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Body on the Plate. On the Relation between the Carnality and Food (on the example of meat in advertising)

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Abstract Do we own our bodies? Do we control them during the meal, or does the meal control us? In this paper, we aim to examine the complex nexus of social and physical practices embedded in eating habits. During the examination of selected culinary advertisements, we will attempt to explain how food stabilizes, catalyzes, separates, and mediates social relations, as well as social and individual bodies. The paper merges the perspective of cultural anthropology, sociology of the body, and food studies.

Keywords Food; Body; Social Practices; Media; Consumption

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Food consumption is not a simple phenomenon which is easy to describe. Depending on the cultural background, intentions and motivations of the actors, social processes, the influence of things, it may shape individuals and their bodies in various ways. It may train or liberate, connect or divide, strengthen or weaken. An analysis of becoming body through food may say a lot about the construction of connections between the individual, the society, and culture. In the article, we seek oppressive and emancipating contents pertaining to the body which are present in purposively selected advertisements of meat. The aim of the article is to answer the question on the nature of particular relations between the cultural and social construction of the body and food consumption represented by media advertisements.

Examination of Eating Body: Between Anthropology and Food Studies

Most of all, the title of the article is to point out the connections between the social constructions of the body and the meanings ascribed to food. It is also to emphasize the physical-social implications of the body and food, not always directly expressed by sociologists. This relation should be understood both as the supply of nutrients to the organism, and as social and cultural influences, such as the issue of obtaining food, expectations and ideas of it, or ethical and political disputes around food production and consumption.

Even though part of our narration will refer to food in general, the reader may certainly wonder why the choice is, in the context of the analyses pertaining to the body, the somewhat controversial product—meat. As stressed by Maguelonne Toussaint-Samat (2002:93), livestock farming was one of the first forms of ownership, in fact of robbing the nature. The transition to the sedentary lifestyle and the conditions connected with plants cultivation and livestock breeding were the foundation for the formation of the human social organization (Mazoyer and Roudart 2006:71; Diamond 2010). Therefore, animal meat in its multiple varieties is treated as a product which is known and consumed for thousands of years in all parts of the world, valuable both due to its physical qualities (source of protein and fats) and as generating a series of social connotations. On the other hand, sociologists of the body incessantly struggle with threads which, for the purposes of these considerations, may be referred to as meat-related: relating

to the human physicality. In order to only outline the issue, it is worth mentioning the attempts at explaining the relations between the material body and the soul/mind, the search for the space within the material (meat-related) body in which the soul would hide, undertaken since the times of Plato. The human body has been referred to in various ways by philosophers and philosophical anthropologists. Descartes, whose idea is the starting point for the contemporary considerations on the body in social sciences, made comparisons with the machine and the vessel, Edmund Husserl wrote about experiencing the body as the *Leib* (the living body) and the *Körper* (the physical solid figure), while Helmuth Plessner, who argued that the human being has the body and is the body and at the same time, was convinced that animals do not possess the ability to relate to their bodies (lack of emotions or capabilities to form bonds). This misconception, which even in the times of Plessner was possible to be verified based on the works by Charles Darwin, is still today one of the common justifications in the ethical dispute on meat consumption (Wójciewicz 2014:23-43). In the 20th century, the issue of the duality of the human body has slowly been giving way to the issues connected with identity shaping, gender, race, sexuality, or health and the relevant body has been considered as a crucial element of the system of social and cultural meanings, a realized object of control and indispensable element of cultural consumption. And in this context of having control over the body within the somatic society, that is the one whose most political and personal problems relate to the body and are expressed by it,¹

¹ The notion introduced by Bryan S. Turner (1996:1).

at the same time based on consumption, our considerations should include food.

Studies on food and eating have a specific status in social sciences. On the one hand, the review of literature shows a wide range of researchers' interests in the issue. The most classic are the neo-Marxist studies deriving from the critical analyses of commodity production systems (e.g., Buttel 1980; 2006; Friedland 1997). They focus on the criticism of the industrial society, distribution of power inside of the food chain. In these studies, food is one of the commodities and the consumers are rather passive participants of the game. Searching for a model of development alternative to capitalism, the studies have been evolving towards analyses of alternative systems and new patterns of production (e.g., Goodman, DuPuis, and Goodman 2014). Although it is an essential one, this trend in food studies suffers from two basic disadvantages. One of them is the distrustful attitude to culture and its significance. The other complex problem refers to the highly simplified vision of consumer behaviors and roles. These studies fail to describe the complexity of relations between the body, identity, and consumption (Lockie 2002).

Anthropology has determined the rhythm of food studies differently. Let us consider the famous concept of the culinary triangle by Claude Levi-Strauss. Through the processes of food processing, the border between the culture and the nature, between what is cooked, raw, or rotted becomes visible (Levi-Strauss 2013:46). Food draws a line which divides structures and functions. The issue of food was approached in a similar way by Mary Douglas (1996:34)

who, fighting the simplified, functionalist definition of bans connected with food, pointed out that their main function was to draw symbolic borders rooted in the culture of the society. At present, anthropology adds to this composition the research into the body, identity, sexuality, ethnicity (e.g., Probyn 2001; Counihan and Kaplan 2005; DeSousey 2016). In the anthropologists' perspective on food, the ritual and magic context is extremely important. The product, chosen for this analysis, thanks to its qualities and origin like perhaps no other, is a pretext to search for the cultural essence of the relation between the body and what feeds the body. Jolanta Brach-Czaina calls this relation the metaphysics of meat.

The meat provides us with its essence, it demonstrates it to us, although we fail to make any effort to think about it. Its hidden sense emanates from it and we yield to it unconscious of our submissiveness. And taking into account the fact that we ourselves are slowly becoming meat, and we may already even be it, we should attempt to analyze out the hidden being-related essence of meatness since it pertains to our fate. [Brach-Czaina 2008:81]

Even if one is deeply reluctant to consume this product, they need to bear in mind that contact with the meat of slaughtered animals allowed humans to discover the physical characteristics of their bodies, but also helped them realize their own meatiness and similarity to what we eat. Eating animals makes us members of the bloodthirsty community, as stated by Brach-Czaina. "The community of creatures is governed by the law of food: we consume one another, irrevocably doomed to be consumed ourselves...We take part in the cosmic cannibals feast"

(Brach-Czaina:83). All attempts to symbolically exclude oneself from this community emphasize even more the cultural ambivalence in the approach to the human body and the animal bodies, as well as to death. We are sure not to say that a lamb chop comes from the carcass. Admiring the cook's talent we will savor it rhapsodizing about the qualities of the meat. What is it then that makes us commonly accept the objective act of cruelty which is eating animals? Starting with the assumption that all food is our builder, the status of meat is a special one, though. The consumption of meat involves extreme mutual sacrifice whose meaning consists in one being sacrificed for the other so that in the future the other one (the human being, or rather what they become) would become food for the animal (Brach-Czaina:87).

In the context analyzed, one needs to consider the perception of the meal as a code on the basis of which it is possible to draw conclusions about social relations, as proposed by Mary Douglas (2007). As evidently manifested by the example of meat, the act of eating consists of the biological and social components, while the consumed meat is obviously assigned social meanings such as the mentioned example of the sacrifice of animals. The consumption of meals is accompanied by patterns which translate into the body—from the need to be present in a place and at a time through the embodied competences connected with taking seats at the shared table. Food turns out to be an activity which is accompanied by greater intimacy than drinking. It is most often that we eat in the company of people who we know or to whom we are related by blood, and the rules derived from culture

and religion have influence on what we actually feed our bodies with.

We would also like to touch upon the issue of lack of food studies in the mainstream of the social sciences. As Warren Belasco (2008) notes, in spite of their importance, the studies on the rituals linked with food, the composition of cookbooks, consumer practices are still on the margin of the mainstream scientific research. It seems that it is possible to indicate three reasons for such a situation. One of them is connected with the dualism of the body and the mind, already mentioned in this work. Food is treated as something which is stereotypically linked with satisfying the basic needs. Belasco stresses that the whole Victorian ritual linked with food relates to the deep suspiciousness of the "civilized" human as regards the apparently physical act. An interesting trace is also the gender thread—food is connected with consumption, perceived as a female sphere, which in contrast to the male public sphere does not deserve the attention of the serious science (Belasco 2008:3). This would explain the discrepancy between the advanced studies on the technical and political aspects of food and the insecure attempts to break through in the case of studies on cultural, identity-, and body-related aspects of eating and food. The last reason for the reluctance of the mainstream social sciences representatives towards food studies may be the nature of the sub-discipline which is deeply rooted in the everyday life. What is essential to food studies happens on a daily basis, in the everyday rituals maintaining or upsetting the social order. In cookbooks and on cook blogs, in the material kitchen equipment and the divisions which result from that. Meanwhile, it seems that

the important trends in sociology like to deal with the traumatic change theory of systems or transformation. The food studies which are focused on the present fail to completely fall within this model.

The Body and Food Consumption

As has been signaled in the introduction to the article, in the 20th century the socially constructed body has begun to experience a revival of interest of social scientists who sought not so much to again consider the Cartesian dilemma on the human duality, as to look at the body and the society through the prism of the mutual influences. One of the most frequently discussed discourses referring to the body is the so-called dietetic discourse. In the times of the reflectively built project of the individual identity in which the body is one of the key elements, it is simply not proper that the self-aware individual would cut off from the discourse. Eating manuals, cookbooks, and handbooks on healthy lifestyle are among the publications which disappear from bookshop shelves the fastest. The media triumphs are celebrated by cooks, dieticians, and nutritionists.

Although dietetics is as old as medicine, new social conditions mean new rules of the game for the embodied actors.

In the society in which famine and poverty disappear, standing out may depend on showing a slim figure, which refers first of all to the classes in power and middle classes; the very liberation from being addicted to eating leads the members of this society, who are employed more and more often—in a factory or office—in positions requiring less and less physical

effort...to excessive consumption of protein, carbohydrates, and fats. [Ory 2014:127]

The modern society has a specific attitude to food and the impact that the food exerts on the body. As Warren Belasco (2016:167) states, the culture normalizes the body by managing its boundaries. Taking account of transformations in the modes of food production, distribution and consumption styles, the development of information technologies and manners of governing, there are four ideal types of embodiment: the efficient body, the authentic body, the busy body, and the responsible body. The efficient body is a body which is conscientiously managed or even controlled by the individual and the society. This is the type which is the closest to the Cartesian vision of the body as a machine. “Moreover, dieting assumed a mechanistic view of the body: its caloric inputs and outputs could be closely measured, and its parts could be tuned up with ultra specialized, shiny exercise equipment” (Belasco 2016:172). The individual who manages the efficient body is ready to support their body with the available technologies and pharmaceuticals in order to be able to, for example, work longer and more efficiently.

The authentic body is not so methodically managed as regards the intake of calories and the nutrients supplied. This is a socialized body participating in the consumption of local products; the action of eating is a source of pleasure for it. As an example of the busy body Belasco points out to the working mother who does not have time to reflect on every calorie consumed. She would eat quickly and anyhow: “Bodies fed by quick-and-easy foods were less likely to be faithful and grateful” (Belasco 2016:176).

The last one, the responsible body, is inhabited by an individual who is familiar with thinking of the social consequences of the eating behaviors they decide on. The responsible body eats in the ethical, healthy, and usually expensive way. "In food terms, caring meant being willing to pay the full cost of a meal" (Belasco 2016:179).

Social construction of body in case of food is inevitably connected to patterns of consumption. However, Alan Aldridge (2006) argues that the subject matter of the role and importance of consumption is easy to reduce to the issue of duality. Consumer ideas in the Western discourse are limited by the notions of: the rational actor, the victim, the naive one, the message sender. The consumer is treated as a discoverer, an identity seeker, a hedonist, a rebel, an activist, a citizen, a puppet (Aldridge 2006:26). In a sense, this division takes into account the two axes: of the authority and of the rational action. In this perspective, while consuming, we yield to compulsion or regain agency, we satisfy our needs or participate in the consumption race. We shape our body or we make it undergo the shaping processes. This Manichaeian approach is also visible in the studies on the role and function of food. On the one hand, in the literature, there are dry descriptions of consumer practices, treated as the rational way of satisfying one's needs (e.g., Oosterveer, Guivant, and Spaargaren 2007). The complexity of consumers' behaviors, aims, and motivations is reduced to the percentage describing the way they consume and buy. Consumer decisions are in this case the result of connecting the needs, fears, consumer awareness, the system, and policies of development (Marsden 2006:7). On the other hand, there is a sen-

sitive description of consumer experiences, convictions and activities, and values rooted in anthropology (e.g., Belasco 2007). Treated as the active subject, the eating citizen (Lyson 2007), or the victim of the system, is forced to excessive consumption (Pollan 2006:100). Today, researchers attempt to slightly depart from this division, even by using the concept of social practices and analyses of the individual and social subjectivity of consumers (Dean, Sharkey, and Jonson 2016). However, it still exerts impact on thinking about consumption, leading to the dominance of typologies which are mostly based on the far too simple clash between the enslaved and the citizen consumption (e.g., Dagevos and Hansman 2001:143-150; Oosterveer et al. 2007).

It brings us to crucial question about more complex relations between consumption patterns and construction of body. In this article, we intend to approach the issue of consumption and its relations with the social body in a slightly different way proposed by Belasco or Dagevos and Hansman. We treat food as **a stabilizer, a catalyst, a moderator, or a separator** of both: social processes and social bodies. Depending on the cultural and political context, the nature of the product itself, the customer expectations and needs, the relations in which they function, it is food that may modify or consolidate the social world surrounding them and their own bodies. Food may also be treated as the platform connecting different actors, different worlds or separating them. Let us now consider elements of our analytical frames:

Food as a stabilizer: in her bright study on foie gras, Michaela DeSoucey (2016) describes the connection

between food and the symbolic field of a society. The food codes and is coded by values and norms characteristic of a group. The peasant cuisine, mum's cooking, the Mediterranean cuisine—each of these notions refers to a specific idyllic vision of the world which is strengthened among other things in culinary habits. If one considers the Italian cuisine, as Fabio Parasecoli (2014:260) describes it, the vision of the Italian provinces and Italian taste which appear in our heads are in fact an ephemeral image, an illusion based on evanescent symbols connected with the national identity. The question here is the feedback effect. Food consolidates our vision and culturally constructs the surrounding world. For example, an interesting phenomenon, typical of Poland, is a strong valorization of the past—the so-called “taste of childhood,” based on referring to the non-existent, to the spirit of the time gone by, to the idyll of the wonderful childhood years. It is our desires that influence the reality. Italian Tuscany, French province, pseudo-peasant inn by a highway—they are physical manifestations of our images connected with food. This way the symbolic field is being stabilized. Referring to the body, we would like to stress how its constructions are maintained through food. The female body, in particular gender roles, for example, cooking in the kitchen, struggling with products while processing them, the references to sexuality in food advertising, the training role of food and its connection with keeping the desired shape of the body in demand at a given historical moment—this is the way food serves as an indicator and one of the tools to stabilize the socially consolidated constructions of the body.

Food as a catalyst: in a different political and social context food may be a factor to symbolize or initiate changes. Warren Belasco (2007) in his book, *Appetite for Change: How the Counterculture Took on the Food Industry*, describes how the counterculture groups were formed around food. Around the controversies linked with food, the citizen, and consumer movements fighting for the well-being of animals, state of the environment, activation of local communities, a new construction of the global world are being formed. At their conception the most important movements such as fair trade, Via Campesina, the organic movement focused on food. Fighting for the elimination of cage rearing, ban of catches of cetaceans, rejecting the shark fin soup have become the keystones connecting the politically engaged citizens. At the same time, the catalyzing function of food has also a more individual nature. Our research has shown that for a share of consumers food and diet are a significant element in identity reconstruction. The change of eating habits marks the beginning of changes. Let us consider the controversial but scientifically fascinating issue of the role of food in the treatment of critically ill patients. Changes of diet, “miraculous” herbs and products are used to regain control over the body and what is happening with it. Food is also treated as a tool to fight the oppressive total system (e.g., the medical one). In this sense, food may be a symbol of change or its catalyst both at the individual and social levels. It is a weapon in the fight for the new world or for one's body and health. Changing one's diet, joining a food cooperative, buying fair trade products, opposing force-feeding we try to accelerate, change the surrounding world.

Food as a mediator and separator: in their study of the *oscypek*,² the team of Krzysztof Górlach used an interesting notion of food as a platform connecting different types of knowledge, various actors, and institutions (Górlach and Nowak 2011). In fact, in its essence food may be a powerful mediator connecting dissimilar people. This occurs in at least two manners. First of all, due to its very essence, food is also a social act. The bonds characteristic of a group are re-established and strengthened through a shared meal. Food, and actually its reflection in the symbolic field are used to build communities. DeSoucey is the author of the term *gastronationalism*. It assumes that food production, processing, and consumption may create and maintain emotional attachment to the idea of the nation forming the fundamentals of collective identity (DeSoucey 2012). Food may form a set of symbols linking us with the community and separating us from strangers. The mediating role of food is approached in a slightly different way by the classic food studies (e.g., Lockie 2002; Goodman 2004; Fonte 2008; Goodman, DuPuis, and Goodman 2014). They stress the networking nature of the processes of food production and distribution. In this sense, buying coffee from a popular coffee-house chain, we complement the complex system of connections which for a short time links us with an American plantation owner, a Brazilian worker, a coffee processor, a seller, a barista, but also with non-human actors: for example, the systems of legal regulations that influence coffee trading. Depending on the type of this network, its openness, transparency, industrial integration, the mediating function may be exposed or disclosed. Nevertheless, food

² *Oscypek* (Polish) is a smoked cheese made of salted sheep milk exclusively in the Tatra Mountains region of Poland.

may unite, from the obvious function of a shared meal that builds the family (Carrington 2013:187), through the symbolic meaning of new consumer movements building depersonalized relations of the engaged citizens.

A more evident function of food is its **separative** potential. This is stressed by Pierre Bourdieu (2013) who focuses on the class and gender dimension of divisions connected with food. The most obvious is the one connected with the division into the upper, middle, and working classes. Each of them had their own distinct set of acceptable and unacceptable meals, flavors, and behaviors. These combined and formed a system of distinctive features serving class separation. The upper classes are characterized by a limited freedom of consumption, of what to consume and how to consume. Food is one of the mechanisms of class control and one of the indicators of affiliation to a particular position within the social structure. This is why the protagonists of *La Grande Bouffe* accomplish a specific class liberation by means of suicide by overeating. The separative nature of food is not limited only and exclusively to the quite obvious issue of social class. Psyche Williams-Forsson (2006), in her brilliant study, describes how food and food-related symbols were/are used to consolidate ethnic divisions. The anthropologist analyzed the role played by chicken legs in the case of the Afro-American inhabitants of the U.S. This dish had a special role at the same time being a symbol and a tool of class divisions and an essential element of the Afro-American political and ethnic identity which was emerging (Williams-Forsson 2013:108). Food is also very clearly divisive for genders. As Rebecca Swenson (2009:36) argues

in her studies on the relations between masculinity, femininity, food, and TV programs, food and its presentation are media for the gender-dividing stereotypes. The competitive male chefs are contrasted with the everyday kitchen activities of women. Very clear traces of gender stereotypes are to be found also in food itself. There is the ethereality, whiteness, and lightness of construction of products such as diet yoghurts, while the same product packaged by marketing specialists for men strikes with the black color of the packaging, functional description, reference to body training (Parasecoli 2013a:291).

Food in the Media

Here, there emerges the question on how to unveil the intimate relation between the body and food. How to reach the disclosed sense of a particular form of consumption? How to analyze the mechanisms of the co-construction of the body and meat? In this article, we have decided to analyze selected TV commercials, or more broadly—media representations. This is a technique frequently used in food studies, and there is a purpose underlying. Most of all, the second half of the 20th century is characterized by a genuine explosion of media representations of food in commercials, newspapers, magazines, films (Rousseau 2012). Our intention is to draw the reader's attention to how the meanings connected with food are constructed. The media constructs of food tie them with our bodies. On a daily basis, we marvel at an article on the healthy impact of mango, or quiver with horror facing another permutation of the mad cows disease, or the swine flu, read/hear about exceptional qualities of the Brazilian acai berries, or with disgust wit-

ness the fight with pork. The dense pop-cultural web woven by the media exposes us to the excess of knowledge, emotions, sensations (Parasecoli 2013b:6). Describing this process, Fabio Parasecoli uses the concept of cultural commands, borrowed from Jean Baudrillard—assuming that, among other things, in the media, there is a specific repeated and encoded core—*the matrix, memories, and the command models* (Parasecoli 2013b:6). In the media, some repeated, but differently understood symbols capable to instantly travel in time, space, and society appear. The essence of this type of post-modernist journey of symbols seems to be commercials. Most of all, they are currently the key texts of culture. Allowing for certain controversy, it may be assumed that they are one of the more important institutions of socialization of the post-modern society (Jhally 1990). To some degree, they have an impact on gender and ethnic identities, family relations, the visions of one's body (Jhally 1990). Through the power of symbols and the authority connected with it, there emerges a Baudrillard algorithm of actions and commands. In this article, the dualism of advertisements will be significant—they are coded by the cultural context and they code the context themselves. Here emerge some interesting questions on how the body is presented in the specific media form; what symbols appear and what is their impact / how they are perceived in the different contexts shaping our bodies. The analysis pattern assumes a description of the creation of the commercial and what it presents, denotations connected with the construction and presentation of the body and materiality, connotations pertaining to the cultural contexts of a specific presentation, reference to the processes of cata-

lyzing, stabilization, separation, or mediation. The accepted analytical pattern assumes that the ways of presenting the body and food in advertisements reflect and strengthen social relations, illustrate and influence the way in which the society defines and re-defines **ethnicity, cultural gender, and gender roles**, as well as **citizenship and class divisions**. In the advertisements of meat products selected for the analysis, the reader will thus find exemplifications of female and male bodies entangled in the above mentioned contexts. These are multiple and multidimensional entanglements described by both theoreticians and researchers of the social dimensions of the embodiment, typical of the contemporary culture (Buczowski 2005; Jakubowska 2009; Shilling 2010). To sum up, our assumption is that by investigating into advertisements, we are able to reach the fragments of codes constituting the cultural and social algorithms of stabilization, catalyzation, mediation, or separation of the body. In the following sections of the article, we shall attempt to analyze this combination by investing in purposively selected TV commercials of food. The selection was made taking into account the division into the stabilizing, catalyzing, mediating, and separative functions of consumption.

The Body and Meat in Advertising

Stabilization—The Erotic Body

Photo 1. Carl's JR burgers commercial.³



The commercial is described by its authors as presenting a traditional American product in a new sexy form. For the first time it was shown in 2015 during the Super Bowl. The model and actress Charlotte McKinney, visible in the picture, was promoted as a totally natural body advertising totally natural burgers (tasty, healthy, and obviously made in

³ Picture available at: <http://www.hngn.com/articles/143301/20151023/charlotte-mckinney-makes-carls-jr-history-with-sexy-new-commercial-photos-video.htm>. Retrieved April 18, 2018.

accordance with a unique recipe). The body which advertises them meets all the criteria stereotypically viewed as “appetizing” femininity—the model is young, white, blonde with smooth complexion without visible imperfections, despite a very slim figure she has full breasts. Thus, the image of the female body presented in the commercial unites two current standards of the female look—leanness with muscularity and proper curves (bust and buttocks), that is, shapes that are practically impossible to achieve for the majority of women (Kimmel 2015:449). Considering the fact that the standards of the physical beauty are strongly marked by gender—the presented commercial aggravates the cultural inequality between women and men, reducing the woman to the role of “a natural body,” at the same time consolidating the schizophrenic standards related to leanness and selective abundance. This is the more so interesting that in some commercials realized within the discussed campaign, the model is heartily eating the burgers dripping with grease, which cannot be an activity to help achieve the ideal body embodied by the model.

It is worth noting that in this case the eroticized body helps maintain the culinary tradition (or rather the image of tradition). Jean Baudrillard stresses that the thing which drives the cultural consumption of the body, especially the female one, is sexuality. “The imperative of beauty being the exploitation of the body by means of narcissistic re-casting and investment requires eroticism as the sexual manifestation” (Baudrillard 2006:176). Therefore, the natural burgers strengthen the culturally constructed oppressive model of female physicality based on eroticism and sexuality. Additionally, there is, using

the words by Baudrillard, the so-called consumption of the body and by the body. The culturally relevant and socially desired body of the model allows her to gain media popularity, become successful and thus consume by means of the body. The same body which allows for the model’s social and economic participation is metaphorically consumed by the advertising message recipients. Hence, this is a highly gendered body reduced to the level of erotic-aesthetic and economic value, which consolidates the image of the female body as apparently liberated sexual object, preserving the social practices oppressive to women.

The discussed commercial is an example of a specific feedback occurring between the meat/food and the body which advertises it. The social ways of constructing the female body promote its use in the meat-related contexts. The meat product becomes much more appetizing if associated with a body that is a desired object.

Stabilization—The Ethnic Body

The second of the analyzed advertisements reaches the history of relation between meat and the body. This is an American advertisement of a range from General Electric. The marketing aim of the campaign, the target group were Afro-Americans. In this case, the question is the consolidation, solidification of ethnic identity and stereotypes connected with it. We shall begin with the choice of food presented in the picture. Chicken legs have had a long and rather infamous history in the culinary and cultural history of the U.S. (Williams-Forsion 2006). It was the cheapest and the most commonly

Photo 2. Advertisement of General Electric's range—1935.⁴



tempts to discover one's identification. Doris Witt (2004:220), a researcher into the connections between famine, gender, and race, uses the term *chicken stories* for the orally transmitted narrations pertaining to cooking, struggle for food, joint food preparation. They stabilized the social practices connected with eating, but also with race—its place in the social structure, cultural universe of values and symbols, political awareness—either in a negative way (racism) or positive one (building identity). The subject matter of relations between food and race is in fact still significant today. The lack of food security, dependence on the state's assistance, diet which deforms the body are characteristic of the ethnic and the poorest groups of citizens of the highly developed countries (Caparros 2017:405). Individuals, groups pushed into the cultural and social margin eat badly, cheaply. There occurs the feedback—ethnic groups and social classes are economically and culturally forced to

available food, unequivocally associated with the ethnic group of Afro-Americans. Symbolically, the chicken meat was treated as a coarse one. What is visible here are the race and class mechanisms of consolidating a low social position of Afro-Americans in the U.S. in the first half of the 20th century. The food has been linked with the construction of race, ethnic identity, subjugation, but also with at-

fast and cheap diet which influences their bodies. The same bodies in the post-modern world worsen the exclusion of communities and individuals, fueling the processes of marginalization.

Coming back to the advertisement, it strengthens the stereotypical behaviors and appearance of Afro-Americans. We shall begin with the description of the hyperbolization of the physical traits of the ethnic group. Shiny white teeth, the presentation of

⁴ Picture available at: <https://pl.pinterest.com/pin/378654281143240151/>. Retrieved April 18, 2018.

lips and ears, emotions expressed with the face—these are to build the image of “a good black guy.” A person who is not especially bright but generally happy and content with simple things. This is strengthened by the model’s behavior. The way he holds the food, the simple construction of the food itself (fried chicken leg) form an image of a person who needs little to be happy, apart from the General Electric range, of course. The unequivocal imagery of the picture is consolidated by the language. Both the message sent by the main character, connected with his satisfaction with eating food (“um.m.m!”) and the symbols used in communication between the company and the recipients (“Yo’ next range should be”) are supposed to preserve the race stereotype of the Afro-American.

Therefore, food intertwined with ethnicity consolidates the imagery that refers to ethnicity. This situation involves two basic dimensions. One, the ideological one, pertains to the social construction of particular groups of people. It determines their physicality, behavior, everyday habits. Food plays the role of strengthening stereotypes. Food is already used in the cultural war for domination. We would like to point out how often food is used, for example, in the conflicts with the imagined Islamic threat. Pork buried on construction sites of mosques, or sent in letters to the Polish Board of Muslims may be examples of it.⁵ Symbols carried by

processed food may thus serve the dominant group to promote expected behaviors and attitudes in the dominated group. Also, cooking may be used by an ethnic group to maintain the continuity of the symbolic field, the patrimony from which the patterns constructing group identities are derived. The chicken stories together with the political movement to build the awareness of Afro-Americans led to the emergence of soul kitchen. This is a cultural practice whose simplified construction was to refer to and promote the ethnic awareness of Afro-Americans. In this sense, meat, or more generally food, through its cultural imagery, the potential to strengthen the positive or negative community, is a powerful tool to stabilize the construction of the body, identity, group.

Catalization—The De-Gendered Body

The above commercial spot is described by YouTube users as a sexy message addressed to women. The commercial visible in the picture is part of a series of films in which an actor is busy in the kitchen making Italian dishes. However, in his case, to call it cooking seems an exaggeration, since the protagonist takes a ready chicken from the stove at most, or meaningfully pats a ball of pizza dough, the actual cooking actions are limited to pouring a ready sauce onto every dish. After watching the video for several seconds, the viewers realize that the cook is playing an erotic game with the viewers (the female viewers—addressing them directly: “Hey ladies!”), and the kitchen gets transformed into a scene from a Chippendales’ show. In the presented spot, the protagonist starts to “cook” in a male apron put on the naked torso, and after a while he blinks

⁵ From *Gazeta Wyborcza*, article “Polscy islamofobii mają nowy genialny pomysł” by Łukasz Woźnicki. See: http://wyborcza.pl/1,76842,16020932,Polscy_islamofobi_maja_nowy_genialny_pomysl__Wysylamy.html. Retrieved April 18, 2018. From news portal (www.natemat.pl), article “Podłożyć świnie muzułmaninowi” by Janusz Wójcik. See: <http://janwojcik.natemat.pl/86007,podlozyc-swinie-muzulmaninowi>. Retrieved April 18, 2018.

Photo 3. Commercial of the Italian meat sauce from Kraft.⁶



flirtatiously and puts on a female apron with frills. However, he is not satisfied with the result because the frills do not match his hairy legs. Therefore, he decides on the third variation—an apron with an image of a naked torso... and then he decides that being completely natural, he is definitely the best, and taking off his clothes, he is smiling while pouring the advertised sauce onto the baked chicken.

The advertised product is, not surprisingly, presented as natural and, interestingly, it has been shown as a tool for even partial emancipation of the busy body (Belasco 2016). The commercial persuades us to bake the chicken, but not to bother about making the sauce—the one from the shop is also good. Similarly to the case of the commercial of burgers, the message is that naturalness of the product goes hand in hand with the naturalness and the appetizing quality of the body that adver-

⁶ Picture available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uH-1dEWhutm8>. Retrieved April 18, 2018.

tises it. This is yet a male body. Obviously—white, fulfilling the culturally defined norms of attractiveness. Although the requirements pertaining to the appropriate body refer to men as well, they do not constitute the most important component of the male status. The protagonist is overflowing with sex appeal, but from the beginning the viewers are aware that they

are taking part in a game using physicality, that the female apron and the naked torso are tongue-in-cheek. The functional eroticism which was explicitly used in the commercial of burgers starring a women, in this case has been accompanied by humor and the very way of conducting the narration. The protagonist cannot handle cooking, but he enjoys it very much and persuades women to be less critical about themselves. Thus, the analyzed spot sends the message that liberates from the hegemonic masculinity, on the one hand, treating femininity ironically, but, on the other hand, questioning the thinking about home cooking as a women's activity, exhausting, demanding perfection and at the same time unmanly—almost castrating.

Catalization—The Post-Productivist Body

The next advertisement touches upon the phenomenon of the post-productivism in consumer behaviors, the modern changes in the relation between

Photo 4. Excerpt from the advertisement of organic beef by Applegate.⁷



meat and the body. This is an advertisement of one of the most popular companies producing organic, functional food, referring to the idea of concern for the well-being of breeding animals. Thus, it refers to one of the most interesting trends in food consumption in the well-developed countries. David Goodman (2003) called this phenomenon quality turn. He assumes that for part of the consumers, a more and more important role is played by the functions of food not connected directly with production, number of calories, simple reception of the taste. Fears connected with the growing complexity and the declining transparency of the industrial, long networks of production and the pro-ecological orientation, as well as the civic part of citizens, even

⁷ Picture available at: <http://www.digitalvariant.com>. Retrieved April 18, 2018.

more intensified by the impact of social movements (Marsden 2006:7) and the consumer ones have led to

modifications in the perception of food, but also the body. There appeared new waves of consumer social practices referring to the idea of environmental protection, sustainable development, local democracy, but also seeking slow food, or new tastes. As Fabio Parasecoli (2014:7) neatly articulated it, in the new context, the hygienically sliced cheese and sterilely packed cheese loses to the one we buy directly

from the farmer and which is stylized to look like a natural one, from the countryside. This has been intensified by the growing fears of modernity—consumers unable to estimate the risk, longing to regain empowerment have started to create individual or community-based safety bubbles around themselves. This is quite a typical thread often appearing during the interviews with the “radically consuming” members of food cooperatives, short networks, shopping groups. These are people whose motivation is strengthened by the fear of the mythical E, the industrial food processing, the laboratory where today’s industrial food is produced. In this sense, there is a fundamental break, the dichotomization of the modern consumers living in the developed countries. On the one hand, there is a growing market of mass consumers, looking for cheap and eas-

ily available food; on the other hand, there emerge groups and movements of people trying to change the world surrounding them.

Returning to the advertisement, it is built on the basis of oppositions. The bodybuilder imitating a cow, representing industrial, modified, and artificial food, is contrasted with the ecological, “natural” female consumers using the Applegate products. The degenerated, exaggerated, turgid body is here a symbol, a metaphor of the contemporary times coded by lack of moderation, degeneration, scientific support. This is a body which by its construction inspires anthropological disgust. It is contrasted with the natural body, defining quality by moderation rather than size. Paradoxically, the change occurs by rejection, reference to the “normality.” The body of the post-productivist consumer is not eccentric, does not refer to extravagance, avoids exaggeration; it stands out thanks to its naturalness, imperfection. In this sense, the change consists in rejecting the post-modern hyperbolization of physicality.

Food may be a powerful symbol, a metaphor, but also a tool of change. The counter-cultural movements of the 1960’s concentrated around food (Belasco 2007); food is also capable of uniting new social movements (DeSoucey 2016); in an appropriate context, food may have a thoroughly political char-

acter. Here, we shall use the notion of gastropolitics, coined by Michaela DeSoucey (2016:17). It assumes that food is one of the tools in the fight for the right to define the symbolic field by particular groups of actors. Thus, the ecological movements, fighting for animal rights, referring to the idea of global justice, but also basing on tradition and patrimony, use food in their attempts to take control over the symbolic field of a society. The body seems to locate in the very center of this idea of the process of catalyzing social change.

Mediation—The National Body

Photo 5. The commercial of sausages and ham from the Chrzanowska Manufaktura Wędlin (The Chrzanów Sausage Manufactory).⁸



Another case to analyze is the commercial spot of sausages and ham—the line is called Kruche z Chrzanowa (The Tender from Chrzanów). The

⁸ Picture available at: <http://www.wirtualnemedi.pl/arttykul/tak-to-sie-robi-chrzanowska-manufaktura-wedlin-reklamuje-kruche-z-chrzanowa-wideo#>. Retrieved April 18, 2018.

commercial is a 15- to 30-second-long TV spot prepared in collaboration with an advertising agency and a media house (which the company does not hide, and even takes pride in hiring specialists to create the image of the traditional sausage and ham). The campaign is conducted under the slogan “This is how you do it!” (“Tak to się robi!”). The key idea to the plot of the spot is a journey back in time to the Chrzanów manufactory which a father and son go on when they stand in front of their refrigerator door wondering in what mysterious way the magnificent sausages are made. Dressed in historical outfits, the two protagonists are shown around the workshop by the sausage master himself who passionately explains how the sausages are made and how the key tenderness is achieved. In the workshop, there is a wood burning smokehouse, there are rings of garlic and other dried spices hanging, there are pots with fresh herbs almost everywhere. At the huge wooden tables the master’s assistants are rushing around—they are only men. The young boy does not hide his delight, he is smelling things, tasting them, and asking questions. After a while, both protagonists are standing again in front of their fridge and, obviously, they reach for the ham, the secret of which they have just learned.

The presented commercial is a typical example of using food as a mediator. The production mode shown in the spot refers to the best national culinary traditions (it is known that no one can make sausages like Poles) and unique skills handed down in the sausage maker families from father to son. The fact that the family of the young traveler in time consumes the advertised sausages means that

they respect tradition and contribute to its transmission in time, thanks to which they feel part of the community (DeSoucey 2012). Eating sausages and ham is connected with the individual and social identity and is an element of the project of the patrimony, described by Michaela DeSoucey—namely, an idealized vision of the community, attachment to the place and frequently also the national-patriotic myth.

In the analyzed case, the myth perfectly corresponds with the iconic physicality of the sausage maker master—the overweight, older man with a big moustache carrying an old book with recipes. The master’s assistants are young men, even boys of thinner figures, without visible growth. The master represents the hegemonic type of masculinity which subordinates other types (Skoczylas 2011:4). The only woman in the analyzed spot is the boy’s mother who does not move in time yet. She does not experience the adventure. She stays at home and serves ham to her husband and son when they come back to their times. The national body is the men’s body. The source of the bodily separation of women from the process of preparing sausages and ham may be sought in the quality assigned to pork (traditionally, sausages or ham were a festive food, and not an element of the everyday menu), as well as in the division into the so-called female and male farm, which was applicable in the Polish families of the landed gentry until the 20th century—women could have and manage the meat of the smaller and more mediocre animals, such as poultry, or what had grown in the vegetable garden (Ciechomska 1996:122).

Separation—The Class Body

Photo 6. Excerpt from a culinary guidebook of Marseille, issued for the guests of the Radisson Blu hotel.⁹



The last example analyzed is the advertisement of the Radisson Blu hotel in Marseille. The photo shows an excerpt from a culinary guidebook offered to the guests. It advertises the restaurants in Marseille which have been awarded the famous Michelin stars. As for the merit, the guidebook touches upon one of the more obvious functions of food consumption—its class and distinction nature. Pierre Bourdieu argues that food, and more precisely the taste, is part of the habitus and it is firmly connected with the cultural capital and the position in the social structure. Physical workers eat and shape their bodies in a different way than managers, and the upper class does it even more differently (Bourdieu

⁹ Picture available at: <http://blog.radissonblu.com/michelin-star-restaurants-marseille/>. Retrieved April 18, 2018.

2013). Together with the advancement in the hierarchy, contemporarily there is interest in healthier, more interesting, more eclectic food which provides emotions (Flemmen, Hjellbrekke, and Jarness 2017:18). At the same time, as these authors point out,

the class meaning of food is of a dynamic nature. It is continuously being renegotiated because of the emerging new patterns and fashions (Flemmen et al. 2017:19). The mechanism of distinction connected with food is changing. This is not only the access to sophisticated cuisine that forms the demarcation line any more. What begins to be important is the division

into “healthy” and “unhealthy” food available for the masses. Admitting to eating at fast food restaurants may result in a clear affiliation to a particular social class. For example, one of the famous, Polish, highly well-paid breakfast TV presenters encourages us on her blog to properly hydrate our organisms and replace water with Rooibos punch.¹⁰ In a different interview, she mentions in a specific way the problems with encouraging children to eat healthy food and avoid fat, as well as fast cheap dishes.¹¹ In the class perspective, consumer practices, enforced

¹⁰ Text available at: <http://www.tvn.pl/showbiz/zdrowe-odzywianie-wedlug-kingi-rusin,123787,0,0.html>. Retrieved April 18, 2018.

¹¹ Text available at: <http://polki.pl/zycie-gwiazd/newsy,kinga-rusin-staram-sie-byc-blisko-natury,10023368,artykul.html>. Retrieved April 18, 2018.

upon many people by difficult economic situations (Caparros 2017:405), are pushed into the domain of childhood, immaturity, inability to make the right reasonable choices.

Returning to the analyzed advertisement, we would like to stress that it is based on the highly simplified and rather stereotypical construction of the class body. Both the body and the physicality of the models refers to sophistication and moderation. The range of colors, lightness of the body, classy packaging, and the entire image which is composed of the decoration, glasses with wine, the size and construction of the food, all these are to emphasize the social refinement. By means of food and body, the advertisement builds the illusion of uniqueness and exceptionality, in which we can be immersed for a while. Here, there is no place for physical hyperbolas, artificiality, or lack of elegance. The class nature of the body and food clearly suggests that this is not a place for everyone. Social distinctiveness, in which food plays a significant and symbolic role, progresses in this symbolic way.

Food may play the role of a strong separator dividing various social worlds. The process does not have to be based only and exclusively on the reference to social class. Food and food processing are used to separate the “civilized” world from the world of the “wild.” They separate ethnic groups, races, and genders. The female consumption which pushes into the world of the light, functional, ephemeral food is shaped differently. Men are united by means of the tough body demanding meat and calories. This strengthens the stereotypical gender-based divisions of the shape and functionality of bodies. Food

is also used to create cultural and political lines of division. Coming back to the works by Michaela DeSoucey—she uses the interesting notion of gastro-nationalism. At the macro level it defines the sets of symbols connected with the community, and at the micro level draws the division lines that separate us from others (DeSoucey 2016:68). The connections between meat, or more broadly food, and the body have their own gloomy history. They may code very strong divisions rooted in the culture and social structure. Paradoxically, the decision about belonging to a food cooperative may have more in common with the declaration of class affiliation than with the declared concern for one’s health and the environment.

Conclusions: Food and the Body— Between Oppression and Emancipation

The body representations in the analyzed advertisements of meat primarily perpetuate social divisions and inequalities (gender, ethnic, class). The meat products advertisements which have been studied fail to be neutral and they are not solely a simple encouragement to purchase a product prepared in line with marketing guidelines. Our analyses show that there are various mechanisms of the social constructing of physicality which underlie meat advertisements. They are oppressive to a large extent. The examples are the race stereotypes (the advertisement of General Electric’s range), the apparent emancipated female sexuality (the Carl’s JR burgers commercial), the simplified vision of the national community based on patriarchal patterns (the commercial of sausages and ham from the Chrzanowska Manufaktura). Cer-

tain insignificant emancipating potential may be found in the advertisement which in a humorous way inverts gender relations (the commercial of the Italian meat sauce from Kraft) or the one ridiculing the artificial and “pumped-up” body of the bodybuilder (the advertisement of organic beef by Applegate).

In our opinion, food exceeds the intimate barriers, shapes us, and builds our organisms. Analyzing the advertisements of food products like meat, it is impossible to set aside the meatness, the physical properties of the human body. The way of presenting the actors’ physicality nearly imposes the meaty interpretation—naked bodies which fulfill the culturally defined norms of physical attractiveness are clearly associated with the advertised product—the juicy beef or firm and well-flavored chicken. In this kind of media representations, the individual is thus more of an object, a commodity, a physical form of capital than the embodied subject. There is a fine line between the advertised product and the body that advertises it. At the same time, we influence the social construction of meat and the body, the way it

is packaged and what it looks like, or what values it codes.

Last but not least, looking at the connections between the body and meat, we should think about interdependence. For example—making class choices we choose light, interesting, healthy food. This transforms our bodies, assigns them specific class qualities which must be maintained by proper food. This way the described relation deepens—the cultural and physical construction of food is more and more strongly coupled with the cultural and physical construction of the body. The media, including advertising, play the function of the medium to transmit the message, shaping the nature of the relation. They form the matrix of memory and a set of commands to determine the manner of transforming the body. The last conclusion directly refers to the consumers themselves and their bodies. Our analysis suggests that today we are torn between the oppression of culture, economy, and society and the rather naive attempts at emancipation. We are buying at discount stores and hypermarkets, we are undergoing physical and cultural unification.

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