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195

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Eat, Drink, Man, Woman: Food, Eating, and Social Formations in Renaissance Culture and Drama

By

Huey-ling Lee

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APPROVED, THESIS COMMITTEE:

Meredith A. Skura, Director
Libbie Shearn Moody Professor of English

Edward A. Snow,
Professor of English

Martin J. Wiener,
Mary Gibbs Jones Professor of History

Houston, Texas

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Abstract

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Food and eating have attracted the attention of scholars in different disciplines, but no one has yet attempted a systematic study of their social and cultural significance in early modern England. This dissertation undertakes such a study of a period in which the traditional social hierarchy was loosening and economic resources were changing hands in an unprecedented pace. Analyzing contemporary drama along with medical treatises, self-help manuals, and popular literatures, I demonstrate the way in which cultural beliefs and practices accompanying preparation and consumption of food contribute to the process of social formation and, more specifically, to the making of a class and gendered body. I argue that, though women’s involvement in food service and provision is indispensable in the maintenance of the social order, they are usually identified with the unruly forces from below, threatening to become not just the medium but the agent of pollution and destruction.
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER ONE</td>
<td>The Devil or the Physician:</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Politics of Cooking and the Gendering of Cooks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER TWO</td>
<td>The Order of the Meal:</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Class and Gender Struggle at the Dining Table</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER THREE</td>
<td>“Feed the Wife Plump for Another’s Vein”:</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gender Politics in the Construction of Appetite</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONCLUSION</td>
<td></td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td></td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

This dissertation explores the ways in which the representations of food and eating in the drama and culture of early modern England contribute to its social formation. It is not original to say that people need food in order to survive. In early modern England, however, the agricultural production — especially grain, which constituted people’s basic diet — was anything but stable, and the supply of foodstuffs was hardly able to meet the demand of the booming population. For the lower social orders, whether one had enough to eat was a daily preoccupation and could even be a matter of life and death. A consideration of the relation between food and survival thus leads to a consideration of the economic and social structures which control who has what to eat and how much. Any understanding of early modern food inevitably implicates other aspects of the material culture such as diet, nutrition, religious attitudes, agricultural and economic history, and even specific historical events. The interaction of these socio-economic factors contributed to the construction of the beliefs, rules, and practices about food that not only governed the acceptability of certain food items and the individual’s access to it but revealed much about the social order and a range of social relations, such as the relationship between married couples, in early modern English society.

Although historical facts about food can help us perceive its importance in early modern England, they alone are inadequate when it comes to recovering the cultural dimensions of food consumption and enhancing our understanding of the relation between food and culture. As long as food is a product and mirror of the organization of society on both the broadest and most intimate levels, the beliefs and practices
accompanying its production and consumption can offer a valuable way to study continuities and cleavages in social values and patterns of life. By looking at the ways in which early modern English people cooked, served, and consumed their food, we can discern various forms of social organizations such as marriage, household, and community, and catch glimpses of the dynamics within and the tension between them. Indeed, cultural beliefs, practices, and rituals related to food are not simply static set pieces dedicated to the reproduction of a fixed order but function instead as the site where different social processes and competing claims met head-to-head. Rather than just reinforcing the existing social values and order, each process which food went through could provide early modern English people not just the opportunity but the means to revise their social understandings and to negotiate the often disparate demands imposed on them by gender roles, class positions, health preoccupations, social ideology, and assertions of self.

As one of the most powerful cultural as well as commercial institutes in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the theater served as a major site where various attitudes, values, and prejudices about food could be recorded, articulated, and negotiated. Indeed, although food may not always be the dominant motif or driving force in Elizabethan and Jacobean drama, metaphors and imageries of food and real occurrences of eating are practically everywhere. These dramatic representations provide a lens among others through which the diverse uses and implications of food as a cultural and economic complex can be unraveled. Drama, however, is not the only source of evidence. Other sources include personal testimonies, dietary literature, pamphlets, poems, ballads, conduct manuals, cookbooks, and courtesy literature. Although inevitably there may be gaps between these texts, together they supply a net of diverse
perspectives upon the food and eating culture of early modern England. At the same
time, as discursive attempts not just to decipher the phenomenon of social changes but to
construct a new social order, the representations in these texts also helped construct and
communicate certain underlying attitudes and a variety of social and cultural categories
and understandings of the time.

The topic of early modern English food and eating has already attracted the
attention of several food historians. Although much of their research is aimed more at
recapturing the technical details of the supposedly lost world, there are some that
emphasize sociological and social historical analysis of food and eating in early modern
society. Among the more systematic studies of the topic are Norbert Elias’ The
Civilizing Process and Stephen Mennell’s All Manners of Food. Both Elias and
Mennell focus on the way the changing relations between social classes work to reorient
eating behavior. Drawing on a wide range of documents and commentaries on
behavioral propriety, Elias provides a general analysis of the diachronic development of
mealtime etiquette that forms part of the civilizing process. He argues that the growth
of social interdependence and differentiation not only intensifies the necessity of
behavioral self-discipline and self-control but raises the threshold of shame and
embarrassment in interpersonal interaction. Reflecting in matters of eating, the

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1 See, for instance, C. Anne Wilson, Food and Drink in Britain: From the Stone Age to
Recent Times (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1973); Sara Paston-Williams, The Art of
2 Norbert Elias, The Civilizing Process: Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigations,
3 Stephen Mennell, All Manners of Food: Eating and Taste in England and France from
the Middle Ages to the Present (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996).
civilizing process thus implies the move toward a more individualized or "civilized" eating habits as well as a reduction of food intake. Following Elias' approach, Mennell argues that the same long-term development that has brought about the change of behavior at table also exerts influence on appetite. Additionally, according to him, the increasing interdependence and the balance of power between social classes have led to diminishing contrasts between, and increasing varieties of, food-related habits, attitudes, and beliefs.

Both Elias and Mennell are largely silent, however, about the place of women in the "civilizing process" that has both refashioned bodily demeanor and refined appetite. That women may form a different relation with food and eating is attested in Caroline Walker Bynum's Holy Feast and Holy Fast. Inquiring into "food-related religious practices and of food images in the piety of medieval women," the book has offered a nuanced account of the culturally distinctive mode of women's involvement in food and eating. Like Bynum, both Nancy A. Gutierrez and Kim F. Hall emphasize the control of food as the means of women's self-empowerment. For example, Gutierrez argues that, while there is a double standard in the representation of fasting men and women in English Renaissance drama, each female character, "in choosing to fast, demonstrates her strength of will and 'power of self.'" For Hall, on the other hand, that strength of will and power of self are demonstrated not in fasting but in the culinary creation of

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banqueting stuff which “provided individual English women with a venue for social and artistic self-expression”\(^6\) and through which they participated in England’s colonial expansion in the seventeenth century.

Undoubtedly, early modern women like their medieval predecessors were in charge of many duties in relation to food, but responsibility is not always equivalent to power. Fully aware of the risk of applying contemporary theories to the past, I nonetheless find some studies informed by social anthropology and sociology helpful in understanding the role of women in early modern dietary system and eating culture.\(^7\) Rather than idealizing female contributions to food, these studies not only acknowledge the problematic and ambivalent relationship that women have with food but help me to conceptualize and formulate the interrelation between gender and class. It is true that women are socially expected to be in charge of the preparation and service of food particularly in the domestic setting, but their contributions do not thus qualify them as deserving at least the same quantity of food as men. Having to balance a range of considerations, such as family tastes and preferences, food cost, variety and nutritional values, they frequently have to subordinate their own food preferences to other family members and especially to their male partners. Because of women’s relatively limited economic access and the differential expectation from society, they can’t really escape the


constraints and differential treatments under the patriarchal control even when dining out. What is perhaps more important is that, although the part women are expected to play in the preparation and consumption of food is generally consistent throughout all social strata, it is not immune to the influence of the class system. Not only does women’s responsibility for food preparation and consumption vary in accordance to their social status, but it can be employed as the tool for the construction of social identity.

Rather than treating class and gender as separate issues, this dissertation tries to examine the interrelation between them. Using the representation of food and eating as a lens, I attempt to reveal both the interplay of public power and domestic life in early modern England and the changing relationships between women and men and between social groups with often striking differentials of power. Although early modern English people were still haunted by the threat of unstable food supplies, they also experienced the unprecedented influx of alien foodstuffs from other regions or foreign countries. While the mobility of food seemed to symbolize the economic and social change of the time, food could also be used to fulfill the function of socialization and to create the opportunities of social restructuring. As primary food providers and servers, women were placed both in the interface between the public and the private and in that between different social groups. Although women’s involvement in food production and consumption had became increasingly indispensable, they were nevertheless represented as a threat to the patriarchal order and often stigmatized as the medium through which forces of pollution and destruction from the outside or the below could be brought in. In exploring the impact that the economic and social changes in early modern England had on its culture of food and eating, I am concerned with the ways in which women’s culinary labor and their ambivalent relationship with food could be exploited for the
reinforcement of the gender hierarchy and for the establishment of a new social order at the expense of themselves as well as those from the lower strata.

The three chapters of the dissertation examine the interrelation of class and gender in the preparation, service, and consumption of food. Starting with the representations of the cook, the first chapter examines the duality of the cook's cultural function as both a guardian and a threat to the consumer's health. While the duality was manifested in class and gender divisions of the market, where food anxieties in general tended to be displaced unto women and lower-class victuallers, the conflict between nurturing and destructive narratives of cooking in contemporary drama received a similar treatment and appeared in the gendered form as the division between the protective male cook and the treacherous female cook. In Ben Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair* or Philip Massinger's *A New Way to Pay Old Debts*, for example, the cook's gender not only determines whether the food he or she makes is nurturing or polluting but predicts the social background of his or her customers. Thus, male chefs are entrusted with the responsibility for defending the integrity of masculinity and for controlling the border between classes while female cooks are represented as the agent that introduces unruly, disruptive forces of all kinds into the elite community.

In the second chapter, I turn the focus from gender division in cookery to the different roles that women and men are expected to play at the dining scene. Lying at the heart of social relations, eating together could also be the site of social struggles for people from different economic and social backgrounds. While the performance of table manners was useful for the prevention of such conflicts, they were more an integral part of education to men than to women. Though no less expected to participate in the dining activity as men, women were usually trained to profess the skills of table service
such as table setting or carving, which were equally important, if not more so, to maintain the orderliness at table as well as to set the stage for the performance of male civility. The male reliance on female labor for the construction of masculinity and male authority both in the household and in the community, however, only intensified the male anxiety about women, who were perceived as a threat that needed to be repressed or at least contained. In popular literature such male anxiety is sometimes expressed through dismissal or collective cannibalism of women. In *The Comedy of Errors*, the problem is solved by displacing it unto the marital conflict between the husband and wife, which is in turn displaced unto the competition between women for the favor of men. As women are clamoring to feed the men, the latter could finally enjoy the service and the food in peace.

Given the many responsibilities that women were expected to undertake in the kitchen and at the table, it may seem that they would hardly have the time and the opportunity to eat. Although that might be the situation in reality, it is not even close to the contemporary’s portrayal of female appetite. The concluding chapter thus examines the gender difference in the construction of appetite. In response to the influx of foreign dainties during early modern period, which symbolized the social mobility and economic changes, the contemporary dietary literature tried to recuperate the bygone social order in its valorization of the virtue of traditional English food. Since such a diet was noted for its quantity instead of quality, despite the general prejudice against gluttony, having a hearty appetite was perceived as essential to the construction of one’s English identity as well as masculinity. Due to the stereotype of female snacking and their involvement in food preparation, however, women were often portrayed as the enemy to society as well as men for perpetuating the foreign influences and contaminating the English appetite.
Dangerous though women were perceived, they were simultaneously indispensable for the reproduction of social order and male lineage. To solve the dilemma, the male characters in Thomas Middleton's *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*, instead of trying to control female desire for food, transform their women into the food for male consumption so that female appetite can be utilized to the advantage of men. On the one hand, holding women accountable for men’s deviant appetite, the latter can excuse themselves from the blame of over-indulgence. On the other hand, as women are turned into the vehicle through which food and wealth can be consumed and purified for male consumption, men can also indulge their appetite without suffering for the consequence of their behavior.

Together these chapters reveal not only the ways in which food and eating contributed to the production and reproduction of social order, but also the important role that early modern Englishwomen played in that process. Through the preparation, service, and consumption of food, women were given both the access to the world beyond the household and the opportunity to participate in the larger social processes. Nevertheless, since their contribution tended to be subsumed under the name of their husbands or other male authorities, the sense of empowerment was, if not illusive, at least compromised. Although the material conditions of life have improved dramatically, and the power relation between classes and genders have also gone through a lot of changes since the early modern time, the relationship between women and food consumption is still to some degree swayed by patriarchal ideology and seems to remain in some ways unchanged. Even so, if most husbands in early modern England couldn't really afford to take their wives’ culinary contributions for granted and were constantly pestered by the anxiety about female manipulation, their modern counterparts might be better provided
for by the modern food industry, which often reminds them that they may be able to do just as well without women's help.
Chapter 1

The Devil or the Physician:

The Politics of Cooking and the Gendering of Cooks

In her study of the “nurturing men” in Shakespeare’s plays, Ann Christensen argues that the creation of such characters can be read as an attempt to recuperate the male authority in the domestic sphere destabilized by the capitalist split between home and work.\(^1\) Since “the chores related to food provision were almost universally allotted to housewives,” “struggles over the power to feed, and about the stewardship of ‘household stuff’” on the Renaissance stage, according to her, may “register broader social concerns about the hierarchical arrangement within and the meanings of the domestic sphere.”\(^2\) Defining the purpose of cooking as “feeding” and “nurturing,” she thus sees Shakespeare’s portrayal of male cooks as “deviation” from the “cultural norm” that traditionally associates nurture with women — a deviation that reflects “the ambivalent roles of women and men within the ‘private’ household” and dramatizes “the home as a contested space.”\(^3\) By defining cooking in this way as a mere act of domestic “nurture” — be it in the form of “literal service and consumption of food” or in the metaphorical representation of “domestic care and comfort”\(^4\) — Christensen oversimplifies the broader meaning of cooking as the cultural process of making of food

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2 Christensen, “Playing”: 328.
3 Christensen, “Playing”: 329.
and of the social body as a whole. Moreover, by seeing male culinary performance as an “infringement” on the domestic domain, Christensen ignores the fact that men had long been culturally established as cooks — or chefs, especially in the courtly context, where most of those “nurturing men” were located. They were always distinguished from female cooks in the domestic space because, unlike women, the men were entrusted with the responsibility not so much to nurture as to protect the eating community that they cook for from the invasion of untamed forces either from Nature or from other (and by definition) barbarous social groups. Women, by contrast, were suspected of meddling with food and thus endanger the health.

Indeed, although providing food is no doubt an essential part of any cook’s work, it is hardly the only function that the profession is expected to fulfill. Particularly in early modern England, the cook as one of the “Officers of the Mouth” was responsible not just for the health of the individual consumer but also for the well-being of the eating community as a whole. As a result the cook, entrusted with the power to protect, was simultaneously equipped with the potential to abuse that power and to become the agent of pollution and destruction. This duality was manifested in class and gender divisions of the market, where food anxieties in general tended to be displaced unto women and lower class victuallers. In contemporary drama, the conflict between nurturing and destructive narratives of cooking had a similarly central role in the representation of the cook. In Ben Jonson’s *Bartholomew Fair* (1631) or Philip Massinger’s *A New Way to Pay Old Debts* (1633), for example, the cook’s gender not only determines whether the

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4 Christensen, “Playing”: 329.
5 Christensen, “Playing”: 328.
6 Gile Rose, *A Perfect School of Instructions for the Officers of the Mouth: Shewing the Whole Art of a Master of the Household, a Master Carver, a Master Butler, a Master*
food he or she makes is nurturing or polluting, but also predicts the social background of his or her customers. In one case the cook will become the physician, in the other, the devil.

Because of their different class identifications, male and female cooks, though rarely confronting each other on stage, are forced into opposing positions. Thus male chefs are entrusted with the responsibility to defend the integrity of masculinity and to control the borderline between classes while female cooks are represented not just as the medium but also as the agent through which unruly, disruptive forces of all kinds can be brought into the elite community. For example, the male chef, Furnace, in Massinger’s play, even when forced to cook for lower-class upstarts, does so not to feed them but to defend the ever-shrinking boundary of the aristocratic community that he works for. Conversely, though embraced by her poor, wayward customers, Jonson’s pig-woman Ursula is perceived as a threat to the male middle-class fair-goers. At a time when the traditional social hierarchy was loosening in early modern England and economic resources were changing hands in an unprecedented pace, the gender division of labor among cooks might have wider implications than their more overt function of the food provisioning. As the dramatic representations suggest, cooks are thus made to assume responsibilities far beyond the culinary and to participate in the class competition and struggle precipitated by the intensifying pressure of economic and social changes.

The ambiguity of the cook’s work was related to the early modern ambivalence toward food as both a source of health and a threat to it. As Michael Schoenfeldt argues, early modern consumers, pressured by Galenic physiology, classical ethics, and Protestant theology, tended to “conceive all acts of ingestion and excretion as very literal

Confectioner, a Master Cook, a Master Pastryman (London, 1682).
acts of self-fashioning,” which can lead to either constructive or destructive result.\(^7\) Highlighting the repeated overlap of food and medicine in the contemporary literature on medical self-help, he suggests:

The point made repeatedly in the vast literature on medical self-help is that all foods do something in one, and to one, physically and mentally. Like the humors they nourish, foods are predominantly either hot or cold, moist or dry, and bestow that disposition on the consumer. To choose one’s diet is an act of self-fashioning in the most literal sense.\(^8\) Nancy G. Siraisi also points out that “the emphasis on dietary regulation as the key to health was one of the most ancient components in medicine.”\(^9\) Nevertheless, as long as most foodstuffs need to be cooked and processed (selected, washed, pared or cut, and seasoned) before they become edible, the relationship between food and physical health may be more tortuous and treacherous than it appears. While the inherent qualities of food can have direct impact on one’s humoral balance, those qualities nonetheless can be adjusted or modified by various culinary procedures. The improvement of physical health, however, is only one of the more obvious purposes that cooking is expected to achieve. By transforming food in its natural and thus inedible state into the edible “food” in the cultural sense, cooking simultaneously contributes to the making of the classed and gendered body. Thus, while the individual consumer may be able to control the quantity of his diet, as long as he still depends on others for the provision of food, he

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\(^8\) Schoenfeldt, “Fables” 252.

may not have the total control that Schoenfeldt suggests. The self-empowerment that Schoenfeldt argues for is contingent on the culinary practice of the cook.

The early modern self-help manuals, while stressing the indispensable role of diet in the maintenance of health, did not ignore the potential impact of culinary operation on the qualities of food and consequently the digestive function of the consumer’s body. Thomas Muffett, for instance, devotes a book to “the nature, method, and manner of preparing all sorts of food used in this nation” in his *Healths Improvement* (1655) — as the title page declares.\(^\text{10}\) Even for those authors who do not specifically focus on the culinary aspect of food, it seems to be an issue that they can not avoid. One example is Thomas Elyot’s *Castel of Helth* (1541). Though Elyot seems to be mainly interested in detailing the digestive features of various foodstuffs, he repeatedly diverts his attention from plain descriptions to all kinds of culinary tips, telling his readers, for instance, how the feet of a young bullock can bring “a colerike stomake into a good digestion” when “tenderly sodden, and layde in sowse two dayes or thre, and eaten colde in the evenninge”\(^\text{11}\) or how colewortes could “bynde the bealy” when “the holle leaves beinge halfe sodden, and the water poured out, and they being put eftesones into hot water, and sodden until they be tender.”\(^\text{12}\) Though the natural qualities of food do play a part in the maintenance of physical health, it seems that the culinary procedure that the food goes through plays a more decisive role.

Neither the knowledge of the natural qualities of food nor the skill in its preparation, however, comes as a gift to everybody. Andrew Boorde in his *Dyetary of Helth* (1547)

\(^{10}\) Thomas Muffett, *Health Improvement* (London, 1655) title page.


\(^{12}\) Elyot 28.
recommends that the physician and the cook “consult together for the preparacion of meate for sycke men,”\textsuperscript{13} but the cooperation seems to lean toward the cook’s authority. Although he only allows “a good coke” to be “halfe a physycyon,” he maintains that “the chefe physycke . . . doth come from the kytchyn.”\textsuperscript{14} In other words, it is by learning how to cook first that one learns how to cure. As Boorde points out, without the proper training and experience in the kitchen, the physician “wyll make a werysse diyshe of meate, the whiche the sycke can not take.”\textsuperscript{15} Certainly, knowing the inherent humoral properties of food alone does not make a good cook out of the physician — unless one is simultaneously capable of choosing the proper cooking method and performing it correctly. Yet a cook can do more than just counteracting and balancing the humoral qualities of specific food items. A good cook, as Thomas Cogan suggests in \textit{The Heaven of Health} (1584), can radically alters the properties of food, making “you good meate of a whetstone” and transforming “such fish and flesh as is of it owne nature unwholesome and unpleasant” into something “both wholesome and pleasant.”\textsuperscript{16} In such formulations, there is nothing natural about the cooked food introduced into the body. As the body can be radically remade and altered by the food it takes in, so food can be radically remade and altered by the cooking process it undergoes. Food in its natural state is unfinished and incomplete. It must be reinvented by cooking before it can be recognized or identified as “food.”

Since food is meant not only to be consumed by the body but to remake it, how food is made or remade can be a great concern. If a good cook, by pleasing the palate

\textsuperscript{13} Andrew Boorde, \textit{Dyetary of Helth} (London, 1547) 277.
\textsuperscript{14} Boorde 277.
\textsuperscript{15} Boorde 278.
\textsuperscript{16} Thomas Cogan, \textit{The Heaven of Health} (London, 1584) 157.
and satisfying the stomach, can strengthen the health and cure the sick, the very culinary skills that enable him to do so can also threaten the physical health of his consumers. For there is always the fear that, though meant to ease hunger, food can be used to stimulate appetite, creating a spiraling effect of uncontrollable desire. Muffett, for instance, tells a story about the ancient Roman attitude toward those in charge of food preparation:

The Romans once banished . . . Cooks [out of Rome], for corrupting and enforcing appetites with strange sawces and seasonings. . . . Yet they retained Cato, the chief dietist of that time, and all them that were able (without physick) to prevent or cure diseases; esteeming diet (as it is indeed) to be so honest, pleasant, and profitable a science."^{17}

While “dietists” claim to set a boundary on the “appetites” and, true to their scientific spirit, do just that, cooks corrupt Roman “appetites” by intensifying or even multiplying the craving for food. What is at stake is not just the insatiable demands of the stomach, but also the extra expenditure needed to purchase more exotic and costly foodstuffs. Despite alleged honesty, however, “dietists” still need to resort to the same “sawce and seasonings” that cooks use in order to allure the consumers to eat so that the therapeutic function of the food can be achieved. As Muffett later admits — “As for them that be sick, whosoever dreameth, that no sick man should be allured to meat by delightful and pleasant sawces, seemeth as froward and fantastical as he that would never whet his Knife.”^{18} The distinction between the two professions, in this light, may not be so clear as Muffett would want it to be. As long as one is in charge of food provision, one is

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^{17} Muffett 7.
^{18} Muffett 254.
treading a delicate line. While one could be retained for one’s culinary performance and be upgraded to the position of a dietist, with just one wrong touch, the same person could easily fall out of grace and be toppled over the Roman wall, banished into the wilderness.

One reason for the ambivalence about cooks — and even dietists — is the way food itself is perceived. Behind culinary artistry is the essential but unpleasant labor of handling and preparing raw food, which brings the cooks in direct contact with the uncivilized aspect of nature. The anxiety about raw foodstuffs is particularly intensified in the case of animal flesh. Muffett asks in his discussion of the preparation of meat:

What is raw flesh till it be prepared, but an imperfect lump? for it is neither the beast it was, nor the meat it should be, till boiling, roasting, bakeing, or broiling, hath made it fit to be eaten of men. . . . As for raw flesh (besides Butchers, Cooks, Poulterers, Slaughter men, and Cannibals) who dare almost touch it with their fingers much less dare any grind it with their teeth.”¹⁹

The only thing that cooks — along with butchers, poulterers, and slaughter men — have in common with cannibals is the fact that, due to the nature of their work, they are required to have direct contact with “raw flesh” as the cannibals do. Though there is a long distance from handling raw flesh to eating human flesh, conceptually they are conflated. As Claude Fischler argues, “to identify a food, one has to ‘think’ it, to understand its place in the world.”²⁰ Suspended in its journey from one category to the other, the raw flesh, unfinished in form and unstable in nature, belongs to neither. Being a shapeless, skinless, blood-oozing mass, it is not only unidentifiable in itself but also undifferentiated from others. As Jean-Paul Sartre writes in his analysis of the disgusting

¹⁹ Muffett 47.
character of stickiness and sliminess ("visqueux"), "[t]o touch the sticky is to risk being dissolved in stickiness."21 Like the sticky and slimy substance, the ambiguous texture of the raw flesh creates "the impression that it is a being which can be possessed," but "at the very moment when I believe that I possess it, behold by a curious reversal, it possesses me."22 The feeling of anxiety or even repulsion about sliminess is hardly a modern phenomenon. In *The Tyrke* (1610), for example, John Mason writes, "Ile fat the slimy earth more then the plague" (2. 1. 58).23 If viscous matter is harmful, food with a slimy texture such as "the fishe of Lakes, Marrishes, Muddie pooles, and stinking Pondes" 24 may not be good for health, either. Identifying the sliminess of such fishes with that of the "excrements" that they consume, John Banister argues that their meat is "so excreme~tal, and so slimy, that thereby filling all the pores of the bodie, empaireth the stre~gth of the members, and greueth or depriueth their functions."25

Thus, by touching the slimy raw flesh, cooks simultaneously risk being "dissolved" or devoured by it and thus rendered undifferentiated from the uncontrollable matter of corruption and death. Furthermore, as Henry Peacham points out when describing the peculiar eating habit of the Tartarians, "the Carrion"—be they "carcasses of Horses, of Cammels, Asses, Catts, [or] Dogs"—would "stinke" and become "full of Maggots."26

22 Sartre 777.
24 John Banister, *A Needfull, New, and Necessarie Treatises of Chyrurgerie briefly comprehending the generall and particular curation of vlcers, drawen foorth of sundrie worthy wryters, but especially of Antonius Calmeeteus Vergesatus, and Ioannes Tagaltius* (London, 1575) 87.
25 Banister 87.
26 Henry Peacham, *The Valley of Varietie: or, Discourse fitting for the times containing very learned and rare passages out of antiquity, philosophy, and history* (London, 1638) 33.
Indeed, like the sun-kissed “carrion” (2. 2. 181)\textsuperscript{27} in Hamlet’s imagination, the raw flesh, when left to its own resort, would soon decay. Once putrefied, it would soon become the breeding bed of stirring maggots. Subject to the danger of self-putrefaction when left alone, it threatens to disrupt and defile the orderly world around it.

The natural course, however, could be arrested — temporarily at least — when proper culinary procedures are applied. Once cooked, the “imperfect lump” is transformed inside out from the slimy, formless mass into a well-defined chunk of meat. At the same time, adapted to the conventional rules of a particular cuisine, it is symbolically transported from the realm of Nature to that of Culture and ultimately given a place, a meaning, in the civilized world. In order for the “civilizing process” to take place, somebody has to get involved with the flesh. Yet to do that is also to participate in the process of natural transformation — or rather corruption — and exposes oneself to the danger of being incorporated into the cannibalistic community. In a cannibalistic society, nobody can avoid the dirty job, but in a civilized society like early modern England, where social distinctions were supposedly well established and forcefully maintained, the majority could be spared from the task by leaving it to the cooks and other food-related professionals. Straddling the border between nature and culture, the human and the natural, the inside and the outside, cooks act as an agent in the “civilizing process” of food; as long as “edibility is inversely related to humanity,”\textsuperscript{28} they also become the guardian of humanity, protecting it from the invading force of wildness and barbarity.

\textsuperscript{27} William Shakespeare, Hamlet, ed. Harold Jenkins, The Arden Shakespeare (New York: Methuen, 1982). All quotations are taken from this edition.
While cooks are in charge of the nature-culture transformation from the raw to the cooked, they are simultaneously responsible for making the distinction between the edible and the inedible throughout the culinary process. On the one hand, even within foodstuffs themselves, discriminations need to be made in order to rid them of what Muffett describes as “all things . . . which are counted either hurtful or unnecessary: as the flaying of Beasts, pulling, and scaling of fouls, garbage of all things that have corruption in their bellies, voiding of piths, rinds, and stones in roots, apples, and plums, etc.”29 On the other hand, the cooking process itself produces another kind of waste that is no more suitable for human consumption. For instance, in the metaphorical kitchen of the Castle of Alma in Faerie Queene,30 the maintenance of “goodly order, and great workmans skill” (2. 9. 33. 1) requires not just the acts of boiling, baking, roasting, or broiling but the procedure of removing “the scum as it did rise” (2. 9. 31. 7) and disposing of “all the liquor, which was fowle and wast. / Not good nor serviceable else for ought” (2. 9. 32. 1-2). Thus, every stage of cooking involves the process of purification, which extracts the potentially edible food from the supposedly bad, “unnecessary,” and “hurtful” matters and hence makes it more “seruiseable” and beneficial to the human body.

Nevertheless, the differentiation, if based on material and physiological constraints, is determined by the cultural system of categorization. As Pasi Falk argues, the cultural binary opposition of edible/inedible “does not obey the ‘bodily wisdom’ of metabolism and nutritional efficacy.”31 As a result, “not nearly everything that is (objectively)

29 Muffett 47.
edible and available is really eaten (for example, insects rich in protein)" while "substances objectively defined as non-foods or even poisons are actually incorporated." More often than not, the classification of the edible and the inedible is informed by class distinction. Andrew Appleby argues that during the sixteenth century only the nobility could afford to have great quantity of meat, but it does not mean that meat products were totally excluded from the diet of the poor. Rather, as described in William Harrison’s *The Description of England* (1587), in formal dining occasions, what was dismissed from the high tables could very well become the food on the lower tables. Specifically, John Jeaffreson argues that, umbles, the internal organs of the deer, though a greatly prized food in the Middle Ages, was in the Tudor period “meat fit for the inferior boards of noble banquets, but inappropriate to the higher tables.” Thus, while the poor might not be able to afford the choice meat, they could still obtain the more offensive part of the meat as their food. Similarly, though offal was associated with “all things that have corruption in [the animals’] bellies” as Muffett describes and thus might be considered as “garbage” in wealthy households, it was not necessarily so to those of the lower strata. Indeed, according to Mennell, “the association of offal with the food of the poor” could be traced far back to “a custom of the internal organs of newly slaughtered animals being given away to the lower orders.” Therefore, if any

32 Falk 69-70.
36 Muffett 47.
37 Mennell 312.
cooks with “reason” would have “upon just cause emptied the inwards,” such “reason” is very much informed by the principle of social hierarchy, and the distinction between the edible and the inedible, as Falk argues, determined by, among others, “(changes in) social status.”

Once the edible is separated from the inedible, it is no less important to eliminate the latter thoroughly. As Falk suggests, “preparing food is a part of the taking possession of and incorporating of foodstuffs (making it ‘our own’) which culminates in the physical act of eating.” Just as excrements produced in the process of digestion are regarded as “matter superfluouse and unsauery, whiche by naturall powers may not be converted into fleshe,” so the garbage and refuse produced in the process of cooking are matters that can’t be incorporated into the household or the eating community and have to be expelled from it so that they won’t corrupt the communal body as a whole. In his narration of the operation in the kitchen of the Castle of Alma, Spenser describes in detail how the culinary waste should be disposed of properly. The “fowle and wast” liquor that was “Not good nor serviceable else for ought” was poured out through “a conduit pipe,” and “all the rest, that noyous was, and nought,” was “close conuvaide,” by “secret wayes, that none might it espy,” brought to the “back-gate,” and finally “throwne out priuily” (2. 9. 32). The secrecy, while denying the existence of food waste and thus the possibility of pollution in the process of preparation, simultaneously protects the integrity of the household by concealing one of its openings or vulnerable points. The cooks, being the master of the kitchen and controlling the ins and outs of the food flow,

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38 Muffett 47.
39 Falk 70.
40 Falk 70.
41 Elyot 52.
are responsible for the physical as well as symbolic well-being of the community they cook for.

Guarding the borders of the community, cooks thus possess the power to ruin its integrity and become the agent of pollution. As Mary Douglas argues, "cooking is susceptible to pollution, in the same way as eating." Food adulteration is one problem. Although Boorde praises cooks for their curing power, he berates them for adulterating their products — "God may send a man good meate, but the devyll may sende an evyll cooke to dystrue it." A story in *Frier Rvsh* suggests another kind of adulteration that endangers not the physical health but the spiritual well-being of food consumers. A Devil named Rush deceives the friars by serving them bacon-stewed pottage "in the Lent, and in the Aduent, both Fridayes and also other dayes." Unaware that they have broken their religious vows, the friars praise him "much better then their other Maister Cooke did." The ultimate threat is probably poisoning. As Alison Sim points out, "there was a genuine fear of death by poisoning among the very wealthy, which gave rise to the elaborate tasting ceremonies which formed part of formal meals." It may be true that "deliberate poisoning certainly did take place but more often food poisoning rather than a malicious act was to blame." In 1530, however, a criminal case was filed against Richard Roose, Cook to the Bishop of Rochester, who poisoned sixteen persons with broth intended for the destruction of his master. Although the case does show intention, to the authority, the mere fact of poisoning signifies a disruption to the passage

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43 Boorde 260.
of food which may further destroy the integrity of the social structure. As a result, a statute was instituted, ruling that poisoning, regardless of intention, was from that moment on to be treated as “high treason”\textsuperscript{47} and thus transforming it from a criminal act against an individual into a threat to the security of the state.

Sometimes what is discarded as inedible, when not properly handled, can become the source of pollution outside the eating community. Not everything excluded from the high table is thrown out as garbage. To become edible again for others, however, the left-overs have to go through rituals of purification. The scraps, as Felicity Heal suggests, can be transformed by the rule of hospitality and become alms dish and broken meats to the poor — whether they are known or unknown to the household — at a place beyond the gates.\textsuperscript{48} Or, according to the system of “perquisites,” which had already enjoyed a long history in the big household, the left-overs were “by right belonged to those who served them” and could be given to their servants.\textsuperscript{49} As long as food is passed down from the rich to the poor or from the master to the servant as a gift of charity or as a token of generosity, the proper social distinction can be maintained, and the scraps, purified in the process.

Nevertheless, socially positioned to mediate the passage of food from one social category or group to another, cooks and servants may exploit that position, disrupt the ordered passage of food, and jeopardize the principle of hospitality. Some servants, for instance, by taking advantage of their right to “perquisites,” might deliberately squander

\textsuperscript{47} A. Luders ed., \textit{The Statutes of the Realm: Printed by Command of His Majesty King George the Third, in Pursuance of an Address of the House of Commons of Great Britain, From Original Records and Authentic Manuscripts}, vol. 4 (London: Record Commission, 1810-1828) 326.

the provisions in the household and end up depending “too much on the leavings from the master’s bountiful table instead of dining on the plainer food they were expected to prepare for themselves.”\textsuperscript{50} What is worse, some others might even try to sell the recycled foodstuffs — “broken” and unbroken alike — for cash. As Sim points out, not every visitor to Court was entitled to dine at the king’s expense. Those who had to provide for themselves thus constituted one portion of potential customers to the unbroken meat.\textsuperscript{51} Even the clandestine passage of left-overs was not an insubstantial trade.\textsuperscript{52} As Edward (Ned) Ward describes in \textit{The London-Spy Compleat} (ca. 1700), the leftovers were used by for rag-dealers and the poor as the chief currency “to barter scraps for patches . . . to change Food for Rayment” in the Rosemary Lane rag fair.\textsuperscript{53} According to Daniel Defoe, well into the early eighteenth century, the domestic servants of the well-off were still alleged to “maintain one, two, or more Persons from [their master’s] Table.”\textsuperscript{54} Either way, food was deviated from the proper passage that it should have taken, and its meaning, appropriated not to the advantage of the master’s reputation, but for the private gains of his servants.

The cook’s potential to disrupt social order was further complicated by the demand of extra-domestic victualling. As an ordinance established in 1379 explicitly ordered,

\textsuperscript{49} Sim 37.
\textsuperscript{51} See Sim 37.
\textsuperscript{53} Quoted in Pennell 242.
\textsuperscript{54} Daniel Defoe, \textit{Every-body’s Business is Nobody’s Business, or Private Abuses, Publick Grievances Exemplified in the Pride, Insolence and Exorbitant Wages of Women-Servants, Footmen, Etc}, 4\textsuperscript{th} ed. (London, 1725) 11-2.
the pastelers of the City of London were forbidden to bake in pasties “garbage, not befitting and sometimes stinking, in deceit of people” — specifically the “garbage” bought from “cook[s] of Bredstreet or at the hostels of the great lords [and] the cooks of such lords.”

Since “garbage” did become food to the lower class, the law was directed not so much at the “garbage” itself as to the impact that the deviation of food might have on society. Even if the pastelers’ re-cycling of left-overs did not cause any physical harm to their immediate consumers, it threatened to contaminate the health of the social body. On the one hand, the appropriation of food undermines not just the code of hospitality but the nobility’s power to control food. On the other hand, since the pastelers distinguished their customers only by their ability to pay, the “garbage” could flow into the hand of those who deserved better. The kitchen hence became the opening of the household, from which resources could flow out, and rubbish, instead of going through the passage of transformation, was directly put back into circulation in the larger social space.

The cook’s potential to disrupt the existing social order is not only magnified by the rise of extra-domestic victualling but complicated by the changing composition of its potential customers as well as the expansion of its market. As Sara Pennell argues, although extra-domestic eating was hardly novel by the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century, it no longer served as an alternative to homely hospitality and as an expression of urban commonweal as it had in the past, but was now “overshadowed by a demand raised up on necessity.”

The dramatic population growth in England, while enlarging the pool of would-be customers for public eating houses in general, contributed

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55 Philips 8.
56 Pennell 230.
to the expanding business specifically with those from the lower strata. While the rise of food prices and the shortage of fuel made domestic food preparation less economically appealing to poor householders, employers who had in the past often paid workers partly in kind, in the form of food and drink consumed in the master’s house or perhaps taken away, were now more inclined to pay in cash.\(^{57}\) Either way, the poor who were unable to cook at home and who had to work away from home were forced to seek refreshment elsewhere.\(^{58}\) At the same time, suburban development of the city, by introducing demographic pressures upon the spatial and temporal organization of non-elite labour and thus of domestic life, might also have contributed to the growing popularity of dining out. As Pennell argues, lack of ready access to an oven, high concentrations of individuals living in lodgings (singly or in fluid, often non-familial groups), and spatial and economic arrangements which could lead to unpleasant confrontations all made eating out the easier, if not the preferable option.\(^{59}\)

Although this section of the market expanded, the specialist cook was not the one to take advantage of it.\(^{60}\) Instead, because food retailing did not require a large amount of capital and equipment, many women seized the opportunity and exploited their traditional female involvement in the culinary aspects of housewifery as a financial resource. As Maryanne Kowaleski argues, women tended to work in “occupations that demanded

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\(^{58}\) Clark 110-1.

\(^{59}\) Pennell 230.

\(^{60}\) There was a cooks’ guild in London, descended from original medieval companies of cookshop proprietors, piemakers and confectioners, in the form of the Worshipful Company of Cooks. As Mennell argues, however, its power was slight — it could not prevent anyone from trading as a cook. See Mennell 138.
skills they learned informally within the family,” and food preparation was one of them.\textsuperscript{61} Moreover, because of the casual, intermittent, or seasonal nature of victualling business, it suited the need of women, who usually had other family responsibilities such as childbearing or child care.\textsuperscript{62} Peter Earle’s study of the female labour market in London in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries shows that 16.4 per cent of single women in identified trades were working in catering, victualling, and shopkeeping\textsuperscript{63}; Klana Krausman Ben-amos’ study of women apprentices in Bristol\textsuperscript{64} and Sue Wright’s study of female employment in Salisbury\textsuperscript{65} reveal a similar tendency of women to participate in the victualling trade. When women worked as unpaid assistants to their husbands, the commonest occupation was usually the operation of a food and drink outlet.\textsuperscript{66} Most historians agree that female involvement in provisioning was usually poorly captured in official records. Such work was undertaken by women with such regularity that it was identified as one of the “women’s” or “housewives’” trades, which, as an early seventeenth-century commentator recommended, should be avoided by men.\textsuperscript{67}


\textsuperscript{63} Earle: 338-9.


\textsuperscript{67} See Michael Roberts, “‘Words They are Women, and Deeds They are Men’: Images of Work and Gender in Early Modern England,” \textit{Women and Work in Pre-industrial England}, ed. Lindsey Charles and Lorna Duffin (London: Croon Helm, 1985) 141. See also Sara
Nevertheless, women’s involvement in the victualling trade did not necessarily mean that they were taking over the territory of specialist — by definition, male — cooks. As Mennell argues, due to the origin of the social institution of the court as a military establishment, male chefs had long established “their monopoly in courtly kitchens” as the “instruments of the refinement of cooking,” and their works were regarded as the demonstration of their genius and artistry.\textsuperscript{68} Female cooks, in contrast, were identified with domestic cooking and denied the professional identity that male chefs enjoyed. As their work was treated as the mere extension of their domestic duties, the food they made was taken as no more than the product of manual labour. Thus, even though it cost more to employ male kitchen staff than their female counterparts, grand households still preferred to hire men as a “status symbol.”\textsuperscript{69} The difference was not only reflected in their market value and their income but reinforced by the prejudice of the guild company, which was generally less inclined — if not totally unwilling — to admit female apprentices to the Freedom.\textsuperscript{70} Certainly, though the lack of official license did not prevent women from trading in victualling, it did mean that they had to work at the poorer end of the market.\textsuperscript{71} Since they were often unable to have shops of their own, they also tended to do their business on the move, attracting people who were less socially and economically stable than male chefs’ customers. Pressured by popular opinion and institutional discrimination, male and female cooks were assigned to separate social spaces and cooked for customers from distinct social groups. This is not to say

\textsuperscript{69} Mennell 201.
\textsuperscript{70} Sim 32.
\textsuperscript{71} Philips 123.
that there was no competition between them. Rather, the competition was not so much
between the cooks themselves as between the social groups that they cooked for or at
least represented.

Not only was the gender difference of the cooks usually correlated with class
difference of their customers, but it also prescribed the relationship between the cooks
and the food they cooked. Caroline Walker Bynum argues that eating in the European
Middle Ages was stereotyped as “a male activity and food preparation as a female one,”
but cooking as a professional occupation was a monopoly of men. In early modern
England, while male chefs continued to dominate the profession, the association of
women with food preparation persisted. This association derives in part from the
“biological analogy” between them. Since lactation makes woman the essential food
provider and preparer, it associates woman’s body with food. For instance, the ballad
“A Worthy Example of a Vertuous Wife” describes how a daughter feeds “her Father with
her own Milk, being condemned to be starved to death” and afterwards pardoned by “the
Emperour” for the admiration of “her great vertue.” Thus, while men more often than

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72 Bynum 190-1.
73 Mennell speculates that, because of “the origin of the social institution of the court . . .
as a military establishment,” men’s “function in the kitchens of the court began as an
extension of that role.” As a result, having established their monopoly in courtly kitchens,
men also became “the instruments of the refinement of cooking as the court itself
developed as the locus of the arts of consumption.” See Mennell 201.
74 For discussion of the history of the exclusion of women from the culinary profession,
see Lois W. Banner, “Why Women Have Not Been Great Chefs,” South Atlantic
75 The cookbooks of the time, whether they were written by men or by women, were
predominantly addressed to women. The gender of the targeted audience can be seen
from the titles of these cookbooks such as The Good Huswife’s Handmaide for the
Kitchen (1588) or Gervase Markham’s The English Housewife (1615).
76 Bynum 190.
77 “A Worthy Example of a Vertuous Wife, who fed her Father with her own Milk, being
condemned to be starved to death, and afterwards pardoned by the Emperour,” The Euing
women are portrayed as cooks, the latter tend to be more physically as well as sexually implicated in the food they cook than the former. If a cook’s function is to preserve the boundaries between the inside and the outside of the consumer’s body and of the eating community, women’s implication in the food they prepare threatens to blur precisely those boundaries. The difference between the cooks’ dual roles as the gatekeeper and as the potential intruder is hence a difference between genders. While male chefs are entrusted with the responsibility to control the borderline, female cooks are represented not just as the medium but also as the agent through which unruly, disruptive forces of all kinds could be brought in.

The difference gender makes in shaping the cook’s relations to food on the one hand and to the (eating) community on the other finds its dramaturgical expression in Ben Jonson’s *Bartholomew Fair*.\(^7^8\) The play has received a lot of attention over the years, but none of its critics has examined its culinary aspect in much detail. The importance of food is first introduced by Justice Overdo who, despite the “many yearly enormities of this Fair” (2. 1. 42), seems particularly concerned with those of victualling. When he first imagines himself having “a doing of right out of wrong” (2. 1. 11-2), his specific concern is the weight and measure of food — “Marry, go you into every alehouse, and down into every cellar; measure the length of puddings, take the gauge of black pots and cans, aye, and custards, with a stick; and their circumference with a thread; weigh the loaves of bread on his middle-finger” (2. 1. 18-22). He is fascinated not just by the idea that he can “do’t himself” without his “corrupt officers” (2. 1. 25; 26) but that he can take

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full charge of food distribution, sending the confiscated foods to those in need — "then would he send for 'em, home; give the puddings to the poor, the bread to the hungry, the custards to his children" (2. 1. 23-5). Overdo is not alone in his concern about equal food distribution; the authorities of that time were similarly concerned that the control of food supplies would fall into the hand of the privileged few. The royal proclamations, for instance, repeatedly sought to enforce the statute lashed out against "the malice and naughty nature of a certain kind of people that live only for themselves" and prefer "their own private gain above the public good." Ostensibly, such attack on covetousness was raised in the name of "the poorer sort." Nevertheless, as Ian Archer, Caroline Barron, and Vanessa Harding argue, in reality it was usually "the poorer sort" — rather than the leading wholesalers playing the markets for easy profits — that often ended up being the easy target of the persecution and being "blamed for increasing prices." Since what those petty traders, hucksters, and fishwives did — intercepting the produce they sold before it reached open market — was "one of the few areas of employment still open to women" in an overcrowded labour market, women most often were the victims apprehended by the officers of law enforcement.

Given those conditions, perhaps it is not too surprising that the first two suspects of "enormity" that Overdo discovers in Bartholomew fair are the gingerbread-woman Trash and the pig-woman Ursula, who are both at the bottom of society. No sooner has Trash

81 Hughes and Larkin, Tudor, vol. 3 194.
83 Archer, Barron, and Harding 23.
made her first appearance on stage than the hobbyhorse-seller Leatherhead accuses her of making her gingerbread with bad ingredients. Immediately she retorts — “[t]hough I be a little crooked o’ my body, I’ll be found as upright in my dealing as any woman in Smithfield” (2. 2. 24-6). Whether she is “crooked” — even if “a little” — because she is old, physically deformed, or both, she is put at a great disadvantage in the overcrowded job market. Her economic and social marginality is suggested by the nature of her work, which requires the minimum cost (for the ground and the ingredients) and the crudest equipment (a basket), and her social value is further implied in her name, “Trash.” Ursula may seem to do a bit better, but not much. As she complains — “Fie upon’t: who would wear out their youth and prime thus, in roasting of pigs, that had any cooler vocation” (2. 2. 42-5) — this is hardly her dream job. Though she has a roof over her head, the working conditions are worse than “hell,” which is “a kind of cold cellar to’t, a very fine vault” (2. 2. 44). If she has a better income than Trash, it is still not enough remove her from the hell-like kitchen — even after she has wasted all her “youth and prime” in it — to a higher-level job that may provide a better working environment and require less embodied labour.

Yet, what Ursula wears off in the kitchen is not just her “youth and prime.” Despite her legendary obesity, she seems to repeatedly go through the process of physical disintegration every time she cooks. As soon as she enters the stage, she complains, “I am all fire, and fat, Nightingale; I shall e’en melt away to the first woman, a rib, again, I am afraid. I do water the ground in knots as I go, like a great garden-pot; you may follow me by the S’s I make” (2. 2. 49-53). Michael J. Bugeja argues that “the ‘rib'
image not only alludes to Genesis but to the meat with which Ursula tempts fair-goers.84 Since Ursula is identified with her “litter of pigs” (2. 3. 2) and even referred to as “some walking sow” (2. 5. 72), and since she, after all, is the one that is “all fire, and fat,” the “rib” image can also allude to herself, as if she herself were the roasted meat after the fat is burned away. Just as Trash’s gingerbread is called her “ginger-progeny” (2. 2. 4), Ursula similarly reproduces herself in her food and becomes the “mother o’ the pigs” (2. 5. 70). As she sizzles away in the “S’s” she makes, she seems to establish a symbiotic relationship with the meat that she cooks. Ursula’s “loss of corporeal being — loss of content, form and integral identity”85 — results not simply from her “womanly unreliability”86 as Gail Kern Paster argues; the inextricability of the relationship between woman and food may play a part as well.

Ursula’s identification with her roasted pig is hardly unique; other middle-class women in the play who have nothing to do with food preparation are also described as food to be consumed by men. For instance, after Littlewit dressed his wife Win with a velvet cap, he offers his wife as one of his “delicates” (1. 2. 12), to Winwife, a suitor to his mother-in-law Lady Purecraft. The gentleman, however, declines the offer — “Alas, you ha’ the garden where they grow still! A wife here with a strawberry breath, cherry lips, apricot cheeks, and a soft velvet head, like a melicotton” (1. 2. 13-5). When Winwife’s description transforms Littlewit’s attempt to dress up his wife into gardening, Win’s body is also metamorphosed into a garden where a variety of fruits “grow still” as if she were a sumptuous dish of assorted “delicates.” As delicious as she appears,

Winwife nonetheless declines to kiss or rather “taste” her because his “taste” tends to “fruit of a later kind” — that is, “the sober matron” (1. 2. 19-20), Win’s mother Dame Purecraft. Interestingly, although “sober” may mean “grave, serious, solemn” in one’s demeanor or speech (OED), the first entry in OED is: “moderate, temperate, avoiding excess, in respect of the use of food and drink; not given to the indulgence of appetite” (OED). By using “sober” to describe Purecraft, Winwife seems to acknowledge implicitly that, despite the male fantasy of woman as a mere object of desire, a woman has an appetite of her own, which is nonetheless expected to become “sober” as she ages. In this light, Winwife’s rejection of the proffered “delicates” may also reveal his anxiety about female voracity represented in the image of a garden where “they” “grow still.”

The anxiety implied in the male construction of middle-class women such as Win and her mother turns into outright hostility in the face of lower-class women such as Ursula. Although Winwife and his companion Quarlous in pursuit of Lady Purecraft decide to venture into the fair, they are reluctant to consort with any of the lower class there. The appearance of Ursula at her booth, however, immediately attracts their attention and provokes a series of contemptuous remarks, not to her but about her — “Mother o’ the bawds,” “mother o’ the pigs,” “Mother of the Furies,” “some walking sow of tallow,” “An inspir’d vessel of kitchen-stuff” (2. 5. 69-74). When the horse-courser Knockem, who also helps Ursula with the business of her “punk” and her “pig” (2. 5. 39), applauds her for her undaunted retaliation against Quarlous and Winwife, they turn to ridicule the horse-courser: “Is she your quagmire, Dan Knowckem? Is this your bog?” (2. 5. 84). The “plain plump soft” (2. 5. 78) body of Ursula’s is turned into a piece of wet and boggy ground, full of decayed or decaying moss and other vegetable matter.

86 Paster 25.
Since it was a common practice among horse dealers to deceive their customers by preparing a corner in the yard where the unsound horses could stand up to their knees in wet clay, Knockem is supposed to use the “quagmire” for his own benefits. Nevertheless, when they continue, the horse-courser is collapsed with the sinking horse and made a victim, and the small patch of wet ground changes into an enormous body of watery femininity, which is so big that whoever “would venture for’t . . . might sink into her, and be drown’d a week, ere any friend he had could find where he were” (2. 5. 87-9). In the next step, the landscape of a feminine sea transforms into that of “a whole shire of butter” (2. 5. 91-2), and Knockem, from a man drawn at the bottom of the ocean into a tinny speck “falling into” (2. 5. 91) a giant bowl of butter. Unlike the seawater, butter melts into a liquid form only when it is heated. Since Ursula is “all fire, and fat,” the enormous body of the hot melting butter thus mirrors her body of fat that is sizzling away in the kitchen. Once liquefied, the butter becomes a heaving body of hot oil that, more overwhelming than the wet clay, threatens to engulf, to dissolve, and to absorb any foreign object falling into it. In addition to the danger of being drowned, the transformation introduces the fearful prospect that one can be cooked and eaten as well as be swamped in the butter or rather in Ursula’s melted “fat.” Retrospectively, this also explains why Quarlious and Winwife are so indignant in the first place when Ursula threatens to “baste and roast” Mooncalf till his eyes “drop out, like ‘em [the pigs]” (2. 5. 66-7). In the wildest fantasy of these middle-class men, the “juicy and wholesome” (2. 5. 78) Ursula is metamorphosed into a cannibalistic orgress who, while inviting others to feed on her, threatens to cook up her customers.\(^8\)

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\(^8\) Despite their fear, Ursula has no desire to eat them. As Mary W. Bledsoe argues, in Ursula’s retort to Quarlious and Winwife’s ridicule “one can see Ursula’s tendency to
Peter Stallybrass and Allon White argue that, since the pig, due to its ambiguous position within European agricultural practices, is categorized as one of the “creatures of the threshold,” Ursula’s identification as the “mother o’ the pigs” (2. 5. 70), “some walking sow” (2. 5. 72), and “sow of Smithfield” (4. 5. 74) by people of all classes hence makes her “the source and object of praise and abuse.” Yet they fail to mention that, in this play, such ambivalence is specifically informed by class difference. The anxiety that troubles the middle-class men about Ursula does not seem to be shared by those from lower down the social hierarchy, who constitute the majority of her regular customers. From the horse-course to her tapster, nearly everybody of the lower orders depends on Ursula for the supply of meat, “draught,” and “sup” as well as “smocks” and “good whimsies” (2. 4. 49-50). Jonathan Haynes argues that “the material bodily principle is magnificently embodied in the enormous flesh of the pig-woman Ursula and in her booth, which caters to all the body’s needs (eating, drinking, defecating, and fornicating).” Indeed, according to Clark, “the victualling house increasingly provided a variety of help and support for the poor — through sales of food in small quantities and the like — which helped them to survive” when living standards declined as a result of rising food

‘anatomize’ people” — “I hope to see ‘em plagu’d one day (pox’d they are already, I am sure) with lean playhouse poultry, that has the bony rump sticking out like the ace of spades or the point of a partisan, that every rib of ‘em is like the tooth of a saw; and will so grate ‘em with their hips and shoulders, as (take ‘em altogether) they were as good lie with a hurdle” (2. 5. 95-101). See Bledsoe, “The Function of Linguistic Enormity in Ben Jonson’s Bartholomew Fair,” Language and Style 17.2 (1984): 153. Interestingly, the “people” whom Ursula threaten to “anatomize” or, to use a culinary term, chop up are hardly the gentlemen but the prostitutes or the “poultry” that they will have. True to her role as a commercial cook, her retaliation is achieved not by slaughtering her (potential) customers but by serving them “lean . . . poultry” that will spoil their appetite.

prices, falling real wages, and widespread unemployment and underemployment.\textsuperscript{90} Thus, Knockem, instead of abhorring Ursula's adulterated food as Justice Overdo does, seems to have no qualms about partaking of it. When Ursula vows to get even with his "mumbling mouth," he jeers back: "What? Thou'lt poison me with a newt in a bottle of ale, wilt thou? Or a spider in a tobacco-pipe, Urs? Come, there's no malice in these fat folks, I never fear thee" (2. 3. 19-21). Although his confidence may reflect a different expectation or taste of food, it can at the same time reveal trust and easiness that can not be found in Quarlous and Winwife's attitude to Ursula.

The relationship between Ursula and her poor customers, in this light, is reciprocal and even symbiotic. As much as these people need her, she seems to need them, too. When Ursula burns her own leg with the scalding-pan, nearly everybody — that is, everybody except for the "gentlemen" (2. 5. 156) — leaps to her aid. Trash is immediately sent for some "cream and salad oil" (2. 5. 151); Leatherhead tries to help her in a chair; Knockem, while tending her blister "with the white of an egg, a little honey, and hog's grease," volunteers to "tend [her] booth and look to thy affairs, the while," so that she can just sit in the chair, "give directions, and shine Ursa major" (2. 5. 72-6). Although cooking threatens to unmake Ursula, wounding seems to make her whole by uniting, consolidating, and making those lower-class characters revolve around her like a constellation. Moreover, just as Ursula is in charge of their provision, so they cure her with foodstuffs that have the same slimy, sticky, and oily texture as her body. Though touching the "cream," the "salad oil," the egg white, the honey, and the "hog's grease" poses the risk of being dissolved in the stickiness of those foods, the transformation also enables them to achieve mutual assimilation with Ursula and, in a sense, replace her

\textsuperscript{90} Clark 125-6.
“lost . . . limb” (2. 5. 150)\textsuperscript{91} with the collective body of theirs. Not only do they attend to her bodily health but they contribute to her business. As Shannon Miller suggests, Ursula and, by extension, her pig stand function as both the “geographic center” and “economic center” in the play.\textsuperscript{92} While the pig-woman binds Edgwirth and Nightingale with the “indenture” and “covenant” (2. 4. 45-6) of free food and sex, they reciprocate with all the “purses and purchase” (2. 4. 34-6) they steal for her — “to bring her comfort” (2. 6. 59). When the supply of prostitutes runs low, she also appeals to Knockem and Whit to prove themselves “right Bartholomew-birds” by procuring more for the “gallants” (4. 5. 13; 16; 15) whom Edgworth promises to take to her shop. Indeed, as the central figure from which main criminal activities and networks are spawned, Ursula is, as Justice Overdo says, “the very womb and bed of enormity” (2. 2. 106-7) which, while threatening to “baste and roast” (2. 5. 67) her off-spring, offers her own flesh to their consumption. As Stallybrass and White argue, “in Ursula’s discourse, animals and humans are interchangeable.”\textsuperscript{93} As she is confused with her food, so her human-progeny seems to become undifferentiated from her pig-progeny and metamorphose into her “litter of pigs, to grunt out another Bartholomew Fair” (2. 3. 1-3).

Ursula’s identification with her vagrant customers and her involvement in their criminal activities both make her the perfect candidate for contemporary fears about the problem of vagrancy. In many ways, Knockem and his pack resemble the ever-growing population of vagrants caused by “population growth, landlessness, and the penury and

\textsuperscript{91} When Ursula first burns her leg, she yells, “I ha’ lost a limb in the service!” (2. 5. 150-1).


\textsuperscript{93} Stallybrass and White 65.
insecurity of wage-labour.”

They are poor, and they lack any regular income apart from wages from intermittent jobs. Though able-bodied and fit to work, they are unemployed or "masterless." Rootless, they are also believed to be lawless, dangerous, and suspected of spreading vice and corruption. All these characteristics match those that, according to Beier, define a man as a vagrant. As he argues, associated with the stereotype of sturdy beggar or masterless men as lazy, corrupt social outcasts, vagabondage is defined as "a social and political danger much like witchcraft," conveniently supplying various explanations of evil forces that conspired to destroy society. Thus, if, as Schoenfeldt points out, "in hierarchical readings of bodily organs . . . the belly is typically linked to the lower classes," Ursula and her companions may represent a rebellious belly that, instead of concocting food and distributing it to different body parts, threaten to consume all. As Ursula has already been constructed as the prototype of female voracity, contemporary fears about vagrancy are compounded by the anxiety about the oral/gastronomical subversion of the social order by women. The female cook is thus turned into the opening and the agent through which the unruly forces of the lower strata are introduced into society.

While the gentlemen in Bartholomew Fair only imagine themselves being devoured by Ursula's booth, in Philip Massinger's A New Way to Pay Old Debts, the prodigal aristocrat Welborne is literally sucked dry and then "vomited out of an alehouse" (1. 1. 178). Although in both plays food functions as an important resource in the social

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95 Beier 4.
96 Beier 12.
97 Schoenfeldt, "Fables" 248.
98 Philip Massinger, A New Way to Pay Old Debts, ed. T. W. Craik (New York: W W
competition between classes, in Massinger's play the problem of food is further complicated by economic factors. If the food provided in Ursula's booth defiles its upper-class consumers in *Bartholomew Fair*, the food sold in the alehouse threatens to disrupt the social distinction and to subvert the traditional social hierarchy that shores up the aristocrat's privilege and superiority in society. Moreover, unlike Ursula who has no personal connection with her gentlemen customers, the alehouse keeper Tapwell used to work as an under-butler in Welborne's family. His refusal to feed his former master for free thus indicates a kind of subversion more threatening than the social dislocation in Jonson's play. For the aristocrats in the play, the meaning of food has to go through yet another transformation in order to recuperate the order and security of the old time. While the traditional function of food as a "gift" is retained, it is also made to adopt the role of money so that the aristocrats can similarly "purchase" their way through the increasingly commercialized world without appearing the same as social upstarts such as Tapwell or, more importantly, the wealthy merchant Sir Giles Overreach. To accomplish the transformation of food, a cook has to be recruited. Since — in this play as in *Bartholomew Fair* — woman, whether inside or outside the elite circle, is not just seen as food for male consumption but also as the medium and the agent of danger and disorder, the responsibility has to fall on her male counterpart. Rather than representing the unruly forces of the lower class, the male cook is portrayed as the guardian of the social elite, defending the aristocratic community as well as its (male) members against invasions from below and changes from the world beyond.

Critics generally focus on the implications of the conflict between the merchant and the nobles in the play. Although some of them briefly discuss the role of the Alworth Norton, 1999). All quotations are taken from this edition.
family cook Furnace in the household and in the elite circle, they fall short of exploring in full the significance of food itself and of his position as cook. The importance of food is introduced in the beginning of the play when Welborne fights with Tapwell for his right to eat. Impoverished and deeply indebted, the prodigal Welborne nonetheless takes it for granted that he can continue eating at the expense of his former servant Tapwell who now runs an alehouse. Tapwell, however, refuses his demand and threatens to call in the constable "if you but advance/ Your Plymouth cloak (cudgel)" (1. 1. 13-4). Surprised, Welborne immediately appeals to his past generosity: "Is not thy house, and all thou hast my gift?" (1. 1. 24). Unfortunately, since such a "gift" is not recorded in the only "register" (1. 1. 25-6) Tapwell keeps, it simply does not count. For Welborne, however, it is perfectly reasonable to expect unlimited loyalty in return for his "gift." As Felicity Heal argues in her study of hospitality in early modern England, "the forms of asymmetrical giving were a necessary part of the behaviour of the elite." In such a gift economy, while "largess was essential to the noble," an enhanced return in the form of

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political and economic loyalty was also expected from the recipient. Such a relationship might have existed when Tapwell was still an “under-butler” (1. 1. 48) in the Welborne household. When he changes his profession and becomes an alehouse keeper, however, he moves into a different social space where a different set of principles prevails. In the world of business, the relation between Tapwell and his customers is not based on reciprocity dictated by implicit cultural scripts but on the contractual agreements recorded in his chalkboard. As he has to earn his living through his income, what is appreciated is no longer the ability to bestow gifts on one’s inferiors but the “gift to pay for what [one has] call’d for” (1. 1. 64). While Tapwell’s refusal to endorse the code of reciprocity may signify his estrangement from the world where social hierarchy and gift economy define or shape the relations among people, it may simultaneously signify his involvement in a new social order. In such a new world, social relations are governed neither by the principle of hierarchy nor by the elite’s obligation to give and the recipient’s obligation to reciprocate; and the need to distinguish the “a lord of acres” (1. 1. 42) from “whores,” “canters,” and “clubbers” (1. 1. 62-3) is also less imperative than survival and thus the need to distinguish between those who pay and those who don’t.

The new order that Tapwell upholds and his concern about survival, however, are precisely what the play condemns. As his demand for payment is represented as an act of ingratitude, Welborne’s violence against the Tapwell couple and his public humiliation of them, forcing them to “go off on their hands, and knees” (s.d.), seem to be justified. Given the play’s treatment of the scene, it is easy to abhor Tapwell’s supposedly cold-hearted practicality and ingratitude just as Welborne does. Michael Neill, for

instance, though acknowledging Tapwell's marginal position and limited power in society,\textsuperscript{101} apparently sympathizes with "the melancholy rage"\textsuperscript{102} of Welborne. He identifies Tapwell as a kind of low-life version of Sir Giles Overreach, the wealthy merchant who fats himself on "decay'd" (2. 1. 79) aristocrats in the play. The association thus turns the alehouse keeper into a supporter of the idea of "a narrow, functionally determined accession of personal power and prestige," and his chalk register of debt, "the [emblem] of a social vision which seeks to make the narrow scruple of commercial law the sole principle of human organization."\textsuperscript{103} In order to justify Welborne's anger and violence against Tapwell, Neill finds it necessary to deny Tapwell's recognition of "the obligations of friendship and the duties of office" and to reduce the scope of his social vision down to the point where it can contain nothing but the desire of commercial profits.\textsuperscript{104} Nevertheless, profit-oriented though Tapwell may appear, he does not throw Welborne out as soon as the latter can't afford to pay for his food. On the contrary, when he finally does so, he has already allowed his former master to eat on credit for a while. Although Tapwell is hardly the only creditor of Welborne, unlike the others who have "not been hasty, nor e'er laid to arrest [Welborne]" (4. 2. 88) for his debts and thus end up being "broke" (4. 2. 84) or "remov'd from the shop-board, and confin'd / Under a stall" (4. 2. 94-5), Tapwell refuses to go that far in his treatment of his former master.

If Welborne's rejection from the public alehouse reflects the decline of traditional

\textsuperscript{101} Neill: 196.
\textsuperscript{102} Neill: 195.
\textsuperscript{103} Neill: 197-8.
\textsuperscript{104} Neill: 198. Frederick M. Burelbach, Jr., viewing the play as a modernized version of the morality play, similarly sees Tapwell's behavior as an act of ingratitude. See Burelbach, "A New Way to Pay Old Debts: Jacobean Morality," \textit{College Language
values in the lower-class circle, his encounter with Lady Alworth’s servants shows that even the aristocratic community is not immune to change. Determined to “piece” his broken state (1. 1. 183) together, he goes to Lady Alworth for help but can proceed as far as to the hall room only. The steward Order immediately accuses him of “rudness” and “saucy impudence” (1. 3. 43-4); the gentleman usher Amble tells him to stay where he can be served among his “fellows from the basket” (1. 3. 46-7); the cook Furnace even bids him “vanish/ Into some outhouse, though it be the pig-sty,” where his “scullion” will attend him (1. 3. 48-50). Lena Cowen Orlin argues that in early modern period the “hall” had been transformed from a space for communal activities into a mere “passageway to the more important state chambers ahead and above,” a liminal space separating the private space of the household from that beyond the gate.\(^{105}\) Although Welborne by birth is supposed to belong to the exclusive private circle of aristocracy, his poverty-ridden body that is “tattered, lousy” (1. 1. 17), and smells like “a creature/ Made out of the privy” (1. 3. 52-3) not only stops him at the hall but threatens to force him right out of it and into “some outhouse” or even a “pig-stye.” Worse than feeding on the alehouse food, he is now served with food that he used to discard as garbage. If Tapwell challenges the outmoded principle of hospitality, Lady Alworth’s servants here invert the power relation between the master and the servant, rendering him inferior to the “scullion,” the servant of the lowest rank in the household as well as in the kitchen. Humiliated, Welborne again explodes in rage: “Why you slaves,/ Created only to make legs, and cringe;/ To carry in a dish, and shift a trencher;/ That have not souls only to

hope a blessing/ Beyond black jacks, or flagons; you that were born/ Only to consume
meat, and drink, and batten/ Upon reversions” (1. 3. 59-5). Yet his contempt for them
only reflects how deeply he has fallen.

As the destruction of Welborne’s aristocratic identity is reflected in the rebellion of
servants and the deprivation of the food he likes, so the restoration of his broken state
depends on regaining his control of food as well as servants. Thus, instead of paying off
his “old debts,” he first tries to repossess his position as a food provider. No sooner has
Lady Alworth agreed to assist him than he invites Marrall, his uncle’s right-hand man and
major persecutor, to dine with him at her place. Expectably, Marrall is suspicious in the
beginning. Nevertheless, as he moves deeper into the Alworth mansion, witnesses the
courteous performance of servants, and tastes the delicacies prepared for the sake of
Welborne, he is gradually “converted” into a “new belief” (2. 2. 72-3) in the restoration
of Welborne’s “sweet nature” (2. 3. 57), which neither “saints, nor angels/ Could have
won [him] to have faith in” (2. 2. 73-4). He is so convinced by his experience that, when accused by Overreach of making the story up, he is determined to switch his loyalty
to Welborne and eventually to bring about the downfall of his former master — “Shall I
not trust my eyes sir?/ Or taste? I feel her good cheer in my belly” (2. 3. 95-6). For
Welborne, the lesson is clear. Although in this new world the code of hospitality has to
bow to the justice of law — as Tapwell told his wife when Welborne forces him to crawl
off the stage, “There’s law to cure our bruises” (1. 1. 97) — the law is hardly immune to
human manipulation. As long as the law is represented by the “chap-fall’n” (2. 1. 4)
Justice Greedy, who is always ready to forget the profit when he thinks of his belly,
Welborne can also change the opinion of law “on the sudden” (4. 2. 62) and to punish the
“unthankful knaves” (4. 2. 82) in the “old” way. Thus, once Welborne is turned “right
worshipful again” (4. 2. 15), he is able to win Greedy to his side by outbidding Tapwell’s bribery of “fat turkeys” (4. 2. 47) with “a yoke of oxen/ Worth all his poultry” (4. 2. 62) — a generous offer silently endorsed by Lady Alworth’s cook Furnace standing beside him.

Nancy S. Leonard points out that Furnace “is linked to Welborne with particular closeness.”¹⁰⁶ Although the success of Welborne’s dinner show requires the cooperation of all servants, it depends primarily on showcasing the cook’s culinary expertise and on his willingness to serve Welborne’s “pleasure” (2. 2. 51). Thus, when Welborne arrives with Marrall, Amble reminds Furnace, “Perform it bravely” (2. 2. 33). Confident in his ability, he simply replies, “I know my cue, ne’er doubt me” (2. 2. 33). Actively involved in the power struggle of those above him, Furnace also seems more cautious and sensitive to the political climate than other servants. When Welborne is stopped at the hallway of the Alworth mansion, he is the last of the servants to join the humiliation of the young aristocrat; when Welborne reminds Lady Alworth of his past generosity to her deceased husband, the cook is also the first to recall the history of his late master — “Are not we base rogues / That could forget this?” (1. 3. 108-9). Moreover, as Margot Heinemann points out, Furnace is more perceptive than other servants of Overreach’s difference from “the usual stereotyped merchant or usurer of City comedy.”¹⁰⁷ Having pleased the poor gentleman’s “palate” with his “utmost skill” (2. 2. 56), he further wishes that he had “The roasting of [Overreach’s] heart, that cheated [Welborne],/ And forces the poor gentleman to these shifts” (2. 2. 97-99). If Furnace’s speech “clarifies what

¹⁰⁶ Leonard 183.
¹⁰⁷ Heinemann 257-8.
happens to the general revulsion once Welborne begins his intrigue"\textsuperscript{108} as Leonard argues, it also symbolically sets the plot of revenge against Overreach. The wish, rather than horrifying his listeners as Ursula’s threat to “baste and roast” (2. 5. 66) Mooncalf does, is taken for granted.

Despite his importance in the restoration of Welborne, Furnace’s primary responsibility is to serve his mistress Lady Alworth, preserving the integrity of her sexual reputation as well as her physical health. Without a husband to define her identity, the noble widow, though secure in her wealth, is in a state no less ambiguous than the prodigal Welborne. Before she concedes to Welborne’s request, she tries to postpone the intrusion of suitors by substituting sumptuous dishes for her presence. Her refusal to eat, however, is an insult to the cook’s culinary expertise. After Furnace’s angry tirade against Lady Alworth’s negligence of his efforts, the steward Order comforts him that his “art,” thought not eaten by their mistress, is still “seen in the dining-room” (1. 2. 37). But Furnace becomes more upset:

\begin{center}
By whom?
\end{center}

\begin{center}
By such as pretend to love her, but come,
\end{center}

\begin{center}
To feed upon her. Yet of all the harpies,
\end{center}

\begin{center}
That do devour her, I am out of charity
\end{center}

\begin{center}
With none so much, as the thin-gutted squire
\end{center}

\begin{center}
That’s stol’n into commission” (1. 2. 38-42)
\end{center}

The suitors’ sexual (as well as economic) interest in Lady Alworth is interpreted as their desire to “devour her.” While in \textit{Bartholomew Fair} Ursula represents the insatiable monster comprised by the number of growing vagrants, in this play it is Justice

\textsuperscript{108} Leonard 184.
Greedy — the “thin-gutted squire” — who embodies the rebellious threat from below. Metaphorically transformed into one of the “harpies” — “a fabulous monster, rapacious and filthy, having a woman’s face and body and a bird’s wings and claws, and supposed to act as a minister of divine vengeance” (OED) — he is both feminized and demonized by his ravenous appetite. When Furnace continues — “His stomach’s as insatiate as the grave;/ Or strumpets’ ravenous appetites” (1. 2. 46-7) — Greedy’s mythic hunger is further identified with the dark power of death or, alternatively, with the promiscuous appetite of prostitutes. What the two analogies are intended to suggest is Greedy’s inability to discriminate his victims. As a justice of law, Greedy is in charge of the guiding principle behind the new social order, which (in theory at least) similarly treats all people — regardless of their backgrounds — as equals and thus opens up the gate of unprecedented opportunities for those from below. Although the erasure of social distinctions poses a threat to the aristocratic community who has already lost its economic superiority in the changing economy, the association of woman with the fabulous bird of prey and with the grave provides a convenient explanation for the monstrosity that characterizes Greedy’s desire to devour the aristocratic community. Concomitantly, normative humanity is conceived not only as aristocratic but as male. Thus, just as in Bartholomew Fair the contemporary fear about the vagrancy problem is projected unto women, so in A New Way to Pay Old Debts the aristocratic anxiety about the upward mobility promoted by economic and social changes is displaced by the prejudice against female desires and the fear of unpredictable natural forces.

Furnace’s feminization and demonization of the lower-class upstart may deflect part of the anxiety about female insatiability and uncontrollability away from the upper-class woman, but it is his cooking that serves as the ultimate defense against the danger.
Monitored by Furnace’s diet regime, Lady Alworth is thus allowed and even expected to enjoy — if not to indulge — her appetite. When she decides to take the control in her own hand and desists from eating except for “spoonmeat” (1. 2. 55), Furnace is distressed:

I was entertain’d by her to please her palate,

And till she forsoe eating I perform’d it.

Now since our master, noble Alworth died,

Though I crack my brains to find out tempting sauces,

And raise fortification in the pastry. (1. 2. 21-25)

Although Lady Alworth is claimed to solemnly renounce “eating,” still dinning on “panada” or “water-gruel” in her chamber (1. 2. 35-6), she is anything but starving. The only thing that she “forswore” is merely those delicates invented to “please her palate.” Furnace, in other words, is not so much concerned about his lady’s being starved as upset about the fact that he is “three parts roasted,/ And the fourth part parboil’d” (1. 2. 33-4) with his “sweat never thought on” (1. 2. 36). Obviously, whether one is working in a country fair booth or in a grand household, the working condition in the kitchen is equally intolerable, but that is hardly Furnace’s primary grievance. He is “angry” because his “art,” as Order calls it, is neither eaten nor “seen” by those who deserve the food. Unlike Ursula’s “pork-like pig” (3. 2. 94) that has never been put on display, Furnace’s dishes are very much treated as works of art. Using the verb “perform,” he sounds as if he is executing an artistic piece of work, which also makes his culinary work appear to be an ingenious achievement rather than just ordinary kitchen drudgery. Indeed, while Ursula cooks with her body and her scalding pan, Furnace cooks with nothing but his “brain”; if Ursula merely brings forth her “litter of pigs” (2. 3. 2), Furnace
makes new discoveries of “tempting sauces” and raises “fortifications in the pastry.”\textsuperscript{109} No longer retaining any traces of its ingredients, the “sauce” in its liquid form seems to be immaterialized; since it is meant not to ease the hunger but to please the palate, it is consumed not so much for biological needs as for aesthetic purposes. The pastry “fortifications,” on the other hand, by putting on the illusion of military constructions, are also transformed symbolically from products of common craftsmanship into masterpieces of architectural ingenuity. Instead of wasting away in the kitchen as Ursula does, Furnace succeeds in transforming his physical pain and discomfort during his work into culinary inventions that embody not just his artistic skills but his intellectual power.

While Furnace’s “art” finds its expression in his culinary creation, it is further reflected in his consumers who are supposed to internalize the food and thus be transformed by it. When her late husband was still alive, Lady Alworth remained the primary consumer of Furnace’s food; when he died, and she forswore eating, the cook is forced to cook for her suitors. To the cook, however, his mistress is no different from the food that he cooks for her. While Lady Alworth may be the immediate consumer of Furnace’s food, symbolically it is those who come to dine on her — first her husband, then her hungry suitors — that he really cooks for. Thus, even when she tries to substitute the food for her presence, the effect is counteracted by her identification with the food. The suitors, by consuming her food, can still “feed upon her.” To his direct and indirect clients, the effect of Furnace’s food is double-edged. While the “sauce” is used to seduce Lady Alworth into eating, the “pastry fortifications” immediately works to contain and to domesticate her appetite. Once Lady Alworth is physically transformed,

\textsuperscript{109} See also the description of the master cook in Jonson’s The Staple of News: “A master cook! Why he’s the men o’men,/ For a professor! He designs, he draws,/ He paints,
and her appetite tamed, she also becomes not just edible but both “tempting” and fortifying to her deceased husband. Not every man, however, has the stomach for such a delicacy. Justice Greedy, for one, can only gorge himself in vain. Despite his indiscriminate appetite, “Meat’s cast away upon him./ It never thrives” (1. 2. 43-4). Unable to assimilate the food into his own body, Greedy seems to have a body that is more class-conscious than he himself.

Furnace, however, is not the only one in charge of food preparation in the household; women, too, participated in high-level culinary practices. During Lady Alworth’s abstinence from food, her chambermaids may be in charge of the preparation of the “panada, Or water-gruel” (1. 2. 35) on which she dines in her chamber. Their culinary involvement, however, is never emphasized except when it seems to pose a threat to their mistress’ stepson Alworth. When young Alworth, after his visit to his stepmother, is about to leave again, Lady Alworth’s waiting-woman and chambermaid entreat him to stay with them a while longer. When he declines, one begs him to “put these few quince-cakes into [his] pocket” that are of her own preserving, and the other offers her hand-made “marmalade” to comfort his stomach (2. 1. 6-9). Both “quince-cakes” and “marmalade” are ornamental confectionary and sweetmeats called “banqueting stuffe.” Such foods are differentiated from Furnace’s “puffpaste” and “larded” pheasant (1. 3. 21-2) because of the nature of their ingredients and their position in the dining ritual. Not even considered as food,\textsuperscript{110} sugar products were in the beginning produced for medicinal purposes as well as for pleasure and entertainment. According to Lynette Hunter, however, during the sixteenth and seventeenth century

he carves, he builds, he fortifies/ Makes citadels of curious fowl and fish” (4. 2. 19-22).

\textsuperscript{110} See Sidney W. Mintz, \textit{Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History}
sugar-work was gradually separated from medicine and used primarily for the purpose of entertainments. The separation, while marking the exclusion of women from the realm of medicine, simultaneously signifies the growing importance of women’s role at a banquet. If, as David Mintz suggests, “sweet things are, in both literal and figurative sense, more the domain of women than of men,” in the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England, the skill at creating the sugary delights was specifically attached to female labor and creativity. As Hall argues, being a “leisured art” particularly associated with higher-class women, the culinary creation of “banqueting stuffe” not only provides individual English women with “a venue for social and artistic self-expression” but opens up “an arena where women asserted their own agency” in a context larger than the domestic one. In this light, while the chambermaids’ “quince-cakes” and “marmalade” serves as the vehicle to express their sexual interest in young Alworth and to exchange them for his kisses, the sweets simultaneously enable their makers to define themselves as subjects and to transgress the “parts” (2. 2. 16) assigned to them within the domestic order of the Alworth household and in the larger scheme to restore a declining social order.

Not everybody shares such a positive view of the self-fashioning power of “banqueting stuffe.” Patricia Fumerton, for instance, doubts that the “personal

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112 Mintz 150.
114 Hall 176-7.
expression” found in the “banqueting stuffe” would necessarily lead to the construction of subjectivity. For her, the after-meal sweets, pitted against the “solid, English reality of meat dishes,” is merely a “like-‘food’” or a mockery of the “real” food whose “shapes and ‘conceits’ are far removed in substance and style from public-feast dishes.” As a result, the subjectivity nourished by banqueting houses and the food they housed, because of their incessant retreat into the private space, is regarded both as “a sugar-spun identity always on the verge of being consumed by an elusive and feared insubstantiality” and as “a mode of self-representation always on the verge of breaking up.” Just as the “private self” one constructs through the consumption of “banqueting stuffe” is as “ephemeral and void” as the sweets, so the subjectivity that women may acquire through their culinary creations is equally substanceless and elusive. Because the making of confections and spirits is not performed in “common living space” but usually in a secluded “still-room,” and because the foods made there are again detached from the public reality of “common foodstuffs,” the “self-expression” achieved in such “decorative void cuisine” becomes something not to be valued, but to be suspected — if not condemned. The “edible self-portrait” that the lady of the household makes is thus turned into a “sugar-and-spice [construct]” that is “all delicacy,

116 Fumerton 123-4.
117 Fumerton 130.
118 Fumerton 132.
119 Fumerton 133.
120 Fumerton seems to ignore the practical concerns involved in the choice of location. As Wilson points out, “[b]ecause the stillroom or stillhouse was periodically warmed by the furnace, it was often chosen as a storeplace for ‘banquetting stuffe,’ on the grounds that this would keep better in warm air.” See Wilson, “Evolution” 32.
121 Fumerton 125.
all personalized in style, all removed from everyday substance,” and “whose very stuff . . .
was void.” In her idealization of “publicly centered forms of living” and thus her
reinforcement of the division between the public and the private, Fumerton devalues one
of the few domains reserved to women and denigrates the “private” sphere in which they
are trapped. When she sees “banqueting stuffe” as mere replications of their female
makers, she not only defines those women as edible and fragmented as their sugar-spun
constructs but implicitly identifies them as potential threats to the physical and spiritual
“wholeness” that contemporaries strive to achieve through their consumption of the
sweets.

Fumerton is not alone in her suspicion; the family cook Furnace is equally
concerned about the potential danger embedded in the chambermaids’ sweets. Detecting
the sexual undertone in their flirtatious exchange with young Alworth, he
comments in disgust — “How greedy these chamberers are of a beardless chin!/ I think
the tits will ravish him” (2. 2. 12-3). While the kissing, described as “greedy,” is
translated into voracious eating, those who provide the comfort foods in the first place are
turned into devourers that threaten to consume the “beardless chin” they ostensibly
attempt to feed. The switch of positions between the feeders and the eater then
transforms the “chamberers” into “tits.” While “tit” means a young woman of loose
character, it could also be the variation of “teat” — in other words, the nipple (OED) or,
figuratively, a source of nourishment or supply (OED). As a result, the chambermaids
as whole human beings located in specific social positions are reduced into anonymous
yet gendered body parts that function to provide both nurturance and sexual pleasure.
The fragmentation of the chambermaids subsequently triggers the transmutation of the

122 Fumerton 125.
food they make into the equivalent of human milk, which in turn makes their intended consumer to regress from a “beardless” youth into a sucking baby.

The effect of the series of transformations is double-edged. To young Alworth, while his “beardless chin” has already signified his immaturity and hence the instability of his masculinity, the symbolic regression renders him even more vulnerable. As Janet Adelman argues, since “the taking in of food is the primary acknowledgement of one’s dependence on the world” and “the primary token of one’s vulnerability,” masculinity and nobility in Coriolanus are both defined by the denial of nurturance and the transformation of hunger into aggression. When Lady Alworth informs young Alworth of his deceased father’s last wish for him, she similarly tells him that the “war” is “a school/ Where all the principles tending to honour,/ Are taught” (1. 2. 100-2) and the “noble way” through which one can be fully “made up” (5. 1. 394) as a man. One “essential” (1. 3. 113) quality of being a soldier is precisely to endure “hunger” even “When plenty of provision fails” (1. 3.111-2). If becoming a baby forces Alworth to renounce his self-sufficiency and threatens to emasculate him, it further exposes him to the danger of physical and sexual violation. Like Welborne’s mistresses, who melt his “lordship” with their “embrace” (1. 1. 47), the “tits” similarly threaten to “ravish” the young man. On the other hand, although the power of the chambermaids may have been blown out of proportion in Furnace’s imagination, the symbolic and social space for them is reduced immensely. As long as the “quince-cakes” and “marmalade” are the material and hence sharable outcomes of their artistic creation, they represent, as Elaine

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Scarry argues, “a fragment of world alteration,”\textsuperscript{124} enabling the makers to move from “a self-contained loop within the body” to “the equivalent loop now projected into the external world.”\textsuperscript{125} The self-extension achieved through their culinary works, however, is curtailed and folded right back into their bodily existence as the sweet preserves are (again) conflated with the product of their bodily secretion.

Rushing to the rescue of young Alworth’s endangered masculinity, Furnace offers his own culinary invention to counteract the emasculating effects of the chambermaids’ sweet stuffs. No sooner has he ushered the chambermaids off the stage than he urges his young master to drink off “the true elixir” that has been “boil’d/ Since midnight” with “cordial” ingredients — that is, “the quintessence/ Of five cocks of the game, ten dozen of sparrows,/ Knuckles of veal, potato roots, and marrow;/ Coral and ambergris” (2. 2. 17-22). While the chambermaids, imagined to extract nourishing liquid from their own bodies for others’ consumption, occupy both positions of subject and object in the culinary act, Furnace, by distilling the “quintessence” only from the bodies (or body parts) of other creatures and plants, maintains his separateness from the ingredients and hence his subject position in his cookery. Moreover, calling his drink “elixir,” a word associated with alchemy, he further upgrades his cookery to a kind of science and transforms his food into alchemical medicine. Charles Webster argues that, by the end of the sixteenth century, “alchemical medicine was seen as a separate system of magical knowledge” which had a dominant influence in English medicine after 1640.\textsuperscript{126} When

\textsuperscript{125} Scarry 170.
Furnace tries to play up the medicinal value of his food, he simultaneously differentiates it from the chamberers’ sweets, which were gradually distanced from medicine and associated with entertainments. Thus, he echoes the gender division of his time, which increasingly excluded women from the professional institutions and defined their skills — whether culinary or medical — as acts with only domestic or personal values.

Although the chambermaids’ sweets threaten to jeopardize young Alworth’s self-sufficiency, Furnace’s drink promises to strengthen it. Just as the alchemist’s elixir has the legendary power to change metals into gold, the cook guarantees that the potion would restore his physical health as well as his sexual prowess:

\[
\text{were you two years older,}
\]

\[
\text{And I had a wife, or gamesome mistress,}
\]

\[
\text{I durst trust you with neither: you need not bait}
\]

\[
\text{After this I warrant you, though your journey’s long,}
\]

\[
\text{You may ride on the strength of this till tomorrow morning” (2. 2. 22-6).}
\]

The foremost goal of the drink is to boost the sexual power of man. Furnace jokingly boasts that its power is strong enough to overwhelm the young man with sexual drive, depriving him of the ability to discriminate the proper sexual partner from the improper. If women are indispensable in the sexual act, be they “gamesome” or not, they merely function as “bait” rather than the partner or even the sexual object. Sex, instead of being an activity of mutual enjoyments, becomes an ordeal, a “long” journey for man that requires unusual “strength” and perseverance to “ride” through. While in normal circumstances it is a woman that a man needs to chase after and “ride” on, with the help of the potion, one fortunately can do away with her altogether and “ride” on the “strength” of the elixir — or rather on power of his own — through the long journey in
the night. This way, young Alworth, if only in fantasy, is enabled to maintain a kind of erotic self-sufficiency and be protected from the danger of being ravished and devoured by women.

Although Furnace prides himself on being the guardian of the Alworth family, such a role, as the traditional social order gradually breaks down under economic pressures, gradually gives way to a new kind of cook. As the professional cook becomes more and more specialized, and his culinary skills are turned into commodities of commercial value, he no longer aims to please the palate of his consumer or master but to show off his culinary expertise so that he could increase his market value.\textsuperscript{127} Therefore, when Overreach, in his preparation for the arrival of his prospective son-in-law Lord Lovell, authorizes Justice Greedy to take “absolute command” (3. 2. 17) of the kitchen, his “rebellious cook” (3. 2. 86) refuses to surrender his authority to the new “monarch . . . of the boil’d, the roast, the bak’d” (3. 2. 20-1). Turning a deaf ear to Greedy’s command, he refuses to roast a fawn with “a Northfork dumpling” (3. 2. 67) in its belly and insists on using the “new device for sauce” he just invented (3. 2. 89-90). Unlike Furnace, who is hired not so much for his loyalty as for his professionalism, the cook may enjoy a different kind of authority from the traditional cook — but not without price. On the one hand, while Furnace as a status symbol is allowed to move beyond the kitchen into the public space of the hall, Overreach’s cook, secluded in the kitchen, seems to be delegated to the margin of the social circle. On the other hand, although his market value reinforces his authority in cooking, it simultaneously subordinates his “authority of the kitchen” (1. 2. 13) to his employer who pays his price. Thus, despite the cook’s initial resistance to Greedy, eventually he “must at his [master’s] command do any
outrage” (2. 2. 111). Subdued by Sir Giles’ threat and giving in to Greedy’s supposedly inferior taste, the cook is reduced to the mere instrument for food production and excluded from the social network of the household. Although he does not become another Ursula embodying the danger of pollution and unruly forces from below, he lose his agency as a guardian of the household and becomes the entrance through which inferior or dangerous matters flow in.

In the wishful thinking of the play, Overreach’s suppression of his cook foretells the downfall of his own. Although he can afford to pile his table with “curious viands” (3. 2. 1-2), he ignores that to be “right honourable” (2. 1. 76) requires the ability not just to feed “high” (2. 2. 110) but also to feed “right.” By depriving his cook of the traditional role as the gastronomic guardian of the household, Overreach makes both his beings and his possessions vulnerable to the pollution of foreign dangers and impure elements. At the same time, when he forces his cook to give in to Greedy, he also contaminates the taste of food by substituting quality for quantity and haute cuisine for provincial cooking. The food thus may serve as another proof to his aristocratic guests that he is not and, hopefully, never will be “one of us.”

The differentiation, though fulfilled in the play, became increasingly impossible in reality when more people like Overreach and even Tapwell came into being. On the one hand, the publication of cookbooks, whether they were targeted at upper- or middle-class readers, might encourage the exchange between different cuisines and, to a degree, the homogenization of different tastes. On the other hand, the development of extra-domestic victualling business might also contribute to the promulgation of new foodstuffs and the transformation of elite and non-elite appetites through their cooking.

127 See Banner: 204-8.
In the busy traffic between food and people, cooks’ social responsibility expanded, but their potential of destruction also increased. While cooks still had to defend their consumers against the untamed force of nature as it is represented in food, they were required to protect the eating community from the gastronomic influence of other (inferior) social groups as well.

Unfortunately, old-fashioned chefs like Furnace who fiercely defend the integrity of the community they cook for had already been in decline. In place of them were the commercial-oriented cooks like Overreach’s cook who served as the agent through which the boundaries between different foods, different social groups, and different social spaces could be blurred, re-negotiated, and redefined. Nevertheless, the competition in the play between the two kinds of (male) cooks, while mirroring the class struggle between their masters, is again displaced unto the conflict between male and female cooks. Despite his hostility toward Overreach, Furnace expresses no grudges against the nameless cook at the Overreachs and even seems to sympathize with him for having to surrender his authority to his master’s “command” (2. 2. 111). Instead, Furnace’s resentment is directed toward the chambermaids who, though professing more sophisticated culinary skills, seem to receive less recognition from their consumers and enjoy even less power than the pig-woman Ursula, who is forever threatening but constantly elusive to the authority’s control.
Chapter 2

The Order of the Meal:
Class and Gender Struggle at the Dining Table

As we have seen in last chapter, food isn't just sustenance to be consumed, but something potentially wild and dangerous that needs to be tamed or civilized in the cooking process. If, as Fischler argues, "cookery helps to give food and its eaters a place in the world, a meaning,"1 it may seem that the civilizing process of food is complete when it is out of the kitchen door. Nevertheless, culinary treatment alone is hardly enough to "tame" the "wildness" perceived in food and to stabilize the meaning of food. Even after being cooked, food still needs to be integrated into a social pattern so that it can be rendered "edible" — not so much in the physical as in the cultural or social sense — to its consumers. Moreover, as long as one has to eat with others, the process of social integration is a collective act, which involves what Falk calls "a culturally structured activity in form of a shared (ritual) meal."2 The dining rituals and table manners, in this light, can also be seen as extension of the cooking process in the kitchen, through which cooked food is collectively predigested again at table before it can be admitted safely into its designated consumer’s body.

As Elias argues in The Civilizing Process, changes in table manners could be understood only in relation both to the formation of the community in which those

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1 Fischler: 286.
2 Falk 15.
manners are performed and to the broader economic and social changes that take place in that community. Practiced collectively, table manners not only establish a sense of order but also communicate and help to shape a variety of social categories and understandings, ranging from conceptions of class relations and gender roles to forms of social dominance and domestic organization. The maintenance of such orderliness at table was particularly important in early modern England when social hierarchy was in the process of restructuring, and social mobility accelerated in an unprecedented pace. As demonstrated by a contemporary story in *Pasqvils Jeste, and Mother Bynches Merriments* (1609), failing to demonstrate proper behavior at table not only exposed one as an incompetent and invalid member of a significant social group, but forced to the open the particular set of tensions ensuing from the economic and social changes of the time. In examining table manners, we can catch a glimpse of the relations of everyday life and the construction of personal and social identities during the early modern period.

Important though table manners were to the maintenance of the orderliness at table, their enactment would not be possible without the supplement of the provision of proper table service. While the training of table manners was primarily an integral part of male education, women were usually expected to profess the skills of table service, such as setting the table, serving dishes, cleaning leftovers, and even carving. Although women have always played an important role in providing food, during the early modern period, their responsibility — particularly in the private setting — gradually expanded from the kitchen to the dining room when the family size reduced, and the demand of female domestic labor rose. While their table service was indispensable to the creation of a pleasant dining experience, it was even more so for maintaining the social order at table as well as setting the stage for the performance of male civility. When men increasingly
depended on female labor to enjoy dining as a comfortable and orderly experience, they were forced to acknowledge their lack of self-sufficiency and their reliance on women for the construction of their identity and authority not just in the household but in the community. As a result, women’s intervention at table was perceived as a threat to men, which conveniently displaced the class struggle between them and served as the cause of unity for them.

In popular literature, the male anxiety is expressed either in the form of dismissal or collective cannibalism of women. In *The Comedy of Errors* (1623), the threat of female control is avoided by displacing the social struggle between men unto the sexual competition between women to the advantage of men. Thus, the overt political and economical conflict between Syracusian and Ephesian merchants and the implicit competition between the twin brothers are conveniently pushed to the background when the focus is shifted to the marital struggle between Antipholus of Ephesus and his wife, Adriana. Rather than confronting the inequality in the marriage, however, the play removes the husband from the gender struggle with his wife by pitting her against other women who, for different reasons, are no less enthusiastic about serving and entertaining him gastronomically as well as sexually. Thus, while the married men in the play can be well provided for wherever they go, the female characters, physically and emotionally exploited for their labor at table, are either excluded from the meal or at least removed to the margin of the dining scene. Once the women are contained, and their danger, purged, the conflict between men is miraculously resolved, and they can finally dine in harmony and in peace.

The early modern anxiety about dining was not unfounded. Although dining has always been a social activity structured by rules, such rules were changing in early
modern England. In the Middle Ages, society was structured according to a more or less rigid hierarchy in which everybody had a certain “place” conceived both in concrete-spatial and in social-structural terms. The social hierarchy was manifested most vividly in the formal dining occasion, where the rules of precedence and rank were asserted through the arrangement of seating, table-setting, and dining rituals of the household ceremonial. In such a society, as Falk argues, “sharing and incorporating food in a ritual meal implies the incorporation of the partaker into the community simultaneously defining his/her particular ‘place’ within it.”

As what one was allowed and could afford to eat was very much dictated by one’s class, one might rarely have the opportunity to encounter food so far beyond one’s social status and economic means that one lacked the knowledge and skill to consume it. Nevertheless, the restructuring of social hierarchies and the redistribution of economic resources during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries not only weakened the constraining power of the community, but also disrupted the hierarchical order of food consumption. Some of the rules might no longer be as feasible as they had been in the past. As the migration and urbanization during this period increasingly threw people of different social origins together, food of different kinds were also removed from the regions that they were produced and transported big cities such as London.

Although Harrison still tried to uphold the late medieval image of the noble household in *The Description of England* (1587), he couldn’t help but acknowledge that, as far as food was concerned, it became harder and harder to maintain a clear demarcation between social groups. Indeed, while the city

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3 Falk 20.
gentlemen and merchants were capable of keeping a dietary standard “often comparable . . . to the nobility of the land” and sometimes surpassing that of the nobility, even the artificers and husbandmen could also afford foods “nothing inferior to the nobility” when special occasions arose.\(^5\)

The restructuring of traditional food order undoubtedly afforded the early modern people with the opportunity — at least in their diet — to move across social boundaries. At the same time, it served to project the anxiety about social mobility unto the concern about food as the source of social pollution and danger. To deal with the anxiety about food, many contemporary conduct books advised their reader to avoid any direct contact with food and, when unavoidable, to minimize it. For example, in *The Schoole of Good Manners* (1609), William Fiston suggests that when one is offered a piece of pie or of tart, “receiue that on thy plate or trencher, and not with thy fingers,” and when forced to “receiuest anything at the Table with thy Hande,” “lay holde of it with no more but thy thumbe, and two forefingers.”\(^6\) As suggested in the last chapter, the early modern English people avoided raw meat because of its sticky and slimy texture. Since cooked food such as roast meat or wet confection can be even stickier than the raw, the contact with it might be able to provoke feelings of discomfort as well. Sartre’s idea that “to touch the sticky is to risk being dissolved in stickiness,”\(^7\) in this light, may apply more vividly to cooked food than to the raw. The feeling of disgust is only one of the least devastating effects. On the symbolic level, to be touched by cooked food is to risk becoming indistinguishable from it and, particularly at the dining table, to risk being

\(^5\) Harrison 129, 131.  
\(^7\) Sartre 777.
expelled from the human community that one is supposed to dine with and, since only non-human creatures can be food, to the realm of animals.

Though hardly invented for the purpose, tableware provides the eater with the instrument to minimize the risk of corruption and dehumanization, and to tame the residual wildness in the cooked food. Just as cooks can’t work properly without cooking equipments, the implementation of many table rules would be difficult, if not impossible, without utensils. Napkins, for instance, are useful when one’s fingers are “fowle.” Fiston advises his readers not to wipe their hands on their “cloathes, nor on the tablecloth.”

Unlike the “cloathes” or “tablecloth,” which is relatively close to the eater’s body and can be seen as a kind of bodily extension, the napkin is an object, which can remove the grease, juice, and remnants of food on the eater’s body and be put aside or replaced quickly. Utensils are useful in distinguishing food and its eater as well as in imposing an order on it. Fiston similarly warns his reader: “To gnaw Bones, is dog-like; but to picke the meat off with thy knife, is good manners.” And he advises his readers not to “bite thy Bread . . . neyther wring it a peeces in with thy hands,” but to “cut it on thy Trencher in small morsels.”

Anna Bryson argues that the use of animal metaphors in Renaissance courtesy books suggest that “good manners involve the conquest of the bestial in man and an identification with a rational human nature separate from brutish

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8 Fiston sig. 3.
9 Fiston sig. D3. An almost identical instruction appears in The Schoole of Vertue, the Second Part (1619): “To gnaw bones belongeth chiefly to dogs, but it is a civill thing to picke them cleane with a knife.” See The Schoole of Vertue, the Second Part (London, 1619) sig. B4.
nature.”¹¹ The bestial metaphors, however, can also be an expression of the anxiety about the wild nature embodied in food, which can be tamed through specific eating techniques. As an unsystematic, primitive approach to food, gnawing bones or tearing bread may threaten to blur the distinction between the food and its eater and to revive its semi-subdued “wildness” by producing irregular edges and scattering fragments. Nevertheless, when a knife is employed, the eater can avoid any unnecessary contact with it — since he or she can pop each morsel straight into the mouth and, ideally, digest it before it has the chance to rebel. Moreover, by imposing a distance between food and its eater, the knife changes the relationship between them. The eater is enabled to establish an object-relation with the food so that the latter is transformed from a medium of pollution into a passive, well-defined object that can be altered and consumed safely.

But the fear of food contamination is hardly the only reason to call for the observation of table manners. As long as one has to eat with others, eating or rather dinning is social behavior regulated by social rules and influenced by changing social relations. F. Seager, for instance, advises in Schoole of Vertue (1557) that, after one’s better is served, one should “pause a space” (436).¹² Hugh Rhodes in The Boke of Nurture (1577) similarly suggests that, when dining with the “soueraygn,” one should “Give him preheminence to begin” (129-31).¹³ The effect of such deliberate postponement may seem trivial. As a “sygne” of one’s “nourture and grace” (437),¹⁴

¹³ Rhodes 74.
¹⁴ Seager 343.
however, the gesture is indispensable for establishing one’s relationship with the authority figures within the dining community as well as one’s due place in the wider social hierarchy. Although most early modern writers still tried to uphold the traditional hierarchical order, but there were examples that seemed to present a different view. For instance, although Fiston like other writers cautions against “[falling] to one’s meate like greedy Wolves, or Cormorants,”\(^\text{15}\) unlike them, he only briefly mentions about the existence of the superior but stresses on the importance of the gaze of one’s “equals” and the dangers of eating not governed by social rules. He advises the reader: “bee not thou too hastte, though it be among thy equals; for so thou mayest be noted of arrogancie and immodistie.”\(^\text{16}\) In addition, Fiston explains in detail the consequence when the rule is violated: “by putting a Morsell too hotte in thy Mouth, one mayest be driuen quickly to voyde out the same againe: than the which, nothing can bee more Slouenly, and make thee more laughed to scorne.”\(^\text{17}\) As his shifted attention from the superior to the equal may reflect the decline of the hierarchical dining arrangement of the old time, the emphasis on the risk of physical rejection and thus public humiliation works to displace the anxiety about social change unto the anxiety about food.

When social conflict is translated into the individual consumer’s struggle with food, dining becomes a tournament in which the eater has to prove himself capable of eating his way through and remaining unscathed. One story in *Pasqvils Jeste, and Mother Bynches Merriments* (1609) best demonstrates the vigorous social struggle at table. The story begins with a “certain rich Counsellor of the common law,” who regularly invites

\(^{15}\) Fiston sig. D.

\(^{16}\) Fiston sig. D.

\(^{17}\) Fiston sig. D.
"one Client or other"\textsuperscript{18} to have dinner with him. The counselor, who keeps "his Termes at an Inne of Court neare pe Citte of London, and his vacations in the Countrey,"\textsuperscript{19} seems to belong to the landowning gentry, but his invitation is motivated not so much by hospitality as by the profit motive. As the narrator comments sarcastically, he invites "one Client or other (whose purses paid for 't soundly before hand) at dinner with him, to the end (I guesse) that his kind entertainment might cause them to retaine him in their Law-causes for counsel."\textsuperscript{20} What seems to be a generous gesture on the lawyer's part is in fact an act of careful calculation. Not only is he using (probably only a small portion of) the money extorted from the clients to entertain them, but he also expects to get more business opportunities from them through the bribery of a meal. Since economic interests dictate that he has to be physically accessible to all and sundry, any concern about class distinction has to be set aside. Therefore, "silly" though the "Rusticke fellow" may appear, as long as he is capable of affording a "rich"\textsuperscript{21} city lawyer, he is too commercially valuable to be excluded from the guest list. It is also worthwhile to curry for his favors and to lower the boundaries between social groups — if only temporarily — for his incorporation.

The "Rusticke fellow" may have the economic power to purchase "better cheere" for himself. Having "never or seldom tasted better cheere then Rye bread and why butter,"\textsuperscript{22} he lacks both the knowledge and the skill to consume the food successfully. Unable to distinguish the "Reddeere Pasty" from the "browne loafe" — although even

\textsuperscript{18} "A Fray Betwixt a Clowne and a Pasty of Venison," \textit{Pasquils Jeste, and Mother Bynches Merriments} (London, 1609) 30.
\textsuperscript{19} "Fray" 30.
\textsuperscript{20} "Fray" 30.
\textsuperscript{21} "Fray" 30.
\textsuperscript{22} "Fray" 30.
the narrator admits the difference is "indeed" hard to tell — he inevitably eats it "the wrong way": 23

[H]ee tooke [the Pasty] out of the dish, let it against his brest, and whipping out his toole no larger then a Cooks mincing knife, he made a breach in the walles and thinking to passe quite through the towne viz. the Pasty without detriment, a troupe of hot shot viz. the fat liquor lying in Ambush suddenly sallied forth, and gau the invader such hot welcome, that between rage and weeping he flung away his weapon and retired swearing a great Othe that he never saw Porridge bak't in a browne loafe before. 24

Had the "Rusticke fellow" succeeded in identifying the venison pasty, or had he paid attention to others before he grabbed the food, he might have thought twice before laying the pasty against his chest. Even if it were an ordinary "browne loafe," as suggested by Fiston, he should have first "cut it on [his] Trencher in small morsels," 25 then put the morsels "being cutte, leisurely and modestly into [his] Mouth" with only the "Thumbe and Forefinger of [his] Left Hand." 26 Instead, he not only grabs the bread but lays it "against his brest," subjecting himself to the pollution and danger of the food. Although he does not break the bread with bare hands, he seems to have used the wrong knife. It is unclear exactly how "large" his knife is, but the comparison with "a Cooks mincing knife" suggests that both its size and shape may be fitter for the use in the kitchen than for that at table. The association with the kitchen knife, on the one hand, functions to remove the fellow metaphorically from the table to the kitchen, from the inner sanctum of

23 "Fray" 30.
24 "Fray" 30.
25 Fiston sig. D.
26 Fiston sig. Dii.
the house to its border. On the other hand, it brings out the violent potential inherent in knives. As Henry Petroski suggests, long after knives had adopted for table use, they continued to be used as weapons. As Scarry argues, the weapon and the tool, though separated by “a gulf of meaning, intention, connotation, and tone” between them, may still “seem at moments indistinguishable” and “may be quickly transformed back and forth, now into the one, no into the other.” In other words, even when defined as tableware, knives were not totally purged of their potential for violence. The association to the cook’s “mincing knife” only revives its supposedly civilized hostility, which in turn transforms its user into a lowly cook as well as a potential predator.

Although the rustic fellow points the knife indirectly at himself, the threat of violence is conceived as directing toward others. No sooner has he laid the knife against the pasty than it metamorphoses into “the towne,” and his “toole,” into a “weapon.” His failure to consume the “fat liquor,” supposedly the most delicious and valuable part in the pasty, immediately identifies him as an unfit eater and as a disqualified outcast of the social group. Consequently, if he has already been pushed to the border of the household, he is now forced beyond the town “walles” as an “inuader,” threatening to make “a breache in the walles” and to “passé quite through the towne . . . without detriment.” As soon as the pasty becomes the symbolic bastion of urban civilization,

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27 Henry Petroski, *The Evolution of Useful Things* (New York: Vintage, 1994) 11. Peter Brears explains that although the table knives eventually lost their sharp points and became less weapon-like after the mid-seventeenth century, the overall length in the late sixteenth century could still reach up to 9.5 inches, their blades being narrow, straight-backed, with a parallel cutting edge, and sharp point. See Brear, “Decoration of the Tudor and Stuart Table,” “The Appetite and the Eye”: Visual Aspects of Food and its Presentation within Their Historical Context, ed. C. Anne Wilson (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991: 71.

28 Scarry 173.
the destructive, unruly force inherent in food is civilized and organized into a military force “lying in Ambush” of the hostile “inuader.” Instead of conquering the “browne loafe” with his “weapon,” the rustic fellow is “suddenly” ambushed by “a troupe of hot shot viz. the fat liquor” and immediately defeated without being able to tell whether he is attacked by “butter and Deeres greace” or just plain “Porredge.” Even his defeat somehow serves to disqualify the country fellow as a valid member of the community and to justify his exclusion.

While it is the pasty that is “cut vp the wrong way,” it is the country fellow that is opened up for the public view. On the one hand, having lost control of his bodily and affective expression, he reveals his vulnerability in his “weeping” and his “ignorance” in his “greate Othe that he neuer saw Porredge bak’t in a browne loafe before.” On the other hand, when he discards the knife in his “rage and weeping,” he simultaneously throws away the means for self-extension, thus forcing himself to retreat back to the confinement of the body. With his “table-cloh embrodered with bak’t butter and Deeres greace,” he also loses the protective shield between himself and food, the boundary between humans and animals. The animal grease not only contaminates his “table-cloh” but threatens to eat way his clothes so that he is “making faces like Singer the clowne when his Master in the play bade him vntrusse.” Having had his clothes, the symbol of humanity and civilization, peeled off imaginatively, the country fellow takes yet another dip. With his hand changed into a “tawny clutch,” a brown “claw of a beast or bird of prey, or of a fiend” (OED), he is further degraded from a “clowne” to a

29 “Fray” 30.
30 “Fray” 30.
31 “Fray” 30-1.
32 “Fray” 31.
beast.

No sooner has the rustic fellow opened himself up than the breach that he made is sealed, and the town, closed to him. Having been moved from the private table to a public stage, he is metaphorically removed again to “Westminster Hall” and given “counsel,” not by the lawyer of his hire, but by “a Chancery Clarke” who advises that “he should never assault such a Towne againe, till the breach were made before him.”33 His personal breach of table manners thus becomes an issue of public concern and demands not just military reaction but also judicial intervention. The legal consultation, in reality, is translated into the collective “laugh and iest”34 of others. Although the country fellow has experienced “much paine” in the pasty’s counter-attack, it is his feeling of “shame” that he suffers “more.”35 So “with much paine but more shame” he departs hastily to get a cooler for his heat,”36 but the “heat” that drives him away is not so much the “heat” that the “troupe of hot shot” has inflicted on his scalded hands as the “heat” produced by his burning shame. Although the city lawyer can’t afford not to invite the rustic fellow to dinner, the urban food system has its own mechanism to single out the unfit eater whose “simplicitie”37 automatically works to expel him from the table. His “fray”38 with the pasty, in this light, may represent more than just the bodily struggle between him and his food, but the social competition between groups of different class, economic power, and even geographic distribution. By attributing the exclusion of the rustic fellow to his bodily “shame,” however, the story works to internalize and to

33 “Fray” 31.
34 “Fray” 31.
35 “Fray” 31.
36 “Fray” 31.
37 “Fray” 31.
38 “Fray” 30.
naturalize the man-made social distinction, and to coerce covert submission from those who, like him, are denied admission.

While the “Pasty of Venison” succeeds in stopping the “Rusticke fellow” from dining with those not of his own kind, in Robert Speed’s *The Counter-Scuffle* (1635), the rare Lenten fare in the debtors’ prison helps promote social cohesion of the inmates in Woodstreet counter. Unlike the rustic fellow whose economic superiority brings him to the city lawyer’s table, the “madcap Gentlemen”⁴⁹ in Speed’s story are thrown at the same table due to their financial downfall. Although other lower-class inmates appear relatively indifferent about the enforced social mixing, the “Gentlemen,” especially a Captain, a Lawyer, and a Goldsmith, are earnest in establishing a hierarchy among themselves. Since economic power is no longer viable as a social marker, and table manners also lose their collective binding force in a prison where the majority comes from the lower strata, the “iarring question” of distinction is shifted to “What calling was of most repute.”⁴⁰ The lawyer first claims authority for the Law, which, according to him, is superior to other professions in its disregard of “degree.”⁴¹ The Captain, however, retorts by pointing out the uselessness of “Lawes or Statutes” without military support.⁴² The goldsmith Ellis, outraged by the Captain’s comment on London as “the Cuckowes nest,” defends the Citizens for their ability to “guard the Towne” and to “force the Foe retire” without the help of foreign “east Commanders./ That hither come, compell’d by want.”⁴³ Unable to reach an agreement, the gentlemen break into a fight.

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⁴² Speed sig. B3.
⁴³ Speed sig. B3.
The conflict between the three gentlemen, because of the kind of weapon they use, soon expands into a full-scale battle that implicates all the inmates in the dining hall. Instead of using any traditional weapons such as knives, swords, or long pikes, these gentlemen resort to food containers such as pots and dishes to attack each other. These tools may be less lethal and effective than the rustic fellow’s knife, but as means of self-extension, they can still be empowering to their users. Indeed, though “no man of force,” Ellis gives the Captaine “such a mall” with a “Pot” that the latter is made to “thumpe against the wall/ His Crupper."44 Nevertheless, these same utensils, when containing food — especially flowing food — are as difficult to control as weapons. Therefore, when the Captaine tries to counterattack with a dish “brim-full of buttered fish,” he not only misses his target but accidentally pours its content on Nic Ballat, a lower-class character who does “none disease./ But sitting quiet and at ease,/ With buttered Rochets sought to please/ His palate.”45 If the gentlemen prisoners, at least initially, seem cautious about their choice of weapon, Nic Ballat simply takes hold “All things neere hand” — that is, the “Poll of Ling,” the “Salt,” and the “buttered Rochets” that he is about to eat — and throws them in all directions.46

The change of food from sustenance into weapon immediately revives its inherent wildness that has been suppressed by cooking. The reversal of the culinary or “civilizing process” of food also threatens to confound the distinction between the eater and the food. With “Candles all . . . shuffled out,” the dining hall metamorphoses into a giant stomach where some are “bloody in the broyle,” “some lay steept in Sallet-Oyle./

44 Speed sig. C.
45 Speed sig. C.
46 Speed sig. C.
And Mustard."47 The inmates are turned into food themselves and cooked up by the very foodstuffs that they are supposed to consume. Such is the case with Owen Blanny, another lower-class character who is more interested in eating than in fighting, when Ellis accidentally tips a “Pippin Pye” on his “Calues head”:

Woe was the case he now was in,
The Apple hot did scald his skin,
His Skull, as it had rotten bin,

Did coddle.48

Although identifying Blanny’s head with a “Calues head” may imply his stupidity and lowliness, it also metaphorically transforms his head, if not his whole body, into food. As a result, the “Pippin Pye” ceases being food and becomes a cook that “[scalds] his skin” and “[coddles]” his “Skull” as if it were indeed an edible “Calues head.” The fact that his head has already “rotten” only seems to accelerate the “cooking” process. The putrefied, uneven surface of the head coated in steaming, viscous custard immediately creates the impression of a bubbling stew, in which the convoluted brain mass in the skull seems to break through the surface and to mingle with bits and pieces of the scalp. Indeed, the boundary between the inside and the outside of Blanny’s head becomes so blurred and mixed up that “one foole among the rout” thinks that his “braines” are “beaten out/ His noodle.”49

If physical contact with food threatens to erode bodily boundaries, the process of consumption poses another threat to the integrity of the body and ultimately that of the

47 Speed sig. C3.
48 Speed sig. C3.
49 Speed sig. C3.
self. Ideally, all acts of incorporation assume an absolute distinction between inside and outside. In order for such acts to complete, however, it requires a brief moment of opening when the inside/outside distinction of the body has to be lifted for the admission of food. Instructions on table manners are hardly unaware of the ambiguity involved in the inevitable bodily opening. The shared advice in conduct books to divide food into bite-sized pieces, for instance, apart from the overt interest in the presentation of civility, may function to minimize the risk and protect their readers from the kind of chaotic confusion suffered by Lockwood in Speed’s story. Having heard the “coyle and stirre” in the hall, the “turn-key fat fellow,” comes “waddling” with “his Guts” to see what happened, but no sooner has he come to the door than “Full in the mouth a butter’d Playce” hits him. In the beginning, the surprised jailor tries to take full advantage of the unexpected treat: “Away he sneakt, and with his tongue,/ He lick’d and swallow’d vp the wrong.” His eager attempt to devour the food, however, soon turns into a disaster. Given the slimy, slippery texture and the elongated, floppy shape shared by the tongue and the buttered flat fish, it is already difficult to tell the two apart. Lockwood’s incapability of stuffing the whole fish into his mouth only exacerbates the confusion. With both the fish and the tongue slithering half way in and half way out of his mouth, it becomes impossible for him to know whether things are coming in or pushing out, or whether he is swallowing or vomiting. Losing its control over the influx and the

50 Fiston, for instance, suggests not to “bite thy Bread . . . neyther wring it a peeces in with thy hands,” but to “cut it on thy Trencher in small morsels, and the put into thy Pottage” (sig. D). Rhodes offer similar advice: “Of bread, slyce out fayre morsels/ to put into your pottage” (195-6). Also, “[e]ate you small morsels of meate,/ not to great in quantitye” (233-4). See Rhodes 76-7.  
51 Speed sig. D.  
52 Speed sig. D.
outflow of the body, the mouth ceases being the organ to swallow and becomes the opening, through which the contents of the body flow out. Like the "grotesque body" theorized by Mikhail Bakhtin, Lockwood's body thus becomes "not separated from the rest of the world" and "unfinished, outgrows itself, [and] transgresses its own limits." The experience, however, is anything but comic to Lockwood. Instead, it becomes so scary that he finally cries "For helpe": "O bring a Surgeon, or I die./ My guts out of my belly flye:/ Come quickly." The confusion in his mouth is thus translated into the experience of disembowelment, and his guts, representing a more exaggerated or rather twisted version of the fish and the tongue, flies out of his unseamed body.

Without leading to total annihilation of the person, however, the experience of bodily disintegration returns Woodlock to the symbiotic state of existence, the maternal site of origin, where self and other seem to mingle together. However traumatic the experience may seem, it allows him to be born and to be made whole again. In order for the rebirth to take place, the "Kitchin queane" Madge is called up "To take and make the Baby cleane/ And clout it." No sooner has Madge arrived than Lockwood, though physically a "fat fellow," shrinks into a "Baby," a "Squall," and an "Elfe." The dwindling of his physical size leads to his loss of bodily control. Thus when Madge "[turns] his Hose beneath the knee./ Nor could shee chuse but laugh to see/ That yellow, which was wont to bee/ A white breach." As soon as Lockwood regresses into the infantile state, the kitchen maid grows into a maternal figure. Having "not wit to helpe

54 Speed sig. D.
55 Speed sig. D.
56 Speed sig. C, sig. D.
57 Speed sig. D.
itself,” the “Baby” leaves itself “Vnto the mercie of the Maide.”\textsuperscript{58} Although Medge seems amused at Lockwood’s yellow breeches, she does not refrain from “[whipping] the durtie Elfe” with a “Dish-clout.”\textsuperscript{59} While the “clouting” symbolically works to patch up the opening of his leaking body, by inflicting pain on him, it also helps sharpen the sense of his physical existence and reestablish the distinction between self and other. Through Madge’s “homely paines,”\textsuperscript{60} Lockwood is removed from a state of physical confusion to another where bodily integrity is restored, and the distinction of inside/outside, reconstituted.

From the symbolic birth of Lockwood comes the regeneration of the whole community. Despite her contribution, the kitchen maid is quickly “payd” off the scene, and her power, replaced or rather appropriated by the narrator’s “Pen.”\textsuperscript{61} Unlike Madge’s “Dish-clout,” the masculine “Pen,” “like the Candles,” rather than engaging in physical contact of any kind, aims to “Shew you these Gallants once agen”\textsuperscript{62} and, by showing, transforms the meaning of their body, their identity, and ultimately their relationships with each other. With the introduction of “Flesh lights,” “twenty mad men” are revealed “in the Hall/ With Bloud and Sauce their faces all/ Besmeared./ Their Cloathes rent and sows’d in drinke,/ Oyle, Mustard, Butter.”\textsuperscript{63} They become so “dis-figured” that they appear to be “monstrous creatures” that “dwell/ Either in Bedlam, or in Hell/ Or that no tongue, or pen can tell/ Their madnesse,” and that “Friend knew not
friend nor foe-man foe./ And each man scarce himselfe did know." 64 The monstrosity of their physical transformation not only deprives them of their old identities but also forces them to be uprooted from the social network in which they anchored themselves. Such total alienated existence, at the same time, affords the narrator an opportunity to reinforce his authority by telling what "no tongue, or pen can tell." Through his writing, the characters emerge from the confusion and find a new identity for themselves. Therefore, though a little stunned at the first sight, the inmates "loudly all at once [break] out/ In lafter" and "embrace" each other for "loue." 65

Once the integrity of the social body is restored, eating together finally becomes possible. What appears to be communion quickly turns into a cannibalistic feast. As soon as "the Noble Counter-brall" is ended, the inmates start to feel the "hunger" which does "vexe’em more./ Then all their anger did before." 66 Together, they search the room to see "how far their store/ Extend[s]" and feed on whatever they can find — regardless whether it is "black as a coale," "trodden," "rost or sodden." 67 When the distinction of edible/inedible is lifted, the differentiation of the eater and the food also collapses. The inmates thus begin to look on each other’s body for food. While one finds "Mustard in his fellows face,/ Another/ Espies, that finds a loafe of bread;/ A dish of butter all bespread,/ And stucke vpon another’s head." 68 It may seem that, by feeding on the food stuck on their fellow prisoners’ bodies, they simultaneously scratch away the layer of disguise that makes them the same. Nevertheless, since to be touched by food —

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64 Speed sig. D2.
65 Speed sig. D2.
66 Speed sig. D3.
67 Speed sig. D3.
68 Speed sig. D3.
especially slimy food like mustard and buttered bread — is to risk being dissolved by it, to lick up the food on each other’s skin may not be far from the act of gobbling up the body underneath. While the mutual incorporation enables the inmates to transcend their outward differences and to achieve total identification with their fellow prisoners, it also appears to be an act of self-cannibalism, through which their desire for absolute self-reliance and independence from all external influences — especially that of female “mercie” — can be fulfilled.

The cannibalistic aggression not only empowers these men to achieve self-possession but to reinforce their collective masculinity. Among all the foods, they are particularly interested in those found in Luellin’s “pocket” or rather “His Cod-piece”:

His Cod-piece

Did plenty of prouision bring,

Somewhat it held of every thing,

Smelts, Flounders, Rochets, and of Ling

A broad piece.⁶⁹

Despite its limited space, the codpiece seems to contain more than it can hold as if it were a cornucopia that continually supplies “plenty” to fulfill these men’s desire for food. Interestingly, though it promises to provide “every thing,” the only foods worthy to be mentioned are wiggly fishes, and true to their origin, some of them, such as the Smelts, are also notorious for their odor. Having gone through the “Codpiece,” however, these fishes seem to have metamorphosed into substitutes of male sexual organ. While these fishes, if not physically, at least psychologically, guarantee to boost up their eaters’

⁶⁹ Speed sig. D3.
masculinity, the implication that the more they are eaten, the more they will be produced further fulfills the male fantasy of never ending virility. The “discouerie” of this magic “pocket,” instead of provoking the inmates into another frantic fight, inspires an egalitarian spirit among them — “each man around/ Tooke equall share of what was found./ Which afterwards they freely drown’d/ In good drink.”\textsuperscript{70} Only when they have all been “Drunke and fed” with the food that symbolizes their self-possession and masculinity, can they finally all “[shake] hands and all to bed” — “As if no quarrel had beene bred.”\textsuperscript{71}

There are many factors that contribute to the success of the commensality among the prisoners, but the sudden intervention of the kitchen maid Madge seems to mark the turning point from conflict to reconciliation, from opposition to unity. Although Madge may appear to be a minor character in the story, her influence is at once indispensable and ubiquitous. If the prisoners rely on her for the provision of food — or rather, precisely because of that — at least in the beginning, they also seem incapable of eating on their own without her superintendence as well as assistance. As a result, though her official domain is supposed to be in the kitchen, her actual work extends far into the dining hall, where she is expected to serve but not to join the meal. However brief her appearance is, it provokes serious, if implicit, psychological repercussions for those prisoners as their urgent demand of her “homely paines” reveals not only their vulnerability but their reliance on women for nurturance and comfort. Despite the narrator’s light-hearted portrayal of the prisoners’ subsequent attempts to recuperate their collective masculine identity, the intensity of their “hunger” for total identification and reassurance of virility

\textsuperscript{70} Speed sig. D3.
\textsuperscript{71} Speed sig. D3.
express a strong sense of anxiety about female domination, which overrides not just their previous "anger" but also their differences that gave rise to the "quarrel" in the first place.

The male anxiety about female intervention in table service only worsens when the woman in charge is changed from a kitchen maid to a wife, and the space, removed from the public to the private. The important role women play in food consumption, though not necessarily accompanied by the acquisition of actual power, enables women to have limited leverage in relation to men. Not only have women often acted as the primary food provider, but they are also expected to supply both practical and emotional services at table. Trivial though these services may appear, they are indispensable to the constitution of a pleasant dining experience — to the diners, but perhaps not to the server — which is enough to remind men of their lack of total self-reliance as well as the instability of their masculinity. In public dining occasions, men may be able to count on each other for brotherly love and mutual support, but when they stay at home, they have no choice but turn to their wives for help and companionship. To early modern Englishmen in particularly, the situation might have become more unbearably real than it had been to their medieval predecessors when dining became more private, and male household servants gradually decreased in number or were replaced by women. Just as wives increasingly became the primary companion for men at home, the latter relied more and more on their wives to entertain their friends and to put on a decent appearance in the community.

Thus, while in The Counterscuffle the prisoners' anxiety about women is negotiated

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72 Speed sig. D2.
only through the carnivalesque feast of mutual- and ultimately self-consumption, *The Married Men’s Feast* (1671) resorts to a more aggressive approach to overcome the threat of female power by inviting its readers to participate in the symbolic consumption of their controlling and disobedient wives. The pamphlet begins by an invitation to “all”—“Come all away to this jovial Feast”—disregarding whether one is “high or low, rich or poor, wise or simple, Gentlemen or Beggers.”73 Nevertheless, it is soon revealed that the feast is far more selective than inclusive in its choice of participants. While misogyny is employed as the criterion for selecting “all such, and none but such” “Brave Martialists who scorn to lead such lives,/ As be over-topt by domineering wives,”74 it serves as the means to distinguish the “Sons of Mars, Bellona’s fellows” from “Milk-sops that are Crow-trodden, or rather Hagg-ridden.”75 Not only have the submissive husbands been singled out as unwelcome guests, but seven questions are devised to prevent those who are like “a knave in an honest Mans Doublet, or a Horse-courser professing honesty”76 from sneaking in. Only when one can “truly and honestly answer in the affirmative to all these questions” and prove oneself one of those “persons of so deserving merits,”77 one is allowed to be part of the feast.

The feast, unlike the city lawyer’s dinner, does not merely expel the unfit guest from the table, but recycles at least some of them to promote the gender stereotype that it tries to establish. Thus, not all who fail the test are excluded from the feast. Although many are exiled to the “Sea in the Hen-peckt Firggot,” a few of them are forced to work

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74 *Married* 1.
75 *Married* 1.
76 *Married* 1.
77 *Married* 2.
as “Seruiors” in the occasion. Following the Gentleman Usher, these “Hen-peckt fellows” are made to join the procession “bare-headed, with the dishes in their hands . . . and wearing ropes about their shoulders instead of towels to signifie what they deserve for suffering their wives to become their Masters.” Indispensable for their labor, these servants fulfill an important social function in the feast. As Fiston argues in his epistle, part of the purpose of taking young children to “Publike banquets” is to “terrifie them from vice, and animate them to labour greedily to be holden virtuous” through the sight of “the open contempt, reproches and shame, with the sharpe punishment of dissolute & euill disposed children.” Similarly, if the purpose of the public display of the Hen-peckt fellows is to punish them through open humiliation, it simultaneously serves as a warning and a lesson to their on-lookers so that the latter would labor more diligently to maintain “the prerogative that is due to your sex.”

The servants, however, are not the only people put on display. Like the prisoners in Woodstreet Counter, the guests try to reinforce the communal solidarity through their collective consumption of food. Nevertheless, the act is performed not out of any brotherly love, but under the peer pressure to be or at least to look the same, and the food is consumed not so much for its delicacy as for its symbolic significance. One of the dishes, for example, consists of “Carp and Pout, which is to be all eaten up, to signifie that all discontents in their wives is devoured.” There are some other foods that represent not female complaints, but bodies or body parts of women. For instance, to

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78 Married 6, 5.
79 Married 5.
80 Fiston sig. A2.
81 Married 1.
82 Married 4.
eat a dish with "several sorts of Tongues" signifies that having been "masters of their wives tongues," the men "may freely eat upon any kind of meat without exceptions." The uncontainable nature of food, rather than a threat, becomes the means to absorb all varieties of female disobedience. As carping and pouting conveniently stand for "all discontents" in women, the consumption of assorted "Tongues" has influences far beyond the silencing of female speeches. Since "meat" could mean sexual organs, the human body as an instrument of sexual pleasure, or a prostitute (OED), to be able to feed "freely" on "any kind of meat" is to open up the prospect of sexual exploitation of all women with no "exceptions" and no distinctions between them. While such a public display empowers the individual diner to demonstrate one’s masculinity and to establish a distinctive social identity in the patriarchal community, it simultaneously pressures others into complying with and even endorsing the same misogynistic attitude.

Not all of the dishes, however, are designed as challenges to the guests. Some are presented as rewards for their achievement in dominating their wives. The most significant dish is "a Phaenix pie because rare men deserve rare meat, which is to be made Caste-wise, with a sprig of palm or lawrel on the top of it betokening victory." Since a woman "is a Phaenix . . . who [has] never offended her Husband," the meat in the pie may seem — at least metaphorically — interchangeable with that of an obedient wife. As if even such "meat" may not be fully trusted, not only is a pastry cast made to contain it, but "a sprig of palm or lawrel" is put on top of it as a token "victory" to prevent its meaning from going awry. As the consumption of Pout and Carp signifies

83 Married 3.
84 Married 3.
85 Married 3.
the punishment of a woman when she is disobedient, the phoenix pie demonstrates the fate when she is not. Neither the phoenix nor the perfect wife, however, will jump to
the dish without being forced to do so. According to the misogynistic logic of the text,
“there are no such ready made.”
Instead, the only way to subject a wife to her husband’s will is to beat her with “a Crab-tree Cudgel” so that “she wilt never love variance after it.” In this light, the “tears of a woman” used to parboil “the hearts of four Game Cocks” in another dish may not be the tears of frustration — “because she cannot have the will of her Husband” — but the tears of pain.

The intensive emotion and labor invested in its arrangement, however, seems to be
out of proportion in regard to the goal that the feast aims to achieve. None of the
behavior expected for an obedient wife is anything extraordinary, but domestic, trivial
things that constitute the basic needs and comforts of everyday life. In principle, a
“qualified” wife is supposed to “go at [her husband’s] command, come at [his] call, and
be obedient to [him] in every thing she is appointed to do.” In practice, the principle is
composed of seven specific issues. Perhaps not too surprisingly, three out of the seven
“things” that, when performed voluntarily, “conclude” a man “Master” of his wife are
concerned with the serving of food and drink. The wife should be “ready to run”
whenever her husband commands her “to fetch a pot of Beer, Ale, or the like,” and make
him “a courtesie when she delivers the pot.” When he is late for dinner or supper, she

86 Married 2.
87 Married 1.
88 Married 3.
89 Married 2.
90 Married 2.
91 Married 2.
is not allowed to "eat one bit" until he comes home. Nor is she supposed to "put finger in the eye and weep" if he refuses to drink the "Posset" or the "Caudle" she makes for him. Trivial though these domestic services may appear, one still requires certain skills and knowledge to be able to accomplish them efficiently and satisfactorily. Nevertheless, then as now, housework is viewed as one of the "inbuilt" functions of women and not of men. Especially for the narrator in the text, to do even minor housework tasks is not only to admit a husband's failure to dominate their wives but also to compromise his masculinity and authority in the household by becoming "a knave in an honest Mans Doublet, or a Horse-courser professing honesty." Thus, any

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92 Married 2.
93 Married 2.
94 In the study of the importance of food in modern family life, Jacqueline Burgoyne and David Clarke point out that divorced men, especially those used to relying on their wives for regular meals, tend to see the absence of such meals as one of the more difficult aspects of living alone. See Burgoyne and Clarke, "You are What You Eat: Food and Family Reconstitution," *The Sociology of Food and Eating: Essays on the Sociological Significance of Food* ed. Anne Murcott (Farnborough: Gower, 1983) 152-63. Although the gender relation between husbands and wives has changed a lot since the early modern period, as far as food is concerned, wives have remained the primary provider, and husbands then might have been no less dependent than the husbands now. For instance, most cookbooks were written for female readers and particularly housewives. See Gervase Markham, *The English Housewife* (1615), ed. Michael R. Best (Montreal & Kinston, London, and Buffalo: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1986). The sexual division can also be seen in Thomas Tusser's different focuses in *Five Hundred Points of Good Husbandry* and in *The Book of Housewifery*. While in the former the husband is spared of any culinary work but provided with information of what "The Farmer's Daily Diet" (xxxvi-xxxviii) should be, the latter offers not just advice about "Cookery" (255) but detailed instructions about "Breakfast doings" (249), "Dinner Matters" (259-61), and "Supper Matters" (266-7). See Tusser, *Five Hundred Points of Good Husbandry, together with A Book of Huswifery* (1573), ed. William Mavor (London: Lackington, Allen, and Co., 1812).
derelictions of duty on the wife’s part, while causing inconvenience to the husband, reflect negatively on him and detract from his masculinity. Her domestic behavior defines his social identity.

*The Married Mens Feast* tries to solve the problem by forcing wives into servants. Nevertheless, as the ballad “A Bill of Fare” (1640)\(^{96}\) suggests, since wives, unlike servants, do stay and eat at the same table, the sway of their emotions may have direct influence on the fluctuation of dining atmosphere. The narrator starts with a long description of all the dainties and excitements that he had in a “wonderful feast” (95) on a Saturday night. Unlike the story of the married men’s feast or that of the prisoners’ Lenten fare, however, the ballad does not end at the closure of the feast, but continues to describe what happens after “the 12 a clock chimes,” and “Went every one home as his way did direct” (105-6). Assuming that his wife would “bare him a spite” (110) for not being “bidden to Supper” (109), the narrator is surprised to find a Breakfast prepared for him in the next morning though he soon discovers what a “sorry fare” (129) it is. He is first served with “a dish of maundering broath,” sprinkled with “A many small Reasons” and biting “Pepper” yielded from “her nose,” which is “so scolding hote” that he can hardly “abide it.” Following the broath are “A great Carpe Pye, and a dish of sad Pouts,” sauced with “Crocodile Vinegar” that is “very tart.” The breakfast finally concludes with “a cup full of stout Wormwood Beere” (113-25). However “loath” he is to hold his patience, he nonetheless “Must swallow all down” — “cause my wife did prouide it” (115-6). Thus, the narrator is forced to feed on the “sorry fare” not just for breakfast but “all that day” — until, finally, on Monday morning he tries “to furnish her

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need” and to “win” her affections back (129-31).

Although the narrator, like the guests in the married men’s feast, is compelled to finish all the dishes, he does so not to triumph over female disobedience, but to appease his wife. Rather than attributing all women’s complaints to their desire to dominate their husbands, he seems to feel that his wife is somewhat justified in her “spight” (110). His late home-coming may explain why he does not “expect” to have “a Breakfast prepar’d” “on the morning betimes” (107-8), but the fact that his wife is “not bidden to Supper” (109) suggests another reason. In addition to his “sound trouts” (123), there are obviously other “women” (26) present at the party. It is unclear who those women are, but the exclusion of his wife implies that they probably are not other male guests’ wives. In this light, she is deliberately omitted from the invitation perhaps because it is not so much an occasion for couples as one for men alone to enjoy themselves. Guilt, however, is not the only motive. He “must swallow all down” simply because his wife does “prouide it” (116). On the one hand, there is a sense of careful calculation on his part since to refuse the meal inevitably would add more fuel to her anger. On the other hand, as long as a husband’s role is defined by his wife’s domestic performance, he is obligated to fulfill his role as a husband and a consumer when she has dutifully provided the “homely cheere” (127) to him.

Although the menu of “sorry fare” and that of the married men’s feast has several dishes in common, the foods in the former, rather than merely symbols of female disobedience, become expressions of the wife’s feelings and emotions. The broiling sound of the “broath,” for example, seems to blur into his wife’s grumbling, and it is hard to tell whether the scalding heat of the broth or the scolding anger of his wife tries his patience. Even the little raisons in the broth metamorphose into the “little Reasons” that
she puts to him while the Pepper bites like her puffing anger. Similarly, the famous “Carpe Pye” seems to turn into a mess of the wife’s confusing, carping speeches; the vinegar-seasoned Pouts taste the same as her tearful pouts. In the end, he seems unable to taste anything but the bitterness of his wife’s “spight.” The wife may have cooked her “spight” into the food to purge him from his riotous night out among his “sound trouts” (123). What turns the breakfast into a “sorry fare” (129), however, is the tension and gloomy atmosphere at table caused by her unhappiness. Certainly, the narrator can follow the lesson of the married men’s feast and beat his wife into submission. Perhaps the violence may get him an obedient servant, but that still does not provide a happy meal mate and thus a pleasant meal to him. Once he succeeds in winning his wife over with a gift, however, the situation changed dramatically. The quantity and variety of meat immediately increase — “A Pye made of Conies, with Ducks and Pigs eyes” (133), “Lambe and Chicken” (135), and “Another Pye made with many sheepes eyes” (137). And everything is sweetened — not just to “delight” his “taste” (134) and to please his “palat” (138) but “[his] mind to suffice” (135).

Keeping up a cheerful atmosphere is only one of the responsibilities women are expected to fulfill at the dining table. Increasingly, housewives during the early modern period were expected to accommodate to the courtly standard of table service and to take over responsibilities that used to be undertaken by male servants in grand households. Although early modern self-help manuals about table service, such as The Boke of Seruynge (1513), were written primarily for men serving for “a prince or any other estate,”97 those instructions gradually found their way into the household manuals for

97 The Boke of Seruynge (London: 1513) sig. 1.
ordinary people. For instance, while in *The Good Huswifes Jewell* (1596) Thomas Dawson only included a small section about “how [meats] must be serued at the Table, with their sauces for flesh daies at dinner,”98 in *The Second Part of the Good Hus-wiues Jewell* (1597) he incorporated a reprint of *The Boke of Servynge*, renamed “The Booke of Caruing and Sewing,” at the end of the book.99 Similarly, though trying to include “all Persons whatsoever that are desirous to be acquainted with the most Excellent Arts of Carving, Cookery, Pastry, Preserving, and Laying a Cloth for Grand Entertainments,” the title page of Rose’s *A Perfect School of Instructions for the Officers of the Mouth* (1682) seems to suggest that it is primarily to “Ladies and Gentlewomen” that the book claims to be of “Singular Use.” Being the master Cook for Charles II, Rose was fully aware of men’s long “imployment” or entanglement in the institute of grand households, but he also seemed to have detected women’s emerging role in the household affair. By defining the book as “curiosity” for the female sex, he implicitly acknowledged that these “Arts,” though exclusive knowledge for men in the past, were now novelties open to women who were “desirous to be acquainted with [them].”100

The need to accommodate to male standards or expectations might reflect the increasing demand for female domestic labor. As Heal argues, during the early modern period household servants were “more likely to be female than in the past, since a more functionalist perception of service led to the recognition that they could perform tasks effectively that had previously allocated to men.”101 Changes in market demand for female servants trained in housewifery and domestic service seemed to occur

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100 Rose title-page.
101 Heal, *Hospitality* 166.
simultaneously with the growth of female employment partly due to the economic upheaval of the period. Hannah Woolley explicitly addressed _The Gentlewomans Companion; or, a Guide to the Female Sex_ (1673) “to all Gentlewomen, who though well-born, [were] notwithstanding by indigency necessitated to serve some person of Quality.” She cautioned against the situation in which daughters, at the sudden downfall or deaths of their parents, were “often exposed to great hardships, many times contenting themselves to serve as Chamber-maids because they [had] not the Accomplishments of a Waiting-woman, or an House-keeper.” Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford argue that, because “domestic chores were undervalued as well as being taken for granted,” “women’s expertise at ‘effeminate’ tasks was presumed to be universal and therefore unskilled.” Once equipped with the “gentile education,” however, women were empowered to transform domestic drudgery into economically valuable “Arts” and not to render themselves “insignificant not only in the world, but in those Families where they [were].”

For early modern housewives, however, the significance of being acquainted with the courtly “manner” of table service was not so much economic as symbolic. Markham argues in _The English Housewife_ (1615) that a good housewife not only has to be equipped with “several knowledges of cookery” but — “inasmuch as in her is contained all the inward offices of household” — must be familiar with “the manner of serving and setting forth of meat for great feast, and . . . making a due proportion of all

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102 Hannah Woolley, _The Gentlewomans Companion; or, a Guide to the Female Sex_ (London, 1673) 204.
103 Woolley 204.
104 Mendelson and Crawford 101.
105 Woolley 205.
things."  

More specifically, he points out:

It is then to be understood, that it is the office of the clerk of the kitchen (whose place our housewife must many times supply) to order the meat at the dresser, and deliver it unto the sewer, who is to deliver it to the gentlemen and yeomen waiters to bear to the table.  Now . . . we allow no officer but our housewife, to whom we only speak in this book.

If male servants in the great household have existed largely to impersonate the power and status of their masters, by replacing them as the sole “officer” in the household, the housewife is expected to fulfill similar ceremonial functions as well.  Unlike male servants in grand households, however, the housewife is advised not to dress with great ceremony, but to wear “comely, cleanly, and strong” garments devoid of any “toyish garnishes, or the gloss of light colours.”  The emphasis thus falls on how the dishes should be served and ordered in meals of different scales.  While “no two dishes of one kind” should be “going or standing together” in a banquet so that they will “not only appear delicate to the eye, but invite the appetite with much variety thereof,” the dishes in great feasts also have to be set “extravagantly about the table” and “each several sorts mixed together” so that they will “give a most comely beauty to the table, and very great contentment to the guest.”  Even in entertainments of “much more humble means,” there should be “fullness in one half of the dishes, and show in the other” so that the table will bring “contentment to the guest” and “much pleasure and delight to the

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107 Markham, *English* 121.
108 Markham, *English* 122.
110 Markham, *English* 121-2.
beholders.” If it is the housewife’s artistry that makes the dining “show” possible, she is not the focus of the gaze of appreciation, but only the invisible hand behind the scene. Instead, it is the husband, the “goodman,” who has the power and authority to keep “in his family for the entertainment of his true and worthy friends.” The aesthetic presentation of the meal, while demonstrating the husband’s authority in her willingness to “serve and keep” him as a proper wife should, reinforces his reputation in the community as a good host and a good householder. Again, the wife’s behavior serves to define the husband’s social identity.

Obscure though the housewife may appear, she has a more active role to play than to “serve and keep” her husband at table. Even when the routines of table service are designed to enhance the aesthetic aspects of dining experience, they simultaneously work to impose a structure of order on it. Ever meticulous about the rules of serving, Markham argues:

. . . . what avails it our good housewife to be never so skilful in the parts of cookery, if she want skill to marshal the dishes, and set every one in his due place, giving precedency according to fashion and custom; it is like a fencer, leading a band of men in rout, who knows the use of the weapon, but not how to put men in order.

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111 Markham, English 123-4.
112 Markham, English 123. Gough in Of Domestic Duties (1622) defines “entertaining strangers” as one of the things that “an husbands consent is to be expected” — since those things are “such as he by vertue of his place and authoritie hath power to order.” See Gough, Of Domestic Duties (London, 1622) 290.
113 Markham, English 60. Gouge also specifies a wife’s “readinesse to doe what her husband requireth” as the willingness to “make ready quickly” when her husband is “desirous to entertaine a friend on the sudden.” See Gouge 319.
114 Markham, English 121.
Interested primarily in how to “adorn and beautify”\textsuperscript{115} the table, Markham focuses on regulating the order of serving and arranging the dishes, but scarcely mentions about setting up the order among the guests. The shift from “dishes” to “men,” however, seems to suggest an implicit connection between the two. Although the provision of appetizing foods is indispensable to a successful entertainment, guests must also be cared for with a proper regard to their rank and degree, and not placed with those who would offend their social sensibilities. While the responsibility of seating arrangement may belong to the head of the household,\textsuperscript{116} the housewife, through the sequencing of courses and the setting of dishes, helps establish the hierarchy among the guests. As Rose suggests in his book, at “covering of the Table with Dishes and Plates,” the steward should “begin at the upper end of the Table, but set on the first Dish at the right side of the Cadnat, or Cover (which is always set if any great person be to be treated) and the next on the left side of the Cover, with a Plate upon a Rider between the two Dishes, against the Salt-seller, doing this all a-long till he comes to the lower end with the last Dish.”\textsuperscript{117} Although in the household of the country gentry such elaborated serving rituals might have been greatly simplified in practice, the demand “that all things should be done in very good order”\textsuperscript{118} seemed to remain the same. Thus, by setting every dish in its “due place” and giving “precedency according to fashion and custom,” the housewife indirectly helps identify the “due place” of each diner in the social structure of

\textsuperscript{115} Markham, \textit{English} 125.

\textsuperscript{116} As the Father in Hollyband’s \textit{Dialogue} forcefully commands his guest to sit, “You shall sit there: have I not power to commaunde in my house?” See Hollyband, “The Citizen at Home,” \textit{The Elizabethan Home: Discovered in Two Dialogues by Claudius Hollyband and Peter Erondell}, ed. M. St. Clare Byrne (London: Haslewood Books, 1930) 35.

\textsuperscript{117} Rose 5.

\textsuperscript{118} Rose 5.
the dining community.

The insistence on orderliness and hierarchy, however, aims not just to maintain the harmony of dining but also to defend the symbolic boundary of the household. Since the housewife has been portrayed as an organizer responsible for placing everything and everybody in their “due place” according to the rule of “precedency,” she is to blame for playing “a fencer, leading a band of men in rout, who knows the use of the weapon, but not how to put men in order.”119 When the dishes symbolize the “men” to be seated orderly at the table, they also metamorphose into warriors getting ready to fight. At the same time, when food is transformed into the “weapon” of war, its dangerous potential to dissolve and to contaminate, rather than a threat to be avoided, becomes a useful resource for defense. The power of the weapon, however, can’t be fully utilized without knowing how to put “in order” the men who use it or rather the dishes that contain it. The ordering of dishes, in this light, is to convert the disorderly energies of food into positive forces, which coerce the guests into their “due place” according to their hierarchy at the table as well as their proper relations to the household. Since a “fencer” can also be “one who fences in public shows” (OED), the display may be more for show than for real fighting, but the performance is enacted not so much to please its beholders as to daunt them, if not into submission, at least in awe. As trivial as her work may seem at the table, the housewife, by manipulating the ins and outs of the guests, is responsible for defining and defending the boundary between the household and the outside world.

Undoubtedly, women are entrusted with more duties than men at the dining table, but responsibility is not equivalent to power and control. As Tusser asks in *A Book of

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119 Markham, *English* 121.
Huswifery (1573), "Take weapon away, of what force is man?/ Take huswife from husband, and what is he then?" Although a husband depends on his wife for the construction of his masculine identity, as a tool or a weapon employed for the advancement of her husband, the housewife can only have her identity subsumed under his. Moreover, as Tusser further explains, "Though husbandry seemeth, to bring in the gains,/ Yet huswifery labours, seem equal in pain." Though the housewife's "labors" — for domestic work as well as for childbirth — seem to receive certain acknowledgement from Tusser, such "labours" can only be measured by their "pains," not their "gains." Thus, just as her husband's identity is defined by her behavior, so is hers by her ability to "serve for a day, for a week, for a year,/ For life-time, for ever, while man dwelleth here. . . . To quiet the head, and to comfort the heart." In the countryside where extra-domestic service was under developed, husbands might have to rely on their wives for provision of dining entertainments. As Heal argues, however, "the role of the towns as foci of economic and social activity ensured the early growth of inns and alehouses, so that public provision of care for the outsider was already well developed in most English towns by the fifteenth century." In the urban area, housewives' contributions to the table were not exactly irreplaceable.

Although dining out may sometimes be not so much an option as a requirement for men out for business, it is also a privilege that can't be possible without access to other resources such as freedom, power, and economic superiority. When men travel between different dining tables, they form alliances, accrue cultural and economic capitals, and

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120 Tusser 240.
121 Tusser 240.
122 Tusser 240.
123 Heal, Hospitality 300.
expand their social spaces, but their mobility simultaneously increases the possibility of conflicts and threatens to undermine the order of the community and their families. In *The Comedy of Errors*, the anxiety about the instability, rather than resulting in the restraint of men, is again turned against women. Thus, the attempt to curb the mobility of merchants, rather than putting a stop to the "mortal and intestine jars" (1. 1. 11) between Ephesus and Syracuse, only produces more "errors" not so much between men as between Antipholus of Syracuse and his wife. By identifying extra-domestic dining experience with women catering for money, the marital conflict is further translated into the competition between the wife and women outside the family. Just as wives are blamed for their supposed disobedience, so are women other than wives stigmatized for their profit-motivated obedience. No matter what happens, husbands continue enjoying their freedom and their food wherever they go and whenever they want to. If those outside women at least get monetary feedback from their service and labor, wives in the pursuit of the wifely ideal tailored specifically for men are playing a game they will never win. Thus, the wife is to blame when her husband dines out, but she is also to blame if she tries to make him eat at home. Either way, the husband wins. As the men triumph over their wives and regain their "liberty" (5. 1. 340), their disrupted families finally can be restored, and the conflict between cities as well as between men, if only temporarily, can also be reconciled.

If the play's final reconciliation is achieved through the restoration of "liberty" to men — particularly businessmen — all the "errors" that constitute the play are caused initially by the attempt to impose restraint on the movement of merchants and to confine

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them within the space prescribed by their social identity. When Egeon is arrested for violating the law resulting from the “mortal and intestine jars” (1. 1. 11) between Syracuse and Ephesus, the Duke of Ephesus explains:

It hath in solemn synods been decreed,
Both by the Syracusians and ourselves,
To admit no traffic to our adverse towns;
Nay more, if any born at Ephesus
Be seen at Syracusian marts and fairs;
Again, if any Syracusian born
Come to the bay of Ephesus, he dies. (1. 1. 13-9)

Although “traffic” means the “trade between distant or distinct communities” (OED), the transportation of goods is inseparable from the corresponding movement of the merchants who sell them. Just as the merchants of Ephesus have to follow their goods to “Syracusian marts and fairs,” so do the Syracusian merchants have to transport theirs to the “bay of Ephesus.” The traveling of merchants, however, increases the possibility of cultural clashes but also that of business disputes between, from the Duke of Ephesus’ point of view, “our well-dealing countrymen” (1. 1. 7) and “your seditious countrymen” (1. 1. 12). At the same time, the mutual migration and mingling may also blur the boundary between the two communities and obliterate the distinctiveness of their identities — a possibility that becomes frightfully real when Antipholus of Ephesus secretly enters Syracuse and is confused with his twin brother, Antipholus of Syracuse. Thus, despite the “enmity and discord” (1. 1. 5) between the two cities, they are unanimous in their desire for the kind of stability marked by differentiation and immobility. The common law between them aims not just to protect their own
boundaries from the transgression of foreign merchants, but to stop local merchants from straying from their birthplace or their “native home” (1. 1. 29) — as Egeon does — to the territory of their adversaries. As demonstrated in the fate of Egeon, the consequence of such deviation is to risk losing his family and ultimately to lose his life.

Nevertheless, although the merchants’ need to travel may undermine the order and integrity of society, for commerce-oriented cities like Ephesus and Syracuse, such mobility is also indispensable to the growth of economy and thus the stability of society. The city authorities on both sides thus are placed in a dilemma — a dilemma that is shared by the Ephesian merchant wife Adriana. In “Dining Out in Ephesus: Food in The Comedy of Errors,” Joseph Candido, by emphasizing the social significance of a family meal as a means of conciliation, tries to rescue Adriana from the criticisms of other characters in the play. Though he praises her for “preferring finally in a crisis to labor at forgiveness rather than to ease into recrimination,” he also criticizes her for having “forsaken the role of hostess and healer that it was her marital duty to perform.”

He explains:

Adriana has indeed acted well in trying to refashion her broken noon meal into a dinner of forgiveness for her supposed husband, but absent from her notion of the shared meal is her own penitence for past wrongs. Now, for the first time, we sense why her husband may have been late for dinner in the first place, for he had little reason to expect anything like the calm repast it was his wife’s duty to supply.

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126 Candido: 235.
127 Candido: 235.
By endorsing the abbess' criticism of Adriana, Candido seems to echo the contemporary sentiment about domestic disturbance caused by female discontent. As Robert Younge remarked in *Sinne Stigmatized* (1639), one of the principal causes of excessive drinking was "curst and shrewish wives at home." Woolley in her instruction "Of Marriage, and the duty of a Wife to her Husband" similarly advised her readers: "let what ever you provide be so neatly and cleanly drest, that his fare, though ordinary, may engage his appetite, and disingage his fancy from Taverns, which many are compell'd to make use of by reason of the continual and daily dissatisfactions they find at home." The assumption behind these comments is that, although "A man's house is his castle," he may not want to stay in it unless his wife has fulfilled her wifely duty, a major part of which is not just to satisfy but to allure the husband's appetite. By accusing Adriana of failing to provide the "calm repast" and to attract her husband home for dinner, Candido ignores the economic and social conditions that encourage and require men — especially businessmen — to dine out whether their wives fulfill their wifely duty or not.

Even if Adriaiana had not provided "Unquiet meals" to her husband (5. 1. 74), there is no guarantee that Antipholus of Ephesus would have become more concerned with the ritual of family meals. On the one hand, in the eastern Mediterranean port town of Ephesus, where mercantile activity is closely intertwined with eating, it is hard to avoid dining out. The local merchant whom Antipholus of Syracuse invites for dinner, for instance, declines the invitation because he has already been "invited . . . to certain

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129 Woolley 103.
130 Woolley 106.
merchants. Of whom I hope to make much benefit” (1. 2. 25). While commensality helps abolish the sharp boundaries between social groups and provides the environment for business, it is also an integral part of the mercantile culture that works to reinforce the existing bond as well as to foster it for future cooperation. When Adriana is distressed by her husband’s delay for dinner, Luciana, perhaps having witnessed the same drama enacted more than once, immediately suggests — “Perhaps some merchant hath invited him.” And from the mart he’s somewhere gone to dinner” (2. 1. 4-5). Luciana’s guess may reveal “the severe limitations of the unwedded woman’s easy aphorisms about marriage,” but it probably is a realistic perception of the dining culture of the men in “business.” Indeed, if Antipholus of Ephesus is hospitable to his merchant friends, his twin brother similarly finds himself repeatedly being invited as he walks around the town. Whether for “business” (2. 1. 11), for “cheer” (3. 1. 19), or for “jest” (3. 1. 123), the men in the play are provided with ample opportunities to dine at different tables but rarely at home.

In addition to the pressure to dine out exerted by the mercantile culture itself, the material conditions of Ephesus also support such behavior. In her study of urban hospitality in early modern England, Heal points out that, in contrast with the nobility and gentry, “city merchants, even the most prosperous among them, lacked the obvious resources for entertainment” — such as space, staff, and provision — “that were readily available in the countryside.” But these limitations could be mended with “growth of inns and alehouses” instigated by growth of the towns as “foci of economic and social

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132 Candido: 226. For Candido, Luciana’s “limitations” reside in her inability to perceive Adriana’s “heavy emotional toll exacted by her husband’s absence,” the “threat of an imperiled marriage,” and “threats to her identity as wife and Lady.” See Candido: 225, 226.
activity.”¹³³ Like the English towns and particularly the capitol London,¹³⁴ Ephesus as the eastern Mediterranean port town bustling with monetary trade is furnished with well-established public provision of care as well. As strangers like Antipholous of Syracuse seems to have no trouble finding an inn for bed and board, local merchants have more than one place to have “cheer” and “welcome” (3. 1. 26). When Antipholus of Euphesus is unexpectedly denied admittance into his own house, his friend Balthasar immediately proposes that they could move “to the Tiger” (3. 1. 97) for dinner. Nevertheless, determined “in despite of mirth . . . to be merry” (3. 1. 108), but probably also attempting to save his face, Antipholus invites them all to the Porpentine where they can dine with “a wench of excellent discourse,/ Pretty and witty; wild and yet, too, gentle” (3. 1. 109-10). In other words, even when a man fails to find food in his own house, Ephesus is not a town that will leave him hungry — for he can always “knock elsewhere,” knowing for sure that they won’t “disdain” him (3. 1. 120-1).

Although those catering establishments are open to all, not everybody can afford the expense and the freedom of eating there. On the one hand, as Cathy Ross argues, “[u]ntil the late 19th century much of London’s eating out was associated with male-dominated roles and activities: work, drinking, political discussion and public conviviality.”¹³⁵ In Ephesus, places for dining out are also reserved for or limited to

¹³³ Heal, *Hospitality* 300.
men only. Even if women want to visit those eating-out establishments, the fact that some of them such as the Tiger and the Porpentine seem to cater for sex as a sideline may be enough to keep them away. For those who appear there such as the Courtesan, they do not go there to eat, but to serve and entertain male customers. On the other hand, although dining out is by no means an experience exclusive to merchants only, it requires certain economic power to be able to eat at one’s will to the point of forgetting mealtime.

It is easy for a merchant like Balthasar to say, “Good meat . . . is common; that every curl affords” (3. 1. 24). For a “bondman” (5. 1. 289) like Dromio of Ephesus, however, it may not be so — as he says when urging his master to go home, “Methinks your maw, like mine, should be your clock;/ And strike you home without a messenger” (1. 2. 66-7).

While his master’s economic and social superiority allow him to eat away from home whenever the need — not necessarily the desire — arises, Dromio’s inferior status prescribes that his “maw” can only be driven by biological needs regulated by the rhythm of domestic mealtime.

For those privileged to take “good meat” for granted, the definition of a good meal is no longer determined by the provision of food, but by the entertainment of words. The sublimation of food into words can be perceived in Antipholus of Ephesus’ conversation with Balthazar when he invites the latter home for dinner:

*Eph. Ant.* You’re sad, signior Balthazar; pray God our cheer

May answer my good will, and your good welcome here.

*Bal.* I hold your dainties cheap, sir, and your welcome dear.

*Eph. Ant.* O Signior Balthazar, either at flesh or fish

A table full of welcome makes scarce one dainty dish.

*Bal.* Good meat, sir, is common; that every churl affords.
Eph. Ant. And welcome more common, for that’s nothing but words.

Bal. Small cheer and great welcome makes a merry feast. (3. 1. 19-26)  

In her study, Heal observes that despite the survival of “good evidence on civic and guild entertainment,” there is little evidence left regarding “the behaviour of smaller groups, or of individual households.” Nevertheless, since the urban elite, despite their different set of institutions and slightly variant rhetoric, shared the same assumptions about order, hierarchy, and social control with the country gentry and nobility, it is possible that they might have tried to adopt the pattern of entertainment used in grand households and to control the access to the “inner sanctum” of their own houses through the process of careful “filtration and restriction.” Thus, unlike the descriptions of male gathering in The Bill of Fare or in The Married Mens Feast, where exotic foods are listed in detail, the importance of foods is greatly down-played here. Although Antipholus is apologetic for the meal he is to offer — especially one not prepared for guests but only for family members — Balthazar seems flattered by the invitation all the same. Familiar with the kind of food his friend usually has at inns or taverns, Antipholus certainly has reasons to worry that Balthazar may find the homely meal disappointing. For Balthazar, however, what is “dear” about this meal is not so much

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136 In Macbeth, Lady Macbeth similarly urges her husband:

My royal Lord,
You do not give the cheer: the feast is sold,
That is not often vouch’d, while ‘tis a-making,
‘Tis given with welcome: to feed were best at home;
From thence, the sauce to meat is ceremony;
Meeting were bare without it. (3. 4. 31-6)


137 Heal, Hospitality 306.

138 Heal, Hospitality 300-1.

139 Heal, Hospitality 163-4.
the “dainties” as Antipholus’ “welcome.” If Antipholus’ invitation demonstrates his hospitality, it simultaneously serves as an expression of his respect for Balthazar and as a clear indication of the social intimacy between them. Although “every churl” — in a sense, including Balthazar himself — can bear the expense of “good meat” or even manage to spare it, Antipholus’ many words of “welcome” are symbolic valuables that can’t be bought with money and supposedly are enough to make “a merry feast” — no matter how “small” the “cheer” is.

Ironically, although only Antipholus of Ephesus has the authority to say the words of “welcome,” he alone is not enough to make the “merry feast” come true. As Douglas Lanier argues, while the play stresses external “rituals” such as meals that make characters recognizable, it also demonstrates that “such events . . . need constantly to be rehearsed and re-rehearsed in order to maintain who’s who.”

Indeed, as long as a Antipholus’ identity as a proper husband and his reputation as a good householder are in part determined by his performance of hospitality, he has to depend on Adriana’s cooperation to sustain his reputation in the community. Thus, even when he is privileged to ignore Adriana’s “hours” (3. 1. 2), he needs to ensure that he can bend her time — whether she likes it or not — to suit his needs either with bribes of gifts or threats of violence. Although “there’s a time for all things” (2. 2. 63-4), the official “time” that holds sway over everybody else’s in the household is defined not just in “commercial terms,” as Ann C. Christensen argues, but in Antipholus’ own terms.

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142 Antipholus, however, is not the only one who takes his wife’s time for granted. The
Dromio’s “maw,” however, Adriana’s time is marked by domestic routines and daily meals, both of which are measured and regulated by the strike of the “clock” (1. 2. 45). Unlike his wife and his servant, Antipholus is empowered to transcend the objective time of the “clock” and thus to disrupt the rhythm of his wife’s “homely” (2. 1. 89) hours. His willful coming and going, therefore, not only deprives Adriana of the material base that constitutes her sense of identity but, by putting her always on hold and in waiting, conceptually stretches the sense of time to the point that there seems to be no end to it. When she complains to her sister, “Hath homely age th’alluring beauty took/ From my poor cheek?” (2. 1. 89-90), she may be expressing real concern about the aging of her physical features, but it also reveals her frustration about the endlessness and emptiness of her “homely age.” Unfortunately, Adriana may complain, but she has no real authority to demand respect from her husband or even to ignore him altogether.

Adriana’s refraining from eating in the absence of her husband may be attributed to her commitment to her marriage and to her “identity as wife and Lady,” but she may also do so out of some quiet concern about her husband’s reaction if she doesn’t wait for him. Certainly, Antipholus of Ephesus has never laid his hand on Andria, but he is probably more than capable of being violent. When he finds himself locked out of the house, he not only threatens to “break ope the gate” with an “iron crow” (3. 1. 73, 84) but asks Dromio to buy “a rope’s end” to “bestow/ Among my wife and her confederates” (4. 1. 16-7) — although it is unclear whether the rope is merely for jest or for whipping and

Father in Hollyband’s *Dialogue* also has no qualms about coming home late. When his wife asks, “where have you tarried so longe? you come not now from the Churche, that I know well, for it is twelve stroken,” he doesn’t feel obliged to explain, either. All the Father says is: “Go to: let us go to dinner: let us go sit.” See Hollyband 34.

143 Candido: 225.
even hanging them. If Antipholus of Ephesus' threat remains a mere threat, his twin brother, sharing the same conception of time, translates it into action. Having mistaken his brother's servant as his own and beaten him for his untimely jest, Antipholus of Syracuse, when finally seeing the right Dromio, warns him with another beating not to "make a common of my serious hours" and to "fashion your demeanour to my looks" (2. 2. 29) — or, "I will beat this method in your sconce" (2. 2. 32-3). Maurice Hunt argues that, despite their different social statuses, Adriana is similar to her servant in her "material transferability" prescribed by patriarchal marriage.¹⁴⁴ Though reluctantly, she is forced to share with Dromio the same fate of having their homely "hours" made "common" for the convenience of their husband or master. Nevertheless, as Donna Hamilton argues, since Adriana, unlike both Dromios, suffers no injury, "the language of violence" is literalised "not evenhandedly . . . but in such a way as to display hierarchy senselessly victimizing the disempowered."¹⁴⁵ As the blow that might have fallen on Adriana is conveniently displaced unto Dromio twins, it serves to re-establish the social distinction between them that has been blurred by the "servitude" (2. 1. 26).

On the other hand, when the material as well as symbolic significance of food decreases, the role of table talk acquires more weight in the constitution of a "merry feast." Antipholus of Ephesus's words of "welcome," therefore, can be nothing "but wind" (3. 1. 75) without the substantiation of female speech acts. Michel Jeanneret argues that, "in the Renaissance, in an increasing number of circles, social graces

consisted of an art of living which was also an art of speaking”\(^{146}\) at the dining table. Indeed, “to put conversation on the menu and to commend it as a necessary spice to a meal is an essential part of the Humanist manifesto” — for words, like “a well-prepared sauce,” represent “the specifically human contribution of a culture capable of keeping the excesses of nature in check.”\(^{147}\) For Antipholus, however, it is primarily woman who is expected to add the “necessary spice” of table talk to a meal. As Adriana attributes her husband’s negligence to her “marr’d” (2. 1. 92) discourse, Antipholus turns to the Courtesan because of her “excellent discourse” (3. 1. 109). Since eating and speaking are mutually exclusive activities, while Adriana or the Courtesan strives to produce “witty” (3. 1. 110), “voluble,” and “sharp discourse” (2. 1. 92), Antipholus and his male friends can just gorge themselves with food. Thus, although the female discourse certainly works as a regulating force to the oral as well as sexual pleasure of its speaker, it simultaneously functions to stimulate and to satiate the instinctual desire of its male audience.

The male dependence on female cooperation or rather subordination for the provision of nurture and entertainment has its risk, but the society of Ephesus lacks no resources to restore the social order if the threat happens to come true. The ability of the social system to cope with the crisis is immediately put to test by the arrival of Antipholus of Ephesus’s identical twin. If Antipholus of Syracuse had never landed at Ephesus, Adriana probably would have kept on complaining to her sister and nagging at her husband. The appearance of the twin brother, however, precipitates her


\(^{147}\) Jeanneret 92-3.
unknowingly to take the situation into her own hands by locking the real husband out of the door. This sudden “restraint” (3. 1. 97) of hers is not only outrageous and incomprehensible to the husband who has long taken his liberty for granted; it is considered “strange” (3. 1. 97) or “mad” (4. 3. 85) as well by others. Instead of being paralyzed or panicked at the disruption of the ordinary order, Antipholus’ equilibrium is quickly restored, and he is determined “to be merry” (3. 1. 108). With the many eating-out establishments in town, he knows that he can always “knock elsewhere”; confident of his economic power, he is also secured in the knowledge that there is no way they will “disdain” (3. 1. 121) him as his wife has done. Finally, it does not matter if the expulsion is meant to be a punishment of Antipholus’s negligence as a husband or just an accidental explosion of his wife’s frustration — since, at home or out of home, the society will make sure that he is well taken care of.

What Antipholus of Ephesus finds “elsewhere” is not just food but a substitute for his wife. It is probably no coincidence that the Porpentine is also run by a woman, who is just as “Pretty and witty; wild and yet, too, gentle” (3. 1. 109-11) as Adriana. While the introduction of the Courtesan reveals how functionally replaceable the wife is, it serves to divert the attention from the conflict between the husband and the wife to the rivalry between Adriana and the Courtesan as they compete to please the same man — not necessarily for completely different reasons. Although the Courtesan’s motive is overtly profit-driven — as she says when she decides to get back her ring, “For forty ducats is too much to loose” (4. 3. 93) — Adriana, despite her affections for her husband, is not exactly free of any condition. As Roy C. Wood argues, “food can be a form of currency” whereby “the giving of food as a gift is intended to elicit some reciprocal gift,
service, or obligation to behave in particular ways or to repay some social debt.”

The meal that Adriana prepares for her husband is likewise proffered as a gift, which, if insufficient to oblige the latter to fulfill his duty, demands to be reciprocated with something that can similarly be measured in “ducats”: “Sister, you know he promis’d me a chain;/ Would that alone a toy he would detain,/ So he would keep fair quarter with his bed” (2. 1. 106-8). Despite the initial opposition between Adriana and the Courtesan, the golden chain that they both expect to obtain somehow ties them together, allowing them to make an alliance against Antipholus of Ephesus.

With the united force of his wife and the Courtesan, it may seem that Antipholus of Ephesus is finally compelled to take responsibility for his own behavior and to deal with his problematic relationship to women. Yet, again, a door of escape is open for him, enabling him to find another harbor under the wing of a mother figure, the abbess mother-in-law. By distinguishing lawful from “unlawful love” (5. 1. 51), the abbess effectively disrupts the newly formed alliance between Adriana and the Courtesan. Directing the focus on Adriana’s jealousy of her husband’s roaming affection, she further pushes the Courtesan out of the picture. True to the stereotype of a mother-in-law, the abbess is mercilessly critical of Adriana. Prodding Adriana into confessing her constant reprehension of her husband “in private” and “in assemblies” (5. 1. 59-60), she cunningly coerces the wife into assuming total responsibility for her husband’s so-called madness by concluding: “In food, in sport and life-preserving rest/ To be disturb’d, would mad or man or beast;/ The consequence is then, thy jealousy fits/ Hath scar’d thy husband from the use of wits” (5. 1. 83-6). If, as the Courtesan speculates, it is Antipholus of

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148 Wood 47.
Ephesus’s “fits” (4. 3. 87) that makes Adriana “On purpose shut the doors against his way” (4. 3. 88), her “jealousy fits” become the cause that drives him out of the house as well as out of his mind. Although Adriana felt fully justified in her anger at Antipholus in the beginning, she is suddenly subdued by the Abbess’ “rebukes,” which even Luciana, who has similarly chided her for her “mad jealousy” (2. 1. 116), finds unacceptable. Instead of talking back to her mother-in-law, Adriana can only agree, “She did betray me to mine own reproof” (5. 1. 90).

Rather than being demoralized by the acceptance of the “reproof,” Adriana is more determined to “lay hold on [her husband]” (5. 1. 91). Her determination, however, is thwarted by the abbess mother-in-law, the ultimate arch-rival, who, unlike the Courtesan, lays claim to the man first in the name of religion and then in the name of a mother. Without yielding to Adriana’s assertion of her “office” as Antipholus’s sole legitimate “nurse” (5. 1. 98-9), the Abbess maintains that she will not “let him stir” until she herself has used her “approved means” “With wholesome syrups, drugs and holy prayers./ To make of him a formal man again” (5. 1. 102-5). Since the Abbess is Antipholus’ biological mother, Adriana actually hits the right note when she calls herself a “nurse” to him. She may imagine herself as the kind of “nurse” that takes care of the sick, but in the presence of her mother-in-law, she is more like the kind “employed to suckle, and otherwise attend to, an infant” (OED). Therefore, when she claims that she will “have no attorney” but herself (5. 1. 100), justified though she may feel, she is speaking against herself — for she is the one who acts as the surrogate mother to Antipholus, not the Abbess. Worse of all, she is not even doing a perfect job, at least not according to the standard “approved” by the mother-in-law. The reversal of roles between the wife and the mother simultaneously changes the wayward husband into a mistreated baby who
breaks away from his wet-nurse’s grasp to his biological mother’s embrace not to escape his responsibility, but “for sanctuary” (5. 1. 94).

If, as Janet Adelman argues, the maternal figure in Shakespearean plays is often imagined to pose the threat of engulfment and swallowing suffocation to men, in *The Comedy of Errors* the malevolent power is effectively purged from the mother Abbess and displaced unto the “possessive” wife Adriana, who describes herself as the “breaking gulf” that threatens to devour Antipholus as “a drop of water” (2. 2. 126). While Antipholus of Syracuse finds “sanctuary” in his protective, all-giving mother, his twin brother, kept and “bound” “in a dark and dankish vault at home” (5. 1. 248), is forced to return to the site of maternal origin and to go through the traumatic experience of birth all over again. The “home,” rather than being “the house I owe” (3. 1. 42), suddenly metamorphoses into a womb-like space that imprisons and binds him and his man together with (umbilical) “cords” (5. 1. 291). Entrapped within this enclosure, his only recourse is to the counter-violence through which he can force his birth by “gnawing with my teeth my bonds in sunder” and regaining his “freedom” (5. 1. 248-51). Barbara Freedman argues that the twins can be seen as representing “the simultaneous and interdependent existence of two mutually exclusive self-concepts” of their father.

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150 R. A. Foakes suggests in the footnote for (2. 2. 123-9) that “Adriana does not realize that her claim upon her husband is too possessive.” In the footnote for (5. 1. 98-101), he also concurs with the Abbess’ accusation of Adriana and comments that “Adriana’s desire to have her husband all to herself... reflects her jealous and over-possessive love, a love disordered.”

Egeon. Though father’s self-recovery may depend upon “the payment of a series of [marital and monetary] debts” as Freedman suggests, it is finally achieved through the exorcism of the threat of female control that Egeon seems to have tried to escape in his own marriage.\textsuperscript{152} When sentenced to be beheaded in “the melancholy vale” right “Behind the ditches of the abbey” (5. 1. 120, 122) that is his wife’s “house” (5. 1. 92) and territory, he seems to be subject to the very same wifely control that has almost ruined his sons’ masculinity. Once both sons are liberated from the supposedly possessive wife, however, the old father finally regains the freedom that he has lost. With all the dangerous potentials absorbed by her daughter-in-law, the Abbess is not just benevolent but liberating. As she is differentiated from her daughter-in-law who attempts to deprive her husband of his “liberty” either with the pressure of obligation or by force, she is different from her former self. Unlike the young wife insisting on “following” her husband around and “making daily motions for [their] home return” (1.1. 47, 59), the new Emilia now “[gains] a husband by his liberty,” loosing his “bonds” with her own hands (5. 1. 340).

Just as the domestication of wives helps restore the masculine identity of husbands, the liberation of the latter miraculously lead to the reconciliation of the “enmity and discord” (1. 1. 5) between Ephesus and Syracuse and the consummation of the “gossips’ feast” (5. 1. 405). Although the twins were physically born thirty-three years ago, as the Abbess tells her sons, “Thirty-three years have I but gone in travail/ Of you, my sons, and

\textsuperscript{152} As Freedman points out, although Egeon claims to be responsible for his separation from his wife, he “appears to have desired to maintain that divorce, despite his protests to the contrary” — since “it was his wife, not he, who had made provisions for her to follow him,” and finally it was he who was “unwilling to return home with her.” See Freedman: 374.
till this present hour/ My heavy burden ne’er delivered” (5. 1. 400-2), symbolically the laboring process is never complete until now. In this light, the feast appears to be part of the childbirth ceremony and thus an occasion more significant for women than for men. Nevertheless, although the “duke,” her “husband,” her “children both,” and even “the calendars of their nativity” are invited by the Abbess to the feast to “joy with [her]” (5. 1. 403-5), Adriana alone is left out from the list and silenced throughout the rest of the play. Moreover, though hosted by a woman in a private feminized space, the feast, with both its hostess and its location sanitized and desexualized by their religious association, may have lost its original significance for women. Indeed, rather than an occasion for women to meet and support each other, the feast is appropriated for the convenience of men. When the Abbess is rendered asexually holy and devotedly serviceable to her men, Adriana, subdued, can no longer pose any harm even if she is present at the feast. It is “such felicity” (5. 1. 406) indeed for Antipholus and his friends, who have tried to stop women’s appetite by making them talk. Finally, they are relaxed enough to eat and even volunteer “gossip,” if not anywhere else, at least “at this feast” (5. 1. 407).

The men in The Comedy of Errors rely on women’s contribution of labor and care to enjoy the conversation and conviviality at table. Although those women are not excluded from the table — on the contrary, they are desired for their ability to entertain — their participation is predicated on the condition of self-restraint and self-denial. As a wife, Adriana is expected to subdue her “venom clamours” (5. 1. 69);

required by her profession, the Courtesan also has to put on the performance of “excellent discourse” (3. 1. 109). Even Emilia is bound by her “duty” (5. 1. 107) as the abbess and as the idealized mother to “make full satisfaction” (5. 1. 399) to those at the “gossips’ feast” (5. 1. 405). Thus, if the new social situation requires men to exercise greater control over their feelings and behavior, women similarly have to repress their desire in order to accomplish their work at table and to sustain the male order. Although self-control at table is necessary for both men and women, the consequences are different. For men, the observation of table manners is employed as the means to increase their social mobility and to broaden their social connections. Women’s various contributions to the meal, however, work not so much to secure full memberships for them as to reinforce their husbands’ authority and reputation in the community. In other words, women may be responsible for the realization of an orderly dining environment, but oftentimes they are not allowed to enjoy the fruit of their own labors. Or, just as the satisfaction of male appetite is predicated on the repression of female desire, a more civilized social contact between men is determined by the reinforcement of female obedience — particularly at table.
Chapter 3

"Feed the Wife Plump for Another’s Vein":

Gender Politics in the Construction of Appetite

As argued in the previous chapters, both cooking and dining are social activities inextricable from underlying attitudes to gender and class differences, social groupings, and relationships in society. Eating is no exception. Much as one’s eating pattern can be determined by the material conditions and food supplies, the act of consumption is not merely an expression of individual desire or an act of self-fulfillment, but social behavior shaped by a variety of cultural beliefs and social categories of the time. As Mennell argues in *All Manners of Food*, the long-term changes in the structure of societies have brought about changes not only in table manners, but in patterning and expression of appetite. He suggests that, as the increasing interdependence and more equal balances of power between social classes from the medieval times had resulted in more equal distribution of foodstuffs, the ability to eat in great quantities and with regularity ceased being the means for social distinction. With the shift of emphasis “from quantitative display to qualitative elaboration,”¹ the “proliferation of small, delicate and costly dishes,” and the “knowledgeability and a sense of delicacy in matters of food” thus became the expression of social superiority as well as the object of social emulation.²

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¹ Mennell 33.
² Mennell 33.
The process of the "civilising of appetite," as Mennell defines it, is thus characterized not just by the growing self-control over the appetite for food but also by the refining of taste for more delicate dishes. As the emphasis on self-control and delicacy leads to the transformation of eating from a matter of survival into a matter of taste, the concern with the quantity of food available for consumption is replaced by the concern with its variety. The assumption is that, the more "civilized" or restrained the appetite and the more differentiated the taste, the more varied the diet tends to become.

Although Mennell's historical and developmental approach provides a useful framework for the understanding of the long-term development of appetite in general, the situation turns out to be more complicated when we take into account local specificity and difference by looking at the early modern English diet. Here the question of gender becomes crucial. There was indeed a change in English diet from the plain country food to the elaborated urban or courtly cuisine, composed of diverse expansive ingredients imported from foreign regions. While the new regimen functioned to express social superiority, it was simultaneously a cause of anxiety and criticism. As the availability of diverse meats represented the economic and social changes of the time, English country food was made to stand for the ideal past untainted by foreign influences. Since a large appetite was necessary for the consumption of the traditional foodstuffs, it became the capability that defined one not just as a man but an Englishman. The desire for the diverse dainties, rather than disappearing with the glorification of the country cuisine, was conveniently displaced unto women. Although in reality women, compelled by necessity, rarely had the luxury to indulge in their appetite, their eating pattern was pejoratively linked to snacking, which in turn associated them with the transgressive,

3 Mennell 32.
non-ritual consumption condemned by men. Coupled with the conception of women as food for male consumption, these associations worked to hold them responsible for the corruption of men’s appetite and ultimately of their identity.

Not surprisingly, in popular literature female eating was usually satirized and presented as a threat to masculine identity, to the integrity of individual household, and even to the stability of society. The anxiety and hostility expressed by these texts were derived in part from the implicit acknowledgement that female appetite is both impossible to contain totally and indispensable to the reproduction of society. In Thomas Middleton’s *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside* (1630), rather than trying in vain to control women’s appetite, the male characters displace their own desire unto women and transform the latter into food for male consumption. When women no longer eat for their own pleasure, they are permitted the gratification from exotic dainties only to transform themselves into delicious and wholesome meals for their husbands or other male consumers. At the same time, having shifted the responsibility of self-control to women, men can give free rein to their appetite for extra-domestic fancy foods and exploit others for their own advantage without jeopardizing their own health and wealth. In other words, as Mennell argues, the “civilizing of appetite” is defined by the consumption of small dishes in small quantities, but it seems always to have been an uneven and gendered process of civilization.

In an age obsessed with eating right, the early modern dietary literature played an important role in defining and shaping the proper appetite for people. In such dietary

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4 Ken Albala suggests that from the 1470s to 1650 there was an immense outpouring of dietary literature from printing presses in Italy, then issuing from other European countries, including England. And such nutrition guides were consistently best-sellers. See Albala, *Eating Right in the Renaissance* (Berkeley: University of California Press,
works, the consumption of diverse foods was consistently considered harmful to the health primarily because the authors believed that the mixture could result in unbalanced humors and thus corruption within the body. Elyot, for example, cautions in *The Castel of Helth* (1541): “sundry meates, being dyvers in substance and qualitie, eaten at one meale, is the greatest enmy to helth.”

He explains that to digest the “diverse meates” requires “dyuers operations of Nature, and dyuers temperature of the stomake.” Since the stomach, when fed with meats of “dyvers qualities,” is incapable of concocting both the “fine meate” and the “grosse meate” at the same time. Leaving the gross meat half cooked and “grosse and crude,” such “unequall mixture” thus “nedes muste ensue corruption, and consequently sickness.”

To avoid the danger, Elyot advises:

> And therefore to a hole man it were better, to fede at one meale competently on very grosse meate only, so that it be swete, and his nature do not abhorre it, than on diuers fine meates, of sundry substance and qualitie. . . . And it is good reson, for after the generall opinion of philosophers and phisitions, the nature of mankynde is best contente with thynges moste simple and unmyxt, all thynges tendyng to unitie, wherin is the only perfection.

As Elyot suggests elsewhere, “in a hole and temperate body, thinges must be taken, whiche are lyke to the mannes nature in qualitie and degree.” The “thynges moste simple and unmyxt,” in this light, are also things that are similar to the eater’s “nature” in

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5 Elyot 42. Boorde in *A Dyetary of Helth* (1547) also warns that “sundry meates of dyuers operacyons eaten at one refeccion or meale, is not laudable.” See Boorde 252.
6 Elyot 42.
7 Elyot 42-3.
8 Elyot 43.
9 Elyot 42.
10 Elyot 40.
their “qualitie and degree.” As Douglas argues in her study of the dietary rules in the Bible, “to be holy is to be whole, to be one; holiness is unity, integrity, perfection of the individual and of the kind.”\textsuperscript{11} Since “hole” can be the variant form of both “whole” and “holy” (OED), to be “hole” is to be one and complete in one’s body as in one’s humoral system. As eating something different from a man’s “nature” threatens to throw the body “out of temper,”\textsuperscript{12} the consumption of “sundry meates . . . dyvers in substance and qualitie”\textsuperscript{13} exacerbates the humoral confusion by creating more conflicts within the body. Because the difference between the diverse meats means that “one shall . . . exceed the other,”\textsuperscript{14} their “mixture” can only result in competition rather than mutual integration or hybridization between them. In this light, any “mixture” is by default “unequall,” which consequently results in competition — if not warfare — between the foods. Indeed, as Phillip Stubbes more vividly describes in \textit{The Anatomie of Abuse} (1583), “how can all these contrarieties & discrepancies agree together in one body at one & the same time? wil not one contrary impugne his contrary? one enemy resist an other? Then, what wiseman is he that wil receiue all these enemies into the castle of his body at one time?”\textsuperscript{15} The “contrarieties & discrepancies” of the foods not only prescribe the impossibility of agreement and co-existence but automatically define them as mutual enemies. Despite their mutual antagonism, these enemies somehow ally with each other against the eater and put “the castle of his body” under siege.

The idea of equality or rather purity applies not just to foods but also to the

\textsuperscript{11} Douglas 55.
\textsuperscript{12} Elyot 40.
\textsuperscript{13} Elyot 42.
\textsuperscript{14} Elyot 43.
composition of eating companions. Just as consuming diverse meats at the same time threatens to ruin one’s appetite and to corrupt one’s health, so does eating with people of different social backgrounds. In “The Truth of Our Times” (1634), for instance, Peacham suggests that “the most solid and durable friendship to [be] among equals — equals in age, manners, estates, and professions.”\(^\text{16}\) Despite his brief complaint about the “many inconveniences” when consorting with inferiors, his resentment is directed primarily toward the “friendship” with superiors:\(^\text{17}\)

As he is your friend, a great man inviteth you to dinner to his table; the sweetness of that favor and kindness is made distasteful by the awe of his greatness — in his presence not to be covered, to sit down and to be placed where and under whom he pleaseth, to be tongue-tied all the while. . . . While you whisper in a waiter’s ear for anything that you want, you must endure to be carved unto many times of the first, worst, or rawest of the meat. Sometime you have a piece preferred unto you from his own trencher, but then imagine his belly is full or he cannot for some other reason eat it himself.\(^\text{18}\)

Although the host’s “greatness” is manifested in his ability to proffer “favor and kindness,” it is more dramatically demonstrated in the imposition of strict codes of behavior, elaborate dining rituals, and hierarchical sitting arrangements on his guests. With their body and speech suppressed, and their social contact and movement carefully controlled, the guests can’t help feeling in “awe” of their host’s “greatness” without

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17 Peacham, *Complete* 203.
18 Peacham, *Complete* 203.
simultaneously experiencing a sense of "subjection or slavery"\textsuperscript{19} on their part. Even when the feeling that one must constantly live "by countenance"\textsuperscript{20} fails to turn "the sweetness of that favor and kindness" "distasteful," all the fuss about how to behave, where to sit, and who to sit with certainly is enough to drain a person of his energies and to deprive him of any appetite for the supposedly sumptuous foods on the table.

As long as one is not on the top of the social ladder, there is still no guarantee that one’s desire can be fully satisfied — for the rule of precedence determines not just the distribution of food but the route that it travels. As Harrison points out in The Description of England (1587), at the feast held by the nobility, it is not the "liefer" friend but the greater personage that "shall have the better provision" because the passage of food is mapped out by the social hierarchy: "the beginning of every dish [is] reserved unto the greatest personage that sitteth at the table, to whom it is drawn up still by the waiters, as order requireth, and from whom it descendeth again even to the lower end, whereby each one may taste thereof."\textsuperscript{21} Thus, a guest of an inferior position may "whisper in a waiter’s ear" for what he wants, but his word alone is not enough to secure the desired piece for him. Without the intervention from the "greatest personage," the meat has to be passed through different hands and reduced in both the size and quality before reaching the lower guest’s plate. Although the "greatest personage" can bypass the designated route and transport a piece of choice meat directly from his own trencher to that of his favored guest, such an offer is anything but stable, often depending on the ups-and-downs of his mood or, more importantly, the internal movement of his belly. The food acquired this way undoubtedly guarantees its quality, but it is not necessarily

\textsuperscript{19} Peacham, Complete 203.
\textsuperscript{20} Peacham, Complete 203.
what the receiver really wants, nor is it meant to fulfill his desire. Rather, the gesture, generous thought it may appear, is to demonstrate the giver’s ability to bestow as well as his power to withdraw whatever and whenever he likes, which, instead of rupturing the existing social hierarchy, only reinforces it.

For Peachman, to dine with a “great man” is to subject one’s appetite to his control and mercy, but Ben Jonson imagines it as an opportunity to gourmandize on the plenty which can’t be possible without the power of the authority. In “To Penshurst,” although the lord’s greatness is again manifested in his power to bestow food on his guests, his hospitality, rather than reinforcing their hierarchical relationships, levels their social differences through equal distribution of food:

Where comes no guest but is allowed to eat
Without his fear, and of thy lord’s own meat;
Where the same beer and bread and self-same wine
That is his lordship’s shall be also mine. (61-4)

In his reading of the poem, Schoenfeldt argues that, with “intentional eucharistic overtones” invested in the feast, the generosity of the host not only “makes possible a secular communion in the midst of a carnivorous social world” but “inverts the potential political cannibalism of the occasion” so that “inferiors consume, instead of being consumed by, their lord.”22 Indeed, although the guests still require their lord’s permission in order to eat, they are free to indulge their appetite without worrying that they may unknowingly act or eat beyond their bounds. Moreover, rather than eating

21 Harrison 131, 126.
only the portion spared from higher tables, they are allowed to feed on the same meat just as their host does. Even the servants, who are supposed to dine only on leftovers, seem to be no exception: "Here no man tells my cups; nor, standing by./ A waiter doth my gluttony envy./ But gives me what I call and lets me eat./ He knows, below, he shall find plenty of meat" (67-70). The sharing of "the same beer and bread and self-same wine" thus flattens the hierarchy among all the diners and transforms the lord from an authority figure to an altruistic person, through whom all kinds of edible raw materials are collected, processed, and distributed equally among everybody. The experience of free indulgence relished by Jonson, however, is anything but the norm. Although he is "allowed to eat/ Without fear, and of [the] lord's meat" at this particular table, most of the time he does "not fain to sit . . . At great men's table," nor can he spare his "gluttony" from the waiter's "envy."

While hierarchical dining settings create competition between the participants and deter them from enjoying their appetite, relationships based on commercial exchange may seem to provide a neutral environment where people can enjoy their food in liberty. Having complained about the restriction on appetite in formal dining occasions, Peacham concludes that the "true and free content" is not to be found when eating with great men, but when dining with "some honest companion in Pie Corner."23 Ideally, commercial victualling establishments such as cook shops or taverns not only make no distinction of the social status of their customers, but also are better equipped than private households to fulfill their various needs and desires. In her study of dining out in the modern world, Lupton argues that although the "home-cooked" meal is valued for its "authenticity and

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23 Peacham, Complete 203.
meanings of security, familial love and comfort,” it is the experience of dining out that often evokes the “emotions” of “pleasure, excitemeat, and happiness.”24 Although the dinning experience in a modern restaurant may be very different from that in an early modern victualling outlet, the excitement and pleasure expressed in popular literature such as the ballad “A Bill of Fare” seem not far from those experienced by Lupton’s interviewees. In addition, as Peacham suggests in “The Worth of a Peny” (1641), in a society that had become increasingly commercialized and urbanized, such establishments were indispensable to the establishment of human relationships: “if a man meetes with his friend or acquaintance in the street, whither should they go, having no friends house neere to go into, especially in rainie or fowle weather, but to a taverne? where for the expence of a pinte or a quart of wine [people] may have a drie house & room to confer or write to any friends about business.”25

The pleasure and convenience offered by such commercial victualling establishments, however, are not without their side-effects. Despite his approval of the tavern’s contribution to the maintenance of social relationships, Peacham warns his reader against the financial risk involved in extra-domestic dining:

If we have a minde to dine at a taverne, we bespeake a dinner at all adventure, never demanding or knowing the price thereof till it be eaten . . . [I]t is no small summe that our young Gallants might save in a yeere, if they would be wise in this respect. Beside in your owne private house or chamber, a dish or two, and a good stomack for the sawce shall give you more content, continue your health, and keepe your bodie in better plight, then variety of many dishes: this pleas

24 Lupton 98.
ever the wisest and best men. (23)

There is no question about the tavern’s ability to entertain. On the one hand, if the anticipation of culinary adventures in the tavern is enough to arouse one’s appetite, the freedom to be excused from the social rules required in the domestic or formal dining environment may further encourage the desire. On the other hand, as a commercial victualling facility, the tavern is both more capable of providing a variety of novel dishes, which may be more effective in seducing its customers into overindulgence than the ordinary household. Even when people are not carried away by the excitement, they may still fall prey “to the curtesie of a numbe tong’d drawer, or his manie-ringed Mistris”\textsuperscript{26} and squander their money on expansive dainties that may not be beneficial to their health. The overindulgence thus can cause both physiological and financial stresses to the consumers. Although Peacham’s primary concern is about money, he uses the excuse of health to justify the wisdom to control one’s appetite. As high expenditure is associated with “variety of many dishes,” which in turn is identified as the sign of immoderation and the cause of bad health, home-cooked meals is defined as beneficial to the physical and mental well-being because of their simplicity and frugality.

Just as home-cooked cheer is rated higher than extra-domestic meals, the plain diet for the common people is often considered more wholesome than that for the upper class. The promotion of the country diet, however, has different implications to people from different social backgrounds. For the lower class, maintaining their original diet, if good to their health, functions to hold their social aspiration in check. For example, when Elyot suggests that to a “hole man” it is better to “fede at one meale competently

\textsuperscript{26} Peacham, \textit{Worth} 24.
on very grosse meate only,”\textsuperscript{27} the “grosse meate” is identified with traditional English country foods, such as “biefe, bakon, chese, or crudes,”\textsuperscript{28} as well as the diet for men “which use moch labor or exercise.”\textsuperscript{29} Claiming that such a “simple and unmyxt” diet is most content with “the nature of mankynde” and beneficial to the “publike weale of [his] countrey,”\textsuperscript{30} Elyot strongly advocates the enforcement of “orddynaunces and actes of counsayle . . . agaynste vayne and sumptuous expenses.”\textsuperscript{31} Nevertheless, though the law is applied to “the meane people,” the nobility is “exempted” and granted the “libertie to abide styl in the dungeon of [surfeit], if they wold.”\textsuperscript{32} In other words, the “publike weale”\textsuperscript{33} is in danger only when the “meane people” deviate from their plain diet and fall in “continual gourmandise, and dayly fedinge on sundry meates”\textsuperscript{34} that used to be affordable to the nobles alone. To curb the upward mobility and social emulation of the lower people, health is again used as an excuse. Rather than motivated by the concern about the health of the “mean people,” Elyot’s promotion of “simple and unmyxt” diet is aimed to persuade them into renouncing their new-found desires and to coerce them back into an inferior social position.

Like Elyot, Peachman similarly praises the benefit of country diet and calls for the return to the old social order. Unlike Elyot, however, he is more concerned about the city “Gallants” who, straying from their country homes, become deviant in their appetite and end up ruining their substance. Having praised home-made food for its virtue,
Peacham further identifies it with “whitemeates” such as “milk, butter, cheese curds, and
the like” 35 — all of which are standard food in “Lancashire, Shropshire, Cheshire,
Yorkshire, and other countries which are remote from the citie.” 36 While he commends
the country inhabitants for contenting themselves with “least and the simplest meat,” he
condemns city dwellers and particularly Londoners for being “reckless in the way of
expence” and for “surfettion” on “more good Beefe and Mutton in one month than all
Spaine, Italy, and a part of France in a whole year.” 37 Peacham is not alone in his
antipathy to the conspicuous consumption of London. As Fisher suggests, the
contemporaries also perceived the metropolitan expansion as “a symptom of disease
rather than of health in the body politic,” a phenomenon attributed in part to the influx of
the country gentry who moved citywards for business and pleasure as well as for saving
the charges of housekeeping in the country. 38 By leaving their country estates
unattended and their local obligations neglected, the gentry’s migration to the city posed a
threat not just to the social order of their native community but also that of the country as
a whole. Moreover, since they could no longer live off the product of their estates, they
also lost the sense of self-sufficiency that their ancestors had enjoyed in the countryside.
Having to rely upon purchase for their food, they were further subject to the exploitation
of commercial victuallers and the corruption of foreign foodstuffs. In this light,
Peacham’s promotion of country diet is a call for return to the good old times — if not
physically, at least gastronomically — when the gentry were still willing to stay in

35 Peacham, Worth 25.
36 Peacham, Worth 25.
37 Peacham, Worth 23.
38 Fisher 197-207.
“countries which are remote from the city” and content with the “plenty of all good and wholesome meats God hath afforded us in this land.”

Reminiscing of a past yet untainted by the changes of the time, home-made country cuisine also functions to define and to distinguish the English appetite from those of other countries. According to Elyot, having “very cholerike stomackes,” English people can consume the gross meat “in a great quantitie” as well as “men which use moch labor or exercise.” Similarly, other contemporary writers attributed the greater appetite of English people to the climatic condition and the geographical location of England. Harrison, for example, explains that the English craving for “a little more ample nourishment than the inhabitants of the hotter regions” is due to northward location of England, which “doth cause the heat of our stomachs to be of somewhat greater force.”

Having specifically defined the region where England belongs — “from the 47 degree to the Pole-ward” — William Vaughan further differentiates the English from “the Spaniards and Italians,” whose stomachs, “by reason of their vehement heat,” can even abstain longer than the English stomachs. Despite his advocacy of “a slender and a frugall diet,” Peacham also finds it necessary to justify the great appetite of his countrymen by dismissing “the temperance of the Romanes,” “the Turkes,” and “the Italians and Spaniards” merely as the “naturall” rather than the “habituall” and thus as “no vertue.”

In addition, he insists that it is not England, but colder countries such as Demark, Norway, and Russia that have “the best stomachs” and “the greatest

39 Peacham, Worth 25.
40 Peacham, Worth 26.
41 Elyot 16.
42 Harrison 123.
43 William Vaughan, Directions for Health (London, 1626) 63.
44 Peacham, Worth 24.
trenchermen of the world."\textsuperscript{45} By naturalizing the capacity of the English stomach, he not only neutralizes the moral judgment against overeating but also downplays the unusualness of his fellow people's capacity for food.

Peacham's ambivalence about the English's reputation for great appetite is expectable since to associate English identity with consumption in quantity was also to risk contradicting the contemporary belief in moderation and to run the risk of becoming gluttony. In order to make such an eating habit fit for the building of English identity, its meaning needed to be purged from its negative connotations and transformed into something constructive. In \textit{The Great Eater of Kent} (1630), the water-poet John Taylor undertook precisely such a task in his attempt to recapitulate the "excessive manner of eating without manners in strange and trve manner" of the legendary Nicholas Wood.\textsuperscript{46} To dissociate Nicholas' great appetite from the association of gluttony, Taylor first tries to transform eating from an involuntary response to bodily needs and desires into an act of reason and self-control. Disclosing the gap between Nicholas' ambition and the capacity of his stomach, Taylor then reveals the constructiveness or the performativity of appetite and demonstrates the way in which eating can be used as the means of identity construction. In the end, Nicholas' great appetite is identified with good husbandry, and his preference to English country food, translated into a proof of his patriotic spirit and his identity as an Englishman.

In order to transform Nicholas' appetite into a quality worthy to be memorized in

\textsuperscript{45} Peacham, \textit{Worth} 24-5.
“Records and Histories,” Taylor first constructs Nicholas’ eating as an act of reason and self-control. On the one hand, emphasizing the ability of Nicholas to “[make] an end of a hog, as if it had been but a rabbit sucker,” Taylor identifies the great eater as a consumer of the hog and dissociates his eating from the brutish behavior of animals. If the hog’s indiscriminating appetite for “all things that are to be eaten” — including not just “fish, flesh, fowl, root” but excrement — threatens to corrupt its flesh as well as its eaters, Nicholas’ stomach functions not just to reverse the process but also to refine the quality of the meat. With the addition of “three pecks of damson,” he activates “a chemical infusion” in his belly, which can “in a manner of extraction distill all manner of meats [eaten by the hog] through the limbeck of his pauch.” The stomach of Nicholas is hence transformed into a distilling vessel that extracts the essence of diverse foodstuffs from the pork and distinguishes them from each other. Rather than uncontrollable behavior that threatens to corrupt the body and to stifle his mind, his eating is turned into a scientific process that needs to be performed and monitored carefully in order to produce the desired product.

On the other hand, although gluttony was usually mentioned as an adjunct to drunkenness during the early modern period, Taylor dissociates Nicholas’ eating from the “swinish vice” of drinking and emphasizes the importance of reason involved in eating and particularly in overeating. He argues that, although the “invincible Ale” is useful for Nicholas “to wash down a hog, or water a sheep” when consumed in moderation,
over-drinking deprives him of his reason and consequently his ability to eat. For example, once a man called John Dale lays a wager that “he would fill Woods belly, with good wholesome victuals for two schillings.” 53 Although Nicholas successfully consumes the “twelve new penny white loaves” sopped in “six pots of potent, high and mighty ale” 54 provided by Dale, he is unable to cope with the alcohol in it:

[T]he powerful fume whereof conquered the conqueror, robbed him of his reason, bereft him of his wit, violently took away his stomach, intoxicated his Pia Mater, and entered the sconce of his Pericranium, blind folded him with sleep; setting a nap of nine hours for manacles upon his thread-bare eyelids, to the preservation of the roast beef, and the unexpected winning of the wager. 55

Just as the debilitation of Nicholas’ thinking puts his stomach to a stop, the defeat of his stomach has the same effect on his brain. The immobilization of the two consequently leads to his “unexpected” defeat and prevents him from eating the roast beef. Revealing the interrelation of the body and mind, the description also changes overeating from involuntary subjection to bodily pleasure into an act of self-discipline and control of bodily functions. As Schoenfeldt has already referred to, early modern consumers conceived “all acts of ingestion and excretion as very literal acts of self-fashioning.” 56 To Nicholas, who has built his “reputation” 57 on his great appetite, the need for self-control — not to eat less, but to eat more — is perhaps even more urgent than it is to the ordinary people.

Nevertheless, although Nicholas’ “stomach” is claimed to be as “boundless” as the

53 Taylor 10.
54 Taylor 10.
55 Taylor 10.
56 Schoenfeldt, “Fables” 243.
“ambition of potent men” such as “the Great Alexander, and Holofernes,” there is a 
limit as to how far his body can stretch to meet the demand of his will. Earlier in his 
career as a great eater, he is forced to test the boundary at Sir William Sydleyes’s house 
when he misjudges the capacity of his stomach and stuffs himself with so much food that 
“his belly [is] like to turn bankrupt and break.” Although he is ultimately saved by the 
“serving-men” who “turn[s] him to the fire, and anoint[s] his punch with grease and 
butter, to make it stretch and hold,” the experience may have made him realize that 
eventually his “ambition” has to bow to the physical limitation of his body — especially 
when he gradually becomes aged, and his physical conditions, degenerated. Thus, when 
later invited by the narrator to perform his legendary appetite in “in the “Bear-garden . . . 
before a house full of people,” Nicholas declines “by reason of his being grown in 
years.” He admits that, given more time and more thorough cooking, he might still be 
able to “make a shift to destroy a fat whether of a pound.” Nevertheless, fearing that 
“his stomach should fail him publicly, and lay his reputation in the mire,” it is no 
longer a risk that he is willing to take.

Nicholas’ concern about his “reputation” suggests that his appetite is not so much 
an innate “quality” of his as a mere effect produced through a stylized repetition of 
extravagant consumption in front of the public eyes. Schoenfeldt suggests that “the 
stomach . . . is the part of our body that makes its needs felt most frequently and

57 Taylor 16
58 Taylor 11.
59 Taylor 8.
60 Taylor 8.
61 Taylor 15.
62 Taylor 16.
63 Taylor 16.
insistently.  Such exigency is particularly true in Nicholas’ case, whose body changes visibly with the cycle of digestion. Despite his giant appetite, he is always like “one of Pharaohs lean kine” while his belly, “(like a mainsail in a calm) [hanging] ruffled and wrinkled (in folds and wrathes),” is “flat to the mast of his empty carcase, till the storm of abundance fills it, and violently drives it into the full sea of satisfaction.” The dramatic change of his body, on the one hand, reflects the oscillation of his food supply and, on the other, reveals the constructiveness of his “reputation” or rather his identity. In other words, without any physical evidence to substantiate his “reputation,” his ability to eat is a “quality” that can never be fully internalized and embodied, but needs to be performed repeatedly and continuously in front of the mundane social audience. Any failure to repeat threatens not just to undermine the credibility of his “quality” and the worthiness of his “reputation” but also to expose the constructiveness of his public persona as a great eater in Kent.

Although Nicholas’ excessive manner of eating attracts a lot of attention from the gentry and the upper class inside and outside of Kent, such attention is informed as much by curiosity as by anxiety and could result in either punishments or praises from the authority. Nicholas himself is not oblivious to the ambivalent implication of his eating behavior. The concern about his “reputation” is not the only reason that he rejects the narrator’s invitation to perform publicly. The fear that “his Grace . . . should hear of one that ate so much, and could work so little,” and thus “command to hang him” may play a more important part. To the authority, it is not so much Nicholas’ overeating as his

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64 Schoenfeldt, “Fables” 243-4.
65 Taylor 18.
66 Taylor 16.
67 Taylor 16.
failure to reciprocate the food he has consumed that makes him the target of the
punishment. The concern of the authority seems to echo the popular conception of the
way the body works. According to Schoenfeldt, in early modern medical discourse, the
body was viewed as “a system demanding perpetual anxious osmosis with the outside
world.”68 “If any obstructions should happen,” as William Vaughan writes in his
Directions for Health (1626), “all the whole filthy masse of noisome humours is thereby
kept within the body, and then given violent assault to some the principall parts.”69
Although Nicholas frequently, if irregularly, takes large quantities of food into his body,
he rarely seems to produce any output — be it excrement or bodily labor — nor does he
accumulate any weight by his eating. In this light, his emaciated body can be viewed as
a sign of sickness, the symptom of physical dissolution or consumption resulting from
excessive eating. As a member of the society, his eating also threatens to undermine the
well-being of the social body by obstructing the flow of social resources. The narrator
may be right when he argues that “eating is not a greater sin than rapine, theft,
manslaughter and murder.”70 Nevertheless, when Nicholas devours the fruit of other
men’s labor without reciprocating in kind, he not only saps the productive power of the
commonwealth but also undermines the health of the society in a way not far from those
who commit the crime of “rapine, theft, manslaughter and murder.”

68 Schoenfeldt, “Fables” 245.
69 Vaughan 168. Robert Burton similarly perceives the consequence of overeating as
self-consumption: “As a lamp is choked with a multitude of oil, or a little fire with
overmuch wood quite distinguished; so is the natural heat with immoderate eating
strangled in the body. An insatiable paunch, one saith, is a pernicious sink, and the
fountain of all diseases, both of boty and mind.” See Burton, The Anatomy of
Melancholy, ed, Floyd Dell and Paul Jordan-Smith (New York: Tudor Publishing
Company, 1927) 197.
70 Taylor 8-9.
To reverse the idea that overeating leads to physical dissolution, Taylor tries to transform Nicholas’ eating from an act of consumption into that of production. He suggests that Nicholas’ “great stomach” functions not just as “a magazine, a store-house, a receptacle” for the storage of food but as a multi-task farm that accommodates everything from the land, the sky, and the water:

. . . . his paunch is either a coop or a roost for [fish of all waters and fowl of all sorts]: he hath (within him) a stall for the ox, a room for the cow, a sty for the hog, a park for the deer, a warren for conies, a store-house for fruit, a dairy for milk, cream, curds, whey, butter-milk, and cheese: his mouth is a mill of perpetual motion, for let the wind or the water rise or fall, yet his teeth will ever be grinding; his guts are the rendezvous or meeting place or burse for the beasts of the fields, the fowls of the air, and fishes of the sea.  

Despite the pervasive medical precaution against the consumption of meats of “sundry substance and qualities,” Nicholas is compelled by his material conditions to gobble everything up at once. As the narrator hints in the beginning, “were the goodness of [Nicholas’] purse answerable to the greatness of his appetite . . . no man below the Moon would be a better customer to a shambles than he.” Lacking a proper means to support his living, Nicholas can’t afford to be fastidious about his food and often has to make do with whatever foodstuffs he can find — even if they are garbage like “ox livers, or a mess of warm ale-grains from a brew-house.”

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71 Taylor 17.
72 Taylor 11.
73 Elyot 42.
74 Taylor 5.
75 Taylor 17.
the eating habit, it also learns to cope with the outburst of "babel or confusion."76 Without becoming cloyed and corrupted by the input of diverse foodstuffs, Nicholas' body symbolically transforms itself into a farm that sends each incoming creature into its proper place and sets the agricultural machinery at work. This way, Nicholas is changed from an idle eater into a diligent husbandman, and his eating, from an act of consumption into that of production. Through the constant working of his body, the food that he consumes is recycled for the production of more agriculture products. Just as the farm, by grouping different animals in a confined space, creates a kind of man-made harmony among them, his body "grinds and binds" all the foodstuffs — be they "never so wild or disagreeing inNature" — "to the peace, in such manner, that never fall at odds again."77 He thus enacts the civilizing process of "the beasts of the fields, the fowls of the air, and fishes of the sea” and "the four Elements"78 and transforms his body into a symbolic "little world"79 that incorporates all different creatures and elements into one unity.

Through his eating, Nicholas not only masters the skills of husbandry, but also epitomizes the ideal of English identity. Unlike the city gallants described by Peacham, Nicholas has no interest in "niceness or curiosity"80 such as "the pheasants of England, the capercailzie, the heathcock, and ptarmigan of Scotland, the goat of Wales," or "the salmon, and usquebaugh of Ireland," or for exotic foods such as "the peacock of Samos," "the sausage of Bologna," "the Spanish potatoe" or "the Italian fig."81 Since these foods are all expensive luxuries affordable only by the upper class, Nicholas probably

76 Taylor 17.
77 Taylor 11.
78 Taylor 11.
79 Vaughan 58.
80 Taylor 12.
81 Taylor 12.
avoids them primarily for financial reasons. But Taylor argues that Nicholas dislikes those foods because “he is an Englishman, and English diet will serve his turn.” Even though some of the foods were produced in England, they seem to be excluded from the English diet because the majority of the English population probably couldn’t afford to eat them, and therefore no authentic “Englishman” like Nicholas would care for them. Whether they are English or not, those who favor such non-English foods are thus labeled as “straggler[s]” who unwittingly eat themselves into exile. On the contrary, Nicholas embarks on a gastronomic tour throughout England as he eats his way from the “Norfolk Dumpling,” “the Devenshire white-pot,” to the variety of puddings in Gloucestershire, Worcestershire, Shropshire, Somersetshire, Hampshire as well as “the pudding-pies of any shire.” Aware of the regional varieties between these cuisines, he nonetheless insists that “all is one to him.” Thus, just as he can eats all disagreeing creatures into peace and harmony, through his national tour, he subsumes all the local differences under one homogenous English taste and unites the various regions into one unified nation.

As long as Englishness is identified with a large appetite, such a national identity is a gendered or, more specifically, masculine identity. While a man with an appetite for “niceness or curiosity” is stigmatized as “pulling meacock,” a woman with the same desire is made the scapegoat for male deviation and the culprit for the contamination and emasculation of men. Peacham, for instance, criticizes the city “Ladies” for their

82 Taylor 12.
83 Taylor 12.
84 Taylor 13.
85 Taylor 12.
86 Taylor 12.
87 Taylor 12.
88 Taylor 13.
“miserable and base” taste for “vile and loathsome things”⁸⁹ and holds them responsible for the contamination and even emasculation of the gentlemen. These gentlewomen’s interest in foreign food such as “Mushromes, Snailes, Forgs, mice, young Kitlings, and the like” is interpreted as the result of their “surfetting” of and thus “loathing” for the “good and wholesome meates God hath afforded us in this land.”⁹⁰ Although other “[Gentlemen] at the Table” may share the same desire for the exotic dainties and certainly not abstain from eating them, they are exempted from the same criticism. Rather than voluntarily accepting those dainties as “an extraordinary favor from her Ladiship,”⁹¹ these gentlemen are alleged to eat them under the social pressure exerted by those gentlewomen. This way, male desire is conveniently displaced unto women, who are not just held responsible for the corruption and emasculation of young gallants but posed as the threat to their Englishness.

As discussed in previous chapters, early modern women undertook a lot of responsibilities in relation to food, and it is easy to see why female appetite and its influence would be perceived as such a threat to individual men as well as to society. For Markham, the integrity of the household is closely related to the degree of self-sufficiency that the housewife manages to maintain. Ideally, an English housewife should “proportion” her “diet” according to “the competency of her husband’s estate and calling” so as to build the “strong forts against the adversities of fortune.”⁹² In order to achieve that goal, she is also expected to supply her family with the “familiar acquaintance” produced in “her own yard” rather than the “strangeness and rarity”

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⁹⁰ Peacham, *Worth* 26. As Albala points out, though not yet associated exclusively with the French, frogs were identified and condemned as a foreign import. See Albala 227.
imported through the “market” from “other countries.” Such self-sufficiency, if possible in the country, might not be an alternative to city dwellers. Instead of acknowledging the constraint as the result of changed social circumstances, Thomas Nashe sees it as the personal flaw of the urban “good-wife” who “will not open her mouth to bid one welcome” unless the table is “furnished like a poulterers’ stalls” or “as though we were to victual Noah’s ark again.” Thus, although the housewife is not the one who “sells commodity of good cheer by the great” and imports exotic foods from “Arabia, Turkey, Egypt, and Barbary,” nor is she the one who demands and benefits from putting on a show of hospitality, she is held accountable for infiltrating English diet with alien foodstuffs and corrupting the purity of English appetite as well as English people.

In reality, however, the majority of women might not have as many opportunities to pamper their appetite as men would like to believe. It was true that early modern women were often in charge not just of purchasing and storing food, but also of preparing and serving meals. Responsibility, however, is not always equivalent to control. As demonstrated by the dining scene described in Hollyband’s “The Citizen at Home,” although the wife may be responsible for food provision, it is the husband who controls its enactment:

Wife. Husband, I pray you pull in peeces that Capon, and help your neighbor:

truly he eateth nothing.

Father. Tarie a little wife, I have not yet tasted of these Cabeges.

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92 Markham, *English 7.*
93 Markham, *English 8.*
Wife. You cannot eate of them, for they be to much peppered and salted.

Father. Ah, what pitie is that? It is the meate that I love best, and it is marred: they say commonly in England that God sendeth us meate, and the Devill cookes.

Wife. My lover, tast a little of these turneps, and you will finde them of a good taste... If you will eate of a good meate, cut of that legge of mutton stuff with garlicke.\textsuperscript{96}

Since the Father comes to the table primarily to dine, he is not shy of expressing and acting on his desire for his favorite foods. Although as a host his first priority is supposed to entertain the guests, driven by his hunger, even that has to “tarie a little.” The Wife, on the contrary, is quiet about her own desires and needs, but busy attending to and catering for those of others. Unlike her husband, who knows what he wants, but not what he should choose, she alone knows the quality and taste of all dishes — which dish is “of a good taste” or “to much peppered and salted,” which is well cooked or “marred.” The knowledge, though implying what she really wants to eat, is used not so much to satisfy her own desire as to help others make better choices of food and thus have a more pleasant dining experience. When the other diners are invited to dine on the dishes that she considers more delicious than others, she alone is left with those that are “marred.” If her husband has ever noticed her self-denial, he seems to take it for granted. Although, at one point, he volunteers to proffer “some crust of this pie” to her, he does so not because the crust is delicious, but because “it is too much baakt.”\textsuperscript{97}

Even when early modern women might have had to suppress their appetite for the

\textsuperscript{95} Nashe 99.
\textsuperscript{96} Hollyband 40.
satisfaction of others in the domestic setting, men were still haunted by the fear that women might find other secret outlets for their desire, which only posed a more insidious threat to existing order and male sovereignty. In popular literature, extra-domestic dining is imagined to open up one of the opportunities for women to escape from the surveillance at home. When women managed to sneak away from their domestic responsibilities, they found in commercial victualling establishments such as taverns or alehouses not just the freedom to express their desire and frustration, but also the mutual empowerment that might sow the seeds of future rebellion. Although such extra-domestic eating activities had to be conducted covertly outside of the household, pregnancy and the childbirth rituals related to it provided a better opportunity for women to feast not just for free but in the private space at home. Since the well-being and even survival of the child were believed to impinge on the satisfaction of the mother, during the period of pregnancy the husband was obliged to indulge his wife’s craving in order to secure the safety of his offspring and ultimately the continuation of his blood. For men, however, whether it was justified or not, female appetite threatened to destabilize the patriarchal order and to jeopardize the integrity of masculine identity.

Although contemporary narratives, such as “A Bill of Fare,” tended to embrace male visits to victualling houses as occasions of unbridled jollity and excitement, female gatherings of a similar sort were treated with anxiety and suspicion. Such apprehension was well captured in a group of texts categorized by Linda Woodbridge as the “genre” of “the gossips’ meeting.” Samuel Rowlands’ Well Met Gossip: or, ‘Tis Merry when Gossips Meet (1675), for example, aims precisely to reveal the “private Meeting” of

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97 Hollyband 44.
98 Linda Woodbridge, Women and the English Renaissance: Literature and the Nature of
women to the “public” eye.99 The poem begins with a widow, a wife, and a maid meeting fortuitously “at Tavern door.”100 Although the wife and the maid, both with duties to attend to, are anxious to leave, at the widow’s insistence, they hesitatingly agree to stop for “One Pint in kindness, and away, no more.”101 Intending perhaps to leave as soon as possible, the wife suggests that they should take the drink “standing here”102 — probably at downstairs bar counter. Fully aware of the potential suspicion or even hostility they may receive, the widow refuses to drink “where every one repairs”103 and insists on having a private room upstairs. The privacy not only opens their appetite but also starts the engine of conversation, which in turn increases their desire for more foods and drinks. Finally, the poem is ended with the women lecturing the vintner to mend his delinquent service and getting another pint of drink for free.

Unlike the space in the private home, the purchased space in the tavern releases the women from the domestic duties expected for them and temporarily removes them from the surveillance of male gaze. No sooner has the vintner left the room than the widow encourages the wife and the maid to “drink familiar.”104 She explains:

We’ll have no pingling, now we are alone:

If there were Men, I would not drink it up

For twenty pounds my self, but now all’s one:

Sometimes wet Lip, and smell the Wine’s enuffe,

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99 Well Met Gossip: or, 'Tis Merry when Gossips Meet (London, 1675) sig. A1. An earlier edition was published in 1602 under the title, Tis Merrie When Gossips Meete.
100 Well 1.
101 Well 1.
102 Well 1.
103 Well 2.
104 Well 3.
And take a Kiss, rather then marre our Ruffe.\textsuperscript{105}

While the wife in Hollyband’s dialogue appears to be devoid of desire, the widow’s comment suggests that the contrary is probably closer to the truth. As long as there are other “Men” around — especially “Lovers” and “Suters” — it is impossible for women “to be Merry./ And in good earnest entertain [their] Wine”\textsuperscript{106} or their food. Not only does the conventional gender role demand that their desires and needs be subordinate to those of others, but they are compelled to adjust themselves to suit the assessing gaze of their male companions. The “dissembling,”\textsuperscript{107} however, involves not just the strict control of food intakes but also the employment of a complex mechanism of gaze. In her study of male gaze, Laura Mulvey argues that in Hollywood classic narrative cinema, “pleasure in looking split between active/male and passive/female.”\textsuperscript{108} As “the determining male gaze projects its phantasy on to the female figure which is styled accordingly,” women are “looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote to-be-looked-at-ness.”\textsuperscript{109} Applying contemporary theory to the past may constitute an anachronistic interpretative practice that threatens to undermine the cultural specificity of an historical other, but the widow’s concern about her own image in front of men seems to suggest that, despite the historical difference, there may still be a kind of continuity in women’s situation between the present and the past. Unlike the heroine in the modern film, however, the gossips are more than just objects, but subjects that, fully aware of

\textsuperscript{105} Well 2.
\textsuperscript{106} Well 2.
\textsuperscript{107} Well 1.
\textsuperscript{109} Mulvey 27.
their being-looked-at-ness, are constantly looking back — not so much to engage the male gaze as to use it as a mirror for self-modification. In order to do that, they have to monitor their eating behavior and to “touch and tast” carefully in all “Senses.” Their deliberate self-objectification, in this light, is not so much blind acceptance of patriarchal values as strategic appropriation and manipulation of cultural fictions about women. Indeed, should the “pingling” has any effect on them, it is no more than skin-deep, functioning only to keep their “Ruffe” clean and to put on an appearance that is, as the widow comments, “foolish fine.”

The presence of men makes it difficult for women not only to act freely on their desire but to speak their mind. When there is “none but Friends” around, however, women’s speaking or rather gossiping seems to gain a momentum of its own. Usually perceived merely as light and idle talk, female gossiping can have important social functions particularly for women. On the one hand, gossip enables the women to move beyond their domestic isolation and to establish an imagined community of their own. For instance, the wife’s toast to “our Friends in Soper Lane,” if invoking their memory of those old friends, immediately reminds them of their common friend, Jane —

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110 Well 2.
111 Well 2.
112 Well 2.
113 Deborah G. Kodish in her study of modern folk culture argues that “gossip does a great deal of social ‘work’ by allowing individuals to manipulate or display their status, and by providing mechanisms by which a community can exercise certain kinds of control, certain kind of license.” See Kodish, “Moving Towards the Everyday: Some Thoughts on Gossip and Visiting as Secular Procession,” Folklore Papers of the University Folklore Association 9 (1980): 95. For studies about early modern English culture, Mendelson and Crawford argues that gossip also had “a respected function in the community as a means of enforcing canons of morality and neighborliness.” See Mendelson and Crawford 215.
“what is become of Jane.”

Although none of those “Friends” are physically present in the private room, the conversation helps the three women reach out to them and renew their connections across time and space. On the other hand, the gossip also functions as an information network, through which female experience can be shared and transmitted to the younger generation. Thus, as the widow cautions the maid “to take good heed” of the criterion for the choice of suitors, a knowledge that she has acquired personally “by experience an good tryal,” the wife tries to pass on to the young woman not just her own “lesson without book” but the legacy from her mother — “Yea, and my Mother did perswade me too,/ Wench (would she say) note what your Elders do.”

Although speaking and eating are mutually exclusive activities, here the women’s speech, rather than deterring them from eating, helps stimulate and justify their appetite for more food. For instance, as soon as the widow, after many refills, orders “Sawsages” and another “Pint of Sack,” the maid, concerned about the time, calls for a stop. The widow protests that single women like the maid and herself, who have to “lye alone all night,” can hardly have enough, and the wife replies that they both “may mend the matter when you will” and pray for the maid — “God made not Besse to live a Maiden stil.”

Intrigued by the issue of marriage, the maid no longer insists on leaving and joins in the discussion. As the meeting prolongs with the digression, each woman starts to ruminate over the wine they have just ordered. After twenty-three lines of conversation, the wife suddenly interrupts herself, thinking aloud of the wine:

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114 Welf 3.
115 Welf 9.
116 Welf 10.
117 Welf 10.
Wife. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .

'Twas nothing but sound truth, which [a Learned Man] did tell:

For Husbands we our Parents must forsake.

Were this Wine burnt, Couzen it would do well.

Maid. Faith I was thinking on it when you spake:

My Mother says, burnt Sack is good at night

Wife. A my word, Besse, your Mother's in the right.

Wid. Brother, I pray thee let this Wine be burn'd,

And see (good youth) the Sawsages be ready.\textsuperscript{118}

Ideally, as Jeanneret argues, table talk functions as a "regulating force" that aims to re-establish "man's unique role as a thinking animal" when the appetite was in danger of taking over.\textsuperscript{119} For women often denied any gratification of this kind, however, being taken over by one's appetite may be a luxury rather than a danger, and the exchange between these women functions precisely to stir up their appetite for more. The common desire for food and drink in turn works to reconcile the women's differences. Despite their disagreement about whether "[o]ur Parents Wills . . . must be Obey'd,"\textsuperscript{120} the three women are unanimous in their support for the opinion of the maid's mother. As the mother's culinary/medicinal knowledge helps bridge the gap between the maid and other elder women, the latter, by showing their approval, reinforce and encourage the act of consumption. Through their words, the women are enabled to prepare themselves psychologically for the actual act of consumption and to have the food and drink served just the way they want without having to contribute any labor to the process of

\textsuperscript{118} Well 11.
\textsuperscript{119} Jeanneret 93.
production.

While the exchange of words paves the way to the act of consumption, the latter functions as a regulating force, defining as well as lubricating the conversation. On the one hand, food and drink as material substance are used to substantiate the words and to stabilize their meaning. For instance, the wife not only asserts her husband’s constancy “by this Cup of Wine,” but insists that it is “as true as the Wine” that “Many do match . . . With some Dunce, Clown, or Gull, they care not who.” Even the maid, who constantly concerns about over-drinking, borrows force from the drink to her description of her gentleman suitor: “Handsome Man never in Sho did tread,/ By this good Drink, a kinder ne’re broke Bread.” On the other hand, just as the exchange of words serves to ease off the difference between them, the act of consumption works to contain the tension and conflict created by female speeches. Although gossip seems less bound by rules than the formal table talk, it is still regulated by implicit codes especially when female reputation is involved. Thus, when the maid retaliates the wife’s ridicule of her ignorance by praying “what Proverb is it that allows/ The Devils Picture on your Husbands Brows,” the widow, fully aware of the danger of this kind of talk, immediately reprimands her and silences her with more drinks — “Enough you wrangling Wenches, fie for shame./ Take me in Drink, leave off your disputation:/ Pray Brot her fil a Pint more of the same.”

Indeed, even in the private room, these women are not totally immune to the assessing gaze of men. With the temporary identity as a consumer, however, they are

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120 Well 11.
121 Well 5.
122 Well 13.
123 Well 6.
empowered not just to assert their desire but also to defend it. When the three women are enjoying the rare experience of being served at table, they are suddenly interrupted by the vintner’s boy, who laughs at the maid for her remark — “If I make one [more drink], pray God my Girdle Break.” Although the wife suggests to “let it pass,” the widow insists — “It shall not be forgiven nor forgot.” Woodbridge suggests that the widow’s indignation results from her drunkenness. If so, she nonetheless seems unusually sober in her calculation of the situation. As she tells the boy, “Your Master lives (you slave) by such as we,” she knows that the tavern as a commercial establishment can’t really afford to select its customers — either by gender or by class. By highlighting the competition in the business — “There are more Taverns besides yours in Town” — she justifies their right to “be courteous used.” Denying that she and her companions come “to entreat or crave,” she further establishes them as autonomous subjects who have the power to choose and to enjoy themselves. At the same time, the widow is aware that not all customers come to taverns for the purpose of eating. In early modern England, such victualling establishments were also places where prostitutes tended to congregate to put their flesh on sale. To differentiate themselves from the prostitutes, the widow thus transforms the act of consumption into the means for self-defense and self-definition. Their desire for “good Wine and welcome” therefore functions not only to distinguish themselves from the “Sissee” and the “Kate,” but to define themselves as

124 Well 6.
125 Well 19.
126 Well 19.
127 Woodbridge 228.
128 Well 19.
129 Well 19.
130 Well 20.
consuming subjects and as “London Gentlewomen born.”\textsuperscript{131}

The freedom and pleasure of eating, however, are not possible without certain financial power. The women in Rowland’s poem seem capable of paying for themselves, but other texts suggest that the expense, small though it is, can be a burden for many women. In an anonymous ballad “Four Witty Gossips” (c. 1630),\textsuperscript{132} the gossips can’t even afford twelve shillings worth of drinks and have to pawn their “girdle,” “Bodkins,” “piece of Lawen,” and “Siluer Thimble” (14. 1-5) to make up for the difference. In another anonymous ballad of a later date called \textit{The Gossips Meeting, or, The Merry Market-women of Taunton} (1675),\textsuperscript{133} the women also spend a lot of time complaining about their financial struggle with their husbands. One of them, for instance, says that, if her husband questions about the money, she will tell him that the money he gave him “would not hold out,/ For all things so dear in the Market row be,/ Let him go himself and the same he shall see” (14-6) Similarly, a widow confesses how she would “reckon him more then it cost” if her husband gave her money “to buy meat to roast” (29-30) Although these women are in charge of purchasing food for the family, it is their husbands who have control over the family finance. Though forced to have their desires “curb’d” both inside and outside of the family,\textsuperscript{134} they finally decide to rebel against their

\textsuperscript{131} \textit{Well} 19.
\textsuperscript{133} \textit{The Gossips Meeting, or, The Merry Market-women of Taunton} (London, 1674). All quotations are taken from this edition.
\textsuperscript{134} In their study of women and their control over food in the modern society, Wm. Alex Mcintosh and Mary Zey argues that the common conception of women as gatekeepers of the food flow into the household needs to be reevaluated. Although women, credited with control over the purchasing, storing, cooking, and serving of food, are perceived as greatly influencing the food habits of family members, the ability to control eventually depends on the relative distribution between men and women of certain social
husbands' control — "Why should we be curb'd so, hang care, let us drink" (41) — despite the risk of physical abuse or tighter surveillance. The risk, however, is out of proportion to the little money embezzled from their household allowances, and the plain foods and drinks that they consume, incomparable to the sumptuous dishes that the men in "A Bill of Fare" have for their Saturday dinner.

When the women manage to pay for their tidbits, the little pleasure they have may still be fraught with guilt and anxiety. When most men only have to tolerate their wives’ carping and pouting, women have many domestic responsibilities to worry about. In Rowlands’ poem, only the widow, being the mistress of her own, is free to stay as long as she likes. The wife is worried that, with her husband away, their "Shop must needs be tended," and the maid is also apprehensive about upsetting her mother for not being at home — "My Mother's gone to Church . . . If I be found from home, she'll be offended." Similarly, the market-women in The Gossips Meeting can find time to get together only under pretence of market shopping. One of them, though defiant to the blows of her husband, is concerned about the well being of her child — "I do fear,/ My child it doth cry at home whilst I am here" (9-10); others are enthusiastic about inventing schemes to fool their husbands — just in case "when we come home they upon us do frown" (43). In order to have a drink or two with friends, women not only have to succeed in stealing money from their husbands but also to squeeze however limited time from their domestic routines. Even so, they are constantly distracted by thoughts of resources — primarily financial resources. Therefore, "men's control over the family finances, women's obligations to produce a harmonious family life, and women's deference toward men all increase the likelihood that men will ultimately control family food decisions." See McIntosh and Zey, "Women as Gatekeepers of Food Consumption: A Sociological Critique," Food and Gender: Identity and Power, ed. Carole M. Counihan and Steven L. Kaplan (Amsterdam: Hardwood Academic Publishers, 1998) 130.
their suspended duties and pestered by the anxiety about the danger of being found out by
their husbands.

As extra-domestic establishments provide women an opportunity to eat outside the
patriarchal order, marriage offers another within it. Despite the general hostility against
female appetite, during their pregnancy wives are not only exempted from their husbands’
control, but also encouraged to indulge their appetite. In *The Gossips’ Meeting*, for
instance, one of the wives, Margret, laughs at her friends’ “fears” (49) of their husbands
and brags about the subservience of her own:

Besides I’m with child, which to me is a joy,
If that I do box him he thinks I but toy;
Poor fool he is fearful to breed any brall,
For fear I should wrong that I go withal. (53-6)

Margret’s “joy” may derive not so much from the “child” as from the temporary reversal
of the power relationship between her and her husband. Her husband is willing to
tolerate her aggression not so much because he is afraid of her as because she is
impregnated with *his* child. The “child” thus functions as an amulet for the mother and
temporarily protects her from any physical as well as emotional abuse from her husband.
Like Margret, the wife in Rowlands’ poem also reminisces about her husband’s
tenderness and patience when she “lay in” for her “first Boy.”\(^{136}\) When she refused to
eat the “Partridge wing” that she had asked for, her husband was anything but upset about
her whimsical change. Instead, he told her: “Thou shalt not lack . . . what Gold will

\(^{135}\) *Well* 1.
\(^{136}\) *Well* 14.
buy.\textsuperscript{137} Getting no response from his wife, he promised her that “[i]f London yield (love) thou shalt not lack” and rushed out to buy her “a Cherry-pye.”\textsuperscript{138} When she “call’d him back” and told him that she didn’t want it for being “full of Stones,” he even “began to weep.”\textsuperscript{139}

Contemporary moral advice might have played a part in shaping the husband’s behavior to his pregnant wife. Nevertheless, given the male hostility against women expressed in popular texts such as “A Married Men’s Feast.” it seemed unlikely that moralist advice alone could have changed the husband’s behavior in such a dramatic way. It was true that, as Linda A. Pollock suggests, “careful preparations for the woman’s lying-in seems to have been the norm, and those cases in which the husband was negligent in this duty aroused concern and criticism.”\textsuperscript{140} Contemporary moralists such as Gouge also advise husbands to be “very tender ouer their wiues, and helpful to them in all things needful, both in regard of the dutie which they owe to their wiues, and also of that they owe to their children.”\textsuperscript{141} Similarly, Thomas Becon in \textit{The Booke of Matrimonye} (1564) suggests that the husband should “unto the uttermost of his power help to ease [his wife] of [the cares and troubles during pregnancy], and comfort her with most sweet and loving words, putting her in remembrance of the great labor and pains.”\textsuperscript{142} The caring for the wife, however, was motivated by the concern not so much

\textsuperscript{137} Well 14.
\textsuperscript{138} Well 14.
\textsuperscript{139} Well 14.
\textsuperscript{141} Gouge 506.
\textsuperscript{142} Thomas Becon, \textit{The Booke of Matrimonye} (London: 1564) fol. DCIxxv.
about the mother’s “well-being” as about “the good and safetie of the childe,”\textsuperscript{143} which totally depended on the former. And, as Pollock argues, at least “among the propertied elite of early modern England, children were simultaneously “a desired but, for many, a difficult-to-procure commodity.”\textsuperscript{144} Although to be overcharged with many young children was a cause of poverty,\textsuperscript{145} children proved not only useful to demonstrate the father’s sexual expertise and his masculinity, but also indispensable for the continuation of his paternal line and the conservation of his familial estate. Nevertheless, in an age when miscarriages, still-births, and abortions were still a commonplace, and there was no guarantee that a child would live to adulthood,\textsuperscript{146} pregnancy was also something that could not be taken lightly. The fictional husband’s “duties” to his pregnant wife, in this light, may be motivated as much by his conjugal love as by the concern about his own self-preservation.

Husbands may have high stakes in their pregnant wives, but in popular texts not all of them are as happy about their “duties” or as indulgent as Margaret’s husband in the ballad and the Wife’s in Rowlands’ poem. Neither the husband in the anonymous ballad entitled “The Lamentation of a New Married Man” (c. 1625) nor the narrator in The Bachelor’s Banquet (1603), for instance, is happy about the supposed pregnancy of their wives. The “new married” husband in the ballad complains:

Then must I get her Cherries,

And dainty Kathern Pears,

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\textsuperscript{143} Gouge 505.
\textsuperscript{144} Pollock 39.
\textsuperscript{146} See Stone 51-5.
And then longs for Codlings,
She breedeth Child she swears
When God knows tis a cushion
That she about her bears.\textsuperscript{147}

According to Audrey Eccles, “the accurate diagnosis of pregnancy was until very recently a most intractable problem.”\textsuperscript{148} Although early modern medical treatises dwelled at length on the problem of determining whether or not a woman was pregnant, neither professional practitioners nor women themselves could really tell for sure.\textsuperscript{149} Under the circumstances, the difficulty to tell the truth almost until the moment of birth could generate a lot of anxiety as well as disappointment when the pregnancy was finally proved false. The uncertainty, however, might also create a space of freedom for some wives and arouse suspicion to some husbands. The husband in the ballad, though just married, has already suspected his wife for faking pregnancy with “a cushion/ That she about her bears.” The resentment in his voice derives not just from the extra marital duty imposed on him but also from his compelled subjection, however temporary it is.

\textsuperscript{147} “The Lamentation of a New Married Man, Briefely Declaring the Sorrow and Grief that Comes by Marrying a Young Wanton Wife,” \textit{The Roxburgh Ballads}, vol. 2, ed. Charles Hindley (London: Reeves and Turner, 1874) 320.


\textsuperscript{149} Jane Sharp, for instance, suggests in \textit{The Midwives Book} (1671) that some women, especially young ones of their first child, “are so ignorant commonly, that they cannot tell whether they have conceived or not.” See Sharpe, \textit{The Midwives Book: Or the Whole Art of Midwifry Discovered}, ed. Elaine Hobby (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999) 81. Jacques Guillemeau also tells the story of a Madam P, “who was deliuered of certaine gallons of water, when she thought assuredly that she had beene with childe,” and conversely the story of “the daughter of M. Marcel: who was iudged by foure of the chiefe Physitians, and as many Chirurgions, and two Midwiues, not to have beene with childe; and yet being dead, there was found in her body, a child betweene six and seuen months old.” See Guillemeau, \textit{Child-birth or, The Happy Deliuerie of VVomen VVherein is Set Down the Gouvernment of Women} (London, 1612) 2-3.
her demands. On the one hand, since there is always the possibility that the wife may actually be pregnant, he "must" attend to her needs and desires to reduce the risk of the complications ensuing from the repression of a pregnant woman’s desire. On the other hand, he is also socially expected to provide her and the child what they want or at least what they need even at the risk of jeopardizing his masculinity by playing “both the husband and housewife.”\textsuperscript{150} To the make it worse, the husband is pestered by the nagging feeling that his wife may be exploiting the popular belief in maternal longings and demanding her due privilege as a mother within wedlock.

As long as the child is not the product of some “peradventure by the help of some other friend,” but “a work of [the husband’s] own framing,”\textsuperscript{151} it may still be worthwhile for the husband to invest his labor and money on his wife. But his duty is not over when the child is born. From moment of childbirth to the time of churking, early modern mothers were still to enjoy another privileged “month” of lying-in — or what contemporaries sometimes called the husband’s “gander month.”\textsuperscript{152} During that period, as Gouge advises, “the mother . . . by reason of her travail and delivery is weak, and not in case to have her head much troubled with many cares.”\textsuperscript{153} Although the advice might not be attended universally, David Cressy speculates that “(at least in some cases) the husband took charge of domestic duties.”\textsuperscript{154} At the same time, as Adrian Wilson suggests, “the social space of the birth . . . was a collective female space, constituted on the one hand by the presence of gossips and midwife, and on the other hand by the

\textsuperscript{151} Bachelor's 61.
\textsuperscript{153} Gouge 526.
absence of men."  Therefore, if the husband only took care of his wife during the wife's pregnancy, now he had to provide for her and the newborn as well as to entertain those women or gossips who came either to help or to visit the mother. The husband's duty might increase, but he was not expected to participate in any of the ritual and process of childbirth.

Expectably, those husbands who had already felt impatient during pregnancy might become even more hostile to the cohort of women that intruded into the private house and threatened to eat away the householder's resources during the lying-in period. The narrator of The Bachelor's Banquet, for example, bitterly complains about the nurse:

. . . . who must make for [the mistress] warm broths and costly cauldles enough both for herself and her mistress, being of the mind to fare no worse than she. If her mistress be fed with partridge, plover, woodcocks, quails, or any such like, the nurse must be partner with her in all these dainties.  

Contradicry to the popular belief practiced by nurses and women, textbook authors suggest that the "correct diet" for women after childbirth should be "a low diet, as for wounded persons, consisting of jellies, gruel, broth and so on, and on no account flesh meat."  

Guillemeau, for instance, admonishes women in childbirth "not to regard the words of their nurses, or keepers, which continually preach to them, to make much of themselves, saying, that they had need to fill their bellies, which have been so much

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154 Cressy, "Purification": 115.
155 Wilson, "Ceremony" 73. Crawford also argues that "up to the mid-seventeenth century, the presence of any man at a childbirth was unusual. Women's modesty required all female attendants." See Crawford 21.
156 Bachelor's 62.
157 Eccles 96.
emptyed, telling them how much bloud they haue lost, and do daily loose.”\(^\text{158}\) No matter how erroneous nurses’ idea of a proper diet might be, however, women remained the primary caretaker of other women in childbirth — at least before male physicians took over. Therefore, it is likely that, more often than not, women’s opinions — whether they came from nurses or the mother’s friends — might in practice override those proposed in printed books predominantly written by men. Ironically, the nurse in *The Bachelors Banquet* is condemned not so much for her supposedly incorrect notions of postnatal diet as for her knowledge of the value of those “dainties.” The nurse’s knowledge, rather than representing generations of collective female experience, is considered merely as an excuse to exploit the husband for her own satisfaction as well as her mistress’s. Even when the mistress takes no part in the conspiracy, by indulging herself in her appetite and neglecting her responsibility as a housewife, she indirectly helps the nurse “privily [pilfer] away the sugar, the nutmegs and ginger, with all other spices that comes under her keeping.”\(^\text{159}\) Thus, she is perhaps more to blame than the nurse for putting her husband — “the poor man” — “to such expense that in a whole year he can scarcely recover that one month’s charges.”\(^\text{160}\)

However deceitful and scheming the nurse may be, she at least has to eat her share “privily.” The “neighbors,” “kinswomen,” and other “special acquaintance,” who come to visit the mother everyday, are allowed to tuck in the household supplies of wine and sugar openly and matter-of-factly. Since such visits are part of the social rituals, these women’s behavior is justified to a certain degree. According to Margaret Cavendish, in early modern England a married woman was expected to spend a lot of time visiting

\(^{158}\) Guillemeau 190.

\(^{159}\) *Bachelor’s* 62.
other married wives “at labours, christenings, churchings, and other matrimonial gossippings and meetings.”¹⁶¹ Foreign visitors such the Dutch merchant Emanuel Van Meteren also remarked on the “custom” of English wives to “[make] merry with [their gossips and neighbors] at child-births, christenings, churchings” under “the permission and knowledge of their husbands.”¹⁶² Thus, whether the husband liked it or not, as a host, he was obliged to “welcome [those female guests] with all cheerfulness and be sure there be some dainties in store to set before them.”¹⁶³ As Mendelson and Crawford argue, “for those above the poorest classes, the lying-in period thus took on the aspect of a protracted party, with expectations of lavish hospitality, including abundant of food and drink for guests.”¹⁶⁴ Moreover, the lying-in chamber of the mother created a more secured and isolated space than the private room in taverns or alehouses where they could freely talk and eat without worrying about their husbands.

Given the rare opportunity to satisfy their appetite, some female visitors or rather gossips do not hesitate to exploit the situation as much as they could — again, through their gossip. The women in The Bachelor’s Banquet, for instance, do not just tuck in whatever given to them without complaint. When they “find not things in such plenty and good order as they would wish, then one or other of them will talk to this effect.”¹⁶⁵ They tell the wife:

Trust me, gossip, I marvel much, and so doth also our other friends, that your

¹⁶⁰ Bachelor’s 62.
¹⁶¹ Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle, Plays (London: 1662) 401.
¹⁶³ Bachelor’s 62.
¹⁶⁴ Mendelson and Crawford 209.
¹⁶⁵ Bachelor’s 64.
husband is not ashamed to make such small account of you and this your sweet child. . . . It is a foul shame for him . . . Blame us not to speak, good gossip, for I protest the wrong that he doth you doth likewise touch us and all other good women that are in your case.\textsuperscript{166}

Instead of directly complaining about the food they receive, they attribute their dissatisfaction to the husband’s miserliness, which in turn proves the “little love”\textsuperscript{167} that he has for his wife and child. As their repeated invocation of “all other good women” and “friends” brings the husband’s performance of hospitality to the eye of public scrutiny, their emphasis on the idea of “shame” changes the meaning of the “wrong” from marital discord into social disgrace on the husband’s part. Mendelson and Crawford argue that, in a pre-industrial society of “honour and shame,” gossip as “a means of enforcing canons of morality and neighbourliness” was “one of the most effective agencies for policing the community.”\textsuperscript{168} Through their gossip, the wife and her female friends thus appropriate social expectation of gender roles to their advantage and construct a collective view whereby male behavior can be redefined and modified for the promotion of their own interests. The gossips’ indignant speech about the wife’s “wrong” makes her burst into tears, but it also justifies her desire for more sumptuous food and clothes at the gossips’ feast, and empowers her to confront her husband in the name of “reason and custom.”\textsuperscript{169} By comparing herself with other wives — “when any of them lies in, their very servants have better fare than I myself had at your hands”\textsuperscript{170} — and manipulating her husband into a social competition with other husbands, she portrays

\textsuperscript{166} Bachelor’s 64.  
\textsuperscript{167} Bachelor’s 64.  
\textsuperscript{168} Mendelson and Crawford 215.  
\textsuperscript{169} Bachelor’s 69.  
\textsuperscript{170} Bachelor’s 69.
herself as the walking "shame" of her husband and eventually makes him cave in to her wishes.

Although these satirical depictions of women hardly provide a realistic picture of their eating behavior, they tell a vivid story about men's imagination and their deep-seated anxiety about female desire. In popular literature, while male eating usually takes place at mealtimes and in public places, women are imagined gorging themselves at irregular hours in relatively secluded, private spaces. Though the irregular eating pattern may reflect the deprivation of women in regular dining occasions, in these texts it only serves to reinforce the stereotype that women's eating is motivated not by necessity but by the desire for pleasure, and tends to provoke more desire not just for food but also for flesh. Perhaps what makes female appetite even more imminent to men is that, while male eating is often represented as a personal achievement, women's eating is usually depicted in the form of group consumption, an activity that portends collective female transgression and subversion. Indeed, the imagination of the destructive potential of female appetite is so blown out of proportion that, men are often portrayed as victims, unknowingly put at the mercy of the cohort of women who threaten to eat away not just their food but also their masculinity.

In *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*, Thomas Middleton resorts to a different approach to solve the problem about female desire. Female eating remains the source of disgust and anxiety to men, but its meaning is changed. No longer helpless victims to the voracious appetite of women, the male characters in the play are transformed into resourceful opportunists who aggressively exploit female desire to their own advantage. On the one hand, women are turned into not just the food for male consumption, but also

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170 Bachelor's 69.
the second mouth for men through which they eat their way into the world and compete with others for limited store of food, wealth, and power. On the other hand, as food is metaphorically overlapped with sex, female appetite as the force of destruction is transformed into the resource for the (re)production of both children and financial gains. Having an excessive appetite again becomes something valuable, if not admirable, in men, but that does not mean that they have to confine themselves to plain country food. By displacing their desire unto women, men can avoid the risk of undermining their health and masculinity, and continue enjoying exotic dainties that have been processed and purified by the female body. On the contrary, although continuing being condemned for their eating, women are expected and sometimes encouraged to indulge their appetite like household pigs — not to pamper their desire, but to prepare themselves for the consumption of men.

The duality of women as both food and eater in their relationship to men is best demonstrated in Mrs. Yellowhammer’s reprimand of her daughter Moll. Though earnest to match her daughter with Sir Walter Whorehound, the mother is unable to force Moll to go along with the marriage that she and her husband have arranged for her. Impatient about Moll’s slowness in learning the trick of seduction, Mrs. Yellowhammer snaps:

Yes, you are dull maid alate, methinks you had need have somewhat to quicken your green sickness; do you weep? A husband. Had not such a piece of flesh been ordained, what had us wives been good for? To make salads, or else cried up and down for samphire. (1. 1. 3-7)

Contemporary medical authors usually recommended “Matrimonial Conjunction, and
such Copulation as the cure for green-sickness. To be afflicted by green-sickness, in this light, was to become sexually ready for intercourse and, since female desire was considered indispensable to conception, for procreation as well. If Moll’s languor is indeed a symptom of greensickness, being “drowsy browed, dull eyed, drossy spirited” (1. 1. 10), however, is hardly the way to “move a man” (1. 1. 47) — not to mention a husband. Moreover, even when she is physically mature for sex, emotionally she is anything but interested in marrying Sir Walter — an “aversion” that could also hamper the success of conception. For the mother, however, marriage is equivalent to reproduction. In order to make her available to the marriage with the knight, Moll not only has to seduce Sir Walter actively but add vigor to her sexual appetite for the “piece of flesh” that is meant for her to have. While the “piece of flesh” means the baby bred in the maternal body, given the importance of female appetite in conception, it may also be the husband or, more specifically, his sexual organ that is “ordained” for the wife’s consumption. Portrayed as a consumer in the sexual act, she is simultaneously the food to be consumed. As soon as she eats the husband’s “piece of flesh” than she can be transformed from green vegetables for “salads” into “a piece of flesh” for male consumption. Otherwise, she would have to procure some “samphire” for herself so that she can provoke urine and menstruation, and to rid herself of the obstruction caused by green-sickness. Marriage thus seems to justify women’s appetite, but it is only to


172 Eccles 34-5.

prepare herself for her husband’s consumption and ultimately his self-reproduction.

Although female appetite is legitimized when it is necessary and useful for men, it is viewed with anxiety and hostility when conducted for the pleasure of women and at the expense of men. The most notorious example in the play takes place at the christening scene when a group of gossips congregate around Mrs. Allwit’s bed in celebration of the new-born baby. Paster argues that Mr. Allwit’s anxiety at the scene is “representative of patriarchal feelings” about “women’s gluttony, drunkenness, reeking wet kisses, and finally incontinence.” While Paster provides insight into the interaction between stereotyped female appetite and gender demarcation, she fails to capture the social and cultural significance of christenings as a contested site of gender struggle. As discussed earlier, though not so exclusively female as rituals like churchings, christenings remained one of the few legitimate social events for married women. Due to their wider social significance, a greater scale of celebration and more sumptuous display of good cheer therefore might be expected. Although female appetite was often blamed for the extravagancy of the christening party, in reality it was probably the husband that had a higher stake in putting on an appearance in such social occasions. As a means of social display, a well-prepared christening party undoubtedly functioned to demonstrate not just the husband’s masculinity but also his hospitality, which established him as a competent householder and member in the community. For somebody like Allwit, who did not really father the child, the christening may even be more important since it also serves as the means to prevent suspicion and rumors, and hence to ensure that Sir Walter can continue providing for his family.

As long as childbirth was essentially a female affair, christening might also be an
occasion of more interest to women than to men. As Cressy suggests elsewhere, while Tudor and Stuart christening parties were notorious for both “male carousing and female gossiping,” popular literature tended to depict such feasts as “heavily if not exclusively female.”

Although in the play almost equal numbers of men and women are present in the christening scene, it is primarily the latter who dominate the center of activity. Excitedly conversing about the baby, the mother, and their own private concerns, the gossips appear at ease around the mother’s bed, but the men, lacking any direct experience and knowledge about such issues, are unable to participate in the conversation and totally out of place in the feminine space of the lying-in chamber. While the women’s enjoyment of their gossiping boosts their desire for more comfits and wine, the men, having no words to say, also have no appetite for the dainties. Despite their collective marginality, they seem isolated from the women as well as from each other. It is true that Allwit’s proposal to “walk down and leave the women” (3. 2. 92) receives immediate response from Sir Walter — “With all my heart Jack” (3. 2. 93) — but his long tirade against the women is rarely reciprocated by any other men. In this light, even though the departure of the men together may signify a kind of alliance between them, they are compelled to do that not so much for their camaraderie as for their shared marginality in this particular situation.

Indeed, the “male alliances” may not be as “stable” as Paster wants them to be. More often than not, the men in the play aggressively compete with each other for the food that will not only strengthen their body but increase their financial stability. From

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174 Paster 55.
176 Paster 63.
the very beginning, for instance, Touchwood Junior is pitted against Sir Walter for the hand of Moll. Having seen his rival trying to recycle his old mistress, the Walsh gentlewoman, to facilitate his marriage with Moll, the young gentleman contemplates to himself:

My knight with a brace of footmen
Is come and brought up his ewe mutton
To find a ram at London; I must hasten it,
Or else pick a famine; her blood’s mine,
And that’s the surest. Well knight, that choice spoil
Is only kept for me. (1. 1. 140-5)

In Touchwood Junior’s animalistic metaphors, man and woman are designated with different roles in the scheme of procreation. While Yellowhammer’s son Tim becomes a “ram” for breeding, the Walsh gentlewoman is turned into “ewe mutton” to be eaten sexually. Such food, however, is unlike the ordinary food. Since “mutton” can mean either “food for lust” or “prostitutes” (OED), this particular kind of food, rather than passively waiting to be consumed, functions to promote the eater’s sexual appetite and actively solicits for her own consumption. Although all women are considered edible for men, they could be different in nature. A prostitute like the Walsh gentlewoman can be repeatedly recycled between various men, but a city maid and potential mate like Moll can be reserved only for one man. For Touchwood Junior, therefore, it is a struggle of life and death. Should he fail to seize the “choice spoil” before the knight does, he will “pick a famine” for himself. On the one hand, as “pick” puns on “peak,” he may face the danger of dwindling — physically and sexually — from starvation. On the other hand, since the marriage with Moll is actually worth “two thousand pound in gold” (4. 2.
to lose her is indeed to choose a financial "famine" and to give up the "gain . . . to a stranger" that will "enrich [his] father" (1. 1. 168-9). Although the Walsh gentlewoman can serve as an appetizer for taste, Moll, with her "sweet maidenhead" (4. 2. 93), is the kind of food that can not only sustain life but also please the palate.

Although marriage may secure the husband's entitlement to the consumption of his wife, it does not necessarily lessen the competition between men, but may even intensify it. Getting a wife may be an almost cost-free venture for "gain" (1. 1. 168). Maintaining one, however, is a costly business that is constantly coveted and threatened by other men. Allwit, the contented cuckold, provides an insight into the matter:

And where some merchants would in soul kiss hell,

To buy a paradise for their wives, and dye

Their conscience in the bloods of prodigal heirs,

To deck their night-piece, yet all this being done,

Eaten with jealousy to the inmost bone —

As what affliction nature more constrains,

Than feed the wife plump for another's veins? (1. 2. 42-8)

It is perhaps no accident that Allwit repeatedly imagines his wife as a wallowing sow — since, as long as a wife is treated as food for her husband, she seems to fulfill the same role as the household pig, the most important domestic animal and the most commonly eaten meat in England. Unlike the pig, however, the wife need more than just leftovers to become fat or "plump" enough for consumption. She not only has to be decked with "embossings,/ Embroiderings, spanglings . . . As if she lay with all the gaudy

177 Harrison comments: "for swine, there is no place that hath greater store nor more wholesome in eating than are these here in England, which nevertheless do never any
shops/ In Grasham’s Burse about her” (1. 2. 32-5), but fed with expensive foods such as “restoratives,” “sugar by whole loaves,” and “wines by rundlets” (1. 2. 35, 38). Although those gaudy outfits and expansive dainties are supposed to make her more delicious for her husband’s consumption, they simultaneously threaten to make her more seductive to other men and to corrupt her appetite, turning her into unwholesome food to her husband. Thus, even if his wife is faithful to him, by projecting his own desire unto others, the merchant can’t help but be pestered by the anxiety and suspicion that he might be feeding his wife “plump for another’s veins.” At the same time, the corrupted flesh of his wife, rather than nourishing his body, only breeds “jealousy” in him, which consumes him and eats him “to the inmost bone.” Thus, the husband is facing a dilemma in which he can’t have the food that he likes without at the same time risking his health and even his own life.

Certainly women are not alone in their appetite for dainties, but men are excused from the blame by displacing their desire unto women. Just as the merchants’ exploitation of “prodigal heirs” is justified by their wives’ desire for “a paradise” (1. 2. 44, 43), the promoters’ corruption of the “religious wholesome laws” (2. 1. 112) is believed to be motivated by the ravenous appetite of their “Molls and Dolls” (2. 2. 70):

This Lent will fat the whoresons up with sweetbreads
And lard their whores with lamb-stones; what their golls
Can clutch goes presently to their Molls and Dolls.
The bawds will be so fat with what they eat
Their chins will hang like udders by Easter eve,
And being stroked, will give the milk of witches. (2. 2. 68-73)

good till they come to the table.” See Harrison 311.
On the surface, these promoters not only appropriate the “sweetbreads” from citizens to pamper their palate and to fatten themselves, but “lard” their “whores” with confiscated “lamb-stones” as if planning to cook them up later in order to eat them. At the same time, however, since “fat” also means “usually, to feed (animals) for use as food” (OED), they seem to fatten themselves up or to turn themselves into delicacies like “sweetbreads” for the consumption of their “whores” whose appetite is turned voracious by the aphrodisiac “lamb-stones.” Thus, it doesn’t matter whether the promoters have given all or part of the meat to the “whores” — in one way or another, “what their golls/ Can clutch” would go “presently to their Molls and Dolls.” Although such an indiscriminating appetite, as discussed before, may undermine the health of men, it works differently to women. Instead of just getting plump in shape or becoming the breeding bed for the men’s offspring, they are transformed in their bodily configurations as well as in their physical functions. Their “chins” not only have been turned into the shape of “udders,” but also have acquired their function, secreting “the milk of witches” when “strok’d.” In other words, the awakening of female appetite simultaneously opens up the possibility of sexual transgression and ultimately their demonization. In an age obsessed with witch-hunt, these deviant women are conveniently blamed for corrupting the promoters and, indirectly, for tainting “every goodness” (2. 1. 117) of the “common good” (2. 1. 114) intended by the laws that try to control people’s diet.

Once women are held accountable for the corruption of male appetite, men can also surrender their responsibility of self-control to women and declare innocence of the sin of excessive consumption. For instance, when Touchwood Junior first meets Moll in her father’s store, he cautions her: “Turn not to me till thou mayst lawfully, it but whets my stomach, which is too sharp set already” (1. 1. 147-8). Although they are both
interested in each other, Moll is demanded to constrain herself in order to prevent Touchwood Junior from being taken over by his own appetite. Similarly, his brother, Touchwood Senior commends his wife, who agrees to live awhile asunder “till prosperity/ Look with a friendly eye upon our states” (2. 1. 19-20):

             . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . Had I married

A sensual fool now, as ‘tis hard to ‘scape it

‘Mongst gentlewomen of our time, she would ha’ hanged

About my neck, and never left her hold

Till she had kissed me into wanton businesses,

Which at the waking of my better judgment

I should have cursed most bitterly. (2. 1. 25-31)

Although Touchwood Senior seems confident in his sexual “bargain” (2. 1. 58) with the country wenches, who “curse” him “to the pit” wherever he goes (2. 1. 56-7), he appears anything but so in his imagined encounter with the “gentlewomen of our time.” Rather than a predator who aggressively tries to “suck out others’” (2. 1. 52) blood, he becomes a victim to the octopus-like gentlewoman who entangles him in her tentacle arms and kisses him into “wanton businesses.” Although sucking and kissing may seem to be similar oral activities, they have different impacts on their recipients. Sucking may seem more aggressive and straightforward in its movement than kissing, but it is also less erotically tantalizing and insidious in its effect than the latter. Thus, while the country wench seems to be fully aware of her own defeat throughout her brief bargaining, in the confusion of kisses, Touchwood Senior seems to surrender without even knowing it. It is not until he has finished that “wanton business” and awakened to his “better judgment” that he realizes what he has done to himself or what he has been done to — supposedly
against his own will. While such an explanation seems to expose the man’s vulnerability to women, it also works to justify his appetite and to free him from any responsibility to control his own action. Since “The feast of marriage is not lust but love./ And care of the estate” (2. 1. 50-1), the responsibility of conservation within the family is displaced unto the wife, who is expected to “unto her fortunes fix her pleasure,/ And not unto her blood” (2. 1. 48-9). Thus, although marriage provides the “lawful” outlet for women’s “desires” (2. 1. 45-6), by deploying female appetite as the means of the conservation of family “estate” (2. 1. 51), it simultaneously creates the illusion of power and manipulates women into self-control.

Even when men are forced to moderate their appetite at home, they can still find other outlets for their desire through extra-domestic dining. Although women are usually stigmatized for their appetite, it is men who tend to tip the balance of food distribution and exploit others of inferior class or gender positions. For example, despite his active sexual life at home, Touchwood Senior can still afford to have “drinkings abroad” (2. 1. 16). Even when he and his wife are forced to “live awhile asunder” because their “desires/ Are both too fruitful for [their] barren fortunes” (2. 1. 8-9), he can also supplement the cut-back in domestic meals with free extra-domestic supplies — “When I please blood./ Merely I sing, and suck out others”’’ (2. 1. 51-2). Rather than taking anybody that happens to come his way, however, the gentleman has a special preference for “country wenches” (2. 1. 60) — not without a good reason. As Crawford suggests, in seventeenth-century England, “family . . . played a large part in the control of female sexuality, and those with wealth controlled their daughters more strictly
than those of lower social status.”

Although lower-class women might enjoy more sexual license than women of higher social status, they had less social power and resources to fend for themselves and to demand compensations from men when they got pregnant. Similarly, Touchwood Senior’s advantaged social background also enables him to eat, if not for free, at least with almost nothing. Indeed, just as he can enjoy his free drinking with the Country Wench by indirectly shifting the expense to the lower-class Promoters, he can afford to dismiss Ellen’s threat of “a law bout” (2. 1. 77) with contempt:

And if that be all thy grief, I’ll tender her a husband;

I keep of purpose two or three gulls in pickle

To eat such mutton with, and she shall choose one. (2. 1. 79-81)

Since “gull” can means “a dupe, simpleton” as well as “a fish not fully grown” (OED), even those husbands that Touchwood Senior has reserved for crisis like this are turned into potential food for him. Being fish-like, those “gulls” are probably too thick-headed and too impotent to care for their wives’ chastity anyway. Thus, rather than an attempt to make up to what he has done to the country wife Ellen, the offer seems to be just another move to satisfy his desire and to reinforce his position as a consumer within both gender and social structures.

While both men and women of the lower class are treated as food for male consumption, wealthier upper-class couples provide the opportunity of profitable investments. Having preyed on the country wenches for free snack, Touchwood Senior tries to transform his eating into an ability of commercial values and to make a fortune

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178 Crawford 9.
179 Crawford 9.
from Sir Oliver and Lady Kix. Unlike the merchant who risks feeding his wife “plump for another’s veins” (1. 2. 48), Sir Oliver is incapable of making his wife fit for his consumption and producing the “piece of flesh” that will not only get him “the goodly lands and livings” (2. 1. 155) but also make him “a man” (5. 3. 1). Lacking his own means, he is forced to “purchase fruitfulness” (2. 1. 144) first from doctors and apothecaries in vain, and finally from Touchwood Senior. Though having “too much” (2. 1. 88) to spare, the decayed gentleman, rather than squandering his “water” (2. 1. 187) to the country wenches this time, immediately strikes a deal with Sir Oliver to help him “get and multiply within [his] house” (3. 3. 78) at the price of “four hundred pounds” (3. 3. 148). Touchwood Senior may act as a substitute food provider to Lady Kix, but he perceives himself as an aggressive consumer, who has already had “a too much aptness in [his] blood/ For such a business” without the “provocation” of aphrodisiacs such as “eryngoes,/ Artichokes, potatoes, and . . . buttered crab” (3. 3. 14-7). In the eyes of others, he is also a producer who, by shaking “the golden fruit” into Lady Kix’s “lap” (3. 3. 11), makes her “belly” “blossom” (5. 4. 75) with child and fattens her husband with lands. Overjoyed, Sir Oliver volunteers to provide “purse, and bed, and board” (5. 4. 81) to Touchwood Senior and his family, and encourages him to “get children” (5. 4. 83). Thus, through his eating, the voracious gentleman not only earns his four hundred pounds, but also wins him a surprising prize that enables him to continue to enjoy home-cooked meals for the rest of his life.

Although part of Touchwood Senior’s success has to attribute to his wife’s unconditional obedience and self-control, not all men are lucky enough to have such an “unmatched treasure” (2. 1. 47) at home, nor can they have the total confidence to control the appetite of their wives. Thus, rather than trying to accomplish the impossible
mission, Allwit gives free rein to his wife’s appetite — not to consume his own financial resources, but to suck up the wealth of his rival or rather his “founder” (1. 2. 12). By lending his wife to Sir Walter, Allwit changes her from an opening through which household resources flow out into an instrument through which the material goods of others can be drawn in. This way, even “out of work” (1. 2. 59), he can nonetheless assume the appearance of masculinity “like a man” (1. 2. 12) while the Knight, though undertaking both the husband’s “labour” (1. 2. 52) and his “cost and torment” (1. 2. 55), is symbolically emasculated. Not only is the “gap” (1. 2. 111) that is supposed to locate on the female body displaced unto him, but he is compelled to go through the experience of disintegration whenever “his marrow melts” (1. 2. 90) at jealousy and when he finds himself slackening under the wave of lusty “Comforts” (5. 1. 63). Rather than a consumer, the knight is hence turned into food for Allwit and, at least in the beginning, is “yet too sweet to part from” (1. 2. 116). Conversely, the cuckolded husband, through his wife, finds “a table furnished to his hand” (1. 2. 13) with “excellent cheer” (1. 2. 24) and a house furnished with daily necessities, such as coals, and stocked with furniture luxurious enough to “lodge a countess” (5. 2. 174). Since the more she consumes, the wealthier and better provided her husband becomes, she is encouraged to indulge her appetite — be it a longing as small as “pickled cucumbers” (1. 2. 7) or as big as “restoratives” enough “to set up a young ‘pothecary./ And richly stock the foreman of a drug shop” (1. 2. 35-7). Harking back to the pig image, Mistress Allwit is indeed “the Husbandmans best scavenger”¹⁸⁰ — as Markham suggests in his *Cheape and Good Husbandry* (1614) — who can eat “anything, either fish flesh, fowl, root, herb, or

¹⁸⁰ Markham, *Cheape and Good Husbandry* (1614) 87.
excrement"\textsuperscript{181} into wholesome meat. Like a pig, she can enrich her husband by fertilizing his land with dung.\textsuperscript{182} As a result, Mistress Allwit metamorphoses from a pig into a "close-stool of tawny stool" (5. 1. 175) that contains excrements, then into the "box" (5. 1. 180) in the game house that contains the money paid by gamesters as a kind of cover charge to the house.

By rewriting the meaning of female appetite, the husbands in \textit{A Chaste Maid in Cheapside} thus construct a set of eating philosophies that justifies their excessive eating and their desire for exotic dainties without having to compromise their health, their wealth, or their manhood. Although women are still abused for their appetite, they are utilized to advance the social and financial status of their husbands. Female appetite, though still posing the threat to consume the substance of the household, is transformed into the means through which men compete with each other for the limited amount of economic and social resources. When women of different classes are metaphorically transformed into foods of diverse qualities, they conveniently serve to fulfill different functions for men whenever and wherever they are needed. Wives, for instance, are used as a kind of food processor through which exotic dainties and foreign influences can be transformed and purified into home-cooked meals for their husbands; women out of wedlock — depending on their social class — are also exploited either to offer cheap provision or to create business opportunities for men. The entanglement of male and female appetites may appear to afford women the rare liberty to enjoy their eating. The foods that women are expected to consume, however, are not substantial meals, but fancy

\textsuperscript{181} Taylor 6.

\textsuperscript{182} The usefulness of excrements is supported by an epigram, "The Dunging of Arable Land," included in T. Pecke's collection: "Dung is not useless, though base Excrement:/ For it helps forward, my best nutriment" (2. 194). See Pecke, \textit{Parnassi Puerperium: or
snacks that are physiologically and financially impossible for women to consume in great quantity at a time. As a result, women can appear to be constantly eating even when they are starving. If such an eating habit seems to echo the development theorized by Mennell, the civilization of appetite only seems to reinforce the stereotype of female insatiability and to invalidate the meaning of female eating.

*Some Well-wishes to ingenuity* (London, 1659).
Conclusion

In exploring the cultural significance of food and eating in early modern England, I have touched upon women’s ambivalent relationship with food and their significance in the process of social formation. Ideally, women were supposed to be the enclosed territory for men or, in accordance with the subject of this dissertation, “but food” for male consumption, and men, as Emilia comments in *Othello*, “all but stomachs” who “eat us hungerly, and when they are full,/ They belch us” (3. 4. 101-3). In reality, however, as the symbolic value of female labor in the preparation, distribution, and consumption of food increased with the restructuring of social relations, women had to be more than just food, and the function of their culinary labor, more than just to nurture.

As discussed in the chapters, food reflected and symbolized social relations and could be a powerful means of inclusion in or exclusion from social groups. All these social functions, however, were not inherent in food itself but were produced through the various practices and rituals in the process of preparation, serving, and consumption. Although medieval women had already played an important part in food provision and preparation, the restructuring of social relations during the early modern period meant that women’s contribution to food consumption gradually assumed the symbolic importance that used to be the responsibility for men. With the decline of hierarchical social structure and the reinforcement of gender division of labor, men increasingly relied on women not just to maintain and to reproduce the social order at the table, but also to negotiate and to secure the boundaries between the private and the public, between

different social groups, and between genders. Thus, in other aspects of their life early modern women might be treated as sexual objects to be enclosed or exchanged between men. In matters related to food consumption, however, they were expected to be active actors in the social drama and thus to have limited access to the world of men and to participate, if not to intervene, in the process of social formation.

While the increasing significant role that early modern women played in food practices might be empowering to them, it often had to be circumscribed by and subordinated to male control. Undoubtedly, a woman’s ability to provide food and to create a comfortable eating environment functioned to validate her economic and social position particularly in the family. In a patriarchal society like early modern England, the relationship between men and women was by definition unequal. The inequality was reflected not just in the gender division of labor and the uneven evaluations of male and female work, but also in the differential distribution of social resources, be they economic, emotional, sexual, or muscular, between genders. On the one hand, rather than acting as the gatekeeper for male consumption, women were obligated to please men’s palate or at least to accommodate their preferences of food, timing, and ways of eating. On the other hand, although women’s artistic creativity and labor became increasingly indispensable to the enactment of many food practices and rituals — particularly in the domestic setting, but applicable to wider social contexts as well — their contributions tended to be subsumed under the name of their husbands or other male authorities, and their potential for meaningful intervention in the world of men, deflected.

Although the material circumstances and social structures have changed dramatically since the early modern period, women are still portrayed as the provider and server of food more often than men, and their relationship with food to some degree is
under the sway of patriarchal ideology. At least in the popular representation, however, the meaning of female contributions and structure of female eating seem to have been changed. Early modern women might not have enjoyed as much power and control over food consumption in reality as they were perceived. The repeated portrayal of men being overpowered by women in all aspects of food consumption nonetheless expressed a sense of anxiety that might not be shared in equal intensity with their modern counterpart who are repeatedly reminded by food commercials that they could do just as well without women. Moreover, if female eating was represented as an illicit activity during the early modern period, it was nonetheless an integral part of the female culture, through which women sought for mutual support and empowerment. According to Susan Bordo, however, although in contemporary commercials female eating is also represented as “a dirty, shameful secret,” it is a secret not just to men but also to women. \(^2\) Eating thus no longer functions as the means to establish a network of female support, but the tool for the sexual competition against other women for the attention of men.

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195

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Well Met Gossip: or ‘Tis Merry when Gossips Meet. London, 1675.


