

The Edible Eighteenth Century: Eating, Dining, and Digesting in Literature from Defoe to
Austen

by

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*A thesis submitted to the
Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Colorado in partial fulfillment
of the requirement for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
Department of English
2016*

This thesis entitled:
The Edible Eighteenth Century: Eating, Dining, and Digesting
in Literature from Defoe to Austen
written by Krystal Yvonne McMillen
has been approved for the Department of English

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Date April 5, 2016

The final copy of this thesis has been examined by the signatories, and we
find that both the content and the form meet acceptable presentation standards
of scholarly work in the above mentioned discipline.

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Thesis directed by Professor John Stevenson

“The Universe is nothing without the things that live in it, and everything that lives, eats” – so begins Brillat-Savarin’s gastro-philosophical treatise, The Physiology of Taste. Consumer movements in eighteenth-century England, a period dubbed a “world of goods” by John Brewer, demonstrate that seen broadly, the universe is also nothing without objects. The influence of the physical world on representations of self, status, and national identity is also bound up with any analysis of the edible –insomuch as life depends on food, food becomes central to recognizing the significance of materiality for the body both in the form of sustenance and also in the manner in which eating invokes the physicality of being.

This project aims to demonstrate that the very same matter that sustains life – food – demands further attention in literary study. While attention to food has become a very trendy contemporary subject – a quick glance at the abundance of food blogs, magazines, cooking shows, cook books, and even the term “foodie” demonstrates that this is, indeed, a focus for the 21st century – it has largely been obfuscated throughout the study of art.

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Introduction

“The Universe is nothing without the things that live in it, and everything that lives, eats”¹ – so begins Brillat-Savarin’s gastro-philosophical treatise, *The Physiology of Taste*. Consumer movements in eighteenth-century England, a period dubbed a “world of goods” by John Brewer, demonstrate that seen broadly, the universe is also nothing without objects. The influence of the physical world on representations of self, status, and national identity is also bound up with any analysis of the edible –insomuch as life depends on food, food becomes central to recognizing the significance of materiality for the body both in the form of sustenance and also in the manner in which eating invokes the physicality of being.

In order to position the eighteenth century as an era fixated on the significance of food in literature, it is pivotal to consider the larger material society of the time. Consumer movements and the burgeoning emphasis on the representative and transforming capability of material goods in eighteenth-century England position this period as one keenly suited for a reexamination of the importance of food to art. The boom in literary production, most notably in the form of the novel, during the eighteenth century also render this as a site ripe for examination.

This project aims to demonstrate that the very same matter that sustains life – food – demands further attention in literary study. While attention to food has become a very trendy contemporary subject – a quick glance at the abundance of food blogs, magazines, cooking shows, cook books, and even the term “foodie” demonstrates that this is, indeed, a focus for the 21st century – it has largely been obfuscated throughout the study of art. Look for instance at the issue of still life art. Oftentimes beautiful realistic renditions of the world, these pieces demonstrate artistic skill through the striking deployment of trompe l’oeil to make objects appear

¹ Brillat-Savarin, Jean Anthelme. *The Physiology of Taste*. (New York: Everyman Library, 2009)), 15.

to lift from the canvas. Yet historically these pieces have been considered “low art” due to the subject matter regardless of their commercial viability. Bowls filled with fruit, vases of flowers, and – most notably for this work-- tables spread with food have not been considered the matter of “art.”

Before we can discuss food in art, we must discuss the way that food has been theorized. The efforts of writers to outline the particular role of food in society largely fall into two categories: structural assessments ahistorically based on anthropologic observations regarding cultures, and deeply historicizing models of evaluation which aim to fix foodstuffs in specific moments of national development, or cultural evolution. Structuralist critics like Claude Levi-Strauss and Roland Barthes position food as a foundation of humanity, a universal principle.² In striking contrast to the ahistorical model of Levi-Strauss and Barthes, Reay Tannihill’s method is strictly historical and geared toward understanding significant social events – war and slavery for instance – through a relation to food stuffs. Tannihill’s model is broad in its approach, generally offering little more than moments of trivial knowledge regarding a panoply of edibles. In a further degree of refinement, critics such as Sidney Mintz limit the scope of examination to a single comestible, such as sugar, in order to achieve a greater degree of historical nuance. Stephen Mennell forwards an alternative food historiography in what he calls a “developmental” model merging structuralist divisions between Nature and Culture with a historicizing impulse aimed at establishing distinctions between national food patterns – most notably, those of France and England, two countries with vastly disparate understandings of food.

² As Levi-Strauss writes: “If there is no society without a language, nor is there any which does not cook in some manner at least some food”; Barthes posits: “[humans] have communication by way of food.” “Toward a Psychosociology of Contemporary Food Consumption” *Food and Culture: A Reader*, ed. Carole Counihan and Penny Van Esterik. (New York: Routledge, 1997), 21.

With a few exceptions – Charlotte Sussman’s text, *Consuming Anxieties: Consumer Protest, Gender and British Slavery 1713-1833*, is a case in point – the application of food to literary evaluations of the eighteenth century are limited. Recently, scholars have devoted some attention to the issue of the edible in the Romantic era,³ yet still as Jocelyne Kolb maintains in *The Ambiguity of Taste: Freedom and Food in European Romanticism*, food is and remains a "low" topic, too low for the attention or taste of many academic critics. As an object of study, it requires "legitimization."⁴ As eighteenth-century literature has proven to be such a fertile ground for studies of materiality and the signifying properties of consumer goods, I propose that there is work to be done on the properties of comestible materials. Much as Sussman’s argument regarding consumer protest depends upon the metonymic slippage between slave bodies and sugar, food demonstrates its materiality differently than a curio – food is biological necessity and material reality, yet it is also fleeting in that it is consumed. It does not persist in its physical form; rather it becomes part of the body of the consumer and exists only through the memory of the subject and of the culture.

This project works to amend the absence of a method of considering the edible eighteenth century, one that utilizes the historicity of edible traditions alongside of the multiplicity of possibilities that they present. The process of consumption demonstrates the limits of the body – in the weakness evoked through hunger, in the loss of intentional control over the digestive process – coterminous to the body’s power. This process of consumption further demands, albeit uncomfortably at times, attention to the production/process of waste. The infiltration and evacuation of products stimulated by consumption sketch an understanding of the body as a

³ There are some other examples of a focus on food and literature, Timothy Morton’s *The Poetics of Spice: Romantic Consumerism and the Exotic* (2000) being another such example.

⁴ Kolb, Jocelyne. *The Ambiguity of Taste: Freedom and Food in European Romanticism*. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), 9.

topographically mapped system of what Jonathan Swift called “unsavory streams”⁵ that connect the body to the world in which it functions. Thus, the innermost spaces – the unseen intestine, the uncontrolled digestive process – connect with the world around it through eating.

Each chapter represents a distinct way in which representations of food, eating, and consumable products intersect with literature. Each is intended to offer a new interpretive avenue for familiar texts so as to demonstrate the manners in which examining the edible might revitalize, or even nourish, the way we read. The real link among these chapters is the focus on *how* literary representations of the act of eating and the effects of eating shape meaning within the works addressed in this project. Ultimately, this is a dissertation dedicated to the close reading of some of the most notable authors of the time. This is not, however, an outdated examination of the canon. Instead, this project adopts as its lens a focus that might not at first blush seem the most literary. Yet upon further inspection these works actively encourage such an approach, nearly pleading that we consider the edible and the literary in conjunction. As Henry Fielding writes of his hero Tom Jones, “While Jones was kissing and mumbling at the book, as if he had an excellent brown buttered crust in his mouth, or as if he had really been a book-worm, or an author who hath nothing to eat but his own works, a piece of paper fell from its leaves to the ground.”⁶ Here, Fielding demonstrates just how natural a match eating and reading are: readers consume their books taking the words within themselves and creating new possibilities, authors offer so much of themselves to their work that in consuming them art also sustains. Even the book itself is impermanent – losing pages over time – leaving only the nourished imagination after its disappearance. It is the goal of this project to elaborate upon Fielding’s metaphor, and, in

⁵ Swift, Jonathan. “The Lady’s Dressing Room,” line 28, 1732. Ed. Jack Lynch. Rutgers University, January 22nd, 2016. <http://andromeda.rutgers.edu/~jlynch/Texts/dressing.html>.

⁶ Fielding, Henry. *Tom Jones*. (New York: Oxford World Classics, 1996), 550.

doing so, build a bridge between the natural and often overlooked act of consumption that sustains us physically and the very much attended to act of literary consumption that sustains us imaginatively.

By far the most New Historical approach to this task is Chapter one, “Eating the World: The Role of Edibles and Comestible *Things* in the Eighteenth Century.” This chapter adopts one object, the sea turtle, as its focus to demonstrate how edibles encode massive amounts of cultural, national, and historical symbolism. By positioning the potential of the sea turtle within this web of representational possibilities, this chapter is able to demonstrate how integral representations of comestibles can be to representations of the “self” or of the individual in literature. In order to argue this, Daniel Defoe’s *The Life and Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* becomes the case study text. A novel dedicated in near entirety to articulation of Crusoe as a character, as a being in representation, I forward a reading of how integral the moments of eating become in this novel.

These edible moments are significant not just because eating becomes crucial to his survival on the island, but because they demonstrate literary representation into the internal and spiritual construction of Crusoe. Just as Crusoe takes his food into his body, Defoe carries his readers deeper into Crusoe’s metaphysical identity. This chapter forwards several examples of this shift to the internal: in his success in husbandry we see his pride grow; in his illness it is his consumption of food and a tobacco tincture that not only heals his body, but brings him to his God. However, the most notorious example would certainly be as Crusoe encounters the cannibals. In these moments not only does Crusoe confront the inherent violence of consumption, and thus finds himself forced to create an ethics for his own eating, but he also comes to a vital understanding about the distinction between man and meat. This turn is pivotal

to the whole of this dissertation as, I argue, this realization reveals the distinct metaphorical capabilities of comestibles. My argument echoes Crusoe's own ethics, for as turtle can become edible flesh and mutton can become meat, food is always capable of transforming into multiple possibilities of existence due to its distinct unfamiliarity. The cannibals demonstrate to Crusoe, in contrast, that man, even when consumed, always remains the known – human.

Chapter two, "Edible Economies: Production, Digestion, and Waste in the Eighteenth Century," adopts a much more economic focus. This chapter primarily examines the burgeoning consumer society during this period. By focusing on the proliferation of products and goods that emerge during this time, I turn to aesthetic visions of good taste and criticisms of waste. By examining primary source material in the form of domestic manuals and cookery books, a curious contradiction of the time emerges: the ideal domestic space simultaneously demonstrated a lavish and decadent appearance at the table while maintaining a desire to waste nothing and spend little. Cookery texts are filled with guides outlining how to navigate the market and how to choose one's viands properly. Whether it be a caution on how not to be swindled by a scheming dealer who over charges for a roast, or a quick tutorial on how to test fish and meat for freshness so it will last as long as possible in the larder, these domestic manuals clearly emphasize good economy. Yet, amongst the pages emphasizing preservation, there are also numerous examples of multi-page, multi-course meals that demand elaborate tablescapes and particular serving ware in order for the course to fit on one table. The manuals emphasize the importance of spectacular, seasonally appropriate, ornate services: the status of the family was established at the table.

This contradiction in the home can be mapped on to medical discussions of digestion at the time. As digestion was a little understood process, physicians forwarded that a body under proper dietary balance ought to have very little extraneous matter left over. Thus, the proper

balance of consumed goods should lead to a body with no need to produce unsavory excrement. While clearly this is a conclusion of little validity from a contemporary perspective, this scientific theory creates a fascinating way to read the scatological fixation of the Georgian Era. By utilizing this desire to be conservative in one's consumption so as to prevent waste, popular works such as Jonathan Swift's "The Lady's Dressing Room" and William Hogarth's *Four Stages of Cruelty* (among others) demonstrate the way in which the satire of these artists is directly linking issues of consuming products to issues of consuming food. Interestingly, Swift and Hogarth do not simply stop at aligning wasteful purchasing with the metaphor of excrement, rather these two satirists push the correlation to a disturbing limit as they also demand that the reader consider that in a world awash with filth and feces, one must begin to consume the filth itself. This terrifying cycle of eating and excreting, ad infinitum, reveals a fixation on immoderate consumption that manifests itself as an embodied imbalance – morality and the body are linked in this representation, and the body becomes a signifier of morality.

The second chapter concludes by examining the wasted body of Tom Nero in Hogarth's series as an emblem of a perverted and corrupted world. The notion of a wasted body directly leads to the subject of chapter three, "Commercial Cannibalism: Dietary Polemics, Digested Materials, and Wasted Bodies in the Eighteenth-Century Slave Narrative." This chapter is perhaps the heart of this dissertation. Much like chapter one, this chapter adopts a particular anecdote to shape the argument. By examining an abolitionist pamphlet written by "Africanus" in order to challenge the validity of the widespread rumors of cannibalism and Anthropophagi, I forward an argument that slave narratives and abolitionist texts forwarded a counter argument to the all too popular tale that the spaces at the edge of the world were filled with black man-eaters. Rather, these texts utilize a rhetorical strategy to demonstrate that the true cannibal is the slave

trader and the system of slavery. Much like the second chapter, this is an economic examination of the demands of production in the eighteenth century. This demand, however, required labor in the form of slavery.

Commercial cannibalism is the term that I utilize to depict the effects of this enslaved labor force. The primary source texts for this chapter are Olaudah Equiano's *The Interesting Narrative of Olaudah Equiano* and Mary Prince's *The History of Mary Prince*. Each of these texts outline slavery as a process that debilitates, destroys, and, ultimately, digests the slave body. There are two prongs to this point that reveal an important distinction between the male and female slave experience. First, Equiano's narrative reveals a very important exploration of the middle passage as a digestive tract in the process of slavery. As he and his kidnapped companions are thrust into the *belly* of the trader's ship, the foul cargo hold, filled with the vomit and excrement of his fellow slaves, literally robs him of his own appetite and begins to debilitate his body. The connection between the ability to sustain one's life and independence become significantly linked. In order to maintain his strength (his only value to the traders) his captors force feed the terrified Equiano. The loss of the ability to regulate nourishment is one of the first signals Equiano offers as a testament to the loss of his agency. This applies to Prince's narrative as well; however, the female body demonstrates that it can be consumed by more than just the demands of labor and production. Prince reveals that the female slave body becomes the site of sexual consumption in the form of rape and sexual assault, but also of literal consumption in the form of a wet nurse. Prince, required to feed her owner's children, becomes a body that produces food for the system that oppresses her freedom.

I use Prince's narrative to transition into the final chapter of this dissertation, "Revelation in the Body: Eating, Ethics, and Revising the Platonic Soul in the Eighteenth-Century Feminine."

This chapter examines another consumable body, the Anglo wife. While free, she still is a procurable individual. Further, she complicated the relationship between consumer and consumed, for unlike the slave body, she is often times implicated in the excessive consumerism of the era. Ultimately, this chapter seeks to examine the ways in which representations of feminine agency, morality, and captivity are coded through a system of dietetics. Beginning with an exploration of a trend to medicalize the female body due to a condition of caloric denial (what we would now call anorexia), this chapter utilizes three texts to demonstrate the way in which literature relied upon representations of diet to demonstrate the plight of the feminine.

Using, Daniel Defoe's *Roxana: The Fortunate Mistress* (1724) I examine the way dining and nutrition become representations for the cause and source of moral actions. In this way, a character's ethics are manifested through edible experiences. The connection between the moral and the meal reveal how perilous the relationship is between the feminine and her nutritional experience. This chapter then turns to Samuel Richardson's masterpiece *Clarissa, or the History of a Young Lady* (1748). Building upon the study of *Roxana* and the connection of the body to morals, the examination of *Clarissa* aims to demonstrate that dietary control becomes a method of exerting control of the body of our heroine. This reveals one of the most complicated contradictions in Richardson's work, for as Clarissa aims to gain more agency in her world, she abstains from meals. Opting out of forced social interactions, or removing herself from events of questionable moral merit lead to her ultimate frailty and starvation. This means that her body at once becomes a site of oppression by her environment, and a site of personal agency as she can exert control over herself by denying food. Finally, this chapter will conclude with Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* (composed 1798, published 1817). This section will serve as a coda to the dissertation in its entirety, as it works to demonstrate that personal, intellectual, and creative

regulation of a character is represented through the regulation of diet. By focusing on the impact of narrative attention to eating, this moment serves to examine the way that textual modes of diet reveal the symbolic function of eating within a literary work.

This dissertation opens and concludes with a focus on the novel not by chance. While the poetic satire of Swift demonstrates the abundance of cultural dialogue with regard to the matter and focus on food and eating, the form of the poem functions distinctly from the form of the novel. Much as comestibles are ingested and taken into the body, exchanges regarding food, eating, and dining transform external discourse as internal alteration; this is much more easily examined in the form of the novel. The efforts of deep interiority and individualized responses create a unique environment through which the impact of the edible is most apparent.

A note on language; I have aimed to standardize language in the case of most quotations. Places where punctuation, particular words, or structural issues are not in the proper contemporary form, I have included the standard *sic* delineation.

Chapter One

Eating the World: The Role of Edibles and Comestible *Things* in the Eighteenth Century

“[A]t night I made my supper of three of the turtle’s eggs, which I roasted in the ashes, and ate, as we call it, in the shell; and this was the first bit of meat I had ever asked God’s blessing to, even as I could remember, in my whole life.”

- Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*

To begin this project, it is vital to address the ways in which comestibles are unique materials, particularly in literary representation. In an effort to begin to articulate the intersections between food stuffs, economies, cultures, nations, bodies, and selves latent in the representation of edibles in the eighteenth century, I will establish an overview of the critical history of examining things in literature. In order to demonstrate the ways in which this topic has a myriad of implications for the study of texts, my analysis takes as its object of study an animal whose existence is dually comestible and material – food and object – in the eighteenth century, the marine turtle. The explicit goal of such a narrow focus is to demonstrate the way in which the thematic focus of foodstuffs used throughout this dissertation can be applied to literary study. Utilizing the sea turtle as the entry point into both *The Life and Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* and into issues of dining and taste in the eighteenth century, I will demonstrate that the unique material properties of viands substantially differentiate them from non-food consummables during this period. As such, unlike other modes of materialism, the attention to food opens the possibility for theorizing representation of objects and of humans in distinct ways. By focusing on edibles, the material connections to the body through nourishment and the metaphorical possibilities within these connections are revealed, thus opening avenues to examine, critique, and reconsider the way that we study representations of the self and the individual in eighteenth-century literature. Ultimately, this examination will reconsider the plight and position of an exceedingly canonical literary figure, Robinson Crusoe. By analyzing *Robinson Crusoe* through

the paradigm of the edible goods Crusoe encounters, I can establish Crusoe's physical and spiritual salvation as dependent on the properties that foodstuffs reveal.

By examining the unique properties of viands, and most specifically the turtle, in order to posit the theoretical potentialities latent in considering edible *things*, new readings of canonical texts emerge. Unlike other theoretical models for examining objects, goods, and things in literary studies, foodstuffs operate in unique ways within the construction of the self and the social in literature. In order to differentiate between the function of foods and the function of objects in texts, it is valuable to briefly articulate the conventions of thing theory and other object-oriented lines of inquiry. From there, utilizing the sea turtle as a case study, I will demonstrate the possibilities for accessing networks of meaning through attention to edibles. Finally, by applying the study of this viand to *Robinson Crusoe*, this chapter will demonstrate the ways in which food objects function in a manner that is distinct from other material *things*.

Within literary studies, *things* invoke a vibrant critical model. From Heidegger to more recent studies by Bill Brown and others, the notion of *things*, and of *thingness*, has been probed and pondered. As Bruno Latour says, "A thing is, in one sense, an object out there and, in another sense, an *issue* very much in there, at any rate, a *gathering*."⁷ Yet for Latour's attention to objects out there yet in there, little attention has been directed toward the objects that occupy the "in there" of the body. Food studies has been a vibrant topic for the examination of anthropologists and historians since the 1960s, when Claude Lévi-Strauss penned *The Raw and the Cooked*, the first volume of his four-part *Mythologiques*. The universality of eating render foodways a common starting point for examining cultures and cultural difference. Lévi-Strauss positions food as a foundation of humanity, a universal principle. As he writes: "If there is no

⁷ Latour, Bruno. "Matters of Fact, Matters of Concern." *Things*. Ed. Bill Brown (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004), 158.

society without a language, nor is there any which does not cook in some manner at least some food.”⁸

In order to examine the significance of food items as unique things, this chapter begins by considering the metaphysical materiality of the sea turtle, a creature that carried a complex, even contradictory, position as both exotic rarity and domestic familiar within eighteenth-century gastronomic circles. Using the prolific examples of both commodifying and consuming turtle in artistic works of the era, I seek to explore the multiplicity of the humble species Chelonioidea in order to probe the possibilities of recognizing comestibles as not merely falling into the category of animal, mineral, or vegetable, but as *things* with unique symbolic properties due to their existence materially external and symbolically internal to human subjects. The import of examining the turtle lies in its nature as a product people consumed. Simultaneously alien and domestic, a material good and a nutritive windfall, a gastronomic staple and a delicacy, sea turtle in the eighteenth century is a commodity subtly winding through British existence. Once we understand that the prevalence of the turtle both economically and nationally, I will then examine the hero of Defoe’s text through his dependence on the edibles of the island, most notably its abundant turtles. By considering the dependence of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century explorers on the sea turtle as sustenance, as well as examining the *haute cuisine* status of turtle during the period, I aim to establish *Robinson Crusoe* as one text which demonstrates the distinct thingness of this edible good. Focusing on how foodstuffs function in Defoe’s work in contrast to other goods or other non-edible products, most particularly human flesh, a good only consumed through the taboo practice of cannibalism, reveals the potential latent in edibles of imagining the self and otherness through eating. Simultaneously inscribing Crusoe’s isolation and effacing it

⁸ Levi-Strauss, “The Culinary Triangle.” *Food and Culture: A Reader*, ed. Carole Counihan and Penny Van Esterik. (New York: Routledge, 1997), 28.

through a covert but persuasive multiplicity of geographical and metaphysical features, the history of the turtle reveals the ability of material goods to reconstruct understandings of the human subject.

This connection to an edible product and the construction of the self cannot be understated. The narrative of the eighteenth-century tortoise might aptly be described in the words of Bill Brown, as “[t]he story of objects asserting themselves as things...the story of a changed relation to the human subject, and thus the story of how the thing really names less an object than a particular subject-object relation.”⁹ Tracing the complicated culinary and cultural history of turtle reveals a new image of Defoe’s hero. Rather than an archetypal figure of individualism, rather than an allegorical rendering of colonialism, Crusoe comes to represent the possibility of a heterogeneous British identity. Through his consumption of this animal, Crusoe collapses the boundaries between conspicuous luxury and basic necessity, and finds in their fusion a providential kingdom on the island and a symbolic autonomy and independence from his “home.”

The turtle is significant because it functions at both the national and the global level in addition to the level of the individual and personal. Thus the novel *Robinson Crusoe* offers not a tale filled merely with the fetishes of a colonial market system, but one concerned with notions of the material and material relations to the body. As Crusoe effects connections constituting the global network of his existence, even categories as exclusive as ‘physical’ and ‘metaphysical’ begin to break down, and materiality ultimately invades even the most sacred spaces. This is the unique byway that food presents for literary interpretation. Rather than passing into a period of disuse that renders the object available for interpretation, food becomes part of the body and

⁹ Brown, Bill. “Things” *Things*. Ed. Bill Brown (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004), 4

permeates the boundaries between conceptions of the physical self and mental identity. For Crusoe and for the eighteenth century, the turtle, in subtle but complicated ways, operates as a fulcrum of perception, rendering the local citizen as a global one through consumption, and ultimately functioning to situate British subjects as citizens of the world.

“TURTLE SOUP--THAT EVERY DISH IN ONE!”: MULTIPLE MEANS OF MULTIPLE MEALS

In 1796, Irish painter Henry Tresham published *The Sea Sick Minstrel; or Maritime Sorrows*. Dedicated to Richard White, respected ship owner and merchant businessman,¹⁰ the poem not only indicates that the esteemed painter wielded a brush with far more dexterity than he did a pen but also that he had a fixation on the trials of sea-faring. The poem’s project, “delineating calamities peculiar to the young adventurer at sea,”¹¹ reveals the stomach to be the dominant site of affliction. Battling persistent sea-sickness, the eponymous minstrel bemoans his situation. Yet, after the sailor “sinks in seas of gastric juice,”¹² he is met by fits of starvation. In a reverie, the minstrel envisions a pageant of viands that culminates in a meditation on gastro-oceanic mergings:

So rich a tide, by state refinement led,
The plighted Doge uxoriously might wed;
Say, say of what? – cold metaphor begone –
Of Turtle Soup! – that ev’ry dish in one! –
While opening lips dissolve in moist desires,
From opening lids, the dear delight retires,
In plastic pomp Tea equipage is seen,
Turtle and Tea – vast difference I ween.¹³

As poetry fails the minstrel in his moment of distress, he dismisses the art, and thus dismisses the artifice, of his work. Rejecting the “cold metaphor,” the minstrel instead invokes a much warmer reality – turtle soup.

¹⁰ In a letter to Horace Walpole Bedford written August 29th 1796, Robert Southey mentions Tresham’s poem as evidence for his disdain for long sea voyages. Little other notice of Tresham’s poem remains.

¹¹ Tresham, Henry. *The Sea Sick Minstrel; or Maritime Sorrows*. (Piccadilly: Printed for Richard White, 1796), v.

¹² *Ibid.*, 18.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 27.

I begin my study of the turtle with this poetic invocation in order to briefly establish the cultural import that food can embody. This poem articulates the significance of the material to the creation of a metaphor, and as such it demonstrates the ways in which literary articulations of comestibles connect the recesses of the body with the world beyond its boundaries. Tresham's poem reveals that even in the midst of the vastness of the ocean, it is the stomach, the interior of his body, from which he cannot distance himself. The nature of comestibles creates this inseparable awareness of the place of the body in the world. It is the necessity of sustenance and the reality of starvation, in part, that prompts this function of food. However, the way that Tresham considers eating turtle soup provide opportunities for reading oneself within the larger network of the social, cultural, and economic fabric of society.

Much was written on the turtle as food, and turtle soup in particular was written of, as Tresham's minstrel proclaims, as "ev'ry dish in one." The turtle itself, an animal rumored to contain seven different types of meat, each variety reminiscent of a different creature, was a veritable walking banquet. As such, the poet subtly comments on the particular ways that edibles have multiple meanings and functions. By being "ev'ry dish in one" the minstrel seems to recognize the multiplicity of functions and meaning in the meal – it is salvation from starvation even as it reminds him of the security of his home where he previously consumed the meal; it is the reminder of refinement in the midst of desolation; it is reality in the face of "cold metaphor." It also demonstrates the abundance of nature. Unlike tea, another wildly popular import of the eighteenth century, the narrator emphasizes that this banquet required no china, no service ware imported or domestic; it required little other than the animal itself. As the minstrel notes, the turtle is contained by the naturally "opening lids" which pun on the opening eyes of the waking minstrel, but also parallel the hunger implied by parting lips. It is not of the

malleable and artificial, “plastic pomp” of so many prepared dishes accompanied by ritual.

Instead, turtle, for the minstrel, is superior because it is not connected to the ceremony of the tea service, but also because it is, in many ways, connected to the human. As parting lips parallel the parting lids, Tresham’s description of the method of obtaining the turtle flesh (removing its lids, or shells) echoes in perfect symbiosis the process of eating – the sacrifice of the turtle leads to the sustenance of the man.

This intense affinity between human and turtle made more sense in Tresham’s time than it does now. In the century preceding the publication of *Robinson Crusoe*, sea turtles were abundant world wide.¹⁴ In 1620, the first parliamentary meeting of the recently formed Bermuda colony convened to discuss, among other things, the poaching and marked decline of sea tortoises. In what is considered by many the first act of conservation law, the Bermuda colony declared the killing of sea tortoises less than 18 inches in length to be an offence punishable by a penalty of fifteen pounds of tobacco.¹⁵ While the need to protect endangered sea turtles is mostly uncontroversial today, the seventeenth-century impulse towards limiting the harvest of these colossal creatures demonstrates a peculiar interest in maintaining a species that remained immensely abundant throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The urge to consider the management and preservation of a plentiful resource reveals not only the inherent value of this “so excellent a fishe,”¹⁶ but also the impulse of the coastal citizens of the Atlantic Ocean to identify proprietarily with the *natural* inhabitants of the island.

¹⁴ Sea turtles live in all oceanic regions, with the exception of the Polar Regions. Estimates posit that during the seventeenth century, 91 million adult turtles thrived in the Caribbean alone; see McClenachan, Loren, Jeremy B.C. Jackson, Marah J.H. Newman. “Conservation Implications of Historic Sea Turtle Nesting Beach Loss.” *Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment*. (4.6, Aug. 2006), 290-296.

¹⁵ The mere fact that the punishment was levied in the form of a consumable good, while not an edible good, is striking and demonstrates the currency consumable items such as tobacco held. Carr, Archie. *So Excellent a Fishe: A Natural History of Sea Turtles*. (New York: Natural History Press, 1967), 1-40. Carr’s foundational text in marine turtle conservation takes its title from the original language of the 1620 Bermuda Assembly turtle legislation. A copy of the legislative text is reprinted opposite the frontispiece.

¹⁶ Ibid.

Indeed, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the tortoise ruled the waves. Seamen considered the massive reptiles with reverence, noting both their abundance and their usefulness. The seventeenth-century explorer, Cristóbal de Acuña, commented on the turtle's ubiquitous presence in his diary: "TEN Leagues below this Island the Province of the *Yorimaus* ends; and two Leagues farther we found on the South-side the Mouth of a famous River... 'tis navigable... and [is] well stock'd with Tortoises.... In a word, it has every thing necessary to make the Navigation of it easy and agreeable."¹⁷ De Acuña's testimony that the "well stocked" island led to agreeable navigation is further supported by the size and utility of the species:

One of these Tortoises is enough to feed a numerous Family some time... and their Flesh is as good as that of a Heifer. At one Season of the Year they are so fat, that a good Barrel of Fat may be taken out of 'em, which is as good as Butter, and being salted a little, tastes extraordinary well, and keeps very well too; this will not only serve to fry Fish, but is likewise as good for Sauces as the best Butter in the World.¹⁸

The symbolic relationship between seafarer and turtle is a natural one; unbounded by land, vulnerable to the ocean's tumultuous temper, both the seaman and the marine turtle depend on the vital yet unpredictable space of the ocean. Yet, contradictions are inherent to this relationship – while explorers pursued the new world, they did so in the name of the old; while the turtle was a supreme global navigator, it was also a protected local commodity. It is this reason that the turtle makes a uniquely suited case study. Ultimately, the conflation of the local and the global in the turtle demonstrates the conflict between the commodity object and the consuming subject. In effect, it destabilizes the distinction between Western and other, between subject and object, between human and thing. This is the unique position that food occupies as its consumption relegates it simultaneously to metaphor and material reality – metaphor as the consumer can

¹⁷ Acuña, Cristóbal de. *Voyages and discoveries in South-America the first up the river of Amazons to Quito in Peru, and back again to Brazil, perform'd at the command of the King of Spain by Christopher D'Acugna*. (London: Printed for S. Buckley, 1698), 142.

¹⁸ Ibid. 65-66.

recall the fleeting and ephemeral taste of the eaten object and can experience satisfaction in the way that it nourishes without understanding how it nourishes; material reality as the body and object become unified through the caloric sustenance the food provides. When we attend to the currents of trade, expansion, and exploration the turtle becomes an emblem of the global traveler, always intensely, instinctually, situated in the local and the global – a creature bounded to the shore where it nests yet also unbounded, navigating the wide sea. As Jacques Du Bosc described it, the turtle was “always covered...carrying [its] house over [its] head.”¹⁹

Yet in regard to the utility of the tortoise for sailors, De Acuña certainly does not overstate his case. Averaging 350 pounds, the marine turtle provided ample food in the form of flesh, fat, and, in the case of the female of the species, hundreds of edible eggs. Sea turtle, however, offered a great deal more than just foodstuffs. The same fat De Acuña claimed as the “best butter in all the world” was melted to oil and used to condition the hulls of ships and boats. The rough hides of the turtle were cured to provide sources of leather for boots, work gloves, and other leather goods, and while at sea sailors could quickly fashion crude sandals from the fins of the creature.²⁰ Furthermore, the substantial size of the shell invited numerous uses. Hollowed out and turned upside down, the top shells of larger turtles could be used for vessels²¹ and were rumored to serve as rooftops to single family homes in the islands.²² In other more Imperial settings, the coveted shell of the hawksbill species provided fashionable inlay materials for detailing furniture pieces, tea caddies, and other accouterments of eighteenth-century curio

¹⁹ Du Bosc, Jaques. *The Accomplish'd Woman*. Trans. Walter Montague, Esq. (1656), 27.

²⁰ Frazier, J. “Exploitation of Marine Turtles in the Indian Ocean,” *Human Ecology*, 8, no. 4 (1980): 332.

²¹ Acuña, *Voyages and discoveries in South-America*, 65-66.

²² Buffon, Georges Louis Leclerc, comte de. *Natural history of birds, fish, insects and reptiles. Embellished With upwards of Two Hundred Engravings. In five volumes.* Vol. Volume 4. (London, 1793), 255.

collections.²³ Much like the island De Acuña encountered, the turtle itself possessed nearly everything necessary to make life easy and agreeable.

So, the eighteenth-century turtle prominently occupies two locales: the sea and the dinner table. The vogue for turtle permeated nearly every aspect of the eighteenth century from the toilets of fashionable ladies, as Alexander Pope's *The Rape of the Lock* reveals,²⁴ to serving as a marker of taste and discernment in fashionable society.²⁵ Yet beyond the commodities to which Pope's combs allude, considerations of sea turtle from an eighteenth-century perspective are incomplete without considering the turtle as a refined dish. As the sage narrator in Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones* notes, the edible possibilities of turtle were immense:

The tortoise...besides the delicious calipash and calipee, contains many different kinds of food; nor can the learned reader be ignorant that in *Human Nature*, though here collected under one general name, is such a 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.²⁶

Delicious as Fielding's narrator makes the turtle's meat sound, he also ascribes to it multiplicity. Calipash *and* calipee are two meats within one creature, yet it is not simply turtle meat we encounter within the tortoise as there "many different *kinds* of food" therein. More than mere animal, much more than meager vegetable, sea turtle presented myriad culinary possibilities. Yet beyond the impulse to reify the turtle as dish, Fielding's account reveals a curious simultaneous compulsion to authenticate, categorize, and consume the creature all the while anthropomorphically identifying with the tortoise. Much as sailors found material value in the

²³ Berg, Maxine. *Luxury and Pleasure in Eighteenth-Century Britain*. (New York: Oxford UP, 2005), 246.

²⁴ When referring to Belinda's toilet, Pope references her combs: "The Tortoise here and Elephant units,/Transformed to combs the speckled, and the white." Pope, Alexander. *The Rape of the Lock*. I.134-144.

²⁵ As Maria Edgeworth's *Belinda* demonstrates, epicurean taste gave turtle a place of prominence: "Having gained immortal honour at an entertainment by gravely protesting that some turtle would have been excellent if it had not been done a *bubble too much*, [Clarence Hervey] presumed, elated as he was with the applauses of the company, to assert, that no man in England had a more correct taste than himself." Edgeworth, Maria. *Belinda*. (New York: Oxford World Classics, 2008), 89.

²⁶ Fielding, Henry. *Tom Jones*. (New York: Oxford UP, 1996), 30.

whole animal, Fielding's meditations reveal a metaphysical connection to the creature: turtle simultaneously acts as a profuse source of food and, in Fielding's words, as a parallel to all human nature.

The turtle captivated the attention of British subjects at home and abroad. Linked to the tides of cultural expansion, imperial exploration, and a burgeoning trade economy, the sea turtle in many ways embodied the fetishized commodity within a trade-market system. As Patricia Spyer notes, "the concept of the fetish is intimately linked to the history of European expansion, to discourses and power relations developed within novel cross-cultural landscapes."²⁷ Certainly, the history of the turtle in Western culture fits this description – claimed by West and East Indian natives and English epicurean enthusiasts alike, the turtle and the products rendered from this creature served to familiarize foreign spaces, effectively inscribing the home abroad and vice versa.²⁸ Yet considering the turtle as simply commodity fetish in the period is problematically dualistic and echoes the concerns raised by Arjun Appadurai. "Part of the difficulty with a crosscultural analysis of commodities," Appadurai writes, "is the tendency to be excessively dualistic: 'us and them'; 'materialist and religious'; 'objectifications of persons' versus 'personification of things'; 'market exchange' versus 'reciprocity'; and so forth."²⁹ The turtle baffled and intrigued eighteenth-century subjects; it defied singularity, proved mysterious and ancient, seduced palates and converted skeptical epicureans, and, in many ways, prompted English citizens to reevaluate themselves.

MOCK TURTLE, MOCK NATION: EATING ENGLAND, EATING THE INDIES, EATING THINGS

²⁷ Spyer, Patricia. "Introduction." *Border Fetishisms: Material Objects in Unstable Spaces*. Ed. Patricia Spyer. (New York: Routledge, 1998), 1.

²⁸ For a discussion of the prominent ways in which foods "assume meanings that transcended boundaries of geography, class and gender in Britain," see Bickham, Troy. "Eating the Empire: Intersections of Food, Cookery, and Imperialism in Eighteenth-Century Britain." (*Past and Present*, no. 198), 73.

²⁹ Appadurai, Arjun, ed. "Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value." *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1986), 12-13.

The influence of edibles on culture is practically limitless and not relegated simply to the dining table. In fact, the history of the turtle serves to demonstrate how politics and legislation, and ultimately how culture itself is shaped by the influence of eating. As such, it is important to consider that one of the most striking motivations for the Bermuda Turtle Legislation of 1620 was that eighteenth-century appetites yearned for turtle. The strangle-hold that turtle had on the culinary scene led to demand exceeding the supply and led to the creation of another dish, an imitation avowedly derivative, yet relished for its supposed resemblance to the taste of tortoise – mock turtle. The history of this reptilian edible demonstrates the ways that strikingly complex currents of taste, gastronomic tradition, national identity, global trade, and issues of mimesis all merge in one glorious cultural stew of information within the carapace and plastron – the top and bottom shells – of one animal. Much as Crusoe finds a way to be both home and abroad, the turtle seems always to refuse stable singularity, and the abundance of recipes in eighteenth-century cookery texts outlining preparations for turtle and mock turtle, cooked according to the “Indian” or “West Indian” methods, for instance, reveals a global curiosity motivating British consumption of this highly adaptable creature. Inevitably, alongside methods of preparing turtle in eighteenth-century cookbooks, recipes outlining the procedures for “turtling” other meats are frequent.

Despite the fact that real turtle meat was considered the authentic delicacy, mock turtle meat, made from the much more accessible calf’s head, allowed greater access to the delicious foodstuff. Cookery texts demonstrate the equality of these two dishes. *The Housekeeper’s Instructor: Or Universal Cook* establishes turtle meat as, “not only furnish[ing] the most delicious repast to the epicure, but to all those who can obtain so luxurious a gratification.”³⁰

³⁰ Henderson, William Augustus. *The Housekeeper’s Instructor: or Universal Family Cook*. (London : printed and sold by W. and J. Stratford, Holborn-Hill, [1790?]), 43 .

Similarly, it speaks of mock turtle as, “a rich soup, and to most palates deliciously gratifying.”³¹ The meager equivocation between a taste luxurious to “*all those*” who eat it and “most palates” scarcely undermines the general appeal of turtled flesh. Yet, in gastronomically merging the turtle – a creature of the sea, of the world, of the Indies – with cow, gourmands moved the staple protein commodity of the nation into a larger global context. As British Beefeaters became mock turtle consumers, beef, symbolic of the British culinary rationality so often contrasted with the indulgent French models of ragouts and fricassees, was transformed into quite another dish, one participating in an extra-national discourse in intensely national terms as the simplistic style of British beef eating was complicated by the intense preparation required of turtling.

Turtle appeared not only to be every dish in one, but a dish for everyone. A pamphlet printed in 1756 gives the following account regarding the universalizing influence of eating turtle meat: “A turtle-feast is equally relished at both Ends of Town, and there is the same fondness for Calipash and Calipee at St. James and in the city. In short, if eating and drinking be a science with which persons of distinction only are thoroughly acquainted, their Inferiors have at least proceeded farther than the first rudiments of it.”³² Here, turtle is ascribed the position of available luxury, yet also captures the class-transcending status of the dish. The very notion of dining on turtle as “feasting” and, no less, a feast that offers enjoyment to “all those who can obtain so Luxurious a gratification” demonstrates the exquisite allure of this viand to eaters of every socioeconomic circumstance. Turtle universalized palates, equalized experience, and edified the masses – in short, turtle permitted “Inferiors” access to the rudiments of the upper class.

³¹ Ibid, 24.

³² *An Address to the Great Recommending Better Ways and Means of Raising the Necessary Supplies than Lotteries or Taxes.* (London : printed for R. Baldwin, at the Rose in Paternoster Row, 1756), 7.

The meditation on turtle also draws attention to the implicit urge to map the turtle – creating, as it were, an edible topography. Claiming that a turtle feast furnishes enjoyment at both ends of town, at St. James or in the city, serves simultaneously to call to mind the distances at which British citizens live and eat while collapsing that space into one uniform locale. Discussions of turtle had the unique ability to both demonstrate space and collapse the distance between places – nearly every recipe for turtle prepared in the way of the home, the English way, is paired in cookbooks with recipes for the preparation of the flesh in the ways of the Indies, a fact that demonstrates the way that the exotic encounters of an expanding empire were transported to the home country via unconventional avenues such as cookery traditions. Eating turtle was a local act but also a global one. Even the very meat itself presented this contradictory and unstable binary of disparate locations. In calling forth the common fondness for calipash *and* calipee, the space and diversity of meat present in the turtle is made apparent. Yet, closer consideration reveals that the types of meat referred to establish the entirety of the creature, as the calipash is the meat taken from beneath the top shell and the calipee is taken from the flesh attached to the bottom shell. As such, descriptions of the turtle conflate its diversity and abundance with its singularity and its entirety – in short, the turtle defies boundaries.

ROBINSON CRUSOE, A CULINARY CASE STUDY: FOOD VERSUS FLESH

It is this simultaneity present in the turtle that makes *Robinson Crusoe* a condensation of the influence and elements of this particular edible. As Crusoe successfully establishes his plantation, his bower, and his country home – complete with subjects, enclosures, and (nearly) all the accouterment of the established and wealthy – he cannot escape the persistent knowledge of his liminality and isolation. Neither singular nor strictly multiple, Crusoe is in England at the same time that he is not. He is British and Islander; he is local *and* global. Perhaps, for the

British, much as for Crusoe, the curious tale of the turtle succinctly demonstrates the function Roland Barthes ascribed to food: “food sums up and transmits a situation: it constitute[s] an information: it signifies....One could say that an entire world...is present in and signified by food.”³³ In the case of Crusoe’s turtles, he encounters a type of food capable of bearing worlds both physical and spiritual.

The sea turtle is a unique food, but it is also a unique *thing*. Yet, to speak of things in Daniel Defoe’s work is, as Cynthia Sundberg Wall notes, “a bit like analyzing epistolary in Richardson or irony in Fielding; what can be said that hasn’t already been said?”³⁴ While Virginia Woolf famously wrote of *Crusoe* as “nothing but an earthenware pot,”³⁵ inspiring Wall’s desire “to speak up for the melons, the raisins, the limes”³⁶ of the novel, much, in fact, remains to be said about the novel’s material commitments. Recently, Crusoe’s things have been discussed within the parameters of the mercantilist economy of eighteenth-century England, a context which places emphasis on the role of the commodity fetish – Crusoe’s hoard of specie, for instance³⁷ -- within Crusoe’s island existence. As Wolfram Schmidgen argues, fetishization in *Robinson Crusoe* fails to work according to the commonly privileged Marxist paradigm of commodity fetishism. According to Schmidgen, the Marxist fetish emphasizes labor and the alienation of labor’s produce in a fashion incompatible with mercantilism, a system within which the fetish accumulates value through circulation and enumeration in a restricted economy.³⁸ The idea of goods circulating within a mercantilist system maps naturally onto *Robinson Crusoe*: much as

³³ Barthes, Roland “Toward a Psychosociology of Contemporary Food Consumption.” *Food and Culture: A Reader*. Ed. Carole Counihan and Penny Van Esterik. (New York: Routledge, 1997), 21.

³⁴ Wall, Cynthia Sundberg. *The Prose of Things: Transformations of Description in the Eighteenth Century*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 109.

³⁵ Woolf, Virginia. “*Robinson Crusoe*.” *The Common Reader, Second Series*. Ed. Andrew McNeillie. (London: Hogarth, 1986), 57.

³⁶ Wall. *The Prose of Things*. 109.

³⁷ Meier, Thomas Keith. *Defoe and the Defense of Commerce*. (Victoria: University of Victoria, 1987), 24-26.

³⁸ Schmidgen, “Robinson Crusoe, Enumeration, and the Mercantile Fetish.” 20.

Crusoe's primary objective on the island is survival and autonomy, "the guiding motive behind mercantilism [is] the quest for national security and self-sufficiency."³⁹ This mode of criticism has encouraged readings of Crusoe's ability to render a set of various objects into an estate surpassing mere sufficiency as evidence for Crusoe as the consummate individual. Separate from the larger community, he is able to generate that which he needs; in the words of Ian Watt, "that Robinson Crusoe...is an embodiment of economic individualism hardly needs demonstration"⁴⁰ – or does it? Perhaps in examining Crusoe's independence, we have overlooked moments of Crusoe's dependence on his environment, a dependence that serves to unwrite the narrative of the consummate individual. Perhaps rather than speaking up for the melons, we ought to let the things of Crusoe's island speak for themselves.

Despite the extensive emphasis Crusoe's journal entries place on eating – collecting food is his primary daily activity, the sole reason for maintaining firearms, that which establishes the island as "his," and that which motivates him to cross the island – few of these eating moments have received critical attention with the notable exception of cannibalism. This is the significant intervention that this dissertation makes. By attending to the comestibles codes at work in eighteenth-century texts, canonical works can be reopened and reexamined through a lens that has previously been over-looked. In order to articulate the distinction of the function of edibles in *Robinson Crusoe* from cannibalism, it is important to realize that cannibalism cannot, for Crusoe, function as food can. Much as the minstrel meditated on the possibilities inherent in his every dish in one, Crusoe finds myriad uses for the comestibles on his island. This is in striking

³⁹ Meier, *Defoe and the Defense of Commerce*. 24.

⁴⁰ Watt, *The Rise of the Novel*, 63. For a treatise on capable individualism separate from society, see also Crawford B. Macpherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Lock*. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1962).

contrast to the encounters he has with cannibalism which belie a distinct singularity of form and function.

While this dissertation will take a more pointed examination of the function and role of cannibalism as metaphor in eighteenth-century literature in chapter three, it is important to recognize that in Defoe's text, the representation of cannibalistic actions are signifiers of the literal acts of consuming human flesh. Unlike the models of cannibalistic representation which rely upon the expectation of anthropophagic horrors to make a political statement of protest that this dissertation will touch on in chapter three, Crusoe's experience with the cannibals is marked by the reality of confronting the feasting on flesh. As Crusoe stumbles upon the shore littered with human remains left behind after a cannibalistic repast, he encounters a model of food preparation that is horrifying – the human body as ingestible flesh. This model of culinary work is one that necessitates murder, an act distinctly separate from hunting. Though the consumption of any meat requires death, the registers of violence in each act are distinct for Crusoe. Further, not only does this model of culinary preparation require a mode of violence that transports Crusoe to consider his own mortality, the thought of consuming the meat products of such violence upends the distance between the consumer and the consumable product.

I begin an analysis of eating turtle in *Robinson Crusoe* with a discussion of cannibalism in order to articulate that human flesh cannot have access to the same metaphysical realm as turtle flesh. Unlike eating turtle, eating the human body prohibits any period of misuse necessary to establish thingness – it upends symbolic distance between consumer and comestible. It is and always only can be of the human. Unlike turtle, or other meats through the process of turtling, there is no potential to become myriad and multiple meals through the cooking process. Beef can become mock turtle, but human flesh will always be inescapably the meat of mankind. In

contrast to the episodes wherein Crusoe considers cannibalism as a distinctly singular experience – there is, after all an Ouroborosesque quality to cannibalism, humankind eating its own tail, meeting its *own* end – his experience with other edibles, most particular to my point, the turtle, permit access to a larger symbolic realm.

The horrors of cannibalism result from its two fundamental truths: first, the brutality of the preparation of flesh, namely murder; second, through the inescapable reality that the “raw” materials of this flesh were, at one point, human. Levi-Strauss has articulated that the most basic distinctions between societies stem from the process of cooking; as cooking is “a truly universal form of human activity,”⁴¹ the differentiations in the cooking process serve to define cultural boundaries. It is here for Crusoe that the distinctions between these two societies, between the self and other, appear the most clearly articulated. As Crusoe observes “a place where there had been a fire made, and a circle dug in the earth, like a cockpit, where it is suppos’d the savage wretches had sat down to their inhumane feastings”⁴² he confront the most horrifying vision he can imagine. He continues:

I was so astonish’d with the sight of these things, that I entertaine’d no notions of any danger to my self [*sic*] for a long while; All my apprehensions were bury’d in the thoughts of such a pitch of inhuman, hellish brutality, and the horror of the degeneracy of humane nature;... in short, I turn’d away my face from the horrid spectacle; my stomach grew sick, and...nature discharg’d the disorder from my stomach.⁴³

No amount of culinary preparation can remove the human from the flesh and the act of cooking the human body cyclically reveals the “degeneracy of human nature.” In order to process the gory truth of cannibalism, Crusoe must transport the eaters of flesh to another realm, removing the perpetrators of such violence to hell. In instances when man becomes consumable

⁴¹ Lévi-Strauss, Claude. “The Culinary Triangle.” *Food and Culture: A Reader*. Ed. Carole Counihan and Penny Van Esterik (New York: Routledge, 1997), 28.

⁴² Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*, 165.

⁴³ Ibid, 165.

commodity, the eater become supernatural representations of “the devil himself”⁴⁴ – the ultimate consumer of man in the flesh and in the spirit, the consumer of souls. Through the culinary preparation of human flesh, Crusoe sees the cannibals as the culinary damned.

Disgusted with the permeable boundary between human and consumable good, Crusoe confronts a challenge to the legitimacy and morality of all eating: “How do I know what God himself judges in this particular Case? It is certain these People either do not commit this as a Crime; it is not against their own Consciences reproving, or their Light reproaching them....They think it no more a Crime to kill a Captive taken in War, than we do to kill an Ox; nor to eat humane Flesh, than we do to eat Mutton.”⁴⁵ This reflection is striking as it demonstrates the ways that the material substances of food goods can be metaphorically permeate the boundaries of the spirit. This ability for foodstuff to represent and reform the most interior spaces of the human spirit will be more fully developed theoretically in chapter four, yet for Crusoe the impact that eating has on his mental and spiritual state cannot be overlooked. As he contrasts his European experience with that of the cannibalistic other, Crusoe destabilizes the two cultures’ binary opposition. He admits his uncertainty as to God’s judgment in this case and he grants the cannibals consciences recognizing the possibility of their own spiritual “Light.” Most strikingly, he allows for the possibility that the cannibals’ eating is justified through their own cultural ethics, which is wholly alien to his own consumer tendencies. While the cannibals only kill criminals who have violated their cultural boundaries, Crusoe recognizes the offhanded way that the flesh he eats is dismissed and disposed of thoughtlessly. It is not, Crusoe realizes, a crime against *his* conscience to kill an ox or to dispatch a sheep to make mutton. These reflections reveal the impulse to understand simultaneously the physical and symbolic properties of

⁴⁴ Ibid. 166.

⁴⁵ Ibid. 171.

digestion and preparation. While Crusoe's meditation reveals that he is uncertain of the ethical properties of eating *anything*, he affirms that the mysterious process of nutrition through digestion cannot obliterate the materiality of the edible human. While sheep, an animal and thus a type of living being different from the humanness Crusoe knows in himself, can be transformed into mutton, the human being, a creature entirely too familiar, cannot become mere meat.

Amid the ambiguous edible encounters of Crusoe's journey, there is one food in which Crusoe's island abounds, and which "signifies the world" – the turtle. Long before he encounters the haunting footprint, in his June 16th entry of the first year he spends on the island Crusoe writes: "Going down to the seaside, I found a large tortoise or turtle. This was the first I had seen; which, it seems, was only my misfortune, not any defect of the place or scarcity: for had I happened to be on the other side of the island, I might have had hundreds of them every day, as I found afterwards."⁴⁶ Finding the shoreline littered with these creatures, Crusoe's entry affirms that the previous nine months, during which he has hungered, have been his "misfortune" rather than a deficiency of the place in which he landed. As De Acuña's sea faring testimony demonstrates, historically Crusoe would have encountered hundreds, possibly thousands of turtles on the shoreline.

The marked abundance of this creature certainly renders the turtle as a fascinating instance of a cultural commodity in Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. Crusoe encounters a luxury good, yet he legitimately hungers and might have even faced starvation had he not discovered its presence on the island. For him luxury is reconstituted as subsistence fare. He has survived shipwreck and struggled for nourishment for nearly nine months prior to this discovery. He has found culinary gold on the shores of his fruitful and productive island, and the experience is life

⁴⁶ Ibid, 86.

changing. The day after he discovers the turtle, Crusoe writes: “*June 17*. I spent in cooking the turtle. I found in her three-score eggs; and her flesh was to me ... the most savoury and pleasant that ever I tasted in my life.”⁴⁷ Unlike the “diverse other plants which [he] had no notion of”⁴⁸ on the island, unlike the gruesome and devilish cannibalism, Crusoe understands this food. He spends the day preparing it and discovering the possibility of future meals within it – the sixty eggs within this creature establishes that this is a fortunate find. Not only is this humble meal the best he has had in his life, it is a meal that promises to renew itself through the both the abundance of the eggs Crusoe has found within this one creature and the abundance of turtles he has found on shore.

Crusoe’s luck in discovering this turtle almost seems preternatural – and he recognizes it as such: “at night I made my supper of three of the turtle’s eggs, which I roasted in the ashes, and ate, as we call it, in the shell; and *this was the first bit of meat I had ever asked God’s blessing to*, even as I could remember, in my whole life.”⁴⁹ In this moment, as he eats the most pleasant thing he’s ever tasted, Crusoe has a life changing, transcendent experience. This revelatory moment – a moment of spiritual transubstantiation of sorts – reveals the unique signifying properties of turtle during the period. Crusoe finds God through his stomach as a result of a divinely edifying experience. The pleasure of its taste, the sudden discovery of such abundance, the multiple properties of its consumable parts renders this eating experience metaphorically Eucharistic – a sacrament that brings Crusoe to know more deeply and to celebrate his faith through the item which he consumes. Significantly, this is an item that is distinctly separate from

⁴⁷ Ibid, 86.

⁴⁸ Ibid, 98.

⁴⁹ Ibid, 91 emphasis added.

the consumption of human flesh either through cannibalism or the papist practice of transubstantiation.

In contrast to the horrifying cannibalistic reality of consuming and preparing human flesh, the transcendent experience of eating turtle depends upon the symbolic properties of this meal. In consuming the turtle redolent with so many identities, Crusoe finds salvation in the very unknowable nature of eating. As tortoise meat saves him from starvation, it is the enigmatic physical transformation of the food occurring within him that permits Crusoe access to a larger understanding of self – Crusoe communes with the wider world through the flesh of the turtle. Through it, Crusoe finds spiritual and symbolic awakening. Physically, his turtle feast carries him through an excruciating illness, spiritually, it awakens a diligence to pray that he will not shake for the duration of his time on the island, and nationally, this feast forges a connection to his homeland. His knowledge of the process of preparation – to eat it “as we call it in the shell” – demonstrates his awareness and familiarity with this food regardless of his and its foreign surroundings. Here, in direct contrast to the cannibal as devil, Crusoe encounters God in turtle.

In order for this transubstantiation to occur, however, Crusoe must consume the turtle, taking it into his own being and becoming one with his nourishment. Immediately following his prayer over the turtle flesh, Crusoe considers the permeability of the boundary between his body and his soul, and between himself and the world of things, as he questions,

What is this Earth and Sea of which I have seen so much, whence is it produc'd, and what am I, and all the other creatures, wild and tame, humane and brutal, whence are we? Sure we are all made by some secret Power, who formed the Earth and the Sea, the Air and the Sky; and who is that? Then it follow'd most naturally, It is God that has made it all: Well, but then it came on strangely, if God had made all these Things, He guides and governs them all, and all Things that concern them; ... And if nothing happens without his Appointment, he has appointed all this to befall me.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Ibid, 92.

As Crusoe sits on the shoreline, once foreign but now his home, he linguistically and religiously navigates a much larger realm. Destroying the distinctions between “Earth *and* Sea,” his current landed position on the island evokes a much larger, global trajectory. Furthermore, much as Crusoe’s meal destabilizes the boundaries between luxury and necessity, the distinction between human and nonhuman becomes tenuous. The consuming subject and consumed meal merge, and are revealed to be of a similar origin: they are from “God that has made all.”

Through digestion, Crusoe becomes one with his meal – the material and the subject combine. Yet, this combination depends upon the ability of foodstuff to retain multiple registers of existence. Once a turtle, then flesh, then food, then sustenance, the material substance of that which is eaten is crucial: as a result of its enigmatic nature the turtle becomes at once always turtle and always the possibility of everything else. By contrast, human flesh is always determined as *not everything else*. No amount of purely culinary preparation can process that flesh into anonymous meat. Inescapably, the uniform similarity between the physical body of the consumer and the material properties of the consumed present an unacceptable singularity – the human cannot become the ingested unknown; it always remains self-consuming knowable matter.

When eating turtle, however, Crusoe’s union with the flesh of his meal is depicted within a realm beyond the body. In his illness, in his moment of despair, Crusoe considers the words of his Bible: “Call on me in the day of Trouble, and I will deliver, and thou shalt glorify me.”⁵¹ Yet, Crusoe realizes: “the Thing was so remote, so impossible in my Apprehension of Things, that I began to say as the Children of *Israel* did, when they were promis’d Flesh to eat, *Can God spread a Table in the Wilderness?*”⁵² The turtle is the table, offering the possibility of a diverse

⁵¹ Ibid, 94.

⁵² Ibid.

world of nutrition, and digestion. As its materiality is a mystery, it can transform these possibilities into sustenance. There is a divinity that Crusoe experiences in the unknowability of this transformation, from food to nourishment, and, in discovering satiation, Crusoe encounters an omnipotent and omnipresent God of nutrients. Human flesh, by contrast, is singular; it resists the most fervent efforts of the chef to “turtle” it; it resists even digestion. If the cannibals’ culinary efforts are damning, it is because they expect a devilish process to transubstantiate flesh into meat before ingestion. Crusoe’s digestive faith, as it processes *internally* the all-meats of the turtle, leads to salvation. God and transcendence become materialized in the body, and the spiritual and the material, the subject and the object, coalesce. The next day, June 29th, Crusoe wakes, “stronger than [he] was the day before, and...hungry”⁵³ so that on June 30th Crusoe “went abroad...[and] kill’d a sea fowl...but [he] was not very forward to eat them; so [he] ate some more of the Turtle’s Eggs, which were very good.”⁵⁴ Much as De Acuña found his banquet at sea in the turtle, Crusoe finds his table in the wilderness – a table so full that he is able to exercise taste and discretion in the meat he consumes.

The connection between the cannibal and Crusoe is not simply one of different meals. That this food is linked to biological need is certain, but food also becomes a distinctive type of *thing*. It is linked to pleasure by means of taste and discernment of the palate.⁵⁵ It is linked to human artifice through the art and tradition of preparation and cooking. Yet, it does not last in its material form the way that human flesh does through its very relation to the body which consumes it. It is fleeting and vanishes as soon as it is consumed – in this state of transience food is both a physical material and a symbolic recollection. It truly acts upon the body,

⁵³ Ibid, 95.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ It is striking that Brillat-Savarin, in true epicurean fashion, declared a sixth sense, sensual desire, to be missing from the categorization of the five senses. This sensual desire is directly related to eating as, “Taste,” Brillat-Savarin writes, “is to enable man to exist...[Sensual desire] is destined to make mankind itself survive” (38).

nourishing and altering it through digestion, but it also signifies. When considering edibles as thing is it crucial to note they have no permanent physical presence. They must be consumed, and in their ingestion become both a material part of the body of the recipient and a component of the imaginative facility. With edibles, memory becomes the souvenir.

Unlike the physical constancy of a mere object, food remains only in the memory of the subject or through a socio-cultural contract within the nation. But despite its radical perishability, it is, in fact, far better suited to cementing a lasting bond between body and soul than any other more stable thing, and as such it is the material substance that most influences Crusoe during his stay on the island. The turtle prepares Crusoe spiritually for his stay on the island, converting him from a sporadically practicing Christian, to a faithful believer. This is the proper preparation for the human according to *Robinson Crusoe*, rather than meat to be prepared for the fire, a soul to prepare for transcendence through attention to its material needs.⁵⁶

In the transformation Crusoe undergoes, he carries with him an indelible mark of his time on the island. Much as Crusoe carried bits of England with him to the unknown space of the island, his encounter with the foreign *thing* reveals the implicit fictionality of his national identity. Much as the turtle is simultaneously local and global, Crusoe's religious identity, that which so clearly separates him from the cannibalistic other, depends upon his own global experience. In consuming the turtle on the island, Crusoe finds the symbolic merging of

⁵⁶Strikingly, Crusoe is not the only instance of such conversion in the novel. This is exactly the type of preparation Crusoe enacts with Friday. He is another character converted through eating. By abstaining from human flesh, Friday distances himself from the murderous labor of cooking the body *and* distances himself from the material flesh of man – he distances himself from the singularity of the body and opens himself up to the multiplicity of consumables. In doing so, Friday becomes open to the larger possibilities that Crusoe presents to him spiritually. Roxann Wheeler writes of Friday's conversion: "If cannibalism is the most important practice signifying savagery, then Christianity is the most significant feature constituting European identity in *Robinson Crusoe*." To this I would like to add that the transubstantiating effect the turtle has on Crusoe offers an opportunity to replace the anxiety of savage eating with "civilized" eating. However, I would like to posit that since the turtle is *never* explicitly a British good, Friday's identity is never singularly a "European" conversion. "'My Savage,' 'My Man': Racial Multiplicity in 'Robinson Crusoe'." *ELH*. 62.4 (1995): 837.

consuming subject and object in a way that lies beyond nationality, beyond enumeration and economies, beyond use value; he finds access to a providential kingdom beyond the borders of nation and beyond the borders of the body.

Chapter Two

Edible Economies: Production, Digestion, and Waste in the Eighteenth Century

“Some people (said he,) have a foolish way of not minding, or pretending not to mind, what they eat. For my part, I mind my belly very studiously, and very carefully; for I look upon it, that he who does not mind his belly, will hardly mind anything else.”⁵⁷

- Samuel Johnson

“Take a side of salmon, and cut off about a handful of the tail... put it in your sousing-pan; and as soon as the pickle be cold, put it to your salmon, and let it stand in it till it be wanted for use, or you may pot it after it be boiled, and fill it up with clarified BUTTER, *and this way it will keep good the longer.*”⁵⁸

- John Farley, *The London Art of Cookery*

It is a common critical convention since the groundbreaking work of Ian Watt to consider the eighteenth century as the site of the novel's rise in popularity, but it is important to note that it also gave rise to long prose tracts of a different sort – most notably the cookbook. The interest in producing and publishing these cooking manuscripts grew steadily throughout the century. One of the most prominent cookery text writers, Hannah Woolley, first published her text, *The complete servant-maid: or The Young Maiden's Tutor*, in 1704. Woolley begins her guide for serving maids by noting the absence of instructional cooking and housekeeping texts for those who cook and justifies her project with the invocation that “The desire I have for your good advantage, and preferment in the world is such that I respect it equal with my own.”⁵⁹ Woolley's empathetic appeal demonstrates a desire to make her working readers successful and respectable

⁵⁷ Boswell, James. *The Life of Samuel Johnson, LL.D.* (Baldwin: London, 1791), 255

⁵⁸ Farley, John. *The London art of cookery, and housekeeper's complete assistant. On a new plan. Made plain and easy ... To which is added, an appendix; ... By John Farley, ... The ninth edition. With the addition of many new and elegant receipts* .. London, 1800. *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*. Gale. University of Colorado Boulder. 22 Oct. 2013, 270., emphasis mine.

⁵⁹ Woolley, Hannah. *The compleat servant-maid: or, The Young Maidens Tutor. Directing them how they may fit, and qualifie themselves for any of these employments. Viz. Waiting-Woman, house-keeper. Chamber-Maid, cook-maid, under-cook-maid, nursery-maid, dairy-maid, laundry-maid, house-maid, scullery-maid. Whereunto is added a suppliment [sic] containing the choicest receipts and rarest secrets in physick and chyrurgery; also for salting and drying English hams equal to Westphalia. The compleat market-man and market-woman, in buying fowl, fish, flesh, &c. and to know their goodness or badness in every respect, to prevent being cheated. Never before printed. Seventh edition with additions.* London, 1704. *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*. Gale. University of Colorado Boulder. 22 Oct. 2013, v.

in their employment. Further, Woolley noted a dearth of information dedicated to training ladies of the house to organize their staff to the best possible advantage. This void of information, however, would not last long. By the century's end, John Farley in his work, *The London Art of Cookery, and Housekeeper's Complete Assistant*, recognizing the abundance of this type of manual, beseeched his readers that "though there are so many books of this kind already published...we flatter ourselves...that our pretensions to the favours of the public are not ill founded."⁶⁰ As Farley outlines, the publication of these texts in the eighteenth century led to a related subgenre of instructional manuals for properly running the kitchen and kitchen garden – the hearth and home had become big business indeed.

These texts scarcely resembled a cookbook by any contemporary standard. Rather, they were manuals on household management, on the demonstration of good judgment through the display of the table, and, of course, on how to assemble dishes to please the palate. These books, in their strategies of domestic display, made the democratizing promise that status could be attained through the production and management of the kitchen. *The Cook's and Confectioner's Dictionary*, published in 1733 assembled recipes from the "most celebrated cooks, confectioners, &c. in the courts of England, France, &c. and of many private and accomplishe'd housewives"⁶¹ insinuating that by deft management of the sideboard, the housekeeper could be equal in quality to the high court. While these domestic tomes were typically aimed at a literate, privileged audience, and titles such as *A True Gentlewoman's Delight...Very Necessary for all Ladies and Gentlewomen* and *The Accomplished Gentlewoman's Companion* clearly demonstrate a focus on affluence, it was through practice and application that this gentle status could be reached through

⁶⁰ Farley, John. *The London art of cookery, and housekeeper's complete assistant. On a new plan. Made plain and easy ... To which is added, an appendix; ... By John Farley, ...* The ninth edition. With the addition of many new and elegant receipts .. London, 1800. [Eighteenth Century Collections Online](#). Gale. University of Colorado Boulder. 22 Oct. 2013, i.

⁶¹ *The Cook's and Confectioner's Dictionary: Or the Accomplish'd Housewife's Companion*. London, MDCCXXIII. [1723]. [Eighteenth Century Collections Online](#). Gale. University of Colorado Boulder. 24 Oct. 2013, title page.

a “subject being both common and universal” as the gratification and the gentrification of appetite.⁶²

Cookery texts demonstrate a tension between the skillful, and often luxurious, treatment of the table and the importance of economy and thrift. In these texts, good economy is equal to good judgment. These books offered recipes for plum cakes and venison alongside strategies for making foods last longer and for getting the best deals at market. The emphasis on judgment also demanded aesthetic assessment of table arrangements and the organization of courses could indicate refined taste regardless of how palatable the food was. It is this curious tension between the economy of domesticity and the conspicuous display needed to secure status at the dinner table that this chapter is invested in, as this tension between economy and excess exploded beyond the confines of the home and permeated the public arenas of the marketplace and artistic discourse.

This chapter, like all good meals, begins at the table, and like all good meals, for better or for worse, ends at the chamber pot. Building upon the work of the last chapter that established the comestible as a thing with unique properties and metaphoric capabilities, this section examines the unsavory end-product of eating: excrement. At the same time that cookery manuals emerged offering directions on both economy and indulgence, a poetic discourse of waste became highly visible. The works of Jonathan Swift, Lady Mary Wortley Montague, William Hogarth, and others reveled in the indelicate acts of the human body and the contents of the

⁶² Smith, E. (Eliza). The compleat housewife: or, accomplished gentlewoman's companion: being a collection of upwards of five hundred of the most approved receipts in Cookery, Pastry, Confectionary, Preserving, Pickles, Cakes, Creams, Jellies, Made Wines, Cordials. With copper plates curiously engraven for the regular Disposition or Placing the various Dishes and Courses. And Also Bills of Fare for every Month in the Year. To which is added, a collection of near two hundred family receipts of medicines: viz. Drinks, Syrups, Salves, Ointments, and various other Things of sovereign and approved Efficacy in most Distempers, Pains, Aches, Wounds, Sores, &c. never before made publick; fit either for private Families, or such publick-spirited Gentlewomen as would be beneficent to their poor Neighbours. By E---- S----. The second edition. London, M.DCC.XXVIII. [1728]. Eighteenth Century Collections Online. Gale. University of Colorado Boulder. 22 Oct. 2013 , ii.

chamber pot. If long prose manuals aimed to elevate even the most modest home to the status of the high court, these poetic works employed the metaphor of human excrement to render even the most elegant wealth in terms of the lowest subject matter.

The fixation on waste, both bodily and material, is emblematic of an emergent cultural discourse on use, value, and moderation. Utilizing the incipient form of cookery books that emphasized prudence in purchasing *and* elaborate demonstrations of status at the table as linked poles of English domesticity, I will demonstrate the citizen subject's obsession with obtaining status by purchasing and displaying commodities. Concurrently, a demand for "good economy" developed that called for a balance and the reduction of waste. Worry over table waste exploded into other discourses, including the study of digestion and bodily economy. In an era of such intense material production, the alignment of material waste and corporeal excesses is striking. Ultimately, this chapter aims to expose a vibrant model of material representation in the era's satires that code their critiques of bad taste and excessive indulgence in intensely bodily materials. By examining the way in which cookery manuals and digestive study emphasize the need for parsimonious consumption alongside economic discussions of consumer tendencies in the era, one is able to reread the scatological demonstrations of satire of the age as making a pointed critique against immoderate consumption at the table and outside of the home. As such, excessive consumption becomes coded as bodily production, metaphorically linking waste to excrement – when satirists are discussing waste or wastefulness, they are issuing a critique of taste. Much as the first chapter of this dissertation demonstrates the ways that food is a distinctive type of *thing*, this chapter aims to examine the metamorphosing ability of consumed and consumer objects and their ability to highlight the contradicting tension between the desire to

procure and consume goods and the desire to demonstrate balance and good economy, a concern that led to an artistic demonstration of the excesses of society as that thing most base: waste.

CONTRADICTORY ECONOMIES: CONSPICUOUS DISPLAY AND WASTE MANAGEMENT

In 1759, the second edition of Mrs. Anne Battam's *The Lady's Assistant in the Oeconomy of the Table* appeared from the London presses of Pall-Mall. In her preface, Battam argued the book was a necessary addition to the then glutted market of cookery texts as it offered 150 original recipes "not to be met with in any former collection, and...written by Ladies of quality."⁶³ Battam's defense of the republication of her tract usefully demonstrates two key conventions of the mindset of Georgian England: novelty was attractive and quality was the key to successful oeconomy, or household management. However, before Battam is able to address her "Collection of scarce and valuable receipts (*sic*),"⁶⁴ she offers her readers a fascinating series of tables and charts to insure that in purchasing "any number of pounds of butcher's meat, from one pound to half a hundred weight"⁶⁵ the savvy shopper could verify that she was, indeed, getting as much meat as she needed at a fair and equitable price. The tables are designed to "shew at one view" the prices to be expected for the purchases. This emphasis on efficiency, both with money in the purse and time spent at the butcher's shop, demonstrates that in order truly to be a lady of quality, it was important to have a handle on the quantity and value of goods procured for the home.

⁶³ Battam, iii.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 1.

⁶⁵ Ibid, v.

A
MARKETING TABLE.

Beef, Mutton, Lamb, Veal, Pork, &c. at per lb.	Two Pound	Three Pound	Four Pound	Five Pound	Six Pound	Seven Pound
d. s. d.	d. s. d.	d. s. d.	d. s. d.	d. s. d.	d. s. d.	d. s. d.
1	0 2	0 3	0 4	0 5	0 6	0 7
1 1/2	0 2 1/2	0 3 1/2	0 4 1/2	0 5 1/2	0 6 1/2	0 7 1/2
1 1/4	0 3	0 4	0 5	0 6	0 7	0 8
1 1/2	0 3 1/2	0 4 1/2	0 5 1/2	0 6 1/2	0 7 1/2	0 8 1/2
2	0 4	0 5	0 6	0 7	0 8	0 9
2 1/2	0 4 1/2	0 5 1/2	0 6 1/2	0 7 1/2	0 8 1/2	0 9 1/2
2 1/4	0 5	0 6	0 7	0 8	0 9	0 10
2 1/2	0 5 1/2	0 6 1/2	0 7 1/2	0 8 1/2	0 9 1/2	0 10 1/2
3	0 6	0 7	0 8	0 9	0 10	0 11
3 1/2	0 6 1/2	0 7 1/2	0 8 1/2	0 9 1/2	0 10 1/2	0 11 1/2
3 1/4	0 7	0 8	0 9	0 10	0 11	0 12
3 1/2	0 7 1/2	0 8 1/2	0 9 1/2	0 10 1/2	0 11 1/2	0 12 1/2
4	0 8	0 9	0 10	0 11	0 12	0 13
4 1/2	0 8 1/2	0 9 1/2	0 10 1/2	0 11 1/2	0 12 1/2	0 13 1/2
4 1/4	0 9	0 10	0 11	0 12	0 13	0 14
4 1/2	0 9 1/2	0 10 1/2	0 11 1/2	0 12 1/2	0 13 1/2	0 14 1/2
5	0 10	0 11	0 12	0 13	0 14	0 15
5 1/2	0 10 1/2	0 11 1/2	0 12 1/2	0 13 1/2	0 14 1/2	0 15 1/2
5 1/4	0 11	0 12	0 13	0 14	0 15	0 16
5 1/2	0 11 1/2	0 12 1/2	0 13 1/2	0 14 1/2	0 15 1/2	0 16 1/2
6	0 12	0 13	0 14	0 15	0 16	0 17

A
MARKETING TABLE.

Beef, Mutton, Lamb, Veal, Pork, &c. at per lb.	1 Stone of 8 lb.	2 St. of 8 lb.	3 St. of 8 lb.	4 St. of 8 lb.	5 Stone of 8 lb.
d. s. d.	d. s. d.	d. s. d.	d. s. d.	d. s. d.	d. s. d.
1	0 8	1 4	2 0	2 8	3 4
1 1/2	0 10	1 8	2 6	3 4	4 2
1 1/4	1 0	2 0	3 0	4 0	5 0
1 1/2	1 2	2 4	3 6	4 8	5 10
2	1 4	2 8	4 0	5 4	6 8
2 1/2	1 6	3 0	4 6	6 0	7 6
2 1/4	1 8	3 4	5 0	6 8	8 4
2 1/2	1 10	3 8	5 6	7 4	9 2
3	2 0	4 0	6 0	8 0	10 0
3 1/2	2 4	4 4	6 6	8 10	10 10
3 1/4	2 6	4 8	7 0	9 4	11 8
3 1/2	2 8	5 0	7 6	10 12	12 6
4	3 0	5 4	8 0	10 16	13 4
4 1/2	3 6	6 0	8 11	11 14	14 2
4 1/4	3 8	6 4	9 0	12 0	15 0
4 1/2	4 0	6 8	9 6	12 8	15 10
5	4 4	7 2	10 4	13 4	16 8
5 1/2	4 8	7 6	10 10	14 0	17 6
5 1/4	5 0	8 0	11 0	14 8	18 4
5 1/2	5 4	8 4	11 6	15 4	19 2
6	5 8	8 8	12 0	16 0	20 0

A key skill of domestic labor was the possession of an eye trained to recognize quality. Battam demonstrated the necessity for a lady of value to be able to recognize and assess quality by appending her text with a twenty-four page guide titled "Directions for Marketing" wherein the lady of quality is encouraged to recognize the difference between fresh and old products at market. Bull meat, she intones, is a "lively colour" if fresh and if "stale, of a dark dusky colour,"⁶⁶ and the savvy shopper is instructed to pinch mutton between her fingers and assess the way the flesh wrinkles in order to judge if it is young or old. Battam's diligence in providing instruction for evaluating goods leads her to include an encyclopedic array of foods ranging from veal to salt cod, making it a valuable document for assessing domestic purchases. It also served to further emphasize economy, to avoid waste, and that if waste occurred, a lady of value was to salvage what she could. To these ends, Battam provides a section solely dedicated to

⁶⁶ Ibid, 265.

“preserv[ing] fish a while when near tainted,”⁶⁷ which, perhaps counter-intuitively to current cooking practice, instructs the cook of the house to lay out the fish in a cellar for twenty four hours. This practice of curing the fish in the cellar demonstrates the necessity of a skilled home manager to prolong, preserve, and protect the use of the goods that were purchased for consumption.

The tension between the frugality of practice and the demonstration of luxury in the home is further exacerbated by the elaborate suggestions for the “Bill of Fare for every month of the year,” multi-course meals offering dozens of suggestions for every season. This emphasis on acquiring the best deal and making the most of even potentially spoiled ingredients might lead the reader to consider the goal of Battam’s tract to be one of frugality. However, such economy lies in direct contradiction to the book’s professed mission to inform the reader of recipes written by “persons of the most refin’d taste and greatest judgment”⁶⁸ and “ladies of quality.”⁶⁹ Battam’s desire to emphasize the rarity of these never before seen recipes is explicitly designed to inform the lady of the house that by overseeing the preparation of these meals, she is sure to impress and emphasize her own quality at the table.

Companion editions for the lady of the house to direct her servants also frequently included ornate instruction for table design and plate laying in addition to these bills of fares for the annum. The anonymously published *Modern Method of Regulating and Forming a Table Explained and Displayed*, not only includes a “correct list of such particulars as are in season during every month” and “twelve elegant dinners for different seasons of the year,” but also “A great variety of dinners laid out in the most elegant taste from two courses of five and five, to

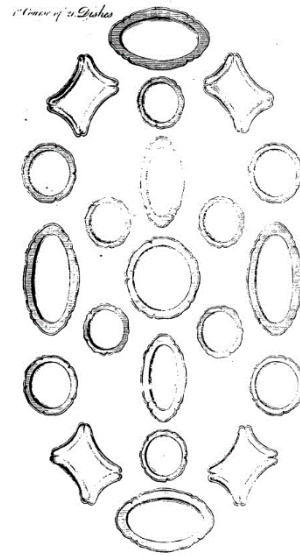
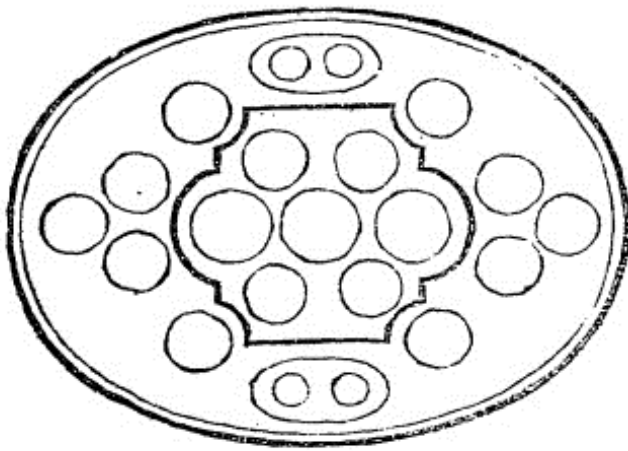
⁶⁷ Ibid, 272.

⁶⁸ Ibid, cover page.

⁶⁹ Ibid, i.

twenty-one and twenty-one dishes, finely represented.”⁷⁰ Twenty-one dishes would make for a luxurious meal, indeed, and these tablescapes demonstrated that variety and abundance were aligned with “the most elegant taste.”⁷¹

The Manner of Setting out a Desart.
The Model of a Desart for an Oval Table of twelve Coverings.



The theatricality of table setting, did not, however, end at the arrangement of the plates. The desire for a table to impart the unmistakable stamp of luxury led to a histrionic array of edible goods. Take, for instance, the introduction to *The Cook's and Confectioner's Dictionary* wherein the author, an anonymous individual who takes the pseudonym of “The Compiler,” offers the following meditation on ancient days when “good house-keeping was in fashion,”

...they us'd either to begin or conclude their entertainments and divert their guests with such pretty devices as these following, viz., a castle made in paste-board, with gates, draw-bridges, battlements and portcullises, all done over with paste. This was set up on the table in the large charger, with salt laid round about it, as if it were the ground, in which were stuck egg-shells full of rose, or other sweet waters, the meat of the egg having been taken out by a great pin...

⁷⁰ *The modern method of regulating and forming a table, explained and displayed. Containing a great variety of dinners laid out in the most elegant taste, ... By several eminent cooks, and others well acquainted with these arts.* [London], [1750?]. *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*. Gale. University of Colorado Boulder. 24 Oct. 2013, emphasis mine.

⁷¹ First image: *The Cook's and Confectioner's Dictionary*, pp3. Second image: *The Modern Method of Regulating and Forming a Table*, 342.

In addition to the castle made in paste, the compiler continues to outline a variety of amusements at the table for guests to partake of including a great ship made of paste, a stag made of paste and filled with claret so that when an arrow was drawn from its side wine would pour out into glasses, pies hollowed out and filled with live birds and frogs that would burst from the pies when cut and cause “a surprising and diverting Hurley-burly,” and even small cannons set about the table that would fire when touched, after which guests would be encouraged to throw the eggs filled with rose water at one another to dismiss the smell of gunpowder.⁷² This tale, one presumes, revels in the glory days of housekeeping past and sets a standard for entertaining guests that perhaps few can hope to achieve. While the emphasis on the past here might very well be a fictitious representation and more nostalgic than real, the elaborate dinner reveals a desire for the most ornate of dining experiences.

Even amid the extravagant table designs of multiple platters and courses, and the descriptions of elaborate dining theatrics of exploding pies, a current of economy and frugality persists. In a timelier update of the dinner of ancient days, The Compiler, as part of her explication of setting a table of twelve desserts, offers alternatives for fine china, suggesting that tin molds can be used and suggesting the replacement of expensive wicker boards with the more economical use of wood. Both of these suggestions are paired with strategies of covering them so the ruse will “not be easily discovered.”⁷³ Further, The Compiler outlines strategies for creating baskets so that each guest can take away a basket of what he/she does not eat to bring home for the next meal. This precursor to the modern doggie bag serves to underscore the simultaneous desire that no food be wasted and that the labors of the kitchen continue to be enjoyed and valued after the meal has passed – even amid the extravagance of the meal, the notion that economy and

⁷² *The Cook's and Confectioner's Dictionary*, 7.

⁷³ *Ibid*, pp3.

utility is connected to good taste and good housekeeping is underscored by this comestible souvenir.

This tension between a housekeeper's good judgment at markets and good prudence with produce and a housekeeper's ability to demonstrate grand status and class through elaborate and ornate tablescapes and meals demonstrates that objects served to establish perceptions of social standing. Comestible goods and consumable products defined the status of the subject both in terms of how that subject conceives of him/herself and how he/she is recognized within the subject's larger world. This sense of worth, of status, was conferred through a variety of material goods in the eighteenth century. As the world of trade expanded exponentially, so did the proliferation of purchasables that flooded trade ports and came to fill every nook and cranny of the eighteenth century subject's public and private life. In part, these goods were useful – candles, lanterns, and tea kettles all serve some function to make the day's work easier – yet, just as Robinson Crusoe's need for food ultimately gave way to a desire for a kingdom, the production and circulation of goods in eighteenth-century England was, in no small part, focused on luxury, lavishness, and superfluity. In fact, then as now, the mere ability to indulge was aligned with financial success. As Maxine Berg writes, "The production of superfluities, of goods above and beyond physical necessities, was what rich nations were engaged in," and as such, purchasing equaled power.⁷⁴

While owning objects might have bestowed a position of power to the English citizen, these objects themselves and the choices represented in procuring them became powerful, rendering the relationships between self and object fraught. As Maxine Berg states, "This ability

⁷⁴ Berg, Maxine. "From Imitation to Invention: Creating Commodities in Eighteenth-Century Britain." *The Economic History Review*. 55:1 (Feb, 2002) pp 2.

to consume thus entailed a willingness to change tastes.”⁷⁵ Much as the cookery texts over the course of the eighteenth century began with as few recipes as could fill 29 pages and became tomes of upward of 600, the objects of purchase that filled the markets were varied and numerous. The frenetic pace at which subjects encountered this newly material environment had ineffable and inalterable effects on the condition of the eighteenth-century citizen. The human surrounded by this world of things faced a weighty task in navigating through that environment, and as Barbara Benedict argues, “Subjectivity might collapse into objectivity under the pressure of handling, collecting, owning, seeing, stepping around, and feeling things.”⁷⁶ Whereas the ability to produce a stunning 21-course meal plated in the correct order around the table conferred status on the keeper of the home, the chargers, teapots, and candelabras she used became avatars of her identity, an identity that was purchasable.

In an era swarming with material possibilities, the corpus of literary works marked by an atmosphere of claustrophobia is substantial, and the discourse on commodity culture in the eighteenth century is rich. Scholarly work on goods in this period owes a debt to Neil McKendrick’s influential study, *The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialization of Eighteenth-Century England*. McKendrick’s text repositioned the significance of the industrial revolution in order to demonstrate the significance of a consumer revolution, a revolution that represented a radical shift in the purchasing practice in the West.⁷⁷ By extension, McKendrick and his coauthors contend that the ability to access and purchase myriad commodities reduced the striking gradation between the rich, the middling, and the poor in the period. Markets

⁷⁵ Berg, p. 3

⁷⁶ Benedict, Barbara M. “Encounters with the Object: Advertisements, Time, and Literary Discourse in the Early Eighteenth-Century Thing-Poem.” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* (40:2) 2007. 193-2007. Pg. 194.

⁷⁷ While Maxine Berg articulates a variant on McKendrick’s theme, namely that this was as much a “product revolution” that established a unique relationship between inventors/manufacturers and the consumer public. For more on this see, Berg, Maxine: *Luxury and Pleasure in Eighteenth-Century Britain*. New York: Oxford UP, 2005 “Delights of Luxury,” 1-21.

previously dominated by the upper crust of society suddenly, through the proliferation of goods such as calico, stoneware, and coffee, were made accessible, if not always affordable to the lower ranks.⁷⁸

This emulation occurred within class structures, as *The Cook and Confectioner's Dictionary* demonstrates, but also occurred within market structures of import and export goods. As such, imitation, replication, and reproduction became an integral component of burgeoning commodity markets from clothing to place settings. As Maxine Berg articulates, imitation was “fundamental” to the dissemination of an “ever-changeable body of material goods.”⁷⁹ Yet this emphasis on imitation created a curious contradiction between novelty and imitation. As new goods flooded the markets, English producers aimed to improve upon (or at least increase the availability of) market commodities. As Maxine Berg specifies,

These were not goods passed down through generations, but new modern goods, displaying their patents, mechanized technologies, and new materials in fashionable style. The variety of their types and values also made at least some of them accessible to more ordinary middling groups and even to tradespeople and craftsmen in their times of prosperity.⁸⁰

Variety and type in conjunction with the new accessibility of goods made purchasing consumables both inevitable and very public.

The way the citizen subject interacted with and responded to these goods is largely undisputed – they purchased at an astonishing and heretofore unprecedented rate. Michael Kwass writes “that eighteenth-century men and women began to consume goods on a previously unthinkable scale. As elites continued to spend lavishly, ordinary men and women freed

⁷⁸ Spary, E.C., *Eating the Enlightenment: Food and the Sciences in Paris, 1670-1760*. 5

⁷⁹ Berg, Maxine: *Luxury and Pleasure in Eighteenth-Century Britain*. New York: Oxford UP, 2005, 45.

⁸⁰ Ibid, 4. For further sources dealing with class emulation see: Sussman, Charlotte: *Consuming Anxieties: Consumer Protest, Gender, and British Slavery 1713-1833*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2000, 26; Walvin, James. *Fruits of Empire: Exotic Produce and British Taste*. (New York: NYU Press, 1997), 161.; Daniel Roche, *A history of Everyday Things: The Birth of Consumption in France 1600-1800*. Trans. Brian Pearce. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000, 72

themselves from the ‘stranglehold of scarcity’ that had long defined their material world and began to fill their lives with objects.”⁸¹ Flooded with options of goods for sale, the British citizenry purchased and then displayed their sense of taste and refinement. Barbara Benedict explains, “While things have always taken up room, this ubiquity [in the eighteenth century] gave them a new cultural power as the range of things available to be displayed *as elements of style* shifted and widened.”⁸² To determine what denoted a product as an “element of style” requires further attention for as Mary Douglas writes, “goods are neutral, their uses are social.”⁸³

The concept of social uses, however, is tied up in an equation of intrinsic value versus defined value. As such, the distinction between need and want, is fraught territory. Douglas stipulates that “there is a tendency to suppose that people buy goods for two or three restricted purposes: material welfare, psychic welfare, and display.”⁸⁴ Yet, material welfare is more easily defined than psychic welfare, to say nothing of display. Once the needs of the body are met in terms of food and shelter, the material goods take on complicated registers of greed and benevolence, status and class. For economist Thorstein Veblen, this is the function of display:

The motive that lies at the root of ownership is emulation; and the same motive of emulation continues active in the further development of the institution to which it has given rise and in the development of all those features of the social structure which this institution of ownership touches. The possession of wealth confers honour; it is an invidious distinction. Nothing equally cogent can be said for the consumption of goods, nor for any other conceivable incentive to acquisition, and especially not for any incentive to the accumulation of wealth.⁸⁵

⁸¹ Kwass, Michael. “Ordering the World of Goods: Consumer Revolution and the Classification of Objects in Eighteenth-Century France.” *Representations* 82:1 (Spring 2003), 87. See also, McCracken, Grant. *Culture and Consumption: New Approaches to the Symbolic Character of Consumer Goods and Activities*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1988 3-6;

⁸² Benedict, 194, emphasis mine.

⁸³ Douglas, Mary and Baron Isherwood. *The World of Goods: Towards an Anthropology of Consumption*. (New York: Routledge, 1996), ix.

⁸⁴ Douglas and Isherwood, vii. Interesting for a study of eighteenth-century literature, Douglas, an anthropologist, turns to art and, most particularly, novelists to bolster her examinations of economic tendencies. She writes of novelists as those who “know the code” and are able to read how “goods in their assemblage present a set of meanings more or less coherent, more or less intentional,” ix.

⁸⁵ Veblen, Thorstein. *The Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study of Institutions*. (New York: AM Kelly, 1965),. Page 25-26, Veblen’s contentions of display depend upon first the acquisition of need, but also of the evolution of society from martial tendencies of battle as the producing force of trophies to industry as the producing forces of trophies: “as industrial activity

If the possession of wealth confers honor, goods take on totemic functions as the arbiters of worth become “primarily a comparison of the owner with the other members of the group.”⁸⁶ As such, the abundance of material possessions available for purchase at a more reasonable price presented a veritable smorgasbord of options from which to fashion one’s worth in a very literal sense. This fashioning took shape as those of inferior social status made efforts to lift themselves from the mire of their economic strata by accumulating objects that echo the purchases of their superiors, and thus, “it becomes indispensable to accumulate, to acquire property in order to retain one’s good name.”⁸⁷

The drive to acquire combined with the proliferation of consumables created a new space for the power of objects to assert themselves over the lives of their subjects, but also flooded markets with materials which would ultimately need to be utilized or disposed of. Veblen, considering that if the primary marker of honor or status is material possession, contends that the primary production of the leisured and socially privileged is waste that manifests in time, effort, and, of course, materials:

From the foregoing survey of the growth of conspicuous leisure and consumption, it appears that the utility of both alike for the purposes of reputability lies in the element of *waste* that is common to both. In the one case it is a waste of time and effort, in the other it is a waste of goods. Both are methods of demonstrating the possession of wealth, and the two are conventionally accepted as equivalents. The choice between them is a question of advertising expediency simply, except so far as it may be affected by other standards of propriety, springing from a different source.⁸⁸

One cause of this waste was that the burgeoning urban center of London faced startling population growth that sent the estimated population from 500,000 in the late 1600s skyrocketing

further displaces predatory activity in the community’s everyday life and in men’s habits of thought, accumulated property more and more replaces trophies of predatory exploit as the conventional exponent of prepotency and success” (28)

⁸⁶ Ibid, 28.

⁸⁷ Ibid, 29

⁸⁸ *ibid*, 86.

to 740,000 in the 1760s and to the even more astounding figure of 1,096,784 by 1801. Facing such astronomical population growth, it was compulsory that the metropolis confronted the issue of waste and waste management in various ways.

While Veblen situates his observations of waste in terms of time, effort, and goods, he overlooks the body as a site of material production in its own right—excrement. It is imperative to revise Veblen's assessment to recognize that in the eighteenth century, the availability of materials created a crisis of taste in the zeitgeist that created a ubiquitous metaphor -- the ultimate form of waste -- excessive excrement. This production of waste is universal, yet during the eighteenth century, the science of digestion, and by extension, excretion, remained largely unknown. The mysterious transformation from food, to nourishment, to excrement was a process believed to take place within the blood, and necessitated a balance of substances to proceed properly. In 1702, Louis Lémery penned *Traité des aliments*. A chemist and Regent Doctor of the faculty of physic at the Academy Royal of Science, Paris, Lémery's text took a particular aim, to procure the "knowledge we ought to be most desirous of...that of foods."⁸⁹ Lémery justified this claim by asserting "The machine of Man's Body...stands in absolute need of foods to repair and restore them. In the meantime, if foods contribute so necessarily, to the preservation of life and health, they also produce the greatest part of those distempers to which we are subject, and many times, by the ill use of them cause even death it self (*sic*)."⁹⁰

Lémery was not alone in granting food, and by extension the stomach, such import. As E.C. Spary notes in *Eating the Enlightenment*, "French physicians and their clients regarded the stomach as a somatic locus where digestive, moral, and even political upsets manifested

⁸⁹ Lémery, Louis. *A treatise of foods, in general. I. The Difference and Choice which ought to be made of each Sort in particular. II. The Good and Ill Effects produced by them. III. The Principles wherewith they abound. And, IV. The Time, Age and Constitution they suit with. To which are added, remarks upon each chapter; wherein their Nature and Uses are explained, according to the Principles of Chymistry and Mechanism*. Trans. Unknown. (London: printed for Andrew Bell, 1706), x.

⁹⁰ Ibid, ix.

themselves and through which appetite was expressed."⁹¹ Understandings of digestion and the actions of the stomach in the eighteenth century were unclear at best. Unlike many of the other processes of the body, digestion remained a discrete occurrence. In an era where the transmission of anatomical ideas occurred in the very public forum of the lecture hall and public dissection of corpses and the vivisection of animals was a spectacle available to the intellectually curious, the processes of the stomach and intestine were mysterious and imperceptible in the surgical arena.⁹² Whereas William Harvey's late seventeenth-century demonstrations of his circulatory theory sent blood spurting feet in the air when an artery was severed, the stomach and intestine seemed rather inactive. David Hume contemplated the secret forces of nature at work in the stomach in *An Essay on Human Understanding*:

It must certainly be allowed, that *nature has kept us at a great distance from all her secrets*, and has afforded us only the knowledge of a few superficial qualities of objects; while she conceals from us those *powers and principles* on which the influence of those objects entirely depends.... But notwithstanding this ignorance of natural powers and principles, we always presume, when we see like sensible qualities, that they have *like secret powers*, and expect that effects, similar to those which we have experienced, will follow from them... The bread, which I formerly eat, nourished me; that is, a body of such sensible qualities was, at that time, endued with such secret powers: but does it follow, that other bread must also nourish me at another time, and that like sensible qualities must always be attended with like secret powers?⁹³

To understand these secret powers of digestive transformation, the anatomically curious relied on the concept of tituration – the process of reducing a larger substance into a smaller one by breaking it down. This process, it was believed, would then produce the residual particles in the

⁹¹ Spary, E.C. *Eating the Enlightenment: Food and the Sciences in Paris, 1670-1760*. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2012), 17.

⁹² Interesting to note, large scale movements were made in understanding the process of digestion in the 19th century after Alexis St. Martin suffered a horrifying injury to the gut when a gun misfired. The remaining wound, a large fistula in his abdomen that extended to the stomach, required mandatory cleanings and attentions. When physician and researcher William Beaumont discovered that this fistula effectively produced a window in to St. Martin's stomach, he encouraged his patient to move into his home so that he could remain under consistent observation. Over the years, the observations that Beaumont made of his patient resulted in large scale breakthroughs in understanding the digestive process. Roach, Mary. *Gulp: Adventures on the Alimentary Canal*. (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2013), 93-103.

, Hume, David. *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*. (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company Inc, 1977), 21.

form of chyle (a milky substance of fatty acids), which would permeate the stomach and the intestines and unite with the bloodstream. The process of digestion, Spary contends, “was understood less as a physiological or anatomical system than as a single self-contained corporeal event. A healthy body mastered foods in the stomach.”⁹⁴

If foods were to be mastered by the stomach, the stomach needed to not be overwhelmed by the materials within it; as such, the notion of balance and moderation became prominent in discourses of digestion. Lémery contended,

If you would live well, and without being incommoded, you must take special care, to keep always within the bounds of moderation; and eat no more food, than you have occasion for your subsistence.... If therefore, it is very good, and even indispensably necessary for all sorts of constitutions, in order to the preservation of life and health, to take their food moderately; it is also very dangerous to eat to excess be it more or less.⁹⁵

Moderation marked not only the practice of eating, however. In a perfectly balanced diet, the presence of waste would be minimal. The body, Lémery contended, only asked through hunger for what it required and if that was given, and no more or no less, all the food would be processed and waste would be unnecessary. Nutritional need was demonstrated through hunger, and the goal of healthful eating was to satiate necessity alone; waste, therefore, became a symbol of eating in excess of moderation. Lémery elaborated on this connection between hunger and waste stating, “It follows... of hunger, that it must increase in proportion to the waste we sustain in our bodies, and that it is a very manifest sign of it.”⁹⁶ Much as the emphasis for the cookbook writer was the ability to preserve money through prudent purchases at the market and proper utilization of those goods in the home, the digestive scientist saw the correlation between moderate intake to lead to a desirably small amount of waste.

⁹⁴ Spary, 17.

⁹⁵ Lémery, 9-10.

⁹⁶ Ibid, 14.

Defecation, while a naturally occurring part of consumption, was to be regulated through moderate eating. Excessive waste from the body marked an imbalance in the bodily economy -- it became a symbol of a system out of order. Spary writes, "If the characteristic of a healthy body in the eighteenth century was the ability to extract the maximum nutriment from foods consumed, so, by extension, the mark of a good digestion was minimal defecation."⁹⁷ This discussion of excessive consumption leading to waste is metaphorically echoed in John Locke's understanding of property. Locke writes, "The same law of nature, that does by this means give us property, does also bound that property too. God has given us all things richly.... But how far has he given it us? To enjoy. As much as anyone can make use of to any advantage of life before it spoils....Nothing was made by God for man to spoil or destroy."⁹⁸ To take too much, to acquire goods beyond use, would leave waste. Yet, contrary to Locke's enlightenment emphasis on moderation and use, the cultural manifestations of decadence and indulgence reveal that many of Locke's countrymen ignored the principle that disdained spoilage or destruction.

Locke's emphasis on moderation is echoed in various literary examples, notably in Tobias Smollet's *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker*. In a move that serves to link the systems of circulation and balance that echo both the sentiments of Lémery and Harvey, this novel revels in the certainty that the excesses of society will ultimately leave the citizens of a consumerist world left with only their abundant waste to devour. "But I am now as much afraid of drinking, as of bathing," the hypochondriac protagonist, Matthew Bramble, exclaims as he relates his experiences at Bath. He continues,

...for after a long conversation with the Doctor, about the construction of the pump and the cistern, it is very far from being clear with me, that the patients in the Pumproom don't swallow the scourings of the bathers. I can't help suspecting, that there is, or may

⁹⁷ Spary, 18.

⁹⁸ Locke, John. *Second Treatise of Civil Government* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1980), 20.

be, some regurgitation from the bath into the cistern of the pump. In that case, what a delicate beveridge [sic] is every day quaffed by the drinkers....⁹⁹

Bramble continues to relay that this unwholesome brew would be “medicated with the sweat, and dirt, and dandruff; and the abominable discharges of various kinds.”¹⁰⁰ Here, in Bath, the place du jour of the well to do, Bramble can only see his abysmal fear of swilling human-stew, a fear furthered by his assessment of the Roman bath as a place where bodies “parboil[l] in the kettle below” and are prepared for the abhorrent concoction that Bramble imagines to be composed of “the strainings of rotten bones and carcasses.”¹⁰¹

Bramble’s hypochondriac image of the kettle of flesh underscores the recurrent image of consumer bodies transformed into those who consume bodies. Smollett’s darkly comedic perspective of Bath demonstrates that there is no place left for waste to go. As Bramble’s vacation to a luxurious hotspot signifies his status, the obsession that he, and by extension Smollett’s vision of Bath, presents to readers is one so overfull and overflowing with the objects of status and the ravenous consumers who devour them, that even the body itself becomes material, consumable, and, ultimately, disposable.

Waste, then, becomes an issue of bodily and material economy. The preoccupation with proving status through goods existed simultaneously with the emphasis on frugality, moderation, and bodily balance, and as a result, the scatological impulse of eighteenth century satire aligns conspicuous display with the act of expelling bodily waste. Excrement is rendered as the residual product of over-consuming. Perhaps no poem considers bodily emissions as a condemnation of the excesses of urban existence quite like Swift’s “Description of a City Shower.” Composed in 1710 and considered immediately important, the poem opens by pronouncing the cityscape

⁹⁹ Smollett, Tobias. *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker*. New York: W.W. Norton Company, 1983, 43.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

freckled with the stinks and inconveniences of living among the masses and it ends in nothing less than a deluge of detritus. The environment is smothering, and nature is perverted, altered so that cats “give o’er [their] frolics” and the senses of man are “offended.” In true Swiftian manner, the things in this poem foretell a tale of woe – things can fill the physical space in the city, but they cannot bring satisfaction. In fact, for a poem so riddled with excess, the vacancy of the world, the waste of a city space, are highlighted. These goods, which served to display, if not affirm, the value of one’s life, Swift demonstrates, actually highlight the disorder and turmoil underpinning this newly emergent consumer society. From a “hollow tooth” to “Triumphant Tories and desponding Whigs,” political talking heads so listless and uncommitted to their idle mission that saving their wigs becomes their dearest, nonpartisan goal, Swift demonstrates a paradoxical tension between the chaos of variety and the illusion of satiation that consumption provides.

In considering the disorder of the European consumer scene, Michael Kwass notes “As consumer objects began to proliferate at a startling rate, provoking a chorus of jeremiads against the confusion and disorder produced by luxury, defenders of luxury intervene to create new taxonomies for ordering their material world.”¹⁰² Such order from confusion sprung, indeed. Yet, Swift is no defender of luxury as the polemic vision of his satire demonstrates. The desperate poverty he witnessed during his time in Ireland certainly rendered him critical of what he viewed as the encroaching absolutist tendencies of an increasingly colonial England. And while, “A Description of a City Shower” demonstrates, ironically, how rain drives members of all classes and statuses to take cover, it is not the rain, but a rising crescendo of excesses that threaten to drown the entire population of the town. Swift focused on items that reveal the ends and

¹⁰² Kwass, Michael. “Ordering the World of Goods: Consumer Revolution and the Classification of Objects in Eighteenth-Century France.” *Representations* 82:1 (Spring 2003), 88.

leavings, the extras and unwanted parts of the urban space. As the flume of “Sweepings from butchers’ stalls, dung, guts, and blood,/Drowned puppies, stinking sprats, all drenched in mud,/dead cats, and turnip tops” descends upon the narrator, the grotesqueness of the elements is striking. Wasted and discarded, these elements represent the empty shells of once vital things. As the descriptions pass from animal to vegetable, it is almost as though waste is the element that has smothered them all.

Swift’s excess begins at the butcher’s table – a site of food production. The offal, (“dung, guts, and blood”) that falls from the animal during preparation of the meat, presumably to be eaten, becomes the tipping point in the deluge to follow.¹⁰³ From blood and guts we see the soaked and lifeless puppies and the sopping stinking fish, drenched, to be certain, in mud, but a mud that is an amalgam also of the wasted meat. As if to affirm that the very food that ought to be functioning within the proper economy of nutrition and sustenance is surrounding and smothering rather than nourishing and fulfilling, none of these nutritive goods can or will be consumed. They are, in fact, ruined and hollowed out of their value, adding insult to the injury of those who rush “to shops in crowds.../Pretend to cheapen goods, but nothing buy.” Materiality has betrayed the urban population; rather than goods, Swift leaves us with waste. This betrayal is coded through the body:

Careful observers may foretell the hour
(By sure prognostics) when to dread a shower:
...Returning home at night, you’ll find the sink
Strike your offended sense with double stink.
If you be wise, then go not far to dine;
You’ll spend in coach hire more than save in wine.
A coming shower your shooting corns presage,
Old achès throb, your hollow tooth will rage.
Sauntering in coffeehouse is Dulman seen;
He damns the climate and complains of spleen.

¹⁰³ According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, Offal as “That which falls or is thrown off in some process”, “residue or waste products”, and “The edible parts collectively which are cut off in preparing the carcass of an animal for food”

Meanwhile the South, rising with dabbled wings,
A sable cloud athwart the welkin flings,
That swilled more liquor than it could contain,
And, like a drunkard, gives it up again.

Not only does the body foretell the event through the olfactory observation of “double stink” and the pain of “shooting corns” and raging teeth, but the body is the origin of the event as nature assumes corporeal form. The cloud, described as a swollen bladder filled with “more liquor than it could contain” rains down upon the town in a torrent of micturition – excessive fluids from the body create the amalgam of waste down below. This indelicate image of an evening shower coming from the bladder is reiterated in William Hogarth’s *Four Times of Day*, 1736.¹⁰⁴ Here, Hogarth’s comedic lampooning of life in London borrows inspiration from “Descriptions of a City Shower” for the fourth installment in the series, “Night.” In this image, Hogarth echoes Swift’s urinating Mother Nature, as an evening shower springs from the bladder when a bed pan is dumped from a window above on to an unsuspecting, and intoxicated, man on the street below.

¹⁰⁴ A similar shower of urine occurs in Book II of *The Dunciad* when Curll and Osborne compete to see whose stream could reach the highest. While Osborne’s exploits amount to failure which “wash’d the Artists face” in his own unarching stream, Curll succeeds to urinate “Thro’ half the heav’ns” (II.176; II. 182). There are also myriad humorous accounts in pamphlets in circulation at the time, including one by Joseph Addison where Socrates, after brawling with his wife, is the victim of a bedpan shower to which he cleverly responds, “after so much thunder we should have some rain.” Addison, Joseph. *Interesting anecdotes, memoirs, allegories, essays, and poetical fragments, tending to amuse the fancy, and inculcate morality*. (Vol. Volume 9. London, 1794), 81.



The proliferation of bedpans and rain showers of urine demonstrate a satirical obsession with the intersection of production and consumption. Where both “Description of a City Shower” and *Four Times of Day* demonstrate a preoccupation with the overwhelming abundance of the products presented to the citizens the fills the spaces of city life, they also reveal a parallel fixation on the way that bodies deal with that which they consume. Sophie Gee in *Making Waste: Leftovers and the Eighteenth-Century Imagination* speaks to Swift’s obsession with what she dubs filth, but what I might call waste:

Swift's landscapes are wastelands, at once full and empty, alienating but eerily familiar. The piles of filth and heaps of excrement that fill the terrain of his writing invert the luxurious good, the costly commodities, the piles of money crammed into the writings of

his political and literary enemies. Swift refuses outright to clean up the landscapes of his poetry and prose...¹⁰⁵

In the midst of a world filled with material waste, what is one to make of a landscape of satire so punctuated by metaphoric bodily leavings? As the deluge of dung in “Descriptions of a City Shower” begins at the butcher’s table and a metaphorical bar (where drunkard nature swills her fill), the fixation of excessive material consumption and comestible gluttony connect the system of ingestion to excretion. Consumers, so eager to purchase nearly anything, are left surrounded by a world filled with the remnant pieces of bodies in the form of broken bits and streams and piles of human waste.

The excremental filled the pages of eighteenth-century satire revealing a critique of gluttonous consumption that rendered the human as a waste-eater thriving on his own excremental production. I’m glad you’ll write; you’ll furnish paper when I shite,”¹⁰⁶ Lady Mary Wortley Montague shouts at Jonathan Swift from the final lines of her poem “The Reasons that Induced Dr. S to write a Poem Called The Lady’s Dressing Room.” Perhaps we might argue that Lady Mary is speaking out of her posterior, but her unorthodox critical gesture also reveals a propensity to metaphorically render bad taste as waste. Here, Montague’s attack on Swift’s work establishes how the organ of discernment, invested in issues of taste and judgment, and the organ of digestion, invested in issues of flavor and eating, are strategically collapsed. This act of equating the two functions in eighteenth-century works serves to highlight a critique implicit in Georgian satire: that wasteful practices are akin to excremental production. The poetic repartee between Montague and Swift link bad taste and feces. Montague’s assessment of Swift as belittling a lover who rejects his advances as an exploration into olfactory misogyny, or a poem

¹⁰⁵ Gee, Sophie. *Making Waste: Leftovers and the Eighteenth-Century Imagination*. (Princeton UP: Princeton, 2010), 91.

¹⁰⁶ Montague, Lady Mary Wortley. “The Reasons that Induced Dr S to Write a Poem Called The Lady’s Dressing Room,” lines 100-101.

simply intending to shock audiences with the taboo, Swift's fixation on Celia's excrement belies a convention in eighteenth century works to render judgments not just through the organ of sense and reason, but also through that of the gut and intestine.

Thoroughly invested in the projects of the eighteenth century, "The Lady's Dressing Room" demonstrates the enlightenment tendencies of organization early in his poem. Before he encounters Celia's chamber pot, the peeping Strephon lays before the reader an "inventory" to "make the matter" of his observation clear. Immediately the reader is confronted with an array of bodily grotesqueries:

And first a dirty Smock appear'd,
Beneath the Arm-pits well besmear'd.
Strephon, the Rogue, display'd it wide,
And turn'd it round on every Side.
On such a Point few Words are best,
And *Strephon* bids us guess the rest;
But swears how damnably the Men lie,
In calling *Celia* sweet and cleanly.
Now listen while he next produces,
The various Combs for various Uses,
Fill'd up with Dirt so closely fixt,
No Brush could force a way betwixt.¹⁰⁷

The "dirty smock," a garment customarily utilized to conceal the body is here object of revelation. This rupture in Strephon's perception of Celia is represented by the conjunction "and" linking the stanzas. As a result there is no real separation between the inventory the poetic narrator offers and the way that Celia's identity is being shaped by her objects. The slight figure of Celia held in place by the boning of her corset is shattered by the image of the swelling form this smock of many sides reveals. The very specter of Celia's body expands to overwhelming proportions as Strephon "display[s] [the smock] wide/And turn[s] it round on every side" – the

¹⁰⁷ Swift, Jonathan. "The Lady's Dressing Room," 1732. Ed. Jack Lynch. Rutgers University, December 3rd, 2014. <http://andromeda.rutgers.edu/~jlynch/Texts/dressing.html>.

smock, containing the bodily remnants of sweat from Celia's day, gestures towards the expanding and expansive nature of waste.

While the pristine nature of Celia's beauty is challenged by the vast array of the grotesque tools of her beautification, the reader's own role in the assessment of Strephon's vision is increased by the narrator's intervening enquiries pleading "Why Strephon will you tell the rest?" only to have the poem carry on for another seventy five lines. It is not only Strephon's imagination that is permeated by Celia's growing form. The reader is also summoned to share Strephon's horror as the narrative voice issues the contradictory statement: "on such a point few words are best/ and Strephon bids us guess the rest." In the first of many claims that succinctness is imperative, the reader is compelled to fill the descriptive void with an array of horrors. This connection of the reader's imagination to Strephon's and the compulsion to augment the descriptions Strephon reveals will persist throughout the poem serving to connect the worldview of the eighteenth-century reader to the realm of the poem. As the inventory continues, objects used for hygienic purposes are "begumm'd, bematter'd, and beslim'd" and the objects of finery and markers of Celia's status are "varnish'd o'er with snuff and snot." Yet, perhaps the most troubling conundrum Swift's text offers his readers is the way in which the effects of Celia's body irrevocably alter the characters within and outside of the poem. Strephon never can again cast his eyes upon the fairer sex; the perception of Celia is forever changed. This reflex of Strephon to consider others in an excremental light demonstrates the potent impact that reveling in the excesses of others can effect.

Strephon's attention to Celia's dressing chamber leads the reader to consider the sweat and scrapings of the body, his culminating focus is ultimately on the excrement "plumpt into the reeking chest." As Strephon happens upon the elaborate and ornate chamber pot, "resolv'd" to

explore regardless of the consequences, it becomes apparent that he does, indeed, know precisely what is in the cabinet:

He lifts the Lid, there needs no more,
He smelt it all the Time before.
As from within *Pandora's* Box,
When *Epimetheus* op'd the Locks,
A sudden universal crew
Of humane Evils upwards flew;

As the voyeur penetrates one of the most private of Celia's spaces, the narrative pace of the poem shifts to a present tense "lifts" as though to offer a real time account to the reader. Drawn in, as Strephon is, the reader follows as Strephon "lifts" the lid only to immediately shift to the past tense recollection of "smelt." This shift in tense serves to connect Strephon's discovery to his past experience. He needn't look any farther, he knows the all too familiar smell of filth. Swift further emphasizes Strephon's familiarity with the discovered substance by articulating that this is a "universal crew/ Of humane Evils." Swift's use of the word "universal" serves to establish the ubiquity of stink in human life. These are, further, "humane [*sic*] Evils,"¹⁰⁸ which seem anything but particular to Celia, rather they are of the entire world, and as such the most intimate position of the chamber pot is rendered very public and familiar to all of humanity.

Significantly, drawing our attention to Celia's feces is not enough; in considering her waste, Swift demands that we return to the table linking the metaphor of waste with the act of eating. The next stanza connects the excremental "evils" to meat. In the final installment of

¹⁰⁸ According to the *OED* the definitions of "humane" relevant to the period of Swift's poem are: "characterized by sympathy with and consideration for others; feeling or showing compassion towards humans or animals; benevolent, kind" or "Designating those texts or branches of study which concern humanity, or which (historically) have been regarded as exercising a civilizing influence on the student or reader." Most likely, however, it is a non-typical spelling of "human."

Strephon's "grand survey" the poem continues to meditate on the olfactory experience of Celia's dung:

As Mutton Cutlets, Prime of Meat,
Which tho' with Art you salt and beat,
As Laws of Cookery Require,
And toast them at the clearest Fire;
If from adown the hopeful Chops
The Fat upon a Cinder drops,
To stinking Smoak it turns the Flame
Pois'ning the Flesh from whence it came

It is this comparison to the smoldering fat dripping from an ideal cut of meat that sends Strephon into his famous refrain "*Celia, Celia, Celia* shits!" Strephon's assessment of the meat is that it is ruined by the smoke induced by the drop of fat, yet anyone who has ever placed meat to flame knows that this is not the case. Even if the meat was damaged by such an event, in a time predating refrigeration, let alone the ease of a grocery store, this "Prime of Meat" prepared "As Laws of Cookery require" would be a commodity not to be disposed of even if it were slightly spoiled. This meat, despite the horrid description, would still be eaten, and that in part turns Strephon's, and by extension the reader's, stomach.

Why does Swift demand that we not only see Celia's waste, but that we must eat it too? This question reveals the issue at the heart of this chapter – mitigating waste in an atmosphere of rabid consumption. It seems a natural progression to reflect on the meat prior to considering its final resting place in the pot, to consider meat as the precursor to excrement. Yet, why does the text of the poem insist on comparing Celia's excrement to edibles? In an unnatural turn, Celia's feces metamorphose into the fixings of a meal. Frequently the infamous chest is the subject of attention in considering this poem, yet what of the coprophagic comparison to "mutton cutlets" and the "laws of cookery" within this exploration of wealthy feminine beautification and of the "universal" comprehension of bowel movements? Swift's excremental discourse demonstrate

that satire adopted the metaphor of human waste to address larger concerns of wasted material products and wasted potential by not tending to issues of taste and discernment.

EXCREMENTAL ECONOMIES: EATING, SHITTING, AND WASTING AWAY IN EIGHTEENTH- CENTURY LITERATURE

For some scholars, the eighteenth century's persistent attention to scybala relates to a sincere attention to bodily function. As such, Jens Martin Gurr addresses the scatological fixation as confronting the idealization of "humans as remarkably non-corporeal, purely intellectual or purely sentimental beings,"¹⁰⁹ thus the scatologically inclined revel in the exceedingly corporeal in order to bring mankind, representationally, back down to the earth. Speaking of Jonathan Swift specifically, Jae Num Lee describes four modes of scatological function in order to situate Swift as acting solidly within traditional literary convention: personal satire, socio-political satire, religio-moral satire, and intellectual satire.¹¹⁰ There has also been a long tradition of addressing Swift's attention to bowel movements as either deeply misogynist, or, conversely and more compellingly, as the great democratizing action shared by men and women of all classes.¹¹¹ Amid all this talk of muck there are, however, relatively few attempts to reconcile the materiality of such matters to their function within literature. While materiality in fact characterized the age, the scatological humor of the eighteenth century rarely works to contain or escape the body. Rather, the sheer excesses of the waste materials deployed by these humorists demonstrate how futile the struggle against the material is.

¹⁰⁹ Gurr, Jens Martins. "Worshipping Cloacina in the Eighteenth Century: Functions of Scatology in Swift, Pope, Gay, and Sterne. *Taboo and Transgression in British Literature from the Renaissance to the Present*. Eds. Stefan Horlacher, Stefan Glomb, Lars Heller. (New York: Palgrave MacMillian), 130.

¹¹⁰ Lee, Jae Num. *Swift and Scatological Satire*. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1971), 62.

¹¹¹ Interestingly, the critical fascination with Swift and excrement had its heyday in the late 1960s and 1970s. Note the works of Katharine Rogers, John F. Sena, Thomas B. Gilmore, John O'Connor, and Donald Greene along with Num Lee as examples of this attention.

What is missing in considering consumer tendencies and the scatological fixation of eighteenth century is an attention to *consuming* tendencies, the silencing of which has led to the obfuscation of a vibrant and vital mode of economic and material representation in eighteenth-century literature. This is not to say that the aesthetic qualities of goods and production have gone unnoticed, but rather that the resulting waste products have been obfuscated by a much more hygienic focus on production rather than on expulsion of materials in society. Even those scholars who deal with the waste of the eighteenth century offer a profusion of apologist sentiments in the defense of their study. Jeff Persels and Russell Ganim consider this scholarly justification of the pursuit of all things scatological in *Fecal Matters in Early Modern Literature and Art*. They write:

Excrement becomes part of this disorder and marginalization because it is both naturally present but, in most cases, socially absent. It finds itself in 'ambiguous and confusing' circumstances because it is of the body but then physically dislodged from it. Consequently, human waste is separated from the individual who created it, and from the society that rejects it.¹¹²

Yet, the near obsessive fixation on the entire process of consumption in eighteenth-century literature betrays the contention that waste can ever been “separated from the individual.” To be focused on the fecal runs the risk of being in foul territory, for certain; however the sheer body of literary representation of eating *and* excreting during this period demonstrates that critics and artists alike were anything but discrete in their treatment of dung. What is revealed instead is a fixation on immoderate consumption that manifests itself as an embodied imbalance, as such morality and the body become linked in representation and in critique and as such the state of the body becomes a signifier of the condition of morality.

¹¹² *Fecal Matters in Early Modern Literature and Art: Studies in Scatology*. Eds. Jeff Persels and Russell Ganim. Ashgate: Burlington, 2004, Xiv.

Many of William Hogarth's engravings emphasize bodies as producing waste while simultaneously being wasted in their own right – the derivative remains of the body therefore serve as a moniker of the condemnation aimed at social practice. Envisioned as a reprimand for the heinous moral atrocities witnessed on the streets of London, Hogarth's *The Four Stages of Cruelty* depict escalating acts of cruelty. The alignment of moral assessment with bodily despair and dysfunction serve to demonstrate a fixation on the misuse of consumption. *The First Act of Cruelty*, in much more subtle manner than Swift's work, demonstrates anal representation parallel to representations of edibles. The image depicts a group of men sodomizing a dog with an arrow. The penetration is excruciating to consider. As an instrument of war and violence, the arrow is intended to pierce the flesh. As these men use it, however, even the tool is corrupted. Excessively violent, the arrow is stripped of its mate. No longer wielded with a bow, it becomes an extension of the men, a utensil of cruelty. The object assumes horrifying dimensions and channels the immorality of the men into a weapon that vividly shatters the boundary of the body as an autonomous unit.

As the dog suffers, his mouth is open, howling in pain. This detail as Hogarth renders it serves two functions: it draws the viewer's eye to another dog in the frame and it calls attention visually to the connections between the mouth and the rectum. If moderate consumption serves to nourish the body, this forced and inverted act serves to emphasize the corrupted order of the world. The engraving depicts a foil to the sodomized canine that further reveals the connection to consumption. In the bottom right corner another act of cruelty occurs as a man ties a bone to the tail of a creature clearly emaciated and in want of sustenance. After conceiving of the anal violence perpetrated against the dog at the center of the print, the second represents the specter of violence to occur – a hungry dog threatening his own flesh in an effort to procure the bone. The

faceless man directly aligned with the tool of violence lies on a diagonal with the man securing the bone to the tail encouraging a collapse of the two men's identities – both of the victims and each of the villains are equated in this scene leading the viewer to conceive of the anal violence on the verge of occurring to the second animal. It is imperative to note that a second and perhaps more common use of an arrow would be for hunting. Used to secure food, the arrow is, in its intended function, a vehicle to produce food, nourishment, and calories. Inserted into the rectum of the dog, the arrow becomes a symbol of the perverted order of things. No longer procuring that food which goes *in* the mouth and *out* the anus, here in Hogarth's corrupted world it represents the shattered system. It is not a leap to consider the sodomy in conjunction with consumption. The script that accompanies the print only serves to solidify this reading. It reads:

While various Scenes of sportive Woe,
The Infant Race employ,
And tortur'd Victims bleeding shew,
The Tyrant in the Boy.
Behold! a Youth of gentler Heart,
To spare the Creature's pain,
O take, he cries—take all my Tart,
But Tears and Tart are vain.
Learn from this fair Example—You
Whom savage Sports delight,
How Cruelty disgusts the view,
While Pity charms the sight.

In conjunction with the image of the dog whose food is tied to his tail, the gesture of offering a tart “to spare the creatures pain” only furthers the connection between the two creatures. As though the boy recognizes the disastrous connections between the edible and the anal, he proffers a treat to distract the cruel men from their corrupt acts. The print comments on excesses rendered twice, twice as anal and twice as edible. The excesses of torment are made metaphor as the act of eating and excreting.

If the first installment of Hogarth's series serves to demonstrate the breach in the natural organization of consuming tendencies, the final installment of Hogarth's series directly connects the villain of the series to the anatomical arena that Harvey and Lémery would have been all too familiar with. The excessive cruelty of Tom Nero has led to his body becoming the site of education for his dissectors. In a curious twist from the first plate, it is his body this time being penetrated, carved, and (visually) feasted upon. As though to reference the aspects of starvation in the first plate, Nero's intestines are pulled from his torso by an examiner who, with the dexterity of a butcher who might cut the offal from his meat, opens the stomach and disembowels his subject. Here, a dog, presumably one tortured in the first scene, feasts upon the heart of the villain as the loose end of the intestine lies in wait beside the canine's repast. If the heart will not fill the pup, the intestine will provide a larger banquet. Here lies the wasted human body. Wasted in life, Hogarth also presents him as wasted in death. Fascinatingly, the position of his body gestures towards a fate of that alludes to consumption. As the dog dines upon his organs, Nero's extended finger gestures towards a pot of cooking human bones. While these bones are presumably being cleaned for display in the anatomical theater, the visual allusion to a bubbling cauldron cooking over a fire is unavoidable.

Nero's forecasting of "human-stew" only completes the circle that Swift's excremental edibles began. In this chapter I have argued that the satiric thrust of the poems of Swift and the images of Hogarth reveal an insistent critique of the waste, in its myriad forms, that was so abundant in the consumer society of the eighteenth century. However, Hogarth's dark and foreboding commentary on the violence associated with unrestrained and unchecked consumption gestures towards a more vicious chapter in the consumer and material history of the eighteenth century. As the next chapter will address, the labor necessary to produce and procure

the commodity goods that populated the eighteenth-century marketplace depended upon a system of regimented violence that exploited and destroyed the human lives that provided the physical effort to produce these commodities.

Chapter Three

Commercial Cannibalism: Dietary Polemics, Digested Materials, and Wasted Bodies in the Eighteenth-Century Slave Narrative

“Men once oppressed our forefathers to the extent that they viewed other men as material out of which to build a nation...Cannibalism still lives!”

- *Native Son*, 1940

“Curiously, all the major positions on cannibalism maintained today are said to have been well represented by the eighteenth century.”

- “Thinking about Cannibalism,” 2004

In 1788 *Remarks on the Slave Trade, and the Slavery of the Negroes* was published by J. Phillips in London. Written by an author who signed only “Africanus,” the brief pamphlet offered an array of letters, sixteen to be exact, outlining a series of concerns regarding the practice of the slave trade. Overtly published as an abolitionist text, a claim the text makes three times before even the first line of the “Introductory Letter,” the profits of all sales of the text were to be “appropriated to the use of the society instituted in London 1787, for the purpose of effecting the abolition of the slave trade.”¹¹³ Amid the myriad topics under assessment, it was definitively important for Africanus to dedicate a letter in its entirety to the issue of “Anthropophagi, or Man-eaters.”¹¹⁴

This letter is significant to this chapter for several reasons. First, the fact that the author is compelled to address the subject indicates the significance of the discourses surrounding cannibalism among Anglo considerations of the peripheral and colonial spaces that had been explored from the fifteenth century onward. Second, Africanus, relies upon a dietary discourse that articulates specific modes of consumption as evidence to counter the presumed cannibalism evident in the non-Western world. Third, this text utilizes a rhetorical turn familiar to other

¹¹³ Africanus. *Remarks on the slave trade, and the Slavery of the Negroes. In a series of letters.* London, MDCCLXXXVIII. [1788], frontispiece.

¹¹⁴ Ibid, 12.

abolitionist documents of the time, most notably *The Interesting Narrative* composed by Olaudah Equiano and *The History of Mary Prince*, of aligning the market of flesh that seemingly haunted the Western imagination not with the practice of anthropophagi, but with a mode of commodity cannibalism against a group of humans that commoditized the body, rendering it product more than person.

This chapter continues the discussion of use, value, and, most importantly, waste where the previous one left off; however for the purpose of this examination, the metaphor of waste in commodity cultures has at its core a haunting reality – the wasted body. The actual consumption of human flesh, in some sense, defies metaphor, yet by examining the way in which a hyper-commodified nation depended on the works and productions of human bodies, the actual destruction of these humans echoes the digestion and excretion of any other flesh. In this sense, the body becomes metaphorical nourishment that is used up, consumed, and wasted by the immoderate demands for goods of the eighteenth-century world. This chapter builds upon the works of anthropologists and historians who largely concur that cannibalism was more a myth of the Western mind than actual practice of native peoples. My examination, however, is distinct from those which have come before it as I see this perception of anthropophagy as actively shaping the literary form and content of slave narratives in the eighteenth century. As such, the discussion of cannibalism is deployed not only as a rhetorical strategy to emphasize abolitionist goals, but it also constructs a system of metaphors that shapes the retellings of the trials of the slave experience.

By examining three distinct, but parallel, models of commodity cannibalism – a term I am using to discuss the destruction of human bodies in order to support, or nourish, the demands of a consumer world—I aim to reveal a discourse of man-eating within these narratives that indicts

slavers in the commodification, in its most Marxist sense, of the human body. In revealing the act commodifying the human in such a way as to render it the material upon which society is built, or nourished, abolitionist texts and slave narratives of the eighteenth century argue that the body is being stripped of any use value at all. Ironically, the rhetorical strategies of these texts employ the same model of the market of human flesh in order to reveal that consumer society is misusing the ability for these (slave) bodies to productively build society. As such, much as Swift's critique of indulgent spending in eighteenth-century culture resulted in piles of filth symbolizing the waste produced by indulgence, these texts render the labor of a slaving body as the most egregious form of comestible sustenance possible for civilization. The product driving the marketplace becomes human flesh consumed as a good by the Western world, an act which ultimately lays waste to the possibility of a more sustainable market model.

DIETARY POLEMICS: AFRICANUS AND THE EVIDENCE OF EATING

One of the core contentions of Africanus's series of letters is the rebuttal of the prevalent Western obsession with African cannibalism. The fourth letter of Africanus's Remarks begins with an apology: "Sir, However reluctant I may be to enter upon the subject of the Anthropophagi, or Man-eaters, yet it is necessary to say something concerning them; and as one great defence [*sic*] of the justice of the Slave Trade rests upon the asserted universality of this custom in the western coasts of Africa, it cannot without propriety be passed over in silence."¹¹⁵ While Africanus insists that propriety is guiding his current attention to this indecorous topic, this is hardly the first invocation of cannibals. In fact, his "reluctance" proves false as the previous letter presumes to begin as a "local description of the remainder of the coast of Guinea,"¹¹⁶ but reads more like an investigatory report challenging the assumptions of the

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid, 7.

savagery of the native inhabitants, savagery most notably rooted in the accusations of these spaces as war-torn regions motivated by the desire to consume human flesh. Africanus explicitly challenges the motives of travelers who reported on little more than hearsay to the instances of natives “lur[ing] seamen on shore, [to] devour them”¹¹⁷ stating that these ‘eye witnesses’ “pronounc[e] boldly, of a country in which [they] never landed.”¹¹⁸ The origin of these horrific accounts is clearly a fabrication, for Africanus writes “...the description which has been given of the state of manners and society on the coast of Guinea is exaggerated; and that though we may have spoken the truth, we have not spoken the whole truth; for that there are ...accompanied with wonderful devastations and incredible cruelties, where they kill and eat their prisoners; [is so] that therefore the condition of the slaves, if not bettered, is, at least, not made worse.”¹¹⁹ Turning the tables on the veracity of the Western traveler, Africanus explicitly condemns this practice of falsifying anthropophagic accounts in order to justify the practice of slavery.

The invocation of cannibalistic practice in the New World would be a more common rhetorical practice than the discrediting of such claims to the eighteenth-century Western audience. The identification of these spaces and their inhabitants as cannibalistic was so pervasive that English newspapers were filled with the news of the horrid “Anthropophagi” or the fierce and dangerous cannibalistic warrior nations in unknown realms. Francis Hutcheson meditated on the consistent emphasis travel writers placed on the terrifying actions of peoples

¹¹⁷ Ibid, 11.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid, 10. The practice of claiming other cultures were anthropophagic based on a complete absence of firsthand information has a long history. As Carole A. Myscofski writes, “Although Columbus never witnessed the consumption of human

¹¹⁹flesh and never met the Caribs whose name he so misunderstood and behaviors so misrepresented, he, like so many travel writers after him, based the truth of his representations on well-known accounts such as Isidore of Seville’s seventh-century catalogs of ‘human monstrosities’ in India and John Mandeville’s fictitious medieval sagas of monstrous beings.” Myscofsky, Carole A. “Imagining Cannibals: European Encounters with Native Brazilian Women.” *History of Religions*. 42:2/3 (2007-2008) 148-149.

they encountered abroad in his work *An Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue*:

[writers] are sparing enough in accounts of the *natural Affections, the Familys, Associations, Friendships, Clans*, of the *Indians*; and as transiently do they mention their Abhorrence of *Treachery* among themselves; their *Proneness* to mutual Aid, and to the Defence (*sic*) of their several *States*; their Contempt of Death in defence of their Country, or upon points of *Honour*. 'These are but common Storys. -- No need to travel to the Indies for what we see in Europe every Day.' The Entertainment therefore in these ingenious Studys (*sic*) consists chiefly in exciting *Horror*, and making Men *Stare*. The ordinary Employment of the Bulk of the *Indians* in support of their Wives and Offspring, or Relations, has nothing of the *Prodigious*. But a *Human Sacrifice*, a Feast upon Enemys Carcases (*sic*), can raise an Horror and Admiration of the wondrous Barbarity of *Indians*...¹²⁰

To speak of any aspect of the familiarity of social structure or civilization would be to speak of the mundane. To emphasize the barbaric, regardless of the truth behind these sentiments, would entertain and so, presumably, move books off the shelves. Indeed, the correlation of “cannibal” and “other” is latent in the etymology of the word itself. The word’s origin stems from “Carib or Caribes, a fierce nation of the West Indies, who are recorded to have been *anthropophagi*.”¹²¹ Yet, despite the linguistic connections to native peoples, Africanus articulates that this conflation is little more than a trick of smoke and mirrors to mislead the good people of England into an immoral trap. Misdirection and miscommunication, Africanus stipulates, is the cause of the great evil of the slave trade, for “the intercourse between several parts of England and the West-India

¹²⁰ Hutcheson, Francis. *An Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue: In Two Treatises*. (London: J. and J. Knapton, J. Darby, A. Bettesworth, F. Fayram, J. Pemberton, J. Osborn and T. Longman, C. Rivington, F. Clay, J. Batley, and A. Ward. 1729.) 206.

¹²¹ “cannibal, n.1”. OED Online. December 2013. Oxford University Press. 31 January 2014. It is equally compelling to consider that the origins of the term have been debated. One argument, shared by Alan Rice and Roberto Fernandez Retamar, argue that the word originated from the voyages of Christopher Columbus. Others such as Peter Hulme draw attention to an alternative vision claiming that the word might be a corruption of a word in the native language of the island inhabitants that sounded similar to Spanish. Eric Cheyfitz notes, “Whatever the actual linguistic case may be....After the association Columbus elaborated in his journal, *cannibal* will come to mean one thing in Western languages: a human who eats another man’s flesh” (42). See Rice, Alan. “Who’s Eating Whom’: The Discourse of Cannibalism in the Literature of the Black Atlantic from Equiano’s ‘Travels’ to Toni Morrison’s ‘Beloved’.” *Research in African Literatures*. 29:4. (Winter, 1998). Pp. 106-121; Retamar, Roberto Fernandez. Trans. Edward Baker. *Caliban and Other Essays*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989; Barker, Francis, Peter Hulme, and Margaret Iversen. *Cannibalism and the Colonial World*. New York: Cambridge UP, 1998; and Cheyfitz, Eric. *The Poetics of Imperialism: Translation and colonization from the Tempest to Tarzan*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997 respectively. See also, Lindenbaum, Shirley. “Thinking about Cannibalism.” *Annual Review of Anthropology*. (33: 2004), 477.

Islands, being not frequent nor direct...may reasonably be supposed not generally known, nor understood.”¹²²

The misdirection that Africanus indicts Western slave traffickers with, however, reveals a more complicated mythos of the cannibal. More specter than reality, Alan Rice notes, “...we can tell that the discourse surrounding cannibalism was never straightforward...but a complex mythology used to attempt to explicate new or strange occurrences on the borders of communities that was sometimes co-opted by powerful forces as a useful method of control....Taking this view, the cannibalistic nature of the other is *almost always a myth*....”¹²³ Rice’s contention that the accusation of cannibalism is more a rhetorical weapon of the West than an actual social practice by a group of people in remote regions is shared among the larger discussion of anthropologists.¹²⁴ Matthew Christensen speaks to the power of labeling a foreign culture as cannibal. He writes, “To label someone or something a cannibal is to discredit and disrupt and to toy and trick his, her, or its authority,” and as such the propagation of writing in the eighteenth century that articulated the other as cannibal had far reaching consequences.¹²⁵ It is because of effects of the “complex mythology” of cannibalism at work in the eighteenth-century global perspective that Africanus demands that attention be paid to those appropriating it for powerful purposes. Ultimately, if his mission succeeds, the veil will be lifted and the scales

¹²² Africanus, 1.

¹²³ Rice, 110 emphasis mine. Rice’s articulation bears an almost uncanny reference to Claude Levi-Strauss’s examination of method in *The Raw and the Cooked*: “...the analysis itself, as it progresses, demands that use be made of myths originating in more remote regions...their behavior appears less strange, once we have ascertained that its object is the capture and assimilation of foreign bodies.” Curiously, cannibalism is, though to a lesser degree than incest, a universal taboo for Levi-Strauss, yet it is difficult to imagine a way in which one could more fully enact the “assimilation of foreign bodies” than by consuming them. Levi-Strauss, Claude. *The Raw and the Cooked*. Trans. John and Doreen Weightman. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1969, 4.

¹²⁴ There are occasional exceptions to this general rule. For instance, survivalist instances of cannibalism are well documented from the Donner Party to Alfred Packer. There are also instances of ritual cannibalism that have been documented, however, the consistent practice of consuming human flesh by any specific culture has not proven common. For a thorough review of current anthropological modes of considering cannibalism see Lindenbaum, Shirley. “Thinking about Cannibalism.” *Annual Review of Anthropology*. (33: 2004).

¹²⁵ Christensen, Matthew J. “Cannibals in the Postcolony: Sierra Leone’s Intersecting Hegemonies in Charlie Haffner’s Slave Revolt Drama ‘Amistad Kata-Kata.’” *Research in African Literatures*. (36:1) Spring 2005. 14.

will fall from the eyes of the fortunate (and free) Englishman. Thus, no longer will the ignorant Westerner be able to adopt indifference, and instead they will realize the falsity of the anthropophagic other and recognize the demon at home – the practice of “commercial consideration[s]” of bodies.¹²⁶

In order to educate his reader, Africanus deploys a dietary rhetoric. If the mythic monster dwelling in the English imagination is a man-eating man, Africanus demonstrates, through a parallel discourse of eating, that nothing could be farther from the truth. Citing as his source the *Modern Universal History*,¹²⁷ Africanus adopts a three part rhetorical approach to dispelling the myth of the cannibal other: abundance, abstinence, and temperance. First, in order to further recognize the prevalent discourse of cannibalism in Africa, and in Guinea more specifically, he identifies an instance that he concedes might represent a rare instance of anthropophagi. In what reads more like a fable than a historical instance, Africanus relates that:

...once during a terrible famine occasioned by their belief in the assertions of their...priests, that the seasons would produce abundant crops without the labour and toil of their hands, they neglected the culture of their fields entirely; and after waiting two years for the performance of the impostor's promise, they were reduced to the greatest extremity of hunger, and that then they not only sold, but [ate] each other; and the stronger, like wild beasts, preyed upon the weaker.¹²⁸

Strikingly, the moral of this tale seems not to indict the act of eating human flesh, but rather to highlight the vicious results of immoral leadership. Here, a people previously dedicated to the husbandry of their land (or at least so we can assume) are misled by their priests. In order to ensure that the reader recognizes this was no simple act of ignorance or laziness, Africanus emphasizes this dissemination of misinformation as a “performance” of an “impostor's promise.”

¹²⁶ Africanus, 2.

¹²⁷ In a curious twist of irony, Africanus never lays claim to have made these travels himself, rather he states them to be “in a great measure...historical” (2). Considering the accusations of hearsay he lays upon the proponents of the cannibal African, this seems perhaps an oversight. However, for the purpose of my claims of a dietary rhetoric, it only affirms the recognition of the significance of the comestible to speak to many aspects of reality and representation.

¹²⁸ Africanus, 13.

It is directly the result of this propaganda that the previously peaceful people are “reduced” not only in their social status, as now they are famished, but also in their human status as they are “wild beasts” that act outside of the accordance of moral behavior. In an effort to educate the misinformed Englishman, the retelling of this tale serves to demonstrate the terrible consequences of delusion -- the myth of the cannibal serves as a metaphor for bad direction.

If the instance of immoral eating resulted from the unfulfilled promise that crops would auto-cultivate, Africanus immediately contrasts this position with anecdotal evidence that a dearth of crops is anomalous: “...the Grain and the Ivory Coast...produces abundance of fruits, roots, and different sorts of pulse, besides plenty of fish, all which constitute the common food of the natives...”¹²⁹ On the Ivory Coast, he offers another example of abundance where even “the diet of the poorest sort of Negroes is called Bomini, composed of rice, fish, fowl, kid, and elephants flesh, and all this boiled and thickened with palm oil, and a vegetable substance called ocrā [*sic*].”¹³⁰ As Africanus continues his gastronomic tour down the coast of Africa he recounts the diets of many peoples in a similar manner, and the text assures us that there too are diets of the wealthy composed of “beef, mutton, fowls, with yams for bread, which, after boiling, they beat into a sort of cake.”¹³¹

Amid this discussion of the various and abundant diets of the nations along the coast of Africa, Africanus deploys a second tactic to invalidate the fears of anthropophagi – one that emphasizes selectivity akin to abstinence in the diets of these peoples. The very same group that represented the perilous tale of cannibalism that Africanus relates manifest a very particular aversion to the consumption of certain types of food: “The diet of the Negroes is described to

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ *ibid*

¹³¹ Ibid, 15. Africanus notes that the wealthy “frequently make entertainments for each other, the fragments of which are given to the poor, whose general food is yams with smoked or dried fish” and as though to highlight the benevolence of this nation he also notes that “the King and great men support according to their ability, a certain number of poor at their places or residence.”

[consist] of rice, roots, and fruits...their sheep and goats being kept for milk.”¹³² While Africanus is careful to articulate that this abstinence might be less of “virtue” than of a disdain for “going in search of game”¹³³ it is substantial that the one element missing from the diets of this group off the coast of Guinea is meat of any sort, let alone human flesh. Privileging husbandry over hunting, the Guineans are hardly portrayed as a vicious people. With this knowledge, the most shocking element of Africanus’s story of their dietary fall from grace is that they consume flesh at all. The abstinence from meat reroutes the tale of cannibalism to one of a more general dietary transgression.

This group Affricanus represents is one of the only instances of a completely meat-free diet, a fact that further underscores the significance of the lapse into flesh eating, however, representations of dietary selectivity are presented in additional instances of Africanus’s fourth letter. He writes of the people of the Grain and Ivory coasts as a group that, due to their abundance of produce, are able to possess very discerning palates when it comes to selecting their protein:

...monkies are also so numerous, that they often form themselves into bodies, make incursions into the plantations, and spoil every thing they meet with: these monkies [*sic*] are very large, and very sagacious, and the Negroes are fond of their flesh, preferring it to that of all other animals, except the elephant.¹³⁴

Here, Africanus intones that these people are at once clever and discriminating. That the monkeys are a nuisance to the productivity of food preparation (an issue readers certainly would deem important following the harrowing tale of starvation just previous in the text) makes their extermination a useful act of the nation. The fact that the Africanus emphasizes that the flesh is delectable, renders the killing of these creatures as an issue of taste rather than necessity. It is

¹³² Ibid, 12.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid, 13.

striking to the testimony of discernment among these groups of people so often regarded as “beasts” by the Western eye that Africanus offers a curious footnote to this anecdote: “May it not be conjectured that the practice among the Negroes of eating the flesh of monkies may have occasioned the generality of the charge against them being cannibals.”¹³⁵ By presenting first the utility of hunting monkeys followed by the discussion of the preferred taste of the flesh, Africanus concludes his assessment of this group by offering yet another alternative narrative to the presumption of widespread cannibalism. If the Englishman were ignorant of the practice of eating large monkeys, perhaps now they can see the confusion between non-human hominoid flesh and human flesh.

The final step in establishing a body of dietary evidence against cannibalism lies in Africanus’s desire to establish these people as a moderate people daily practicing temperance. In order to build a connection between his English audience and the foreign people of the African coast, Africanus establishes a metric of civility through the type of liquor the nations consume. While “European spirits are much sought after by all,”¹³⁶ and are often traded for by the African natives, according to the text, Africanus presents an array of other beverages that are imbibed: “water, palm wine, and a kind of beer, called Ballow, made of the grain of the country” and “a sort of beer called Pito, and wine drawn from the Bourbon palm-tree.”¹³⁷ This emphasis on spirits is significant as it demonstrates an interest in alcohol that the civilized Englishman would have found familiar. Yet in contrast to the delight the English took in imbibing, Africanus states and restates that these are not drunken barbarians of which he speaks. Rather, temperance is highly valued among a people “guilty of no excess in eating or drinking; as being temperate and

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid, 12

¹³⁷ Ibid, 12 and 14

sober, from their dislike of gluttony and drunkenness.”¹³⁸ This would perhaps have struck a chord that resonated with civility. As the nation of England was riddled with issues of widespread drunkenness and public intoxication, the fact that these “barbaric others” were practicing moderation and temperance in their consumption of alcohol to the extent that some groups considered drunkenness “a crime of so odious a nature, that it [was] prohibited under the severest penalties, and even death itself”¹³⁹ might have offered the “other” as exemplary rather than alien.

Having obscured the specter of the anthropophagic other from the view of the Western reader, Africanus shifts the scope of the horrors of consuming humans to the practice of the slave trade itself. The fallacies of cannibalism have been exposed, but Africanus emphasizes that this does not, in fact, mean that there are no markets where human flesh is sold. While the text derides the assertions of individuals such as the insidious Captain Snelgrave that flesh is eaten and sold in the markets of lands such as Dahomè,¹⁴⁰ he does insist that flesh-markets do indeed exist in this world. “Human flesh,” he writes, “might doubtless have been exposed to sale in the markets of the camp, not dead for food however, but alive for slavery.”¹⁴¹

This is the market that Africanus launched his pen against. If ignorance is what permits the slave trade to remain a practice, the voracious monster of “commercial consideration” drives that trade. It is not the ability of the African to adopt a beast-like mentality that separates the human from human flesh that leads to the consumption of man; it is instead the perceived ‘need’

¹³⁸ Ibid, 13.

¹³⁹ Ibid, 14. England’s drinking problem has been widely documented was visually depicted in Hogarth’s famous “Gin Alley.”

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, 13.

¹⁴¹ Ibid, 14. The obsession with cannibal tales that permeated the Western world also creates an interesting paradox, one Carole Myscowski addresses when she writes, “consider[ing] the unnatural nature attributed to...cannibals, the question lingers: who, then, is surpassing in barbarity—the consumers of human flesh or the voyeurs who are consumers of the tales of anthropophagi?” Myscowski, 143.

of a system that permits cruelties to be “inflicted on [the human] without remorse.”¹⁴² It is this commercial consideration, Africanus asserts, that dissolves the moral ability to empathize with the slave body and recognize that body as human. “A cargo of slaves,” Africanus writes, “like a cargo of lumber, may have foundered at sea without exciting a sigh”¹⁴³ for to the English imagination, these bodies are less man than material – the material needed to build empire and commerce – out of sight and out of mind. Yet, Africanus presents a terrifying conundrum to his reader; if that body should make it to shore, rather than founder at sea, its presence does not gain any more of its humanity. In a harrowing critique of the system of “commercial consideration,” Africanus relates that, having arrived at the destined port, one would face the horror of slavery, a system marked by “the condemnation of thousands of Human Beings, to the rank and labour of brutes, without any prospect of release, may [be] considered as a consequence of state policy, and justified by the plea of commercial necessity.”¹⁴⁴

In order to recommend the abolition of slavery, Africanus does not desire to remove the need for labor from the system at hand. Rather, he draws a significant distinction between servitude and slavery. He asserts:

...it is not meant to deny the necessity for *Servitude*, but to remedy the cruelties and consequent miseries of *Slavery*; and to hold forth to the attention of the public, good reasons for concluding, that the SLAVE TRADE is impolitic as well as Unjust...and that humanity and commercial benefits are not such irreconcilable principles as commonly imagined.¹⁴⁵

In fact, Africanus demonstrates his keen investment in preserving the commerce of his world, and it is in this vein that he articulates that the trade of human bodies delimits the possibility of merchandise. By making “mankind itself...the Commodity”¹⁴⁶ the system demonstrates a

¹⁴² Ibid, 2.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid, 4.

perversion of commerce. If the most atrocious and unnatural horror of the African people would be to consume man as sustenance, Africanus articulates that the English involvement in trade is actively participating in the ghastly practice of reducing the population of “no less than three thousand five hundred miles” of African coastline to the state of being “unnatural merchandize.”¹⁴⁷

If the previous tactics have depended upon a discourse of dietary evidence proving that the nourishment of the African people does not depend on bodies, and instead demonstrates a civility through moderation and temperance, his most pointed mode of attack on the trade is to align it with the practice of indulgently devouring one group for the pleasure of it. By rendering man as a western commodity to be sold at market, Africanus indicts the nations participating in the trade of this indulgence through the principles of commerce, which he aligns with “self-interest... made to justify the supplying one country with the luxuries of life, at the expense of the population, and in some instances nearly the existence of another.”¹⁴⁸ The model of civilization has been corrupted through a “refinement of cruelty and injustice” rather than a refinement of character or goods. It is, in fact, the Westerner who craves flesh, pain, and torture. In contrast to this “refined” model, Africanus offers his readers access to salvation: gain awareness, initiate change, and save lives. By dedicating his letters to Grenville Sharp, Esq. Africanus underscores that the abolition of the slave trade would amount to the rescue of lives: “permit me, Sir, to dedicate to you these letters to which your present undertaking has given birth.”¹⁴⁹ The emphasis on the life-giving properties of the support of the abolitionist cause (underscored by the deployment of a birthing metaphor) furthers Africanus’s argument, all the

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid, 9.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid, ii.

while subtly condemning any who continue the support of the demonic and commercially cannibalistic practice of dealing in the market of human flesh.

DIGESTED MATERIALS: PROCESSED BODIES AND NUTRITIONAL REGULATION IN EQUIANO'S

INTERESTING NARRATIVE

If Africanus presents a model for reading a dietary defense in opposition to the “myth of cannibalism,” Equiano’s *Interesting Narrative* functions as a text that demonstrates the transformation of the slave body from man to material in a way that depends upon a metaphorical digestion of the human body. Much as Africanus aligns the cargo of men with a cargo of timber, Equiano’s relation of the middle passage demonstrates that slave bodies are rendered as the materials necessary for the production of the Western world. My examination positions the *Interesting Narrative* as a text that actively repurposes the human slave body as an element to be consumed and used up in the support of the consumer market of the eighteenth century. By fixating on the middle passage as a place of consumption, this text parallels the previous chapter in its obsession with the waste of the market system, making the slave body at once something to be consumed and controlled through the market system of slavery. Further, this text demonstrates that part of Equiano’s own solution – and salvation – depends upon learning to refine materials, such as water, in his own life. This ability to purify and enhance materials without the dependence on the slave labor market opens the text up for discussion with other issues of slave-produced products and conceptions of cannibalism in the eighteenth century.

Equiano’s narrative is an ideal demonstration of the cannibalistic effects of the eighteenth-century slave trade as it is a text composed by an individual who occupied – or self-fashioned – at various times an African identity and a British identity. Vincent Carretta addresses

this unique mode of literary production in the eighteenth century as a “literature of diasporic movement and cultural encounter.”¹⁵⁰ This movement across the Atlantic created fractured resonances of the known simultaneous to the unknown which in turn forced the individual to make meaning from the forced encounters of the slave trade. It is this meaning-making that I take up in this chapter. While the critical conversation regarding Olaudah Equiano/Gustavus Vassa/The African is typically one of either establishing or locating identity, this examination is much more in line with the work of George Boulukos who “emphasize[s] the interrelationship of...Equiano’s identities...[to] establish the possibilities and the stakes of competing...political identities within eighteenth-century British discourse.”¹⁵¹ While Boulukos locates this political identity within the slavery debate, Equiano’s text expands that political identity to include a nuanced evaluation of the economic culture and debates on consumer practices in the eighteenth century.

Much attention has been paid to Equiano’s focus on economics and mercantilism in *The Interesting Narrative*. This literature falls into numerous camps regarding the significance of the economic emphasis. Some, such as Nini Rodger’s work *Equiano and Anti-Slavery in Belfast*, align Equiano’s emphasis on a “universality of mankind” with the concepts familiar with mercantilism and larger Enlightenment principles.¹⁵² Others reference Equiano’s attention to mercantilism with condemnation for distracting his attentions from the nobler project of abolition, or shift the direct focus from economics to the effects of travel writing claiming, as Geraldine Murphy has, that it is Equiano’s unique position as African, Briton, and world traveler that leads him to view Africa

¹⁵⁰ Carretta, Vincent. “Introduction.” Eds. Carretta, Vincent and Philip Gould. *Genius in Bondage: Literature of the Early Black Atlantic*. (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky) 2001, 1.

¹⁵¹ Boulukos, George E. “Olaudah Equiano and the Eighteenth-Century Debate on Africa.” *Eighteenth-Century Studies*. 40:2. (Winter, 2007), 241.

¹⁵² Rodgers, Nini. *Equiano and Anti-Slavery in Eighteenth-Century Belfast*. (Belfast: Belfast Society) 2000, 10.

...as the undeveloped continent waiting to be cultivated by Europe. The colonizing eye of such passages is consistent with several of the roles Equiano plays once he has acquired his freedom.... His assumptions... may represent to some modern readers assimilation or capitulation, but they also subversively expose the positionality of European-and African-identity.¹⁵³

For the attention given to his economic position and his hybrid identity in establishing the narrative of his life, there is a void in considering Equiano's economic savviness in his exposition on his torturous voyage through the middle passage. In fairness, this might stem from the dearth of pages in Equiano's narrative. In a text more than 200 pages in length the section addressing Equiano's experience on board the slave ship is a mere seven pages. That said, I contend that this brevity only serves to further demonstrate the way in which Equiano's discussion of the middle passage reveals how his understanding of the system of slavers serves to shape his narrative. This section of the chapter will trace a rhetorical path similar to Africanus's. By initiating his narrative with a distinctly anti-anthropophagic discourse, Equiano positions his tale to violently indict the practice of slavery and the slave trade by rendering it a practice built upon the destruction and consumption of human flesh. Finally, this section will address how following his manumission, Equiano becomes deeply involved in issues of refining. These entrepreneurial endeavors serve to distance Equiano from the horrifying waste he observes in the slave trade.

Much as Africanus's text defuses objections to his abolitionist project by appealing to dietary evidence, Equiano's narrative also contains a similar dietary polemic. Equiano's deployment of the rhetorical evidence of eating depends upon the use of metaphor as well as anecdote. In establishing his African cultural history, Equiano recounts tales of a people very close to Africanus's text. Equiano's Eboe tribe are a "simple" people where "luxuries are

¹⁵³ Murphy, Geraldine. "Accidental Tourist." *Eighteenth-Century Studies*. 27:4 (1994), 557.

few.”¹⁵⁴ They are also an industrious people where both genders are daily employed in the labors of tillage and the maintenance of the land.¹⁵⁵ Equiano further presents a lengthy examination of the diets, markets, and all around civility of the Eboe people outlining not only the diverse and abundant food choices of their meals.¹⁵⁶ It is significant to note that in his description of the types of tillage that his people engage in he articulates that their tools include “hoes, axes, shovels, and beaks, or pointed iron to dig with,” “no beasts of husbandry are used,” he specifies.¹⁵⁷ The extensive emphasis placed on the variety of vegetables his tribe consumes, as well as the intentional distancing of their modes of labor from the use of animal bodies, demonstrates his tribe’s independence from the necessity of living labor.

In addition to a dietary/agricultural distancing from any mode of living even remotely anthropophagic, Equiano’s reflections on his past life reveal the way that linguistic and cultural practices are shaped by the same anti-cannibalistic desire. Outlining a series of idioms that serve to undermine any literal cannibalistic tendencies of the tribes, he mentions that the Eboe people refer to those who are cross or unpleasant as people who “if they were to be eaten they should be eaten with bitter herbs” (41) clearly an idiom that functions as a metaphor not as a literalism akin to a saying such as “what’s eating him?” Further, in discussing religious conventions he writes that, “...the natives believe that there is one Creator of all things, and that he lives in the sun, and is girded round with a belt, that he may never eat or drink.”¹⁵⁸ The Creator, all-powerful and supreme as gods are, is a temperate being, never indulging in *any* practice of consumption let alone excessive consumption or gluttony.

¹⁵⁴ Equiano, 34.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid, 35.

¹⁵⁶ Equiano write of his people’s taste for goats as well as vegetables including “plantains, eadas, yams, beans, and Indian corn.” Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid, 38.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid, 40.

Distinct from the appeals in Africanus's letters, and distinct from the abstinence of the Eboe figure of the Creator, is the discussion of the middle passage. It is here that Equiano radically departs from the rhetorically calm claims that Africanus depends upon to make his case. Rather than distancing the African communities from cannibalism, or briefly aligning the slave body with cargo as Africanus does, Equiano dedicates the bulk of his textual attention to his time on a slave ship to the terrifying way in which bodies are transformed. Writing on the Middle Passage, Maria Diedrich, Henry Louis Gates, Jr., and Carl Pedersen address the way in which much attention has been given to the conditions of the ship in transport:

One of the most striking images of the Middle Passage...is the tight-packing of the slave ships, and illustration often used in history textbooks and anthologies on the African American experience. This image is no doubt familiar, even hackneyed. The injustice and brutality of tight-packing is unquestionable, the suffering and horror experienced by the slaves unimaginable. Add to that image the lack of proper diet, the unhygienic conditions that prevailed aboard the ships...as well as the brutalities the Africans suffered at the hands of their white captors, and the inhumanity of the institution of slavery is laid bare.¹⁵⁹

While tight-packing might be a "hackneyed" way of reducing the experience of the Middle Passage to one particular horror, it is undeniable that the condition of the ship serves to reshape the way Equiano conceives not only of his identity but of the practice of trading in human bodies. As Robert Hayden artfully articulates when considering the impact of the Middle Passage on the slave self,

...how do you spell "I am" when you are deprived of home, of place, of your sense of direction? How do you spell "I am" when the seamless web defining the self is torn? How do you spell "I am" when you are branded, when you are stacked away in the claustrophobic hell below the deck of a slave ship, when you are discarded because a commodity is damaged? How do you spell "I am" on water without boundaries?¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁹ Diedrich, Maria, Louis Gates, Jr., and Pedersen, Carl. "Between History and Fiction." *Black Imagination and the Middle Passage*. Eds. Diedrich, Maria, Louis Gates, Jr., and Pedersen, Carl. (New York: Oxford UP, 1999), 6.

¹⁶⁰ Hayden, Robert. "Voyage through Death...". *Black Imagination and the Middle Passage*. Eds. Diedrich, Maria, Louis Gates, Jr., and Pedersen, Carl. (New York: Oxford UP, 1999), 17.

It is this very question of identity, of “I am,” that Equiano is invested in addressing in this section of his narrative. For all of the focus devoted to the slave quarters on a ship, it would be a tremendous oversight not to recognize the way that the middle passage portion of Equiano’s narrative participates in the larger discourse of slave literature of the time by casting aspersions upon a practice that dehumanizes, devitalizes, and devours the functioning body of the African.

In the discussion of the most traumatic moment in his early life, Equiano rhetorically transforms himself from man, to material, to meat in a shocking move that cannot be ignored by his reader. First, in a rhetorical turn that parallels Africanus’s, he articulates that once on the slave ship he is “handled, and tossed up, to see if [he] were sound.”¹⁶¹ Much as Africanus detailed the cargo of slaves as akin to a cargo of timber, Equiano’s articulations of being tossed and handled remove his human agency from the propulsion of his body. Here he is more substance than man, controlled by the slave traders and under no control of his own.

This lack of control reaches climactic horror when Equiano is forced upon the ship. The “large furnace of copper boiling” is terrifying enough to make Equiano swoon with fear. Here, unfamiliar with the use of such a furnace, Equiano creates meaning from what he does know – a boiling pot of water is to make food. Unlike his tribe that would not participate in the ghoulish practice of indulgent consumption of flesh, the sight of this object convinces Equiano that he himself will be eaten by the “white men with horrible looks, red faces, and long hair.”¹⁶² While he is immediately assured that he was not to be eaten, the threat of anthropophagy consumes Equiano’s thoughts. If Equiano’s meditations on his tribe in Africa demonstrated the way that metaphor further distanced his people from cannibalistic practice, here, the descriptive force of his experience serves to collapse the space between the specter of man eating and the reality of

¹⁶¹ Ibid, 55.

¹⁶² Ibid.

death by consumption. Strikingly, this copper kettle, presumably a furnace of some sort if not a cooking vessel, is used to fuel the motion of the ship, making Equiano's assumptions that the flesh of the slaves will fuel the crew not far from the truth of the matter. Equiano's concern over cannibalism is rooted in his experience in Africa where the consumption of human flesh by his tribe would be unthinkable, but also in a not infrequent assertion that slavers were gathering bodies for consumption¹⁶³ -- an issue supported by the fact that upon seeing "a multitude of black people of every description chained together" he "no longer doubted of [his] fate."¹⁶⁴

The assurance that he is not to be eaten, Equiano continues to assert, is disingenuous for while the Western slave traders will not literally consume Equiano's flesh, his description of the middle passage is riddled with metaphors of consumption and digestion. Down in the belly of the ship, Equiano "received such a salutation in [his] nostrils as [he] had never experienced in his life"¹⁶⁵ -- a condition that reduces his appetite, removes the "least desire to taste anything,"¹⁶⁶ and leaves him feeling desperate. The assailing odors that infiltrate his nose serve to demonstrate the loss of authority Equiano has over his body. The boundaries now permeable to the environment he finds himself in, his body is penetrated via the olfactory sense and renders him unable to separate himself from the conditions of the ship. As such, his body absorbs the noxious elements of the vessel he is in.

¹⁶³ Thorton, John. "Cannibals, Witches, and Slave Traders in the Atlantic World." *The William and Mary Quarterly*. 60:2 (April, 2003). Pp. 273-294. As John Thorton writes in "Cannibals, Witches, and Slave Traders in the Atlantic World," "For those who hailed from West Central Africa... cannibalism and other atrocities represented a small facet of a larger social critique of all forms of economic and political exploitation" (275). The parallel between the white cannibal and the practitioner of "witchcraft" is echoed by Equiano when he considers that he has "gotten into a world of bad spirits" and the connection between bad spirits and consumption is further developed when the slavers revive the swooning Equiano by offering him "spirituous liquor" which Equiano is fearful to take from the slave trader (55).

¹⁶⁴ Equiano, 55. Equiano's thoughts upon seeing the grouped and bound bodies directly support his conclusion that he is going to be eaten. It is a curious parallel that the tight quarters of chattel slavery echo the current and controversial conditions of large scale food production such as the gestation and farrowing crates of factory farms.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid*, 56.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid*.

Quickly, Equiano learns that he is no longer in control of his body, for even though the toxicity of the ship has left him without any appetite, he recalls that “on... refusing to eat, one of them held me fast by the hands, and laid me across, I think, the windlass, and tied my feet while the other flogged me severely.” Unable to stomach food as a result of the conditions below deck, Equiano is treated to the brutal reality that his body is little more than an object to be sustained and tended to by the slavers onboard the ship. Mandatory nourishment might not seem like the most horrendous violation one might face on a slave ship, **but** compulsory eating removes Equiano’s agency over one of the most basic human rights, his ability to nourish his body. Further, by utilizing punishment to enforce eating, the slavers underscore the relationship between violence and consumption that the slave system depends upon.

While the ship serves as a vessel to transport the laboring bodies from their native lands to the locales where they will be forcibly enlisted to produce goods for the tables of the elite, it also begins the physical destruction of these bodies. Both the stench on the ship and the food forcibly fed to Equiano infiltrate his body when he first boards the ship, yet the abuses the ship will enact upon Equiano have only begun. The metaphor of the slave as consumable material is perpetuated as Equiano continues to reveal the conditions of the slave ship:

The stench of the hold while we were on the coast was so intolerably loathsome, that it was dangerous to remain there for any time, and some of us had been permitted to stay on the deck for the fresh air; but now that the whole ship’s cargo were confined together, it became absolutely pestilential. The closeness of the place, and the heat of the climate...was so crowded that each had scarcely room to turn himself, [and] almost suffocated us. This produced copious perspirations, so that the air soon became unfit for respiration, from a variety of loathsome smells...¹⁶⁷

Here, the cargo hold becomes a cage of stench and waste, the bodies of the slaves crammed into a space that cannot accommodate them. The description becomes explicitly linked to issues of digestion as the spaces between the slave bodies are filled with the foul odors of “necessary tubs”

¹⁶⁷ Ibid, 58

that pose a threat to human life as children often fall in and are “almost suffocated”¹⁶⁸ by the excrement. Here, in the belly of the ship, mechanism of the slave trade serves to degrade the human body – as the filth of the human body **becomes** so pervasive as to be inescapable, the living slave becomes mired in a perpetuating pit of excretion and the ship becomes a vehicle transporting a cargo hold of the most base bodily functions.

In my previous chapter, I posited that satirists such as Swift and Hogarth were actively involved in the project of coding conspicuous consumption as waste and excrement. With this metaphor in mind, the condition of the slave quarters on the ship are shockingly revealing. It is the slave trade which produces many of the goods that grace the tables of the elite that in turn produces the waste that Swift condemns. Yet in the slave ship, the metaphor is made real. Here, the very necessary and life-giving act of breathing is made difficult as the filth of the excessive (and excessively maltreated) bodies. This filth creates an amalgam of waste that becomes unbearable. Considering the belly of the ship as a space with the digestive capability of breaking down the slave body depends upon a metaphorical conflation of the ship with the digestive tract. The emphasis on the regulation and control of the slave body’s own ability to consume serves to emphasize the distance from humanity that results from slavery. By making the body a material to be tended and preserved, rather than a human with agency over his/her own substance, Equiano describes how the market place of slavery renders the human as more meat than man.

While it is not a new observation to recognize the slave body as lacking agency, Equiano’s emphasis on the inability to control the acts of consuming (or the vital act of respiring) situates the slave condition as more mechanical than humanoid. The significance of the processing of the slave body in the ship’s belly and the inability to control the substances taken

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

into one's body are compounded by the appearance of the kitchen slave in the iron muzzle in Virginia. The muzzle serves to distance her from the human race as it is a tool placed upon an animal, but it further demonstrates the way in which the body of the slave is considered material. Equiano writes, "I had seen a black woman slave as I came through the house, who was cooking the dinner, and the poor creature was cruelly loaded with various kinds of iron machines; she had one particularly on her head, which locked her mouth so fast that she could scarcely speak; and could not eat nor drink."¹⁶⁹ Equiano's emphasis on the "various kinds of iron machines" is statement enough to invoke a monstrous image of a cyborg-esque being whose body is being subsumed by equipment, but it is in his directed attention to the prohibition of eating and drinking that the pattern of bodies being seen as the product to be used up rather than nourished becomes apparent. The act of cooking dinner for her master is in direct contrast to the prohibition against eating the mechanism of the iron muzzle enforces – she is to nourish and sustain the Virginia estate and her master through the deprivation of her own sustenance.

Whereas Africanus relies primarily on a rhetorical strategy that maligns the practice of slavery by equating the slaver with a cannibal at market, Equiano undermines the Western slaver through an attention to the way the human body is converted into a material. In order to distinguish his own efforts towards financial success and liberty, Equiano defers instead to a discussion of refining materials, particularly water, without the use of forced physical labor. While Equiano acquires myriad skills over the course of his narrative, one of particular use to a man at sea is the ability to purify ocean water to make it potable. As opposed to the site of putrefaction that the waste filled belly of the ship presents, water is the stuff of life: it is the

¹⁶⁹ Ibid, 63.

venue for his mobility and the forum of his enslavement; it is the source of his sustenance and the site of much peril; it is the specter of death and the font of his rebirth through baptism.

Yet in considering Equiano's ability to purify water, we return to William Harvey, the dominant voice in seventeenth-century discourse on the mystery of physiology. Modeling the human heart on a complex hydraulic system, he hypothesized the heart to function as a pump moving blood through the body. While Equiano had no overt concern with Harvey's research, his own experience with hydraulics – his time spent mastering Dr. Irving's water purification system – provides access to a mode of labor that transforms material through intellectual and mechanical work rather than by degrading the material of the body. As Equiano spends his time with Dr. Irving, his "old and good master,"¹⁷⁰ he develops a skill useful to a seaman: "Dr. Irving made me an offer of his service again...I was very happy in living with this gentleman once more; during which time we were daily employed in reducing old Neptune's dominions by purifying the briny element, and making it fresh." For Equiano, a baptized Christian at this point in his life, to exert his power over saline water is to exert his power over paganism (Neptune being a Roman god) and over the sea (the transformative space that instigated his slavery) aligns his work with the transformative function of water in the rebirth of baptism. No longer required to utilize his body as the primary mechanism of labor, Equiano in acquiring the skill of "reducing Neptune's dominion" by "purifying the briny element" he seizes the power over his own life, and over his own body.

This method of creative/intellectual labor taking privilege over the degenerating and putrefying modes of labor traditionally employed by the slave trade is followed through to the globally minded plan Equiano envisions will end the need for the slave trade entirely. By

¹⁷⁰ Ibid, 172.

considering the African body not as one to be thought of in the “bowels” of the Earth, as Africa is alluded to, or in the belly of the ship, Equiano transforms these bodies to be human consumers rather than the human consumed:

As the inhuman traffic of slavery is now taken into the consideration of the British legislature, I doubt not, if a system of commerce was established in Africa, the demand for manufactures would most rapidly augment, as the native inhabitants would insensibly adopt the British fashions....In proportion to civilization, so will be the consumption of British manufactures.¹⁷¹

Here, in his analysis of an unfettered market, Equiano emphasizes that the production of consumers will increase the production of goods. The African subject needs to be recognized as part of a civilized population rather than as a commodity to be traded, and Equiano proposes instead that the British consider Africa as the place with “hidden treasures” within its “bowels”¹⁷² and its people as viable consumer subjects. As Ross Pudaloff writes, Equiano recognizes creative and intellectual emancipation through market systems:

Himself the object of commerce and trade, Equiano does not...caution against the spread of a market capitalism that commodifies and alienates people....On the contrary, despite his own enslavement, Equiano celebrates commerce and exchange He gains his freedom by purchasing himself and implies that the exchange of money for self can lead to a new and better identity.¹⁷³

Yet in addition to the ability to navigate the marketplace, Equiano also emphasizes the acts of labor and purchase that are prerequisites to a vitally functioning capitalist system. By shifting the act of labor from the forced diminishment of the human body through slavery to one that augments the human body through the acquisition of “fashions” and “goods” Equiano effectively indicts the Western slave trade as an exercise in wasting the potential of human investment by considering the human a commodity.

WASTED FLESH: SALT, PRESERVATION, AND PUTREFIED BODIES

¹⁷¹ Ibid, 232.

¹⁷² Ibid, 234.

¹⁷³ Pudaloff, Ross J. “No Change without Purchase: Olaudah Equiano and the Economies of Self and Market.” *Early American Literature*. 40:3 (2005), 501.

If Equiano reveals that the body enslaved is a body that is used up through the process of slavery, and demonstrates a possible solution via globalized commercialism, he overlooks the role that laboring bodies have in producing one of the very same commodities that he has intellectually labored so hard to master. In an ironic shift, his efforts to learn to “purify the briny element” demonstrate a way of making water pure and potable, but the text raises questions about the other modes of procuring salt, not water, from brackish ponds and seas. As such, while Africanus demonstrates the rhetoric of anthropophagy to condemn the practice of the slave trade, and Equiano reveals the ship to be a vessel built to consume the bodies of slaves during their transport, Mary Prince’s narrative takes the metaphor of anthropophagy to a horrifying conclusion by examining the toll taken on the slave bodies that labor to *extract* salt from brine. In her narrative composed in the late eighteenth century, *The History of Mary Prince: A West Indian Slave Narrative*, the reality of salt procurement from slave worked ponds is laid bare.

In her brief account, Prince details the terrors of being sold on the auction block, the brutal physical abuse suffered upon slaves by cruel masters, and her travels to England. Amid these tales, however, she chronicles a particularly miserable phase of her slave existence – her forced labor for a master who owned salt ponds. Over the course of her narrative, Prince utilizes the metaphor of “seasoning” the brutalities of slavery. This metaphor acts in conjunction with the efforts of Africanus and Equiano by rendering the human body as a synonym for a comestible good to be consumed by slavers and the practice of slavery. However, during Prince’s articulation of her time spent drawing salt from the ponds, her metaphor shifts to a terrifying reality of the consumption of flesh. To conclude this reading of flesh as a commodity good and material in a commodity market, I will show how Prince’s text provides a transition from the metaphor of anthropophagic action to an articulation of the production of a particular good, salt.

This material, Prince's narrative outlines, is one that distinguishes the specter of cannibalism from reality of anthropophagy.

To address these issues, it is imperative to recognize the way Prince utilizes the metaphor of the saline throughout the entirety of her experience. This creates a dramatic impact when that salt becomes material rather than metaphor. Prince, in a move similar to Africanus, aligns her experience on multiple occasions to the experience of meat at market, particularly to animals at market. Upon first being brought to the auction block her mistress claims "I am going to carry my little chickens to market" where she is "offered [up] for sale like sheep or cattle."¹⁷⁴ Her horrifyingly dehumanizing experience continues as she, "was soon surrounded by strange men, who examined and handled me in the same manner that a butcher would a calf or a lamb he was about to purchase, and who talked about my shaped and size in like words – as if I could no more understand their meaning than the dumb beasts."¹⁷⁵ Much as Equiano decries his "handling" on board the ship, Prince here is prodded and examined prior to purchase. This conflation of the slave with edibles is a familiar refrain, yet unlike the modes of exposition that frequent Africanus's and Equiano's texts, Prince reveals the way that "seasoning" the slave body through the labor in the salt ponds literally consumes it.

Shortly after being sold by her first owner, Prince finds herself under the ownership of a new master, a holder of a salt pond. Salt raking was a common industry in the islands of Turks and Caicos 750 miles from Bermuda. Bermuda's agricultural export of tobacco became obsolete with the colonization of North America. As such, seeking a new and lucrative export, Bermuda invested in salt production. Salt raking, a taxing mode of labor in brutal conditions, required the salt water from the sea be trapped in ponds and allowed to evaporate. The water would then be

¹⁷⁴ Prince, Mary. *The History of Mary Prince: A West Indian Slave Narrative*. (New York: Dover Publications, 2004) 6,7.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid, 7

moved to a second smaller pond to evaporate further. Ultimately, the brine would then be moved into pans where it would rest for month-long periods to crystalize. The taxing demands placed upon the body in pulling, or raking, large amounts of the sludgy brine mixture was compounded by extreme and harsh weather conditions and the terrible effects standing in salt for hours on end took on the body.

Prince writes of this labor,

I was immediately sent to work in the salt water with the rest of the slaves. This work was perfectly new to me. I was given a half barrel and a shovel, and had to stand up to my knees in the water from four o'clock in the morning till nine, when we were given some Indian corn boiled in water, which we were obliged to swallow as fast as we could for fear the rain should come on and melt the salt.¹⁷⁶

Joining the ranks of her fellow slaves on the Island of Grand Turk, Prince immediately becomes immersed, literally, in the labor of her situation. As her body stands knee deep in the salty brine for hours on end, her corporality becomes enmeshed with the products of her labor. The boundaries between her own physical form and the material she is charged with producing, much as is the case with Equiano on the slave ship, alters her ability to nourish herself as the threat of rain undoing her labor in the salt ponds dictates the pace at which she feeds.

The labor in the ponds alters the way the slaves nourish themselves, but this product they work to produce for European consumption also devours the slave body. This impact on the body is crucial to understanding the rhetorical motives behind Prince's narrative. As Barbara Baumgartner writes, "Mary Prince identifies the key components of slavery: incessant work, unrestrained abuse, silenced voices, and broken bodies."¹⁷⁷ If it is through the endless and body ravaging work that Prince defines slavery, it is through regaining her voice in her narrative that she defies the practice institution and reveals its monstrous cruelty. Prince describes the way the

¹⁷⁶ Ibid, 15.

¹⁷⁷ Baumgartner, Barbara. "The Body as Evidence: Resistance, Collaboration, and Appropriation in 'The History of Mary Prince.'" *Callaloo*. 24:1 (Winter, 2001), 235.

salt water destroys the flesh of the slaving body with ravenous capability: “We...worked through the heat of the day; the sun flaming upon our heads like fire, and raising salt blisters in those parts which were not completely covered.”¹⁷⁸ As Prince details the intense temperature within which she toils, the landscape of the salt ponds transforms into an oven roasting and blistering the flesh that is within it. If Equiano traveled the Atlantic while being consumed in the belly of slavery, Prince labors in slavery’s furnace.

The metaphor of the flesh roasting environment is only made a more actual reality as Prince details the wound the salt would inflict:

Our feet and legs, from standing in the salt water for so many hours, soon became full of dreadful boils, which eat down in some cases to the very bone, afflicting the suffers with great torment... We shoveled up the salt in large heaps, and went down to the sea, where we washed the pickle from our limbs...¹⁷⁹

Here, the deterioration of the flesh from the hours of soaking in “the pickle” of salt Prince describes through the metaphor of consumption. The slaves are being eaten by the labor demanded of them. In a furiously ironic twist, the salt that the slaves of the Islands of Turk and Caicos was in such demand because it was needed for purposes of food preservation. With no consistent methods of refrigeration (though some of the exceptionally wealthy in the American colonies might have an ice cave or an ice house on their estate) the eighteenth-century Anglo citizen was in need of salt. Salting meat, fish, and cheeses was the dominant method of keeping food fresh and preventing deterioration. Further, the very same method of pickling, a process of saturating produce in a salt or vinegar brine that creates anaerobic fermentation which prolongs the edible state of the pickled goods that Prince invokes to describe the effects of the briny water on her limbs was the most dominantly utilized method of making vegetables shelf stable in the eighteenth century. Thus, due to the Western demand of a good that preserves the goods that

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

nourish a European society, the bodies of the slaves in the salt ponds are devoured and consumed.

The time in the salt pond left an indelible mark on Prince's body through the rest of her life. Afflicted with painful rheumatism and unable at various intervals to fully use her limbs, the labor of the salt ponds leaves a cruel and constant reminder of the destructive toll it demanded. Yet, following her release from the work at the ponds, Prince tells of yet another mode of labor in which the slave body is consumed. To conclude this chapter, I would like to gesture towards the most palpable distinction between Prince's descriptions of cultural cannibalism as it is enacted through the institution of slavery and Equiano's and Africanus's depiction of it. Prince, already decrying the way the brine destroyed her body, alludes to a second method her body is consumed. Working for the sexually abusive Mr. D--, Prince finds herself employed primarily with charge of tending to "the chambers and nurs[ing] the child."¹⁸⁰ It is during her time with Mr. D-- that the mechanisms of her enslavement consume her body in a way particular to women.

Here, by exploiting her female anatomy, the mode of consuming the slave body to produce the foundations of Western society become most literalized. The productions of her breast are directly nourishing the next generation of Anglo-slavers. She, while being denied her own adequate nourishment, is charged with giving her body to her master's child. Yet, the act of nursing serves to further raise the specter of another distinctly feminine way that slavery destroyed the female body. Through sexual assault, rape, and impregnation, the female slave becomes a product of sexual consumption, the result of which further propagates the cruel system by producing more laboring bodies.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid, 21.

Prince subverts the destruction laid upon her body through slavery by reclaiming her rhetorical agency. Baumgartner writes of this act stating, "While Prince's physical abuse and her experience of pain initially appear devastating, her body ultimately provides her with the means of creating a new order of experience, a new subject position from which she can speak and, in some sense, transcend the brutality that had previously shaped and defined her."¹⁸¹ Much as Africanus and Equiano condemn the practice of slavery as an anthropophagic institution guilty of consuming the humans it depends upon for labor, Prince demonstrates a keen savvy. After having her body exploited and destroyed by the practice of slavery, she turns the practice around. Creating a narrative to be consumed by the very population that demanded her labor, she demonstrates the way that the form of the slave narrative of the eighteenth century was shaped by the practice it condemned. As with Africanus and Equiano, Prince's primary goal is to reveal the Western conceit of the uncivilized and barbaric black to be nothing more than a fiction. By revealing the actual ways in which slavery consumes slave bodies, these writers transform the myth of the cannibalistic other into the reality of the anthropophagic European culture, a culture that consumes bodies in order to produce consumer goods.

¹⁸¹ Baumgartner, 253.

Chapter Four

Revelation in the Body: Eating, Ethics, and Revising the Platonic soul in the Eighteenth-Century Feminine

"Then it is your opinion in general that a [true philosopher] is not concerned with the body, but keeps his attention directed as much as he can away from it and toward the soul?"

- Plato, *Phaedo*

"Illness is the night-side of life, a more onerous citizenship. Everyone who is born holds dual citizenship, in the kingdom of the well and in the kingdom of the sick. Although we all prefer to use only the good passport sooner or later each of us is obliged, at least for a spell, to identify ourselves as citizens of that other place."

- Susan Sontag, *Illness as Metaphor*

It would be useless to discuss food imagery in literature without reminding ourselves that we have to eat and eat enough in order to survive. While starvation is one of the great threats haunting the edges of *Robinson Crusoe*, it is an overwhelmingly gendered issue. The ideal of the feminine body has changed over time, the alteration of the body through the regulation of diet and restriction through clothing lead to the transition from the voluptuous Rubenesque form of the late sixteenth century to the slight slender form of the Victorian era.¹⁸² This is not to say that men are not subject to dietary restriction— Lord Byron's Spartan diet of a few biscuits a day as his sole nourishment in order to maintain a state of creative clarity, provides one such example¹⁸³ — however, the issue of exerting control over the body's shape, size, ability, and function remains resoundingly an issue of the feminine.

As the previous chapter addressed how the ability to decide when and how to nourish the body could be co-opted in order to rob the individual of the agency to operate the most basic

¹⁸² For more, see Bordo, Susan. "Anorexia Nervosa: Psychopathology as the Crystallization of Culture." *Food and Culture: A Reader second edition*. Eds. Counihan, Carole and Penny van Esterik. (New York: Routledge, 2008), 163; Silver, Anna. *Victorian Literature and the Anorexic Body*. (New York: Cambridge UP, 2002), 11. It is also important to note that this bodily ideal has not been static. However, historically, the ideal figure of the feminine began shrinking in size during the modern era, ultimately leading to the body altering fashion and diets of the Victorian Age.

¹⁸³ Brumberg, Joan Jacobs. "The Appetite as Voice." *Food and Culture: A Reader second edition*. Eds. Counihan, Carole and Penny van Esterik. (New York: Routledge, 2008), 152-153.

biological drives of his/her own body, this chapter will further explore the significance and power inherent in eating. The regulation of nutrition has implications from the medical/psychological to the visual/sexual which makes access to food a powerful avenue for examining representations of power and authority. The novelist in representing a tradition of alimentary control translates the subtext of the dinner table to the reader. In illuminating the cultural force present in eating, novelists become translators of the unspoken, lifting the veil of cultural power and putting into print that which would normally remain unwritten even if universally experienced. There is a power in demonstrating the multiplicity of meanings in any experience, and calling upon the reader to interpret and internalize the truth that eating *means* many things at once. More than the acquisition of calories, dining reveals elements of class, status, and station in life. Anna Silver speaks of this, “Authors responded to their culture in various ways, so that signs such as hunger, appetite, fat, and the body generated many different and often competing meanings between and within texts....Eating does not have any one ‘meaning,’ even in any one given text.”¹⁸⁴ While Silver’s literary focus is predominantly on the Victorian era, her work underscores the multifocal nature of dining in literary composition. These representations demonstrate the intersection of cultural forces upon the body, but also demonstrate the ways in which the body manifests cultural and social demands upon the spirit and the intellect.

Much as the slave body is consumed in the manufacture of commodity culture, the feminine body assumes distinct proportions as both consuming agent and consumed object in its eighteenth-century depictions. This chapter will turn to another human commodity, perhaps more subtly coded than the slave body, but procurable nonetheless – the wife. The Anglo-woman, free

¹⁸⁴ Silver, Anna. *Victorian Literature and the Anorexic Body*. (New York: Cambridge UP, 2002), 3-4.

by legal definition yet confined through social mores, represents a curious hybrid in the model of consumer and consumed. As Swift's Celia and Smollet's Tabitha demonstrate feminine consumption, Richardson's *Clarissa*, Defoe's *Roxana*, and Austen's Catherine Moreland exemplify a reading of the precarious, bodily position of the female self. I will address three distinct modes of dining representation in eighteenth century literature. First, using Daniel Defoe's *Roxana: The Fortunate Mistress* (1724) as an exemplar, I will attend to the way dining and nutrition become justifications for moral actions. This section of the chapter demonstrates both the way in which the immaterial, in this case ethics, is coded within acts of the material, and also the precarious relationship between women and their nutritional experiences. Second, this chapter will turn to Samuel Richardson's masterpiece *Clarissa, or the History of a Young Lady* (1748). Building upon the idea of the permeability between the body and morals, this section will demonstrate how regulating diet becomes a conduit for exerting power over the female body. Further, I will demonstrate the complicated way in which personal resistance to social forces utilize the same tool, the body, in combatting oppression. Finally, this chapter will conclude with Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* (composed 1798, published 1817) in order to demonstrate the powerful way in which intellectual and creative regulation is articulated through control of dietary choices. Ultimately, this chapter aims to conclude this study by focusing on the impact of narrative attention to eating. By addressing the issues of bodily nutrition through textual form, this study will reveal the symbolic function of food in both its material and spiritual form. While previously I discussed the ways in which food promotes multiplicities of readings permitting novel understandings of characters, this chapter forwards the argument that the feminine, wifely body becomes a consumed good through the practice of marriage, while aiming to reclaim control through that which she consumes.

The examination of the relationship between the feminine and food as a politically active one is not novel. As Deane W. Curtin writes, "Feminist philosophy can be seen partly as a process of learning how to value the ordinary experiences of women's lives, experiences that have been defined by patriarchal culture as trivial.... In a patriarchal culture, where women's entire lives are trivialized and privatized... a sympathetic attention to food, as sense of ourselves as bodily creatures can be revealed, and with that a sense of the value of the most ordinary (and vitally important) aspects of our experience."¹⁸⁵ Curtin's explicit link to the feminine through the "everyday" of food, may seem trivial at first, yet consider then the radical power latent both in being denied *and* in controlling that source of the everyday. This final chapter serves both as a culmination of the meditations on waste and excess in chapters two and three. It is also a return to the discussion of the separation of the soul from the body addressed in chapter one. In the case of the feminine, morality, ethics, and access to virtue are coded within the functions of the body and, perhaps more importantly, in controlling those functions. Defoe's *Roxanna* and Richardson's *Clarissa* make apparent the way that the feminine subject, when denied social agency, becomes a vehicle in fiction to demonstrate the ethics of eating. This effectively serves to collapse the distinction that has served to relegate consuming to a position of subordinate importance. In this regard, I will be in some sense returning to the material of the first chapter in order to demonstrate how clearly the subordination of lower order senses parallels the patriarchal privileging of the canonical eye, for representations of the feminine in eighteenth century fiction abound with examples of moral transcendence attained through, not in opposition to, the body.

¹⁸⁵ Curtin, Deane W. "Introduction." *Cooking, Eating, Thinking: Transformative Philosophies of Food*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 8-9.

“I WOU’D SERVE HER WITHOUT ANY WAGES, BUT I COULD NOT LIVE WITHOUT VICTUALS”: FOOD AS
VITAL SUBSTANCE

The biological imperative behind eating is clear. Without food, the body perishes, and the threat of famine is a motivating factor in the formation of societies. As Stephen Mennell writes, referencing early modern societies, “nothing was more bound up with the overall insecurity of life than the precariousness of food supplies,”¹⁸⁶ and as such humans coordinate and execute actions to preserve the security of their food supply. Daniel Defoe’s tragic heroine becomes, in some sense, an exemplar of this phenomenon. Finding herself wed to a man who has little predisposition for wealth management, and who would rather spend his days drinking and hunting, Roxana fears for her security. Her partner’s inability to maintain, let alone increase, their financial status influences how Roxana views him. Rather than a husband, Roxana addresses him as a “Thing called a husband;”¹⁸⁷ her disdain is apparent, as she reduces him to a subhuman and emasculated “thing” rather than a man. The collapse of “thing” and the title of “husband” reveals that her married experience has offered her very little fulfillment. Her language echoes the commodification of marriage and of human life. No longer a [hu]man capable with intrinsic worth, he is transformed into the totality of their marriage, representative of a bad investment rather than a valuable asset. Alone and isolated she recognizes that the money is “decreas[ing] a pace,” and feels her “ruin hastening on.”¹⁸⁸ It is, however, the way that she envisions her financial ruin that is telling and foreshadows the rationale behind her future actions.

¹⁸⁶ Mennell, 25.

¹⁸⁷ Defoe, Daniel. *Roxana*. (Toronto: Broadview, 1724), 47.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid*, 51.

One day, as her husband leaves for one of his indulgent hunting expeditions, Roxana confesses that, “When he said he wou'd be gone, I us'd to wish secretly, and even say in my Thoughts, *I wish you wou'd, for if you go on thus, you will starve us all.*”¹⁸⁹ Limited in her actions by her status as a married woman, Roxana’s silent fantasies are indicative of a realization that she would be better on her own. Her husband’s mismanagement of his money and, by extension, his marital responsibilities, leave her vulnerable not just financially, but socially and emotionally as well. Strikingly, Roxana’s imaginings of her demise are explicitly embodied. While the threat of social, sexual, and financial ruin are equally present in Roxana’s reflections on her husband’s behavior, it is through the fear of starvation that she chooses to articulate her concerns.

These fears become manifest when her desires for her husband’s absence become reality. Not long after a brief hunting trip becomes a permanent absence, Roxana reflects on the condition of her estate: “The house, that was before handsomely furnish'd with Pictures and ornaments, cabinets, peir-glasses, and everything suitable, was now stripp'd and naked, most of the goods having been seiz'd by the landlord for rent, or sold to buy necessaries.”¹⁹⁰ In this moment, as Roxana describes her possessions dwindling around her, the materiality of her feminine existence becomes explicitly embodied. The landlord’s demand for the good to be sold to make up the absence of rent render the house as a body stripped of all protective coverings and left bare, presumably ready to be sold on another, darker sort of market. While Roxana’s precarious sexual position is alluded to through the description of the bare house, her emotional situation is rendered through her stomach. She continues meditating on her situations stating, “in a word, all was misery and distress...we had eaten up almost everything, and I remain'd, unless, like one of

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid, 57.

the pitiful Women of *Jerusalem*, I should eat up my very Children themselves.”¹⁹¹ Having nothing left in the house to sell or to eat, Roxana realizes her abject futility. It is through the impending threat of starvation that her misery is articulated and her potential destruction is realized.

Rendering this fear through a scarcity of food is logical if one considers the sentiments of anthropologists Peter Farb and George Armelagos: "Eating is symbolically associated with the most deeply felt human experiences, and thus expresses things that are sometimes difficult to articulate in everyday language."¹⁹² Thus, as she comes to realize her financial destitution has left her with nothing to eat, her desperation for financial, domestic, and even familial comfort (as she fears she will be forced to “eat up” her children) is made clear. Yet, if our most deeply felt experiences are expressed through food and eating, it is not just desperation that Roxana articulates through consumption. Her affections for her handmaid, Amy, are expressed through her culinary prowess as she refuses to be swindled out of a cent in her purchasing of meat and insists in bringing the butcher home so that Roxana can oversee the exchange.¹⁹³ This act symbolizes Amy’s importance to Roxana. As she refuses to have Roxana cheated out of either her money or her meat, Amy’s dogged dedication to her mistress is made manifest through her protection of her access to viands.

The biological element to Roxana’s decisions and behaviors is undeniable; however, little attention has been given to the nutritional justifications for her sexual liaisons. As Ann Louise Kibbie notes: “The legacy of the analogies between biological and monetary generation is evident in Daniel Defoe's *Moll Flanders* (1721) and *Roxana* (1724), novels in which biological

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Farb, Peter and George Armelagos. *Consuming Passions: The Anthropology of Eating*. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1980), 111.

¹⁹³ Defoe, *Roxana*. 64.

reproduction is explicitly bound up with capital increase."¹⁹⁴ Yet, an examination of Roxana's professed motivations behind her unconventional sexual behavior is justified by a second biological impulse, the need for food. As our heroine contemplates her burgeoning relationship with her new suitor, the wealthy jeweler, she is struck by the moral implications of the path with which she is flirting. Recently abandoned by her husband, she recognizes that her legal status is complicated without verification that her husband has perished. Reluctant to make a foray into the unlawful state of mistress, she confronts Amy for counsel on whether to indulge her suitor. Amy's response is unequivocal: "Do! Says Amy, your choice is fair and plain; here you may have a handsome, charming Gentleman, be rich, live pleasantly, and in Plenty; or refuse him, and want a dinner, go in rags, live in tears; in short, beg and starve...."¹⁹⁵ Amy, already established as a sage advisor, lays the matter clear: morality is malleable, but the demands of the body are not.

Roxana's financial savvy ultimately leads her to a fair amount of stability; however, even in moments more comfortable than when she first wooed her jeweler, Amy's plea echoes in Roxana's head and continues to inform her decisions. When considering an affair with her Prince, Roxana -- at this point quite established in her wealth -- still weighs the threat of starvation against denying her desires: "I that had so much to reflect upon more, than the Prince; that had now no more temptation of poverty, or of the powerful motive, which Amy us'd with me, namely, *comply and live; deny and starve*; I say, I that had no poverty to introduce vice, but was grown not only well supply'd but rich and not only rich but very rich...."¹⁹⁶ Here, the

¹⁹⁴ Kibbie, Ann Louise. "The Birth of Capital in Defoe's Moll Flanders and Roxana." *PMLA*. 110:5 (Oct, 1995), 1024.

¹⁹⁵ Defoe, *Roxana*, 77.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid*, 137.

“temptation of poverty” is no longer justifying her sexual actions, yet she explicitly links the path that she is upon with the original fear that to deny sexual largess would mean hunger.

Linking Roxana’s sexual behavior to a desire for financial and nutritional security reveals that, for Defoe’s representation of the feminine, stability and independence are represented through the satiation of the body. Anna Richards, in her work *The Wasting Heroine in German Fiction by Women 1770-1914*, writes that “...portraying women as thin and pale reveals that authors were responding to a feeling of disempowerment provoked by the dissolution of established social norms, changes in the world, and the rise of the women's movement.”¹⁹⁷ While Richards’s work examines German literature as her evidence, the claim that bodily frailty reflects a lack of agency corresponds to Defoe’s representation of his heroine operating outside of the bounds of social propriety in order to secure her nutritional stability. In circumventing the demands of society due to her gender, she gains access to financial wealth and independence that would otherwise not be available to her. Rather than becoming the feminized commodity, circulated and traded among her male suitors, she reverses the schema. Primarily invested in securing her fate from starvation, she becomes a lady of pleasure; however, perpetually motivated by the biological impulses of her original actions, she successfully transforms into a woman of business. The spectrum along which Roxana moves demonstrates that she is not the feminine form unable to control her passions and her sexual appetites, nor is she the feminine trope: frail and fragile and in need of a male hero. Rather, Roxana demonstrates that her morality function within a deeply personal and embodied manner. Her actions write her outside of the boundaries of social mores, and lead her to physical and financial successes.

¹⁹⁷ Richards, Anna. *The Wasting Heroine in German Fiction by Women 1770-1914*. (New York: Clarendon Press, 2004), 10.

EMBODIED VIRTUE: SUFFERING AND STARVATION IN THE FEMALE HEROINE

If Defoe's heroine of *Roxana* is able to recognize the significance of food and is willing to justify her moral and physical actions through her desire to maintain access to sustenance, food is inscribed into a system of power and reveals a symbolic language that translates across the boundaries of gender and class. As Roxana rewrites social expectations of sexuality and propriety and aims to remedy moral transgressions through the demands of her stomach, she reveals how food speaks across the boundaries of the body and the spirit, and that willfully abstaining from consumption, often to the peril of the body, represents a mode of utilizing the language of comestibles to protest the otherwise inexpressible. While decades of study demonstrate the ways in which the culinary, the domestic, and feminine have repeatedly been deemed less valuable than the aesthetic, the intellectual, and the masculine, this chapter serves an exploration of the unique intersections that edibles manifest in literature. Food has been subordinated due to its connection to the body (and, thus, the domestic/feminine), yet I posit that the feminine body deploys food as a strategic ethic – a revelation of the soul and interiority through the body. Deane Curtin effectively summarizes the dominant contention with regard to edibles when he writes:

Substances have relations to food as *objectified*; food is understood as 'other'... because of the dual nature of substances as mind and body, food is understood merely as fuel that recharges the body while leaving the mind untouched. Substances have relations to food, but such relations are indirect, external. *Therefore, they are not understood as defining what it means to be a person.* By the term 'objectified relation,' then, I [mean the] relation of mental substance to food: while a relation exists between a substance and food, this relationship is not considered to be defining. A mental substance can enter into such external relation without losing its independence.¹⁹⁸

Curtin's assessment that the relation between food and substance is indirect is contradicted by Defoe's insistence that his heroine's nutritional demands infiltrate her mental state as she acts.

¹⁹⁸ Curtin, Deane W., "Food/Body/Person." Ed. Curtin, Deane W. and Lisa M. Heldke. *Cooking, Eating, Thinking: Transformative Philosophies of Food*. (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1992), 11.

An even more striking example of this direct relation between food and substance occurs in Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa* (1748).

In a position of relative financial independence due to the inheritance from a loving grandfather, Clarissa Harlowe, unlike Roxana, does not find herself in danger of starving. As the Harlowes are well off, food is not in short supply. However, Clarissa finds herself limited in personal agency, pressured to marry a man she despises or suffer the torment of her family; thus she reels from the loss of control she feels over her situation. In her reluctance to accept the loathed Solmes, Clarissa's uncle Anthony threatens to rob her of any financial security that might leave her settled, however difficultly, outside her family stating that "the will *could* be set aside, and *should*."¹⁹⁹ Shaken by both the harsh scorn of her uncle and the threat of losing the affections of her parents and siblings, Clarissa retreats to her private chamber and initiates what will become a recurring behavior: the attempt to abstain from meals. Clarissa writes to Anna: "I had not recovered myself when I was sent for down to Tea. I begged by my maid to be excused attending; but on repeat command, went down with as much cheerfulness as I could assume...."²⁰⁰ While her efforts are thwarted in this moment and she does join her family for tea, Clarissa's impulse to respond to emotional distress is through her control over the physical act of eating. Clarissa's missive to her confidante demonstrates that her desires to take tea are directly related to her sense of self. Having "not recovered" herself, the grieved Clarissa indicates that her desires to feed her body are linked to her sense of self internally. Emotionally lost amid the demands the patriarchal power structure has placed upon her, she has no interest in nourishing her physical being. Yet this instance is crucial to the examination of Clarissa's future actions as

¹⁹⁹ Richardson, Samuel. *Clarissa: Or, the History of a Young Lady*. Ed. Toni Bowers and John Richetti. (Buffalo: Broadview, 2011), 55.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

she recognizes that she cannot abstain from the social setting of tea. Instead, she responds to the “command” to dine and performs an act at once socially necessary and entirely disingenuous: she falsely performs the act cheerfulness. In this moment, the dining setting makes demands of Clarissa’s interior self. She must alter her emotions to engage at the table – a scene which serves to offer sustenance to the physical body.

Clarissa’s desire to refrain from taking tea demonstrates an impulse to align her feelings of despair with the physicalized response of eating. Responsive non/eating, or abstaining from nutrition as a result of an emotional state, is a well-recognized component of eating disorders and body dysmorphia and it is a significant element of anorexia nervosa. First diagnosed in 1873 by Charles Lasègue and Sir William Withey Gull, anorexia nervosa is the condition of intensely regulating dietary intake often accompanied with the ritualizing of meals. While anorexia nervosa is now often accompanied with the overt desire to lose weight or to remain thin, the original diagnosis of Lasègue and Gull was more explicitly oriented towards the control of the mind over the demands of the body, and, as such, “morbid mental state[s]”²⁰¹ contributed to the want of appetite. Gull’s attention to the impact of the mind on the body largely shaped the history of medical attempts to explain this diagnosis. An extensive amount of attention was dedicated towards the sexual impulses and appetites of patients studied in the 19th century. Sexuality was something to be rendered private, and, physicians hypothesized, the fear of publicizing these sexual tendencies contributed towards the suppression of appetites. Whether food was avoided due to a fear of one’s own sexuality,²⁰² or out of a desire to avoid actions that drew attention to the bodily status of the individual, studies in anorexia overwhelmingly conclude

²⁰¹ Gull, William. Qtd. Silver, Anna. *Victorian Literature and the Anorexic Body*. (New York: Cambridge UP, 2002), 4.

²⁰² As Anna Silver notes, “Some psychiatrists have posited that the anorexic turns to food refusal because of her fear of sexual maturation,” a process which is slowed or stopped as the symptoms of severe anorexia – such as the loss of fatty tissues in the abdomen and breasts as well as amenorrhea – progress. Silver, 5.

that the individual response to abstain from food is a reaction to larger social, familial, or cultural forces at work.

Though anorexia nervosa remained without a formal diagnosis until more than a century after the publication of *Clarissa*, we need to consider the etiology behind the condition. Some diseases are rooted to their moment in time, often due to a moment of outbreak or the introduction to a new contagion. Self-starvation is not one of these conditions, and as Susan Bordo writes in "Anorexia Nervosa: Psychopathology as the Crystallization of Culture," "we should feel cautioned against the impulse to regard anorexia as expressing entirely modern attitudes and fears."²⁰³ As Maree Burns and Helen Mason contemplate in "Re-theorising the Slash of Dis/Order," "eating dis/orders are theorized...as (multiply) constituted within and by the alwaysgenderddiscursive (*sic*) contexts in which we live: (individual) 'disorder' is re-theorised as part and parcel of the (culturally normative) order of things."²⁰⁴ The particular normative order of things certainly is temporally rooted and it is vital to unearth the motivations of the cultural forces at play in the construction of the disease. As Joan Brumberg articulates:

The symptoms of disease never exist in a cultural vacuum. Even in a strictly biomedical illness, patient responses to physical discomfort and pain are structured in part by who the patient is, the nature of the care giver, and the ideas and values at work in that society. Similarly, in mental illness, basic forms of cognitive and emotional disorientation are expressed in behavioral aberrations that mirror the deep preoccupations of a particular culture.²⁰⁵

For *Clarissa*, there are myriad forces at work on her, but they mostly emanate from her families' desire to regulate her behaviors and actions. The regulation that *Clarissa* experienced, over her physical and financial movements as well as her romantic desires, would be familiar to most

²⁰³ Bordo, Susan. "Anorexia Nervosa: Psychopathology as the Crystallization of Culture." *Food and Culture: A Reader second edition*. Eds. Counihan, Carole and Penny van Esterik. (New York: Routledge, 2008), 169.

²⁰⁴ Burns, Maree and Helen Mason. "Re-theorising the Slash of Dis/Order." *Critical Feminist Approaches to Eating Dis/Orders*. Eds. Helen Malson and Maree Burns. (New York: Routledge, 2009), 2.

²⁰⁵ Brumberg, Joan Jacobs. "The Appetite as Voice." *Food and Culture: A Reader second edition*. Eds. Counihan, Carole and Penny van Esterik. (New York: Routledge, 2008), 141.

women of the eighteenth century. Much as Roxana was compelled to justify her sexual behavior by reorienting her moral framework, and as Swift's voyeur, Strephon, destroys the mirage of feminine perfection when he penetrates Celia's dressing room, social forces were actively at work on the eighteenth-century female body.

The intense influence of culture on the body of the feminine stems from the tendency to consider the feminine through the body – a body to be protected sexually so she can be traded economically in marriage and procreate abundantly to carry on familial legacy. Bordo speaks to this always-embodied woman stating, “female bodies have historically been significantly more vulnerable than male bodies to extremes in both forms of cultural manipulation of the body... this has something to do with the fact that women, besides *having* bodies, are also *associated* with the body, which has always been considered woman's 'sphere' in family life, in mythology, in scientific, philosophical, and religious ideology.”²⁰⁶ As such, the desire to escape the “prison” of the body leads to a desire to escape the shackles of regulation. If regulating young women includes limiting all demonstrations of non-normative appetites, the body becomes a site where bodily desires are trained in service of moral success.

Regulating the female body in the eighteenth century was a cottage industry. Manuals and handbooks emphasizing proper diet and bodily maintenance served to align corporeal sustenance with feminine and maternal duties. In 1685, Thomas Tryon, English merchant turned author of instructional manuals, composed *A new method of educating children, or, Rules and directions for the well ordering and governing them during their younger years*. Tryon in this manual articulates the importance of feminine diet. Not simply a matter of personal nutrition, Tryon's document makes clear the responsibility of maternity that is built into the female body:

²⁰⁶ Bordo, "Anorexia Nervosa: Psychopathology as the Crystallization of Culture," 166.

All Seed partakes of the Nature and Quality of the Ground wherein to it is sown: If the Ground be good, and the Seed good, you may reasonably expect sound and firm Fruit, without blemish or distemper. Proper Method... must be observed, or all will be spoil'd. What Crop can the Husband-man hope for, if he neglects to Till and Manure his Land, or sows it with improper and unsuitable Seed?²⁰⁷

The metaphor of agricultural productivity is fitting in an analysis of the role of edibles in the eighteenth century. Tyron's metaphor demonstrates the way that the female body is to be tended and cultivated not only by herself, but by the community surrounding her. Particularly, this responsibility originated with the mother and was passed on to the husband. Joan Brumberg speaks to the training the mother's offered their children writing, "[as] appetite was regarded as a barometer of sexuality both mothers and daughters were concerned about its expression and its control. It was incumbent upon the mother to train the appetite of the daughter so that it represented only the highest moral and aesthetic sensibilities."²⁰⁸ This issue of maternal dietary regulation is significant for our understanding of Richardson's text. While there are multiple instances where Clarissa's response to emotional distress is channeled through the abstention of meals, they are, at least initially, acts that are warranted by her mother.

The moments that Clarissa abstains from food make Tryon's association of nutrition and companionship most compelling for my argument. According to his model of proper feminine digestive habits, diligent adherence to a suitable diet is a necessary responsibility of women. Proper food, he establishes, promotes a proper disposition, and thus requires "that particular care be taken about the Education of Women themselves, since they sow the first Seeds in the Humane Ground."²⁰⁹ Inherent in taking "particular care" in the education of women is a warning to monitor the successful acquisition of this nutrition and diet so as to have good ground for

²⁰⁷ Tryon, Thomas. *A new method of educating children, or, Rules and directions for the well ordering and governing them during their younger years shewing that they are capable*. London: Printed for J. Salusbury and J. Harris 1695, 6.

²⁰⁸ Brumbers, 148.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

sowing seed. Clarissa's early demands for her maid to help obscure her fasting emphasize an awareness that her diet is being monitored. This moment is echoed when Mrs. Harlowe agrees to "excuse [her] attendance at afternoon tea."²¹⁰ After hearing that her protestations have fallen on a hardened heart, and that her father will not excuse Clarissa from her engagement. To make matters worse, Mrs. Harlow delivers the news that now Clarissa's brother has joined in agreement on the matter. Clarissa desperately pleads with her mother to understand her case. Mrs. Harlow, rather than offering Clarissa an alternative reality to her engagement, chastises her daughter and affirms the power of the patriarchy stating, "You know your papa has made it a point; and did he ever give up on one he thought he had a right to carry?"²¹¹ The gendered use of pronouns in this statement demonstrates how Mrs. Harlow herself must succumb to the demands of the paterfamilias as she claims no agency at all in the recognition of the validity of her husband's demands. "*Papa* has made it a point"; "did *he* ever give up on one *he* thought *he* had a right to carry?" Clarissa is devastated by this betrayal of her own gender, and her response is immediately emotional: "I was silent. To say the truth, I was just then *sullenly* silent. My heart was too big. I thought it was hard to be thus given up by my mama, and that she should make a will so uncontrollable as my brother's, her will."²¹² Her silence is rendered physical, both through the repeated articulation in print ("I was silent...*sullenly* silent"), but also through the metaphor of a swelling heart. Her desperation is rendered physical a third way – she refrains from appearing at the table. This absence is the one way in which her mother can offer her daughter solace. It is an absence that must be sanctioned by the family in order to be acceptable, and it creates a space that is distinctly feminine. Clarissa writes, "She tenderly wiped the tears

²¹⁰ Richardson, Samuel. *Clarissa: Or, the History of a Young Lady*. Ed. Toni Bowers and John Richetti. (Buffalo: Broadview, 2011), 97

²¹¹ Ibid 96

²¹² ibid

from my eyes and kissed my cheek – your papa expects you down with a cheerful countenance – But I will excuse your going....I will go down, proceeded she, and excuse your attendance at afternoon tea, as I did to dinner; for I know you will have some little reluctances to conquer...And so you *shan't* come down, if you choose *not* to come down...”²¹³ This is not the only time that Mrs. Harlow will excuse Clarissa from the table as she declared Clarissa unfit to attend breakfast later in the novel.²¹⁴ In both of these instances, abstaining from meals is an acceptable course of action for Clarissa to take as they have been concealed by a sympathetic feminine companion, her mother.

Culturally, Tryon's sentiments on diet serve to inscribe the body of the feminine fully into the maternal discourse of domesticity, as initially Clarissa's actions are condoned by her mother. However, they also function as a reminder of the functional failings that Richardson paints of Clarissa's family for they create a symbolic language of protest and dissent that Clarissa continues to opt into.²¹⁵ The importance placed on food and eating habits in this early stage of distress establishes a pattern of action that ultimately leads to a debilitating model of protest that Clarissa comes to understand. Further, her self-starvation coincides with the very type of feminine distress that Tryon aims to avoid, which both establishes the failings of the maternal influence in Clarissa's life, but also establishes that Clarissa is attempting to escape the confinement of feminine existence in her world. Confronted with the options of the ignominious Solmes and the immoral Lovelace, Clarissa turns to her body to access and preserve agency over her moral objections. In many ways the option of starvation presents itself as an act of rebellion

²¹³ Ibid 96-97

²¹⁴ Ibid 103

²¹⁵ On several occasions Clarissa comments upon the failings of the women in her family. In a letter dated Wednesday March 1st, she writes “This passiveness in my Mother and in my Aunt, in a point so contrary to their own first judgments, is too strong a proof that my Father is absolutely resolved.” Richardson, Samuel. *Clarissa: Or, the History of a Young Lady*. Ed. Toni Bowers and John Richetti. (Buffalo: Broadview, 2011), 75.

– a noble ethical practice that preserves her desire to remain unattached to Solmes. This desire is articulated in her refusal to succumb to the needs of her body, and it is also rendered through her letters, doubly inscribing her actions as having an extra-bodily impact on her spirit.

Upon Clarissa's abduction she is out of her parents' house and thus outside of the realm of maternal approval of her actions. It is then that Lovelace becomes discontented with how Clarissa is eating—or not. In a letter addressed to Miss Howe, Clarissa relates an exchange with Lovelace regarding food:

While we were talking at the door, my new servant came up with an invitation to us both to tea. I said *he* might accept of it, if he pleased; but I must pursue my writing; and not choosing either tea or supper, I desired him to make my excuses below....He objected particularity in the eye of strangers as to avoiding supper.²¹⁶ In this exchange Clarissa reveals she is no longer afforded any excuse for avoiding food. While at home, Mrs. Harlowe's exemption made Clarissa's abstinence acceptable and not troubling to the men dining in the house. Yet, in this instance Clarissa seeks the excuse of her own accord, offering in reply to Lovelace's objection: "You know...and can tell them that I seldom eat suppers. My spirits are low. You must never urge me against a declared choice."²¹⁷ Clarissa's insistence that she be allowed to skip the meal provides her with an opportunity to issue her agency in her relationship with Lovelace. She will not budge on her position, yet her actions are concerning to Lovelace for the sake of propriety and appearances and, for different reasons, to the reader.

Decoding the motivations behind Clarissa's food choices demonstrates that her resistance to nourishment is simultaneously a refutation of the expectations on her gender. Abstaining from food also becomes a mechanism for regaining control over her morality in a deeply personal way. Embodied reactions to emotional events are a substantial part of the responses of the

²¹⁶ Ibid 525

²¹⁷ ibid

anorexic subject. As Allie Glennie speaks of anorexic behavior, “Anorexia is not caught like measles; the anorexic stance is, initially at least, a chosen response to a set of ontological difficulties produced by the particular version of the patriarchal paradigm [in operation].”²¹⁸ This issue of anorexia as response rather than symptom resonates with Clarissa’s situation. Denied an active voice in the determination of her situation, Clarissa’s response is articulated through food and by extension through her body.

The fact that the act of abstaining from food had debilitating consequences only serves to highlight the limitations placed upon female agency in the eighteenth century. While the effects of Clarissa’s actions directly undermine her health, they also serve to undermine the control that her family and Lovelace have over her self. Nancy Guiterrez comments on the dual nature of the power dynamics of self-starvation stating, “The body of a starving woman, made so through deliberate food refusal, is a political paradigm of this age’s crisis of authority, for it brings to light explicit and subliminal cultural pressures within a family and marital structure.”²¹⁹ As such Richardson’s deployment of a starving heroine demonstrates the complicated access the feminine had to agency.

Clarissa herself recognizes that her corporeal form is fraught and flawed. In her denial of food she approaches an increasingly less embodied form, one that ultimately will only reside in the text itself. The desire to distance herself from her body through the abstention from food serves to highlight her connection to her moral desires in a manner uninhibited by the patriarchy. As such, her actions take their place in the long tradition of trying to understand the Cartesian

²¹⁸ Glennie, Allie. *Ravenous Identity: Eating and Eating Distress in the Life and Work of Virginia Woolf*. (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2000), 1.

²¹⁹ Guiterrez, Nancy A. *'Shall She Famish Then?' Female Food Refusal in Early Modern England*. (Burlington: Ashgate, 2003.), 2.

divide that separates the mind from the body. The implications of applying the Cartesian divide to starvation patterns serve to inform the larger moral implications at work in responsive eating, or utilizing the physical behavior of eating as a response to an emotional state. As Liz Eckermann writes in “Theorizing Self-Starvation:” “By operating within a Cartesian framework of mind-body dualism, and focusing on the rational reflexive mind as the site of human experience, Self-starvation [is] thus beyond the corporeal aspects of human experience;”²²⁰ as such the effects of starvation move the sufferer beyond the confines of the body and liberate the suffering individual to enjoy the spirit. Eckerman discusses the deep political ramifications of these actions, arguing that “rather than seeing anorexia as an act of conformity to social ideals, it can be seen as an attempt to reappropriate what activity and power she can by constructing a body for herself which is unable to satisfy the dictates of her social and sexual role.”²²¹ This creative act of constructing a rebellious body that refutes the demands of social forces fits Clarissa powerfully. This behavior simultaneously frustrates Lovelace and also reveals to Richardson’s reader that he does not understand how to interpret Clarissa’s behavior or distress correctly. Flummoxed by Clarissa’s stubborn refusal to eat, Lovelace writes to Belford:

Now let me tell thee that I have known a bird actually to starve itself, and die with grief, at its being caught and caged – But never did I meet with a lady who was so silly. Yet have I heard the dear souls most vehemently threaten their own lives on such an occasion. But it is saying nothing in a woman’s favour, if we do not allow her to have more sense than a bird. And yet we must all own that it is more difficult to catch a bird than a lady.²²²

Lovelace’s association of Clarissa and a caged bird is a disturbing metaphor for her precarious position as a female captured by the demands of her social position and subject to the demands and desires of her current caregiver, a man whose intentions are suspect at best and villainously

²²⁰ *Critical Feminist Approaches to Eating Dis/Orders*. Eds. Helen Malson and Maree Burns. (New York: Routledge, 2009), 12.

²²¹ *Ibid*, 14.

²²² *Ibid* 557

dangerous at other times. His response to her behavior also distances him from the reality of her actions. Lovelace does not interpret her denial of food as a reasonable response to low spirits. Rather, it is a “silly” recourse that potentially demeans her character. Yet by misreading her actions this way, Lovelace demonstrates how effectively Clarissa has unwritten herself from the narrative of ideal femininity. He cannot understand her behaviors because she has distanced herself from the expectations of the narrative that social powers have aimed to inscribe upon her.

The fact that Clarissa chooses a course distinct from the prescriptive model of femininity that Tryon advocated for demonstrates that she is attempting to navigate the thorny realm of permissible feminine action – she is using her body as a tool to align her physical position with her moral disposition. Abstaining from meals grants her some much valued privacy and time for contemplation that she might not be guaranteed otherwise. The association of privacy and self-starvation is certainly a troubled one, but one that Richardson explores repeatedly. Ultimately, however, Clarissa’s denial of food leads to complicated results. She insists that she is not willfully trying to kill herself, but she cannot deny that her body, along with her spirits, is weakening. She writes:

As I am of opinion, that it would have manifested more of revenge and despair, than of principle, had I committed a violence upon myself when the villainy was *perpetrated*; so I should think it equally criminal, were I now *willfully* to neglect myself; were I *purposely* to run into the arms of death...when I might avoid it. Nor...must you impute to gloom ...a spirit of faulty pride, or still *more* faulty revenge, the resolution I have taken never to marry *this*; and if not *this*, *any* man.²²³

Clarissa continues to assert that she will eat “when appetite serves” and “will eat and drink what is sufficient to support nature.”²²⁴ While she may continue to eat enough to sustain what she considers adequate nutrition, her tragic fate seems to reveal a lack of interest in her corporeal existence. Equally complicating is Clarissa’s notion that it would be criminal to “willfully

²²³ Ibid 1117

²²⁴ Ibid 1,118

neglect” herself but that she would from henceforth be staunchly opposed to marriage of any variety. The narrative conclusion of Richardson’s novel seems to indicate that without the option of becoming a wife, Clarissa’s options are sorely limited. Ultimately, readers are left to celebrate Richardson’s virtuous heroine, though she has no recourse of spirit except through the destruction of her body. While Tryon’s tract regards feminine nourishment as a lifelong responsibility, Richardson explores the suffering Clarissa endures as a form of protest that sees death as the inevitable result of the limited options for protest available to women at the time. Rather than a suicide, which would leave the heroine open to criticism for her actions, Clarissa’s determination to cling to some element of her scruples and her morals has left her emotionally as well as physically famished. Subject to the cruel demands of a patriarchy, Clarissa cannot stomach the options left to her in live, and as such she views her end as “the refreshing inn after a fatiguing journey: the end of a life of cares and troubles; and, if happy, the beginning of a life of immortal happiness.”²²⁵

ACCESSING INTERIORITY: CONTROLLING THE TABLE AND REGULATING THE FEMININE

Comestibles have powerful impact on moral actions. In *Roxanna*, Defoe’s heroine is able to justify her physical actions and sexual liaisons to herself and to others in light of her stomach. Self-protection, particularly against starvation, trumps all social protocol, and as such Defoe’s heroine does not recognize her action as transgressions, but rather as necessary actions. Richardson articulates that controlling the intake of nourishment can amount to regaining control over the parameters of the body. By effectively unwriting the body’s ability to be a viable vessel for sexual or maternal actions, Clarissa is able to assert her moral agency, albeit at the expense of

²²⁵ Ibid

her body. Finally, this chapter will delve into the consequences of what occurs when another individual asserts authority over the consumption patterns of others. Brillat-Savairn spoke on the immense power that accompanies provision: “To invite people to dine with us is to make ourselves responsible for their well-being for as long as they are under our roofs.”²²⁶ The act of dining and of hospitality becomes a communion of trust. Entering another’s home renders an individual vulnerable and dependent upon their host for the protection of both body and spirit. Jane Austen’s *Northanger Abbey* demonstrates the horrifying consequences that can occur when that trust is not fulfilled.

Readings of Austen’s *Northanger Abbey* have varied over the years, and often the text has been viewed as a “mock” or the work of a young pen trying her hand at satire. I follow in a tradition that sees Austen’s text as something other than a satire or mock-gothic empty of meaning, aping literary conventions. Rather, much as Christopher Miller does, I would like to highlight the aspects of “alarm” that are at work within this novel. Miller writes, “In what is essentially a novel of education, Catherine Morland must abandon her gothic suspicion that her host at the abbey, General Tilney, has murdered his wife, and yield to a clear-eyed reckoning of the probable.”²²⁷ In abandoning her suspicions about Tilney’s murderous tendencies, Catherine Morland is alerted to the more probable reality that Tilney represents the tyrannous patriarchy at work in her world.

The tyrannous behavior practiced by General Tilney is not made manifest in the markers of the gothic at play in the novel. Rather than being rendered through the additions of dungeons to his family estate or through the unraveling mystery of a concealed transgression, the General’s

²²⁶ Brillat-Savarin, 16.

²²⁷ Miller, Christopher. R. “Jane Austen’s Aesthetics and Ethics of Surprise.” *Narrative*. 13:3 (Oct. 2005), 238-260, 239.

behavior serves to simultaneously evacuate the more obvious tropes of gothic deployment in the service of revealing the subtle gothic intentions of the General's behavior. This behavioral gothic is manifested in the everyday, the places and spaces that surround his family, and by extension Catherine Moreland, at all times – the domestic spaces. Upon arriving at the Abbey, Catherine receives a tour of the estate:

From the dining-room of which, though already seen, and always to be seen at five o'clock, the General could not forego the pleasure of pacing out at length...they proceeded by quick communication to the kitchen – the ancient kitchen of the convent, rich in the massy walls and smoke of former days, and in the stoves and hot closets of the present. The General's improving hand has not loitered here: every modern invention to facilitate the labour of the cooks, had been adopted within... His endowments of this spot alone might at any time have placed him high among the benefactors of the convent.... With the walls of the kitchen ended all the antiquity of the Abbey...²²⁸

Here, the walls of the Abbey literally and symbolically represent the history of the house. They mark the end of the original structure – the remaining areas replaced by the General's father on account of decay. They also serve to demarcate the spaces that the General has prioritized for improvements. Strikingly, the emphasis of his efforts are focused on the spaces dedicated to the preparation of meals. The pride that the General takes in displaying his achievements is apparent in Austen's text; Catherine has "already seen" the dining room, yet it serves as the origination of the full tour which includes, notably, the kitchen. These walls illustrate the improvements made to the Abbey, but they also bear the mark of the Abbey's history as Catherine reads upon them countless meals through the "smoke of former days." These ancient meals, however, converge with the modernity of the "stove and hot closets," technologies that produce the meals to be eaten "always...at five o'clock." Even the time that the General chooses for his dining represents the emphasis that he has placed on his meal. It was increasingly common in the later eighteenth century for the upper classes to begin their meals early so that the multiple courses could be

²²⁸ Ibid, 135.

enjoyed over the course of the evening. As such, the General's desire to enjoy "pacing [his meal] out at length" demonstrates his status through the mode of the meal. This junction of past and present through the smoke-stained walls and new equipment links the General to the history of the house. It also joins him to the present moments of the Abbey's kitchen. In procuring the new stoves upon which his food will be produced, he has symbolically connected himself to the "labour" of his cooks, a union which required no hesitation; much as "quick communication" brought the tour to the kitchen, these improvements were made with a decisive "hand [that had] not loitered."

The General's fixation with his kitchen is striking considering that this space is conventionally a feminine one. But the attentions of Tilney to modernizing and putting his mark on this space reveals the avenues to which he resorts in order to exert control over his family. With General Tilney's wife deceased, he turns his eye towards domestic responsibilities by altering the architecture of his home. These renovations affect the kitchen area where food is prepared, but also the kitchen gardens where it is grown. The General's "kitchen-garden" with "walls [that] seemed countless in number, endless in length" is a point of pride for the General. Marked by "hot-houses" and an overwhelming "parish to be at work within the inclosure," the garden marks out the space in which clearly the General has been able to demonstrate his mastery over nature and over the community that surrounds him.

Deidre Lynch writes of the significance of the Romantic interest in greenhouses, hot houses, and other structures intended to "force" plants out of their natural patterns and habitats, and into an English domesticated environment. This "global redistribution of flora" Lynch claims, "represented sites where the domestic and exotic were brought into strange intimacy" and where "Nature, miniaturized, was shoehorned into the enclosed, feminine sphere of the

house.”²²⁹ With this emphasis on bringing foreign natural flora under the control of the domestic, feminine space, Tilney’s efforts appropriate both the forces of Mother Nature and the mother-space. As such, his garden more resembles a prison, walled and restrictive, than a natural sanctuary.

As he exerts control through these vestiges of the edible – present in the kitchen, the garden, and, the dining space – the tyrannical hold of the paterfamilias appear pervasive. The domination of nature in the garden translate to a domination of human nature. As he walks Catherine through his prized gardens, he monitors Catherine for her response, to which he “was flattered by her looks of surprise, which told him almost as plainly, as he soon *forced* her to tell him in words, that she had never seen any gardens at all equal to them before.”²³⁰ Much as the hot houses they stroll by are intended to force plants from their natural and seasonal patterns of maturation, Tilney makes his intentions to compel Catherine’s development in his intended course clear.²³¹ Not only demonstrating the power he has over the land and the people who work the hot-houses for him, the General is able signal his authority over the very looks on Catherine’s face, and the words “forced” from her lips.

Yet, for all of his efforts surrounding the production of edibles, the General professes to be “careless enough in most matters of eating, he loved a good fruit – or if he did not, his friends and children did.”²³² It is this histrionic apathy towards eating which renders the General’s obsession with kitchens and gardens so shockingly despotic. Professing that which he grows is

²²⁹ Lynch, Deidre Shauna. “‘Young Ladies are Delicate Plants’: Jane Austen and Greenhouse Romanticism.” *ELH* 77 (2010), 689-729, 692.

²³⁰ Austen, 130, emphasis mine.

²³¹ Lynch writes of Austen’s “forced” females comparing their maturation to the gardening process stating, “It may be that the blooming girls of Austen novels are not so much ‘lilies of the field’ as they are flowers bred up...in what we now call container gardening...located, that is, amidst the ornamental plants bred up in the Regency’s increasingly numerous greenhouses, hothouses, hotbeds, hot-stoves, and forcing houses.” Lynch, 694.

²³² Austen, 130.

not in accord with his own palate or desires, he transfers his taste for “a good fruit” to his friends and children. They will consume that which he provides, and much as the General gains access to kitchen labor through the new stoves, he penetrates the most interior recesses of his wards through regulating their ingestion – symbolically inhabiting the interiors of those in his care.

The General’s ability to establish himself in the house through the spaces of the kitchen and the kitchen-garden, permit a reading of Catherine’s first meal at the Abbey. This moment reveals the General’s fixation with regulating his ward’s gustation:

...still [Catherine] was far from being at ease; nor could the incessant attentions of the General himself entirely reassure her. Nay, perverse as it seemed, she doubted whether might not have felt less, had she been less attended to. His anxiety for her comfort – his continual solicitations that she would eat, and his often-expressed fears of her seeing nothing to her taste – though never in her life before had she beheld half such a variety on a breakfast-table – it made it impossible for her to forget for a moment that she was a visitor.²³³

Perhaps we might read the General’s attentions as symptoms of a diligent host, yet his continual petitions result in Catherine feeling out of place and “utterly unworthy of such respect.”²³⁴

Wishing to be “less attended to,” Catherine’s expressions reveal her vulnerability – she becomes victim to a despot who regulates her body through “continual solicitations...[to] eat,” her taste through his “often-expressed fears” insincerely bemoaning the breakfast fare, and, ultimately, her emotions as she is left feeling “utterly unworthy.”

Here, hospitality becomes a weapon to delimit emotional capability. As the General ultimately revokes his offer to house Catherine, leaving her vulnerable and alone, his demonstrations of control are channeled through the very spaces of domestic charity. As those in his care consume the products of his comestibles efforts, bringing his goods into their bodies for nourishment and sustenance, he is permitted an avenue to influence the emotional balance of

²³³ Ibid, 112.

²³⁴ Ibid.

those under his watch. Much as Clarissa exercises control over that which she eats in order to reassert her moral and emotional balance, General Tilney demonstrates his ability to upset the emotional balance in others through his control over their food.

As Brillat-Savarin wrote, “The Creator, while forcing men to eat in order to live, tempts him to do so with appetite and then rewards him with pleasure.”²³⁵ This chapter has aimed to demonstrate the ways that the seemingly disparate principles of compulsion and free will, physicality and morality, hospitality and tyranny unite in the symbolic properties of comestibles. It is this property of food as both necessity and ostentation that permits these readings -- the way its perishability begets ephemerality, and the way that consumption transforms the materiality of food simultaneously into a new physical substance – by nourishing the body – the representation of edibles and consumption in literature provides a unique avenue for exploring character intentions and models of interiority.

²³⁵ Brillat-Savarin, 16.

Conclusion

This project has aimed to examine the universal act of eating within the confines of a literary era that demonstrated an interest in the body, the object, and the edible. Ultimately, looking at food on the page contradicts the visceral nature of eating, but this contradiction is the emblem of the eighteenth century. A time invested in the edification of man, and the tenants of Neoclassicism, it was also a time fixated on the scatological – never simply of the mind the eighteenth century reveled in the body.

Perhaps nothing demonstrates this as clearly as the gluttonous actions of the great mind of the time. In the “Age of Johnson,” so nicknamed for the substantial impact that Samuel Johnson’s contributions had on his contemporaries, the man most highly regarded for his intellect could not shake the demands of his body. His friend and biographer James Boswell commented on the intensity of Johnson’s gluttonous fixations:

When at table, Johnson was totally absorbed in the business of the moment; his looks seemed riveted to his plate; nor would he, unless when in very high company, say one word, or even pay the least attention to what was said by others, till he had satisfied his appetite, which was so fierce and indulged with such intenseness that while in the act of eating, the veins of his forehead swelled and generally a strong perspiration was evident...it was doubtless not very suitable to the character of a philosopher, who should be distinguished by self-command.²³⁶

Here the image of the man of the mind ravaged by the demands of the body seems to perfectly articulate the tensions that these artists of the eighteenth century battled. In an expanding empire which confronted numerous and foreign peoples and objects, while the world seemed to grow to fill the expanses of the globe, the body always was and remained the familiar.

This project, through four chapters each with a distinct approach, has aimed to probe the relationship of the body to the text, the object, the other, and to the demands and expectations of society. Art through the efforts of representation provides us with portals to the past, offering a

²³⁶ Qtd in Mennell, 32.

way to see backwards and a means by which to consider our predecessors. While the demands of our cultures and the shape of our world continues to evolve, there are constants. We, much like Johnson, can aim to be of the mind, but we can never escape the demands of the body. As such, eating is forever.

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