamlet, the common Danish and especially Claudius' (over)indulgence in alcohol have a political facet, as it overshadows the country's reputation and every Danish accomplishment. That the King as the head-of-state and upmost representative of Denmark participates in heavy drinking makes him – Hamlet implies – a weak and possibly even irresponsible ruler.

While this literal connection between eating, drinking, and politics explicates Hamlet's disgust with Claudius, the metaphorical link refers to Hamlet's role as a political opponent and his resistance against the new king. As suggested above, Hamlet's resistance remains verbal, but grows in vehemence to such an extent that it borders sometimes on a negation of monarchy *per se*. In his famous retort to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, the audience gets a first taste of this: "The King's a thing [...] of nothing." (*Hamlet* 4.2.27–29) Implying that the king is an

6 References to the King's drinking occur for instance in 1.2.125, 1.2.175, 2.2.84, 3.2.294, 3.3.89, and 5.2.264.

entity of no consequence betrays an almost anti-monarchical sentiment. Hamlet displays this attitude also in face of the King himself. Being asked where he hid Polonius' body, Hamlet replies that the counsellor is "at supper" (*Hamlet* 4.3.17) and then corrects himself by adding:

Not where he eats, but where he is eaten. A certain convocation of politic worms are e'en at him. Your worm is your only emperor for diet: we fat all creatures else to fat us, and we fat ourselves for maggots. Your fat king and your lean beggar is but variable service – two dishes but to one table. That's the end.

[...]

A man may fish with the worm that hath eat of a king, and eat of the fish that hath fed of that worm.

KING What dost thou mean by this?

HAMLET Nothing but to show you how a king may go a progress through the guts of a beggar. (*Hamlet* 4.3.19 – 25, 27 – 31)

On the surface, this is simply an enigmatic, quibbling answer to Claudius' question and appears to him as yet another proof of Hamlet's madness. The famous allusion to the Diet of Worms in 1521 and the vocabulary employed, charged with political terminology, hint at the political dimension of this passage.⁷ As Roland Mushat Frye argues, this utterance can be seen in the tradition of the *memento mori*: Death appears as the great leveller expunging all socio-economic differences; the references to worms and maggots were a commonplace in this context, too.⁸ Hamlet's choice of imagery, however, opens yet another level of meaning. The prince indirectly attacks the King by playing on the notion of the food chain.⁹ Not only will kings and beggars alike be eaten by worms, but anyone may eat and digest a king. Just as Hamlet's reduction of the king to a "nothing", this statement has subversive potential. The monarch appears here again as a thing of no consequence, which any man can quite literally incorporate.

Interestingly, lines 26 to 28 – the passage containing the reference to the food chain – were omitted from the First Folio,¹⁰ effacing the almost logical and virtually inevitable sequence Hamlet suggests. More importantly, the politically highly relevant change from "man" to "beggar" is missing in the Folio version. The possibility of a beggar eating a king emphasizes the treasonous notions of

7 Stephen GREENBLATT suggests that the subtext created in this passage contains an inversion or rather distortion of the Eucharist (cf. GREENBLATT, Stephen. *Hamlet in Purgatory*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001. 240 – 41).

8 Cf. FRYE, Roland Mushat. *The Renaissance Hamlet. Issues and Responses in 1600*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984. 228 – 31. Hamlet harps on this idea also in the Graveyard Scene.

9 Cf. GREENBLATT. *Hamlet in Purgatory*. 241.

10 Cf. Jenkins in his edition of *Hamlet*, app. 4.3.26 – 28. 341.

this cannibalistic image¹¹ and highlights the extreme social dichotomy between the one who eats and the one who is eaten: Being potentially incorporated by a beggar robs the monarch of the last trace of sanctity and inviolability. This may seem to be a complete nullification of monarchy on Hamlet's part, but the prince is not an opponent of monarchy as such, he rejects only Claudius' autocratic rule. Hamlet's metaphor operates here only locally and does not have a greater impact on the play. It does, however, emphasize Hamlet's utmost rejection of Claudius and adds to the audience's awareness that the king has a serious political opponent in Hamlet.

II.

Politics play a much more dominant role in *Julius Caesar*. It is therefore hardly surprising that certain images recur throughout the play; the most important in this respect is certainly the trope of blood. However, there is also an alimentary metaphor in this play, which is politically highly relevant. This image, though it operates locally, has a wider scope and is closely linked to the central political topic of the play. The questions of legitimate resistance and tyrannicide Shakespeare addresses in *Julius Caesar* reflect the contemporary political debates and theories, particularly those promulgated by the so-called Monarchomachs.¹² From the 1570s onwards, this group of mainly Huguenot or Protestant political thinkers argued in favour of the legitimacy of resistance to an unlawful or tyrannous ruler introducing notions of feudal contractual law into the political and constitutional discourse. The monarch, so the argument ran, was bound by his coronation oath and under the law himself. Should he usurp the throne or act tyrannously and thus violate his oath, his subjects were no longer bound by their duty to be obedient, but gained the right to resist. While some treatises, such as Theodore Beza's *De iure magistratuum* (1574), argued in favour of resistance by legal means and from within the administration only, other authors, e. g. Stephanus Junius Brutus in *Vindiciae contra tyrannos* (1579) and particularly the Scotsman George Buchanan in his dialogue *De iure regni apud Scotos* (1579), even advocated armed resistance as *ultima ratio*.¹³

11 Ruth MORSE has shown that cannibalistic images are used frequently to underline and unmask treasonous acts (cf. MORSE, Ruth. "Unfit for Human Consumption. Shakespeare's Unnatural Food." In: *Deutsche Shakespeare-Gesellschaft West Jahrbuch* 1983. 125–49).

12 For a detailed analysis see MIOLA, Robert S. "Julius Caesar and the Tyrannicide Debate." In: *Renaissance Quarterly* 38 (1985): 271–89.

13 For an overview see, for instance, SKINNER, Quentin. *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought. Volume 2: The Age of Reformation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978. 302–59.

While the arguments put forward in political theory are straightforward, the questions of resistance and tyrannicide in *Julius Caesar* are not as simple as they may seem at first glance. Caesar, an ambiguously drawn character, is not yet crowned and has – so far – not acted tyrannously. The debate in the play is therefore concerned with the legitimacy of a preventative assassination.¹⁴ Furthermore, Brutus is a radical republican and in this he surpasses the Monarchomachs by far, who do not question monarchy as a political system while Brutus rejects any kind of single rule.¹⁵ Brutus is thus confronted with the personal and moral dilemma that he will have to kill his friend on the grounds of mere assumptions in order to protect and preserve the ancient Roman liberties: “I know no personal cause to spurn at him, / But for the general.” (*Julius Caesar* 2.1.11–12) As opposed to Hamlet, Brutus has only political reasons for his murder plot and, indeed, his convictions outweigh his qualms. Nevertheless, the plan to kill Caesar creates a predicament for the conspirators and particularly for Brutus: Since the assassination is preventative, it is essentially illegitimate. However, in order to be publically justifiable, the deed has to at least appear legitimate. Brutus therefore advises Cassius and the other conspirators:

Let's be sacrificers but not butchers, Caius.
 [...]
 Let's kill him boldly, but not wrathfully;
 Let's carve him a dish fit for the gods,
 Not hew him as a carcass fit for hounds.
 And let our hearts, as subtle masters do,
 Stir up their servants to an act of rage
 And after seem to chide 'em. This shall make
 Our purpose necessary and not envious,
 Which so appearing to the common eyes,
 We shall be called purgers, not murderers.
 (*Julius Caesar* 2. 1. 165, 171 – 179)

Caesar is to be literally sacrificed on the ‘altar of the Republic’. Brutus imagines the assassination as a quasi-religious ritual with the conspirators acting as priests. The opposition of “sacrificers” and “butchers” opens at the same time the semantic field of food preparation. And indeed, Brutus stays with the metaphor when he argues that the killing has to be an act of delicacy: The murder has to be performed like the careful slicing of a roast worthy of the gods in order to make the deed appear noble and palatable to the people. The audience,

14 Cf. MÜLLER, Wolfgang G. “Präventiver Tyrannenmord und Freiheitsideen in Shakespeares *Julius Caesar*.” In: Georg Schmidt, Martin van Gelderen and Christopher Snigula (eds.). *Kollektive Freiheitsvorstellungen im frühneuzeitlichen Europa (1400 – 1850)*. Frankfurt/Main et al.: Peter Lang, 2006. 105 – 19.

15 Cf. MÜLLER. “Präventiver Tyrannenmord.” 112.

however, is left with a bitter aftertaste because Brutus' alleged nobility is undercut by his reference to the appearance of the deed only apparent in his choice of verbs such as "seem" and "appearing".¹⁶

In the late sixteenth century a debate about the legitimacy of killing a ruler certainly had subversive implications, as did the comparison of regicide with a pseudo- or quasi-religious act. However, Shakespeare undermines Brutus' ideology not only here, but particularly after the assassination itself. The play suggests that the protection of liberty is the conspirators' main reason for killing Caesar. Once the deed is done, Cassius and Cinna exclaim accordingly: "Liberty! Freedom! Tyranny is dead!" (*Julius Caesar* 3.1.78) and "Liberty, freedom, and enfranchisement!" (*Julius Caesar* 3.1.81) Both of them stress the idea of liberty saved. Brutus, however, remains ominously silent for some time, before he suggests:

Stoop, Romans, stoop,
And let us bathe our hands in Caesar's blood
Up to the elbows and besmear our swords,
Then walk we forth even to the market-place,
And waving our red weapons o'er our heads
Let's all cry, 'Peace, Freedom and Liberty.'
(*Julius Caesar* 3.1.105–110)

His proposition gruesomely echoes and inverts his earlier request to act like "sacrificers". As Alexander Leggatt argues, Brutus' suggestion that the Romans cover themselves in Caesar's blood alludes, on the one hand, to the ritualistic character Brutus wants the assassination to have, while emphasizing, on the other hand, the brutality of the murder.¹⁷ The assassination is now depicted as a bloodbath or even as butchery undermining the discourse of liberty put forward by the conspirators: At the precise moment when liberty could be achieved, it is questioned.¹⁸ The enormous discrepancy between Brutus' words and deeds thus undercuts his own ideology, creating almost a subversion of the subversion it implies. This is not to say that Shakespeare necessarily promotes an orthodox political stance here, but it emphasizes the ambivalent treatment of the resistance question which is characteristic of the play.

16 Robert S. MIOLA and Alexander LEGGATT come to the same conclusion (cf. MIOLA, Robert S. *Shakespeare's Rome*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983. 93–94; and LEGGATT, Alexander. *Shakespeare's Political Drama. The History Plays and the Roman Plays*. London/New York: Routledge, 1990 [1988]. 145).

17 Cf. LEGGATT. *Shakespeare's Political Drama*. 155.

18 Cf. MÜLLER. "Präventiver Tyrannenmord." 117–18.

III.

An instance where alimentary metaphors operate much more globally is *Coriolanus*. In fact, the nexus between politics and food dominates at least the first half of the play. Already the opening scene draws the audience's attention to this point: Due to a dearth, grain is scarce in Rome and the populace is about to revolt. The seditious citizens accuse the patricians of hoarding and thereby artificially increasing the market price for corn. The patrician Menenius tries to quench the rebellion with his famous tale of the body politic (*Coriolanus* 1.1.95 – 153). In the allegory, the members of the body revolt against the belly accusing it of idleness while keeping all the food to itself. The belly, as Menenius would have it, represents the patricians, who may receive the food first, but distribute it to the other members of society. Shakespeare borrowed this allegory from his source Plutarch. His decision to render this version of the body politic instead of the classical one with the head as the governing part is, as Wolfgang G. Müller argues, apt for two reasons: On the one hand, the classical image of the body politic is more suitable for a monarchy than for the oligarchically structured Roman society; on the other hand, having the belly as the ruling body part emphasizes the subject of food shortage and ties in with the alimentary imagery of the play.¹⁹

The tale, however, is not entirely successful on stage although Menenius manages to quench the riot. The First Citizen tries to provoke Menenius by remarking on the discrepancy between both representations of the body politic (*Coriolanus* 1.1.113 – 23) and it is only by ridiculing him as “the great toe of this assembly” (*Coriolanus* 1.1.154) that Menenius manages to silence him. Meant to indicate this citizen's irrelevance in the state, it also points to the distance between the patricians and the plebeians, the toe being – anatomically speaking – that part of the body which is furthest from the belly. Secondly, and much more importantly, Menenius' explanation of the allegory fails. In the tale, the belly passes on food to the members of the body; the patricians, however, do not. As Menenius himself says, the senators pass “their counsel and their cares” (*Coriolanus* 1.1.149) to the rest of the body, not food: The plebeians, as Stanley Cavell argues, are given “words *instead* of food”.²⁰ To the ears of the plebeians, Menenius' request that they “digest things rightly / Touching the weal o'th'common” (*Coriolanus* 1.1.149 – 50) must sound almost ironic: Starving they are still asked to consider the greater good requiring them to be placid and

19 Cf. MÜLLER, Wolfgang G. *Die politische Rede bei Shakespeare*. Tübingen: Narr, 1979. 169.

20 CAVELL, Stanley. “‘Who does the Wolf Love?’ Reading *Coriolanus*.” In: *Representations* 3 (1983): 1 – 20. 15; emphasis in the original. Arthur RISS argues similarly (cf. RISS, Arthur. “The Belly Politic: *Coriolanus* and the Revolt of Language.” In: *English Literary History* 59 (1992): 53 – 75. 61).

submissive. With a populace on the brink of a rebellion, this hints at the importance of the connection between language, politics, and food in this play. Indeed, the social conflict between the patricians and the plebs is mirrored by the language used. While the people starve and pine away, the senatorial class employs the language of superfluity. This is visible particularly in the role that political rhetoric plays in this context.

In *Coriolanus*, public and politically relevant language and behaviour are depicted as insincere and potentially deceptive. Interestingly, the patricians have a tendency to use alimentary imagery in this context. When Coriolanus is cheered for his single-handed victory against the Volscians, he states his unease about being praised:

[...] you shout me forth
 In acclamations hyperbolical,
 As if I lov'd my little should be dieted
 In praises sauced with lies.
 (*Coriolanus* 1.9.49–52)

Coriolanus is weary of rhetoric. Interesting in this passage is Coriolanus' use of food imagery: The participle "sauce[d]" hints at the artificiality he feels to be inherent particularly in laudatory rhetoric. That he, furthermore, regards his praise to be "sauce[d] with lies" highlights his distrust of political behaviour and eloquence. His stubbornness, unrelenting honesty and most importantly his defiance of rhetoric and politically clever behaviour contribute directly to the aggravating conflict between Coriolanus and the plebeians and his ultimate banishment. He is not only unwilling to be flattered, but also refuses to court the plebs, whose votes he needs to become consul. When the election fails because of Coriolanus' discourteous and brusque behaviour, Menenius acts once more as a mediator. He tells the tribunes that Coriolanus was bred to be a soldier and "is ill school'd / In bolted language; meal and bran together / He throws without distinction." (*Coriolanus* 3.1.318–19) Menenius characterizes Coriolanus as an unable orator by the 'unsifted' language he uses: The good orator, according to Menenius, employs only the most refined language keeping the coarser to himself. Political rhetoric is here described as not only a careful weighing of words, but implicitly also as potentially deceiving. As Brockbank points out, the connection between "bolted" and the intricacies of rhetoric was not uncommon in the Renaissance, but in this case it also "anticipat[es] *meal and bran*".²¹ That Menenius recurs to this semantic field is also extremely significant and reiterates his rhetoric from the beginning of the play: The people desperately need grain,

21 Brockbank in his edition of *Coriolanus*, FN 3.1.319. 215–16; italics in the original.

but faced with the tribunes he distinguishes between various kinds of cereal produce, creating once more an image of superfluity on the patricians' side.

An analogy of this occurs in the next scene. Volumnia admonishes her son Coriolanus to court the people in order to have his consulship confirmed. In this instance, the potentially deceptive aspect of politics and in particular political rhetoric is at the centre of Volumnia's argument. Advising her son that "action is eloquence" (*Coriolanus* 3.2.76), she encourages him to dissemble humility in front of the people:

Go to them, with this bonnet in thy hand,
And thus far having stretch'd it – here be with them –
Thy knee bussing the stones – for in such business
Action is eloquence, and the eyes of th'ignorant
More learned than the ears – waving thy head,
Which often, thus, correcting thy stout heart,
Now humble as the ripest mulberry
That will not hold the handling [...].
(*Coriolanus* 3.2.73–80)

In all likelihood, Volumnia makes gestures appropriate to her advice, i. e. she kneels, nods her head, etc. She does not necessarily advise her son on rhetoric only, but suggests that he literally acts. Her postulate that "action is eloquence" implies the close relation of language and body language in the political arena. In this context, she uses the simile of the mulberry, which is so delicate and tender that one can barely touch it. In connection with her suggestion to dissemble, this expresses the utmost adaptability and malleability Volumnia expects of her son.²² Certainly this image is, as Maurice Charney argues, "overwrought"²³, but it ties in with regard to the alimentary imagery used by the patricians. If the mulberry is considered to mirror careful, rhetorical argumentation, then this could be seen as another instance of words being offered to the plebeians instead of food.

At the same time, this passage contains an allusion to the Greek orator Demosthenes, whose biography Shakespeare will have known from Thomas North's translation of Plutarch's *The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans*, which served him as the major source for *Coriolanus*. Volumnia's postulate that "action is eloquence" contains an echo of Demosthenes.²⁴ In his essay "Of Boldness", Francis Bacon recounts an anecdote in which Demosthenes answered the question what the most important part of good rhetoric was with "action",

22 Cf. MÜLLER. *Die Politische Rede bei Shakespeare*. 213.

23 CHARNEY. *Shakespeare's Roman Plays*. 32.

24 Cf. Brockbank in *Coriolanus*, FN 3.1.76–77. 223; cf. also MÜLLER. *Die Politische Rede bei Shakespeare*. 212–13.

because man is gullible and prone to believe appearances rather than carefully structured arguments: "There is in Humane Nature, generally, more of the Foole, then [sic] of the Wise; And therefore those faculties, by which the Foolish part of Mens Mindes is taken, are most potent."²⁵ Body language is therefore an integral part of rhetoric. As Müller points out, Volumnia goes further than this, assuming an identity of acting and rhetoric.²⁶ This underscores Volumnia's proposition to dissemble and highlights the negative connotations associated with political rhetoric in the play. Moreover, another allusion to Demosthenes may be contained in the simile of the mulberry. As Plutarch describes in *Lives*, Demosthenes used to train to speak with pebbles in his mouth in order to improve his articulation and pronunciation. Volumnia's suggestion to be "as humble as the ripest mulberry" can be regarded as a parallel, if the mulberry is considered as a substitute for the pebbles.²⁷ Just like Demosthenes was forced to carefully handle the pebbles in his mouth, Coriolanus will be forced to carefully monitor and employ body language. While the former meant to perfect his oratorical skills, the latter is supposed to enhance his public appearance and non-verbal communication. There is, however, one crucial difference between the two: Demosthenes used the pebbles in order to clarify his language and enunciation, but Coriolanus is to veil his true intentions and to dissemble. In this case, the simile would echo the notion of dishonesty implied in Volumnia's maxim that "action is eloquence" discrediting once more rhetoric and the body language accompanying it in the political arena.

Shakespeare juxtaposes this language with metaphors of starvation, greed and even cannibalism on the plebeians' part.²⁸ As Charney suggests, the imagery in the play characterizes them as hungry and "appetitive".²⁹ Their behaviour is frequently described by metaphors of eating and repeatedly they are accused of devouring the state and especially Coriolanus. When Sicinius and Menenius argue about Coriolanus, Menenius claims that the wolf loves the lamb "to devour him, as the hungry plebeians would the noble Martius" (*Coriolanus* 2.1.8–9). Coriolanus is thus becoming the object of the plebs' hunger. Ruth Morse has shown that by means of the state-as-body-analogy, treasonous actions are likened to cannibalism; this, she argues, intensifies the horror felt at the traitorous deed.³⁰ While this is certainly undeniable and does emphasize the motif of

25 Bacon, Francis. "Of Boldnesse." Quoted in MÜLLER. *Die Politische Rede bei Shakespeare*. 212.

26 Cf. Bacon, Francis. "Of Boldnesse." Quoted in MÜLLER. *Die Politische Rede bei Shakespeare*. 212.

27 I am indebted to Wolfgang G. Müller for this suggestion.

28 For a discussion of the motif of cannibalism see also CAVELL. "'Who does the Wolf Love?' Reading *Coriolanus*." 6 ff.

29 CHARNEY. *Shakespeare's Roman Plays*. 143.

30 Cf. MORSE. "Unfit for Human Consumption." 136–37. 139.

ingratitude in *Coriolanus*, a further layer of meaning can be attributed to this image in the play. There is apparently no alleviation for the plebeians' starvation: Coriolanus, accusing them of ingratitude, even argues strongly against corn being distributed for free (*Coriolanus* 3.1.112–15). Furthermore, the plebeians feel threatened by the patricians. In 1.1 the First Citizen draws attention to this when he says: "If the wars eat us not up, they [the patricians] will" (*Coriolanus* 1.1.84). While the plebeians are certainly more often associated with cannibalism, it is highly telling that they consider themselves to be threatened by quasi-cannibalistic acts from the patricians.³¹ This creates the image of a politically highly unstable state, in which one member devours the other. Wars and patrician hoarding endanger the plebeians' very existence and thus, horribly, the only 'food' left for the plebs seems to be the state and Coriolanus. Their ingratitude, disobedience and treason could be seen as almost logical consequences. This does not mean that Shakespeare pursued a particular political agenda or that the audience was to sympathize with the plebs. In fact, they are like the rabble in many other Shakespearean plays, for example in *Julius Caesar* or *Henry VI, Part 2*: mindless, easily swayed and prone to violence. But by contrasting the language of the two social classes along the axis of food, Shakespeare allows his audience to understand the plebeians' position.

IV.

In a political context, Shakespeare uses alimentary metaphors in a threefold way with the purpose of creating a subversive subtext. They can occur only locally without further consequences for the play as a whole. Hamlet's negation of monarchy is spoken in anger and is, in fact, primarily a rejection of Claudius' Denmark. Nevertheless, his utterance has a highly subversive aspect. Other locally limited metaphors can be resumed. The difference between Brutus' words and the conspirators' later deeds reveals the highly ambivalent nature of the assassination in *Julius Caesar*. In this case, the metaphor is, however, not only echoed but in fact inverted, resulting in an additional ambiguity of the issue of legitimate resistance. The subversive potential inherent in having a ruler killed on stage is thus subverted itself. Finally, eating imagery can permeate a play to such a degree that it becomes a primary motif and adds significantly to its political substance. In *Coriolanus*, the conflict between patricians and plebeians stems from the quarrel over grain. Shakespeare takes this idea further by having

31 Joan FITZPATRICK points to parallels that can be found in literature opposing the enclosures in the sixteenth century (cf. FITZPATRICK, Joan. *Food in Shakespeare. Early Modern Diaries and the Plays*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007. 94).

the patricians use a language of superfluity and offering the plebeians rhetoric instead of food. This is juxtaposed with the traitorous, verbally cannibalistic behaviour of the populace, who in their need seem to have only the state left to devour. The subversion in this case is not as explicit as in the first two examples, but Shakespeare may allow for an understanding of the plebeians' actions. Furthermore, as many critics have pointed out, the rebellion portrayed in the opening scene probably is based on either the Midlands Insurrection of 1607 or other smaller revolts of the 1590s, which also had their grounds in dearths and food shortage.³² Shakespeare's audience was thus familiar with and in all likelihood aware of the close connection between food and politics.

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32 This is one of the points vividly discussed in literature in the last decades. For arguments favouring the rebellion of 1607 as the background of *Coriolanus* see for instance RISS. "The Belly Politic."; GURR, Andrew. "Coriolanus and the Body Politic." In: *Shakespeare Survey* 28 (1975): 63 – 69; MILLER, Shannon. "Topicality and Subversion in William Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*." In: *Studies in English Literature, 1500 – 1900* 32 (1992): 287 – 310; and GEORGE, David. "Plutarch, Insurrection, and Dearth in *Coriolanus*." In: Catherine M.S. Alexander (ed.). *Shakespeare and Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004 [2000]. 110 – 29. Positions for an impact of the various smaller rebellions in the 1590s are put forth, for example, by WILSON, Richard. "Against the Grain: Representing the Market in *Coriolanus*." *Seventeenth Century* 6 (1991): 111 – 48; and EASTMAN, Nate. "The Rumbling Belly Politic: Metaphorical Location and Metaphorical Government in *Coriolanus*." In: *Early Modern Literary Studies* 13,1 (May, 2007): 2.1 – 39.

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Wolfgang G. Müller

Private Culinary Fantasies, Public Feasting, and the Cannibalization of the Body in Jacobean Drama

Eating is an ever-present subject in Jacobean drama, as is most obvious in the high frequency of banquet scenes, which are not just occasions for the common consumption of food and drink, but for social and political intercourse and frequently conflict. Eating is in the drama of the period not only to be found in the concrete action on stage in scenes of eating and feasting, but it also emerges metaphorically in various discourses such as morality, religion, gender, and poetry. This suggests an interdependence of eating and culture. What recent theoretical and historical studies on the anthropological, social and cultural significance of eating have shown, namely that eating is much more than the mere intake of food, is confirmed on a fictional level in Jacobean drama. On account of the ubiquity of eating as a theme and metaphor in Jacobean drama, the present contribution cannot attempt to be in any way comprehensive. The main focus is on Ben Jonson's plays *The Alchemist* und *Bartholomew Fair*. As far as the former play is concerned, one of the duped characters, Sir Epicure Mammon, will be scrutinized, who indulges in spectacular culinary fantasies, which are related to erotic fantasies. The analysis of the latter play concentrates on a group of visitors to a London fair, all having a declared or concealed craving for or aversion to roast pork, which is offered by the pig-woman Ursula in the heart of the fair. In both plays eating is related to Puritan attitudes towards eating and other kinds of sensual pleasure. Whenever eating is referred to in the plays under discussion the idea of sex is, as it were, in the air. Eating seems to be erotically charged. Since this is so, a second focus of the article will be on the interdependence of sex and eating, as it is expressed mainly in metaphors of food and feeding applied to sex and sexual intercourse. For this purpose the discussion will change from comedy to tragedy. The plays to be referred to in this context will be a tragedy with the telling title *The Insatiate Countess* and John Ford's incest tragedy *'Tis a Pity She's a Whore*.

I. Sir Epicure Mammon's Culinary Fantasies in Ben Jonson's *The Alchemist*

Sir Epicure Mammon, one of the dupes in Jonson's *The Alchemist*, longs for immense wealth, which is to enable him to live a life of enormous personal power and sensual satisfaction.¹ A context for Jonson's Sir Epicure is the Renaissance reception of epicureism, for example in the early Ficino and in Lorenzo Valla, who propagated in *De Voluptate* (1433) "an emphasis upon the life of the senses, self-indulgence, and freedom from all restraint"². The following quotation from Lorenzo Valla could also have come from the mouth of Sir Epicure, "Would that man had fifty senses, since five can give such delight"³. In order to realize his dreams Epicure strives to come into possession of the stone of wisdom, which is to change all metal into gold. Of his grandiose fantasies of power, wealth and erotic and culinary fulfilment I will concentrate upon the latter. But since the culinary and the erotic occur in close connection in Epicure's fantasies a few lines from a much wider context will be at least quoted. With the help of the stone Epicure means "To have a list of wives, and concubines, / Equal with Solomon" and make himself a back "that shall be as tough / As Hercules, to encounter fifty a night" (*The Alchemist*, II.2.35–39). There are actually three rhetorical and poetic climaxes in Epicure's effusive speeches, the first relating to his dreams of absolute power, the second to his excessive notions of erotic satisfaction, and the third, with which we are here concerned, to his fantasies of eating the most luxurious kinds of food served in the most exquisite dishes and cutlery:

My meat shall all come in, in Indian shells,
Dishes of agate, set in gold, and studded,
With emeralds, sapphires, hyacinths, and rubies.
The tongues of carps, dormice, and camels' heels,
Boil'd i' the spirit of Sol, and dissolv'd pearl,
(Apicius' diet, 'gainst the epilepsy)
And I will eat these broths with spoons of amber,
Headed with diamond, and carbuncle.
My foot-boy shall eat pheasants, calver'd salmons,
Knots, godwits, lampreys: I myself will have
The beards of barbels, serv'd instead of salads;

1 This chapter draws on MÜLLER, Wolfgang G. "Gold und Sinnenlust: Sir Epicure Mammon als Illusionist in Ben Jonsons *The Alchemist*." In: Norbert Lennartz (ed.). *The Senses' Festival. Inszenierungen der Sinne und der Sinnlichkeit in der Literatur und Kunst des Barock*. Trier: WVT, 2005. 17–35.

2 HAYDN, Hiram. *The Counter-Renaissance*. New York: Scribner, 1950. 472–73.

3 Quoted in HAYDN. *The Counter-Renaissance*. 484. See also VIAU, Robert. "Jonson's Sir Epicure Mammon: 'The perpetual Possession of being well Deceived.'" In: *Seventeenth Century News* 36 (1978): 44–48.

Oil'd mushrooms; and the swelling unctuous paps
 Of a fat pregnant sow, newly cut off,
 Dress'd with an exquisite and poignant sauce;
 For which, I'll say unto my cook, 'There's gold,
 Go forth, and be a knight'. (*The Alchemist*, II.2.72 – 87)

As it is customary in Ben Jonson, he gives a source for some of the delicacies Sir Epicure dreams of, the classical Roman cookbook of Apicius. The editor of the text quoted declares that “Jonson here selects some of the more repulsive (to our taste) and exotic items from the standard Roman cookery book of Apicius.”⁴ However, a scrutiny of Apicius’ text – *De re coquinaria* – shows that most of the extravagant and exotic dishes which Jonson quotes are not referred to.⁵ The culinary fantasy presented in *The Alchemist* is of Jonson’s making, which may, at best, be a parody of the Roman cookbook. In accordance with the exquisite and extravagant dishes that are referred to in Epicure Mammon’s words – carps’ tongues, doormice, camels’ heels, which are boiled in a distillate of gold and a solution of pearls, all not derived from Apicius – the tableware and the spoons are of the greatest imaginable preciousness. A means of rhetorical intensification is the comparison with the dishes which his page will eat, pheasant, carved salmon, rare fowl, and eel. To these are opposed the barbs’ beard which Epicure has as salad, and “the swelling unctuous paps / Of a fat pregnant sow, newly cut off”. The hyperbolic nature of Epicure’s description almost inevitably leads into the grotesque. An interesting aspect of Epicure’s vision is its being related to a feudal concept of society. There is a master-servant relationship to be perceived, and Epicure plans to make his cook a knight as a reward for his art. He himself is a lord, as the ‘Sir’ prefixed to his name indicates. It is obvious, however, that the aristocratic pretensions of Sir Epicure Mammon lack authenticity. Just as he gives his cook gold to buy himself a knightship, his own title may have been purchased.

The political context of Epicure’s vision is changed when Dol Common, who makes, together with Face and Subtle, the third in the trio of cheaters, tries, disguised as a lady, to trick him into courting her. She suggests that, since they live in a monarchy, the king may seize the stone and put him in prison. Then Epicure conjures up a utopian vision of a free state, a land of unlimited sensual pleasure. In this last achievement of Epicure’s visionary imagination culinary fantasies emerge again conspicuously. Using the rhetorical figure of *invitatio*,

4 JONSON, Ben. *The Alchemist*. Edited by F.H. Mares. London: Methuen, 1971. 52.

5 Even in his reference to the sow’s paps Jonson outdoes Apicius. The Roman book seems only to refer to sow’s meat with the paps *not* cut off, but there is nowhere an indication that sow’s paps are to be served as a single dish or course, let alone is there a reference to a “fat pregnant sow” with “the swelling unctuous paps [...] newly cut off” in Apicius.

which is known from the love poetry of the time, he asks Dol to accompany him into this land of unlimited possibilities:

We'll therefore go with all, my girl, and live
 In a free state; where we will eate our mullets,
 Sous'd in high-country wines, sup pheasants' eggs,
 And have our cockles, boil'd in silver shells,
 Our shrimps to swim again, as when they liv'd,
 In a rare butter, made of dolphin's milk,
 Whose cream does looke like opals: and, with these
 Delicate meats, set ourselves high for pleasure,
 And take us down again, and then renew
 Our youth, and strength, with drinking the elixir,
 And so enjoy a perpetuity
 Of life, and lust. (*The Alchemist*, IV.1.155 – 66)

This is a rhetorical and poetical vision of a departure into a world of pleasure in which energy dispersal is always made up by a new addition of strength as an effect of the stone which is – as a floating signifier – here called the ‘elixir’. One may feel tempted to apply the term entropy to this phenomenon of a never-slackening energy, but the temptation had better been resisted on account of the imprecision the meaning of the concept takes on whenever it is dissociated from its original scientific context. Be that as it may, Epicure Mammon paints a picture of an interplay of extreme culinary and libidinous experiences which releases ever new energies as a consequence of the power of the stone.

It is interesting that Epicure's libidinous and culinary fantasies receive a check at their climax that is ironically related to Christian and specifically Puritan morality. The play's three cheaters pursue the strategy of making Epicure responsible for a possible failure of their project of producing the stone. Surly, one of the deceivers, emphasizes that the possessor of the stone ought to be “A pious, holy and religious man, / One free from mortal sin, a very virgin” (*The Alchemist*, II.2.98 – 99), whereupon Epicure tells him that he intends to employ somebody to pray for him. When Subtle warns him that he ought to be free from “carnal appetite” (*The Alchemist*, II.3.8) and “covetise” (*The Alchemist*, II.3.48), Epicure assures him that he will employ the stone for the “Founding of colleges, and grammar schools, / Marrying young virgins, building hospitals, / And, now and then, a church” (*The Alchemist*, II.3.50 – 52). The cheaters' self-exculpatory strategies are targeted to putting the blame for the failure of their alleged experiment on Epicure. For this end they use the prostitute Dol Common as a bait. It is astonishing that Epicure's dream visions – powerful rhetorical and dramatic climaxes in the play – instantaneously evaporate once the project of procuring the stone has failed. Epicure shouts: “O my voluptuous mind! I am justly punish'd.” (*The Alchemist*, IV.5.74) The strategy of the deceivers works promptly

and perfectly, as Epicure's confession to Subtle indicates: "Good father, / It was my sin. Forgive it." (*The Alchemist*, IV.5.77–78) Confronted by the feigned Puritanism of the three cheaters Sir Epicure Mammon's carnal and culinary vision collapses, as if it had never had any substance.

II. The Desire for 'Roast Pig' and Satire on Puritanism in Ben Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair*

While Sir Epicure Mammon, motivated by the prospect of gaining enormous riches through the stone of wisdom, cultivates private fantasies, which are to a great extent of a culinary nature, *Bartholomew Fair* deals with the temptation which real food presents in the form of pork which the pig-woman sells "I' the heart o' the Fair" (*Bartholomew Fair*, I.5.140–41).⁶ This is the first of the two great attractions of the fair. The second is the performance of a puppet-play. Both pleasures, equally frowned upon by the Puritans in the play, are related in the plot. Win, the wife of Littlewood, who wrote the puppet play, desires to see the play, a pleasure which her mother would never consent to permit her. Upon the advice of her husband she goes to the fair under the pretext of a longing "to eat of a pig" (*Bartholomew Fair*, I.5.140). Now her mother, who has the telling name Dame Purecraft and calls her daughter, puritan-style, Win-the-fight, reminds of the fact that her "education has been with the purest" and forbids her to eat of the "unclean beast, pig" (*Bartholomew Fair*, I.6.6–8) and asks her "to pray against its carnal provocations" (*Bartholomew Fair*, I.6.17). After Win's weeping and her husband's entreaties she relents on condition that the Puritan Zeal-of-the-Land Busy can make pig-eating in the fair appear lawful. Here Jonson gives us a wonderful satire on the Puritans. When Busy has come on stage, Dame Purecraft asks him whether her daughter may commit the act of eating pork without offence, whereupon Busy launches into a long misogynistic argument:

Verily, for the disease of longing, it is a disease, a carnal disease, or appetite, incident to women; and as it is carnal, and incident, it is natural, very natural. Now pig, it is a meat, and a meat that is nourishing, and may be longed for, and so consequently eaten; it may be eaten; very exceeding well eaten. But in the Fair, and as a Bartholmew-pig, it cannot be eaten, for the very calling it a Bartholmew-pig, and to eat it so, is a spice [species] of idolatry [...] (*Bartholomew Fair*, I.6.44–51).

This quasi syllogistic argument is ironically subverted by its expanded rhetorical structure, its long-windedness, repetitiveness and its tautologies. The hypocrisy

⁶ Quoted from JONSON, Ben. *Bartholomew Fair*. Edited by G.R. Hibbard. New Mermaids. London: Ernest Benn, 1977.

and opportunism of the Puritans is exposed when, upon being asked to make the cause “as lawful as you can” (*Bartholomew Fair*, I.6.56–57), Zeal-of-the-Land Busy revises his position, getting entangled in contradictions:

Surely, it may be otherwise, but it is subject to construction, subject, and hath a face of offence with the weak, a great face, a foul face, but that face may have a veil put over it, and be shadowed, as it were; it may be eaten, and in the Fair, I take it, in a booth, the tents of the wicked. The place is not much, not very much; we may be religious in the midst of the profane, so it may be eaten with a reformed mouth, with sobriety, and humbleness; not gorged in with gluttony, or greediness; there’s the fear; for, should she go there as taking pride in the place, or delight in the unclean dressing, to feed the vanity of the eye, or the lust of the palate, it were not well, it were not fit, it were abominable, and not good. (*Bartholomew Fair*, I.6.62–73)

Contradictions are to be found on many levels. For instance, the offence of eating pork in the fair is on the one hand rhetorically emphasized – “a great face, a foul face” – but it is, on the other hand, glossed over, “that face may have a veil put over”. Or the act of eating pork is characterized by the use of the adjective “reformed” which comes from a sphere of reference totally incongruous with eating: “eaten with a reformed mouth”. What is to be perceived in this oxymoron characterises Busy’s discourse as a whole: his argument in favour of sensual pleasure is couched in a great array of religious cant.

The fact that the Puritans condemn pork – “the unclean beast, pig” (*Bartholomew Fair*, I.6.6–8) – in this play requires comment. In this they seem to be related to the Jews. It is noteworthy that Littlewit calls the Puritan Busy “Rabbi Busy” (*Bartholomew Fair*, I.6.83) and that Busy himself refers to the Puritans as being accused of Judaism. A reason for the alleged kinship of the Puritans with Judaism was that the Puritans, like the Jews, placed emphasis on the Old Testament and that they were more tolerant in their attitude towards the Jews than other Christian sects. It was Oliver Cromwell who allowed the Jews to return to England from which they had been expelled by Edward I.⁷ Now when Busy decides to gormandize on pork he wants to wash himself of the reproach of Judaism “by the public eating of swine’s flesh, to profess our hate and loathing of Judaism, whereof the brethren stand taxed” (*Bartholomew Fair*, I.6.88–90). But it is obvious that this argument is just a pretext for satisfying his desire for pork. Busy’s hypocrisy also shows when the group of revellers actually reaches the centre of the fair and smells the roast pig. He declares it would be “a sin of obstinacy, great obstinacy, to decline or resist the good titillation of the femelic [exciting hunger] sense, which is the smell” (*Bartholomew Fair*, III.2.74–76). To Littlewood he says, “Let your frail wife be satisfied; your zealous mother [Dame Purecraft], and my suffering self, will also be satisfied.” (*Bartholomew Fair*,

⁷ See the annotation to this passage in JONSON. *Bartholomew Fair*. 42.

III.2.78–80) His greed he covers by the hypocritical argument that by early entering the pig-woman's booth he will escape so many of the other vanities of the fair (*Bartholomew Fair*, III.2.83). Having partaken of the roast pork, Busy actually declares that he had only come to the fair “to protest against the abuses of it, the foul abuses of it, in regard of the afflicted saints [Puritans], that are troubled, very much troubled, exceedingly troubled, with the opening of the merchandise of Babylon again, and the peeping of popery upon the stalls here, here in the high places [places of idolatry]” (*Bartholomew Fair*, III.6.81–86).

Much more could be said on the subject of eating in *Bartholomew Fair*, for instance on the relation the play exposes between gluttony and other vices such as lechery, ale-drinking, smoking etc. or on the drastic description of the pig-woman's physical and moral degeneracy as a consequence of the hardships of her profession. It could also be shown that the puppet show which presents a travesty of the story of Hero and Leander is permeated by notions of eating and drinking. Thus Hero crosses the Thames to eat fresh herring in Old Fish Street. Seeing her land, Leander falls in love with her. He gets her drunk so that she loves him, “He strikes Hero in love with him, with a pint of sherry” (*Bartholomew Fair*, V.4.169).

III. The Cannibalization of the Body in Jacobean Tragedy

With the topic of looking at the body in terms of food this essay will leave Jonsonian comedy and turn to Jacobean tragedy. But before doing so, at least a few references to cannibalism in Jonson will be made, one of which is conspicuously connected with pork.⁸ Eating and sex frequently go together in Jonson. In *Bartholomew Fair*, Quarlous says of women who venture themselves “into the Fair, and a pig-box, will admit any assault” (*Bartholomew Fair*, III.2.125). In the same play Littlewood's wife is described as if her head were a compound of fruit delicacies, “A wife here with a strawberry-breath, cherry-lips, apricot-cheeks, and a soft velvet head, like a melicotton [A peach grafted on a quince]” (*Bartholomew Fair*, I.2.14–15). The notion of a woman or a part of a woman as something to be eaten remains on the level of metaphor here, but the metaphoric use of language is clearly an expression of an attitude towards the female sex, which is seen in terms of delicacies. This gendered use of food metaphors is nowadays still present in everyday language, e. g. in ‘She is a peach’, ‘She is a dish’, or in calling the pudenda a ‘honey-pot’. A reference to cannibalism – in connection with pork – is to be found in *Everyman out of His*

8 See HEDRICK, Don K. “Cooking for the Anthropophagi: Jonson and His Audience.” In: *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 17 (1977): 233–44.

Humour, where the satirist Carlo Buffone pleads for pork as the best food of all, on grounds of it being most like man's flesh. As the starting-point for his pseudo-logic he uses the "Axiome in naturall philosophy. *What comes neerest the nature of that it feeds, converts quicker to nourishment*" (*Everyman out of His Humour*, V.5.60–62).⁹ The obvious implication is that man's flesh would be the best food for man, that it would be best suited for metabolism. Buffone elaborates his arguments, referring to the cannibals: "Mary, I say, nothing resembling man more than a swine, it followes, nothing can be more nourishing: for indeed (but it abhorres from our nice nature) if we fed one upon the other, we should shoot up a great deal faster, and thrive much better: I referre mee to your usurous *Cannibals*" (*Everyman out of His Humour*, V.5.69–74). To adduce yet another example, in a masque Jonson gives us an aetiology of tobacco in connection with eating men's flesh. In the masque *The Gypsies Metamorphosed* (1621), a song tells us of the gypsy lord who invited the devil to dinner, of the devil feasting on men – bad or foolish men, hypocrites etc. –, and of the by-product of the meal – the invention of tobacco from the devils's fart (*The Gypsies Metamorphosed*, 975 ff.).¹⁰

References to the sexual act as eating the body of a woman are frequent in Jacobean tragedy, for instance in John Fletcher's *The Tragedy of Valentinian*, where Maximus refers to the fact that he does "not love bitten flesh" (*The Tragedy of Valentinian*, III.1335)¹¹ or in Thomas Middleton's *Women Beware Women*, where Guardiano draws an analogy between getting a woman to "Cupid's feast" and "catch[ing] love's flesh-fly" (*Women Beware Women*, II.2.402, 400).¹² My discussion of Jacobean tragedy must be restricted to one of the plays which have recently been called 'Jacobean Sex Tragedies', *The Insatiate Countess*,¹³ a play which was written by William Barksted and Lewis Machin from a draft by John Marston. This play is highly interesting in the context of the topic of the cannibalisation of the body in that here it is not only the female, but also the male body which becomes the object of voracious desire. Its protagonist, the 'men-eating' Countess Isabella, is presumably the randiest woman in all Jacobean literature. She gets through four lovers in the play's action, before being beheaded in the penultimate scene. The topic of treating the body as food is in

9 This and the next two quotations are taken from HERFORD, Charles H., Percy SIMPSON and Evelyn SIMPSON (eds.). *Ben Jonson*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971 [repr.].

10 Critics have tended to explain Jonson's obsession with food and cannibalism in a psychological context (the type of the anal-erotic) or in the tradition of the use of digestive metaphors for poetical imitation.

11 Quoted from WIGGINS, Martin (ed.). *Four Jacobean Sex Tragedies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.

12 Quoted from MIDDLETON, Thomas. *Women Beware Women*. Edited by William C. Carroll. London: A. & C. Black, 1995.

13 The play is quoted from WIGGINS. *Four Jacobean Sex Tragedies*.

this play also discussed in the context of gender roles. In a conversation between two women who belong to the play's subplot equal right of feeding on their lovers is demanded for females. Abigail asks why men should 'desire variety'. Her friend Thais answers by formulating men's argument that "to feed on pheasants continually would breed a loathing", whereupon Abigail replies that then women's appetite for different kinds of flesh is also permissible: "Then if we seek for strange flesh, that have stomachs, at will, 'tis pardonable."¹⁴ (*The Insatiate Countess*, III.3.40) The issue which is broached here is equal rights for women in matters of sex, which means that just as men cannibalise women, so women are entitled to cannibalise men. The play's protagonist, the 'insatiate countess', actually is presented as a woman who devours men. Having been jilted by Isabella, her first lover Rogero entreats his successor Gniaca to

Leave her, and leave thy shame, where first thou found'st it;
Else live a bond-slave to diseasèd lust.
Devourèd in her gulf-like appetite. (*The Insatiate Countess*, IV.2.70)

If Isabella emerges in this play as a kind of sexual cannibal, a voracious sex-maniac, who uses men as "fuel to her lust" (*The Insatiate Countess*, V.1.58), her main strategy of temptation is to invite men to feed on the delicacies of her body. Thus she promises her lover Gnacia an erotic banquet:

Cease admiration, sit to Cupid's feast,
The preparation to Paphian dalliance.
Harmonious music, breathe thy silver airs
To stir up appetite to Venus' banquet,
That breath of pleasure that entrances souls,
Making that instant happiness a heaven
In the true taste of deliciousness.
[...]
I'll lead to Venus' paradise
Where thou shalt taste that fruit that made man wise. (*The Insatiate Countess*, III.4.61 – 77)

The banquet she conjures up in her words is strongly eroticised. The culinary is submerged in the erotic. "Cupid's feast" is the preparation to "Paphian dalliance"¹⁵ and "Venus' banquet" which provides "the true taste of love's deliciousness". At the end of the quoted passage the metaphor of "Venus' banquet" is changed to that of "Venus' paradise" and in a startling transition from classical to Judeo-Christian mythology, Isabella equates herself with Eve, who fed Adam the apple from the Tree of Knowledge, causing the Fall of Man and the expulsion

14 "Strange flesh" can here be read in two ways, (1) as referring to unusual food, (2) as referring to another man's penis.

15 Paphian = venereal, derived from Paphos (Cyprus), where Venus was born.

from the garden of Eden.¹⁶ It is doubtful whether in her erotic enthrallment Isabella is aware of the moral implications of her words, but nonetheless the idea of the Fall is evoked and her ardour relativised. However, a little later, once again applying the metaphor of eating, now in the form of overeating (“surfeit”), to love, she expresses a strongly moral point of view in relation to her love for Gnacia:

May thy desire for me forever last,
Not die by surfeit on my delicates;
And as I tie this jewel about thy neck,
So may I tie thy constant love to mine,
Never to seek weaking variety,
That greedy curse of man’s and woman’s hell
Where nought but shames and loathed diseases dwell. (*The Insatiate Countess*, III.4.92–98)

With its references to constancy, hell and shame, this passage reveals an Isabella who is more than a thoughtless sex-maniac. Nonetheless, she does not hesitate to initiate a murderous intrigue against the lovers who have left her, an intrigue in which she again plays out her supreme quality as a temptress with a Spanish colonel, who when he first sees her exclaims: “What rarity of women feeds my sight” (*The Insatiate Countess*, IV.2.156).

What is at stake in the many references to food and eating in the context of love in this play is gender, the different roles men and women take in sexual behaviour or, on a more abstract level, the relation of subject and object in sex. The norm is that (early modern) men look at women in terms of food to be eaten and that they have the privilege to choose their dish and, perhaps, also to try another one. Men are agents or subjects and women patients or objects, an issue discussed from a linguistic point of view in a notorious study by C.C. Bang-Bang with the title *The Grammar of Sexual Inequality: or, The Grammar of Fucking and Laying*.¹⁷ In *The Insatiate Countess* this norm is criticised by two female characters, Thais and Abigail, who claim their right to have “appetites for different kinds of flesh”. Now Isabella, the “insatiate countess”, practises both roles, that of a subject devouring men in “gulf-like appetite” and that of an object allowing herself to be enjoyed as a dish. Yet this is not the whole truth. Even in her apparently passive role she is active, attempting to allure men to the delicacies of her body. Her strong desire to act out the role of the subject in these two ways – treating men like food to be eaten and causing men to treat her like food – is obviously insufferable in the play’s male-dominated fictional world. Since the

16 See the editor’s note in WIGGINS. *Four Jacobean Sex Tragedies*. 353.

17 BANG-BANG, C.C. *The Grammar of Sexual Inequality: or, The Grammar of Fucking and Laying*. Trier: Linguistic Agency, 1974 [repr.].

men cannot force her into the role of a sexual object, they subject her to the strongest misogynistic revilements and treat her as a transgressor or, to use Julia Kristeva's term, as an abject¹⁸ to be eliminated from society.

IV. The Heart as Food in John Ford's *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*

The theme of treating the body as a delicacy to be eaten or devoured, which is abundant in Jacobean drama, is not to be pursued further in this paper, but attention will be given to a case in which a play comes close to presenting cannibalism not metaphorically but literally on the stage. The drama in question is John Ford's incest tragedy *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* (1633), which dramatizes the opposition between a corrupt public world busy with intrigue and a private world of incestuous love which bears the marks of authenticity, depth, and beauty, but is fragile and ultimately cannot be sustained within a hostile society. The part of the body which is at stake here is the heart. In order to be able to interpret the scene decisive for our argument, we have to take a look at some of the many references to the heart and to eating metaphors applied to sex in this play. Declaring his love for his sister Annabella, Giovanni offers his dagger to her to cut out his heart and perceive the genuineness of his feelings:

And here's my breast, strike home.
Rip up my bosom, there thou shalt behold
A heart in which is writ the truth of what I speak. (*'Tis Pity She's a Whore*,
I.2.203–05)¹⁹

Giovanni's offer to expose his heart for his sister to perceive the truthfulness of his love stands in stark contrast to Iago's denial that Othello could read his thoughts even if he had his heart in his hand: "You cannot [know my thoughts], if my heart were in your hand, / Nor shall not whilst 'tis in my custody" (*'Tis Pity She's a Whore*, III.3.165–66).²⁰ The many references to the heart in *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* emphasise the absolute sincerity of the lovers' surrender to each other. Having accomplished their love in physical terms, the heart is once again referred to as a measure of the intensity of their passion. Giovanni declares "That yielding thou hast conquered, and inflamed / A heart whose tribute is thy brother's life" (*'Tis Pity She's a Whore*, II.1.4–5), whereupon his sister affirms: "And mine is his." (*'Tis Pity She's a Whore*, II.1.6) The idea of an exchange of the

18 KRISTEVA, Julia. *Pouvoir de l'horreur. Essai sur l'abjection*. Paris: Seuil, 1983.

19 Quoted from FORD, John. *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*. Edited by Brian Morris. London: Ernest Benn, 1968.

20 SHAKESPEARE, William. *Othello*. Edited by E.A.J. Honigmann. The Arden Shakespeare. London: Thomson Learning, 1997.

lovers' lives and hearts is here envisaged in a kind of love duet which leads to a climax of passion. Giovanni asks Annabella to kiss him and responds to her kiss with a sensual intensity which is indicated by the notion of sucking. The allusion to the mythological rape of Leda by Jove in the form of a swan expresses the violence of the action and at the same time its unnaturalness: "Thus hung Jove on Leda's neck, / And sucked divine ambrosia from her lips." (*'Tis Pity She's a Whore*, II.1.16 – 17) In the context of the representation of Giovanni's love for his sister, the food metaphor never emerges in such drastic language as in the following quotation from Ford's *The Broken Heart*, where Bassanes unjustly accuses Ithocles of incest, speaking of "one that franks [crams] his lust / In swine-security of bestial incest" (*The Broken Heart*, III.2.150 – 51).²¹

In *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*, the love of brother and sister is jeopardised by the fact that the two can never really break free from the constraints of the society they live in. As Brian Morris says, this holds particularly true for Annabella,²² who cannot evade marriage with the nobleman Soranzo. When the latter learns that she is pregnant, without him as yet knowing who the father is, he accuses her of a superabundance of lust, using the metaphor of (over)eating:

Must your hot itch of and pleurisy of lust,
The heydey of your lechery, be fed
Up to a surfeit, and could none but I
Be picked out to be cloak to your close tricks,
Your belly-sport? [...] (*'Tis Pity She's a Whore*, IV.3.8 – 12)

Since Annabella refuses to disclose the name of the child's father, he threatens "to rip up thy heart, / And find it [the name] there" (*'Tis Pity She's a Whore*, IV.3.53 – 54) and "with my teeth [to] / Tear the prodigious lecher joint by joint" (*'Tis Pity She's a Whore*, IV.3.54 – 55). At this point we find a significant conjunction of the motifs of ripping up the heart and rending a person into pieces by bites, the latter reminding of the cannibalistic love fury of Penthesilea in Heinrich von Kleist's *Penthesilea*.²³

The play's climax is reached in its last scene, which is significantly a banquet scene, the last of a number of scenes of this kind in the play. Soranzo offers "coarse confections" (*'Tis Pity She's a Whore*, V.6.3) to his guests, when Giovanni enters, as the stage direction indicates, "with a heart upon his dagger". He declares,

21 Quoted from FORD, John. *The Broken Heart*. Edited by Brian Morris. New Mermaids. London: A & C. Black, 1994.

22 FORD. *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*. xix.

23 See MEDEIROS, Paulo. "Cannibalism and Starvation: The Parameters of Eating Disorders in Literature." In: Lilian Furst and Peter W. Graham (eds.). *Disorderly Eaters. Texts in Self-Empowerment*. University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992. 11 – 27. 17 – 19.

You came to feast, my lords, with dainty fare;
 I came to feast, too, but I digged for food
 In a much richer mine than gold or stone
 Of any value balanced; 'tis a heart,
 A heart, my lords, in which is mine entombed:
 Look well upon 't; d'ee know't? (*'Tis Pity She's a Whore*, V.6.24–29)

Giovanni refers to his action in terms of food metaphors. He sarcastically states that he came to “feast too” and presents a heart, which is his sister’s, to the dinner party as a “dainty fare”, “much richer [...] than gold or stone”. The procedure of excorperation – cutting his sister’s heart out of her pregnant body – is complemented by an emphasis on incorporation: in her heart his heart is enclosed (“entombed”). This is a public vindication of the brother and sister’s love, which follows upon the private justification in the previous scene in which Giovanni kills his sister in order to save her “fame” (*'Tis Pity She's a Whore*, V.5.85). There is dramatic logic in the fact that Giovanni, having “from her [Annabella’s] bosom ripped this heart” (*'Tis Pity She's a Whore*, V.6.60), uses the same instrument he stabbed his love with to stab Soranzo, the destroyer of their love, thus exchanging the hearts on the dagger:

Soranzo, see this heart, which was thy wife’s;
 Thus I exchange it royally for thine,
 And thus and thus. [...] (*'Tis Pity She's a Whore*, V.6.73–75)

A question that remains to be asked concerns the function of the food metaphors in this climactic scene. The presentation of Annabella’s heart on the dagger as food is, of course, appropriate in the context of a banquet scene. So emphatically are the ideas of feasting and food expressed in Giovanni’s presentation of Annabella’s heart on his dagger that the decision of some theatre directors to make Giovanni actually eat her heart on stage is not entirely mistaken, although there are no real clues in the text for such a procedure.²⁴ Considering the strong tendency in Jacobean theatre to relate sex and eating in such a way that the sexual act becomes a kind of cannibalization, the idea of a man eating the heart of his love may be not too far-fetched. But what is most significant in *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* is the depth and purity of the incestuous lovers’ passion which is ever and again expressed by references to their hearts and the exchange and communion of their hearts. That the notion of eating is here extended to the heart as the seat of the lovers’ feelings is in keeping with the predilection for relating eating and feasting with sex and sexual activity in the drama of the age.

24 That is why it is problematic to relate the scene under discussion to the biblical narratives of “eating the apple and the Eucharist”, which “represent two opposite yet complementary moments of rupture and reunion” (DOUEIHI, Milad. “The Lure of the Heart.” In: *Stanford French Review* 14 (1990): 51–68. 52).

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The Play as Banquet: Implications of a Metatheatrical Conceit in Jacobean – Caroline Drama

The play as banquet is a metaphor which can be found in the prologues and epilogues of early Stuart drama but also in the commendatory verses appended to the printed plays. Ben Jonson, John Fletcher, Richard Brome and James Shirley were amongst those playwrights and poet-critics who elaborated it into a metatheatrical ‘conceit’. To conceive of a staged play as a lavish dinner appears particularly apt if one considers the large number of structural and functional correspondences between Renaissance banquets and theatrical performances. Both forms of entertainment were highlights of courtly and civic festivities and closely connected.¹ As shared features one might mention the uniting communal experience, the spectacular display and the self-conscious theatricality. But, in addition, the banquet offered itself as a model of social and intellectual intercourse. Gerhard Neumann calls it ‘a prime site for the communication of values’,² and Michel Jeanneret emphasizes that the Renaissance conception of the banquet was bound up with the “symposiac ideal”, the attainment of a perfect balance and completeness, which included a synthesis of the intellectual and the physical, edification and pleasure.³

The banquet metaphor is informed by two ancient literary *topoi*, namely the conception of the poet as a cook and poetry as food.⁴ The Greek playwright Aeschylus, reportedly, referred to his tragedies as ‘slices from the great banquets

1 Banquets were actually sometimes accompanied by theatrical performances (as by music). It should be also pointed out here that playwrights liked to represent such festive events on stage. For the use of banquet scenes see Chris MEADS’s study *Banquets Set Forth: Banqueting in English Renaissance Drama* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001).

2 I am referring here to a statement by Gerhard NEUMANN in his yet unpublished lecture “Das Essen und die Literatur: Aspekte eines Kulturthemas”, given during the convention of the Deutsche Shakespeare Gesellschaft on 25 April 2008 in Vienna.

3 See JEANNERET, Michel. *A Feast of Words: Banquets and Table Talks in the Renaissance*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991. 1–2.

4 See Ernst Robert CURTIUS’s chapter on alimentary metaphors in *Europäische Literatur und Lateinisches Mittelalter* (Bern: Francke, 1948), 144.

of Homer⁵. Although such food and dinner metaphors were commonplace in sixteenth-century debates about drama,⁶ they were scarcely employed in Elizabethan dramatic paratexts.⁷ This changed in the early Stuart period when metatheatrical conceits became more frequent in added texts, though they were by no means as customary and varied as later in the Restoration period.⁸ It is my contention that the banquet conceit was ideally suited to express the concerns of Jacobean and Caroline dramatists. The use of this play metaphor, which has as yet hardly been investigated,⁹ sheds light on anxieties and tensions in the theatrical community (and points thus to larger developments in late Renaissance theatre), but it also reveals – and this is the aspect I am interested in – how playwrights and their supporters sought to create their own ideal audiences. In developing the feast comparison they drew on contemporary notions of festivity, ideals of hospitality, manners, social customs and dietary lore as well as the social and moral values encoded in specific items of food or eating habits. Recent

5 CURTIUS. *Europäische Literatur und Lateinisches Mittelalter*. 144. Curtius refers also briefly to Pindar, Plautus and Quintilian, but is more interested in the use of this imagery in religious writings.

6 Cf. MITSU, Eferpi. “The ‘popular philosopher’: Plato, Poetry, and Food in Tudor Aesthetics.” In: *Early Modern Literary Studies* 9,2 (September 2003): 1–23.

7 John Lyly used the metaphor in combination with others in the prologue to his play *Midas* (published 1592) in order to announce a mixture of genres: “what heretofore hath beene serued in severall dishes for a feaste, is now minced in a charger for a Gallimaufrey. If wee present a mingle-mangle, our fault is to be excused, because the whole worlde is become an Hodge-podge.” (BOND, R. Warwick (ed.). *The Complete Works of John Lyly*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967. III, 116, lines 17–20)

8 For the use of conceits in prologues and epilogues of Restoration drama see AVERY, Emmett L. “Rhetorical Patterns in Restoration Prologues and Epilogues.” In: Max F. Schulz, William D. Templeman and Charles R. Metzger (eds.). *Essays in American and English Literature Presented to Bruce Robert McElderry, Jr.* Athens, OH: Ohio University Press. 221–37. AVERY cites three instances of the feast analogy, namely the prologue to Thomas Thomson’s *The Life of Mother Shipton* (1668), the prologue to John Dryden’s *Sir Martin Marall* (1667) and the epilogue to John Crowne’s *Andromache* (1674).

9 Critical interest has been rather limited to pointing out instances in Ben Jonson’s dramatic work. Jonas BARISH mentions that “Jonson often imagines himself as a host welcoming spectators to a banquet” and comments very briefly on the prologue to *The New Inn*, see BARISH, Jonas A. “Feasting and Judging in Jonsonian Comedy.” In: *Renaissance Drama*, New Series V (1972): 3–35. 5 and 6–7; Don E. HEDRICK refers to the “extended metaphor of the play as a feast in the Prologue to *The New Inn*” and draws attention to related images, see HEDRICK, Don E. “Cooking for the Anthropophagi: Jonson and His Audience.” In: *SEL: Studies in English Literature 1500–1900* 17,2 (1977): 233–45; Michael McCANLES notes in passing that “[i]n the Prologue to *Epicoene* Jonson invites his audience to his play as to a feast”, see McCANLES, Michael. “Festival in Jonsonian Comedy.” In: *Renaissance Drama*, New Series VIII (1977): 203–19. 205; and Alexander LEGGATT, who offers an extensive discussion of Jonson’s relation to his audiences, simply registers that “The Prologues to *Epicoene* and *The New Inn*, and the Epilogue to *The Alchemist*, offer the play as a feast for our entertainment”, see LEGGATT, Alexander. *Ben Jonson: His Vision and His Art*. London: Methuen, 1981. 225, also 208.

research in this cultural field by Ken Albala and others is indispensable for a deeper understanding of the illuminating quality and persuasive force of the banquet trope.¹⁰

A compact instance can be already found in the epilogue to George Chapman's comedy *All Fools* (1598/9, published 1605):

EPILOGUE

[...]

Sometimes feastes please the Cookes, and not the guesstes;

Sometimes the guesstes, and curious Cookes contemne them:

Our dishes we entirely dedicate

To our kind guesstes, but since yee differ so,

Some to like onely mirth without taxations,

Some to count such workes trifles, and such like,

We can but bring you meate, and set you stooles,

And to our best chere say, you all are [...] welcome. (*All Fools*, lines 4–12)¹¹

A witty variation of a commonplace introduces the image of the feast, with the main attribution of roles, namely the conception of the playwright (and here by extension also the actors) as cooks (and hosts) and the playgoers as guests. The parts of the play are conceived of as dishes, with the idea of a series of courses. The implicit metaphor is then continued. What is being served is the best food available and the playgoers are treated with hospitality. The welcoming of the theatregoers would be expected in a prologue, whereas epilogues conventionally appealed to the audience for a fair appreciation and applause.

Noticeable is the anxiety over the diversity of tastes in the audience,¹² which is apparently met on the production side with a resigned take-it-or-leave-it stance. Such worries over audience reactions intensified in the Jacobean period. As Leo Salingar points out, there was not only a marked increase in the number of prefatory texts added to the plays, but also – in contrast to previous paratextual practice – a much more common discussion of the public's taste and its reaction

10 See ALBALA's extensive studies *Eating Right in the Renaissance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002) and *The Banquet: Dining in the Great Courts of Late Renaissance Europe* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007); see also PASTON-WILLIAMS, Sara. *The Art of Dining: A History of Cooking and Eating* (London: National Trust Enterprises, 1993). 82–199. With Albala I use the term 'banquet' in the sense of an "extended elaborate dinner", which could be either "a grander public banquet" or a "private banquet, intimate and among friends" (*The Banquet* xi-xii).

11 Quoted from HOLADAY, Allan (ed.). *The Plays of George Chapman: A Critical Edition*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1970. 296.

12 For further paratextual examples of such authorial complaints about the wide variety of demands but also rapidly changing fashions see KLEIN, David. *The Elizabethan Dramatists as Critics*. London: Peter Owen, 1963. 172–78.

to plays.¹³ It is against the background of a volatile theatrical atmosphere that the usefulness of the banquet conceit becomes evident. It obviously offers scope for a definition of aesthetic and behavioural standards. This is what happens in the quoted epilogue: The playwright and actors make it known that they have their audience's entertainment in mind. They define themselves as neither over-elitist, nor as giving in to popular taste while clandestinely despising their clientele. The given example of markedly different preferences suggests that they are in favour of a balance between edification and pleasure. The way they welcome their 'guests' to their 'feast' evokes ideals and norms which put the addressed playgoers under the obligation of polite behaviour. Indeed, the speaker indicates who is welcome: "Our dishes we entirely dedicate / To our kind guests" (*All Fools*, lines 6–7). 'Kind' means 'sympathetic, considerate' and 'grateful', but in the seventeenth century it also denoted high birth and good breeding (see *SOED*).

It was Ben Jonson who fully grasped the metatheatrical potential of the banquet metaphor and became its main promulgator. In the prologue to his comedy *Epicoene or The Silent Woman* (first performed in 1609), one can find close resemblances to Chapman's approach, but also a decisive extension of the conceit:

Truth says, of old the art of making plays
 Was to content the people, and their praise
 Was to the Poet money, wine, and bays.
 But in this age a sect of writers are,
 That only for particularly likings care
 And will taste nothing that is popular.
 With such we mingle neither brains nor breasts;
 Our wishes, like to those make public feasts,
 Are not to please the cook's tastes, but the guests'.
 Yet if those cunning palates hither come,
 They shall find guests' entreaty and good room;
 And though all relish not, sure there will be some
 That, when they leave their seats, shall make 'em say,
 Who wrote that piece could so have wrote a play,
 But that he knew this was the better way.
 For to present all custard or all tart
 And have no other meats to bear a part,
 Or to want bread and salt, were but coarse art.
 The Poet prays you, then, with better thought
 To sit, and when his cates are all in brought,

13 See SALINGAR, Leo. "Jacobean Playwrights and 'Judicious' Spectators." In: *Renaissance Drama* 22 (1991): 210–11, 215 and 217; cf. also SWEENEY, John Gordon. *Jonson and the Psychology of Public Theater*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985. 3.

Though there be none far-fet, there will dear-bought
 Be fit for ladies; some for lords, knights, squires,
 Some for your waiting-wench and city-wires,
 Some for your men and daughters of Whitefriars.
 Nor is it only while you keep your seat
 Here that his feast will last, but you shall eat
 A week at ord'naries on his broken meat,
 If his Muse be true,
 Who commends her to you. (*Epi-coene* 1–29)

Again, the prologue figure, who now speaks on behalf of the poet-playwright, defines the roles that should be adopted by the dramatist and his audience and offers aesthetic precepts. The attack on writers caring only for refined tastes (perhaps a sideswipe at George Chapman and John Marston, who exclusively wrote for the private theatres) rejects the idea of an elitist theatre. But while Jonson utilizes a commonplace to insist “that public feasts / Are not to please the cook’s tastes, but the guests” (*Epi-coene*, lines 8–9) and commits himself to a socially diverse audience, he still has the “cunning palates” (*Epi-coene*, line 10) especially in mind. ‘Cunning’ means here ‘learned’ (cf. *SOED*). Jonson, who likes to stage the reactions of spectators in his plays, typically envisages and thereby pre-empt the response of this clientele:

And though all relish not, sure there will be some
 That, when they leave their seats, shall make ‘em say,
 Who wrote that piece could so have wrote a play,
 But that he knew this was the better way. (*Epi-coene*, lines 12–16)

Some of these educated auditors will admit, so the claim, that the playwright could have pleased them but decided wisely against it. As Roger Holdsworth, the editor of the New Mermaids edition, points out in a footnote, the populist stance expressed here is in stark contrast to decidedly elitist statements by Jonson.¹⁴

Jonson’s further extension of the conceit draws on contemporary ideas about a healthily balanced diet and a well-ordered dinner. “For to present all custard or all tart” (*Epi-coene*, line 16) would be dietetically inadvisable¹⁵ and against the contrapuntal flavour arrangement of a good banquet.¹⁶ To eat only one type of food might also be cloying and spoil the appetite. In contemporary dietetic literature bread and salt were described as good for maintaining the balance of humours. Bread was regarded as “tempered food”.¹⁷ Salt is, of course, also a metaphor for pungent wit (*SOED*). The playwright’s wit, this is implied here, has

14 JONSON. *Epi-coene*. 8.

15 See ALBALA. *Eating Right in the Renaissance*. 7.

16 Cf. ALBALA. *The Banquet*. 14–18.

17 Cf. ALBALA. *Eating Right in the Renaissance*. 84.

a therapeutic quality. Not to achieve the right kind of balance in a play would be “coarse art” (*Epicoene*, line 18) and have a possibly detrimental effect on the playgoers’ health, their powers of judgment and moral behaviour.¹⁸ The “cates”, i. e. choice victuals to be offered, are not “far-fed”, but “dear-bought” (*Epicoene*, line 21). Jonson exploits here the growing sense of a national cuisine in his time, which often led people to regard foreign culinary habits with disgust.¹⁹ “Dear-bought” means that he has, like a good host, not spared expense, but it also signals that his fare is the result of hard study. In turn, he expects and admonishes his audience to remain decorously seated and to appreciate what is brought in, namely something for everybody. As one would expect of a ‘good public feast’ there is variety and abundance.²⁰

Jonson’s ironic catalogue of guests and the hardly flattering prediction “you shall eat / A week at ord’naries on his broken meat” (*Epicoene*, lines 26–27) is at variance with the politeness he himself demands. If I interpret the statement correctly, Jonson makes out that his play will be the talk of the town and as such ‘dished up again’ in the taverns. “Broken meat(s)”, i. e. partly eaten dishes from a grand banquet, were usually given to the poor,²¹ and an ‘eater of broken meats’ was actually used as a term of abuse.²² The adopted tone betrays Jonson’s deep ambivalence towards his audiences.

At the root of this tense relationship is the conflict between values and cash, the writer’s cultural authority and his subjection to market forces.²³ Highly revealing is the old ideal of mutuality Jonson harks back to at the beginning of the prologue:

Truth says, of old the art of making plays
Was to content the people, and their praise
Was to the Poet money, wine, and bays. (*Epicoene*, lines 1–3)

Where the ideal of the public feast is no longer sustainable or attractive, one might switch to a courting and cultivating of the educated and refined in the audience. John Fletcher’s exploitation of the banquet conceit in the prologue to his comedy *A Wife for a Month* (licensed 1624) could be regarded as a clever validation of such a response:

18 Renaissance dieticians held the view that “[i]nappropriate foods or faulty digestion cloud[ed] the thoughts and obfuscat[ed] the intellect, drawing the unfortunate thinker into confusion and possibly sin” (ALBALA. *Eating Right in the Renaissance*. 63).

19 Cf. ALBALA. *Eating Right in the Renaissance*. 224.

20 Cf. ALBALA. *The Banquet*. 11.

21 Cf. SIM, Alison. *Food and Feast in Tudor England*. Stroud, Gloucestershire: Sutton Publishing, 1997. 39.

22 Cf. SHAKESPEARE. *King Lear*. II.ii.13.

23 See SWEENEY. *Jonson and the Psychology of Public Theater*. 6–7.

You are welcome Gentlemen, and would our Feast
 Were so well season'd, to please every Guest;
 Ingenuous appetites, I hope we shall,
 And their examples may prevaile in all
 (Our noble friends); who writ this, bid me say,
 He had rather dresse, upon a Triumph day,
 My Lord Mayers Feast, and make him Sawces too,
 Sawce for each severall mouth, nay further go,
 He had rather build up those invincible Pyes
 And Castle Custards that afright all eyes,
 Nay eat 'em all, and their Artillery,
 Then dresse for such a curious company
 One single dish; yet he has pleas'd ye too,
 And you have confest he knew well what to do;
 Be hungry as you were wont to be, and bring
 Sharpe stomacks to the stories he shall sing,
 And he dare yet, he saies, prepare a Table
 Shall make you say well drest, and he well able. (*A Wife for a Month* 367)

The quality of the offered entertainment is expressed in terms of seasoning or the preparation of sauces. This is a frequent elaboration of the conceit. The phrase “ingenuous appetites” is cleverly chosen. While it could refer to playgoers of “free and noble birth”, it especially (and probably ironically) singles out those of “high intellectual capacity” (see *SOED*). The prologue therefore courts the group whose influence is hoped to be decisive, “their examples may prevaile in all (Our noble friends)”. The reference to the Lord Mayor’s Banquet in London, then as today an important fixture in the social calendar, serves here only as a foil to a yet more demanding feat of entertaining, namely that of satisfying the “curious company” in the theatre audience, for which the speaker promises to “dress”, i. e. “to cook” and “to prepare a Table”. The architectural feats of the cooks, “invincible Pies” and “Castle Custards”, were an admired feature of both civic and courtly banquets. However, the also practised “pie-in-the-face slapstick and the fool’s leap into a giant custard at the Lord Mayor’s banquet” were regarded by some as crude entertainment.²⁴ The hierarchy introduced in this coded way sets the refined delights of an apparently more intimate banquet amongst acquaintances over the visual splendour and noisy merry-making of a public feast. Such exploitations of the social meanings encoded in food and the various types of banquets were obviously geared towards specific primary audiences and had their own immediate contexts.

24 For this information and Ben Jonson’s slighting reference to such amusements in the prologue to *Volpone*, see the footnote in Robert N. Watson’s Second New Mermaids edition of the play (London: A & C Black, 2003). 7.

Another important variation of the banquet-image can be found in the prologue to Jonson's late comedy *The New Inn* (1629):

You are welcome, welcome all, to the New Inn;
 Though the old house, we hope our cheer will win
 Your acceptance: we ha' the same cook
 Still, and the fat, who says you sha' not look
 Long for your bill of fare, but every dish
 Be served in i' the time, and to your wish;
 If anything be set to a wrong taste,
 'Tis not the meat there but the mouth's displaced;
 Remove but that sick palate, all is well.
 For this the secure dresser bade me tell,
 Nothing more hurts just meetings than a crowd,
 Or, when the expectation's grown too loud
 That the nice stomach would ha' this or that,
 And being asked, or urged, it knows not what;
 When sharp or sweet have been too much a feast,
 And both out-lived the palate of the guest.
 Beware to bring such appetites to the stage,
 They do confess a weak, sick, queasy age;
 And a shrewd grudging too of ignorance,
 When clothes and faces 'bove the men advance.
 Hear for your health, then; but at any hand,
 Before you judge, vouchsafe to understand,
 Concoct, digest. If, then, it do not hit,
 Some are in a consumption of wit
 Deep, he dare say – he will not think that all –
 For hectics are not epidemical. (*The New Inn* 1 – 26)

The title of the play almost demands the conceit. The imaginative transference of the audience situation into a feast scenario could be seen as a clever preparation for “the pretended reality of the stage”.²⁵ The speaker refers to the playwright as a fat cook. This is a humorous allusion to Jonson's corpulence, but since ‘fat’ also means ‘well supplied with what is needful or desirable’ (*SOED*), it also makes claims for the writer's authority.²⁶ The topic likening of writing to cooking implies key concepts of Renaissance poetics: the concoction of foods carries notions of an imitative and emulative intertextual practice and the cooking

25 The phrase is Anne RIGHTER's, to whose ideas I am indebted here; see her discussion of the world-as-stage play metaphor in *Shakespeare and the Idea of the Play* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967). 61 – 62.

26 As Bruce Thomas BOEHRER points out, Jonson sought to transform his fatness into a positive image of his literary vocation; see BOEHRER, Thomas. “Renaissance Overeating: The Sad Case of Ben Jonson.” In: *PMLA* 105,5 (1990): 1071 – 82.

process, which transforms nature into art, offers parallels to the mimetic endeavours of the artist.

The genial welcoming of the prologue-speaker soon changes to an open admonition of the playgoer-guests:²⁷

If anything be set to a wrong taste,
 'Tis not the meat there but the mouth's displaced;
 Remove but that sick palate, all is well. (*The New Inn*, lines 7–9)

The contentious tone jars with the politeness demanded in the evoked situation. It reflects Jonson's critical stance towards audiences, which is well-documented.²⁸ Here it has to be seen in the context of his failing fortunes on the stage, where success is, of course, dependent on meeting peoples' tastes.²⁹ Jonson tries to shape the aesthetic judgment of his audiences. 'Taste', 'palate', 'appetite' and 'stomach' are key terms in his campaign for a proper reception of his plays.³⁰ He shows himself concerned with a perversion of taste which has lost all understanding of quality, and to make this point draws on contemporary dietetic knowledge. A "sick palate" can be caused by a moody and finicky attitude:

[...] when the expectation's grown too loud
 That the nice stomach would ha' this or that,
 And being asked, or urged, it knows not what; (*The New Inn*, lines 12–14)

Or it can be the result of an over-indulgence in one particular type of food:

When sharp or sweet have been too much a feast
 And both out-lived the palate of the guest. (*The New Inn*, lines 15–16)

Jonson's arguments gain their persuasiveness from the fact that a wrong diet does not only upset the balance of humours, which is essential for a person's health and well-being, but can actually lead to fundamental change in the original temperament, which means that a person completely loses the sense of what is healthy and good.³¹ This is what Jonson means when he concludes his negative examples of perverted tastes with the exhortation: "Beware to bring such appetites to the stage" (*The New Inn*, line 17). According to the medical lore of the time, unhealthy imbalances have to be rectified by the consumption of

27 Cf. Peter CARLSON's reading in "Judging Spectators." In: *ELH* 44 (1977): 450–51.

28 See STURMBERGER, Ingeborg Maria. *The Comic Elements in Ben Jonson's Drama*. (Salzburg: Inst. für Engl. Sprache und Literatur, Univ. Salzburg, 1975), chapter 3.1.2: "Jonson's Attitude towards Jacobean Audiences"; KERNAN, Alvin B. "Shakespeare's and Jonson's View of Public Theatre Audiences." In: Ian Donaldson (ed.). *Jonson and Shakespeare*. London: Macmillan, 1983. 74–88.

29 See CARLSON. "Judging Spectators." 450.

30 Cf. BARISH. "Feasting and Judging in Jonsonian Comedy." 6.

31 Cf. ALBALA. *Eating Right in the Renaissance*. 84.

foods which have contrary properties.³² The poet-playwright Jonson offers such regenerative fare: “Hear for your health, then” (*The New Inn*, line 21). In doing so he utilizes another *topos*, namely that of the poet as physician.³³ As the prologue-speaker jokingly diagnoses, only some playgoers are in a “consumption of wit” (*The New Inn*, line 24). In order to appreciate ‘wit’, the central aesthetic quality of a play, one has to be able to use one’s critical understanding:

[...] but at any hand,
Before you judge, vouchsafe to understand,
Concoct, digest. (*The New Inn*, lines 21 – 23)

Jonson employs the topic image of digestion which links intellectual activities to eating. Thus, he instructs his audience to fully absorb his play by paying careful attention to its various parts. As Jeanneret points out in his exploration of the metaphorical field of bibliophagy, the Latin ‘digerere’ generally means “[t]o separate, sort out, order to classify.”³⁴ Jonson thus demands a process of assimilation which corresponds to his own studies of the classics, if not his imitative writing practice.³⁵

Jonson’s use of the play-as-feast metaphor has intra-textual relevance³⁶ and should be seen in relation to the rich use of alimentary and culinary metaphors in his plays. But there is also a wider intertextual issue here, which should be mentioned. Jonson’s irate response to the failure of *The New Inn* in the notorious “Ode to Himself” gave rise to a series of poems by supporters, which took up the banquet conceit to vilify unappreciative playgoers and critics. One of them,

32 Cf. ALBALA. *Eating Right in the Renaissance*. 86.

33 Due to the great importance attached to food for the maintenance of health, cooks and physicians were regarded as having similar tasks. In his *A Compendyous Regimen or A Dyetary of Health* (1562), Andrew Boorde remarked: “A good coke is halfe a physycyon. For the chefe physycke (the counceyll of physycyon excepte) doth come from the kytchyn, [...]”, (London, 1906). 277 – 78; quoted from SIM. *Food and Feast in Tudor England*. 86.

34 JEANNERET. *A Feast of Words*. 136.

35 For Jonson’s use of the digestive metaphor in discussing ideal reception and imitation see LOEWENSTEIN, Joseph. “The Jonsonian Corpulence, or The Poet as Mouthpiece.” In: *ELH* 53 (1986): 491 – 518. 505 and 510 – 512.

36 While the prologue to *The New Inn* invites playgoers to a banquet which demands an exercise of their understanding and judgment, characters in the play have to choose between a Platonic “philosophical feast” or an Ovidian “banquet of sense”. See KERMODE, Frank. “The Banquet of Sense.” In: Frank Kermode (ed.). *Renaissance Essays: Shakespeare, Spenser, Donne*. London: Collins, 1973. 89 – 93; see also Harriett HAWKINS’s discussion in “The Idea of a Theater in Jonson’s *The New Inn*.” In: *Renaissance Drama* 9 (1966): 205 – 26. Hawkins investigates the *theatrum mundi* metaphor in the play, but does not consider the banquet metaphor in the prologue. The linkage of the two play metaphors raises intriguing questions, which, unfortunately, cannot be discussed here.

Thomas Randolph, also made repeated use of the metaphor in the prefatory materials to his own (unperformed) plays.³⁷

In the original version of the “Ode to Himself”, Jonson actually gibed at one of his own followers, namely Richard Brome, whose success with the (now lost) *The Love-sick Maid* had coincided with the failure of his *The New Inn*. Brome’s taking up of the banquet conceit in prologues to two subsequently written comedies seems to have been partly actuated by resentment about this remark,³⁸ but there is also a metatheatrical issue. Brome’s pronounced modesty in the prologue to *The Love-Sick Court or The Ambitious Politique* (produced 1633/34) is in line with what Julie Sanders calls his “more popular and populist”³⁹ approach to playwriting:

Sometimes at poor mens boards the curious finde
 ’Mongst homely fare, some unexpected dish,
 Which at great Tables they may want and wish:
 If in this slight Collation you will binde
 Us to believe you’ve pleasd your pallats here,
 Pray bring your friends w’you next, you know your cheer.
 (*The Love-Sick Court*, lines 13 – 18)⁴⁰

In the prologue to his comedy *The Damoiselle, or The New Ordinary* (1637/8) Brome even opposes Jonson’s drive towards authorial control and aversion to commercialism (cf. the prologue to *The New Inn*, lines 7 – 9 and the prologue to *Epiccoene*, lines 1 – 3):

[...]
 Readers and Audients make good Playes or Books,
 Tis appetite makes Dishes, tis not Cooks.
 [...]
 He [the playwright] does not ayme,
 So much at praise, as pardon; nor does claime
 Lawrell, but Money; Bayes will buy no Sack,
 And Honour fills no belly, cloaths no back.
 And therefore you may see his maine intent

37 See the praeludium to *Aristippus, or The Jovial Philosopher* (1625 – 26) and the introduction to *Hey for Honesty, Down with Knavery* (1626 – 28), *Poetical and Dramatic Works of Thomas Randolph*. Edited by William Carew HAZLITT. New York: Benjamin Blom, 1968.

38 This evidence is not discussed by Brome specialists, who assume that the relationship between the two men was soon amicable again. See KAUFMANN, R.J. *Richard Brome: Caroline Playwright*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1961. 23 – 25; and SHAW, Catherine M. *Richard Brome*. Boston: Twayne, 1980. 21 – 25.

39 SANDERS, Julie. *Caroline Drama: The Plays of Massinger, Ford, Shirley and Brome*. Plymouth: Northcote Publishers, 1999. 8.

40 Quoted from BROME, Richard. *The Dramatic Works of Richard Brome Containing Fifteen Comedies Now First Collected in Three Volumes*. New York: AMS Press, 1966 [1873]. II, 89.

Is his owne welfare, and your merriment.
 Then often come, 'twill make us and him the wetter,
 Wee'l drown the faults of this, in one that's better. (*The New Ordinary* 377)⁴¹

Brome, for one, was apparently willing to accept the power of audiences in the theatrical marketplace, but, significantly, he does not abandon the spirit of festivity.

If prologues/inductions and epilogues served the formation of audience tastes in the theatre, commendatory verses could be used to inculcate critical standards in reader-playgoers; witness the elaboration of the banquet comparison by the poet Thomas Carew on William Davenant's comedy *The Wits* (first performed in January 1634, published in 1636):

'To the Reader of Mr. William D'Avenant's Play'

It hath been said of old, that plays are feasts,
 Poets the cooks, and the spectator guests,
 The actors waiters: from this simile
 Some have deriv'd an unsafe liberty,
 To use their judgments as their tastes; which choose,
 Without controul, this dish, and that refuse.
 But Wit allows not this large privilege;
 Either you must confess, or feel its edge:
 Nor shall you make a current inference,
 If you transfer your reason to your sense.
 Things are distinct, and must the same appear
 To every piercing eye, or well-tun'd ear.
 Though sweets with your's, sharps best with my taste meet
 Both must agree this meat's or sharp or sweet: ("To the Reader", lines 1 – 14)⁴²

Carew makes explicit use of the play as feast conceit to expound the foundation of dramatic criticism. The key terms are 'judgment' and 'wit'. Audiences are not to "choose, without control", reason must not be transferred to sense. Carew's adaptation of the conceit focuses, once more, on the central issue of 'taste'. To make his point he plays out one meaning of the word against another. When he criticizes those that "use their judgments as their tastes" he downgrades mere liking, individual preferences, but when he states in his subsequently given example of audience reactions that something "hits your taste either with sharp or sweet" he refers to "the faculty by which a particular quality is discerned". As people can discern and agree upon the flavour of a dish, so the argument,

41 Quoted from BROME, Richard. *The Dramatic Works of Richard Brome Containing Fifteen Comedies Now First Collected in Three Volumes*. New York: AMS Press, 1966 [1873]. I, 377.

42 Quoted from CAREW, Thomas. *The Dramatic Works of Sir William D'Avenant*. Edinburgh: William Paterson, 1872. II, 116.

playgoers can identify the quality of a play. The question of what constitutes the quality of a play is not raised but treated as self-evident, as an already settled matter. It is most likely circumscribed by the term ‘wit’ which revealingly conflates the structural and verbal qualities presented in plays with the faculty of their recognition. Those who cannot detect this quality have, so Carew, simply no taste.⁴³ His classicist argumentation points to a flaw in the banquet conceit, namely a misunderstanding which could arise from the projection of the gustatory onto matters of aesthetic discernment.

Carew’s preoccupations reflect the trend towards theatrical connoisseurship in fashionable Caroline audiences.⁴⁴ As his praise of Davenant’s play demonstrates, exercise of judgment does not preclude sensual pleasure:

[...] in this play, where with delight
I feast my epicurean appetite
With relishes so curious, as dispense
The utmost pleasure to the ravish’d sense. (“To the Reader”, lines 22–25)

The word ‘curious’ is used here in the sense of ‘exquisite’ and ‘made with care or art’ (*SOED*). Although the banquet comparison is ideally suited to convey the pleasure afforded by the consumption of plays, such overt revelling in sensual delight is very rare in the use of the conceit. The playwrights and their supporters were altogether more concerned with the horrors of a failed banquet than the pleasures of eating.

What Jacobean and Caroline playwrights found useful was the adaptability of the metaphor to a conceptualization of the whole theatrical experience, not just the play itself. In contrast to the most important metatheatrical image of the time, the play-as-mirror-of-the-world, derived from the *theatrum mundi* simile,⁴⁵ the banquet conceit could be used to define the relationship between stage and gallery. Rival economic and legal conceits which configured this relationship as business transaction or contractual arrangement⁴⁶ were less attractive, be-

43 The discussion of taste – as it surfaces in the texts interpreted here – deserves a much wider investigation; useful in this respect would be Friedrich SCHÜMMER’s essay “Die Entwicklung des Geschmacksbegriffs in der Philosophie des 17. und 18. Jahrhunderts.” In: *Archiv für Begriffsgeschichte: Bausteine zu einem historischen Wörterbuch der Philosophie*. Bonn: H. Bouvier, 1955. I, 120–41.

44 Cf. NEILL, Michael. “‘Wits most accomplished Senate.’ The Audience of the Caroline Private Theatres.” In: *SEL* 18 (1978): 341–60. 344.

45 For a discussion of the simile and its formative influence see STROUP, Thomas B. *Microcosmos: The Shape of the Elizabethan Play*. Lexington: University of Kentucky, 1965.

46 JONSON employed these conceits in *The Magnetic Lady* (1632) and the Induction to *Bartholomew Fair* (1614), but his elaboration is ironic and implies a critique of his audience. Cf. KERNAN, Alvin B. “Shakespeare’s and Jonson’s View of Public Theatre Audiences.” In: Ian Donaldson (ed.). *Jonson and Shakespeare*. London: Macmillan, 1983. 74–88. 77; and BRU-

cause they did not carry the wanted positive associations. They were also less adaptable to other concepts and could not be exploited for such a wide range of metadramatic and metatheatrical issues. As I have shown, the banquet conceit allowed playwrights to put their labours into a positive light, to set aesthetic norms, to voice poetological issues, to score against rivals and critics and, most importantly, to shape their own ideal audiences. This was sometimes done by the envisaging and censuring of audience reactions or by introducing critical distinctions between various groups in the theatre. Moreover – and this is a dimension which had to be neglected here – the banquet conceit offered dramatists the opportunity to highlight specific qualities of their plays, to draw attention to artistic procedures and to accentuate their views on the right balance of instruction and pleasure, matter and artifice, artistic authority and the power of recipients. What should not be forgotten, it enabled them to display their poetic wit.

For obvious reasons, the conceit would not have been feasible in performances at court. It is no coincidence that it is almost always used in connection with comedies. Banquets have here very positive connotations of a reinstatement of social harmony and a celebration of communal values which are conducive to the playwrights' endeavour to influence the reception of their plays. Although the use of the conceit tends to be bound up with a more or less pronounced acknowledgement of the power of audiences, it can be also regarded as a clever act of self-empowerment. The overt or implied shift of playwright and actors into the eminent social position of hosts implies a certain claim to power and status. The casting of playgoers as dining guests is very flattering, but it obliges to cooperation and also allows a censorious distinction into gourmets and gourmands. The "panel of tasters" becomes thus itself accountable for its taste.⁴⁷ Considering the weak position of playwrights and actors in the commodity culture of Renaissance theatre, the strategy appears to be an attempt to counter the ideology of the marketplace. This did not necessarily mean that the playwrights excluded economics. In fact, Brome, as I have shown, but also Fletcher and Nabbes wrought commercial ideas into their uses of the banquet conceit.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, the ideal foil is here festivity or the overall emphasis is firmly laid

STER, Douglas. *Drama and the Market in the Age of Shakespeare*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992. 8.

47 According to Jonas BARISH, Jonson seems to have perceived his audience in this way; see "Jonson and the Loathed Stage." In: BARISH, Jonas. *A Celebration of Ben Jonson*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973. 29. In the Caroline period, as Michael NEILL points out, some playwrights even fostered such a corporate identity by metaphorically referring to their audiences as "a court of taste" (see NEILL. "'Wits most accomplished Senate.'" 344).

48 See the prologue to BROME's *The Damselle, or The New Ordinary* (1637/38), the epilogue to Fletcher's tragedy *The Emperor Valentinian* (1612), and the prologue and epilogue to Thomas Nabbes's *Tottenham Court* (1638).

on courtesy and reciprocity, conservative social values, which hark back to the old feudal order. The meals which the playwrights envisage are usually quite lavish and certainly relate to the social experience of better-off audiences, but they are by no means decidedly exclusivist or even courtly (note the preference for the neutral term 'feast'). What the dramatists thus tried to cultivate in their own interest were playgoers who came as fair-minded and discerning guests.

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Donne, Devotion, and Digestion

That Donne and devotion should be uttered in one breath hardly needs accounting for: born in 1572 into a family proud of its association with Roman Catholic martyrs, John Donne appears to have remained loyal to the old faith well into his early twenties. He renounced Roman Catholicism and converted to the Church of England presumably some time around 1600, and we know for a fact that he took Holy Orders in 1615, to become one of the most renowned preachers of his age. It is therefore safe to assume that, throughout his life, devotion mattered a great deal to Donne – but one may justly wonder where digestion comes in. In this essay, I hope to shed some new light on the ways in which Donne’s writing intermingles devotional with physical, in particular dietary and digestive, experience. Although I shall be drawing on various Donne texts, his *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions* are to serve as my major source of reference.

The *Devotions* were written on the *Emergent Occasion* of a severe illness Donne suffered from towards the end of 1623. Unlike most of his other writings, the *Devotions* were published in his lifetime, and Donne appears to have been fairly convinced of this work’s merit and the need for it to be printed at the earliest possible occasion: its first edition dates from February 1624. Nevertheless, except for the *Devotions*’ now proverbial “No man is an Iland, entire of itself”, Donne’s worldly and erotic poetry in particular has clearly outdone this piece of devotional prose in both popularity and critical acclaim. Whenever literary scholars have addressed Donne’s *Devotions*, they foregrounded but two major points: in the first place, the *Devotions*’ characteristic blend of physical and spiritual sickness and recovery, which exemplifies William Vaughan’s dictum in *Naturall and Artificial Directions for Health*, a popular health manual from 1600: “‘if the bodie be replenished with [...] diseases, the soule can not be whole, nor sound’”, because “‘of their joint qualities one with another’”.¹

1 HEALY, Margaret. *Fictions of Disease in Early Modern England: Bodies, Plagues and Politics*. Basingstoke/New York: Palgrave, 2001. 33.

Secondly, considerable attention has been paid to the work's unique structure. It consists of 23 individual devotions, each bearing a motto which records the "several steps" of the speaker's sickness – the first, for example, is superscribed "1. Insultus Morbi primus; *The first alteration, The first grudging of the sickness*" (*Devotions* 7). Every individual devotion is divided into three parts: beginning with a so-called meditation, it moves on to an "expostulation" with God, before closing on a "prayer". The development of Donne's *Devotions* is both linear and circular: as a whole, they record the rapid progress of the disease and the patient's gradual recovery, but they do so through an ever-recurrent pattern of meditation, expostulation and prayer.

The *Devotions*' "nexus of spirituality and corporeality",² evident for example in the speaker's acknowledgement towards God "that in the state of my *body*, which is more *discernible*, than that of my soule, thou dost *effigiate* my Soule to me" (*Devotions* 119), as well as their remarkable construction are central also to my argument. No one, however, has so far taken into account the particular relevance which the relation between *eating* and spiritual edification, *intestines* and inwardness,³ what Michael Schoenfeldt calls the "technology and ethics of digestion",⁴ may have for an understanding of Donne's *Devotions*. This is quite remarkable, especially since food studies have well established themselves in recent years, also as concerns the early modern period. The German Shakespeare Association, for example, chose foods and feasts as the thematic focus of its 2008 annual convention. By contrast, not much work has so far been done on the metaphysical poets' palatal preferences – Joan Fitzpatrick's 2007 monograph deals exclusively with *Food in Shakespeare*, and although Robert Appelbaum has recourse also to other literary texts, the discussion of *Twelfth Night* character Andrew Aguecheek's preference for beef is programmatic for the general agenda of his study.⁵ Michael C. Schoenfeldt's monograph on *Bodies and Selves* (1999) provides a chapter on "Devotion and Digestion" in George Herbert, and Stanley Fish's characterization of John Donne as "bulimic", as he "gorges himself to a point beyond satiety [...] [on] the power words can exert"⁶, has reached noto-

2 SCHOENFELDT, Michael C. *Bodies and Selves in Early Modern England: Physiology and Inwardness in Spenser, Shakespeare, Herbert, and Milton*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999. 33.

3 Cf. APPELBAUM, Robert. *Aguecheek's Beef, Belch's Hiccup, and Other Gastronomic Interjections: Literature, Culture, and Food among the Early Moderns*. Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 2006. xv.

4 SCHOENFELDT, Michael C. "Fables of the Belly in Early Modern England." In: David Hillman and Carla Mazzi (eds.). *The Body in Parts: Fantasies of Corporeality in Early Modern Europe*. New York/London: Routledge, 1997. 242 – 61. 244.

5 Cf. APPELBAUM. *Aguecheek's Beef, Belch's Hiccup, and Other Gastronomic Interjections*.

6 FISH, Stanley. "Masculine Persuasive Force: Donne and Verbal Power." In: Andrew Mousley

rious fame – but not much has been made of those passages in Donne where food or the processes of eating and digestion are directly addressed and where these are closely linked to the mental state of man, who, it is suggested, “*drinckes misery, & [...] tastes happinesse*” (*Devotions* 67). In what follows, I shall read Donne’s *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions* against a background of early modern concepts of eating and digestion. Moreover, I want to explore the ways in which the structure of the *Devotions* may be said to mirror and reflect on the Eucharistic consumption and digestion of bread and wine. As Persels and Ganim have pointed out, scatology, i. e. “the representation of the process and product of elimination of the body’s waste products”,⁷ is not exactly a subject for polite society. I would like to apologize in advance if, as I go along, I shall draw attention to some less appetizing details in John Donne’s writing.

Halfway into the *Devotions*, the speaker accepts that “[t]he *disease* hath established a *Kingdome*, and *Empire* in mee” (*Devotions* 52), thus reproducing the dominant image of Thomas Elyot’s best-selling medical manual *Castell of Health* (1534), an early modern adaptation of Galenic humoral concepts. According to Schoenfeldt, a humoral model of self entails an idea of the body as permeable, its porousness becoming most evident through processes of eating and digestion, “when something alien is brought into the self and something alien is excreted by the self”.⁸ We all, as David Hillman puts it, “have our exits and our entrances”,⁹ and the speaker of Donne’s *Devotions* confirms the significance of the body’s permeability through ingestion when he muses how “[w]e study *Health*, and we deliberate upon our *meats*, and *drink*, and *Ayre*, and *exercises*, and we hew, and wee polish every stone, that goes to that building” (*Devotions* 7). A sick man’s appetite and success in processing food were considered vital indicators of his progress towards health, and thus Donne, in one of his letters, reassures his addressee of his recovery from a fever by affirming, “I eat, and digest well enough” (*Prose* 163).

Indigestion and lack of appetite, by contrast, reveal the seriousness of the disease the speaker of Donne’s *Devotions* suffers from: “[i]n the same instant that I feele the first attempt of the disease, I feele the victory: [...] instantly the tast is insipid, and fatuous; instantly the appetite is dull and desirelesse” (*Devotions* 11). He soon comes to interpret his fading appetite typologically:

(ed.). *John Donne: Contemporary Critical Essays*. Houndmills: Macmillan, 1999 [1990]. 157–81. 157.

7 PERSELS, Jeff, and Russell GANIM (eds.). *Fecal Matters in Early Modern Literature and Art: Studies in Scatology*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004. xiii.

8 SCHOENFELDT. “Fables of the Belly in Early Modern England.” 244.

9 HILLMAN, David. *Shakespeare’s Entrails: Belief, Scepticism and the Interior of the Body*. Basingstoke/New York: Palgrave, 2007. 13.

It was part of *Adams* punishment, *In the sweat of thy browes thou shalt eate thy bread*; it is multiplied to me, I have earned bread in the sweat of my browes, in the labor of my calling, and I have it; and I sweate again, & againe, from the brow, to the sole of the foot, but I eat no bread, I tast no sustenance: Miserable distribution of *Mankind*, where one halfe lackes meat, and the other stomacke. (*Devotions* 12)

The weak appetite he suffers from parallels and reflects the archetypal sinner's burden of punishment. A reluctance and inability to eat appear to indicate previous spiritual or moral failure. As complex relations were assumed to hold "between corporeal process and dispositional inclination",¹⁰ both good digestion and digestion problems would have been suspected of having "a physiological as well as a moral cause".¹¹ "Health [...] becomes a responsibility and disease a matter for possible moral reflection",¹² and the speaker of Donne's *Devotions* knows that there would be good reason for his physicians to blame the patient himself for his sickness, as they might well "chide mee, for some disorder, that had occasion'd, and inducd, or that had hastned and exalted this *sicknes*", not least because of a negligence in terms of "*dyet, and exercise* when I were well" (*Devotions* 47). Galen, who considered himself "equally philosopher and doctor",¹³ wrote a whole treatise on how "[t]he faculties of the soul depend on the mixtures of the body".¹⁴ These "mixtures of the body" are significantly influenced by what one eats, as the speaker of Donne's *Devotions* is quite aware:

Fevers upon wilful distempers of drinke, and surfets, *Consumptions* upon intemperances, & licentiousnes, *Madnes* upon misplacing, or over-bending our naturall faculties, proceed from our selves, and so, as that our selves are in the plot, and wee are not onely *passive*, but *active* too, to our owne destruction; But what have I done, either to *breed*, or to *breath* these *vapors*? They tell me it is my *Melancholy*: Did I infuse, did I drinke in *Melancholly* into my selfe? (*Devotions* 63)

Wondering where exactly he may have gone wrong, either or both in terms of his physical and moral health, Donne's speaker draws heavily on a dietary vocabulary. Moreover, whereas, in the above passage, the speaker acknowledges his primary sin to consist in "*Melancholy*", he was more concerned with a different variety of trespasses earlier on: "The bed is not ordinarily thy *Scene*, thy *Climate*: *Lord*, dost thou not accuse me, dost thou not reproach to mee, my former sins, when thou layest mee upon this bed? Is not this to hang a man at his owne dore, to lay him sicke in his owne bed of wantonnesse?" (*Devotions* 16) The sin of

10 SCHOENFELDT. "Fables of the Belly in Early Modern England." 243.

11 SCHOENFELDT. "Fables of the Belly in Early Modern England." 258.

12 TEMKIN, Owsei. *Galenism: Rise and Decline of a Medical Philosophy*. Ithaca/London: Cornell University Press, 1973. 40.

13 GALEN. *Selected Works*. Translation and Introduction by P.N. Singer. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997. xxxvi.

14 GALEN. *Selected Works*. 150.

wantonness, however, was considered to proceed most immediately from reckless dietary indulgence. “For”, as we may read in Thomas Newton’s translation of the regiment of Levinus Lemnius, *The Touchstone of Complexions*, from 1576, “when the body is bombasted with drincke, and bellycheere, the privities and secrete partes do swel, and have a marveyulous desire to carnal couture”.¹⁵ Sin causes sickness, and “the body’s ailments are a direct physical punishment for our dietary sins”.¹⁶

Apart from the articles of food and drink which had entered or were to enter the sick patient’s body, the products it discharged were of considerable interest to early modern physicians. Since a man’s health was believed to be reliant primarily on his digestion, it was standard practice to inspect a patient’s urine and faeces for an indication of the particular disease,¹⁷ as there was supposedly no part of the body, nor no excrement of the same, which might not prove helpful for that purpose.¹⁸ Thus also in Donne’s *Devotions*, on the very first page of which the speaker explains: “we are not sure we are ill; one hand askes the other by the pulse, and our eye askes our own urine, howe we do” (*Devotions* 7). Just as one’s appetite, or the lack of it, were believed to have a moral dimension, so digestion and indigestion could be traced to spiritual accomplishments and trespasses. This is evident even in “[t]he Elizabethan ‘Homilie Against Gluttony and Drunkenesse’”, which “makes good digestion dependent upon divine grace”.¹⁹ Flatulence, by contrast, is rather suspicious: “as *wind* in the body will counterfet any disease, and seem the *Stone*, & seem the *Gout*, so *feare* will counterfet any disease of the *Mind*; it shall seeme *love*, a love of having, and it is but a *fear*, a jealous, and suspitious feare of loosing;” (*Devotions* 29). Just as the wind indicates a reluctance of the body wholly to let go of its excrements, so the sin of fear may testify to human avarice and greed – it is no coincidence that, in Milton’s depiction of the Fall in *Paradise Lost*, man should be smitten with the wind.²⁰ Analysis of indigestion, in the many forms it may take, is part of the physician’s ordeal: “he evaluated stools and urine by sight, by smell, and occasionally by taste (the urine of a diabetic patient is sweet)”.²¹ His task is herein not all that different from the duties of a Christian minister. As we read in one of

15 Quoted in HEALY. *Fictions of Disease in Early Modern England*. 31.

16 ALBALA, Ken. *Eating Right in the Renaissance*. Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press, 2002. 178.

17 Cf. APPELBAUM. *Aguecheek’s Beef, Belch’s Hiccup, and Other Gastronomic Interjections*. 54.

18 Ulisse Aldrovandi in CAMPORESI, Piero. *Das Blut: Symbolik und Magie*. Translated from the Italian by Wolfgang Sützl. Wien: Verlag Turia & Kant, 2004 [1984]. 52.

19 SCHOENFELDT. “Fables of the Belly in Early Modern England.” 253.

20 SCHOENFELDT. “Fables of the Belly in Early Modern England.” 256.

21 LINDEMANN, Mary. *Medicine and Society in Early Modern Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999. 226.

Donne's sermons: "as Physicians must consider excrements, so we must consider sin, the leprosie, the pestilence, the ordure of the soul" (*Sermons* X, 5, 123).

There may, however, be instances where the particular kind of sin is less obvious – as concerns the particular ailment of the patient in the *Devotions*, "[t]he *pulse*, the *urine*, the *sweat*, all have sworn to say *nothing*, to give no *Indication* of any dangerous *sickness*. My forces are not enfeebled, I find no decay in my strength; my provisions are not cut off, I find no abhorring in my appetite;" (*Devotions* 52). The physicians, much as they may have analysed the indigested matter discharged by their patient with all due diligence, are for a long time unable to diagnose his illness. Even as late as meditation 19, the speaker observes how "[a]ll this while the *Physitians* themselves have beene *patients*, patiently attending when they should see any *land* in this *Sea*, any *earth*, any *cloud*, and *indication* of *concoction* in these *waters*" (*Devotions* 97), "waters" here referring to the speaker's urine.²² Once the physicians have – at last – established the particular type of sickness, the individual variety of indigestion their patient is suffering from, they can finally act. "Id agunt. *Upon these Indications of digested matter, they proceed to purge*" (*Devotions* 104), reads the superscription of the 20th devotion.

If the inspection of excrements is closely associated with an analysis of human sin, purgation likewise has both a medical and a spiritual dimension: it constitutes a more thorough way of knowing, revealing and excreting one's sins than digestion ordinary: "As *Phisicke* works so, it draws the *peccant humour* to it selfe, that when it is gathered together, the weight of it selfe may carry that humour away, so thy *Spirit* returns to my *Memory* my former sinnes, that being so recollected, they may powre out themselves by *Confession*" (*Devotions* 54). More often than not, indigestion originates from the body's reluctance to discharge all corrupted matter – and in the case of such "intestine Conspiracies", there is an urgent need for "*voluntary Confessions*" (*Devotions* 68). Whenever one fails to excrete and exude the indigestible remnants of the unwholesome apple man took a bite of at his Fall, they remain part of and corrupt his body. In the absence of any such interpretable remnants, the serpent may perfect its "*Master-piece*": "to make us sin in secret so, as we may not see our selvs sin" (*Devotions* 53). Less biblically speaking, "if obstructions should happen, all the whole filthy masse of noysome humours is thereby kept within the body, and then given violent assault to some of the principall parts".²³ The speaker of Donne's *Devotions* knows quite well that "[t]he patient's *narrative* of illness was

22 Cf. PARR, Anthony. "John Donne, Travel Writer." In: *Huntington Library Quarterly* 70,1 (2007): 61 – 85. 82.

23 Vaughan in SCHOENFELDT. "Fables of the Belly in Early Modern England." 245.

the most important part of the physical examination"²⁴: the open verbalisation of one's bodily ailments is the equivalent of the first step towards spiritual confession. Addressing God, the speaker acknowledges that, "[t]ill wee tell thee in our sicknes, wee think our selves whole, till we shew our *spotts*, thou appliest no *medicine*" (*Devotions* 6). After an attentive inspection of sinful excrements and all other symptoms of sickness, and before applying any kind of further treatment, medical and spiritual physicians turn to measures of purgation and confession respectively: "[j]ust as the self is always producing sins that need confession, so it is always manifesting noxious humors that demand evacuation".²⁵ Sinning, by implication, is as inevitable as eating and defecating – and since "all foods do something in one, and to one, physically and mentally",²⁶ it follows that different kinds of food result in various types of excrement and sin.²⁷ There is but one kind of food which is exempted from this digestive cycle, alluded to in the second prayer of Donne's *Devotions*: "My tast is not gone away, but gone up to sit at *Davids table, To tast, & see, that the Lord is good: My stomach is not gone, but gone up, so far upwards toward the Supper of the Lamb, with thy Saints in heaven, as to the Table, to the Comunion of thy Saints heere in earth*" (*Devotions* 14). The ingestion of the body of Christ in the Eucharist, which follows upon confessional purgation, promises the forgiveness of all sin and consequently, no excrements, no sins, should result from this holy meal. The Eucharist's "no shit"-ideal constitutes the typologically redeeming counterpart to the human body's failure fully to discharge the bits and pieces of the apple Adam and Eve had sinfully indulged in. Whereas, at man's first eating, his body was thoroughly corrupted by indigested matter, the wholesome second eating of the Eucharist restores him. Consider the beginning of one of Donne's "Holy Sonnets": "Wilt thou love God, as he thee! Then *digest, / My Soule, this wholesome meditation, / How God the Spirit, by Angels waited on / In heaven, doth make his Temple in thy brest*" (*Poetry* l.1 – 2). Not only does this poem conflate processes of devotion and digestion – it also introduces a connection between divine and human spheres which is strengthened by an epigrammatic contemplation of the mutual likeness of God and man in its concluding couplet: "'Twas much, that man was made like God before, / But, that God should be made like man, much more" ("Holy Sonnet: Wilt thou love God" l.13 – 14). Nowhere is the bond between man and God, between physical and spiritual spheres, more palpable than in the Holy Eucharist, where wine stands in for Christ's blood.

24 LINDEMANN. *Medicine and Society in Early Modern Europe*. 227, my emphasis.

25 SCHOENFELDT. *Bodies and Selves in Early Modern England*. 33.

26 SCHOENFELDT. "Fables of the Belly in Early Modern England." 251; also FERNÁNDEZ-ARMESTO, Felipe. *Food: A History*. Basingstoke/Oxford: Macmillan, 2001. 40.

27 ALBALA. *Eating Right in the Renaissance*. 68.

In his recent study of early modern dietaries, Ken Albala observes how it was generally assumed that, in order to discharge as few excrements as possible, you ideally ought to “eat what you are”,²⁸ by sticking to those foods which are most wholesome, i. e. most easily assimilated to the human organism. Meat, due to its resemblance to man’s flesh, was considered particularly nourishing: “In the most extreme extension of this theory, the substance most easily converted into human flesh [...] is nothing other than human flesh itself”.²⁹ For obvious reasons, human flesh or blood was no common nutrient, although Piero Camporesi cites numerous medieval and early modern authorities such as Marsilio Ficino who prescribe the consumption of human blood especially for pale and anaemic intellectuals³⁰ – and even today, blood transfusions from young and healthy donators are recommended as a means of rejuvenation and revitalisation for those who can afford them.³¹ Moreover, blood (sometimes even the human blood of executed criminals) was one of the favourite ingredients of medieval and early modern cuisine.³² Such near-cannibalism was not without its critics, and although human blood was “standardly viewed as the very life-force itself”,³³ many preferred to settle for “its analog, wine”, which was believed to be endowed with very similar “theoretical virtues”.³⁴ A “moderate amount” of wine, Galen contends, “has excellent effects on digestion, distribution of food, blood production, and nutrition, at the same time as rendering the soul both gentler and more confident”.³⁵

More than that, when consumed during Holy Communion, wine functions as the blood of the Son of God which altogether renews the human soul by freeing it from sin. Thus the speaker of Donne’s *Devotions* feels comforted by the assurance that, in the Sacrament, “that *Bread* and *Wine*, is not more really assimilated to my *body*, & to my *blood*, then the *Body* and *blood* of thy *Sonne*, is communicated to me in that action, and participation of that *bread*, and that *wine*” (*Devotions* 75). Clearly, the celebration of the Eucharist constitutes both a spiritual and a nutritional event, for the term “*assimilation*”, as Albala remarks, refers to that stage of the digestive process “wherein nutrients are converted to flesh”.³⁶ The body of Christ which inhabits the consecrated host is no less easily assimilated and consequently no less wholesome than the wine of Christ’s blood.

28 ALBALA. *Eating Right in the Renaissance*. 68.

29 ALBALA. *Eating Right in the Renaissance*. 68–69.

30 CAMPORESI. *Das Blut: Symbolik und Magie*. 22.

31 CAMPORESI. *Das Blut: Symbolik und Magie*. 24.

32 CAMPORESI. *Das Blut: Symbolik und Magie*. 37.

33 PORTER, Roy. “Preface.” In: Piero Camporesi. *Bread of Dreams: Food and Fantasy in Early Modern Europe*. Translated by David Gentilcore. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989. 1–16. 10.

34 ALBALA. *Eating Right in the Renaissance*. 73.

35 GALEN. *Selected Works*. 155.

36 ALBALA. *Eating Right in the Renaissance*. 63.

In *Devotions*, the sacred crumb is typologically foreshadowed by the Israelites' consumption of manna:

O *eternall*, and *most gracious God*, who gavest to thy servants in the wildernes, thy *Manna*, bread so conditioned, qualified so, as that, to every man, *Manna tasted like that*, which that man liked best, I humbly beseech thee, to make this correction, which I acknowledg to be part of my *daily bread*, to tast so to me, not as I would but as thou wouldest have it taste, and to conform my tast, and make it agreeable to thy will. (*Devotions* 39)

The taste of the heavenly bread, and by implication its substance, becomes identical with each man's individual taste and body. The Israelites were fed with bread not only much to their own likings, but also very like themselves. The greater the similarity between the substance of food and the human body, the smaller the "proportion of the food expelled as excrement".³⁷ Fruit, conversely, was thought to be of very little nutritional value, there even was a "fear of fruit corrupting in the body",³⁸ and the ambiguity of 'corrupting' is certainly telling, especially if we recall the circumstances and immediate consequences of Adam and Eve's Edenic apple-eating.³⁹ To be sure, early modern dietary concepts are not without their contradictions: not only is wine made from fruit, it effectively results from the, albeit monitored and guided, gradual corruption and decomposition of grapes. Still, the analogy between blood and wine rested on the assumption that the making of both "involve[s] a crushing, fermenting, separating from various by-products, and ultimately refining for use".⁴⁰ While such processes would normally occur within the body, in the case of such vitalising fluids as blood and wine, all necessary transformations are completed outside the digestive tract. Just as digestion was frequently imagined as a continuation of the cooking process (raw fruits and meats were considered less wholesome than their cooked version⁴¹), so was it equally possible for various digestive steps to be performed before food would enter the body through one's mouth.

The doctrine of the Eucharist as the ritual which, at least temporarily, frees man from sin, is consistent with early modern concepts of eating and digestion: since human flesh and blood were supposedly the only substances to be absorbed entirely by man's organism, the ingestion of the body and blood of Christ

37 ALBALA. *Eating Right in the Renaissance*. 68.

38 ALBALA. *Eating Right in the Renaissance*. 9.

39 An earlier and very prominent instance of such ambiguous corruption may be found, as Margaret HEALY has noted, in Calvin's *The Institution of Christian Religion* (1536), according to which "[t]he soul is 'corrupted' – rather as poisoned vapours, or the digestive products of imprudent or excessive consumption, corrupt the blood in the humoral process – and the disease is 'inheritable'" (HEALY. *Fictions of Disease in Early Modern England*. 44).

40 ALBALA. *Eating Right in the Renaissance*. 74.

41 Cf. SCHOENFELDT. *Bodies and Selves in Early Modern England*. 247.

does not result in undesirable by-products of sinful excrement, as these nutrients are immediately assimilated to, even partly become, the body of him who receives the Host. As Robert Appelbaum puts it, “the ritualistic consumption of wine and bread signified the assumption of the body of Christ and through it individual redemption”.⁴² The bleeding wounds of Christ, David Hillman observes, thus “become a kind of transitional space”,⁴³ the site where Christ’s and a Christian’s blood may mix and merge. Admittedly, Donne nowhere directly refers to the Eucharist as a feast of blood-drinking which results in an identification with Christ. The sucking of blood is, however, central to “The Flea”, a poem which Theresa DiPasquale reads as “Profane Eucharist”.⁴⁴ While DiPasquale’s interpretation places considerable emphasis on the sacrificial aspect of Holy Communion, the poem also directly alludes to the consumption of blood which forms part of the sacrament. Having bitten (or, in the poem’s diction, “suck’d”) both the speaker and his addressee, the flea “pamper’d swells with one blood made of two” (“The Flea” l.8), as there is now no longer only one, but “three lives in one flea” (“The Flea” l.10) comprised. “[T]his flea *is* you and I” (“The Flea” l.12, my emphasis) the speaker protests: blood is so entirely absorbed by the human body that he or it who sucks or drinks it adopts part of the identity of whom he feeds on. Profane as the Eucharist of “The Flea” may be – no less than its sacred counterpart, it adheres to a notion of blood as a wholesome nutriment that is easily assimilated to the consumer’s organism, no matter if he be insect or human, or if the blood he drinks be that of an ordinary man or of Christ.

Never may man come closer to an identification with Christ than on ingesting His body and blood: his belly “is the way to God”,⁴⁵ and, as Curtin suggests, “we are what we eat in a most literal, bodily way. Our bodies literally are food transformed into flesh, tendon, blood, and bone”.⁴⁶ That the reception of the host should for Donne be closely connected to an almost physical communion with the body of Christ becomes clear, for example, in the following quotation, where the speaker prays to God that he may

in that *Sacrament* associate *the signe* with the *thing signified*, the *Bread* with the *Body* of thy *Sonne*, so, as I may be sure to have received both, and to be made thereby, (as thy

42 APPELBAUM. *Aguecheek’s Beef, Belch’s Hiccup, and Other Gastronomic Interjections*. 54.

43 HILLMAN. *Shakespeare’s Entrails*. 31.

44 DIPASQUALE, Theresa M. “Receiving a Sexual Sacrament: ‘The Flea’ as Profane Eucharist.” In: Raymond J. Frontain and Frances M. Malpezzi (eds.). *John Donne’s Religious Imagination: Essays in Honor of John T. Shawcross*. Conway: UCA Press, 1995. 81 – 95.

45 SCHOENFELDT. “Fables of the Belly in Early Modern England.” 258.

46 CURTIN, Deane W. “Food/Body/Person.” In: Deane W. Curtin and Lisa M. Heldke (eds.). *Cooking, Eating, Thinking: Transformative Philosophies of Food*. Bloomington/Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1992. 3 – 22. 9.

blessed servant *Augustine* sayes) the *Arke*, and the *Monument*, & the *Tombe* of thy most blessed *Sonne*, that *hee*, and all the *merits* of his death, may, by that receiving, bee buried in me, to my quickning in this world, and my immortall establishing in the next. (*Devotions* 39)

“*The signe*” is to be associated with the “*thing signified*”. Although the term “associate”, which Donne uses here, does not imply an identification of the bread with the actual body of Christ (dangerously close to Roman Catholic doctrine), it is significant that the speaker then draws upon the authority of St. Augustine to describe the desired after-effects of the Eucharist. The way in which this passage discusses Holy Communion confirms Whalen’s claim that “the reformers by and large were as concerned as their roman Catholic enemies to maintain a doctrine of ‘real presence’ even while jettisoning the traditional scholastic logic that had supported it”.⁴⁷

Donne’s understanding of the Eucharist locates Real Presence less on the altar than within the receiving communicant himself: “It is the crucified Christ that is reborn in those who receive the bread and wine”.⁴⁸ As DiPasquale points out, Donne conceives of Holy Communion in a similar way as Hooker, who advises that “[t]he real presence of Christ’s most blessed body and blood is not [...] to be sought for in the sacrament, but in the worthie receiver of the sacrament” (*Laws* 5.67.6).⁴⁹ Whereas Christ may no longer have been present on the altar, his presence could make itself felt “within the communicant after Communion”.⁵⁰ Although one tends to associate such *imitatio Christi*, or *identificatio cum Christe*, with Roman Catholic doctrine, a potential assimilation of Christ’s body to one’s own is, as I have shown, more generally supported by early modern concepts of digestion. Moreover, even the Thirty-Nine Articles, which had to be subscribed to by all members of the English reformed clergy, allude to an *imitatio Christi* when promising that the elect “be made sons of God by adoption: they be made like the image of his only-begotten Son Jesus Christ”.⁵¹ Although the “like” appears to deny an actual equation of the elect Christian with Christ himself, it is noteworthy that the article dealing with the Lord’s Supper insists that the host is assumed to be “the *sign* or *sacrament* of so great a thing [the body

47 WHALEN, Robert. *The Poetry of Immanence: Sacrament in Donne and Herbert*. Toronto/ Buffalo/London: University of Toronto Press, 2002. xiii.

48 JOHNSON, Jeffrey. *The Theology of John Donne*. Cambridge: Brewer, 1999. 142; also APPELBAUM. *Aguecheek’s Beef, Belch’s Hiccup, and Other Gastronomic Interjections*. 168.

49 Quoted in DIPASQUALE, Theresa M. *Literature and Sacrament: The Sacred and the Secular in John Donne*. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1999. 6.

50 MCNEES, Eleanor. “John Donne and the Anglican Doctrine of the Eucharist.” In: *Texas Studies in Literature* 29 (1987): 94–114. 99.

51 CRESSY, David and Lori Anne FERRELL (eds.). *Religion and Society in Early Modern England: A Sourcebook*. London/New York: Routledge, 1996. 64.

and blood of Christ]”⁵² only when received by the wicked. As regards faithful Christians, by contrast, “the bread which we break is a partaking of the body of Christ; and likewise the cup of blessing is a partaking of the blood of Christ”.⁵³ Or, as one of Donne’s sermons puts it, “[a]s our flesh is in him, by his participation thereof, so his flesh is in us, by our communication thereof” (*Sermons IX*, 10, 248).

The characteristic intermingling of digestion and devotion, of eating habits and moral discipline, of excrements and sins, of purgation and confession in Donne’s *Devotions* also extends to the idea of Holy Communion. The Eucharist constitutes the potent medicine to be administered after the patient’s physicians have arrived at a diagnosis on the basis of the sick man’s indigested matter and have consequently subjected him to a thorough purging process in the course of which all corrupted matter yet infesting the patient’s body ought to have come to light. As the human soul was believed to reside in the blood (“*anima hominis est sanguis et fundamentum spirituum*”⁵⁴), the blood of Christ, which, in the Eucharist, was to mingle with the communicants’ human blood, was considered “*tutamen et salus animae et corporis*”,⁵⁵ a remedy for both soul and body, “*malorum omnium antidotum*”,⁵⁶ an antidote for all kinds of afflictions. “Christ was [...] the physician of both the body and the soul”,⁵⁷ and thus, when Donne’s speaker reassures himself to “have drunke of thy *Cordiall Blood*, for my recoverie, from actuall, and habituall sinne in the [...] Sacrament” (*Devotions 61*), he clearly also hopes for physical convalescence.

Donne’s *Devotions*, as I have tried to show, closely link devotion and digestion: sinning is as inevitable as defecating; indigestion, supposedly caused by corrupted matter within the patient’s body,⁵⁸ indicates a need for purgation, just as hidden sins must openly be confessed to God before the beneficial and healing effect of the medication administered in the Eucharist can successfully set in. But how does all this relate to the intricate structure of the *Devotions* as a whole, divided as they are into 23 sections, which are in turn broken down into the three parts of meditation, expostulation, and prayer? Not only are there numerous thematic correlations between devotion and digestion in general: the structure of each individual devotion, I contend, parallels the digestive process.

52 CRESSY and FERRELL. *Religion and Society in Early Modern England*. 64.

53 CRESSY and FERRELL. *Religion and Society in Early Modern England*. 67, my emphases.

54 CAMPORESI. *Das Blut: Symbolik und Magie*. 8.

55 CAMPORESI. *Das Blut: Symbolik und Magie*. 84.

56 CAMPORESI. *Das Blut: Symbolik und Magie*. 85.

57 WEAR, Andrew. *Health and Healing in Early Modern England*. Aldershot: Ashgate (Variorum), 1998. 148.

58 Cf. CAMPORESI. *Das Blut: Symbolik und Magie*. 135 on the need for efficient disposal of excrements; cf. also PORTER. “Preface.” 12.

According to Galen, digestion is performed gradually and on various levels:

We [...] know that everything eaten is first of all ‘drunk down’ into the stomach, where it undergoes a preliminary process of transformation, then received by the veins which lead from the liver to the stomach, and that it then produces the bodily humours, by which all other parts, including brain, heart, and liver, are nourished.⁵⁹

Michael Schoenfeldt by and large follows Galen’s outline, identifying three major digestive stages:

The first, occurring in the stomach proper, is termed concoction, and converts food into chyle, a fluid that the body can begin to absorb. The next stage of digestion occurs in the liver, and converts the chyle into blood, which can be distributed to the different members of the body through the network of veins. The third and final stage of digestion takes place in the various parts of the body that attract what nourishment they need from the blood.⁶⁰

It may be no coincidence that Donne’s 23 *Devotions* are likewise divided into three parts, indeed, and here I quote the original title page from 1624,

DIGESTED INTO
MEDITATIONS upon our Humane Condition.
EXPOSTULATIONS, and *Debatements with God*.
PRAYERS, upon the severall Occasions, to him.

The prayers document the change of outlook and perspective which the speaker has undergone in the course of the particular devotion. “O most gracious *God*, who [...] clothd me with thy selfe, by stripping me of my selfe, and by dulling my bodily senses, to the meats, and eases of this world, hast whet, and sharpned my spiritual senses, to the apprehension of thee” (*Devotions* 13–14): thus the speaker of the second devotion praises and elevates God in his prayer – when, in the meditation, he had still mourned the “Miserable distribution of *Mankind*” and then moved on to expostulate with God about why His anger had to come down on him with such sudden and overwhelming might. Most of the time, the first part of each devotion theorises about the miserable situation of man, before moving on to communicate and debate this relationship to God in the expostulation. The prayer, i. e. the third and concluding part of each devotion, frequently strives to bring about a union of man and God in actual fact.⁶¹

For example, the speaker of prayer 7 asks God to endow his corrections with

59 GALEN. *Selected Works*. 169.

60 SCHOENFELDT. “Fables of the Belly in Early Modern England.” 244–45.

61 FROST mentions the speaker’s frequent attempts to equate himself with Christ, but does not note that these communions most regularly and predominantly occur in the prayer, the third and final part of each individual devotion (cf. FROST, Kate Gartner. *Typology, Numerology, and Autobiography in Donne’s Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990. 36).

“thy two qualities, those two operations, that as they *scourge* us, they may scourge us into the way to thee: that when thy have shewed us, that we are nothing in our selves, they may also shew us, that thou art all things unto us” (*Devotions* 40). In a sense, this quotation reflects on the progress of each individual devotion as it suggests that any recognition of God as “all things unto us”, which amounts to making us one with God, must be preceded by man’s acknowledgment of his own utter inadequacy and nothingness normally treated in each devotion’s first part, the meditation. Only then can that (comm)union with God and Christ be effected, which the speaker, at the end of the same prayer, anticipates as the prospect “to die in *thee*, and by that death, to bee united to him, who died for me” (*Devotions* 40). Elsewhere, the speaker similarly begs, “*Let this praier* therefore, O my *God*, be as my *last gaspe*, my *expiring*, my *dying* in *thee*; that if this bee the *houre* of my *transmigration*, I may die the *death* of a *sinner*, drowned in my *sinnes*, in the *bloud* of thy *Sonne*,” (*Devotions* 85).

Such union occurs most commonly through the consumption of the Eucharist, where man, through eating, assimilates and takes on the body of Christ – and the speaker of Donne’s *Devotions* proves highly ingenious in paralleling his own body with that of the Saviour Himself. In the second prayer, he asks God to “*transferre* my *sinnes*, with which thou art so displeased, upon him, with whome thou art so well pleased, *Christ Jesus*, and there will be rest in my bones” (*Devotions* 14). This transference, however, seems to be made unnecessary by the way in which the speaker fashions himself in the prayer’s last lines: “in the midst of these *brambles*, & *thornes* of a sharpe sicknesse, appeare unto me so, that I may see thee, and know thee to be my *God*, applying thy selfe to me, even in these sharp, and thorny passages. Doe this, O *Lord*, for his sake, who was not the lesse, the *King of Heaven*, for thy suffering him to be *crowned* with *thornes*, in this world” (*Devotions* 14). The thorniness which the sick speaker’s fate shares with Christ’s crown suggests that God should deal with him no less benevolently than he has with Him who, in spite of all his suffering, would never lose his title to “*King of Heaven*”. As a reminder of “Christ’s crucifixion” the speaker’s sickness leads him “from humiliation to humility”,⁶² enabling him to enact an identification with Christ. The prayers in particular constitute “vocative rituals”,⁶³ verging on an imitation of, a communion with Christ, as “the materials of ceremony”, the ritual consumption of Christ’s body, are here brought “within close proximity of the devotional psyche”.⁶⁴ Once more, the Eucharist typologically recalls man’s Fall. Having eaten the apple, man suffers from the after-

62 GOLDBERG, Jonathan. “The Understanding of Sickness in Donne’s *Devotions*.” In: *Renaissance Quarterly* 24,4 (1971): 507 – 17. 512.

63 WILCOX, Helen. ““Was I not made to *thinke*?”: Teaching the *Devotions* and Donne’s Literary Practice.” In: *John Donne Journal* 26 (2007): 387 – 99. 392.

64 WHALEN. *The Poetry of Immanence*. xiii.

effects of an inverted or black communion: just as, after the Holy Eucharist, celebrants do not only have Christ 'in their blood', but, to some extent, have even become the Son of God, so, at the Fall, we "are become *devils* to our selves, and we have not only a *Serpent* in our bosome, but we our selves, are to our selves that *Serpent*" (*Devotions* 53). Edenic identification with the devil precedes the imitation of Christ in the Eucharist, man's second eating atones for his first, as he receives both sin and salvation in and through his blood.⁶⁵

Since a conception of the Eucharist as *identificatio cum Christe* is, as we have seen, strongly informed by early modern concepts of eating and digestion, the development of each devotion may also be described in physiological terms, and it can be seen to parallel the three stages characterised by Schoenfeldt. As the digestive process continues, foodstuffs are processed in such a way as to enable their assimilation to the consumer's body, and ultimately become part of his physical substance – as each devotion progresses, the speaker, whose sole focus, in the meditation, is on himself, increasingly registers God's presence as he communicates with Him in the expostulation. But whereas speaker and God remain two distinct entities during these "*Debatements*", in the prayers, the speaker really turns to and, occasionally, even into Christ, and thus God, Himself. The end of each devotion coincides with the completion of the digestive process, the assimilation of the body of Christ to the speaker's own physical frame, through devotional communion.

There is, however, yet another way in which the structure of each individual devotion may be said to correspond to early modern digestive concepts. As I have suggested earlier, the reception of the Eucharist, the ingestion of Christ, necessitates some preparation. Apologizing for his epistolary silence, Donne, for example in one of his letters, explains that he has reserved "a few daies for my preparation to the Communion of our B. Saviours body; and in that solitarinesse and arraignment of my self, digested some meditations of mine" (*Letters* 228). Solitary meditations on oneself ought to precede participation in the Eucharist. As Donne's speaker ruefully remembers, "I have sinned even in that fulnesse, when I have been at thy table, by a negligent examination, by a wilfull prevarication, in receiving that heavenly *food* and *Physicke*" (*Devotions* 81). Just as even

65 Cf. CAMPORESI (*Das Blut: Symbolik und Magie*. 113), who points out that it is in man's blood that both his redemption and damnation are determined. Gary KUCHAR, in his reading of *Devotions*, stresses the speaker's "radically alienated, solipsistic experience of self that is often represented through the fragmented or dismembered body" (KUCHAR, Gary. "Embodiment and Representation in John Donne's *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions*." In: *Prose Studies* 24,2 (2001): 15–40. 19) and concludes that the humoral model is thus increasingly undermined by later, more mechanistic concepts. However, even according to a humoral understanding of eating and digestion, the after-effects of man's first and second eating may resemble each other so uncannily as to engender solipsism.

the most wholesome diet will fail to cure a sick patient unless he be previously subjected to purgation, so may the salvational benefits of consecrated bread and wine manifest themselves only if they are preceded by repentance and the purifying rite of confession.

In the expostulations, although at times reluctantly, the speaker recognizes the necessity of communicating with God and baring his sinful heart to Him. However, just as Donne's physicians are able to "proceed to purge" only upon the indications they have – at last – gathered from their diligent inspection of the patient's exudations and excrements, so is it foremost that the communicant, before he advance to confession, explore the particular nature of his sins. Such self-examination tends to be the major focus of the meditation, where the speaker for example reflects how "wee beggard our selves by hearkening after false riches, and infatuated our selves by hearkening after false knowledge" (*Devotions* 7). On acknowledging and bemoaning this "perplex'd discomposition, O ridling distemper, O miserable condition of Man" (*Devotions* 8), the speaker cannot but acknowledge the vital necessity of turning to God and confessing his inadequacies to him in the expostulation. Similarly, in the 20th meditation, the speaker recognises how he is "ground even to an *attenuation*, and must proceed to *evacuation*, all waies to exinanition and annihilation" (*Devotions* 106), which he then immediately does in the expostulation, where "the activities of body and soul are so thoroughly intertwined that any attempt to separate 'medical' from 'religious' matters would be erroneous and impossible".⁶⁶

This proceeding to *action* therefore, is a returning to *thee*, and a *working* upon *my selfe* by thy *Physicke*, by thy *purgative physicke*, a free and entire evacuation of my *soule* by *confession*. The working of *purgative physicke*, is *violent* and contrary to *Nature*. O Lord, I decline not this *potion* of *confession*, how ever it may bee contrary to a *naturall man*. To take *physicke*, and *not according to the right method*, is *dangerous*. O Lord, I decline not that *method* in this *physicke*, in things that burthen my *conscience*, to make my *confession* to *him*, into whose hands thou hast put the *power* of *absolution*. I know that *Physicke* may be made so *pleasant*, as that it may easily be taken; but not so *pleasant* as the *vertue* and *nature* of the *medicine* bee *extinguished*; (*Devotions* 108).

Only after the turmoil of confessional purgation, or purgative confession, may the speaker conclude with a grateful prayer: "I am come by thy goodnesse, to the use of thine ordinary meanes for my *body*, to wash away those *peccant humors*, that endangered it" (*Devotions* 109). The following quotation, in which the speaker prays for the lasting reassurance of the sacramental remedy of the Eucharist, is likewise from a prayer: "O Lord, continue to mee the *bread of life*; the *spirituall bread of life*, in a faithfull assurance in *thee*; the *sacramentall bread*

66 HEALY. *Fictions of Disease in Early Modern England*. 47.

of life, in a worthy receiving of thee; and the more reall bread of life, in an everlasting union to thee” (*Devotions* 115).

Analysis of one’s excrements and sins, ensuing purgation through confession and the wholesome regenerative consumption of the Eucharist are subject to repetition – in Donne’s *Devotions*, the process from meditation over expostulation towards prayer is rehearsed 23 times. As long as he lives, man is prone to sinning, which is why the redemptive repast of the Eucharist must be received on a regular basis. The linear development of the speaker’s increasing sickness and gradual recovery is likewise exposed to the dangers of relapse, as becomes clear by the speaker’s fear of falling back into his old ways of sickness and sin in the prayer which concludes the 23rd and last devotion: “This *transmigration* of *sinne*, found in my selfe, makes me afraid, O my God, of a *Relapse* [...]; for, I have *had*, I have *multiplied Relapses* already” (*Devotions* 123–24). Such instability testifies not only to the general frailty of man but more specifically also comprises both the strength and the weakness of the humoral body: it may be manipulated successfully by way of purgation and diet – but any healthy balance thus achieved has to be monitored and watched over constantly.⁶⁷

It is noteworthy that, after devotions 19–22 all have related certain aspects of purgation, devotion 23 is solely concerned with the dangers of relapse and does not administer a new and wholesome diet to the convalescent patient. A nourishing meal would be first and foremost in restoring a suffering invalid, and for a poor man, it may be that even “ordinary porridge would bee *Julip* enough, the refuse of our servants, *Bezar* enough, and the off-scouring of our Kitichin tables, *Cordiall* enough” (*Devotions* 37). At the end of Donne’s *Devotions*, by contrast, there is no mentioning of the speaker’s consumption of consecrated bread and wine, although the celebration of the Eucharist would normally be expected to follow upon purgation through confession. Moreover, a collection of 23 devotions appears far less conclusive than one of 24 – a number which would have equalled the hours of the day, and 24 devotions might have been considered emblematic of man’s life having come full circle. As we know, however, Donne recovered from the illness which had given him the cue for composing his *Devotions* and died only in 1631 – not of indigestion, but presumably of cancer of the stomach. Ultimate and lasting communion with the divine can take place only after death and is consequently not for those who recover from their sickness to go on living for another few years. Given the choice, the speaker of the *Devotions* might indeed, as Papazian suggests, have opted for death rather than

67 Cf. SCHOENFELDT. “Fables of the Belly in Early Modern England.” 252; cf. also HEALY. *Fictions of Disease in Early Modern England*. 189.

recovery.⁶⁸ But as Donne's work stands, the speaker is not (yet) permitted to enjoy his truly Last Supper in a 24th devotion.

Holy Communion is a meal to be shared commensally. The fellowship created by the ritual of the Eucharist seems to have been so strong that the Thirty-Nine Articles admonish their subscribers to recall that "[t]he supper of the Lord is *not only* a sign of the love that Christians ought to have among themselves one to another; but rather it is a sacrament of our redemption by Christ's death".⁶⁹ As I have argued, Donne's *Devotions* are both thematically and structurally informed by the ritual of the Eucharist. Their most quoted words, namely that "[n]o man is an Iland" (*Devotions* 87) may refer to the community aspect of this redemptive repast. The speaker himself profits from empathising with him "for whom the bell tolls": "[a]nother Man may be *sicke* too, and sicke to *death*, and this *affliction* may lie in his *bowels*, as *gold* in a *Mine*, and be of no use to him; but this *bell* that tels mee of his *affliction*, digs out, and applies that *gold* to mee" (*Devotions* 87). The speaker acknowledges the difficulty of identifying with other people's ailments and illnesses (*Devotions* 121), yet his advice, "never send to know for whom the bell tolls, it tolls for thee" (*Devotions* 87) works as an implicit address also to his audience.

Although each man may participate in the celebration of the Eucharist, he is not able nor authorised to prepare either host or chalice himself. Whereas animals may instinctively know what herb may cure them, in the case of man, "the *Apothecary* is not so neere him, nor the *Phisician* so neere him, as they two are to other creatures; Man hath not that *innate instinct*, to apply those naturall medicines to his present danger, as those creatures have; he is not his owne *Apothecary*, his owne *Phisician*, as they are" (*Devotions* 20). For his medicine as much as for his sacred crumb, he has to depend on "the *bodily*, and the *spiritual Phisician*" (*Devotions* 20) respectively, both of whose help God has afforded "to Man by the Ministry of man" (*Devotions* 20). In that the *Devotions* offer religious guidance, their sick speaker, as well as the preacher Donne himself, is not only in need of (physical and spiritual) ministrations, but also ministering himself. He encourages his reader to enter into communion and empathise not only with him "for whom the bell tolls" and who is presumably on the brink of death or dead already, but also with the speaker: the reader is to analyse his own excremental sins in like manner, purge himself by confessing them and ultimately to assimilate Christ to his own body through a wholesome Eucharist. The devotional and digestive processes which Donne's speaker exhibits and which he

68 PAPAŽIAN, Mary Arshagouni. "Donne, Election, and the *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions*." In: *Huntington Library Quarterly* 55 (1992): 603–19. 616.

69 CRESSY and FERRELL. *Religion and Society in Early Modern England*. 67, my emphasis.

“for whom the bell tolls” further inspires in him are to be reflected by the minds and processed by the bowels of his readers and to improve them thus.

Many years before writing the *Devotions*, Donne had, in his “Satyre II”, already implied that listening to or reading the texts of others bears some resemblance to digestive processes. The implications of this parallel are here presented as much less edifying than I have suggested with regard to his *Devotions*:

But he is worst, who (beggarly) doth chaw
Others wits fruits, and in his ravenous maw
Rankly digested, doth those things out-spue,
As his owne things; and they’are his owne, ‘tis true,
For if one eate my meate, though it be knowne
The meate was mine, th’excrement is his owne: (“Satyre II” l.25 – 30)

Much as my own argument has thrived on the fruits of John Donne’s wits and those of previous critics, I hope that I have managed to do a little more than merely digest and “out-spue” his *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions*, together with earlier readings of this work. Although I would readily grant that, in taking it over-literally, “Satyre II” to some extent ridicules the parallel between eating and reading, writing and digesting, I hope to have shown that, in Donne, devotion and digestion are more thoroughly intertwined with one another than the idea of metaphor accounts for. The relation between devotion and digestion in *Devotions* is unique precisely in that one cannot disentangle the two concepts from one another, let alone identify the one as the other’s tenor or vehicle respectively. Nor would it be adequate to speak of metaphysical conceit here: the phrase has been subject to countless attempts at definition, the lowest common denominator of which seems to be that it constitutes an “extended metaphor” (*OED*). A discussion as to the significance of this virtual inseparability of tenor and vehicle for appraising Donne and other so-called metaphysical writers would merit another paper (or even book). In the meantime, while I refrain from cooking up yet another definition of metaphysical conceit, I hope to have contributed to a more wholesome understanding of early modern concepts of devotion and digestion by adding some new spice and seasoning to the appreciation of John Donne’s *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions*.

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Questions of Taste: The Critic as Connoisseur and the Hungry Reader

X. Echte Polemik nimmt ein Buch sich so liebevoll vor,
wie ein Kannibale sich einen Säugling zurüstet.

Walter Benjamin, "Die Technik des Kritikers in dreizehn Thesen."¹

They are all hungry: readers, critics, poets: for food and drink, for recognition, for words. But hunger, or appetite, in the age of politeness, civility and reason, must not be visible in its crude form. Appetite is refined into taste, and although eating is still an essential need, it is, in the ruling class, among members of the political and intellectual elite, also a performance, in which the host, the guests, and the cook (or the critic, the readers, and the author) play their respective parts. Their script is taste. It extends even to the cannibalism of Swift's *Modest Proposal*, where the suggested culinary innovation is advertised as both economically sound and highly satisfactory from the gustatory point of view: the consumer can feed on the typically plain English dishes of roast or boiled meat, and on the typically sophisticated French preparations of ragout or fricassee,² not to forget the added advantages of "the profit of a new Dish, introduced to the Tables of all *Gentlemen of Fortune* in the Kingdom, who have any refinement in Taste" (*A Modest Proposal* 518), and of fresh custom to the taverns, which will be "so prudent as to procure the best receipts for dressing it to perfection", so that the fine gentlemen "who value themselves upon their Knowledge in good *Eating*, and a skillful Cook [...] will make it as expensive as they please" (*A Modest Proposal* 518).

After this first taste of our subject, here is the bill of fare: as *amuse gueule*, there will be a brief summary of my thesis, as *hors d'oeuvre* I shall refer to several aspects of social practice, as well as to symbolic aspects of food in mid-eighteenth century England, for the main course I shall look more closely at the connection between

1 BENJAMIN, Walter. "Einbahnstraße." In: *Gesammelte Schriften*. IV,1. Edited by Tillmann Rexroth. Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 1972. 83 – 148. 108.

2 SWIFT, Jonathan. "A Modest Proposal." In: *Gulliver's Travels and Selected Writings in Prose and Verse*. Edited by John Hayward. London: Nonesuch Press, 1968. 512 – 21. 514: "a young healthy Child well Nursed is at a year Old a most delicious, nourishing, and wholesome Food, whether Stewed, Roasted, Baked, or Boyled, and I make no doubt that it will equally serve in a Fricasie, or a Ragoust."

taste and criticism, while the substantial dessert will consist in a discussion of Fielding's first introductory chapter to *Tom Jones*.

Food taste, and taste in the arts, both of which achieve prominence in the course of the eighteenth century, exist not just side by side, but discrimination in the one is closely connected with discrimination in the other. Food and eating metaphors are used extensively in the vocabulary of eighteenth-century criticism, with the reader feeding on what the author prepared, while the critic, acting as a go-between, selects and serves up choice morsels, either to entice the reader, or to put him off. But the semantic field connected with taste can carry more meaning than this simple relationship suggests, since specific food or eating conventions may need to be decoded in order to reveal their connotations. Moreover, I would argue that we see a pattern or a blueprint emerge, which I will call the discriminating critic, not only as an institution in the shape of reviewers, i. e. critics, in periodicals, but also on the private level, as a means of constituting individual identity within a more and more diverse market of products, commodities, fashions, manners, and views.³ The importance of food for this pattern is still visible today. I am not only thinking of Bourdieu's work on social distinction and symbolic capital, but also of specific forms of conspicuous consumption and food criticism: Barry C. Smith edited a volume called *Questions of Taste. The Philosophy of Wine* in 2007, whose contributors are wine makers, wine critics and teachers, philosophers, a linguist and a biochemist, and they address questions of knowledge, epistemology, aesthetics, art and craft, as well as objectivity and subjectivity. We should also take into account the 'slow food' movement that originated in Italy in 1989 and is now an international non-profit organization, present in 132 countries world-wide, concerned with the aesthetics, politics, ethics, ecology and economy of food production, distribution, preparation and consumption, re-creating a sense of taste as well as of individual and public responsibility, even of morality. In a sense, such developments can trace their beginnings back to the eighteenth century.

3 Cf. BREWER, John. "Cultural Consumption in Eighteenth Century England: The View of the Reader." In: Rudolf Vierhaus (ed.). *Frühe Neuzeit – Frühe Moderne?* Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992. 366–91. Brewer looks at reading practices and critical judgment as it is found in the diaries (17 vols. 1773–1792) of Anna Margareta Larpent, the wife of the theatrical censor John Larpent. Brewer shows that Larpent "saw herself as a literary and moral critic, capable of forming and expressing incisive judgments, she also believed that her powers could only be used properly in a limited sphere, one confined to the family and its circle of friends". What was regarded as "proper female conduct" subjected her to considerable tension, visible in the diaries. She emerges as "a cerebral self, a person devoted to culture and learning, a woman who, though she never ventured into print, was a bold and stringent critic. Her diary is a monument to literature, a memorial to her own enlightenment and improvement rather than a great work of art. It asserts Anna's right to determine what good art, literature and theatre should be and it creates a remarkably intellectual and literary *persona*" (372–73).

What makes food so important for an understanding of the eighteenth century? When we look at the concrete level of cultural practice, we can observe the steady growth of a repertoire of recipe books and cooking manuals, accompanied by advertisements in periodicals and directed at very diverse audiences and users⁴, as one element of this phenomenon; the connection between eating and art criticism in clubs and societies furnishes another element (of which the Dilettanti are only one, if particularly prominent, example, but we could also think of the Beefsteak Club), while a third element can be seen in the names of literary and political publications taken from the semantic field of eating, like Kapelion,⁵ *Olio*,⁶ or *Salmagundy*.⁷ Denise Gigante in her monograph *Taste. A Literary History*⁸ includes the cruder aspects at both ends of the eating process, appetite and digestion. This paper will, however, concentrate on the sophisticated distinctions possible to the tongue and the mind, which are connected either with pleasure or aversion. In terms of eighteenth-century aesthetics, the distinction runs between beauties and imperfections or faults in literary texts.

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- 4 Cf. LEHMANN, Gilly. *The British Housewife. Cookery Books, Cooking and Society in Eighteenth Century Britain*. Trowbridge: Prospect Books, 2003. Some examples of contemporary publications are: GLASSE, Hannah. *The Art of Cookery Made Plain and Easy* (1747); SMITH, Eliza. *Compleat Housewife* (1727); CLELAND, Elizabeth. *A New and Easy Method of Cookery* (1755). Dr Johnson, as reported by Boswell, April 15 1778, in the course of a discussion of Mrs Glasse's cookery book, claims that women "cannot make a good book of Cookery" (BOSWELL, James. *Life of Johnson*. Edited by R.W. Chapman, corrected by J.D. Fleeman. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970/1976. 943) and is convinced that he "could write a better book of cookery than has ever yet been written; it should be a book upon philosophical principles" (ibid. 942). Cf. also the advertisement in the *Tory Tatler* 13, Dec. 22.–27, 1710: "Royal Cookery; or, the compleat Court-Cook. Containing the Choicest Receipts in all the particular Branches of Cookery, now in use in the Queen's Palaces, of St. James's Kensington, Hampton-Court, and Windsor. With near 40 Figures (curiously engraven on Copper) of the magnificent Entertainments at Coronations, Installments, Balls, Weddings, &c. at Court; also Receipts for making the Soupes, Jellies', Bisques, Ragoo's, Pattys [puppons, S. V-B], Tanzies, Forc'd-Meats, Cakes, Puddings &c. By Patrick Lamb, Esq; near 50 Years Master-Cook to their late Majesties King Charles II. King James II. King William and Queen Mary, and to Her present Majesty Queen Anne. To which are added, Bills of Fare for every Season in the Year. Printed for Abel Roper, and sold by John Morphew, near stationers-Hall".
- 5 *The Kapelion, or Poetical Ordinary. Consisting of great variety of dishes in prose and verse, recommended to all who have a good taste or keen Appetite*. By Archimagirus Metaphoricus, London 1750–51.
- 6 *The Olio: Being a Collection of Essays, Dialogues, Letters, Biographical Sketches, Anecdotes, Pieces of Poetry, Parodies, Bon Mots, Epigrams, Epitaphs, &c. Chiefly Original*, by the late Francis Grose, Esq. F.A.S. London, 1792. The Advertisement explains that Grose is not the author of all these texts; some are collected or compiled, but the editor is unable to distinguish between them, since they are all in Grose's handwriting. The analogy between such an assortment of texts and the mixture of ingredients that makes up an olio seems particularly apt.
- 7 Cf. the revolutionary publication called *Politics for the People: or, a Salmagundy for Swine* (1794).
- 8 GIGANTE, Denise. *Taste. A Literary History*. New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 2005.

Yet while everybody must eat real food, and thus automatically communicates with their environment, the symbolic field is hotly contested: particular food (and by implication, a taste or preference for such food) carries a multitude of meanings in the eighteenth century, in connection with such categories as patriotism (English roast beef versus French “made dishes”), nature (products in season versus hothouse luxuries, sound nutrition versus fake delicacies), economics (food appropriate to the consumer’s pocket versus ruinous extravagance), class (conspicuous consumption, French cooks versus honest, homely English fare; but: potatoes are only fit for hogs and the Irish), politics (meat versus vegetarian diet; specific imports like sugar⁹), religion (Protestant eating habits versus Catholic pastries decorated with crosses), fashion (new French recipes versus traditional English fare), gender (hearty male appetites versus female delicacy), and to almost all of them taste is decisive. Food and taste create real and imagined communities, so it is not surprising that the question of what and how you eat and entertain is an essential aspect of eighteenth-century identity.

I cannot here do justice to the groundbreaking insights of anthropologists,¹⁰ cultural critics, historians, sociologists and literary scholars who have sharpened our awareness of the profound significance of taste, food and eating habits.¹¹ But as far as I can see, there is a general tendency in literary studies to regard the romantics or even the beginning of the nineteenth century as the first epoch that on the one hand “elevated food to the status of the fine arts”¹², and on the other hand, along with the consumer revolution, addressed the political and social implications of specific foods as well as eating habits. I would argue that much of this can already be observed in the early and mid-eighteenth century. While Gigante addresses mainly poetry and non-novelistic prose,¹³ my concluding example from Fielding will allow a glimpse of the topic in a novel situated not only at the centre of the canon but also in the middle of the eighteenth century.

9 MORTON, Timothy. “Introduction.” In: Timothy Morton (ed.). *Radical Food. The Culture and Politics of Eating and Drinking 1790 – 1820. Vol. I: Ethics and Politics*. London/New York: Routledge, 2000. 1 – 31; cf. also MORTON, Timothy. *Shelley and the Revolution in Taste. The Body and the Natural World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

10 Cf. the review article by MINTZ, Sidney W. and Christine M. DU BOIS. “The Anthropology of Food and Eating.” In: *Annual Rev. Anthropol.* 31 (2002): 99 – 119.

11 Cf. e.g. the indispensable, wide-ranging study by MENNELL, Stephen. *All Manners of Food. Eating and Taste in England and France from the Middle Ages to the Present*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1985; still useful is DRUMMOND, J.C. and Anne WILBRAHAM. *The Englishman’s Food. A History of Five Centuries of English Diet*. London: Pimlico, 1991 [1939, 1957]; PINKARD, Susan. *A Revolution in Taste. The Rise of French Cuisine*. Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

12 GIGANTE. *Taste*. 1.

13 Cf. GIGANTE. *Taste*. 16.

Before we come to the interpretation of food metaphors in literary texts, we need to look briefly at eighteenth century eating habits in England. Already in the late seventeenth century, fashionable cooking was French, and particularly the Whig aristocracy employed male French chefs, whereas lower down the social scale the female English cook commanded the kitchen.¹⁴ Differences existed not so much with regard to the meats – there was beef and fowl on either table – as in the manner of preparation and the accessories which were regarded necessary for stock, sauces and garnishes. Of the proverbial French preparations, such as *olio*, *pupton*, *cullis*, or *fricassee*, perhaps the most prominent and therefore most frequently maligned was the *ragout*. It was already described by Massialot, the famous seventeenth-century chef, in his *Cuisinier royal et bourgeois* (1691, Engl. translation 1702), as “a high season’d Dish, after the French Way”¹⁵ and could mean either the whole dish, or the sauce, which could contain veal sweetmeats, mushrooms, truffles, oysters, artichoke bottoms, *fricandeaux* and *paupiettes*, seasoned with gravy, wine, herbs and spices, thickened with butter. Such a *ragout* is added to a dish of meat, thus creating variety.¹⁶ The *hash* is originally also a French dish, *hâchis*, fashionable and luxurious in Restoration cooking, but later incorporated into English eighteenth-century cooking in a much less sophisticated form as a method of using leftovers of roast meat by cutting them up into small pieces and heating them in a simple sauce made of gravy, spices, flour, egg and cream.

In the 1730s and 40s, changes in French cooking spilled over into England: there was a shift away from the elaborate mixture of ingredients and strong seasoning, towards smaller dishes, cleaner tastes, less profusion but at least as much, if not more, refinement than previously. However, as Gilly Lehmann points out, this “*nouvelle cuisine*” (the term was used at the time) fashionable in France and in English aristocratic households with French cooks, did not always

14 Stephen MENNELL points out that in the course of the eighteenth century, a specifically English tradition of cookery, which had been continued mainly in the kitchens of the gentry in the country, gained further ground even in more affluent or socially superior households. In some cases, the financial situation of a family might not have warranted the employment of an expensive and prestigious French cook; in some cases, the political ambition of a landowner might have suggested the greater wisdom of an ‘English’ fashion at his table; besides, spending a great part of the year in the country and living on local produce, and less necessity than in France for conspicuous consumption, would further encourage a simpler style of cooking and eating. Cf. MENNELL. *All Manners of Food*. Chapter 5 (“From Renaissance to Revolution: France and England – Some Possible Explanations”). 102–33.

15 LEHMANN. *The British Housewife*. 179.

16 LEHMANN. *The British Housewife*, in the chapter on “Culinary styles, 1730–1760”. 235: “The *ragoo* as a universal garnish, used quite indiscriminately, is the main component of what is seen as the refined made dish and is the identifying characteristic of ‘French’ cookery as practised in England.”

meet with approval, due to the consumers' ignorance of purpose, style and method – in other words, lack of taste:

English cooks were working for an audience which had no real understanding of what *haute cuisine* was about, but which still wanted to emulate elite fashions so long as all extravagance was eliminated. The expensive and troublesome sauces of *nouvelle cuisine* were unacceptable, though lavish garnishes of the court style remained popular because they were highly visible signs of status.¹⁷

The French fashion was not uncontested. While French cooking and eating was highly prestigious in aristocratic circles during the Restoration and the first thirty years of the eighteenth century, gradually a change set in which was clearly visible by the middle of the century. Many articles in periodicals, paintings, and fiction denounced either the expense and luxury, or the lack of substance, of this fashion as frivolous, wasteful, and unpatriotic. We can go back as far as Addison's essay in the *Tatler* on Tuesday, March 21, 1710, where we find already most of the commonplaces of this crusade. Return to the food of your forefathers, beef and mutton; avoid very young animals – they are the invention of sickly and degenerate palates; great families have lost the athletic constitution of their progenitors because they feed on false delicacies, and dishes with hot spices are prepared with a view to excite, not allay the appetite: "I look upon a *French Ragoust* to be as pernicious to the Stomach as a Glass of Spirits; and when I have seen a young Lady swallow all the Instigations of high Soups, seasoned Sauces, and forced Meats, I have wondered at the Despair or tedious Sighing of her Lovers".¹⁸ The writer finally describes a meal of the kind he detests: there is a variety of unknown dishes, which of course he avoids; fortunately, there is roast beef on the sideboard, so he has found something he can eat after all. Only the dessert is a pleasure: pyramids of sweetmeats, fruit, whipped cream, ice cream, sugar plums, icing, jellies in various colours, and the whole, "ranged in its proper Order, looked like a very beautiful Winter-Piece".¹⁹ This, however, he considers too beautiful to touch, while the other guests demolish the sweets with great appetite. He goes home to a plain dinner of two courses only. The *Tory Tatler* no. 13, 22–27 Dec., 1710, is equally satirical:

In the mean time I can't, but lament the Degeneracy on this Age, and our unaccountable Apostacy from the Vertues of our Ancestors, who (rest their worthy Souls!) with incredible Pains and Charge brought these Delicacies to the utmost perfection, to be slighted and despis'd by us: How is all Hospitality and the ancient Usage of Plum-porridge and Mincepie neglected and grown obsolete in our Days! How is good

17 LEHMANN. *The British Housewife*. 236.

18 *The Tatler*, No. 148 (Tuesday, March 21, 1710). Edited by Donald Bond. Vol. II. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987. 337.

19 *The Tatler*, No. 148. 338.

Christmas Fare and merry-making Wassel Bowl forgot! Are we then Englishmen? Are we Brittons? *Oh! Tempora; Oh! Mores!* We smell no longer in the Houses of our Nobles the delicious Fragrancy of that reviving Broth, nor see its precious Fumes issuing forth as the Provokers to Appetite and the kind Restoratives of fainting Nature. All this, forsooth, is old fashion'd and honest substantial English Food must yield to French *Quelque Choses* and fantastick Fricasies. Not so our good Fore-Fathers: They emptied Grocer's Shops, and laid in large Magazines of Sir Loins, Collars of Brawn and Neats-Tongues, to solemnize and make glad this sacred Portion of the Year.²⁰

The satirical poem "The Woman of Taste", published anonymously,²¹ is equally severe on French cookery and misguided English palates. The kinds of food preferred by Sappho, the olios, ragouts, the dishes which pretend to be what they are not (such as beef masquerading as venison), are reprehensible, and if her table manners are to be considered elegant and feminine, appetite or hunger are out of the question:

The name of rude and rustic wou'd you shun,
 Avoid cheap dishes as you wou'd a dun,
 And to be deem'd at modern feasts genteel,
 On veal and mutton never make a meal:
 Your palate then is nice, and taste compleat,
 When you commend, not know what 'tis you eat;
 Something extremely fine as well as new,
 In the dear Olio, and the high Ragout;
 [...]
 Though hungry, when you view the fowl or fish,
 Seem nice, and only piddle o'er the dish,
 The rabbits carv'd, from wings and legs refrain,
 And though half starving, only beg the brain:

20 *Tory Tatler*, No. 13, 22–27 Dec., 1710. In: *Eighteenth Century Journals Online*. 156. On the same page is the advertisement for Patrick Lamb's *Royal Cookery*; see also Fn. 3. Cf. LEHMANN. *The British Housewife*. 89, for the inaccurate, but telling story reported in an Essay in the *Universal Spectator* in 1736 and in the *Gentleman's Magazine* how Lamb, "presented as the Duke of Marlborough's cook during his campaigns, invites the cook of one of the marshals of France to a dinner of beef and pudding, which astounds the Frenchman, but Lamb informs him that this is the fare which 'has carried my Countrymen twice through France already' and will do so again [...]. It is paradoxical to see Lamb presented here as an upholder of good patriotic English fare, since he was one of the leading practitioners of French court-style cuisine. The nostalgia-ridden political comparison between the good old days when England went to war and triumphed over France, and the 1730s when Walpole's preoccupation was to steer clear of such conflicts, wasted no time on such inconvenient facts. Eighteenth-century commentators on food invariably looked back to a golden age of beef and pudding, the two patriotic dishes par excellence, whenever they wished to contrast English food with insubstantial French raggoos."

21 The poem is attributed to Thomas Newcomb, the 3rd edition was published in 1733, cf. *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*, 14–15.

The palate only chose, the choicest meat,
When the whole carp with pleasure you cou'd eat,

The essay on taste in *Common Sense, or The Englishman's Journal*, no. 54 (Saturday, February 11, 1738), propagates an equally critical view on the perversion of taste under the authority of fashion:

Taste is now the fashionable Word of the fashionable World, every Thing must be done with *Taste* – that is settled; but where and what that Taste is, is not quite so certain, for after all the Pains I have taken to find out what was meant by the Word, and whether those who use it offnest had any clear Idea annex'd to it, I have only been able negatively to discover, that they do not mean their own natural Taste; but on the contrary, that they have sacrificed it to an imaginary one, of which they can give no Account. – They build Houses in Taste, which they can't live in with conveniency, – they suffer with Impatience the Musick they pretend to hear with Rapture, and they even eat nothing they like, for the sake of eating in Taste.²²

The literal meaning of taste, as the sense impression received by the tongue, is here not just taken as the conventional neutral analogy for the basis of an aesthetic judgment passed on various art forms, but is used satirically for an artificial, yet fashionable aesthetic stance. Its disciples no longer need to trust their own estimation (as the origin in an individual act of sense impression would naturally suggest), they simply follow the crowd, and although the result for their daily lives is a disagreeable one, they feel secure in the public sanction of their conformity. Even their physical taste has been subjected to the dictate of fashion, or rather, they have voluntarily renounced their trust in the information given by their own bodies, and exchanged it for a foreign leadership.

The connection between taste, food and the critic can be illustrated from the practical as well as from the philosophical point of view. The icon of criticism, Dr Johnson, was not only well known for the great quantities of food he could enjoy, but is described by Boswell, on Friday, 5 August 1763, as somebody who

was, or affected to be, a man of very nice discernment in the science of cookery. He used to descant critically on the dishes which had been at table where he dined or supped, and to recollect minutely what he had liked. I remember, when he was at Scotland, his praising 'Gordon's palates' (a dish of palates at the Honourable Alexander Gordon's) with a warmth of expression which might have done honour to more important subjects. [...] He about the same time was so much displeas'd with the performances of a nobleman's French cook, that he exclaimed with vehemence, 'I'd throw such a rascal into the river'.²³

22 *Common Sense, or The Englishman's Journal*, no. 54 (Saturday, February 11, 1738). In: *Eighteenth Century Journals*.

23 Cf. BOSWELL, James. *Life of Johnson*. Edited by R.W. Chapman. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970. 332.

For the philosophical point of view, we can turn to David Hume, for whom the connection between physical and mental taste is beyond question. He tells his readers in the essay “Of the Standard of Taste”²⁴, with reference to an anecdote taken from Cervantes’ *Don Quixote*, that the “great resemblance between mental and bodily taste will easily teach us to apply this story”.²⁵ The perfection of every sense or faculty depends on the perception of the most minute objects. This holds true for the gourmet and for the critical reader:

The smaller the objects are, which become sensible to the eye, the finer is the organ, and the more elaborate its make and composition. A good palate is not tried by strong flavours; but by a mixture of small ingredients, where we are still sensible of each part, notwithstanding its minuteness and its confusion with the rest. In like manner a quick and acute perception of beauty and deformity must be the perfection of our mental taste; nor can a man be satisfied with himself while he suspects, that any excellence or blemish in a discourse has passed him unobserved. In this case, the perfection to the man, and the perfection of the sense or feeling, are found to be united. A very delicate palate, on many occasions, may be a great inconvenience both to a man, himself, and to his friends: But a delicate taste of wit and beauty must always be a desirable quality, because it is the source of all the finest and most innocent enjoyments of which human nature is susceptible.²⁶

At this point, we are immediately reminded of Addison, who had set out the principles of well justified, moderate and judicious criticism in his essay on Milton’s *Paradise Lost*. Profound learning, knowledge of ancients and moderns, must provide its basis, to which judgment and taste need to be added, but most importantly, a “true Critick ought to dwell rather upon Excellencies than Imperfections, to discover the concealed Beauties of a Writer, and communicate to the World such Things as are worth their Observation”.²⁷ This emphasis on the

24 In: HUME, David. *Essays and Treatises on Several Subjects*. Vol. I. Edinburgh, 1793 [1758]. 224–49.

25 HUME. “Of the Standard of Taste.” 233. HUME refers to two wine tasters who claimed that a particularly fine hogshead tasted faintly of leather and iron respectively. They were showered with ridicule, until the empty barrel disclosed a key with a leather thong attached to it.

26 HUME. “Of the Standard of Taste.” 233.

27 Cf. *The Spectator*, no. 291 (Saturday, February 2, 1712). In: Gregory Smith (ed.). *The Spectator*, vol. II, London: Everyman’s Library, 1963. 369. Ronald PAULSON in his recent book *Hogarth’s Harlot. Sacred Parody in Enlightenment England*. Baltimore/London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003, takes a very critical view of Addison’s principles, and he makes the connection to the aesthetic aspect of taste: “*Paradise Lost* was transformed by Addison from a religious to an aesthetic experience as he described in several *Spectator* papers the ‘beauties’ of each book. But every time religion was aestheticized it was by an act of politicization: Addison, among other things, sanitized the strong political strain of Milton’s poem in the name of eighteenth-century Whiggery. In its shift of authority from the poet-maker to the critic and connoisseur (the experience of art), aesthetics reflected the Whig shift of authority from the monarch to the oligarchy of property-owning, therefore disinterested, aristocrats” (ibid. 23–24).

distinction between the beauties and imperfections in literature, as well as the discussion of the possible comprehensiveness of taste as an individual or a communal category indicates the fear of social dynamite in political and religious disputes. The aestheticisation (and commercialization) of society, which is recommended by Addison at the beginning of the century (deliberately at the expense of strong political party convictions) is supposed to lead away from the Whig/Tory division, and move closer towards that refined civility in which all enlightened citizens can share.

William King in his poem “The art of cookery. In imitation of Horace’s Art of poetry”²⁸, discusses and embodies the connection between food and literature, the art of cooking and the art of writing, in his text. Not only does he elaborate on it in the paratexts, he makes it most obvious in the parallel printing of Horace’s treatise and his culinary poem. King writes a kind of conduct book in verse for the cook and the host, assuming the function of the critic who gives advice to the author:

I here send you what I Promis’d, a *Discourse of Cookery*, after the Method which *Horace* has taken in his *Art of Poetry*, which I have all along kept in my View; for *Horace* certainly is an Author to be imitated in the Delivery of *Precepts*, for any Art or Science: He is indeed severe upon our sort of Learning in some of his *Satyrs*, but even there he instructs, [...] I have in this Poem us’d a plain, easie, familiar Stile, as most fit for a Precept; [...] I have not consulted any of his Translators, neither Mr. *Oldham* [...], nor *Ben Johnson* [sic], who is admirable for his close following of the Original; nor yet the Lord *Roscommon* [...].²⁹

The poem covers many aspects of food, from the appropriateness of choosing ingredients that are in season to the matching of food and guest. The matter, the manner and the quantity of the food depend on the social status of host and guest, as well as the occasion for which the food is prepared. There is no absolute condemnation of refinement: expensive and elegant dishes must be mastered by the cook and offered in perfection at the table, where they are appropriate. On the contrary – cooks must be very skilled, they should even read critics’ opinions (he recommends Bossuet), so that their wide range of repertoire can cater for all occasions.³⁰ The parallel to Horace’s *Art of Poetry* is obvious: guidelines for poetry, concerning e.g. genres, or verse forms, correspond to guidelines for

28 The poem was first published in London without paratexts in 1708, then in a second edition “with some Letters to Dr. Lister, and others”, in 1712.

29 KING, William. “The art of cookery. In imitation of Horace’s Art of poetry.” London, 1712 [1708].

30 For a critical discussion of the poem, cf. MORTON, Timothy. “Old Spice: William King, Culinary Antiquarianism, and National Boundaries.” In: *Eighteenth Century Life* 23 (1999): 97–101.

proper cooking and eating. By implication, King's precepts claim to be as socially and aesthetically relevant as Horace's.

Proper taste in food and in aesthetics becomes more markedly patriotic as the century progresses. *The Microcosm*, in 1789, deplores the decline of Shakespeare's reputation under the pressure of French neoclassicism, by connecting patriotism, the perversion of literary taste, and the absurdity of such rule dominated criticism, with Catholicism and French cuisine:

Even among a national audience, the most admired of his dramas were received at least without that enthusiastic applause, they had formerly excited; and we must expect, that, in another century, the partiality for our favourite poet will vanish, together with our national antipathies against popery and wooden shoes, and frogs and slavery; and that a taste for *French* criticism will immediately follow a relish for their cookery.³¹

But food metaphors are not only used to describe the taste of the reader or the critic, they are also a staple in the critic's language when describing his own or the author's writing. In the *Monthly Review* (June 1750), an appreciation of a new collection of fairy tales uses the food metaphor extensively: the author "here and there scatters a little humour to season his piece, and make[s] it go down, not only with younger readers, but even with people of more experienced and discerning palates. However, there is no part of this entertainment that we imagine our readers would much relish, and therefore shall conclude this article without any extract".³² Both author and critic serve food and cater for the taste of the reader. In October, in the same journal a reviewer refers to the book market, claiming that book-sellers "having assumed to themselves the prerogative of judging of the merit and fate of books in this enlightened age, are seldom brought to publish any work, unless it be exactly conformable to the general taste, and consequently promise a quick sale", adding that the volume under discussion is "entirely consonant to the taste in vogue".³³ Here, fashion meets economy, the general taste perhaps not of the reading, but the buying public must be properly assessed, so that supply and demand correspond to each other. Critics fulfil a key role in adjusting the one to the other.

On the other hand, art criticism, particularly in connection with the sublime, insists on the necessity of refining one's taste, of learning to discriminate between different kinds of pleasure, of distinguishing between quantity and quality, and perceiving the extraordinary as that which is capable of giving most pleasure:

31 *The Microcosm, a Periodical Work, by Gregory Griffin, of the College of Eton – 1786–1787*. Issue 35 (Monday July 9, 1787). 391. In: *Eighteenth Century Collections Online* (accessed: 17 June, 2009).

32 *Monthly Review* (June 1750). Vol. III. 111.

33 *Monthly Review* (October 1750). Vol. III. 459.

Upon this occasion we will just inquire, en passant, whether it is in our interest to have so refined a taste as to be pleased only with a very few things, and these rarely to be found; which therefore contracts our enjoyments, whereas it is our business rather to enlarge them. It will be readily suggested in answer to this, That what is lost upon account of the number of our pleasures, will be gained in the quality of them. The question then will be, if the noisy, tumultuous pleasures of the vulgar are not equivalent to those which the most refined wits taste; that is, whether one man is not as happy (or pleased, which is the same thing), with an uncommon, diverting accident at the beargarden, or with a bad picture, as another in considering some of the noblest instances of the sublime in Raphael or Homer? The answer to which is very short, He is not, and that for the same reason that an oyster is not capable of the same degree of pleasure as a man.³⁴

The connection between literature as food and the critic as the one who tastes it first and then offers it to the reader is taken for granted in the food metaphors used by the contributor to the *Critical Review*, Vol. 3, 1757, who praises *The Connoisseur*, a new periodical:

From four volumes consisting of no less than 140 papers to select any particular essays as worthy of particular attention, instead of recommending could only prejudice the work, as casting a disagreeable shade over the rest; to which we might with great justice add, that the feast before us is really a *Caena dubia*, where there is such a variety of excellent dishes that we should be puzzled in our choice; we will take the freedom however to point out one that happened particularly to hit our palate, and Mr. Town we flatter ourselves will more readily excuse our stealing it off the table, as it was a dainty not of his own providing but sent in by a friend.³⁵

Here, the critic likes his food and therefore can pass it on to the reader. The same holds true for the reviewer who comments on Dr Leland's *View of the Deistical Writers* in the *Critical Review*, vol. I, 1756. "The reader perceives how elegant an entertainment he is invited to: we shall give him a little taste of every dish, and help him (as most people do) to that part which seem'd most agreeable to our own palate."³⁶

But often, the opposite is the case, as Fielding makes explicit in the introductory chapter to Book XVI of *Tom Jones*, "On Prologues". Fielding the dramatist was well acquainted with audience reactions in the theatre, so he gives us a satirical picture of the critics' "Faculty of Hissing" und their cat-calls in this chapter, a response that they already display when they hear the prologue spoken in the theatre (*Tom Jones* 541). This is a fairly typical view of the behaviour of the critic, as it is presented in eighteenth-century texts: an ignorant, spiteful fault-

34 *The Works of Mr Jonathan Richardson*, corrected and prepared for the press by his Son Mr. J. Richardson, London 1773. 175.

35 *Critical Review* (1757). Vol. III. 315–16.

36 *Critical Review* (1756). Vol. I. 195.

finder, a censurer, denouncing authors and works of which he has understood nothing. Sterne has a similar view of critics in *Tristram Shandy*, where he associates them with the lack of appreciation for a meal: “There is nothing so foolish, when you are at the expence of making an entertainment of this kind, as to order things so badly, as to let your criticks and gentry of refined taste run it down: Nor is there anything so likely to make them do it, as that of leaving them out of the party” (*Tristram Shandy* 96–97). Critics, like guests, need to be flattered, otherwise they will condemn the entertainment. In Peacock’s novel *Nightmare Abbey* we find, as late as 1818, a succinct characterization along the same lines, given by Mr. Hilary: “professed critics [...] in literature [...] see nothing but faults, because they are predetermined to shut their eyes to beauties. The critic does his utmost to blight genius in its infancy; that which rises in spite of him he will not see; and then he complains of the decline of literature” (*Nightmare Abbey* 79).³⁷ The function of the introductory chapters in *Tom Jones*, so the narrator explains in his best ironic vein at the beginning of Book XVI, is to serve as “Whetstone to [the critic’s] noble Spirit; so that he may fall with a more hungry Appetite for Censure on the History itself. [...] we have always taken Care to intersperse somewhat of the sour or acid Kind, in order to sharpen and stimulate the said Spirit of Criticism” (*Tom Jones* 541). Acidity in the form of citrus juice, verjuice or even vinegar³⁸ was a pervasive feature of Restoration and early eighteenth-century cooking. While these liquids, applied in small quantities, gave subtle flavour to many dishes when the French style of cooking was observed, by the second half of the eighteenth century, simplified English cooking would use ready-made lemon pickle instead, and with this increase in acidity cater for less refined palates. Peacock also makes the connection between spicy food and readers’ tastes, but his emphasis points into a slightly different direction:

That part of the *reading public* which shuns the solid food of reason for the light diet of fiction, requires a perpetual adhibition of *sauce piquante* to the palate of its depraved imagination. It lived upon ghosts, goblins, and skeletons (I and my friend Sackbut served up a few of the best), till even the devil himself, though magnified to the size of Mount Athos, became too base, common, and popular, for its surfeited appetite. (*Nightmare Abbey* 68)

The craving for strong flavours corresponds to the taste for the sensational in literature: both are inappropriate, both are associated with lack of judgment.

This takes us to our last course, the analysis of Fielding’s first introductory chapter to *Tom Jones*, “The Introduction to the Work, or Bill of Fare to the Feast”

³⁷ Mr Hilary takes up Addison’s view of the critic, which may be a little dated more than a hundred years later.

³⁸ Fielding’s editor persona in *The Champion* is called Sir Hercules Vinegar.

(*Tom Jones* 25 – 27). The whole passage deserves detailed attention. The extended food metaphor may simply be taken for an oddity, or even an element of mock-heroic, setting the elitist ritualized dining conventions of the gentleman against the down-to-earth democratic usage of the public ordinary: “An Author ought to consider himself, not as a Gentleman who gives a private or eleemosynary Treat, but rather as one who keeps a public Ordinary, at which all Persons are welcome for their Money” (*Tom Jones* 25). However, with our knowledge about the significance of food we are amply justified in asking what the function of Fielding’s analogy between eating and reading, between cooking and writing, may be, and what we can learn about the significance of taste on both levels.

What kind of entertainment does the gentleman provide? The meaning of “treat” is positive: a free meal that has connotations of pleasure and plenitude; however, the qualifying adjective “eleemosynary”, charitable, suggests, together with “indifferent” and “utterly disagreeable”, that we should associate inferior food, which the guests nevertheless have to be conspicuously grateful for.³⁹ The narrator does not discuss any other version of the private meal. It seems odd that he presents this negative view of a private dinner invitation, in which the guest is supposedly not offered any choice: elegant meals (he speaks of a “feast” in the headline to the chapter) provided a great number of dishes in each course, all of which were placed on the table at the same time, so that the guests could choose what they liked, while public ordinaries offered a fixed menu.⁴⁰ The other

39 “Good-Breeding forces them outwardly to approve and to commend whatever is set before them” (*Tom Jones* 25).

40 The *OED* glosses “ordinary” as a “meal regularly available at a fixed price in a restaurant, public house, tavern, etc.” and an “inn, public house, tavern, etc., where meals are provided at a fixed price; the room in such a building where this type of meal is provided”. While the *OED* explains that “the more expensive ordinaries [in the eighteenth century] were frequented by men of fashion, and the dinner was usually followed by gambling”, Stephen MENNELL points out that there are considerable differences between inns and taverns: “The Inn [...] had for centuries fulfilled a specific social function, but a function not quite the same as that later met by restaurants. Inns provided meals for the travellers who stayed in them, but one ate what one was given when one was given it. In every country, some inns were better than others. In eighteenth-century London, many of them had a considerable reputation for their ‘ordinary’ – a fixed-price, fixed menu or *table d’hôte* dinner provided daily. It remained broadly true, however, that at an inn one did not choose a meal from a menu and the food was not as a rule very elaborate; nor were inns as such exactly places of fashionable resort. [...] Closest approximations in the eighteenth century to the later restaurants, both in their social functions and in the food they served, were the English taverns. [...] A tavern was from the beginning likely to cater for a socially superior clientele. By the eighteenth century many taverns in the capital were noted eating-places and centres of social life.” The cooks of the famous taverns like the *London Tavern*, the *Crown and Anchor*, *The Globe*, or the *White Hart*, all wrote cookery books, and taverns at the upper end of the range, which would serve not only English fare, but also French dishes, could “accommodate both the exclusive dining clubs like the Sublime Society of Beef-Steaks and the vast banquets of the aldermen of the City of London, at which a thousand or more might sit down at once.” (cf. MENNELL. *All*

complaint uttered by the narrator, that the guests could not give voice to criticism, so that this constraint of politeness is set off against the liberty of speech enjoyed at a public ordinary, seems more convincing. It has a parallel in what Boswell, in 1776, quotes from a statement by Dr Johnson, who appreciated the atmosphere of the tavern:

There is no private house [...] in which people can enjoy themselves so well, as at a capital tavern. Let there be ever so great plenty of good things, ever so much grandeur, ever so much elegance, ever so much desire that every body should be easy, in the nature of things it cannot be; there must always be some degree of care and anxiety. The master of the house is anxious to entertain his guests; the guests are anxious to be agreeable to him: and no man, but a very impudent dog indeed, can as freely command what is in another man's house, as if it were his own. Whereas, at a tavern, there is a general freedom from anxiety. You are sure you are welcome: and the more noise you make, the more trouble you give, the more good things you call for, the welcomer you are. [...] No, Sir; there is nothing which has yet been contrived by man, by which so much happiness is produced as by a good tavern or inn.⁴¹

However, as late as 1781, there is a dispute about the propriety of taverns. Johnson considers them as places unfit for bishops to frequent, since they might meet unsuitable company, such as prostitutes. Even though a number of taverns do not admit women, any well-dressed woman in the company of a well-dressed man will not be turned away, because the tavern needs to make a profit: "Taverns sell meat and drink, and will sell them to any body who can eat and can drink".⁴²

Fielding's reference to dinners eaten by the alderman of Bristol evokes the opposite of a worthless charitable meal:

The Tortoise, as the Alderman of Bristol, well learned in eating, knows by much Experience, besides the delicious Calipash and Calipee, contains many different kinds of Food; nor can the learned Reader be ignorant, that in Human Nature, tho' here collected under one general Name, is such prodigious Variety, that a Cook will have sooner gone through all the several Species of animal and vegetable Food in the World, than an Author will be able to exhaust so extensive a Subject. (*Tom Jones* 25–26)

The tortoise is a luxurious fare, reserved for the table of the wealthy, which became fashionable in the second half of the eighteenth century. The manner of preparation and consumption is equally indicative of symbolic capital. As we can learn from a twenty-first century cookery website,

Manners of Food. 136–37) On the other hand, eating simple meals in taverns was not at all uncommon for ordinary people whose lodgings might not lend themselves to much cooking at all, or whose finances would not cover the cost of a servant who could be employed for the purpose.

41 BOSWELL. *Life of Johnson.* 697.

42 BOSWELL. *Life on Johnson.* 1124.

[t]he calipee and calipash found inside the green sea turtle impart the characteristic gelatinous quality to British turtle soup. The calipee is a light yellow, fatty gelatinous substance in the upper part of the shell; the calipash is a dull green similar substance found in the lower part of the shell. Connoisseurs judge whether turtle soup is authentic by the lumps of calipash and calipee it contains.⁴³

Before you can actually eat any of the four different kinds of meat a turtle provides, you need to put in a great amount of physical effort, so that modern recipes recommend the frozen variety. This was no option for the alderman's cook: so tortoise is a special, expensive and prestigious commodity. It would either be a meal in itself, or feature as the centre piece of a first course in an elaborate, elegant dinner, and thus bear no resemblance to the eleemosynary treat described at the beginning of the chapter. On the contrary, Lehmann points out that recipes for tortoise, which begin to appear in cookery books from 1755 onwards, are long and complicated: the various parts have to be prepared separately, so that turtle actually formed five dishes: fricassee, soup, calipee, calipash, and fins. It rivaled venison for prestige: to share this food would signify a particular honour for your guest.⁴⁴ On the other hand, as an exotic import, it stands for the commercial empire, whereas venison, legally available only to the upper classes, represents the old order of traditional English society.

When a single turtle can furnish the cook with so many dishes, then, so the narrator, human nature will provide him with ample material for a whole book, since variety on the table does not depend on the basic foodstuffs, but on the manner of preparation.

Where then lies the Difference between the food of the Nobleman and the Porter, if both are at Dinner on the same Ox or Calf, but in the seasoning, the dressing, the garnishing, and the setting forth? Hence the one provokes and incites the most languid Appetite, and the other turns and palls that which is the sharpest and keenest. In like manner, the Excellence of the mental Entertainment consists less in the Subject, than in the Author's Skill in well dressing it up. (*Tom Jones* 26)

Yet this dressing up provides us with another ambiguity. When "the plain and simple Manner in which it is found in the Country" has fed the readers' initially keen appetite, the narrator will "hash and rago" the later courses "with all the high *French* and *Italian* Seasoning of Affectation and Vice which Courts and Cities afford" (*Tom Jones* 26).

The analogy is ambiguous: French and Italian seasoning, applied to the later chapters of the book, signifies on the one hand the artistry of the author, but on the other hand carries the satirical overtones of reprehensible artistry which is not only outmoded – French court style cooking was no longer in fashion, since

43 www.quirkbooks.com; consulted 12 May, 2009.

44 Cf. LEHMANN. *The British Housewife*. 258 – 59.

the culinary art had moved on to different tastes and preparations – but also deficient in moral substance, and even in patriotism. On the other hand, it seems highly appropriate to combine this style with the affectation and vice that are, according to Fielding, characteristic of life at court and in the city. The number of books and chapters, however, which Fielding serves up as so many courses, would be comparable to an elaborate royal repast, where three or even four courses would be offered with the same large number of dishes for each course. Even the narrator's offer for the reader to skip over a passage or a chapter⁴⁵ can be seen in analogy with eating habits: guests would not taste every dish put on the table, since there would be not only three or four centre pieces, but also as many as twenty smaller dishes arranged symmetrically on the table. A public ordinary may provide a bill of fare (as would the cookery books, which make suggestions for the harmonious composition of complete meals), but the multiplicity of dishes as well as the variety provided by the author could not be expected from an average eighteenth-century inn, nor would the guest be offered much of a choice. An exception might be superior taverns like the *White Hart*, where the famous cook William Verral entertained large numbers of upper class guests with French style meals around the middle of the eighteenth century, but he seems to have denied these skills to less distinguished visitors.⁴⁶ The connection between food and text, as well as the analogy between the public ordinary as the site where people consume food and the publication from which they consume literature is not just made by Fielding. In 1750 readers would be confronted with a public ordinary that offered textual food, in the shape of a new periodical, called *The Kapelion; or Poetical Ordinary. Consisting of a great Variety of Dishes in Prose and Verse; recommended to all who have a good Taste and keen Appetite. By Archimagirus Metaphoricus.*⁴⁷ The Introduction to the *Kapelion* rings the changes of an elaborate analogy between food and poetry in the sense of fiction, and a bill of fare as preview of the content is promised by the

45 Cf. FIELDING. *Tom Jones*. Book VI, Chapter 1: "it would be wiser to pursue your Business, or your Pleasures (such as they are) than to throw away any more of your Time in reading what you can neither taste nor comprehend" (177); Book XVI, Chapter 1: readers ignoring the introductory chapters "have the advantage of beginning to read at the fourth or fifth Page instead of the first, a Matter by no means of trivial Consequence to Persons who read Books with no other View than to say they have read them" (541).

46 Cf. LEHMANN. *The British Housewife*. 365.

47 The *Monthly Review*, September 1750, commenting on this publication, deals with literary works contained in the first two numbers in no favourable manner: "But as we would not absolutely discourage young writers, such as these authors appear to be, we shall say no more of their work at present, charitably hoping, that they have not pick'd out their best and most important pieces for their two first numbers; but that, on the contrary, when we come to see their four, or four and twenty volumes all together; the whole will make up a more savoury and tempting mess, than what some may expect from the taste they have already given us" (369).

editor of this short-lived journal, too, but unlike Fielding, who provides the reader with the introductory chapters, Archimagirus Metaphoricus deplors the fact that he does not have the time for it.

When the reader is compared to an Epicure by Fielding's narrator, which implies a sophisticated taste and high expectations concerning the food, and when even Heliogabalus' legendary, if possibly lethal meals are referred to (he is supposed to have served delicacies like Nightingales' tongues or peacocks' brains)⁴⁸ as the models for the narrator's bill of fare and skill in preparing (textual) food,⁴⁹ then the reader could not possibly be content with a public ordinary, where he would eat in the style of a common man, and have to be satisfied with common pieces of meat or a simple manner of preparation. So author and readers find themselves in a quandary: on the one hand, it is democratic and patriotic to eat what one chooses oneself and pays for – and this would in most cases be simple and straightforward English style dishes –, on the other hand, artistry and style in the preparation, as well as prestigious ingredients, which distinguish the expert cook as well as the learned and discriminating reader, are to be found in aristocratic, or at least socially high-ranking circles. Fielding tries to have it both ways: democratic and exclusive. In view of the fact that one of Fielding's motives for writing novels was earning money, it is not surprising that he wanted to evoke the impression of catering for a large section of the public and thus offered Tom Jones' history as food for anybody who cared to pay for the book and read it. On the other hand, Fielding was not averse to noble society and wished for approval by what Addison used to call "the best judges", i. e. those whose classical education, whose refined taste and whose philosophical sophistication would enable them to appreciate the

48 *Historia Augusta*, Chapter 21.

49 FIELDING. *Tom Jones*. 26: "How pleased therefore will the Reader be to find, that we have, in the following Work, adhered closely to one of the highest Principles of the best Cook which the present Age, or perhaps that of *Heliogabalus*, hath produced? This great Man, as is well known to all Lovers of polite eating, begins at first by setting plain Things before his hungry Guests, rising afterward by Degrees, as their Stomachs may be supposed to decrease, to the very Quintessence of Sauce and Spices". But cf. the satirical passage in *The World*, no. 20 (1753). 121: "In the article of EATING, for instance (that noble pleasure!) who is there so proper to advise with, as one who is acquainted with the kitchens of an Apicius or a Heliogabalus? For though I have a very high opinion of our present taste, I cannot help thinking that the ancients were our masters in expensive dinners. Their cooks had an art amongst them, which I do not find that any of ours are arrived at. Trimalchus's cook could make a turbut or an ortolan out of hog's flesh. Nicomedes, king of Bithynia, when he was three hundred miles from sea, longed for a johndory, and was supplied with a fresh one by his cook the same hour. I dare say there are men learned enough in this kingdom, under proper encouragement, to restore to us this invaluable secret." (*Eighteenth Century Journals Online*) What sounds like a recommendation of culinary art to begin with, turns out to target a deception for which French cooks and their elaborate "made dishes" were frequently blamed, namely to pass a common piece of meat or fish for an expensive delicacy.

finer points of his novel. His ideal reader, like the guest at table, must not only love good food, but be able to judge its quality, in other words, the skill which went into its preparation as well as the flavour of the end product.

As a very special reader, the true critic should, above all others, fulfill these expectations. In the introductory chapter to Book IX the narrator insists that “all the Arts and Sciences (even Criticism itself) require some little Degree of Learning and Knowledge” (*Tom Jones* 315). But how much learning can authors rely on in their audience? While all critics are readers, authors become aware in the course of the eighteenth century that potentially all readers can be critics. They can talk about literature in private circles and in public places, but they can also write about literature, they can even judge in idiosyncratic manner under the protection of anonymity in the review journals, and exercise considerable influence in the world of letters, in the book trade, and in society in general. While the food metaphors at first glance seem to be fairly innocuous – what is more innocent than a critic choosing morsels and feeding the public? – this paper could show that the cultural field of eating, like the field of aesthetics, is heavily encoded with educational, social, political, and even moral significance. Taste as a physical capacity is supposed to be naturally given, but of course, as we know very well today, not least on the basis of research into the marketing strategies of food companies, taste is culturally acquired and can be manipulated. But it can also be educated, and thus even food taste is ultimately an aesthetic category, as far removed from the innocence of nature as the sophisticated system of a philosophy of art. Enlightenment food criticism relies on similar strategies as does literary criticism; the critic can wrap himself in the robe of a moral institution, but he can also appear as a cannibal who destroys what he subjects to his scrutiny. In any case, whoever has food, can eat, and whoever can read, can act as critic or at least pretend to the expertise of the connoisseur, famous incidences of misunderstanding included – we only need to remember the public’s initial reaction to Lovelace and Richardson’s subsequent revisions of *Clarissa*. In this case, moral and aesthetic judgment seem to have been at variance – whether the author was a bad cook or whether his guests lacked taste, or both knowledge and learning, can still be debated. Although Richardson attempted to teach his readers what to think, they preferred to listen to the tale and not to the teller. Even the author as critic is not omnipotent.

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‘Noctes Ambrosianae’ (1822 – 35): A Comic Symposium of the Romantic Period

The symposium, literally a banquet with a drinking party, was a male aristocratic social institution in ancient Greece, where food and wine served the purpose of open philosophical discussion, together with a relaxed atmosphere. The ancestor of modern talk shows, it was public by select individual invitation, and sometimes by publication of its fictitious serious or playful discussions. The exclusively male participants each reclined on a sofa (‘kline’) in the men’s apartment (‘andron’), in front of a low table holding food and goblets of wine, and drank diluted wine served in bowls from a large vessel (‘krater’) by handsome youths, while other servants stood around. Slaves were hired to sing and dance, and often the participants sang their own lyric poems or ‘scolia’. The symposium was presided over by a moderator (‘symposiarchos’) supervising the formalities and rituals, which guaranteed a peaceful and constructive course of the ceremony. Short speeches were delivered on agreed serious or jocular topics, and relaxed discussions followed. Plato and Xenophon, both declared disciples of Socrates, wrote *Symposia* fictitiously set in such a scene, in which their teacher played a prominent role as moderator and arbiter. The symposium was taken over, transformed, and adapted by both the Romans and the Etruscans,¹ and there has been an uninterrupted flow of varieties of that public eristic inheritance of the Classical Tradition throughout European literature until the present day.

Thus, in the European cultural memory, symposia are inseparably linked with Plato’s Socratic dialogues. In the Romantic Period, Friedrich Schlegel defined ‘Romantic irony’ or ‘Socratic irony’ from Xenophon’s portrait of Socrates in *Memorabilia*: a brilliant non-dogmatic philosopher who could simultaneously affirm and doubt, preach and laugh, create and de-create, ever on an open-ended move. Irony implied humorous distance, humorous self-reflexivity and self-parody, humorous renunciation of any opinionated stance of dogmatic claim to

1 VÖSSING, Konrad (ed.). *Das römische Bankett im Spiegel der Altertumswissenschaften*. Stuttgart: Steiner, 2008. 169 – 89.

absolute truth in favour of intellectual mobility, acceptance of contradictions by transcendence of contradictions:

Sie [die Sokratische Ironie] ist die freieste aller Lizenzen, denn durch sie setzt man sich über sich selbst hinweg; und doch auch die gesetzlichste, denn sie ist unbedingt notwendig. Es ist ein sehr gutes Zeichen, wenn die harmonisch Platten gar nicht wissen, wie sie diese stete Selbstparodie zu nehmen haben [...].²

Entgrenzung, representing the world's infinity and contradictions, in combination with *natura naturans*, showing thoughts and works in a Shandyan *status nascendi*, was a Romantic programme against the value which the Enlightenment and Neoclassicism placed on rational limitation, strict form, and finish. In passages of meta-fiction, readers were permitted glimpses behind the curtain, into the green room of writing. The grotesque and the illogical were allowed to re-enter into what has been called an "open universe", and had to be endured.³

Thus, Romantic irony was the principle on which *Blackwood's Magazine* and its series of 'Noctes Ambrosianae' worked, although *Blackwood's* was chiefly dedicated to anti-Romantic reviews, satire, and invective. And *Blackwood's* was not the first. Other periodicals, like *The Satirist* (1807–14) edited by the Tory George Manners, had begun that fashion of ironical and self-mocking humour much earlier in the century.⁴ Performance and growth of argument counted more than any final result of linear, logical, and discursive thinking.⁵ It was the co-editor John Wilson's gift for exuberance, irony, and ventriloquism especially, which counterbalanced his occasional vitriolic and opinionated outbursts, placed *Blackwood's* in that tradition of hilarious paradox and self-parody, pinpointed in Edgar Allan Poe's spoof "How to write a Blackwood's Article" (1838).⁶ With its exuberance, 'Noctes Ambrosianae' resumed the tradition of the Menippean satire, especially Rabelais' *Gargantua et Pantagruel* (1532–64), its carnivalistic joy in witty neologisms and long inventive word lists, particularly with respect to Gargantuan excesses of food and drink. And it combined this

2 SCHLEGEL, Friedrich. "Kritische Fragmente, 1797, No 108." In: *Werke in zwei Bänden*. Berlin/Weimar: Bibliothek deutscher Klassiker, 1980. I, 182. See also MELLOR, Anne K. *English Romantic Irony*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980. 18; and HANDWERK, Gary. "Romantic Irony." In: Marshall Brown (ed.). *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*, vol. 5, *Romanticism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000. 203.

3 THORSLEV, Peter L. "The Open Universe and Romantic Irony." In: Peter L. Thorslev. *Romantic Contraries: Freedom versus Destiny*. New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1984. 142–86.

4 ANON. "The Satirist Satirized." In: *The Satirist* 2 (March 1808): 84–86. Also see REIMAN, Donald H. (ed.). *The Romantics Reviewed: Contemporary Reviews of British Romantic Writers*. New York/London: Garland, 1972. C II. 790–95.

5 Cf. Mark PARKER's Introduction to *Blackwood's Magazine 1817–25: Selections from Maga's Infancy*. Edited by Nicholas Mason et al. London: Pickering & Chatto, 2006. Vol. III, XIX–XXIV.

6 MORRISON, Robert. "Blackwood's Berserker: John Wilson and the Language of Extremity." In: *Romanticism on the Net* 20 (November 2000).

with another ancient classical tradition, the *Buntschriftstellerei* of Aulus Gellius' *Noctes Atticae* (170 AD), a random collection of short didactic essays and reading reminiscences on the most various topics, assembled under a title which may well have provided the model for the title of 'Noctes Ambrosianae'. For the sake of fun, Timothy Tickler, one of the chief fictional characters in 'Noctes Ambrosianae', imagines a popular instead of an elitist symposium, inviting and hosting all classes indiscriminately in separate rooms of William Ambrose's spacious North British Hotel, although the symposium tradition demanded a restriction to learned though boisterous "tavern sages":⁷

TICKLER. [...] shut them all up here together for three days and nights [...] to eat, drink, sleep, snore, walk, strut, hop, swagger, lounge, [...] etceterorum, etceterorum. [...] give them at discretion great big greasy legs of Leicestershire mutton; red enormous rounds of Bedford beef; vast cold thick inexpugnable pies of Essex veal; broad, deep, yellow, fragrant, Cheshire cheeses; [...] gills of real malt whisky, the most genuine Cognac brandy, the very grandest of old antique veritable Jamaica rum, [...] tables covered with freeze tablecloths [...] speckled with spots of gravy, vinegar, punch, toddy, beer, oil, tea, treacle [...] lunelle, claret, hock, purl, perry, saloop, tokay, gingerbread, scalloped oysters, milk, ink, butter, jalap, pease-pudding, blood—.⁸

The celebration of excesses of food and drink also marked the magazine's political commitment. Eating and drinking to excess had been a traditional cultural practice in Britain, challenged first by the pre-Romantics and then by the Radicals due to sensibility and the man of feeling's refusal to kill animals, the return to health and nature, and ultimately the provision of food for everybody, including the poor.⁹ As a champion of Toryism and an updated classical tradition, Tickler agrees with the demand of food for everyone. Yet he opposes the Radical poet Percy Bysshe Shelley's vegetarianism, the Radical physician Thomas Trotter's recommendation of a moderate diet and abstention from alcohol, and the Radical philosopher Thomas Robert Malthus' theory of the decreasing means of subsistence in his utilitarian *Essay on the Principle of Population* (1798).

Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, founded in 1817, was a staunch and witty Tory monthly, a 'duelling magazine', which resumed the satirical mode of *The Anti-Jacobin* (1797–99) at a time when the Whig *Edinburgh Review* (founded in 1802) was running out of fashion and the Tory *Quarterly Review* (founded in

7 ALEXANDER, John H. (ed.). "Introduction." In: *The Tavern Sages: Selections from the Noctes Ambrosianae*. Aberdeen: The Association for Scottish Literary Studies, 1992.

8 "Noctes Ambrosianae" LXVII. In: *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 30 (August 1831): 400–01. For the tradition see WEINBROT, Howard. *Menippean Satire Reconsidered: From Antiquity to the Eighteenth Century*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005.

9 See the texts reprinted in MORTON, Timothy (ed.). *Radical Food: The Culture and Politics of Eating and Drinking 1790–1820*. 3 vols. London/New York: Routledge, 2000.

1809) was too ponderous to be much in demand. *Blackwood's* first editors were soon replaced by John Gibson Lockhart, John Wilson, and James Hogg. They started with a long-lived series of anti-Romantic, anti-Whig, and anti-Radical invectives against the 'Cockney School of Poetry', indicting Leigh Hunt, William Hazlitt, John Keats, Bryan Waller Procter alias Barry Cornwall, Charles Lamb, and others for their low origin, ignorance of Greek and Latin as well as of the classical tradition, primitivism, lack of literary training, constant search for novelty and sensationalism, and prostitution of their pens to the vulgar populace.

The strong partisan tone of these articles, however, might create the false impression that the *Maga*, as *Blackwood's* was soon called, was a homogeneously diehard pro-Tory and pro-Neoclassical, and an anti-Whig and anti-Romantic magazine. Some of its contributors held Whig views on Irish home rule and Catholic emancipation (William Maginn) or the abolition of slavery (James Hogg). Some rehabilitated and even emulated the poetry of the later Tory Wordsworth (John Wilson). Some liked Scottish balladry (Walter Scott's son-in-law John Gibson Lockhart) or even wrote Romantic poetry and novels or fashioned themselves as successors of the primitivism and genius of Robert Burns (James Hogg alias 'The Ettrick Shepherd', who spoke broad Lowland Scots). And assessments of Romantic poets like Percy Bysshe Shelley could vary from review to review, or even be heterogeneous within the same review (Wilson).¹⁰ 'Noctes Ambrosianae', the series of 71 dialogues originally devised by Lockhart and initially co-authored by Wilson, Maginn, Hogg, and others, appeared in *Blackwood's* from 1822 to 1835. The series was designed as a comical, sprightly, satirical, and very Scottish modern update of the Socratic dialogues and cultural practices of the classical tradition, which *Blackwood's* upheld against the group of poets later summarized by the negative labels 'Romantic School' or 'Spasmodic School'. Sots and temperance men were "not suffered to sit at our Symposium".¹¹ It reported imaginary dialogues and conversations on questions and events of the day, on remarkable books and the characters of public men.¹² What chiefly distinguished that Scottish Tory update of the symposium from its Greek ancestor was the sheer quantity of the food and the undiluted wine: the more wine, the more Scottishness and the more freedom of thought and speech. In their relaxed facetious tone, 'Noctes Ambrosianae' counteracted the one-sided impression conveyed by the *Maga's* vitriolic and

10 STROUT, Alan Lang. "Maga, Champion of Shelley." In: *Studies in Philology* 29 (1932): 95–119.

11 "Noctes Ambrosianae" XXXV. In: *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 23 (January 1828). 119.

12 ANON. "Reviews and Magazines in the Early Years of the Nineteenth Century." In: Adolphus W. Ward (ed.). *The Cambridge History of English Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964 [1907–16]. XII, 154–60.

dogmatic invectives against the 'Cockney School of Poetry' and by the aggressiveness of the 'Mohawks', the partisans of *Blackwood's*, one of whom had killed John Scott, editor of the liberal literary *London Magazine*, in a duel in 1821. Odoherly, another of the chief fictitious characters of 'Noctes Ambrosianae', explains the basically anti-Romantic periodical's Romantic irony to Byron. In such numbers, 'Noctes Ambrosianae' published meta-journalism, much as Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* and Byron's *Don Juan* presented meta-fiction to the reading public:

ODOHERTY. [...] doing all that ever these folks could do in one Number, and then undoing it in the next, – puffing, deriding, sneering, jeering, prosing, piping, and so forth [...].¹³

Lockhart as originator of 'Noctes Ambrosianae' said much the same, again through a persona, in *Peter's Letters to his Kinsfolk* (1819), his prose sketches of contemporary Edinburgh society. Here, Lockhart's stress is on carnivalesque masquerade and sprightliness and good humour, the very contrary of the ferocious old-style slashing which earned him the nickname 'The Scorpion':

They [...] [the contributors of *Blackwood's*] have presented themselves in all the different aspects which lively fancy and good-humoured caprice could suggest. They assume new disguises every month, and have a whole regiment of fictitious personages into whose mouths they have thrown so much matter, that they almost begin to be regarded as real personages by the readers of the Magazine.¹⁴

This explains why letters of protest to the Editor, collected in a full bag labelled 'Scandala Magae', are occasionally read and humorously refuted in 'Noctes', chiefly through the interlocutors' honest self-irony. North and Tickler agree that *Blackwood's* conforms to the inconsistency of human nature and the literary market: "But what say you to our gross inconsistency, in raising a mortal one day to the skies, and another pulling him an angel down?"¹⁵ The plentiful wine and food served and consumed throughout the dialogues allow the interlocutors to be alternately polemic and irenic, rude and sociable. This is so from the first dialogue in 1822 to the long last dialogue in 1835, where the free controversial discussion of such serious subjects as spirit, matter, religion, literature, human nature, and patriotism is mixed with comical incidents and funny anecdotes, and is accompanied by the eating of oysters and by the sizzling of slices of beef in the open fire.¹⁶ All the altercations, including dissensions between the editors and

13 "Noctes Ambrosianae" IV. In: *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 12 (July 1822). 105.

14 LOCKHART, John Gibson. *Peter's Letters to His Kinsfolk*. Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1819. II, 227. See also PARKER. "Introduction." III, XXIV.

15 "Noctes Ambrosianae" XII. In: *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 14 (October 1823). 489.

16 "Noctes Ambrosianae" LXXI. In: *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 37 (February 1835). 256 – 86.

contributors and reviewers and guests of the *Maga*, end in good humour and mutual toleration, and the whole series ends with good wishes and the nibbling of cheese.¹⁷ Full tables and merry songs guarantee good company and ultimate peace in spite of past bantering and continued disagreement. After all the “squabashing” (a word coined by *Blackwood’s*) one can still sit together over one’s cups of wine. This has been a *sine qua non* of occidental culture, which is distinctively characterized by open dissent and public arguing. Letting go, *πάρεσις*, honesty of speech instead of political correctness, is another *sine qua non* of the art of constructive arguing, as John Stuart Mill was later to show in his famous essay “On Liberty” (1859). Secrecies and backbiting, whispering to one’s neighbour, are not allowed.¹⁸ This insistence on the ultimate social inclusion of adversaries is the more surprising as the numerous poetological reflections on the art of satire in Neoclassical satires 1660–1830 show little insight into the dangers of an adversary’s irreparable social exclusion by the cruelty of invective, at a time when wars and death penalty and torture and corporal punishment were still considered indispensable.¹⁹ Rooms in Ambrose’s Tavern and Ambrose’s North British Hotel in Edinburgh, which replace the men’s apartments of the ancient Greek house, stood for male sociability and conviviality. In their spaciousness and with their many adjacent rooms, they guaranteed publicity beyond the separate rooms where the disputants met, because their altercations and songs could be heard, partitions could be removed, and larger assemblies could be addressed.²⁰ The elitist authors and guests of *Blackwood’s* replaced the Greek aristocracy in a city which styled itself as a modern Scottish Athens. With Socrates and Schlegel’s Romantic irony, the interlocutors in that public venue defend their positions in public to invited guests and the reading public of their periodical, but do not take themselves too seriously. They are a mixed group of literary characters, most of which represent historical men (to the total exclusion of women) with real or alias names. Regular attendants waited upon by Ambrose, the publican, are Christopher North (Wilson’s pen-name), the Editor (Lockhart), Timothy Tickler (Wilson’s well-known maternal uncle Robert Sym), the Ettrick Shepherd (Hogg), Morgan Odoherly (the hard-drinking and erudite improvising Irish soldier-poet modelled on Maginn), – the inner circle of the

17 “Noctes Ambrosianae” LXXI. In: *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine* 37 (February 1835). 286.

18 “Noctes Ambrosianae” XV. In: *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine* 15 (June 1824). 706.

19 LESSENICH, Rolf. “Kulturelle Veränderungen und unvermeidbare Verletzungen der Grenzen des tolerablen Streits zwischen Klassizismus und Romantik 1660–1830.” In: Uwe Baumann, Arnold Becker and Astrid Steiner-Weber (eds.). *Streitkultur. Okzidentale Traditionen des Streitens in Literatur, Geschichte und Kunst*. Göttingen: Bonn University Press, 2008. 317–26. 325–26.

20 “Noctes Ambrosianae” XXXVIII. In: *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine* 24 (October 1828). 536.

editors of and contributors to *Blackwood's*. Occasional guests are the English Opium-Eater (Thomas De Quincey), Lord Byron, Mr Blackwood the publisher (nicknamed 'Ebony'), North's private secretary Mordecai Mullion (Wilson's persona in his campaign against an academic rival in the field of political economy). To these are added male servants, invited male singers and other male guests, some of them Edinburgh celebrities and others wholly fictitious. The often heated discussions and even turmoil of the 'Noctes' is moderated by North in the function of Socrates, who acts as a modern Scottish symposiarch, appeasing hurt feelings and settling rows with wine, food, and song.²¹ North takes pride in his masterpiece on his great Greek model, *The Defence of Socrates*, a philosopher who subordinated all earthly dissensions and trials "to the principle of Love."²² This fiction mirrored the fact that Wilson, professor of philosophy and political economy at Edinburgh University 1820–1851, adored Socrates – and was the chief author of 'Noctes Ambrosianae'. The stock characters of the "most excellent Magazinity"²³ of the 'Noctes' were impersonated and modified by various collaborating authors, whose anonymity makes it difficult to identify them for each number, while most of the later numbers were written by Wilson.²⁴ Tickler, for instance, was designed by Lockhart, but also, in various numbers, impersonated by Maginn, so that the Scotsman received a dimension of a rumbustious and hard-drinking Irishman.²⁵ With its repertoire of stock characters in a male club situation, the invention follows the both serious and playful De Coverley Papers from the Spectator Club of Joseph Addison's early Neo-classical periodical *The Spectator* (1711–14), in this respect an offspring of the *Characters* of Theophrastus. Thus, the heritage of and claim to the superiority of the classical tradition are clearly marked.

Romantic Period Neoclassicists had to defend themselves against the Romantics' reproach of imitative fixation upon an outdated cause and dead languages, the classical tradition of Greece and Rome. That reproach (as raised by William Hazlitt against George Canning and William Gifford) was as polemical and ungrounded in fact as was the Neoclassicists' indictment of the Romantics for sheer ignorance, intentionally misunderstanding Blake's and Keats's mythopoetic originality. In order to demonstrate the modern vitality and rele-

21 For example, "Noctes Ambrosianae" LI. In: *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 28 (August 1830). 429–30 and 435–36.

22 "Noctes Ambrosianae" LIV. In: *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 39 (February 1831). 273.

23 "Noctes Ambrosianae" VI. In: *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 12 (December 1822). 695.

24 Due to the circumstance that Maginn and Lockhart moved to London in 1823 and 1825 respectively; see ALEXANDER. "Introduction." VIII. The identifications (as far as possible) by Alan Lang STROUT (*A Bibliography of Articles in Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*. Lubbock, TX: Library, Texas Technological College, 1959) have proved extremely reliable.

25 WARDLE, Ralph M. "Timothy Tickler's Irish Blood." In: *Review of English Studies* 18 (1942): 486–90.

vance of an ever updated classical tradition, emulation instead of imitation, *Blackwood's* 'Noctes Ambrosianae' posed as a modern Scottish and Tory version of a Greek symposium, quoting Phocylides of Miletus on philosophical-gastronomical conviviality in the original Greek, accompanied by a topical comical translation marking the dialogues' anti-Romantic and anti-Whig satire. When the outstanding classicist and hard drinker Odoherly repeatedly designates *Blackwood's* as a 'classical work', he means the periodical's modernization and functionalization of the classical tradition. A modern periodical must have an eye on the market, and too much Greek and Latin and stagnant classical homogeneity would not sell. A modern magazine dedicated to the classical tradition must be, in the words of Odoherly,

[...] a classical work continued from month to month; – a real Magazine of mirth, misanthropy, wit, wisdom, folly, fiction, fun, festivity, theology, bruising, and thingumbob.²⁶

The modern classical symposium character of 'Noctes Ambrosianae' was additionally marked by an epigraph prefixed to almost each of the 71 'Noctes', beginning with number six (1822):

XPΗ Δ'ΕΝ ΣΥΜΠΟΣΙΩ ΚΥΛΙΚΩΝ ΠΕΡΙΝΙΣΣΟΜΕΝΑΩΝ
ΗΔΕΑ ΚΩΤΙΛΛΟΝΤΑ ΚΑΘΗΜΕΝΟΝ ΟΙΝΟΠΙΟΤΑΖΕΙΝ.

This is a distich by wise old Phocylides,

An ancient who wrote crabbed Greek in no silly days;

*Meaning, " 'TIS RIGHT FOR GOOD WINEBIBBING PEOPLE,
NOT TO LET THE JUG PACE ROUND THE BOARD LIKE A CRIPPLE;
BUT GAILY TO CHAT WHILE DISCUSSING THEIR TIPPLE."*

An excellent rule of the hearty old cock 'tis –

And a very fit motto to put to our Noctes.²⁷

The ritual nature of this modern symposium is underscored by inserted sketches of the laid-out tables, including fixed seating plans for various days and meals and courses supervised by North and Ambrose, which provide the framework for totally unfixed and open-ended discussions. Thus, the heterogeneity of the topics and the heat and occasional roughness of its playful and serious discussions are domesticated, regularized, and prevented from degenerating into chaos, as in the second scene of number eighteen, with its open conflict between the *Blackwood's* Neoclassicists and the Romantic primitivist Hogg.²⁸

Hogg, who was rarely allowed to contribute reviews to *Blackwood's* because his Romantic standards of judgment could not be trusted, was simultaneously

26 "Noctes Ambrosianae" IV. In: *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 12 (July 1822). 105–06.

27 "Noctes Ambrosianae" VI. In: *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 12 (December 1822). 695.

28 "Noctes Ambrosianae" XVIII. In: *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 17 (January 1825). 117.

1822.]

Noctes Ambrosianae. No. XVIII.

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SCENE II.

Supper Room. Round Table.

Enter NORTH, TICKLER, MULLION, and HOGG. AMBROSE preceding.

Waiters following.

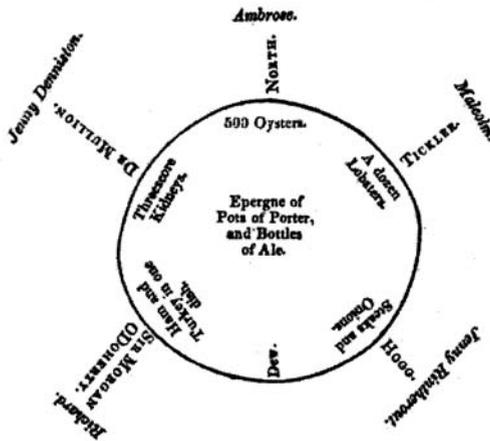
To them, ODOHERTY.

ODOHERTY.

Just in time, I see. I hope I have not kept you waiting. I was just dining with Patrick Robertson, and had to run for it.

NORTH.

Do not delay us longer by your apologies. Gentlemen, be seated.



one of the series' chief satirists and the series' chief butt of satire.²⁹ While the plentiful wine opens the minds and mouths and fires the invention, the food gives contentment and prevents destructive rows. The old question discussed both in classical antiquity and in modern times, *an vinum fit poetam*, plays a prominent role in the dialogues. In the very first dialogue the Editor, who frankly discusses editorial politics and the literary market with his author Odoherly, who has just returned with cultural news from London, sets the tone by confessing that he never composes articles without a good full bottle:

EDITOR. [...] I can never write without a bottle beside me. [...] When Addison was composing his Essay on the Evidences, he used to walk up and down [...] I believe he took brandy while he was doing the last act of Cato. 'Nemo bene potest scribere jejunus.'³⁰

Wine and poetry are associated throughout. In the year of Sir Walter Scott's death, North and Tickler find that "the wine of life is on the lees" after the age of

29 See RICHARDSON's commentary to *The Stirling / South Carolina Research Edition of the Works of James Hogg*, vol. 23: *Contributions to Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*. Edited by Thomas C. RICHARDSON. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008.

30 "Noctes Ambrosianae" I. In: *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 11 (March 1822). 373.

Scott, Wordsworth, Southey, and Coleridge, and that Britain must wait for a new “vintage” of poets, with a promising young Alfred Tennyson.³¹

In the wholly fictitious dialogue between Odoherty and Byron in Pisa, one of the few ‘Noctes’ not set in Ambrose’s in Edinburgh, though constantly referring to the cultural practices there, drink and food and cigars play the same prominent role. They give the contrary characters a common basis, so that their discussions of literature and reviews and their dissensions are throughout sweetened by alcohol, be it Byron’s Italian *Lacryma Christi* or Odoherty’s Irish whiskey from Inishowen, the subject of one of his spirited merry English and Latin songs:

The French, no doubt, are famous souls,
 I love them for their brandy;
 In rum and sweet tobacco rolls,
 Jamaica men are handy.
 The big-breech’d Dutch in juniper gin,
 I own, are very knowing;
 But are rum, gin, brandy, worth a pin,
 Compared with Inishowen?³²

Byron reads an old, long, merry four-stanza song from Joseph Ritson’s collection, chosen to refer to his own consumption of little food and much wine, and the polyglot classicist Odoherty simultaneously translates and sings it in Latin. The two are in a most hilarious mood for simultaneous disagreement and jolly good company:

| | |
|--|--|
| BYRON READS I cannot eat but lytle meat My stomach is not good; But sure I think that I can drynke With him that wears a hood. | CANTAT DOHERTIADES Non possum multum edere Quia stomachus est nullus Sed volo vel monacho bibere Quanquam sit huic cucullus. ³³ |
|--|--|

From 1823, *Blackwood’s* attitude towards Byron’s Radical politics and Romantic poems became less tolerant. And yet Ticker, Byron’s harshest critic, concludes one of his diatribes against the absent Byron with a merry conciliatory drinking parody of Byron’s short impromptu lyrics:

Drink to me only from a jug,
 And I will pledge in mine;

31 “Noctes Ambrosianae” LX. In: *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine* 31 (February 1832). 276–77.

32 “Noctes Ambrosianae” IV. In: *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine* 12. (July 1822). 101, stanza 2 of 3.

33 “Noctes Ambrosianae” IV. In: *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine* 12. (July 1822). 108, stanza 1, lines 5–8.

So fill my glass with whisky punch,
 And I'll not look for wine.
 The thirst that in my throat doth rise
 Doth ask a drink divine,
 But might I of Jove's nectar sip,
 That honour I'd resign.³⁴

Cakes, sweets, honey, and creamy coffee are also placed on the tables in admirable quantity, to sweeten the disputants' acrimoniousness. As subject of the dialogues, they can serve as an irenic introduction or as a means of appeasement in the course of the disputes.³⁵

The arrival of a dinner invitation, together with regularly refilled bumpers on the table, is enough to interrupt a tavern row, including the firing of pistols, and to let the whole scene of heated disputes over such sensitive subjects as English and Scottish culture end in harmony, with North rising in his role of symposiarch and asking all the interlocutors to rise with him and to sing the British national anthem "in full chorus" (and full of spirit). In the Tory *Maga's* old feudal order, Wilson presides over the symposium as King William IV presides over the state, allowing freedom of thought and speech and taking care that it remains a constructive game and does not degenerate into a destructive war.³⁶

Jehovah, King of Kings,
 Spread thy protecting wings
 O'er Britain's throne!
 Crown'd with thy grace immense,
 Long may King William thence
 Justice in love dispense –
 God save the king!³⁷

Strong dissension characterizes the dialogues of the friends, none of whom, however, is ultimately converted. None, however, is ultimately excluded, either, and even the periodical's favourite adversaries receive their occasional stint of understanding or praise from North. It is this ultimate inclusion which distinguishes the dialogues from the savage indignation of most formal satire. Two Romantics, Hogg and De Quincey, are the butts of much bantering, which they take in good humour, sustained by much drink and food. A standard argument of Neoclassicists, that Romantic primitivism and return to nature was a well-selling construction and pose, was repeatedly advanced against Walter Scott's

34 "Noctes Ambrosianae" X. In: *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 14 (July 1823). 106.

35 "Noctes Ambrosianae" XXXVII. In: *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 24 (October 1828). 501.

36 HUIZINGA, Johan. *Homo ludens: Proeve eener bepaling van het spelelement der cultuur*. Haarlem: H.D. Tjeenk Willink, 1938. Passim.

37 "Noctes Ambrosianae" LI. In: *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 28 (August 1830). 435–36.

friend and collaborator Hogg, whose affected boorish ignorance, lower-class origin and broad Lowland Scots, Highland dress, Ettrick shepherd's plaid, and self-stylization as Burns's natural successor were well known. In fact, Hogg was as self-educated and sophisticated as Burns. With Hogg and the company sitting in the Blue Room at Ambrose's around a "Table crowned with Bottles, Pitchers, Devils, Books, Pamphlets, &c.", Tickler comments on Hogg's self-fashioning at a cattle-show:

TICKLER. [...] Hogg makes a very fine savage. He was all over in a bristle with dirk, claymore, eagle's feather, tooth, whisker, pistol and powder-horn. His ears were erect, his brow indignant, his hands very hairy, his hurdies were horrible, his tread was terrific.³⁸

Odoherly continues the bantering with a satirical question and nickname, "Had you your tail on, Clanhogg?" But in his cups, Hogg takes it all in good humour, "what's the use of argufying wi' the like o' you?" And he retorts with a merry song and toast to all and everything, frankly admitting his show without, however, altering his attitude:

Knees an' elbows, and a',
Elbows an' knees, and a';
Here's to Donald Macdonald,
Stanes an bullets, an'a'³⁹

Hogg is as Gargantuan an eater as he is a drinker and a roarer, which forms part of his primitivistic self-fashioning. North teases him for his unpolished manners from Ettrick, "where the breed of wild boars is not wholly extirpated".⁴⁰ But, as Hogg slyly insinuates, North can be just as boisterous and voracious as Hogg in spite of his classical polish and torturing gout. Both denounce gluttony as immoral and bestial, but define gluttony, like true Tories, not from the excessive quantity of consumed food, but from the attitude of the voracious eaters who must still sit upright, control their cutlery, be interested in art, and be able to discuss controversial matters:⁴¹

NORTH. I feel as if an oppressive weight were taken from my heart.

SHEPHERD. Then that's mair than I do – mair than you or ony ither man should say, after devoorin' half a hunder eisters – siccan eisters – to say naething o' a tippenny loaf, a quarter o' a pund o' butter – and the better part o' twa pats o' porter.⁴²

38 "Noctes Ambrosianae" VII. In: *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 13 (March 1823). 369.

39 "Noctes Ambrosianae" VII. In: *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 13 (March 1823). 370.

40 "Noctes Ambrosianae" XLII. In: *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 25 (April 1829). 527–28.

41 "Noctes Ambrosianae" XLII. In: *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 25 (April 1829). 527–28.

42 "Noctes Ambrosianae" XXXVIII. In: *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 24 (October 1828). 522.

Much the same full-bellied and mundane tolerance characterizes the way the company deals with De Quincey. A standard argument of Neoclassicists, that Romantic confessional writing offended against the rule of generality and decorum and that the Romantic vision of truth in drug consumption revealed nothing but diseased minds, led to a number of brilliant parodies of De Quincey's *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*. The best of these was Thomas Colley Grattan's "Confessions of an English Glutton" (1823).⁴³ Significantly for the dialogues' non-dogmatic openness, it is the Romantic Hogg who attacks De Quincey on that score. De Quincey had settled in Edinburgh in 1821 at the invitation of John Wilson, introduced himself to the *Maga* with a harsh criticism of its publishing policy, and was for a short time received into its inner circle of contributors. Then, *Blackwood's* published his translation of Friedrich Schiller's *Der Geisterseher*, before a quarrel with William Blackwood caused him to return to Wordsworth and the Lake District. Open critical voices were, however, welcome and needed, and thus De Quincey was introduced as an interlocutor of 'Noctes Ambrosianae' in his absence and without his consent. North and especially Hogg tease De Quincey for claiming metaphysical insights in his opium dreams and for confessing the pleasures and pains of opium consumption with an indecorous public self-denudation worthy of Rousseau, while they make sure that De Quincey has plenty of food and drink on his table. North asks De Quincey whether he has lately been in Constantinople, alluding to his description of the loss of time and space in opium dreams, to his oriental imagery, and to his oriental addiction. And Hogg, who associates De Quincey with Wordsworth ('Wudsworth') and the Lake School, whom he ridicules for being 'great yegotists', teases De Quincey by asserting that laudanum has no different effect than whisky. His subsequent long description of one of his hangovers from excess of alcohol is a parody of De Quincey's *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater*, deriding De Quincey's "metaphesics" as "clean nonsense":

THE SHEPHERD. Sax thousand draps o' lowdnam! It's as muckle, I fancy, as a bottle o' whusky. I tried the experiment mysel, after reading the wee wud wicked wark, w' five hunner draps, and I couped ower, and continued in ae snore frae Monday night till Friday morning. But I had naething to confess; naething at least that wad gang into words; for it was a week-lang, dull, dim, dwawm o' the mind, with a kind o' soun' bumming in my lugs; and clouds, clouds, clouds hovering round and round; and things 'sight, no made for the sight [...]; and events o' auld lang syne, like the torments o' the present hour, wi' naething to mark onything by; and doubts o' being quick or dead;

43 GRATTAN, Thomas Colley. "Confessions of an English Glutton." In *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 13 (January 1823): 86–93. See also KENT, David A. and D.R. EWEN (eds.). *Romantic Parodies 1797–1831*. Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1992. 302–03.

[...] and a dismal thought that I was converted into a quadruped cretur, wi' four feet; [...] and the moon within half a yard o' my nose; [...].

MULLION. Hear till him – hear till him. Ma faith, that's equal to the best in a' the Confessions.⁴⁴

De Quincey's opium experiment with North's Newfoundland dog O'Bronte, in the presence of North, Hogg, and Tickler, proves Hogg right. The dog is so drunk as to mistake himself for another creature, to believe himself back in the company of harpooners on a whaling boat, and to make a havoc of the beautiful spring bower at Ambrose's, upsetting everything and setting the bees free on poor Tickler. A pity it is, Hogg remarks, that the dog cannot write his Confessions, and De Quincey is not really annoyed at the satirical joke.⁴⁵ The grotesquely comical scene, like all others, again ends in peace, with the company called in for dinner by North.

Πάρεσις, however, demands not only honesty in criticism of others, but also honesty in criticism of oneself, unaffected by false irrational personal sensitivity. The design of 'Noctes Ambrosianae' obliged the various contributors to admit their own weaknesses and contradictions when they had to impersonate the fictional characters representing themselves: North's contradiction between his modern business-oriented mind and his classical erudition, Hogg's literary vanity as well as the lack of polish and classical education he prides himself on, Tickler's aggressiveness and distrust of poetry, Odoherty's impulsiveness and Irish partisanship. Much of what the wine makes Christopher North reveal about the editorial policy of *Blackwood's* is self-critical insofar as it implies the same reproaches that the periodical advanced against the Romantics: prostitution to the literary market, catering for the taste of a large reading public hungry for novelty, attention to sales figures, and low quality production if necessary. Neo-classical critics and satirists of Romanticism like William Gifford and Thomas James Mathias had never grown tired of referring to Horace's postulation that the poet should be an elitist, an exceptionally gifted and carefully trained master of his art, elaborating his verses for an erudite readership. This was in contradistinction to their inimical view of the out-group of the easy and careless Romantics, whose mass production merely serves the vulgar, and "Die's laufen lassen, wie es läuft."⁴⁶ The editors of the *Maga* keep articles which they do not consider high enough quality for publication in a deposit called the "Balaam Box", in order to have filling material for the pages of their monthly in case of

44 "Noctes Ambrosianae" XII. In: *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 14 (October 1823). 485–86.

45 "Noctes Ambrosianae" L. In: *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 27 (April 1830). 929.

46 PLATEN, August Graf von. *Der romantische Öpιδus* (1829), act I. In: *Sämtliche Werke. Historisch-kritische Ausgabe*. 12 vols. Edited by Max Koch and Erich Petzet. Leipzig: M. Hesse, 1910. X, 94.

need. This Balaam Box grows so full that a weight has to be placed on the lid, and sometimes the lid flies up and the “jammed-down articles” fly around and break precious furniture. Hogg even offers to sit on the lid like a guardian angel to keep the Grub Street trash down, “after sic a denner”.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, North has the Balaam Box opened from time to time to satisfy the market, which expected a certain quantity of pages for the fixed price. North and Odoherly, like their models Wilson and Maginn, and also like Lockhart, were excellent classicists proficient in Greek and Latin and champions of the classical tradition, who nevertheless knew and openly admitted that a learned readership alone would not yield enough profit. Odoherly frankly admits the practice, even in a discussion with Lord Byron, whom *Blackwood's* regularly blamed for feeding the ignorant crowd with well-selling improbabilities and oriental novelties:

ODOHERTY. [...] although he [North] now and then puts in puffs of mediocre fellows, every body sees they're put in merely to fill the pages [...]. His book is just like the best book in the world – it contains a certain portion of *Balaam*.⁴⁸

Odoherly teases Byron about his false claim that as a genius and aristocrat he never writes for profit, reciting a satirical poem on his denial of ever having written “puffing verses for Martin and Day,”⁴⁹ as well as on his false assertion of writing one Byronic style. The good wine allows Odoherly frankly to admit that he, too, has “written in all kinds of style, from Burke to Jeremy Bentham”, and that he, too, has written advertisement verses for shoe-blackening firms.⁵⁰ At a time when poetical commercial advertisements and poetry albums and annuals sold better than high quality, and when the reading public wanted sprightliness and novelty and variety, even supporters of the classical tradition and opponents of Romanticism must conform to the dictates of the market. After all, the *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* of 1817 was no longer the ponderous *Quarterly Review* of 1809. This honest admission de-escalated the quarrels between Neo-classicists and Romantics.

For all abiding dissensions of the interlocutors of 'Noctes Ambrosianae' on all subjects, the heated discussions end in perfect harmony, often marked by hands joined, “quaihs filled”, and a song of lasting good fellowship. Even the ferocious disputant Timothy Tickler can start such a round of final reconciliatory singing:

47 “Noctes Ambrosianae” XXVI. In: *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 19 (June 1826). 738.

48 “Noctes Ambrosianae” IV. In: *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 12 (July 1822). 105.

49 Day and Martin as well as Warren were shoe-blackening firms, who advertised their products with poems. One of the best-known volumes of Romantic parodies, deriding the Romantic poets for the prostitution of their art to the populace and the market, was William Frederick DEACON's *Warreniana* (1824). In: Graeme Stones, John Strachan et al. (eds.). *Parodies of the Romantic Age*. London: Pickering & Chatto, 1999. Vol. IV.

50 “Noctes Ambrosianae” IV. In: *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 12 (July 1822). 109 – 110.

Come, jolly boys, and never disunited,
 One cup for friendship's sake,
 Let's now with claret nobly freighted
 Our dochandhurras take!
 We up Leith Walk, ere now, have often stoitied,
 With a' world awake –
 Jolly boys, jolly boys, jolly boys –
 Farewell, dear host, be soon and blithe our meeting,
 Jolly boys, jolly boys, jolly boys.⁵¹

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Silvia Mergenthal

Dining with the Brontës: Food and Gender Roles in Mid-Victorian England

Amuse-bouches

But there were never such good children. I used to think them spiritless, they were so different to any children I had ever seen. I set it down to a fancy Mr Brontë had of not letting them have flesh-meat to eat. It was from no wish for saving, for there was plenty and even waste in the house, with young servants and no mistress to see after them; but he thought that children should be brought up simply and hardily: so they had nothing but potatoes for their dinner; but they never seemed to wish for anything else; they were good little creatures.¹

Owing to some illness of the digestive organs, Mr Brontë was obliged to be very careful about his diet; and, in order to avoid temptation, and possibly to have the quiet necessary for digestion, he had begun, before his wife's death, to take his dinner alone – a habit which he always retained.²

First Course

Human beings are, like pigs, omnivores. Unlike pigs, however, they establish rules which govern what – out of the nearly limitless supply of what can be eaten – is actually good to eat. Thus, for instance, the ingredients of Italian Futurist Marinetti's "exalted pork" – raw and skinned salami, very hot espresso, and plenty of eau de cologne – are, all three of them, digestible, but their combination violates the conventions of what is considered "good taste" (possibly in both senses of the word).³ Another recipe quoted in Eva Barlösius's *Soziologie des*

1 GASKELL, Elizabeth. *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*. Edited by Alan Shelston. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985. 87. Gaskell here quotes one of her "informants".

2 GASKELL. *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*. 91.

3 Marinetti's recipe for "exalted pork" is quoted in BARLÖSIUS, Eva. *Soziologie des Essens. Eine sozial- und kulturwissenschaftliche Einführung in die Ernährungsforschung*. Weinheim/München: Juventa, 1999. 91.

Essens alerts us to the fact that these conventions are, of course, anything but universal: fried puppy seasoned with ginger, garlic, and soy sauce and served with green onions, tofu, and dried and salted beans which we may find revolting is, after all, a popular dish in China and other parts of Asia.

It is the link between the natural and the socio-cultural dimensions of eating, its “natural artificiality”, which, according to Barlösius, lies at the heart of an anthropology of eating.⁴ On the basis of this anthropological constant, namely, the necessity of having to choose what to eat, every culture develops its own cuisine, that is, its system of language and practices around phenomena such as food, eating, and embodiment. As many anthropologists, sociologists, and historians have recently argued, this system can best be understood as a discourse,⁵ which also implies that, first, an individual’s food preferences and avoidances are the products of his or her social experiences, that is, the result of what they encounter in their tribe, their community, and their class within a larger society. Secondly, societies – and groups within societies – can be distinguished from one another synchronically and diachronically, or in a geography and history of everyday life, on the basis of their food discourses. These food discourses revolve around a set of questions:

- What is considered edible?
- How, and by whom, is food prepared and served?
- When and how is food consumed?
- How is the selection, preparation and consumption of food related to other discursive practices, for instance, to religious discourses which designate certain foodstuffs as sacred, others as profane, or to discourses of social distinction?⁶
- Finally, what, between the extremes of gluttony and self-starvation, is regarded as deviant with regard to consumption of food, and how should individuals who do not eat ‘properly’ be treated?

Diane McGee has suggested that “[t]he various approaches of anthropology, sociology and history to links between food and culture can form a foundation for understanding the role of food and meals in literature and in the historical

4 BARLÖSIUS. *Soziologie des Essens*. 32–36. The term “natural artificiality” (*natürliche Künstlichkeit*) is borrowed by Barlösius from Helmut PLESSNER’s *Die Stufen des Organischen und der Mensch. Einleitung in die philosophische Anthropologie*. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1928.

5 For a comprehensive survey of the ‘discursive’ position in food studies see LUPTON, Deborah. *Food, the Body and the Self*. London: Sage, 1996. 12–13.

6 The latter – food preparation and consumption as a means of social distinction – has, of course, famously been discussed in Pierre BOURDIEU’s *La distinction. Critique sociale du jugement*. Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1979.

and cultural contexts which give birth to literary texts”.⁷ Literature, in other words, is one of the sites in which discourses on food are articulated; literary texts reflect, albeit frequently in refracted or fragmentary ways, the dietary habits and eating practices of the society in which they originate. They can thus provide information, perhaps not so much on what people in a specific society actually ate, but on what, given the culinary norms of their period, they should, or should not, have been eating.

The following paper will proceed in two steps: first, it will look at four Brontë novels – Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* and *Shirley*, Emily Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights*, and Anne Brontë’s *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*⁸ – and examine, focusing on the set of questions formulated above, how these novels are embedded in the food discourses of mid-Victorian England: if, in a given society, foodstuffs are endowed with cultural meaning, and food becomes a form of communication, these novels will select and isolate images, usages, situations, and behaviours from this form of communication. They will exhibit them and reflect critically upon them, and they will experiment with alternative models of food preparation, distribution, and consumption.

More interestingly, perhaps, literary texts will also integrate components – ingredients, in fact – of contemporaneous food discourses into their own patterns of meaning-making. In a second step, then, this paper will attempt to show how what might be called their food theme can be linked to some of the other key motifs of the two novels by Charlotte Brontë.

Second Course

With regard to what is considered edible in Victorian England, the four novels by Anne, Emily, and Charlotte Brontë establish several sets of boundary lines between food and non-food. On the national level, for instance, Hortense Gérard Moore in *Shirley*, who grew up in Belgium, repeatedly has heated arguments with her English servant. The latter considers the food which is offered to visitors in the Moore ménage as “not fit for dogs”:

The soup was a sort of purée of dried pease, which Mademoiselle had prepared amidst bitter lamentations that in this desolate country of England no haricot beans were to be had. Then came a dish of meat – nature unknown, but supposed to be miscellaneous –

7 MCGEE, Diane. *Writing the Meal: Dinner in the Fiction of Early Twentieth-Century Women Writers*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001. 11.

8 The four novels were published in 1847 (*Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights*), 1848 (*The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*), and 1849 (*Shirley*), respectively. In the following, chapter rather than page references will be given.

singularly chopped up with crumbs of bread, seasoned uniquely though not unpleasantly, and baked up in a mould; a queer, but by no means unpalatable dish. Greens, oddly bruised, formed the accompanying vegetable; and a paté of fruit, conserved after a recipe devised by Madame Gérard Moore's 'grand'mère', and from the taste of which it appeared that 'mélasse' had been substituted for sugar, completed the dinner. (*Shirley*, ch. 6)

However, as has already been indicated, within the society which is Victorian England dietary practices and eating habits are not uniform, but diversified in terms of gender, class, or age group. Women, if they are seen eating at all, consume small quantities of gender-coded food, for instance white meat, bread, and cakes, as when Jane Eyre "takes possession of a cold chicken, a role of bread, some tarts" (*Jane Eyre*, ch. 17), which she conveys from the kitchen to the nursery and there shares with her pupil and the nursery maid. We also learn, chiefly from *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, that in Victorian society even very young children are plied with alcoholic beverages, which is why Helen Huntingdon, the eponymous tenant, goes to great lengths to wean her young son off wine and brandy. While Helen, with a family history of alcoholism, is a teetotaler, Jane Eyre might take a little wine in an emergency (*Jane Eyre*, ch. 26); Grace Poole, however, Bertha Mason's attendant, is not averse to beer, and even spirits. In fact, it is because of her predilection for gin, which is associated with working-class drinking habits, that, as "she kept a private bottle [...] by her, and now and then took in a drop too much" (*Jane Eyre*, ch. 36), Bertha occasionally manages to escape from the attic to which she has been confined, and to roam Thornfield Hall.

A similar link between gender- and class-coded attitudes to food becomes evident when one considers who is responsible for cooking and serving it. Hence, we can tell that Gilbert Markham in *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* comes from a different social background from that of the woman he falls in love with, Helen Huntingdon, because his mother still brews her own ale. And both Isabella and Cathy Linton, on being transported from Thrushcross Grange to Wuthering Heights, are suddenly compelled to help with the cooking, a loss of social status which causes Isabella to "remember a period when it would have been all merry fun" (*Wuthering Heights*, ch. 13), and which Cathy consequently tries to compensate for by turning work into play when she carves "figures of birds and beasts out of the turnip parings in her lap" (*Wuthering Heights*, ch. 31). As Nicola Humble points out in the introduction to her edition of what is one of the most famous codifications of the Victorian domestic ideology of separate spheres, to wit, *Mrs Beeton's Book of Household Management*, the degree of involvement in the preparation of food, on the part of the mistress of the Victorian household, denotes social status: although, in practice, most middle-class women would have taken charge of a considerable portion of the cooking, Beeton, in devoting

separate chapters to the role of the mistress and to that of the housekeeper, maintains the polite fiction that middle-class women need not soil their hands with physical labour.⁹

As to when and how meals are consumed, characters in Brontë novels repeatedly point out differences between city and country habits, and comment on changes in these habits during their lifetimes: “Yorkshire people in those days”, explains the narrator in *Shirley* with reference to the 1810s, took their tea directly round the table; sitting well into it, with their knees duly introduced under the mahogany (*Shirley*, ch. 7).¹⁰

In a way, the question how food discourses relate to other discourses, both in the Brontë canon and in Victorian society at large, has already been answered: the most prominent intersection is between food discourses and Victorian constructions of gender and class, at the point at which moderation and discipline are inculcated as standards of civilised behaviour, standards which are embodied, as it were, in the middle-class woman. What this may mean for Victorian women is summarised, somewhat satirically, by Rose Markham in *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*:

[I]f there is anything particularly nice at table, mamma winks and nods at me to abstain from it, and if I don't attend to that, she whispers, 'Don't eat so much of that, Rose, Gilbert will like it for his supper' – I'm nothing at all – in the parlour, it's 'Come, Rose, put away your things, and let's have the room nice and tidy against they come in; and keep up a good fire; Gilbert likes a cheerful fire.' In the kitchen – 'Make that pie a large one, Rose, I dare say the boys'll be hungry; – and don't put so much pepper in; they'll not like it I'm sure' – or, 'Rose, don't put so many spices in the pudding, Gilbert likes it plain.' [...] If I say, 'Well, Mamma, I don't', I'm told I ought not to think of myself... (*The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, ch. 6)¹¹

9 BEETON, Isabella. *Mrs Beeton's Book of Household Management*. Edited by Nicola Humble. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000. xxii-xxiii. *Mrs Beeton's Book of Household Management* was first published in 1861.

10 See BEETON for other wide-ranging changes in nineteenth-century eating habits: “Husbands, as noted earlier, increasingly travelled into the centre of London and other large cities to work, and took their midday and often their evening meal in town. Consequently, meal times shifted, with the midday dinner moving into the evening, and a light luncheon replacing it in the daytime. Wives would often eat this meal with their children in the nursery. When they held their weekly ‘at home’ gatherings, they would serve the relatively new afternoon tea, with elegantly cut sandwiches and cakes.” (BEETON. *Mrs Beeton's Book of Household Management*. xxiii)

11 In his *Endangered Lives. Public Health in Victorian Britain* (London: Dent, 1983), Anthony S. WOHL comments on the prevalence of this pattern of always putting the breadwinner first in working-class families as follows: “When, as was often the case in a society where seasonal unemployment and under-employment prevailed, there was not enough food to go around, it was the women who got the least. Even in good times it was customary for the men to get the meat and much larger portions in general and the mothers and daughters made do with

Deviant behaviour with regard to food in Victorian society frequently errs on the side of too little moderation, as in the case of the three curates in *Shirley*, and their insatiable appetites, which are a clear sign of their lack of self-restraint.¹² In Bourdieu's terms, the curates have not acquired the rules and norms of good taste which are the cultural capital of their period: Malone because of his nationality (he is Irish), Donne because of his lower-class origin, and Sweeting because, as his name already indicates, he is not properly masculine, but a 'lady's pet'.

However, Brontë novels also exhibit cases of self-starvation. The first of these is probably that of Catherine Linton, neé Earnshaw, whose near-fatal illness, the "brain fever" which will render her physically frail and mentally unstable, is precipitated by what amounts to a hunger-strike: "[...] she fasted pertinaciously, under the idea, probably, that at every meal Edgar was ready to choke for her absence, and pride alone held him from running to cast himself at her feet" (*Wuthering Heights*, ch. 12). It hardly comes as a surprise that Heathcliff, who is, after all, Catherine's other half, as both assert throughout, in the days before his death first withdraws from communal meals, and eventually finds himself unable to ingest food altogether.¹³

The most striking case of self-starvation is probably that of Caroline Helstone in *Shirley*, whose eating disorder will first be classified as anorexia nervosa, an illness which was thought to mainly affect middle class girls and which could be diagnosed differentially by ruling out other physical or mental causes of a chronic lack of appetite, some twenty years after the publication of the novel. Caroline Helstone, who has never known maternal love and nurture, and who, in one of the most harrowing passages in the novel, has "expected bread, and [has] got a stone; break your teeth on it, and don't shriek because the nerves are martyred: do not doubt that your mental stomach – if you have such a thing – is strong as an ostrich's – the stone will digest" (*Shirley*, ch. 7)¹⁴– Caroline Helstone, then, wastes away "like any snow-wreath in thaw, like any flower in

bread, weak tea, and scraps – a custom which continued well into this century." (WOHL, *Endangered Lives*, 12)

- 12 See on the link between eating habits and self-restraint (Norbert Elias's *Selbstzwang*) MENNELL, Stephen. *All Manners of Food. Eating and Taste in England and France from the Middle Ages to the Present*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1987. MENNELL regards what he calls a shift from quantitative display to qualitative elaboration, and from gluttony to a sense of delicacy, as an example of Elias's 'civilising process'.
- 13 Whether, in the case of Heathcliff, this behaviour indicates that he is (actually or metaphorically) a vampire, is another question altogether. On the issue of illness in *Wuthering Heights* see also GORSKY, Susan Rubinow. "'I'll cry myself sick': Illness in *Wuthering Heights*." In: *Literature and Medicine* 18.2 (Fall 1999): 173–91.
- 14 Significantly, this chapter is entitled "The Curates at Tea".

drought” (*Shirley*, ch. 24). As Helen Malson has shown,¹⁵ anorexia nervosa, understood not as a phenomenon that exists independently of medical discourse, but as constituted through it as well as through other discursive practices, was related, in nineteenth-century medical discourse, to other nervous disorders such as hypochondria and hysteria, both associated with women patients:

Hypochondria and hysteria were dominant concepts, ‘institutionally fixed’ and culturally entrenched. In the prevailing ‘nervous mythology’, hypochondria provided an historical and etymological relationship between nervous and gastric disorders whilst hysteria epitomised the gendering of nerves and the cultural patriarchal construction of ‘woman’ as pathologically nervous and inferior.¹⁶

As we have already seen, Victorian society also linked food and femininity so as to promote restrictive eating among middle-class girls: in a period which valorises physical frailty in middle-class women as a sign of their spiritual orientation, there is a real danger that women can actually become too frail to live.¹⁷

Third Course

Food in *Jane Eyre* – a novel which, in the words of Helena Michie, is “obsessed with feeding and starvation”¹⁸ – can be used for various purposes: first of all, food represents metaphorically the content or the raw material of a story, when Bessie feeds the “eager attention” of Jane and of her Reed cousins “with passages of love and adventure taken from old fairy tales and older ballads” (*Jane Eyre*, ch. 1) – and by extension, of course, Brontë feeds the imagination of her readers. In this context, then, the process of preparing and serving a meal corresponds to literary or artistic treatment. Because of the historical association of women and meals, women narrators like Bessie – and women writers like Brontë – are in a particularly good place to live this metaphor.

Secondly, as we have already seen, food serves to characterise people and to establish their gender and class identities. Characters are expected to behave both properly – that is, take food and drink in moderation – and appropriately –

15 MALSON, Helen. *The Thin Woman. Feminism, Post-Structuralism and the Social Psychology of Anorexia Nervosa*. London/New York: Routledge, 1998. 47 – 75.

16 MALSON. *The Thin Woman*. 59 – 60.

17 See BRUMBERG, Joan Jacobs. *Fasting Girls. The Emergence of Anorexia Nervosa as a Modern Disease*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1988. 182; and HELLER, Tamar and Patricia MORAN (eds.). *Scenes of the Apple. Food and the Female Body in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Women’s Writing*. Albany: SUNY Press, 2003.

18 MICHIE, Helena. *The Flesh Made Word. Female Figures and Women’s Bodies*. New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987. 23.

that is, they are expected to conform to gender and class norms: if they don't, their fate may be dire, as the example of Jane's cousin John Reed, who, as a boy, "gorged himself habitually at table, which made him bilious, and gave him a dim and bleared eye with flabby cheeks" (*Jane Eyre*, ch. 1), and who, as an adult, "gave himself up to strange ways, and his death was shocking" (*Jane Eyre*, ch. 21).

Finally, the food theme in *Jane Eyre* can be read in relation to the binary oppositions which govern the novel, and around which it is organised: dependence vs. independence, exclusion vs. inclusion, and reason (alternatively, duty, or the soul) vs. emotion (or, passion, or the body). From this perspective, the trajectory of Jane's journey in the novel can briefly be sketched as follows: on the first stage of that journey, in Lowood, Jane experiences near-starvation, a castigation of the flesh which is ostensibly sanctioned by the Bible, as Mr Brocklehurst explains:

'Should any little accidental disappointment of the appetite occur [...], it ought to be improved to the spiritual edification of the pupils, by encouraging them to evince fortitude under the temporary privation. A brief address on those occasions would not be mistimed, wherein a judicious instructor would take the opportunity of referring to the sufferings of the primitive Christians; to the torments of martyrs; to the exhortations of Our Blessed Lord Himself, calling upon His disciples to take up their cross and follow Him; to His warnings that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God; to His divine consolations, "If ye suffer hunger or thirst for My sake, happy are ye."' (*Jane Eyre*, ch. 7)

However, in Lowood Jane also learns that gifts of food can also be tokens of love, particularly when bestowed illicitly, and thus subversively, in the feminine space which is Miss Temple's room, where the latter "unlocked a drawer, and taking from it a parcel wrapped in paper, disclosed presently to our eyes a good-sized seed-cake" (*Jane Eyre*, ch. 8). Although, on this occasion, Jane shares the seed-cake with her friend Helen Burns, Helen Burns – a young woman who is all spirit – will eventually die of consumption, the wasting disease.

Victorian fiction – perhaps, as Helena Michie speculates, in an attempt to invert the original story of the Fall – is "full of examples of men taking in starving young women, feeding them, and eventually marrying them".¹⁹ The whole class of 'governess novels' – of which, of course, *Jane Eyre* is the prime example – is based on the motif of the male employer providing food and shelter, a debt which Jane gratefully acknowledges throughout when, on the next stage of her journey, she becomes a governess at Thornfield Hall. As a governess, she finds herself in an ambiguous class position: she does not have to dine with the servants, but will not be invited to sit at her master's table. Hence, she is either confined to the

19 MICHIE. *The Flesh Made Word*. 22.

nursery, or else takes her meals with the house-keeper, Mrs Fairfax. Even so, Jane's appetite, as has already become evident, is the properly regulated one of a middle-class lady, whereas Grace Poole, the working-class woman, and Blanche Ingram, the haughty aristocrat, both have the improper eating habits of their respective social classes – and Bertha Mason's "moral madness" causes her, who is all body, to commit the ultimate sin against humanity, which is to ingest another human being: "This wound was not done with a knife", says the surgeon examining Bertha's brother after he has been attacked by her, "there have been teeth here" (*Jane Eyre*, ch. 20).²⁰

After her escape from Thornfield Hall, Jane again nearly starves to death, but also, for the first time, clearly and unequivocally articulates her needs and desires: "But I was a human being, and had a human being's wants: I must not linger where there was nothing left to supply them." (*Jane Eyre*, ch. 28) Once again, she is taken in by a dominant male figure who provides food and shelter and asks for her hand in marriage, but now, having inherited her uncle's fortune, Jane finally comes into her own, and can assume the role of the provider herself. On being asked by St John Rivers, "[w]hat aim, what purpose, what ambition in life have you now?", Jane replies:

'and lastly, the two days preceding that on which your sisters are expected will be devoted by Hannah and me to such a beating of eggs, sorting of currants, grating of spices, compounding of Christmas cakes, chopping up the materials for mince pies, and solemnizing of other culinary rites, as words can convey but an inadequate notion of to the uninitiated like you.' (*Jane Eyre*, ch. 34)

It is only now after she has "become an independent woman", a woman who has discovered what she needs in order to keep body and soul together, that Jane can both feed Rochester's "famished heart" (*Jane Eyre*, ch. 37), and exchange "famine for food" (*Jane Eyre*, ch. 37) herself.

In *Shirley*, as in *Jane Eyre*, food is used to represent, metaphorically, the content of the novel:

It is not positively affirmed that you shall not have a taste of the exciting, perhaps towards the middle and close of the meal, but it is resolved that the first dish set upon the table shall be one that a Catholic – ay, even an Anglo-Catholic – might eat on Good Friday in Passion Week: it shall be cold lentils and vinegar without oil; it shall be unleavened bread with bitter herbs, and no roast lamb. (*Shirley*, ch. 1)²¹

20 In an article entitled "How Eating Becomes a Metaphor in the Novels of Charlotte Brontë" and published in the *New Statesman* of May 5, 2003, Michele ROBERTS calls Bertha's vampiric behaviour "the shadow side of hunger, destructive greed" (www.newstatesman.com/200305050048; accessed: 6 January, 2010).

21 Among Jews, this event is commemorated in the Feast of the Unleavened Bread (see for instance Exodus 12:8 and Numbers 9:11).

While, ostensibly, this passage discourages readers from expecting too much of the meal which is to follow – they may be able to assuage their appetite, but their palates will not be tickled – it also intervenes, confidently and authoritatively, in the religious controversies of the 1840s by alluding to the dietary practices of the Oxford Movement; given that *Shirley* is set in the 1810s rather than the 1840s, this intervention both draws attention to the gap between the present of the novel's first readers and the past of its characters, and bridges this gap. Finally, with its distinctly biblical flavour – unleavened bread with bitter herbs was the food consumed by the Israelites before their exodus from Egypt (though, unlike Brontë's readers, they were allowed roast meat with it) – the passage also serves as an introduction to the first scene of the novel, which shows the three curates, Mr Donne, Mr Malone, and Mr Sweeting, all three of them, as has already been suggested, insatiable eaters who exploit the good will, and raid the larders of their respective landladies, at dinner. With them, as Sandra M. Gilbert and Sandra Gubar have argued in *The Madwoman in the Attic. The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*,²² “commences a novel very much about the expensive delicacies of the rich, the eccentric cooking of foreigners, the food riots in manufacturing towns, the abundant provisions of soldiers, the scanty dinner baskets of child labourers, and the starvation of the unemployed.”²³

The curates' meal is interrupted by Mr Helstone, who has come to dispatch one of them, Malone, to the aid of mill-owner Robert Moore; the latter expects a consignment of new machines, and his workers have threatened to destroy these machines because they are afraid they will be put out of work (and out of bread, as it were) by them. Arrived at the mill, Malone, perhaps the least reconstructed male character of the novel, immediately applies himself to preparing a distinctly masculine repast of mutton-chops, while Moore himself brews punch (*Shirley*, ch. 2).

On the other side of the gender divide – in a novel which shows the detrimental effects of the Victorian doctrine of separate spheres on society – Caroline Helstone, Mr Helstone's niece, who, as we have seen, will eventually suffer from a form of anorexia nervosa, is wholly dependent on her uncle for sustenance, having been, as she believes, deserted by her mother in infancy and nearly starved to death by her father.²⁴ As a consequence of her dependent state,

22 In a chapter suggestively entitled “The Genesis of Hunger, According to *Shirley*” (GILBERT, Sandra M. and Susan GUBAR. *The Madwoman in the Attic. The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*. New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1979. 372–98).

23 GILBERT and GUBAR. *The Madwoman in the Attic*. 373.

24 Her father “went out early every morning, and often forgot to return and give her her dinner during the day” (*Shirley*, ch. 7).

Caroline is also forced to play the role of the hostess at her uncle's tea-table. The tea-table, incidentally, is one of the spaces where the two genders meet, and it is used by Brontë in *Shirley* to expose the characters' inability to establish real communication across the gender divide in formal settings: of the four clerical characters present, it is only Mr Helstone who is completely at ease in female company, paradoxically because "at heart, he neither respected nor liked the sex, and such of them as circumstances had brought into intimate relation with him had ever feared rather than loved him" (*Shirley*, ch. 7).

By contrast, Shirley Keeldar, Caroline's friend, is the mistress of her own household, and as a Lady Bountiful whose attitude towards the provision of food is that of the feudal landlord as whom she fancies herself at times, can dispense food freely, but also withhold it from those she deems unworthy of partaking of it in her company: it is she who throws the odious Mr Donne, one of the banes of Caroline's existence, out of the house. As Gilbert and Gubar have claimed, Shirley here resembles Bertha Mason in *Jane Eyre* in that she can act out the protagonist's – that is, Caroline's – repressed desires. Paradoxically, however,

for all the seeming optimism in this depiction of a double, as opposed to the earlier portrait of self-destructive and enraged Bertha, Shirley does not provide the release she first seems to promise Caroline. Instead, she herself becomes enmeshed in a social role that causes her to duplicate Caroline's immobility.²⁵

It is a symptom of this immobility that Shirley, like Caroline, begins to lose weight, so that "her face showed thin, and her large eye looked hollow" (*Shirley*, ch. 28). In this, Caroline and Shirley, as middle- and upper-class women, share the fate of the poor, whose situation, feelingly described by Robert Moore, is – albeit, admittedly, on an even more life-threatening scale – one "where there is no occupation and no hope" (*Shirley*, ch. 31).

As against this bleak picture of an England which condemns both women and the poor to – symbolic or real – starvation, the novel – having established the outer boundaries of the national cuisine in its distinction between English food and Belgian non-food – is organised around a proliferation of meal events, from a picnic à deux in the primeval forest – a picnic on nuts and wild berries that, interestingly, never actually takes place, but is always deferred, that is, either remembered or anticipated – to the School-Feast at which 1,200 children and 400 adults are fed.

Some of the meal events in *Shirley* are arranged so as to reflect upon one another. As has already been implied, this is the case with the two tea-parties in Chapters 7 and 15, entitled respectively "The Curates at Tea" and "Mr Donne's Exodus". At the first of these two tea-parties, Caroline dispenses tea at her

25 GILBERT and GUBAR. *Madwoman in the Attic*. 383.

uncle's behest, but cannot ask Mr Donne to leave when he persists "in sitting with his cup half full of cold tea before him, long after the rest had finished, and after he himself had discussed such allowance of viands as he felt competent to swallow" (*Shirley*, ch. 7). At the second, he is finally punished for his insufferable company manners, chiefly his habit of abusing the natives of Yorkshire, when Shirley turns him out of her house – or rather, out of her garden, where the tea-table has been set up – because he is "no gentleman" (*Shirley*, ch. 15). By contrast, the novel also demonstrates that when the rules of Victorian domesticity are temporarily suspended, true friends can converse across the boundary lines of gender and social status while they partake of food: rather suggestively, this is nursery food, namely, bread and milk, and it is consumed in the informal setting of the school-room, "in a cosy circle now enclosing the school-room fire" (*Shirley*, ch. 26). Shirley does not usually engage in culinary activities herself: kneeling before the fire to toast the bread, she also kneels at the feet of her former tutor, Louis Moore, whom she will later marry although he is not her equal in terms of class.

Among the meal events in *Shirley*, it is certainly the School-Feast, with its military and national overtones, which mediates most clearly between the individual eating experience and collectivity. The School-Feast has been analysed in detail by Gilbert and Gubar,²⁶ who stress the links between it and the attack on Robert Moore's mill a few hours after its end. However, the School-Feast also illustrates the practices of inclusion and exclusion inherent in the choice of one's eating companions²⁷: on the way to the School-Feast, the procession of (Church of England) Sunday School pupils and their teachers, "priest-led and woman-officered" and accompanied by bands, quite literally encounters its double of "Dissenting and Methodist schools, the Baptists, Independents, and Wesleyans joined in unholy alliance" (*Shirley*, ch. 17). Mr Helstone, at the head of the Church party, has his bands play "Rule, Britannia", and "[t]he enemy was sung and stormed down; his psalm quelled; as far as noise went, he was conquered" (*ibid.*). Ultimately, the novel suggests, the needs of those who have so far been excluded from the companionship which is England, be they non-conformists, women, or the working poor, will have to be met – in other words, they will have to be admitted to the table – so that new social bonds can come into being.

26 GILBERT and GUBAR. *Madwoman in the Attic*. 383–84.

27 As has frequently been pointed out, a "companion" is, etymologically speaking, the person one shares one's bread with; see for instance KORSMEYER, Carolyn. *Making Sense of Taste. Food and Philosophy*. Ithaca/London: Cornell University Press, 1999. 200.

Dessert

In *Making Sense of Taste. Food and Philosophy*, Carolyn Korsmeyer has argued that “because of the temporal dimension of eating – and of tasting and the satisfaction of appetites – narrative contexts can furnish reflections of the meaning this activity entails”²⁸. A brief glance at what Korsmeyer calls the “gustatory semantics”, that is, the variety of meanings assigned to taste, food, eating, or appetite, of the two remaining Brontë novels, Emily’s *Wuthering Heights* and Anne’s *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, may serve to exemplify this structural analogy between narrative(s) and eating: while all four novels under consideration here employ food to show character traits of their protagonists (with the inability, or refusal, to eat a symptom of emotional disturbance or distress in every one of them), one of the main concerns in *Wuthering Heights* and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* is the intersection of gender and class. In both these novels, society is divided into those who do the cooking and those who consume the food prepared by others, and the playful deviations from this pattern which one can find in *Jane Eyre* and *Shirley* – Jane’s Christmas baking, Mr Malone’s mutton-chops, or Shirley’s toast-making – are not encouraged in either Emily’s or Anne’s fictions: having to help with the cooking is, instead, usually experienced as a distressing loss of social status by their middle-class protagonists. In addition, while meal events in *Jane Eyre* and *Shirley* can be quite happy, especially if they are improvised and only involve a small number of participants, they are invariably fraught with tension and more or less acute social embarrassment in *Wuthering Heights* and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*.

This opens up two further areas of investigation which, by way of conclusion, one can turn into hypotheses: first, then, one can perhaps classify authors on the basis of how they intervene – or conspicuously fail to do so – in the food discourses of their respective periods: a novel by Charlotte Brontë has a distinctive flavour, compared to, for instance, a novel by Emily or Anne. If one extends this investigation to include canonical novels by male authors such as Charles Dickens or William Thackeray, one can also see, as Helen Michie has shown, how *Oliver Twist*’s cry for “more” sets him apart from other orphans like Jane, who swallows her burnt porridge in silence: “[w]hile Oliver can at least assert his desire, his very physical presence, to the hierarchy of his orphanage, Jane has to sneak to Miss Temple’s room for toast and seed-cake. Female hunger cannot be acted out in public; once again it is relegated to bedrooms and closets.”²⁹

Secondly, within the corpus of texts by a specific author, for instance Char-

28 KORSMEYER. *Making Sense of Taste*. 186.

29 MICHIE. *The Flesh Made Word*. 23.

lotte Brontë, individual novels can be assigned to sub-genres, also on the basis of how they engage with the food discourses of their period: hence, in *Shirley*, which is Charlotte's condition of England novel, it is the cohesive aspects of food, the way in which people are gathered together in the name of what the novel repeatedly calls "the Establishment", which are fore-grounded; by contrast, the emphasis in *Jane Eyre* is on the nexus between food, embodiment, and subjectivity. As Jane says about Rochester: "Literally, I was (what he often called me) the apple of his eye." (*Jane Eyre*, ch. 38)

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David Paroissien

Dyspepsia or Digestion: The Pleasures of the Board in *Martin Chuzzlewit*

Suggest doing lunch with Tony Jobling of *Bleak House* and he will state the obvious: without food, we don't survive. "Ill fo manger, you know", he comments, pronouncing that word, as the narrator notes, "as if he meant a necessary fixture in an English stable. Ill fo manger. That's the French saying, and mangering is as necessary to me as it is to a Frenchman. Or more so." Thus the wisdom of Mr Guppy's friend, having demolished two plates of veal and ham, a second "summer cabbage", one marrow pudding, bread, butter and a slab of Cheshire cheese, all washed down with a pint of beer and a glass of rum. Suitably replenished, he sits back from the table and ponders, "I ask myself the question, What am I to do? How am I to live?" (*Bleak House* 264–66) Dependent on the generosity of others or faced with the prospect of dining with the Duke of Humphrey, Jobling, as William Guppy shrewdly realizes, is ready to cooperate in any coercive scheme he proposes.

The victim of spare living, Mr Jobling, had a vigorous appetite and not much time for reflection. Well nourished and fed more regularly, he might have offered a further observation. Without cooked food, we don't think. As anthropologist Richard Wrangham has remarked, cooking was the development that advanced humanity. It got us out of the trees, up on two feet and into a position that yielded leisure. Cooking granted us more energy than a raw diet. It also endowed us with "many extra hours of free time every day". Cooked food, Wrangham concludes, is "the signature feature of human diet".¹

The connection between food and thought and leisure and thought is one Dickens understood from first-hand experience. Being hungry and gazing at pineapples on display in Covent Garden cramped rather than encouraged his early creativity. Succumbing to the lure of stale pastries temptingly exposed in dusty tins by confectioners as he walked from his lodgings to the blacking warehouse put a hole in his daily dinner money, leaving only enough on bad days

1 WRANGHAM, Richard. "Second thoughts on life, the universe and everything by the world's best brains." In: *The Guardian* (1 January, 2008). 3.

to buy half a pint of coffee and a single slice of bread and butter.² Deprive the growing boy of three good meals and you generate discontent and even criminal behaviour.

While Dickens managed to avoid the shades of the prison house that descended on Fagin's pupils, the work world he began as a boy unquestionably curtailed his educational development. True, the 12-year old clung to his 'station' throughout the nine-month ordeal at Warren's. But the attempt to teach him something during the dinner-hour from twelve to one, kindly suggested by James Lamert, his relative, broke down. Such an arrangement, Dickens later noted, proved "incompatible with counting-house business [and] soon died away, from no fault of his or mine."³

Biographers not surprisingly argue that the hard experiences Dickens endured as a boy marked him for life. Those months spent in the rat-infested warehouse by the river Thames left a deep trace on the novelist. Read the account he supplied of lounging about the streets of London "insufficiently and unsatisfactorily fed" and you need seek no further explanation for what critics term Dickens's 'orality': "Eating, Drinking, Speaking" – "the need for oral satisfaction of every kind."⁴ The autobiographical fragment, as Peter Ackroyd notes, revolves around food.⁵ And is there any wonder? You are young and hungry in London and you drift towards Covent Garden, the largest open emporium in the nineteenth century, where every kind of imported and domestic fruit and vegetable is on display. Cross the Strand and stroll towards Hungerford Market, poultry and fish in similar abundance confront you. Turn east towards the City and wander into Newgate Market packed with meat and game, or go back towards the river and see fish of every variety on sale at Billingsgate. Endure hunger at a formative age but work hard and overcome such experiences, and who would not want to enjoy good meals and food? Not for the adult Dickens Prufrock's 'sawdust restaurants with oyster shells' or life measured out with coffee spoons. Quite the contrary. Good meals to celebrate the completion of a novel, outings to favourite eating places for birthday and wedding anniversaries, elaborate dinners on public occasions. "All through Dickens's life," writes Ackroyd, "these affairs crop up with almost monotonous regularity."⁶

His fiction is much the same. One reader with a taste for facts has logged 35 breakfasts in *The Pickwick Papers*, 32 dinners, 10 luncheons and 'drink' on 249

2 Dickens describes his privations in the *Autobiographical Fragment*; see also "The Streets – Morning", *Sketches by Boz*.

3 FORSTER, John. *The Life of Charles Dickens*. 2 vols. London: Everyman, 1969. I, 22.

4 ACKROYD, Peter. *Dickens*. London: Sinclair-Stevenson, 1990. 2.

5 ACKROYD. *Dickens*. 248.

6 ACKROYD. *Dickens*. 247.

separate occasions.⁷ From Dickens's first novel to his incomplete last, the pleasures of the board stand out. Feel a little 'low' and want 'support', which is how Canon Crisparkle's mother interprets her son's reveries when he falls into thought over some knotty ethical problem, what better way to revive him than for 'the blooming old lady' to hasten to the dining-room closet and open doors that spread not the perfumes of Arabia but all the health-giving smells and tastes the domestic and oriental world can muster. Deep shelves stocked with jam pots, "tin canisters, spice boxes, and agreeably outlandish vessels of blue and white," (*The Mystery of Edwin Drood* 100) packed with preserved tamarinds and ginger. Pickles a plenty sat in uniform rows, all neatly labelled alongside jams "wearing curl-papers", and announcing themselves "in feminine calligraphy, like a soft whisper, to be Raspberry, Gooseberry, Apricot, Plum, Damson, Apple and Peach" (*The Mystery of Edwin Drood* 100). "Every benevolent inhabitant of this retreat," comments the narrator in *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, "had his name inscribed" (*The Mystery of Edwin Drood* 100) on the good Canon's stomach. Significantly, such restorative and culinary skills belong to both sexes. Captain Cuttle is no less a dab hand with the preparation of nourishing food than the athletic and virile Lieutenant Tartar. While the former might go overboard on the quantity of gravy he prepares for Florence, whom he welcomes after she flees from her father's house (see *Dombey and Son*, ch. 49), the latter excels at light meals. Working quickly in his landlocked galley kitchen, he produces a veritable repast, one that dazzles and enchants: "Wonderful macaroons, glittering liqueurs, magically preserved tropical spices, and jellies of celestial tropical fruits, displayed themselves profusely at an instant's notice." (*Edwin Drood* 241)

The celebration of food in Dickens's novels, however, requires a note of caution. Any biographical inferences we draw from the descriptions of elaborate meals must be treated with circumspection. For the writer who expiates on the delights of food and drink, Dickens proved, as Ackroyd notes, remarkably abstemious in his personal habits.⁸ Generous and always cordial as a host, in fact he ate little and drank sparingly. In the words of Dickens's office boy, "'He wasn't but a light eater himself.'"⁹ The paradox thus poses a challenge worth exploring. Food in Dickens's fiction carries multiple significances. Meals and their consumption offer a network of meanings embedded in the discourse of those who have much to say before they fill their stomachs. "'Ah!'" said Mr Squeers, smacking his lips and holding aloft a glass of milk and water, "'here's richness! Think of the many beggars and orphans in the streets that would be glad of this'"

7 LANE, Margaret. "Dickens on the Hearth." In: Michael Slater (ed.). *Dickens 1970*. London: Chapman & Hall, 1970. 166.

8 ACKROYD. *Dickens*. 248.

9 ACKROYD. *Dickens*. 248.

(*Nicholas Nickleby* 106; ch. 5). Well might Squeers's apostrophe serve as an epithet for all of Dickens's heavy grubbers.

We require no appetizer when we turn to *Martin Chuzzlewit*, a novel generously endowed with hearty eaters. Take Mr Pecksniff, for example. Obliging this self-revealing hypocrite strikes the keynote that defines his character as soon as he sees food. Knocked to the ground by a sudden burst of wind in the opening episode, he recovers quickly under the ministrations of his two daughters. When his limited abrasions have been dressed "with patches of brown pickled paper," in the manner prescribed by contemporary first-aid manuals, he settles down to "some stiff brandy-and water" (*Martin Chuzzlewit* 61) followed by afternoon tea. No dainty cucumber sandwiches and finger foods for this gorging. Tea in this instance comes as a smoking dish of ham and eggs, together with cream, sugar, tea and toast. The minor cuts he suffered stimulate rather than hinder his appetite, which, once satisfied, prompts a sermon on "the worldly goods" (*Martin Chuzzlewit* 65) he had just demolished. Listing them, Charity reminds him not to forget eggs:

'And eggs,' said Mr Pecksniff, 'even they have their moral. See how they come and go! Every pleasure is transitory. We can't even eat, long. If we indulge in harmless fluids, we get the dropsy; if in exciting liquids, we get drunk. What a soothing reflection is that!' (*Martin Chuzzlewit* 65)

We might want to question Pecksniff's medical knowledge – the accumulation of fluid in body tissues is symptomatic of various conditions and has nothing to do with 'dropsy', or oedema – but let's not doubt his religious fervour. Fractured and high-flown, he lards his speech with improving sentiments, the language of evangelical societies and churchly fellowships anxious to better the nation's moral life by urging us to practice restraint, swear off alcohol and suppress vice.

A lack of tolerance for sentiments like these pervades Dickens's fiction. Brought up sitting under the voice of powerful preachers like the fictional Reverend Boanerges Boiler and "steamed like a potato in the unventilated breath" of his rhetoric, Dickens acquired from childhood a deep distaste for the "lumbering jocularity" of the kind practiced by Pecksniff before or after a meal.¹⁰ Sitting in chapel and close enough to the Reverend Boiler's big round face, Dickens the child could look up his outstretched coat-sleeve "as if it were a telescope with a stopper on, and [...] hate him with an unwholesome hatred for two hours" ("London Churches" 108). Later, as an adult, it was knowledge of the hypocrisy of such public performers that engaged Dickens's contempt. Many of them were hard drinkers. Others gluttons. And while they preached continence

10 DICKENS, Charles. "City of London Churches." In: Michael Slater (ed.). *Dickens' Journalism*. London: J.M. Dent, 2000. IV, 108.

or abstinence, their own passions were all too easily unleashed, albeit coupled with uplifting sentiments.

To give Mr Pecksniff his due, he is not slow to acknowledge our undeniable animal nature. En route to London by coach with his two daughters and all three wrapped up against the cold, “moral precepts” fall from his lips as freely as crumbs when he eats. “‘What are we?’” he asks his daughters, “‘What are we [...] but coaches? Some of us are slow coaches,’ and with increased emphasis, ‘some of us are fast coaches. Our passions are the horses; and rampant animals too!’” (*Martin Chuzzlewit* 174)

‘Really, Pa!’ cried both the daughters at once. ‘How very unpleasant.’

‘And rampant animals too!’ repeated Mr Pecksniff with so much determination, that he may be said to have exhibited, at the moment, a sort of moral rampancy himself: ‘and Virtue is the drag. We start from The Mother’s Arms, and we run to The Dust Shovel.’ (*Martin Chuzzlewit* 174)

If this journey of a Victorian Everyman sounds a little odd, bear in mind the novel’s historical setting and Dickens’s delight in exposing Pecksniff’s ponderous hypocrisy, lubricated by copious refreshments from a ‘stone vessel’ concealed in his coat pocket. The novel’s action unfolds in the middle 1830s before rail travel became popular; so when the architect takes to the high road on business, he sets out from an old-fashioned coaching inn instead of a train station. Thus employing the old trope of life as a journey, Pecksniff offers the curious proposition that we start at ‘The Mother’s Arms’, drinking milk at the maternal breast, to proceed from one public house to the next, driven by ‘un-governable coursers’ and restrained only by the ‘drag’ or brake on the coach’s rear wheels, until we run to ground at the appropriately named end destination, ‘The Dust Shovel’. So much for eschatology delivered as the coach lumbers along, until, “exhausted”, Mr Pecksniff “corked the [brandy] bottle tight, with the air of a man who had effectively corked the subject also; and went to sleep for three stages” (*Martin Chuzzlewit* 174).

The circumstances in which Pecksniff delivers his inebriated reflections heighten the narrator’s contempt for quasi religious posturing. Just think, Mr Pecksniff had reminded his daughters, noting the frosty weather. Tucked up in the coach and secure against the sharp air, he comments how all three are warm and well-fed, a condition of well-being which should not prevent them taking satisfaction in “admiring the fortitude with which certain conditions of men bear cold and hunger” (*Martin Chuzzlewit* 174). In support of this uplifting thought, he offers the following observation: “‘And if we were no better off than anybody else, what would become of our sense of gratitude; which,’ said Mr Pecksniff with tears in his eyes, as he shook his fist at a beggar who wanted to get

up behind [the coach], ‘is one of the holiest feelings of our common nature’” (*Martin Chuzzlewit* 174).

The elevation of his own personal comfort to the status of a moral exemplum reveals how Mr Pecksniff sees the world. Confident complacency of this order rests on the comforting illusion that Providence alone accounts for the status quo. Inequality exists, Pecksniff reminds us, in order to make those of us who enjoy life’s riches feel good.

The pace of a coach journey punctuated by stops provided travellers with opportunities for refreshment. One option allowed customers to pay the innkeeper a fixed price for supper, an arrangement known as ‘a contract business’. Under the terms agreed, the more one ate, the better the bargain, an advantage Pecksniff was not slow to exploit.¹¹ Once food is placed before him, he demolished everything that came within reach. And “by this means”, notes the narrator, he acquired “a greasy expression of countenance, indicating contentment, if not repletion” (*Martin Chuzzlewit* 179). Sixpenny-worths of hot brandy-and-water at the bar and the furtive refilling “of his own little bottle” “in order that he might refresh himself at leisure in the dark coach without being observed” complete his indulgence (*Martin Chuzzlewit* 179). Can there be any wonder that, at a later stage of the journey, with so much food inside him Mr Pecksniff felt impelled to deliver “a kind of grace after meat” (*Martin Chuzzlewit* 179) in order to ease his conscience?

His discourse on this occasion resembles the earlier scrambled comments about life as a journey, as he muddles medical and religious thinking to wonderful effect:

‘The process of digestion, as I have been informed by anatomical friends, is one of the most wonderful works of nature. I do not know how it may be with others, but it is a great satisfaction to me to know, when regaling on my humble fare, that I am putting in motion the most beautiful machinery with which we have any acquaintance. I really feel at such times as if I was doing a public service. When I have wound myself up, if I may employ such a term, [...] and I know I am Going, I feel that in the lesson afforded by the works within me, I am a Benefactor to my Kind!’ (*Martin Chuzzlewit* 179)

Pecksniff’s terminology in this passage unconsciously reveals how he conceptualises the world. He continues to rely on notions derived from William Paley – present in the earlier passage – who, with other natural theologians, argued that the intricacy they observed in the natural world constituted evidence of God’s design. Likening the world to a watch or clock whose every part manifests purpose and intention, Paley and his followers saw God’s hand in everything, even the chemical processes of the alimentary tract of the human

11 METZ, Nancy Aycock. *The Companion to Martin Chuzzlewit*. Robertsbridge: Helm Information, 2001. 128.

body. William Prout, for example, a leading physician and analytical chemist and one of the eight contributors to the *Bridgewater Treatises* (1833–40), puts forward this claim in his *Chemistry, Meteorology, and the Function of Digestion Considered with Reference to Natural Theology* (1833):

When we witness such a display of elaborate arrangements, as are exhibited in the mechanism of the digestive organs [...] it is evident that the chemical changes so produced, must be at least as real, as the mechanical structure [of the universe] by means of which they are effected. [...] The existence is thus unavoidably acknowledged of a Being, who knowing every pre-existing chemical property of matter, and willing to direct these chemical properties for a specific object, has contrived for that purpose an apparatus admirably fitted to attain His object.¹²

A sly verbal turn admits a further subtext perhaps not lost on the more knowing reader. Making its way through the digestive tract, food reaches its destination as the result of bowel motions that eventually lead to “*Going*” [my italics], euphemistic usage still current for voiding, which Pecksniff imaginatively deems “a public service”. Surely this claim that his evacuations afford a lesson for all of us must be the most hyperbolic rationale ever offered for the expulsion of what Prout termed “excrementitious matters”.¹³ In the face of Victorian conventions, a Rabelaisian Dickens exploits humour associated, in Bakhtin’s apt phrase, with “the lower bodily stratum”.¹⁴

Moralising discourse of a Pecksniffian kind characterises only one of the novel’s great eaters. When Mrs Gamp takes her seat at the table, she states her dietary requirements with unpretentious clarity.¹⁵ As a nurse who works hard for a modest living – one who “went to a lying-in or a laying-out with equal relish” – she needs her nourishment. In her own inimical words, as she explains to Mr Pecksniff,

‘If it wasn’t for the nerve a little sip of liquor gives me [...] I could never go through with what I sometimes has to do.’ [...] ‘Mrs Harris,’ I says, [...] ‘leave the bottle on the

12 Quoted by Nancy Aycok METZ in her *The Companion to Martin Chuzzlewit*, 129. I owe a considerable debt to this volume and acknowledge with gratitude its assistance preparing this essay.

13 PROUT, William. *Chemistry, Meteorology, and the Function of Digestion Considered with Reference to Natural Theology*. London: W. Pickering, 1834. 432.

14 BAKHTIN, Mikhail. *Rabelais and His World*. Translated by Helene Iswolsky. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1968. 23. BAKHTIN’s analysis of Rabelais as a writer working outside the literary norms of the time whose vitality derives from his independence and absorption of folk carnival humour offers interesting insights into both Mrs Gamp and Mr Pecksniff, two figures who, in different ways, treat the needs of the flesh and the body in a comic mixture of assertion and denial offset, certainly in Pecksniff’s case, with sanctity and pretence.

15 The language of Mrs Gamp is not without religious rhetoric; but her comically mangled and disconnected religious sentiments lack the self-serving sanctity Pecksniff invokes to cover his gluttony.

chimney-piece, and don't ask me to take none, but let me put my lips to it when I am so disposed, and then I will do what I'm engaged to do, according to the best of my ability' (*Martin Chuzzlewit* 379).

Her idiosyncratic substitution of the 'dg' phoneme for the consonants 's', 'z' or 't', as Nancy Metz points out, perhaps suggests the slurred, thick speech of intoxication,¹⁶ evidence of which is present in the state of her nose – “somewhat red and swollen” and the fact that in the words of the narrator, “it was difficult to enjoy her society without becoming conscious of a smell of spirits” (*Martin Chuzzlewit* 378).

But let us allow Mrs Gamp some latitude in her professional pursuits. This “female functionary, a nurse, and watcher, and performer of nameless offices about the persons of the dead” (*Martin Chuzzlewit* 374) needed a little reinforcement, especially for the latter task. Bathing and laying out a corpse calls for a combination of mental and physical stamina in order to straighten the limbs, clean and plug the orifices and dress the body in grave clothes. Such tasks, as she explains to Mr Pecksniff, require privacy and can hardly be done in the presence of troublesome observers. “I can feel for them as has their feelings tried,” she remarks about the grieving Mr Chuffey, Anthony Chuzzlewit's devoted clerk, but “I am not a Rooshan or a Prooshan, and consequently cannot suffer spies to be set over me.” (*Martin Chuzzlewit* 382) Accordingly, left alone when the old man is led away, she sits down on a stool with a bottle of spirits on one knee and a glass on the other. Three stiff drams were necessary before she sets to work to prepare “all that remained of Anthony Chuzzlewit” (*Martin Chuzzlewit* 381).

Her engagement on this occasion also required her to watch over the corpse for a week, a practice invariably carried out by paid professionals like Mrs Gamp. During that sad time she was of course amply supplied with creature comforts. “Mrs Gamp,” the narrator relates, “proved to be very choice in her eating, and repudiated hashed mutton with scorn. In her drinking too, she was very punctual and particular, requiring a pint of mild porter at lunch, a pint at dinner, half-a-pint as a species of stay or holdfast between dinner and tea, and a pint of the celebrated staggering ale, or Real Old Brighton Tipper, at supper.” (*Martin Chuzzlewit* 384) Casual invitations to refresh herself with wine “as the good breeding of her employers” might prompt them to offer, together with recourse to the bottle on the chimney-piece, must have rendered her under the influence throughout the day (*Martin Chuzzlewit* 385).

Further work falls to Mrs Gamp when she is engaged to look after a gentleman ‘took ill’ in an inn nearby. She is able to double up, she explains, on account of the

16 METZ. *The Companion to Martin Chuzzlewit*. 274–75.

quiet ways of Mr Chuffey, whom she can pack off early to bed and then repair to the inn for a turn at night-watching. “‘I will not deny,’” said Mrs Gamp, seeking to justify her decision, “‘that I am but a poor woman, and that the money is a object; but do not let that act upon you [...]. Rich folks may ride on camels, but it ain’t so easy for ’em to see out of a needle’s eye. That’s my comfort, and I hope I knows it’” (*Martin Chuzzlewit* 474).

Seeing Mrs Gamp in action quickly dispels any fear that her double spell of nursing might prove too much. Rather her own comfort takes precedence over everything, especially when it concerns food and drink. Relieving the day nurse, she gets straight to the point: “‘Anything to tell afore you goes, my dear?’ asked Mrs Gamp. [...] ‘The pickled salmon,’ Mrs Prig replies, ‘is quite delicious. I can partick’ler recommend it.’ ‘Don’t have nothing to say to the cold meat, for it tastes of the stable,’” she continues. But “‘The drinks is all good’” (*Martin Chuzzlewit* 478). Acting on her partner’s advice, Mrs Gamp makes quick work of her professional duties and settles down in the easy chair, made softer by removing the patient’s pillow, and concludes that ‘it was high time to think about supper’ and so gives her orders to the assistant chambermaid.

‘I think young woman [...] that I could pick a little bit of pickled salmon, with a nice little sprig of fennel, and a sprinkling of white pepper. I takes new bread, my dear, with jest a little pat of fresh butter, and a mossel of cheese. In case there should be such a thing as a cucumber in the ’ouse, will you be so kind as to bring it, for I’m rather partial to ’em, and they does a world of good in a sick room. If they draws the Brighton Old Tipper here, I takes *that* ale at night, my love; it bein’ considered wakeful by the doctors. And whatever you do, young woman, don’t bring more than a shilling’s-worth of gin and warm-water when I rings the bell a second time; for that is always my allowance, and I never takes a drop beyond!’ (*Martin Chuzzlewit* 480)

Although the conditions of Mrs Gamp’s work necessitate solitary dining, to eat alone, in her case, in no way diminishes the pleasure of a meal. Her orders executed and the food brought up, she sits down to eat and drink “in a high good humour”. “The extent to which she availed herself of the vinegar, and supped up that refreshing fluid with the blade of her knife,” comments the narrator, “can scarcely be expressed in narrative” (*Martin Chuzzlewit* 480). Thus deprived of company and conversation, Mrs Gamp settles for the food and disposes of everything in an eccentric manner. If her attention to etiquette proves disconcerting, her lack of decorum suggests a healthy enjoyment, a positive if inelegant form of self-empowerment. Dickens emphasises this point later when Mrs Gamp defends her attempt to stop Jonas Chuzzlewit taking his pregnant wife to sea aboard one of “Them confugion steamers”, popularly believed to bring about premature labour:

'I goes out workin' for my bread, 'tis true, [she warns Jonas] but I maintain my independency, [...] I has my feelins as a woman, sir, and I have been a mother likeways; but touch a pipkin as belongs to me, or make the least remarks on what I eats or drinks, and [...] either you leaves the place, or me. [...] Don't try no impogician with the Nuss, for she will not abear it!' (*Martin Chuzzlewit* 706)

Self-assertiveness characterises other eaters in the novel, but the narrator finds their behaviour neither comic nor endearing. Several scenes that occur during the course of young Martin Chuzzlewit's travels in the United States add to our perspective on the way people behave at the table. Martin's first meal on firm land after his transatlantic crossing occurs at Mrs Pawkins's boarding house in New York. Summoned by a bell rung violently, the diners rush to the 'eatin room', thrusting one another aside in their dash to take a seat. Some eighteen or twenty people assemble, five or six of whom are ladies, who, in apparent self-protection, sit "wedged together in a little phalanx by themselves" (*Martin Chuzzlewit* 334). The military metaphor is apt: to dine in an American boarding house is to engage in combat. Almost no one speaks as knives and forks work away "at a rate quite alarming", each person seeming "to eat his utmost in self-defence", asserting "the first law of nature" (*Martin Chuzzlewit* 334). In conditions that resemble a battle, one turkey, a pair of ducks and two fowls strategically deployed on the table, disappear "as rapidly as if every bird had had the use of its wings" (*Martin Chuzzlewit* 334). Oysters, pickles, cucumbers and other victims of the assault vanish in moments, great heaps of "indigestible matter" melting away "as ice before the sun". "It was a solemn and an awful thing to see," comments the narrator. "Dyspeptic individuals bolted their food in wedges; feeding not themselves, but broods of nightmares, who were continually standing at livery within them" (*Martin Chuzzlewit* 334).

The sheer plenitude of food on the table merits comment, but questions raised here and in other scenes depicting meals focus on social and behavioural issues. Why do Americans eat so fast? Why do they eat in silence, not reflective like monks in holy calm, but rather like beasts swallowing food together "from a common trough" (*Martin Chuzzlewit* 440)? Why do they act so aggressively, almost choking themselves "in their unnatural efforts to get rid of all the meat" before others came? Why is each diner so intent, "as usual, on his own private gorging"? (*Martin Chuzzlewit* 608). Why are cheerfulness and good spirits lacking? Why do travellers sit down with their companions – "fellow-animals", as Dickens describes his passengers aboard a canal boat on the Ohio river in *American Notes* – "to ward off thirst and hunger as a business, to empty, each creature, his Yahoo trough as quickly as he can, and then slink sullenly away" (*American Notes* 214–15)? Why, in short, have Americans stripped the social sacraments from meals and left nothing but "the mere greedy satisfaction of the natural cravings" (*Martin Chuzzlewit* 215)?

Initially puzzled by the way people eat and then disappear, Martin naively enquires after his first meal in company: “‘Is there no desert, or other interval of conversation?’” only to receive this explanation: “‘We are a busy people here, sir,’” replies Mr Jefferson Brick, “‘and we have no time for that’” (*Martin Chuzzlewit* 336). Much later Elijah Pogram returns to the question of time when Martin expresses his disgust at the behaviour of one of the diners aboard a steamboat. Seated with “several virtuous citizens”, Martin notices one “in a high state of tobacco”, with juice of the weed dried about his mouth and chin, suck on his knife for some moments and then make “a cut with it at the butter”. In defence of this act, Pogram rationalises: “‘We have no time to acquire forms, sir’”, to which Martin angrily replies that “it’s not a question of acquiring anything”, rather it’s one of losing “instinctive good breeding” and the forms that distinguish man from brutes. “‘The mass of your countrymen,’” Martin continues in an extended lecture, “‘begin by stubbornly neglecting little social observances, [...] acts of common, decent, natural, human politeness.’” (*Martin Chuzzlewit* 609) But ignoring small obligations like these prepares the ground for the regular disregard of “great ones” (*Martin Chuzzlewit* 609). By such inattentiveness, a whole society can slip into the kind of dysfunctional behaviour Martin finds characteristic of much of American society (*Martin Chuzzlewit* 609).

The validity of Dickens’s criticism raises important questions. That his objections were accurate we can assess from the fact that middle class English observers made similar observations about American dining. In American hotels and boarding houses, proprietors laid out fish, poultry, beef, dried meats, tea, coffee, pickles, cake, toast, preserves, and bread and butter simultaneously for convenience. But while seated, diners were not helped to portions by servants, a practice that struck English visitors as odd and, from the perspective of Americans in Europe, as equally remarkable on account of their formality. Guests generally proceeded to the table in an orderly manner and each took his or her place according to a seating plan. Then one waited to be served, one didn’t simply stick one’s fork in the nearest plate. It took time for the servants to remove one set of plates and to supply the next. Conversation under these circumstances flourished.¹⁷ One talked with one’s partner on the right and then on the left. Throughout the whole meal, well-trained servants in England effaced themselves as much as possible; if employed at American boarding houses, waiters were described by Thomas Hamilton in 1843 as skipping around the

17 “Meals proceed through a series of courses,” noted Henry COLEMAN, as one set of dishes was removed after the other; and “At table, no one helps himself to any thing, [...] but a servant always interferes.” (COLEMAN, Henry. *European Life and Manners: In: Familiar Letters to Friends*. 2 vols. London: Charles C. Little & James Brown, 1849. I, 87–88; 295).

table in an effort to keep the ‘masticators’ happy. Elsewhere in his *Men and Manners in America*, Hamilton speaks of “[a] large bevy of negroes” bustling about “ministering with all alacrity to the many wants which were somewhat vociferously obtruded on their attention.”¹⁸

Characteristically, however, it was the speed with which Americans ate that drew most attention. “At breakfast there was no lounging, no dipping into newspapers, no interval of repose in mastication; but all was hurry, bustle, clamour, and voracity, and the business of repletion went forward with a rapidity altogether unexampled.”¹⁹ At dinner the same prevailed. Observing passengers on a steamboat on the Hudson, Hamilton noted how each man seemed to devour his food as if under “the uncontrollable impulse of some sudden hurricane of appetite. [...] A few minutes did the business.”²⁰

Historians today point to the United States as the home of fast food: fare dispensed in wrappings often dropped in the street as the food is consumed quite literally on the hoof. In reaction to this trend Italian-led advocates of ‘slow food’ have made important inroads,²¹ but the four components of McDonaldization – characterised by George Ritzer, sociologist and student of North American patterns of consumption, writing in 1996 as efficiency, calculability, standardization and control²² – continue to prevail. Almost certainly, these principles originated in assumptions about food Dickens documented in North America.

To read Dickens’s criticisms as the result of an anti-American bias, however, undercuts their validity. Dickens went to America in 1842 in search of a republic that existed in his imagination, one which, on inspection, bore no resemblance to the reality he encountered. If Americans downed their food with unseemly haste, were Englishmen better off taking more time and listening to Pecksniff’s

18 HAMILTON, Thomas. *Men and Manners in America*. Edinburgh/London: William Blackwood, 1843. 14.

19 HAMILTON. *Men and Manners in America*. 44.

20 HAMILTON. *Men and Manners in America*. 44. Fast eating continued throughout the century and prevailed at all social levels. One English journalist writing later noted how gentlemen eating lunch at the Astor House in New York would enter, “read the bill of fare, speak to the waiter,” pay the bill and depart. Individuals would doubtless take their dinner; “but the operation is so rapid that I cannot say properly that I witnessed it.” HOLYOAKE, George Jacob. *Among the Americans and a Stranger in America*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1970 [1881]. 33.

21 ‘Slow food’ as a counter-movement began in Italy in 1986, the result of an anti-MacDonald’s demonstration in Rome, a movement variously opposed to the invasion of fast food and the growing dependence on the agri-business of chemicals and the mass production of food at the expense of locally grown, sustainable products. See ANDREWS, Geoff. *The Slow Food Story: Politics & Pleasure*. London: Pluto Press, 2008. Authors and environmentalists Alastair Sawday and Gail McKenzie are among the proponents of the movement in England.

22 RITZER, George. *The McDonaldization of Society*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press, 1995.

moralising sentiments? Mrs Gamp enjoys her meals and eats with relish; but her manners would make her equally unwelcome as a guest. Sunday dinner at Todgers' at least put greater emphasis on ceremony and even supplied some of the social observances Martin found lacking aboard an American canal boat. But for whatever grace and lively spirit of community that prevailed on that occasion, Todgers' was a commercial boarding house and decisions about food were always subject to costs sharply assessed in the calculating eye of Mrs Todgers. To satisfy the unreasonable demands of young gentlemen for gravy, she had no qualms about adding water to extend the amount "they expected each day at dinner" (*Martin Chuzzlewit* 190). Likewise she did not hesitate to lower the table beer – a weak beverage in the first place – or dilute the soup. Even the Sunday celebration, delayed to the genteel hour of five, fails to meet expectations, as Pecksniff, emboldened with drink, puts familiar hands on the hostess before trying to pull off his shoes and falling senseless into the fireplace (*Martin Chuzzlewit* 211). By contrast, the preparation of a beefsteak pudding by Ruth Pinch – her hands covered in flour, apron fetchingly tied around a slim waist accentuated by a "wicked little stomacher", and her rosy lips pursed up – is about as close to a tempting eating experience as this novel comes (*Martin Chuzzlewit* 676). Only one genuinely seductive hostess presides, and she is the comely Mrs Lupin, whose well stocked kitchen Mark Tapley finds equal to the charms of the widow herself.

But the snug and cosy Dragon, whose kitchen fire burns "clear and red", is an inn of the old kind, a piece of nostalgia about to fade from the English scene (*Martin Chuzzlewit* 733), replaced by faceless and depressingly uniform hotels situated at new railway termini, where travellers faced unpalatable food and indifferent treatment by waiters more eager to see their customers leave than to provide good service. For an alternative, the traveller might try the refreshment stalls located inside the stations – convenience and speed accounting for their sudden growth – where the choice of edibles had been reduced to a new low: "stale sponge-cakes that turn to sand in your mouth" or "shining brown patties, composed of unknown animals within".²³ Money, of course, could buy luxury and ostentatious banquets of the kind hosted by Montague Tigg. "Dine with me to-morrow, in Pall Mall!" he urges, an invitation greedy Jonas Chuzzlewit can't

23 "Refreshments for Travellers" *All the Year Round*, 24 March, 1860. In: SLATER, Michael (ed.). *Dickens' Journalism*. London: J.M. Dent, 2000. IV, 74–83. 79. The impact of railways on eating habits and the availability of well-prepared food had been recorded much earlier. See MOGG, Edward. *Mogg's New Picture of London; or, Strangers' Guide to the British Metropolis*. London: E. Mogg, 1848. 192. Later in the century, Nathaniel NEWNHAM-DAVIS wrote: "As a rule one does not expect to get a good dinner at a railway hotel" (NEWNHAM-DAVIS, Nathaniel. *Dinners and Diners: Where and How to Dine in London*. London: Grant Richards, 1899. 287).

refuse. The dishes on that occasion – wines and fruits of the choicest kind and everything “elegantly served” – were equal to their task: to serve as bait for the unwary and snare them into investing substantial sums in the fraudulent Anglo-Bengalese Life and Loan Company (*Martin Chuzzlewit* 505).

Scenes based on food in *Martin Chuzzlewit* offer an extensive agenda, one we can read from a variety of critical and cultural perspectives. At times realistic and full of the observational detail which Walter Bagehot writing in 1856 prized as “something amazing [...] something incredible,”²⁴ the same passages also fuse fanciful modes that bring to life two of Dickens’s greatest gargoyles. Tastes of course will vary. But like any good host, Dickens provides a Bill of Fare time has done nothing to diminish. Each of the dishes, varied and nicely concocted, remains just as fresh and appetizing as when, one by one, they were originally served up in monthly portions.

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24 BAGEHOT, Walter. “Charles Dickens.” In: Philip Collins (ed.). *Dickens: The Critical Heritage*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971. 390–401.

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Don't Play with Your Food? – Edward Lear's Nonsense Cookery and Limericks

A lobster wooed a lady crab,
And kissed her lovely face.
"Upon my sole," the crabbess cried,
"I wish you'd mind your plaice!"
(*A Nonsense Anthology* 28)¹

Edward Lear is famous for his nonsense poems, especially for his limericks. In quite a few of his limericks, food and eating habits figure, and this is certainly the major topic of his *Nonsense Cookery*, first published in the *Nonsense Gazette* in August 1870. Lear's treatment of food is not serious, and the recipes in his *Nonsense Cookery* are not really meant to be instructions to cook. The basic ingredients in his nonsense cooking as well as in his limericks concerned with food and eating are language and wordplay: he combines words and phrases, and the outcome is a delightful dish² that is, however, inedible – one literally can only 'eat the words' and digest them.³ Although it is commonly considered to be dangerous, or, at least, odd, to analyse jokes, an attempt will be made to find out how his nonsense cooking works and how he treats food in his limericks, i. e. in how far food contributes to their being nonsensical.⁴

1. Nonsense Cookery

Lear's *Nonsense Cookery* contains three recipes, preceded by an introductory comment that presents them as written by Professor Bosh:

Our readers will be interested in the communications from our valued and learned contributor, Professor Bosh, whose labours in the fields of Culinary and Botanical

1 WELLS, Carolyn (ed.). *A Nonsense Anthology*. Charleston, SC: BiblioBazaar, 2006 [1910].

2 See also "dish" as a book title, e. g. in MACDONALD, George. *A Dish of Orts*. Whitethorn, CA: Johannesen, 1996 [1893].

3 Cf. the essay by Matthias Bauer in this volume. The very word 'game' indicates a relation to food.

4 It is somehow surprising that food in Edward Lear has not yet been considered as a topic: there are no results for the search entries "Edward Lear" and "food" in the MLA database.

science, are so well known to all the world. The first three Articles richly merit to be added to the Domestic cookery of every family; [...]. (Lear 123)⁵

Although Professor Bosh is introduced as learned and famous, his name already gives away that his contribution is not to be taken seriously by the readers. The three articles mentioned in the introductory note, “Three Receipts for Domestic Cookery”, confirm this suspicion through their titles: “To Make an Amblongus Pie”, “To Make Crumbobblious Cutlets” and, finally, “To Make Gosky Patties”. The recipes are thus based on the creation of nonsense words that are combined with well-known dishes; there is nothing extraordinary about pies, cutlets, and patties. Their attributes, however, are newly-invented words derived from wordplay that takes place on a morphological level.

The word “amblongus” seems to be a strange combination of “amb-” + Latin “longus”. The initial syllable “amb-” occurs in words like “ambage”, “amble” and “amblosus”. One of these alternatives, “ambage”, refers to language, “roundabout or indirect modes of speech”, “[d]ark and obscure language”⁶; a phenomenon that occurs in Lear’s recipes that are likewise “obscure” and somehow “indirect” as far as their meaning is concerned. This reading leads to another one of MacDonald’s wordplays: amblongus is a derivation from ‘ambiguous’, and *ambiguous* contains ‘big’, the opposite of which is ‘long’. He mixes various morphemes, plays with them, and thus creates a new word – he uses several (linguistic) ingredients and treats them as in a recipe.

If one goes on reading the recipe, one finds a further possibility of interpretation: after more than twelve hours of careful cooking, all that is left to be done with the result of the endeavour is to “Serve [it] up in a clean dish, and throw the whole out of the window as fast as possible” (Lear 124). Given this context, the reference to “amblosus”, “amblotic”⁷ as a potential meaning or connotation becomes also possible, as something that is being ‘aborted’, namely the outcome of the cooking.⁸ Lear thus plays with connotations and possible meanings that morphemes evoke and that are not entirely without sense, but neither are they being attributed a definite meaning.

The second recipe, “Crumbobblious Cutlets”, is similar to this. “Crumbobblious” is a so-called portmanteau-word – Lewis Carroll liked to use them, e.g. in “Jabberwocky” – consisting of “crumbly (or crummy) + bobbish”⁹ and

5 LEAR, Edward. *The Complete Nonsense of Edward Lear*. Edited by Holbrook Jackson. London: Faber & Faber, 2001 [1947].

6 Cf. *OED ambage* I.; I.2.

7 Cf. *OED amblotic*, a. “1839 Hooper, *Med. Dict.*, *Amblotic*, having the power to cause abortion”; *amblosus*, n.

8 Cf. *OED abort*, v. 2.a. “to bring to a premature end; to terminate without result or success”.

9 Cf. KEYSER, J.D. “The Stuttering of Lewis Carroll.” In: Yvan Lebrun and Richard Hoops (eds.). *Neurolinguistic Approaches to Stuttering: Proceedings of the International Symposium on*

something like “bilious” or “edulious”¹⁰; both words, bilious and edulious, are one way or another connected with food and digestion and have rather negative connotations (and both were already in Lear's lifetime more or less obsolete). The word “gosky” reads like blending of “gos” + the suffix “-ky”. “Gos” could refer to both the short form of “goshawk” and “a diminutive species of geese”,¹¹ both animals that might be eaten. Lear thus creates nonsense words that have the appearance of being nonsensical at first glance but show some reference to the semantic fields of eating and to the recipes that follow.

Whereas in the titles of the recipes, the nonsense stems from the combination of a ‘nonsense’ adjective with a familiar noun, in the recipes themselves, the nonsense is rather produced by inappropriate ingredients and procedures. “To Make Gosky Patties” reads as follows:

Take a pig, three or four years of age, and tie him by the off-hind leg to a post. Place 5 pounds of currants, 3 of sugar, 2 pecks of peas, 18 roast chestnuts, a candle, and six bushels of turnips, within his reach; if he eats these, constantly provide him with more. Then procure some cream, some slices of Cheshire cheese, four quires of foolscap paper, and a packet of black pins. Work the whole into a paste, and spread it out to dry on a sheet of clean brown waterproof linen.

When the paste is perfectly dry, but not before, proceed to beat the Pig violently, with the handle of a large broom. If he squeals, beat him again.

Visit the paste and beat the Pig alternately for some days, and ascertain if at the end of that period the whole is about to turn into Gosky Patties.

If it does not then, it never will; and in that case the Pig may be let loose, and the whole process may be considered as finished. (Lear 124 – 25)

The first ‘joke’ lies in the fact that the pig is not being stuffed with or roast in the ingredients given – i. e. currants, sugar, peas, roast chestnuts, turnips – but is being fed with them; one wonders whether the candle is simply put before the pig or whether it is supposed to eat that as well as pigs were kept as ‘domestic animals’ especially because they were known for eating all sorts of rubbish.¹²

To make the paste, after the pig has been provided with a constant refuel of the ingredients enumerated in the recipe, in the next step, cream is needed as well as

Stuttering (Brussels, 1972). Paris: Mouton, 1973. 32 – 36. 35. As the third component, Keyser offers “delicious”, which does not make sense. – “Bobbish” means “[w]ell; in good health and spirits” (see *OED*).

10 Cf. *OED bilious*: “Of, pertaining to, or connected with, the bile; [...]. Obs.”; *edule*: “edible [...] So also edulious.” By having the word end on -lious, Lear chose one of the least common suffixes for adjectives; all in all there are only 64 entries for adjectives ending on -lious, most of them have been out of use since the seventeenth or eighteenth centuries.

11 Cf. *OED gos* and *goslet*.

12 JAMES, Allison. “Piggy in the Middle: Food Symbolism and Social Relations.” In: Gerald Mars and Valerie Mars (eds.). *Food: Culture and History*. London: The London Food Seminar, 1993. 29 – 48. 32.

Cheshire cheese; then foolscap paper and black pins are added, and these ingredients, after having been worked into a paste, need to dry, after which the pig has to be beaten. Not only is the mixture of ingredients most unusual – the cream and the cheese do still make sense – but the foolscap paper and the needles are not only inedible but in the latter case even dangerous.¹³ Why the pig has to be beaten is not clear either; usually a pig is considered to be an ideal food source and hence is *eaten*, not *beaten*.¹⁴ But not here: eating the pig seems to be out of the question; beating it becomes part of the recipe, and that has to be done alternately with visiting the paste, and it must be done with the handle of a large broom. The point probably is that the pig is to be ‘buffeted’: usually this would refer to its being served on a buffet, which is here being misunderstood intentionally and transformed into the notion of beating, as “to buffet” also means “to beat, strike”.¹⁵ The meaning of the word “buffet” that is related to food is set aside and substituted by another meaning of it, namely ‘beating’, which is then translated into another word.¹⁶

Although the recipes are nonsensical, their apparent exactitude fulfils the requirements of the genre. If one takes a closer look at the amounts of ingredients that are (mostly) given in very exact numbers, one finds, however, that these are simply enormous, e. g. five pounds of currants, four cauliflowers, four gallons of sauce. What is not very exact and, in fact, unidentifiable, are some of the ingredients, as “amblonguses” that, however, need to be “fresh”. Sometimes the author diverts from his exact directions and tells his readers to add “any number of oysters” (Lear 124) or does not want to set a definite number as in the case of amblonguses: “Take 4 pounds (say $4\frac{1}{2}$)” (Lear 123). In a ‘real’ recipe, this may lead to confusion and, in some cases, even to failure.

Despite some deviations from precise information as to numbers, the recipes are mostly very exact, they are even exaggerated in their exactitude, for instance, when it comes to the treatment of ingredients (as we have seen already in the case of the pig): “Crumbobblious cutlets” are made as follows: “procure some strips of beef, and having cut them into the smallest possible slices, proceed to cut them still smaller, eight or perhaps nine times” (Lear 124). This sounds like tiresome work but can be considered still to be perfectly reasonable within a recipe. The

13 One might read an allusion to DICKENS’ *Great Expectations* here, where sometimes a needle gets, unintentionally, into Pip’s bread-and-butter: “My sister had a trenchant way of cutting our bread-and-butter for us, that never varied. First, with her left hand she jammed the loaf hard and fast against her bib – where it sometimes got a pin into it, and sometimes a needle, which we afterwards got into our mouths.” (*Great Expectations* 10)

14 JAMES. “Piggy in the Middle.” 32.

15 OED *buffet*, v. 1. Cf. Matthias BAUER’s essay in this volume.

16 Furthermore, the English vocabulary comes into play here again, to be more precise, the Germanic/ Roman distinction between the animal name and the name of the food: one can beat pork (the butcher, for examples, does) but not pigs.

real nonsense, after this introductory hyperbole, starts when the cook is asked to “brush [the minced meat] up hastily with a new clothes-brush” and to then “stir it round rapidly and capriciously with a salt-spoon or a soup-ladle” (Lear 124). There is no reason whatsoever to brush up minced meat “with a new clothes-brush” as this will certainly spoil both the meat and the brush. What is moreover conspicuous is the instruction to stir the meat “capriciously” with either a salt-spoon or a soup-ladle. Both instruments are part of the usual equipment of kitchen-tools, they differ, however, very much in size; a soup-ladle is far bigger than a salt-spoon. This means that, after a rather decent beginning of the recipe, it starts to turn into nonsense through the use of tools that have nothing whatsoever to do with cooking or by the random choice of tools. And how to stir anything “capriciously” is not explained either.

Yet it is above all the combination and treatment of ingredients that make the recipes appear so strange and without sense. In the case of “Gosky Patties”, after several days, the whole procedure does not end in throwing everything away, but the recipe says that the mixture eventually may, or may not, turn into Gosky Patties. We cannot even be sure that there will be an outcome, which seems to be characteristic of Lear's *Nonsense Cookery*. His recipes are, after all, not meant to result in serious cooking but rather to entertain the readers as they are based on language-play.

On another level, Lear's *Nonsense Cookery* also parodies recipes and thus follows a literary tradition that goes way back to the Middle Ages, e.g. the *Buoch von guoter spise* in Middle High German, and the Middle English Cooking Book, *Liber cure cocorum*, which was re-published in 1862.¹⁷ An example quoted in Melitta Adamson's *Food in the Middle Ages* shall illustrate the genre: “A tasty little dish. Finally prepare a tasty little dish of stickleback stomach, and flies' feet, and larks' tongues, titmouse legs, and frogs' throats. This way you can live a long and carefree life”.¹⁸ Like in Lear's nonsense cooking, strange ingredients are combined and they sound anything but “tasty”: they “range from realistic to tiny, disgusting, and absurd”,¹⁹ which reveals the parodic intention of the recipe. At the same time, the outer form of the text corresponds to the genre of ‘culinary recipe’ and suggests seriousness – readers and cooks may actually rely on the correctness and the exactitude of the recipe –, while the content plays with

17 Cf. ADAMSON, Melitta Weiss. “The Games Cooks Play: Non-Sense Recipes and Practical Jokes in Medieval Literature.” In: Melitta Weiss Adamson (ed.). *Food in the Middle Ages. A Book of Essays*. New York: Garland, 1995. 177–95. 190 n1. See also CURTIUS, Ernst Robert. *Europäische Literatur und Lateinisches Mittelalter*. Tübingen: Francke, 1993. 431–33 for the tradition of humorous recipes in the Middle Ages.

18 ADAMSON. “The Games Cooks Play.” 177.

19 ADAMSON. “The Games Cooks Play.” 180.

different conventions of the genre, e.g. the disruption of the exactitude and the fact that there will be no outcome to our cooking efforts.

These recipes are typical of Lear's handling of food, not only in his *Nonsense Cookery* but also in his limericks where strange cooking, the wrong use of food and overfeeding are referred to.

2. Strange Cooking, Wrong Use of Food and Overfeeding

Although Lear's limericks mainly refer to eating habits whenever they deal with food, there are also two examples of cooking behaviour that may be linked to his recipes in *Nonsense Cookery*:

There was a Young Lady of Poole,
Whose soup was excessively cool;
So she put it to boil by the aid of some oil,
That ingenious Young Lady of Poole. (Lear 26)

There was an Old Man of Peru,
Who watched his wife making a stew;
But once by mistake, in a stove she did bake,
That unfortunate Man of Peru. (Lear 28)

The first example astounds by its 'normality': the lady's soup is cool, that's why she boils it "by the aid of some oil", which, however, she would not use *in* the soup but to kindle the flames, – and is hence "ingenious". In the second example, however, we are confronted with a piece of 'real' nonsense, especially if we also consider the illustration that goes along with it:



We can see the wife shoving her husband into the oven in a huge pan. Although the limerick itself says she did bake him "by mistake", the picture shows her

pointing at him: it looks as if the baking of her husband were an intentional act.²⁰ While she is laughing, her husband raises his arms as in an attempt of self-defence; she, however, only laughs. Another instance of nonsense in the illustration are the size relations: the husband is so small that he fits into the pan that the woman can easily handle, and the wife is far taller than him; he is under-sized (like a child) while all other proportions seem to be appropriate. The preparation of a dish, stew, here becomes the trigger for a limerick that differs from the illustration that comes with it; this means that not only the content of the poem is nonsensical but also the text-picture-relation is incoherent.

Quite a few of Lear's limericks deal with the topic of food in the way of eating too much, overfeeding, and making fun of this:

There was an Old Person whose habits,
Induced him to feed upon Rabbits;
When he'd eaten eighteen, he turned perfectly green,
Upon which he relinquished those habits. (Lear 19)

Like in so many of Lear's limericks, it is an Old Person who behaves strangely; in this case, the nonsense of the poem derives from the hyperbole of eating not only a few but "eighteen rabbits": the Old Person becomes sick afterwards, which makes him change his habits. Eating too much, however, may also be fatal:

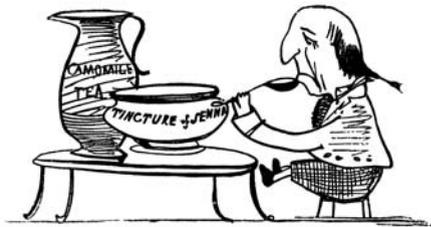
There was an Old Man of Calcutta,
Who perpetually ate bread and butter;
Till a great bit of muffin, on which he was stuffing,
Choked that horrid old man of Calcutta. (Lear 37)²¹

If one considers that Lear's first and foremost audience were children, one soon discovers one possible source of the fun in this poem²²: the old man overeats

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- 20 One is reminded of "Hansel and Gretel" when the witch wants to bake Gretel in the oven and asks her to crawl in there. See GRIMM, Jacob and Wilhelm GRIMM. "Hansel and Gretel." In: Maria Tatar (ed.). *The Annotated Brothers Grimm*. New York: Norton, 2004. 72–85.
- 21 Further cases are that of the "Old Man of the South": "There was an Old Man of the South, / Who had an immoderate mouth; / But in swallowing a dish, that was quite full of fish, / He was choked, that Old Man of the South" (LEAR 32); and the "Young Person of Kew": "There was a young person of Kew, / Whose vices and virtues were few; / But with blameable haste, she devoured some hot paste, / Which destroyed that young person of Kew" (LEAR 179).
- 22 Lear wrote his poems for children mostly and only published them after having presented and dedicated them to a particular child. *The Book of Nonsense*, for example, was originally written for the grandchildren of the Earl of Derby; cf. FINLAY, Nancy. "A Gift of Nonsense: An Edward Lear Manuscript." In: *Bibliion: the Bulletin of the New York Public Library* 7,1 (1998): 5–19. – Children are fond of play, and they like to play with food. Cf. HOLMES, Robyn M. "Play During Snacktime." In: *Play & Culture* 5 (1992): 295–304; MARS, Valerie. "Parsimony amid Plenty: Views from Victorian Didactic Works on Food for Nursery Children." In: Gerald and Valerie Mars (eds.). *Food: Culture and History*. London: The London Food

himself on something that children like to eat very much. His overfeeding is turned into children's play²³: he is "horrid" and has to choke (as a sort of 'punishment' even); eating is part of the "imaginative play of children",²⁴ and it may even become part of their role-playing: "Whatever way the limericks may have functioned for Lear, they can be coherently understood as extending to the child reader an invitation to imaginative role-playing. The dramatic game they open up refers to basic areas of socialization – eating, dressing, grooming, speaking, and so on – and to the kinds of tensions inherent in familial relationships".²⁵ Thus, violence and 'death' in the limericks are never shocking, but are part of the games Lear plays.²⁶ Although it may appear to be violent that the man chokes on the muffin and the woman bakes "[t]hat unfortunate Man of Peru," she at least, and the readers as well, seem to have fun.

Lear also shows that the overuse or 'wrong' use of food need not necessarily be fatal, and has some good advice and even medicine at hand:



There was an Old Man of Vienna,
Who lived upon Tincture of Senna;

Seminar, 1993. 29–48; and MECHLING, Jay. "Don't Play With Your Food." In: *Children's Folklore Review* 23,1 (2000): 7–24.

- 23 MECHLING ("Don't Play With Your Food." 7) describes eating and playing as "two powerful human practices" that are usually dealt with by anthropologists in a serious way, as can be seen in Allison JAMES's article "Confections, Concoctions and Conceptions." In: *Journal of the Anthropological Society of Oxford* 10 (1979): 83–95. – See also BIMBERG, who likewise finds food and drink to be very important in books for children (BIMBERG, Christiane. "The Importance of Eating and Drinking in British Children's Classics." In: *Inklings* 17 (1999): 10–34).
- 24 MECHLING. "Don't Play With Your Food." 11.
- 25 RIEDER, John. "Edward Lear's Limericks: The Function of Children's Nonsense Poetry." In: *Children's Literature* 26 (1998): 47–60. 54.
- 26 The violence in Lear "is that of a Tom & Jerry cartoon" (MORINI, Massimiliano. "'How Pleasant to Know Mr. Lear!': Edward Lear and the Sympathetic Reader." In: *RSV* 4,8 (1999): 93–109. 97); cf. also THOMAS, Joyce. "'There was an old man...': The Sense of Nonsense Verse." In: *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 10,3 (1985): 119–22. – "We face then two peculiarities of play: (a) that the messages or signals exchanged in play are in a certain sense untrue or not meant; and (b) that that which is denoted by these signals is nonexistent" (BATESON, Gregory. "A Theory of Play and Fantasy." In: Gregory Bateson. *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*. New York: Ballantine, 1972 [1952]. 177–93. 183).

When that did not agree, he took Camomile Tea,
That nasty Old Man of Vienna. (Lear 18)

There was an old person of Fife,
Who was greatly disgusted with life;
They sang him a ballad, And fed him on salad,
Which cured that old person of Fife. (Lear 159)²⁷

In these limericks, Lear has people eat and consume the strangest things. The old man of Vienna lives on tincture of senna, which works as a purgative²⁸ and is replaced with camomile tea, when it no longer agrees with him – which is a natural consequence of senna. The habit does not seem to be too pleasant if one looks at his facial expression in the illustration. But Lear also introduces the strangest causal relations: the old person of Fife is cured from his disgust of life because a ballad is sung to him and he is being fed on salad.²⁹ In this limerick, the combination of the two, ballad and salad, leads to an internal agreement: first of all within the line, as they are rhyming words, but also with regard to the person of Fife, who feels better and with whom this treatment 'agrees'. In his *Anatomy of Melancholy*, Burton does indeed recommend music as a remedy against being disgusted with life,³⁰ "salad", however, is counted among those things that should not be eaten.³¹ It is therefore basically the language which determines the treatment of the person of Fife here: the agreement of words and their sound is all that counts.

Eating is therefore often introduced in Edward Lear's limericks for mere linguistic reasons. As regards content and the playful mode that is so typical of his writing, food and eating habits may also serve as signs of oddity:

27 Further examples include the following limericks: "There was an Old Person of Leeds, / Whose head was infested with beads; / She sat on a stool, and ate gooseberry fool, / Which agreed with that person of Leeds" (LEAR 12); "There was an old person of Pett, / Who was partly consumed by regret; / He sate in a cart, and ate cold apple tart, / Which relieved that old person of Pett" (LEAR 182).

28 OED "senna": "2. *Pharm.* The dried leaflets of various species of *Cassia*, used as a cathartic and emetic."

29 With reference to Fernando FERRARA's study *Aspetti e tendenze della poesia vittoriana* (Naples: Liguori, 1962), PONTEROTTO remarks that "nonsense uses normal logical schemata but deforms the situation, obtaining a contrast between structural and formal seriousness on the one hand and absurdity of content and incongruity of detail on the other" (PONTEROTTO, Diane. "Rule-Breaking and Meaning-Making in Edward Lear." In: *Revista Alicanta de Estudios Ingleses* 6 (1993): 153–61. 155).

30 Cf. BURTON, Robert. *The Anatomy of Melancholy*. Edited by Nicolas K. Kiessling, Thomas C. Faulkner and Rhonda L. Blair. 2 vols. Oxford: Clarendon, 1990. II.2.6.3: "Musicke a Remedy" (2: 112–16).

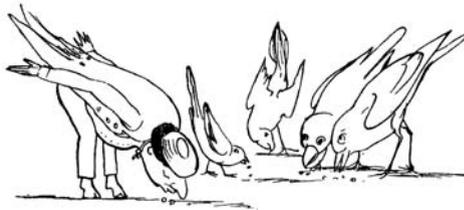
31 "Some are of opinion that sallets breed melancholy mood" (BURTON. *The Anatomy of Melancholy* I.2.2.1 (1: 215)). "Sallet" was a variant spelling of salad until the nineteenth century; cf. OED "sallet, salad(e)".



There was an old person of Dean
 Who dined on one pea, and one bean;
 For he said, "More than that, would make me too fat,"
 That cautious old person of Dean. (Lear 187)

As opposed to the Old Persons who overfed themselves in some of the examples, Lear now introduces another "old person" who hardly eats at all and is extremely thin.³² The illustration emphasises the absurdity of the person's behaviour: Even if he ate much more, his anxiety of growing fat is irrational and ridiculous given his outer appearance, even more so as "one pea, and one bean" are virtually fat-free.

A person also is what he eats. This becomes most evident in the following limerick:



There was an old man of El Hums,
 Who lived upon nothing but crumbs,
 Which he picked off the ground, with the other birds round,
 In the roads and the lanes of El Hums. (Lear 180)

From his eating crumbs and picking them off the ground, the old man of El Hums has become just like the birds: his nose resembles a beak, his arms and his coat look like wings, and his whole appearance and movement is an imitation of the birds. He has metamorphosed into a bird through his eating behaviour.³³

32 The idea might go back to the proverb "He that eats least eats most", which means that eating less at the occasion will lead to a longer life, so that one eats more that way eventually; cf. *ODEP* 216.

33 Thomas BYROM comments on this phenomenon of metamorphosis in the images (BYROM,

This is certainly one of the instances when “old” is used not necessarily as a literal reference to age only but also as a slightly “disparaging term”.³⁴ Furthermore he is an old bird, i. e. in the jocular use for a man, ‘a cove’.³⁵ The concept that eating has an effect on a person’s outer appearance, i. e. whether someone is thin or fat, is here extended to a concept of ‘sympathy’³⁶: one adopts a whole set of attitudes and even one’s looks through the food one consumes.

Strange behaviour in the realm of food can furthermore consist not only in eating but also in feeding:

There was a young lady of Corsica,
Who purchased a little brown saucy-cur;
Which she fed upon ham, and hot raspberry jam,
That expensive young lady of Corsica. (Lear 191)³⁷

As she feeds her dog upon ham and hot raspberry jam, this young lady is no longer simply a “young lady” in the last line but changes into an “expensive lady”, which mirrors her peculiar, even eccentric behaviour and entails at least some degree of value-judgment.³⁸ Something very similar can be seen in Lear’s depiction of the “old person of Bray”:

Who sang through the whole of the day
To his ducks and his pigs, whom he fed upon figs,
That valuable person of Bray. (Lear 192)

He is a “valuable” person as he sings all day, but perhaps even because he feeds his pigs upon figs. In this case, the form of the limerick and the genre of nonsense rhyme allow for and lead to the introduction of edibles: pigs rhyme with figs.

Thomas. *Nonsense and Wonder: The Poems and Cartoons of Edward Lear*. New York: Dutton, 1977. 133 – 38).

34 See *OED old* S5.a.

35 See *OED bird* I. 1.e

36 For the notion of “sympathy” see, e.g., KRANZ, M. and P. PROBST. “Sympathie.” In: Joachim Ritter and Karlfried Gründer (eds.). *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*. 13 vols. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1998. Vol. 10: 751 – 56.

37 See also the following example: “There was an Old Man of Apulia, / Whose conduct was very peculiar / He fed twenty sons, upon nothing but buns, / That whimsical Man of Apulia” (LEAR 24).

38 This variation of the adjective in the first line is typical of Lear, although sometimes he even uses adjectives that seem to be out of context, e.g. when he suddenly calls an “old man” “intrinsic”: “Lear’s wildly inappropriate adjectives are paradigmatic instances of one of the fundamental activities the limericks perform: the world of Lear’s nonsense is a playground” (RIEDER. “Edward Lear’s Limericks.” 49). – BYROM reads this limerick as follows: “Her [the young lady’s] relation with the creatures nearly always involves food or eating, but there is no oral gratification for her. Rather, the association of animals and eating gives her anxiety. She has a strange demonic dog which she must appease” (BYROM. *Nonsense and Wonder*. 114). This interpretation, however, overlooks the fun and playful mode that is characteristic of Lear’s writing.

They form a minimal pair, as we know from Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, where the Cheshire Cat asks Alice whether the baby she carried away from the Duchess' kitchen has changed into a "pig" or a "fig".³⁹ Their phonological resemblance is the reason why the "valuable person of Bray" feeds the pigs with figs and not with apples or anything else.

The constraints given by the form, i. e. that a limerick has to follow a certain pattern, thus likewise determine what is being eaten and by whom:



There was an old man who screamed out
Whenever they knocked him about;
So they took off his boots, And fed him with fruits,
And continued to knock him about. (Lear 171)

Having his boots taken off and being fed with fruits actually seems to delight this old man; it is therefore all the more surprising that some critics actually read this limerick seriously: "In one exceedingly strange limerick, They punish him, and at the same time, to his masochistic glee, provide him with a salve for the pains They inflict".⁴⁰ That Lear's limericks are supposed to be fun and depend on (linguistic and also conceptual) play seems to be out of the question: "[The] agitation of the verse is quietened in the cartoon, which presents a more ambivalent state of affairs. [...] the image calms the word".⁴¹ Such a reading does not at all consider that words are the basic components of Lear's nonsense and that they are employed for their own sake, not to make statements about 'the world': nonsense, although it can be very serious,⁴² is usually supposed to be fun.

39 "Did you say 'pig' or 'fig'?" said the Cat" (CARROLL, Lewis. *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There*. Edited by Roger Lancelyn Green, illustrated by John Tenniel. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998. 59).

40 BYROM. *Nonsense and Wonder*. 95. Cf. also DILWORTH, who categorises this limerick as "what may be the most fascinating of the limericks of social accommodation. [...] Accommodated in these ways he is verbally and visually high, 'elated', though the beating continues" (DILWORTH, Thomas. "Society and the Self in the Limericks of Edward Lear." In: *The Review of English Studies* 45 (1994): 42–62. 57–58).

41 BYROM. *Nonsense and Wonder*. 114, 123.

42 Cf. HOLLANDER, John. "The Poetry of Nonsense: Lewis Carroll's Quest Romance." In: John

Apparently, “fruits” are only introduced to rhyme with “boots”.⁴³ The choice of words thus gives the impression of being random, “approximate sounds of the rhymes draw objects together”.⁴⁴ As Rieder explains with regard to content, “the limericks tend to expose the arbitrariness or artificiality of convention rather than laying down the law. The limericks on eating, for instance, include stories of starvation and gluttony, of ‘old men’ who sink into alcoholic depression and of others who enjoy pleasantly recuperative snacks, of accidental cannibalism but also of miraculous cures”.⁴⁵ But, what is even more important, Lear's limericks are mainly based on language: those dealing with food are not so much about describing or even sanctioning eating behaviour; this is only part of the fun. Their major ingredients are words and the play with words.

3. Wordplay

Whenever the language of Lear's nonsense writing is considered by critics, they refer to its apparent arbitrariness: the choice of words is declared to be random and to follow merely a pattern of rhyme.⁴⁶ This, however, makes the choice already less random, if not on a semantic, then at least on a phonological level. And as we can see in the context of his *Nonsense Cookery*, especially the titles “Amblongus Pie”, “Crumbobblious cutlets”, and “Gosky Patties” have semantic connotations that are not utterly ‘nonsensical’ in the sense of being without any meaning. Although none of the modifiers in these compounds exist, they can be traced back to some origins that attribute meaning to them. Thus Lear combines known food – pie, cutlets, patties – with neologisms and apparent non-words: “The Lear formations are word-like non-words, since they activate neither two meanings nor new meanings but several potential meanings”.⁴⁷ These potential

Hollander. *The Work of Poetry*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1997. 200–09; KÖHLER, Peter. *Nonsens: Theorie und Geschichte der literarischen Gattung*. Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1989; LECERCLE, Jean-Jacques. *Philosophy of Nonsense: The Intuitions of Victorian Nonsense Literature*. London: Routledge, 1994; SCHÖNE, Annemarie. *Untersuchungen zur englischen Nonsense Literatur unter besonderer Berücksichtigung des Limericks und seines Schöpfers Edward Lear*. Bonn: Diss. 1951.

43 An alternative would have been to feed him with ‘roots’. This, however, would not have changed the nonsensical combination of events in this limerick.

44 COLLEY, Ann. “Edward Lear's Limericks and the Reversal of Nonsense.” In: *Victorian Poetry* 26 (1988): 285–99. 294.

45 RIEDER. “Edward Lear's Limericks.” 52. This is actually the only reference I have found about Lear's treatment of food in his limericks.

46 Cf. HEYMAN, Michael. “A New Defense of Nonsense; or, Where Then Is His Phallus? and Other Questions Not to Ask.” In: *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 11,3 (1985): 187–93. 191.

47 PONTEROTTO. “Rule-Breaking and Meaning-Making in Edward Lear.” 156.

meanings can be derived from single morphemes that are put together into apparent ‘non-words’. One is hence able to form a certain idea about the ingredients as all these words are pronounceable, they “phonetically fit their context”,⁴⁸ and they are recognized as having some similarity to English words.⁴⁹

‘Phonetical fitting’ seems to be very important in Lear’s limericks because of the rhyme that defines the genre. In the following example, however, his wordplays goes even further:

There was an Old Person of Chili,
Whose conduct was painful and silly,
He sate on the stairs, eating apples and pears,
That imprudent Old Person of Chili. (Lear 6)

“Apples and pears” is an expression from Cockney rhyming slang that originated around 1840⁵⁰ and which means ‘stairs’: the original word is replaced by one that rhymes with it, i. e. pears; these are combined with apples because apples are not pears – which makes this sound very nonsensical (other combinations with apples are e. g. apple and banana – piano; apple pie – sky).⁵¹ What we find here is a sort of doubling which points to the “painful and silly” conduct of this person who actually has misunderstood the dialect. The word stairs and its synonym “apples and pears” are not recognized as synonymic, and hence results the action of the old person: he sits down and eats the very thing that, in a non-literal sense, signifies the object he is sitting on.

Very often the whole content of Lear’s limericks thus relies, as we have already seen, on the combination of words that fit phonetically and that rhyme:

48 HEYMAN. “A New Defense of Nonsense.” 191.

49 “[...] meaningful nonsense syllables were attributable in large measure to the degree to which the novel stimulus in question accorded with or departed from the rule structures of syllable and word formation in English (for English speaking subjects)” (JENKINS, James J. “Nonsense Syllables: Comprehending the Almost Incomprehensible Variation.” In: *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory, and Cognition* 11,3 (1985): 455 – 60. 456). – PONTEROTTO calls them “well-formed but meaningless” (PONTEROTTO. “Rule-Breaking and Meaning-Making in Edward Lear.” 157); this, however, seems to be slightly simplistic given the complexity with regard to the combination of lexical and morphological units.

50 See MATTHEWS, William. *Cockney Past and Present: A Short History of the Dialect of London*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972 [1938]. MATTHEWS calls Cockney “the most creative form of English” (xv), a judgment that certainly explains Lear’s use of it. Lear is, however, not mentioned by Matthews, nor is Cockney an issue in Lear criticism. “[I]t was originally the language of ballad-sellers [...] [and] seems to have begun as a secret language” (132). Lear probably adopted elements from it because of its basic playfulness. Around the 1950s a whole variety of dictionaries of modern slang appeared in England (cf. MATTHEWS. *Cockney Past and Present*. 130 – 33).

51 In a shortened version, stairs are merely called “apples” in Cockney; cf. PERKINS, Derek and Joan PERKINS. *Cockney Rhyming Slang*. Illustrated by Anthony James. Swansea: Domino Books, 2002. 9. – “The expert use of rhyming slang consists in the abbreviation of the terms by the omission of the rhymes” (MATTHEWS. *Cockney Past and Present*. 152).

There was an Old Person of Rheims,
 Who was troubled with horrible dreams;
 So, to keep him awake, they fed him with cake.
 Which amused that Old Person of Rheims. (Lear 33)

The man is troubled with nightmares – “horrible dreams” as they are called so that they rhyme with the city of “Rheims”⁵² – and the only possible remedy is to keep him awake: if he does not sleep at all, he will not dream badly. The reasoning of this is rather doubtful, but Lear moves in the realm of nonsense anyway. This goes even further as “awake” needs a rhyming word that also fits the context semantically. Hence, the Person of Rheims is fed with cake so that he will not sleep, simply because “awake” rhymes with “cake”. He is “amused” at the therapy, and it does seem quite tempting; luckily, “awake” rhymes with something delicious. This is not the case with another “old person” that the reader meets in Lear’s limericks:

There was an old person of Bromley,
 Whose ways were not cheerful or comely;
 He sate in the dust, eating spiders and crust,
 That unpleasing old person of Bromley. (Lear 201)

He is less fortunate than the old person of Rheims: as he sits in the dust, there is nothing left for him but to eat “spiders and crust”. Instead of being amused or happy, he is described as being “unpleasing”; whether this is a result of his eating behaviour or whether his eating habits result from this is not explained and, one might presume, irrelevant. Lear’s limericks are not primarily about logical causal relations but they are concerned with and based on language and word-play.

The apparent horrors of eating in some of the limericks and also in Lear’s *Nonsense Cookery* turn out to be expressions of linguistic pleasures. Lear’s wordplay is part of the overall playful mood of his writing. There are quite a range of examples in his limericks where he bases his nonsense texts on strange eating habits, overfeeding and dietary cures for ridiculous behaviour. Food in Lear thus very often serves as a means to make a text nonsensical, by the combination of words that do not fit in content (but, for instance, in regard to sound) and make the mere action of eating ridiculous, as well as by the invention of new words that are combined with elements of food. Very often these culinary elements are merely introduced for the sake of rhyme. By mixing all these different bits and pieces together and stirring them carefully, Lear succeeds in presenting his readers with very palatable nonsense texts that ought not to be taken seriously but understood and interpreted as sheer fun.

52 Rheims is pronounced [ri:mz] in English.

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Norbert Lennartz

The *bête humaine* and its Food in Nineteenth-Century Naturalist Fiction

I.

It is without a doubt provocative to say that, in terms of eating and man's liminal position as a carnivore, Byron's *Don Juan* is – in parts – the first work of European Naturalism. Apart from the unprecedented and shocking realism of the poem's images, the episode in the notorious Canto II in which a bunch of starving survivors in a longboat gradually turn into bestialized cannibals anticipates not only the Naturalists' approach to eating, but also their concept of anthropology. Ontologically huddled together in a *bateau ivre* after the loss of the Trinidad, Byron's survivors are no longer able to preserve their façades of human dignity, but are eventually forced to face the crude fact that, despite their self-fashioning and the diversity of cultural masks, they are "carnivorous production[s]"¹ that are exclusively swayed by the imperative of the despotic body:

He [= man] cannot live like woodcocks upon suction,
But like the shark and tiger must have prey. (*Don Juan* II, 67, 529)

Depicting them as determined by ruthless nature – "Twas nature gnawed them to this resolution" (*Don Juan* II, 75, 598) –, Byron sarcastically re-interprets the Christian myth of creation when he shows that, in the course of seven days, man gradually loses his theomorphic qualities to degenerate into an all-devouring and man-eating monster. This anti-Ovidian metamorphosis is also underlined by the fact that Byron subtly changes the similes into metaphors: while initially the starving men are only compared to sharks and tigers, from stanza 71 onwards, they are metaphorically merged with beasts to such an extent that they suddenly feel "all the vulture in [their] jaws" (*Don Juan* II, 71, 564) and leer at their prospective prey with truly Hobbesian "wolfish eyes" (*Don Juan* II, 72, 576).

1 BYRON, George Gordon. *Lord Byron. The Complete Poetical Works*. Edited by Jerome J. McGann. 7 vols. Oxford: Clarendon, 1980–93. V, 110 ff. *Don Juan* II. 67.

What emphasizes the liminal character of Byron's early nineteenth-century *bêtes humaines* is not only the fact that, as early as in 1819, the Romantic sceptic draws pseudo-logical conclusions from sentimental egalitarianism and thus sees priests, sharks, aldermen and pikes (II, 157, 1256) on the same ontological level; anthropological pessimists like Byron also underline the bestial eating habits which nineteenth-century man assumes and which seem to be incompatible with the conspicuously Malthusian scarcity of food or the various anorexic "Barmecide supper[s]" in mid-Victorian fiction.² While the various representations of hunger in nineteenth-century fiction culminate in the heroines' emaciation and consumption by disease,³ the absence of food in Byron's shipwreck episode is neither related to cultural patterns of femininity nor to the dandy's concept of corporeal disgust; it is the incentive to man's bestialization. With "hunger's rage" growing wild, Byron's anti-Romantic individuals are not prepared to vanish into non-existence; as slaves to nature and corporeality, they cannot help pouncing on Don Juan's tutor, or like the ship's surgeon, drinking greedily from Pedrillo's "fast-flowing veins" (*Don Juan* II, 77, 612). Byron's image of man as a vampire, as a bestialized monster gnawing the bones of his fellow creatures and eventually perishing with "hyena laughter" (*Don Juan* II, 79, 632), is a grim (and parodic) visualization of what was generally to be understood as man's second humiliation, his descent from animals as propagated by Darwinists. But while Darwin argues that man is part of an upward evolutionary process, in which the fittest survive, Byron seems to be in line with all those late nineteenth-century pessimists who see man constantly regressing into animal savagery and, like Doctor Moreau's liminal creatures, succumbing to the lure of bloody flesh.

II.

Renate Brosch's argument that the "reduction of visual display of the grosser, carnivorous aspects of food-intake can be seen as part of a 'feminisation of culture'"⁴ is true of a certain part of Victorian literature, but cannot be applied to

2 This term is used in BRONTË, Charlotte. *Jane Eyre*. Edited by Michael Mason. London: Penguin, 1996. 87. Various other female characters from Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* to Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* are hardly ever seen eating, relishing good food and gratifying their bodies' needs.

3 For the wider context see SILVER, Anna Krugovoy. *Victorian Literature and the Anorexic Body*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002; especially the chapters on the Brontës and on Christina Rossetti, 81 ff.

4 BROSCHE, Renate. "Visual Victual: Iconographies of Food and Dining in Nineteenth-Century England." In: Tobias Döring, Markus Heide and Susanne Mühleisen (eds.). *Eating Culture. The Process and Politics of Food*. Heidelberg: Winter, 2003. 209–35. 210.

the whole range of nineteenth-century British fiction in general. Nineteenth-century tendencies to aestheticize food as something to display, but not to touch and to downgrade all pleasures of eating as a dramatic loss of self-control are indicative of the dandies' myth of the body as a *tableau vivant*, devoid of bodily functions and needs. The "mad hungers" that the would-be dandy Dorian Gray feels no longer refer to his longing for food, but to his yearning for sensations, for hedonistic and amoral delights.⁵ Even though the dandy's disgust at eating cannot be separated from his inveterate misogyny,⁶ there is something effeminate about the Victorian aestheticists' concept of man as a creature that is impeccably dressed, listens to Wagnerian music and exchanges Kingsley's masculine maxim of hard work and cold water for the contemplation of beauty and (homoerotic) art. This kind of feminization of culture with its negation of food is, however, not uncontested, since it clashes with the re-emergence of the *bête humaine* in the Naturalist novel of the 1890s.

In this respect, H.G. Wells's dystopian novel *The Time Machine* (1896) must be accorded a central position, because it not only revolves around the dichotomy between aestheticism and Naturalism, but also around the contrastive eating habits of the over-refined Eloi and the degenerate cannibals, the Morlocks. Projecting the Victorian antagonism between the aestheticists and the bestialized working classes onto an imaginary future, Wells characterizes the Eloi as enfeebled and infantilized creatures that have lost their natural agility and spend their time "in playing gently, in bathing in the river" and, as a sign of their decadent vegetarianism, "in eating fruit and sleeping" (*The Time Machine* 41).⁷ Their adversaries, the Morlocks, live in subterranean caves, and as the descendants of the proletarian *bêtes humaines* depicted in the multifarious Zolaesque novels of European Naturalism, they have also degenerated into "ape-like creature[s]" (*The Time Machine* 44) and assimilated themselves to the darkness of the mechanized urban jungles. While Wells's narrator, the time traveller, does not take long to understand that the species of man has branched off into two different types of animals, the scope of the Morlocks' degeneration is not evident until he decides to descend into their underworld and to witness their dehumanized and liminal behaviour. What the narrator is faced with in his *de-*

5 WILDE, Oscar. *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Edited by Isobel Murray. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998. 105.

6 See Charles BAUDELAIRE's *Journaux intimes*, in which he equates women with eating and the gratification of crude desires and emphatically underlines the fact that women are the opposite of the dandy: "La femme a faim et elle veut manger. Soif, et elle veut boire. [...] La femme est naturelle, c'est-à-dire abominable." ("Mon cœur mis à nu" III. In: Charles BAUDELAIRE. *Œuvres complètes*. Edited by Claude Pichois. Paris: Gallimard, 1999. 677)

7 All references are to the following edition: WELLS, H.G. *The Time Machine*. Edited by Patrick Parrinder. London: Penguin, 2005.

scensus ad inferos ties in with the horror that readers of Byron's *Don Juan* must have felt. Thus, what is evident is that man has lost his theomorphic qualities and that the imperatives of his belly seem to have become so omnipresent that, like an odoriferous smell, they pervade the maze of tunnels, which are metaphorically related to intestines or other alimentary organs: "the faint halitus of freshly shed blood was in the air" (*The Time Machine* 54). After exploring the guts of this futuristic body politic to "a deadly nausea" (*The Time Machine* 56) and eventually clambering out of the "well-mouth" (*The Time Machine* 56) again, the time traveller is made painfully aware of the fact that the Morlocks are not only excessively carnivorous, but that, in the course of a negative evolution, they have turned into cannibals and see the Eloi in the upper world only in terms of food: "These Eloi were mere fatted cattle, which the ant-like Morlocks preserved and preyed upon – probably saw to the breeding of." (*The Time Machine* 62) The "erosion of class differences in eating", which Renate Brosch refers to,⁸ is contradicted and given an ironic twist in Wells's novel. The old hierarchies are nullified not so much on account of the fact that the lower classes successfully aspired to the refined standards of upper-class eating as on account of the fact that the old concept of divided society was replaced by the crude dichotomy between predators and prey.

In this respect, Wells's novel is strikingly in line with Byron's negative anthropology, which defines man only in terms of the survival of the most savage.⁹ While in Byron's and Wells's literary universes man does not refrain from devouring human flesh, Naturalist novels tend to stop short of depictions of cannibalism, but more often than not show man in a precariously liminal state, always on the point of transgressing the blurred boundaries between humanity and bestiality. One of these liminal characters is Jim Saunders, the titular heroine's father in *Esther Waters* (1894), a novel that earned its author, George Moore, the name of "the Bestial Bard".¹⁰ Given to drink and to fits of irascibility, Saunders is one of those belly creatures that – not unlike Alfred Jarry's monstrous Père Ubu – reduce the diversity of life to the gratification of their bodily needs. The simple fact that Saunders' entire life has taken a turn for the bestial is at first conveyed to the reader by the numerous references to the toy dogs that his daughters Jenny and Julia are making. With his home as a kennel filled with heaps of toy dogs, Saunders himself has assumed the behaviour of a snarling dog, which is made evident when his victimized family desperately tries to forestall

8 BROSCH. "Visual Victual." 212.

9 For the affinity between Byron and Wells, see also LENNARTZ, Norbert. "The Island of Doctor Moreau: H.G. Wells Seen from the Byronic Perspective." In: *Anglia* 125/3 (2007): 430–47.

10 Quoted in HUGUET, Christine. "Charting an Aesthetic Journey. The Case of *Esther Waters*." In: Mary Pierce (ed.). *George Moore. Artistic and Literary Worlds*. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholar Press, 2006. 160–72. 160.

his ferocious outbursts by presenting him with a substantial piece of meat: “Yes; get half a pound [of meat], and when it’s nicely cooked and inside him it’ll make all the difference. That will please him.” (*Esther Waters* 100)¹¹ Saunders’ canine affiliation is also clear from the fact that he is reduced to his olfactory faculty. Paying attention to his pregnant step-daughter Esther in a most perfunctory manner, he is attracted by the meat whose odours he smells like an animal ready to pounce on its prey:

He threw his basket into a corner, and then himself on to the rough bench nailed against the wall, and there, without speaking another word, he lay sniffing the odour of the meat like an animal going to be fed. (*Esther Waters* 102)

What Moore’s narrator refers to several times is the egotistical isolation into which the modern *bête humaine* withdraws itself. Considering the fact that eating used to be a communal affair and that “the sauce to meat [was] ceremony” (*Macbeth*, III.iv.35), the conspicuous absence of communication and ritual which prevails over Saunders’ dinner is striking. Oblivious of the other hungry members of the family, feeding “in hungry silence” (*Esther Waters* 103) and eventually finishing off the last pieces of his beefsteak “gluttonously” (*Esther Waters* 105), he is not reluctant to refuse to give Esther the shelter that she needs during the remaining weeks before her confinement. The moral reservation that he puts forward – “We wants no bastards ‘ere” (*Esther Waters* 107) – scarcely disguises the fact that he sees his step-daughter as a massive threat that endangers his voracious solipsism and canine eating habits. In this respect, his pulling at his pipe “doggedly” (*Esther Waters* 108) unfolds a certain ambivalent meaning and fits in with his brutish and almost vampiric disposition which makes him starve his family in order to have his excessive desires stilled for a short period of time: “Oh, the children can eat anything; I want beer” (*Esther Waters* 114).

While in the cultural memory the 1890s are steeped in the colour yellow and are often represented as a period of witty bantering over cucumber sandwiches, the counter-discourse, which focuses on man’s metropolitan jungle existence, on his clear-cut roles of being either fodder or Morlockian devourer, is still treated as a marginal phenomenon or as an outgrowth of French Naturalism, which is supposed to be hardly compatible with what is termed British poetic realism.¹² Even though *Esther Waters* lacks the decadent resignation which

11 All references are to the following edition: MOORE, George. *Esther Waters*. Edited by David Skilton. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.

12 See GOETSCH, Paul. *Die Romankonzeption in England 1880 – 1910*. Heidelberg: Winter, 1967. 43ff; and the recent publication by DAVIS, Philip. *Why Victorian Literature Still Matters*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008. Here the Victorians’ realism is idealized as an art form that

makes the Eloi easily accessible titbits for the Morlocks, there is no denying that Moore sees his protagonist in the context of “naturalist zoomorphism”,¹³ in terms of a “hunted animal” (*Esther Waters* 167). Constantly on the alert and ontologically menaced by liminal figures with “eagle features” (*Esther Waters* 169) and “high aquiline nose[s]” (*Esther Waters* 170), Esther even has to fend off upper-class parasites who force her to save her mother’s milk for the maintenance of their offspring and to let her boy starve:

It was then a life for a life. It was more. For the children of two poor girls had been sacrificed so that this rich woman’s child might be saved. Even that was not enough: the life of her beautiful boy was called for. (*Esther Waters* 146)

Although worlds apart from the horrors of dark Romanticism and *fin-de-siècle* fantasy, the combination of the semantic fields of eating and bestiality in Moore’s novel amply shows that man is perpetually exposed to vampiric onsets,¹⁴ to the greedy desires of liminal creatures that can scarcely conceal the beast beneath the brittle façade of human civilization.

In marked contrast to Thomas Hardy’s Tess, who at a crucial point in her life is described as an insignificant fly on a huge billiard table waiting to be squashed into non-existence,¹⁵ Esther Waters is an ambivalent combination of the Victorian New Woman and bestialized man. Fed with strawberries as an antecedent to her sacrifice by the rakish Alec, Tess personifies Hardy’s idea of man’s passivity in the face of all-devouring fate; Esther, by contrast, is far more energetic and rather less conceived of as an insect-like being fatalistically flung into a hostile Darwinian world. What Moore, however, emphasizes is that Esther is not so much a paragon of superhuman vulnerability, a martyr irretrievably in the clutches of an obliterating past,¹⁶ as a liminal character herself, always on the point of being swept away by the riotous crowds in their “screaming and disordered animality” (*Esther Waters* 283). In this respect, the fact that Esther goes to a fun fair in the company of a few friends is revealing, since it shows that what is ironically called a “Cockney pilgrimage” (*Esther Waters* 274) reverses the nineteenth-century idea of life as a pilgrimage in the vein of Bunyan and shows the protagonist for what she is: a woman defying Evangelical austerity, only to

not so much transcends the physical as shows “the metaphysical arising even from within it” (72).

13 HUGUET. “Charting an Aesthetic Journey.” 162.

14 See also O’TOOLE, Tess. “The Servant’s Body: The Victorian Wet-Nurse and George Moore’s *Esther Waters*.” In: *Women’s Studies* 25 (1996): 329–49; in particular 337, where O’Toole interprets the exploitation of Esther’s body in terms of class conflicts.

15 HARDY, Thomas. *Tess of the d’Urbervilles*. Edited by Tim Dolin. London: Penguin, 1998. 105. All references are to this edition.

16 Cf. LENNARTZ, Norbert. “The Intrusion of Old Times: Ghosts and Resurrections in Hardy, Joyce and Beyond.” In: *Connotations* 17/1 (2007/08): 14–28.

plunge into the anonymous sensuality of the bestial crowd, the “vast herd” (*Esther Waters* 285). Leaving Fred, the representative of theological asceticism, behind in the mission tent, Esther is attracted by the noises of the crowd, its orgiastic “fifes, drums and cymbals” (*Esther Waters* 282) and the mysterious promises of a packet of Turkish Delight. The craving of the *bêtes humaines* for food, Bacchic revelry and alimentary disorder not only clashes with the Puritanical repudiation of corporeal pleasures, but also with the intricacies of the social constructions of eating, the various Victorian arts of dining.¹⁷ This is best illustrated in the restaurant episode in *Esther Waters* as well as in the depiction of the picnic in Somerset Maugham’s *Liza of Lambeth* (1898).

III.

Spectacular and subversive acts of rebellion against the sophisticated arts of dining are not a nineteenth-century discovery, but can be found even in the seventeenth-century Cavalier poetry. The speakers in Sir John Suckling’s poetry are often not only identified with hungry and transgressive hawks, they are also imagined as rowdies who disrupt amorous banquets and clamorously call for the best part of the erotic dish. Even though a shift of paradigm can be ascertained in the Cavaliers’ representations of eating and loving, the various hawks or falcons in early modern poetry can hardly be compared to the ravenous beasts that, in the wake of Byron’s *Don Juan*, were ushered in in the fiction of the late Victorian age. While the Cavalier transgressors of the art of dining were *provocateurs* from the ranks of the aristocracy, the iconoclasts of the nineteenth century are of a Morlockian order, out of tune with the refinement of the upper classes and fiercely opposed to the effete adherents of Frenchified *haute cuisine*.

Taking the fact into consideration that, with the rise of the restaurant in Victorian Britain, consumption of food had become a touchstone for ideals of sophistication with “super-chef[s]” like Alexis Soyer providing the ideological underpinning,¹⁸ the readers of Moore’s novel are made sharply aware of the economic and anthropological dichotomies that unsettled Victorian society. When the group of revellers enters a first-class restaurant, they are instantaneously revealed as oddities, as outsiders that can cope neither with the refined jargon of the French menu – “Bisque soup, what’s that?” (*Esther Waters* 286) – nor with the conventions of decorum and dress that are appropriate in eating

17 BROSCHE. “Visual Victual.” 213 ff.

18 For the context see DALY, Suzanne and ROSS G. FORMAN. “Introduction: Cooking Culture – Situating Food and Drink in the Nineteenth Century.” In: *Victorian Literature and Culture* 36,2 (2008): 363–73. 365–66.

places like this: “the beauty of an open evening bodice and the black-and-white elegance of the young men at dinner” (*Esther Waters* 286). Asking their way to the lavatories “for a sluice” (*Esther Waters* 286) and shouting to each other at the top of their voices, they cannot conceal the fact that – despite the money they unexpectedly made at the horse races – they will never be able to live up to the standards of the terrified and perturbed Eloi people around them. Thus, it is hardly surprising that the champagne is not to their taste and that the delicacies on their plates do not meet their expectations: “the servants played with [them], and left [them] on their plates” (*Esther Waters* 287). After enjoying the coarser pleasures of a ‘saddle of mutton’ and numerous glasses of brandy, the company rapidly disintegrates and consequently drops the mask of feigned civilization.

It is Shakespeare’s Cassio who not only experiences the disastrous consequences of alcohol, but also learns that alcohol is conducive to bringing out the monster in man: “that we should with joy, pleasance, revel and applause, transform ourselves into beasts!” (*Othello*, II.iii.287–88) Thus, what could be more incompatible with the previous pretensions to sophistication than the physical deterioration that suddenly affects the company around Esther. One of them, Ketley, is no longer in control of his language, and, in marked contrast to both the manifold Victorian angels in the house and the rebellious New Women in the wake of Ibsen’s Nora, Sarah is so hopelessly drunk that she feels obliged to step aside and to vomit. Having transformed themselves into beasts, they clearly pinpoint the fact that the various façades which the Victorians invented were brittle and the result of humanist theories which were constantly subjected to question by a phalanx of sceptical writers. Next to Wilde, who contributes to the deconstruction of the dandy, and next to Conrad, who in his *Heart of Darkness* (1899) shows the metamorphosis of one of the English harbingers of reason into a bestialized cannibal, it is anthropological sceptics like Moore and Maugham who draw graphic images of the *bête humaine* and its usurpation of the former strongholds of humanity.

In order to highlight the Darwinian shift of paradigm in his short novel *Liza of Lambeth*, Maugham describes the illicit love affair between Jim and Liza and their participation in a communal picnic before the backdrop of pastoral poetry and provocatively calls it the ‘Idyll of Corydon and Phyllis’: “Gallantry ordered that the faithful swain and the amorous shepherdess should drink out of one and the same pot.” (*Liza of Lambeth* 34)¹⁹ Maugham’s concept of anthropology, which is much indebted to Zola’s novels and the prevalent theories of determination, could not be more different from the stock-in-trade motifs of idyllic poetry. Ironically conjuring up names and character constellations from Virgil’s

19 All references are to the following edition: MAUGHAM, Somerset. *Liza of Lambeth*. London: Penguin, 1967.

Eclogues, the narrator points to the unbridgeable gap that has opened up between classical images of superhuman man and late Victorian representations of man's sub-humanity or abomination. When the coachman rallies the party for the picnic, he does so with words that would never be found in the context of pastoral poetry: "'Come along, lidies an' gentlemen – if you are gentlemen, [...] the animals is now goin' ter be fed!'" (*Liza of Lambeth* 36) The people's bantering protest about being aligned with animals – "'we're not hanimals; we don't drink water'" (*Liza of Lambeth* 36) – is not based on the fact that there is an essentially ontological difference between man and animal; according to their definition, the only point of discrimination between man and the motley category of quadrupeds is the dubitable fact that animals drink water and men alcohol. Recalling Shakespeare's Cassio and Moore's Sarah, one is invited to contradict and even to reverse this facetious hypothesis, and the more so, when one focuses on the passage in which the outdoor repast and its profusion of food are depicted:

Then they all set to. Pork-pies, saveloys, sausages, cold potatoes, hard-boiled eggs, cold bacon, veal, ham, crabs and shrimps, cheese, butter, cold suet-puddings and treacle, gooseberry-tarts, cherry-tarts, butter, bread, more sausages, and yet again pork-pies! They devoured the provisions like ravening beasts, stolidly, silently, earnestly, in large mouthfuls which they shoved down their throats unmasticated. (*Liza of Lambeth* 37)

This almost Rabelaisian enumeration of food and dishes is likely to conjure up intertextual reminiscences of the legendary land of Cockaigne. Challenging the lop-sided image of Victorian scarcity and of starving children punished for daring to ask for more, Maugham's narrator seems to show his readership a rural counter-world in which mythical ideas of plenty and the cornucopia are referred to in order to create a picture of communal satisfaction and comfort. The "long sigh of content" (*Liza of Lambeth* 37) that breaks from thirty-two throats, however, cannot conceal the fact that the picnic has revealed an anthropological concept that could not be more divergent from the pastoral framework of the episode. The fact that "[t]hey devoured the provisions like ravening beasts"²⁰ not only shows the reader the spuriousness of the idyllic references, it also reminds him of the shipwreck episode in Byron's *Don Juan*, where the survivors in the longboat "fell all ravenously on their provision" (*Don Juan* II, 68) and thus started the first phase of their deterioration. In Maugham's text, the deterioration has progressed to such an extent that, on the one hand, the party of picnickers are explicitly compared to beasts and that, on the other, in their bestial eating habits, they have grown accustomed to shoving down the food "unmasticated".

20 BYRON. *Lord Byron. The Complete Poetical Works*. 543.

In his attempt to underline his sense of Britishness, Charles Dickens reverted to similar images when he described the Americans' "funeral feasts" in the *American Notes*.²¹ What Dickens was repelled by and what he considered to be incompatible with British ideas of etiquette was the way the Americans reduced eating to a form of solipsistic and business-like ingestion of nourishment. Although sitting down with "so many fellow-animals", they seemed to ignore all the individuals around them and to be eager to empty their "Yahoo's trough[s]" as quickly as possible.²² While the theriomorphic qualities of the Americans are of the same exotic element as Gulliver's adventures among the Yahoos, and thus quickly to be relegated to the category of the "waking nightmare", the bestial consumption of food in *Liza of Lambeth* is no longer an idiosyncrasy of a renegade nation of republicans. As a characteristic of Victorian reality it is indicative of the rapidity with which human beings discard their anthropomorphic qualities and, as in Wells's *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1897), turn a body politic into a pack of prowling animals.

The picnic in Maugham's novel is thus given a symbolic function: while Isabella Beeton, the paragon of Victorian cooking, maintains that "[d]ining is the privilege of civilization",²³ novels of the Naturalist period are evidence of the fact that not only dining has been superseded by coarse modes of devouring, but that the *bête humaine* has asserted its right and transformed life into a jungle. Thus, the coarse eater Jim, "that beast of a Blakeston" (*Liza of Lambeth* 39), is also an uncouth, theriomorphic lover who physically eclipses Liza and, as a sign of his crude desires deals her "a violent, swinging blow in the belly" (*Liza of Lambeth* 66). If one takes into account the fact that Liza represents the last vestiges of art and civilization in her district, dancing the Cancan in the streets and enjoying the tunes of the Intermezzo from the *Cavalleria Rusticana*, it is hardly surprising that she is eventually crushed by the Blakestons' animal superiority. When Mrs Blakeston finally takes her revenge on Liza for embroiling her husband in an extra-marital affair, their rivalry eventually culminates in a fight that makes the lurking animal in their bodies more than transparent. Mrs. Blakeston's heavy protruding jaw (*Liza of Lambeth* 97) clearly distinguishes her as a *bête humaine* descended from Doctor Moreau's chamber of torture; and even though Liza is on the point of losing her humanity with her hands turning into claws (*Liza of Lambeth* 98) and her teeth trying to sink themselves into her opponent's flesh (*Liza of Lambeth* 101), she proves too weak in the post-Dar-

21 DICKENS, Charles. *American Notes*. Edited by Patricia Ingham. London: Penguin, 2000. 189. In *Martin Chuzzlewit*, Dickens also refers to the Americans as barbarians and "[d]yspeptic individuals" bolting "their food in wedges". DICKENS, Charles. *The Life and Adventures of Martin Chuzzlewit*. Edited by Patricia Ingham. London: Penguin, 2004. 264.

22 DICKENS. *American Notes*. 189.

23 DALY and FORMAN. "Introduction: Cooking Culture." 363.

winian community of animals, in which only the hungriest, the most transgressive and the most coarse can be uppermost.

IV.

In *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891), the narrator describes the rape of the titular heroine in terms of the Darwinian appropriation of “the finer” by “the coarse” (*Tess of the d'Urbervilles* 74). This mechanism subjects individuals of a more refined nature to severe forms of persecution which sometimes do not stop short of physical assault, sexual exploitation or even cannibalization. While the *bêtes humaines* – ranging from the Blakestons, Frank Norris' Mc Teague, Conrad's Kurtz to Tennessee Williams's Steven Kowalski in *A Streetcar Named Desire* – epitomize the modern supremacy of brutish force in a new Darwinian chain of being, the humiliation of the crushed and the vanquished can take on a variety of forms. While Wells's Eloi are in constant danger of being cannibalized by the Morlocks, the intellectuals in George Gissing's novel *New Grub Street* (1891) are victimized by the striking fact that they are not so much “shy guest[s] at the feast of the world's culture”²⁴ as completely excluded from any riotous banquet or picnic and severely afflicted by a world that causes them existential digestion.

In a world dominated by Darwinian gourmands and advocates of cultural fast food, writers who still adhere to principles of literary quality are faced with starvation. Among the typical representatives of the refined that are inevitably to be engulfed by the emergent class of the coarse are Edwin Reardon and his idealistic friend Biffen. To what extent their refusal to comply with the smooth and shallow standards of modern popular culture is reflected by the conspicuous absence of food can be seen when they are having their “Spartan fare” (*New Grub Street* 146):²⁵

[...] by degrees the meal had grown simpler, until now, in the depth of his [Reardon's] poverty, he made no pretence of hospitable entertainment. It was only because he knew that Biffen as often as not had nothing whatever to eat that he did not hesitate to offer him a slice of bread and butter and a cup of tea. (*New Grub Street* 146)

If one takes into consideration the fact that the Victorians championed ideologies of ‘muscular Christianity’ and profound anti-intellectualism,²⁶ elitist writers

24 JOYCE, James. *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Edited by Jeri Johnson. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000. 151.

25 All references are to the following edition: GISSING, George. *New Grub Street*. Edited by John Goode. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993.

26 For the context see HOUGHTON, Walter E. *The Victorian Frame of Mind, 1830–1870*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985 [1957]. 124 ff.

threatened by starvation were considered to be anachronistic and, thus, indicative of a backward philosophy of life that was inconsistent with the new ideas of illimitable progress, brawny optimism and evolution. The “squalid feast” (*New Grub Street* 375), which Reardon and Biffen are compelled to feed on, stands in marked contrast not only to the gluttonous meals that the *bêtes humaines* gorge themselves on, but also to Queen Victoria’s excessive appetite for food, which, according to Adrienne Munich, “made of her a transgressive spectacle”.²⁷ Even though Victoria’s keen appetite is contradictory to the long-cherished myth of the Victorian heroine’s emaciation, the monarch’s body could be seen in terms of Mother Nature’s fecundity and plenty.²⁸ In this respect, Thomas Hardy was not too wide off the mark when, in *Jude the Obscure* (1895), he delineated Arabella Donn as a “complete and substantial female animal” (*Jude the Obscure* 39)²⁹ that, as a sign of her fertility, hatches eggs in her capacious bosom and prepares the pigs’ innards for “black-puddings and chitterlings” (*Jude the Obscure* 40). As the representative of earthy life and with all the attributes of the *bête humaine* – “rich complexion of a Cochin hen’s egg” – Arabella, the late Victorian descendant of Jonson’s Ursula, the pig-woman, in *Bartholomew Fair*, thrives, whereas Jude, the failed intellectual and scholar of classical languages, is consumed by disease. It is hardly coincidental that Gissing’s Reardon also proves to be most unfit for modern life and is eventually carried off by the lung disease, which paradigmatically denotes consumption in a different sense: as being devoured and wasting away to nothing. This equation between lack of food and ill health, which in Hardy’s novel is only hinted at and which might be the motivation for Victoria’s enjoyment of food, is explicitly made in *New Grub Street*:

A touch of congestion in the right lung was a warning to Reardon that his half-year of insufficient food and general waste of strength would make the coming winter a hard time for him (*New Grub Street* 365).

While Reardon and Biffen dreadfully suffer from the lack of food and desperately take refuge in Wildean ideas of philhellenism – “By all the gods of Olympus, we will go to Greece together, you and I!” (*New Grub Street* 374) –, other devotees to high-culture literature like Alfred Yule are characterized as “martyr[s] to dyspepsia” (*New Grub Street* 94), as victims of a gastric disorder that, with the late

27 MUNICH, Adrienne. “Good and Plenty: Queen Victoria Figures the Imperial Body.” In: Tamar Heller and Patricia Moran (eds.). *Scenes of the Apple. Food and the Female Body in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Women’s Writing*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003. 45–64. 47.

28 MUNICH, Adrienne. “Good and Plenty.” 52.

29 Referring to the 1895 edition of the text, Taylor uses the phrase “female human”, but gives the 1903 and 1912 variants in the endnotes.

nineteenth-century denigration of intellectual values, “literary flesh is heir to” (*New Grub Street* 92). Subjecting his family to his fits of frustration and irascibility, the tense *homme de lettres* is shown carving the meat “angrily” (*New Grub Street* 90). What, furthermore, partially connects him with the numerous voracious *bêtes humaines* in the late Victorian novels is that he also gluttonously eats his meal, and that the unceremonious intake of food is done in ominous silence:

[...] then he ate a few mouthfuls in a quick, hungry way, his head bent closely over the plate. It happened commonly enough that dinner passed without a word of conversation (*New Grub Street* 90).

In contrast to the bestial men in the wake of Zola’s novel *La bête humaine* (1890), who devour their huge quantities of food without negative consequences, Yule’s hurried way of ingesting his dinner triggers off painful bouts of dyspepsia and indigestion. While Byron’s cannibals in *Don Juan* are afflicted by madness and eventually die, in accordance with their liminal nature, with “hyena laughter” (*Don Juan* II, 79, 632), Yule and the numerous intellectual drudges around him suffer from gastric disorders because they are unable to digest not so much their scanty meals as the world into which they are flung. Devoured by self-consuming ambition, Yule is no longer able to reconcile his outdated literary ideals – “formed on the study of Boswell” (*New Grub Street* 92) – with the modern demands of commodified culture. While Jasper Milvain, an “alarmingly modern young man” (*New Grub Street* 20) and successful producer of popular trash culture, is ready to supply the mob “with the food it likes” (*New Grub Street* 13), Yule can scarcely come to terms with the fact that the literary fare that he produces is indigestible and out of touch with the *zeitgeist* that calls for the uniformity of intellectual fast food and the paradoxical “genius of vulgarity” (*New Grub Street* 14).

Even though it is more appropriate to compare Milvain, this new type of literary self-made man and frequenter of cheap and “dirty eating-house[s]” (*New Grub Street* 181), to a parasite rather than to a monstrous *bête humaine*, the reader is clearly alerted to the Darwinian background of the novel when mention is made of “the press of energetic young men [which makes] it hard for a veteran even to hold the little grazing-plot he had won by hard fighting” (*New Grub Street* 104). In a world that seems to be exclusively structured according to the crude principle of crushing and being crushed, of devouring and being devoured, the scholar is inevitably thrust into the role of a Don Quixote who dyspeptically strives to arrest the wave of innovation that is about to smother him. The same fate is meted out to Wells’s Mr Polly who, as an ardent reader of Shakespeare,

Milton, “Bocashieu” and “Rabooloose” (*The History of Mr Polly* 19),³⁰ is familiar with “the birth-feast of Gargantua”, but completely at a loss to find the literary reflections of the splendours of the Renaissance *artes vivendi* in his sordid reality. Enmeshed in an ontological tangle which sharply contrasts both with the “picturesque and mellow things” of his dreams and with the abdominal humour of his literary heroes Falstaff and Hudibras, Mr Polly begins to develop the first symptoms of indigestion (*The History of Mr Polly* 41). The more things begin to crowd upon him and prove to be mentally indigestible, the more he is subject to “little streaks and bands of dyspeptic irritation and melancholy” (*The History of Mr Polly* 63). Despite the fact that he temporarily seeks refuge in the works of Shakespeare and in his imaginary forays into the Tudor world, Mr Polly’s indigestion eventually takes hold of his entire life and “rule[s] all his moods” (*The History of Mr Polly* 121). While his body is persistently turned into “a battleground of fermenting foods and warring juices” (*The History of Mr Polly* 129), his perception becomes so much darkened that he sees the people around him, his neighbours and his fellow-tradesmen, exclusively in terms of “dehumanized humanity” (*The History of Mr Polly* 129).

Wells’s Edwardian novel is, thus, not so different from Gissing’s *New Grub Street*: in both novels, we are shown quixotic characters living in worlds of fiction and illusion who are obliged to come to terms with the sobering fact that modern, post-Darwinian reality is fashioned either by bestial all-devouring monsters or by parasitical individuals who have facilely learnt to pander to the coarse desires of the vulgar masses and to benefit from their fast-food mentality. While Reardon, Biffen and Yule are eventually crushed by the harbingers of vulgarity and defeated by hunger, malnutrition and the horrors of dyspepsia, Mr Polly, the self-styled “Visitant from Another World” (*The History of Mr Polly* 205), manages to escape from his dyspeptic deadlock situation into a pastoral *locus amoenus*. But as in Maugham’s *Liza of Lambeth*, Mr Polly’s idyll is jeopardized and not free from the onslaught of the coarse and monstrous. Having enjoyed some cold boiled beef, a bit of crisp lettuce and new mustard (*The History of Mr Polly* 166), Polly is painfully made aware of the fact that his paradise is “threat-marred” (*The History of Mr Polly* 178) and open to the intrusion of a transgressive figure called Uncle Jim. In one significant respect, however, Wells’s novel differs from the Naturalists’ descriptions of the *bête humaine* and its gluttonous appropriation of the world: contrary to all Darwinian laws of relentless evolution, it is the quixotic Mr Polly, who, “among the ruins of [many] an idyllic afternoon” (*The History of Mr Polly* 194), eventually triumphs over the representative of brutish and destructive power. After a lapse

30 All references are to the following edition: WELLS, H.G. *The History of Mr Polly*. Edited by Simon J. James. London: Penguin, 2005.

of five years, the anti-heroic protagonist of the novel is, according to the narrator, “a plumper, browner, and healthier Mr Polly altogether than the miserable bankrupt with whose dyspeptic portrait our novel opened” (*The History of Mr Polly* 199). Notwithstanding the fact that the novel is consistent with Wells’s idea of the absurd arbitrariness of life,³¹ *The History of Mr Polly* does point to a teleological direction and is, thus, devoid of the oppressive sense of determination that otherwise irretrievably divides mankind into victims and victimizers, into gourmandizing eaters and available food.

V.

Nineteenth-century literary representations of eating are more diversified than what the myth of the Victorian age of abstinence, scarcity and Evangelical austerity indicates. Concentrating on the Malthusian impact on food distribution, on female self-starvation and on other forms of non-consumption of food, critics tend to downplay or to eclipse the nineteenth-century phenomenon of the *bête humaine* and its relevance for a specifically Darwinian culture of eating.

Lord Byron’s Regency epic poem *Don Juan* paved the way for later representations of bestial men. What anticipates the grim anthropological concepts of the Naturalists is not only the fact that the wolfish men are voracious and egotistical eaters; the fact that they pounce on Pedrillo, Don Juan’s teacher, the “pastor and his master” (*Don Juan* II, 78, 624), foreshadows the late Victorian tendency to downgrade intellectuals from a Darwinian perspective. Although Pedrillo can hardly conceal the lurking beast within himself when he greedily devours one of the forepaws of Juan’s spaniel, in the context of the (pre-) Darwinian idea of life as a struggle for supremacy, he is an intellectual misfit, whose brains are paradigmatically disposed of as scraps for sharks to feed on. This dichotomy between victimized scholar and bestialized man is recaptured in various novels of the late Victorian and Edwardian period. Even if one has to acknowledge the fact that scholars and men of letters from Reardon to Mr Polly are no longer exposed to the threat of cannibalization, they are compelled to see that Morlockian figures in the shape of petty tradesmen, caterers to the taste of the vulgar and bland representatives of coarseness have drained their lives of

31 Mr Polly’s concluding digressions give expression to his feeling of randomness and absurdity: “Only I don’t see what it’s all up to” (*The History of Mr Polly* 208). Cf. LENNARTZ, Norbert. *Absurdität vor dem Theater des Absurden. Absurde Tendenzen und Paradigmata untersucht an ausgewählten Beispielen von Lord Byron bis T.S. Eliot*. Trier: WVT, 1998. 135 ff.

their vitality and thrust them into the infernal tortures of hunger, indigestion and consumptive emaciation.

The intellectual's inability to eat, which is blatantly pitted against the insatiable gluttony of the *bêtes humaines*, is also indicative of the increasing indigestibility of the modern world. In his essay *The Soul of Man under Socialism* (1891), Wilde complains about the fact that the new cultural fast-food generation is no longer prepared to relish literature like gourmets, but is only eager to "swallow their classics whole, and never taste them".³² In this respect, the cultural devourers of canonical literature resemble the picnickers in Maugham's *Liza of Lambeth*, who swallow their food 'unmasticated'. While the representatives of the coarse call for the hurried appropriation and ingestion of life – without too much rumination³³ –, the species of the refined, who nostalgically conjure up the Renaissance world of feasting and ceremony, are relentlessly faced with the fact that there is either no ontological food left or that the leftovers are conducive to the horrors of dyspeptic pain. Seen from this perspective, images of eating and drinking can never be understood in terms of decorative illustration; in the wider context of Victorian literature, they are rather vital signifiers and metaphors closely related to upheavals in anthropology and to strands of cultural pessimism which were slowly gaining ground.

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32 WILDE, Oscar. *The Soul of Man and Prison Writings*. Edited by Isobel Murray. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990. 19.

33 The word *rumination* is derived from the Latin word 'ruminatio', which means 'chewing (the cud)' and refers to the close, and now almost oblivious, relationship between eating and thinking.

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The Promises of Plenty in Scarcity: Notes on Ascetic Modernism

“God gave a Loaf to every Bird – / But just a Crumb – to Me –” (*The Poems* 748), writes US-American author Emily Dickinson (1830 – 1886) in one of her poems, impersonating one of her favourite figures: the “incredibly shrinking woman”. Or as she famously put it in another of her almost 1800 lyric texts:

Renunciation – is a piercing Virtue –
The letting go
A Presence – for an Expectation –
Not now –
The putting out of Eyes –
Just Sunrise –
Lest Day –
Day’s Great Progenitor –
Outvie
Renunciation – is the Choosing
Against itself –
Itself to justify
Unto itself –
When larger function –
Make that appear –
Smaller – that Covered Vision – Here – (*The Poems* 782)

Now this is not explicitly a poem about dieting or renouncing food. And yet, Dickinson’s text – about which much could be said (and much has been said already) – clearly ponders the horrors and pleasures of doing without nurture in a more general sense. Dickinson wrote about 200 poems which “deal directly or indirectly with food and liquor”¹ and which do so rather pervasively, as David Luisi claims in an essay of 1971: “there is hardly a topic”, he notes, “which Miss Dickinson does not speak of in terms of food and drink.”² Or, as Dickinson

1 LUISI, David. “Some Aspects of Emily Dickinson’s Food and Liquor Poems.” In: *English Studies* 52,1 (1971): 32 – 40. 32.

2 LUISI. “Some Aspects of Emily Dickinson’s Food and Liquor Poems.” 33.

scholar Vivian R. Pollak has it in 1979: “Dickinson uses thirst and starvation metaphorically to represent a broad spectrum of needs: spiritual, emotional, and intellectual”³ – in both her poems and in about a third of her letters. “The luxury it was”, she writes, for instance, in her poem “The luxury to apprehend” (*The Poems* 819), letting her speaker recall a rare moment of fulfilled desires,

To banquet on thy Countenance
A Sumptuousness bestows
On plainer Days,
Whose Table, far
As Certainty – can see –
Is laden with a single Crumb –
The Consciousness – of Thee –

In Dickinson’s poem “Victory comes late” (*The Poems* 195), by contrast, the speaker anticipates satiety, yet again the privileged trope employed is the economy of scarcity and lusciousness:

How sweet it would have tasted!
Just a drop!
Was God so economical?
His table’s spread too high
Except we dine on tiptoe!
Crumbs fit such little mouths –
Cherries – suit *Robins* –
The Eagle’s golden breakfast – *dazzles them!*
God keep his vow to “*Sparrows*”
Who of little love –
Know how to starve!

Yet even if many of these poems celebrate the pleasures of indulgence, most of them, as I will argue, work a paradox which promises to harvest plenty from little or less. Or as the poet herself puts it:

The Banquet of Abstemiousness
Defaces that of Wine –

Within it’s reach, though yet ungrasped
Desire’s perfect Goal – (*The Poems* 1447)

Taking off from Dickinson’s “strategy of shrinking”⁴ and “ethic of abstinence”⁵ I will make a three-step argument. While quite generally I do not disagree with the

3 POLLACK, Vivian R. “Thirst and Starvation in Emily Dickinson’s Poetry.” In: *American Literature* 51,1 (1979): 33–49. 33.

4 POLLACK. “Thirst and Starvation in Emily Dickinson’s Poetry.” 35.

5 POLLACK. “Thirst and Starvation in Emily Dickinson’s Poetry.” 37.

claims of earlier feminist arguments that interpret Dickinson's pervasive tropes of fasting and eating "as a specifically female response, conditioned by American Victorian definitions of true womanhood"⁶ and as a refusal to accept such conventional nurture, I do think they may cut too short. They do so, first, because they take tropes of eating and fasting literally. The assumption that by renouncing food and subsisting on crumbs, Dickinson's speakers bespeak the poet's anorexic condition is, first, based on a highly naïve notion of how texts and world interrelate – a notion that, in addition, goes against Dickinson's own modernist sense of representation. Neither is Dickinson's style aptly described as anorexic. Rather, dieting and overeating are two sides of one horrific coin, even in Dickinson. Secondly, such a claim ignores that in Dickinson as well as in many other modernist texts the pains of loss or lack are actually a gain. So how, I wonder, can our readings of modernist asceticism account for that paradox?

Three potential readings come to my mind: The first interrelates the discourse of food intake with contemporaneous economic theory and conceptions of subjectivity and shows that Dickinson privileges a poetics of scarcity in part because she is horrified by the 'indifferent' states of identity and wholeness that Transcendentalism has to offer. The second is a reading by way of analogy, building on the claim that Dickinson's faith in fasting interrelates with the modernist project of revitalizing the powers of language by simplifying, reducing, or slimming down literary discourse. My third reading takes us into an altogether different direction (and I cannot go very far along this line here); it interprets the many "crumbs" spread around on Dickinson's poetic plates as well as the "liquor never brewed" the poet serves us and the "balms" that she lets ecstatic bees drown in as metaphors not of a denial of the body,⁷ but of an insistent physical materiality that much of modernist literature drives home – a materiality taking distinct shapes, though, in different modes of the modernist project. And it is this materiality that fashions a subject clearly at odds with the idealist Romantic and highly elusive Emersonian self. Or as Dickinson herself puts it: "Renunciation – is the Choosing / Against itself – / Itself to justify / Unto itself –." (*The Poems* 782) My claim is not, though, that these three readings are alternatives; instead, they constitute three interpretative dimensions of a shift in subjectivity which crystallized, for instance, in modernist tropes of eating.

6 POLLACK. "Thirst and Starvation in Emily Dickinson's Poetry." 48.

7 I make reference here to Dickinson's poems "I taste a liquor never brewed" (*The Poems* 207) and "Come slowly – Eden!" (*The Poems* 205).

Step One. “It would have starved a Gnat –” (*The Poems* 444): Food Shortage, Surplus Poetry, and Self-Fashioning

I take issue here with the notion that the act of renouncing food, in literary texts, equals an abstinence of bodily pleasures. Instead, I would like to suggest that by insistently employing tropes of food intake or of a refusal to eat modernist texts actually interrogate a more complicated economy of desire based on a dialectics of pleasure and pain. Most of Dickinson’s poems on dietary preferences, for instance, ponder pain as a path to pleasure; and frequently pleasure results from a down-sized bread basket.

A little bread – a crust – a crumb –
[...]
A modest lot – A fame petite –
A brief campaign of sting and sweet,
Is plenty! is enough!

she writes. “Who asketh more”, the same poem reads on, “Must seek the neighboring life!” (*The Poems* 135) And yet as Dickinson’s texts advertise an “ethic of abstinence”, they also sense that there’s “a liquor never brewed” which promises a “madder Joy” (*The Poems* 1447).

I taste a liquor never brewed –
From Tankards scooped in Pearl –
Not all the Frankfort Berries
Yield such an Alcohol!

[...]

When Butterflies – renounce their “drams” –
I shall but drink the more!

Till Seraphs swing their snowy Hats –
And Saints – to windows run –
To see the little Tippler
From Manzanilla come! (Fr 207B)

Evidently, Dickinson’s poetics of need and desire interrogates both contemporaneous religious ideology (which projected life as lack to enhance the prospect of a more promising afterlife) as well as Transcendentalist philosophy (which by embracing a pantheist theology undid the distance between this and “the neighboring life” – or eternity – altogether).

At the same time, both Transcendentalism and Dickinson’s poetics are grounded in a conception of self or subjectivity that, not unlike American

economic theory, defined need or poverty as a privileged position. In contrast to the dominant economic theories of Ricardo and Malthus, which held that “poverty is normative, given the unequal race between population and means of subsistence”⁸, the American economist Henry C. Carey, for instance, argued that human progress “was to be a story of ever *increasing* returns [...] beginning with scarcity and ending with superabundance”.⁹

Unlike Carey, the philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson cared neither for macroeconomics nor did he mean to simply invert the Malthusian sense of economy. Instead, he embraced scarcity as the presupposition for an empowered self. Where “poverty turns out to be universal, ontological, [and] constitutive of the self”¹⁰, however, the “landlord” is hardly different from the “laborer” and economic difference seemingly dissolves.¹¹ For Emerson, each and everybody acts as a “needy self”. “[A]ll I know is reception”, writes Emerson, “I am and I have”.¹² This, however, is where Emerson and Dickinson clearly part. For Emerson scarcity, need, and hunger are fundamental for the fullness or identity that the (male) subject was to achieve by embracing the otherness of nature and thereby overcoming alienation. Unlike Whitman, who meant to put Emerson’s transcendentalist philosophy into poetic practice and, in his poems, aims to bridge the gap between self and other or nature, Dickinson, though, was highly sceptical of the Transcendentalist notion of identity and idealist convictions. She strongly resists the notion that nature gains its significance through the perceiving consciousness primarily, that words are directly fastened to visible things, and that the business of the philosopher or poet is to leap over the chasm of the unknown. Instead Dickinson recognizes nature’s defiance to human understanding, be it scientific or philosophical, and cherishes perception itself: “Perception of an object costs / Precise the Object’s loss – / Perception in itself a Gain / Replying to it’s Price – / The Object absolute – is nought – / Perception sets it fair / And then upbraids a Perfectness / That situates so far –” (Fr 1103).

“Nature and God”, she writes elsewhere, “I neither knew”; both remain strangers (Fr 803), different worlds whose secrets are not to be revealed. No matter how close the human mind deems itself to nature, “nature is a stranger yet; / The ones that cite her most / Have never passed her haunted house, / Nor simplified her ghost” (Fr 1433). Rejecting Emerson’s idealism and teleology, Dickinson insisted on the separation between self and nature as a fundamental condition of human subjectivity. Rereading Emerson’s “trust thyself” as “Ex-

8 DIMOCK, Wai-chee. “Scarcity, Subjectivity, and Emerson.” In: *boundary* 2 17,1 (1990): 83–99. 87.

9 DIMOCK. “Scarcity, Subjectivity, and Emerson.” 88.

10 DIMOCK. “Scarcity, Subjectivity, and Emerson.” 98.

11 DIMOCK. “Scarcity, Subjectivity, and Emerson.” 99.

12 Quoted in DIMOCK. “Scarcity, Subjectivity, and Emerson.” 99.

plore thyself”, she transforms the struggle between the “Me” and the “Not-Me” into the self’s struggle with the other within, at the risk of referentiality. Knowing that nature cannot answer the questions that preoccupy her, Dickinson, on the one hand, turns toward the landscape of our psyche where she finds yet another version of the division between self and other. “One need not be a Chamber – to be Haunted”, she wrote, echoing gothic traditions, “One need not be a House – / The Brain – has Corridors – surpassing / Material Place – // [...] Far safer, through an Abbey – gallop – / The Stones a’chase – / Than Moonless – One’s A’self encounter – / In lonesome place – // Ourselves – behind Ourselves – Concealed – / Should startle – most –” (Fr 407). Delineating the speaking subject as divided and multiple, Dickinson’s poem at the same time underlines that the subject is inseparable from its own other (Fr 709) who can be both, friend or foe (Fr 579).

For Dickinson, only the space we call eternity allows for states of identity and promises an economy of plenty. And this is how she envisions eternity in terms of liquid:

Come slowly – Eden!
Lips unused to Thee –
Bashful – sip thy Jessamines –
As the fainting Bee –

Reaching late his flower,
Round her chamber hums –
Counts his nectars –
Enters – and is lost in Balms. (Fr 205)

In yet another poem, Dickinson projects eternity as the meeting of “Fleshless Lovers” (Fr 691) who enjoy “the Privilege / Of One another’s Eyes” (Fr 691) and

Look – feed upon each other’s faces – so –
In doubtful meal, if it be possible
Their Banquet’s real – (Fr 301)

The fleshless lovers’ “Banquet” is “real” because “the Wine [comes] once a World”, as Dickinson puts it, and because only the “Torrents of Eternity” (Fr 1420) allow lovers to consume their unmediated identity and wholeness – a state that, interestingly enough, compares to what psychoanalysis has termed the preoedipal, a moment in the constitution of the human subject when all needs are physical and (supposedly) fulfilled.

In Dickinson’s poetic universe, there is no other place where identity was to be had. In a letter of March 1853 to Susan Gilbert, Dickinson compares eternity to an infinite embrace. “Bye and bye”, she writes, “[eternity] will open it’s everlasting arms, and gather us all” (*The Letters of Emily Dickinson* 103). “There is no first, or last, in Forever –,” she puts it in a later correspondence to Susan. “It

is Centre, there, all the time –” (*The Letters of Emily Dickinson* 288). “To crumbling men”, reads one of her poems, eternity looks “firm” and represents “The only adamant Estate / In all Identity –” (Fr 1397). Viewed from the poet’s privileged vantage points, “The Dying” (Fr 830), eternity indeed presents itself as glimpses of identity, as the unmediated, mirroring gaze into the countenance of a beloved other (Fr 691). Somewhat paradoxically, by use of broken language, the poet projects the beyond as a limitless space, in which the human subject dissolves, as a state where (gender) differences dissolve, a condition of fulfilled wholeness and without desire – a condition that is unattainable on this side of existence.

All existence this side of life, by comparison is hunger, starvation, and desire at best, and yet, for Dickinson, desire and hunger are actually a desirable state of affairs. After all, the ‘desire for desire’, as Mary Ann Duane called it in a different context, is the very fundament of human subjectivity. Identity, by contrast, may turn out a scary state of non-difference, desirelessness, and fulfilled wholeness in Dickinson’s lyrics, as figured, for instance, in her poem, “Behind Me – dips Eternity” (Fr 743):

Behind Me – dips Eternity –
 Before Me – Immortality –
 Myself – the Term between –
 Death but the Drift of Eastern Gray,
 Dissolving into Dawn away,
 Before the West begin –

‘Tis Kingdoms – afterward – they say –
 In perfect – pauseless Monarchy –
 Whose Prince – is Son of none –
 Himself – His Dateless Dynasty –
 Himself – Himself diversify –
 In Duplicate divine –

‘Tis Miracle before Me – then –
 ‘Tis Miracle behind – between –
 A Crescent in the Sea –
 With Midnight to the North of Her –
 And Midnight to the South of Her –
 And Maelstrom – in the Sky –

Let us follow Dickinson’s traveller on her way to eternity, a state where, supposedly, all hunger is a foreign term, where all desires are fulfilled. Most striking about this text is its proliferating parallelisms, which permeate prosody, grammar, lexicon, and punctuation while also competing with an element of trinity resonating in the three-line structure and its threefold spatial dimension

(“behind”, “before”, “between”). Composed in an expanded version of common meter, the – unusually regular – poem (for Dickinson that is) abounds in alliteration. “Duplicate divine” allies death with divinity and counterbalances content, for death, after all, is described as drifting away. Based on repetition with a difference, parallelism involves an element of circularity and ahistoricity, which gets underscored, on the level of syntax, by a lack of verbs and, when it comes to semantics, by an emphasis on timelessness (“pauseless”, “dateless”). In fact, using “before” as a preposition (and not as an adverb of time), Dickinson’s vision of eternity transforms temporality into spatial dimensions. But even spatial dimensions eventually diminish. There is miracle and midnight all over; eternity (or infinite time) and immortality (or never-ending existence) are one. Down and above merge. The crescent drops into the sea. Sea and sky mirror each other. In such a universe hierarchies collapse, oppositions dissolve, and subjectivity turns into identity. Whereas on this side of life “opposites entice”, “The Absolute – removed / The Relative away –” (Fr 488) in the beyond. Associated with the East and the rising sun, death marks not an end but a new beginning, a kind of rebirth that rapidly drifts into oblivion. The speaker evolves from this experience as both subject, “Myself”, and object, “Me”, but her self-portrait as “Term between” does not quite fit. For, where oppositions become self-reflections, notions of “inbetweenness” no longer apply. Instead, identity becomes all-pervasive. Presented as “Crescent in the Sea – / [...] / And Maelstrom – in the Sky –,” the subject has turned into a mirror image of utopian wholeness.

In his dedication “To Emily Dickinson”, Hart Crane addresses his predecessor as a “you who desired so much” and for whom feeding on hunger became “an endless task”, a hunger which, as Crane seems to suggest, also nourishes the many silences of her texts, achieving their utmost “clarity” “[w]hen singing that Eternity possessed”:

You who desired so much – in vain to ask –
 Yet fed you hunger like an endless task,
 Dared dignify the labor, bless the quest –
 Achieved that stillness ultimately best,

Being, of all, least sought for: Emily, hear!
 O sweet, dead Silencer, most suddenly clear
 When singing that Eternity possessed
 And plundered momentarily in every breast; (“To Emily Dickinson”)

As a close reading of Dickinson’s poem “Before Me – Dips Eternity –” suggests, however, this “sudden” clarity has its darker dimensions, too. The fullness of identity the poem envisions turns out a scary echo chamber rather than the ultimate reparation of the subject’s sacrifices and longings. In fact, I read Dickinson’s threshold glances into paradise as part of her unorthodox dialectics

of gain and loss – a dialectics that, for various, and partly gender-related reasons, is both deeply grounded in its cultural climate and aspiring not simply to transcend but to transform that climate. In its first step of negation Dickinson explores subjectivity as a “contract of sacrifice”¹³. In what seems a negation of negation this “Covered Vision” of lack, loss, and hunger is traded for a “Superior Spectre”, for a vision of a realm “Nicknamed by God – / Eternity –” (Fr 452), a place in which the split between subject and object is supposedly repaired. Yet “singing that Eternity possessed”, the poet loses all certainty of that possession. As distance diminishes, paradise proves too close to pain, leaving much to be desired, and no negation of negation at all. In her final move Dickinson therefore reclaims eternity for daily life by trying to account for it in writing, on this side of existence. In the process, the poet’s many ‘losses’ were clearly outbalanced by a substantial degree of liberty – and poetic licence – we may add. For, after all, Dickinson considered poetry potency. “I dwell in Possibility –,” reads one of her poems, “A fairer House than Prose – / More numerous of Windows – / Superior – for Doors –” (Fr 466). Poetry, for her, needed hunger to produce surplus, “The spreading wide my narrow Hands / To gather Paradise –.”

Step Two. ‘Anorexic’ Writing? Shrinking Bodies, Slimming Down Texts, Celebrating Materialities

“Throughout the visceral fight that has opposed the Fat and the Lean since the beginning of time”, Lucien Dällenbach writes in his book on the poetics of the mosaic, “one would expect the Moderns to side with thinness”¹⁴. And this is not only the case because in the United States “fat began to be identified as a health and aesthetic issue at the very end of the nineteenth century”¹⁵. This also seems plausible because when it comes to size, modernism opts for minimal solutions – like the haiku, for instance. As Ezra Pound famously wrote in “A Few Don’ts by an Imagiste” in 1913: “It is better to present one Image in a lifetime than to produce voluminous works;” “[u]se no superfluous word, no adjective, which does not reveal something;” “use absolutely no word that does not contribute to

13 KRISTEVA, Julia. “Women’s Time.” In: *Signs* 7,1 (1981): 13–35.

14 Quoted in DELVILLE, Michel. “Walking on the Wild Side of Modernism: On Tender Buttons and Brussels Sprouts.” In: Christoph den Tandt (ed.). *Reading Without Maps. Cultural Landmarks in a Post-Canonical Age*. Brussels: Presses Interuniversitaires Européennes and Peter Lang, 2005. 135–46. 135.

15 STEARNS, Peter N. “Fat in America.” In: Christopher E. Forth and Ana Carden-Coyne (eds.). *Cultures of the Abdomen: Diet, Digestion, and Fat in the Modern World*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005. 239–57. 139.

the presentation;” and: “[u]se either no ornament or good ornament.”¹⁶ Modernists prefer their texts to be skinny, lean, straight, and Pound explicitly praises “Mr Yeats” for “ha[ving] once and for all stripped English poetry of its per-damnably rhetoric”¹⁷. Similarly, Hilda Doolittle – “H.D., imagiste”, as Pound has it in 1914 – in many ways embodied this lineage, while authors like Gertrude Stein and Amy Lowell seemed to be aberrations, physically as well as textually, a position that Simone Knewitz, in her work on modernist poetry, has challenged.¹⁸

Likewise for Dickinson, renunciation was a matter of physiology and philosophy as much as a question of aesthetics. “Less was more for Dickinson”, writes Heather Kirk Thomas, “and this triumph of renunciation informs her poetry with a minimalist art”¹⁹. While Whitman’s lengthy catalogue poems aim for inclusion and comprehensiveness, Dickinson would do with less space than the – at the time privileged – iambic pentameter provided her with. Trimming the poetic line, experimenting with hymn stanza and ballad meter as well as with idiosyncratic syntax and punctuation, and employing a disjunctive and highly elliptical syntax, Dickinson creates complex tensions that seem to make many of her poems burst out of their seams. This effect is due both to the ambiguity of Dickinson’s oftentimes riddling rhetoric and grammar and to a desire, driving much of her poetry, to represent aspects of human existence which tend to resist. At the same time, this may also explain why, even if less was indeed more for most modernists and the ‘minimalism’ of Ernest Hemingway, for instance, continues to inform postmodernist neo-realisms, this very reductiveness frequently corresponds to a peculiar monumentalism that also informs Dickinson’s poetics of scarcity.²⁰ This ‘grand scale’ of Dickinson’s poetics is a distinctive mark of her manuscripts, as Dickinson scholar Martha Nell Smith has argued in her work on the poet’s fascicles, a mark erased in the printed versions of her work which decrease the scale and scope of Dickinson’s forceful handwriting.

While less was indeed more for many modernists, there are, however, many notable exceptions to the paradigmatic modernist who favoured diminished textual frames. Next to Whitman’s ever-expanding “Song of Myself” (1855/

16 POUND, Ezra. “A Few Don’ts by an Imagiste.” In: *Poetry* 1 (1912–13): 200–207.

17 POUND, Ezra. “A Retrospect.” In: *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*. Edited by T.S. Eliot. London: Faber, 1954. 3–14. 11.

18 Cf. KNEWITZ, Simone. “Spoken Art: Amy Lowell’s Dramatic Poetry and Early Twentieth-Century Expressive Culture.” In: *Copas* 9 (2008). <http://www-copas.uni-regensburg.de/articles/issue_09/09_06_text_knewitz.php> (accessed: 3 December, 2009)

19 THOMAS, Heather Kirk. “Emily Dickinson’s ‘Renunciation’ and Anorexia Nervosa.” In: *American Literature* 60,2 (1988): 205–25. 222.

20 We may also think of the current trend to produce big fat books, displayed, for instance, by Mark Z. Danielewski’s *House of Leaves* (2000), Richard Powers’ *The Echo Maker* (2006), and, of course, Thomas Pynchon’s *Against the Day* (2006).

1882), long poems such as T.S. Eliot's "The Waste Land" (1922), Hart Crane's "The Bridge" (1930), Marianne Moore's "Marriage" (1923), and William Carlos Williams's *Patterson* (1946–58) come to mind, for instance, as does the work of paradigmatic modernist Gertrude Stein who composed sentences that abolished punctuation altogether and seemed never-ending, over-boarding, characterized by seriality, and repetitiously insistent, or simply too much for many a reader. Thus Michel Delville is right when he claims in an essay on Stein's *Tender Buttons* – "arguably", as he puts it, "the most famous example of food poetry written and published during the modernist period"²¹ and one of her 'leaner' publications – that we need to distinguish between "different kinds of aesthetic 'asceticisms' when we want to make sense of the full complexity" of modernist writing²².

At the same time, 'lean' Dickinson and 'fat' Stein may be more proximate to each other than the physique of their writing (and their bodies) may suggest. Even as Stein's "new kind of realism", as William James labelled her modernist agenda,²³ her aim to produce an immediate account of objects – including food –, even as that goal was in direct opposition to Dickinson's interest in perception itself – "Perception of the Object", we may recall, "costs / Precise the Object's loss –" – Dickinson and Stein still meet when it comes to matters of materiality. In some sense Dickinson may even anticipate what Delville calls Stein's "materiology": instead of transforming food into art, both Dickinson's and Stein's poems expose both the very fabric and texture of language and the materiality of physical experience.

Step Three: Modernist Literature, the Liminality of Food, and the Limits of the Body

"[T]he unstable, ambiguous, liminal quality of food", writes Delville with reference to Stein, "questions the limits of the body which, in turn, tends to be perceived as a precarious, unfinished entity, an organic factory ingesting, processing, exuding, and excreting substances that are alternatively inside and outside".²⁴ Stein's food poems are meant to animate inanimate objects such as "milk", "celery", and "oranges" and account for the relationship between materiality and meaning as process and movement.

21 DELVILLE. "Walking on the Wild Side of Modernism." 136.

22 DELVILLE. "Walking on the Wild Side of Modernism." 144.

23 JAMES, William. *The Flowers of Friendship: Letters Written to Gertrude Stein*. Edited by Donald Gallup. New York: Knopf, 1953. 50.

24 DELVILLE. "Walking on the Wild Side of Modernism." 138.

Orange in

Go lack go lack use to her.
 Cocoa and clear soup and oranges and oat-meal.
 Whist bottom whist close, whist clothes, woodling. Cocoa and clear soup
 and oranges and oat-meal.
 Pain soup, suppose it is question, suppose it is butter, real is, real is only,
 only excreate, only excreate a no since.
 A no, a no since, a no since when, a no since when since, a no since when
 since a no since when since, a no since, a no since when since, a no since, a
 no, a no since a no since, a no since, a no since. (Selected Writings 496)

Dickinson's poems, by contrast, are based on what Roland Hagenbüchle calls 'phenomenological reduction' – a focus not so much on things and phenomena themselves, but on how they affect our body and mind. Consequently, Dickinson's concern with the horrors of eating and the pleasures of starving insistently foregrounds the body as the physiological basis of perception and experience, as the texture of the interdependence of self and world. Dickinson's tropes of eating do, even if the intake is minimal, capitalize on modes of such physical experience – experiences which tend to resist representation while at the same time driving many of Dickinson's and by extension many modernist texts, poetry as well as prose. So far, we have merely begun to explore this kind of materiality.

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Fascination and Pleasure: Aesthetic Culture, Darwinism, and Eating in English Literature at the Turn of the Century (Wells, Housman, Brooke)

I. Fascination and/or Pleasure

In the introductory matter to his *Utopia*, Thomas More uses the metaphor ‘salt’ to characterise the sharp, biting quality of his satire. Satire evidently offers a special kind of pleasure or ‘Genuss’. The German word ‘Genuss’ refers both to the consumption of food and to pleasure, and it is traditionally used in the language of art criticism. The same word denotes the pleasure of eating and the pleasure of contemplating art. In fact, since antiquity the production and consumption of art has been metaphorically spoken of in terms of cooking and eating. Different genres attract different metaphors from the realm of culinary pleasures. Thus ‘farce’ and ‘pot-pourri’ ultimately point back, as Fritz Nies has shown,¹ to different types of food (‘gewürztes Hackfleisch,’ ‘Eintopfgericht’) which is also true, I would add, for ‘satire’ (‘scharfes Gemengsel’). The German philosophy of art has often emphasised the importance of tasting, of ‘Kunstgenuss’, as an experience and as a term. Friedrich Vischer, in his *Ästhetik*, declares: “es ist keine Kunstphilosophie und Kunstkritik möglich, wo ihr nicht der volle, ungeteilte, reine Kunstgenuss vorangegangen ist.”² The formula ‘reiner Kunstgenuss’ apparently suggests a differentiation between sensual pleasure and the disinterested, abstract experience and judgment of beauty in the tradition of Kant, who explicitly distinguishes between what is merely agreeable and what is beautiful. To illustrate his notion of the ‘agreeable’ Kant uses the example of drinking alcohol: “der Kanariensekt ist angenehm”.³

Despite this Kantian distinction the rhetoric of tasting and enjoying has often

1 Cf. NIES, Fritz. “Genussverheißung in französischen Gattungsnamen.” In: Wolfgang Klein and Ernst Müller (eds.). *Genuss und Egoismus. Zur Kritik ihrer geschichtlichen Verknüpfung*. Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2002. 42 – 53. 45 – 46.

2 Vischer quoted in MAAG, Georg. “Lust und Genuss: Eine Passagensammlung.” In: Gisela Febel, Françoise Joly and Silke Pflüger (eds.). *Paradox oder Über die Kunst, anders zu denken: Mélanges für Gerhart Schröter*. Kemnat: quantum books, 2001. 367 – 74. 372.

3 KANT, Immanuel. *Kritik der Urteilskraft*. Hamburg: Meiner, 1959 [1790]. 49.

been regarded with suspicion. Kant after all never gave up the term ‘Geschmack’, ‘taste’. How can one distinguish the experience of art from the hedonism of consumer culture? Does it make sense to attempt a distinction at all? The language of advertising puts the problem into focus. The inscription on a matchbox reads thus: “Erst im vollkommenen Genuss findet der Mensch seine wahre Bestimmung. Diesem Anspruch ist die Marke Mercedes verpflichtet.”⁴ In view of such a statement and the reality of a ‘bürgerlicher Kunstbetrieb’, it is no surprise to discover that Theodor Adorno, in his *Ästhetische Theorie* (1970), violently reacts against the potential reductionism implied in the word ‘Genuss’. He insists on the essential difference between the aesthetic hedonism of our consumer culture and aesthetic appreciation proper linked to the experience of truth, a truth which no doubt defies the conceptual grids of the rational tradition:

Wer Kunst konkretistisch genießt, ist ein Banause, Worte wie Ohrenschmaus überführen ihn. Wäre aber die letzte Spur von Genuss extirpiert, so bereitet die Frage, wozu überhaupt Kunstwerke da sind, Verlegenheit. Tatsächlich werden Kunstwerke desto weniger genossen, je mehr einer davon versteht. Eher war sogar die traditionelle Verhaltensweise zum Kunstwerk [...] eine von Bewunderung, dass sie an sich so sind, nicht für den Betrachter. Was an ihnen aufging und ihn hinriss, war ihre Wahrheit, wie sie in Gebilden des Kafkaschen Typus jedes andere Moment überwiegt. Sie waren keine Genussmittel höherer Ordnung. Das Verhältnis zur Kunst war keines von Einverleibung, sondern umgekehrt verschwand der Betrachter in der Sache [...]. Wer jene genuine Beziehung zur Kunst hat, in der er selber erlischt, dem ist sie nicht Objekt [...].⁵

After Adorno German reception theory (Jauss and others) has worked hard to rehabilitate the pleasure principle. However, the problem addressed by him is still with us as Bohrer’s passionate attack on the aesthetic hedonism of contemporary culture in 1998 proves. And it is still with us in the sense that Bohrer agrees with Adorno’s dismissal of aesthetic hedonism, but disagrees with Adorno’s seemingly Platonic conjunction of truth (or ethics) and beauty which for him fails to do justice to what he conceives to be modernity’s “Ästhetik des Schreckens”.⁶ The fascination of the uncanny, inexpressible and powerfully mysterious seems to lie at the very heart of the aesthetic experience (“das ästhetische Rätsel”⁷). The aesthetic object is endowed with a quasi-magic power of attraction which Bohrer, without linking it with the obvious term ‘fascination’, calls “Strahlkraft”.⁸ For him the source of this “Strahlkraft” is subversive aesthetic negativity, not Adorno’s truth.

It seems to me that these theoretical problems are both real and insoluble. The

4 Quoted in MAAG. “Lust und Genuss.” 373.

5 ADORNO, Theodor. *Ästhetische Theorie*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1970. 27.

6 BOHRER, Karlheinz. *Die Grenzen des Ästhetischen*. München: Hanser, 1998. 170.

7 BOHRER. *Die Grenzen des Ästhetischen*. 170.

8 BOHRER. *Die Grenzen des Ästhetischen*. 188.

appreciation of art cannot be reduced to a form of lust, nor can one cut it off from sensual and intellectual pleasure or deny it a truth-value. What I wish to focus upon in what follows are the historical origins of the problem which are to be found in the culture around 1900, when aesthetic hedonism, consumerism and Darwinism joined forces to legitimize consumption and the concomitant use of culinary imagery. Poets such as A.E. Housman, John Davidson and Rupert Brooke recognised the problem and dealt with it, as we shall see, in their poetry in a critical fashion. So did – though admittedly implicitly rather than explicitly – Oscar Wilde, whose *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, featuring the aesthetic hedonist Lord Henry and his disciple Dorian, has rightly been called the tragedy of aestheticism as a way of life. Wells gave it a biological twist by pointing out the importance of aesthetic and intellectual stimuli for the development of the brain. Furthermore, the aesthetic discourse of the time also discovered the category of fascination, which seems to be implied in Adorno's argument. In true artistic experience art, rather than waiting to be bought and swallowed, is conceived of as an agent whose truth or mystery overwhelms the recipient, in a sense swallows him. The force of this mysterious power of attraction, whether it is motivated spiritually or biologically, is fascination. Adorno never explicitly mentions the term, but his vocabulary strongly suggests it when he uses verbs such as 'hinreißen' and 'verschwinden', which stress the overpowering force of the work of art.

It seems as if we are facing a choice between culinary ('Genuss', 'eating', etc.) and occult ('fascination', 'magic', 'charm', 'spell', 'Strahlkraft', etc.) metaphors when we talk about the aesthetic effects of a work of art or, for that matter, any fascinating spectacle, and the structural properties responsible for those effects. Is it possible, with the help of metaphors, to distinguish between 'true art' and 'pseudo-art'? Or do we have to assume that analogies, which allow the formation of illustrative metaphors, are chosen at random and unable to diagnose and to buttress such distinctions? Still, the remarkable shift from 'pleasure' to 'fascination' seems to indicate a significant shift of emphasis. While pleasure in the sense of 'interesseloses Wohlgefallen' implies emotional moderation and the rational detachment of the aesthetic connoisseur, who judges formal qualities in particular, fascination and spell suggest the presence of overpowering energy and a cult of intensity for which aesthetic *experience* is more important than the hermeneutic detection of meanings. From the point of view of the recipient, rational control gives way to a sort of pleasurable, life-enhancing imprisonment. I will return to such questions in the last section of my paper.

II. Darwinist Perspectives: H.G. Wells

Let me begin by looking at the aesthetic implications of the Darwinist paradigm endorsed by H.G. Wells. One consequence is that the pages of his fiction are virtually littered with references to and representations of eating, including cannibalism, hunger, and indigestion. Since man is a 'culminating ape' and an 'edible predator' the images created by Wells to define his characters stress their kinship with the animal world. In his *H.G. Wells and the Culminating Ape* (1996 [1982]), Peter Kemp devotes a whole chapter to the topic of eating in Wells's life and fiction. The Morlocks in *The Time Machine* leave their underworld at night to practise cannibalism on the Eloi. Lurid horror elements are thus substantiated by Darwinist thinking. For Wells vegetarians simply ignore biological evolutionary facts. Indigestion explains the physical and mental problems of characters whose salvation also follows a Darwinist pattern. The comic novel *Mr. Polly* recounts the protagonist's escape from literal and symbolic indigestion:

[...] basically it is the story of a man leaving a bony woman who is a bad cook for a plump woman who is a good cook, and settling down with his new partner to a life of gastronomic bliss in an inn once called 'Potwell', now rechristened 'Omlets'.⁹

Similarly, gastronomic metaphors also serve to illustrate literary pleasures. Kemp, referring to Wells's *Tono Bungay*, which features the first-person narrator George Ponderevo, provides the following example: "[...] George Ponderovo, assembling the ingredients of his fiction, speaks of a 'hotch-potch of anecdotes and experiences with my uncle swimming in the middle as the largest lump of victual.'"¹⁰ Almost as if wishing to please Wells's Darwinist bent of mind, his literary friends also take recourse to culinary images when praising Wells's work. The aesthete's penchant for enjoying choice tit-bits, be they artistic or culinary, makes it apparently easy for him to appropriate Darwinist imagery. Thus Henry James, in a letter to Wells, has this to say about Wells's novel *Marriage*:

I consume you crude and whole and to the last morsel, cannibalistically, quite, as I say, licking the platter clean of the last possibility of a savour and remaining thus yours abjectly Henry James.¹¹

James communicates a positive aesthetic judgment, but seems to undercut it ironically by an exaggerated use of Darwinist images. The text hovers thus provocatively between excessive praise and a vile encomium. At the beginning,

9 KEMP, Peter. *H.G. Wells and the Culminating Ape. Biological Imperatives and Imaginative Obsessions*. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996 [1982]. 52.

10 KEMP. *H.G. Wells and the Culminating Ape*. 36.

11 KEMP. *H.G. Wells and the Culminating Ape*. 38.

James adopts the role of a cannibal, who either eats the author Wells or his work or both. An act of savagery is suggested since the eater is not selective at all and seems to be extremely hungry. The implied perspective of the cannibal is then subtly shifted to that of a dog who 'licks the platter clean'. Finally, the dog James greets his master Wells "abjectly", i. e. as befits a dog. James, the sophisticated artist and gourmet, has transformed himself into a Darwinist creature. From an intertextual point of view it seems clear that James projects a Darwinist interpretation on a famous English nursery rhyme:

Jack Sprat could eat no fat,
His wife could eat no lean.
And so, between them both, you see,
They licked the platter clean.¹²

What seems most important to me is the impression that Wells's biological view of man in a sense both strengthens and demetaphorizes the culinary images. Education, Wells argues, requires the provision of sufficient and adequate intellectual food no matter whether the books are fictional or non-fictional. I suggest that this intellectual food really consists of intellectual stimuli to which the brain responds by growing new cells. These stimuli are very real and, if insufficient or wrongly chosen, damage the child's intellectual development. Wells, the educator, is deeply concerned about this issue. For him, unlike Adorno, consumption as such is not the bogey, but the wrong kind of consumption. What counts is the book's potential for developing the user's brain. This, I conclude, must be its truth no matter whether the book is factual, fictional, mythical or religious.

From a Darwinist perspective, physical, intellectual and aesthetic consumption are perfectly legitimate and welcome as long as they contribute to the recipient's well-being and survival. Adorno's moral and aesthetic asceticism does not make sense from this angle unless it is viewed as the prerequisite for the fashioning of a cultured elite which Wells, too, considers to be indispensable for a functioning society. Mass culture and the entertainment industry are certainly not adequate intellectual food for Wells's Samurai.

Following Nietzsche's and Schopenhauer's example many artists and intellectuals of the turn of the century adopt the perspective of cultural criticism which results in a similar devaluation of mere culinary delights. Acts of critical distancing are therefore integrated into the very texture and structure of poetry by way of metareferential manoeuvres. Thus, as we shall see in the next chapter, the popular, exclusively hedonistic approach to art is targeted by A.E. Housman

12 I wish to thank John Fowler (Stuttgart) for pointing out this quote to me and for reading my essay.

and Rupert Brooke, who in a sense anticipate Adorno, as something to be deplored. Or, to put it differently, whereas Darwinism and the aesthetic hedonism of the new leisure class justify culinary images, cultural criticism, which implicitly and explicitly claims to have access to a higher truth,¹³ rejects them.

III. Aesthetic Culture: Housman and Brooke

In late nineteenth-century culture subjectivism, impressionism and aestheticism develop into a veritable lifestyle. For a small elite the pursuit of truth and the fulfilment of social duties lose their importance, whereas attractions, be they culinary, aesthetic or sexual, move to the forefront.¹⁴ To gain intense, ecstatic and fascinating experiences seems to become the very purpose of life. The epitome of this development is Oscar Wilde's Lord Henry and his adoration of the pleasure principle. The masses, too, are increasingly gripped by the delights of leisure and consumerism. John Davidson's poem "The Crystal Palace" of 1909 is a Nietzschean portrait of the 'mob' moving aimlessly through the Crystal Palace and enjoying the culinary delights provided by the globalised market. Davidson adopts the point of view of the cultural critic who deplores the reduction of individuals to a mass of seemingly bored or even mindless consumers. Very much in the spirit of his master Nietzsche¹⁵ Davidson employs the analogy of consuming, of eating and digesting, to interpret the modern age as a consumerist time which enjoys and passively registers the world's diversity of victuals both physical and cultural. The following passage evokes the pleasures of the *bon-vivant's* cosmopolitan dinner table:

'Grilled soles?' – for us: – Kidneys to follow. Now,
Your sole, sir; eat it with profound respect.
A little salt with one side; – scarce a pinch!
The other side with lemon; tenderly
Don't crush the starred bisection; count the drops!
Those who begin with lemon miss the true
Aroma: [...]
And now the wine a well decanted, choice
Chateau, *bon per*; a decade old, not more;
A velvet claret, piously unchilled. ("The Crystal Palace", lines 190 – 205)

13 Cf. PAUEN, Michael. *Dithyrambiker des Untergangs. Gnostizismus in Ästhetik und Philosophie der Moderne*. Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1994.

14 Cf. HAMANN, Richard and Jost HERMAND. *Epochen der deutschen Kultur von 1870 bis zur Gegenwart. Band 3: Impressionismus*. Frankfurt: Fischer, 1977 [1960]. 36 – 37.

15 NIETZSCHE, Friedrich. *Umwertung aller Werte. 2 Bände*. Edited by Friedrich Würzbach. München: dtv, 1969. Vol. 2, 480: "Die Modernität unter dem Gleichnis von Ernährung und Verdauung".

As the publication of the book *The Pleasure and Solace of Books* in 1898 testifies,¹⁶ solitary reading and the reception of art, just like “the cosmopolitanism of victuals, of literatures, newspapers”,¹⁷ are considered to be particularly rewarding pleasures. The two following examples analyse metareferential representations of the effects of poetry and music in poems by Housman and Brooke.

III.1 Poetry as Pleasure and Bitter Medicine: A.E. Housman

In 1896, the famous classical scholar and homosexual A.E. Housman, who suffered from unrequited love throughout his life, published a collection of poems entitled *A Shropshire Lad*. The fascination these poems produced in English readers particularly of the first half of the last century should, I believe, be attributed to the combination of an emotional and a cognitive fascination. Emotionally, the neo-pastoral poems appeal to educated urban readers because they record and express the nostalgia of a rural speaker for his native Shropshire, a ‘land of lost content’, which is in fact a purely imaginary Arcadia. Intellectually, the reader is gripped by the speaker’s and Housman’s cynical realism. Housman’s poetic Shropshire does not merely feature “happy highways” (*A Shropshire Lad* 57) but also, with provocative frequency symptomatic of an obsession, death by suicide, murder and unhappiness. Time’s rule is inexorable.

Metareferentiality is a crucial factor of the poem’s intellectual fascination.¹⁸ The poet justifies his method in the two meta-lyrical pieces at the end of the collection. Sensual pleasures, he argues there, cannot be the ultimate aim of poetry. What convinces and even endears and heals the reader in the long run is not a drug or an anodyne but the bitter truth. Rhetorically, poem number 43 is divided into two speeches. In the first stanza, his friends accuse him of killing them with his terrible “tune”. In his answer, which takes up the remaining four stanzas, the poet, who calls himself Terence, refuses to offer the verbal equivalent of the pleasures of beer:

16 Cf. SEEBER, Hans Ulrich. *Moderne Pastoralidichtung in England. Studien zur Theorie und Praxis der pastoralen Versdichtung in England nach 1800 mit besonderer Berücksichtigung von Edward Thomas (1878 – 1917)*. Frankfurt: Lang, 1979. 249.

17 NIETZSCHE. *Umwertung aller Werte*. Vol. 2, 480: “der Kosmopolitismus der Speisen, der Literaturen, Zeitungen”.

18 Cf. SEEBER, Hans Ulrich. “Narrative Fiction and the Fascination with the New Media Gramophone, Photography and Film: Metafictional and Media-Comparative Aspects of H.G. Wells’s *A Modern Utopia* (1905) and Beryl Bainbridge’s *Master Georgie* (1998).” In: Werner Wolf (ed.). *Metareference in the Arts and Media*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2009. 427 – 449.

Ale, man, ale's the stuff to drink
 For fellows whom it hurts to think:
 Look into the pewter pot
 To see the world as the world's not. (*A Shropshire Lad* 92)

Drunkenness, of which the poet gives an example in stanza three, only produces a lie: "the tale was all a lie" (*A Shropshire Lad* 92). Housman implicitly denounces the pleasures of daydreaming which Freud shortly afterwards identified as the true psychological origin and function of poetic fantasy: "Ich bin der Meinung, dass alle ästhetische Lust, die uns der Dichter verschafft, den Charakter solcher Vorlust trägt und dass der eigentliche Genuss des Dichtwerks aus der Befreiung von Spannung in unserer Seele hervorgeht."¹⁹ Rejecting the analogy of beer-drinking, Housman conceives of his poetry as a bitter, but wholesome medicine because it trains the reader for the realities of a world which has "much less good than ill" (*A Shropshire Lad* 93). The poet invests considerable effort and pain to produce a bitter drink which gives health and makes friends:

'Tis true, the stuff I bring for sale
 Is not so brisk a brew as ale:
 Out of a stem that scored the hand
 I wrung it in a weary land.
 But take it: if the smack is sour,
 The better for the embittered hour;
 It should do good to heart and head
 When your soul is in my soul's stead;
 And I will friend you, if I may,
 In the dark and cloudy day. (*A Shropshire Lad* 93)

Significantly, to some extent the argument and the form of his poems give the lie to his theoretical statement in *The Name and Nature of Poetry* (1945 [1933]). There he argues that wit, reason, intellect, ideas and meaning do not concern the essence of poetry. This is why he denounces metaphysical and eighteenth-century poetry. Theirs is only an intellectual appeal whereas genuine poetry ought to appeal to and express emotion by the subtle, suggestive use of a language freed from the constraints of denotation. For Housman, poetry is a quasi-physical thing which affects the psycho-physical organism called human being. However, the truth is that the power of his own poetry has very much to do with its intellectual transparency and accessibility. Secondly, Housman's smooth, though sophisticated versification and colloquial language invite a culinary and hedonistic, but also professional response. The sophistication appeals to the connoisseur of poetic craft. Thus the only marked irregularity of the iambic

19 FREUD, Sigmund. "Der Dichter und das Phantasieren." In: *Studienausgabe, Band X: Bildende Kunst und Literatur*. Frankfurt: Fischer, 1970 [1908]. 169–80. 179.

metre is created to emphasise in rhythmic terms, too, i. e. by the use of spondees, the kinship between the sincere poet (“mý sóul’s stéad”) and the intended reader and friend (“yóur sóul”). Thirdly, the implied analogy of bitter medicine in segment 43 and the explicit analogy of drinking beer or wine, which he continues to use in his essay, are not compatible. Housman loves to present himself as a gourmet who enjoys drinking beer and wine and does not hesitate to use the culinary activities as illustrations for the act of aesthetic appreciation:

When I am drinking Barolo stravecchio in Turin, I am not disturbed, nor even visited, by the reflexion that there is better wine in Dijon. But there is; and there was better poetry, not reckoning Milton’s, even in the perverse and crooked generation preceding Dryden. (*The Name and Nature of Poetry* 28)

Instead of deploring a logical contradiction it is probably wiser to view this as a genuine aporia and ambivalence which even Adorno could not escape. Art offers pleasure and truth and the two in fact reinforce each other. Housman corrects mere aesthetic hedonism, but cannot give up the notion of pleasure.

III.2 The Caricature of an Aesthetic Hedonist: Rupert Brooke

Aldous Huxley’s famous caricature of modern consumerism in *Brave New World* reveals how film and music are transformed to satisfy the consumer’s romantic and illusionist expectations. Kitsch is a mode of art which, by removing aesthetic distance and creating perfect illusion, provokes total identification and an excess of emotional participation. Kitsch is also a mode of reception or attitude which transforms great art into an occasion for self-indulgence and revelling in one’s emotions. Titillation of the senses thus displaces disinterested aesthetic enjoyment and discrimination. Cultural criticism has always deplored this perversion of aesthetic perception in what Adorno calls ‘Kulturindustrie’. Art which prevents thinking by creating intense and ‘fascinating’ illusion is only affirmative and therefore not acceptable for critical theory. From a postmodern perspective, which implies an alliance between ‘popular’ and ‘high’ culture, we are nowadays inclined to take a much more lenient view of this problem than Adorno.

It is, however, a problem which is already diagnosed by Rupert Brooke in his poem about the effect of a Wagner opera on a devoted consumer:

Wagner

Creeps in half wanton, half asleep,
 One with a fat white hairless face.
 He likes love-music that is cheap;
 Likes women in a crowded place;
 And wants to hear the noise they are making.

His heavy eyelids droop half-over,
 Great pouches swing beneath his eyes.
 He listens, thinks himself the lover,
 Heaves from his stomach wheezy sighs;
 He likes to feel his heart's a-breezing.

The music swells. His gross legs quiver.
 His little lips are bright with slime.
 The music swells. The women shiver.
 And all the while, in perfect time,
 His pendulous stomach hangs a-shaking.
 Queen's Hall, 1908 (*Poems of Rupert Brooke* 16)

The poem records the reactions of a fat visitor to a work by Wagner, probably *Tannhäuser*, performed at Queen's Hall in 1908. Since Brooke was an admirer of Nietzsche's it may even have been influenced by the philosopher's critical account of Wagner in "Der Fall Wagner". The alleged lover of art turns out to be a veritable gourmet whose appetite for women and for the pleasures of the operatic spectacle are inseparable. Accordingly his responses to the musical event come directly from his stomach and the climax of the performance coincides with a rhetorically suggested sexual climax: "His little lips are bright with slime./ The music swells. The women shiver." Brooke, adopting the role of a satiric observer, evokes ugliness to present a malicious portrait of a sensual hedonist and *bon-vivant*. The parts of his body mentioned in the text are indexical rather than symbolic signs of the type he belongs to: "fat wide hairless face", "heavy eye-lids", "great pouches", "pendulous stomach", "gross legs", "slime". Although eating and drinking are not mentioned explicitly it is clear that Wagner's work of art is subjected to the point of view of a sensual, hedonistic person driven by appetites. The noise the women make is therefore as satisfying for our gourmet as Wagner's music. In Brooke's poem the culinary disposition of the consumer and the culinary quality of Wagner's music reinforce each other.

The poet's formal arrangements produce suggested meanings which emphasize sensuality and sensuousness. I confine myself to a few selected examples. It is by no means clear to whom the personal name of the title refers. One would assume that it is a metonymy in which the composer's name stands for the

music produced by him. Yet since the poem attempts a portrait of a lover of Wagner's music the name can equally and insidiously refer to the visitor himself. Wagner would then be identified with a caricature of a consumer of late romantic music. The repetition of the sentence "the music swells" in the last stanza enacts the famous, long-drawn crescendos of Wagner's operas. Since "swell" is repeated twice and linked to the shivering woman by syntactic parallelism a causal relationship is suggested, with sexual undertones, between the swelling of the music and the shivering of the women. The last two lines confront us with a synaesthetic combination of visual image and sound, a parting shot, so to speak, at Wagner and the Wagnerite. The latter, or rather the stomach, completely overcome by the power of music, sways with it to and fro, and the regular iambs of the slow-moving line complement this impression of a total, but also ridiculous harmony between moving body and music. The Wagnerite is really an egoist who wishes to indulge in his feelings and appetites, who therefore identifies with the lover of the story. He in a sense labours ("heaves") to show off, in audible terms ("wheezy sighs"), the intense degree of his emotional involvement: "Heaves from his stomach wheezy sighs." One could argue, therefore, that the visitor is not as passive as consumers are supposed to be according to the critical view of consumerism. However, his activity, which does not reveal any engagement with truth or with the artistic qualities of Wagner's work, is the very opposite of the connoisseur's knowingness and aesthetic discernment demanded by Adorno and his school. His behaviour follows the logic of 'Verkitschung' which, one should concede, does not do justice to the sophistication of Wagner's art. I suggest that the will to be pleased and titillated prevents the Wagnerite of the poem from experiencing fascination proper.

It is precisely such a consumerist reception of art which Schönberg's atonal music, practically invented at the same time to which the poems refers, wishes to subvert and to prevent. Indeed, Adorno's aesthetic asceticism and avantgardism is directly inspired by his masters Arnold Schönberg and Alban Berg. Not surprisingly, Nietzsche and Adorno accuse Wagner's art of inviting a consumerist response. Wagner, the sorcerer, overwhelms his listeners by providing a veritable drug for them. Instead, as envisaged by Adorno, of being fascinated by an encounter with truth which only the language of art can express, Wagner's disciples succumb to the lure of a quasi-magic power.

IV. The Relativity of Pleasure and Fascination

Let me return to the question of pleasure and fascination. The literary delineation of the intense experience of art and art-like performances avails itself both of culinary images and of the term 'fascination'. In a letter to Wells, the novelist

Gissing confesses: “Delighted with *The War of the Worlds*. Devoured it at a sitting”.²⁰ Gissing becomes so absorbed by his reading of the Wells novel that he completely forgets the passing of time. The reading matter provided by Wells proves to be so attractive and nourishing that it provokes the user’s cannibalistic instincts. Art in a sense catapults him out of time because it totally occupies the recipient’s attention. There is a dialectic at work here between the subject and the object which deconstructs the opposition passive vs. active. A glance at Bacon’s use of the term ‘devour’ (‘swallow’) makes the special nature of the aesthetic experience referred to here more transparent. Bacon, in his essay “Of Studies”, proposes the following distinctions:

Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested; that is some books are to be read only in parts; others to be read, but not curiously, and some few to be read wholly and with diligence and attention.²¹

Bacon is evidently thinking of the cognitive and informative value of books. They are after all the chief medium of the Renaissance’s project of education. The utility of a book as an instrument of education determines its value. If the value of a book is predicated on its cognitive value alone it is clear that books which do not meet this criterion do not deserve to be studied in detail. They must only be ‘swallowed’, i. e. read superficially. Given the context of modern aesthetic fictions the metaphor ‘swallow’ means the very opposite. It becomes an emphatically positive description of the reading experience. Art and literature which manage to enchant the recipient do precisely what is expected from them in the modern aesthetics of intensity no matter whether they belong to ‘low’ or ‘high’ culture. “Enchant”²² implies that the reader at least to some extent loses his sovereignty, whereas in the case of Bacon the act of reading remains a rationally controlled act.

This is precisely the reason why modern accounts of the act of reading, particularly in works of evaluative literary criticism, frequently use the term ‘fascination’. The metaphors ‘devour’ and ‘fascinate’ – in its original meaning ‘fascinate’ refers to the power of the evil eye and to magic practices, be they evil or good – merely stress the active or passive aspect of the same experience. One can wonder whether Gissing devoured the book or whether it would not be more appropriate to say that he was devoured by the book. Such an inversion of subject and object happens when the critic or novelist interprets the object of the reader’s, or a character’s or the narrator’s attention as a fascinating agent or

20 Quoted in KEMP, H.G. *Wells and the Culminating Ape*. 36.

21 BACON, Francis. “Of Studies.” In: W.E. Williams (ed.). *A Book of English Essays*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1963 [1942]. 17–18.

22 Cf. PICK, Daniel. *Svengali’s Web: The Alien Enchanter in Modern Culture*. New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 2000.

fetish: “That book you sent me so fascinated me that I forgot how the time was going” exclaims Dorian in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (157). He insists that liking – which is, by the way, Kant’s term (‘Wohlgefallen’) for positive aesthetic appreciation – is not the same as being fascinated. John Davidson interprets his aesthetic experience of the Crystal Palace as follows: “It is a dreadful place the Crystal Palace, an ugly thing; from no standpoint and in no mood can I find it beautiful. Its colossal ugliness fascinates. It is built of glass and iron, what is the brag?”²³ And the narrator of Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* is fascinated by the incomprehensible otherness of the continent of Africa depicted on a map. The iconic signs of the map, the snake-like river in particular, enthrall the reader as if they were magic runes, as if they communicated something powerful and mysterious which apparently appeals to the subconscious knowledge and desire of Marlow: “And as I looked at the map of it in a shop-window, it fascinated me as a snake would a bird – a silly little bird.” (*Heart of Darkness* 33) Interestingly, aesthetic and intellectual fascination (“as I looked at the map”) is compared to biological fascination which in fact precedes the act of being devoured.

Fascination and pleasure stress different aspects of the experience of art, but they are not opposed to each other. Fascination can be a sign and a symptom of intense pleasure, even of a masochistic nature, and admiration. The recipient who is frozen into immobility is totally absorbed by the pleasures a work of art can offer. Not surprisingly, the hedonist Dorian Gray turns out to be a Wagnerite who is fascinated by *Tannhäuser*. In the opera Dorian sits “either alone or with Lord Henry, listening in a rapt pleasure to *Tannhäuser*, and seeing in the prelude to that great work of art a presentation of the tragedy of his own soul” (*The Picture of Dorian Gray* 166). The brief excerpt from *The Picture of Dorian Gray* assembles the typical features of the aesthetic experience of fascination. While the observer and listener sits petrified (“rapt”) in his chair, as in a state of ecstasy or horror, his mind is moved to reflections concerning his own situation. As if following the psychotherapist’s reading of fascination,²⁴ Dorian interprets his fascination with Wagner’s famous and notorious prelude to *Tannhäuser* as a response to what he intuitively knows only too well, which is in his case his seduction by evil and eroticism. Fascination is not triggered by the utterly alien and other, but by an other which also hides the familiar.

This means that the recipient can also be struck dumb by the strangeness, mystery and lurking danger of what he encounters, particularly by the unspeakable ugliness of evil. Decadent literature often records a kind of spell-

23 DAVIDSON. “The Crystal Palace.” 521.

24 Cf. KAST, Verena. “Auf daß ein Feuer aus dem Stein schlage: In jeder Faszination begegnen wir uns selbst – begeistert, aber auch ängstlich.” In: Hartmut Meesmann (ed.). *Fasziniert und begeistert, verzaubert vom Unbekannten*. Oberursel: Publikum-Forum, 1998. 3 – 5.

binding pleasurable horror which is summed up by the term fascination. In fact, the observer can become a suffering victim of the power of fascination, which means that in such cases fascination and a kind of sadomasochism are not far apart. Evidently 'fascination' transgresses the boundaries of Kant's 'interesseloses Wohlgefallen' of the beautiful and the sublime which implies, despite the recipient's inner agitation in the case of the sublime, in any case a detached, even rational stance. It seems more compatible with modern notions of irritation, intensity, ecstasy, energy and alienation which have been partly filtered out by the commercial appropriations of the term. It is also more compatible with the formal and semantic difficulties of a work of art particularly in the modernist sense which prevents mere emotional immersion and participation as practised by Brooke's Epicurean Wagnerite.

Thus it would seem at first glance that the term 'fascination' does more justice to (modern) aesthetic experience than pleasure for two reasons. Since it focuses on the 'fascination of what's difficult' (Yeats) it does not treat the work of art as an object in the consumerist sense, and it accommodates evil and the ugly since there is also the fascination of evil. And it seems undeniable that a work of art which does not produce some sort of fascination at least for some recipients is a failure. Ultimately, however, the term fascination does not help us to distinguish between the right and the wrong pleasure, between, as Adorno would have it, an acceptable and an unacceptable art. As there are different pleasures and tastes, there are also different fascinations and totally differently motivated moments of intensity. In music Dorian Gray, for example, can be fascinated either by the strange instruments ("hideous voices", 165) of South American natives or by Wagner although their respective musical codes are completely different (*The Picture of Dorian Gray* 115–16). His preference depends on the mood he is in. In contemporary culture the language of advertisements, which of course focuses on the positive meaning of the term, has long since appropriated the term fascination. To persuade potential buyers, commodities are presented as aesthetically fascinating objects. For Nietzsche, therefore, the language of culinary pleasures and the ambivalent magic language of fascination ultimately point to the same doubtful quality of Wagner's music and the overwhelmingly seductive effect it has on Wagnerites: "Wagner wirkt wie ein fortgesetzter Gebrauch von Alkohol", says Nietzsche.²⁵ Like the rattlesnake,²⁶ whose power of fascination is always dealt with in histories of the occult phenomenon, he attracts his victims by the magic power of fascination, and like Minotaurus Wagner is a man-eater:

25 NIETZSCHE, Friedrich. "Der Fall Wagner. Turiner Brief vom Mai 1888." In: Karl Schlechta (ed.). *Friedrich Nietzsche: Werke in drei Bänden, Zweiter Band*. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1994 [1955]. 931.

26 "[...] das Klapperschlangenglück des alten Meisters" (NIETZSCHE. "Der Fall Wagner." 913).

“Ah, dieser alte Minotaurus! Was er uns schon gekostet hat! Alljährlich führt man ihm Züge der schönsten Mädchen und Jünglinge in sein Labyrinth, damit er sie verschlinge – alljährlich intoniert ganz Europa, auf nach Kreta, auf nach Kreta.”²⁷

Wagner is accused of cannibalism and the production of a fascination which is, very much in the sense the decadent aesthetes use the term, both stimulating and corrosive. In fact, Wagner is the most prominent representative of decadent art whose hallmarks are aesthetic enjoyment, overeating and the twilight of erotic and aesthetic fascination. In his music and in Gustave Moreau's paintings of Salome, erotic and aesthetic, aesthetic and erotic appeals become indistinguishable. Des Esseintes, the protagonist of Huysman's classic decadent novel *Against Nature* (1884), is enthralled by Moreau's painting of the *femme fatale* Salome:

The character of Salome, a figure with a haunting fascination for artists and poets, had been an obsession with him for years [...] (*Against Nature* 65)

[...] there was some irresistible fascination exerted by this painting; (*Against Nature* 67)

Like Wagner, Huysmans avails himself of images culled from consumption and from magic to illustrate the overwhelming, fascinating effect of certain works of art. The following quote even mixes metaphors. Des Esseintes' aim is “to intoxicate himself with the magical charm of style” (*Against Nature* 95). Clearly culinary and magic metaphors aim here at characterising a defective or decadent way of using and abusing art just as much as at suggesting its objective properties and qualities.

Erwin Koppen (1973) offers rich evidence to prove the close correlation between fin de siècle decadence and Wagner's late romantic art. Read against the background of *Dekadenter Wagnerismus* it seems likely that Brooke's poem is a satiric commentary on this tradition, which extends from Baudelaire via Huysmans to Beardsley, rather than simply the poetic expression of a personal experience. It may well be both. In order to suggest the specific hedonistic quality of Wagner's art, writers and poets establish analogies and metaphors which identify his music and the mode of reception it provokes with sex, hypnosis and drugs. All these analogies imply the pathological dimension of Wagner's art.

(a) The erotic Wagnerite appears to be someone who forfeits the rational control and distance of Kantian aesthetic contemplation. There is an amusing dialogue between two American ladies in John Galsworthy's *The Island Pharisees* (1904) which confirms Baudelaire's verdict – “diaboliquement voluptueuse” – in a lighter vein:

27 NIETZSCHE. “Der Fall Wagner.” 932.

'They projuice [sic!] a strange condition of affairs in me', said the thin one.

'They're just divine', said the fatter.

'I don't know if you can call the fleshly lusts divine', replied the thinner.²⁸

(b) At the end of the nineteenth century, psychology develops into a science proper by explaining mesmerism and fascination in terms of hypnotism and suggestion. Particularly neurotic and hysterical women are supposed to fall victim to the mesmerizing, hypnotic power of artists like Svengali²⁹ or Wagner. Contemporaries were quick to discover a link between hypnotism and Wagner's music. Koppen comments:

Diese Musik war gewiß ebenfalls dazu angetan, Hysteriker zu entzücken. Ihre starken Orchester-Wirkungen brachten bei ihnen hypnotische Umstände hervor – in der Pariser Salpêtrière erzeugte man häufig eine Hypnose durch plötzliches Anschlagen eines Gongs – und die Formlosigkeit der unendlichen Melodie entsprach ganz dem träumerischen Schweifen ihres eigenen Denkens.³⁰

(c) Finally, the perusal of Wagner's music resembles the consumption of alcohol and hashish. Its function is obviously to escape the drab realities of the world and to sharpen perception, to open up new channels of vision. Contemporary observers employ this comparison, as Koppen shows, again and again.

Consumerism as a mass phenomenon and consumerism as an aestheticist attitude of the *fin de siècle* could not but provoke, in dialectical fashion, the ascetic modernism of Schönberg, Adorno and others who believed in the virtues of abstraction, reduction and aesthetic autonomy. Davidson, Housman and Brooke, by taking issue with consumerism, clearly contributed to this development, though not as ground-breaking formal innovators. Whether due to the activity of the reader ('devour') or that of the 'magic' book ('fascinate') the goal and purpose of the act of intense reading is the union of book and reader. We are what we read. Wells would have agreed wholeheartedly. But this is also the biblical view. Twice in the Bible, in the Old and in the New Testament, God's prophet is requested by the voice of the angel to eat the proffered book. This is from Ezekiel:

9 And when I looked, behold, a hand was sent unto me; and, lo, a roll of a book was therein;

10 And he spread it before me; and it was written within and without: and there was written therein lamentations, and mourning, and woe.

28 Quoted in KOPPEN, ERWIN. *Dekadenter Wagnerismus. Studien zur europäischen Literatur des Fin de siècle*. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1973. 118. I wish to thank Claus Daufenbach (Bonn) for pointing out this important source to me.

29 Cf. PICK. *Svengali's Web*.

30 KOPPEN. *Dekadenter Wagnerismus*. 326–27.

CHAPTER 3

Moreover he said unto me, Son of man, eat that thou findest; eat this roll, and go speak unto the house of Israel.

2 So I opened my mouth, and he caused me to eat that roll.

3 And he said unto me, Son of man, cause thy belly to eat, and fill they bowels with this roll that I give thee. Then did I eat it; and it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness.

4 And he said unto me, Son of man, go, get thee unto the house of Israel, and speak with my words to them. (*The Holy Bible, King James Version*)

Imbibing God's word seems to empower Ezekiel to speak to the sinful house of Israel with authority. The same effect of magic empowering seems to be implied in Revelation (10, 9–10). However, what used to be heavenly nourishment suggesting salvation became, in the context of a secular, consumerist culture, a strikingly intense form of distraction and stimulation unless it also suggests an epiphanic illumination. There seems to be no escaping this ambivalence.

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Michael Hollington

Food, Modernity, Modernism: D.H. Lawrence and the Futurist Cookbook

Introduction

I begin with D.H. Lawrence in the summer of 1929 recording some rather negative impressions of Germans eating and of German food. The poem he wrote then, “Food of the North”, is hardly a masterpiece, but it introduces with great clarity the issues I want to explore here in Modernist writing. Its interest resides to start with in its binary structure, for this paper will first explore some of the oppositions so frequently encountered when Modernists write about food and then later some of the points at which they seem to collapse these and go beyond binary thinking.

The specific focus of Lawrence’s poem is an opposition between the diet of the north and the diet of the south that has a long history in Europe:

The food of the north tastes too much of the fat of the pig
fat of the pig! Take me south again, to the olive trees
and oil me with the lymph of trees not with the fat of the pig.
(*The Complete Poems*, II, 652)

Anyone familiar with such classic works as Flandrin and Montanari’s *Food: A Culinary History* will immediately recognise the attitudes it expresses. To go no further back, they stem from Roman times, when, as Florence Dupont remarks, an essential distinction was made in the matter of food and drink between civilisation and barbarism: “[...] any people that subsisted on nothing but meat and animal by-products was by definition barbarian: the Germanic tribes, which primarily consumed milk, meat and cheese, are a prime example.”¹ By contrast, in the “predominantly Germanic culture that followed in the Middle Ages”, according to Massimo Montanari, when “meat, not bread, became the food

1 DUPONT, Florence. “The Grammar of Roman Dining.” In: Jean-Louis Flandrin and Massimo Montanari (eds.). *Food: A Culinary History*. English Edition by Albert Sonnenfeld. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2000. 113–27. 113.

symbol of the warrior”,² the pig seems to have won out over cereals, acquiring quasi-divine status as an infallible year-round provider of nourishment – as “meat on legs”³ – most particularly in Northern Europe where in the early Middle Ages at least an abundance of oak forests provided endless acorns for pig fodder. Later still, in the period when Lawrence was writing, there is further evidence to support his perception of German food culture as ruled by the pig. With modernity and the onset of the industrial revolution, pig meat was again found to be ideally adapted for mass production and consumption, and thus central to modern diet. Hans Jürgen Teuteberg and Jean-Louis Flandrin observe that “what was peculiar to Germany, or at any rate what distinguished Germany from France was an increase in the consumption of another industrial meat – pork – which rose from 14.5 pounds per person in 1850 to 55 pounds in 1899 and 66 in 1937.”⁴

Lawrence employs here not only simple binary oppositions but what Paul Fussell calls the “modern versus habit”, the habit of representing ‘the other’ as foreign and repellent, which Fussell believes began in or received significant fresh impetus from the opposing lines of trenches at the front in the First World War.⁵ We shall find plenty of such thinking in Modernist writing about food and eating, representing the culinary ‘other’ as disgusting. Lawrence is particularly irate about the disgusting voracity of German eaters, in particular of his mother-in-law. It seems that in her the old warrior spirit supposedly fostered by eating pork has devolved into what Lawrence sees as frenzied egotistic competitive devouring of everyone and everything: “Frieda’s mother really rather awful now [...] she’s 78, and suddenly thinking her time to die may be coming on. So she fights in the ugliest fashion, greedy and horrible, to get everything that will keep her alive – food, high air, pine-trees, Frieda or me.” (*The Letters of D.H. Lawrence*, VII, 397) And so he pulls no punches in registering a new-found disgust at the Baronin supplanting previous cordial relations between the two.

But later that same summer, visiting Rottach in the High Bavarian Alps, there is a distinctive change of emphasis. Lawrence stumbles there on what he thinks of as an alternative way of living and getting well, even at a point where he is at an advanced stage of tuberculosis. He finds a doctor who thinks that modern diet is

2 DUPONT. “The Grammar of Roman Dining.” 113.

3 MONTANARI, Massimo. “Food Systems and Models of Civilization.” In: Jean-Louis Flandrin and Massimo Montanari (eds.). *Food: A Culinary History*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2000. 69–78. 75.

4 TEUTEBERG, Hans Jürgen and Jean-Louis FLANDRIN. “The Transformation of the European Diet.” In: Jean-Louis Flandrin and Massimo Montanari (eds.). *Food: A Culinary History*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2000. 442–56. 449.

5 FUSSELL, Paul. *The Great War and Modern Memory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977. 79.

the cause of most of the ills of modern man, describing his ideas to Aldous Huxley as follows:

He says that we are all undergoing a great change in our animal man – that includes woman, of course. But especially men between 42 and 49 are in a state of change. The new animal man will be different from the old – and already demands different food and different rhythms – but he is given only old food and old rhythms and so gets poisoned. He says mine is partly poison from unwanted food – and I know that’s true. Especially heavy German food is poison to me. He says, go back to simple food. The Roman legions conquered the world on millet porridge. (*The Letters of D.H. Lawrence*, VII, 466)

A programme emerges that offers Lawrence vital hope for survival and renewal.

The fact that it was as complete a failure as far as Lawrence’s health was concerned as the experiments with the systems of Manoukhine and Gurdjeff had been for Katherine Mansfield (he would be dead in six months) hardly matters here. What is important is the specific Modernist version of binary thinking on display – revolt against a discredited past coupled with a belief in the possible redemptive power of radical change. I shall explore this pattern a little here, exploring first the ‘horrors’ of eating as these are represented in Modernism, and then the ‘pleasures’ of food, gradually showing how these two attitudes can on occasion be merged in a mode of additive ‘both/and’ thinking rather than thinking in terms of opposed binary ‘either/ors’. This new kind of thinking is perhaps more truly radical than anything else in the Modernist era.

Horror

Anticipating that later move, one might begin here by putting forward Kafka’s great parable “Ein Hungerkünstler” (A Hunger Artist) as a kind of secret key to the meaning of the many expressions of food revulsion in Modernist writing. Its blackly humorous logic delivers a climax where the artist – patronised by his overseer as a kind of mental defective suffering from the effects of long deprivation – has to confess and ask forgiveness for the false pretences of his act. He has exhibited himself as someone bound on a course of starvation, but he reveals that his motives were not those of pure devotion to the art of hunger as Kantian *Selbstzweck*. He has refused to eat simply because he could not find the food he craved:

‘Verzeiht mir alles,’ flüsterte der Hungerkünstler, nur der Aufseher, der das Ohr ans Gitter hielt, verstand ihn. ‘Gewiss,’ sagte der Aufseher, und legte den Finger an die Stirn, um damit den Zustand des Hungerkünstlers dem Personal anzudeuten, ‘wir verzeihen dir.’ ‘Immerfort wollte ich, daß ihr mein Hungern bewundert,’ sagte der Hungerkünstler. ‘Wir bewundern es auch,’ sagte der Aufseher entgegenkommend. ‘Ihr sollt es

aber nicht bewundern,' sagte der Hungerkünstler. 'Nun, dann bewundern wir es also nicht,' sagte der Aufseher, 'warum sollen wir es denn nicht bewundern?' 'Weil ich hungern muß, ich kann nicht anders,' sagte der Hungerkünstler. 'Da sieh mal einer,' sagte der Aufseher, 'warum kannst du denn nicht anders?' 'Weil ich,' sagte der Hungerkünstler, hob das Köpfchen ein wenig und sprach wie mit zum Kuß gespitzten Lippen gerade in das Ohr des Aufsehers hinein, damit nichts verloren ginge, 'weil ich nicht die Speise finden konnte, die mir schmeckt. Hätte ich sie gefunden, glaube mir, ich hätte kein Aufsehen gemacht und mich vollgegessen wie du und alle.' Das waren die letzten Worte, aber noch in seinen gebrochenen Augen war die feste, wenn auch nicht mehr stolze Überzeugung, daß er weiterhungre. ("Ein Hungerkünstler" 272–73)

[‘Forgive me, everybody,’ whispered the hunger artist, only the overseer, who had his ear to the bars, understood him. ‘Of course,’ said the overseer, and tapped his forehead with a finger to let the attendants know what state the man was in, ‘we forgive you.’ ‘I always wanted you to admire my fasting,’ said the hunger artist. ‘We do admire it,’ said the overseer, affably. ‘But you shouldn’t admire it,’ said the hunger artist. ‘Well then we don’t admire it,’ said the overseer, ‘but why shouldn’t we admire it?’ ‘Because I have to fast, I can’t help it,’ said the hunger artist. ‘What a fellow you are,’ said the overseer, ‘and why can’t you help it?’ ‘Because,’ said the hunger artist, lifting his head a little and speaking, with his lips pursed, as if for a kiss, right into the overseer’s ear, so that no syllable might be lost, ‘because I couldn’t find the food I liked. If I had found it, believe me, I should have made no fuss and stuffed myself like you or anyone else.’ These were his last words, but in his dimming eyes remained the firm though no longer proud persuasion that he was continuing to fast.]

Applying that principle to the examples that follow can suggest initially in a crude way that in Modernist writing as a whole the negative representation of revolting food and disgusting eaters – where meat in particular is a prime focus of horror – functions as a means of conveying metaphoric criticism of a society that offers only base forms of material gratification and little or none of the kind of soul food that is longed for. With one exception only, these passages all deal with communal meals where some form of hospitality is on display, and thus invite comparison with traditions of symbolic communion, both Christian and pagan, where the dinner table carries rich and complex cultural meaning. The tradition of embattled hospitality of Psalm 23 – “Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies” – is invoked more than once, but it is a common stance of Modernist writers and some central characters in their work to refuse, like Kafka’s hunger artist, the food that is on offer.

Two types of guest shrinking from what is on offer seem to hover in the background of Modernist horror against food – the unworthy and the unwilling. The first is that of Herbert’s “Love”, where the unworthy guest who feels “guilty of dust and sin”⁶ is paradoxically invoked in the figure of the hunger artist, who,

6 HERBERT, George. *The Complete English Works*. Edited by Ann Pasternak Slater. London:

if he could hunger properly, might feel sufficiently worthy to eat. The second and more common is that of the Don Juan story, where the Commendatore is an unwilling guest at the banquet to which the Don invites him. This traditional tale is most significantly reincarnated for our purposes in Mozart's opera *Don Giovanni*, since the relevant passage is quoted in Joyce's *Ulysses* in the middle of the lunch scene we shall shortly be discussing. The 'stone guest' appears as he has promised, announcing first in a suitably melodic phrase that he has complied with the rules of hospitality – "Don Giovanni, m'invitasti a cenar teco, e son venuto" (*Don Giovanni*, II, 24. 425) – but then, in what is perhaps the first abstract twelve note tone row in music, signifying otherworldliness, he declares his refusal of the proffered food: "Non si pasce di cibo mortale chi si pasce di cibo celeste." (*Don Giovanni*, II, 24. 428) We find echoes of that opposition, and of the classical tradition of gods and mortals eating at table together, in not a few Modernist food writings.

But my first example of Modernist food revulsion simply represents one of the many satiric attacks upon the industrialisation of food in the Modernist era, of which that in Chaplin's *Modern Times* is perhaps the most famous and powerful, at least from a visual point of view. It was a period in which as a result of World War I – won by American farmers, according to the official propaganda of the time, when "wheat, beef, corn, foods of every variety, hermetically sealed in tins, were thrown into the scales on the side of the Entente allies in sufficient quantities to tip the balance toward the side of civilization and against autocracy"⁷ – tinned and processed food entered everyone's conscious and unconscious mind, often as nightmare. As Giovanni Reborà remarks, "anyone who spent a year in the trenches during the 1914–1918 war [...] would long shun any canned product – 'soldier's food' – like the dried meat of the seventeenth century."⁸

But even before the war, the dishes that Leonard Bast prepares for Jacky in E.M. Forster's *Howards End* (a novel full of Anglo-German tensions) clearly presage such revulsion. Putting a penny in the slot of the gas meter and filling his flat with "metallic fumes" (*Howards End* 51), Leonard makes a meal out of tins that is anything but celestial: They began with a soup square, which Leonard had

Campbell, 1995. 184.

7 Cf. <<http://www.oldandsold.com/articles26/world-war-one-34.shtml>> (Accessed: 24 April, 2010)

8 REBORÀ, Giovanni. *Culture of the Fork*. Translated by Albert Sonnenfeld. New York: Columbia University Press, 2001. 81. Another source of food-revulsion in World War I for soldiers at the front may have been the nightly experience of listening to rats amongst the corpses of the dead in No Man's Land, as in David JONES's *In Parenthesis*: "you can hear the rat of no-man's-land rut-out intricacies, weasel-out his patient workings, scrut, scrut, scrut, harrow out-earthly, trowel his cunning paw; redeem the time of our uncharity, to sap his own amphibious paradise." (JONES, David. *In Parenthesis: Seinnyessit E Gledyf Ym Penn Mameu*. London: Faber & Faber, 1963. 54.)

just dissolved in some hot water. It was followed by the tongue – a freckled cylinder of meat, with a little jelly at the top, and a great deal of yellow fat at the bottom – ending with another square dissolved in water (jelly: pineapple) which Leonard had prepared earlier in the day. Nor can the crackle of conversation save the occasion: it is a meal apparently consumed in silence, for Jacky simply eats “contentedly enough, occasionally looking at her man with those anxious eyes” (*Howards End* 51), while Leonard is engaged in the business of “manag[ing] to convince his stomach that it is having a nourishing meal.” (*Howards End* 52) This is clearly not the food the hunger artist craves.

Also belonging to the pre-war period, and to the uneasy ideological skirmishes of the time, is Mansfield’s *In a German Pension*, which goes beyond Lawrence in its rendering of the horrors of German behaviour at table. The opening sketch, “Germans at Meat”, contains sprightly satire of such figures as Herr Hoffmann from Berlin, “wiping the soup droppings [the word is wickedly chosen] from his coat and waistcoat” (*In a German Pension* 3) as he fondly remembers the enormous breakfasts he enjoyed in England. Here, unlike chez Leonard Bast, there is a great deal of animated talk from the German side. “Do they really eat so much?,” asks another, female guest with evident gusto, “soup and baker’s bread and pig’s flesh, and tea and coffee and stewed fruit, and honey and eggs, and cold fish and kidneys, and hot fish and liver?” (*In a German Pension* 3) – the random order of the enumeration making the combination sound all the more disgusting. A third speaker, the Traveller from North Germany, threatens to take the conversation in the direction of digestion and evacuation: “I eat sauerkraut with great pleasure... but now I have eaten so much that I cannot retain it. I am immediately forced to –.” (*In a German Pension* 3) Whereupon, with great dexterity, the narrator manages to interrupt him by remarking upon the weather, but is forced in the process to reveal how stony a guest she is in this company. She has to confess, not only that she does not eat sauerkraut but that she is a vegetarian – “I have not eaten meat for three years” (*In a German Pension* 4) – to the reciprocal horror of her audience. Mansfield’s sly wit and finely tuned ear for absurdity manages to hear, in their expression of disapproval that any woman should so neglect her duty to the nation – “who ever heard of having children upon vegetables?” (*In a German Pension* 4) – the idea of someone giving birth lying on a sack of potatoes. This gift (of which Leonard Woolf remarked memorably, “I don’t think anyone has ever made me laugh more than she did in those days”⁹) is often exercised on images of grotesque eating, as when she mocks in a letter the Laurel and Hardy couple D.H. Lawrence and Frieda, in which Lawrence is “a little gold ring in that German Christmas pud-

9 Quoted in TOMALIN, Claire. *Katherine Mansfield. A Secret Life*. London: Viking, 1987. 180.

ding which is Frieda. And with all the appetite in the world one cannot eat one's way through Frieda to find him."¹⁰

These two passages clearly take their cue from literary Naturalism, and so too at an initial level does the food theme in Joyce's *Ulysses*. Despite the famous carnivorous note struck when its hero first appears – “Mr Leopold Bloom ate with relish the inner organs of beasts and fowls” (*Ulysses* 65) – one would be hard put to find a better example of Modernist revulsion against food than Bloom's reaction to the Burton restaurant in the ‘Lestrygonians’ episode of the novel:

Perched on high stools by the bar, hats shoved back, at the tables calling for more bread no charge, swilling wolfing gobfuls of sloppy food, their eyes bulging, wiping wetted moustaches. A pallid suetfaced young man polished his tumbler knife fork and spoon with his napkin. New set of microbes. A man with an infant's saucestained napkin tucked round him shovelled gurgling soup down his gullet. A man spitting back on his plate: halfmasticated gristle: no teeth to chewchewchew it.... Smells of men. His gorge rose. Spaton sawdust, sweet, sweetish warmish cigarette smoke, reek of plug, spilt beer, men's beery piss, the stale of ferment. (*Ulysses* 215)

At this point in the chapter the heroic voyager through Dublin (obviously close to vomiting) begins to feel that this is another nightmare from which he must escape if he is ever to reach home. “Couldn't eat a morsel here” (*Ulysses* 215), is his next thought, then a little later “get out of this”, and finally “Out. I hate dirty eaters.” (*Ulysses* 216) Bloom decides on a vegetarian lunch at Davy Byrne's, to consist of a gorgonzola sandwich and glass of Burgundy, and indeed the train of thought of this solitary dinner makes him sound for the nonce like Lawrence in Plättig yearning for the vegetarian south: “Like a few olives too if they had them. Italian I prefer... Puts gusto into it. Pure olive oil.” (*Ulysses* 218 – 19)

My final example in this section really belongs in the next, or at the very least, offers a transition to it. Mrs Ramsay's bœuf en daube in *To the Lighthouse* is of course a triumph, and its celebration forms the climax of part one of the novel. It brings together the entire company of family and friends for a moment of harmony and unity – of “merging and flowing and creating” (*To the Lighthouse* 96) – even bringing into the circle those males who like Ramsay himself take little or no notice of female trivia like cooking (“did he even notice his own daughter's beauty, or whether there was pudding on his plate or roast beef?” *To the Lighthouse* 81 – 82), and who is clearly a distant relative of the lunchtime Bloom (“he hated people wallowing in food” *To the Lighthouse* 110; “It bored him unutterably to sit still while people ate and drank interminably.” *To the Lighthouse* 137).

Yet perhaps this is the exception that proves the rule of Modernist food horror.

10 ALPERS, Antony. *The Life of Katherine Mansfield*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987. 205.

Essentially it belongs not to the present of Modernity, but to another (lost) time and place: “It is a French recipe of my grandmother’s.” (*To the Lighthouse* 116) It also seems to belong to a different mode of representation – that is to say, not primarily to realism or naturalism. Placed in an earthenware pot, it can be understood in symbolic parallel to Lily Briscoe’s painting as a self-reflexive figure of the work of art: unlike Leonard Bast, “the cook had spent three days over that dish” (*To the Lighthouse* 115).

Almost the last image we have of Mrs Ramsay on that day offers another symbolic parallel. This is when she engages in another act of communal ‘cooking’ designed to create harmony and unity, mediating between the child who wants the pig’s skull in the bedroom and the child who is frightened of it by placing her shawl over it to mask its appearance (*To the Lighthouse* 132). This profound scene offers a ghostly premonition of her death, and underlines how the triumph at the supper table is both solid and real and fragile and ephemeral. Cooking in *To the Lighthouse* clearly straddles the sphere of nature and the sphere of culture. In doing so it offers our first glimpse of that blurring of the binaries to be explored later, but also, more simply, takes us to an aestheticising of food that is at the heart of the most interesting, suggestive and celebratory Modernist food project of all, to which we must now turn.

Pleasure

I refer to Marinetti’s *The Futurist Cookbook* of 1932, and begin by stressing once more its addiction to binary thinking. Its premises depend on its own revulsion against heavy food and overeating, but here the central villain is not the pork or roast beef of the north but pasta, the cereal staple of Italian diet. “All farinaceous foods weigh the body down, and in consequence [...] are a threat to the intelligence” (*The Futurist Cookbook* 48), Marinetti intones, and elsewhere, sounding papal, “blessed be the struggle against this deadly pasta which weighs down the body and numbs the spirit with its exhausting digestions” (*The Futurist Cookbook* 46–47). The Modernist obligation to create a nouvelle cuisine could not be made clearer: “Futurist cooking will be free of the old obsession with volume and weight and will have as one of its principles the abolition of pastasciutta [...] a passéist food because it makes people heavy, brutish [...] makes them sceptical, slow, pessimistic.” (*The Futurist Cookbook* 33) These are just a few of the many fulminations against pasta in the book, and it is also clear how they appropriate a version of Nietzsche’s idea of the superman to support the Italian fascist programme for the radical cleansing and rejuvenation of the ‘race’. “Futurist food”, we are told on a number of occasions, “is the realization of the general desire to renew our eating habits and of the fight against weight, big

bellies, obesity. We need to maintain the vitality we Italians had in our youth in Antiquity, and in our early manhood in the Middle Ages.” (*The Futurist Cookbook* 97–98) If the breezy positive note of cheerful bravado is dominant in the book, its binary opposite – disgust at human swilling – is never out of sight.

Besides the programme for ‘racial’ renewal there is also a distinctive binary gender politics in this text, which urges men to be more masculine and women to be more feminine, and which (again tapping into a long tradition that equates particular foods with particular human qualities, e.g. meat with masculine strength and courage) regards the preparation of specially designed meals as a means towards this end. “We must stop the Italian male from becoming a solid leaden block of blind and opaque density. Instead he should harmonize more and more with the Italian female, a swift spiralling transparency of passion” (*The Futurist Cookbook* 36), Marinetti declares, and so explicitly erotic dishes for male eyes as well as male taste buds are devised to encourage suitable celebratory postprandial activity. One is “a beautiful piece of sculpted roast veal with two long eyes of garlic in a dishevelment of chopped boiled cabbage and small green lettuces” with “dangling earrings of little red radishes soaked in honey” (*The Futurist Cookbook* 115), whilst another is entitled ‘The Curves of the World and their Secrets’:

Marinetti, Prampolini and Fillia, in collaboration, had inoculated it with the magnetism of the most beautiful women and the most beautiful Africas ever dreamed of. Its sloping architecture of soft curves following one upon the other to heaven concealed the grace of the world’s most feminine little feet in a thick and sugary network of green oasis-palms, whose tufts were mechanically interlocked by cog-wheels. Further down could be heard the happy chattering of birds of Paradise. It was a motorised edible sculpture, perfect. (*The Futurist Cookbook* 26)

It will be evident of course in the last example that we are in the realm of imaginary rather than actually realisable food, and indeed the Futurist cookbook bears something of the same kind of relation to the culinary practice of the period as the imaginary designs of Tatlin or Scheerbart or Sant’Elia do to Modernist architecture. And despite the interest of the ideological associations of the work, and their complicated possible connection with Lawrence, himself for a time seemingly attracted to Italian fascism, and certainly a vitalist engaged in a parallel project to reinvent masculinity, our main focus here must be on the fundamental Futurist imbrication of food and art. It is here, as in *To the Light-house*, that the celebratory note of *The Futurist Cookbook* chiefly resides.

It is not just that Futurists consider cooking from an aesthetic point of view, although they certainly belong in that Romantic and post-Romantic tradition. The dissemination of Kantian aesthetics inevitably involved the elevation of a number of cultural practices into the sphere of art: if murder could be consid-

ered by de Quincey as one of the fine arts, then certainly cooking could also qualify, as it did, especially in France, in part thanks to the advocacy of Grimod de la Reynière and Brillat-Savarin. We certainly find ‘conventional’ recommendations for the aestheticising of food in *The Futurist Cookbook* such as the following: “Up until now, except for desserts, cooking has not paid much attention to the aesthetic side. Today our refined sensibility requires a complete ‘artistic’ study of cooking. We must fight against puddles of sauce, disordered heaps of food, and above all against flabby, anti-viral pastasciutta.” (*The Futurist Cookbook* 67) We also find recognisable mainstream Modernist aesthetic positions, such as a predilection for synaesthesia, and the idea of a culinary *Gesamtkunstwerk*: “Eating futuristically one uses all the senses: touch, taste, smell, sight and hearing.” (*The Futurist Cookbook* 77) And there are occasional practical suggestions for the realization of such an experience of food, such as the proposal for the “abolition of knives and forks for food sculptures, which can give prelabial tactile pleasure” (*The Futurist Cookbook* 76).

But the Futurist programme is in essence more extreme. It is actually working towards the total aestheticising of food, which means ultimately its abolition. In the short term Futurists aim at a lightening of diet that goes well beyond gorgonzola sandwiches and olive oil: Marinetti announces “as the principal feature of the new cuisine a rapid sequence of dishes no bigger than a mouthful or even less than a mouthful” (*The Futurist Cookbook* 56). In the longer run, the Futurist faith in the machine is such that it can envisage a time when taking nourishment through the consumption and digestion of food has become a thing of the past: “We must kill off the old, deeply-rooted habits of the palate; and prepare men for chemical foodstuffs” is one exhortation to the true believers, followed shortly by the even more radical speculation that “the really miraculous idea, which may even have escaped Marconi, is the possibility of broadcasting nutritious airwaves” (*The Futurist Cookbook* 67). To travesty Emily Dickinson, the Futurists seem to think that future humanity might eventually enjoy the experience, not just of being ‘inebriate of air’, but inebriate of airwaves.

Quite how seriously one should take this utterly paradoxical non-celebration of the pleasures of eating is another question. I am not alone in tending to think that *The Futurist Cookbook* is best read as an extended joke, one that looks back to Edward Lear and forward to Monty Python. But this on no account means that I wish to minimise its significance. Quite the reverse, in fact: the real achievement of this text lies not in its swaggering pretensions as propaganda but in its invention and celebration of the role of humorous play and creativity in the Modernist attitude to food. It is here, perhaps, that a transcendence of the binaries is glimpsed. And if, as I have argued elsewhere¹¹, the keynote of Mod-

11 HOLLINGTON, Michael. “Svevo, Joyce and Modernist Time.” In: Malcolm Bradbury and

ernism is liberation – from fixed dogmas, fixed binaries, fixed meanings, fixed notions of what is art and what is not, etc. – then the play element in writing about food in the period is well worth highlighting.

It is not hard to find some hilarious recipes in *The Futurist Cookbook* for meals that are essentially in the nature of real or imaginary artistic happenings. There is the untitled “dish invented out of thin air [...] the waiters serve it while a battistangola reproduces the sound of frogs croaking. Rice and beans, frogs and salami. The best” (*The Futurist Cookbook* 84), or ‘Ox in the Cockpit’, consisting “of some very mysterious meat balls over whose composition it is neither good nor helpful to speculate, placed on top of aeroplanes made of bread. The planes were fine, the meat balls less so. However, the dish was among the most appreciated, being one which offered many of the guests the chance to still their hunger with bread which had never before appeared to be such a divine and precious food,” (*The Futurist Cookbook* 92) or ‘The League of Nations’ – “little black salami sausages and tiny pastries filled with chocolate custard, floating in a cream of milk, eggs and vanilla. (While this dish is being tasted, a twelve-year-old Negro boy, hidden under the table, will tickle the ladies’ legs and pinch their ankles).” (*The Futurist Cookbook* 110) As with Kafka, though in a much more light-hearted vein, the jokes often turn back on themselves, as with ‘Aerofood’, of which culinary masterpiece Marinetti asserts with tongue in cheek that “it is a dish I would not recommend for the hungry” (*The Futurist Cookbook* 110). It is composed of

a slice of fennel, an olive and a kumquat. In addition there is a trip of cardboard on which are glued, one next to the other, a piece of velvet, a piece of silk, and a piece of sandpaper: the sandpaper – Fillia explains – need not be eaten, it is only there to finger with the right hand and provide prelabial sensations which make the food much more tasty as contemporaneously the left hand tries to bring it to the mouth. (*The Futurist Cookbook* 110)

The humour we shall find in Modernist foodplay may not always be quite as exuberant as this but we shall find in it a constant emphasis on creativity and play. Before proceeding to explore some examples, we might pause to note a particular level of theoretical correspondence between Lawrence and *The Futurist Cookbook*. He too equates pasta with non-vital, bad, ‘heavy’ art in a passage in *Sketches of Etruscan Places* which comments mockingly on the conventional preference for “the greekified illustrator of Pope’s Homer” (*Sketches of Etruscan Places* 164), John Flaxman, over Etruscan art. He too employs culinary binaries, with the Lévi-Strauss categories ‘raw’ and ‘cooked’ particularly in evidence, as he registers his own critical verdict:

James McFarland (eds.). *Modernism*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976. 430–42.

But the same instinct lies at the back of our idea of 'art' still. Art is still to us something that has been well cooked – like a plate of spaghetti. An ear of wheat is not yet 'art'. Wait, wait until it has been turned into pure, into perfect macaroni.

For me, I get more real pleasure of these Volterranean ash-chests than out of – I had almost said, the Parthenon frieze. One wearies of the aesthetic quality – a quality which takes the edge off everything and makes it seem 'boiled down'. A great deal of pure Greek beauty has this boiled-down effect. It is too much cooked in the artistic consciousness. (*Sketches of Etruscan Places* 164)

Returning to food in fiction, I want first to go back as far as Dickens, who provides a surprising anticipation of *The Futurist Cookbook*, and the role of play in Modernist writing about food, in the opening chapter of *Little Dorrit*. Rigaud and John Baptist Caveletto are in jail in Marseille, eating. The former, a 'gentleman', is able to pay for a nourishing meal of Lyon sausage, strachino cheese, etc., while the latter gets only bread. But he is able to transform his meagre rations through creative play – that is to say, he 'sculpts' them into various imaginary shapes like the Futurists in their culinary masterpieces of fantasy and desire:

The little man sat down again upon the pavement with the negligent ease of one who was yet thoroughly accustomed to pavements; and placing three hunks of coarse bread before himself, and falling to upon a fourth, began contentedly to work his way through them as if to clear them off were a sort of game. 'How do you find the bread?' 'A little dry, but I have my old sauce here,' returned John Baptist, holding up his knife. 'How sauce?' 'I can cut my bread so – like a melon. Or so – like an omelette. Or so – like a fried fish. Or so – like a Lyons sausage,' said John Baptist, demonstrating the various cuts on the bread he held, and soberly chewing what he had in his mouth. (*Little Dorrit* 8)

Dickens here, and the Futurists with their bread airplanes, also parallel a passage in Lawrence's *Sketches of Etruscan Places*. In this anti-Fascist text (Lawrence by now thoroughly disillusioned with Mussolini's attempt to revive the brutal memory of the Roman empire, which for him bears the criminal responsibility for crushing the vastly superior Etruscan civilisation) the author delights in any sign of protest against authority, and any resulting official discomfiture. So he is fascinated by the story of two prisoners whose creative skill with bread fashions a jailbreak at the fortress of Volterra, and reveals where his sympathies lie:

There were two men who escaped. Silently and secretly they carved marvellous likenesses of themselves out of the huge loaves of hard bread the prisoners get. Hair and all, they made their effigies life-like. Then they laid them in the bed, so that when the warder's light flashed on them he should say to himself: There they lie sleeping, the dogs!

And so they worked, and they got away. It cost the governor, who loved his household of malefactors, his job. He was kicked out. It is curious. He should have been rewarded, for having such clever children, sculptors in bread. (*Sketches of Etruscan Places* 171)

And of course, virtually anyone writing about children and food owes something at some point to Dickens – not least that ardent Dickensian Katherine Mansfield, whose role in the rehabilitation in the Modernist era of this temporarily eclipsed ‘eminent Victorian’, with and via her husband John Middleton Murry, has yet to be fully explored. Her longest short story “Prelude” contains an extended example of Modernist foodplay, as Kezia and her siblings stage an elaborate make-believe banquet that would grace *The Futurist Cookbook* for airy inventive miniaturised lightness:

The dinner was baking beautifully on a concrete step. She began to lay the cloth on a pink garden seat. In front of each person she put two geranium leaf plates, a pine needle fork and a twig knife. There were three daisy heads on a laurel leaf for poached eggs, some lovely little rissoles of earth and water and dandelion seeds, and the chocolate custard which she had decided to serve in the pawa shell she had cooked it in. (*The Collected Short Stories* 41)

The Futurist note of zany culinary tomfoolery is certainly echoed in another way in the dazzlingly pyrotechnic display of food signifiers that flood the ‘Lestrygonians’ episode in Joyce’s *Ulysses*. I shall give just a couple of examples, in which the erotic jokes favoured by the Futurists are very much in evidence, though the second also helps to anticipate my concluding remarks about the humanist values not infrequently encoded in Modernist foodplay writing.

The first is Bloom joking to himself about cannibalism, as he muses on the suggestions inherent in the placement in that day’s newspaper of the advertisement for Plumtree’s potted meat under the obituary column announcing the death of Paddy Dignam. Having just attended Dignam’s funeral that very morning, his mind embarks on an amusing associative riff about the fate of his corpse which revives again the fantasy that certain foods enhance virility:

Dignam’s potted meat. Cannibals would with lemon and rice. White missionary too salty. Like pickled pork. Expect the chief consumes the parts of honour. Ought to be tough from exercise. His wives in a row to watch the effect. There was a right royal old nigger. Who eat or something the somethings of the reverend Mr Mactrigger. With it an abode of bliss. (*Ulysses* 218)

The second is Bloom’s memory of the lovemaking with Molly which she will revisit in her monologue from her perspective at the very end of the novel. Here kissing and eating are closely intertwined in a seriocomic act of intense communion between living food sculptures, interrupted and deflated by a passing goat leaving its droppings in the foliage, but then resumed. The rest, so to speak, is laughter:

Ravished over her I lay, full lips full open, kissed her mouth. Yum. Softly she gave me in her mouth the seedcake warm and chewed. Mawkish pulp her mouth had mumbled sweet and sour with spittle. Joy: I ate it: joy. Young life, her lips that gave me pouting.

Soft, warm, sticky, gumjelly lips. Flowers here eyes were, take me willing eyes. Pebbles fell. She lay still. A goat. Noone. High on Ben Howth rhododendrons nanny goat walking surefooted, dropping currants. Screened under ferns she laughed warmfolded. Wildly I lay on her, kissed; eye, her lips, her stretched neck, beating woman's breasts full in her blouse of nun's veiling, fat nipples upright. Hot I tongued her. She kissed me. I was kissed. All yielding she tossed my hair. Kissed, she kissed me. (*Ulysses* 224)

Conclusion

I want to end by returning to the Lawrence passages we began with, and to the double-sided frame of mind we found him in the summer of 1929. Anyone who has studied Lawrence at all closely will be aware of the kaleidoscopic Whitmanesque contradictions and relativities that characterise his representations of a whole host of subjects – his is perhaps the most sustained instance of ‘both/and’ thinking in the Modernist era. Food is no exception; by the end of the month of August 1929, as Lawrence starts to plan the move back to Italy envisaged that month in the poem “Food of the North”, he pictures himself and Frieda settled in a place where, lo and behold, pigs are very much back on the menu:

It would be great fun if we can find a house and have ducks and goats. I've never tried my hands at pigs, but why not? They must be much nicer than human ones. We might even make bacon, and hang a long flitch against the wall. My father always said that was the beautifullest picture on the wall – a flitch of bacon! – and Boccaccio could hang opposite – all the carnal sins together. (*The Letters of D.H. Lawrence*, VII, 410)

Food and sex are obviously reunited here – the Boccaccio mentioned is Lawrence's sexually explicit painting of that title. We are reminded of Bloom here, not only through this conjunction, but through the comically philistine but paradoxically Modernist notion of a flitch of bacon as art, as Lawrence continues that rehabilitation of his father we find in his late writings. Comedy is indeed much more prevalent in Lawrence than is commonly supposed, and nowhere more so than in his writing about food. I have space here for two examples only: the first is the satiric conflict between Mr May and his former wife in *The Lost Girl*. He is a food lover, she a vegetarian socialist trying to persuade her husband “to nibble a lettuce leaf with her, and drink water from the tap – and then elevate myself.” (*The Lost Girl* 129) Their marriage, he complains, was a comedy of struggle over what food to eat and how to prepare it, remembering how he once tried to make some mushrooms: “I put them on the stove to fry in butter: beautiful fresh young champignons. I'm hanged if she didn't go into the kitchen while my back was turned, and pour a pint of old carrot water into the pan.” (*The Lost Girl* 129)

Here Lawrence, at an earlier stage of career, is not at all in the Rottach mood of 1929 – his satiric swipe at left-wing food puritans reminiscent of Orwell’s sarcasms in *The Road to Wigan Pier*. My second example stretches back into Lawrence’s childhood to suggest that food and fun were rarely far apart in his mind. This is a passage from *Sea and Sardinia* where a group of peasants stages a very Futuristic culinary *Gesamtkunstwerk*, this time in the form of a kind of food symphony of which he thoroughly approves:

And they fell on their soup. And never, from among the steam, have I heard a more joyful trio of soup-swilkering. They sucked it from their spoons with long gusto-rich sucks. The maialino was the treble – he trilled his soup into his mouth with a swift, sucking vibration, interrupted by bits of cabbage, which made the lamp start to dither again. Black-cap was the baritone; good, rolling spoon-sucks. And the one in spectacles was the bass: he gave sudden deep gulps. All was led by the long trilling of the maialino. Then suddenly, to vary matters, he cocked up his spoon in one hand, chewed a huge mouthful of bread, and swallowed it down with a smack-smack-smack of his tongue against the palate. As children we used to call this ‘clapping’. ‘Mother, she’s clapping!’ I would yell with anger against my sister. The German word is *schmatzen*. (*Sea and Sardinia* 77)

But the food writing of Lawrence’s last period is essentially aimed at a mediation between the binaries of life and death. Looking for what he called the third thing, the ‘holy ghost’, he attempts to go beyond this most intractable of opposites. The tragic note of *To the Lighthouse* is eschewed, for Lawrence wants his banquet to continue into the afterlife. So too is any form of transcendence of spirit over matter. What he discovers in the Etruscan tombs is the equivalent of the imagined room with the flitch of bacon on one side and the Boccaccio on the other, for “death, to the Etruscans, was a pleasant continuance of life, with jewels and wine and flutes playing for the dance” (*Sketches of Etruscan Places* 19). He sees their vision of life as humanistic and comic: “there seems to have been in the etruscan instinct a real desire to preserve the natural humour of life.” (*Sketches of Etruscan Places* 32–33) That humour is not absent even from the poem “The Ship of Death”, with its evocation of Etruscan funerary practices where the dead are kitted out with cooking paraphernalia for their journey into the beyond:

A little ship, with oars and food and little dishes, and all accoutrements fitting and ready for the departing soul. Now launch this small ship, now as the body dies and life departs, launch out, the fragile soul in the fragile ship of courage, the ark of faith with its store of food and little cooking pans. (*The Complete Poems*, II, 718–19)

There is a not dissimilar mood in the last phase of Katherine Mansfield’s life. Reconciled to Lawrence (she left him one of her books), restored to her belief that he was the finest writer she had encountered in her lifetime, she too turns decisively to a celebration of life that inevitably involves a celebration of food. “I

was dying of poverty of life”, she writes to Murry after entering the Gurdjeff institute at Fontainebleau; but here, “as for the food it is like a Gogol feast” (*The Collected Letters*, V, 305). Earlier she had felt there that she had finally struck the right balance between life and art, so that she might invite ‘the other’ to her table, as in Herbert’s “Love”: “We know too well that unless one has a background of reality in oneself people can’t endure in us. When we have a table spread we can afford to open our door to guests, but not before.” (*The Collected Letters*, V, 298–99)

This is her equivalent of Lawrence’s final turn away from hunger artistry. She found what she sought in Fontainebleau, he in one of the painted tombs at Tarquinia:

The scene is natural as life, and yet it is has a heavy archaic fullness of meaning. It is the death-banquet; and at the same time it is the dead man banqueting in the underworld; for the underworld of the Etruscans was a gay place. While the living feasted out of doors, at the tomb of the dead, the dead man himself feasted in like manner, with a lady to offer him garlands and slaves to bring him wine, away in the underworld. For the life on earth was so good, the life below could but be a continuance of it. (*Sketches of Etruscan Places* 46)

With such texts in mind, we may perhaps add a footnote to the suggestive title of David Ellis’s fine biography of Lawrence’s last years, *Dying Game*, to the effect that ‘dying game’ also meant ‘eating game’, and that ‘the dying game’ was also ‘the eating game’.

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Heide Ziegler

Food on Intertextual Demand: *The Blood Oranges* (John Hawkes); *The Good Soldier* (Ford Madox Ford); *As You Like It* and *What You Will* (William Shakespeare)

Narratives and narrators have always been telling us about food and its importance for human beings and their gods, about the acquisition, preparation, and consumption of food and the cultural significance thereof (in Homer's epics, for instance, but also in the Old Testament, meals and offerings of food to the gods play a very important and recurring role); but all these stories are made palatable by narrative distance. In plays, however, since they are performed by real actors on a stage, constraints abound as regards eating and drinking: feasting at banquets, partaking in meals, even sipping from a cup are not readily permitted. Not because the cup may contain a poisoned liquid, as it did at the end of *Hamlet* (the actors, after all, need only to pretend that they are dying) but because the audience does not like to watch actors who eat and drink. Eating and drinking helps to keep us alive, and being alive is a precondition for being a spectator as well as an actor. Still, the spectator is not paying for a ticket in order to worry about the actor's life, only about that of the character he or she is impersonating – since only *that* life delights or causes the pity and fear which will lead to the desired catharsis. Asking the audience to watch the intake of food and drink on the stage requires a high structural importance of those actions in order to justify the call for attention, and it ought to be performed by an actor who knows how to create a willing suspension of disbelief.

William Shakespeare seldom employs the need for nourishment and its gratification as an instrument to advance his plots. Exceptions, on closer inspection, tend to reveal a highly metaphorical meaning. In Act II, scene vii of *As You Like It*, the Duke Senior, who is banished from his dominions by his brother Frederick, has indeed asked for a meal to be served on stage, although in contrast to courtly custom it only seems to consist of some fruit that is being offered to his followers in the Forest of Arden (we have already learned at the beginning of Act II that the Duke is opposed to the hunting of game, even for nourishment). We get this information indirectly from Orlando, who enters, with his sword drawn, and desperately wants to get a share of those dishes for his starving servant Adam: “But forbear, I say, / He dies that touches any of this fruit, / Till I and my affairs

are answered.” (*As You Like It*, II.vii.98 – 100) The meal thus seems to be a rather frugal repast, a little *déjeuner à l’herbe*, and although its nutrient value is decisive, since it will serve to save the life of Adam, the point ought to be made that it is also a rather democratic affair and does not allow for any show of rank and hierarchy – standing in contrast, for instance, to the banquet scene in *Macbeth* where Macbeth’s followers are dismissed by Lady Macbeth and asked not to stand on their order of coming and going. Here the Duke greets Adam, irrespective of their different rank, with a hearty, “Welcome, fall to. I will not trouble you / As yet to question you about your fortunes.” (*As You Like It*, II.vii.171 – 72) One might thus be tempted to speculate that in Shakespeare’s Forest of Arden food may indeed be food, because everybody is equal and close to Nature. However, the Duke immediately asks for music as an accompaniment to their meal which, as we recall from the first line of *Twelfth Night: or, What You Will*, must be considered as ‘food for love’. In similar fashion, in *As You Like It*, the actual process of eating is immediately veiled, so to speak, by Amiens’s song, and this song also serves to veil the report which Orlando needs to give to the Duke about his heritage and latest fortunes – facts which the audience already knows. The whole scene thus becomes a metaphor for the decent character, if also somewhat unbridled courage of Orlando – who is probably barred from any participation in the meal anyway, since his full story has to be related to the Duke within the brief time span permitted him by the duration of Amiens’s song. It is this song which advances the plot, since it sums up his own as well as the Duke’s recent ill fortune: “Blow, blow, thou winter wind, / Thou art not so unkind / As man’s ingratitude.” (*As You Like It*, II.vii.174 – 76)

John Hawkes’s fourth novel, *The Blood Oranges*, which was published in 1971, can be related to both Shakespeare’s *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night: or, What You Will*. Although there are some distinct parallels of setting and character between Hawkes’s novel and Shakespeare’s plays, the most important feature they share seems to be that certain dramatic conventions, among them the ‘metaphorical’ treatment of food, are carried over into the novel – a feature that sets Hawkes’s late modernist text radically apart from traditional story-telling. The setting in both *The Blood Oranges* and *What You Will* is “Illyria”, which turns out to be a more or less imaginary landscape somewhere in Southern Europe (Hawkes wrote the novel while staying in Vence near Nice on the Côte d’Azur for one year). Fiona, one of the four main characters, who in some respects resembles Shakespeare’s Viola in *What You Will*, teasingly calls her eventual lover, who for a long time will not admit his love for her, her “Malvolio” – thereby referring to the character’s predominant self-love in Shakespeare’s comedy. At this point the direct parallels between *The Blood Oranges* and *What You Will* seem to come to an end; but an additional comparison between Hawkes’s novel and Shakespeare’s comedy *As You Like It* reveals a straightforward counterpart

to Shakespeare's sophisticated character Rosalind, who in *The Blood Oranges* appears as the sullen and probably illiterate maid Rosella. Hawkes was deeply moved by Shakespeare's plays, but he never attempted a parody or pastiche of any of them, thus avoiding all anxiety of influence. Instead, even the titles of plays like *What You Will* and *As You Like It* seemed to grant him ready permission to enter into the Shakespearian spirit at liberty. Shakespeare's songs in *What You Will* and *As You Like It* did, for instance, inspire some of Hawkes's most brilliant poetic language in *The Blood Oranges* – the darkly and richly poetic language that he is known for amongst his small, but dedicated following. However, Hawkes's adoration of the Bard usually takes the forms of either tragic irony or hapless memory.

Anxiety of influence can, by contrast, be detected in the debt Hawkes felt he owed the 1915 novel, *The Good Soldier*, by Ford Madox Ford, and a brief comparison between the two novels on the one hand and *The Blood Oranges* and Shakespeare's two comedies on the other hand will reveal the difference between inspiration (Shakespeare) and intimidation (Madox Ford). Hawkes himself acknowledged his debt to Madox Ford by choosing a motto from *The Good Soldier* for his own novel: "Is there then any terrestrial paradise where, amidst the whispering of the olive-leaves, people can be with whom they like and have what they like and take their ease in shadows and in coolness?" (*The Good Soldier* 213)¹ The terrestrial paradise the first-person narrator of *The Good Soldier* longs for continues to evade him, because he is forced to live with a lie which he cannot even fathom for the longest time – the pretense his wife keeps up that she has a heart condition in order to be able to carry on a number of secret affairs. In stark contrast to Madox Ford's narrator, Hawkes's narrator in *The Blood Oranges* never seems to hide anything or accept secrets in others, least of all secrets of an amorous nature.

Like *The Good Soldier*, *The Blood Oranges* features two couples and a young girl whose difficult and complex relationships seem to be irresolvable even when two of the protagonists die in *The Good Soldier*, and one of the protagonists dies and another one disappears in *The Blood Oranges*. The lack of insight that gradually undermines the impression of honesty of the first-person narrator for the reader in Madox Ford's novel, to the point where he unwittingly becomes unreliable, is consciously – intertextually – counteracted by the attitude of the first-person narrator in Hawkes's novel, for whom narration becomes a means of recovering his threatened identity, an identity he almost lost in the attempt to create a valid 'life-plot' for the two couples. It is the inspiration conveyed by Shakespeare that induces Hawkes to save his narrator from the fate of prolonged

1 FORD, Ford Madox. *The Good Soldier: A Tale of Passion*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981 [1972]. All further references will be to this edition.

suffering which is ultimately in store for the narrator of *The Good Soldier*. The last sentence of *The Blood Oranges*, “In Illyria there are no seasons” (*The Blood Oranges* 271),² recycles Hawkes’s Illyria into Shakespeare’s seventeenth-century Mediterranean landscape, despite the fact that the timelessness which it seems to evoke highlights an escape into intertextuality rather than refer to a shared pastoral idyll.

Cyril, the narrator of *The Blood Oranges*, calls upon the power of memory in order to create his own emotional space where present events can be inextricably linked with remembered scenes from the past, a past that includes the imaginary as well as the real. The result is a narrative chain of events instead of a plot, and although that ironic chain is different from what Cyril would have liked to imagine or experience, he does at least manage to evade the sad fate of Dowell, the narrator of *The Good Soldier*. “This is the saddest story I have ever heard” (*The Good Soldier* 11). The first sentence of *The Good Soldier* is that narrator’s desperate attempt to distance himself from a story which he himself was part of and from which he can no longer escape, partly because his role tended to be a passive instead of an active one.³ By contrast, Hawkes’s narrator used to see himself as a ‘sex-singer’, a prominent figure in Love’s tapestry,⁴ whose timeless mysteries he calls “bucolic, lusty, gentle as the eyes of daisies or thick with pain” (*The Blood Oranges* 1).⁵ Weaving and then wearing a crown of flowers during one of his self-staged pastoral happenings, Cyril was, and would have liked to remain, the erotic hero whose ritual movements are confined to the space of Love’s tapestry, where he can forever search for another ready lover. That cherished fabric, however, hangs in shreds when Cyril and the reader encounter each other at the beginning of *The Blood Oranges*, in other words, at the very moment when Cyril assumes the role of narrator. Love’s tapestry has been destroyed, Cyril claims, by his counterpart Hugh, who could never even help him form a circle, together with their wives Fiona and Catherine, by holding one another’s hands, because Hugh has only one arm; and who would never help him create the bucolic life-cycle he craves for the four of them – withdrawing into what Cyril calls Hugh’s “sick innocence” (*The Blood Oranges* 3) and finally into a more or less accidental suicide.

2 HAWKES, John. *The Blood Oranges*. New York: New Directions, 1971. All further references will be to this edition.

3 Madox Ford adds an interesting intertextual twist to this first sentence by telling Stella Ford in his “Dedicatory Letter” that he originally wanted to name the novel *The Saddest Story* and by letting us know that this is “a true story” (preface). He thus raises the question whether it is the narrator who is speaking or the author himself, who intrudes to comment on the text.

4 I distinguish throughout between Hawkes’s ‘tapestry of Love’, which is dominated by the goddess of Love, and the ‘tapestry of love’, a fabric that his narrator attempts to weave through his narrative.

5 Hawkes may have had in mind the famous unicorn tapestries at the Musée de Cluny in Paris.

It has often been pointed out that Cyril and Hugh, when seen as characters in the novel, represent the Arcadian world of the gods of antiquity (Cyril) as opposed to the Christian world of conventional morality (Hugh), the possibility of happy, diverse, and frequent sexual encounters as opposed to severe monogamy.⁶ In another place, I have attempted to show that Hawkes's philosophy in *The Blood Oranges* is saturated with what the Romantic philosopher Karl W.F. Solger called tragic irony.⁷ Like Hawkes, Solger connected antiquity with various forms of symbolism and modernity with Christian allegory – antiquity and modernity representing two forms of life that ultimately cannot be reconciled. Hawkes's novel is rife with both tropes, symbolism and allegory, symbolism relating to Cyril and allegory to Hugh. Even before they meet Hugh and Catherine, for instance, Cyril and Fiona, on visiting a small old church, discover a life-sized wooden arm that protrudes over the edge of the pulpit. This arm can be allegorically connected to Hugh, a substitute for his missing arm; furthermore, on encountering Hugh a little later, Cyril notices that the former's face resembles that of Saint Peter which is chiseled into the granite arch of the entrance to the church they have just left.

If Cyril cherishes self-created symbols, and if Hugh's role is seen by him as allegorical or pre-determined, Cyril's narrative stance must become an attempt at dominance. Still, his narrative role remains ambivalent: he wavers between an author-related omniscient distance and a character-related addiction to spontaneous orality. His narrative is circular, thus resembling his most important relics from the past, relics that are symbolic of both his former unchallenged erotic dominance and human forbearance: an old rusty chastity belt which the foursome have found in an abandoned, perhaps Genoese, fortress and which Hugh has forced upon his wife, thus giving Cyril a chance to liberate Catherine; or the crown of flowers which Cyril has woven for himself and which is meant to turn him into a pagan god. Cyril's tapestry of Love may hang in shreds, the safety provided by that circumscribed space may have evaporated – destroyed by Hugh's death, by Catherine's subsequent nervous breakdown, and by Fiona's disappearance with Hugh's and Catherine's children – but Cyril immediately attempts to create a new kind of narrative structure, no longer spatial and removed in time, but of a temporal circularity that at least helps him to evade and abrogate death. For Cyril, Hugh's death was simply an unfortunate accident. The

6 John V. KNAPP maintains that in *The Blood Oranges* "Hawkes' intention is nothing less than to create a 'new' morality to supplant the outworn asexuality of a moribund Christianity" (KNAPP, John V. "Hawkes' *The Blood Oranges*: A Sensual New Jerusalem." In: *Critique* 17,3 (1976): 5–25. 6). See also BUSCH, Frederick. *Hawkes: A Guide to His Fictions*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1973. 155.

7 Cf. ZIEGLER, Heide. *Ironie ist Pflicht. John Barth und John Hawkes: Bewusstseinsformen des amerikanischen Gegenwartsromans*. Heidelberg: Winter, 1995. 236–70.

concentration on his circular relics supports Cyril's endeavour to consign unforgettable memories to a past dominated by larger-than-life forces while it also permits him to bring his story forward again from that "medieval" age into his own present time – where it can be turned into narration. Indicative of such merely imaginative moves towards the present, of Cyril's attempts to substitute art for life, words for deeds, is his repeated exhortation to Catherine, "Remember?" He wants Catherine to link the past and the present, but only as they belong to their common memory. Cyril's narrative attitude in *The Blood Oranges* mirrors Hawkes's own radical conviction as a writer that plot, setting, and theme are "the true enemies of the novel".⁸ Plot, setting, and theme restrict the freedom of the narrator, his easy forays into the realm of the unconscious, his symbolic interpretation of gratuitous events, his power to create his own alternative world.

However, if Cyril's narration is circular, not linear, he needs to create special narrative markers that tell the uninitiated reader where in time and space he has to locate each narrated event. Cyril therefore constantly varies the amount of sensual versus metaphorical detail he attributes to the things and scenes he relates, and the degree of rhetorical sophistication exhibited in each of the remembered fragments of the novel precisely denotes its chronological place within the seemingly circular chain of events. Narrated events acquire an increasingly metaphorical quality as they recede into the past; they gain in sensuality when they are brought forward into the present. This waxing and waning of metaphorical versus sensual abundance is most apparent when Cyril refers to food or excrement, when he describes how he eats a meal or refers to the bodily discharge of its remnants. The growing amount of sensual detail which we discern as we move towards the description of a recent meal as opposed to a meal that took place long ago also discloses another interesting aspect of Cyril's story: the hidden horrors that underlie the apparent pleasures of eating as well as those of having to narrate in the present tense. Shakespeare's remarkable abstinence from showing the consumption of food on the stage opened possibilities for comparing the stage to the world and the world to the stage, since it clearly helps to demarcate the boundaries between the two realms. Hawkes transfers Shakespeare's contrast between the story on the stage that can be controlled, and the world that cannot, into Cyril's enthusiasm when he can celebrate what has become his own narrated and 'quotable' past, while showing us how he dreads the present as it reveals its unknown challenges from moment to moment.

Hawkes thus counters the demand for psychological realism, which has come to dominate even dramatic criticism since the eighteenth century, encouraged by the rise of the novel which can trace the inner workings of its characters' minds

8 ENCK, John. "John Hawkes: An Interview." In: *Wisconsin Studies in Comparative Literature* VI,2 (Summer 1965): 141 – 55. 149.

to a degree that a play, presenting its persons through speech and action, cannot. Hawkes's narrator Cyril behaves like an actor on a stage who would dominate the action through pre-conceived speech; but not being the author, he at the same time shies away both from spontaneous action and unreflected speech, in order to avoid situations where reality refuses to fit his design. By the same token he is, however, constantly forced to search for instances where his imagination and reality might overlap, in order not to lose control over the present situation. For example, he is extremely pleased when a little goat which he has only imagined so far, white and with blue eyes, suddenly jumps upon the scene:

Was it dream, change, coincidence, or was my state of mind a menagerie of desire from which real animals might spring? Could it be that one of my speechless creatures of joy and sentiment had torn itself loose from the tapestry that only I could see? (*The Blood Oranges* 92 – 93)

It disturbs Cyril only slightly that the animal happens to be cream-colored instead of white: “Even from where we stood we could see his bright blue eyes and the nubile horns embedded in soft down. At least I had been right about the color of his eyes, I thought, and smiled” (*The Blood Oranges* 93). Thus Cyril is a wanderer between the worlds, not only of his present and his former life – which he is learning to control by turning the former tapestry of Love into his own present narrated tapestry of love – but also between the intertextual demands of various literary texts and different rhetorical devices.

The challenges of Cyril's present life, which consist in constantly evading the horrors of haphazard everyday experience by immediately turning them into the controlled pleasures of art, become most apparent when he describes how only “yesterday” he ate unusual food, at least by the standards of an American audience, prepared in an unusual fashion. That meal, moreover, takes place only after the idea of bowel movements and excrement has been evoked. Cyril shares both activities with his “little South European maid”, who “speaks an ugly language that will never be mine, she cannot understand a word of my lengthy erotic declarations” (*The Blood Oranges* 2). He has named this maid Rosella, “because the calves of her legs are raw, unshaven, and because she wears thick gray woolen socks” (*The Blood Oranges* 2). Rosella's “ugly” language may be Albanian, and she cooks and cleans for Cyril, after he has – at least temporarily – been abandoned by Fiona. In a scene that precedes an extraordinary culinary scene, Rosella and the narrator are seen hunting for black snails in the garden of the villa which he has been renting for some time. For this pursuit, Cyril seems to be most inadequately dressed: in a shabby black coat, vest and trousers, with a golden watch chain hanging across all the breadth of his black vest.

Moments later I was once more able to enjoy the sound of heavy snails falling into the wide-mouthed pot. In the twilight we were side by side, Rosella and I, kneeling together

at the edge of a small rectangle of pulpy leaves. The snails were plentiful and the sticky silver trails crept down dead stems, climbed over exposed roots, disappeared under black chunks of decomposing stone. Everywhere the snails were massing or making their blind osmotic paths about the villa, eating and destroying and unwinding their silver trails. They were the eyes of night, the crawling stones. (*The Blood Oranges* 47)

In his worn black coat and vest and trousers, Cyril symbolically seems to relate to death and decay (alluded to in phrases like “dead stems”, “exposed roots”, “black chunks of decomposing stone”); the golden watch chain which hangs across his black vest evokes the ominous idea of an hour-glass, since we are able to see the watch chain, but not the watch. At the same time, the snails and their “sticky silver trails” or “their blind osmotic paths” also have sexual connotations. The black snails, alive but blind, symbolize forbidden sex and death as excrement. They are “the eyes of night” in the sense that night covers their actions, blinds conscious human perception to their massive activities and to the threat they present when they disgustingly move like “crawling stones” about the villa, or within human bowels. They are collected in big clumps into a pot which Cyril eventually leaves “where Rosella could dump the snails down the hole in the flat stone of our crude lavatory in the morning” (*The Blood Oranges* 50). To anyone who has ever come in contact with Turkish-style toilets, still in use in some parts of present-day ‘Illyria’, the implications are obvious.

Within this framework of destructive feeding and decomposition a feast of cooking and eating three or four dozen sparrows is set, sparrows that a young relative of Rosella has shot and brought as a gift in a crock – in analogy to the pot into which the black snails have just been dropped.

We cooked them together, ate them together. For the first time I not only ate with Rosella but joined her in that damp cavelike room of stone and tile where, until now, Rosella had moved alone with a young woman’s bored carelessness through all her days and nights of cooking. I joined her and removed my black coat and in frayed shirt sleeves and soiled vest sat beside my standing Rosella and helped her, pulled the feathers from my share of the sparrows, which was no easy job, and despite my size hovered as near as I could to her shoulder while inside the casserole she built up the layers: butter, thyme, sparrows, onions, butter, thyme, sparrows, onions, and so forth. [...] I watched Rosella’s fingers at work, fingers even now stained with the black earth of my garden. Sometime toward the end of these preparations I sighed a deep sigh and realized that next time I too would be able to tie the wings, chop off the miniature feet. ‘The heads. I see we eat the heads, Rosella. And the beaks. For the full effect we must eat the entire bird. I understand.’

Her example was not at first easy to follow. Beaks that were very much like little split black fingernails. Heads smaller than my thumb and without eyes. I noticed such details, calmly watched how Rosella ate each sparrow in a single bite, and realized that it would be difficult for even a seasoned sex-aesthete to follow her example. [...] Thanks to Rosella’s cooking, the sparrows, I found, were simply soft and crunchy too,

as if the different textures of sweetness had been so combined that it was still necessary to chew a moment that very substance which had in fact already dissolved, melted, in the aching mouth.

'Rosella,' I said, with my jaws working and elbows propped casually on the table, 'magnificent!' (*The Blood Oranges* 51 – 52)

There can be no doubt that Cyril (as well as his author) knows how to handle the lexicon of food, that this description of preparing and enjoying a meal of sparrows is full of sensual, closely observed details which will appear both appetizing and disgusting to the reader (in this context one ought to remember that Cyril was actually able to 'enjoy' the sound of those black snails dropping into the wide-mouthed pot). The vivid depiction of this meal is also 'dramatically' interesting because another one like it cannot be found again in the course of the whole novel, despite the fact that food in general and the tasting of white wine in particular are mentioned repeatedly. In other words, we have approached the moment when the narration comes full circle and very close to coinciding with the present. The meal with Rosella took place only "yesterday" (*The Blood Oranges* 45), that is, in the very recent past. Since no definite story-line can be found in the novel – any story-line would detract from Cyril's power of memory that selects its own reality fragments and immediately starts to subject them to the shaping forces of his imagination – the present, so close at hand, offers all the threats of uncoordinated chaos, symbolized by the fact that the meal is probably still being digested.

Because of her influential role as a fabulous cook and Cyril's present mentor, Hawkes's Rosella is made to hark back to Shakespeare's Rosalind, which is the reason why the narrator 'named' Rosella himself. Thus, Cyril (and his author) can place Rosella firmly into an intertextually guaranteed past and out of harm's way. Rosalind and Rosella are opposed, yet related through the very contrariness of their decisive features. While Shakespeare's Rosalind is active, intelligent, versatile, and rich in poetic and rhetorical skills, Rosella speaks a language that the narrator cannot understand; therefore she usually stays silent and passive. Rosalind is a young male actor, dressed up as a woman and cross-dressing as a young man; the calves of Rosella's legs, we remember, are "raw" and "unshaven" and look like those of a man, and the narrator has called her Rosella "because" of this fact, that is, because he might want to allude to an originally male Rosalind. Rosalind knows how to create a plot; Rosella, to make a bad pun, only knows how to fill a pot. Yet both young women share an Arcadian consciousness which contributes to their seductiveness: Rosella's dark skin and aquiline nose cause the narrator to believe in her 'barbarian' roots; yet she lives in a country where ancient marble statues may turn up anywhere, at any time, a circumstance that imbues her with a poetic glow; just as Rosalind's presence turns the Forest of Arden into a place where poems grow on trees like leaves. Rosalind is a specialist

in cross-dressing, like Viola in *What You Will*; Rosella, however, possesses truly androgynous features, resembling the little statue of a hermaphrodite which Cyril and Fiona at one point discover during their sojourns in Illyria. Hugh has been photographing her in the nude and he dies holding one of the photographs of Rosella in his hand when he, as Hawkes stated in an interview, “means to undergo a partial hanging in order to experience sexual release, but he slips and accidentally dies”.⁹ Rosella thus attracts both of the male protagonists because of her androgynous features, while Rosalind is erotically attractive to members of both sexes: Phoebe falls in love with her, whereas Orlando can woo her more easily, as soon as Rosalind tells him that he should attend to her as if she were a woman.

Rosella’s androgynous nature thus keeps both Hugh and Cyril from embracing her, because the complex Shakespearian context which she calls up places her out of their reach. Her seductiveness is dependent on her having been part of the tapestry of Love that hangs in shreds after Hugh’s death, after the impatient medieval goddess of Love has deserted Cyril. However, his attempt to weave a new tapestry of love by interlacing the real and the imaginary into meaningful recollected experience may nevertheless bode well for the future, since it can promote a belief in the persistence of the creative imagination and its capacity to change present elements of potential chaos into clusters of symbols which may be arranged in such a fashion as to predict the possibility of a new kind of erotic future. It is in this sense that Cyril’s new ideal of ‘sexless matrimony’ with Catherine needs to be understood: to his mind this will be a bond that relies on memory, especially the shared memory of their past sexual encounters, which fortifies them against any new dangerous developments, since Fiona and Hugh are indelible parts of that memory. However, before they can enjoy this new union – predicted by the blood oranges of the title that fuse the notions of colourful fruit and life-giving ‘humor’ and that amount to the author’s last word¹⁰ – Catherine and Cyril will have to free themselves from what amounts to a late modernist intertextual past.

The term ‘sexless matrimony’ refers the reader back to Madox Ford’s *The Good Soldier*, and while appearing to place Hawkes’s novel firmly in the modernist tradition, the concept developed in *The Blood Oranges* is meant to show how Hawkes overcame this extraordinary anxiety of influence. Madox Ford’s narrator Dowell is married to a woman whose so-called “heart” will not permit the consummation of their marriage. He calls himself his wife’s permanent

9 John Hawkes in KUEHL, John. *John Hawkes and the Craft of Conflict*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1975. 169.

10 This intention was recalled by the author when he titled a selection from his novels: *Humors of Blood & Skin: A John Hawkes Reader*. New Directions: New York, 1984.

“nurse-attendant” (*The Good Soldier* 213); their relationship does therefore amount to what Hawkes, in his own novel, would call ‘sexless matrimony’. Interestingly, the two couples in *The Good Soldier*, Dowell and his wife Florence, and Edward Ashburnham and his wife Leonora, meet over a dinner that lacks any trace of sensuality. The description of their first meeting in the dining room of a hotel in Nauheim never concerns food; it concerns manners and the behavior of waiters and focuses on the question where the newly arrived Ashburnhams will be seated. They end up sitting at the same table with the Dowells – a feat smartly engineered by Florence who is eager to become acquainted with Edward Ashburnham:

I have forgotten the aspect of many things, but I shall never forget the aspect of the dining-room of the Hotel Excelsior on that evening – and on so many other evenings. Whole castles have vanished from my memory, whole cities that I have never visited again, but that white room, festooned with papier-maché fruits and flowers; the tall windows; the many tables; the black screen round the door with three golden cranes flying upward on each panel; the palm-tree in the centre of the room; the swish of the waiter’s feet; the cold expensive elegance; the mien of the diners as they came in every evening – their air of earnestness as if they must go through a meal prescribed by the Kur authorities and their air of sobriety as if they must seek not by any means to enjoy their meals – those things I shall not easily forget (*The Good Soldier* 28–29).

Food in this scene is mentioned either in the guise of artificial representation (“papier-maché fruits”) or as something the enjoyment of which has to be camouflaged. A starker contrast to the scene of cooking and eating three or four dozen sparrows in Hawkes’s *The Blood Oranges* can hardly be imagined. Here outer appearance is all that counts – in exact correspondence to the sexless marriages of the Dowells and the Ashburnhams. In truly modernist fashion, Madox Ford is looking for an objective correlative of each of the emotions betrayed during what will amount to an existential moment for all the characters concerned – a moment whose significance the narrator divines without being yet able to name it. The couples meet over a dinner which marks the point when their destinies will become hopelessly intertwined. That is, they meet at a social gathering the ostentatious insignificance of which becomes ominous precisely because no one in that quartet is keen on speaking the truth; instead, they do everything to hide it. Had the Dowells and Ashburnhams been able to enjoy their food and to express their pleasure, this might have been an indication for the reader that they were in search of honesty – an honesty that the two men aspire to, but that is constantly undermined by the hypocritical behavior of their women. Yet a comparison with the dinner scene in Hawkes’s novel will reveal that the situation is not that simple and that a recourse to Hawkes’s Shakespearean sources is needed to understand the significance of the comparison between *The Good Soldier* and *The Blood Oranges* that Hawkes seems to ask for.

Florence and Leonora both want to keep up appearances in order to follow their own fateful designs: Florence strives to keep her husband in blissful ignorance about her various sexual encounters with other men; Leonora endeavours to protect her husband's excellent reputation. They both succeed to the point that they continue to dominate Madox Ford's plot, thus standing in stark contrast to Hawkes's character Cyril, who (like his author) has learned to oppose the very idea of dominance with the help of a linear plot. Cyril substitutes a circular narrative for the development of a plot, because he wants to be the master of his own life again, after it has been disrupted by the death of Hugh; and he understands that his narrative will only be successful, if he does *not* try to ascribe the other characters their place in the new tapestry of love which he has recently begun to weave and which only his author will later be calling a novel. In former times, Cyril was the unself-conscious "white porcellain bull" (*The Blood Oranges* 2), the man, husband, and lover, who always simply appeared at Love's will. The structure of his life seemed to be predestined by his being Love's favourite. Now, as a narrator, Cyril has become responsible for his own creation, and his success will depend upon the substitutes he manages to find for sexual gratification; for if he cannot find such substitutes, he will inevitably end up in a sexless matrimony of the kind designed by the women in Madox Ford's novel. Sharing Rosella's meal of sparrows, for example, as well as collecting the black snails together, appears to create an even greater proximity between them than having sex with her. Rosella becomes part of Cyril's narrative construction, the inevitable partner in the tapestry of love of his own making. Cyril begins to feed his hunger for love by taking things into his mouth, the sparrows which have been cooked without severing their heads or their beaks that look like Rosella's black fingernails or, in another scene that happened only "yesterday", by kissing the flowering mimosa tree in his garden. At that point Cyril tenderly gathers the "hivelike masses of yellow balls" (*The Blood Oranges* 54) close to his face and pushes forward his open mouth "until my mouth was filled and against all the most sensitive membranes of tongue and oral cavity I felt the yellow fuzzy pressure of the flowering tree" (*The Blood Oranges* 54).

Orality seems to be Cyril's new philosophy: eating, kissing, speaking, narrating. Given the dictates of memory, his narration can thus assume the character of repeated ritual.¹¹ His attempts to re-sensualize the past must nevertheless fail, because he cannot integrate it into his narration in any palatable

11 Cf. GADAMER, Hans-Georg. "Unterwegs zur Schrift?" In: Aleida Assmann, Jan Assmann and Christof Hardmeier (eds.). *Schrift und Gedächtnis: Beiträge zur Archäologie der literarischen Kommunikation*. München: Wilhelm Fink, 1998. 10–19. 13: "Zwischen Mündlichkeit und Schriftlichkeit besteht also keine scharfe Trennung. Auf beide Weisen kann sich Überlieferung vollziehen, und in beiden Fällen ist es eine neue Mündlichkeit, in der die Überlieferung sich erst vollendet."

manner, only as part of a recollected, that is, imaginary world. Describing for the reader how he ate the sparrows and kissed the mimosa tree may still give the impression of sensually gratifying experiences, because both events happened only “yesterday”. They thus belong to what Henry James would have called the “*visitable* past”,¹² but as Cyril dives deeper into the well of memory, sensual experience must gradually give way to metaphor. When, for example, Cyril describes the meal the two couples are having together on the morning when they have finally enjoyed a cross-sexual night of love after Hugh’s resistance has been overcome by Fiona, this long-awaited pastime seems to assume an overly symbolic quality:

But the food, wasn’t there also something special about the food? Of course there was. How like Fiona on this morning of mornings to select from the garden of her imagination only those items which, according to superstition, were aphrodisiac. Just like Fiona to fuse in one stroke her feminine wisdom and my sensible view of sex. (*The Blood Oranges* 261)

On this morning Fiona looks like a faun. Arcadia still seems to prevail, but it is already an Arcadia of hidden horrors as well as pleasures, since it is an Arcadia remembered, an Arcadia darkened by subsequent events. The aphrodisiac food which Fiona has chosen so carefully will not prevent Hugh’s death by hanging, an accident described in the following section, and her florid imagination will not protect her from having to take on the burden of caring for Hugh’s and Catherine’s children after Hugh’s death and Catherine’s nervous breakdown; while Cyril, despite his sensible view of sex, is confined to the obligation of nursing Catherine and abandoned to the pains of his isolation. Still, the metaphor-creating quality of Cyril’s imagination also has a healing effect,¹³ if not for him as a character, since he is caught in the trap of his memory, then at least for him as the novel’s narrator, since his circular narration incrementally becomes that of his author, who ultimately substitutes the reader for the unheeding Catherine.

Thus Hawkes’s art, like all true art, may indeed have an ultimately cathartic effect, but this effect can only be detected when the reader accepts both the potential for creativity and the constraints offered by intertextuality, since Hawkes not only refers to Shakespeare’s happy comedies with easy titles, like *What You Will* or *As You Like It*, but also to the damage Shakespeare’s and his own Arcadian settings suffer from a novel like Ford Madox Ford’s novel *The Good Soldier*. The answer to the question posed by the narrator of Madox Ford’s novel as to the existence of any “terrestrial paradise” is answered in the negative

12 JAMES, Henry. *The Art of the Novel: Critical Prefaces*. Edited by R.P. Blackmur. New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1934. 164.

13 Cf. GASS, William H. “Introduction to John Hawkes.” In: John Hawkes. *Humors of Blood & Skin: A John Hawkes Reader*. New York: New Directions, 1984. xvi.

by that novel's very plot, which ends by showing the total destruction of the narrator's happiness and the happiness of all the characters he cares for. Hawkes does not denounce or call into question the content of the plot of *The Good Soldier*, but he refutes it as tragic 'plot' by creating an intertextual balance between his own novel and two Shakespearian comedies where Arcadia has a temporary, but restorative function. Still, the narrative tapestry woven by his narrator cannot simply be seen as a successful 'design'; it also has to incorporate what Hawkes tends to call 'debris', the destructive elements he found in Madox Ford's novel.

This combination and mutual interdependence of design and debris is indicated repeatedly by the way food is referred to in Hawkes's novel. Whenever Cyril mentions food, metaphorically or not, the events he relates have to take their chronological place in his circular memory. Only the author is able to use one of the narrator's metaphors to establish an independent meaning beyond the borderlines of the text – not by denying its former context, but by granting it the timelessness of the title. The metaphor of the blood oranges, which is mentioned several times in the course of the novel, is made to take a leap unto the cover of the novel in order to become part of a pictorial pattern, or 'tapestry'. This metaphorical leap has been prepared by textual repetition within the novel and the gradual transformation of meaning occurring with each return. The blood oranges are first referred to in the text when Cyril remembers how the four of them – he and Fiona, Catherine and Hugh – spent an evening on the beach together, watching a sunset that in his mind called up precisely such an image:

The sun was setting, sinking to its predestined death, and to the four of us, or at least to me, that enormous smoldering sun lay on the horizon like a dissolving orange suffused with blood. (*The Blood Oranges* 37)

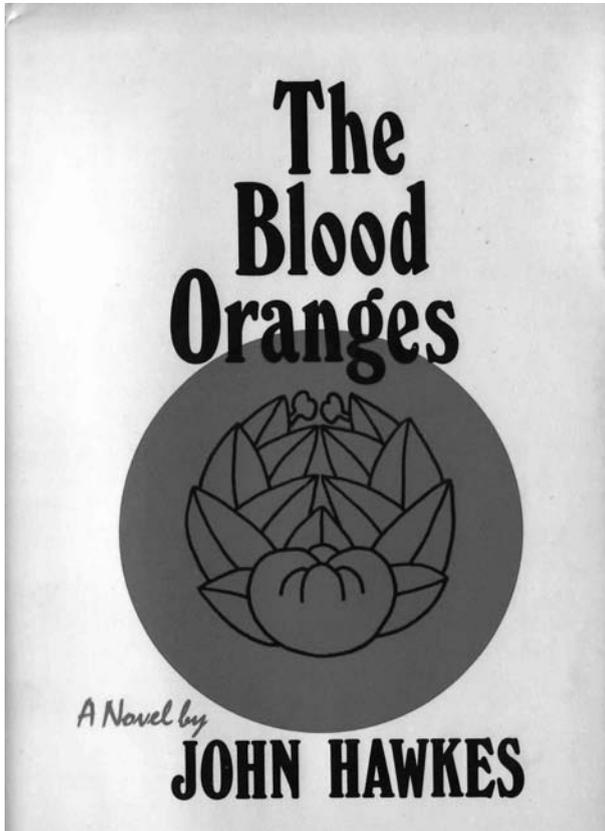
Being a "sex-aesthetician", as he calls himself, Cyril attempts to counter the cosmic threat of the setting sun – rendered palpable through expressions like "predestined death", "smoldering", or "suffused with blood" – by removing Fiona's bikini halter. He thus calls upon his wife to erotically challenge death, a challenge that she is at this point still able to meet: her "voice was soft and clear, the naked orange breasts were unimaginally free" (*The Blood Oranges* 40).

It seems to be this image of Fiona's orange-colored breasts, their very exposure being a triumph of the imagination, that inspired the author to choose *The Blood Oranges* as the title for his novel. It is worth noting that whenever the phrase is used in the novel, "blood orange(s)" does already possess metaphorical qualities; it never simply refers to the fruit of that name. However, since the fruit would be the first association coming to the mind of any reader picking up the book, the author obviously felt the need to defamiliarize him or her of their common expectations. Hawkes, who was always a stickler for details, was in all

likelihood involved in creating the design for the original dust jacket of *The Blood Oranges*. While the image on that dust jacket at first glance portrays a blood orange set against an orange-colored setting sun, that blood orange, upon closer inspection, reveals the details of a bird, tied together for cooking over the red-hot fire. The blood oranges have assumed the character of a palimpsest that takes the reader from an Arcadian past all the way into the present. Thus the reader, looking at what appears to be a well-known, innocuous fruit, is already tacitly being introduced both to the horrors and pleasures of eating as they have been transformed by the author's imagination, in other words, into the horrors and pleasures of reading *The Blood Oranges* by John Hawkes.

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John Hawkes. *The Blood Oranges*. Jacket design by Gertrude Huston.
New Directions: New York, 1971.

Frank J. Kearful

‘Good to Eat’: Selected Modern American Poems

My Cook’s tour of poems that offer something good to eat begins with Allen Ginsberg’s “Howl”, followed by a stop with Ginsberg at “A Supermarket in California”, and a bite from his *Reality Sandwiches*. With Robert Lowell’s distinction between raw and cooked poetry in mind, we will move on to selected poems by Lowell, Richard Wilbur, William Carlos Williams, and John Berryman. Along the way we will be noting associations of food and eating with religious experience, the erotic, the comic, and still life. The tour ends with two light-verse quickies, by Jonathan Williams and Roy Blount Jr., on some things not necessarily good to eat.

On a recent pilgrimage to the City Lights Bookstore in San Francisco I acquired a now prized possession, a canvas tote bag emblazoned with a facsimile of the cover of Allen Ginsberg’s *Howl and Other Poems* (1956), and on its reverse side just three words:

starving
hysterical
naked

Anyone who enters the bookstore, head bowed, will know them as the climax of *Howl*’s opening line:

I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness, starving, hysterical,
naked¹

1 My Ginsberg quotations are from GINSBERG, Allen. *Collected Poems 1947–1980*. New York: Vintage, 1984; parenthetical references are to line numbers. Ginsberg preferred to call the verse lines in “Howl” strophes: see “Technique” in the 1986 Viking edition of “Howl”, for which Ginsberg provided footnotes and commentary (*Howl* 154). On his substitution of “hysterical” for “mystical” in the opening line, see 124. The Viking edition contains facsimiles of numerous working drafts of the poem.

Part 1 of “Howl” amplifies the “starving” motif in a series of “who” declarations that ally hunger, food, and eating with the “madness” of the best minds of Ginsberg’s generation, summoned into existence as a band of beat brothers. Bardic long lines proffer by turns surrealistic visions, political protest, ecstatic celebration, resonant lament, absurdist farce, lyric reminiscence, and prophetic utterance. Insider references to familiar haunts are linked with eating and drinking, beginning “who ate fire in paint hotels or drank turpentine in Paradise Alley, death, or purgatoried their torsos night after night” (“Howl” 10) and “who sank all night in submarine light of Bickford’s floated out and sat through stale beer afternoon in desolate Fugazzi’s, listening to the crack of doom on the hydrogen jukebox” (“Howl” 15). The “best minds” themselves become part of a food chain, “whole intellects disgorged in total recall for seven days and nights with brilliant eyes, meat for the Synagogue cast on the pavement” (“Howl” 19).

When “Howl” leaves New York, the starving motif accompanies it, “who lounged hungry and lonesome through Houston seeking jazz or sex or soup, and followed the brilliant Spaniard to converse about America and eternity, a hopeless task, and so took ship to Africa” (“Howl” 27). On the road within America, the starving/eating motif allies with diners, gaunt waitresses, and Neil Cassidy,

who went out whoring through Colorado in myriad stolen nightcars, N.C., secret hero of these poems, cocksman and Adonis of Denver – joy to the memory of his innumerable lays and girls in empty lots & diner backyards, moviehouses’ rickety rows, on mountaintops in caves or with gaunt waitresses in familiar roadside lonely petticoat upliftings & especially secret gas-station solipsisms of johns, & hometown alleys too (“Howl” 43).

Returning to New York, “Howl” combines surrealism, slapstick, and nostalgia in urban vignettes that evoke food, eating, drinking, and those “who ate the lambstew of the imagination or digested the crab at the muddy bottom of the rivers of Bowery” (“Howl” 47); “who wept at the romance of the streets with their pushcarts full of onions and bad music” (“Howl” 48); “who cooked rotten animals lung heart feet tail borscht & tortillas dreaming of the pure vegetable kingdom” (“Howl” 52); “who plunged themselves under meat trucks looking for an egg” (“Howl” 53); “who jumped off the Brooklyn Bridge this actually happened and walked away unknown and forgotten into the ghostly daze of Chinatown soup alleyways & firetrucks, not even one free beer” (“Howl” 57).

Many of the poem’s more bizarre moments “actually happened”, or sort of happened, including an incident involving Carl Solomon, to whom “Howl” is dedicated:

presented themselves on the granite steps of the madhouse with shaven heads and harlequin speech of suicide, demanding instantaneous lobotomy (“Howl” 66).

Solomon, a fellow patient in the Columbia Psychiatric Institute in 1949, gave his version of what really happened in a footnote that Ginsberg provided for the 1986 Viking edition of "Howl":

This section of the poem garbles history completely and makes light of what was a very serious matter. I was attending Brooklyn College; the lecturer was Wallace Markfield (later a friend); it was an off-campus affair. Markfield's subject was Mallarmé and Alienation; The potato salad throwing was supposed to be Dadaism and also an illustration of alienation; it was done in jest and also as a gift-gesture to a campus girlfriend whose birthday it was and who thought the idea very funny. Contradiction: "in jest" and "quite a serious matter," this was typical of the black humor of dada. ("Howl" 131)

Solomon has a bit more to say about food, not thrown but stuck in one's mouth as if one were a pig ready for roasting: "The perfect existential gesture in those days was supposed to be putting an apple in your mouth and jumping into a fire" ("Howl" 131).² When Ginsberg addresses Solomon in a pensive aside, he skips the potato salad:

ah, Carl, while you are not safe I am not safe, and now we're really in the
total animal soup of time – ("Howl" 72)

Elaborating on the idiom "to be in the soup", Ginsberg elides the titles of two Marx Brothers movies, *Duck Soup* and *Animal Crackers*, while on a more classical note he alludes to the *tempus edax* topos. In Ginsberg's version of it, time as the consumer of all things is ready and waiting to slurp "the total animal soup".³

A decisive turn in the poem begins in line 72 with "therefore". A succession of independent and dependent clauses progresses over six lines ("Howl" 72–77), impelled by a series of finite verbs beginning "who therefore ran" and con-

2 Ginsberg derived details about many bizarre events he relates in "Howl" from Solomon, who struck his fellow patient in the Columbia Psychiatric Institute in 1949 as being "an intuitive Bronx Dadaist and prose-poet" (*More Mishaps*). Looking back in *More Mishaps* (1968), Solomon remarks: "History moves in strange ways, I met for the first time my fellow Beatnik to be, Allen Ginsberg. I gave Allen an apocryphal history of my adventures and pseudo-intellectual deeds of daring. He meticulously took note of everything I said (I thought at the time that he suffered from 'the writer's disease,' imagined that he was a great writer). Later, when I decided to give up the flesh and become a lunatic saint, he published all of this data, compounded partly of truth, but for the most part raving self-justification, crypto-bohemian boasting à la Rimbaud, effeminate prancing, and esoteric aphorisms plagiarized from Kierkegaard and others – in the form of Howl. Thus he enshrined falsehood as truth and raving as common sense for future generations to ponder over and be misled" ("Howl" 51). Ginsberg included Solomon's account in a footnote for the Viking edition of *Howl* ("Howl" 131), from which I quote it. "Howl" announces, directly beneath the title, "for Carl Solomon".

3 In either case, the line (forgive the pun) supersedes the earlier references to soup, "lounged hungry through Houston seeking jazz or sex or soup" and "the ghostly daze of Chinatown soup alleyways and firetrucks". "Soup of time" brings to mind "primordial soup", coined around 1924.

cluding “rose”, blew”, and “shivered”. The best minds of Ginsberg’s generation swing into action, and the arts of poetry, painting, and music join forces with religious allusions in a beat apocalypse. A jazz band plays, and in line 77 a saxophone’s cry replaces the last trump that sounds the day of doom in Revelation. It shall shiver the cities down to the last radio tuned into the band playing:

and rose incarnate in the ghostly clothes of jazz in a golden shadow of the mind and
blew the suffering of America’s naked mind for love into an eli eli lamma
lamma sabacthani saxophone cry that shivered the cities down to their last
radio. (“Howl” 77)

The “naked” motif of line 1 is transformed when the best minds of Ginsberg’s generation are envisioned risen from the dead, not naked but clothed in jazz. Their playing transforms the “hysterical” motif into “shivered”, which itself is transformed into a transitive verb. The “starving” motif still awaits resolution, which comes in line 78:

with the absolute heart of the poem of life butchered out of their own bodies good to
eat a thousand years.

The anacoluthon instigated by a nominative absolute phrase terminates the sequence of finite-verb sustained clauses of lines 72–77. Line 78 ends with the only full-stop period thus far, and thus also terminates what can be conceived of as a single long sentence. The poem that began “I saw”, recording hopped-up visions of the latter days now upon us, envisions at the end the Day of Judgment, and in the very last line a following millennium. There shall come about a rescue from “the total animal soup of time”, achieved by “the absolute heart of the poem of life”.

Line 78 suggests a sacrificial ritual in which the best minds of Ginsberg’s generation are at once victims, celebrants, and communicants, and also brings to a climax Ginsberg’s celebration of the powers of art and religious mythmaking in lines 72–77. The “poem of life” works semantically two ways: the poem about life, but more essentially, the poem whose “absolute heart” is formed out of life itself. In both cooperating senses it evokes the topos of the power of poetry to brave the ravages of time and transcend impending death. The hysterical, naked, and starving shall be makers of the poem of life, butchered from their own bodies.

Returning to the present world of mid-1950s America, Part 2 of “Howl” begins with a more malignant sort of ritual eating, “What sphinx of cement and aluminium bashed open their skulls and ate up their brains and imagination?” The powers of Moloch are vanquished, however, during the course of Parts 2 and 3 and a “Footnote to Howl”, a chant that culminates in an invocation of time: “Holy time in eternity holy eternity in time the clocks in space holy the fourth

dimension holy the fifth International holy the angel in Moloch!" Thus shall we indeed be saved from "the total animal soup of time".

"Howl" is followed in the City Lights edition of *Howl and Other Poems* (1956) by "A Supermarket in California", in which Ginsberg, "shopping for images", goes into a "neon fruit supermarket".⁴ As for fruits in a slang sense, what better place than a neon fruit supermarket to meet another "fruit"? And what better state than California, in the old saying "the land of the fruit and the nut". Presumably "neon" leapfrogs "fruit" in order to modify "supermarket", and indicates the modern lighting cast upon the riches on display. One cannot quite banish from one's mind, though, "neon" as a direct modifier of "fruit", suggesting in effect a compound noun, "neon fruit". If one pursues the slang sense of "fruit" a "neon fruit" might be construed as a humorous reference to gay self-display. The "neon fruit supermarket" is not, in fact, a supermarket selling only fruit. In any event, Ginsberg spots Garcia Lorca "down by the watermelons", but it is Whitman who most catches his attention, and whom he follows:

I saw you, Walt Whitman, childless, lonely old grubber, poking among the meats in the refrigerator and eyeing the grocery boys.

I heard you asking questions of each: Who killed the pork chops? What price bananas? Are you my Angel?

I wandered in and out of the brilliant stacks of cans following you, and followed in my imagination by the store detective.

We strode down the open corridors together in our solitary fancy tasting artichokes, possessing every frozen delicacy, and never passing the cashier. ("A Supermarket in California", 4–7)

Garcia Lorca already having been spotted, the poem becomes a fantasy of gay poetic bonding, with the participial phrase "possessing every frozen delicacy" casting a sexual glow.

In *Reality Sandwiches* (1963) Ginsberg associates himself with the author of *Naked Lunch* in "On Burroughs' Work", a three-stanza *ars poetica*, a genre which from Horace onwards customarily repudiates an overblown ornamental style. "On Burroughs' Work" does so in stanzas 1 and 3, employing a traditional metaphor for such purposes, dressing. Ginsberg wittily transposes it, however, from clothing to cuisine:

4 One might compare Ginsberg's *ars poetica* with Archibald MacLeish's "Ars Poetica", which begins "A poem should be a globed fruit" (cf. MACLEISH, Archibald. "Ars Poetica." In: Steven Gould Axelrod, Camille Roman, and Thomas Travisano (eds.). *The New Anthology of American Poetry: Modernisms 1900–1950*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2005).

The method must be purest meat
 and no symbolic dressing,
 actual visions & actual prisons
 as seen then and now.

.

A naked lunch is natural to us,
 we eat reality sandwiches.
 But allegories are so much lettuce.
 Don't hide the madness. ("On Burroughs' Work")

Nakedness is not, it so happens, the traditionally recommended alternative to overdressing. As Alexander Pope, who makes extensive use of the dressing topos in *An Essay on Criticism* (1709), famously observed, "True Wit is Nature to Advantage drest, / What oft was *Thought*, but ne'er so well *Express*" (297–98).⁵ Ginsberg is no fan of heroic couplets, but he cleverly rhymes "us" and "lettuce" and his linking of "madness" with "sandwiches" helps construct something like an *abab* quatrain.

When Robert Lowell received a National Book Award for *Life Studies* in 1960, he distinguished between raw and cooked poetry to describe a parting of the ways in American poetry that *Howl and Other Poems* had initiated. It was clear which culinary school Ginsberg belonged to, but Lowell himself was a more complicated case. His densely allusive, metrical, rhymed early poetry was indubitably "cooked", but Ginsberg's free-verse shenanigans had begun to make an impact on him by the time he came to writing *Life Studies* (1959), in which meter and rhyme, particularly in the "Life Studies" sequence, are less salient. In *Life Studies* Lowell does not hide the madness, but he never celebrated it. Not eager fully to identify himself with either raw or cooked poetics, he commented humorously and ambivalently on both.

Lowell's insistently metrical, intricately rhyming "Where the Rainbow Ends", which concludes *Lord Weary's Castle* (1946), replicates Matthew Arnold's "Scholar Gypsy" and is a good example of his early, cooked poetics.⁶ It never-

5 Pope employs a series of conceits in lines 289–303 that link excessive ornamentation in dress and in poetry. His observation "Others for Language all their Care express / And value Books, as Women Men, for Dress" (*An Essay on Criticism* 304–05) launches a passage (*An Essay on Criticism* 306–36) that offers critical observations of what one might call "symbolic dressing". Gwendolyn Brooks updates Pope's dressing-style conceit in "The Sundays of Satin-Legs Smith", an *ars poetica* in which Satin-Legs' Zoot-suit aesthetic represents a stylistic inclination. Karen Jackson Ford argues that Brooks' style emulates Satin-Legs' but distances her own from it through plain-style interventions.

6 On the thematic implications of Lowell's replication of the stanza in "Where the Rainbow Ends", and on the poem's bringing of closure to *Lord Weary's Castle*, see my "'Stand and live':

theless shares with "Howl" a preoccupation with hunger, food, and eating, and the two poems' beginnings and endings are remarkably similar. Lowell, too, strikes a prophetic note at the outset of the first of the poem's three stanzas:

I saw the sky descending, black and white,
Not blue, on Boston where the winters wore
The skulls to jack-o'-lanterns on the slates,
And Hunger's skin-and-bone retrievers tore
The chickadee and shrike. The thorn tree waits
Its victim and tonight
The worms will eat the deadwood to the foot
Of Ararat: the scythers, Time and Death,
Helmed locusts, move upon the tree of breath;
The wild ingrafted olive tree and root. ("Where the Rainbow Ends")

As Ginsberg would later, Lowell uses the "I saw" apocalyptic formula to cast himself in the rhetorical role of a biblical prophet. The visionary utterance "I saw the sky descending, black and white, / Not blue, on Boston" leads in the second stanza to "I saw my city in the Scales, the pans / Of judgment rising and descending". These two uses of the "I saw" formula join to evoke Revelation 21:2, "And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband", but Lowell's Boston is no more a New Jerusalem than Ginsberg's New York is.⁷

Stark images beginning with an El Greco-like sky transform Lowell's Boston into a winter scene of desolation where "Hunger's skin-and-bone retrievers" pursue the chickadee and shrike, where worms "will eat the deadwood to the foot / of Ararat", and where Time and Death become "Helmed locusts" that "move upon the tree of breath". What the worms don't eat, the locusts will. At the very end, the poem returns to imagery of trees, food, and eating, but it is life, not death, that is now promised. The voice heard is no longer that of Lowell as doomsday prophet, but a voice that he hears inwardly:

Stand and live,
The dove has brought an olive branch to eat. ("Where the Rainbow Ends")

Tropes of Falling, Rising, Standing in Robert Lowell's *Lord Weary's Castle*" (in: *Connotations* 17,1 (2007/08): 29 – 60), which offers a detailed reading of the poem and its tropes within historical, biographical, religious, and literary contexts. I make some use of the essay here.

⁷ The formula is employed thirty-five times in Revelation, e. g., 8:2 ("And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them"), 16:13 ("And I saw coming out of the mouth of the dragon and out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits like frogs"), 20:1 ("Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand"). It is used no less frequently in the Old Testament prophetic books, on which Revelation is modeled.

The injunction summons up two biblical passages, Christ's use of the stand-and-live topos in Mark 5:41 and the dove's bringing an "olive leaf" to Noah in Genesis 8:11.⁸ The line as it were brings to life the "deadwood" of Ararat, where Noah's ark landed (Genesis 8:4), and it makes the dove a supplier of food. In Genesis 8:11 it offers nothing to eat: "And the dove came to him in the evening; and, lo, in her mouth was an olive leaf plucked off: so Noah knew that the waters were abated from off the earth."⁹ In "Where the Rainbow Ends" it has brought not merely a leaf but a branch, also a sign of peace and reconciliation, which Lowell is bidden to eat as if he were a communicant receiving a host, which accords with the widespread Roman Catholic imagery in *Lord Weary's Castle* and the altar scene of the preceding stanza. "Where the Rainbow Ends" in the end provides, like "Howl" Part 1, something good to eat, blessed by religious associations.

No one has ever praised, or condemned, Richard Wilbur for being a practitioner of "raw" poetics. His *Collected Poems 1943–2004* offers a cornucopia of well-crafted metrical poems, some in syllabics, of which he is the greatest living master, and a dazzling display of stanzaic forms. Now that James Merrill and Anthony Hecht are no longer with us, Wilbur is in a class of his own among contemporary American poets whose poetics do not begin and end with free verse and "open form". Poets and critics who can stomach only "raw" poetics sometimes belittle his formal virtuosity, unflappable sanity, and genial, civilized manner. All that can get on some people's nerves. What Wilbur does not "hide" is his Christian faith, which only makes matters worse.

8 Lowell's allusion to Romans 11:17, "the wild engrafted olive and the root", can be understood only in connection with the thorny Pauline passage it initiates (11:17-24), which itself is a part of a larger unit (10:16–11.32) that suggests "a pattern and a plan behind the history of Israel and the Church" (O'NEILL, J.C. *Paul's Letter to the Romans*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975. 177); for an explication of 11:17 in its Pauline contexts, see O'NEILL. *Paul's Letter to the Romans*. 187–88.

9 My biblical quotations are from the *King James Bible*. The *JPS Commentary* on Genesis provides along with the Hebrew text a similar translation: "The dove came back to him toward evening, and there in its bill was a plucked-off olive leaf! Then Noah knew that the waters had decreased on the earth." It notes that "toward evening" is when birds customarily return to their nests, which implies that the dove had been out all day and that resting places were available. "Plucked off" derives, it points out, from the rare noun *taraf*, connoting that the leaf was freshly removed from the tree and was not flotsam, and thus was a sure sign that plant life had begun to renew itself. The olive tree, "one of the first to be cultivated in the Near East, is an evergreen. It is extraordinarily sturdy and may thrive for up to a thousand years [which recalls Ginsberg's "good enough to eat a thousand years"]. Thus it became symbolic of God's blessings of regeneration, abundance, and strength, which is most likely the function it serves here. In the present context the olive branch is invested with the idea of peace and reconciliation, and for this reason was incorporated into the official emblem of the State of Israel" (58).

Wilbur is not one to engage in tit-for-tat abuse, but I read his "A Barred Owl", from *Mayflies* (2000), as an apologia for his "cooked" poetics:¹⁰

The warping night air having brought the boom
Of an owl's voice into her darkened room,
We tell the wakened child that all she heard
Was an odd question from a forest bird,
Asking of us, if rightly listened to,
'Who cooks for you?' and then 'Who cooks for you?'

Words, which can make our terrors bravely clear,
Can also thus domesticate a fear,
And send a small child back to sleep at night
Not listening for the sound of stealthy flight
Or dreaming of some small thing in a claw
Borne up to some dark branch and eaten raw. ("A Barred Owl")

Placed as the initial poem in *Mayflies*, "A Barred Owl" poses the question, "who cooks for you", the answer to which in terms of the volume as a whole is "Richard Wilbur". Each of the poem's two stanzas is composed of three heroic couplets that give metrical, rhyming form to a single sentence; first comes the narrative, then in stanza 2 the lesson to be drawn from it, which is a lesson in poetics. The antithetical endings of the two stanzas, "cooks for you / eaten raw", establish a "cooked/raw" dialectical framework for the poem as a whole. The speaker/poet is a poeta doctus who first transforms the owl's voice into a healing fiction, then celebrates the humane power of poetic artfulness.

Wilbur's last line provides us with the incidental pleasure of hearing at a distance Emily Dickinson's quatrain "A Bird came down the Walk, / He did not know I saw- / He bit an Angeworm in halves / And ate the fellow, raw". Birds will be birds, and in "Blackberries for Amelia" Wilbur advises his grandchild, one must be "quick / And save some from the birds" (*Collected Poems* 16). "A Barred Owl" also brings to mind, though, Robert Frost's "The Oven Bird", another ornithological poem on power of poetry, which thanks to its title and versification evokes cooked poetics. In point of fact, an oven bird is not, like the turkey, doomed to the oven after a short, happy life, but acquires its name through its nest-building habits. The Library of America edition of Frost's poetry identifies it as "a North American warbler, sometimes called a 'teacher bird', whose dome-

10 Some of what I say here about "A Barred Owl" draws on my 2002 essay on Wilbur and Anthony Hecht (cf. KEARFUL, Frank J. "The Odd Couple." Review Essay on Richard Wilbur, *Mayflies* (New York: Harcourt, 2000); *Richard Wilbur in Conversation with Peter Dale* (London: Between the Lines, 2000); Anthony Hecht, *The Darkness and the Light* (London: Waywiser, 2002); *Anthony Hecht in Conversation with Philip Hoy* (London: Between the Lines, 2001). In: *Leviathan Quarterly* (December 2002): 106–13).

shaped nest resembles an oven and whose call sounds like ‘teacher, teacher’” (*Collected Poems* 971). Frost’s “The Oven Bird” implies an analogy between nest-building and poem-building, and the “teacher, teacher” cry of the oven bird advertizes the poem as an *ars poetica*. Frost, who once quipped “I’d as soon write free verse as play tennis without the net down” (*Collected Poems* 856), was the staunchest champion of metrical verse among the modernists. “The Oven Bird”, a good example of his cooked poetics, is an iambic pentameter quatorzain rhyming *aabcbdcdeefgfg*, which reconfigures Shakespeare’s rhyme scheme, notably by beginning with a couplet, and which ends rather than begins with a question, “The question that he frames in all but words / Is what to make of a diminished thing” (116).¹¹

But the poem I most closely associate with “The Barred Owl” is James Merrill’s villanelle “The World and the Child”, from *Water Street* (1962). Its scene is another “darkened room” and “a child awake” who hears an owl’s “white hoot of disesteem” (“The World and the Child” 147). Unlike the caring speaker in “The Barrel Owl”, the father has tip-toed out of the bedroom, and the child “lies awake in pain”. But the two poems in the end are not all that different. Wilbur’s couplet “Words, which can make our terrors bravely clear, / Can also thus domesticate a fear” affirms poetry’s power to heal. For his part, Merrill employs the “cooked” form of the villanelle to fashion a healing fiction.¹²

In “Personae”, also from *Mayflies*, Wilbur satirically foregrounds eating and dressing, first with regard to “the poet” and then “musicians”. He again employs

11 Shakespeare preferred to begin with a question, as in Sonnet 18, “Shall I compare thee to a summer’s day?” See also, for example, the opening lines of Sonnet 4, “Unthrifty loveliness, why dost thou spend / Upon thyself thy beauty’s legacy?”; of Sonnet 8, “Music to hear, why hear’st thou music sadly?”; of Sonnet 9, “Is it for fear to wet a widow’s eye / That thou consums’t thyself in single life?”; of Sonnet 16, “But wherefore do not you a mightier way / Make war upon this bloody tyrant Time, / And fortify yourself in your decay / With means more bless’d than my barren rhyme?”; and of Sonnet 17, “Who will believe my verse in time to come / If it were filled with your most high deserts?” Leading up to Sonnet 18, Shakespeare’s sonnets to the young man throw a lot of questions at him. In Sonnet 17, questioning turns to compliment, and in Sonnet 18 the initial question prompts Shakespeare’s most hyperbolic praise of the young man. Shakespeare commonly ended his sonnets with a ringing assertion, and in Sonnet 18 he ends up hyperbolically praising the power of his verse, “So long as men can breathe and eyes can see, / So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.” References to food and eating begin in Sonnet 1, “But thou, contracted to thine own bright eyes, / Feeds’t thy light’s flame with self-substantial fuel, / Making a famine where abundance lies” (ll. 6–8) and “Pity the world, or else this glutton be, / To eat the world’s due, by the grave and thee” (ll. 13–14). But let’s not get started on tropes of hunger, food, and eating in Shakespeare’s poems and plays. All references are to SHAKESPEARE, William. *The Sonnets*. Edited by G. Blakemore Evans. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

12 See KEARFUL, Frank J. “As Good as It Gets: ‘The Child Awake and Wearied Of’: James Merrill and the Villanelle.” In: Manfred Beyer (ed.). *Zum Begriff der Imagination in Dichtung und Dichtungstheorie*. Trier: WVT, 1998. 271–87.

heroic couplets and a two-part structure, each part comprising ten lines. In this case, each part is visually divided to create a 6–4 structure that suggests, in small, the 8–6 structure of a Petrarchan sonnet:

1
 The poet, mindful of the daring lives
 Of bards who dwelt in garrets, drank in dives,
 And bought in little shops within the means
 Of working folk their soup-bone, salt, and beans,
 Becoming, in the cause of literature,
 Adjunctive members of the laboring poor,

Ascends the platform now to read his verse
 Dressed like a sandhog, stevedore or worse,
 And wears a collar of memorial blue
 To give the brave Bohemian past its due.

2
 Musicians, who remember when their sort
 Were hirelings at some duke's or prince's court,
 Obligated to share the noble's patron's feast
 Belowstairs, or below the salt at least,
 Now sweep onto the concert stage disguised
 As those by whom they once were patronized.

How princely are their tailcoats! How refined
 Their airs, their gracious gestures! And behind
 The great conductor who urbanely bows
 Rise rank on rank on rank of noble brows. ("Personae" 48)

Wilbur's heroic couplets skewer his victims with Popean precision, but his portrayal of the musician recalls more immediately Ben Jonson's "To Penshurst", whose heroic couplets underscore the ideal relation of poet and patron. Jonson's country house poem abounds with references to food, and Jonson himself, albeit a mere poet, sups plentifully (and drinks plentifully) at Penshurst:

Where comes no guest but is allowed to eat
 Without his fear, and of the lord's own meat;
 Where the selfsame beer and self-same wine
 That is his lordship's shall be also mine. ("To Penshurst" 68, ll. 61–64)

The editors of the Oxford edition of Jonson's selected poems note the presence in these "cooked" lines of classical sources and analogues in Lucian, Juvenal, and Martial.¹³

13 See, for example, Lucian's "Laws for Banquets", *Saturnalia*, 17: "All shall drink the same

Wilbur's conception of the good life includes, as they certainly did for Jonson, food and drink. In "A Late Aubade", from *Walking to Sleep* (1969), they serve as a clinching argument not to go, or at least not so quickly:

You could be sitting now in a carrel
Turning some liver-spotted page,
Or rising in an elevator-cage
Toward Ladies' Apparel.

You could be planting a raucous bed
Of salvia, in rubber gloves,
Or lurching through a screed of someone's loves
With pitying head.

Or making some unhappy setter
Heel, or listening to a bleak
Lecture on Schoenberg's serial technique.
Isn't this better?

Think of all the time you are not
Wasting, and would not care to waste,
Such things, thank God, not being to your taste.
Think what a lot

Of time, by women's reckoning,
You've saved, and so may spend on this,
You who had rather lie in bed and kiss
Than anything.

It's almost noon, you say? If so,
Time flies, and I need not rehearse
The rosebuds-theme of centuries of verse.
If you *must* go,

Wait for a while, then slip downstairs
And bring up some chilled white wine,
And some blue cheese, and crackers, and some fine
Ruddy-skinned pears. ("A Late Aubade" 229)

Wilbur reverses gender conventions of the *aubade* by making the male urge the female not to leave although dawn has long come and gone. Hence Wilbur's ironic title, "A Late Aubade". Stick around a bit longer is his plea, not hers. Activities that she might undertake in the busy world outside their bedroom are

wine, and neither stomach trouble nor headache shall give the rich man an excuse for being the only one to drink the better quality. All shall have their meat on equal terms."

not worth bothering about, which is a theme that Donne works variations on in "The Good Morrow", "The Sun Rising", and "The Canonization". The speaker assures her that such doings are not "to your taste" (stanza 4), thus anticipating his later appeal to her "taste". With Donnean chutzpah he tells her that what she really would prefer to anything else is to "lie in bed and kiss" (stanza 5). But like the female in Donne's "The Flea", Wilbur's lady manages to put a word in edgewise: it's already late, it's almost noon. To which he replies, first gathering his wits, "It's almost noon, you say?" Like the resourceful male in the "The Flea" ("Tis true, then ..."), he grants her point but converts it to his own advantage. The fact that it is almost noon obviates any need for him to "rehearse / The rosebuds theme of centuries of verse" and thus pester her with yet another rendition of Robert Herrick's plea in "To the Virgins, To Make Much of Time", "Gather ye rosebuds while ye may". Herrick sententiously remarks that the higher the sun rises, the "nearer he's to setting", a bit of natural history that he uses for *carpe diem* purposes, as Catullus and Jonson had before him. In "A Late Aubade" it is the lady who raises the rising/setting sun topic. What will the male do with it? As it is already almost noon, he will not waste time by rehearsing what poets have repeated over the centuries about not wasting time. Clever fellow.

He even seems to drop his demand that she stay in bed with him, announcing "If you *must* go", which leaves the apodosis hanging until the next stanza, in which he will appeal to her taste buds instead of blathering on about rosebuds. Ever since Eve the fair sex has been susceptible to appeals to gustatory pleasures if only they "reach then, and freely taste" (*Paradise Lost* IX, 732). Give her diamonds if you can, but chocolates are cheaper. On a more cynical modern note, Ogden Nash's "Reflections on Ice-Breaking" advises "Candy is dandy / But liquor is quicker". In Wilbur's summoning up of a repast which they will share in bed after *she* fetches it, chilled white wine elegantly substitutes for Nash's crude "liquor". Besides, Wilbur and his lady have long ago broken the ice, and now it is a matter of prolonging pleasures already under their belts.

The tempo of the final quatrain begins to slow in line 2, with the spondee "bring up" followed by three successive stressed monosyllables, "chilled white wine", each savored in and for itself. Alliteration and reverse rhyme ("Wait", "while", "white", "wine") and plocé ("some", "some", "some") thicken the plot as one reads on through line 3, which culminates in a sensuous spondee, "blúe chéese". Wilbur deftly modulated the normative iambic dimeter of the terminal line in the preceding quatrains, only one of which (stanza 6, "Than anything") fully conforms to the norm. Now he comes up with a new variation, a trochee, "Rúddy", followed by another succulent spondee, "skinned peárs". I expect that Wilbur hoped we would recall that fruit "Ruddy and gold" (*Paradise Lost* IX, 78) with which Satan tempts Eve, whose genuine physical hunger – it is lunchtime – leads finally as much as anything else does to her fall. At the same time, as Bonnie

Costello has suggested, the quatrain's imagery constitutes a poetic life expressive of the speaker's Epicureanism and his erotic intentions.¹⁴ See, too, Costello's discussion of food, the erotic, and still life in Wilbur's "Terrace".¹⁵

I read "A Late Aubade" as both a replay of that first seductive offering of fruit to an unsuspecting female, in John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, and as a revision of William Carlos Williams's "This Is Just to Say" (1934):

I have eaten
the plums
that were in
the icebox

and which
you were probably
saving
for breakfast

Forgive me
they were delicious
so sweet
and so cold. ("This Is Just to Say")

Williams's first-person speaker, or rather writer, has already gone downstairs, or in any event to the kitchen, but instead of bringing something tempting back to the bedroom for joint consumption and erotic merrymaking, he has gone ahead and eaten the plums himself. In Williams's adaptation of the *aubade* and of the verse epistle, the protagonist leaves a note, apparently on the kitchen table or the refrigerator, for his beloved to discover later. As a male surely with important things to do – Williams was a pediatrician – he must be off early. In an *aubade* the couple who have spent a night in bed may regret that it is time to part, but by generic convention the male manages with unbecoming haste to overcome his grief and hit the road. A man's got to do what a man's got to do. In Shakespeare's dramatic rendition of an *aubade* (*Romeo and Juliet*, III.v) even Juliet does not get anywhere in her efforts to detain Romeo. In "This Is Just to Say" the beloved, still asleep, has no opportunity to try to detain her "Romeo", who sneaks away, but not before grabbing a bite. At least he is gentleman enough to let her know that the plums, which she presumably bought, tasted good.

14 COSTELLO, Bonnie. *Planets on Tables. Poetry, Still Life, and the Turning World*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008. 156.

15 COSTELLO. *Planets on Tables*. 155.

In John Berryman's Dream Song 4 Berryman's lusting male is forced to look on while a delectable female feeds herself. Making matters more excruciating, Henry, Berryman's alter ego in *The Dream Songs* (1969), is convinced that she glanced at him – twice!:

Filling her compact & delicious body
with chicken páprika, she glanced at me
twice.
Fainting with interest, I hungered back
and only the fact of her husband & four other people
kept me from springing on her

or falling at her little feet and crying
'You are the hottest one for years of night
Henry's dazed eyes
have enjoyed, Brilliance.' I advanced upon
(despairing) my spumoni. – Sir Bones: is stuffed,
de world, wif feeding girls.

Black hair, complexion Latin, jewelled eyes
downcast ... The slob beside her
feasts ... What wonder is
she sitting on, over there?
The restaurant buzzes. She might as well be on Mars.
Where did it all go wrong? There ought to be a law against Henry.
Mr. Bones: there is. (Dream Song 4)

In the second stanza we discover that Henry is relating the scene to someone else, who addresses him as "Mr. Bones". Here and elsewhere in *The Dream Songs* Henry plays Mr. Bones to his unnamed friend's Mr. Tambo, as the two engage in what is meant to recall the banter of the blackface minstrel-show "endmen".¹⁶ Mr. Tambo puts in his two-cents' worth on what Mr. Bones has to say, interrupting him with quips, puns, and one-liners. Henry "hungered back", but his unnamed friend counsels him, "Sir Bones: is stuffed, de world, wif feeding girls". The word "stuffed" keeps the references to eating going, while sounding a vulgar note as in the phrase "get stuffed". Hungering Henry, unable to "make advances", is reduced to advancing on his spumoni. Not being able to satisfy one

16 Berryman's conception of minstrel show routines derived from Carl WITTKÉ's *Tambo and Bones: A History of the American Minstrel Stage*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1930. WITTKÉ remarks that the two endmen "furnished the comedy of the show [...] and were universally successful in keeping their audiences in an uproar" (ibid. 141). For a recent view of the propriety or otherwise of Berryman's use of the minstrel show, see MABER, who also relates Henry to the "interlocutor", a figure who did not black up and was a parody of authority and pedantry (MABER, Peter. "So-called *black*: Reassessing John Berryman's Blackface Minstrelsy." In: *Arizona Quarterly* 64,4 (2008): 129 – 49).

hunger is no reason to stop eating, and perhaps to go on doing so all the more diligently.¹⁷

Helen Vendler maintains that like many mid-twentieth century American poems *The Dream Songs* uses Freudian analysis as a model, and she suggests that Henry and his friend can be loosely thought of as the Superego and Id.¹⁸ In Dream Song 4 the friend's pronouncement "There is", in response to the colloquial expression aimed at Henry "there ought to be a law against", accords well with the friend's role as Superego. In Dream Song 311 the Superego seems to have imposed itself so as to restrain Henry's massive hungers at least for a stretch, but the Id reasserts itself:

Famisht Henry ate everything in sight
after his ancient fast. His fasting was voluntary
self-imposed.
He specially liked hunks of decent bread
sopped in olive-oil & cut raw onion,
specially.

Hunger was constitutional with him,
women, cigarettes, liquor, need need need
until he went to pieces.
The pieces sat up & wrote. They did not heed
their piecedom but kept very quietly on
among the chaos. (Dream Song 311, stanzas 1 – 2)

Henry's "ancient fast" summons up the theme developed in Kafka's *Ein Hungerkünstler*, often translated as "A Hunger Artist" but also as "A Fasting Artist", of the hunger artist who creates his art out of his misery while putting himself on show. In the quasi-Freudian dynamics of *The Dream Songs*, the inception of art issues from the clash of Id and Superego. Henry's hungers for food, women, cigarettes, liquor are linked with the act of writing, art coming to the fore as a means of creating wholeness.

In Dream Song 311 Henry eats a "raw onion", but Berryman's poetics may be

17 On "Dream Song 4" as a parody of love-poetry topoi dating back to the troubadours, see by all means Helen VENDLER (*The Given and the Made. Recent American Poets*. London: Faber, 1995. 37 – 38); going further back, Michael HINDS argues that Berryman is writing an imitation of Catullus, who himself was making use of a poem by Sappho (HINDS, Michael. "Allusions, Etc.: Berryman, Catullus, Sappho." In: Philip Coleman and Philip McGowan (eds.). *After Thirty Falls. New Essays on John Berryman*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007. 121 – 39).

18 VENDLER qualifies her Freudian topology when it comes to the Friend: "He could more properly perhaps be called Conscience, like something out of a medieval Christian allegory. In fact, it is the very crossing of the Christian model of the Friend with the Freudian model generating Henry that makes *The Dream Songs* an original book; two great schemes of Western thought, the religious and the psychoanalytic, contend for Berryman's soul in a hybrid psychomachia" (VENDLER. *The Given and the Made*. 35).

regarded as compound of the cooked and the raw. The idiosyncratic six-line stanza he employs, three stanzas per Dream Song, with the third and sixth lines contracting into a normative iambic trimeter, contends with the chaos that Henry's hungers engender. There is no regular rhyme scheme, but scattered rhymes occur, in Dream Song 311 as *need/heed*, the weak rhyme *voluntary/specially*, and the marvelous off-rhyme *on/onion*. The iambic pentameter of *The Dream Songs* survives much battering, sometimes through the typographical imposition of an accent mark, as in "with chicken páprika, she glanced at me".¹⁹ The normative iambic trimeter of lines 3 and 6 may be realized quite regularly, as in "de world, wif feeding girls" in Dream Song 4, whereas in Dream Song 311 the falling rhythm generated by the light extra syllable in "until he went to pieces" lets the pieces as wit were fall. The withholding of a third stress in "among the chaos", also creating a falling rhythm at the end, also affectively registers Henry's psychic condition. Like Lowell when he came to writing the "Life Studies" sequence, Berryman employed the cooking skills he had acquired as a young poet, but he added raw ingredients and did not "hide the madness".

There is a lot of clowning around in *The Dream Songs*, but also much pathos imbued with humor, a mix created in part by Berryman's metrical modulations and his rhyming. A good example, Dream Song 76, titled "Henry's Confession", also makes memorable incidental use of a sandwich:

Nothin very bad happen to me lately.
How you explain that? – I explain that, Mr. Bones,
terms o' your baffling sobriety.
Sober as a man can get, no girls, no telephones,
what could happen bad to Mr. Bones?
If life is a handkerchief sandwich,

in a modesty of death I join my father
who dared so long ago leave me.
A bullet on a concrete stoop
close by a smothering southern sea
spreadeagled on an island, by my knee,
You is from hunger, Mr. Bones,

I offers you this handkerchief, now set
your left foot by my right foot,
shoulder to shoulder, all that jazz,
arm in arm, by the beautiful sea,
hum a little, Mr. Bones.

I saw nobody coming, so I went instead. (Dream Song 76)

19 The word-stress may fall on either the first or second syllable of "paprika", but in American English (including mine) the stress is normally on the second.

The weak rhyme in stanza one, *lately / sobriety*, is picked up in stanza 2, *me / sea / knee*, and is echoed again in *sea* in stanza three, while the rhyme *Mr. Bones / telephones* strikes a comic note. “A búllet òn a cóncrete stoóp” extends the normative trimeter to iambic tetrameter, while the iambic pentameter line that initiates stanza 3 (“I offers you this hándkerchiéf, now sèt”) gives way to a seven-syllable line one is initially inclined to read iambically, “your léft foot bý”, but the line read in full becomes in effect a four-beat accentual-verse line, with strong stresses on “left foot” and “right foot”, in an effective demonstration of where the “feet” should be “set”. Often Berryman mocks poetic lyricism, but the alliterative lyrical phrase “smothering southern sea” lingers evocatively like a phrase from Poe’s in “Annabel Lee”. Colloquialisms also, however, play their usual role. The friend’s dig “You is from hunger” picks up on an American slang use of “hunger”, defined in the *Oxford English Dictionary* as “acceptable only as a last resort; incompetent, undesirable, or contemptible; very bad, lousy. Freq. in strictly from hunger”. Among examples quoted is one from J.D. Salinger’s *Catcher in the Rye* that somewhat recalls Dream Song 4: “I started giving the three witches at the next table the eye again. That is, the blonde one. The other two were strictly from hunger.” The friend’s use of “from hunger” in Dream Song 76 has nothing to do with drinking or womanizing, but is a response to Henry’s evocation of his father’s suicide. Berryman’s own father shot himself when Berryman was twelve, and Henry’s reverie fuses a feeling of deep loss and a yearning for reunification with the father. It also summons up a recollection of his father’s swimming out to sea with Berryman’s brother, in an apparent attempt to kill both.²⁰ The stanza also amounts to what the title of Dream Song 76 refers to as – titles are rare in *The Dream Songs* – “Henry’s Confession”. The poem raises the question, what confession?

A psychological interpretation might invoke the paradigm of a child’s acquisition of guilt feelings stemming from injuries, deprivations, or losses for which it is not responsible. But more immediately at issue is Henry’s strong attraction to death, deriving from a fixation upon his father’s death and his loss of a father. It is this recurrent psychic plunging into death in *The Dream Songs*, this magnetic attraction to it, that Henry “confesses” to. His “modesty of death” consists in merely fantasy enactments of suicide, but behind Henry’s confession is a realization that such fantasies may be dangerous in drawing him ever closer to the act itself, which would offer a kind of reunification with the father. Suicide, after all, runs in families, as Hemingway’s suicide and, more recently, Nicholas Hughes’s demonstrate. In Hughes’s case, both his mother, Sylvia Plath, and his

20 Cf. HAFFENDEN, John. *The Life of John Berryman*. London: Routledge and Keegan Paul, 1982. 24–25.

stepmother committed suicide. In Dream Song 76 the friend tries to get Henry to snap out of it.

The wacky proviso that ends stanza 1, "If life is a handkerchief sandwich", could be construed as a codicil that the friend appends to his question, "what could happen bad to Mr. Bones?" The use of lower-case for "in" at the outset of the stanza 2 suggests, however, an ongoing if disjointed utterance, and what follows in the poem makes an attribution to Henry more plausible. Although booze and women are not at present a cause of misery, Henry qualifies the friend's assurance that he has nothing to worry about. Life, unfortunately, is not a handkerchief sandwich. (More often, it is a knuckle sandwich, but that is another story.) In stanza 3 the anonymous friend offers a plain old handkerchief, a real one, and bids Henry/Mr. Bones join him in a song and dance routine, singing together "By the Beautiful Sea" as a counter to the "smothering southern sea" of Henry's reverie.²¹ Despite efforts to cheer him up, Henry remains embroiled in his "modesty of death", and he has the final say, "-I saw nobody coming, so I went instead", a remark which recalls the "departure", presumably of the father, in Dream Song 1. Henry confesses his "unappeasable" sorrow sometimes self-mockingly, sometimes in anger at his father, sometimes with a sense that his father's end will be his own. His last words in Dream Song 76 project his suicide in the past tense, the going to meet his father already accomplished. Berryman committed suicide by jumping from a bridge in Minneapolis on January 7, 1972. Too bad life is not a handkerchief sandwich.

Berryman's Dream Song 4 made its way into *The Oxford Book of American Light Verse*, my source for two quickies to wind up this Cook's tour of poems offering something good enough to eat. Actually, Roy Blount, Jr.'s poem (*The Oxford Book of American Light Verse* 522) is about something many may also feel not really good to eat:

Against Broccoli

The local groceries are all out of broccoli,
Loccoli.

21 "By the Beautiful Sea" is a golden oldie from the 1914 musical "For Me and My Gal" by Harold Atteridge and Harry Clifton, after the lead-in goes: "By the sea, by the sea, by the beautiful sea! / You and me, you and me, oh how happy we will be! / When each wave comes a-rollin in / We will duck or swim, / And we'll float and fool around the water. / Over and under, and then up for air, / Pa is rich, Ma is rich, so what do we care ? / I love to be beside your side, beside the sea, / Beside the seaside, by the beautiful sea." youtube offers several renditions of the song, ranging from a 1914 recording to a comic version by Spike Jones.

Jonathan Williams spotted a sign on a North Carolina highway which made for a poem (509) likely to appeal only to foot fetishists who also happen to be cannibals:

The Anthropophagites
 See a Sign on
 NC Highway
 That Looks Like Heaven

Eat
 300 Feet

On second thought, the poem is really a proclamation of raw poetics.

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‘All Hands to Dinner!’ – Food and Drink in Naval Stories

Introduction

Food and drink are necessities of life, and since the very first days of humankind the task of providing enough nourishment has been of the utmost importance. However, the times of Dickens’ *Oliver Twist* begging for more food appear to be long gone. At least in today’s Western European societies preparing and consuming victuals is an issue of life style and luxury rather than a question of life and death. An increasing interest in eating and the preparation of foodstuffs in recent years can be deduced from countless TV shows and books which explore various facets of contemporary food culture. What and how people ate and drank in former times is mostly discussed by a number of historians and anthropologists. Moreover, historical novels may offer their readers at least a glimpse of food and eating habits in different historical periods. This is in particular true for those fictional texts that are based on painstaking and meticulous research. In this article I will analyse the depiction of food in several historical novels written by C.S. Forester and Patrick O’Brian, whose fame is based on their naval stories. Both authors created a series of novels focusing on the adventures of sea-faring protagonists in the service of the British Royal Navy in the era of the Napoleonic Wars.¹ A discussion of Robert Louis Stevenson’s classic adventure novel *Treasure Island* (1883), which addresses a more juvenile readership, will complement the exploration of the forms and functions of references to food and drink in naval stories.

1 FORESTER’s Hornblower novels were originally published between 1937 and 1968, O’BRIAN’s Aubrey-Maturin series was released between 1969 and 1999.

The description of food as a means of creating a reality effect

The most obvious function of the depiction of food and drink in naval stories as well as in historical novels (and in realist fiction in general) is adding 'colour' to a fictitious narrative and contributing to the so-called 'reality effect' (Roland Barthes). By showing that fictional characters have essentially the same needs as the readers, such as having to eat and to drink on a regular basis, a text tends to be rendered more plausible and the characters are made to appear more lifelike. If the victuals consumed by the characters are appropriate for the period the story is set in, the reality effect is enhanced. It is important for a realist historical novel to appear to be correct with respect to the description of the setting: if a reader stumbles over obvious anachronisms, the story as a whole becomes less convincing, as the 'willing suspension of disbelief' is compromised. Yet if the author manages to convince the readers of the historical accuracy of the descriptions he provides, the fictional character of the story tends to be disguised to a certain extent. Sternlicht observes exactly this quality in C.S. Forester's novels:

Forester mastered the quintessential skill of the historical novelist; the mixing of fact and fiction, of real personages and fictional characters, of actual events and plausible events which seem as if they could have happened at a circumscribed time and in a real place. Furthermore, and of great importance, there was Forester's intuitive realization that the historical novelist's success is directly proportional to his ability as a background painter. The historical panorama must appear unseamed and flawless to sustain the 'suspension of disbelief.'²

Part of this "historical panorama" is beyond doubt the historically correct depiction of food and drink, as the following discussion will show.

In the first instalment of his Hornblower series, *The Happy Return* (1937), Forester provides the readers with information about the enormous quantity of supplies a warship of the Royal Navy needed in order to feed the crew. Hornblower and his crew, aboard the frigate *Lydia* (a comparatively small ship of the Royal Navy), have been at sea for months, on a secret mission which has taken them to the Pacific coast of Central America, where they are supposed to provide weapons for El Supremo, a local leader who is an enemy of Spain. In return for the weapons and ammunition Hornblower demands stores his ship needs for the voyage back to England:

Hornblower's mind began to total up all the multifarious wants of a frigate seven months at sea. [...] 'I shall need two hundred bullocks. Two hundred and fifty if they are thin and small. Five hundred pigs. One hundred quintals of salt, forty tons of ship's bread, and if

2 STERNLICHT, Sanford. *C.S. Forester*. Boston: Twayne, 1981. 112.

biscuit is unobtainable I shall need the equivalent amount of flour, with ovens and fuel provided to bake it. The juice of forty thousand lemons, oranges or limes – I can supply the casks to contain it. Ten tons of sugar. Five tons of tobacco. A ton of coffee. You grow potatoes on this coast, do you not? Then twenty tons of potatoes will suffice. [...] Then for our current needs, while we are in harbour,' he went on 'I shall need five bullocks a day, two dozen chickens, as many eggs as you can provide, and sufficient fresh vegetables for the daily consumption of my ship's company.' (*Return* 246)

What amounts to the cargo of a freighter is needed in order to maintain independence from the shore (*Return* 252), which is an important tactical issue for Hornblower, especially in hostile waters. Hornblower's list of supplies is largely consistent with the provisions real ships of the Royal Navy stored. Nicholas Rodger, Professor of Naval History at the University of Exeter, describes the victuals typically consumed by sailors in the later part of the eighteenth century: Beef and pork were salted to conserve them, the peas were dried. In the second half of the eighteenth century it was "settled policy that salt meat was to be replaced by fresh whenever possible in port, and even at sea, and likewise biscuit with baked bread. [...] The anti-scorbutic value of fresh meat and vegetables, derided by medical science then and for long afterwards, was well known among seamen."³ Forester's accurate description of the food needed onboard a warship in the time of the Napoleonic Wars lends credibility to his story by giving the readers the impression that they are shown a realistic depiction of life aboard a man-of-war, thus priming them to accept the unfolding fictitious story as realistic, too.

The need to replenish stores is regularly mentioned in Forester's Hornblower novels. Often this issue seems to be of greater importance to the captain than slugging it out with the enemy. References to the need of acquiring stores for the ship can be found in *Hornblower and the 'Atropos'*, for instance, where Hornblower once again has to organise supplies for his vessel (*Atropos* 70, 81) and later has to replenish its water reserve (*Atropos* 136). In *Hornblower in the West Indies* an Englishman offers goods and information after Hornblower has entered the Spanish port of San Juan: "The principal ship chandler of the port. Beef cattle, My Lord, chickens, eggs, fresh bread, fruits, vegetables." (*West Indies* 604–05) And when Hornblower and his companions prepare for a voyage down the Loire in order to escape from Napoleonic France in *Flying Colours*, there are details concerning the provisions taken aboard their small raft:

3 RODGER, Nicholas Andrew Martin. *The Command of the Ocean. A Naval History of Britain, 1649–1815*. London: Penguin, 2004. 305. According to RODGER, the main foodstuffs for sailors in this period were bread, beef, pork, peas, flour, and brandy. Stockfish "was being phased out because it was hard to preserve (and unpopular with the men) [...]" (RODGER. *The Command of the Ocean*. Ibid.)

[...] the fifty pounds of biscuit which Jeanne baked for them [...] would provide the three of them with a pound of bread each day for seventeen days, and there was a sack of potatoes waiting for them, and another of dried peas; and there were long thin Arles sausages – as dry as sticks, and, to Hornblower’s mind, not much more digestible, but with the merit of staying eatable for long periods – and some of the dry cod which Hornblower had come to know during his captivity at Ferrol, and a corner of bacon; taken all in all [...] they were going to fare better on their voyage down the Loire than they had often fared on the ships of His Majesty King George. (*Colours* 82–83)

Realistic details such as those provided in the passage quoted above make it much easier for the readers to suspend their disbelief regarding for example Hornblower’s heroic and lucky escape, when he, despite being searched for by virtually everyone in France, not only reaches England, but manages to capture a French ship in the process.

The eye for detail and the realistic depiction of the needs of fictional characters has been a mainstay of realist narratives ever since Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe*. This is also observed by Susanne Reichl, who identifies four criteria which serve to classify contemporary novels as realist, two of which are especially interesting in the context of this paper, namely “(1) [...] starke Geschehens- und/oder Erzählillusionsbildung, (2) [...] starken Wirklichkeitsbezug aufgrund dominant außertextueller Bezüge [...]”.⁴ These two features of realist novels are highly relevant to the realist historical novel, where a mostly fictitious plot with fictitious protagonists is set in a more or less accurately depicted past, featuring real historical events and figures. The protagonists of Forester’s and O’Brien’s books fight on England’s side before, in, and after the Napoleonic Wars; real events have repercussions on them, they interact with historical figures, and sometimes they even appear to be responsible for historical events taking the course they actually did. The frequent references to reality in the Hornblower novels as well as in O’Brien’s naval novels correspond to Reichl’s criterion number two. In addition, every detail concerning life aboard a ship-of-war depicted in Forester’s and O’Brien’s novels – including descriptions of food and drink – supports the “starke Geschehens- und/oder Erzählillusionsbildung”.⁵ Thus, passages such as the following, describing the typical fare

4 Quoted in ZERWECK, Bruno. *Die Synthese aus Realismus und Experiment. Der englische Roman der 1980er und 1990er Jahre aus erzähltheoretischer und kulturwissenschaftlicher Sicht*. Trier: WVT, 2001. 41–42.

5 In order to achieve a correct depiction of details Forester relied very much on *The Naval Chronicle* (published from 1790 to 1820), which was “written by naval officers for naval officers of the period and they served as a professional roundtable where ideas concerning tactics, shiphandling, communications, gunnery, and other naval procedures were discussed, shared, and evaluated” (STERNLICHT, C.S. *Forester*. 89). STERNLICHT states that “[t]he details provided in *The Naval Chronicle* intrigued Forester. In them he not only learned of the naval campaigns, ship’s encounters, and diplomatic accomplishments, but also of shiphandling,

aboard a ship on a long journey to be “[s]alt beef and salt pork, weevily bread and dried peas, with a glass of lemon juice twice a week” (*Return* 375), are not only historically accurate, they also sound convincing.⁶

Historical novels such as the ones written by Forester and O’Brian may vary a great deal with respect to how accurately they depict the past. In *Von historischer Fiktion zu historiographischer Metafiktion* Ansgar Nünning stresses that the historical novel in general is not a mimetic depiction of a real past but an autonomous fictional construct.⁷ Moreover, Nünning offers a typology of the historical novel.⁸ According to this typology, O’Brian’s and Forester’s novels largely correspond to the category of the ‘realistic historical novel’.⁹ O’Brian’s characters take part in military campaigns and events which really happened, and they also regularly refer to historical persons and incidents. In one case, virtually the entire novel is based on historical fact, as the author points out:

Sometimes the reader of a novel, particularly a novel set in another age, likes to know whether the events have any existence outside the author’s mind, or whether, like the characters, they are quite imaginary.

[...] in this case the groundwork of the tale, a little-known campaign in the Indian Ocean, is factual; and as far as the geography, the manoeuvres, the ships taken, burnt, sunk or destroyed, the battles, triumphs and disasters are concerned, the writer has kept close to contemporary accounts, to the log-books and despatches of the officers who fought the actions, and to the Admiralty records. Apart from the necessary fictions at the beginning and the very end, he has not done anything to neaten history except for the omission of a few confusing, unimportant ships whose fleeting presence was nei-

maneuvers, stationkeeping, signaling, gunnery, heavy-weather sailing, court-martials, punishment, and execution” (STERNLICHT. *C.S. Forester*. 104). Forester’s use of highly professional source material such as *The Naval Chronicle* contributes to the creation of a convincing illusion of reality.

6 The usual foodstuffs for sailors are described by HATTENDORF as follows: “While the crew ate at tables below deck on weekly rations of ship’s biscuit, salt beef, pork with pea soup, and cheese, the officers had better fare.” (HATTENDORF, John B. “The Royal Navy during the War of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic War.” In: Dean King et al. (eds.). *A Sea of Words*. New York: Holt, 2000 [1995]. 1 – 30. 19) Weevils are maggot-like vermin (the larvae of beetles) thriving in bread and biscuit that is stored for a considerable time.

7 NÜNNING, Ansgar. *Von historischer Fiktion zu historiographischer Metafiktion*. Vol. 1: *Theorie, Typologie und Poetik des historischen Romans*. Trier: WVT, 1995. 74. Cf. also FOLEY, Barbara. *Telling the Truth: The Theory and Practice of Documentary Fiction*. Ithaca/London: Cornell University Press, 1986. NÜNNING’s claim that a historical novel is not a mimetic depiction of the past corresponds with what EAGLETON says about the realist novel: “To call something ‘realist’ is to confess that it is not the real thing.” (EAGLETON, Terry. *The English Novel*. Malden, MA/Oxford: Blackwell, 2005. 10)

8 NÜNNING. *Von historischer Fiktion zu historiographischer Metafiktion*. 5.

9 NÜNNING. *Von historischer Fiktion zu historiographischer Metafiktion*. 262 – 67.

ther here nor there; nor has he thought fit to gild the lily by adding in any way to the Royal Navy's pugnacious resourcefulness in time of adversity.¹⁰

What prevents O'Brian's Aubrey-Maturin novels and Forester's Hornblower novels from being subsumed under Nünning's category of 'documentary historical novels' despite the detailed references to reality is the fact that the protagonists are fictitious, although the characters of Hornblower and Aubrey have been inspired by various historical persons.¹¹

As was pointed out above, the authentic and detailed description of food and drink as well as of the way in which both are consumed is crucial for the reality effect in naval novels.¹² This includes the detailed depiction of deteriorating and waning supplies, as the following passage illustrates, which refers to the state of the supplies at a point when Hornblower and his ship have been at sea for months without having made landfall:

[...] in seven months' voyage every luxury had long since been consumed. The coffee was a black extract of burnt bread, and all that could be said in its favour was that it was sweet and hot. The burgoo was a savoury mess of unspeakable appearance compounded of mashed biscuit crumbs and minced salt beef.¹³ Hornblower ate absent-mindedly. With his left hand he tapped a biscuit on the table so that the weevils would all be induced to have left it by the time he had finished his burgoo. (*Return* 229)

10 O'BRIAN, Patrick. "Author's Note." In: Patrick O'Brian. *Mauritius Command*. London: Harper, 2002 [1977]. xiii.

11 Hornblower is a fictional character, but his fictional life shows many similarities with the life and career of Admiral Lord Donald Cochrane. STERNLICHT observes: "Cochrane was probably the greatest frigate captain in the history of the Royal Navy and surely one of its most outstanding seamen. The parallels between Cochrane's real life and Hornblower's fictional life are almost startling. [...] In some ways the Hornblower Saga is almost a biography of Cochrane." (STERNLICHT. *C.S. Forester*. 103–04) Jack Aubrey is not modelled after one specific historical person but appears to be a conglomerate of several personalities, as O'Brian points out: "[...] the admirable men of those times, the Cochranes, Byrons, Falconers, Seymores, Boscauens and the many less famous sailors from whom I have in some degree compounded my characters, are best celebrated in their own splendid actions rather than in imaginary contests [...]" (O'BRIAN, Patrick. "Author's Note." In: Patrick O'Brian. *Master & Commander*. New York: Norton, 1990 [1970]. 11–12. 12).

12 Cf. LEVINE, who states that "the great realistic fictions are exuberant with details." (LEVINE, George. "From the Realistic Imagination: English Fiction from Frankenstein to Lady Chatterley." In: Michael McKeon (ed.). *Theory of the Novel. A Historical Approach*. Baltimore/London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000. 613–31. 628).

13 KING defines 'burgoo' as follows: "To seamen, a thick oatmeal gruel or porridge. Easily cooked and cheap to provide, it was frequently served excessively at sea, and so unloved by seamen." (KING, Dean. "Burgoo." In: Dean King et al. *A Sea of Words*. New York: Holt. 122) Officers usually ate better food than the crew. But after a long journey, without the possibility of replenishing the captain's stores, Hornblower has to eat the same food as his crew – again a realistic detail.

Similar to historical novels, adventure novels such as Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island* may also use descriptions of food and drink in order to give a fictional story a realistic touch. *Treasure Island* depicts the adventures of young protagonist Jim Hawkins as he competes with pirates, trying to gain possession of a mysterious treasure. Throughout the novel passages that seem implausible (such as a mere boy regularly outwitting veteran pirates) are tempered by realistic details. In one scene, for example, Jim equips himself with weapons and food after the pirate's attack on the stockade: "being near a bread-bag, and no one then observing me, I took the first step towards my escape, and filled both pockets of my coat with biscuit. [...] These biscuits, should anything befall me, would keep me, at least, from starving till far on in the next day." (*Island* 116) The pirates likewise equip themselves for the treasure hunt: "some carrying picks and shovels [...] – others laden with pork, bread, and brandy for the midday meal." (*Island* 171)

An important task of the commander of a warship was keeping his crew (and himself) in fighting condition. The availability of sufficient food was of course mandatory for this. More than once in the novels by O'Brian and Forester, the commander orders his crew to have a meal just before an engagement with the enemy. When a Spanish frigate is pursuing Hornblower's smaller vessel the narrator states: "With a powerful enemy plunging along behind her the life on the *Atropos* went on quite normally; the men had their grog and went to their dinners [...]." (*Atropos* 193) In the same chase, Hornblower himself has his breakfast on deck while being pursued by the enemy: "he sat on the deck and ate cold beef and the last of the goodly soft bread taken on board at Gibraltar, somewhat stale now but infinitely better than ship's biscuit; and the fresh butter from the same source, kept cold so far in an earthenware crock was quite delicious." (*Atropos* 203) The danger and the detailed description of Hornblower's breakfast seem to be at odds, but this juxtaposition underlines the importance of being in the best possible condition for a fight. Additionally, the scene of course contributes to establishing Hornblower as a cold-blooded captain. Meals eaten immediately before a battle are referred to on a regular basis in the novels by O'Brian and Forester: Hornblower orders his crew to eat before a hopeless battle against four French ships of the line (*Ship* 562); Aubrey orders his crew to have "a substantial breakfast" before clearing for action (*Post Captain* 291). A more complex example of this pattern appears in Forester's *The Commodore*: Hornblower's flotilla has to skirt dangerous shores for several hours. The crew of Captain Bush's ship, on which Commodore Hornblower resides, stays battle-ready at the guns for the whole time. Hornblower wants to tell Bush that he should release the crew to have breakfast but he cannot say so without making Bush look like a fool. Thus, Hornblower invites Bush to have breakfast with him:

An invitation of that sort from a Commodore was as good as a command to a captain. But Bush was far too good an officer to dream of eating food when his men could not do so. Hornblower could see in his face the struggle against his nervous but impractical desire to have his crew at their guns every moment of this tense time; Bush, after all, was new to command and found his responsibility heavy. But good sense won him over in the end. ‘Mr Hurst. Dismiss the watch below. Half an hour for them to get their breakfast.’ (*Commodore* 195–96)

Similar to the scene showing Hornblower having a meal during a chase, this scene not only underlines the mundane necessities of life (i. e. the need to eat) but also contributes to the characterisation of Hornblower and Bush – a function of references to food and drink in naval novels which will be discussed in more detail below. Hornblower’s way of nudging Bush into choosing a pragmatic approach emphasises that Hornblower is a circumspect, considerate and sly character, while Bush is shown as a man of common sense and as a responsible captain.

Eating and drinking as a means of characterisation

Ian Watt coined the term ‘realistic particularity’ to refer to “characterization, and presentation of background”, stressing the “attention it [the realist novel] habitually accords both to the individualisation of its characters and to the detailed presentation of their environment.”¹⁴ Food and drink may contribute very much to the characterization of individuals and groups, and they may provide a detailed background, thus being exemplary of Watt’s ‘realistic particularity’. Both Horatio Hornblower and Jack Aubrey are to a high degree characterised by how and what they eat and drink. Especially Hornblower’s character traits are revealed in many situations involving food and drink.

Forester’s protagonist is always concerned about how his crew sees him, which suggests a certain lack of self-confidence. In Forester’s first Hornblower novel *The Happy Return* Hornblower’s frigate, the *Lydia*, has been on a secret mission to the Pacific coast of Central America for over seven months. Supplies are low, so is morale, which causes Hornblower to seek to convey an impression of stoic calm:

Polwheal was waiting with his dinner in the cabin. Hornblower meditated for a moment upon the desirability of a dinner of fat salt pork at noontide in the tropics. He was not in the least hungry, but the desire to appear a hero in the eyes of his steward overrode his excited lack of appetite. He sat down and ate rapidly for ten minutes, forcing himself to

14 WATT, Ian. “The Rise of the Novel.” In: Dorothy J. Hale (ed.). *The Novel. An Anthology of Criticism and Theory, 1900–2000*. Malden, MA/Oxford: Blackwell, 2006 [1957]. 462–80. 468.

gulp down the distasteful mouthfuls. Polwheat, too, was watching every movement he made with desperate interest. (*Return* 235)

Later, Hornblower remembers the need to acquire alcohol for his crew, and not just food and water: "His heart was leaping with joy. It would appear like a miracle to his officers that he should conjure rum and tobacco from this volcano-riddled coast." (*Return* 254) Hornblower himself is not very partial to alcohol and tobacco, but – as in the scene with his steward – it is usually not his own comfort he seeks. Instead, he actively tries to instil awe and even hero-worship in his subordinates. To ease the tension on the evening before a battle with a dangerous Spanish ship of the line, Hornblower invites some of his officers to have dinner with him: "Hornblower compelled himself to play the part of the courtly host, while every word he uttered was designed to increase his reputation for imperturbability." (*Return* 260) On the same occasion, he (wrongly) informs two young midshipmen that he (like them) once ate rats when there was nothing else to eat: "The two boys blinked at their captain in admiration. This little human touch had won their hearts completely, as Hornblower had known it would." (*Return* 261) Lying and trying to appear better than one is may be seen as an unpleasant facet of Hornblower's character. Yet his efforts to be regarded as almost superhuman are tempered by his all-too-human side. Right before the *Lydia* engages the Spanish ship for the second time, Hornblower involuntarily reveals his 'human' side:

As he [Polwheat] proffered the tray Hornblower suddenly realised how much he wanted that steaming cup of coffee. He took it eagerly and drank thirstily before he remembered that he must not display human weakness of appetite before his servant. (*Return* 362)

While Hornblower usually tries to do what he thinks is expected of a captain in the Royal Navy, there are some character traits regarding food and drink that have nothing to do with pretence. Hornblower's attitude towards alcohol is a recurring theme in all of Forester's novels. In *The Happy Return*, for instance, the narrator states that "in an age of hard drinking Hornblower stood almost alone in this abstemiousness, from no conscientious motive but solely because he actively disliked the feeling of not having control of his judgment" (*Return* 293). In subsequent volumes, Hornblower is repeatedly offered spirits, and his efforts to remain sober are almost a running gag in Forester's series.¹⁵ Hornblower has no aversion to liquor per se. In the context of social occasions or after having won a battle he allows himself to indulge in spirits, as in *A Ship of the Line*: "not one day in a month did Hornblower drink anything stronger than water when by

15 In *Hornblower and the 'Atropos'*, he declines offers of rum, brandy and wine numerous times (cf., for example, *Atropos* 32, 46, 112).

himself, yet today he drank three glasses of claret, knowing that he wanted them, and enjoying every drop.” (*Ship* 470)

Hornblower’s usual restraint is not limited to alcohol, as the description of his supper after the stressful funeral procession for Lord Nelson, which he had to organise, shows:

The smell of bacon and eggs when they came was heavenly. [...] And after bacon and eggs, cold beef and pickled onions, and a flagon of beer – another simple pleasure, that of eating his fill and more, the knowledge that he was eating too much serving as a sauce to him who kept himself almost invariably within bounds and who looked upon over-indulgence usually with suspicion and contempt. (*Atropos* 60)

Hornblower is clearly anxious about self-control, as remarks regarding his character that have nothing to do with food also emphasise. He wants to make the best possible impression on the people around him – be they his peers or his subordinates –, and thus he is eager to avoid turning himself into a fool as a result of heavy drinking or feasting. This does not prevent Hornblower from enjoying a good meal, however. He usually looks forward to his breakfast:

He turned away, changing the subject of his thoughts; a generous slice of fat pork, fried to a pale brown – there had been a leg in soak for him for the past two days, and the outside cut would be not too salty now. It would smell delicious – he could almost smell it at this very moment. Holy Jerusalem, unless it was still spluttering on his plate when it was put before him despite the journey from galley to cabin he’d make someone wish he had never been born. And he would have biscuit crumbs fried with it, and he would top it off with black treacle smeared on a biscuit, thick. That was a breakfast worth thinking about. (*Atropos* 140)

Eating is actually one of the few joys Hornblower has aboard the ship. Moreover, he keeps an open mind as far as foreign cuisine is concerned and in this context even risks the disapproval of his fellow Englishmen. When he is invited to attend a state dinner in Russia, he comments on the food: “‘Foreign kickshaws¹⁶,’ said Hornblower to himself, but he enjoyed the food and had no prejudice against foreign cookery.” (*Commodore* 260)¹⁷ When Hornblower, having been released from captivity by pirates, is invited to have breakfast with the governor, the narrator remarks:

16 “Kickshaw: A fancy food dish. The term was primarily used contemptuously by the British for, say, dainty French cooking, as opposed to a hearty English dish. Something dainty or elegant but unsubstantial, a trifle or gewgaw.” (cf. KING. “Kickshaw.” In: *A Sea of Words*. 263)

17 Cf. also the following scene: “‘That is caviare,’ she [a Russian countess] explained to him, ‘and this is vodka, the drink of the people, but I think you will find that the two are admirably suited to each other.’ The Countess was right. The grey, unappetising-looking stuff was perfectly delicious. [...] there was no doubt that vodka and caviare blended together exquisitely.” (*Commodore* 257)

Hooper, apparently, was partial to a steak for breakfast; a silver dish of steak and onions was brought in almost as soon as Hornblower had uttered his formal good morning. Hooper looked at Hornblower oddly when he answered the butler's enquiry with a request for papaya and a boiled egg – that was a bad start, for it confirmed Hooper in his opinions of Hornblower's eccentricity that he should have these outlandish Frenchified notions about breakfast. (*West Indies* 654)¹⁸

Jack Aubrey, one of the two protagonists in O'Brien's novels, is also characterised by his attitude towards food. Though there are fewer clear-cut examples of eating and drinking from which one could deduce Aubrey's personality, the sheer number of richly detailed references to food is astonishing. On nearly 60 occasions someone eats or drinks in *Master & Commander*, and this number is not reduced much in the subsequent books of the series. On many of these occasions, it is Jack Aubrey who is shown eating or drinking. He is very fond of food, as can be seen, for example, when he explains in detail the different dishes he has ordered for a meal with his new friend Stephen Maturin (*Master & Commander* 42–43). Although Aubrey's personality cannot as easily be identified by just observing him eat and drink as Hornblower's, he is clearly a 'round' character (in a double sense). Maturin, a physician and scientist, is often worried about Aubrey's health. He more than once comments on the fact that his friend is much too fond of food: "[...] he still eats for six; and although I should no longer call him grossly obese, he is far too fat." (*Post Captain* 178) Additionally, Aubrey regularly joins his peers on social occasions in drinking abundantly. His over-indulgence regarding food and drink makes Jack Aubrey in certain respects the exact opposite of Horatio Hornblower.

In addition to individuals, whole groups may also be characterised by their attitude towards food and drink. This is made full use of in Stevenson's *Treasure Island*. Basically there are two groups in Stevenson's novel: the pirates and the morally upright characters. The pirates are shown to be heavy drinkers, which is stressed from the very beginning. Already on the first page Billy Bones whistles the pirates' signature song "Fifteen men on the dead man's chest – Yo-ho-ho, and a bottle of rum!" (*Island* 1)¹⁹ The pirates' fondness for alcohol (especially

18 Hornblower's choice seems to be at odds with the more 'English' breakfast he usually enjoys (see above). Yet *Hornblower in the West Indies* is set many years after *Hornblower and the 'Atropos'*, and it is set in a tropical climate. Therefore one could argue that Hornblower has broadened his culinary horizon in the meantime and – contrary to his more conservative fellow Englishmen – adapts his choice of food to his environment.

19 A longer version of the song is sung by Bones and by (drunken) pirates later in the book: "Fifteen men on the dead man's chest – Yo-ho-ho, and a bottle of rum! Drink and the devil had done for the rest – Yo-ho-ho, and a bottle of rum!" (*Island* 5, 124) A link between drinking and leading a godless life is clearly established – a theme that is picked up again when the repentant pirate Ben Gunn tells Jim: "I've thought it all out in this here lonely island, and I'm back on piety. You don't catch me tasting rum so much; but just a thimbleful

rum) is regularly reinforced throughout the book. Bones, for example, virtually lives on rum or rum and water,²⁰ gets drunk regularly, and even continues drinking after having suffered a stroke: “‘Look, Jim, how my fingers fidges,’ he continued, in the pleading tone. ‘I can’t keep ‘em still, not I. I haven’t had a drop this blessed day. That doctor’s a fool, I tell you. If I don’t have a drain o’ rum, Jim, I’ll have the horrors [...].’” (*Island* 13) Bones’ foolishness,²¹ which causes him to ignore signals sent by his own body as well as the advice of a doctor, indicates a want of self-restraint and a lack of discipline that is characteristic of nearly all of the pirates. The beggar-pirate Blind Pew repeatedly drinks and refers to rum (*Island* 9, 27) as does Black Dog (*Island* 45), and Israel Hands wants the mutiny to begin as soon as possible because he wants “‘to go into that cabin, I do. I want their pickles and wines, and that’” (*Island* 59). The only pirate who does not get drunk on a regular basis is Long John Silver, the sea-cook. This correlates with the fact that Silver is also the most dangerous and clever one among the pirates. He keeps the other pirates in line and scolds them when they get impatient and want to act without thinking: “‘[...] I know the sort you are. [...] you’re never happy till you’re drunk. [...] You’ll have your mouthful of rum to-morrow, and go hang.’” (*Island* 60) Silver is correct in his assessment, which is shown later, when Jim Hawkins retakes the ship *Hispaniola*. The latter discovers what the pirates have done after commandeering the ship:

Dozens of empty bottles clinked together in corners to the rolling of the ship. [...] I went into the cellar; all the barrels were gone, and of the bottles a most surprising number had been drunk out and thrown away. Certainly, since the mutiny began, not a man of them could ever have been sober. (*Island* 132–33)

Indeed, the pirates – with the notable exception of Long John Silver – are drunk whenever they can,²² despite the fact that they are on a treasure hunt and have to defend themselves against steadfast, determined men, who drink only in moderation.

The difference between the pirates and the morally upright characters becomes obvious quite early. While the pirates (except for Silver) do not think about tomorrow and tend to act rashly, Jim Hawkins and his companions are epitomes of common sense and reason most of the time. This is exemplified by a scene where Jim has taken back the *Hispaniola* and the wounded pirate Israel Hands demands brandy:

for luck, of course, the first chance I have. I’m bound I’ll be good, and I see the way to.’” (*Island* 80) Excessive drinking is associated with godlessness, and, like a pirate-version of Robinson Crusoe, Gunn has used being marooned on an island to find his way back to piety.

20 Cf., for example, *Island* 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 10–11 and 15.

21 Today one would diagnose him as being addicted to alcohol.

22 Cf., for example, *Island* 61–62, 162 and 119.

Foraging about, I found a bottle with some brandy left, for Hands; and for myself I routed out some biscuits, some pickled fruits, a great bunch of raisins, and a piece of cheese. With these I came back on deck, put down my own stock behind the rudder-head, and well out of the coxswain's reach, went forward to the water-breaker, and had a good, deep drink of water, and then, and not till then, gave Hands the brandy. (*Island* 133)

Whereas Jim, the identification figure for the adolescent reader, behaves in a sensible way, consuming wholesome food and water, the pirate – even in his wounded state – prefers liquor. The pirates' over-indulgent behaviour is not limited to alcohol, though. Despite the fact that they know their food supplies are limited, they are extremely wasteful, as the following scene illustrates:

Just then a man hailed us from the fire that breakfast was ready, and we were soon seated here and there about the sand over biscuit and fried junk. They had lit a fire fit to roast an ox [...]. In the same wasteful spirit, they had cooked, I suppose, three times more than we could eat; and one of them, with an empty laugh, threw what was left into the fire, which blazed and roared again over this unusual fuel. I never in my life saw men so careless of the morrow; hand to mouth is the only word that can describe their way of doing; and what with wasted food and sleeping sentries, though they were bold enough for a brush and be done with it, I could see their entire unfitness for anything like a prolonged campaign. (*Island* 169)

While the morally upright characters under the leadership of Doctor Livesey take stock, ration their provisions and plan for the long term, the pirates do exactly the opposite. This lack of discipline and common sense ultimately makes it easier for the good characters to prevail. The way the characters deal with drink and food clearly defines them. Further evidence of this is provided by the character of Long John Silver, who is much more disciplined in his drinking habits than the other pirates, but who is not averse to a swig (cf. *Island* 155). He strikes a bargain with the doctor in order to secure food for himself and the pirates (cf. *Island* 171), but he is indifferent to the wasteful behaviour displayed by his companions (cf. *Island* 169). His attitude towards drink and food places Silver right in between the pirates and the morally upright characters, and, indeed, he seems to be situated in the 'grey zone' between good and evil.²³

The pirates in Stevenson's *Treasure Island* are not the only characters in naval stories who are partial to alcohol; many of the characters in Forester's and O'Brian's novels also drink spirits whenever they can. In O'Brian's novels, even apes get drunk: in his capacity as scientist, Maturin has a drunken ape (*Post Captain* 51), and the *Lively* has a drunken orang-utan aboard, "a confirmed

23 For a more detailed analysis of the character of Long John Silver, cf. HONAKER, Lisa. "One Man to Rely on': Long John Silver and the Shifting Character of Victorian Boys' Fiction." In: *Journal of Narrative Theory* 34,1 (2004): 27 – 53.

alcoholic’”, as Maturin explains (*Post Captain* 405). To the crew’s chagrin, the ape eventually dies because of his addiction. While the drunken apes mostly produce comic effects, the sailors’ partiality for alcohol becomes an important characteristic of this group in Forester’s and O’Brian’s books – a characteristic that is based on historical fact. Hattendorf points out that the

issuing of grog, a mixture of rum and water, began in the 1740s as a means to control liquor consumption in the Navy. The men usually received two rations a day totaling a pint, but it was not the only drink. Beer, rationed out at the rate of a gallon a day, was far more popular than grog but usually available only in home waters or up to a month out at sea. In the Mediterranean, the seamen often received a pint of wine as their alcohol ration.²⁴

This daily ration of alcohol seems to have been of paramount importance to British sailors, or at least this is the impression one gets from Forester’s and O’Brian’s novels. Hornblower and Aubrey even fear for the shipshapeness of their vessels if their crew is deprived of their liquor. Hornblower, for example, is concerned about dwindling supplies, especially of rum, in *The Happy Return*:

The shortage of tobacco, of water and of wood was nothing nearly as important, however, as the imminent shortage of grog. He had not dared to cut that daily issue, and there was only rum for ten more days in the ship. Not the finest crew in the world could be relied on if deprived of their daily ration of rum. (*Return* 224)

In O’Brian’s *Post Captain*, protagonists Stephen Maturin and Captain Jack Aubrey have a heated discussion about the benefits and perils of alcohol aboard a ship after the older midshipmen made the youngest of them drunk, which caused him to behave in an insolent manner to Captain Aubrey, who declares: “‘They shall not do it again, however. I have stopped their grog.’” Maturin, the ship’s surgeon, replies:

‘It would be as well if you were to stop the whole ship’s grog. A most pernicious custom, a very gross abuse of animal appetite, a monstrous aberration – half a pint of rum, forsooth! I should not have a quarter of the men under my care, was it not for your vile rum. They are brought down with their limbs, ribs, collar-bones shattered, having fallen from the rigging drunk – diligent, stout, attentive men who would never fall when sober. Come, let us pour it secretly away.’ ‘And have a mutiny on our hands? Thank you very kindly. No: I should rather have them three sheets in the wind now and again, but willing to do their duty the rest of the time.’ (*Post Captain* 220)²⁵

24 HATTENDORF. “The Royal Navy.” 19.

25 Dr Maturin’s misgivings about issuing alcohol to the crew seem to be grounded in fact. Cf. ESTES: “Most [surgeons] were also concerned about shipboard drunkenness, but seamen insisted on retaining the grog perquisite, amounting to a half pint of rum mixed with one quart of water twice a day. However, it was not only the seamen’s preference that kept rum as standard issue: They needed liquids, and beer and water did not keep well at sea.” (ESTES, J.

On the whole, the picture of the British sailor drawn by Forester and O'Brien in passages such as the one quoted above seems to be very realistic. Rodger states that there were various ways for the sailors to get their drink; officers offered spirits as a reward, and alcoholic beverages were smuggled aboard.²⁶ Rodger concludes: "To get drunk was the birthright and hallmark of real sailors, who when they were given leave 'hasten to the first tavern and drink themselves into a state of helpless infirmity; which not to do would be symptomatic of cowardly lubberliness, or worse'."²⁷ The strong partiality of British sailors for alcohol in reality, thus, is reiterated in naval stories. It is no surprise, then, that the pirates in *Treasure Island* are drunkards, since they, as Squire Trelawney declares, are "all Englishmen" (*Island* 67).

Food and social class

Since Forester and O'Brien try to paint a convincing picture of the late eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries, they carefully describe which types of food and drink are consumed by different social classes, with special emphasis on the differences between the officers and the crew aboard a sailing ship. The crew of a ship of the Royal Navy was provided with basic foodstuffs in addition to water and spirits, as was shown above. The officers could either consume the same type of food and drink or they could buy their own, better stores, which appears to have been expected of them. Especially a captain or a flag officer was likely to be judged at least to a certain extent on the basis of what he ate and drank. Rodger points out that "captains were expected to 'keep a table', and admirals had to feed and entertain their staff and numerous official visitors".²⁸ How important it was for a captain to fulfil this social obligation is shown by Forester in *A Ship of the Line*:

He [Hornblower] wanted to buy a litter of pigs, and two dozen fowls – a couple of sheep as well, for that matter – before weighing anchor in the *Sutherland*. There was the wine

Worth. 2000 [1995]. "Stephen Maturin and Naval Medicine in the Age of Sail." In: Dean King et al. *A Sea of Words*. New York: Holt. 31 – 50. 34)

26 Cf. RODGER. *The Command of the Ocean*. 496. The function of alcohol as a reward or incentive will be discussed below.

27 RODGER. *The Command of the Ocean*. 496 (quoting Charles Reece Pemberton. *The Autobiography of Pel. Verjuice*. 217).

28 RODGER. *The Command of the Ocean*. 524. This included the captains of captured ships: Jack Aubrey entertains the commanders of two Spanish frigates in *Post Captain* (474). The strict conversational conventions at a captain's table are laid down by O'BRIAN in *Post Captain*. Subordinates were only allowed to speak when addressed by their commander. The narrator speaks of "the convention that equated their captain, at his own table, with royalty, and forbade anything but answers to proposals set up by him." (*Post Captain* 251)

he needed, too. Some he could buy later and more advantageously in the Mediterranean, but it would be well to have five or six dozen on board at the start. The effect on the officers and men might be bad for discipline if he were not provided with every luxury as a captain should be; and if the voyage out were long and lazy he would have to entertain his brother captains – the Admiral, too, most likely – and they would look at him askance if he offered them the ship’s fare on which he was content to live. The list of things he needed stretched longer and longer in his imagination. Port, sherry, and madeira. Apples and cigars. Raisins and cheeses. [...] A chest of tea. Pepper and cloves and allspice. Prunes and figs. Wax candles. All these things were necessary to his dignity as captain – and to his own pride, for he hated the idea of people thinking him poor. (*Ship* 414)

Fulfilling this social duty was very expensive, and it often used up more than the officers’ regular pay.²⁹ Yet ‘keeping a table’ was more than a social obligation for a commander; the efficiency of the proceedings aboard a ship depended upon him socialising with his officers. In *Post Captain*, Jack Aubrey is broke and therefore unable to invite his officers to dinner. Since dinner is the only occasion for a captain to talk to his subordinate officers about things other than duty, Jack Aubrey is aware of the negative consequences of his lack of money: “[...] he had scarcely entertained them at all. He was not keeping up the dignity of a captain; a captain’s dignity depended in some degree upon the state of his store-room – a captain must not look like a scrub [...].” (*Post Captain* 243) Being unable to live up to social expectations is dangerous for the captain’s reputation. The impact of the captain’s income on the ship’s morale is also addressed in *Hornblower and the ‘Atropos’*. In order to keep his subordinates in good humour and his reputation intact, Hornblower has to buy his own provisions, and beyond that he decides to contribute to the improvement of the officers’ food:

‘If the wardroom decides to buy an ox I would be glad to pay a quarter of the price,’ said Hornblower, and the wardroom cheered up perceptibly. A captain who bought a share in an animal would always get the best cuts – that was in the course of nature. And they all had known captains who would pay no more than their share. But with five wardroom officers Hornblower’s offer was generous. (*Atropos* 141)

In addition to the provisions aboard a ship, the meals and drinks enjoyed by the characters in Forester’s and O’Brian’s novels on land are indicative of the characters’ social standing. As an admiral, Hornblower is offered everything that is good and expensive during a visit to New Orleans:

At the Naval Headquarters he drank an excellent Madeira; the General gave him a heavy Marsala; at the Governor’s mansion he was given a tall drink which had been iced (presumably with ice sent down during the winter from New England and preserved in

29 Cf. RODGER. *The Command of the Ocean*. 524.

an ice-house until nearly mid-summer it was more precious than gold) extraordinarily to the point where actual frost was visible on the tumbler. (*West Indies* 554)

As was already suggested in the discussion of the effects of a captain's table on morale, the lower classes had a clear idea of what a gentleman was supposed to eat and drink. This is exemplified by an innkeeper in *Post Captain* (333), who is unhappy about what Aubrey and his officers order: "gentlemen as were gentlemen called for wine, not beer [...]." Similarly, Hornblower's first wife Maria – a naive woman from a modest social background – tries to conform to her notion of what it means to be a lady. After having helped steer a riverboat, Hornblower orders some beer: "'How about you, dear?' he asked Maria. 'I think I'd like half a pint,' said Maria – Hornblower could have guessed at her reply beforehand; Maria would think it was a sign of a lady to drink beer only by the half pint." (*Atropos* 24–25)

The juxtaposition of the typical English sailor as a heavy drinker and the much more dignified drinking habits of the English middle and upper class may induce the readers of Forester's and O'Brian's naval novels to draw conclusions about English society as a whole, if one considers the ship as a 'microcosm' of English society. The crew (the lower classes) fare on simple food and seem to be content with this. They have to be controlled by the officers (the middle and upper class), however, because of the ever-present danger of becoming slack and getting hopelessly drunk. For the sake of the ship's (and England's) prosperity, the officers have to keep the crew in line. The naval novels thus seem to confirm the class distinctions which existed at the time the novels are set, and neither Forester nor O'Brian tries to convey a revisionist assessment of the different social classes and their relationship to each other.

National identity and national differences

In Forester's and O'Brian's naval novels the protagonists sail the seven seas and regularly visit foreign countries. Consequently, the cuisine of various foreign countries is depicted as well. In this context the differences between the cuisines encountered around the world and the English style of cooking are often commented upon. This certainly serves to add 'colour' to the depiction of foreign surroundings, but it may also characterise the English and non-English characters.³⁰

Since both series focus on the Royal Navy, English customs regarding food

30 The use of the depiction of food and drink in literary texts in order to mark national, ethnic or cultural identity and variation is also examined by REICHL in *Cultures in the Contact Zone*. 48.

and drink are described most frequently. British sailors are shown to have a very conservative stance towards food, as the following passage from Forester's *The Happy Return* illustrates:

The shore party did [...] cook their rations before a huge bonfire, and revel in roast fresh meat after seven months of boiled salt meat, but with the characteristic contrariness of British sailors they turned away with revulsion from the delicious fruit which was offered them – bananas and pawpaws, pineapples and guavas, and considered themselves the victims of hard practice because these were substituted for their regulation ration of boiled dry peas. (*Return* 255)

In terms of their rejection of foreign food Hornblower's crew is the exact opposite of their captain, who does not mind trying food he is not used to, as was pointed out above. The crew's preference for familiar, albeit plain foodstuffs over exotic delicacies shows them to be bound to tradition and wary of foreign cultures. To a certain extent the British officers share their subordinates' attitude. This is hinted at when Hornblower is invited to have dinner with his admiral in *A Ship of the Line*. After an entrée of turtle soup (407), the Admiral comments on the dishes that are served in the form of an on-table buffet:

'Can I carve you some of this beef, Mrs Elliott?' asked the Admiral. 'Hornblower, perhaps you will be good enough to attend to those ducks before you. Those are neats' tongues, Bolton, a local delicacy – as you know, of course. Will you try them, unless this beef claims your allegiance? Elliott, tempt the ladies with the ragout. They may be partial to foreign kickshaws – made dishes are not to my taste. On the sideboard there is a cold beefsteak pie which the landlord assures me is exactly like those on which his reputation is founded, and a mutton ham such as one finds only in Devonshire.' (*Ship* 408)

Despite the admiral's aversion to "foreign kickshaws", the company has pineapple for dessert in addition to the inevitable cheese (*Ship* 209), which shows that the more sophisticated circles of English society did not necessarily reject *all* exotic food. The admiral's scornful reference to the ragout could be interpreted as an indication of his sense of national identity (expressed by sticking to traditional English dishes) or as a dislike of all things French, since England and France have been at war for years at the time when the conversation takes place. The custom of putting different dishes on the same table and inviting everyone present to try what he or she likes is presented by Forester and O'Brian as the English style of dinner characteristic of the period, which was different from the Continental style of providing a succession of courses.

Up to the end of the eighteenth century the styles of dining differed considerably in England and France, as Mennell points out: "Die Pies und die großen Fleischstücke von früher blieben weiterhin der Mittelpunkt der Mahlzeiten in England, während in Frankreich das Interesse vor allem den delikaten kleinen

Gerichten galt.”³¹ This difference between the English cuisine and the French one is alluded to in scenes from *Hornblower and the 'Atropos'* and *Post Captain*. In Forester's novel, an admirals' buffet in London is described in the following manner: “There were cold pies, there were hams, there were cold roasts of beef being assembled on the buffet; silver was being set out on the dazzling white cloth.” (*Atropos* 46) In O'Brian's novel, a French friend (and in times of war an antagonist) of Aubrey and Maturin orders the following dinner on the Mediterranean coast in France:

‘Dinner,’ said Captain Christy-Pallière, closing the file of Death Sentences, F-L. ‘I shall start with a glass of Banyuls and some anchovies, a handful of olives, *black* olives; then I believe I may look at Hébert's fish soup, and follow it with a simple langouste in court-bouillon. Possibly his gigot en croûte: the lamb is excellent now that the thyme is in flower. Then no more than cheese, strawberries, and some trifle with our coffee – a saucer of my English jam, for example.’ (*Post Captain* 82)

Even the more elaborate dishes eaten by English aristocrats described by Forester and O'Brian seem comparatively homely. Menell explains this striking difference between English and French cuisine historically and sociologically: In contrast to the situation in France, the English aristocracy had not been deprived of their political influence. Menell argues that this was the reason why the English aristocracy did not have to resort to fancy eating for the sake of distinguishing itself from the lower social classes.³²

The difference between French and English cuisine is not only apparent in the dishes that are served, but also in the manner in which they are presented to the diners. As mentioned above, there was an English style of serving dinner as well as a Continental style. The difference between the two is explained in *Hornblower in the West Indies*: “A steaming plate of turtle soup, thick with gobbets of green fat. This was to be a dinner served in the Continental fashion which had come in after Waterloo, with no hodge-podge of dishes set out on the table for the guests to help themselves. [...] Dish succeeded dish [...]” (*West Indies* 558) The reference to this change in eating habits once again provides evidence of the meticulous way in which Forester (and O'Brian) studied cultural developments in order to render their novels plausible.

In Forester's and O'Brian's naval novels national stereotypes are repeatedly reiterated and negotiated via food. This is also reflected in the fact that Jack Aubrey and Dr Maturin are announced as “‘roast-beefs’” by a French aide (*Post Captain* 82) when they visit the French friend of theirs mentioned above. Yet, not only do others identify the English on the basis of what they eat – Aubrey himself,

31 MENNELL, Stephen. *Die Kultivierung des Appetits. Die Geschichte des Essens vom Mittelalter bis heute*. Translated by Rainer von Savigny. Frankfurt/M.: Athenaeum, 1988 [1985]. 143.

32 Cf. MENNELL. *Die Kultivierung des Appetits*. 163.

when pondering how many men are necessary to man a fighting ship, realises the need of “beef-and pork-fed Englishmen” (*Post Captain* 108) to do a proper job. When Hornblower is on a diplomatic mission in Russia in *Commodore Hornblower* he tries to convince Czar Alexander of the advantages of an alliance with England by giving him an appropriate picture of his potential new allies. When the Czar is aboard Hornblower’s flagship, the commodore offers the monarch the standard fare of the British Navy to demonstrate what British sailors are content with. Hornblower rejects Bush’s desperate plea to serve the monarch food from the officers’ stores. Instead, the Czar is offered pea soup (“[...] in the British Navy pea soup, as Hornblower had remarked, was the best dish served [...]” *Commodore* 270), weevily biscuits (*Commodore* 269–70), “boiled salt ribs of beef, boiled salt-beef tongue, and boiled salt pork, with pickled cabbage to accompany the meat” (*Commodore* 270), and rum, “the life-blood of the Navy” (*Commodore* 270). Hornblower’s ploy is successful, for the Czar, impressed by both the frugality and the self-confidence of the English, finally consents to an alliance.³³

The range of cultures which are characterised in terms of food is not restricted to Europe in the naval novels written by Forester and O’Brian. In Forester’s *Hornblower and the ‘Atropos’*, for instance, Hornblower has to deal with very different cultures, which are to a certain degree individualised by references to their cuisine. For his mission in the Mediterranean, Hornblower takes aboard pearl divers from Ceylon and their Scottish overseer and interpreter McCullum. At one point Hornblower and McCullum discuss the food eaten by the Ceylonese specialists:

‘They are ready, along with the food for them.’ ‘Food?’ ‘The poor bodies [...] are benighted heathen, followers of Buddha. They wellnigh died on the voyage here, never having known what it was to have a full belly before. A scrap of vegetable, a drop of oil, a bit of fish for a relish. That’s what they’re used to living on.’ Oil? Vegetables? Ships of war could hardly be expected to supply such things. ‘I’ve a puncheon of Spanish olive oil for them,’ explained McCullum. ‘They’ve taken kindly to it, although it’s far removed from their buffalo butter. Lentils and onions and carrots. Give them salt beef and they’ll die, and that would be poor business after shipping them all round the Cape of Good Hope.’ (*Atropos* 98)

Apart from this discussion of the diet of the Ceylonese the novel provides very little information about the pearl divers, since they stay among themselves and

33 Perhaps the quality of Navy standard fare also had an impact on the Czar’s decision, for in the course of the eighteenth century British naval victuals improved, which caused “[s]oldiers and passengers [to] remark with pleasure on the goodness of naval food” (RODGER. *The Command of the Ocean*. 306, referring to Earle’s *Sailors*). It is unclear whether Forester was aware of this fact, but Hornblower’s comment on the pea soup hints at the possibility that at least some naval foodstuffs were not that bad.

do not speak English. Much more than other, European guests aboard the *Atropos* they remain outsiders – something that is clearly marked by their 'foreign' diet. When Hornblower prepares to meet a Turkish Mudir (a local official), an experienced warrant officer called Turner, who is familiar with the customs in the Eastern Mediterranean, tells him what kind of food and drink is appropriate in the situation:

'Should we offer him a drink?' asked Hornblower. 'Well, sir, it's usual over business to offer coffee.' 'Then don't you think we'd better?' 'You see, sir, it's the coffee – it'll be different from what he calls coffee.' [...] [The Mudir] proceeded to sweeten his coffee to a syrup with sugar, and he did not touch the cup, but raised it to his lips by means of the saucer. 'There ought to be little cakes and sweetmeats, too, sir,' said Turner. 'But we couldn't offer him blackstrap³⁴ and biscuit.' 'I suppose not,' said Hornblower. (*Atropos* 153)

This scene is reminiscent of the close link between food and local customs and stresses the importance of intercultural competence in diplomacy. As a side note: at first it seems as if Hornblower gets the better of the Turkish Mudir in their diplomatic haggling, but later it becomes clear that the Mudir has deceived Hornblower, an outcome which perpetuates the stereotype of the cunning and deceptive Oriental.

The Spanish appear on several occasions in the Hornblower novels, and their behaviour towards Hornblower varies, depending on the changing political situation. Interestingly, they are at their worst when they are allies of the English, as in *A Ship of the Line*. Their impertinent behaviour is depicted most clearly by means of references to provisions. Hornblower has to support a ragtag Spanish army on the Iberian Peninsula, and the Spanish (on their home turf) demand to be fed off the stores Hornblower's crew has brought for themselves. In the interest of the success of the joint operation Hornblower agrees: "Soon sailors and Catalans were all of them eating heartily. Even the squadron of [Spanish] cavalry smelt food from afar, like vultures, and rode hastily back to join the feast [...]" (*Ship* 538) The Spanish/Catalans are presented as cheapskates, taking the food provided by the English for granted without offering them any thanks. What is already foreshadowed by the Spaniards' inability to provide food for themselves at this stage is confirmed later: the whole operation is a fiasco because the Spanish turn out to be totally incapable and unreliable. The discipline and skill of the English at least enable them to retreat in good order, while their Spanish allies flee without a fight. The examples analysed so far show that food and drink are among the most important markers of national identity and national stereotypes in naval novels. The 'otherness' of the cultures the English

34 "Blackstrap: An inferior kind of port wine. Also a drink consisting of a mixture of rum and molasses." (KING. "Blackstrap." In: *A Sea of Words*. 110)

protagonists encounter is repeatedly stressed by means of references to food, and an impression of a distinct ‘Englishness’ is likewise projected via pointing out ‘national’ eating habits.

Food and drink on the plot level

Besides characterising individual characters as well as social and national groups, food is also an important consideration as far as the plot of many naval novels is concerned. Food and drink are used in manifold ways to advance the stories told by Stevenson, Forester and O’Brian. Often the simple necessity of making sure that there are sufficient provisions influences the way the characters act. This is perhaps most obvious in *Treasure Island* and in the Hornblower novels. In Stevenson’s classic the morally upright characters have to escape from their ship when the latter is taken over by the pirates. Taking adequate provisions with them is of the utmost importance in this situation. Given the fact that there is a spring inside the block house, Jim considers the stockade on the island an excellent stronghold (*Island* 85), since clean water constitutes a valuable asset. Moreover, Dr Livesey, expecting a siege by the pirates, explains to Jim what the loyal crew members have managed to salvage from the ship: “[...] powder tins, muskets, bags of biscuits, kegs of pork, a cask of cognac, and my invaluable medicine chest.” (*Island* 86)³⁵ These supplies are limited of course, and the doctor guesses that they will only last “for ten days at short rations” (*Island* 96). This shortage of food necessitates new plans and prompts Jim to embark on his dangerous sortie from the stockade. Thus, the need to act caused by dwindling supplies is what sets the action of the second part of *Treasure Island* in motion in the first place.

That the necessity of keeping a sailing ship well-stocked constitutes a realistic plot element was already mentioned above. That this need also dictates the way the characters act can be seen throughout the Hornblower novels. In *The Happy Return*, for instance, the shortage of supplies not only hampers everyday work aboard Hornblower’s frigate, but the captain is also afraid of illness and of a potential mutiny because of the unrest that is caused by the lack of food:

Seven months at sea had almost consumed the ship’s stores. A week ago he had cut the daily ration of water to three pints a day, and three pints a day was hardly sufficient for men living on salt meat and biscuit in ten degrees north latitude, especially as water seven months in cask was half solid with green living things. A week ago, too, the very last of the lemon juice had been served out, and there would be scurvy to reckon with within a month and no surgeon aboard. (*Return* 224)

35 This can also be understood as an allusion to Robinson Crusoe and his lists of supplies.

The shortage of supplies in hostile waters (Spanish America) leads to a desperate situation. In *Hornblower in the West Indies*, the ship Hornblower and his wife are travelling in is still afloat after having been damaged by a hurricane, but it has lost nearly all of its stores. Rain provides the much-needed water (*West Indies* 742, 747), and 23 coconuts are the only food left for the remaining crew. Hornblower has to resort to threats to maintain order and to prevent the men from eating the coconuts all at once (*West Indies* 745). The scarcity of food and drink determines the time that is left before they have to reach land; moreover, the act of managing their meagre supplies constitutes much of the action in this Hornblower story. In another novel, the lack of supplies (water and fresh food) is used by Hornblower as a pretext to hide his true intention, namely retrieving gold and silver from a sunken Navy ship in Turkish waters (*Atropos*).

Occasionally food and drink are not on the minds of the characters but still influence the course of the action. This becomes apparent in two scenes from *Treasure Island* in which food and drink are clearly used as a 'convenient' plot device to ensure the success of protagonist Jim Hawkins. In one scene early in the novel, an apple barrel turns out to be crucial for Jim's survival as well as for the survival of his companions. Jim explains to the narratee:

[...] and always a barrel of apples standing broached in the waist, for anyone to help himself that had a fancy. 'Never knew good come of it,' the captain said to Dr Livesey. 'Spoil foc's'le hands, make devils. That's my belief.' But good did come of the apple barrel, as you shall hear. (*Island* 56)

Having fallen asleep inside the barrel, Jim overhears the pirates planning a mutiny, which makes it possible for him to warn the morally upright men aboard. Jim is in danger when Silver orders one of his men to fetch him an apple from the barrel, but coincidence saves Jim from being detected (*Island* 61). Later in the novel, when Jim tries to recapture the *Hispaniola*, conveniently the two pirates in charge of guarding the ship are drunk (what else?) and are quarrelling with each other (*Island* 124), which leads to the death of one of the pirates and to the other one being incapacitated. This lucky coincidence enables Jim to commandeer the ship and once again save his companions.

Besides constituting a plot device and motivating the action, food may also be used to express relationships between characters. The ambivalent relationship between Jim and Long John Silver, for example, is touched upon in a scene immediately after Jim overheard the pirates making plans for a mutiny. When the ship reaches the island, Silver is very friendly towards Jim: "'When you want to go a bit of exploring, you just ask old John, and he'll put up a snack for you to take along.' And clapping me in the friendliest way upon the shoulder, he hobbled off forward and went below." (*Island* 64) At this point Silver has no reason to be suspicious, and thus one can assume that the pirate does not try to

lull the boy into a false sense of security with his friendliness. The readers (as well as Jim) are consequently left to ponder the real reasons for this expression of joviality on the part of the pirate. Shortly afterwards, Jim is given food and offered a glass of wine by the morally upright characters after his report about the impending mutiny: “And they made me sit down at the table beside them, poured me out a glass of wine, filled my hands with raisins, and all three, one after the other, and each with a bow, drank my good health, and their service to me, for my luck and courage.” (*Island* 66) This scene is of great importance for Jim on several accounts: firstly, it constitutes Jim’s initiation into the group of grown-ups; secondly, it is a symbol for his coming of age; thirdly, the expression of gratitude is bound to satisfy the reader’s wish to see the protagonist rewarded for a job well-done.

Food and drink may also be an incentive or a reward for characters in naval novels; likewise, being deprived of certain foodstuffs may be a punishment. The character Ben Gunn, for example, has been marooned on the island for three years.³⁶ When Jim Hawkins meets him, Ben explains that he has “‘lived on goats since then, and berries, and oysters. [...] But, mate, my heart is sore for Christian diet. You mightn’t happen to have a piece of cheese about you, now? No? Well, many’s the long night I’ve dreamed of cheese – toasted, mostly – and woke up again, and here I were.’” Jim promises Ben “‘cheese by the stone’” (*Island* 79) if he helps him to defeat Silver and the mutineers. Jim is as good as his word and procures cheese for Ben. The cheese is supplied by Dr Livesey, who happens to carry around a piece of Parmesan:

‘Was it cheese you said he had a fancy for?’ ‘Yes, sir, cheese,’ I answered. ‘Well, Jim,’ says he, ‘just see the good that comes of being dainty in your food. You’ve seen my snuff-box, haven’t you? and you never saw me take snuff; the reason being that in my snuff-box I carry a piece of Parmesan cheese – a cheese made in Italy, very nutritious. Well, that’s for Ben Gunn!’ (*Island* 102)

Far more often than cheese, rum is used as a means of reward and punishment in naval novels, which is not surprising given the British sailors’ partiality for spirits. To keep the wounded men quiet during a battle with the *Natividad* and thus keep the fighting spirit of the uninjured men up, Hornblower counts on the British sailors’ willingness to do just about anything to get hold of alcohol: “‘Keep every man quiet. A tot of rum to every wounded man, and promise ‘em another at eight bells if they lie still. I never knew a jack yet who wouldn’t go through hell fire for a tot of rum.’” (*Return* 315) Likewise, Hornblower uses rum as a reward for exceptional achievements, as he does at gunnery practice in A

36 Ben’s return to Christianity, brought about by a prolonged period of being marooned on an island, is – once again – an homage to *Robinson Crusoe*.

Ship of the Line: “‘Good shot, there!’ said Hornblower. An extraordinary lucky shot from one of the lower gun deck guns had smashed the second cask to fragments. ‘Mr Bush, see that every man of that gun’s crew gets a tot of rum tonight.’” (*Ship* 455) British sailors’ partiality for spirits of course also entails the opportunity for punishment. The withdrawal of spirit privileges was considered a serious form of punishment in the Royal Navy,³⁷ as the young midshipmen under Jack Aubrey’s command have to find out: The boys get the youngest among them drunk and send him on deck, where he behaves insolently towards his captain. As a consequence, Aubrey revokes their grog privileges (*Post Captain* 219–20), as has already been stated earlier.

Conclusion

Several recurring functions of references to food and drink in naval novels have been identified above, ranging from rendering a story more plausible by means of authentication to contributing to the characterisation of individuals as well as social and national groups, more often than not reiterating social and national stereotypes in this way. Although there are certainly differences between the historical naval novels written by Forester and O’Brian on the one hand and Stevenson’s adventure novel *Treasure Island* on the other hand, food and drink feature prominently in all of the naval novels discussed above. The depiction of sailors (and occasionally of some ‘landlubbers’) eating and drinking (or at least wishing to do so) is part of the ‘reality effect’ clearly aimed at in all of the naval novels. In particular the detailed references to the type of food and drink stored and consumed aboard a ship in Forester’s novels, including pea soup and weevily bread, contribute very much to the readers’ impression that the novels provide a historically accurate depiction of everyday life in the Royal Navy in the era of the Napoleonic Wars.

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37 Cf. RODGER. *The Command of the Ocean*. 496.

- (comprising the novels *Hornblower and the 'Atropos'* [1953], *The Happy Return* [1937] and *A Ship of the Line* [1938])
- . [1996]. *Admiral Hornblower*. Omnibus. London et al.: Penguin. (comprising the novels *Flying Colours* [1938], *The Commodore* [1945], *Lord Hornblower* [1946] and *Hornblower in the West Indies* [1958])
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The Pleasures in the Horrors of Eating Human Flesh: Stephen Sondheim and Hugh Wheeler's *Sweeney Todd*

The consumption of human flesh by other humans is usually considered on a par with incest and much worse than murder because it violates the binaries between animal and human, life and death.¹ The horrors of cannibalism produce discourses of alterity; they reinforce distinctions between insiders and outsiders, (good) selves and (evil) Others, humans and supposed non-humans, culture and nature. By making these distinctions, cannibalism was often used to justify segregation and expulsion.² Ever since Greek antiquity, tales about anthropophagy represented the inferiority and inhumanity of people living on the margins of civilisation. From mythical Polyphem to the inhabitants of the Americas, cannibalism was “a discourse on the Other, defining out-groups in terms of their horrifying man-eating propensities”.³ Early modern travelogues and novels about uncivilised cannibalistic tribes thus draw an opposition between the rational and civilised West and the colonial rest. They suppress the

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- 1 Cf. THOMSEN, Christian. *Menschenfresser in Mythen, Kunst und fernen Ländern*. Ratingen: area Verlag, 2006. 8; and FULDA, Daniel. “Einleitung: Unbehagen in der Kultur, Behagen an der Unkultur. Ästhetische und wissenschaftliche Faszination der Anthropophagie.” In: Daniel Fulda and Walter Pape (eds.). *Das Andere Essen. Kannibalismus als Motiv und Metapher in der Literatur*. Freiburg: Rombach, 2001. 7–50. 10. Pithily subsumed in FULDA’s untranslatable German pun: “Wer Mensch ißt, ist kein Mensch” (ibid. 12). As the article deals with cannibalism represented in fiction, I will not delve into the controversy among anthropologists whether cannibalism is historical reality or myth. For this controversy see the articles in BARKER, Francis, Peter HULME and Margaret IVERSEN (eds.). *Cannibalism and the Colonial World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998; and chapter 1 of POOLE, Ralf J. *Kannibalische (P)Akte. Autoethnographische und satirische Schreibweisen als interkulturelle Verhandlungen von Herman Melville bis Marianne Wiggins*. Trier: WVT, 2005.
 - 2 HULME, Peter. “Introduction: The Cannibal Scene.” In: Francis Barker, Peter Hulme and Margaret Iversen (eds.). *Cannibalism and the Colonial World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998. 1–37. 2.
 - 3 OBEYESEKERE, Gananath. “Cannibal Feasts in Nineteenth-Century Fiji: Seamen’s Yarns and the Ethnographic Imagination.” In: Francis Barker, Peter Hulme and Margaret Iversen (eds.). *Cannibalism and the Colonial World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998. 63–86. 63.

eerie resemblances between the supposed savages, Christian eucharist and its rituals, and project the violence perpetrated by the colonisers on the colonised.⁴

Cannibalistic incorporation and violence, however, can also stand for the return to an idealised and desired unity as well as for unmitigated naturalness.⁵ In contrast to the traditional colonial model, Montaigne's essay "Des cannibales" is considered the starting point of a counter-discourse, which constructs cannibalistic societies as Utopian alternatives to Western culture. Exoticising anthropophagy and trying to come to grips with a strange, but fascinating Other in this and other texts leads to "self-recognition that is also a self-estrangement".⁶ The Other advances to a medium of cultural criticism, with which to tell stories 'about ourselves'.⁷

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, representations of cannibalism get closer to home, focusing on "the cannibal and the savage in our midst"⁸ as well as on the cannibal in ourselves. Anthropophagy advances to one of the dominant cultural tropes with which to negotiate anxieties about contemporary society, most prominently the "morbid symptoms of capitalism in crisis".⁹ Novels and horror movies like *The Silence of the Lambs*, *Hannibal* or *American Psycho* present psychotic mass murderers as protagonists with a penchant for human meat, who act in urban jungles instead of primitive and far-away tribes.¹⁰ The oppositions between self and Other have become blurry in a world of transnational exchange, global capitalism and hybrid cultures.¹¹ Within this framework, the cannibalistic discourses oscillate between the need to externalise an evil Other, the preoccupation with the vicissitudes of capitalism and a cathartic return to one's alleged true nature.¹²

Steven Sondheim and Hugh Wheeler's musical thriller *Sweeney Todd. The Demon Barber of Fleet Street* is a case in point for these ambivalent contemporary constructions of cannibalism between horror and pleasure. The standard combination of cannibalism and mass-murder here is projected onto two characters, the "demon barber" Sweeney Todd and his neighbour Mrs

4 GREENBLATT, Stephen. *Marvelous Possessions. The Wonder of the New World*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991. 134; HULME, Peter. "Introduction: The Cannibal Scene." In: Francis Barker, Peter Hulme and Margaret Iversen (eds.). *Cannibalism and the Colonial World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998. 1 – 37. 34.

5 Cf. KILGOUR, Maggie. *From Communion to Cannibalism. An Anatomy of Metaphors of Incorporation*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990. 11.

6 GREENBLATT. *Marvelous Possessions*. 135.

7 FULDA. "Einleitung." 22.

8 OBEYESEKERE. "Cannibal Feasts in Nineteenth-Century Fiji." 86.

9 HULME. "Introduction." 37.

10 Cf. MOSER, Christian. *Kannibalische Katharsis*. Bielefeld: Aisthesis, 2005. 84.

11 OBEYESEKERE. "Cannibal Feasts in Nineteenth-Century Fiji." 86.

12 Cf. MOSER. *Kannibalische Katharsis*. 83 – 107.

Lovett. Sweeney kills; Lovett turns the dead bodies into meat pies and sells them with great success to her unsuspecting customers. In contrast to earlier versions of the Sweeney-legend, which had presented the protagonists as evil criminals, in Sondheim and Wheeler's *Sweeney Todd* they are humanised, thereby indicating that "the spirit of Sweeney is all around us".¹³

I aim to show in this paper how Wheeler and Sondheim adapt the Sweeney legend for a complex portrait of both nineteenth-century and contemporary society, especially in the correlation of cannibalism and capitalism. Their version manages to contain the representation of cannibalism without completely neutralising or sanitising its provocative potential. This is due to a fusion of dramatic and musical genres and to the use of meta-theatrical and dramatic frames, which use the tensions attached to the presentation of cannibalism and mass murder, partly creating detachment, partly motivating emotional involvement. *Sweeney Todd* thus oscillates between empathy and distancing through excess, the comic and the grotesque.¹⁴

1. Cannibalising Melodrama

Sweeney Todd offers a hybrid mix of popular forms, with melodrama and musical as the most prominent ones. Both genres are associated with the illicit pleasures of commercial entertainment, with a proclivity for formulaic plots, sentimentalism, sensationalism and stereotypes.¹⁵ Popular plus popular does not make super-popular, though. The juxtaposition of the musical with an outmoded nineteenth-century form which operates with an aesthetics of excess and clear-cut Manichean Victorian morals highlights the more sophisticated and modern approach of Sondheim and Wheeler. At the same time, the use of a non-standard melodramatic plot full of horror sets *Sweeney Todd* off from the usual fare of Broadway musicals.

The merging of genres also sets the different meanings associated with the Sweeney legend at play and self-consciously refers to the traditions and contexts of representing the tale of "the demon barber of Fleet Street". The story first appeared in the serial novel *A String of Pearls*, which was published anony-

13 SONDHEIM, Stephen. "Larger than Life: Reflections on Melodrama and *Sweeney Todd*." In: *New York Literary Forum* 7 (1980): 3–14. 10.

14 Cf. FULDA. "Einleitung." 28.

15 DYER, Richard. "Entertainment and Utopia." In: Rick Altman (ed.). *Genre: The Musical*. London: Routledge, 1981. 175–89. 176; WILDBIHLE, Hubert. *Kursbuch Musicals*. Passau: Musicalarchiv Wildbihler, 1999. 8; MAYER, David. "Encountering Melodrama." In: Kerry Powell (ed.). *The Cambridge Companion to Victorian and Edwardian Theatre*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004. 145–63. 148–49.

mously in the penny dreadful *The People's Periodical and Family Library* in 1846.¹⁶ In February 1847, one month before the last instalment of *A String of Pearls* had even come out, George Dibdin Pitt turned the novel into a melodrama. Its success triggered a series of other melodramas and movies.¹⁷ In these early versions, Sweeney and Lovett murder out of sheer malice and greed. Following the traditional melodramatic triangle between hero, heroine and villain, their depravity is juxtaposed with a romantic love story between a young girl who either searches for a beloved young man kept prisoner by Sweeney and/or who is threatened by Sweeney's wish to marry her himself. The ending follows the precepts of melodramatic poetic justice. The villains have to be punished, evil is contained, "in order to replay its inevitable defeat and reassure the virtuous that though their fears be valid, their optimism is justified".¹⁸ Therefore the happy reunion of hero and heroine runs parallel to the deadly punishment of the villains Sweeney and Lovett. Wheeler's libretto maintains this basic pattern and uses all the standard elements of melodrama: a sensationalist story, stereotypical characters and a classical melodramatic ending: Young Tobias Ragg cuts Sweeney's throat. Lovett burns to death in her own oven. The young sailor Anthony Hope manages to woo and win the young damsel in distress Johanna.

But there are several new twists in the old story, which complicate the simple formula. These changes go back to Christopher Bond's *Sweeney Todd*, first performed at the Theatre Royal, Stratford East, in 1973. Bond retained Dibdin Pitt's plot, but wanted to reduce its comic effect on contemporary audiences: "My object has been to add to the chair and the pies an exciting story, characters that are large but real, and situations that, given a mad world not unlike our own, are believable".¹⁹ Bond, and later Sondheim and Wheeler, added a revenge plot, which humanises Sweeney Todd and motivates his subsequent murders. After 15 years of imprisonment in the colonies, the barber Benjamin Barker returns to

16 Peter Haining seems to be the only one to assume that there was indeed a historical Sweeney Todd, who was accused of murder and executed in 1802 (cf. LODGE, Mary Jo. "From Madness to Melodramas to Musicals." In: *The Theatre Annual* 56 (2003): 78–96. 83); recent publications more convincingly see Sweeney's story as a legend incorporating and appropriating elements from Homer to Hänsel and Gretel with occasional references to famous criminal cases such as Sawney Bean's cannibalistic family (MACK, Robert L. *The Wonderful and Surprising History of Sweeney Todd*. London: Continuum, 2007. 52; BOND, Christopher. "Introduction." In: Stephen Sondheim and Hugh Wheeler. *Sweeney Todd. A Musical Thriller*. New York: Applause Books, 1991. 1–9. 2).

17 Cf. JONES, John Bush. "From Melodrama to Tragedy: The Transformation of Sweeney Todd." In: *New England Theatre Journal* 2,1 (1991): 85–97. 85–86; and MACK. *The Wonderful and Surprising History of Sweeney Todd*. 197–200; 202–39.

18 Mason quoted in LODGE. "From Madness to Melodramas to Musicals." 85; cf. JONES. "From Melodrama to Tragedy." 86.

19 BOND, Christopher. *Sweeney Todd. The Demon Barber of Fleet Street. A Melodrama*. London/ New York: Samuel French, 1974. v.

London under the alias of Sweeney Todd. The corrupt Judge Turpin had sent him to Australia on a false charge in order to be able to persecute Barker's wife. With his rival out of the way, Turpin rapes Lucy. After Lucy's alleged death, he even becomes the ward of her and Barker's daughter Johanna. Barker/Sweeney plans to take revenge on Turpin while his friend Anthony Hope falls in love with Johanna, who is jealously guarded by the Judge, who even plans to marry his ward. Due to this reshuffling of the plot, the melodramatic set-pieces are defused onto two villains: a maniacal mass-murderer and an upper-class lecher. Lovett with her meat-pies almost inconspicuously comes villainous third.

In this constellation of characters, Judge Turpin assumes all the traits of the classical melodramatic villain whose actions are too bad to be true. His deeds come across as utterly and inexplicably evil. Neither the habitual corruption of justice, nor his rape of Lucy and his wish to marry Johanna are motivated.²⁰ He commits crimes, because he can, as member of the upper class and representative of its unjust system of justice. "He's the devil incarnate" (*Sweeney Todd*, II, 161), as Anthony puts it. Over against Turpin's villain, Todd assumes the position of hero. He defends the honour of his wife who has been sexually assaulted by a social superior and he helps Anthony free Johanna from the clutches of her evil foster-father.²¹ As excessive killer, however, Sweeney simultaneously acts as the central villain of the piece. In his one-dimensional focus on revenge and bloodshed he fulfils all the stereotypes about mad, bad and dangerous serial killers from the singing to his knives (*Sweeney Todd*, I, 41–43), slashing at the air (*Sweeney Todd*, I, 101–02) or triumphantly raising his razor after having cut Turpin's throat (*Sweeney Todd*, II, 195). In spite of this, the barber appears as the less stereotypical character, because Turpin serves as contrastive foil and because the audience knows about his motives, which are – more or less – justified. Accordingly, Sweeney's death does not quite mark the triumph of good over evil and the reinforcement of law and order as it is wont in melodramas.²² Instead, it indicates the culminating point in a series of tragic denouements. Sweeney cuts Turpin's throat. In order to avoid detection, he unwittingly kills his own wife, who had eked out a miserable existence as mad Beggar Woman. Realising what he has done, he murders Lovett for not having

20 The scene in which the Judge whips himself, reciting "Mea culpa" (*Sweeney Todd*, I, 68–70) while watching Johanna through the keyhole until he climaxes would lend some pathological explanation, comparable to Sweeney's decision to turn into a mass murderer. In the first production, however, this scene was cut and most subsequent productions decided not to incorporate it either (cf. ZADAN, Craig. *Sondheim & Co.* New York: Da Capo Press, 1994 [1974]. 256).

21 This was one option for melodramatic plotting, albeit a minor one. An example would be *Black Eye'd Susan* (1829).

22 LODGE. "From Madness to Melodramas to Musicals." 85.

told him about Lucy's survival. Lovett's assistant Tobias, whom the discovery of the secret of the meat pies has turned insane, kills Sweeney in turn.

Due to this opposition of villains in an emotionally fraught revenge plot, not much space seems to remain for Lovett and her version of cannibalism. At first sight, she represents the archetype of the evil witch, who bakes innocent victims and eventually is baked herself as punishment. And yet, when compared with the original melodramatic versions, she gains more profile and advances to Sweeney's congenial partner. While Turpin and Sweeney personify extraordinary crimes, she represents a parody of business-minded pragmatism and middle-class respectability. Her plan to use free human corpses as meat for her pies is presented matter-of-factly and often provides comic relief over against Sweeney's maniacal murders and the Judge's cold cruelties. The spectators are confronted with an ethos which still underlies contemporary society, the wish to set up "a nice respectable business [...], money coming in regular" (*Sweeney Todd*, II, 163). The potential for sympathy and identification is undermined by her using human meat out of criminal energy and thrifty shrewdness.

The tripling of villains, the distinction between mundane greed, sheer evil and tragic pathology as well as the intricate connections between love plot and revenge plot add some grey to the usual black-and-white world of melodrama. Even the young couple is indirectly and subtly associated with the theme of murder and madness. Turpin has Johanna imprisoned in a lunatic asylum to keep her from Anthony's advances. In their attempt to escape, Johanna kills the owner of the asylum with the gun Sweeney gave to Anthony. On their subsequent flight, she becomes more and more incoherent, her statements get close to the fragmentary ramblings of the lunatics surrounding her: "Will we be married on Sunday?/ That's what you promised,/ Married on Sunday!/ [...] That was last August/ [...] Kiss me!" (*Sweeney Todd*, II, 186).

All in all, the combination of melodramatic elements in *Sweeney Todd* creates a tension between an outmoded dramatic genre and a plot that could and should be taken seriously.²³ This leads to an instable mixture of psychological depth, a 'humanising' of the main character and the farcical "circus quality"²⁴ nowadays associated with melodrama.

23 Cf. SONDHEIM. "Larger than Life." 6.

24 SONDHEIM. "Larger than Life." 4.

2. Melo and Musical

Setting the story of Sweeney Todd to music augments its emotionality, at the same time it denaturalises the action on stage.²⁵ Sondheim's score self-reflexively points towards nineteenth-century tunes and modality. The musical numbers evoke the accompaniment of melodrama, music-hall and "London's street sounds and street cries".²⁶

The structure of the score combines operatic ensembles and orchestral music which uses the techniques of film music. The musical accompaniment often continues during spoken dialogue and creates "a sustained atmosphere of tension and suspense".²⁷ The choral pieces, duets and solos are arranged in a tight web of motifs, reprises and ensembles, which add a layer of "multiple, sometimes competing discourses" to the dialogue,²⁸ sometimes undercutting stage business and lyrics, sometimes making connections audible or at least subliminally present. Pirelli's pompousness and his fake Italianness, for instance, comically manifest themselves in his pseudo-operatic performance during the shaving-duel with Sweeney which culminates in a series of ostentatious and forced high notes. The minuet of the ballroom scene, in which Lucy is raped, serves as the basis for the mad Lucy's (or rather the anonymous Beggar Woman's) motif, thus making her trauma audible and hinting at her true identity.²⁹

Other reprises and musical allusions undermine melodramatic stereotypes and again emphasise the grey zones inherent in the plot. Anthony's romantic solo "Johanna", for instance, is taken up by Sweeney when he kills one customer after another. These parallels indicate Sweeney's "schizoid split"³⁰ between yearning for his lost daughter and his actions as ruthless killer. In addition to this, they also point towards the reasons for this split and his fixation on revenge. Echoes of "Johanna" recur in "Pretty Women",³¹ the duet between Sweeney and Judge Turpin, indicating what is on both men's minds. The romantic songs forge an instable homosocial bond not only between the "fellow spirit[s]" (*Sweeney Todd*, II, 194) and doubtful father figures Sweeney and Turpin, but also between

25 Cf. LODGE. "From Madness to Melodramas to Musicals." 89.

26 BANFIELD, Stephen. *Sondheim's Broadway Musicals*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993. 293.

27 MACK. *The Wonderful and Surprising History of Sweeney Todd*. 274; cf. ZADAN. *Sondheim & Co*. 246.

28 PUCCIO, Paul M. and Scott F. STODDART. "'It Takes Two'. A Duet on Duets in *Follies* and *Sweeney Todd*." In: Sandor Goodhart (ed.). *Reading Stephen Sondheim*. New York: Garland, 2000. 121–29. 122; cf. WILDBIHLE. *Kursbuch Musicals*. 13; BANFIELD. *Sondheim's Broadway Musicals*. 288–89.

29 ZADAN. *Sondheim & Co*. 252; BANFIELD. *Sondheim's Broadway Musicals*. 296.

30 SONDEHEIM. "Larger than Life." 13.

31 Cf. BANFIELD. *Sondheim's Broadway Musicals*. 300.

the villains and Anthony. This might at first highlight the tender and human sides of judge and barber. But especially in the reprises towards the end of the play, the musical parallels integrate Anthony into the group of irrationally driven men and indirectly problematise his plan to marry a complete stranger, who herself is on the brink of insanity after having been abducted.

The technique of contrasting the action on stage by a harmonious score, as in the reprises of “Johanna” undercut attempts at realism.³² The musical score often works as a distancing device.³³ Characters breaking out in song, whose lyrics not seldom get lost in transmission, point towards the artificiality of the representation. The difference between what is presented and the way it is presented, especially in the solos and duets, draws the attention to the performance itself: the perception of the audience oscillates between seeing a mad mass murderer and an accomplished singer, between the tale of Sweeney Todd and the performance of a Sondheim musical. These shifts in perception are implemented and highlighted from the very beginning of the musical by means of meta-theatrical frames.

3. Meta-theatrical and Epic Frames

To state the very obvious: we do not really need to be disgusted or horrified by *Sweeney Todd*, because no one really gets harmed, killed or eaten. Everything is a piece of theatre. The opening and closing scenes emphasise the obvious. They serve as meta-theatrical frames which underline *Sweeney Todd*'s status as musical entertainment and nineteenth-century cautionary tale. At the same time, prologue and epilogue are connected to a set of epic frames within the story, which highlight the dramatic potential and which give further depth to the characters. What starts out as means of detachment, later on draws the audience further into the world of the plot.

At first sight, the musical seems to employ the by now classical Brechtian alienation effects. The ensemble opens the show with a prologue which invites us to:

32 ZADAN. *Sondheim & Co.* 249.

33 I would disagree with BANFIELD who claims that the combination of melodrama and musical results in “total audience involvement” (*Sondheim's Broadway Musicals*. 292). Some reviews of the original production disclaim any compelling effects. Walter Kerr, for instance, wrote in *The New York Times*: “that vision remains a private and personal one. We haven't been lured into sharing it” (quoted in ZADAN. *Sondheim & Co.* 258). More generally, the audience is constantly aware of the fact that they see a musical and often acknowledge this by applauding the performers (cf. the DVD of the Broadway production).

Attend the tale of Sweeney Todd.
 His skin was pale and his eye was odd.
 He shaved the faces of gentlemen
 Who never thereafter were heard of again.
 He trod the path that few have trod,
 Did Sweeney Todd,
 The Demon Barber of Fleet Street. (*Sweeney Todd*, Prologue, 23)

From the initial gloomy and foreboding organ solo, the audience is well aware of the tragic ending of the “Demon Barber of Fleet Street”. Even if they are not familiar with the well-known Sweeney legend, and if they do not consciously hear the musical allusions to the “Dies Irae”,³⁴ the spectators see how Sweeney’s body is buried, or rather “*unceremoniously dump[ed]*” (*Sweeney Todd*, Prologue, 24). The fact that only a bit later, Sweeney “*rises out of the grave*” (*Sweeney Todd*, Prologue, 25) points towards the artificiality and theatricality of the scene and marks what is to follow as re-enactment. The suspense thus shifts from the outcome of the story to the differences and similarities of the new version of “the tale of Sweeney Todd” to its forerunners and to the manner in which it is retold.

After the gory ending, the ensemble gathers yet again and closes the tale with an epilogue which reprises music and lyrics from the beginning of the show:

Tobias: Attend the tale of Sweeney Todd.
 His skin was pale and his eye was odd.
 Johanna and Anthony: He shaved the faces of gentlemen
 Who never thereafter were heard of again.
 Policeman: He trod the path that few have trod,
 Policemen, Johanna and Anthony: Did Sweeney Todd,
 All: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street. (*Sweeney Todd*, Epilogue, 202)

In contrast to the prologue, the different parts in the epilogue are presented by individualised characters, most of them protagonists in the play proper. By joining in the epilogue, the performers get out of character and become commentators.³⁵ This frame-breaking and the move from the here-and-now of performance back to the then-and-there of narration is enhanced when all the dead characters – Turpin, Beadle, Beggar Woman – join the line-up. Lastly, Todd

34 BANFIELD. *Sondheim’s Broadway Musicals*. 297; WILDBIHLER. *Kursbuch Musicals*. 293.

35 I would not go as far as FRASER, who claims that “much like a Greek chorus in the final moments of a Sophoclean tragedy, this chorus speaks to the audience to offer perspective on the mistakes of the central characters” (FRASER, Barbara Means. “Revisiting Greece. The Sondheim Chorus.” In: Joanne Gordon (ed.). *Stephen Sondheim. A Casebook*. New York/London: Garland, 1997. 223–49. 238). The chorus foregoes direct moral judgements and does not point out what Sweeney should or could have avoided. Instead it emphasises the acts of telling, attending and re-enacting the “tale of Sweeney Todd”. Thereby it comes closer to Brechtian epic than to Greek tragedy.

and Mrs Lovett “*rise from the grave*” (*Sweeney Todd*, Epilogue, 204). It is them who are also the last to leave the stage: “*They look at each other, then exit in opposite directions, Mrs Lovett into the wings, Todd upstage. He glares at us malevolently for a moment, then slams the iron door in our faces. Blackout*” (*Sweeney Todd*, Epilogue, 204).

This sequence anticipates the dramaturgy of the curtain call, where the fictitious world of the play unmistakably gives way to the common reality of performers and audiences. The epilogue connects the curtain call with the plot proper. In this supplementary frame the performers shift from embodying a character to representing the performance itself, making the audience aware of the performativity of the piece in general, the ingenuity of the production and the (high) quality of the performers.

The epilogue also links nineteenth-century London with the present by directly addressing the audience: “Perhaps today you gave a nod/ To Sweeney Todd [...] Isn’t that Sweeney there beside you?” (*Sweeney Todd*, Epilogue, 203). The story itself might stem from the nineteenth century, but its moral ramifications, especially the potential for identification with Sweeney’s vengefulness still prove relevant today.³⁶ Implicitly, the portrayal of London society as a world of competition, injustice and profit is framed as a distorting mirror of contemporary life.

So far, so Brechtian. But prologue and epilogue do more than just distance the audience from the action on stage: they shift the focus to Sweeney’s motivations, the specific aesthetics of Sondheim and Wheeler’s adaptation and they highlight the musical performance as performance. Moreover, epilogue and prologue form the basis for further ensemble pieces in the play, which counter the initial meta-theatrical distancing and which are part of a set of epic frames in the play proper. The reprises of the prologue actually heighten the suspense. The chorus offers guidance for the audience.³⁷ It comments on the action and bridges temporal gaps, helping the plot to move on³⁸ and preparing the audience for what is to come: “Sweeney pondered and Sweeney planned / Like a perfect machine he planned, / Barbing the hook, baiting the trap, / Setting it out for the Beadle to snap” (*Sweeney Todd*, I, 67–68). These passages mostly call attention to central dramatic turning points and punctuate moments of rising action: when Lovett returns the case of razors to Sweeney and after the murder of Pirelli in the first act, before Anthony frees Johanna from her imprisonment in the

36 Cf. SONDHEIM. “Larger than Life.” 10.

37 FRASER. “Revisiting Greece.” 237.

38 Not to mention the furniture. The members of the chorus also do the scene changes in *Sweeney Todd*, a mixture between Brechtian alienation and the practical, smooth transition of scenes; this use of the chorus is a hallmark of Sondheim musicals (FRASER. “Revisiting Greece.” 237).

lunatic asylum and after Sweeney has killed Turpin in the second act. Although they still point towards the meta-theatrical aspects of the performance, when occurring within the world of the play, they mainly enhance the dynamics of the plot.

In the play proper, we find additional epic frames, which function like a “closer focusing of the camera in a film”³⁹ and thereby augment the emotional engagement of the audience. “There Was a Barber and His Wife” sung first by Sweeney (*Sweeney Todd*, I, 32–33) and then by Lovett (*Sweeney Todd*, I, 37) reconstructs the pre-story of the play, Sweeney’s happy family life as Benjamin Barker and how it has been destroyed by Judge Turpin. Lovett’s “Poor Thing” provides a distanced and cynical version, focusing on Lucy and what happened to her after Sweeney’s deportation. The detachment of the song is undercut by the simultaneous representation of Lucy’s rape by the Judge on stage. The scene culminates in Sweeney’s breakdown, his recognition by Lovett, the vow of revenge and the return of his shaving knives, celebrated in the song “My Friends” (*Sweeney Todd*, I, 41–42) and followed by the reprise of the “Tale of Sweeney Todd” (*Sweeney Todd*, I, 43).

In act II, after Sweeney has successfully avenged himself, the songs recur once again, framing the fast move towards the final catastrophe highlighting the circularity of the plot. “My Friends” signals Sweeney’s triumph after having murdered Turpin. Lovett reprises “Poor Thing” when she tries to explain that Lucy has not died, but lived on as mad Beggar Woman. “There Was a Barber and His Wife” closes the play proper (*Sweeney Todd*, II, 200) after Sweeney has killed both Lucy and Lovett. The last line “And he was – naïve” pertaining to the young Benjamin Barker as well as to Sweeney duped by Lovett indicates the futility of Sweeney’s revenge.⁴⁰ But, as the subsequent epilogue also implicitly indicates, the “tale of Sweeney Todd” will be re-enacted and re-told over and over again.

The meta-theatrical frames are part of a web of musical allusions and reprises, of ensemble pieces and solos, which initially distance the musical from the world of the audience and which later draw the audience deeper into the world of the musical. This strategy comes closer to the techniques of melodrama and film than to a constant breaking the illusion and connects the meta-theatrical frame to the intersecting generic frames of melodrama and musical.

39 BANFIELD. *Sondheim’s Broadway Musicals*. 304.

40 Cf. BANFIELD. *Sondheim’s Broadway Musicals*. 304.

4. Cannibalism and Capitalism

Shifting between detachment and involvement, horror and pleasure, also holds true for the representations of cannibalism. The combination of melodrama and musical puts the main focus on the duel between Sweeney and Turpin. The tropes of cannibalism give their rivalry a sociopolitical dimension and connect it with ambivalent portrayals of the capitalist system. From its first appearance in 1846, the story of Sweeney and Lovett is closely related to the consequences of the Industrial Revolution. Their criminal methods – men who disappear after a visit at the barber’s and who no-one seems to miss; pies for quick consumption with not too many questions asked about the origin of the meat – are only possible in the anonymity of a metropolis like London with unfettered enterprise, greed and mass consumption: “Sweeney Todd and Mrs Lovett emerge from the dark recesses and move within the dynamic chaos of the moving city’s increasing anonymity to earn their reputations as the definitive personifications of urban appetite”.⁴¹ Like many nineteenth- and twentieth-century texts, the Sweeney Todd legend focuses on the cannibal in our midst looking for his prey in an urban jungle.⁴² In spite of the usual correlation of cannibalism, murder and capitalism, there are considerable variations in Wheeler and Sondheim’s adaptation. The nineteenth-century versions had merged images of capitalist London with references to foreign, savage Others and projected them onto Sweeney. *The String of Pearls*, for instance, describes the barber as “natural curiosity” who due to his eccentric hairstyle “might have been mistaken for some Indian warrior with a very remarkable head-dress”.⁴³ In contrast to this, Lovett’s pie shop at first seems an alluring meeting place, “one of the most celebrated shops for the sale of veal and pork pies that London ever produced. High and low, rich and poor, resorted to it; its fame had spread far and wide”.⁴⁴ As the story progresses, however, it transpires that the prospering enterprise is literally founded on the machinations of evil Others. Sweeney and Lovett’s underground pie factory represents industrialisation as hellish nightmare. Only one worker bakes the thousands of meat pies. He is constantly kept underground as “a mere machine for the manufacture of pies”,⁴⁵ not allowed to leave the vaults at all. When the latest pie cook⁴⁶ complains about the unmerciful “slavery”,⁴⁷ Sweeney warns him:

41 MACK. *The Wonderful and Surprising History of Sweeney Todd*. 47.

42 Cf. MOSER. *Kannibalische Katharsis*. 84.

43 ANON. *Sweeney Todd. The Classic Tale that Became a Legend (A String of Pearls)*. In: Robert Mack (ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007. 4.

44 ANON. *Sweeney Todd*. 29.

45 ANON. *Sweeney Todd*. 173.

46 Who in the end turns out to be Mark Ingestrie, the supposedly dead fiancé of Johanna Oakley.

‘Continue at your work’, said the voice, ‘or death will be your portion as soon as sleep overcomes you, and you sink exhausted to that repose which you will never waken from [...]. Make pies’, said the voice, ‘eat them and be happy. How many a man would envy your position – withdrawn from all the struggles of existence, amply provided with board and lodging, and engaged in a pleasant and delightful occupation’.⁴⁸

The strict work discipline of an industrial society, the dreary existence of workers and the inhumanity of *laissez faire* liberal economy are here projected onto Sweeney and Lovett as society’s Others. The free mixing of classes in the pie-shop, which at the beginning suggested the lively bustle of London, is revealed as the product of the rampant efficiency of two outsiders, signifying the dangers of weakened traditional hierarchies. The proper order can only be restored by a return to established social bonds. The members of the upper class, Colonel Jeffery and the magistrate Sir Richard Blunt, assisted by a band of obedient inferiors, bring Sweeney to justice. He dies by the hangman’s rope, officially sentenced to death and executed in Newgate Prison. The stable ties between active upper class and deferential lower class, the tried-and-trusted social institutions of Navy, Police and prison manage to contain the new forces of capitalism associated with Sweeney Todd and Lovett.

Wheeler and Sondheim’s *Sweeney Todd* also relates cannibalism to capitalism, but reverses the structures of the correlations. It is the old hierarchies and institutions which are shown to be corrupt. In contrast to his predecessors, Sweeney does not personify the inhuman traits of a capitalist system, he becomes its victim and later acts as capitalism’s vengeful Other. He cannot escape completely, though, because the system permeates all realms of life; especially the processes of mass production and consumption are shown to be ubiquitous.

The setting in nineteenth-century working-class London ties in with the melodramatic tradition of *Sweeney Todd*. In accentuating the dearth and madness of slum-life, it serves as temporal, spatial as well as social distancing device for the twentieth-century audience, presenting a world which seems worse than the contemporary state of affairs. The congenial Broadway production by Hal Prince made these negative connotations physically present. Tying in with the quasi-Brechtian epic framing, the set did not attempt at realistic reconstructions, but presented “an oversized industrial landscape”.⁴⁹ The action took place on movable steel constructions and catwalks, which integrated pipes, beams and wheels from a dilapidated iron foundry.⁵⁰ The pipes occasionally

47 ANON. *Sweeney Todd*. 176.

48 ANON. *Sweeney Todd*. 177–78.

49 MACK. *The Wonderful and Surprising History of Sweeney Todd*. 276.

50 Cf. MACK. *The Wonderful and Surprising History of Sweeney Todd*. 276, and the photos in SONDEHEIM, Stephen and Hugh WHEELER. *Sweeney Todd. A Musical Thriller*. New York: Applause Books, 1991.

emitted clouds of steam and the sound of a factory whistle marked scene-shifts. Unlike *A String of Pearls*, which tried to come to grips with pressing contemporary anxieties, *Sweeney Todd* refers back to a bad old past, which, seen from the perspective of the original Broadway audience, happened elsewhere.

The lyrics similarly evoke a world of Coketownish gloom. Right from the start, London appears as a fascinating, but inhuman metropolis. Sweeney counters Anthony's enthusiastic "there's no place like London" (*Sweeney Todd*, I, 29) with a grim portrait of the city:

There's a hole in the world
Like a great black pit
And the vermin of the world
Inhabit it
And its morals aren't worth
What a pig could spit
And it goes by the name of London.

At the top of the hole
Sit the privileged few,
Making mock of the vermin
In the lower zoo,
Turning beauty into filth and greed. (*Sweeney Todd*, I, 32)

London dehumanises its inhabitants by its sheer size, its immorality and an asymmetrical, supposedly impermeable class structure which only knows vermin and the "privileged few". The selfsame opposition fuels Sweeney's revenge plot. He fights against someone from the "privileged few" who has taken advantage of his position. Consequently, in his fixation on bringing Turpin down, the barber reiterates the bleak image of society, and thereby gives his revenge a social dimension. At the end of act I after the Judge has hurriedly left the barber shop in order to prevent Johanna from eloping with Anthony, Sweeney once more denounces London as "great black pit" filled with "people/ Who are filled with shit!" (*Sweeney Todd*, I, 101). Anger and frustration about Turpin's escape make Sweeney's insanity come to the surface and he comes to the conclusion: "They all deserve to die!" In "Epiphany" he justifies the mass murder which is to follow:

Because in all of the whole human race, Mrs Lovett,
There are two kinds of men and only two.
There's the one staying put
In his proper place
And the one with his foot
In the other one's face – [...]

[...] the lives of the wicked should be –
 [Slashes at the air]
 Made brief.
 For the rest of us, death
 Will be a relief –
 We all deserve to die! (*Sweeney Todd*, I, 101)

Sweeney counters the cut-throat world of capitalism by literally cutting the throats of his customers. The monstrous system creates its own monster. This does not come across as an act of class-warfare, though. In his killing frenzy Sweeney tries to move outside the capitalist system and returns to an archaic, seemingly natural world of morality, violence and emotionality. The recurrent self-characterisation as “naïve” (*Sweeney Todd*, I, 32; II, 200) puts him in a similar position as the noble savages created by the colonial discourses of cannibalism and emphasises the cathartic potential of violence.⁵¹ But the barber cannot escape the processes of industrial production for long, and with his serial killings he becomes enmeshed in the processes of machine culture.⁵² Although he addresses the new barber chair as “another friend” (*Sweeney Todd*, II, 149), the contraption with which he can expedite his victims over a chute directly into Lovett’s cellar serves as part of a vertical conveyor belt, a “machine”, which complements and dehumanises the mass-murderer as “perfect machine” (*Sweeney Todd*, Prologue, 25; I, 68).

While industrialisation and machine culture add to the murderous inhumanity of London and are correlated with Sweeney, consumerism and commodification come across as normal and natural. It is this facet of capitalism which is directly associated with cannibalism and Mrs Lovett. She has internalised the principles of profit-orientation and efficiency for her own purposes, thus adding method to Sweeney’s madness. Following her motto “waste not, want not” (*Sweeney Todd*, I, 93), Sweeney’s victims can become the basis for a lucrative enterprise. What the penny dreadfuls and melodramas had presented as atrocious perversion complementary to the demonic deeds of the barber, Sondheim and Wheeler’s musical uses as comic relief. In the duet “A Little Priest” Sweeney’s dark vision of an unjust and hierarchical society returns as satire playfully introducing the topic of cannibalism:

Todd: What is that?
 Mrs Lovett: It’s priest.
 Have a little priest.
 Todd: Is it really good?
 Mrs Lovett: Sir, it’s too good,

51 Cf. MOSER. *Kannibalische Katharsis*. 112.

52 Cf. POOLE. *Kannibalische (P)Akte*. 179.

At least.
 Then again, they don't commit sins of the flesh,
 So it's pretty fresh.
 Todd [*looking at it*]: Awful lot of fat.
 Mrs Lovett: Only where it sat.
 Todd: Haven't you got poet
 Or something like that?
 Mrs Lovett: No, you see the trouble with poet
 Is, how do you know it's
 Deceased?
 Try the priest.
 Todd [*Tasting it*]: Heavenly. [*Mrs Lovett giggles*] Not as hearty as bishop,
 perhaps, but not as bland as curate, either.
 Mrs Lovett: And good for business – always leaves you wanting more.
 Trouble is, we only get it in Sundays. (*Sweeney Todd*, I, 106 – 107)

In this song, death is not the great leveller. One after another, the professions are given their distinctive flavours, textures and tastes: grocer's meat is green, chimney sweep provides dark meat, beadle's meat is greasy and fiddle player's meat is stringy. The potential victims come from all strata of society, the educated upper class, middle-class businessmen and artists as well as the working-class.⁵³ The lyrics provide a firework of puns, homonyms, rhymes and spoonerisms and play with meat metaphors and professional stereotypes: "Try the friar. / Fried, it's drier" (*Sweeney Todd*, I, 111). A great part of the nervous humour of "A Little Priest" derives from the opposition between the taboo topic of cannibalism, the witty patter and the cheerful music. The waltz rhythm gives the song an energetic dynamic and indicates the growing complicity (and the underlying romance) between Lovett and Sweeney,⁵⁴ rising to a crescendo in "The history of the world, my sweet –/ [...] is who gets eaten and who gets to eat" (*Sweeney Todd*, I, 110). Apparently, Lovett's business plan reverses the power structures of the "black pit". Cannibalism and mass consumption ensure that "those above will serve those below" (*Sweeney Todd*, I, 108). In contrast to Sweeney's position as mad Other, Lovett's project seems mundane and – almost – common-sensical: "Seems an awful waste./ I mean,/ With the price of meat what it is,/ When you get it,/ If you get it –" (*Sweeney Todd*, I, 104). Her pragmatic approach lends comic relief from Sweeney's brooding psychopathology.⁵⁵ Even more so as the cannibalism depicted is still fictional. In "A Little Priest" no-one has been eaten yet, Sweeney and Lovett act out their fantasy with the help of "imaginary pie[s]" (*Sweeney Todd*, I, 106), therefore in the finale of act I the

53 Cf. PUCCIO and STODDART. "It Takes Two." 125.

54 PUCCIO and STODDART. "It Takes Two." 125.

55 LODGE. "From Madness to Melodramas to Musicals." 89; ZADAN. *Sondheim & Co.* 249.

audience can disregard the announced anthropophagy as mere metaphor and vehicle for social satire.⁵⁶

Act II opens with Lovett's customers enthusiastically partaking in acts of cannibalism. Her business flourishes and she almost lives a conventional "from-rags-to-riches" success story. The correlation of capitalism and cannibalism occasionally gains macabre overtones when, for instance, Tobias finds a long black hair and a piece of fingernail in his pies (*Sweeney Todd*, II, 182). Nevertheless, while Sweeney's revenge attains tragic dimensions, Lovett's pie business remains rather pedestrian. None of the customers notices what they really eat and they never find out. The usual pattern of the unwitting consumption of human flesh would be horror and a tragic denouement. In Greek myth and Shakespearean drama serving one's guests human meat without them knowing is presented as heinous crime, a violating of the rules of hospitality, undermining the moral basis of a community. Once the guests are aware of what they have eaten, they are shocked and the perpetrator of the crime is severely punished. Not so in *Sweeney Todd*. Eating Lovett's pies has nothing to do with hospitality or the celebration of community. In contrast to the mythical banquets, her pies have to be purchased. They are the fast food that makes workers and employees maintain their productivity, not eaten in pleasant company, but a token of the anonymity of market forces. The people do not care about the contents of the pies, as long as they are cheap and taste good. In their ignorance, Lovett's customers come across as gullible consumers, gourmands who go for quantity and affordability.

Mrs Lovett's business practices and the willing suspension of suspicion of her customers are not the exception, but the rule. Mrs Mooney bakes pies containing cat meat. "Lately all her neighbors' cats have disappeared" (*Sweeney Todd*, I, 36), but no one seems to pay heed. The parallels between Lovett and the fraudulent quack Pirelli are even more pronounced. Pirelli sells an elixir which promises to stop the loss of hair and heal skin disease. Both elixir and pies are advertised by the same person: Tobias – at first Pirelli's apprentice, after Pirelli's murder by Sweeney, Lovett's little helper. He uses the same tune for advertising "Mrs Lovett's meat pies" (*Sweeney Todd*, II, 142) and "Pirelli's Miracle Elixir" (*Sweeney Todd*, I, 52). The music emphasises the underlying correspondences: both products aim at the mass market and both are not what they seem. The elixir "smells like piss" (*Sweeney Todd*, I, 55), as Sweeney observes; the meat pies allegedly taste delicious, but they contain human meat. Pirelli is an Irishman posing as Italian; Mrs Lovett a criminal pretending to be an honest business-woman. Ironically, the blackmailer Pirelli is also the first dead person to end up in one of Lovett's pies.

56 Cf. FULDA. "Einleitung." 28.

This does not start the vicious circle of the production and consumption of human bodies, though. The musical uses several ‘motivic-metaphorical inferences’ of a cannibalistic society.⁵⁷ Everyone takes the meat-market of prostitution, personified by Lucy as mad Beggar Woman, as a matter of course. Wigs made from human hair provide a more direct link to the “demon barber”, his madness and Lovett’s business:

Todd: Where do you suppose all the wigmakers of London go to obtain their human hair?

Lovett: Who knows, dear? The morgue, wouldn’t be surprised.

Todd: Bedlam. [...] For the right amount, they will sell you the hair off any madman’s head.

Lovett: And the scalp to go with it too, if requested. (*Sweeney Todd*, II, 168)

In view of this “metaphorical cannibalism”⁵⁸ of the profit-driven world of capitalism, Lovett does no more than literalise what is already there. With her wish to gain respectability and to have a regular income as well as with her practice of selling mystery meat to her customers, she cannot be externalised as exception from the norm as easily as Sweeney or Judge Turpin. The contrast between her intentions and her criminal deeds does not make her an archetypal witch or an evil Other, but a comical social riser. While the slum life on Fleet Street and the division of classes reminds the audience of a distant past, Lovett’s business strategies connect the past with the twentieth- and twenty-first-century present, especially with “our common experience of having ingested food products on faith”.⁵⁹ The motives of cannibals in our midst or us as cannibals here do not indicate a return to nature, but the predicaments of a highly differentiated society in which food is industrially produced and marketed.

The trope of cannibalism as capitalism and vice versa gains a further complicating dimension by the revenge plot and by the romance between Johanna and Anthony. While Sweeney and Lovett represent a surreal version of self-made businesspeople who rise due to the dynamics of the market forces, Judge Turpin and his sidekick Beadle Bamford embody the injustices of traditional hierarchies and the immobile power structures of the *ancien régime*. Turpin resembles a stereotypical eighteenth-century upper-class rake who tries to seduce an innocent poor victim by means of his power and money. Turpin and Bamford arrange Lucy’s rape at a ball. The guests are dancing a minuet and Lucy is offered champagne. When the Judge grabs Lucy “*the Beadle hurls her to the floor. He holds her there as the Judge mounts her and the masked dancers pirouette around*

57 FULDA. “Einleitung.” 25.

58 PUCCIO and STODDART. “‘It Takes Two.’” 125.

59 Guest quoted in MACK. *The Wonderful and Surprising History of Sweeney Todd*. 212.

the ravishment, giggling” (*Sweeney Todd*, I, 39). All this conforms with the stereotypes of upper-class luxury, lechery and the inhumanity of a closed society.

Sweeney, the self-made professional, takes revenge on someone whose social status allows him to get away with rape and murder. An upper-class Goliath is brought down by a simple barber from the London slums. The revenge plot ends tragically, the David vs. Goliath principle, however, finds a happy ending in the love story between Johanna and Anthony Hope. The young sailor manages to win Johanna’s heart and saves her from the persecutions of Judge Turpin. The contest between young and old is grafted onto the opposition between upper class versus lower class, immobile and unjust class hierarchies versus a new system based on meritocracy and competition. Johanna, first associated with caged birds and later incarcerated in Fogg’s asylum, can only escape from her prisons with the help of Anthony. In this – admittedly minor plot-line – there is indeed “no place like London” and no better system than democratic capitalism. *Sweeney Todd* reflects and refracts anxieties about a world of global capitalism and competition.

5. Conclusion

Since its premiere in 1979, many people have attended the tale of Sweeney Todd, watched the show, bought the CD and DVD, and seen the movie. This would point towards Dyer’s analysis of the entertainment industry as providing “alternatives to capitalism which will be provided by capitalism”.⁶⁰ This would tie in with contemporary versions of cannibalism such as *Silence of the Lambs* and *Hannibal* as indicators for the catharsis of late-capitalist consumerism.⁶¹

The reworking of the Sweeney legend, the mixture of different genres and the framings and re-framings do complicate this too facile conclusion. Instead of offering elements of utopian solutions within the dramatic world (as Dyer would expect), *Sweeney Todd* leaves all the moral aporias associated with Sweeney, Lovett and Turpin open. In addition, it also hints at the impossibility of romantic closure for Anthony and Johanna. The series of frames highlight the different forms of telling the “tale of Sweeney Todd”. Together with the meta-theatrical frame they self-reflexively point towards the musical as performance. Sweeney and Lovett are presented as a criminal pair which combines psychological depth and social criticism. They also offer bravado performances, nostalgic local colour and wit.

On the meta-level, the consumption of human meat by undiscerning cus-

60 DYER. “Entertainment and Utopia.” 185, his emphasis.

61 Cf. MOSER. *Kannibalische Katharsis*. 105–08.

tomers can also be interpreted as an indirect comment on the status of the musical as part of the entertainment industry, directed at audiences looking for soporific and unchallenging distraction. Sondheim and Wheeler's musical sets itself off from these overtly profit-oriented products. Songs about cannibalism and murder do not fit into the usual plot patterns of Broadway and West End musicals. The meat pies made of human flesh indicate the ubiquity of capitalist processes in both society and the music business. By selling them in a musical, Wheeler and Sondheim turn subversion into a marketable commodity without completely selling out. They make us have our meat pie and eat it, too.

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Marion Gymnich

Eating *bok choy* in Chinatown – The Pleasures and Horrors of Food in Chinese American Literature

I. Introduction

Literary texts by Chinese American writers frequently feature descriptions of lavish banquets for family and friends; they show individuals tasting dishes that trigger childhood memories, and they show fictional characters, narrators and speakers in lyrical poetry explicitly pondering the manifold cultural implications of consuming – and rejecting – certain types of food. The interest in food that is characteristic of Chinese American literature is shared by other ‘ethnic’ American literatures as well as by many postcolonial literatures. Despite interesting similarities with respect to the way food is dealt with in different ‘ethnic’ literatures, one may however claim that the functions and implications of food that are addressed by writers such as Frank Chin, Amy Tan, Gish Jen and Maxine Hong Kingston have been shaped by specific concerns of Chinese American culture.

One of the reasons for the interest in food that is apparent in Chinese American literature is certainly the prominent role restaurants have traditionally played in Chinese immigrant communities in the United States. Since the nineteenth century Chinese restaurants have constituted an important segment of the economic structure of Chinese immigrant communities in North America. In fact, Chinese restaurants even flourished in the United States in periods when Exclusion Acts sought to reduce the number of new immigrants from China and when hostility towards Asian immigrants was widespread.¹ Given the sig-

1 Cf. BARBAS, Samantha. “‘I’ll Take Chop Suey’: Restaurants as Agents of Culinary and Cultural Change.” In: *Journal of Popular Culture* 36,4 (2003): 669–86. 669: “Between 1870 and 1930, a time of great political and social hostility against Asian immigrants, Chinese restaurants drew a thriving business from non-Chinese customers. Lured by the possibility of experiencing ‘Oriental’ sensuality and ‘exotic’ foreign cuisine, thousands of white Americans patronized restaurants owned and operated by immigrant Chinese.” Cf. also LIU, Haiming and Lianlian LIN. “Food, Culinary Identity, and Transnational Culture: Chinese Restaurant Business in Southern California.” In: *Journal of Asian American Studies* 12,2 (2009): 135–62. 136: “[...]”

nificance restaurants have traditionally had for Chinese Americans as a source of income as well as a cultural institution,² it is hardly surprising that Chinese American literature regularly portrays characters who own a restaurant or who make a living by working in the food sector. In Frank Chin's novel *Donald Duk* (1991), for instance, the protagonist's father is a successful cook, and references to the preparation of food can be found throughout the text. The references to food, cooking and related issues, including table manners and activities such as buying groceries, are indicative of the significance the (careful) preparation of meals has had in Chinese American culture. The frequent allusions to the preparation of food in this text as well as in Chinese American fiction in general may thus serve to distinguish Chinese American culture from mainstream American culture. While Chinese cuisine is often praised for its variety and ingenuity in Chinese American literature, the American society as a whole has come to be seen as the quintessential 'fast food culture'.

II. References to food as markers of ethnicity and alterity

Given the fact that "food is [...] used to differentiate among groups"³ and that "ethnic foodways construct ethnic or racialized identities"⁴, references to exotic (or at least exotic-sounding) dishes, often served 'banquet-style' (i. e. one dish at a time), in Chinese American literature figure as one among several potential markers of 'ethnicity'.⁵ In addition to food (and drink), the list of markers of ethnicity includes other items of material culture, such as clothes and furniture, which may likewise create an impression of 'alterity', of foreignness. Yet food is

during the Exclusion period (1882–1943), when the racial environment forced many early Chinese immigrants out of their skilled occupations and channeled them into menial service jobs, restaurant occupations became one of the few available and limited employment opportunities."

2 Li Li, for instance, argues: "The Chinese restaurant has been the bearer of Chinese culture in America since the day the first one was established." ("Cultural and Intercultural Functions of Chinese Restaurants in the Mountain West: 'An Insider's Perspective'." In: *Western Folklore* 61,3–4 (2002): 329–46. 339.)

3 HENDERSON, Laretta. "'Ebony Jr!' and 'Soul Food': The Construction of Middle-Class African American Identity through the Use of Traditional Southern Foodways." In: *MELUS* 32,4 (2007): 81–97. 82.

4 XU, Wenying. "Masculinity, Food, and Appetite in Frank Chin's *Donald Duk* and 'The Eat and Run Midnight People'." In: *Cultural Critique* 66 (2007): 78–103. 78.

5 The same argument can be made for virtually all other 'ethnic' American literatures, including Chicano/a fiction and Native American literature. In addition, postcolonial Anglophone literatures, such as Caribbean and African literature, also tend to contain many references to food and drink, which evoke the specific cultural background depicted in the literary text.

arguably the most prominent semantic field as far as the representation of material culture in Chinese American literature is concerned.

The dishes which are referred to in Chinese American literary texts often sound quite exotic, at least to those readers who are not familiar with Chinese, respectively Chinese American, culture. In Gish Jen's novel *Typical American* (1991), for instance, one encounters references to dishes bearing names that are intriguing but not necessarily descriptive, such as "crystal chicken" (*Typical American* 57), "red-cooked carp" (*Typical American* 57), "Lion's Head" (*Typical American* 94), "Strange-Flavored Chicken" (*Typical American* 95) and "Ants Climbing Trees" (*Typical American* 95). Names like the ones just mentioned are bound to leave many readers wondering what these exotic-sounding dishes might look and, of course, taste like. Names such as the ones listed above clearly serve as markers of ethnicity; they are indicative of the 'Otherness' of the Chinese (American) culture. In accordance with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's notion of the 'Other',⁶ 'Otherness' can in this context be regarded as a site of desire. Terms such as 'crystal chicken' and 'ants climbing trees' are certainly likely to tickle the readers' culinary curiosity. In this respect, the function of the literary references to food is reminiscent of the fact that Chinese restaurants have traditionally attracted visitors by means of a promise of exotic flavours.⁷

References to exotic-sounding dishes in Chinese American literature appear to be highly ambivalent in terms of their function. On the one hand, they may cater to the readers' interest in exoticism, thus exploiting and even reinforcing the fascination with Chinese Otherness that has contributed to the success of Chinese restaurants from the nineteenth century onward. On the other hand, the act of mentioning dishes which are likely to be unknown to Western readers may also be read as "an expression of ethnic resilience",⁸ i. e. as the perpetuation of culture-specific traditions. References to Chinese dishes with exotic names like the ones mentioned above may defy readers' expectations. Western readers of Chinese American literature might actually very well expect the references to Chinese food to sound somewhat more familiar since restaurants have traditionally constituted one of the prime 'contact zones' with Chinese (American)

6 Cf. SPIVAK, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" In: Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (eds.). *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988. 271–313.

7 Cf. LIN's comment on the meaning of having dinner in Chinatown in New York City: "The typical American encounters Chinatown as part of a process of alimentary gratification. Aside from providing a break from normal culinary routine, the prospect of eating Chinese food in association with a journey into the central-city district of Chinatown also affords the diner the opportunity of experiencing the exotic Orient without undertaking transpacific travel." (LIN, Jan. *Reconstructing Chinatown: Ethnic Enclave, Global Change*. Minneapolis/London: University of Minnesota Press, 1998. 171)

8 LIU and LIN. "Food, Culinary, and Transnational Culture." 150.

culture. Due to the success of Chinese restaurants, already at the beginning of the twentieth century Chinese food “was consumed by members of every class, racial, and religious group”⁹ in the United States. Thus, the fact that the food referred to in Chinese American literature may occasionally appear to be a far cry from the cuisine typically offered in Chinese restaurants in the United States definitely enhances the alterity created by references to Chinese-style food. In addition, the allusions to exotic-sounding food in Chinese American literature are apt to make the readers aware of the fact that the ‘Chinese’ food they are used to from restaurants may be anything but ‘authentic’ or that it constitutes just a small segment of what Chinese cuisine has to offer.¹⁰ Studies of the development of Chinese restaurants and of the impact Chinese cooking has had in the United States have revealed that the food offered in Chinese restaurants was not always meant to be authentic, but may intentionally have been what Miller calls “Chinese-esque”¹¹ instead: “[...] while many Chinese dishes in America reflect their regional origins in China with great accuracy, others are new or modified”.¹²

In Chinese American literary texts the function of references to food as markers of alterity is frequently supported by linguistic devices, specifically by the insertion of Chinese words and by the use of compounds which are not familiar to the readers. Words referring to dishes that are characteristic of Chinese cooking are often lexical items borrowed from Chinese, such as “*chaswei*” (Amy Tan, *The Joy Luck Club* 20) and “*bok choy*” (Fae Myenne Ng, “The Red Sweater” 363). The semantic field ‘food and drink’ accounts for a substantial part of the lexical items borrowed from Chinese appearing in Chinese American literature, which serve as markers of alterity.¹³ Alternatively, the lexical items referring to Chinese American food may be compounds that look unfamiliar to the readers despite the fact that they consist of English words. Compounds such as “*crystal chicken*” (*Typical American* 57) are cases in point.

While some dishes referred to in Chinese American literature ultimately remain enigmatic for the readers, quite often the use of non-English terms to refer to food in Chinese American literature is accompanied by more or less detailed explanations, as the following examples from Amy Tan’s novel *The Joy Luck Club* (1989) illustrate: “*chaswei*, sweet barbecued pork cut into coin-sized slices” (*The*

9 MILLER, Hanna. “Identity Takeout: How American Jews Made Chinese Food their Ethnic Cuisine.” In: *Journal of Popular Culture* 39,3 (2006): 430–65. 446.

10 BARBAS (“‘I’ll Take Chop Suey.’” 670) points out that the kind of ‘Chinese’ food Westerners tend to be familiar with, such as chop suey and chow mein, is actually already hybrid, whereas authentic Chinese cuisine may be largely unknown even to people who frequent Chinese restaurants.

11 MILLER. “Identity Takeout.” 445.

12 LI. “Cultural and Intercultural Functions of Chinese Restaurants in the Mountain West.” 330.

13 Cf. REICHL, Susanne. *Cultures in the Contact Zone: Ethnic Semiosis in Black British Literature*. Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2002. 78.

Joy Luck Club 20), “*syaumei*, a little dumpling” (*The Joy Luck Club* 47) and “*zong zi* – the sticky rice wrapped in lotus leaves, some filled with roasted ham, some with sweet lotus seeds” (*The Joy Luck Club* 71). In Gish Jen’s novel *Typical American* there are similar lists of Chinese dishes, providing uninitiated readers with information on the ingredients of the ‘exotic’ dishes that are mentioned, as the following passage shows:

[...] *da bao* were big buns with chicken and egg and juicy chunks of Chinese sausage (unless they had a red dot on them, those were sweet bean paste); *cha shao* was roast pork. *Zongzi* were lotus leaf-wrapped bundles of sticky rice – the girls liked the savory ones, which came tied up in pairs. [...] *Jiaozi* were the pork dumplings they went down the block to eat with *jiang you* and vinegar. (*Typical American* 132)

In a similar fashion, the readers of Chin’s *Donald Duk* are informed what a dish called ‘Dragon and Phoenix Soup’ consists of: “[...] the dragon is the shark’s fin and the lobster in the broth. The phoenix is the broth made of chicken, duck, squab, guinea hen and bird’s nest” (*Donald Duk* 66).¹⁴ The frequency of references to food accompanied by explanatory comments in Chinese American literary texts implies that readers of Tan, Chin or Jen may actually accumulate encyclopaedic knowledge concerning Chinese food. Some of the Chinese names and explanations of dishes even recur within the same text or can be found in several literary works. (In the quotations above there are two explanations of *zongzi* for instance, one from Tan’s *The Joy Luck Club* and one from Jen’s *Typical American*.) Readers may even be made aware of culture-specific conventions of naming dishes, which account for the predominance of ‘colourful’ terms such as ‘Dragon and Phoenix Soup’: “‘Like in my restaurants,’ Dad says, ‘I don’t say *sliced cross-section of broccoli spear alternate with slices of Virginia ham and chicken breast*. Sounds too laboratory science. Who wants to eat some kind of autopsy? Ugh! So, I say *Jade Tree Golden Smoke Ham and Chicken*.’” (*Donald Duk* 124) Explanations like the one just quoted make the ‘exotic’ dishes sound more familiar and reduce the foreignness evoked by their names.

The function of references to food as markers of alterity may however be intensified by allusions to its symbolic dimension – a phenomenon that is quite common in Chinese American literature. The following passage from Amy Tan’s *The Joy Luck Club* illustrates this possibility:

‘The hostess had to serve special *dyansyin* foods to bring good fortune of all kinds – dumplings shaped like silver money ingots, long rice noodles for long life, boiled

14 Such details concerning the ingredients of Chinese American dishes are part of the didactic tendencies which are characteristic of Chin’s novel as a whole (cf. RICHARDSON, Susan B. “The Lessons of *Donald Duk*.” In: *MELUS* 24,4 (1999): 57–76), but, as the examples quoted above show, a certain didactic interest seems to be typical of many Chinese American literary texts, at least as far as Chinese food is concerned.

peanuts for conceiving sons, and of course, many good-luck oranges for a plentiful, sweet life.' (*The Joy Luck Club* 10)

In Chin's *Donald Duk* the readers are informed about the food that is traditionally eaten in the context of the New Year's celebrations (cf. *Donald Duk* 45). Although food symbolism of course also exists in other cultures, Chinese American literature at least suggests that the system of food symbolism is particularly elaborate in the Chinese culture and that it is apparently still very much alive in Chinese American culture.¹⁵

For Western readers, food is one of the prime 'contact zones' with Chinese (American) culture, but food also typically constitutes one of the basic dimensions of contact with the parents' or grandparents' country of origin for second-generation and third-generation Chinese Americans. Literary texts depicting tensions and misunderstandings between Chinese American and Caucasian characters as well as those portraying generation conflicts between first-generation immigrants and American-born Chinese Americans quite often use food as the trigger for intercultural misunderstandings and as the site of conflict, thus elaborating on the function of food as marker of alterity on the story level.

In Amy Tan's novel *The Bonesetter's Daughter* (2001), for instance, culture-specific preferences concerning food turn into a site of conflict between Chinese Americans and Caucasians. Due to her upbringing, the second-generation Chinese American protagonist Ruth is familiar with traditional Chinese food, but she is likewise used to mainstream American food. At one point she plans a traditional Full Moon banquet in order to please her mother. In an attempt to bring together her Chinese American heritage and the American part of her life, Ruth invites her Chinese American relatives along with her Caucasian partner and the latter's children from his first marriage. While Ruth is aware of the fact that her guests are bound to have different food preferences on the basis of their ethnic background, she does not anticipate the scorn expressed by the Caucasians. To her dismay Ruth realises that not even a single one of the Chinese dishes appeals to the Caucasian guests:

More dishes arrived, each one stranger than the last, to judge by the expressions on the non-Chinese faces. Tofu with pickled greens. Sea cucumbers, Auntie Gal's favorite. And glutinous rice cakes. Ruth had thought the kids would like those. She had thought wrong. (*The Bonesetter's Daughter* 84)

Admittedly, some of the items that are part of the dinner may in all likelihood sound off-putting for most Western readers, in particular perhaps "the jiggling mound of jellyfish" (*The Bonesetter's Daughter* 83), which is highly appreciated

15 On the symbolic nature attributed to food in Chinese American culture, see Li. "Cultural and Intercultural Functions of Chinese Restaurants in the Mountain West." 335–36.

by Ruth's mother but fails to tempt the Caucasian guests. Despite the reservations Western readers might have about some of the Chinese dishes it is relatively easy to imagine a banquet consisting of European food that would be equally questionable from the point of view of people not used to the type of food that is served. (Mud pies and haggis might be good candidates.) After all, food preferences are inevitably shaped by cultural traditions, and what is seen as tempting or even edible by a person largely depends on his/her cultural background.

With respect to Chinese American characters food preferences regularly serve as markers of alienation respectively assimilation regarding the different cultures they are exposed to. Cultural assimilation often correlates with a preference for American (fast) food, while cultural alienation usually comes along with a preference for traditional Chinese food. Gish Jen's *Typical American*, for instance, juxtaposes two characters whose attitude towards American food is diametrically opposed, reflecting their respective attitude towards Anglo-American culture. On the one hand, there is Helen who "learned to cook, so that she'd have Chinese food to eat. When she could not have Chinese food, she did not eat" (*Typical American* 62); on the other hand, there is "Theresa (who would eat anything, even cheese and salad)" (*Typical American* 62).¹⁶ In *Typical American* the references to Chinese, 'foreign', food in the course of the novel gradually give way to references to American food, including hamburgers and other types of fast food. The family's changing eating habits clearly correlate with their increasing assimilation to American society and their readiness to adopt the latter's customs, life style and value system.

Especially for second-generation Chinese Americans the absence of American food in their homes may serve as a constant reminder of their family's 'foreignness', as the following passage from Tan's *The Bonesetter's Daughter* illustrates: "[...] all kinds of good things Ruth [a second-generation Chinese American] was never allowed to eat: chocolate milk, doughnuts, TV dinners, ice cream sandwiches, Hostess Twinkies" (*The Bonesetter's Daughter* 35). When the protagonist Jin Wang of Gene Luen Yang's award-winning graphic novel for children *American Born Chinese* (2006) is bullied at school, one of the things the bullies pick out in order to make fun of him is food – both the food he actually eats (dumplings instead of sandwiches) and the food Chinese are said to eat ("Come on, let's leave bucktooth alone so he can enjoy Lassie", *American Born Chinese* 33).

16 Note that the comment on Theresa's readiness to eat American-style food may serve as a reminder that even 'common' types of food such as salad and cheese may appear alien to Chinese Americans. Comments like this may make the readers aware of the fact that food preferences are highly culture-specific.

Frank Chin's novel *Donald Duk* presents a twelve-year-old American boy of Chinese descent who initially is extremely ill at ease with his Chinese American heritage. He despises Chinese customs and daydreams about dancing like Fred Astaire. The character's aversion to all things Chinese includes Chinese food, as the following scene illustrates: "Next they unload giant clams. They have large shells, the size and shape of a small loaf of French bread. A round thick tube of flesh sticks out of the shell. 'Ugh! Obscene!' Donald Duk says." (*Donald Duk* 39) Presumably at least those readers who are not familiar with this particular type of clam are quite likely to understand the title character's disgust. Given the way they are described, the giant clams indeed sound grotesque and anything but appealing. Yet Donald's twin sisters praise them enthusiastically, referring to them as "delicious" and "just heaven when poached" (*Donald Duk* 39). This may remind the reader of the simple truth that there is certainly no direct correlation between what food looks like and what it tastes like.

While the protagonist of Chin's novel rejects the Chinese American heritage, his father has developed a Chinese American identity which allows him to preserve Chinese traditions while simultaneously embracing certain American ideas, and food is one of the ways in which the "perpetual negotiation with other ethnic traditions and heritages"¹⁷ is performed by him. The dishes he prepares on the occasion of the Chinese New Year celebrations suggest that cultural hybridity is an extremely productive and dynamic principle that offers unlikely but appealing mixes of cultural traditions and long-established food preferences. The range of dishes he cooks with great ingenuity includes the following items:

Fettucini Alfredo with shark's fin. Poached fish in sauces made with fruit and vegetables. Olives on toast that taste like rare thousand-dollar caviar. Chocolate, bananas, yellow chili peppers, red chili oil and coconut milk go into one sauce over shredded chicken and crabmeat to be eaten rolled up in hot rice-paper pancakes with shredded lettuce, green onions and a dab of plum sauce. (*Donald Duk* 64)

The dishes are likely to sound interesting and tempting to the readers; they combine Western and Chinese food traditions, giving rise to a combination that is certainly 'exotic' but at the same time largely avoids stereotypes.¹⁸

The culinary hybridity which is celebrated in Chin's novel is actually part of the tradition of Chinese American food in general, although its hybrid quality

17 LEONARD, Suzanne. "Dreaming as Cultural Work in *Donald Duk* and *Dreaming in Cuban*." In: *MELUS* 29,2 (2004): 181 – 203. 184.

18 In the short story "Thanksgiving in a Monsoonless Land" by Indian American writer Roshni RUSTOMJI food likewise serves as an image of ethnic hybridity. Here the Indian-born character Dinaz Mehta prepares a turkey as well as a "sweet-sour-hot Parsi wedding stew" and "sweet-sour-hot shrimp" (329) for a Thanksgiving dinner and argues that the "authentic American turkey [...] will most probably taste quite good with the authentic Indian achaar. Better than with cranberry sauce." (330)

has not always been made explicit. Barbas sketches the history of a hybrid dish, namely chop suey, a “concoction typically involving bean sprouts, celery, onions, water chestnuts, green peppers, soy sauce, and either pork or chicken, chopped in small pieces”,¹⁹ which was introduced in Chinatown restaurants in the 1890s and which “fused American tastes with a smattering of Asian ingredients”²⁰. The success of chop suey contributed to the fact that “Chinese cooking, albeit in a watered down, highly distorted form, left its Chinatown borders and crossed into mainstream American culture”.²¹ Liu and Lin regard the Americanization of Chinese food as “an interesting process of cultural negotiation”: “While Chinese restaurant business helped shape the American diet, Chinese food was simultaneously being shaped, transformed, and sometimes altered by American popular tastes.”²² Ultimately, one may argue that a regional or national cuisine is always bound to be the result of a process of negotiation. In immigrant and diasporic communities this process is shaped in particular by pressure exerted by the mainstream culture. In this respect, food may very well serve as a metonymy of cultural processes in general.

In addition to the type of food that is eaten, table manners may likewise give away a character’s proximity to a particular cultural tradition. Not only the choice between eating with chopsticks or with knife and fork may be relevant in this context. In Amy Tan’s novel *The Joy Luck Club* one of the narrators, a second-generation Chinese American woman, comments on the table manners of first-generation Chinese Americans in a way which clearly suggests that for her American table manners constitute the norm: “Eating is not a gracious event here. It’s as though everyone had been starving. They push large forkfuls into their mouths, jab at more pieces of pork, one right after the other.” (*The Joy Luck Club* 20) Historically, table manners have been shaped by culture-specific assumptions about the body and its needs. The way in which the consumption of food is described in the passage quoted above implicitly comments on the departure from the current Western norm of eating with restraint, which only emerged in a historical process of defining polite behaviour and table manners and which became particularly prominent in the nineteenth century.

Beyond references to culture-specific types of food and table manners, a

19 BARBAS. “‘I’ll Take Chop Suey’.” 674.

20 BARBAS. “‘I’ll Take Chop Suey’.” 674.

21 BARBAS. “‘I’ll Take Chop Suey’.” 675. Cf. also BARBAS’ comment on the success of chop suey and other Chinese American dishes: “By the 1930s, chop suey, chow mein, and other Chinese American foods had become popular dinnertime staples. During the Depression and World War II, the inexpensive, filling dishes were lauded by women’s magazines as an effective way to stretch the family food budget.” (681) Yet, according to some scholars, by now “[a]uthentic Chinese food has replaced Americanized dishes” in many Chinese restaurants (cf. LIU and LIN. “Food, Culinary Identity, and Transnational Culture.” 135).

22 LIU and LIN. “Food, Culinary, and Transnational Culture.” 150.

depiction of customs involving the preparation and/or consumption of food may further reinforce the impression of the ‘Otherness’ of the culture that is represented. In Chinese American literature the alterity of Chinese American culture is clearly marked, for instance, by references to the role food plays in Chinese funeral rites. In Amy Tan’s novel *The Kitchen God’s Wife* the narrator, a second-generation Chinese American woman, provides the following description of a funeral:

In front of the casket is a long, low table overflowing with food – what looks like a nine-course Chinese dinner, as well as an odd assortment of mangos, oranges, and a carved watermelon. This must be Grand Auntie’s farewell provisions for trudging off to heaven. The smoke of a dozen burning incense sticks overlaps and swirls up around the casket, her ethereal stairway to the next world. (*The Kitchen God’s Wife* 41)

The presence of food in front of the casket clearly distinguishes the Chinese tradition of taking leave from departed relatives from Western funeral rites.²³ Likewise, the description of the family shrine decorated with food in Chin’s *Donald Duk* contributes to the impression of ‘Otherness’:

Before family emblems and photographs stands an incense burner with smoldering sticks of incense punk. A steamed chicken on a platter and three little teacups filled with tea, and a mound of tangerines and a perfectly shaped pomelo grapefruit with stem and leaves are all arranged in front of the incense burner. (*Donald Duk* 65)

A “culinary postmortem” (*The Kitchen God’s Wife* 44) and a family shrine displaying food may certainly strike readers who are not familiar with these customs as unusual. Such descriptions emphasise the ‘alterity’ of Chinese American traditions and simultaneously serve to highlight the special significance attributed to food in Chinese culture. In the Christian religion, food of course also plays a crucial role, but, in comparison to Chinese (American) rites, the range of food that is drawn upon in Christian rituals tends to be decidedly more limited (being essentially restricted to bread and wine), which stresses the symbolic nature of the food items that are used in the rites. The “steamed chicken on a platter and three little teacups filled with tea, and a mound of tangerines and a perfectly shaped pomelo grapefruit with stem and leaves” mentioned in Chin’s novel may of course be equally symbolic in nature, but what

23 References to food in Chinese American funeral rituals can also be found in Frank CHIN’s short story “Railroad Standard Time” (206): “Loyal filial children kowtow to the old and whiff food laid out for the dead. The dead eat the same as the living but without the sauces. White food. Steamed chicken. Rice we all remember as children scrambling down to the ground, to all fours and bonking our heads on the floor, kowtowing to a dead chicken.” See also the allusions to food sacrificed to honour the deceased in Maxine HONG KINGSTON’s *The Woman Warrior* (22).

is described arguably resembles ‘real food’ more than the wine and bread of the Christian Eucharist.

The cultural importance of food in Chinese-American literature is also displayed in passages that develop what almost amounts to an ‘aesthetics of food’. The latter may be identified in references to meals, but it is perhaps even more striking in the detailed depiction of the ‘raw material’ of meals, as the following description of turnips from Tan’s *The Bonesetter’s Daughter* demonstrates:

In the vegetable aisle, Ruth headed toward a bin of beautifully shaped turnips. They were each the size of apples, symmetrical and scrubbed, with striations of purple. Most people did not appreciate *the aesthetics of turnips*, Ruth thought as she chose five good ones, whereas she loved them, their crunchiness, the way they absorbed the flavor of whatever they were immersed in, gravy or pickling juice. (*The Bonesetter’s Daughter* 33; emphasis added)

Here, the readers are invited to use the full range of their senses in order to imagine what they in all likelihood consider to be just an ordinary vegetable. The passage quoted above first of all appeals to the visual imagination (“beautifully shaped”, “symmetrical and scrubbed, with striations of purple”) and then moves on to a depiction of the texture and taste of turnips (“their crunchiness”, “the way they absorbed the flavor”). By means of the detailed description of the turnips an impression of sensuousness is created that one probably would not expect in the context of the depiction of an ordinary vegetable.

The description of the turnips in *The Bonesetter’s Daughter* exemplifies a tendency to draw the readers’ attention to simple food which is quite common in Chinese American literature, in particular in poetry. Although references to food in Chinese American literature very often evoke a distinct impression of exoticism, there are also many texts that emphasise the simplicity of food, referring to the ingredients of a meal rather than to a complex dish and using generic terms for food items rather than culture-specific ones. Russell Leong’s poem “Aloes” from his poetry collection *The Country of Dreams and Dust* (1993) is framed by the following lines:

*We must eat
And drink
In order to live.* (“Aloes”, ll. 1 – 3, 76 – 78)

References to food could hardly be more generic in nature than the ones in the lines quoted above. The fact that these lines appear at the beginning as well as at the end of the poem stresses the existential significance of eating and drinking. Within the poem there are several further references to eating and drinking which likewise seem to avoid the kind of exotic flavour one encounters very often in references to food and drink in Chinese American literature, as was shown above. The lyrical I in Leong’s “Aloes” for example refers to “Rice, fish, vege-

tables” (l. 47). Towards the end of the poem again a comparatively ascetic image of food and food preparation is evoked:

The monk in the kitchen
is cutting cabbages
on the nicked formica table
for supper. (ll. 72 – 75)

Mentioning cabbage on a formica table instead of alluding to fanciful dishes such as ‘Dragon and Phoenix Soup’ undermines the habit of expressing cultural difference via exotic food and thus creating an effect akin to lavishly decorated Chinese restaurants, which have used a performance of ‘Otherness’ in order to attract customers. Despite frequent references to ‘exotic’ food indicating alterity in Chinese American literature, there are some Chinese-American literary texts which seem to defy this widespread tendency, offering more simple references to food instead.

The simplicity of the references to food in Leong’s poem may thus be more programmatic in nature than it might appear at first sight. After all, the use of references to exotic food as markers of ethnicity has not gone unchallenged within Chinese American literature. In Frank Chin’s short story “Railroad Standard Time” (1988), for instance, the narrator explicitly criticises the clichés that are reproduced and perpetuated by books about Chinatown in general and by spreading stereotypes relating to food in particular:

Books scribbled up by a sad legion of snobby autobiographical Chinatown saps all on their own. [...] Part cookbook, memories of Mother in the kitchen slicing meat paper-thin with a cleaver. Mumbo jumbo about spices and steaming. The secret of Chinatown rice. The hands come down toward the food. The food crawls with culture. (“Railroad Standard Time” 204)

In the passage above the narrator criticises the emphasis on food in traditional depictions of Chinese American life and in particular the exotic and enigmatic quality Chinese cooking has often been endowed with in descriptions of Chinatown (both fictional and non-fictional ones). Yet the narrator grudgingly admits the centrality of food in the context of the representation of Chinatown when he, a few lines after the passage quoted above, proceeds with his description of San Francisco’s Chinatown in the following manner:

Food again. The wind sucks the shops out and you breathe warm roast ducks dripping fat, hooks into the neck, through the head, out an eye. Stacks of iced fish, blue and fluorescent pink in the neon. (“Railroad Standard Time” 205)

The description of food provided in the passage above suggests that the pleasures and horrors of food are ultimately inseparable in Chinatown. While the odour of “warm roast ducks” seems to promise a pleasant culinary experience,

the description of ducks hanging on hooks which pierce their necks, heads and eyes is likely to undermine positive associations. Likewise, the depiction of the “[s]tacks of iced fish, blue and fluorescent pink in the neon” is hardly apt to suggest pleasure; instead the passage evokes an impression of death, reinforced by the sterile and morgue-like neon light.

III. The horrors of food

Throughout Chinese American literature one encounters references to food that is a particular treat, at least for some of the characters, as was shown above. Yet food is not universally presented as being wholesome and appealing. Instead, various ‘horrors of food’ are referred to as well, and these go clearly beyond the disgust that is expressed by individual characters who are confronted with unfamiliar food items. A depiction of the horrors of food can be found in particular in episodes which are set in China. In other words, these scenes serve to stress the characters’ reasons for leaving China in the first place, and they may make the United States look quite good in comparison. Tan’s *The Kitchen God’s Wife*, for instance, includes the following, relatively graphic description of unhealthy food and its dangers, which the protagonist was exposed to in China:

[...] the next morning, my stomach felt worse, and I knew it was the food from the day before. And then I said to myself, Oh, I hope Hulan didn’t buy cheap vegetables from Burmese people. Those people had so many dirty habits – using their own night soil to fertilize the plants, spreading the germs they brought with them, cholera, dysentery, typhoid fever. (*The Kitchen God’s Wife* 335)

The problems caused by a lack of hygiene which are mentioned in the passage above are likely to echo Western concerns about a supposed lack of hygiene in ‘exotic’ countries and thus may contribute to the perpetuation of stereotypes. Food shortages and even starvation in China are also mentioned from time to time, as the following passage from *The Kitchen God’s Wife* illustrates:

‘Every year the river overflowed,’ Hulan had said. ‘Sometimes it spilled only a little, but one year, it was like a giant kettle overturned. And when all that muddy water covered our fields, we had nothing to eat, except dried kaoliang cakes. We didn’t even have enough clean water to steam them soft. We ate them hard and dry, wetting them only with our saliva.’ (*The Kitchen God’s Wife* 362)

Tan’s *The Joy Luck Club* contains similar references to the horrors of eating, to times of a terrible shortage of food, when “many people [...] were starving, eating rats and, later, the garbage that the poorest rats used to feed on” (*The Joy Luck Club* 11). At least in Amy Tan’s novels, the horrors of food serve to reinforce

the predominantly negative image of the life led by the older generation back in China.

While descriptions of the horrors of food are frequently associated with China in Tan's novels, there are also scenes where the horrors of food are located in an American setting. In Gish Jen's novel *Typical American* the protagonist Yifeng/Ralph Chang originally came to the United States to study engineering, but he soon starts working in restaurants: "Being Chinese, he had thought the safest place to work would be in the Chinese restaurants [...]. Weren't people needed to wash dishes, wait table, make noodles?" (*Typical American* 34) Yet, instead of waiting tables or making noodles, the protagonist, who at this stage speaks little English and has no relevant work experience, is forced to do jobs that sound extremely disgusting:

At dawn he would get up, wash, put on his bloody clothes, and walk to the store basement, where by the light of a yellow forty-watt bulb, crates of animals surrounding him – pigs and rabbits against one wall, pigeons and snakes against another – he would kill and clean and pluck hours upon hours of chickens. The first week he vomited daily from the stench of the feces and offal and rotting meat. [...] he'd snap the victim's neck, bare its jugular, slit it. Into the barrel, still kicking, to drain. Later, a roll in hot water, to loosen the feathers. Then he would pluck and dress the body [...]. (*Typical American* 34)

The description of the protagonist's daily routine is reminiscent of the miserable jobs many Chinese immigrants have traditionally had to accept after their arrival in the United States, the 'Gold Mountain' they had heard of in China. In particular the reference to the protagonist's nausea is likely to make the reader aware of the horrors of Yifeng/Ralph's workplace. Yet details such as the "yellow forty-watt bulb" also contribute to rendering the scene more vivid – and more horrible.

IV. Food, interpersonal relationships and individual memories

Beyond their function as markers of ethnicity, references to food may fulfil a range of further functions in Chinese American literature, most of which are ultimately also informed by the process of negotiating cultural identities and allegiances, however. May Paomay Tung stresses that food has a range of functions within Chinese American culture that are radically different from those in other American and European cultures.²⁴ Tung argues in particular that preparing, offering and accepting food in Chinese American culture is traditionally

24 Cf. TUNG, May Paomay. *Chinese Americans and their Immigrant Parents: Conflict, Identity, and Values*. New York/London/Oxford: The Haworth Clinical Practice Press, 2000. 31.

equivalent to the expression of emotions via linguistic means and gestures in Anglo-American culture.²⁵ Since this feature of Chinese American culture can be traced back to Chinese culture, Caucasians as well as second- and third-generation Chinese Americans may be unaware of this particular semantic dimension of food. This also accounts for the fact that “American-raised children frequently complain about the persistent emphasis on food, [...] not knowing its meaning.”²⁶

In Chinese American literature scenes depicting family meals tend to be fraught with tension. Not only what is eaten is a culture-sensitive issue but also the ways in which meals are organised and even ritualised. In accordance with what Tung argues the way characters talk about food and specifically about meals with family members sometimes seems to express a meaning which is encoded in a culture-specific fashion. The following passage from Tan’s *The Kitchen God’s Wife*, where a character thinks about her life in China, is a case in point:

[...] I never felt I belonged to that family. [...] They were not mean to me, not really. But I knew they did not love me the way they did Peanut and my boy cousins. It was like this: During the evening meal, Old Aunt or New Aunt might say to Peanut, ‘Look, your favorite dish.’ They might say to the little boys, ‘Eat more, eat more, before you blow away with the wind.’ They never said these things to me. They noticed me only when they wanted to criticize, how I ate too quickly, how I ate too slowly. (*The Kitchen God’s Wife* 134)

According to the character’s memories, affection and a lack thereof were expressed indirectly during meals, by means of references to food and eating. The way the character, a first-generation Chinese American, remembers the dinner scenes implies that it was not difficult for her to decipher the code, which suggests that it was based on a cultural consensus.

In Gish Jen’s *Typical American*, in contrast, the offer of food on the part of the wife and the husband’s (mild) complaints about a supposed lack of salt appear to be an expression of mutual affection:

The first trip [to the kitchen] he had tasted the soup; the second, he had asked Helen to make him a cup of tea; the last, he had had more soup. ‘Needs salt,’ he had said then. To this she’d answered affectionately, as she tasted it herself, ‘What do you know?’ (*Typical American* 71)

Here, the acts of assuming the right to criticise and of assuming the right to reject the criticism without causing offense seem to be made possible by a certain intimacy, which allows husband and wife to read the ‘sparring’ as an expression

25 Cf. TUNG. *Chinese Americans and their Immigrant Parents*. 31.

26 Cf. TUNG. *Chinese Americans and their Immigrant Parents*. 31.

of affection. The overtones of intimacy which appear to be implied in the short dialogue are reinforced by the use of Chinese, the characters' native language.²⁷ Upon the husband's next trip to the kitchen, however, the atmosphere suddenly changes, which is indicated by the wife's use of English as well as by the fact that she now adds salt to the soup: "'Needs salt.' He smiled. But this time [...] she said okay, in English, patiently, and reached for the salt shaker. She was going to add salt. What wasn't proper?" (*Typical American* 72) The husband's use of Chinese, combined with his smile, is meant to express affection; yet his wife now refuses to share the language of intimacy, opting for English – and for interpreting the remark about the lack of salt as a request or even as criticism of her cooking.

In Chinese American literature food is frequently linked with notions of home and belonging, with childhood memories and, especially for first-generation immigrants, with recollections of a life that is irrevocably lost. The protagonist of Mabelle Hsueh's short story "A Platter of Steaming Dumplings", for instance, is reminded of his mother by the taste and smell of jasmine tea: "He drank more tea and the delicate flavor of jasmine pricked his nose and tongue. He recalled how his mother enjoyed adding a few fresh jasmine flowers to her tea whenever the plants in the garden were in bloom." ("A Platter of Steaming Dumplings" 309) Triggering individual memories, even those that may seem to be long-lost, may well be regarded as a property of food in general.²⁸ The intimate nature of memories triggered by the act of tasting once-familiar food can be traced back to the way body memory operates. According to memory studies, the body possesses a memory in its own right, and the taste buds certainly contribute to this body memory. Beyond the general properties of food in relation to body memory there is also an 'ethnic dimension' rendering the link between food and childhood memories more complex since "[e]ither explicitly and consciously or implicitly and unconsciously, adults teach children foodways that are often associated with their ethnic identity."²⁹

Tasting a dish triggering childhood memories and in particular memories of a home that has been lost as a result of emigration may turn into an emotionally intense process. For the protagonist of Mabelle Hsueh's short story "A Platter of Steaming Dumplings" the process of remembering details from his childhood which is triggered by eating dumplings in a Chinese American restaurant is a pleasant experience which allows him to establish an emotional link with his past.³⁰ In Gish Jen's novel *Typical American*, in contrast, the taste of familiar food

27 Throughout Gish Jen's novel italics are used to indicate when the characters speak Chinese.

28 Marcel Proust's novel *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu* (1913–27) has become the literary *locus classicus* as far as this particular property of food is concerned.

29 HENDERSON. "'Ebony Jr!' and 'Soul Food.'" 82.

30 Cf.: "Professor Liu bent forward and put the dumpling in the middle of his tongue. As the juice squirted out of the soft dough and filled his mouth, he closed his eyes and sighed with

is shown to intensify a character's feeling of homesickness: "Her cooking was so agonizingly close to that of his family's old cook that his stomach fairly ached with the resemblance, even as his mouth thrilled." (*Typical American* 57) Pleasure and pain appear to be virtually inseparable in this case. Yet food may also trigger unpleasant and even downright traumatic memories. In Amy Tan's *The Kitchen God's Wife*, for instance, the protagonist shuns certain types of food because they bring back images of her life in wartime China. This causes her to ponder the connection between food and memory in more general terms: "Why do some memories live only on your tongue or in your nose?" (*The Kitchen God's Wife* 296) Food that is familiar from childhood may respond to diverse, perhaps only half-understood cravings, as the following passage from Tan's *The Bonesetter's Daughter*, in which protagonist Ruth's childhood memories are presented, illustrates:

Every year, before their family reunion dinner in September, her mother started two new fermenting jars of spicy turnips, one of which she gave to Ruth. When Ruth was a little girl, she called them *la-la*, hot-hot. She would suck and munch on them until her tongue and lips felt inflamed and swollen. She still gorged on them from time to time. Was it a craving for salt, or for pain? [...] At times Ruth secretly ate the spicy turnips in the morning, her way of seizing the day. Even her mother considered that strange. (*The Bonesetter's Daughter* 33)

Apparently half-felt emotions such as a "craving [...] for pain" translate quite easily into the consumption of food, without, however, enabling Ruth to fully grasp what she is feeling. In fact, it seems to be one of the properties of taste that it may be associated with a comparatively diffuse set of emotions and memories, which possibly even defies attempts at conscious classification and categorization. Arguably this is one of the characteristics of the link between food and memory which makes this connection interesting in the first place.

In Fae Myenne Ng's short story "The Red Sweater" (1986) the narrator, a second-generation Chinese American woman, ponders the link between food, memories and her identity as a Chinese American. She indicates her assimilation to American culture by her preferences regarding restaurants ("In American restaurants, the atmosphere helps you along. I want nice light and a view and handsome waiters." 360) and by her table manners ("I seldom use chopsticks now. At home, I eat my rice in a plate, with a fork. The only chopsticks I own, I wear in my hair." 360). Nevertheless, when she meets her sister in an American restaurant she feels a sense of alienation, caused by the discrepancy between

pleasure. 'When I was a boy,' he began, 'my grandmother always made *jiao-zi*, along with other foods, on the twenty-third day of the last month of the Chinese year. They were offerings for the Kitchen God.' ("A Platter of Steaming Dumplings" 310)

their present environment and the way they had dinner together when they both lived with their parents:

For a moment, I feel strange sitting here at this unfamiliar table. I don't know this tablecloth, this linen, these candles. Everything seems foreign. It feels like we should be different people. But each time I look up, she's the same. I know this person. She's my sister. We sat together with chopsticks, mismatched bowls, braids, and braces, across the formica tabletop. ("The Red Sweater" 360–61)

The memory of shared meals strengthens the bond between the sisters. Moreover, the narrator points out that for her the taste of Chinese food is superior to that of Western food, which she considers to be less distinctive in terms of its flavour:

The food [in the American restaurant] isn't great. Or maybe we just don't have the taste buds in us to go crazy over it. Sometimes I get very hungry for Chinese flavors: black beans, garlic and ginger, shrimp paste and sesame oil. These are tastes we grew up with, still dream about. Crave. Run around town after. Duck liver sausage, beancurd, jook, salted fish, and fried dace with black beans. Western flavors don't stand out, the surroundings do. ("The Red Sweater" 363)

The passage quoted above clearly expresses the notion that food eaten in one's childhood tends to leave an indelible trace in one's memory and is likely to determine which kind of food one is likely to prefer as an adult. While the narrator has learned to enjoy the atmosphere offered by American restaurants, her taste buds (perhaps involuntarily) remain loyal to her Chinese American heritage and cause her to crave Chinese food. Moreover, for the narrator in Ng's short story the memory of her parents is closely connected with her father's marked preference for bok choy and with her mother's preparation of this dish – a memory that incidentally also echoes the traditional distribution of labour within the family.³¹ Thus, childhood memories in this short story appear to be intimately linked with food on several levels. The central role played by food in childhood memories is certainly not unique to Chinese American literature. Nevertheless it is a further facet adding to the special significance references to food have throughout Chinese American literature.

31 Cf. "The Red Sweater" (363): "There was always bok choy. Even though it was nonstop for Mah – rushing to the sweatshop in the morning, out to shop on break, and then home to cook in the evening – she did this for him. A plate of bok choy, steaming with the taste of ginger and garlic. He said she made good rice. Timed full-fire until the first boil, medium until the grains formed a crust along the sides of the pot, and then low-flamed to let the rice steam. Firm, that's how Deh liked his rice."

V. Conclusion

As the discussion above has shown, Chinese American literature is replete with references to food and eating. Many of these references are apt to remind the readers of the fact that the pleasures and horrors of eating may be the product of acculturation, since they reveal the culture-specific ‘tuning’ of the eyes and taste buds of the individual. Unfamiliar food is often shown to be perceived as unappealing or even downright disgusting by cultural outsiders while satisfying the cravings of cultural insiders. The references to food constitute one of the features of Chinese American literature that mark the ‘ethnicity’ of this literature, thus catering to the readers’ interest in the depiction of Chinese American ‘Otherness’ – a tendency that has not gone entirely unchallenged within Chinese American literature itself. A mixture of foreign and familiar food (i. e. culinary hybridity) may tempt the individual to try even what is unfamiliar and may celebrate the problematic concept of hybridity. In more general terms, the approach to food in Chinese American literature confirms the anthropological insight that “traditional food can become a living and dynamic part of the present and can allow for knowledge to be reproduced by individuals”³². The fact that references to eating and to the preparation of food are virtually omnipresent in Chinese American literature supports the assumption that “[f]ood is a meaningful aspect of Chinese American experience”³³, which has been put forward by a number of scholars.

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The Battle of the Bulge? Anorexia Nervosa in North American Fiction 1969-1981-2007

Hunger is a feeling everyone can relate to in one way or other. But what happens when this feeling turns into a much desired state? What if the yearning for hunger becomes overwhelming? At this point in a long and complex process, hunger becomes an illness: anorexia nervosa. Living in the media age, we are constantly confronted with visual representations of diverse cultural phenomena including anorexia nervosa, arguably one of the most dangerous illnesses of our time. On the one hand, we have 'super-thin' Hollywood starlets whose close-ups are (mis)used for promoting the latest diets and the so-called 'pro-ana'-websites created by young girls who glorify anorexia nervosa as their much beloved friend.¹ On the other hand, campaigns are initiated in order to raise awareness of the problem, the most famous of which surely is the one created by Oliviero Toscani featuring the anorexic French model Isabelle Caro, who is posing naked, meant to give anorexia a face.

In the following, representations of anorexia nervosa in selected works of North American fiction will be discussed. Given that eating disorders in general and anorexia nervosa in particular have increasingly been taken note of in the past decades, this paper aims at exploring three novels from different periods in order to see how literary representations of this severe eating disorder have changed over time. The novels to be looked at are Margaret Atwood's *The Edible Woman* (1969), Deborah Hautzig's *Second Star to the Right* (1981), and Bethany Pierce's *Feeling for Bones* (2007). This selection is considered to be paradigmatic as, from today's point of view, Atwood's novel, to begin with, is oftentimes regarded as one of the first novels to depict a severe eating disorder explicitly. More than ten years later, Hautzig's work of young-adult fiction caused a big stir due to its precise portrayal of the treatment of anorexia nervosa at a stage when

¹ See, for example, Slavenka DRAKULIC's essay "Schlachtfeld Frauenkörper" in *EMMA* (September/October 2006): 50 – 54; or, in the same edition, Christiane HEIL's "Armes Hollywood." 55 – 57. Susie ORBACH also examines the influence of celebrities with eating disorders in her article "Fat celebrities a danger to our health? Come off it." In: *The Guardian* (June 30, 2009).

the disease was hardly known, and it is nowadays regarded as the “landmark novel about anorexia nervosa” (book cover Puffin books). Pierce’s novel, lastly, deals with anorexia nervosa in the media age – a period when the illness takes centre stage. Due to these very different cultural contexts, a juxtaposition of the three works promises to turn out particularly fruitful.

Far from intending to provide any answers as to diagnostic or therapeutic approaches, this paper must be seen as an attempt to identify certain developmental tendencies in the representation of anorexia nervosa against the background of an ever-increasing awareness of the disease. Eventually, this contribution hopes to find its place in a growing discourse on eating disorders and pays tribute to the women and men who are battling the horrors of this very enigmatic disease, the bulge, and, probably, something more.

Margaret Atwood’s first novel, *The Edible Woman*,² offers a wide range of topics to be considered in connection with anorexia nervosa. This paper will particularly focus on the juxtaposition of the protagonist’s food refusal and the forthcoming wedding with her fiancé Peter. We will argue that Atwood’s novel can be read as the story of a woman, Marian MacAlpin, whose body and mind refuse to give in to a marriage of convenience and thus, as a means of rebellion, develop a serious eating disorder. In other words, Atwood “brings food and eating (or not-eating) into direct relationship with gender and cultural politics, using food and its activities to problematize assumed gender roles of the late 1950s and 1960s in urban Canada”.³

First of all, it is crucial to mention that the term ‘anorexia nervosa’ is not once brought up in the novel because at the time it was written the term as well as the illness itself had not been widely recognized.⁴ Only about ten years after the publication of the novel the American Anorexia and Bulimia Association was founded.⁵ Nevertheless, Marian’s refusal of food surely is the most obvious symptom of what is nowadays diagnosed as anorexia nervosa. Furthermore, the extreme way in which she scrutinizes and describes other people’s bodies can be read as another symptom of an eating disorder. At the beginning of the novel, Marian’s relationship to food is untroubled; she is a hearty eater and food seems to be prominent in her life, though not in a negative way. Whenever she is

2 In the following the abbreviation *TEW* will be used to refer to *The Edible Woman*.

3 SCEATS, Sarah. *Food, Consumption and the Body in Contemporary Women’s Fiction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000. 95. Greta OLSON’s *Reading Eating Disorders: Writings on Bulimia and Anorexia as Confessions of American Culture* (Frankfurt: Lang, 2008) offers an excellent introduction to anorexia nervosa and bulimia as cultural phenomena.

4 Compare, for instance, BRUCH, Hilde. *Der goldene Käfig. Das Rätsel der Magersucht*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1980.

5 Cf. MORRIS, David B. *Illness and Culture in the Postmodern Age*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000. 153.

hungry, she eats. Besides, Marian feels healthy and she does not leave the house without a nourishing breakfast. But when her boyfriend Peter asks her to marry him, her attitude towards food and towards herself suddenly changes significantly. The ‘outbreak’ of her eating disorder is not marked by an actual loss of appetite. As opposed to most anorexics, Marian does not regard herself as fat or in need of losing weight in order to conform to a certain body image.⁶ Still, it is striking how closely she scrutinizes all the women around her and how hard she sometimes judges too tightly fitted dresses or the plump bodies of her colleagues.⁷ In other words, a closer look at Marian’s behaviour reveals that she is indeed concerned with appearances and physicality but not to the point of voicing any kind of dissatisfaction with her own body. Thus, the motivation for Marian’s extreme change has to be looked for elsewhere.

When Peter and Marian are about to share a meal at a restaurant, Marian is suddenly repulsed by the fleshliness of her steak, which she perceives “as a hunk of muscle. Blood red. Part of a real cow that once moved and ate and was killed, knocked on the head as it stood in a queue” (*TEW* 155). At the same time, she is shocked by the seemingly physical violence with which Peter gobbles up his steak because “violence in connection with Peter seemed incongruous to her” (*TEW* 154).⁸ Later on she revises her impression by stating that Peter is in fact violent, only that his is a “violence of the mind, almost magic: you thought it and it happened” (*TEW* 155). Answering Peter’s surprise about her almost untouched plate, she pretends to be full, which reinforces Peter’s notion that he is the stronger link in their relationship because thus he has one more opportunity to be “pleasantly conscious of his own superior capacity” (*TEW* 156). Marian’s reaction can be read as a “response to the unnatural position she is forced into as

6 The WHO describes anorexia nervosa as a “disorder characterized by deliberate weight loss, induced and sustained by the patient. It occurs most commonly in adolescent girls and young women, but adolescent boys and young men may also be affected, as may children approaching puberty and older women up to the menopause. The disorder is associated with a specific psychopathology whereby a dread of fatness and flabbiness of body contour persists as an intrusive overvalued idea, and the patients impose a low weight threshold on themselves.” <http://apps.who.int/classifications/apps/icd/icd10online/index.htm?gf50.htm> (last accessed: 20 May, 2009).

7 For example: “[S]he could see the roll of fat pushed up across Mrs. Gundridge’s back by the top of her corset, the ham-like bulge of thigh, the creases around the neck, the large porous cheeks; the blotch of varicose veins glimpsed at the back of one plump crossed leg, the way her jowls jellied when she chewed, her sweater a woolly teacosy over those round shoulders; the others too, similar in structure but with varying proportions and textures of bumpy permanents and dune-like contours of breast and waist and hip” (*TEW* 171).

8 The presentation of Peter in this scene complies with common stereotypes. According to Susan BORDO, “[m]en are supposed to have hearty, even voracious, appetites. It is a mark of the manly to eat spontaneously and expansively.” In: BORDO, Susan. *Unbearable Weight. Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body*. 10th Anniversary ed. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003 [1993]. 108.

a bride-to-be: submissive, domestically focused, approving, deferential, maternal”.⁹ She quickly understands the severity of the incident at the restaurant because she immediately fears to “starve to death” if the state continues (*TEW* 156). Indeed, she gradually develops an aversion to certain types of food. At first, it is mainly different kinds of meat that she cannot eat any longer. For any vegetarian this might still be easy to comprehend, but when Marian’s horror expands to peanut butter “disliking the way it cleave[s] to the roof of her mouth” (*TEW* 159), it becomes clear that there is something wrong with her eating behaviour. Each new refusal is connected with the fear “that slowly the circle now dividing the non-devourable from the devourable would become smaller and smaller, that the objects available to her would be excluded one by one” (*TEW* 157). And her fear is justified: after a disgusting story about eggs, Marian stops eating them. The natural fact that carrots grow in the earth is sufficient to make her cut them out of her diet. Also when she tries her once beloved rice pudding, the feeling in her mouth reminds her of “a collection of small cocoons. Cocoons with miniature living creatures inside” (*TEW* 213). A bite of cake turns into something that feels “spongy and cellular against her tongue, like the bursting of thousands of tiny lungs” (*TEW* 213). For a while Marian lives on noodles and vitamin pills, but finally, “[t]he food circle ha[s] dwindled to a point, a black dot, closing everything outside” (*TEW* 264).

During the entire process, Atwood describes Marian as unable to control herself. At first, it is inexplicable to her what is “making these decisions, not her mind certainly” (*TEW* 156). Later, it is her body, metaphorically referred to as an “angry god” (*TEW* 204), that dictates her what to eat and what to cut out. Again and again, Marian desperately declares to be under the influence of her body’s will. She conceives of it as an independent entity, separate from her mind. In an ironic pun Atwood has her protagonist spend her days starving “with the forlorn hope that her body might change its mind” (*TEW* 183). Thus, critic Sarah Sceats claims that “the body is given its own, subversive voice”.¹⁰ But how much of a reliable narrator is Marian after all? On the textual level, Atwood announces the major alterations to Marian’s body and behaviour with a shift in the narrative perspective. The autodiegetic narration changes to a heterodiegetic one. Only at the end of the novel, when Marian’s eating disorder stops, the autodiegetic narration continues. So it can be said that the narrative situation reflects Marian’s increasing loss of control and her regaining it in the end.¹¹ But, on the whole, Atwood leaves the reader in doubt. Prior to her first refusal of food at the

9 SCEATS. *Food, Consumption and the Body in Contemporary Women’s Fiction*. 96.

10 SCEATS. *Food, Consumption and the Body in Contemporary Women’s Fiction*. 95.

11 For a more detailed analysis of the narrative situation in *TEW* see, for example, BRAIN, Tracy. “Figuring Anorexia: Margaret Atwood’s *The Edible Woman*.” In: *LIT* 6,3–4 (1995): 299–311.

restaurant Marian realizes the following: “It was my subconscious getting ahead of my conscious self, and the subconscious has its own logic. The way I went about doing things may have been a little inconsistent with my true personality, but are the results that inconsistent?” (TEW 104) The comment suggests that Marian might not easily be trusted in solely blaming her body for rejecting food. What complicates the question even more is the fact that Marian never directly criticizes the shape of her body. As was stated above, in contrast to many anorexics Marian is not fighting her body because she feels fat and thus starves. Instead, her body turns into an enemy due to its refusal to digest food. Nevertheless, some critics are quite certain about the reasons for Marian’s refusal to eat. Tracy Brain, for instance, interprets her cutting out of certain types of food as “typical anorexic behavior”.¹² And, according to Susie Orbach, “food refusal [...] is not a passive act but the outcome of much determination and resolve on the part of the anorexic woman”.¹³ Moreover, most clinical therapists agree that the act of starvation is chosen by the patient and that thus anorexia patients can be regarded as “in charge of food”.¹⁴ Still, the text does not clearly support the argument that Marian simply acts like any other anorexic. Her desperation about her inability to eat seems to contradict the assumption that she is suffering from ‘typical’ anorexia nervosa. After all, she has a strong desire to eat, which she voices time and again. For instance, when her diet is reduced to salad and vegetables, “she long[s] to become again a carnivore, to gnaw on a good bone!” (TEW 178)

Anorexia nervosa can quite literally be interpreted as an illness that expresses the patient’s inability to stomach something.¹⁵ Reasons for Marian’s *hunger strike*, conscious or subconscious, can be detected in all of her personal relationships. The most severe ‘indigestible’ aspect of her life is certainly her relationship with Peter and all it encompasses. In many ways, Marian’s eating disorder is a “rebellion against culturally constructed forms of femininity”¹⁶ and thus against her marriage with Peter. As was mentioned before, he considers himself to be superior to her. Time and again, he treats her as a mere object, belittles her and regards her as barely more than a decorative accessory. One of the most degrading incidents surely is when he places his ashtray on her back to enjoy a postcoital cigarette. The fact that he does so twice in the course of the novel seems to suggest that it is a habit to keep his girl-friend down by his side because she can only get up if he lifts the ashtray. In other words, only if he allows

12 BRAIN. “Figuring Anorexia.” 301.

13 ORBACH, Susie. *Hunger Strike*. London/Boston: Faber and Faber, 1986. 134.

14 ORBACH. *Hunger Strike*. 137.

15 Cf. CHERNIN, Kim. *The Hungry Self. Women, Eating, and Identity*. London: Virago Press, 1986. 19.

16 BRAIN. “Figuring Anorexia.” 299.

Marian to raise herself she can do so. Apart from keeping Marian small, the 'violent eater' Peter wants a sensible wife by his side whom he can direct and 'consume'.¹⁷ Atwood constructs Marian as the victim in this relationship. No wonder then that Marian turns to someone else to find what Peter cannot give her. Her temporary affair with Duncan has been interpreted as an expression of the "instability of stereotypes"¹⁸ because Duncan is not at all strong or powerful. On the contrary, compared to Marian and, more significantly, to Peter, Duncan is described as fragile, with a body that feels like "the gaunt slope of a starved animal in time of famine" (*TEW* 176). At one point Marian complains about his unfriendly room-mates, who behave towards her "as though they think [she's] trying to gobble [him] up" (*TEW* 190). As opposed to Marian and Peter's relationship, in this case the physical roles are obviously reversed. What is more, Duncan's fragility and his lack of interest in her life and motivations calm Marian down. According to Tracy Brain, Marian turns to Duncan because he is the seemingly "'feminine' man who is Peter's opposite and a counter to every component of the image of the ideal 'masculine' man".¹⁹ However, it can be argued that Marian likes Duncan not so much because of his physical inferiority but because he does not make any demands on her. This is made clear in the scene in which Duncan reaches out for Marian and thus threatens her the same way Peter does, so that she draws back "with an infinitesimal shiver of horror" (*TEW* 193). She only felt that kind of horror in connection with food before. On the whole, it is the balance of power in the relationship with Duncan which Marian treasures. The roles of the 'consumer' and 'the one being consumed' always oscillate between him and her. And even if Duncan 'consumes' her she does not "at all mind being used, as long as she [knows] what for: she [likes] these things to take place on as conscious a level as possible" (*TEW* 188). Interestingly, Duncan seems to be the only one who has a faint idea why Marian no longer eats. When she voices her inability again, he tells her, "you're probably representative of modern youth, rebelling against the system, though it isn't considered orthodox to begin with the digestive system" (*TEW* 197).

Rejection and rebellion are words that have been repeated time and again. "Marian's repudiation of femininity"²⁰ finds expression in the relationships with her room-mate Ainsley and her friend Clara, whose attitudes towards being mothers contradict Marian's. At the beginning of the novel, Marian almost acts as a surrogate mother to Ainsley. Significantly, she is the one who tries to

17 For a closer analysis of anorexia nervosa in connection with consumer culture see BORDO, Susan. "Reading the Slender Body." In: Mary Jacobus et al. (eds.). *Body/Politics: Women and the Discourse of Science*. New York/London: Routledge, 1990. 83–112.

18 BRAIN. "Figuring Anorexia." 306.

19 BRAIN. "Figuring Anorexia." 306.

20 BRAIN. "Figuring Anorexia." 306.

convince Ainsley to have some breakfast before leaving the house. So, even in this relationship, Marian is connected with food. Ainsley's sudden decision to get pregnant at all costs without getting married leaves Marian insecure because she is confronted with her own aversion concerning commitment, serious relationships and motherhood. Seeing Clara struggle with her pregnancy and being confronted with the maternal body, which resembles "a swollen mass of flesh with a tiny pinhead, a shape that [makes] her think of a queen-ant, bulging with the burden of an entire society" (TEW 117), causes additional unease inside Marian.²¹ On the whole, the process of becoming a mother only has negative connotations for her. In her opinion, it reduces Clara to a "vegetable stage" (TEW 133). Despite the fact that a sugar coating voice inside her head tells Marian that "Peter and she [are] going into it with far fewer illusions" (TEW 135), it is fairly obvious that she is terrified of being equally reduced sooner or later. The voice inside her head constantly reminds her that she is handing her life and decision more and more over to Peter (cf. TEW 92). At the same time, Marian behaves oddly on several occasions because the pressure gets at her. It does not come as a surprise that Atwood has both Peter and Ainsley accuse Marian of "rejecting [her] femininity!" (TEW 82 and 280). Peter does so when Marian suffers a breakdown and does not behave as meekly and passively as he expects her to. Ainsley claims this when Marian bakes and eats the title-giving cake in the shape of a woman at the end of the novel. This final act of rebellion is not at all a rejection but it allows Marian to break free. The fact that she decides on a sponge cake is highly symbolic because in the process of making it, this light type of cake is filled with a lot of air. And by baking and offering this cake to the horrified Peter, who finally flees, Marian seems to become able to breathe freely again. What is more, by putting all the different ingredients together, she can put the scattered pieces of her self back together. She is no longer the consumed victim, the woman being eaten up by other people and their demands on her. So, on the one hand, "she asserts her ownership of herself. No longer perceiving herself as victimised or assimilated, she ceases to see food as such."²² On the other hand, however, Atwood again avoids a definite ending because it is Duncan and not Marian who finishes the cake.

Moving twelve years ahead in time, the obvious, yet unnamed illness haunting Marian is labeled in Deborah Hautzig's novel *Second Star to the Right*.²³ Where *The Edible Woman* portrays the struggle of a young woman on the verge of marriage, the protagonist of Hautzig's disturbing account is a 14-year-old

21 To Tracy BRAIN ("Figuring Anorexia." 306–307), the metanarrative of Fish's PhD thesis on *Alice and Wonderland*, in which he draws a connection between Alice and Marian, represents a textual strategy to support Marian's aversion to motherhood.

22 BRAIN. "Figuring Anorexia." 304.

23 In the following, the abbreviation SSR will be used to refer to *Second Star to the Right*.

teenager. Throughout the novel, first-person narrator Leslie approaches and guides the readers through her personal hell.

On the surface, Leslie's life in New York City is every girl's dream. She is pretty, a straight-A student, has a bunch of friends, and her father, a piano teacher at Juilliard, and her mother, a real-estate agent, are happily married and support her in every way. However, there is trouble in paradise: "It's hard to know where to begin telling you about this. [...] But I know that if I don't at least try, I'll stay the way I am till it kills me. Till I kill me, I mean. I never really accept that that's what I'm doing – I say it, but I don't believe it." (SSR 1) Even Leslie's very first words show both an unusual awareness of her problem and the willpower to cope with whatever "it" will turn out to be. Clearly, it is the heroine's honest display of emotions and her sharp wit which make Hautzig's novel stick out. Leslie's case comes to read like a textbook example of an anorexic's struggle, and back in 1981, the time was ripe for a book like this in order to familiarize people with a very unfamiliar illness. Only two years later, the death of the anorexic American singer Karen Carpenter, which was attributed to her illness, was to create a big stir – and at one fell swoop anorexia nervosa was known and heatedly debated across the US.

Trying to pinpoint when it all began, Leslie remembers making friends with Cavett, a girl from her new school. While Cavett shows a healthy appetite eating the Oreos Mrs. Hiller offers them, Leslie feels guilty, "[l]ike [she]'d done something evil", and does not know why (SSR 4). Afterwards, she fills Cavett in on her plan to lose ten pounds, which her new friend clearly rejects. At that point, Leslie has already developed a distorted body image. Although her hobbies include playing the piano and writing, her perfectionist self-perception leads the talented young woman to complain about never having wanted to take ballet lessons saying, "Then I wouldn't be fat" (SSR 6). Both Cavett and Leslie's little brother Sammy try to convince her that she is "just right" (SSR 6) and "beautiful" (SSR 23), but being the hard worker she has always been, Leslie is sure that "if [she] w[as] thin, [her] life would be perfect" (SSR 12). According to the DSM (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders), at this stage Leslie already displays two major symptoms of anorexia nervosa, namely "intense fear of gaining weight or becoming fat" and a "disturbance in the way in which one's body weight, size, or shape is experienced".²⁴

Tragically, no matter how supportive Cavett is, she constitutes both Leslie's "salvation" (SSR 112) and her biggest opponent. Due to Cavett's slim figure, Leslie gets increasingly jealous (cf. SSR 7), which, again, is common with anorexics. For Joan Jacobs Brumberg, who traced the history of anorexia nervosa,

24 Quoted in: GREMILLION, Helen. *Feeding Anorexia. Gender and Power at a Treatment Center*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2003. 8.

the illness must be regarded as an expression of the patient's mental and bodily addiction to perfection.²⁵ This struggle instantly goes along with the constant need to compare oneself to one's female friends.²⁶ As today the ratio of anorexic women to anorexic men is higher than ten to one,²⁷ anorexia nervosa can be identified as a rather gender-specific illness. Starting from these observations, Helen Gremillion's claim that "anorexia embodies contemporary ideals of femininity"²⁸ suggests that, on a symbolic level, anorexia is a metaphor for women's struggle in society, as has already been pointed out with regard to *The Edible Woman*. Thus, it seems that anorexia is primarily a battle a woman must carry out with herself as well as between her and members of the same sex, who she (mis)takes as her rivals in terms of discipline and, hence, beauty.

The analysis of *The Edible Woman* has suggested that the anorexic's beloved ones are, paradoxically, prone to cause her the biggest problems. This seems to happen more accidentally than consciously. With regard to Leslie's case, this assumption can be verified. Whereas Marian finally identifies Peter as the source of her unhappiness, it is Leslie's mother who involuntarily keeps her daughter from leading a carefree life. Jacobs Brumberg has observed that mothers play a crucial role in almost every novel about female anorexic teenagers. Moreover, the plots of such novels are strikingly similar with regard to the young female protagonists' constant inner conflict between feelings of love, hate, and guilt towards their mothers.²⁹ In this respect, *Second Star to the Right* can certainly be seen as paradigmatic considering that it led the way for a substantial number of 1980s young-adult novels on anorexia. Knowing about the key role of the mother-daughter relationship, it is worthwhile to put this specific aspect of Leslie's life under closer scrutiny. Consequently, the question at stake is: What does the problematic relationship between Leslie and her mother entail?

The first pages of the novel already reveal that being recognized and well-liked by Leslie's friends is very important to Mrs. Hiller, and that she, like her daughter, is in need of perfection and control (cf. SSR 5 and 16). It soon becomes clear that Leslie feels inferior to her mother and that she already began to put the screws on herself in her childhood in order to imitate her mother's success. In spite of her good grades, however, she feels she is just not a "European beauty" like her mother (cf. SSR 32). Suffering from that 'flaw,' Leslie's insecurity makes her return to her childhood. At one point, she confronts Mrs. Hiller with "a game [they] played when [she] was little", asking her, "How much do you love me?"

25 Cf. JACOBS BRUMBERG, Joan. *Todeshunger. Die Geschichte der Anorexia nervosa vom Mittelalter bis heute*. Frankfurt: Campus, 1994. 14.

26 JACOBS BRUMBERG, *Todeshunger*. 224.

27 Cf. GREMILLION. *Feeding Anorexia*. 6.

28 GREMILLION. *Feeding Anorexia*. 30.

29 JACOBS BRUMBERG. *Todeshunger*. 23–24.

(SSR 11). Significantly, her mother answers “[f]rom here to the moon and back again”, but Leslie recognizes with insecurity that “her eyes, *as always*, look[...] frightened” (SSR 11 – 12, emphasis added). In the following, Leslie desperately tries to break through to her mom’s sincere emotions but remains disillusioned thinking, “I’m trying to be like you, Mom. I’m trying so hard” (SSR 37). According to Jacobs Brumberg, the problem of how to handle being torn between imitating the idealized mother and developing one’s own identity at the same time is a dilemma a lot of female anorexic teenagers have to face.³⁰

Interestingly enough, however, the mother appears to be struggling just as much. In 1940, psychiatrist Frieda Fromm-Reichman coined the term ‘schizophrenogenic mother’ in order to refer to a type of mother who simultaneously tends to ignore her children’s needs and to be overprotective of them almost to the point of confusing their identities with her own.³¹ Quite tellingly, Leslie herself illustrates that exact notion when she states, “Mom pretends to be so selfless, yet manages to suck me dry till I don’t even feel like a person. *Till I can’t tell us apart.*” (SSR 120, emphasis added) Gremillion sees this kind of pathological overparenting as “linked up with a new social vigilance to naturalize women as mothers”³² and thus argues for its topicality in a late twentieth-century context. Mrs. Hiller’s most emotional moments finally reveal her pressures. At a rather early point in the novel, she writes Leslie a letter in which she reassures her daughter of her love while admitting that in her function as a mother she can be “a terrible nag” at times (SSR 74). Yet after Leslie’s hospitalization, she is again very hard on her daughter when she confesses that she told people Leslie had gone to boarding school. Confronting Mrs. Hiller with her biggest apprehension, Leslie eventually asks, “You’re afraid they’ll think it’s your fault, aren’t you?” – and receives the sobering answer: “Yes, if you must know [...] It makes *me* look like a bad mother. OK?” (SSR 137)³³

Nevertheless, since the novel clearly centers on Leslie’s problematic identity formation, the obvious question to ask is how she experiences the downward spiral into the disease, which is to go from the most empowering to the most threatening aspect of her life. Her decision to go on a diet makes her feel more powerful than ever before. Having lost only a few pounds because of a flu, what Leslie perceives as her mother’s insincere display of joy about her daughter’s ‘achievement’ is all the incentive she needs to decide to go ahead. At a moment’s notice she rejoices, “For the first time in my life, I felt *in control*. [...] It was like something in me had finally erupted, you know?” (SSR 42, emphasis added)

30 JACOBS BRUMBERG. *Todeshunger*. 34.

31 Cf. GREMILLION. *Feeding Anorexia*. 80.

32 GREMILLION. *Feeding Anorexia*. 81.

33 For a more extensive discussion of the relationship between a mother and her anorexic child in the twentieth century see GREMILLION. *Feeding Anorexia*. 73 – 118.

Eventually, she has discovered something that is entirely up to her and it is, more importantly, something she can use to prove herself: “They don’t believe me, but they’ll see – I’m going to be thin. And happy.” (SSR 42) Thoroughly convinced that a thin body means beauty and happiness, in the following days, Leslie exposes her mind to calorie counters and food scales, and her body to excessive fitness (SSR 42). Using her body as an instrument, it is, as Gremillion describes the common situation of the anorexic body, “thoroughly embedded in culturally normalized, gendered ideals surrounding dieting, fitness, the micromanagement of food and of body shape, and efforts to subordinate the flesh to will-power”.³⁴ Yet Leslie’s attempt to control both her body and mind very soon gets out of hand. Right after the start of her diet, we learn that she somewhat lets herself off the hook and allows something unknown inside of her which she calls “the dictator” (SSR 43) – and which is, thus, reminiscent of Marian calling her body an “angry god” – to take charge. The mercilessness of how “[h]e / she / it – I’ve never been sure which” (ibid.) takes over control is intensely scary: “[I]t was as though this person, this dictator, had taken up residence inside me to keep me in line. It wasn’t simply that I *chose* not to eat; I was forbidden to.” (SSR 44) Besides prohibiting her to eat, the dictator also humiliates her. For instance, while she is doing her daily fitness exercises, it rages, “If you weren’t such a fat clod, [...] you wouldn’t thud like that” (SSR 57). No wonder that after a few weeks, Leslie cannot bear the enormous pressure any longer and begins to negotiate with the dictator like with a parent. Exhaustedly, she asks it, and thus a part of herself, “Aren’t I allowed an occasional C+?” (SSR 74) Paula Saukko, who – just as Deborah Hautzig – suffered from anorexia nervosa herself, delineates the consciousness of anorexic women in her study *The Anorexic Self: A Personal, Political Analysis of a Diagnostic Discourse* (2008) by drawing on Russian linguist Valentin Voloshinov. In her eyes, the ‘anorexic mind’ is characterized by “polyvocal ‘internal speech,’ or dialogues between multiple voices. The voices are not personal but echo the various social ‘accents’ or agendas and sensibilities of their times”.³⁵ Similarly, Leslie is eventually overcome with guilt towards her parents so that the day her father and mother decide to take her to the hospital, Leslie’s ‘real self’ and the dictator are at odds. Leslie asks herself, “Why am I so worried about them ... when I’m the one being put in the hospital?” – and the dictator answers her right away: “Ah, because you, Hiller, don’t count. You’re supposed to make them happy, and now you’ve gone and gotten sick” (SSR 98). While Leslie’s self tries to get rid of her bad conscience, the dictator reminds her of her socially imposed role of the thankful daughter. Moreover, with regard to

34 Cf. GREMILLION. *Feeding Anorexia*. 33.

35 SAUKKO, Paula. *The Anorexic Self. A Personal, Political Analysis of a Diagnostic Discourse*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008. 6.

The Edible Woman, this could also be an interpretation of the forces that are battling with each other inside Marian.

As has already become clear by now, Leslie's account does not depict anorexia nervosa as a mere 'battle of the bulge'. Quite contrarily, more than anything, she suffers from an increasingly distorted perception, which results from her constant pressure, her feeling of guilt, and her fear. Meanwhile, as stated before, Leslie's unusual awareness of her problem makes this fictional case stand out. It is due to the first-person viewpoint that we are offered an insight into the psyche of an anorexic patient. On the one hand, we have the doctors who advise her to "[g]o home [and] try to gain a few pounds" (SSR 89), the nurses who "[don't] know what to make of [her]" (SSR 107), and the girls who laugh and "wish [they] had [her] problem" (SSR 100). Clearly, such remarks illustrate that back in 1981 anorexia was hardly known. It is therefore of utmost importance that Leslie points out the crucial relevance of her critical mental state when she, for example, thinks to herself, "I know I'm not fat. I said *I feel fat*" (SSR 105) after meeting with Dr. Sussman, who diagnoses her with anorexia nervosa, or when she imagines asking Dr. Gold, "Now, can you change the insides, too?" (SSR 116). However, while the very key to treating anorexia seems to lie in the anorexic patient's personal problems, as illustrated by Dr. Wilcox's claim "Eating is not your problem, Leslie. It never was; it never will be" (SSR 119), the question of what might be the deeper meaning behind the anorexic's rejection of food apart from the obvious need to lose weight is still left open. It seems that posing this question requires referring back to the conflict between mother and daughter since, according to the psychoanalytically oriented feminist author Kim Chernin, mothers and daughters tend to express their emotions rather in connection to food than in connection to sexuality. Given that the anorexic girl is oftentimes torn between imitating the mother and developing her own personality, the feeling of guilt that Leslie representatively experiences and cannot quite place goes hand in hand with moments in which she tries to be nobody but herself and is said to physically express this in the decision to stop eating properly.³⁶ In her study on the historical development of anorexia nervosa, Joan Jacobs Brumberg notes that in the Victorian age, it was the task of the mother to provide her children with food. Thus, nourishment was equated with love and a hearty eater embodied an equally healthy mother-daughter relationship. The rejection of food, in turn, was seen as a dysfunction within this relation and was therefore one of the most outstanding forms of nonverbal discourse.³⁷ Leslie's silent cry for attention, however, does not exclusively mean to place blame. Rather, the gist of her emotional turmoil is dominated by a feeling of equality: "Mom, it's my fault,

36 Cf. JACOBS BRUMBERG. *Todeshunger*. 34.

37 Cf. JACOBS BRUMBERG. *Todeshunger*. 134–135.

too, because I play it with you. Together we make a stereo, different sounds coming from each speaker, mingling, playing a single tune. And it's not enough to turn it *off* because we're supposed to be two different records." (SSR 127)

Moving on to the new millennium, at first sight, the struggle of 16-year-old Olivia, the autodiegetic narrator of *Feeling for Bones*, is strikingly similar to that of Leslie. Yet Bethany Pierce's 2007 debut novel broaches further issues and differs decisively in its representation of anorexia nervosa. First of all, the most noticeable parallel is certainly the similarly complicated mother-daughter relationship. Just as Leslie feels she is unable to ever become as beautiful as her mother, Olivia has always been spellbound by the "red-lipped siren" (FFB 41)³⁸ her mother constitutes for her. Yet unlike her mother, she has to "purse [her] lips tight to get that shadow of a cheekbone in [her] profile" (cf. FFB 42). Despite being admired by Olivia, her mother's behavior is rather sobering. In the very next paragraph we are told that "[her] mother was never good at showing affection" (ibid.). Gradually, one recognizes that Mrs. Monahan's pressure resembles that of Mrs. Hiller. Both have to juggle work and parenthood, and Olivia's mother is already too preoccupied to check her daughter's plate (cf. FFB 53). Referring to her mom's parenting skills, Olivia describes her as a "die-hard fanatic on the subject of Bible literacy" and cites her mom's favourite quote "*Instruct a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it*" (FFB 242). This notion of molding one's child like clay is, again, reminiscent of the mother in *Second Star to the Right*, who (involuntarily) projects her identity on her child. And indeed, while Leslie feels increasingly suffocated, Olivia calls her mother a "prison guard" and "drill sergeant" (FFB 343).

In contrast to *Second Star to the Right*, however, it is interesting to note that Pierce's novel equally focuses on Olivia's father whereas Leslie's dad has almost entirely been taken out of the mix. Against the background of the controversial part of the mother in the second half of the twentieth century, Hautzig's interest in elaborating on the mother becomes more understandable. In line with the domestic role of the woman in the 1950s and 1960s, the psychiatric literature of these decades regarded the mother as synonymous with 'family' or 'family environment'³⁹ – a tendency that, despite the achievements of second-wave feminism, still predominates in the early 1980s. As far as the father is concerned, Helen Gremillion notes that father-daughter relationships were generally rather ignored in psychiatric theory before the 1980s,⁴⁰ and that an elaborate discourse about the role of the father and fatherhood in the situation of an anorexic person or in the treatment of anorexia is, even today, still widely lacking (cf. FFB 74). In

38 The title *Feeling for Bones* will be abbreviated by FFB.

39 Cf. GREMILLION. *Feeding Anorexia*. 81.

40 Cf. GREMILLION. *Feeding Anorexia*. 113.

Feeling for Bones the impact of the father's behavior in particular as well as his situation in general is evident. When Olivia was little, her mother called her husband's specific view of things his "idiosyncracies", and Olivia grew up believing the scary stories he told her as, for instance, if you swallowed water melon seeds, you would grow a full-size melon in your stomach (cf. *FFB* 40). Besides, Olivia's need to please her father as much as her mother also leads her back to her childhood days when she recalls: "Dad used to make me walk around balancing books on my head to keep me from growing up. Holding Callapher [her little sister], I understood why he feared the end of our childhood. I wanted to be my father's little princess again" (*FFB* 56–57). Apart from these particularities, it becomes increasingly clear that Olivia is in search of a father figure. It is obvious that seeing her dad devastated and drifting after the move and the loss of his job is taking its toll on her. Apparently, her father has always been a quite sensitive man but his increasing apathy and his difficulty in keeping his faith in God lead his daughter, who is often forced to take on a mother role for her little sister and who must at times even comfort her dad instead of being comforted by him (cf. *FFB* 204), to desperately long for normality. When Mr. Monahan takes up his new job at the Bethsaida Christian Academy towards the end of the novel, Olivia is overcome by a sense of relief: "It was good to see him leave in the morning and come home in the evening looking tired and relieved. The Working Father. But my happiness with the new arrangement was purely selfish" (*FFB* 238).

It is hard to say whether or not the Monahans' difficult economic situation causes Olivia's eating disorder, but it can be argued that her "battle for normality" (*FFB* 170) has her reach out for something that offers her what she needs. Ultimately, she finds this comfort in fashion magazines. Although – or maybe even since – her father does not approve of these magazines, she believes "[e]very page [is] another promise that life c[an] become what it should, that I c[an] be beautiful" (*FFB* 47). Interestingly enough, Olivia does not need to voice as explicitly how much she wants to be beautiful and thin as Leslie needed to back in the 1980s, even though we might feel inclined to assume this due to her position as first-person narrator. Instead, the reader is able to grasp this notion because of the specific way of narrating how Olivia perceives the world.

Indeed, perception can even be stated as the key term in characterizing the representation of Olivia's illness. For a long time, Olivia thinks of normality as something that is visible to the eye. Apart from the fashion magazines, she, for example, needs to make sure she can "retain[...] some dignity" by demonstrating to her schoolmates that she does not own the old, rusty Cheese Wagon her mom drives her to school with (*FFB* 96). What is more, she considers her new friend Mollie to be a "godsend" in what she calls "the year of my ugliness" (*FFB* 95). Mollie is a lot like Leslie's best friend Cavett; she is described as "sane" (*FFB* 104), "likable" (*ibid.*) and looking "like a famous actress" (*FFB* 110). In other

words, Mollie is everything Olivia feels she is not. Similar to Leslie in *Second Star to the Right*, Olivia finally comes to oscillate between love and hate towards her new friend but desperately tries to profit from Mollie's beauty: "I thought that if I stood close enough, the essence of this beauty would somehow rub off on me" (FFB 166).

However, in addition to seeing beauty as displayed by the media and trying to conform to it, there is another, more subtle mode of perception which shapes Olivia's life and is symptomatic of her illness. Throughout her whole report, perceiving her own and other people's bodies as well as the implications of perception itself are crucial. The novel opens with the description of a dream sequence in which Olivia is confronted with the reflection of her body which she sees wavering and blurring (FFB 9). In what follows, she is repeatedly haunted by mirrors and windows in which her body is exhibited in all its seemingly grotesque distortions. But although she wishes she had "eyes blind to mirrors" (FFB 57), she notes that Jesus said the eyes are the windows into the body and indicates that, apparently, her weak, haggard appearance is due to her distrust and disbelief (cf. FFB 137). Yet two incidents show that she is actually willing to regain her lost faith. Significantly, these incidents are again characterized by a certain type of perception. Only this time Olivia does not rely on visual perception but on touch. When she touches her art teacher, Mrs. Kemnitz (FFB 62), and her mother (FFB 76 and 200), she connects with two people who are especially important to her in a certain way: she is "feeling for bones" (FFB 76). This occurrence, whose importance is highlighted by the title of the novel, is crucial in that Olivia bonds with the person she is 'in touch' with and at the same time experiences an intense awareness of her own body and, gradually, of her illness: "I was aware of the hard lines of bones beneath skin. My mother was not as soft as she used to be. Or was it the feeling of my bones evident through my own skin? [...] 'I'm all right, Mom,' I said. But I held her a little longer" (FFB 200).

Little by little, it becomes clear that Olivia's longing for normality is in fact more of a search for truth. The hardest thing for her to learn is that there is more to beauty than what meets the eye. Although the dictionary entries about "control" (FFB 79), "beauty" (FFB 95), "invention" (FFB 137), "collage" (FFB 235), and "scale" (FFB 255), which precede some of the chapters, might suggest that outer appearance rules her life, it can be argued that they are more indicative of the attempt to put her life in order and to find a rational explanation of what is happening to her. In the end, however, the things that give her the strength she needs are just as 'invisible' as the problems which caused her illness. Even though she suffers from the food that hardens in her stomach like "a ball of cement" (FFB 25) and experiences physical pain when her stomach begins "to hurt, like there was a fist clenched beneath [her] skin" (FFB 49), she realizes that "the real mess [...] was in my head. I felt as if I'd always known, as if the

realization was only admitting a fact I'd been keeping secret from myself" (FFB 85). Similar to Leslie's struggle, Olivia's illness is dominated by mental problems which are, literally, too hard for her to stomach. Slowly, she keeps on drawing connections between her body and mind and tries to understand them as "connected things" (FFB 138) while still allowing each its own life ("I'd listened to my mind for so long, I'd forgotten how to listen to my body", FFB 170).

All in all, it can be seen in the novels that the more than thirty years between *The Edible Woman* and *Feeling for Bones* created an ever more increasing awareness of women's struggles against body images, gender norms and cultural restrictions, which find their expression in a disease such as anorexia nervosa. In other words, "[m]odern anorexia is the biopsychosocial disorder mirroring a society with specific tensions and contradictions," as Roy Porter puts it.⁴¹ As could be seen, the three characters are struggling with very different issues and they suffer from diverse symptoms. A certain aversion to food they share. But that is just one fundamental symptom of anorexia nervosa and often only a starting point for the downward spiral into the disease. The women characters' problems seem to lie deeper. Family members and friends function as counter characters or even as catalysts of the disease. Marian's fiancé Peter, Leslie's mother Mrs. Hiller or Olivia's friend Mollie are surely perfect examples of this tendency. Obviously, writing about eating disorders is possible in a much more matter-of-fact way nowadays than in the 1970 s or 1980 s because symptoms and the ways of treatment are better known and thus do not have to be depicted as extensively. Novels like *The Edible Woman* and *Second Star to the Right* prepared the ground for young authors like Bethany Pierce, who grew up in a time when eating disorders are so in-your-face that feminist journalist Alice Schwarzer even called the disease a "mass psychosis" ("Massenpsychose").⁴² Ultimately, it has been the aim of this paper to contribute to the ongoing debate on eating disorders. Besides, it was important to delineate certain tendencies and developments in twentieth- and twenty-first-century North American novels centering around anorexia nervosa. One of the most significant developments is surely the actual acknowledgment of the disease itself, which in all three novels has turned out to be much more than a mere battle of the bulge.

41 PORTER, Roy. *The Greatest Benefit to Mankind. A Medical History of Humanity*. New York/ London: W.W. Norton, 1997. 706.

42 SCHWARZER, Alice. "Hungersucht. Auf dem Laufsteg tot zusammengebrochen." In: *EMMA* (November/December 2006): 50 – 51. 51.

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Armchair Epicures: The Proliferation of Food Programmes on British TV

Even though the recent surge of TV cookery shows in many countries¹ seems to have taken viewers and critics by surprise, food and television are fundamentally not an unlikely match. Food has always lent itself ideally to visual representation (cf. still life painting and food photography), and cooks have been appearing on the small screen since the early days of television.² And anthropologists inform us that the very sight of food alone arouses an instinctive craving in human beings, which manifests itself in “a concentrated food stare”.³ This may explain why camera shots of sizzling cuts of meat or vegetables on chopping boards can work as irresistible eye-catchers for TV audiences – especially modern TV audiences with their infamously minimal attention span. Moreover, cooking and eating are also powerful symbols of intimacy.⁴ Lifting the lid from a saucepan in someone else’s kitchen, even opening the fridge door, can constitute an unacceptable rude invasion of privacy. Television’s ‘public cooking’ therefore has all the natural attraction of modern reality TV: it stimulates ‘visual greed’ and it pries into people’s private affairs. But despite this potentially boundless fascination that TV cookery can have for the public, Britain still seems to constitute a special case, as the country has more food shows and more TV chefs than other nations, and the ways in which food issues are presented and discussed in British TV entertainment point to concerns of national import.

The British cookery show boom started at least ten years earlier than it hit the other industrialised nations. It was in full swing by the time the *BBC Good Food Show* was launched in 1990, and probably had its beginnings in the early 1980s,

1 They are firmly established in the USA and in most western European countries, though formats and frequencies of airing differ greatly.

2 HUMBLE, Nicola. *Culinary Pleasures. Cookbooks and the Transformation of British Food*. London: Faber & Faber, 2005. 150.

3 MORRIS, Desmond. *Manwatching. A Field Guide to Human Behaviour*. London: Vintage, 1978. 303.

4 DOUGLAS, Mary Tew. “Deciphering a Meal.” In: Mary Tew Douglas. *Implicit Meanings*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975. 249 – 75. 256.

when the term *foodie* was first coined and popularized through the publication of *The Official Foodie Handbook* (Barr/Levy) in 1984. Since then, Britain has continued to launch new shows and new formats earlier and at a faster rate than other countries.⁵ Classic cookery lessons, game shows where several cooks compete against each other, fly-on-the-wall documentaries showing incompetent restaurant staff struggling to improve, travel programmes introducing a region through its food – it seems as if any traditional format, educational, documentary or entertaining, was capable of being spiced up by the mere presence of a cook.⁶ “Food is the new rock ‘n’ roll,” announced Nigella Lawson, meanwhile a successful TV cook herself, ten years ago,⁷ and cultural critic David Bell, in the same year, observed that “food has come to take centre stage in popular culture”.⁸ Today, the heroes of the food programmes, the ‘celebrity chefs’, have attained pop-star status on a par with Hollywood actors, and their number is growing at the same inflationary rate as the programmes they host. The BBC, in 2002, had portraits and biographies of twelve such chefs on its website, six years later that list had exploded to an amazing 108 names.⁹ The public influence of these chefs has become overwhelming and reaches far beyond their original domain of cooking. TV chefs meanwhile dominate the book market, they advertise consumer goods, they appear in chat shows, on the daily news, and even on the business news: the *BBC Money Programme* recently argued that the “Superchefs are now Superbrands”.¹⁰

Whereas elsewhere in Europe and in the USA food programmes occupy daytime and late-night niches, Britain’s most successful shows are prime time blockbusters. Gordon Ramsay, Jamie Oliver, Nigella Lawson, and even less glitzy personalities such as the “Two Hairy Bakers” or the “Two Fat Ladies”¹¹ regularly achieve top ranks in the ratings lists (between 3.5 and 4.5 million viewers in the 8:00 to 9:00 p.m. slot). By comparison, Germany’s most successful food show, *Kochen bei Kerner* (discontinued in 2008) used to reach an average of 1.7 million viewers,¹² its immediate follow-up programme, *Lanz kocht*, is currently being

5 Many of the well-known formats originated in the UK, e.g. *Ready Steady Cook*, *Come Dine with Me*, restaurant make-over shows etc., and are also being successfully marketed internationally (cf. ASHLEY, Bob, Joanna HOLLOWES and Ben TAYLOR. *Food and Cultural Studies: Studies in Consumption*. London: Routledge, 2004. 175).

6 Cf. HUMBLE. *Culinary Pleasures*. 241.

7 LAWSON, Nigella. “Can’t Cook, Don’t Want To.” In: *The Guardian* (13 October, 1998).

8 BELL, David. “Food.” In: Peter Childs and Mike Storry (eds.). *Encyclopaedia of Contemporary British Culture*. London: Routledge, 1999. 203–04. 204.

9 ANON. “BBC Food: Chefs’ Biographies.”

10 DAWES, Charlotte. “The Rise of the Superchef.” In: *BBC Money Programme*, *BBC 2* (25 February, 2009).

11 The *Two Fat Ladies* was discontinued in 1999; all the other cooks are still on air.

12 PFEIFFER, David. “Ofen für alles.” In: *Süddeutsche Zeitung Magazin* 48 (2007).

viewed by 1.38 million people.¹³ A similar observation can be made for the book market. In no other European country do people buy more cookery books than in the UK. Amazon UK lists more than 90,000 titles in its section “Food and Drink” (France: 47,000, Germany: 11,000, October 2008), and the books by celebrity chefs are best-sellers not only in the cookery section, but on the overall sales list, too.¹⁴ Plainly, in Britain TV chefs occupy a position in public life which is markedly different from other countries. More than just pop stars, they are now attaining the status of national monuments. Many of them have been awarded an OBE (Oliver, Rhodes, Stein, Ramsay, Smith, Caines), a government-sponsored website ranks them as one of England’s “Cultural Icons” – in a line with Mrs. Beeton, Stonehenge and Big Ben¹⁵ – , and Delia Smith, the ‘patron saint’ and all-time favourite of TV cooking, has even been immortalized in the *Collins Dictionary* in an entry running “Delia [...] the recipes or styles of British cookery writer Delia Smith (born 1941)”.¹⁶

What is puzzling about the phenomenal rise of the British TV chef is the fact that it is taking place at a time when real cooking skills and traditional eating patterns are said to be in rapid decline. Britons, it has been pointed out, are now eating more ready meals than the rest of Europe together,¹⁷ dining tables are disappearing from private homes, along with joint family meals,¹⁸ and more and more people are eating “on the hoof”,¹⁹ subsisting on a diet of take-away meals, crisps, chocolate bars and other ‘junk’. Popular anthropologist Kate Fox, accordingly, suspects that Britons “watch the celebrity chefs prepare elaborate dishes from fresh, exotic ingredients, while their own plastic-packaged supermarket ready-meals circle sweatily for three minutes in the microwave”.²⁰ And Tim Lang, professor of Food Policy, contends that British food culture is “ill at ease with itself, concerned about passivity, but enjoying it”.²¹ Other commen-

13 POHLMANN, Sonja. “Der beste zweite Talker.” In: *Der Tagesspiegel* (9 September, 2008).

14 Amazon UK’s top sellers in all book categories, in October 2008, had *Jamie’s Ministry of Food* ranking first place and *Nigella’s Christmas* third.

15 Interestingly, food and drink-related entries constitute by far the largest category of icons listed on this website. They include: cheddar cheese, chicken tikka massala, a cup of tea, fish and chips, *Mrs. Beeton’s Book of Household Management*, the pint, the pub as well as roast beef and Yorkshire pudding (cf. ANON. “TV Chefs through the Decades.”).

16 “Delia.” In: *Collins English Dictionary*, 6th ed. Glasgow: Collins, 2003.

17 BLYTHMAN, Joanna. *Bad Food Britain. How a Nation Ruined Its Appetite*. London: Fourth Estate, 2006. 98.

18 BLYTHMAN. *Bad Food Britain*. 85–89.

19 BLYTHMAN. *Bad Food Britain*. 94.

20 FOX, Kate. *Watching the English. The Hidden Rules of English Behaviour*. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2004. 298–99.

21 LANG, Tim. “The Challenge of Food Culture: Healing the Madness.” (Ms.) *The Schumacher Lectures on Food, Land, and Living Communities*. October 1996. 4.

tators have interpreted the food shows as “vicarious consumption”,²² “voyeurism” or even “food pornography”.²³ But despite the many critical readings on offer, most commentators seem confused about any possible connections between the two trends. Some consider the new pop-cultural cookery as a counter reaction to, and substitute for, a lost culinary tradition which once was “healthy”, “life-sustaining” and “wholesome”.²⁴ Others suggest that television, rather than encourage people to cook, may even have the inverse effect of putting people off cooking.²⁵ And while one may hold against all these critiques that they presuppose an implicit normative concept of culture (‘healthy’, ‘good’ vs. ‘unhealthy’, ‘bad’ cultures; ‘flourishing’ vs. ‘declining’ cultures), they are duly set off by other, more descriptive analyses, which read Britain’s modern cookery shows as parts of larger postmodern discourses about changing roles and identities. Contemporary food TV, it is argued, is “symptomatic of specifically postmodern anxieties” and plays with “the fluidity of [...] boundaries” between a “multiplicity of identity positions”;²⁶ the new TV chefs present cooking as undergoing a shift from a ‘female’ to a ‘male’ activity, from the sphere of domesticity to the public arena and from science to art and lifestyle.²⁷ Jamie Oliver, for example, has been interpreted as a representation of the “New Lad”, a hybrid masculinity blending the traits of male machismo and female caring,²⁸ and Nigella Lawson has been read as a public persona who tries to redefine the role of modern women in the home and in the working world.²⁹

All these are perceptive analyses of individual TV chefs and their shows (for the most part they focus on Jamie Oliver and Nigella Lawson, often in contrast with Delia Smith), but they do not account for the huge “public appetite for more

22 Cf. ADEMA, Pauline. “Vicarious Consumption: Food, Television and the Ambiguity of Modernity.” In: *Journal of American and Comparative Culture* 23,3 (2004): 113–23. 116.

23 BLYTHMAN. *Bad Food Britain*. 3. The terms ‘food pornography’ and ‘gastro-porn’ were actually invented as early as the 1970s and were originally used to refer to cookery books. Cf. COCKBURN, Alexander. “Gastro-Porn.” In: *The New York Review of Books* 24,20 (8 December, 1977): 194.

24 Cf. ASHLEY et al. *Food and Cultural Studies*. 172.

25 Cf. ANDREWS, Maggie. “Nigella Bites the Naked Chef. The Sexual and the Sensual in Television Cookery Programmes.” In: Janet Floyd and Laurel Forster (eds.). *The Recipe Reader. Narratives, Contexts, Traditions*. London: Ashgate, 2003. 185–204. 188; and CHAN, Andrew. “‘La grande bouffe’: Cooking Shows as Pornography.” In: *Gastronomica* 3,4 (2003): 47–53. 53.

26 ANDREWS. “Nigella Bites the Naked Chef.” 194.

27 Cf. BRUNSDON, Charlotte et al. “Factual Entertainment on British Television.” In: *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 4,1 (2001): 29–62. 38; HOLLOWES, Joanne. “Oliver’s Twist: Labour and Domestic Masculinity in ‘The Naked Chef’.” In: *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 6,2 (2003): 229–48. 230–31; and ASHLEY et al. *Food and Cultural Studies*. 182–84.

28 BRUNSDON et al. “Factual Entertainment on British Television.” 38–39; HOLLOWES. “Oliver’s Twist.” 233.

29 “Feeling like a Domestic Goddess.” (HOLLOWES. “Oliver’s Twist.” Passim.)

and more discussion about food”,³⁰ which Britain is experiencing today, let alone offer an explanation for the amazing rise of the TV chef to the status of a national monument. Although shifting identities and the fluidity of boundaries are certainly interesting features in much of contemporary popular culture (cf. TV comedy, soaps, etc.), they are not a distinctive feature of food shows alone. In order to understand the specific “public appetite” for food in the media it therefore seems necessary to look at a much broader variety of food programmes than critics have examined so far. The hidden motivations and secret interests of the new type of food lover for whom the consumption “of food on television becomes more pleasurable than actually cooking and eating”,³¹ and whom I propose to call, heuristically, an ‘armchair epicure’, must somehow be inscribed in the structures and recurring motifs of all existing food shows. For despite the enormous variety of programmes which today instruct Britons “How to Cook” (Delia Smith), or how to “Learn to Cook in 24 Hours” (Jamie Oliver), or “How to Eat” (Nigella Lawson), or “How to Be a Domestic Goddess” (Nigella Lawson), or how to cook for friends (Gordon Ramsay), or how to win at “Food Poker”, or how to get “Ready, Steady, Cook”, or even “How to Cheat at Cooking” (Delia Smith), all these formats share distinct characteristics which may serve as a clue as to what popular demands exactly they tap into. These common characteristics include: a typical narrative structure, a play with class conventions, pointing to the recently coined concept of the “muddle class”, and ubiquitous references to travelling.³²

Narrative structures

All cookery programmes do more than just show the preparation of food; they always incorporate it into a narrative structure which moves from a ‘problem’ to a ‘solution’. In the classic cookery show, basically “a home economics class on the screen”,³³ the ‘problem’ was how to process a range of ingredients into a finished dish (shown to the audience at the beginning of the programme), and the ‘solution’ was the recipe. The purpose for which the acquired cooking skills

30 HUMBLE. *Culinary Pleasures*. 242.

31 ADEMA. “Vicarious Consumption.” 116.

32 Another set of common characteristics of cookery shows has been proposed by Niki STRANGE: “Cookery-Educative”, “Personality”, “Tour-Educative” and “Raw-Educative” (301). Since Strange puts her emphasis on the educational aspect of the programmes, her categories overlap only in part with the ones proposed here. (STRANGE, Niki. “Perform, Educate, Entertain: Ingredients of the Cookery Programme Genre.” In: Christine Geraghty and David Lusted (eds.). *The Television Studies Book*. London: Arnold, 1998. 301–12)

33 HUMBLE. *Culinary Pleasures*. 238.

were to be used by the addressees was largely left open – or it was assumed to be an end in itself. For the chefs, there was no context other than the meta-context of the show's didactic intention and the food that was cooked would either be thrown away or perhaps eaten by the camera crew.³⁴ Delia Smith, the most famous of these old-style TV chefs, was also one of the first to expand the classic format into a new type of programme, the personality and lifestyle show. Whereas the early Delia Smith programmes were recorded in a TV studio, the later ones were shot in Smith's own country house,³⁵ and the message was to teach people to improve their lives through consuming and preparing better food, which meant: by emulating 'Delia's' lifestyle.³⁶ This concept turned out to be such a success that the ingredients Smith used on television in the evening were often sold out in all the shops on the next morning.³⁷ Delia Smith's successors, placing even more importance on their own personality and lifestyle, include Gary Rhodes, Jamie Oliver, Gordon Ramsay, and Nigella Lawson, to name but the most famous ones. These chefs have changed the classic format into a new type of programme where the preparation of the food itself is embedded in a much broader narrative context: the new TV cooks no longer start with the ingredients ready on the kitchen worktop, but they begin by introducing some form of motivation for the cooking, and/or they show how the materials are first of all obtained (bought, or even grown or reared).³⁸ Nor do they end with the finished dish appearing on the table, but they close by showing how the prepared meals are eaten together with friends or family. The cooking is only one element within a more general structure, where an initial 'problem' opens up a framing situation for a plot which develops in a movement from chaos/anxiety to order/harmony. For example: a programme opens with Nigella Lawson telephoning a lady friend, who, to all appearances, has just been left by her lover; Nigella spontaneously offers to cook something so as to comfort her mate and then hurries out to buy the ingredients. At the end of the episode, after the cooking demonstration, we see the forsaken lover sitting on Nigella's sofa, still snivelling, but already drying her tears while munching freshly-made chocolate chip biscuits. Another example: Jamie Oliver is worried about how he might entertain a bunch of his friends' children, whom he has offered to babysit. The solution is in Oliver's easy-going personality as well as his skills as a cook; he manages to get the children interested and even involved in the cooking, and the

34 Cf. ASHLEY et al. *Food and Cultural Studies*. 183–84; and HUMBLE. *Culinary Pleasures*. 236.

35 Cf. HUMBLE. *Culinary Pleasures*. 237.

36 Cf. ASHLEY et al. *Food and Cultural Studies*. 182.

37 Cf. HUMBLE. *Culinary Pleasures*. 236, 239; and STRANGE. "Perform, Educate, Entertain." 303.

38 Characteristically, Jamie Oliver has recently turned his attention to gardening and growing his own food.

communal meal around a big table at the end of the episode comes like the grand finale and happy ending at the same time. The borrowing from literature, especially popular story-telling, is only too obvious: the TV meal is a low-brow equivalent of the literary banquet, a “celebration of community, the manifestation of hierarchy, order, stability”.³⁹

After a great many chefs had attained TV celebrity status and begun competing for the public’s favour, a new format evolved, the game show,⁴⁰ where cooks prepare meals from surprise ingredients. Here, too, cooking is not an end in itself, but framed by the structure of a competition, within which culinary skills are the means of success. Similarly, cooking can be presented as part of a journey, where it helps understand an unknown country or region – a format which was pioneered by Madhur Jaffrey, who took her viewers on a gastronomic tour of her native India. Then, food can also feature in so-called fly-on-the-wall documentaries, where the TV camera pries into ordinary people’s lives, homes, kitchens, etc.; these formats include televised competitive dinner parties in which amateur cooks take turns at playing host to each other (e.g. *Come Dine with Me*⁴¹) and makeover shows such as *Jamie’s School Dinners* or *Gordon Ramsay’s Kitchen Nightmares*.⁴² All of these formats have in common that the cooking is invariably framed by an external narrative, with plots moving from chaos to order. The anxieties and insecurities, which in this process the millions of armchair epicures regularly watch being transformed into harmony and success, revolve around two central issues: the connections between food and class, and between food and place.

Muddle class

Critics have argued that the target audience of modern cookery shows, the “primary watchers of Channel 4 and BBC 2”,⁴³ are people with inherently middle-class values. The general shift from work to fun, which has taken place in televisual representations of cooking, has been taken as one important indicator of that target group’s interest, since fun, according to Bourdieu, is now con-

39 WEIDHORN, Manfred. “Eating.” In: Jean-Charles Seigneuret et al. (eds.). *Dictionary of Literary Themes and Motifs*. 2 vols. New York: Greenwood, 1988. 431–39. 436.

40 The first one was *Ready Steady Cook*. Others include *Food Poker* and *Master Chef*.

41 The title of this programme, of course, strongly echoes Marlowe’s famous poem “The Passionate Shepherd to His Love” and its promise of pastoral bliss.

42 Three-star chef Gordon Ramsay uncovers abominable practices in high-street restaurant kitchens and humiliates owners and staff while trying to improve standards. His special ingredients: excessive swearing and insults. His latest programme has appropriately been named *The F-Word*.

43 ANDREWS. “Nigella Bites the Naked Chef.” 188.

sidered a “moral duty” by the modern, upwardly mobile middle classes.⁴⁴ This critical assessment also seems to be corroborated by statistics about food magazines, whose readers, according to the National Readership Survey, are predominantly middle-class and female.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, it is rather remarkable that some important class markers, such as speech/accents, food knowledge, and taste, are treated with astonishing ambivalence in all the programmes – almost as if middle-class affiliation were now a taboo topic that one had better not mention explicitly.

Indeed, despite their middle-class bias presumed by critics, modern food programmes do cover a broad range of class and consumer identities – from the distinctly upper class *Two Fat Ladies* to the distinctly working class *Two Hairy Bikers*, from hedonist Keith Floyd to hip ex-pop stars *Neneh and Andi*, from middle-class ‘nice guy’ Jamie Oliver to working-class ‘bad-boy’ Gordon Ramsay. But none of these media personalities is perceived as unequivocally representing one particular class. All of them blur, even confound, traditional class distinctions. It seems as if the new TV chefs, like the armchair epicures watching them, are inhabitants of what sociologists have begun to describe as a new “muddle-class Britain”, in which “the traditional markers of social class – job, family background and wealth – appear [...] to be fading”.⁴⁶ According to a recent survey, more and more members of the poorest fifth of the population (1.84 million) today call themselves ‘middle class’. And an even greater proportion of the richest fifth of the population (2.67 million) are now calling themselves ‘working class’.⁴⁷ This class ‘muddle’ is reflected in the media personalities of TV chefs. Jamie Oliver, who comes from a middle-class family, puts on a “mockney”⁴⁸ accent on television to pander to the tastes of a working-class audience; Gordon Ramsay, who is a working-class upstart, constructs the image of a chef who belongs to the social elite in a society based on competition and achievement – though with very bad manners. Nigella Lawson, famous daughter of former Chancellor Nigel Lawson, comes across as conspicuously upper middle-class in manner and deportment, but is not averse to the occasional dose

44 Cf. ASHLEY et al. *Food and Cultural Studies*. 182.

45 Cf. ANON. “NRS Top Line Readership.” According to the downloadable statistics, the total readership of food magazines in the period Jan. to Dec. 2008 was 15.6 million – with 9.8 million ABC1 (= upper to middle middle-class) as against 5.8 million C2DE (= lower middle and working class) readers. The ratio of women to men was 12.2 m to 3.4 m. Interestingly, the two age groups 15 to 44 and 44+ were represented nearly equally (7.9 m to 7.7 m).

46 FREAN, Alexandra. “We’re All Middle Class Now as Social Barriers Fall Away.” In: *The Times* (5 May, 2006).

47 Cf. ANON. “NRS Top Line Readership.” Cf. also ANON. “New ‘Middle Britain’ Report.”

48 This term has been in use since 1989 and denotes an “accent and form of speech affected (esp. by a middle-class speaker) in imitation of cockney” (*Oxford English Dictionary Online*, “mockney”).

of “inverse snobbery”,⁴⁹ e. g. when she buys ingredients, not at a farmer’s market in the countryside, but from an inner-city petrol station forecourt shop. Even the eccentric, upper-class “Two Fat Ladies” have a working-class resonance in their programme’s name: ‘two fat ladies’ is the – working class – bingo clue for 88, and being ‘fat’ is shameful and even sinful by any middle-class standards.⁵⁰

Although the different ‘lifestyles’ which the shows promote are connected with status and prestige, these lifestyles are not clear class markers either. The shows rather advocate a spirit of competitive individualism which cuts across class boundaries. This seems to confirm a theory, sometimes contested, whereby food is generally not a strong signifier of class differences in Britain.⁵¹ Food, like every other type of consumer good (cars, clothes, furniture), can of course be used for conspicuous consumption, but, as food sociologist Alan Warde has argued, in Britain it is comparatively rare that people use “their food practices as strategies of distinction”.⁵² “The major differences between the foods different classes consume are largely a product of the unequal distribution of material, rather than symbolic resources”.⁵³ An interesting confirmation of Warde’s point, incidentally, can be found in Ian McEwan’s novel *Saturday*, where protagonist Henry Perowne, a successful brain surgeon who prides himself on his many personal achievements, goes to a market to buy ingredients for a family dinner and is quite satisfied with himself at the thought that these include “three monkfish tails that cost a little more than his first car” (*Saturday* 127). Although the fish in the bag does symbolise Perowne’s social status, its value is merely measured in terms of price, not in terms of any food knowledge which would have taken years to acquire and might have distinguished the connoisseur from the uninitiated. The “monkfish tails” are not ‘symbolic’, but merely ‘economic’

49 Cf. ANON. “What Is Working Class?”

50 Delia SMITH also panders to middle-class tastes in her recent book *How to Cheat at Cooking*. London: Ebury Press, 2008. Incidentally, this is a revised version of her very first cookbook of 1971 (cf. HUMBLE. *Culinary Pleasures*. 199), where she recommends the use of foodstuffs allegedly favoured by the working classes such as tinned minced meat, frozen chips and other ready-prepared ingredients.

51 That does not mean that all classes eat the same. In fact, Jamie Oliver’s dreadful failure to improve school meals is most certainly due to the children’s class background. A recent market-oriented survey also confirms that social differences in food choice continue to exist. However, the same survey also points out that class-specific behaviour does not follow a clear, consistent pattern, since “workers [...] and the bourgeoisie [...] have stronger class preferences than the middle groups” (TOMLINSON, Mark. “Do Distinct Class Preferences for Foods Exist? An Analysis of Class-Based Tastes.” In: *British Food Journal* 96 (1994): 11 – 17. 16).

52 ASHLEY et al. *Food and Cultural Studies*. 70.

53 ASHLEY et al. *Food and Cultural Studies*. 70.

capital.⁵⁴ Similarly, TV chefs do not place importance on food knowledge as symbolic capital. One might even argue that, in combining high-cultural elements (elite cooking) with low-cultural elements (reality TV), the modern food programmes even rob any formerly elitist food knowledge of its symbolic value by popularising and democratising it.⁵⁵ In an episode called “Jamie Oliver’s Luscious Chocolate Sundaes”, for example, Oliver fuses ‘low-brow’ appetites with ‘high-end’ tastes, not only by choosing a popular sweet (Chocolate Sundae) and refining it with a fashionable sparkling drink (Prosecco), but also by demonstrating how the bottle of Prosecco must be opened in the first place (not with one’s hands, like champagne, but with a special corkscrew) – something which neither Oliver’s two lady friends in the studio nor the unsuspecting public in front of the screens had apparently known before. This way, step by step, the middle-class audience can increase their knowledge about food and lifestyle without any of the embarrassment that the same lessons might have caused them in real life.

Another manifestation of the curious absence of traditional class distinctions from eating is the rather low profile generally given to taste in the TV cooking demonstrations. If “taste”, as Bourdieu argues, is a marker of distinction by which “[s]ocial subjects [...] distinguish themselves by the distinctions they make”,⁵⁶ then the British TV chefs are not making much effort to “distinguish themselves” along this parameter. For when describing the taste of a particular dish they hardly ever resort to words that emphasise its rarity or distinctiveness (e. g. *exquisite, choice, dainty, elegant, fine*), but they rather prefer onomatopoeic words like *luscious, sumptuous, scrumptious, succulent*, or slang expressions like *yummy, pukka, wicked, or sorted* – terms which emphasise the physical pleasures of eating, thus appealing to a potential epicurean streak within their viewers. If it is true, though, that these viewers are also “receiving an education [...] on how to perform distinction by gaining pleasure and fun”,⁵⁷ then this type of distinction is obviously not strongly connected to social privilege in a traditional sense, but merely to personal achievement.

This idea of distinction through personal success is brought out strongly in many cookery shows: in the game shows, where cooking is constructed in terms of victory and defeat, in the lifestyle shows, where it serves the purpose of being a successful host, or of having a happy family, or of feeling like a “domestic

54 By comparison, Perowne’s symbolic capital is enormous in his knowledge of literature, music, politics.

55 Cf. ASHLEY et al. *Food and Cultural Studies*. 185; and ADEMA. “Vicarious Consumption.” 116–17.

56 BOURDIEU, Pierre. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Translated by Richard Nice. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989. 6.

57 ASHLEY et al. *Food and Cultural Studies*. 184.

goddess”, or in the make-over shows, where the end result may be a formerly struggling restaurant reshaped into a thriving business.⁵⁸ The two most successful TV chefs, Gordon Ramsay and Jamie Oliver, have both put achievement and success in various guises at the very top of their respective agendas. Oliver’s *Fifteen* project, for example, is aimed at helping “disadvantaged young people – homeless, unemployed, overcoming drug or alcohol problems – to believe that they can create for themselves *great careers* [my emphasis] in the restaurant industry” (*Fifteen*). Ramsay’s cookery show *The F-Word* once featured a series where amateur chefs prepared dishes served to celebrity diners who only had to pay the bill if they liked the food, and the amateur chefs’ success was measured in terms of how many people thought the food worth paying for – in other words: in terms of their respective cash returns. One consistent reference to success found in all the shows is the emphasis on time economy and speed. No cookery demonstration without repeated mentionings that such and such a job “only takes twenty seconds” – which, by the way, is in patent contradiction to the oft-repeated mantra that cooking is fun: if something is such fun, why should anyone want it to last only a few seconds! The most pronounced exponent of the speed-cooking principle is probably Gordon Ramsay, whose book *Gordon Ramsay’s Fast Food*, according to its blurb, “is packed with ideas for 5-minute snacks, 10-minute main courses and 30-minute menus for all occasions”.⁵⁹ The same Gordon Ramsay once offered a job to an inmate of Marshgate Prison, Doncaster, where he cooked during one episode of *The F-Word*, after the prisoner had impressed him in a little competition, which the master chef had lost – a competition at speed-chopping onions.⁶⁰ It seems that speed and time economy, which have always played an important role in cookery instructions, both in cookbooks and on TV, have now changed from merely signifying convenience (easing the housewife’s burden) to a new, symbolic value of indicating social success, irrespective of traditional class backgrounds, in modern ‘middle-class Britain’.

58 The same competitive spirit is also found in the food magazines, which have extended the idea of ranking and testing, originally applied only to restaurants, to virtually everything that can be connected with food and the kitchen: cookery schools, wines, olive oils, even chicken stock cubes.

59 RAMSAY, Gordon. *Gordon Ramsay’s Fast Food. Recipes from “The F Word”*. London: Quadrille, 2007.

60 DARKCLOUD3388. “F-Word: Gordon at Marshgate Prison.”

Travel motif

The combination between food and travel has been firmly established in culinary discourses since the middle of the twentieth century,⁶¹ when, in Britain, it was popularised particularly through the cookery books of Elizabeth David, Claudia Roden and Jane Grigson. Their televisual successors use the journey either as a major narrative frame for their programmes, or they employ it just as a motif which surfaces occasionally in pictures and symbolic references. But, generally, travelling is such a ubiquitous feature of today's food shows that it has already been termed one of "the main ingredients of the cookery programme genre".⁶²

The first presenters who successfully combined food and travel on TV were Madhur Jaffrey, Tom Vernon and Keith Floyd. Indian actress Madhur Jaffrey had already written several successful cookbooks before from the 1980s onwards she appeared on TV with programmes about 'authentic' Indian cookery (as opposed to the Indian-style dishes available in British high streets), and broadcaster Tom Vernon first started out with a radio travelogue called *Fat Man on a Bicycle* (1979), which was later followed by other *Fat Man* programmes, initially on radio and then on television, in all of which Vernon went on gastronomic tours of different countries. Ex-restaurateur and bon vivant Keith Floyd is the most prolific author of the threesome, both in terms of books and TV series, and with his many *Floyd on ...*⁶³ programmes he soon became a household name amongst British television cooks. His trademark was an almost anarchic extravagance in everything he did – as a cook, as a traveller and as a personality-presenter⁶⁴ – and the "innovative programmes in which he starred opened the flood gates for the chef-performers and cooking game shows that were to dominate the television schedules for much of the next decade".⁶⁵ The travelogue structure, together with some of Floyd's newly invented eccentricities such as cooking out of doors, was subsequently copied in many other programmes. *Rhodes around Britain*, in the 1990s, e. g. showed restaurant chef Gary Rhodes whizzing up and down British roads (pun intended) in his yellow Ferrari, cooking what he called "new British classics" from local ingredients grown in the regions he was visiting. In *Two Fat Ladies* two eccentric upper-class ladies, Clarissa Dickson Wright and

61 It has recently been argued that this period also marks the beginning of a development during which foods have increasingly become associated with "nationalities or ethnicities" (PANAYI, Panikos. *Spicing up Britain. The Multicultural History of British Food*. London: Reaktion Books, 2008. 14).

62 STRANGE. "Perform, Educate, Entertain." 301.

63 Floyd on France, India, Italy, Africa etc.

64 Cf. HUMBLE. *Culinary Pleasures*. 240.

65 HUMBLE. *Culinary Pleasures*. 240.

Jennifer Paterson, used a vintage motorbike with sidecar to travel around the British Isles, cooking predominantly fatty meat-based dishes according to local recipes. *Two Hairy Bikers*, first aired in 2005, is almost like a revived version of the *Two Fat Ladies*, though Dave Myers and Simon King, the two “bearded culinary motorcycling experts”⁶⁶ referred to in the title, travel around the entire world, and, with their thick northern English accents, come across as distinctly more working class.⁶⁷ In *Oz and James’s Big Wine Adventure*, wine expert Oz Clarke takes motoring (!) journalist James May on trips to winemakers in Europe and overseas. And the titles of Rick Stein’s *Mediterranean Escapes* or *French Odyssey*, or Giancarlo Caldesi’s *Return to Tuscany* just speak for themselves. The list could be extended almost indefinitely. All these programmes show the various presenters travelling to their destinations in SUVs or campervans (their preferred vehicles of choice), and the footage is often supplemented by a map (usually a hand-penned one) of the itinerary plus voiceover commentaries saying things like: “We are now going to visit ...” Even programmes whose formats do not suggest any travelling at all, like Ramsay’s *Kitchen Nightmares* or *The F-Word* or Oliver’s *Naked Chef*, contain explicit or oblique references to travel. Ramsay, in *Kitchen Nightmares*, motors around Britain to seek out nightmarish restaurants which he wants to improve, or, in *The F-Word*, travels to distant lands in order to cook and eat exotic things (e.g. puffins), and Oliver’s most striking trademark in his early programmes was his Italian scooter, on which the young chef rode around London on his quest for fresh food, but also just to convey the feeling of the place in which he worked and lived.

What all these uses of the travel motif have in common, regardless of any incidental associations with adventure, globetrotting or lifestyle, is that they reflect a strong connection between food and place. The TV cooks’ incessant assertions that the food sampled really originates from the places visited is very obviously targeted at the audience’s subliminal anxiety (fuelled by food scares, factory farming, superstore monopolies and other concerns) that food of obscure origin constitutes a potential threat. This anxiety can be temporarily relieved by embarking on a journey to an Arcadian sanctuary, which may as easily be located in Lancashire as in Belgium or in Morocco, where the confusing complexities of modern industrialised food chains have been reduced to a simple and transparent bilateral relationship between producer and consumer/cook. The travel motif thus turns the armchair epicures into the protagonists of a quest (thereby giving them something of an armchair traveller) – a quest for the natural ‘source’ of the food which they fantasise about, and also for the source of

66 FERGUSON, Euan. “Meet the new Delia and Nigella.” In: *Observer Food Monthly* (11 December, 2005): 41.

67 FERGUSON. “Meet the new Delia and Nigella.” 41.

meaningful consumption outside the self-alienating experiences of their day-to-day reality.

The almost ritual way in which TV chefs are increasingly using the word *source* in the verb form as a euphemism for *to buy*, or *to purchase*, reflects the importance allotted to this concept. One episode of *Neneh and Andi Dish It Up* is particularly revealing in this respect. It shows the two cooks motoring from London down to a farm in Lincolnshire, where they want to cook food for a “Barn Dance”. At one point the viewer is informed in a voiceover commentary: “Rather than letting our vegetables go limp en route on the A 11, we chose to *source* [my italics] everything locally from a farm”,⁶⁸ while at the same time a tractor and wagon, which pull up in the farmyard to deliver the ‘locally sourced’ food, underscore visually not only the freshness of the produce but also the idea that a ‘source’ is, of course, quite literally far more trustworthy as a place of origin than, say, a London superstore. In the present case, however, the images unintentionally also belie the verbal message: the boxes of ‘locally sourced’ vegetables, which the two cooks then lift off the wagon, on close scrutiny also contain a fair amount of exotic ingredients such as sweet potatoes and oranges – something that no Lincolnshire farmer has ever managed to grow on Lincolnshire soil. Quite obviously, Neneh and Andi were just paying lip service to an obligatory subtext of every food programme, which stipulates that only food at its ‘source’ can be quite the genuine article, whether this ‘source’ be the farmer’s soil, an old recipe, a local tradition, or what not. The *Hairy Bikers*, for example, repeat this line continually as well; whatever exotic land they travel to, they always claim that they are there “to learn”, and that they “want to do it properly”. It is food in its state of innocence that the travelling TV chefs are after, and the term which is most frequently applied to this notion is “culinary authenticity”.⁶⁹ In fact, it seems fair to assume that all the journeys on which food experts have set out ever since the days of Elizabeth David and Jane Grigson⁷⁰ are “quest[s] for the authenticity of food customs”.⁷¹

It is interesting that neither the self-appointed food experts nor most of their academic critics have ever queried this concept of authenticity, but rather accept it as a natural property of culinary cultures and a value in itself. One exception is perhaps Nicola Humble, who in her study of British and American cookbooks has observed critically, though in a slightly different context, that “studied attempts at authenticity [...] have tended to be the British response to their adopted cuisines”, in contrast to “America [,which], at least from the 1960s

68 NENEHFAN. “Neneh and Andi Dish It Up: Barn Dance (part1).”

69 JONES, Steve and Ben TAYLOR. “Food Writing and Food Cultures: The Case of Elizabeth David and Jane Grigson.” In: *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 4 (2001): 171–88. 179.

70 Cf. JONES and TAYLOR. “Food Writing and Food Cultures.” 171.

71 JONES and TAYLOR. “Food Writing and Food Cultures.” 186.

onwards, has tended to produce hybrid cuisines [...] melding other cuisines to create something new".⁷² It has also been argued – significantly by American scholars – that the very notion of authentic food is a mere fiction⁷³ and that attempts to track down or imitate the style of food which others eat or used to eat is an impossibility.⁷⁴ Nevertheless, "studied attempts at authenticity" are very much in evidence whenever British TV chefs explore the food customs of foreign lands or set out in search of their own country's culinary traditions. Although it must be admitted that authenticity and respect for tradition exert a fascination on people in many cultures, the unusually great importance attached to this notion in Britain is remarkable. Historically, it can be interpreted as an after-effect of Britain's early industrialisation and urbanization, which, as Stephen Mennell has shown conclusively, divorced many town dwellers from the rural origins of their food and "disrupt[ed] the informal transmission of [culinary] knowledge and tradition"⁷⁵ more seriously than in other countries. Ultimately it produced a "sense of inferiority of English cookery".⁷⁶ The understanding that Britain's original culinary traditions have been lost, and 'authentic' food customs can only be found abroad or in the past, has been accepted wisdom since the early nineteenth century.⁷⁷ Generations of Britons have been familiar with this line of argument, and today's TV chefs draw on it whenever they travel to remote havens of authenticity, from which they take an external perspective on their own present-day food culture, either claiming that it is better than its reputation, or bemoaning that it leaves room for improvement. Either way, travelling in British food shows must be regarded as a form of culinary navel-gazing.

Conclusion

The analysis of narrative structures and thematic issues in modern British cookery programmes suggests that the enormous proliferation of the genre cannot simply be explained as a result of the increasing importance of the visual over the sensual. The plot structures, the class issue and the travel motif indicate

72 HUMBLE. *Culinary Pleasures*. 299.

73 Cf. HELDKE, Lisa. "But Is It Authentic? Culinary Travel and the Search for the 'Genuine Article'." In: Carolyn Korsmeyer (ed.). *The Taste Culture Reader: Experiencing Food and Drink*. Oxford: Berg, 2005. 385–94. 388.

74 ABARCA, Meredith A. "Authentic or not, It's Original." In: *Food and Foodways* 12 (2004): 1–25. *Passim*.

75 MENNELL, Stephen. *All Manners of Food: Eating and Taste in England and France from the Middle Ages to the Present*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996 [1987]. 225.

76 MENNELL. *All Manners of Food*. 206.

77 MENNELL. *All Manners of Food*. 206.

that the attraction of the shows lies beyond the merely visual and must predominantly be contained in the verbal: the rhetoric of the programmes clearly expresses a desire for food as a carrier of symbolic meanings, a signifier of identity and belonging. If “recipe writing is about the creation of community,” as Janet Floyd has stated about the functions of cookery books,⁷⁸ then the millions of television viewers surely must be experiencing an equally strong, if not stronger, sense of togetherness when they simultaneously watch the food shows. Simultaneously they feast their eyes on culinary delights and listen to narratives in which cooking is fun, the meals are banquets, the journeys quests, and the protagonists chivalrous heroes who win the public’s favour on account of their miraculous and fairy-tale-like transformations from obscurity to superstardom. In this context the blurring of class distinctions, quite apart from its realistic sociological background, is a necessary fiction needed to render the narratives plausible.⁷⁹ For the community of armchair epicures transcends long-established class boundaries. As it is fictitiously being created through the invocation of lost traditions and the myth of authenticity, this community is a nutshell representation of that much stronger “imagined community”⁸⁰ called the nation. No wonder that television chefs, though they may not have any solid grounding in the nation’s day-to-day kitchen-sink reality, are nevertheless national icons.

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78 FLOYD, Janet. “Simple, Honest Food: Elizabeth David and the Construction of Nation in Cookery Writing.” In: Janet Floyd and Laurel Forster (eds.). *The Recipe Reader. Narratives, Contexts, Traditions*. London: Ashgate, 2003. 127 – 43. 142.

79 Apart from that, five million viewers cannot be reached in a primetime slot if only a narrow social stratum is targeted.

80 Cf. ANDERSON, Benedict. *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso, 2006 [1983]. *Passim*.

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