

UNIVERSIDADE DE LISBOA
FACULDADE DE LETRAS
DEPARTAMENTO DE ESTUDOS ANGLÍSTICOS



**DEALING WITH APPETITES.
ANGELA CARTER'S FICTION**

Maria José Pereira Pires

DOUTORAMENTO EM ESTUDOS DE LITERATURA E DE CULTURA

ESTUDOS INGLESES

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ANGELA CARTER'S FICTION**

Maria José Pereira Pires

Tese orientada pela Professora Doutora Alcinda Pinheiro de Sousa,
especialmente elaborada para a obtenção do grau de doutor em
Estudos de Literatura e de Cultura, Estudos Ingleses

DOUTORAMENTO EM ESTUDOS DE LITERATURA E DE CULTURA

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Aos meus filhos
Pedro e Eduardo

Some years ago [...], in all seriousness, a friend said to me: 'I'm seriously worried about the place of the intellectual after the Revolution.' I misunderstood her completely: I said: 'As for me, I shall cook.' I assumed, you understand, that she was wondering what she, as an intellectual [...] would do with her time in a society where the profession of intellectual *as such* had been rendered redundant and we weren't allowed to be parasites on the backs of those in productive labour any more. And I thought, a job in the communal kitchens ... turning out bowls, plates and dishes of hearty fare – potato soup, beans with sausage, braised oxtail, cabbage pancakes, chilli ... all the things I know best how to cook, due to a life spent on a relatively limited income in mostly northern climates. (Except for four months in Texas, where the chilli originated.)

(Carter 1987, 111)

Abstract

Through the plurality of her work, Angela Carter (1941-1992) became one of the most original and controversial British writers in the second half of the twentieth century. Such an assertion becomes clear when dealing with the way her fiction embodies the deconstruction and demythification of cultural values as well as their renegotiation in a clearly pungent and powerful, mocking or lyrical manner. Therefore, Carter's work should be seen as a series of actions and thoughts in evolution where myths are questioned and not as a series of orthodox beliefs. This study deals with her fiction, but does not neglect Carter's other writings – mainly her journalism and shorter writings – for her essayistic writing invites the reader to think, to argue back, and even to accost her/his world and beliefs. Bearing in mind Carter's plurality, this dissertation aims to explain the way food representations are to be read in order to better understand the building of characters in her writings, from a growing narrative technique in her early writings to a more mature one in her late work. Accordingly, the focal point of this four-chapter study is mainly food apropos of Carter. Starting with the more general food studies and moving to the more particular food-cultural studies and finally arriving at the more recent approach of gastro-criticism, the opening chapter emphasises how various disciplines have been, and still are, concerned about food issues. This takes in consideration the rich interdisciplinary discussions being made on how to explore food issues. The other three chapters run through Carter's early, self-reflexive, and late writings, as these echo three particular moments of production: the second half of the 1960s, the 1970s, and the 1980s until her untimely death, paying close attention to her decisive experience in Japan (1969 to 1972).

Keywords: Angela Carter, Food-Cultural Studies, Gastro-criticism, representation, identity.

Resumo Alargado

Esta dissertação tem como objectivo analisar a forma como a produção ficcional da escritora Angela Carter (1941-1992) expõe as tendências culturais da segunda metade do século XX ocidental relativas a uma moralidade onde surgem como inerentes a provisão de comida, o modo de consumo e a partilha ou retenção de alimentos. Ao fazê-lo, crê-se que Carter se distingue mais do que pela mera reacção contra os valores convencionais associados à comida e ao acto de comer. Neste sentido, pretende-se demonstrar como as suas escritas revelam o que pode ser considerado uma política do apetite; apetite como um *constructo* cultural e sujeito a forças e restrições externas.

Tal não implica, porém, que estas forças e restrições sejam diáfanas e directas, operando, antes, através de relações de poder esquivas. Embora em termos psicanalíticos e arquétipos, a figura materna seja a primeira fonte de alimento, esta não será central ao nosso projecto. Isto não significa que a *maternidade*, ao providenciar alimento, seja dispensável nos textos ficcionais de Carter, assim como é indicador de poder. Neste âmbito, um dos propósitos deste estudo é examinar os mecanismos discursivos através dos quais na escrita de Carter o poder é exercido através do apetite. Na escrita ficcional a questão centra-se na forma como personagens e acções possam representar uma realidade cultural, social e política. Também a escrita não-ficcional de Carter, em particular os seus artigos jornalísticos, reflectem este mesmo entendimento, até agora negligenciado pela crítica e aqui trabalhado pela sua importância na representação do social no período após a Segunda Guerra Mundial.

Neste quadro, o presente estudo visa contribuir para a reinterpretação da obra de Carter na óptica dos Estudos de Cultura, mais precisamente nos “food-cultural studies”

(estudos culturais de alimentação, como tradução alternativa). O perfil mais amplo deste estudo delimita-se com base na concepção de “circuito cultural” que se verte no sentido que atribuímos às coisas pela forma como as *representamos* – as palavras que usamos sobre elas, as histórias que contamos, as imagens que delas produzimos, as emoções que lhes associamos, as formas como as classificamos e conceptualizamos, os valores que lhes atribuímos. E, como tal, partimos da ideia de sentido, enquanto relação com *todos* os momentos e *todas* as práticas que participam na construção da identidade, na concretização da diferença, na produção e no consumo, assim como no regular da conduta social. Representações são, neste contexto, influenciadas pela cultura e têm simultaneamente a capacidade de moldar a cultura e as atitudes, os princípios, as leituras e os comportamentos da sociedade.

A partir da ideia de circuito de cultura surgiram os chamados “food-cultural studies” (estudos culturais de alimentação), onde o enfoque é dado aos cinco processos culturais principais a considerar quando se trabalha o sentido de qualquer fenómeno cultural relativo à alimentação – a saber, a produção, regulamentação, representação, identidade e o consumo (Bob Ashley *et al.*, *Food and Cultural Studies*, 2004). Num contexto introdutório, justifica-se esta problematização, mas interessa-nos a representação enquanto ligação estreita simultaneamente com identidade e conhecimento; sendo o sentido *produzido/construído*, a representação entra na própria construção das coisas e, assim, cultura surge como processo constitutivo, ou primário. Logo, não pode haver um status de congruência, simultaneidade e totalidade completa entre o processo e o produto da representação. Quanto à contradição entre o que é o acto de representar e o que é representado ela varia consoante o contexto circunstancial, permitindo assimilação ou alienação. Assim, representação pode ser vista tanto como motivacional (*enhancing*) e o oposto (*undermining*), como estimulante e como obliteradora daquilo que representa (Stuart Hall, *Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, 1997).

É esta dicotomia que se considera estar subjacente à análise das escritas de Angela Carter, admitindo o modelo discursivo numa perspectiva construtivista. Na sua obra, parece-nos pertinente salientar o modo porquanto é possível o objecto surgir como um *constructo* com sentido dentro de uma formação discursiva. Ao considerarmos que não são as continuidades trans-históricas que importam mas antes as quebras radicais, rupturas e descontinuidades entre períodos, entre formações discursivas, o período após a Segunda-

Guerra Mundial é disso testemunho como contexto sobejamente retratado e comentado nas escritas de Carter. Parte-se, assim, do pressuposto que os discursos não se limitam a reflectir a realidade ou a designar objectos, mas a constitui-los em contextos específicos de acordo com relações de poder particulares. Logo, retoma-se criticamente a obra de Carter, explorando-a enquanto trajectória transgressiva em que a cultura se torna uma produção globalizada.

O último dos processos culturais acima referidos, o consumo, surge implicitamente relacionado com as culturas e identidades de classe. Nas escritas de Carter o que é comido, a forma como é preparado, servido e comido, envolve-se nas dinâmicas de poder na esfera privada, mas também na já existente esfera pública, ou seja, as práticas alimentares devem ser compreendidas relativamente às formas como produzem, negociam e reproduzem a natureza da relação entre as esferas pública e privada – *The Field of Cultural Production* (1993) de Pierre Bourdieu é paradigmático destas formas que estruturam relações de poder mais vastas.

De igual modo, o fluxo de culturas alimentares nacionais está, em parte, dependente de processos de globalização, destacando-se duas perspectivas: uma que compreende a globalização e o impacto deste processo na cultura alimentar como precursor da diversidade cultural gastronómica, enquanto a outra toma a globalização como o prenúncio de homogeneidade culinária. Na Grã-Bretanha, após a Segunda Guerra Mundial, sobretudo, têm sido reconhecidas quatro grandes vagas de influência culinária estrangeira: italiana, chinesa, indiana e grega e turca. A realidade britânica é central nas escritas de Carter, mas não se pretende descurar a forma como diferentes realidades, a japonesa, a americana, assim como as de outros países europeus, são observadas pela escritora também através da referência a quatro dos supramencionados cinco processos culturais principais relativos à comida, concretamente, a produção, representação, identidade e o consumo. Compreende-se ainda que a moralidade do acto de comer e as atitudes perante a alimentação devem ser consideradas dentro de um sistema social e político.

É neste sentido que se propõe uma leitura do trabalho de Carter tendo como base uma abordagem gastro-crítica sugerida por Ronald Tobin (*Thought for Food: Literature and Gastronomy*, 2008). A natureza interdisciplinar do seu método tem como base os

desafios às margens das disciplinas ditas tradicionais, uma vez que a gastro-crítica se pauta por uma rede de técnicas que apoiam um conceito, a partir da antropologia, sociologia, semiótica, história e dos estudos literários. Neste estudo crê-se na interdisciplinaridade da gastro-crítica pela sua base na relação entre gastronomia e análise literária. Como tal, as leituras literárias podem levar a novas compreensões dentro desta área de estudos, apesar das representações da alimentação na literatura ter sido negligenciada até recentemente. Ao ler a ficção de Carter neste quadro e perante a forte relação entre gastronomia e literatura, considera-se que o seu trabalho revela uma nova compreensão de processo de criação. Considera-se que é precisamente a análise literária que contribui para o reforço do carácter social e simbólico do acto de alimentar.

Em conclusão, é através da pluralidade do seu trabalho que Carter se tornou uma das escritoras britânicas mais originais, mas também mais controversas da segunda metade do século XX. Esta evidência torna-se clara quando lidamos com a forma como a sua ficção incorpora a desconstrução e desmitificação de valores culturais, assim como a sua renegociação de um modo deveras lancinante e vigoroso, satírico ou lírico. Neste sentido, a obra de Carter deve ser vista como uma sequência de acções e pensamentos em evolução onde se questionam os mitos e não como uma série de crenças ortodoxas. Até agora, apenas os seus nove romances e as colecções de contos, para além do ensaio *The Sadeian Woman – An Exercise in Cultural History* (1979), têm constituído, predominantemente, o enfoque dos estudos e da crítica à sua obra – embora tal não aconteça em relação ao estudo das representações da alimentação, com a excepção de Sarah Sceats (*Food, Consumption and the Body in Contemporary Women's Fiction*, 2000) e Emma Parker (“The Consumption of Angela Carter: Women, Food, and Power”, 2000) principalmente.

Uma vez que tal abordagem já foi feita, pretende-se apresentar um projecto de trabalho inovador que estude paralelamente a sua outra escrita, não-ficcional, até agora negligenciada, e que acentua o poder de observação e crítica da escritora. Tal acontece nos artigos jornalísticos de Carter, coligidos em *Shaking a Leg: Journalism and Writings* (1997). A sua escrita ensaística convida o leitor a pensar, a argumentar em resposta, e mesmo a questionar o seu próprio mundo e as suas crenças. É este modo de escrita que molda os diversos apetites de Carter. Conscientes, porém, de que os textos desta colecção fazem parte de uma obra, não se descure o facto da escritora, como filha dos anos sessenta do século passado, ter vivenciado as extraordinárias mudanças que originaram

transformações radicais nas diferenças de estilo, sexo, gostos, políticas e classe. Considera-se, em síntese, que a obra de Carter pressupõe uma percepção arguta do mundo à qual está sempre subjacente um tom mudo de auto-interrogação e é também isto que se pretende trabalhar. Neste sentido, a análise da obra de Carter está estruturada em três capítulos correspondentes às três fases que aqui se consideram como reveladoras da sua evolução enquanto escritora: a segunda metade dos anos sessenta do século XX, os anos setenta, e os oitenta até à sua morte, evidenciando ainda a sua experiência decisiva no Japão (1969 a 1972).

Palavras-chave: Angela Carter, “food-cultural studies” (estudos culturais de alimentação), gastro-crítica, representação, identidade.

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Abbreviations

BC – The Bloody Chamber

BV – Black Venus

CR – The Curious Room

ED – Expletives Deleted

FT – The Virago Book of Fairy Tales

Fw – Fireworks

HV – Heroes and Villains

IDMDH – The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman

Lv – Love

MT – The Magic Toyshop

PNE – The Passion of New Eve

NC – Nights at the Circus

“Notes” – “Notes from the Front Line”

NS – Nothing Sacred: Selected Writings

SD – Shadow Dance

SL – Shaking a Leg: Collected Journalism and Writings

SP – Several Perceptions

SW – The Sadeian Woman: An Exercise in Cultural History

“Year One” – “Truly, It Felt Like Year One”

WC – Wise Children

Introduction

Looking back at my Master's dissertation on Angela Carter's way of dealing with William Shakespeare in a Post-Modern context (2002), I could not but notice the epigraph chosen at the time: 'I am all for putting new wine in old bottles, especially if the pressure of the new wine makes the old bottles explode' ("Notes" 69). She referred to reading being as creative an activity as writing and how the new readings of old texts are fundamental for most intellectual development, but now it also comes to me as an appetizer for further research. It is by assuming that texts are intrinsically self-dismantling and therefore open to reconceptualization, that Carter is with no doubt more concerned with simultaneously sabotaging and invigorating the past and its legacy rather than she is concerned with destroying or presuming to erase what had gone before – 'she is at all times a frank deconstructionist' (Cavallaro 2011, 188). Just as then, the epigraph chosen for this study is taken from a non-fiction text. Published four years after "Notes from the Front Line", "Angela Carter's Potato Soup" is part of Sue O'Sullivan's compilation *Turning the Tables – Recipes and Reflections from Women* (1987). The fact that it is mostly Carter's fiction which has been the object of analysis, lead me to pay closer attention to her other writings so far neglected, like her journalistic pieces. Celebrated for her feminist, magical realist, and picaresque works, Carter's writings are still open to various original readings.

In 2007, when asked by my thesis supervisor, Alcinda Pinheiro de Sousa, about the object of my dissertation I could not but promptly indicate Angela Carter as the centre of my future research. In fact, Sousa was also the one who had introduce me to Carter's work, for she had been dealing with these writings since the late 1980s through Maria Helena Serôdio, at the ULICES (University of Lisbon Centre for English Studies). By the

mid 1990s, Carter was already part of the academic curricula in an institution known for a strong Shakespearean nucleus. She died on 16 February 1992, aged just fifty-one, but I am aware of how her work continues to be studied, celebrated, and discussed internationally by readers, students, and academics. Carter was diagnosed with lung cancer right after she had finished writing what would be her last novel, *Wise Children* (1991), but as everything else, it fit her literary life.¹ In view of that, one can say she used this last novel as a means to express implicitly her thoughts concerning her own death, in the *Omnibus* programme *Angela Carter's Curious Room*:

Basically, *Wise Children* is a comedy, and in cultural terms, comedy stands for fertility, continuance, a sense of the protean nature of the world, of the inextinguishable, unappeasable nature of the world, the unappeasable nature of appetite and desire, which isn't necessarily a tragic thing; it is the motor that keeps us going, it is the desire to go on, that everything is going on. That the fact that you're not there to see the cherry tree next year – to introduce a Japanese motif here – the fact that you're not here to see the cherry tree next year doesn't mean the cherry tree has disappeared. It means that the cherry tree is doing its own thing in its own space and time, and that is how it should be. (Evans 1992)

Even if the official biography of Carter by Edmund Gordon is yet to be published, it is clear that the *Omnibus* programme was her final statement, her own obituary. In this programme, Carter offered 'a conclusive verdict upon her own work and recapitulated the public story of her life for the last time' (Gamble 2006a, 194).

Back to her contribution to the feminist recipe book compiled by Sue Sullivan, Carter described herself as 'a middle-aged non-vegetarian yet nevertheless of the whole-food tendency, whose small son [had] never tasted Coca-Cola' (Carter 1987, 112). Carter's reflection appears under the heading "Changes", a theme which I believe well portrays the diversity of writing genres and variety of interests, but also the process of transformation she undergoes during the three decades she publishes – from the mid 1960s to the very early 1990s. She was, in fact, a transformer of cultural history and cultural potential (Smith 2007, 3). The chosen epigraph portrays this ability of transformation in a

¹ Most times, when reading *Wise Children*, critics tend to emphasise Carter's intentions and perspectives in this novel as if she was already aware of her ill condition while writing it. However, it was not so, since she was only diagnosed with lung cancer after she had finished writing it (Gamble 2006a, 191).

mentality which reflects the meaning of a wider range of interests, as these validate her choices and motivations. Analogous to Carter's prevailing intellectual activity was her concern about daily experiences which mirrored structured locations of power, like the politics of food and for that matter having 'a job in the communal kitchens'. Known for her biting wit, Carter allies the images of her experience to the power of language. The use of the gerund tense in 'turning out bowls, plates and dishes of hearty fare' takes the reader to the busy, demanding world of collective kitchens. Furthermore, the need for a vigorous and energetic diet ('potato soup, beans with sausage, braised oxtail, cabbage pancakes, chilli') comes also from her understanding of and familiarity with a certain social class and walk of life: 'due to a life spent on a relatively limited income in mostly northern climates' (*ibid.* 111).

Carter's experiences abroad are always sprinkled with references to food and its representations. A perfect example can be found in the postcard sent to her friend Simon and his partner John-Paul in 1989 (evidenced by the post office stamp) showing a street corner where a sign reads 'Donuts' underneath '7UP' and the main focus is on the wall around the corner where a large painted advertising presents 'brains' at 25 cents and a drive-in service (figure 1). The whole postcard, entitled "An American Diner", is filled in the back with a quotation followed by a rhetoric question: 'I admit that I simply can't handle the brain sandwich but those who like that particular dish speak highly of the preparation here. p.154, "Joe Pollack's Guide to St. Louis Restaurants," Chicago Review Press, 1988. Am in St. Louis. Where should I be?'²

² This postcard is part of the Simon Watley collection of correspondence from Carter, presently at the British Library. I was able to see this collection thanks to the collaboration between the ULICES and the British Library.

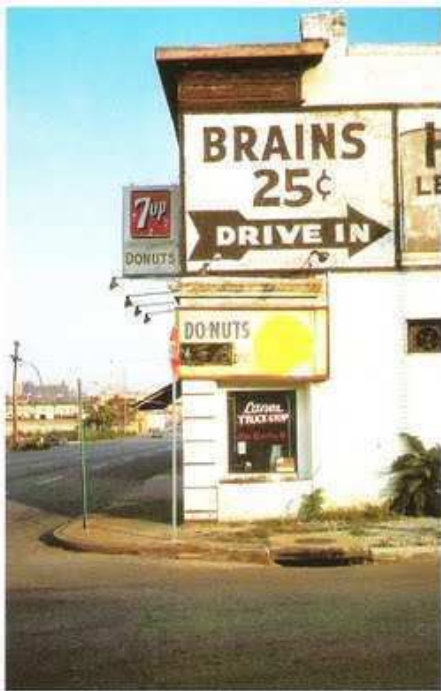


Figure 1 – “An American Dinner”, postcard.
 Cumquat Publishing, St. Louis, Missouri.
 (<http://yanchepangie.blogspot.pt/2009_08_01_archive.html>)

Representations of food have always been an essential aspect of literature, for the references to food turn to be fundamental and not simply vicarious (Halligan 2004, 100). Food has played a central role in texts and it often became illustrative of specific characteristics of a character – the most common examples in the Western world run from the Holy Bible with Eve eating the apple in the Garden of Eden, to Sir John Falstaff and Sir Toby Belch in William Shakespeare’s *Henry IV* historic plays and the comedy *Twelfth Night* – or an episode – as is the case of the centrality of the Madhatter’s Tea-party in *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* by Charles Lutwidge Dodgson – or it is even used as a leitmotif in fairytales – well-known examples are curiously those connected to cruelty and death, like Snow White, Hansel and Gretel and the gingerbread house, or Little Red Riding Hood – or as the structural framework of the story – this the case of a meal in Katherine Mansfield’s short story “Bliss”, for instance. One can easily see that Carter is not an only case and she even read the Bible and the above mentioned writers in whose work representations of food bear an essential role, either as a means of illustrating the space, or facilitating the character’s personalities. I decided on studying the way food representations are to be read in order to better understand the building of a character in Carter’s writings. Such object does not reject the possibility of referring to non-fiction texts by Carter, since these are a relevant part of her work and clearly express the diversity mentioned at the beginning. In fact, non-fiction clarifies fiction ways of functioning in an interactive way.

This reading proves to be innovative in what concerns Carter's writings, even if there are already four women who have written about the theme of food in her fiction. Carter's friend and writer Margaret Atwood was the first to publish an essay in *Flesh and the Mirror: Essays on the Art of Angela Carter*, a collection edited by Lorna Sage's in 1994. In the essay entitled "Running with the Tigers" Atwood's focal point is the relationship between food and sexuality through the figures of tiger and lamb in Carter's story collection *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* (1979).³ Sarah Sceats has written widely on Carter and food, even if from a different perspective from the one adopted in my study. Her first essay, "Eating the Evidence: Women, Food and Power" (1996) presents a general review of the slippery relation between appetite and power, focusing specifically on the role of food in mothering, in the case of fiction by several writers amongst which is Carter.⁴ A year later, Sceats restates the same argument in "The Infernal Appetites of Angela Carter", inspired by Barbara Hardy's essay on Charles Dickens and food.⁵ By looking at how Carter uses food to embody moral values, Sceats presents what she names a 'politics of appetite' and, based on Freudian terminology, delineates two distinctive types of appetite in Carter's work: one driven by Eros and the other by Thanatos. All through Carter's fiction, according to Sceats, these two drives interact in diverse degrees, showing how unsteady power is. Sceats argument is reiterated in a study published in 2000, *Food, Consumption and the Body in Contemporary Women's Fiction*. She explores again how concerns with food, its consumption, and the body are central to the work of several writers, as Carter, Doris Lessing, and Margaret Atwood. In the same year, Emma Parker writes the essay "The Consumption of Angela Carter: Women, Food, and Power" where she uses Cixous' ideas as a framework for reading Carter's fiction, in a different perspective from Sceats', whose works form a mostly Kleinian psychoanalytic perspective (Parker 2000, 166, n. 4).

More recently, Margaret E. Toye published "Eating Their Way Out of Patriarchy: Consuming the Female Panopticon in Angela Carter's *Nights at the Circus*" (2007) in

³ Atwood is not the only one to draw attention to Carter's deconstruction of dualisms, as she focuses on the way Carter defies the binary nature of the roles of carnivore and herbivore or predator and prey when she puts forward the possibility of synthesis within such a gendered master-slave relationship.

⁴ The fiction Sceats examines in "Eating the Evidence: Women, Food and Power" is by Alice Thomas Ellis, Doris Lessing, Molly Keane, Jenefer Shute, Angela Carter, and Michèle Roberts.

⁵ Hardy's essay was published in *Essays in Criticism* (October 1963) and is entitled "Food and Ceremony in *Great Expectations*". She examines the use of food ceremonies celebrating sociability, hospitality, and love in Dickens' novel.

Women's Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal. In this essay Toye focuses on Carter's investigation of the possibilities of one particular imaginary fortress, the all female Panopticon which appears in her novel *Nights at the Circus* (1984), as it proves to be a link between the interest in subverting imprisoning structures and the importance of inverting economies of consumption. This is where Toye believes Carter's work to be considered avant-garde, since the former's examination of such focus pre-dates the increasing critical attention directed to consumption studies of late Carter's work. In the final section of the essay, Toye concentrates on how Carter weaves together the themes of consumption and the prison, since these provide potential for liberation through a dramatization of the female prisoners consuming the female Panopticon and hence both literally and symbolically eating their way out of patriarchy – 'I argue that Carter's deconstruction of these economies of consumption allows for the creation of new ones' (Toye 2007, 481). Also published in a journal (*Journal of Modern Literature*) is Abigail Dennis' article "'The Spectacle of her Gluttony': The Performance of Female Appetite and the Bakhtinian Grotesque in Angela Carter's *Nights at the Circus*" (2008). Interesting that both Toye and Dennis study *Nights at the Circus* at Canadian Universities that are based in an Anglophone province (Ontario), Wilfrid Laurier University (Waterloo), and the University of Toronto, respectively. In her article, Dennis looks at how Fevvers, as Carter's version of the "New Woman," negotiates men's and her own appetites in order to claim a share of power. She also considers Carter's long-term anorexia and the way she uses 'the trope of feminine eating, a locus of gendered power relations, in conjunction with images and metaphors of performance, to comment on how interactions with the social, cultural and physical forces of appetite can reflect and inform contemporary sexual relations in general' (Dennis 2008, 116).

Nevertheless, it is Toye who calls attention to the rich interdisciplinary discussions being made possible through a focal point in which anthropological, literary, cultural, feminist, postcolonial, global, and food studies explore literal and symbolic questions of identity in relation to various cultural, political, and economic institutions that structure our lives (*ibid.* 480). In fact, these interdisciplinary discussions are now more evident, even if after my Master's dissertation the publishing on Carter could be considered moderate, including the introductions published in 2006 by Vintage to *The Bloody Chamber* by Helen Simpson, to *Nights at the Circus* by Sarah Waters, and to *Wise Children* by Ali Smith. Examples of those publications are *Re-Visiting Angela Carter:*

Texts, Contexts, Intertexts (2006), edited by Rebecca Munford – in this collection an interesting article that shows those interdisciplinary discussions is Charlotte Crofts' essay "‘The Other of the Other’: Angela Carter's ‘New-fangled’ Orientalism", which followed Susan Fisher's "The Mirror of the East: Angela Carter and Japan" (2001) – Sarah Gamble's essay "There's No Place Like Home: Angela Carter's Rewritings of the Domestic" (2006) and her book *Angela Carter: A Literary Life* (2006). Also by Ali Smith is the introduction to the reviewed and updated edition of *Flesh and the Mirror: Essays of the Art of Angela Carter* (2007), edited by Lorna Sage: "Get Carter: An Introduction to the New Edition".

In this context, my approach to Carter's writings will focus on the representations of food and will clearly take advantage of its interdisciplinary scope.⁶ There is presently a wave of interest in food culture and history. In fact, whereas there were already some relevant and acknowledged books on cookery and food, in the late 1980s a book on epic and epoch-making world history of food, as Maguelonne Toussaint-Samat's *A History of Food* (1987), would all the same stand almost alone on a bookshelf. Actually, in the last three decades, the study of food from almost every perspective has taken off in both academic and popular culture. At the end of last century, articles on food appeared in a varied list of scholarly periodicals and anthologies, whilst new books on the topic continued to be published in ever greater numbers by both university and trade presses. The avalanche of books on food spread to conferences on food which were no longer the sole concern of food professionals. One of the first was the *Oxford Symposium on Food & Cookery* (1981), an annual conference on food history now housed at St Catherine's College Oxford, chaired by the writer and journalist Paul Levy and co-chaired by Claudia Roden, the much-honoured food writer.⁷ In what concerns periodical publications, there

⁶ Although I am well aware of the slippery and polemic usage of the term 'interdisciplinarity' in general, and in literary studies in particular, I choose to use it in the broadest sense: forging connections across different disciplines, 'a dialogue or interaction between two or more disciplines' (Moran 2010, 14). This will be further clarified in the first chapter, mostly when dealing with the various perspectives on Food Studies.

⁷ Carter writes some undeniably relevant journalistic pieces on Elizabeth David's work and it is curious to notice the following appreciation on the Symposium's history:

The first seminar on 4 May took as its theme the subject of Davidson's fellowship: "Food and Cookery: the Impact of Science in the Kitchen". Twenty-one people turned up, representing several disciplines from the history of medicine to mathematics to French literature, to discuss the historical connection between food writing and writing on medical matters. The first Symposiasts included Elizabeth David, her editor and publisher Jill Norman, Anne Willan and

are the well-known journals *Food, Culture & Society: An International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research* first published in 1997 — it has become the benchmark journal for the field of Food Studies on behalf of the Association for the Study of Food and Society (ASFS) — *Food and Foodways*, published since 1985, and *Gastronomica*, a journal devoted to food and culture and associated to the University of California, which was first published in 2000.⁸ What turned to be familiar in these works is the notion that studying the most banal of human activities can yield essential information and insights about daily life and world view all together – ‘Particularly within the context of the postmodern questioning of reality[ies], looking closely at the material culture of the food of ordinary people has the appeal of the concrete within a world of uncertainty’ (Avakian 1997, 1).

There is no question that more people are studying food than ever before, and signs of increased activity point to food studies as a new discipline. In addition to the food-related papers now presented regularly at mainstream academic conventions, there has been a number of major international conferences devoted entirely to food, and these have, in turn, resulted in published collections – some examples are: in 1999 Carola Lentz edited *Changing Food Habits: Case Studies from Africa, South America, and Europe*, Raymond Grew edited *Food in Global History*, and Arien Mack edited *Food: Nature and Culture*; in 2000 Michael Dietler and Brian Hayden edited *Feasts: Archeological and Ethnographic*

Mark Cherniavsky of the La Varenne Cookery School in Paris, Paul Levy, Richard Olney and Professor Nicholas Kurti. (<<http://oxfordsymposium.org.uk/12-history/>>)

⁸ There is also an online journal from the University of Texas at San Antonio: *Convivium Artium: Food Representation in Literature, Film, and the Arts*. Its first issue was published on the internet in 2002 and only in 2006 was a second issue presented coinciding with the Fourth Conference on Food Representation in Literature, Films and the other Arts, that took place in February of 2006 at the University of Texas, San Antonio. In addition, different organizations sponsored conferences addressing food, apart from the annual conference of the Association for the Study of Food and Society (ASFS).

Another example is the cookbook and the way it has evolved from basic national foods to elaborate illustrations, including even ingredients unavailable most of the times. A more recent trend in the presentation of food in cookbooks is using these to show national romantic elements of a country. One can find this in Arne Brimi and Ardis Kaspersen’s *Norway’s National Dishes: A Food Lover’s Journey in Our Own Country* (2006), which has gone through twelve reprints since it first came out. It seems to intend to highlight the national romantic element through illustrations of food against a background of fjords and mountains, underlining the cultural aspect of food and adding an exotic element, as a combination of food and travel (Rønning 2011, 136)

Furthermore, in 2006 the journal of postcolonial writing and culture *Kunapipi* presented as a special issue “The Kookbook” where Anne Collett states that food can be considered the ‘barometer of well-being — of the body and the body politic’ and she emphasises ‘the place of food in literature and the literature of food, of which the recipe itself is a literary form in its own right’ (Collett 2006, viii).

Perspectives on Food, Politics, and Power; in 2002 Warren Belasco and Philip Scranton edited *Food Nations: Selling Tastes in Consumer Societies*. In addition, eager journalists and documentary filmmakers make the new work of food scholars more popular, and socially conscious food professionals also come together to exchange ideas with the scholars (Belasco 2008, 5-6).

I must emphasise here the scope of this project within the ULICES and the literary research. Bearing this in mind, I am conscious that it is essential to make a literary theoretical and practical reflection. I am also aware of the crossroads of the cluster of concepts that such study demands, which lead to the impossible task of problematizing them all here, namely: culture, civilization, canon, poetry, fiction, narrative, textuality, discipline, interdisciplinarity, multidisciplinary, and transdisciplinarity.⁹ Albeit this study aims at readers from cultural and literary studies who have a perfect understanding of the slipperiness and ambiguity of these concepts, a more explicit consideration of these matters would be more appropriate in a further study which I intend to proceed. If the idea of Food Studies came to me from teaching in a programme designed for food production and cookery in the hospitality industry at Escola Superior de Hotelaria e Turismo do Estoril, the idea of Food-Cultural Studies came from *Food and Cultural Studies* (2004), edited by Bob Ashley along with three other colleagues from the University of Nottingham. In the same year and coming from the same institution, Brigitte Nerlich and Marianne E. Lien (from the University of Oslo, Norway) edited *The Politics of Food*. A year later, Carolyn Korsmeyer edited *The Taste Culture Reader: Experiencing Food and Drink* and in 2008 Warren Belasco's *Food: The Key Concepts* (September) and *Bit Me: Food in Popular Culture* by Fabio Parasecoli were published. Finally, in December 2009 *Food Studies: An introduction to Research Methods* by Jeff Miller and Jonathan Deutsch came out. There has also been some concern about publishing an anthology of poems devoted to the pleasure of the table, but already in 2003 Peter Washington 'serves up a tantalizing and variegated literary feast' (front bookflap) in the selection *Poems of Food and Drink*.

Being used to read Carter's texts while bearing in mind their subversiveness, actually makes it unproblematic to create a bridge with food studies which have also turned out to be inherently subversive. This becomes clearer when one considers how the

⁹ There will be other concepts also relevant, like Ronald Tobin's use of multidisciplinary used in the sense of sciences which contaminate each other, to be seen in the first chapter.

study of food often requires the crossing of disciplinary boundaries and posing inconvenient questions. Even if the food supply belongs to us all, for the past century there has been a delegation of responsibility, understanding, and controlling to those seen as highly credentialed experts.¹⁰ The present idea is that these same experts have often led people astray: ‘as for example [the] period after the Second World War, when specialists with endowed chairs at elite universities assured us that the first modern pesticide, DDT, was perfectly safe, that the Basic Four Food Groups constituted the best diet, and that in the near future we’d be defeating world hunger with steaks made from algae, yeast, and coal dust’ (Belasco 2008, 6).

Some of the texts discussed in this study will be from fiction, even though the kind of works we loosely call non-fiction, are just as biased, selective, and loaded as those. It is believed that in fiction the writer has most control over his choice of material and, thus, the sifting process involved gives a better idea of the applications of food or its use as a focus for further ideas. Another advantage of fictional evidence is the writer’s use of metaphor, which it is also believed to pick out correspondences across wide fields of experience. Yet, even though fiction may have its own private concerns and idiosyncrasies, deserving undoubtedly full attention, there should not be a separation from the environment in which it was produced (Gowers 1993, 12). In reality, the treatment of food in the texts discussed here intends to be a response, whether evasive or aggressive, to the varied entity of Britain and the other cultures visited, or merely referred by Carter. In this context, the bibliographic references made throughout this study are presented in a tripartite structure: those by and on Carter; those on and related to food studies / food-cultural studies; and other works. I also considered the option of listing Carter’s works according to their original publication date. In addition, for practical reasons, I felt the need to present at the very beginning a list of abbreviations that will be useful when quoting Carter’s writings.¹¹

I do not consider complex to find ambiguity occurring with individual foodstuffs, given that these are in essence generally real and disposable, which is why they are as a rule read in a literal way. Material things that appeal to the senses by tradition pose the

¹⁰ Michael Pollan claims that ‘somehow this most elemental of activities – figuring out what to eat – has come to require a remarkable amount of expert help’ (Pollan 2007, 1).

¹¹ These abbreviations will only be used in the quotations.

In general, whenever the source is the same of the preceding quotation it will be identified by the short ‘*ibid.*’ and when the source and the page are the same as the previous one, it will be used ‘*ibidem*’.

most challenge to the writer who tries to reproduce them on paper. It is often a challenge to the supremacy of narrative to present matter for art's sake alone.¹² These matters all provide literally food for thought. This commonly used phrase, 'food for thought', bears a multitude of meanings which not only provides mental stimulus for the intellect, but also articulates the ambiguity of everything related to food – 'Not only does it refer to real food, but it also has a metaphorical interpretation, as well as a symbolic and cultural context' (Rønning 2011, 130). The ambiguity mentioned above comes also from the concept of 'food' itself. Generally speaking, the study of food is usually pointed out as relating either to the human sciences (as ethnology, ethnography, sociology, medicine, history), or to environmental analysis (like geography, climatology, botany, agronomics), or even to the economy, 'where nutritional requirements are both an initial and a final stage' (Toussaint-Samat 2009, 4). On the other hand, when one turns to the realm of gastronomy, it is not hard to find references to philosophy and art in dictionary definitions.

What I propose to do in the first chapter is to present the general trends of recent work and how discussions took their place in the wider field of the social sciences and the topic of food is one that has been receiving attention from a variety of scholars and approaches. Despite having selected the ones I believe to be more relevant, there has been a prolific work on the area and there will certainly be other significant work to be considered. Bringing into play Carter's self-awareness, the first chapter will be entitled via the conclusion of her short story "The Smile of Winter" (1974): 'Do not think I do not realize what I am doing' (*FW* 46). This is the way an unnamed narrator admonishes the reader and afterwards briefly analyses the story with a perceptiveness that gives life to what might 'otherwise have been a static piece of mood-music' (Rushdie 1996, xiv). Carter is indeed a creator of *fireworks*! Such admonishment fits perfectly my intentions in a chapter on food with regard to Carter's writings.¹³ After a starter on the representations of food in narrative, in respect to food I believe to be pertaining to travel from the wide-ranging perspectives on Food Studies, to the more particular Food-Cultural Studies (through five types of approaches), and finally the more singular Gastro-Criticism. One

¹² This idea is shared with Emily Gowers concerning representations of food in Roman literature. See Gowers 1993, 33.

¹³ The conclusion mentioned here is clearly described by Salman Rushdie's perspective on his introduction to the collection of Carter's short stories, *Burning your Boats*: 'Carter's cold-water douches of intelligence often come to the rescue of her fancy, when it runs too wild' (Rushdie 1996, xi)

way of looking at Carter's treatment of food in her fictional work is to see it from a gastro-critical perspective, since it challenges the boundaries of traditional disciplines.

What I believe will prove an innovative method is the contribution to the Food-Cultural Studies by proposing to read Carter's literary work from this perspective considering the traditionally considered non-literary, by means of gastro-criticism as a literary and cultural method very productive in terms of the reconstruction of meanings by the reader. The pioneer of gastro-criticism, the critic Ronald Tobin, has been studying Molière's theater allying comedy and gastronomy from the 1990s, but the term gastro-criticism only became public at the early years of this century in his essay "Qu'est-ce que la Gastrocritique?" (2002/2004). Still, it is only in his lecture at UCSB entitled "Thought for Food: Literature and Gastronomy" (November 2008) that he discusses how the literary critics have devoted few pages to the study of self-nourishment in literature until recently. By indicating the extensive use of food in literature from Homer onwards, Tobin speaks of the language of cuisine as 'a dossier of the age' when he refers to the 19th and 20th century novels.¹⁴ Tobin essentially draws attention to cooking as a process of metamorphosis and illusion where the chef becomes a kind of Prometheus playing with fire, just as the writer grows to be a creator playing with language.

The question I pose is the motivation for Carter to work with food in her writings: is she endeavouring to show the significance of the representations of food as a theme, symbol, or as metaphor for social aspects and means? This subject is to be studied from the analysis of Carter's fiction and non-fiction writings, reflecting on three particular moments of production. These moments echo three stages in Carter's life – the second half of the 1960s, the 1970s, and the 1980s until her death in 1992 – taking into account that the experience in Japan from 1969 to 1972 was a decisive moment in her life and career as a writer. Because I believe those stages signal Carter's growing narrative technique in her early writings, a maturing technique in her self-reflexive writings resulting from her time in Japan, and her establishment as a writer in her late writings, there will be three chapters, divided in parts, where the focus lies on Carter's novels, but also on her short narratives,

¹⁴ Ronald Tobin had already published this same information in "Qu'est-ce que la gastrocritique?" (2002/2004), to which he kindly directed me. Therefore, in this study I will be presenting the French version of his lecture, as well: 'L'alimentation constitue enfin l'archive où est déposé le dossier d'une époque' (Tobin 2002/2004, 623).

fictional and non-fictional, as well as her interviews and other neglected writings.¹⁵ Also, to facilitate the understanding of the chronology of Carter's writings, each chapter ends with a table concerning the texts mentioned in it (with emphasis on those which are the primary object of study). I use her writings to read herself, which feels like an anthropophagic relationship. The titles of the four chapters will bear Carter's own words, for as a reader there is a perpetual appropriation of the writer's work.¹⁶ I believe Carter would be keen on this *hors d'oeuvre*, even though unlike T.S. Eliot's Alfred J. Prufrock who 'measured out [his] life with coffee spoons' (1963, 14), one cannot say that she measured out her life with meals.

¹⁵ Speculation as to how Carter's career might have developed, had she lived, is fruitless (Gamble 2006a, 204). Still, one can always venture to speculate on her ability to take and give great pleasure from continuously striking the audience with great surprise and some emotional disturbance.

¹⁶ Whenever there is no reference to the source of the subtitle it is because it belongs to the text mentioned in the title. Otherwise, there will be a footnote referencing its source.

I.

**On Food apropos of Angela Carter.
'Do not think I do not realize what I am doing'**

'Do not think I do not realize what I am doing.'
(Carter, "The Smile of Winter" *FW* 46)

Representations of Food in Narrative.

The bar was a mock-up, a forgery, a fake; an ad-man's crazy dream of a Spanish patio, with crusty white walls (as if the publican had economically done them up in leftover sandwiches) on which hung unplayable musical instruments and many bull-fight posters, all blood and bulging bull's testicles and the arrogant yellow satin buttocks of lithe young man. Nights in a garden of never-never Spain.

(SD 1)

'Then,' says I [David Copperfield], producing the money, 'just draw me a glass of the Genuine Stunning, if you please, with a good head to it.'

The landlord looked at me in return over the bar, from head to foot, with a strange smile on his face; and instead of drawing the beer, looked around the screen and said something to his wife.

(Dickens 1990, 142)

When one reads both these quotations, from Angela Carter and Charles Dickens' novels, there is the feeling that food, as a great pleasure of life, is also the focal point around which many social occasions and leisure events are organised. Therefore, whilst hunger is a biological drive and food is indispensable to survival, there is more to food and eating than the satisfaction of physiological needs, such as the 'social drives' based on cultural, religious, economic, and political factors that affect the availability and

consumption of food. In other words, despite similar human physiological needs, food habits are not universal, natural, or foreseeable, as they are social constructions with considerable variations¹ – ‘food is a bridge between nature and culture, and food habits are learnt through culturally determined notions of what constitutes appropriate and inappropriate food, and through cultural methods of preparation and consumption, irrespective of the nutritional value of these foods and methods’ (Germov 2004, 4).² My intention is to present in this introductory chapter accounts for the different disciplines that have been and still are concerned about food issues. In view of that, I will move from the general food studies to the more particular food-cultural studies and within this scope are naturally the cultural and literary readings. Even if the representations of food are easily recognisable in literature, I believe these have been by no means one of the most studied readings, as I intend to evidence by the end of this chapter.³

¹ By ‘food habits’ we mean the different processes through which food is produced, obtained, prepared, and consumed. These ‘represent powerful systems of symbols whose associations are closely held, in their own way, by nearly everyone’ (Miller 2009, 7).

² Deidre Wicks also introduces this idea in her chapter on the vegetarian option:

Eating is a highly personal act. But it is also, for most people, a social act. When we eat, how we eat, and what we eat are, for those of us not experiencing genuine scarcity, decisions that are driven by complex motives. While these motives include ‘natural’ or biological motives – such as hunger – they also include social factors, such as taste, manners, expectations, and obligations. Consequently, the act of eating becomes imbued with social meaning. The connections between nature, culture, eating, and the meaning of food become even more complex when we examine the decision to include or exclude certain foods, such as meat, in the diet. (Wicks 2004, 264)

³ Although acknowledging the importance of “representation” and of its being still a polemic concept, this study does not aim at pondering such a polemic. Nevertheless, by using it at different stages, the analysis done here will contribute to the questioning of the concept of “representation”. Indeed, the word “representation” embodies a wide range of meanings and interpretations and it is usually presented in a symbolic, political or cognitive sense by the English dictionaries. Among the most diverse interpretations of the concept of “representation” is the ability to draw upon features which then are presented to the viewer as constructions and not merely as reflections. Thus, the presented “versions of reality” are seen as influenced by culture and people’s common thoughts and actions. The possibility of having any reality independent of its representation, along with the possibility of having a representation as a neutral record of that reality is an issue studied by contemporary cultural theory. As all knowledge is seen as a function of practices of representing, there is no neutrality in the process. Representations are, therefore, influenced by culture and simultaneously have the ability to shape it and mould society’s attitudes, principles, perceptions and behaviours, constructing reality itself. In this manner, representations cannot be given a definitive or concrete meaning, bearing in mind the ‘gap between intention and realization, original and copy’ (Mitchell 1995, 21). Actually, as Kathryn Woodward mentions, comprised in representation are the signifying practices and the symbolic systems which produce meanings and position us as subjects, as well. By producing meanings, representations are processes through which people’s experience and identity can make sense and Woodward goes still further by suggesting that those ‘symbolic systems create the possibilities of what we are and what we can

In relation to the passage of *Shadow Dance* (1966) quoted here, at the very beginning of this study, the bar is a drinking space relevant for Carter and that is clear right from these two starting words of her first novel. The specific use of the adjective 'crusty' to depict the walls – 'a Spanish patio, with crusty white walls' – is emphasised by the following image presented as a side comment: 'as if the publican had economically done them up in leftover sandwiches'. Such use of the adjective (which makes 'crusty' something that has or is characterised by a crust, especially a thick crust, as in well-baked bread, or even someone or something that has a rude or harsh character or exterior) constitutes one of the features that characterise Carter's writing. A similar example of the richness of Carter's language can be found in her novel *The Passion of New Eve* (1977), as the following unexpected descriptive term creates a surprising effect: 'her [Mother's] Virginia-smoked ham of a fist grasped my [Evelyn's] shrinking sex' (*PNE* 64). Indeed, the dry cured ham, that goes through a process of slow smoking and is kept in a controlled environment for aging which adds a distinguished rich flavor to it, belongs to the completely diverse field of food preservation. However, it is its use here that not only helps to picture the hand tightly closed resembling the shape of a cured ham, but it also implicitly illustrates the fist of someone who seems to have gone through some physical transformations, as I will be pointing out in the third chapter.

Back to the passage quoted at the beginning, these very first words set the camp tone, unmistakably, and this pub scenery prepares the reader for the moment when the new monstrously-scarred Ghislaine reappears and accosts an appalled Morris, with all her stitch-marks, when she revisits the scene of her former triumphs like a specter; she is imagined as one of the undead, the victim as predator, and 'the atmosphere described belongs to Hammer horror films' (Sage 1994, 10).⁴ Similarly to the 'fake' bar, Ghislaine

become. Representation as a cultural process establishes individual and collective identities' (Woodward 1997, 14).

⁴ Lorna Sage refers to this 'camp tone' (Sage 1994a, 10), but Carter had also used the term in her last novel *Wise Children* when describing the effect Gorgeous George's performance had on the audience (*WC* 66). It is difficult to define 'camp' due to its elusiveness and changeability; still, I use it to refer to a style of performance which also relates to a mode of perception. I believe both Carter and Sage had such intention as well. As an aesthetic sensibility which makes it a concept closely related to kitsch, it appeared in 1909 denoting *ostentatious, exaggerated, affected, theatrical, and effeminate* behaviour. But by the time Carter writes *Shadow Dance* the definition of camp as an aesthetic which had been popular from the 1960s already implied *banality, artifice, mediocrity*. On further study on the subject, see "Notes on 'Camp'" (1964) by the American writer Susan Sontag (camp's key elements considered by her are: *artifice, frivolity, naïve middle-class pretentiousness*, and 'shocking' *excess*) and *Camp* (1983) by Mark Booth who defines camp as

was, in her untouched state, second-hand, imitation, an android, a 'ravishing automaton' (SD 7). If 'Life imitates art' (*ibid.* 25), as Morris' partner in the seedy antique shop, Honeybuzzard, often remarks, art also imitates and draws on other art.⁵ A good example is precisely the staff from the bar depicted in the first passage, since they are seen by Morris as 'Struldbrugs', mainly the 'shambling, ribald skivvy' from the bar (Sage 1994a, 14).⁶ In the same way as the deplorable characters in the third book of Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver Travels* (1726) who only get older and uglier, Carter's Struldbrugs are immortal wasted characters which contribute to the novel's atmosphere of decay, which is also that of the bar – 'Like Ghislaine, they are dehumanized by their appearance' (Lee 1997, 25). Furthermore, it is only when Morris meets the Struldburg he feared had been killed that there is a moment of transformation of the food in the bar in a funny evocation of joy which will dominate Carter's last novels:

The hot water splashed from the urns in deliriously joyful fountains. The marzipan petals on the fondant cakes shook out in gray green life. Deep notes of joy rang from the cream horns. The éclairs – eclairissement – burst under the pressure of the sweet white cream of joy. The ham rolls bounded like ecstatic piglets from their Cellophane pens. (SD 161)

Another novel by Carter which recalls *Gulliver's Travels* both textually and structurally is *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman*, since the narrator, Desiderio, names his episodic tale a picaresque adventure. However, whereas Gulliver's approval from the visited communities is sometimes based on his attempts to win their favor by flattery, Desiderio remains skeptical whenever he finds a different society (Lee 1997, 62). One can also mention the penultimate chapter of Carter's novel as a parodic

primarily a matter of self-presentation. His work is relevant for the first words of *Shadow Dance* specifically because he discerns carefully between genuine camp and *camp fads and fancies*, things that are not intrinsically camp, but display artificiality, stylisation, theatricality, naivety, sexual ambiguity, tackiness, poor taste, stylishness, or portray camp people and thus appeal to them. This distinction that Booth presents is original in relation to Susan Sontag's definition.

⁵ This remark by Honeybuzzard grabs one's attention for its reference to Oscar Wilde's essay *The Decay of Lying* (1889) where the third doctrine is precisely that 'Life imitates Art far more than Art imitates Life' (Wilde 2010, 26). Following Wilde's anti-mimetic philosophy, which holds that art sets the aesthetic principles by which people perceive life, this view of the people in the bar implies that what is found in life is not what is really there, but is that which people have been taught to find there by artists, through art.

⁶ Sarah Gamble calls the attention to how the Struldbrug signifies a 'warm' atmosphere and a 'protective and benevolent' (SD 38) maternity for Morris, whose mother had died in an air-raid during the war (Gamble 1997, 57).

recast of Book Four of *Gulliver's Travels*, when Desiderio finds a society of centaurs who resemble the rational Houyhnhnms, but are too human to be so. Moreover, Carter herself felt as one of Book Two of *Gulliver's Travels* characters, Glumdalclitch, when she wrote "A Souvenir of Japan" (1974): 'I felt as gross as Glumdalclitch' (Fw 7). This comparison with Swift's kindly nine year-old giantess can be seen as Carter's rehearsal for the big and displaced winged aerialist Fevvers in *Nights at the Circus* (1984) in a 'satire of proportion' (Hunt 2006, 135).⁷ In fact, the need to peer past the 'glossy veneer' unites Carter and Swift and some of their texts; here I have to agree with Hunt when she claims that 'perhaps more interesting and less recognized are the shared narrative and thematic concerns' of *Nights at the Circus* and *Gulliver's Travels*, both peopled with the peculiar, they address the concepts of spectacle and self, and make use of a discourse of prescription (*ibid.* 138-139).

As such, Carter's relation with Swift and Dickens reflects what she mentioned in John Haffenden's interview 'one of the snags is that I do put everything in a novel to be read [...] on as many levels as you can comfortably cope with at the time' (Haffenden 1985, 86). For Carter, reading is as creative as writing and it is in the new interpretations of previous texts that a new intellectual development is based upon: 'I am all for putting new wine into old bottles, especially if the pressure of the new wine makes the old bottles explode' ("Notes" 69). According to the writer, the rewriting of myths is due to the fact of these being easier to denounce and deconstruct than history, a discourse that results from evidence. This is why Carter's strategy manifests itself in the way she contests the basic habits of thought, making them explode from within, when she rewrites the glories and myths that are considered to be central and dominant in diverse western cultures. Swift and Dickens' texts are just two of Carter's preferences that one may find along her work.⁸

⁷ Although Lorna Sage was the first to point out such comparison (Sage 1994a, 26), Anna Hunt studies deeper the playful mutations of the famous Fevvers to the Venus myth as a shared satirical interest with Swift's texts in imploding cultural forms. Hunt starts by examining the eighteenth-century fascination with freak shows and how it influenced narratives of self and spectacle as *Gulliver's Travels* and *Nights at the Circus*, in "'The Margins of the Imaginative Life': The Subject and the Grotesque in Angela Carter and Jonathan Swift" (Hunt 2006, 136-141).

⁸ Carter's relation to the so called literary fathers was studied in *Angela Carter Responde a William Shakespeare num Contexto de Pós-modernidade (Angela Carter Comes to Terms with William Shakespeare in a Post-modernity Context)*. This Master's dissertation (Pires 2002) considers the central idea of influence according to Harold Bloom, when applied to what women write – i.e. there's the questioning of the viability of interpreting the intertextual relations between women's works and between these and those which are prior or subsequent to them, bearing in mind the question of influence. The study was done mainly through reading the allusions to

Even if at first sight Swift and Dickens may seem to model almost conflicting traditions, I consider her use of a gothic fantasy, and a recognised 'fusion of fantasy and realism' (Makinen 1992, 7-8) of a magic realism register, reveals the way she works these references.

In the passage from Dickens' *David Copperfield* (within a setting akin to the bar in Carter's novel) one witnesses the narrator's self-assurance as he – David Copperfield – enters a pub and orders ale on his birthday. This character's attitude is not surprising when one hears about him being accustomed to the currant and cowslip wine given to him by his nurse, Peggoty. Still, his childhood drinking habits are not unusual in a book swarming with characters considerably worse for their tippling – Mr. Wickfield, who is lost in his cups since his wife's death, Mrs. Crupp (the landlady), a victim of the punchbowl, and one of her former tenants who died of drink. The red-nosed and verbose Mr. Micawber is perhaps the most unforgettable of these drinkers, mainly for his rum punch, 'a concoction capable of drowning sorrows, heralding some new venture, and celebrating anything that seems the least bit worthy of conviviality – often all three in the same evening' (Scrafford 2004, 32).⁹

Returning to David's visit to the pub, his request to the landlord comes as no surprise if one remembers Dickens' tribute to the sensuous delights of the brewing

Shakespeare's plays in Carter's novels. An example on how Carter comes to terms with such a strong literary father is the diversity in which Carter's novels transform the allusions to Shakespeare's drama, that may be reduced to two types when referring to the depiction of women: her characters represent the feminine, reinforcing the way Shakespeare's drama does it; the feminine is represented in a way which deviates intentionally from the plays. Therefore, the intent from which Carter's English novels, in the post-modern second half of the twentieth century, face the Shakespeare's Renaissance drama, in order to deviate from it, just shows the will to elect it as an influence and to respond to it. Moreover, the remarkable literary maturity with which these novels accomplish such coming to terms with the powerful centre certainly witnesses the overcoming of any anxiety that may have been felt at the beginning of the responding process.

⁹ Dickens' descriptions of the almost celestial Micawber in *David Copperfield* when his face shines out at the company from a cloud of steam 'amid the fragrance of lemon peel and sugar, the odor of burning rum' appeals to the senses just as the comparison of the character's actions, when he stirs, mixes, and tastes 'as if he were making, instead of punch, a fortune for his family':

[...] I [David Copperfield] informed Mr. Micawber that I relied upon him for a bowl of punch, and led him to the lemons. His recent despondency, not to say despair, was gone in a moment. I never saw a man so thoroughly enjoy himself amid the fragrance of lemon-peel and sugar, the odor of burning rum, and the steam of boiling water, as Mr. Micawber did that afternoon. It was wonderful to see his face shining at us out of a thin cloud of these delicate fumes, as he stirred, and mixed, and tasted, and looked as if he were making, instead of punch, a fortune for his family down to the latest posterity. (Dickens 1990, 350)

It is Micawber who does the bacchanalian honours at one of several dinner parties David presides over in the establishment of Mrs. Crupp, who takes a little brandy on occasion 'for medicinal purposes'.

industry in a piece of journalism called "The Uncommercial Traveller" (1860), published in *All the Year Round*. Here he records his wanderings at night through the streets of London and observes people as well as places, especially drinking people, at the time 'when the late public houses turned their lamps out, and when the potmen thrust the last brawling drunkards into the street' (Dickens 1860, 349). Furthermore, he characterises the atmosphere in the following way: 'There was plenty going on at the brewery, and the reek and the smell of grains, and the rattling of the plump dray horses at their mangers were capital company. Quite refreshed by having mingled with this good society, I made a new start with a new heart' (*ibid.* 350).¹⁰ It is an extract where one notices Dickens' satisfaction in more beery behaviour, in particular the way in which 'intoxicated people appeared to be magnetically attracted towards each other' (*ibid.* 349).

Dickens, considered mostly as the great reformer, is the social critic with a journalist's eye for memorable detail that was idolized by so many Victorians, and the crudity of his treatment of reality offers the *essential* truth of a situation (Duggan 2006, 164), as I believe may be said about Carter's writings, especially about Japan.¹¹ When one reads the two passages at the beginning of this chapter, such memorable detail comes

¹⁰ Dickens' view on mingling with good society brings to mind Raymond Williams' description of his moving from Wales to Cambridge as an undergraduate since it is in a food space that he experiences the symbolic violence of those who claim authority over culture, at a teashop, in "Culture is Ordinary" (1958), as shown below:

I was not oppressed by the university, but the teashop, acting as if it were one of the older and more respectable departments, was a different matter. Here was culture, not in any sense I knew, but in a special sense: the outward and emphatically visible sign of a special kind of people, cultivated people. They were not, the great majority of them, particularly learned; they practiced few arts; but they had it, and they showed you they had it. (Williams 1993, 7)

Williams, a key figure in the radical changes on the cultural critique in Great-Britain (whose most well-known works are from the late 1950s to 1960s), also associated the concept of culture to a place where food and beverage are consumed.

¹¹ Nancy Hill maintains that the 'corrective' of the grotesque for Dickens is in fact a step towards reality rather than away from it (Hill 1981, 96-97), as Dickens' "The Spirit of Fiction" (1860) shows:

Greater differences still exist between the common observer and the writer of genius. The former accuses the latter of intentional exaggeration, substitution, addition, and has never been able in society to see the startling phenomena which he condemns in the romance as melodramatic and unnatural. The reason is, that such an individual has never developed the sense required for seeing such things [...]. (Dickens 1867, 120; my emphasis)

The emphasis on *see* does show how the grotesque may be used as a step towards reality, in a similar way to what Carter also pointed out during her stay in Japan. It was Carter's lack of linguistic understanding which accentuated her capability of seeing the most diverse aspects of a culture where the ordinary implies the understanding of several cultural layers. We will further discuss such an apprenticeship in chapter three of this study.

All in all, it seems that Dickens and Carter represent reality in opposed ways; but, in fact, their ways bring them close, since art helps in distancing from reality.

through the metaphoric dimension of Carter's sentence – 'a Spanish patio, with crusty white walls' – where the adjective 'crusty' would be associated to food rather than to walls in the atmosphere of a bar; likewise, Copperfield's demand for 'a good head' to a glass of a specific brand of beer – 'a glass of the Genuine Stunning [...] with a good head to it' – presents a detail which consents such a metaphoric reading. In what concerns the referred crudeness, it is observable either in the characters that are associated to the place or in those who influenced the circumstances. Therefore, there is a similar literary form of approaching the situation, since there is a reflection on detail and the crudity when dealing with reality, as strategies to attain what is the essence of the situation. Either the bar or the pub are places related to the consumption of food and beverage, and the strategy of representation is analogous in the way and the object of representation. However, I believe Carter's metaphor to be more noteworthy due to her association of two universes whose relation is indeed out of the ordinary: food and construction.¹²

Eating and drinking are altogether essential elements of human life and when one engages in such actions, one connects to reality, to nature around – 'it becomes part of us, we taste it and feel it. [...] Through nutrition, nature becomes human thoughts and actions' (Korthals 2004, 1). Being no exception, Dickens' characters eat as well as drink together and one witnesses how food illustrates David's different stages in life. For instance, when David works at the bottlinghouse of Murdstone and Grinby, one witnesses how he nourishes himself on pennyloaves, cold puddings, and a sporadic savaloy (a spicy dry sausage). Later, the menu at David's somewhat elaborate dinner to entertain his old acquaintance, Steerforth, results basically from what Mrs. Crupp *cannot* do, since her fireplace is 'fitted out' only to do chops and mashed potatoes, and even her range is not capable of poaching a fish:

¹² When asked by Susannah Clapp in the summer of 1991 about the books that had been more important to her, Carter actually did not find him funny in the terms Clapp expected her to like Dickens:

I had rather expected her [Carter] to plump for the comic extravaganza and forthright social commentary of Dickens – to like the skirmishes between realism and grotesquerie – but she did not find him funny. She had reread *Bleak House* while writing *Wise Children* and been very disappointed: 'not because the plot was predictable and mechanical: I liked that. But the thinness and skeletisation of the characters rather oppressed me. It was a bit like being in a world of comic strips. It did seem to me a very clockwork universe. (Clapp 2012, 25)

Indeed, Carter's universe is anything but disappointing clockwork, as her imagery quoted above just evidences.

[...] so we looked at the oysters and ate the mutton. At least we ate as much of it as was done, and made up with capers. If I [David Copperfield] had permitted him, I am satisfied that Traddles would have made a perfect savage of himself, and eaten a plateful of raw meat, to express enjoyment of the repast; but I would hear of no such immolation on the altar of friendship; and we had a course of bacon instead; there happening, by good fortune, to be cold bacon in the larder. (Dickens 1990, 541-542)

While the mutton seems to be the most unfortunate victim in this passage, he is also, through the magic of Micawber, the most fortunate, as Micawber salvages the raw-and-gray, cinder-covered flesh, making it the most appetizing dish (Shapiro 1996, 88). In this episode one is also reminded that food exchanges between individuals can be used to symbolize their mutual interdependence and reciprocity, while the routine provision of food for another, without the referred reciprocity, can express one's dominance over a subordinate. Thus, in a domestic context, the preparation and serving of food for a family can express care and concern even if, subtly, 'the discharging of the responsibility to prepare food for others may also be seen as an expression of the server's effective subordination to the household's provider or 'breadwinner'' (Beardsworth 1997, 52). The interesting point to emphasise is that the provider, someone who supplies a particular service or commodity, is in many cases simultaneously the server and usually a woman.

The domestic in Angela Carter is also visible in many of her writings, but I do agree with Sarah Gamble in what concerns the way she rewrites 'narratives of homeliness and domesticity' (Gamble 2006b, 279), since 'although Angela Carter could never be categorized as a "domestic" novelist, it is certainly possible to read her work as an exemplification of the type of "domestic deconstruction"' (*ibid.* 278). A similar idea is to be developed in the second chapter of this dissertation, when analysing Carter's second novel, *The Magic Toyshop* (1967), which equally to the domestic context I just mentioned in *David Copperfield*, features a transition between two very different dwellings – the prosperous country home of the heroine's parents and the eclectic South London house of her uncle Philip where she feels an alien. In an identical way, the preparation, service and consuming of food in *The Magic Toyshop* echoes the concept of what Gamble termed 'multi-layered, complicated, and contradictory home' (*ibid.* 282). I believe Carter intended to show what a common domesticity is in order to make the reader ponder on the diverse layers that are being shown. The contradictory vacillation pointed out by Gamble is based

on evoking, and even desiring, the domestic and simultaneously on pulling away from it, which generates nostalgia – ‘it is this emotion that becomes the marker of an attempt to break down the boundaries that demarcate the domestic space, for when the subject is at his or her furthest point away from “home,” it is nostalgia that is at once most strongly voiced and most emphatically disavowed’ (*ibid.* 278). Moreover, these same processes mirror power relations in gender and family matters, as will be shown through the study of the characters’ eating habits in the already mentioned second chapter. Yet, one should not forget that the feelings just mentioned weaken considerably as home draws nearer in the end of Carter’s career, ‘as an indicative of the evolution of an economy that, while clearly situated in the realm of the domestic, is not conceptualized as delimiting the female subject’ (*ibid.* 279).

Still, being Carter’s work the main focus of our study I brought her and Dickens together as an appetiser on how representations of food are relevant in a narrative. Such a choice was based on two main reasons. Firstly, because one can perceive Dickensian elements in Carter’s early fiction – mainly in the novel *The Passion of New Eve* (1977) which *imitates*, to some degree, the narrative structure of one of its intertexts, Dickens’ *Great Expectations*, as well as the end of *The Magic Toyshop* (1967) – and in the later novels where it is perhaps in the realm of the circus that Dickens’ influence is believed to be readily traced.¹³ Even in Carter’s last work, *Wise Children* (1991), the most Shakespearean of her novels, Grandma Chance’s strong personality that ‘created’ a family resembles Dickens’ recurrent structure of adoptive families being more successful in nurturing than the ‘real’ ones, as in *David Copperfield*. Furthermore, in *Heroes and*

¹³ Dickens is also the writer whose work is populated by fairy godmothers, ogres, and robber bridegrooms. Robert Duggan, in his essay “‘Circles of Stage Fire’: Angela Carter, Charles Dickens and Heteroglossia in the English Comic Novel”, considers precisely the intertextual relations between the works of Dickens and Carter, since in both the self frequently becomes a public performance, a theatrical display accomplished with brio and colour.

Accordingly, Duggan reads Carter’s later works through the prism of Dickens and concludes the following: ‘[...] one can discern how *Nights at the Circus* and *Wise Children* adopt the linguistic play of heteroglossia that Bakhtin saw as central to the tradition of the English comic novel and to Dickens in particular’ (Duggan 2006, 174).

Even though it is not my intention here to get into a Bakhtinian perspective, it is interesting to study in Carter’s later works the coexistence of distinct varieties within a single ‘linguistic code’. Such coexistence of, and conflict between, different types of speech (as the speech of characters, the speech of narrators, and even the speech of the author) is what Bakhtin argued as the origin of the power of the novel and what he termed heteroglossia (“Discourse in the Novel” (1935), Bakhtin’s final essay of *The Dialogic Imagination*, first published as a whole in 1975).

Villains (1969) Mrs Green owns a copy of *Great Expectations* as one of three objects she believes to be relevant to carry in her endless journey.

Secondly, what I believe brings Dickens and Carter together is the way the former answers the Victorian passion for intense and critical self-focus literature by both describing the society and instructing people, along with Carter's critical emphasis on symbolism in conjunction with how she shows different ways of looking at the world. Here I agree with Robert Duggan when he states that it is the clash of perceptions that goes to the core of Carter's literary project and from this perspective he concludes that her 'intertextual relationship with Dickens goes beyond a common (Shakespearean) source and a series of allusions to Dickens' narratives' (Duggan 2006, 174). This conclusion focuses only on the novels, since it is explicit how the adoption of the English comic novel's distinctive mixture of political critique and humorous entertainment, intrinsic to its form, manages to hold together different registers of experience. Accordingly, Dickens does provide a powerful example of how diverse registers can be brought together and Carter follows such example in her fiction and, I would add, in her work considered non-literary.

As for the importance of food in Dickens the chosen novel is *David Copperfield*, even though titles like *A Christmas Carol* or *Oliver Twist*, when mentioned, also bring to mind roast goose, merry holly-decked puddings, and warming drinks at the fireside, as these works thrive with celebratory spirits and enjoyable company.¹⁴ In his work Dickens embraces the cultural requirement that fiction enforces social regulations and he simultaneously prescribes a system of behavior concerning the middle-class diet. Accordingly, *David Copperfield* functions not only as a descriptive text, but as a prescriptive and proscriptive one as well.¹⁵ In spite of Dickens' not well known efforts as the editor of two popular journals to alter the national disgrace in private realms of domestic economy known as English cookery, there are instructional elements of *David Copperfield*, for example, that are relevant to David's rise into the middle class, specifically his own culinary education and renewal. Therefore, in classic *bildungsroman*

¹⁴ Barbara Scrafford points out that Dickens' characters 'roam the vibrant streets of London, fortifying themselves with meat pies, cold puddings, and warm gingerbread. No sooner is a long-lost acquaintance restored but a table is laid and the poker set in the grate to mull whatever is handy' (Scrafford 2004, 31).

¹⁵ In his article "The middle-class moderation of food and drink in *David Copperfield*" (2009), Daniel Lewis focuses particularly on how the novel operates as a didactic tool in relation to middle-class eating and drinking habits.

fashion, David must learn the rules of courtship, employment, and education, but he must also learn how to eat and drink in moderation to successfully enter into the middle class – ‘The novel shows that society enforces rules about moderation of food and alcohol through various verbal abuses, such as mockery, friendly laughter, and chastisement’ (Lewis 2009, 79). In a similar fashion, Melanie in *The Magic Toyshop* (1967), Marianne from *Heroes and Villains* (1969) and later Evelyn in *The Passion of New Eve* (1977) show an ‘ironic feminized version of the Dickensian *bildungsroman*’ (Pearson 1999, 254), as the first two leave behind the comfort of a socially higher status and the latter leaves a painless world, and the three protagonists learn about sexuality and find their place in the world, or discover freedom and a new path to be followed. The food dimension is what I consider to be present in these characters’ learning process to be analysed in the next two chapters.

Yet, the process or technique of narrating is not restricted to the literary text, and there are other arts where similar uses of representations of food also help to portray settings, time, or characters.¹⁶ More to the point, food is the catalyst for the story to be told, food is the catalyst for change, and it is, hence, the perfect way of overcoming the sense of otherness. If you sit at a table with someone else you are already sharing, and Peter Greenaway’s *The Cook, The Thief, His Wife and Her Lover* (1989) shares his reflection in such a way that one believes food comes to represent the nucleus of the story to be told. This British director chooses the cook to be the leading character in the title; even if he is mainly passive and not the strongest character in the film, food imbues in most details of this violent lesson that behind civilization’s need for art and refinement there lays an insatiable appetite for cruelty. Greenaway proposes an association between, on the one hand, sex and death and, on the other hand, food and sex; i.e. he continually reinforces that no-one is immune neither to man’s base desires, as food, sex and power, nor to man’s base fear, death.¹⁷ The visual sequences speak for themselves as there are scenes of sex between lovers intercalated with the preparation of a signature dish in the kitchen; a kiss is followed by the cutting of a tomato and the crossing of a leg is followed

¹⁶ Painting, sculpture, architecture, music, and the *belles lettres* were the five art forms to be considered the basis of what in the West came to be meant by Art, by the middle of the eighteenth century (Zolberg 2005, 115), and, thus, it is used here in an artistic category perspective.

¹⁷ If the Wife, Georgina, wants to make eating *mean* something, the Cook, Richard, has always known the meaning inherent in food (Lawrence 1997, 185), as he explains how each dish is charged: ‘Aphrodisiac – [surcharge] fifty percent. [...] a lot for anything black [...] Eating black food is like consuming death. Like saying, ‘Ha ha, Death, I’m eating you’.

by the slicing of a cucumber, for instance. One finds in this movie a unique way of cooking disturbingly sumptuous meals in exact detail, since food is used as a metaphor. In fact, every frame is like a painting and one can see the restaurant wall being dominated by a reproduction of the Dutch master Frans Hals painting *Banquet of the Officers of the St. George Civic Company* (1616), whose 17th-century characters are ironically dressed in the same rich frocks as the Thief's disreputable gang. Albeit Greenaway references politics, art, economics, even fashion and art mainly to articulate his views, his conclusions, when boiled down to their essence, could not be more basic: as part of a culture, we are what we eat, or, what we eliminate – if anatomy is destiny, then it is the bowels that dictate history and rule.

Without a doubt, this is a complex, contradictory text which needs to be approached firstly as a film, a specific medium with its own modes of representation, its own system of signs; and secondly, as a text which raises questions about representations and readings in (postmodern) texts and contexts (Sinnerbrink 1990). Indeed, it is a sensuous and metaphorical feast, a spectacle of visual and visceral excess; but then, as after any feast, there may be a sense of bloatedness, nausea, overindulgence. As part of the audience, one is also a diner in the lavish *Le Hollandais* and Greenaway tucks in one's napkin, places the menus on the lap, as one waits in dignified expectation for the velvet curtains to part and the spectacle to begin – accomplished by Michael Nyman's rhythmically striking anvil (Lawrence 1997, 214 n. 30). Moving from the cool blue of the car park, a slow, grand tracking shot brings us into the kitchen, which is presented as a large medieval-type space bustling with life and bathed in a soft green light. This is the sanctuary, the place of nurturance and transformation, guarded by the Cook; it is where the miraculous transformation of the raw into the cooked takes place.¹⁸ The nourishing need is covered up by food's preparation in order to conform to an exigent presentation. Accordingly, cooking becomes a metaphor for a series of transformations throughout the film: nature into culture; raw flesh into food and art, both of which are linked in an economy of excess; and finally, murder into sacrifice.¹⁹ It is the Cook's intuition that

¹⁸ Concerning the kitchen set, it is seen as a cavernous factory-level scale which implies all the machinery behind 'the studiously 'posh' Old World elegance of the restaurant' (Lawrence 1997, 214 n. 30).

¹⁹ The Thief, Albert Spica, ends up by eating a piece of the cooked Lover, Michael, and according to Amy Lawrence it is such last bite which brings the film's investigation of food-as-metaphor full circle:

brings together the Wife and the Lover, as he presents similar dishes to them and, thus, the aesthetic of consumption becomes a metaphorical seduction.

Being Carter's contemporary British citizen, it was not hard to choose Greenaway in what concerns the artistic domain. *The Cook, The Thief, His Wife and Her Lover* is just one example of how food is a representation, a hedonistic acting, which can be read from different perspectives. My focal point rests precisely on the way Carter, as part of a society culturally conditioned by food matters, configures the fact that literature is also conditioned by the same issue. Literary representations have always limned the way societies deal with food, i.e. along with a diversity of disciplines, literary studies have also dealt with the question of food. Carter, as Greenaway, is a cultural object and produced objects which influenced others in their representations of food.

As a last meal, Richard's pièce of résistance is presented not to prolong life (to nourish) but to condemn. Spica's obsession with food's transformation into shit is revealed as a fetish, distracting us from the body itself. What Greenaway refers to as 'this rotten, worm-infested body' is itself on a journey to putrefaction, a trip to decay only momentarily postponed by a healthy diet. (Lawrence 1997, 187)

Various Perspectives on Food Studies.

Even though my concern will now be the various perspectives on food studies, I feel the need to emphasize what Jeff Miller and Jonathan Deutsch called our attention to in *Food Studies: An Introduction to Research Methods* (2009): what food studies are. This clear and well-structured bourgeoning guide starts by delimiting the many fields that study food itself: from its production (as agricultural sciences and aquaculture); its chemical, physical, and biological properties (such as biochemistry); its physiology when consumed (by nutrition); and its preparation (usually by culinary arts). Moreover, one is reminded that even branches of these same fields (such as cultural and community nutrition, agro-economics, and food-marketing) which became important factors in food studies, still have their own clearly outlined fields of study. Thus, food studies are evidently not the study of food itself but the study of the relationships between food and the human experience, whose relationships may be studied from diverse perspectives and 'from a range of places in the food system, from production to consumption, or from farm to fork' (Miller 2009, 3). What I believe is missing in these initial concerns is a stronger emphasis precisely on what I consider to be the basis of food studies, which is food itself. Its relationship with the human experience could not be better highlighted, though.

Following such considerations, since food studies comprise the study of food and people from a variety of humanities and social science perspectives (as anthropology, sociology, social psychology, cultural studies, media studies, history, or literature) they are clearly in an interdisciplinary field. In addition, one cannot forget how such a variety of perspectives is combined – involving, for instance, food historians, food

anthropologists, sociologists of food, nutritionists, or even scholars who may not be trained in any predominant discipline, but in the field of food studies – turning food studies into a challenging interdisciplinary field. Consequently, I advocate the need to revise the grammar in 'Food studies is' to read 'Food studies are'. This is a considerable shift for me, even if food studies are seen as a new discipline or on occasion still an isolated assemblage of disciplines. Instead, I reflect on food studies as an interdisciplinary field where certain interests and methods have come together. There is no doubt about the usefulness of such collaboration, since it permits to understand phenomena and relationships, even though it is not a unified field.

Conversely, some scholars have been worried for the last decade that much of the research is so interdisciplinary that it lacks rigor. Steven L. Kaplan, a professor of history at Cornell University and one of the editors of *Food and Foodways* (the international journal that began publication in the late 1980s) is one of them. For him, some people were still not aware of what food is: 'It's about the whole range of issues from feasting to fasting – from great famines and the humble efforts of ordinary people to forge a minimal survival diet, to the more extravagant and elaborate dimension of bourgeois self-indulgence and the aestheticization of food' (Ruark 1999, A19). I share his concern on some theoretical work in food studies, as he added in Ruark's piece:

Before the rise of food studies in the humanities, food was treated only as fuel. [...] Now we have, paradoxically, the reverse problem: A great many people are talking about food in terms of vaguely symbolic language, without mooring it in the tension between the symbolic and the physical. (*ibidem*)

One may also confirm that food studies approaches benefit from a certain freedom and creativity, which in due course provide some balance from the strength offered by what otherwise could be considered a limiting disciplinary quality. This is what is implied by Carole Counihan when she answers that methodologically she works as an anthropologist (Miller 2009, 173). I share her feeling that food studies are necessarily 'interdisciplinary in subject matter, in thinking, in theoretical and analytical approaches' (*ibid.* 173-174). This position does not oppose other methodologies, but differs from those as Psyche Williams-Forsion's when she claims that food becomes the centre of analysis while she then uses a variety of methods and theories to examine it (*ibid.* 196). Accordingly, she does recognize the variety of methods one is able to employ 'under the umbrella of food studies' (*ibidem*).

Still, if 'Food studies is as diverse as food itself' (*ibid.* 4), it becomes at once complex to clearly demarcate its own methodology precisely due to this interdisciplinarity.

On the other hand, what one now considers food studies has not been always seen as such. For instance, bearing in mind Jeffery Sobal's comments on the earliest Association for the Study of Food and Society (ASFS) meetings, he evidences the interest of mostly nutritionists and epidemiologists which was then seen as a food-and-society type of focus and the change in those who attended those meetings afterwards. Sobal notices food studies being different from food and society, being for him a still 'nebulous, evolving area'. I cannot but share his perspective on such a general account. However, he specifies this differentiation based on how food and society 'represents more social science perspective' and food studies seem to be more linked with the humanities; but also based on their methodology, as the former would include much more quantitative and positivistic analysis, whilst the latter work with methods like historical, qualitative, ethnographic analysis, in addition to discourse and textual analysis, straight from humanities (*ibid.* 133). Thus, it is not hard for him to clearly conclude his interview with the idea of how hard it is to situate food studies – 'where it is and how it really relates to the disciplines at this point. We actually don't even have a strong description of what food studies is and what it incorporates' (*ibid.* 135).

Having been faced with a similar conclusion after reading literature on the subject, I feel confident to establish food studies as an inclusive field of studies confirmed by its plurality. Accordingly, the interdisciplinary food scholars working from a variety of humanities and social science perspectives led to my above mentioned belief in the grammar shift to a plural form of food studies. Moreover, such interdisciplinary work directed my reading to the fact that the 'many fields that study food' are part of what food studies imply, as well. In view of that, when considering food studies, these should be taken into account as not only the study of food and people's relationships with it, but also as the combination of a variety of perceptions, too.

One of the best examples I found that avows such combination is *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (1985) by the anthropologist Sidney Mintz. This book actually draws on history and anthropology, in addition to botany, geography, economics, and nutrition. Mintz makes use of multi-disciplinary theory and methodology in order to study sugar's meanings and uses over time, and, furthermore, he manages to exemplify how one can focus on both production and consumption. It caught my attention

because *Sweetness and Power* is considered 'one of the first serious academic studies to put an edible commodity squarely at the center and examine it from a variety of angles. [...] [And it] is central to food studies as a core text in an emerging field of academic study' (Bentley 2008, 111). In fact, at the turn of the century, Mintz observed to Ruark in an article she published in *Chronicle of Higher Education* (1999):

[Food] has been a disdained and patronized subject, and people who study it have been disdained and patronized. [...] I'm still trying to make people who are not anthropologists aware of the tremendous importance of food in our lives and worldwide, politically. (Ruark 1999, A17)

Food is undeniably considered the first of the essentials of life, the world's largest industry, our most regularly indulged pleasure, the core of our most intimate social relationships and almost every positive social experience involves the sharing of food (whether a simple cup of tea with an acquaintance, or a 'genuine Stunning' with colleagues or strangers). In view of this, it is legitimate to ask about the reason for some reluctance to address the wider meaning of our food behaviors and the reason for food to have been taken for granted, at least in academia. Recently, Belasco pointed out how 'intellectuals are heirs to a classical dualism that prizes mind over body' (Belasco 2008, 2), as philosopher Carolyn Korsmeyer had remarked – 'taste and eating [are] tied to the necessities of existence and are thus classified as lower functions of sense perception, operating on a primitive, near instinctual level' (Korsmeyer 1999, 1) – and, earlier, Deane Curtin and Lisa Heldke had commented: 'Our tradition has tended to privilege questions about the rational, the unchanging, and the eternal, and the abstract and the mental; and to denigrate questions about embodied, concrete, practical experience' (Curtin 1992, xiv).²⁰

Belasco also drew attention to how food scholarship has also been hindered by a Victorian remnant, the 'separate spheres', i.e. 'the idealized bourgeois division between the private female sphere of *consumption* and the more public male sphere of *production*' (Belasco 2008, 3); an institutionalized bias which delayed serious attention to food even after the women's movement obliterated the separate spheres, despite the significant and

²⁰ Peter Atkins and Ian Bowler conclude the following on this subject: 'It is difficult [...] to deny the importance of food studies to a full understanding of society, although familiarity seems to have bred contempt for the study of mundane items of daily life in some academic circles' (Atkins 2001, 323).

largely sympathetic reappraisals of women's food work in recent years.²¹ Nevertheless, one should not forget that there is an interwoven relation between food practices and their representations, on the one hand, and the everyday life, on the other, that has been discovered by some women's studies scholars. Such a relation can reveal the particularities of time, place, and culture, providing an excellent vehicle to contextualize women's lives – 'Just as the kitchen is no longer off limits for women's studies, some of the latest work in food studies is beginning to recognize that food practices are gendered' (Avakian 2005, 7). Indeed, why constantly assert women as prisoners of a patriarchal order? The answer may well be based on a devaluation of manual work when compared to intellectual work, instead of the gendered food practices. I will reflect on this matter further ahead.

If it is common knowledge that the need for food is our primary biological drive, food, in general terms, comes to represent an influential symbolic resource for expressing patterns of social differentiation, above all when one considers the core dimensions of social differentiation which sociologists seek to analyse and understand (as class, gender, age and ethnicity). Food is always seen as more than a simple matter of sustenance. In view of this, Roland Barthes' distinction between denotation (scientific, value-free description) and connotation (in which social, cultural and political beliefs and values come attached to a phenomenon) and his structuralism are relevant as they perform the essential function of demonstrating how apparently natural or commonsense meanings attach themselves to objects and practices.

An example of this is provided by Barthes' discussion of the relationship between food, national identity and imperialism in the mythology "Steak and Chips", which he begins by reducing steak to its denotative level – like meat in its pure state, defined by its quasi-rawness: 'blood is visible, natural, dense' (Barthes 1973, 62).²² As it limits meaning,

²¹ Similarly to what Belasco does more recently, Mennell had also pointed out the same spirit as one of the reasons for sociologists to have neglected food as a topic for research for so long:

Prestige has always played a part in the popularity of research topics. For most of the twentieth century, the prestigious topics tended to be stratification and class inequality, politics and power, industry, organisations and bureaucracy. All were in some sense masculine concerns. The inequality between the sexes was taken for granted, while that between social strata was not: work was mainly a man's world, the home and the kitchen a woman's. Leisure, culture, consumption – and food – were widely considered to be peripheral and even frivolous concerns. (Mennell 2004, vi)

²² '[...] le sang y est visible, naturel, dense' (Barthes 1957, 78).

the denotative level also generates meaning in the form of what Barthes names 'a morality':

[Rare steak] is supposed to benefit all the temperaments, the sanguine because it is identical, the nervous and lymphatic because it is complementary to them. [For intellectuals, steak is] a redeeming food, thanks to which they bring their intellectualism to the level of prose and exorcize, through blood and soft pulp, the sterile dryness of which they are constantly accused. (*ibidem*)²³

Among the first series of connotations, Barthes notes that the craze for steak tartare, a combination of raw eggs and ground beef, represents a particularly dense range of meanings about the healthiness of the natural and traditional, as opposed to the 'sickliness' of the modern. This connotation generates further layers of meaning, as for example the one where he underlines the fact that despite the invasion of 'American steaks', the steak is a deeply nationalized foodstuff, 'a basic element' in the cuisine of France; it is an edible metaphor for the national family, since it offers a symbol of consensus across the social classes, figuring 'in all the surroundings of alimentary life: flat, edged with yellow, like the sole of a shoe, in cheap restaurants; thick and juicy in bistros; cubic, with the core all moist throughout beneath a lightly charred crust, in haute cuisine' (*ibidem*).²⁴ What is even more interesting is the conclusion to the essay, in which these connotations combine to offer a magical resolution to the crisis in French post-war history – 'At a moment of humiliating withdrawal from its empire, steak and chips are offered as a symbol of the deep horizontal comradeship and natural values hidden beneath the apparent defeat of the 1950s' (Ashley 2004, 6).

Besides Barthes' discussions, interest in the sociology of food (which for a long time languished as subject worthy of academic pursuit) has more recently widened giving rise to various books and journals (Coveney 2006, xi). In other words, the study of food and eating, for about two decades, has been one of the fastest-growing areas in sociology

²³ 'Tous les tempéraments sont censés y trouver leur compte, les sanguins par identité, les nerveux et les lymphatiques par complément. Et de même que le vin devient pour bon nombre d'intellectuels une substance médiumnique qui les conduit vers la force originelle de la nature, de même le bifteck est pour eux un aliment de rachat, grâce auquel ils prosaïsent leur cérébralité et conjurent par le sang et la pulpe molle, la sécheresse sterile dont sans cesse on les accuse' (Barthes 1957, 78).

²⁴ '[...] il figure dans tous les décors de la vie alimentaire: plat, bordé de jaune, semelloïde, dans les restaurants bon marché; épais, juteux, dans les bistrotts spécialisés; cubique, le cœur tout humecté sous une légère croûte carbonisée, dans la haute cuisine' (Barthes 1957, 78).

(Mennell 2004, v).²⁵ There has been an increase in University courses broadly headed 'food and society' notably in the USA and Canada and later in the UK, mainly from the last decade of the twentieth century.²⁶ Around the end of the century, Beardsworth called our attention to a six-year research programme entitled 'The Nation's Diet' set up in 1991, from which a large number of the projects funded 'were sociological in orientation or contained a significant sociological component' (Beardsworth 1997, 4).

Still, when one refers sociology, as any other discipline, one has to bear in mind the theoretical innovations in it (mainly the shift from the primacy of production to the primacy of consumption in what concerns some western countries,²⁷ noted as early as 1950 by David Riesman in his classic *The Lonely Crowd*, and developed further by Daniel Bell and other theorists of post-industrial and post-modern society in the 1970s and 1980s) as well as the ones in what is considered the sister discipline of sociology – social anthropology. These innovations are a sign of 'shifts of emphasis between possibilities which are always present in the act of sociological analysis' (*ibid.* 57). Accordingly, when examining this specific area of sociological analysis and research, food and eating, they logically reflect the changing fashionability of the different approaches. Critics started to identify such area of potentially fruitful expansion in sociology in the 1980s when the increase of the amount of research and writing in this field was noticeable. One cannot

²⁵ Over a decade ago, culinary history was considered to be slowly but surely entering the curriculum as a respectable academic field:

Three hundred anthropologists in the United States list food studies as their specialty; courses in food and culture are increasingly widespread at the University of California-Berkeley, Emory University, and the Johns Hopkins University. There are degree-granting programs burgeoning at Boston University, Cornell University, and New York University, even reaching into the ever expanding cooking schools (careers in food services are at the top of job opportunities). (Sonnenfeld 2000, xvi)

²⁶ An example which had its beginning in 1996 was the class "Culture and Foods" as part of the Department of Nutrition and Food Studies at New York University's School of Education. Their students had been trained in nutrition, food studies and food management. Nowadays we have the Department of Nutrition, Food Studies, and Public Health in the New York University.

²⁷ In fact, when we access Country STAT (a web-based information technology system for food and agriculture statistics at the national and sub-national levels presented by FAO) it is visible how such shift from production to consumption only makes sense for some western countries. These statistics across thematic areas such as production, prices, trade and consumption become a relevant tool for analysing and monitoring the goal of eradicating extreme poverty and hunger. Taking into account a global map on Net trade in food by Country STAT, which considers the relation between the percentage of exports and imports of food and the consumption in food calories at the beginning of this century, one can conclude that the so called developed countries present an unbalanced relation between these factors. This information may be complemented with the analysis of Food Balance Sheets which cover production, trade, feed and seed, waste, consumption, and other utilizations, in terms of quantities, calories, proteins, and fats.

forget, for example, that in the early 1980s, Jack Goody had already summarized the cyclical process of new sociological theory in the following way:

Instead of the revolutions of natural science, we find the rebellions of the social sciences. Rather than crystallising existing knowledge and offering a model for future experimental and intellectual work, such changes indicate a shift of emphasis between possibilities that lie permanently embedded in the analysis of sociological material, e.g. between the actor's or observer's point of view, between qualitative and quantitative methods between synchronic and diachronic analysis, between the study of surface and deep structure, and so forth. In other words, these polemical shifts may serve to redirect research energy into neglected channels [...]. (Goody 1982, 8)

In view of that, there are growing fields, such as food sociology which can bring together the social aspects of food and nutrition – a good example would be *A Sociology of Food & Nutrition: The Social Appetite* (1999) edited by John Germov and Lauren Williams. The social and cultural dimensions of the human food system, from production to consumption, have also been emphasised to promote new ways of thinking about what is usually held as a mundane, everyday act of eating – *Sociology on the Menu: an invitation to the study of food and society* (1997) by Alan Beardsworth and Teresa Keil. The subject of eating and the sociology of food had already emerged as a significant area of sociological research, as illustrated on diverse interdisciplinary sources used by Stephen Mennell, Anne Murcott and Anneke van Otterloo in *The Sociology of Food: Eating, Diet and Culture* (1992). Food, thus, has become an essential item of consumption and a cultural symbol and sociologists study the social context of food and nutrition by exploring the socio-cultural, political, economic, and philosophical factors that influence food production and consumption. Topics that dominate the literature and are the basis of its focus include: the relation of food to nutrition and health; the inequalities of consumption by class, gender, age and nation; the relation of food to the definition of private and public spheres; the consequences of the impact of food on colonialism and migration; as well as the changing technologies of food production and their social effects.

However, as Beardsworth and Keil state, when questioning how food and eating can be considered a case of serious sociological neglect, the scanning of the contents pages of a wide range of introductory sociology texts available leads to the following obligatory conclusion: 'alongside the themes which, in various guises, occur again and

again (stratification, work and employment, crime and deviance, ethnicity, gender, the family, etc.) you will not come across food and eating as a specifically identified focus of interest' (Beardsworth 1997, 1). Hence, even when such issues are addressed, they regularly appear on the margins of one or more of the central themes and the sociology of food and eating comes as a specialised area which is never likely to be of central importance. Furthermore, one may pinpoint, as some of the factors which possibly facilitated the inhibition of the development of sociological interest in this area, the strong association of the purchasing, preparation and presentation of food, along with the more menial tasks of the kitchen, with the traditional domain of women, holding little intellectual interest to the male researchers and theorists who have historically dominated the profession.

Nevertheless, I believe the study and analysis of food-related issues considered the intellectual property of other professions and academic disciplines to be the more important factor – the production may have been the property of agronomists, economists and geographers; the consumption may have been of nutritionists and dieticians. To summarise, the sociology of food and nutrition, or food sociology, focuses on the multitude of socio-cultural, political, economic, and philosophical factors that influence our food habits – what we eat, when we eat, how we eat, and why we eat. As a result, sociologists search for patterns in human interaction and try to uncover the links between social organisation and individual behavior, i.e. food sociology concentrates on the social patterning of food production, distribution, and consumption, which can be conceptualised as the social appetite (Germov 2004, 5).

The longstanding interest in food and eating is shown by some of sociology's neighbouring disciplines, as history and social anthropology. The historians' interest in such issues is expected when one considers the great impact that basic realities concerning the control of and access to food resources can have upon broader social, economic and political events and processes (Beardsworth 1997, 3). This was the case of Harvey Levenstein's work which laid the foundation for the social history of food in modern America: *Revolution at the Table: The Transformation of the American Diet* (1988). Such a major work (that related America's changing eating habits and attitudes towards food from 1880 to 1930 to key forces like immigration, urbanization, emergent technologies, new nutritional facts, and the increase and power of the corporate food industry) along with Stephen Mennell's 1985 *All Manners of Food: Eating and Taste in England and*

France from the Middle Ages to the Present (which addressed domestic cooking and women's magazines) gave academic weight to the study of food.

In addition, when one considers ideas based on the premise that knowledge of history offers a sense of a feasible change, it becomes clear that the historical research perspectives do help to understand what is deeply rooted in a culture, given that it examines thoughts, endeavors, and achievements. This is so due to its being 'a useful indicator of what has been relevant to societies, cultures, and individuals' (Miller 2009, 78). As a valuable method in food studies research, history facilitates our knowledge on 'food choices, patterns of commensality, the gendered nature of food' (*ibid.* 77), for example. Accordingly, it is not out of the ordinary what Ken Albala, co-editor of the journal *Food, Culture and Society* and author of several books on food studies, explains concerning his background and training in an interview: 'My field [as an intellectual cultural historian] is the European Renaissance. Which doesn't mean I haven't stolen from other disciplines' (*ibid.* 91); 'History is a weird discipline in that it bridges humanities and social sciences' (*ibid.* 95).

In a parallel way to historians, social anthropologists have also shown an interest in incorporating the analysis of alimentary matters into their work, possibly owing to the nature of their subject matter. As Carole Counihan and Penny Van Esterik explain, anthropology has traditionally maintained an interest in food 'because of its central role in many cultures' (Counihan 2008, 1), and work within the discipline has sought to explore food from a 'range of symbolic, materialist, and economic perspectives' (*ibid.* 2). Since anthropology was among the first disciplines to recognize the importance of studying food practices, much of contemporary scholarship that combines food studies and women's studies is also undertaken by anthropologists. Counihan has been central to this effort, editing the journal *Food and Foodways*, among other works, and her perspective is that food practices are both constitutive and reflective of gender construction. Her essay "Bread as World: Food Habits and Social Relations" (in *The Anthropology of Food and Body: Gender, Meaning, and Power*, 1999) is a recognised example of the value of focusing on food.

In the twentieth century the focus was on detailed description, documentation and analysis of the workings of relatively small-scale, traditional social systems which have usually been conceptualized in broadly holistic terms; an approach which demanded awareness on the processes involved in producing, distributing, preparing and consuming

food, as these constitute a complex of activities that provides the whole framework of life on a daily and a seasonal basis.²⁸ An interesting situation that turned out to be common regarding the subject of food and eating is the case of Herbert Spencer and Émile Durkheim's attention paid to the way in which all human groups taboo the consumption of particular potential sources of nourishment, which is taken to be the beginnings of serious theoretical interest in food and whose interests were later pursued more by their anthropological than by their sociological colleagues (Mennell 2004, vi-vii). Indeed, when looking summarily at the contributions of nineteenth-century scholars, without a doubt, the anthropological interest in food centered largely upon questions of taboo, totemism, sacrifice and communion, that is, mainly on religious aspects of the process of consumption. The attention of these early anthropologists was directed towards the ritual and supernatural aspects of consumption.

As mentioned above, there have been many different ways of interpreting food, like semiological, socio-historical, cultural, but according to Emily Gowers, the most influential work in this direction has been precisely in the field of social anthropology, 'which has taught us that the classification of food, the rituals of cooking, and the arrangement of meals hold clues to notions of hierarchy, social grouping, purity and pollution, myths of creation and cosmogony, and the position of man in relation to the world' (Gowers 1993, 5).²⁹ One example is Claude Lévi-Strauss with his notorious 'culinary triangle' of raw, roasted, and boiled food (1965) which was developed as a universal model for the mythological organization of culture.³⁰ The discussion of the 'culinary triangle' was one of the major themes of *Mythologiques* and the subject of an independent article ("Le Triangle Culinaire") where after an initial brief reference to Jakobson's linguistic thesis, mainly his primary vowel-consonant triangle, Lévi-Strauss claims that just as no society lacks a spoken language, every human society processes

²⁸ An important resource for the *Anthropological Study of Food Habits* (a wealth of articles on every aspect of the study of food habits) is sponsored by the Illinois State University at *World Food Habits: English-Language Resources for the anthropology of food and nutrition* (Robert Dirks).

²⁹ In his first chapter, Goody reviews briefly some aspects of the sociology of cooking as a means of sketching certain developments that have taken place in social anthropology from the 1930s to the 1980s, developments in Britain that he believed to be occasionally seen in terms of a movement from the functionalism of Malinowski through to the structuralism (or functional-structuralism) of Radcliffe-Brown to the structuralism of Lévi-Strauss.

³⁰ This is a recurring theme in Lévi-Strauss' work, as in *Anthropologie Structurale* – mainly in the part entitled "Organisation Sociale", chapter VIII, "Les organisations dualistes existent-elles?" (Lévi-Strauss 1958, 147-180).

some of its food supply by cooking. Thus cooked food is thought as fresh raw food which has been transformed (*élaboré*) by cultural means, in opposition to rotten (*pourri*) food which is transformed by natural means.

Another example can be found in the influential anthropologist Mary Douglas who claimed that an understanding of food is essential when one tries to learn how society operates and also stressed how food had been unjustly treated by the academia, around the 1970s, explaining its causes:

The absence of serious research into the cultural and social uses of food is caused by a more fundamental separation between food sciences and social thought. It is the legacy of a process of intellectual compartmentalization corresponding to academic teaching and research divisions' (Douglas 2003b, 2).

Consistent with her perceptiveness of food's vital role, Douglas considered, for instance, that the dietary prohibitions of Leviticus preserve the same principles of purity and loathing for boundary-crossing that mark out Jewish society as a whole; on the other hand, she believes the English working-class meal can only be analysed as a self-contained system of inflexible models and distinctions.

Such a distinction is also intrinsic in the early 1970s explosion of work in women's studies, along with the excitement associated with this new scholarly interest in food, cooking, and eating – 'Like women's studies, the emerging field of food studies is interdisciplinary and includes attention to the daily lives of ordinary people within its purview' (Avakian 2005, 2). Even if one of the basic concepts that follows women's studies is precisely the distinction between sex, a biological status, and gender, which is a social, cultural, learned status (Plott 2000, ix), one emphasises the importance of readings in terms of gender, as it encompasses women and men in relation to each other, analyses their interactions and the processes of domination and oppression. Thus, gender studies, more than women studies, has focused on the way the social organization and structure and society's cultural and knowledge productions are gendered (the division into two differentiated groups, 'men' and 'women', overriding individual differences and intertwining with other major socially constructed differences). Therefore, gender is a system of power, constructed and maintained by both the dominants and the oppressed, as both ascribe to its values in personality, identity formation and behaviour. Still, what I

have noticed is an absent attempt to focus on gender as an analytic tool to be used by food studies.

Notwithstanding what I have noticed, I can point out as an example of such an attempt the conference entitled “Women, Men, and Food: Putting Gender on the Table” (12-13 April, 2007), which was sponsored by the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, Harvard University and explored the relationship between food and gender, from production, to preparation, and to consumption. Once more the participants ranged from food writers, historians, economists, scholars in gender studies, and activists and their main reflections were on the ‘variety of ways in which men and women shape food, and how, in turn, food and foodways shape men and women’ (Bentley 2008, 111). Another example also from the United States is an Interdisciplinary Conference at the University of Notre Dame in Indiana, organized by the Gender Studies Program (26-29 January, 2012) entitled “Food Networks: Gender and Foodways”, which sought to address gender issues as they relate to food and it welcomed presentations from all disciplines – Anthropology, Literary Studies, Film Studies, Sociology, Theology, Cultural Studies, Visual Culture, Gender Studies, Food Studies, American Studies, Ethnic Studies, History, Agriculture, and more.

Yet, it was not until recently that few scholars in food studies brought a gendered or a feminist perspective to their work on food. In 2001, Sherrie A. Inness edited *Kitchen Culture in America: Popular Representations of Food, Gender, and Race* aiming precisely at exploring a few of the ways that food and cooking culture have shaped women’s gender roles over the 1990s. The emphasis lays not only on the central function of food in constituting the lives of American women, but also of ‘all of American society’ (Inness 2001, 3). Thus, ‘kitchen culture’ is used to refer to the several discourses about food, cooking, and gender roles ‘that stem from the kitchen but that pervade our society on many levels’ (*ibidem*). This is how kitchen culture is pointed out as an influence on advertising, cooking literature, daily meals, and places of consumption through which women’s roles have been formed – ‘if we are to understand women’s gender roles in the United States, we need to study food’ (*ibid.* 4).

On the other hand, feminist scholars focused merely on women’s food pathologies, as anorexia, bulimia, and other eating disorders – for instance, *The Hungry Self: Women, Eating & Identity* (1985) by Kim Chernin is mainly about women’s troubled relation with food. In reality, other features of women’s relationship to food are at least just as relevant.

The focus has been mainly on the negative aspects of this relationship and not on what I think is the most important part they play when working in the kitchen – the pleasure taken from food practices does not depend on the gender.³¹ On this matter Arlene Avakian and Barbara Haber summarise the following:

Feminists organized around housework and women's studies scholarship addressed domesticity, but cooking was ignored as if it were merely a marker of patriarchal oppression and, therefore, not worthy of attention. Similarly, food studies whether in anthropology, sociology, nutrition, or agricultural studies ignored or distorted what could be learned from and about women's relationship to food practices. (Avakian 2005, 2)

Thus, in spite of women's centrality to food practices, which I think is a central issue too relevant to be thus ignored, few in this overabundance of new works on food focused on women, until the last decade, and only a minority of those had a feminist analysis.³² Among these, Avakian's anthology, *Through the Kitchen Window: Women Writers Explore the Intimate Meanings of Food and Cooking* (1997, 1998) was the first to address the varied and complex aspects of women and food. I acknowledge that there has been little attention given to food practices and women matters, either due to how feminine scholars associate the former to the subjugation of women and do not value an area mastered by them, or because scholars depreciate such a relationship between food and women as serious enough for academia's respectability.

Still, it is psychology's interest in food and eating which is often considered the discipline where such an interest has covered a wide range of topics – as the sensory, cognitive, and emotional dimensions of eating, the processes of nutritional socialization and the basis and expressions of eating disorders. This concern is possibly the nature of the disciplinary scope of psychology itself, because of its closeness to investigating the

³¹ In 1999, during a talk at a Toronto conference "Crossing Borders: Food and Agriculture in the Americas" (a joint meeting of the Association for the Study of Food and Society and the Agriculture, Food, and Human Values Society) Barbara Haber, curator of printed materials at Radcliffe College's Schlesinger Library, who started to collect cookbooks there, recalled precisely how feminist scholars, who taught their colleagues the importance of women's experiences, have not always been sympathetic with food studies – 'At first, she said, her colleagues thought she was trying to send women back to the kitchen' (Ruark 1999, A18).

³² Avakian edited in 1997 *Through the Kitchen Window: Women Writers Explore the Intimate Meanings of Food and Cooking*, which proves to be an interesting anthology of female culinary writing based on the most diverse experiences. These experiences and narratives are read as personal portrayals of identity, character, and intimacy.

physical processes of eating in their immediate sensory and behavioural contexts. When compared to the social studies of psychology, the latter tends to investigate the complex influences of personality, biography, and interpersonal relationships, occasionally even overlapping the sociologists, social anthropologists, and the historians' interests. When one thinks of books as *Making Sense of Taste: Food and Philosophy* (1999), by Carolyn Korsmeyer, one understands why and how taste (which has by tradition been considered beneath the concern of philosophy for being too bound to the body, too personal and idiosyncratic) can justify more philosophical respect and interest. This becomes clearer when one acknowledges that besides providing physical pleasure, food bears symbolic and aesthetic value for the human experience.

Finally, even when considering the idea that food can be used to express social differentiation, one cannot forget that the food options and choices of particular groups also reflect the inequalities intrinsic to such differentiation. Indeed, the process of socialization is essential either regarding the formation of individual identity or the transmission of culture from generation to generation; this is, in other words, the process through which one internalizes the norms and values of society, and learns how to perform the social roles.³³ Whereas structuralist theories believe that the individuals' lives are primarily determined by the society in which they live, concentrating on the large-scale features of society (like the economy, political system, and dominant culture) and on how these structures shape individual and group behavior, post-structuralist theories developed as a critique of structuralist approaches that did not theorise adequately how individuals shape society. This is why I believe that the study of food, cooking, eating and drinking, once a subject limited to nutritionists and a few anthropologists studying the symbolic importance of foodways among 'natives' has expanded to include sociology, history, philosophy, economics, and the interdisciplinary field of cultural studies, for instance.

As also stated before, such a proliferation of combined perspectives and its recognised relevance would be enough to allow food studies a prominent place in the academia, and in mass media. Yet, even their increasing distinction with more publications on food subjects, television shows, educational initiatives, and conference panels, turns food studies relatively new to the table (Miller 2009, 7). Actually, if with

³³ As a consequence, post-structuralist approaches generally abandon the search for universal, original causes, or prevailing logic of social change, as 'poststructuralist theorists focus on human agency and social construction rather than social determinism' (Germov 2004, 341).

food everyone wants to talk about it, since it is so much a part of who we are and who we aspire to be, food studies as a discipline within academia is not fully understood. At the end of last century, the general idea was that while food studies scholars were excited about the progress their field had made, they acknowledged that they were still 'elbowing for room at the academic table' and some even mentioned being worried that 'too many cooks will spoil the broth' (Ruark 1999, A17). I believe even if this is so, food has already, undoubtly, even if only recently, become a significant and coherent area of inquiry for cultural studies and the social sciences. For this reason I choose to now restrict my approach to the food-cultural Studies, which I believe to be still new to the academic table.

Five Types of Critical Approaches to Food-Cultural Studies.

As seen above, when one looks into the interdisciplinary history of food studies, there are some inevitable references. There is Roland Barthes' semiotics, the anthropology of Claude Lévi-Strauss and Mary Douglas, Pierre Bourdieu's work on the relationship between food, consumption and cultural identity,³⁴ and Norbert Elias and Stephen Mennell's historical-oriented analysis. Along with these diverse disciplinary perspectives, more recent ones have appeared, such as: the 1997's publications David Bell and Gill Valentine's *Consuming Geographies: We Are Where We Eat*, Alan Beardsworth and Theresa Keil's *Sociology on the Menu*, Alan Warde's *Consumption, Food and Taste*, Carole Counihan and Penny van Esterik's reader *Food and Culture*, Jukka Gronow's *Sociology of Taste*; and, lately, Peter Atkins and Ian Bowler's *Food in Society: Economy, Culture, Geography* (2001), Bob Ashley's *et al Food and Cultural Studies* (2004), Carolyn Korsmeyer's reader *The Taste Culture Reader: Experiencing Food and Drink* (2005), Warren Belasco's *Food* (2008), and Pamela Goyan Kittler and Kathryn Sucher's *Food and Culture* (2011), among others. Such a cultural interest suits the interdisciplinary field of cultural studies, and this chapter presents some key theoretical frameworks in order to understand food cultures.

Similarly to a vehicle, food becomes the lens through which scholars may study cultural behavior, for example, in 'studying culture and how culture gets enacted or acts out' (Miller 2009, 195), since culture finds expressions in food, as it does in language, art, science, customs, amongst others. The expression 'food-cultural studies' was first termed by Bob Ashley and his research colleagues (Ashley 2004, 1), and was based on a moment

³⁴ Bourdieu's *Distinction* was voted in 1998 one of the ten most influential sociological books of the twentieth century. In it he demonstrated how the field of food links up with many other areas of 'taste' (music, literature, furnishings, art, among others) in the deployment of cultural capital.

in the formation of the 'British' Cultural Studies when the polarization of culturalist and structuralist methods was partially resolved through the adaptation of a Gramscian hegemonic theory, which inherently shows a return to the fundamental cultural issue of the complex relationship between power structures of diverse kind and human agency.³⁵ As Steven Jones, one of the authors of *Food and Cultural Studies*, summarises, the book drew on two particular insights associated with Cultural Studies: firstly, the relationship between structure and agency and the way this was temporarily resolved through the 'turn to Gramsci', and, secondly, the 'circuit of culture' model suggested first by Richard Johnson (1986-1987) and developed by the Open University *Culture, Media and Identities* team.³⁶

At a first glance, they share with food studies a common concern with the meanings, values and theorisation of food, seeing that they draw on a range of disciplinary perspectives from the humanities and social sciences (anthropology and sociology in particular). Nevertheless, this coinage of food-cultural studies also relies on the need to observe some of the food studies field for Cultural Studies which, was felt to have lost interest in food and beverage over time. In fact, these are insights from 'British Cultural Studies', as Jones clarifies and adds that there may be an inconsequential national difference between food studies – which he would consider as a primarily American phenomenon, and mostly located, in disciplinary terms, in History and Anthropology departments – and food-cultural studies. Throughout my research, the slight national difference pointed out by Jones can be considered, but it is mainly the issues in the book, which are particularly foregrounded in cultural studies (as identity, difference, representation, and ideology), that might be less prominent in other schools of thought within food studies. On the whole, though, Jones concludes that there is no will to

³⁵ Concerning the designation 'British' Cultural Studies used by Ashley *et al*, there is a clear understanding of it in Graeme Turner's *British Cultural Studies: an introduction* (1990), in general, Part I with its theoretical principles and the brief history of the British Cultural Studies and, specifically, chapter six of Part II, "Ideology", where the inflections of European Marxism through Gramsci, for example, are central to what has been recognised as British Cultural Studies.

³⁶ A map of the 'circuits of culture' is first presented by Johnson in "What is Cultural Studies anyway?". These circuits include the original production of an object, the 'text' of the object itself and the texts that envelop that same object, along with the readings that these texts come across, and, consequently, the lived cultures of which those texts are a part. The map of the circuits of culture also gave way for Johnson to mention the distinctive approaches to cultural studies (production studies, textual studies, and lived cultures) and, therefore, he concluded that a cultural study should take advantage of all three approaches, whenever that is feasible.

emphasise their exceptionalism, as these researchers did not 'wish to emphasise either 'food studies' or 'cultural studies' – it was an attempt to synthesize them'.³⁷

Returning to the main guidelines of food studies' historical development, by the 1960s and 1970s, food was at the centre of the structuralist theory (mainly in the writings of Claude Lévi-Strauss and Mary Douglas), but in the 1980s, food was central to anthropology's turning away from structuralism, as the controversial work of Marvin Harris shows, especially *Good to Eat: Riddles of Food and Culture* (first published as *The Sacred Cow and the Abominable Pig* in 1985). In the early 1980s, Jack Goody identifies three main approaches: the functional, the structural, and the cultural.³⁸ In a very similar way, a decade later, Stephen Mennell, Anne Murcott, and Anneke van Otterloo present a quite similar scheme and suggest three main headings that can classify studies of food and eating: functionalism, structuralism, and developmentalism.³⁹ More recently, in 2004, Bob Ashley and his team-teaching colleagues of the module "The Culture of Food" (Nottingham Trent University) also identify three key approaches to the study of food culture: culturalist, structuralist, and Gramscian hegemonic theory (more related to the production phenomenon). This lead me to conclude that the combination of Goody, Mennell, and Ashley's schemes would present a five-category classification of approaches: functional, structural, developmental, cultural, and hegemonic. I should point out that the latter is implicit in Goody's discussion, even though he does not explicitly present it as one of the main approaches. In contrast, the structuralist one turns out to be a concept that is fundamental to the other three sets of main approaches.⁴⁰

Starting with the functionalist approach, there has been a strong influence on sociology and social anthropology from functionalist perspectives. This is clear when one

³⁷ Steven Jones considerations included here were offered via e-mail (November 2010).

³⁸ Apart from these three approaches, Goody also examines approaches which introduce historical and comparative data, even though he does not provide such approaches with a distinctive label. He also concludes that, despite the framework of opposition given to or assumed by the various approaches he identifies in the context of the sociology of cooking, 'they are not so much alternatives as complementary, at least in some of their aspects; a concern with 'meaning' (at whatever level) does not exclude a concern with the social role of food, which some see as an important kind of meaning. Indeed much of the disagreement lies not at the level of theoretical practice but of theoretical assertion' (Goody 1982, 33).

³⁹ In an analogous way to Goody's classificatory scheme, these authors underline the empiric or policy-oriented emphasis that some of the studies in food and eating have had; this has proven a difficulty when they are classified in terms of theoretical approach.

⁴⁰ In their third chapter, "Sociological Perspectives on Food and Eating", Beardsworth and Keil examine each one of these approaches (functionalist, structuralist, and developmental) by analysing their underlying logic and the type of questions they present, as they look at representative examples of their uses.

considers that functionalism is based upon an analogy between a society and an organic system. Just as a living body, society is seen as made up of a set of characteristics and institutions which contribute to the unity and stability of the social system – ‘society is seen in holistic terms and as having emergent properties which spring from the complex interrelationships and interdependency of its component parts’ (Beardsworth 1997, 58). Despite the relevance of the contributions to the development of functionalist perspectives by leading figures in sociology – Talcott Parsons with *The Social System*, Robert King Merton with *Social Theory and Social Structure*, Kingsley Davis with *Human Society*, and Émile Durkheim with *The Division of Labour in Society* – this approach has attracted an outburst of criticism. One of the criticisms sustains that it is an essentially static view of human social organization, failing to clarify on the presence of conflict and change in social systems. Another assumption that has been pointed out is the parallel between the functional needs of a social system and the physiological needs of a living body, since the former has the ability to endure broad structural changes, questioning such notion of a group of permanent and inevitable functional needs. Criticisms like these rendered functionalism out of fashion within sociology, even if functionalist interpretations remain implicitly at the core of much sociological analysis.

In fact, this functionalist approach to food and eating has noticeably been adopted within social anthropology, more precisely within the British school through one of its founders, Bronislaw Malinowski. As he studied how societies work, Malinowski’s observations led him to conclude that every aspect of social life and institutions were designed to serve the basic needs of human beings, i.e. humans’ primarily biological needs for food, shelter, and reproduction.⁴¹ These studies understand not only specific detailed ethnographic accounts of food production and allocation systems, but also general monographs on traditional peoples.⁴² Still, the questions one poses regarding the non-

⁴¹ We can read in the introduction:

But functionalism does not hinge only on sex and food or on both of these. The functional method recognizes, perhaps above all, that the satisfaction of biological needs implies and develops a system of derivative requirements. Man, living under conditions of culture, obtains his bread indirectly through cooperation and exchange. He has to procure it in complicated economic pursuits. Culture, therefore, creates new requirements for implements, weapons and means of transport, for social cooperation, for institutions that can ensure a normal and local ordering of human groups which allow an organized cooperation. (Malinowski 1987, lxxiv)

⁴² An example is Radcliffe-Brown’s discussion of the Andaman Islanders (1922), but Evans-Pritchard’s text from the late sixties, *The Nuer: A Description of the Models of Livelihood and Political Institutions of a Nilotic People*, is a classic which documents the political and ecological

nutritional role of food in society and in everyday life implicitly carry a functionalist perspective.

The second approach considered is the structuralist and the only one identified by Goody, Mennell, and Ashley's schemes. It differs from the functionalist mainly because it alleges to look beneath the 'surface' links (theorized by functionalism) into the 'deep structures' which underpin them, claiming to analyse the structure of human thought (Goody 1982, 17; Ashley 2004, 3-7). Structuralism, similarly to functionalism, rests on an analogy, only this one is linguistic: cultural surface features are considered as being generated equally to everyday speech as it is produced by an underlying system of rules (Saussure 1960). The well-known French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss examines a wide range of anthropological material and ethnographic data assuming that such surface features may lead to the acknowledgment of general, underlying patterns, i.e. the deep structures which represent the static foundations of the vast diversity of surface cultural forms one can observe. It is in his first volume of *Structural Anthropology* (1958) where he offers a comparative analysis of French and English cuisine, and in a similar way to Saussure's structuralist analysis of language as he broke it down into its smallest, phonemic units, Lévi-Strauss argues that it is possible to analyse the 'constituent elements', or 'gustemes' of different cuisines, and to distinguish 'certain structures of opposition and correlation' (Lévi-Strauss 1963a, 86).⁴³ In other words, he and his followers sought to understand food as a cultural system, an approach which undoubtedly recognises that 'taste' is culturally shaped and socially controlled. There is a considerable literature influenced by Lévi-Strauss' structuralist approach 'which treats food as analogous to language, and examines the ways in which its meanings can be grasped from an understanding of symbol and metaphor' (Caplan 1997, 1). In fact, he sustained that food was 'good to think with' and that deciphering the codes underlying such matters as food permitted the anthropologist to 'have reached a significant knowledge of the unconscious attitudes of the society or societies under consideration' (Lévi-Strauss 1963a, 87).⁴⁴

dimensions of Nuer society, especially chapters two, "Oecology", and four, "The political system".

⁴³ 'Comme la langue, il me semble que la cuisine d'une société est analysable en éléments constitutifs qu'on pourrait appeler dans ce cas des «gustèmes», lesquelles sont organisés selon certaines structures d'opposition et de corrélation' (Lévi-Strauss 1958, 99).

⁴⁴ '[...] nous serions en droit de conclure que nous avons atteint une valeur significative des attitudes inconscientes de la société, ou des sociétés en question' (Lévi-Strauss 1958, 100).

Contrary to functionalist focus on the social processes involved in producing, allocating and consuming food, the structuralist viewpoint poses on the rules and 'conventions that govern the ways in which food items are classified, prepared and combined with each other. The assumption is that these surface rules of cuisine are themselves manifestations of deeper, underlying structures' (Beardsworth 1997, 61). It is through these rules that when deciphered, as a language, it will clear the understanding of the organization of the human mind and society. Apart from Lévi-Strauss' use of this analogy to analyse the differences between what he terms the English and French cuisine,⁴⁵ the mostly quoted example of his structuralist approach to cuisine is the analysis of the transformations concerning the actual cooking of food, an operation that helps to explain the common feature of human thought involved in the relation between the distinct raw ingredients and cooked food and the distinct nature and culture (1964).⁴⁶ In other words, in the sphere of eating, cooking is what transforms nature (raw ingredients) into culture (acceptable food for humans). Such ideas are formulated in the well-known 'culinary triangle', a diagrammatic form explaining the transitions between nature and culture which are associated with food. It is the development of the basic triangle and Lévi-Strauss' justifications that seem to have become more idiosyncratic leading to some doubts regarding the analytical and heuristic usefulness of such a scheme. One of these critics is Mennell who believes these triangles to be worthless when trying to explain the foodways of European societies (Mennell 1996, 9). Furthermore, the account for the culinary code by using abstract and concrete triangles, and their drawing on to each other is unclear and at times self-contradictory. Also, when I searched for references to other important types of cooking, such as baking or smoking, I concluded that they were left out of the triangle, even though there was no decision criteria provided on the inclusion or exclusion, in this case, of each category from the triangle.⁴⁷

Another social anthropologist whose work has close links with the structuralist approach to food and eating, in a more familiar world than the exotic one analysed by

⁴⁵ '[...] distinguer la cuisine anglaise de la française' (Lévi-Strauss 1958, 99).

⁴⁶ Let us not forget that the English translation of Lévi-Strauss' *Le cru et le Cuit* to *The Raw and the Cooked* may be seen as perhaps incomplete, since 'cuit' in French does not necessarily mean 'cooked', but is also used to denote 'done', which does not require cooking. Therefore, Strauss' use of 'cuit' implies what culture and society do to the raw and make it 'done' or 'cooked'.

⁴⁷ This is not an original argument since we found similar critiques on the lack of convincing demonstrations of his theory. In 1969, three years after the publication of "The Culinary Triangle" and in the same year of *The Raw and the Cooked*, Shankman emphasised such a lack in "Le Rôti et le Bouilli: Levi-Strauss' Theory of Cannibalism".

Lévi-Strauss, is Mary Douglas. Her analysis is based on the structuralist idea that food can be treated as a code, whose encoded messages are about social events and relations like hierarchy, inclusion and exclusion, boundaries, and transactions across boundaries. In the highly praised *Purity and Danger* (1966), Douglas analyses the food taboos laid out in Leviticus and Deuteronomy, interpreting them as the ways in which tribal societies maintained their separateness and nearly armored their sense of group identity, a pattern that still exists and that Angela Carter illustrates in *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* when unveiling the river people's eating rituals, as will be seen in the third chapter. Douglas also saw that an awareness of food-related convictions is crucial to policy makers who must avoid violating taboos – the river people and its leader Nao-Kurai in Carter's novel understand this almost as a survival condition: 'I knew as well as if Nao-Kurai had sung it out that they proposed to kill me and eat me, like Snake, the Fire-Bringer, in the Fable, so that they would all learn how to read and write after a common feast where I would feature as the main dish on the menu at my own wedding breakfast' (*IDMDH* 91). Douglas takes up the idea of a framework of categories for the description of eating (from the uppermost category, the daily menu, to the base of the structure, the mouthful, the equivalent to the gastronomic morpheme) and applies it to provide a different insight into a structure that seems to underlie most meals in English cuisine. According to Beardsworth, the strength of Douglas use of structuralist perspectives is that she never loses sight of the fact that 'while food may be seen as a metaphor, a symbol or a vehicle of communication, it is, above all, a life-giving substance, and a meal is a physical as well as a social event' (Beardsworth 1997, 63).

Roland Barthes is a further obvious author when discussing the structuralist approach to food and eating. According to him an item of food constitutes an item of information and, thus, all foods are seen as signs in a system of communication, as in food advertising. The movements of connotations across groups and things suggest this major structuralist inheritance within food-cultural studies, found within Barthes' *Mythologies* (1957). In addition, from the Saussurean position that signification is produced through difference, Barthes moves to a structuralism in which signification is produced by the transference and combination of meaning – 'Substances, techniques of preparation, habits, all become part of a system of differences in signification; and as soon as this happens, we

have communication by way of food' (Barthes 2008, 30).⁴⁸ In fact, he proposes that an entire 'world' (social environment) is present in and signified by food, since his basic argument is that where there is meaning, there must be system. Moreover, conscious of the centrality of food to other forms of social behaviour, Barthes uses the metaphor of a 'veritable grammar of food' to illustrate the need to clarify the range of modern social activities. In a discussion of the business lunch, he observes that:

To eat is a behavior that develops beyond its own ends, replacing, summing up, and signaling other behaviors [...]. What are these other behaviors? Today we might say all of them: activity, works, sports, effort, leisure, celebration – every one of these situations is expressed through food. We might almost say that this 'polysemia' of food characterizes modernity. (*ibid.* 33)⁴⁹

Hence, instead of the idea that meaning is produced only through difference, this statement reveals a more nuanced structuralism which considers meaning as being produced through both differentiation and association. Yet, it also leaves us suspicious of the *completeness* of meaning.

Above all, 'cultural studies found a number of increasingly complex resources within structuralist-derived theories' and what 'the various structuralisms *share* is a valuable sense that meaning is not a wholly private experience, being instead the product of shared systems of signification' (Ashley 2004, 7). Nevertheless, the structuralist analysis' account of culture is seen as unsatisfactory because people's behaviour is clearly not entirely determined by existing structures, as some forms of structuralism acknowledge. Whereas Barthes acknowledges that each class eats a steak that holds that class' sense of itself ("Steak and Chips" in *Mythologies*), for example, there is a more clearly 'culturalist' turn within a structuralist framework that can be detected in Alison James' observation of children's sweet-eating in the North East of England (1982) – amongst others, she studied the diverse meanings of the dialect word 'ket' for adults and

⁴⁸ '[...] substances, techniques, usages entrent les uns et les autres dans un système de différences significatives, et dès lors la communication alimentaire est fondée' (Barthes 1961, 980).

⁴⁹ 'Se nourrir est une conduit qui se développe au dela de sa propre fin, qui remplace, resume ou signale d'autres conduites [...]. Quelles conduits? On pourrait dire aujourd'hui: toutes: l'activité, le labeur, le sport, l'effort, le loisir, la fête, chacune de ces situations a son expression alimentaire; et l'on pourrait presque dire que cette sorte de 'polysémie' de la nourriture caractérise la modernité' (Barthes 1961, 985).

children, as children's food culture exists simultaneously within and in opposition to a dominant familial food structure.⁵⁰

Actually, if one takes the structural analysis, it ends up being over-simple because of the need to be clear or cause impact. In view of that, it has been criticized for being anachronistic, for tending to offer a particular case as a general model, and for assuming that one city, or even one tribe or class, has a single mentality. Comparatively, models for studying food nowadays are likely to be much more complex, accommodating the mode of production and the class structure, as well as cultural factors, as changes in taste. In *The Loaded Table: Representations of Food in Roman Literature*, Gowers explains why the inspiring structural analysis did not suit her intended approach for the texts she discusses. Firstly, she points out the fact that because food is being presented in a literary form it has special consequences, as the meaning of food is rarely elemental and there is a multitude of obscuring factors overlaid on any universal codes. Also, there is the civilized reserve about choosing food as a literary subject, which is bound to influence the extent and nature of its representations (Gowers 1993, 5-6).

The difficulty of turning food into language goes back to the Greek and Latin vocabulary itself, which, as does the English, when referring to taste, appetite, consumption, fulfillment, pleasure, and repulsion was based mainly on physical metaphors. Gowers gives the example concerning the Greek word for 'pleasure' which came from 'sweet' and originally meant a taste of flavor, as the Latin word for 'wise' originally meant 'juicy or 'flavoursome'. Thus, she concludes:

This meant that the act of eating managed to steal its way even into the more abstract or sublimated writing that tried to avoid it. Eating was linguistically ubiquitous, which is an indication of how useful it was as a conceptual parallel. It is not enough, then, simply to extract the 'real' food from a description, as this ignores the engagement between material and metaphorical food that is often vitally significant. In fact, similarities and differences between eating and the less material pleasure of a meal, or between eating and experience in general, are a central part of the meaning of food in Roman literature. (*ibid.* 8)

Therefore, what makes a rigid literary food analysis intricate are all the diverse tensions between 'its trivial and significant, material and metaphorical, real and illusory aspects

⁵⁰ See Ashley for further information on the question of how these food cultures are created within dominant structures (Ashley 2004, 7-16).

[which] contribute as much to its meaning as any universal cultural code' (*ibid.* 9). Bearing in mind Gowers observations, it becomes clearer for me to emphasize my objective: to read texts in order to produce more meaning. In other words, interpreting and understanding the use of food in literary texts, in this case, Angela Carter's fictional work, with the purpose of creating a meaning out of the just mentioned inherent tensions.

On the other hand, this same author believes that Bakhtin's 'festive' model is helpful for the best part of Roman literature about food, since it effectively combines cultural history and literary criticism. Even though his model is aware that literary texts are the products of their cultural background, it also allows for the intensified concentration of meaning and distinctive experiments accredited by their extraordinary context. In the case of fiction, with its own concerns and idiosyncrasies, it cannot be separated from the environment in which it was produced.⁵¹ Still, as Gowers acknowledges, seeing a literary work as a manifesto for popular culture is too optimistic (*ibid.* 31).

In addition, it comes as no surprise Mennell's historicist criticism on Barthes' lack of any systematic historical perspective drawing upon the resources of his own common-sense views of historical knowledge. One of the criticisms on the structuralist perspective has to do with its focus on the idea of food because it rules out the analysis of the vital interconnections which articulate the human food system as a whole. Also, there seems to be no true concern about the links between food production and consumption and the wider economic order, in addition to the foodways and food consumption patterns. Moreover, in a similar way to functionalism, the structuralist approach is now unfashionable even if it continues to inform the sociological analysis of food an eating. Still, it is Mennell's criticism of the structuralist analysis (Mennell 1996, 13-14) that prevails by pointing out how the 'process-reduction' assumption (a tendency to assign prevailing significance to hypothetical underlying unchangeable entities) undermines attempts to understand the nature of the relevant ongoing changes in human food systems. As a result, Mennell emphasises what he designates as the developmental approach, where the analysis of change is central.

The developmental approach is better explained as 'a residual category into which can be placed a range of approaches which exhibit some common features and

⁵¹ When dealing with the treatment of food in certain Roman texts, for example, they can be read as a response to the monstrous entity of Rome (Gowers 1993, 12).

preoccupations' (Beardsworth 1997, 65). Its primary focus is social change, its directions, processes, and origins. Therefore, more importance is given to the existence of conflicts and contradictions in social systems in what concerns sociological analysis. Mennell's main contribution to the sociology of food fits the developmental category, comparing England and France's eating and taste – 'If the dominant structuralist approach to food preferences and avoidances does not have much to offer in understanding their origins, formation and processes of change over time, is there an alternative? If structuralism is too static, that points to the need for a developmental approach' (Mennell 1996, 15). His study bases its theory on the work of Norbert Elias (mainly *The Civilizing Process: The History of Manners*) in which it is clear that a protracted civilizing process has been at work in Western societies, underlying a switch from external constraints upon individuals towards the development of internalized ones which affects many areas in social life, including eating, and leading to what Mennell terms 'civilizing of appetite' (*ibid.* 20-39).⁵²

Another relevant contribution to the sociological and social anthropological analysis of food and eating has been made by the American anthropologist Marvin Harris (1986) who was highly influential in the development of cultural materialism. Whereas Mennell, Murcott and van Otterloo (1992) decide to relate him to the developmental approach (due to his anti-structuralist assertiveness), Harris describes his approach as a form of cultural materialism. Other critics (Beardsworth 1997, 66), however, say that Harris' form of explanation also has marked affinities with the functionalist approach because he is very critical of the notion that the symbolic dimensions of food and eating are dominant and that these dimensions can be considered autonomously from the nutritional, ecological and economic realities of human life. In Harris' series of essays he studies some food prohibitions or taboos which appear to have an essentially symbolic, moral or religious basis (like the prohibition on beef associated with Hinduism, the prohibition on pork associated with Judaism and Islam), as he tries to show that these ideas, and the nutritional practices derived from them, may be based on a strong practical logic. Such a line of thinking is consistent with the developmental approach, according to

⁵² Mennell uses 'civilized' in Elias's sense of 'civilization', since for the latter '*rational understanding* is not the motor of the *civilizing* of eating or of other behaviour' (Elias 2000, 99), since he considers the changes in patterns of social convention and cultural tastes to be understood as part of a wider change of society and 'manners': 'the close parallel between the 'civilizing' of eating and that of speech is in this respect highly instructive. It makes it clear that the change in behaviour at table was part of a much larger transformation of human feelings and attitudes' (*ibidem*).

Mennell and his co-authors (1992), as Harris attempts to describe the particular conditions and processes which have given rise to a specific feature of a food system or a nutritional culture.

Carter's piece "Elizabeth David: *English Bread and Yeast Cookery*" (first published in *New Society* in 1982 and then collected in *Expletives Deleted*) is a precise example of how relevant the symbolic dimensions of food are. In it Carter deconstructs the way Christianity's central metaphor – 'the bread and the wine' – becomes incomprehensible when read in nutritional terms: 'A sacramental meal of shared rice and saké, the nearest Chinese equivalents to the Mediterranean staples, suggests a very anaemic Christ indeed' (*ED* 96). Still, she keeps on using 'the sacramental quality inherent in bread in our culture' (*ibid.* 97), acknowledging how 'bread changes its function while retaining its symbolism' (*ibidem*) to conclude her poignant analysis of David's book in the following manner: 'It is appropriate she leaves religion alone since *English Bread and Yeast Cookery* is already proving to be something like the holy book of the cult of the True Loaf, in which the metaphoric halo surrounding bread is turned back on itself, the loaf becomes not foodstuff nor symbol but fetish' (*ibid.* 99). In fact, bread turns out to be a greatly charged figure in Carter's work, as will be seen in her novel *Nights at the Circus*, also published in the 1980s.

In what concerns culturalism, according to Ashley and his colleagues, Raymond Williams' work is generally characterized as tending towards this analytical method traditionally seen as incompatible with structuralism (Ashley 2004, 8-17). Thus, whereas structuralism tends towards the idea that mental and social structures exist prior to their human subjects, by organizing people's thoughts and ways of living, culturalism, on the other hand, recovers men and women making their own histories; i.e. while structuralism is anti-humanist in its argument that structures organize people, culturalism is mainly humanist in its insistence on the magnitude of subjective experience. Still, as one knows, cultural studies have been centrally concerned with power and when examining the field's joint articulation of power and agency I agree with Ashley's comment:

[...] despite their obvious differences in orientation, structuralism and culturalism share a common belief in a dominant ideology which is imposed from above and resisted from below. Such an account is an inadequate response to the changing distribution of power in any period. Rather than imposing their will, 'dominant' groups generally govern with some degree of consent from their inferiors, and the

maintenance of that consent is dependent upon a constant repositioning of the relationship between ruling and ruled. (Ashley 2004, 16-17)

In *Food and Cultural Studies* the pub is considered the most prominent space for culturalist analysis, as it is a paradigmatic space of white working-class Britishness. However, they point out that whereas culturalism strength lies in its condensed descriptions of people's lived experiences, the pub example leads to a central problem with the approach: 'In attempting to reconstruct an *authentic* form of working-class culture, culturalist writers are forced up against the highly structured conditions of cultural production in contemporary life' (*ibid.* 12). In other words, there are structures to bear in mind, like the industries and even government policies which produce new consumer groups, for they disrupt the sense that culture is the meanings and values arising from distinct social groups and classes together with the lived traditions through which these 'understandings are expressed' (*ibidem*). All in all, culturalism tends to be interested in the bounded spaces, like the teashop and the pub, paying particular attention to their evocative commonplace. Since it is known that cultural studies have been essentially concerned with power, the field's joint articulation of power and agency would lead to a third theory, based on a Gramscian perspective, according to Ashley and his team.

On the other hand, Goody, in his work, criticises a Lévi-Straussian approach for its emphasis on culture, and for failing to consider social relations and individual differences, as he also does with Douglas for disregarding internal social differentiation, as well as external socio-cultural influences, historical factors, and material elements. Even though Goody recognizes the value of culture, he states that the study of food and eating must involve political economy both at the micro-level (as the household), and the macro-level (as the formation and structure of states). The coded expressions of power embodied in eating are also identified by Carter, when she quotes Lévi-Strauss' *The Raw and the Cooked* as an epigraph to the chapter "Tomato Woman" of *Expletives Deleted* (1992); a chapter on cookery book reviews that according to Emma Parker, demonstrates 'her [Carter's] recognition that food does much more than merely feed the body; when, what, how, and with whom we eat is intrinsically related to a society's most fundamental beliefs and philosophies' (Parker 2002, 141). As Carter chooses to trail after Lévi-Strauss, there is evidence in her fiction 'that a culture can be understood through its food myths and metaphors and, furthermore, that consumption provides access to a society's deepest social unconscious' (*ibid.* 142).

Indeed, in Carter's early fiction, power is connoted by consumption and consumption is characterised by a struggle for power. I do agree with Parker, and will develop this issue further in the following chapter, especially in the ways that eating acts as a muffled way of expression that may turn explicit what is otherwise merely implicit and, in terms of gender relations, it reveals the machinery of power that patriarchy tries to disguise.⁵³ A clear example is the way Carter exposes what she terms 'an ill-concealed and ugly plot' by the wholefood entrepreneurs: 'to get women back where they belong. Up to their elbows in bread dough, engaged in that most arduous and everlasting of domestic chores, giving the family good, hearty, home-baked bread' (*ED* 95). In this piece, "Elizabeth David: *English Bread and Yeast Cookery*", Carter perceives a patriarchal conspiracy to bond and burden women to the kitchen hard-work behind a celebration of wholefoods. She even distinguishes the 'British housewife' from the other Europeans for being 'historically, the only one of all who found herself burdened with this back-breaking and infinitely boring task' (*ibidem*). This distinction and the power relations mirror the cultural diversity in relation to national diets:

The average black-clad Italian, French or Greek mama, if asked to make bread, has always tossed her head with a haughty sneer. What else are bakers for? For herself, she's got better things to do – the meat sauce, the *coq au vin*, the dolmas, and so on. Of course, it's always been more difficult, given British cuisine, for our housewives to get away with that excuse. Since we've got to have something to shine at, it turned out to be baked goods, didn't it? (*ibidem*)

A sensitivity to the complex relationship of domination and subordination is the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci's major legacy to cultural studies, being 'hegemony' the key term within Gramsci's conceptualization of how a ruling social group preserves its authority, as it deals exclusively with the imposition of a group's will. It is during the moments when a ruling group is exerting leadership, that subordinate groups actively subscribe to the values and objectives of their superiors, instead of passively accepting them (in the case of structuralism), resisting them, or remaining immune to them (in the

⁵³ Parker's text exemplifies very clearly the oppression and exploitation present in Carter's early fiction, before *The Bloody Chamber*, see Parker 2000, 144-152. This is claimed by her grounded on the fact that in the novels written before the collection of stories *The Bloody Chamber* it is not hard to identify the powerful who 'not only eat' but 'eat the powerless' (*ibid.* 146) and this becomes even more patent in *The Sadeian Woman* when she recalls Sade: 'The strong abuse, exploit and meatify the weak, says Sade. They must and will devour their natural prey' (*SW* 140).

case of culturalism). Hegemony has to be continually reproduced and renegotiated, as something which can be achieved, an ongoing process, operative even at those moments when a ruling power can no longer generate consent.

Critics like Ashley and co-authors believe that it is one of the gains of a food-cultural approach to see food and drink belonging as much to a dominion of civil society as to the economy – ‘while in subsistence or impoverished economies, the guarantee of food sources may cement a group’s rule, in societies which are largely free of famine the family meal, the barbecue or the nice cup of tea are cultural forms in which a ‘common sense’ about the world is reconstructed’ (Ashley 2004, 18). Even when considering the philosopher Ludwig Feuerbach’s dictum that ‘man is what he eats’, which Gramsci himself believes to contain a static view of ‘human nature’, he believes there is a need of a more dynamic version of food culture (Gramsci 1991, 354).⁵⁴ Still, I consider a Gramscian perspective to be mainly related to production,⁵⁵ even if there is more to which a Gramscian line could direct us, principally issues around globalization and national identity. A reading of Carter’s above mentioned piece, “Elizabeth David: *English Bread and Yeast Cookery*”, is also possible under this perspective, mainly due to its reference to the factory-made loaf regarded as forged and no longer the staff of life when compared to war-time needs. Bread changes but retains its symbolism and Carter underlines the difference between its production as a craft and a lady-hobby (treated like an art-object by Elizabeth David). She does this in her distinctive witty tone:

Here [in *English Bread and Yeast Cookery*] is, furthermore, the bitter-sweet bread of nostalgia, summoning up a bygone golden age of golden loaves, before Garfield Weston, of Allied Bakeries, the demon king in the real-bread scenario started buying up British bakeries in the 1950s and smirching with his filthy profane Canadian hands the grand old English loaf. (ED 99)

The approach used to study Carter’s work will be an intentionally diverse and longitudinal one, since sociological sources will often facilitate our reading, along with the

⁵⁴ On Gramsci’s ideas and writings that contributed to the cultural studies and their influence upon a major critical thinker, Stuart Hall, see James Proctor 2004, 35-56.

⁵⁵ An example is the Gramscian account of massifying food culture which starts with a change in productive techniques and quickly radiates out into two ‘superstructural’ issues – the psychological dimension of hegemony (the way in which a successful hegemonic system must be internalized by the subordinate subject, so that it becomes a part of their identity) and the ways in which these changes become diffused and embedded within, civil society, reflexively impacting upon the productive process itself (Ashley 2004, 20).

ideas and findings of neighbouring disciplines which will also be applied in order to support my analysis extending different perspectives. In other words, cultural studies have regularly constructed itself as a field with an open relationship with disciplinarity, mainly productive links with sociologies, histories and geographies of food. It is my belief that interdisciplinary studies are prone to yield the most fruitful results, confirming Atkins and Bowler's perspective that it is not possible to classify and categorize particular aspects of food as 'belonging' to a particular discipline (Atkins 2001, 324). Thus, there is a constant cross-referencing of material emphasising the inter-relationships, or multiple positioning, of knowledge about food in overlapping discourses. In fact, by considering food an object of study, something generally thought of as paradigmatically both consumable and mundane, I hope to have shown what cultural studies attempt to do and this presentation of different approaches in the arena of food and drink is just a piece of a Babel of other issues as theorists have intruded, and continue to intrude, onto the terrain of food culture (Ashley 2004, 25). Some areas of food studies research have been much more heavily researched than others. It is not my intention to work specifically in one of the more highly researched areas, but I also believe it difficult not to refer to at least some of the themes which are considered food studies staple, as, for example, themes like identity, consumption, agency and sustainability (Miller 2009, 59). The inter-relation of cultural and literary studies is part of this study on readings of food in Carter, whether in literary or non-literary texts.

Gastro-Criticism: Challenging the Boundaries of Traditional Disciplines.

One may inquire about the reason for a wealth of literature on food and food in literature to have gone untreated until so recently through the study of writing, as Ronald Tobin asked in his lecture *Thought for Food: Literature and Gastronomy* (19 November 2008).⁵⁶ This comes as a surprise because, like Tobin, I believe that few things seem to lend themselves more easily to conceptualization than the art and act of self-nourishment ('Is it possible that the very proximity of these functions explains the degree to which they are generally ignored or poorly understood?').⁵⁷ There is the need to become aware of a variety of principles and, although the analysis of taste and consumption has yet to be the object of a widely received theory, some motivating thought has been addressed to the essential operation of self-nourishment as an activity that replenishes the body, brings us together in a significant social rite and opens the door to the rest of the creation thought. Therefore, it intrinsically takes up our being elements from the outside world.

⁵⁶ There are many different ways of beginning a discussion of food in literature, but we share Jonathan David's statement when he mentions François Rabelais' novel *Gargantua and Pantagruel* (1532) as the text that comes to mind because its references to food appear on nearly every page: 'the social hierarchy of everyday life is leveled, and individuals become united in a festival in which all participants are actors, and communal laughter mocks everyday society' (David 2003,117). The feasts which accompany any festival celebrate the human encounter with and triumph over the world, in which food represents the entire process of cultivation, harvest, storage, trade, and preparation – 'Humanity devours the products of nature without being devoured by the world' (*ibidem*).

⁵⁷ As mentioned in the introduction, Ronald Tobin had already published an essay with the same information, "Qu'est-ce que la gastrocritique?" (2002/2004):

Mais, compte tenu de la profusion des oeuvres littéraires farcies d'ingrédients alimentaires, comment se fait-il que les études consacrées à la gastronomie littéraire soient si peu nombreuses? Après tout, peu de choses semblent se prêter plus aisément à la conceptualisation que l'art et l'acte de se nourrir. Est-il possible que ce soit la proximité de ces fonctions qui puisse fournir la meilleure explication du fait qu'elles soient généralement ignorées ou si mal comprises? (Tobin 2002/2004, 622-623)

Problems arise right from the beginning with the definition of consumption, similar to what Alan Warde had stressed in the late 1990s. In generic terms, consumption is a complex field, 'covering a multitude of activities and a range of goods and services, many of which are provided in non-commodified forms' (Warde 1997, 19). Some analyses concerned with the symbolic features of consumption use personal, private purchases in the marketplace as their focal point, even if there are several other sources of products that might be consumed when considering the purposes or functions of consumption. Urban sociologists examine the role of the state in providing the professed 'collective consumption' services. Clearly, to identify varied modes of provision of services contributing to consumption leads to the question of how these articulate and how they develop over time. Again Warde calls our attention to the way the analysis of the history of consumption is no longer encapsulated in the question 'who buys what?', but must become one of 'who obtains what services (or goods), under what conditions are those services delivered and to what use are they put?' It has become clear that the rhythms of provision are complex, varying, for instance, by country, region, class, gender, and generation (*ibidem*). This may be the reason why I feel that consumption is not a coherent conceptual field, since the activities and items involved are heterogeneous. What can be said about food may not apply to another field; as it is possible that class differences in one field of consumption are declining while in another they are increasing. It is also possible there may be some evident cases of growing neo-tribalism at the same time as the behaviour of the best part of the population tends towards greater uniformity. Therefore, it is a difficult task to decide between general theories applying to all spheres of consumption, especially when it comes to areas of study like food, which are extremely complex and heterogeneous.

It is clear that sociologists and anthropologists have carried on much of this form of research, since eating comprises the point of contact between the social and anthropological being.⁵⁸ Accordingly, food consumption is less about eating enough to survive, and more about social meanings – an example is Bourdieu's reflection on food as a means of expressing 'distinction', as he believes different social classes eat different

⁵⁸ Tobin had already pointed out: 'Beaucoup de recherches sur le développement de l'*homo coquus* ont été menées par des sociologues et surtout par des anthropologues parce que manger constitue un point nodal entre l'être social et l'être anthropologique' (Tobin 2002/2004, 623).

food items.⁵⁹ In fact, sociology has always been more concerned about the group differentiation coming up from social norms and relationships than purely from money income. Still, the best-established sociological accounts of consumption were firstly based on the principle that consumption practices were themselves (in advanced capitalist societies) an obvious reflection of class position. The reason for class position to constantly present some basis for diverse patterns of consumption behaviour is based on its inevitable association with the unequal distribution of income and wealth. Bourdieu's assumptions makes us see that there are other relevant factors, since he maintained that consumption reflected complex class distinctions in addition to the transmission of cultural capital. Nowadays, it is common belief that some class differences still exist, yet these have been declining, at a particularly fast rate since the 1970s, as some consider – even if 'evidence for this thesis, at least in the field of food, is not strong. [...] This is apparent to some extent in terms of the kinds of foodstuffs purchased and also, more significantly, in the persistence of social distance between classes' (*ibid.* 109).

Indeed, human behaviour seems to have evolved partly as interplay between eating behavior and cultural institutions. Furthermore, 'cultural traits, social institutions, national histories and individual attitudes cannot be entirely understood without an understanding also of how these have meshed our varied and peculiar modes of eating' (Tobin 2008).⁶⁰ Being into what he coins as gastro-criticism, Ronald Tobin believes that eating and ingesting is but one aspect of a whole art or science of gastronomy, undertaking a critical

⁵⁹ Bourdieu shows how eating habits convey class differences and how 'tastes in food also depend on the idea each class has of the body and of the effects of food on the body [...] and on the categories it uses to evaluate these effects some of which may be important for one class and ignored by another' (Bourdieu 1984, 190). The description is of the state of affairs in the 1970s and he implies that the social class structuring of the field and the ends to which it operates will persist over time, even if items consumed may change in the meantime. Still, I believe that Bourdieu's analysis, in spite of his claims to the contrary, applies most effectively to France, since it is believed that food in Britain probably has lower cultural significance than in France and, thus, class distinction has been expressed more obviously by accent, residence, education, and leisure pursuits than through eating. Yet, that was almost half a century ago, as now food is becoming ever more a significant cultural marker, an effect of greater media attention, more eating out and wider exposure to foreign cuisines – 'In this way Britain might be becoming more like France, and class distinctions may even have grown in the field of food' (Warde 1997, 41) as Harvey Levenstein also claims has been the case in the USA since 1960 ("The Golden Age of food processing: miracle whip über alles").

⁶⁰ 'Puisque le comportement humain a en fait évolué en grande partie grâce à l'interpénétration des pratiques alimentaires et des institutions culturelles, il n'est pas possible de déchiffrer les traits culturels, les institutions sociales et les attitudes individuelles sans tenir compte de leur relation avec nos façons diverses et souvent curieuses de nous nourrir' (Tobin 2002/2004, 623).

Actually, this idea had already been presented by Farb and Armelagos; see Farb 1980, 4.

significance to the preservation of the species.⁶¹ In fact, one has just to remember the symbolic history of the Judaeo-Christian which opens with the tasting of the fruit in the garden. Such an act of disobedience was ingestion and, accordingly, food was intimately involved in the breaking of the law (Tobin 1990, 2). This Judaeo-Christian tradition and the idea that ingestion has to do not only with metabolism but with morality are mentioned by Carter in relation to food in “The Cult of the True Loaf” a review of Elizabeth David’s *English Bread and Yeast Cookery* (1982) in her sharp critical way:

(When the Scots first clapped eyes on grain, they knew immediately what to do with it; they distilled it. No wonder the Scots proved averse to the doctrine of transubstantiation. A deity with flesh of oatcakes and blood composed of volatile spirit makes the mind reel.)

Nevertheless, part of the fuss we make when we think our bread – our BREAD – has been tampered with must, surely relate to the sacramental quality inherent in bread in our culture. Our bread, our daily bread, has been profaned with noxious additives. Although that bread is certainly no longer our ‘daily bread’ within the strict meaning of the prayer. (*ED* 97)

Carter’s reaction was also triggered by the fact that the large white sliced loaf became ever more popular in the 1960s. I think her references and concerns echo the 1961 invention of a new method of aerating bread to produce the standard slice (known as the Chorleywood process) in addition to the way industrial flour millers – which mainly sold the large white sliced loaves – bought up local independent bakers. Hence Carter’s suggestion of a tampered ‘daily bread’ with ‘must’, literally the unfermented or fermenting juice expressed from fruit, especially grapes. Even before such considerations, Carter had derided the nation’s choices usually interpreted ‘as the result of a lack of moral fibre, as if moral fibre is somehow related to roughage in the diet’ (*ibid.* 94).

Going back to the symbolic Judaeo-Christian idea of the fruit in the garden, in Carter’s second novel, *The Magic Toyshop* (1967), the fifteen year old heroine, Melanie, goes out on an unexpected midnight walk in the garden, wearing her mother’s wedding dress, and this reveals itself as the start of a series of disasters ensued by her need to return home by climbing an apple tree (naked, she leaves the wedding dress behind, trapped in

⁶¹ I decided to use the broader term ‘gastro-criticism’ instead of ‘sitocriticism’ (an expression coined by Beatrice Fink in 1987 which comes from the Greek *sitos* or wheat and, thus, by extension, food) as Tobin underlined (Tobin 1990, 168, n.10).

the tree branches) in the black of the moon. The consequent adversities are revealed through the lifestyle Melanie was meant to have, which is a far and further away dreamlike vision when compared to the situation she finds herself in, in her Uncle Philip's house, where she becomes more aware of her sexuality, as well.⁶² Lorna Sage suggests that 'despite the appearances [in this novel], the past is the nearest route to the future' (Sage 1994a, 16). After her parents sudden death, Melanie and her siblings, Jonathan and Victoria, are sent to live with their mother's brother, the toy-maker. This reality is much more distant from the comfortable way of life they were used to, as rural middle-class, than the plain train ride that led them there; such distance is depicted not only in terms of comfort areas that are so far apart, but in every commodity, such as food.

Food is used to portray both worlds. Thus, different beverages characterize different realities for Melanie; tea seems to be a constant presence in Uncle Philip's house and it becomes clear once Melanie and her siblings meet Aunt Margaret's brothers, Francie and Finn, at the train station – 'two young men [...] drinking tea from cardboard cups and unhurried, slow, rustic movements' (*MT* 33); 'they drank their tea' (*ibid.* 34). On the other hand, coffee and its 'sophistication' are presented as belonging to another segment of society – 'And tea, tea, tea with everything, just when she [Melanie] had begun to appreciate the sophistication of coffee' (*ibid.* 77) – as Melanie understands it, when she daydreams about independence, a condition paralleled only by the independence portrayed and implied by magazines – 'like the girls in stories in magazines. Brewing Nescafé on her own gas-ring and buying solitary quarter pounds of cheese for herself' (*ibid.* 78). Another beverage that is casually mentioned and clearly characterizes Melanie's economical and social way of life is 'orange juice and ice-cubes' taken from the refrigerator (*ibid.* 6), a kitchen appliance available to almost every household.⁶³ Food

⁶² When Robin Tobin mentions the Judaeo-Christian tradition he also evidences how digestion precedes sexual shame, in a way that may be used to study Melanie's evolution during *The Magic Toyshop*:

L'histoire symbolique de la tradition judéo-chrétienne, s'ouvrant sur l'épisode d'Adam mangeant le fruit défendu, montre que l'ingestion précède la honte sexuelle. Les deux actes sont liés par la bouche, cette zone érogène qui, ayant trouvé son psychanalyste en Freud, n'a pas encore son véritable historien; la connexion est telle qu'on se sert du même vocabulaire pour décrire l'ingestion et la satisfaction sexuelle. En considérant le péché originel comme une manifestation de vanité, il semble qu'on a occulté le fait que le premier acte de désobéissance était un acte d'ingestion et que, depuis, l'histoire de l'humanité est celle du rapport intime qui lie gastronomie et institutions culturelles. (Tobin 2002/2004, 624)

⁶³ Already during the 1920s and 1930s, it became common for electric refrigerators to include a freezer section that had an ice cube compartment with trays.

seems to have been 'present' in the act of reading itself as Melanie recalls those leisurely times using memories of sweetness: 'Some of her own childhood seemed trapped in the pages on which she had dribbled chocolate and, years ago, marked specially loved pages with sweetpapers and scraps of hair-ribbon' (*ibid.* 91; my emphasis).

Therefore, food is always part of Melanie's dreams and wishes for it gives the impression to have the power to soothe her and simultaneously to provide sustenance in a more spiritual way. This is seen through the use of senses such as touch, taste, smell, and sight: 'A series of pictures followed one another through her [Melanie's] mind. Lamp-lit faces around a table where cold-weather food steamed, hearty stews and puddings running with golden syrup' (*ibid.* 93-94; my emphasis). Even Melanie's previous diet reflects itself on her robust physical condition when compared to that of Aunt Margaret – 'She [Melanie] knew and trusted her firm, quick, resilient body, fed on wholesome food all its life, washed and tended so carefully. Aunt Margaret was as fragile as the first white shoots put trembling out by a bulb kept in a pot in a dark airing-cupboard' (*ibid.* 138; my emphasis). The adjectives are used here as a strong evidence of someone who has taken care of, fed, 'washed and tended' only to be emphasized by the adverb 'carefully'.

Uncle Philip also stresses Melanie's vigor but from his own perspective: 'You're well built, for fifteen. [...] It's all that free milk and orange juice that does it' (*ibid.* 143). Such perspective is recalled and commented by Aunt Margaret's youngest brother, Finn, about the use of specific cutlery – 'You [Melanie] represent the enemy, who use toilet paper and fish knives' (*ibid.* 152) – even if Melanie denies making use of that particular piece of cutlery. In fact, it was a different lifestyle which Melanie cannot disregard and her uncle's remark characterizes his disdain for such a way of life, as he does regarding some type of socially high placed clients that come to his shop. Furthermore, when Melanie has to face an analogous situation, she acts towards her siblings in a way that seems to compensate for their 'loss' and her own loss – as at the very beginning of the train journey 'She [Victoria] began to eat them at once, after Melanie had opened the tin for her. It was wrong for her to eat sweets so early in the day but Melanie did not have the heart to stop her' (*ibid.* 159). These are the circumstances where chocolate is used, in a typical manner, as a substitute for warmth, love, comfort and from the very beginning Melanie makes sure her siblings do not lack them to the degree that she is able to provide those feelings: either by buying it ('I had a pound. But I bought milk and nut chocolate with it' (*ibid.* 35)) or by

allowing Victoria to have her way in what concerns sweets. In *The Magic Toyshop* one starts to picture how Carter is aware that eating embodies coded expressions of power.

Therefore, one can see how to look for ethic gastronomical metaphors encoded in literature is to discover ultimately that flesh has become the word that there is a body language in literary discourse. Still, it comes as natural to find literature reflecting the two acts by which the human species distinguishes itself: to eat rather than to feed, and to speak or write – ‘we perform oral acts, then, in the course of a meal whose culinary grammar has determined the choice, preparation and consumption of food’ (Tobin 1990, 3).⁶⁴ Yet, just as one is nourished by food, so is one restored by dreams, symbols, myths, signs of all kinds. This is why it is possible to see the strong ties between gastronomy and literature: eating is paradigmatic of literary acts, to imagine or dream, to nourish intellectually, to dominate or devour someone, to know oneself – gastronomy can be considered the art of appearance. In view of that, gastro-criticism serves to place in the foreground both of the arts with which it deals and by doing it reveals the poet and the cook as ‘supreme creators of metamorphoses and illusion’. Accordingly, these two make something new out of something in existence ‘through a process of selection, renovation, and imagination [since] they perform an archetypal, sacred, and creative act that produces original, complex products which change the consumer emotionally, intellectually, and physically’ (*ibid.* 4).⁶⁵

Still on Ronald Tobin’s gastronomic study of Molière’s comedies, he states that he at once discovered the need of a different approach for each of the ten plays he considered fruitful to undertake. Such awareness underscored the pluridisciplinary nature of his method as he claims that ‘if there is an approach that challenges the boundaries of traditional disciplines it is surely gastro-criticism with its [...] network of techniques supporting a concept’ (Tobin 2008).⁶⁶ So it happens with Carter and the way I feel is best

⁶⁴ ‘Chercher la métaphore gastronomique encodée dans un texte littéraire revient donc à découvrir que la chair s’est transformée en logos et que le corps est parlant. Et pourtant qu’y a-t-il de plus normal que de retrouver inscrits dans la littérature les deux actes par lesquels se distingue l’espèce humaine: manger et parler?’ (Tobin 2002/2004, 624).

⁶⁵ ‘La gastrocritique est conçue pour mettre en relief le fait que poète et cuisinier travaillent tous deux à créer la métamorphose et l’illusion. [...] Le chef et le poète sont tous deux des bricoleurs, et grâce à un procédé de sélection, de rénovation et d’imagination, ils initient un acte sacré et éminemment créateur qui engendre des produits originaux et complexes, dotés du pouvoir de transformer le consommateur sur les plans physique, émotionnel et intellectuel’ (Tobin 2002/2004, 624-625).

⁶⁶ ‘Mes recherches pratiques m’ont obligé à emprunter une voie d’approche différente pour chacune des autres pièces, ce qui ne fait que mettre davantage en évidence le caractère

in order to approach her work. In a way, I am adopting an interdisciplinary approach, just as Tobin adopted the so called gastro-criticism that draws upon anthropology, sociology, semiotics, history, and literary studies. He did use it to elucidate the role of food, service, spectacle, diet, ingestion, and digestion in several works drawn from a variety of national literatures.

I believe it is the interdisciplinarity of gastro-criticism which can act in accordance with this study, for it is based on the relation between gastronomy and literary analysis.⁶⁷ One cannot disregard the gastrological legacy left by the thinkers mentioned in this chapter – Claude Lévi-Strauss, Mary Douglas, Roland Barthes, Jack Goody, and Pierre Bourdieu, among others – as some literary critics felt their weight when exploring the diverse codes ‘that underlie the use of food motifs and the depiction of fictional meals in works of literature’ (LeBlanc 2009, 8). My new perspective on Carter’s texts can become a way of reading others, even if there is already some work done in this area.⁶⁸ Therefore, it will be innovative for literature to reread texts bearing in mind the gastro-criticism approach. So far, gastro-critical studies have progressively revealed how the food chosen by literary characters sheds light on the characters’ personality and psychology, as well as the sociology and cultural values of the world they inhabit (*ibidem*). On the other hand, for food-studies, it possibly helps to understand how literature may clarify its domain in relation to other cultural practices, since the act of eating implies essentially links whose

pluridisciplinaire de ma méthode. La gastrocritique n’est pas une grille fixe; elle est plutôt, comme toute approche expérimentale, un réseau de techniques mis au service d’un concept’ (Tobin 2002/2004, 628).

⁶⁷ Such interdisciplinarity is once again underlined by Tobin to which he adds the idea that it is a method which presupposes a vast research within the human sciences, exploring the bonds between food and art: ‘mais puisque le rapport entre mets et mots n’a pas été suffisamment exploré, il a semblé nécessaire de concevoir une approche pluridisciplinaire qui relie gastronomie et critique littéraire. Cette méthode suppose une vaste entreprise de recherche dans les sciences humaines qui explore les liens entre l’alimentation et l’art’ (Tobin 2002/2004, 624).

⁶⁸ Lorna Piatti-Farnell, for instance, presented a study which attempted to explore a wide range of culinary contexts and, as such, she concludes the following:

Perspectives of food in contemporary American fiction have emerged as bound up, explicitly or implicitly, with modes of political economy and forms of communal and national organization. [...] confirming that eating ‘occupies an unrivalled centrality’ in human lives, the texts studied have underlined the importance of food when thinking about such conceptual fields as the body, subjectivity, memory, gender, sexuality, class structures, race, ethnicity, culture and national identity. (Piatti-Farnell 2011, 149)

relevance should not be minimized.⁶⁹ Consequently, this will prove to be a contribution of literature to those interested in representations of food and its performances.

⁶⁹ The need of assurance that food indeed cuts across numerous conceptual frontiers leading naturally to pluridisciplinary analysis is felt by Tobin. He also claims that gastro-criticism is without a doubt a field of research with the right to question the limits imposed by the traditional academic disciplines, since it shows the vast symbolic range offered by the act of nourishment:

Or manger suppose forcément un rapport, et l'étude des actes culinaires et gustatoires ne doit pas minimiser l'importance de ces liens. On n'a qu'à consulter l'admirable recueil *Pratiques et discours alimentaires à la Renaissance* 9, pour s'assurer que c'est en ce que l'alimentation traverse tant de frontières conceptuelles qu'elle se prête tout naturellement à des analyses pluridisciplinaires. En fait, s'il existe un champ de recherche qui s'arroge le droit d'interroger les limites imposées par les disciplines académiques traditionnelles, c'est sûrement à la gastrocritique que reviendra l'honneur de démontrer le vaste éventail symbolique offert par l'acte de se nourrir. (Tobin 2002/2004, 624)

Reviews	Collections & Exercises	Novels	Writings Date
		<i>Shadow Dance</i>	1966
		<i>The Magic Toyshop</i>	1967
		<i>Heroes and Villains</i>	1969
		<i>The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman</i>	1972
		<i>The Passion of New Eve</i>	1977
	<i>The Bloody Chamber</i>		1979
	<i>The Sadeian Woman</i>		
<i>"Elizabeth David: English Bread and Yeast Cookery"</i>			1982
		<i>Nights at the Circus</i>	1984
		<i>Wise Children</i>	1991
	<i>Expletives Deleted</i>		1992

Table 1 – Chronology of Angela Carter’s writings mentioned in the first chapter.

II.

Early Writings.

'We carry our history on our tongues'

‘What is more, we carry our history on our tongues and the history of the British Empire came to exercise a curious kind of brake upon our expression in the English language, as it became less and less the instrument of feeling and more and more that of propaganda.’

(Carter, “A Happy Bloomsday” *SL* 538)

Moving from the general food studies to the more particular food-cultural studies and finally to the neoteric approach of gastro-criticism, the opening chapter points out how various disciplines have been, and still are, concerned about food issues. As already stated, the literary readings can lead to new understandings within this field of studies albeit the representations of food in literature have gone untreated until recently. When reading Angela Carter's fictional and non-fictional work in view of such framing and of the powerful bond between culinary and literature, I consider her work to reveal a new understanding of the process of creation. My choice here of 'culinary' instead of 'gastronomy' (the expression preferred by Ronald Tobin) for the relation between the creative art and science of cooking and literature echoes precisely the artistic performance of creators. Even if Carter manifestly perceives the power of a cultural heritage, she uses it to create anew by the process of selection and reconstruction. Through a pungent perception she produces complex intricate work which aims at changing the reader's acuity on his own bequest.

As mentioned in the introduction, some writing about the theme of food in Carter's fiction has been previously made: first Margaret Atwood uses the relation between food and sexuality in the stories published in *The Bloody Chamber* as the focal point of her essay "Running with the Tigers" (1994); Sarah Sceats in "The infernal appetites of Angela Carter" (1997) analyses the way Carter draws on food to embody moral values; in "The Consumption of Angela Carter: Women, Food, and Power" (2000) Emma Parker focuses on reading Carter's novels by highlighting the changing representation of the relation between women, food, and power; and more recently, Abigail Dennis published her essay "'The Spectacle of her Gluttony': The Performance of Female Appetite and the Bakhtinian Grotesque in Angela Carter's *Nights at the Circus*" (2008).

In this study, Carter's writings are presented in three distinct moments of production mirroring three stages in her life which, in fact, roughly match the 1960s, the 1970s, and the 1980s until her sudden death at the beginning of the 1990s. The turning

point in Carter’s career as a writer was definitively her experience in Japan from 1969 to 1972. Such a reading is not original and Lorna Sage’s monograph on Carter’s work was the first to read it in that way. In *Angela Carter* (1994) Sage develops what she had already presented in *Granta 41* (1992) and designates these periods as “Beginning”, “Middle”, and “Ending”. I fully agree with this perspective and have decided on a three partition structure for this study: “Early Writings”, “Self-reflexive Writings”, and “Late Writings”.¹ Others, like Emma Parker, have chosen a similar partition even if some of the texts included in each phase of Carter’s writing differ from mine – namely when Parker considers *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* (1972) to be part of Carter’s early writings, as I will explain in the following chapter.

This chapter will demonstrate that through her early writings one may witness Carter’s growing narrative technique. A maturing of this technique will be patent in the writings studied in the next chapter, as she somehow undergoes a process of separation from the British literary scene. Finally, the last chapter will focus on writings that prove her establishment as a writer who dies untimely. In all these three chapters I will focus not only on Carter’s novels, but on her short narratives, fictional and non-fictional, as well as her interviews and other neglected writings. This is easily understood when we consider Carter’s wide-ranging work: from the most well known novels and stories, to the film scripts, the not so studied journalistic pieces, book reviews, radio plays, and the most recently revealed poems and postcards.² My analysis will run through her writing in different registers where similar expressions of language are identifiable. If the aim is to use the language inventively to accentuate the effect of what is being said, then Carter does it in a unique voice which evolves throughout the three decades she gets published.

The first of the above mentioned three chapters, entitled “Early Writings”, covers approximately the second half of the 1960s, particularly from the publication of Carter’s first novel *Shadow Dance* in 1966 to her visit to Japan in 1969 and subsequent move to

¹ The choice of “Late Writings” over “Final Writings” has to do precisely with her sudden death.

² The news on a series of unknown poems by Carter was published in 13 March 2011 in *The Observer*. The journalist, Vanessa Thorpe, commented on how these poems were discovered at Carter’s London home, having, thus, revealed a previously unknown passion that would cast new light on her development as a novelist. Thorpe quotes Carter’s friend, Salman Rushdie on this matter: ‘She came out of the very un-English tradition of Grimm fairy stories and European Gothic and then made a kind of English version of this [...]. I did always think of her as a magical writer and in these poems you see how much she was already there. All the iconography of her later fabulism seems to be there’ (Thorpe 2011, 21). However, Sarah gamble had already made a presentation on Carter’s poems in a conference entitled *Angela Carter: A Critical Exploration* at the University of Northampton in 2009 (5-6 June).

this Asian country. The choice of ‘We carry our history on our tongues’ as a subtitle for this chapter encompasses the idea of her writing having expressed a present voice right from the 1960s, even though Carter concludes this essay in 1982 (“A Happy Bloomsday”), the third decade of her literary production.³ Through those words, she remarked upon the degree to which Britain’s political and cultural geocentrism constricted the imagination along with its expression in English. The fact that Carter ponders on this in the early 1980s, when she was already celebrating lowbrow forms and languages, makes it even more relevant when studying her early writings – before she experienced living outside the British Empire. I believe that same feeling of political and cultural constriction was already evident in those writings. Let us not forget that even if the 1960s marked Carter’s political awakening, she called these times ‘wilfully eccentric and whimsical’ (Clapp 2012, 51).

She is continually enthralled by her power as writer, since writing was for Carter, according to Sage, an act that ‘took you out of your skin, out of your background, gender, class, nationality...’ (Sage 1994a, 2). Carter’s thought on the celebration of James Joyce’s centenary could not have missed the power of language, specifically the way it was used by this Irish writer as it bears a teasing feeling of the colonised. Joyce never took English seriously and that is what Carter believes ought to be done in order to progress. In fact, we believe that it is not Carter’s intention to disestablish English, similarly to Joyce, but as she confesses, regardless of Joyce’s intention and being herself a ‘writer in post-imperialist Britain’, his writing proved how to tell the ‘story of whatever it is that is going to happen next’ (“A Happy Bloomsday” *SL* 539). He freed her to use the Word as profane and not as if it were holy.

All in all, the corpus and Carter’s growing and maturing style are reflected on through literary lenses, from what I regard as a spiraling movement. Such movement spirals to a more autonomous writing in her narrative practices, and the conducting line will be the representations of food, from the preparation to the consumption of food. In other words, the literary analysis of Carter’s work will consider the gastronomical dimension proposed by Tobin, and from a methodological perspective, it will be taken into

³ In an interview to John Haffenden in the mid 1980s, Carter notes that she always followed politics and the 1960s seem to be a shifting period: ‘I don’t think I voted until the late 1960s, but that was partly the result of a political decision not to vote. There comes a moment when many of the things of which you have a theoretical knowledge actually start to apply to oneself’ (Haffenden 1985, 78). As Gamble points out, part of such increased engagement with the political process was definitely a result of Carter’s growing feminist awareness (Gamble 2006a, 77).

consideration how Carter used representations of food to characterise characters.⁴ It is through such usage that I believe lies the progressive maturing of her writing and even if she refers to fiction in the following statement, it is a thought applicable to most her writing: ‘One of the functions of fiction is to try to present a set of ideas in fictional prose, but at the same time, fiction should be open-ended; you bring your own history to it and read it on your own terms’ (Watts 1985, 163).

⁴ What must be stressed here is that such methodological perspective is centred on the characters in a literary analysis, not necessarily excluding other narrative categories, as time and space, which help to characterise the characters.

Awareness and Experimenting in the 1960s.

‘This is how *I* make potato soup’ (FT x)

From Carter’s early writings any reader will immediately feel her awareness of the importance of the second decade after World War Two.⁵ Such awareness implies knowledge gained not only through her own perceptions, but also via diverse means of information. These early writings prove to be very self-conscious of the 1960s as a turning-point decade. Observant of the social and artistic circumstances of the 1960s, Carter could not but begin to conduct experiments, like any writer who aims at being acknowledged as an artistic innovator.⁶ Because, in fact, she had a position in the politics of textuality, I have to agree with Lorna Sage’s conclusion that ‘she [Carter] went in for the proliferation, rather than the death, of the author’ (Sage 1994a, 58). Alerting to history’s relevance in the self, Carter explains the writer’s capability to create, apropos of fairy tales and their makers in *The Virago Book of Fairy Tales* (1990):

[fairy tales] are also anonymous and genderless. [...] Ours is a highly individualized culture, with a great faith in the work of art as a unique one-off, and the artist as an original, a godlike and inspired creator of unique one-offs. But fairy tales are not like that, nor are their makers. Who first invented meatballs? In what country? Is there a definitive recipe for potato soup? Think in terms of domestic arts. ‘This is how *I* make potato soup’. (FT x)

⁵ The Second World War (1939-1945) marked not only her infancy, as she was born in 1940, but also the moment Carter ‘came of age’ (SL 32) in her own words – in the piece “Fools are my theme” (1982) now collected in *Shaking a Leg*.

⁶ Sarah Gamble’s *The Fiction of Angela Carter* (2001) is right from the beginning presented as a guide concerned with charting critical discussions of Carter as an artistic innovator, among other areas of discussion (Gamble 2001, 11).

One may question whether the reference to the domestic arts parallels her declaration ‘I’m a domestic person’ (Clapp 2012, 42), since it could be another of Carter’s statements where precision is exhibited in an ironic manner. Nevertheless, the ‘I’ she used is clearly a product as well as the potato soup, and both set the tone to this chapter which points towards the importance of the relation between production and consequent consumption of food in narrative.

For this first part of the second chapter I decided on the above mentioned subtitle – ‘This is how I make potato soup’ – from *The Virago Book of Fairy Tales* precisely because by not excluding any genre of writing for being considered inferior, I am in fact following Carter’s idea of challenging partitions of taste. This reckoning may be traced all through her career as she stated in an interview given to Haffenden: ‘I think I must have started very early on to regard the whole of Western European culture as a kind of folklore. I had a perfectly regular education, and indeed I’m a rather booksy person, but I do tend to regard all aspects of culture as coming in on the same level’ (Haffenden 1984, 36). Such comment reflected on her ‘eclectic borrowing from a variety of different sources, genres and modes’ (Gamble 2001, 9), as well as it did on the relevance of the diverse genres she chose to use. Even though I selected Carter’s second novel, *The Magic Toyshop* (1967), to centre my study of how she is finding her authorial voice, I will not neglect other writings, like the journalistic pieces – Carter was actually fond of the idea that journalism ran through her veins (Clapp 2012, 36). Therefore, I will pay close attention to “Food Fetiches, review of Barbara Tims (ed.), *Food in Vogue: Six Decades of Cooking and Entertaining*” (first published in *New Society* 1977 and latter collected in *Expletives Deleted*) in the last part of the present chapter. This piece proves to be a relevant retrospective on what is just another way of enouncing the grayish of the 1960s pertaining to consumption, gender, and class in England.⁷ All in all, *The Magic Toyshop* will be the focal point of this chapter, and from this novel irradiates references to other writings (i.e. there will be a simultaneous convergence to and irradiation from *The Magic Toyshop*).

⁷ Such grayish spirit translates into a crisis of identity Britain was experiencing in the 1960s, along with the nation’s loss of international status. To this feeling Carter answers with ‘a satirical exploration of the ways in which a new sense of nationalism can be (re)constructed’ (Gamble 2006a, 90) in *The Magic Toyshop* and *Heroes and Villains*.

As pointed out by Carter herself and her critics, the 1960s are a significant decade. Carter was a young woman and later, in "Notes from the Front Line" (1983), she puts on view the usual propensity to fail to recognize the experience of that decade, in particular for women, and underlines the relevance of the end of this period: 'there was a brief period of public philosophical awareness that occurs only very occasionally in human history; when, truly, it felt like Year One, when all that was holy was in the process of being profaned and we were attempting to grapple with the real relations between human beings' ("Notes" 70). Sarah Gamble has argued that this was a spirit Carter tried hard to maintain alive in her work, since she in no way brought to an end 'questioning and challenging consensual beliefs of any kind' (Gamble 2001, 9). The distance in time, as a rule, permits a new pondering on one's growth, or at least it allows for a clearer review of the past.

In relation to Carter's positions in the 1960s, they are more understandable when she ponders on them almost a decade later. In a letter to Sage one witnesses how the first years were for her a kind of curious room, in a similar way to her own house which was a cabinet of curiosities. Writing to her friend Sage in 1977, Carter senses her transformation as a reconstruction and not a revolution for itself: 'I'm more interested in socialist reconstruction *after* the revolution itself, which seems to mark me out of my peers' (Sage 1994a, 22). This awareness of what had been happening could not but lead her to experiment with what was left after those dramatic changes. As a confessed socialist, Carter shows an uncompromising awareness of reality, portrayed in her writings, fictional and non-fictional (to be seen further ahead). That awareness is paralleled by a desire to induce the reader to confront the sometimes unpleasant responsibilities with resolution and assurance when faced with a ruthless material world. I believe such commitment, which is visible throughout her career, can be traced back to her early writings – '*this* world is all that there is, and in order to question the nature of reality one must move from a strongly grounded base in what constitutes material reality' (Carter 1998, 25). Therefore, the above mentioned reconstruction tones with Carter's own description of herself as a 'demythologiser'. If one acknowledges this assumption as a clarification of Carter's perception of her role as a writer, one also recognizes, as Gamble does, that she writes to blow apart the 'fictions that regulate our everyday existences. Put more simply, she writes to make us think' (Gamble 2001, 10).

When reading Carter’s literary work of the 1960s, one perceives how ephemeral this decade was, as is later stressed by herself in “Truly, It Felt Like Year One” (1988). It is clear that at the end of the 1980s Carter would portray the 1960s with a strong sense of nostalgia ‘for an era which seemed to promise so much but which was in actuality so brief’ (Gamble 2006a, 58). In the mentioned article, the 1960s are remembered as a festivity, even if her writings from this decade have as a focal point the extreme form of skepticism that denies the costs of existing in a decade in which ‘everyday life [...] took on the air of a continuous improvisation. [...] *Carpe diem*. Pleasure’ (“Year One” 212).⁸ Living such an exciting experience may be concurrently somehow terrifying as revealed in Carter’s early writings: ‘[the Bristol Trilogy] shows clearly how the sixties were a laboratory – or perhaps, rather, a battlefield – in the relativisation of all kinds of values: aesthetic, moral, spiritual, economic, political’ (O’Day 1994, 57).

Evidently, Carter is also aware of the risks she takes when putting herself up away from her peers, the mainstream centre. At the same time, she must find a balance not to cross over to a situation when her message becomes unintelligible.⁹ Carter is conscious of this and in what concerns her answer to reception and recognition she does care about prizes because they also lead to having readers. The readers can notice the almost teasing and seditious representation of her contemporary culture as a prominent trait of her early writings. It is a playfulness which the 1970s writings did not follow, as the 1960s Camp sensibility gave way to the ‘robust political and performative role’ (Sage 1994a, 40) played by Carter herself.¹⁰ Generally known as ‘the Bristol Trilogy’ – her three novels *Shadow Dance* (1966), *Several Perceptions* (1968) and *Love* (1971) – it offers realist representations of the 1960s ‘provincial bohemia’ with its themes and motifs which

⁸ Gerard DeGroot, a professor of modern history, argues precisely that the conventional view of the 1960s as a time of ripe and productive counter-culturalism and social revolution is a deception. He states that this turbulent decade led to almost no positive advances and, as such, DeGroot’s perspectives embrace an interesting revisionist polemic which would not be far from Carter’s perceptions mentioned above. In fact, DeGroot insists that at their most intense, the 1960s had the uncanny quality of being equivalent to a life inside a modernist work of art. It is to his credit, that he quotes several people who discussed that quality of the 1960s and among them is Carter (DeGroot 2008, 139).

⁹ Such awareness has also been pointed out by Gamble regarding the beautiful and decadent figure of the dandy in Carter’s early novels:

[...] Carter’s awareness of the risks she runs constructing herself as marginal subject, who must not only resist the pull towards the centre and reintegration with the mainstream, but also the risky drive to push still further outwards, until one has passed entirely beyond the boundaries of communication and meaningfulness. (Gamble 1997, 190)

¹⁰ See the previous chapter for a reference to Carter and Camp (footnote 4).

actually concern that decade’s counterculture.¹¹ These novels convey a mesmerizing feeling of the period, but they are more than novels about the 1960s, since they also mark ‘the beginning of Carter’s imaginative reworking of her own history’ (Gamble 2006a, 52).

From the onset, Carter was faced with the decade’s spirit that there would not be anything new to be done or to become. She did feel the limitless freedom of living in such time and place, as she writes: ‘Because I simply could not have existed, as I am, in any other preceding time or place. I am the pure product of an advanced, industrialized, post-imperialist country in decline’ (“Notes” 72). The decline of England was undoubtedly considered by Carter as constructive since it allowed her to come into existence. She felt the value of being heard. As already mentioned in this second chapter, in the same article Carter claims the significance of language – ‘[...] language is power, life and the instrument of culture, the instrument of domination and liberation’ (*ibid.* 30) – and how it could be used to introduce a new type of discourse that could be socially destabilizing. It was, thus, Joyce’s writing which Carter declared to have facilitated her to understand that the ‘Word’ is not sacred:

He disestablished English [...].

Joyce Irished, he Europeanised, he decolonialised English: he tailored it to fit this century, he drove a giant wedge between English Literature and literature in the English language and, in doing so, he made me (forgive the personal note) free. Free not to do as he did, but free to treat the Word not as if it were holy but in the knowledge that it is always profane. (“A Happy Bloomsday” *SL* 539)

Here Carter emphasizes how she is aware of the power of the ‘Word’ as profane, regardless of its heritage – ‘we carry our history on our tongues’ (*ibid.* 538). Clearly this is a reflection on the early 1980s, which does not put at risk the reading of her earlier writings in terms of a simultaneous feeling of awareness and experimenting in the 1960s.

Even though *Love* (1971) is read as Carter’s farewell to the 1960s, it is chosen here for reworking the themes of her first novel, *Shadow Dance*, ‘with more skill and far greater control, it crucially changes the mood of the setting, exchanging the former novel’s

¹¹ Some of the early novels actually invite readings in terms of quite traditional literary realism, as O’Day did. If what connects Carter’s early works can be read as a ‘sixties realism saturated with domesticated gothic and psychological fantasy elements’ (O’Day 1994, 24), it can also be read as a reworking of the relationship with the past. This bond is recycled in subversive forms, in a process where the margins between reality and fantasy become imprecise, mainly from *Shadow Dance* onwards (Sage 1994a, 11-12).

dark and dangerous delight in its own subversiveness’ (Gamble 1997, 93). Looking at the “Afterword” written for *Love*’s reissue in 1987, one perceives how Carter calls the reader’s attention to the fact that the book was actually written in 1969 and ‘the people in it, not quite the children of Marx and Coca-Cola, more the children of Nescafé and the Welfare State, [who] are the pure, perfect products of those days of social mobility and sexual licence’ (Lv 113). Carter’s perception of the decade’s ephemerality, as seen above, reflects precisely in how she read 1967 as the time when ‘things were peaking’, but her writings from the final three years of the decade mirror a swift alteration into disappointment. There is still a performance, through her characters, which somehow reveals a primary desperation. After publishing three successful novels, Carter begins to reconsider her own authorial intentions and techniques – ‘This process of artistic evolution echoes Carter’s gradual shift in focus during the later years of the sixties, which moved her towards a more explicit radicalism’ (Gamble 2006a, 76).¹² *Love* illustrates Carter’s awareness and experimenting in the 1960s.

In this narrative genre, food is present not only as an element of comparison, creating unique imagery, but also helping to characterise characters, environments, and time of preparation and consumption. Other writers have done similar uses of representations food in fiction, as we have seen in the previous chapter, and Jane Austen is another good example of an author in whose novels these representations play a vital part even if there are no lengthy descriptions of meals as we find in Charles Dickens’ detailed narrative. Thus, Austen becomes relevant here for the way each of her references to food contributes as indicators of the characters’ moral worth in a period of changes for England (in view of how close it was to urbanization and the change in the role of women, along with the sumptuousness of a middle-class). Furthermore, Carter reflected on Austen, especially in what concerns the novel of sensibility, which was, as Janet Todd explains, a didactic mode that ‘initially showed people how to behave, how to express themselves in friendship and how to respond decently to life’s experiences’, but a mode that rapidly devolved into a popular form that ‘prided itself more on making its readers weep and in teaching them when and how much to weep’ (Todd 1986, 4). Nevertheless, Carter reverses such a paradigm by incorporating this mode into a post-modern pastiche. Already

¹² In 1967 the John Llewellyn Rhys memorial prize for the best novel was awarded to *The Magic Toyshop* and in 1968 the Somerset Maugham Award was won by Carter’s third novel, *Several Perceptions*.

pointed out by Patricia Juliana Smith (1994), in a motivating essay that adds an intriguing twist to the reading of Carter’s fifth novel, *Love* becomes an example on how to review and critique emotional excess or ‘sensibility’.

Indeed, the short novel *Love* is more liable to raise fear and revulsion than tears and sympathy, since it proves to be a study in how *not* to exile oneself. Smith presents such a twist as she draws on what at first seems a rather incongruous comparison between Carter and Austen:

In this [novel], Carter effectively scrutinizes the moral ambivalences of sensibility, particularly the sinister motivations lurking behind the external display of emotionality constructed as a sign of heightened sensitivity and refined benevolence. Simultaneously, she mercilessly illustrates the similarities between the excesses of the period that gave rise to Romanticism and those of the period that gave us the sexual revolution. [...] In a retrospective assessment of the cultural and social significance of the sixties, Carter speculated that ‘manners had not been so liberal and expressive since the Regency – or maybe even since the Restoration, with the absence of syphilis compensated for in the mortality stakes by the arrival of hard drugs.’ Indeed, the sex and drugs that seem synonymous with sixties culture were simply elements of a greater phenomenon, the youth culture’s valorization of total freedom (or, more precisely, license), of boundless physical and mental sensation, and of a Rousseauistic ‘natural’ goodness unrelated to traditional social mores [...]. Likewise, if less demotically, the eighteenth-century cult of sensibility prized emotional susceptibility, heightened sensitivity, and a tremendous capacity for suffering, all regarded as the outward signs of a highly refined moral character. (Smith 1994, 24-25)

Just as some characters from *Several Perceptions* (1968) are part of a drifting counter-culture (Sage 1994a, 17), *Love*, written still in 1969, portrays a new no-man’s land of 1960s Bohemia (*ibid.* 20). Since the Gothic novel and the novel of sensibility are strongly related, Annabel is undeniably used in a similar way to an overstated Gothic heroine, given that she ‘externally exemplifies the “feminine” traits of physical and mental frailty and passive victimage peculiar to the Gothic heroine’ (Smith 1994, 25) in a horrifying extent, despite the conflict between Annabel and the two brothers who rivaled her ‘for the

distinction of having the acutely tortured sensibility’ (*ibid.* 26). The didactic role I mentioned above is underlined by Smith for she understands Carter’s later revision of the book as a critique of the extremes of the eighteenth century, when it was written:

As the adolescent Jane Austen demonstrated in her parodic “Love and Friendship” two centuries before, sensibility is often nothing more than a façade to disguise a refusal to accept responsibility, a means by which to ‘check out’ and feign ignorance of cause-and-effect relationships that govern one’s environment. [...] Carter creates a telling and painful parody of the mores of her own generation. [...] In all, Carter’s characters approximate, in their self-created emotional fragility, the condition of moral dubiousness characteristic of Austen’s self-styled heroines [...]. (*ibid.* 28)

Meanwhile, one cannot forget Carter’s comment on her own purposes and criteria: ‘I’m making a conscious critique of the culture I was born to. In a period like this [1960s] of transition and conflicting ideologies, when there isn’t a prevalent ideology, really all artists can do is go round mopping up’ (Sage 1994a, 13). Evidently, as Sage concludes, there was vital food for imagination in the shadows.

As Gamble also noted, for Smith the morose masochism of *Love* adopts a deterrent meaning, since it conveys an implied critique of the 1960s dissipation when their counterculture self-destructs – ‘*Love* is a farewell to the sixties and to myths of the sixties’ (O’Day 1994, 47). This idea, an echo of Marc O’Day’s conclusion regarding *Love* (*ibid.* 54-55), is not strong enough for Gamble, who points out the lack of attention that neither O’Day nor Smith pays to the violence taking place within the novel (Gamble 2001, 29-30). Similarly, I stress how these critics miss the part that food plays in Carter’s novel as she draws on an ‘impressionistic aesthetic notion’ (O’Day 1994, 55) achieved in *Love*. Only Sarah Sceats mentions food in *Love* but just to minimize its importance: ‘Ordinary appetite for food is not much in evidence in this novel, except, tellingly, when Lee first wakes up after a party and finds Annabel lying with him for warmth. The hunger in her face touches him so deeply that he takes her home and gives her breakfast, thereby initiating a pattern of caring. But her hunger is not for food, and is suspiciously predatory’ (Sceats 2000, 41).

In fact, even though the relationship between two of the protagonists of *Love* is not described in terms of foodstuff, there are references along the novel where food, and mainly the acuity of the action of consuming, implicitly assist in the portraying of this same relationship. The characters of *Love*, belonging to the ‘love generation’ of the late 1960s, are portrayed by Carter herself in the “Afterword” as the just mentioned ‘children of Nescafé and the Welfare State, [who] are pure perfect products of those days of social mobility and sexual licence’ (*Lv* 113). The reader notices from the start the use of terminology that relates to consumption in order to describe different conditions and states of mind. Furthermore, the characters convey affection through cooking and feeding, even if some feed others and simultaneously these same characters feed on them (like Lee who feeds Annabel and feeds on her); consequently, ‘Annabel is devoured rather than nourished by his love’ (Parker 2000, 150). Right from the beginning, the moment Lee and Annabel become acquainted, we come across the idea of hunger – ‘She [Annabel] opened her eyes and some kind of hunger, some kind of despair in her narrow face caught at Lee’s very tender heart’ (*Lv* 15) – that of providing for – ‘He took her home with him and gave her some breakfast’ (*ibidem*) – and of feeding – ‘how was he to know [...] that he would become a Spartan boy and she the fox under his jacket, eating his heart out’ and ‘At intervals, he fed her and caressed her’ (*ibidem*). All these references in the same page are really the starting point to understand their future relationship, as later on Annabel is believed to have intentionally eaten her wedding ring (*ibid.* 57) once she finds Lee cheating her in what we believe to be more than just keeping ‘herself to herself’ as the latter judges. Actually, Lee acknowledges that the feeling has changed and that he then feels like ‘the Spartan boy but no fox under my jacket, only my heart, eating itself out’ (*ibid.* 61) and later on he trusts that Annabel’s act of eating the ring evolved into the consumption of the other, when he tells the Fool in the park – ‘She carried on the metaphor by trying to eat me alive [...]. I got away just in time’ (*ibid.* 101). Annabel’s gesture may be read as a refusal to be subsumed by marriage any longer, and once this happens it marks the switch of the two characters’ roles (Parker 2000, 151). The moment Annabel starts to earn money, which she keeps in an Oxo tin, one notices the connection between food and money; a connection which points to the fact that food, like money, is a form of power.

In reality, whenever Annabel’s past is mentioned there is always a reference to the consumption of food, even if indirectly: ‘Little Annabel slipped out of the grocer’s while

her mother discussed the price of butter’ (*Lv* 75); ‘She drifted haphazardly from one undemanding job to another, working sometimes as a waitress, sometimes packing biscuits in a factory before moving on to a fish-and-chip shop’ (*ibid.* 76); ‘with the small change she bought chocolate bars, cream cakes, sugar buns and other sweet, unnecessary things she consumed immediately’ (*ibidem*). The time she worked in a bar also reflects the consuming of beverages and her state of mind (*ibid.* 78-80), as the way she populates her world with imaginary animals she preferred to the colorless fauna of reality – ‘She quickly interpreted him [Lee] into her mythology but if at first, he was a herbivorous lion, later he became a unicorn devouring raw meat’ (*ibid.* 34). Both images portray a natural contradicting personality: the former implies an apparently wild beast whose essence is unthreatening to others from his kind, whereas the latter explicitly uses the verb ‘devour’ and the adjective ‘raw’ to characterise the meat as a shocking image hardly associated to an imaginary fairy tale animal, the unicorn. These paradoxes illustrate Annabel’s perspective of Lee, but her unbalanced diet of sweets denotes the unhealthy nature of her newfound power; a reversed position of power which ends on fatal consequences when Annabel commits suicide.¹³ From a nutritional and social point of view one cannot forget the importance of sugar in the 1960s due to the fact that its consumption reached record levels, probably in a reaction towards the years of rationing – an example is how cereal makers branched out from the already familiar corn flakes and whole-wheat breakfast cereals to produce sugar-coated cereals.

When one looks back on Jane Austen, who easily recurs to food, from production, to preparation and consumption, one notices how often the references to the characters’ personality and their relationships are also portrayed through food issues. I chose *Emma*, as an example because in this novel food is ‘the voluntary currency of love and caring; or it is instrument by which one class, or one sex, keeps another in a desirable state of servility and quiescence’ (Lane 1995, 168). In addition, in this novel one witnesses the complete cycle of the year from one October to the next – meaning from harvest to harvest – and the reader has a farming family playing a relevant role, which seems to be a unique

¹³ Emma Parker reads Annabel’s appetite as swiftly assuming a cannibalistic air (Parker 2000, 151), which can be seen when she marks Lee as a possession by making him tattoo his name on her arm, a tattoo which can only be removed by being ‘unpeeled like an orange or pared like an apple’ (*Lv* 69).

situation in Austen's novels.¹⁴ *Emma* focus on a few families and their interrelationships and we are introduced to a grandfather devoted to thin gruel and boiled turnips, an old maid who prattles incessantly about the season's crop of apples, continuous rounds of whist, and little suppers of scalloped oysters and minced chicken served next to the fire. Even though these may not sound like the makings of dynamic entertainment, this satire of village life confirms the skill and control of an author in her prime (Scrafford 2004, 51). It seems that with the intention of teaching Emma how to live, Austen creates the only organic community of her fiction and food becomes the device used to show its interdependency (Lane 1995, 154).

Emma and her father, Mr. Woodhouse, are at the higher end of the village social ladder and, as such, central to its social life, which consists mostly of family dinners, tea visits, and games of whist. Besides Mr. Woodhouse's tiring pleas for everyone to eat less, sleep more, and stay warm, he is a man obsessed with the dangers of too much exercise, believing as he does in the virtues of a bland diet and quiet living. He is distressed by large dinner parties, since 'his own stomach could bear nothing rich, and he could never believe other people to be different from himself' (Austen 1963, 13), and tries to dissuade all from eating wedding cake at weddings. However, Mr. Woodhouse believes a very soft boiled egg not to be unwholesome, provided that it is cautiously boiled; also, a little fresh pork boiled with turnip and carrots is a pleasure not to be completely avoided; and an apple, in particular a country apple (well-cooked, naturally, and from his own farm), does nourish the body on condition that very little exercise is taken. Still concerning apples, according to Mr. Woodhouse, at dinner these are a fearsome prospect, for being too stimulating to be good for anyone. Nevertheless, being a generous man who shares his largess with the community, such as Mrs. and Miss Bates (a widow and her talkative spinster daughter, who chatters on endlessly about everything, including the quality of the season's apples) Mr. Woodhouse donates a loin of pork or recommends an apple for health. Then Miss Bates soliloquizes eternally on the action: on how apples are to be prepared, whether it is better to bake them three times, as Mr. Woodhouse suggests, or to make them into dumplings, on how the pork is to be cooked (should it be roasted or boiled? Do they have a large enough salting pan?), and on how much her niece enjoys apples, amongst other

¹⁴ This is pointed out by Maggie Lane who comments the following on Austen's choice of the important part played by the farming family: 'This has been noticed as Jane Austen extending her social range, admitting a class of people who were to thrive in the coming decades as the middle classes expanded and exerted their claims to be taken into account' (Lane 1995, 162).

things (Scrafford 2004, 52-53). Thus, in *Emma* the giving and sharing of food 'becomes a symbol or extended metaphor for human interdependence' (Lane 1995, 153). Finally, common to Austen's novels, a small group of provincial families is focused on, coming to stand for the foibles of all humanity.

Also, one should bear in mind that even if Austen's satire is not the dark variety of Jonathan Swift's, she satirizes her characters for their foolishness, their vanity, and even their cruelty (Scrafford 2004, 54). Nevertheless, in *Love*, Carter's choice to emphasise the problematic relationships common in a young generation in the 1960s reflects on the absence of communion and, accordingly, the absence of sharing food echoes that choice. Even in episodes where characters find themselves in social gatherings, there is no attention focused on meals or drinks, as it is demanded by society. Being renowned as a decade of change, the 1960s witnessed the introduction of different foods and cooking habits into the kitchen and a greater assortment of foods became available in the shops. Thus, tinned foods, already well established during the 1930s, continued to be the most common convenience food. Still, the increase of frozen food was probably the main innovation of the 1960s and, in view of that, self-service shops and supermarkets began to influence the way that food was prepared and sold. The customer was certainly given more choice. This is what I believe is significant in Carter's first novels: the absence of explicit references to celebrations through food seems to illustrate the disillusion of the 1960s. Therefore, that absence becomes a significant lacuna which allows the reader to consider how commensality and conviviality represent in an implicit way the dryness of the human relations.¹⁵

¹⁵ The importance of such lacuna underlines the ambiguities in other texts, as Ronald Tobin comments concerning *Le Misanthrope ou l'Atrabilaire amoureux*, a comedy of manners in verse written by Molière (first performed on 4 June 1666). Focusing more on character development and nuances than on plot progression, the play satirizes the hypocrisies of French aristocratic society. Simultaneously, it points out the most common human flaws while depicting several social gatherings where food's absence is everything but irrelevant (Tobin 2002/2004, 629).

Melanie's rite of passage in *The Magic Toyshop*.

'Nibbling in tiny crumbs from the edge of the spoon'

As pointed out in the first chapter on the subject of the domestic in Carter, *The Magic Toyshop* (1967) illustrates a transition process between two markedly different dwellings and experiences as Melanie moves from her parents' wealthy country home to the eclectic house of her uncle Philip. This South London 'multi-layered, complicated, and contradictory home' (Gamble 2006b, 282) becomes an echo of the diverse layers of the preparation, service, and consumption of food in *The Magic Toyshop*. The whole experience becomes a rite of passage for Melanie, as she goes through a process of self-knowledge. I trust this to involve somehow Carter's rite of passage from evoking a domesticity to concurrently pulling away from it. Similarly to what was pointed out in the last chapter, these same processes mirror power relations in gender and family matters, particularly in terms of the representations of food. To be observed further ahead, is the way the heroine Melanie is drawn to an environment where another woman responsible for the preparation of food, Aunt Margaret, can only have small bites of a minute portion of food ('nibbling in tiny crumbs') which she eats 'from the edge of the spoon', in opposition to her husband, Uncle Philip.

In the same way that gender relations and sexuality continue to be challenging, food offers conflicted identities for women – as one asks whether food can be considered a means of female empowerment or enslavement, agency or objectification, pleasure or anguish... One can argue that, on the one hand, preparing and serving food has long given women power. When one looks at hunting and gathering societies, women end up finding most of the calories and they have always played a prime role in agriculture and in much

of the Third World they are still the primary food providers for the household.¹⁶ As Warren Belasco states, ‘even when women are restricted to feeding just their own immediate family, they find leverage through cooking’ (Belasco 2008, 42). For example, the control of the kitchen can often be interpreted as the control of domestic consumption – since cooks supervise a household’s imports of nutrients and its exports of money. From sociological and anthropological perspectives, women are known for often choosing to provide service because they recognize that their work contributes to sociability in groups, and even to a group’s survival (DeVault 1991, 233), and eating together is frequently considered the foundation of a family (Counihan 2004, 117). Marjorie Devault begins part one of her book, “Doing Family Meals”, by stating the following about the social importance of food and eating:

Eating, apparently a biological matter, is actually profoundly social. What we eat, where we get it, how it is prepared, when we eat and with whom, what it means to us – all these depend on social arrangements. Food sustains social and emotional life as well as psychological being, through the cultural rituals of serving and eating. The work required to feed a family is partly determined by the material situations of household groups [...]. But the work of feeding others is also shaped by, and in turn expresses, beliefs and customs of the society at a particular time. More than just the provision of edibles, feeding work means staging the rather complex social events that we label meals. (Devault 1991, 35)

At the same time that one may distinguish the various tasks of shopping, preparation, cooking, and cleaning up as work, the intricacy of their coordination (also a potential source of anxiety or failure) is often hidden by plain counts of the incidence of each stage – ‘the skill that produces group life, the effort of being constantly attentive, or the subtle pressures that pull women into relations of subordination and deference produced by this work’ (*ibid.* 228). This is an example of what food provisioning, nearly always done by women, is believed to involve and Carter’s novel *Heroes and Villains* (1969) – published two years after *The Magic Toyshop* – portrays a similar situation.

¹⁶ According to the United Nation’s Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), ‘women produce more than 50% of the food grown worldwide. This includes up to 80% of food produced by women in African countries, 60% in Asia and between 30 and 40% in South America’ (“Women Farmers” 2004).

The above mentioned foundation of a family, together with the continuous thoughtfulness from the subordinated women, that Devault reminds us of, is present through *Heroes and Villains*' character Mrs Green. Jewel's foster-mother is introduced to Marianne from the first actions as the one to be trusted and who will protect her, like in the following reference she makes to food: 'never eat anything that I haven't cooked for you myself, nor given you with my own hands' (*HV* 41-42). One learns right after this advice that Mrs Green is responsible for the meals and for the kitchen space, wherever that is when this tribe of Barbarians moves:

She [Marianne] watched Mrs Green prepare her some breakfast in the empty kitchen where the huntsmen had eaten hours before. Mrs Green used a metal pot over an open fire; she mixed flour from a sack stolen from those who had effortfully tilled the soil, kept good seed and sown it, reaped, harvested, milled, bagged and then been deprived, though they were the rightful bakers and eaters of the flour and its subsequent bread if there was such a thing as natural justice. Nevertheless, Mrs Green scooped up a handful of flour by right of conquest, since the need of the Barbarians was greater. To make her bread, she mixed the flour with salt, water and animal fat in a bowl of very rough pottery. (*ibid.* 42)

In this moment the perspective is still in accordance to Marianne's state of mind since she is split between her previous life with the Professors and her most recent condition living with the Barbarians, in a post-apocalyptic society. It seems all the processes through which the flour goes are reminded here as being an endeavour of those who had put some effort into the task in an organized manner to end up destitute/dispossessed of their privileged relation towards the food commodity, flour, which would be baked into bread. The 'natural justice' is here respectful of the 'right of conquest' in terms of necessity. By implying such need as overruling the order of things, one is shown a somehow powerful Mrs Green, who is entitled to 'make her bread' in her own way. Moreover, right at the beginning the reader witnesses an attack by the Barbarians through Marianne's perspective, who finds interesting how some Worker women from the Professors seemed to be helping those villains who 'were calmly occupied in seizing sacks of flour, crocks of butter and bolts of cloth' (*ibid.* 5) as if they found some defiance in doing so, some power.

One can see a similar concept of network when reflecting on food production and consumption which goes on, precisely, within a widespread network of production

processes and social links. In other words, changes in consumption are evidently related to changes in the economy as a whole and particularly to those changes in the production area, 'as an overdetermined cycle of ecological, economic, and social decline continuously weakens the subsistence economy and as dependence upon wage labor through male temporary migration steadily increases' (Weismantel 2005, 89). An example is Karl Marx's emphasis in the dialectical relationship between production and consumption: 'Production creates the material as outward object of consumption; consumption creates the want as the inward object, the purpose of production' (Marx 1973, 93). Furthermore, consumption is lead not only by material constraints, but also by the immaterial, culturally created definition of what is desirable. All in all, what people eat represents the meeting-point between the desirable and the possible; the moment the latter changes, so must the former (Weismantel 2005, 89).

Returning to Mrs Green, I believe there is an implied influence of her over some of the events taking place along the novel, and even though the cooking of the bread over the fire is the longest description of the preparation of a meal, other more relevant occasions are given a simple account of the preparation of a meal or the nurturing of a character as a background. The first time Marianne meets Donally and is the object of Jewel's brothers malign regards, Mrs Green 'was [...] preparing the evening meal, arranging a joint of pork to roast over the fire' (*ibid.* 50). The process of roasting reminds me of Lévi-Strauss' claiming that the principal modes of cooking form a structured set which is the converse of the 'culinary triangle' already referred to in the first chapter, being roasting a process in which the meat is brought into direct contact with the agent of conversion (fire) without the intervention of any cultural apparatus or of air or water and, thus, the process is only partial, as roast meat is only partly cooked. This is a perfect choice to present the Barbarians in their natural environment.

Also about the cooking methods, one had already read about Marianne's nurse warning her about the consequences of not being good, i.e. the Barbarians would eat her, as she would be wrapped in clay, baked in the fire and seasoned with salt. Still, baking is a method the Barbarians believe to be used by the Professors themselves, as Jen tells Marianne about his father's departure: 'He dressed up and went away and he didn't come back and the Professors had killed him and baked him and eaten him with salt' (*ibid.* 35). This is the kind of ideas that leaps to Marianne's mind as she awaits her primitive wedding ceremony, but this would be performed by the one she believed to be an ex-

Professor and, hence, she believed she would be killed by Donally in a ritual where she would be cut up and fried (*ibid.* 76). Similarly, the preparation of the 'big meal' for Marianne's wedding feast is done by Mrs Green (*ibid.* 68) who again symbolically carries a 'smell of burned fat and roasting meat' (*ibid.* 69), recalling once more Levi Strauss' perspective on the roasting. Here one can see how Carter in her fiction (but not only) gives us evidence of the fact that 'a culture can be understood through its food myths and metaphors' and, in addition, that it is through consumption that one may be admitted in a society's 'deepest social unconscious', from a Lévi-Strauss' perspective (Parker 2000, 142).

Still, it was Mrs Green who simultaneously prepared Marianne for the wedding and prepared the wedding feast itself, as if one of the tasks is indeed a sequence of the other and, so, the image of marriage. Parker reads it in terms of a form of cannibalism and, accordingly, validates that when two people are married, they become one, they become usually the man (*ibid.* 147). Therefore, the woman tends to feel swallowed up and incorporated (as Jewel confirms in this power struggle with the central female character, whom he wishes to control through marriage, applying what Dr. Donally claims to be 'Social psychology' (*HV* 56)). In addition, Mrs Green is also the one who enters the newlyweds' room, 'carrying a dish in her hands' for breakfast as she avows for its safetiness after having gotten rid of Donally's offer of poisoned porridge (*ibid.* 83-85). She also feeds both Jewel's brothers (*ibid.* 100) and Marianne, protecting her when she is pregnant ('Mrs Green brought her a bowl of porridge and stood over her with arms akimbo as she ate it' (*ibid.* 143)). In other words, notwithstanding a once-educated and even rebellious Mrs Green, her 'maternal' position is in effect that of cook, housekeeper, and even servant – 'she uses her food to sustain, cure and protect her charges and to maintain the status quo, but never to charm or influence or harm' (Sceats 1997, 104).

The consumption of food is such a daily and constant happening that it is to a great extent associated to a wide range of meanings and functions. In addition, as the consumption of food is a rather intimate, everyday occurrence, it becomes difficult for outsiders to observe it directly; as it is also a happening loaded with great emotional significance, meals belong to the particularly vulnerable and valued meeting points where informal relationships are intensified – 'Food itself is also very closely linked to emotional meanings' (Korthals 2004, 17). Following this line of thought, it comes as no surprise that visual artist Barbara Fischer's observation in *Foodculture: Tasting Identities and*

Geographies in Art (1999) is regarded as a central starting point of current food studies: food appears like 'a matrix in which innumerable aspects of life and lived reality come to intersect, including the mixing, congealing, and dispersing of a sense of national, cultural, and personal identity' (Fischer 1999, 26).¹⁷

In reality, until the end Mrs Green's attitudes have a relation to food preparation – either by excusing not taking a stand about Donally's fate when asked about it ('The porridge is burning,' said Mrs Green and retreated to her cooking fire' (*HV* 129)) or by neglecting to stir the porridge, leaving a 'scorched' smell hung in the air while Jewel excluded Donally (*ibid.* 131). Thus, Mrs Green's cooking is a means of 'keeping chaos at bay' (Sceats 1997, 100). Indeed, this female character may be considered the archetypal mother (or granny) provider, according to Sceats: 'smelling of baking with her sleeves rolled up over muscular forearms, wearing a spotless white apron, with coiled grey hair and a face like a bun' (*ibid.* 104). Earlier, Carter had introduced, in *The Magic Toyshop*, Aunt Margaret who may also be read as representing the disempowered nurturer, but whom I consider to have, in a similar way, other relevant features to be discussed shortly. Still, in *Heroes and Villains*, besides Mrs Green's primary function of cooking, she also takes care of Marianne, and she is protective of the existing order, mainly among Jewel's family. It is Marianne who promptly identifies Mrs Green as 'some kind of domestic matriarch' (*HV* 43), i.e. she is defined by her role; the role of cook is 'potentially powerful in Carter's writing' (Sceats 1997, 104), being essential in the story "The Kitchen Child" (1985), that will be analysed in the last chapter of this study.

However, in the final part of the novel one sees Marianne returning to the tribe and she immediately meets Mrs Green, after which she acts as if taking power in her hands at all levels:

¹⁷ Actually, when we ponder on Fischer's book title, we must recall the cultural turn in social science which has affected aspects of food studies in the 1990s. Two years before this publication, David Bell and Gill Valentine's *Consuming Geographies: We are what we eat* (1997) had already showed a work concentrated mostly on the relationship between food geographies and consumption – using sites of analysis starting with the body, then moving to the home, the community, the city, the region, the nation and, finally, the globe. As Peter Atkins and Ian Bowler conclude, 'for most social scientists with an interest in food, this cultural shift has meant the adoption of ethnographic methodologies of data collection' (Atkins 2001, 7) – the ethnographic approach to food studies is considered a rapidly expanding field. Furthermore, the 'cultural turn' in food studies in the 1990s, mainly since Bell and Valentine's incursions in the realms of post-structuralism, was read as a future expectation for a significant expansion of post-structuralist work on food (*ibid.* 253).

Mrs Green greeted her [Marianne's] return inscrutably; she stirred a cauldron of stew with a huge metal spoon.

'I'll do that,' said Marianne. The old woman, interpreting her, surrendered the spoon with some bitter laughter.

'You'll not make him come back by getting his meal ready, you know,' she said. 'They call that sympathetic magic. And if he comes back, he'll bring the Doctor with him, more powerful than ever.'

She was already resigned, as was her custom. She was ready packed to make her own move, if necessary. Marianne went on stirring the stew. (*HV* 149)

Possibly this compassionated magic is what Mrs Green believes she had actually been performing during her stay with the Barbarians and she confesses so to Marianne in case the latter wants to take advantage of it, when the former presents herself as the traditional submissive. Marianne does not seem to mind this new condition, since she had learnt by then that the power situation is fluid, or even unpredictable, due to the tribe's constant threat of attack from outside and the conflict within the family. I believe that Marianne is aware of Mrs Green's resignation, regardless of her fierce protectiveness, and reacts even if it proves to be a situation still defying her recognition:

Indoors, the cooking fire was reflected in a misty, cracked mirror on the wall; there also stood Marianne, unrecognizable to herself, leaning over the cauldron. Visions appeared in the steam [...]; finally, she there reencountered her father, who merged imperceptibly with the image of the blind lighthouse and then disappeared in the slowly rising bubbles. (*ibidem*)

The cooking provides the means to complete her visions while other characters appear: 'The food was almost cooked. She stirred the spoon round and at last Donally's son came in. The room was full of smoke, he materialized from it like an apparition in the pot' (*ibidem*). If the return of Jewel is what she expects with the stirring of the stew, as pointed out by Mrs Green, she almost achieves it, since as she finishes it – 'Marianne leaned over the fire and pinched a piece of meat. It was done' (*ibid.* 150) – she recognises Jewel's blood in the boy which puts an end to her condition in every sense: 'She fell down and the food spilled. The dogs fought over the meat swimming in gravy on the floor' (*ibidem*).

The power over the tribe is about to be struggled for but Marianne will also be a part of such an effort – 'She becomes empowered by appropriating male authority and

shifting her position within the existing socio-symbolic order, rather than by overturning that order' (Parker 2000, 150). Again, when I recall Lévi-Strauss' structural set, I can read the stew (a dish, especially a mixture of meat or fish and vegetables with stock, cooked by stewing) as an undergoing cooking by boiling slowly or simmering and, intrinsically, boiling is a process which reduces the raw food to a decomposed state analogous to natural rotting, but it entails the mediation of both water and a receptacle, which is definitely an object of culture. I also believe that it is possible to study the world through the way food is dealt with. The so called family cuisine is the true national cuisine of a people and this is why one has to be always aware that when considering the concept of a cuisine, other issues matter – talking about cuisine in Europe is different from the cuisine in Africa, since in a world of starvation, there is no place for sophistication, for example.

Returning to the idea of preparation and service of food as giving power to women, it was, in fact, from the 1970s that feminism has added a dimension to food studies that it was deeply lacking before, when feminist writers analysed precisely the role of women within the household, and, above all, the fundamental part played by their food preparation tasks in the reproduction of the family. Still, they have also concentrated on the relationship between food and body shape in the construction of female identity within a framework of patriarchal expectations (Atkins 2001, 7). Eating at home involves large quantities of labour time in addition to responsibilities for decision-making, even though it is often described simply as consumption. It is the uneven division of these and other domestic obligations that has been a cause for feminists interest since the 19th century, plus a subject of sociological investigation for the last seventy years. One reason for empirical research until at least the end of the previous century was the recognition of 'alternatives to the conventional arrangement which allocates most such tasks to adult women' (Warde 1997, 51). Not so long ago, research on domestic divisions of labour was inspired by a wish for understanding the way many discrete work tasks were distributed between individuals and households. Therefore, when one studies the act of eating, one can say it works like a subdued form of expression that is capable of making explicit what is otherwise merely implicit and, as Emma Parker states, when referring to eating in terms of gender relations, it 'exposes the machinery of power that patriarchy seeks to disguise' (Parker 2000, 142). The way Carter reads Elizabeth David's *English Bread and Yeast Cookery* (collected in *Expletives Deleted*) can be seen as a paradigm of how she sees what is apparently a celebration of wholefoods, part of a patriarchal conspiracy deliberated to

bond women to the kitchen, and a plot ‘to get women back where they belong. Up to their elbows in bread dough’ (ED 95).

Although Carter’s just quoted piece, “Elizabeth David’s *English Bread and Yeast Cookery*”, was published in the early 1980s (in *New Society*, 1982), it echoes a whole reaction to the post-war years (even before the First World War, through the reference to Maud Pember Reeves’ research for her book *Round About a Pound a Week*), women’s attitudes during such periods, and it also gives us an idea about her own feelings towards personal growth from what she terms ‘misspent youth as a housewife’ (*ibidem*).¹⁸ Moreover, there is a comparison with other European women (already mentioned in the first chapter), in what seems to be a consequence of the British women following up with their long-established national cuisine – ‘Oddly enough, in all of Europe, the British housewife is, historically, the only one of all who found herself burdened with this back-breaking and infinitely boring task [...]. The average black-clad Italian, French, or Greek mama [...] [has] got better things to do – the meat sauce, the *coq au vin*, the dolmas, and so on’ (*ibidem*; my emphasis). In essence, according to Carter, this is due to the excellence of British baked goods: ‘Of course, it’s always been more difficult, given British cuisine, for our housewives to get away with that excuse. Since we’ve got to have something to shine at, it turned out to be baked goods, didn’t it?’ (*ibidem*). Indeed, even if there had been a significant shift in eating habits in Britain, some traditional dishes like roast Cornish pasties, steak and kidney pie, bread and butter pudding, treacle tart, remain popular. In this piece about Elizabeth David’s book, Carter also refers to housewives organizational tasks and needs – ‘One of the things Pember Reeves’s housewives liked about bread was its portability – a child did not have to sit down to eat a hunk of bread and marge and that was convenient if you did not have sufficient chairs, or even a table, on or at which to sit’ (*ibid.* 97).

Old cookbooks, for instance, put forward a rich insight into the lives of forgotten women, given that such intimate stories disclose individual women letting others know their own life stories, the account they have of their communities, and ‘the visions they have of society and culture’ (Theophano 2002, 3). In the same way as Janet Theophano’s

¹⁸ In 1913 the social reformer Maud Pember Reeves presented the culmination of a four-year research, *Round About a Pound a Week*, co-authored by anarchist activist Charlotte Wilson. This was an influential survey of poverty and infant mortality around Lambeth Walk, London. Since it argued for some reforms, the report was published at the time as a political pamphlet. It is still available today, as the optical character recognition (OCR) reprint published by Persephone Books Ltd in late 2008.

had read women's lives through the cookbooks they wrote, Laura Shapiro's study of women's letters to the editor (2004), food columns, and other advice exchanges uncovers a multifaceted and sophisticated discussion of the emotional, economic, and political pressures on homemakers of the 1950s. Thus, food can give 'voice' to the disempowered, and occasionally there is group work like the community cookbooks compiled by groups of women for charitable, religious, and civic causes (Bower 1997, 8). On the other hand, as mentioned above, food can, simultaneously, confine women to subservient roles keeping them busy at home and 'quiet' in the public sphere – 'In this view, food controls women' (Belasco 2008, 44). When one considers that food memoirs, cookbooks, and food studies textbooks are largely written by and for those who do cook, one should remember that these are also for those who think they should cook. Accordingly, several classic cookbooks have been written by women aspiring to get *out* of the kitchen to pursue more public careers.¹⁹ Also, the increase of cookbooks since early modern times can be understood as a reflection of culinary inexperience, since cookbooks may show what people ate, and simultaneously they can easily reveal what people wished they could eat.

This is clear in Elizabeth David's publications and it was pointed out by Angela Carter in "Saucer's Apprentice" (first published in *New Society* on April 8, 1976, and now collected in *Shaking a Leg*). Indeed, according to Carter, David's mission was to resuscitate fading and amnesiac palates with the prospect of unthinkable dishes. Such food had no need to be rich; it simply had to taste of something, to bear recognizable links to natural produce, and, most important, to be non-gray. Whether it ever saw light of day, or the candlelight of evening, was beside the point; the mere promise of it, David herself confessed, was a form of nourishment. Even if people could not very often make the dishes described in her books, she pointed out, 'it was stimulating to think about them' as a form of escapism (David 1965, 12). This is actually what was so special about the time when David started to write, in the 1950s: she offered the 'kind of meals of which dreams are made' at the end of a period of austerity when the 'standardized, government-regulated, plain but adequate diet' was able to ask for a little more (*SL* 85). In reality, if David's basic medium of expression in her first books is recipe, her directions tend to the

¹⁹ Warren Belasco lists some examples of such cases: Lydia Child who used profits from her popular guide *The Frugal Housewife* (1829) to finance abolitionist projects or Ellen Richards who urged that homemade soups would keep men out of saloons, and was Massachusetts Institute of Technology's (MIT) first female doctoral student and a member of its chemistry faculty until her death in 1911 (Belasco 2008, 46).

laconic in a way that is not advisable for beginners (Rosen 1998, 77). Her books would be considered good cookbooks for they inspire readers more than they inform them about technique, since most of the recipes were beyond the grasp of her readers. In her first book, *Mediterranean Food*, as quoted above, the purpose seems to be an escape from the dullness of English life, appealing to the readers senses of sight, smell, and taste – ‘the recipes are disguised metaphors, poetic images of a way of life’ (*ibid.* 78). David can, thus, be considered a writer of pastoral, because it evokes a golden age of simple pleasures.

In the same way as the previous situation was portrayed, much of food history focuses mainly on the ornamental haute cuisine of elites who could employ *others* to do their cooking. Therefore, the greatest reputation went to male *chefs*, not female *cooks*, usually seen as lesser kitchen workers. Still, one should not forget that the ability to express oneself, to claim power and voice as a home cook, is to some extent determined by the equipment available.²⁰ This may be why pragmatic Victorians went for processed convenience foods and pre-cooked takeout foods. For example, in *London Eats Out: 500 Years of Capital Dining* (1999) – or, more recently, in John Burnett’s *England Eats Out: A Social History of Eating Out in England from 1830 to the Present* (2004) – one discovers that nineteenth-century Londoners could choose from numerous street stands and takeout shops, as wheelks in barrels, penny ham sandwiches, baked potatoes, Italian ice cream, hot pies, and hot eels (Ehrman 2001, 84-85). Clearly this is not a unique situation, since the demand for convenience is almost universal, or at least a function of ‘civilization’ (as in urbanized society).

Following this line of thought, if shopping is a sort of ritual practice, which is closely tied to the care for others, cooking a meal is also regarded as being generally the work of women – even though this is becoming less so in the Western world. For that reason, Michiel Korthals agrees with the concept that ‘nutrition is a gender matter *par excellence*, and the neglect of nutrition as an object of research is clearly associated with the dominance of traditionally male interests in science’ (Korthals 2004, 20). Yet, the relation between technological developments and the preparation of meals must not be

²⁰ Bearing in mind that for most of history cooking facilities were spare and ill-equipped, one knows that before the modern era, few homes had decent stoves, ovens, and energy was scarce (Mennell 1996, 49). An example was the world enthusiasm in embracing potato, since it could be roasted quickly over an open fire and eaten with bare hands, and both plates and utensils were also scarce. The same can be said about cooking methods, such as stir-frying and *sautéing* which conserved energy, time, and nutrients in peasant societies.

undervalued, for such developments have a vast impact on *what* is cooked and *how* it is done. One example from the last century is precisely the availability of freezers and microwave ovens and how these became significant in the preference for certain types of fast-food – ‘And that corresponds well with the increasing number of women with regular jobs, who no longer take the time to cook at home’ (*ibidem*).

Despite the fact that modern women, regardless of their political and economical status, now employ many laborsaving technologies, products, and services, they have resisted an absolute socialization of cooking. Even if the 1950s have been termed the ‘golden age of food processing’ – when the marketers launched a full attack on scratch cooking (Levenstein 2003b, 101-118) – cooking had so deep and immovable roots that even the powerful fist of the food industry could not pull them up (Shapiro 2005, xxiv). There was a paradox, since in the early 1960s women eagerly bought processed foods and followed recipes in Peg Bracken’s best-selling *The I Hate to Cook Book* (1960), and they simultaneously still took pleasure in Irma Rombauer’s ode to the kitchen, *Joy of Cooking* (1931), and Julia Child’s best-seller, *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* (1961).²¹

The fact that it becomes difficult to depict a plain division between what can be considered ‘traditional’ and what can be seen as ‘modern’ is probably due to a strong compromise between all three points of a triangle: a respect for food’s powerful voice (identity), a healthy suspicion of distant, impersonal providers (the responsibility issue), and the higher cost of packaged or professionally prepared food (the convenience issue), all these pointed out by Belasco (Belasco 2008, 49). Even though the majority of women serve both as producers and consumers in the public “cash economy” (Shapiro 2005, xxiii), since these women basically work two jobs a day, there are bigger expectations for food quality and creativity, where cooks may find themselves having to perform before an ever more discriminating audience of family and guests. This happens in *The Magic Toyshop* when Carter portrays Aunt Margaret’s meals. The first time Melanie hears anything about Aunt Margaret is through her own brothers, right at the train station:

‘She’s a gran’ cook,’ said Finn, offering this apparently in compensation.

‘Such pastry!’

²¹ Warren Belasco gives an enlightening example of such compromise:

As a compromise, they may have tried the recipe for “Eight-Can Casserole” in the Oakland [Iowa] Centennial Cookbook (1982), or even have submitted an “original” recipe combining boxed cake mixes, canned almond slivers, ersatz whipped cream, and crushed candy bars to the hugely popular Pillsbury Bake-Off. (Belasco 2008, 49)

‘Does she make bread pudding often?’ asked Jonathon.

‘Rarely,’ said Finn, after a moment’s thought. (*MT* 38)

Melanie becomes aware that her brother Jonathon resented Mrs Rundle’s endless bread puddings and may find some comfort with Aunt Margaret, but later on she is also aware that although the brothers (Finn and Francie) agree on her aunt’s cooking skills, their personalities differed – “But you [Melanie] mustn’t spoil your supper,’ he [Finn] said, ‘for it’s rabbit pie. And if ever a woman could make a rabbit pie, it’s our Maggie. Isn’t that so, Francie?’ Francie smiled his archaic smile and Aunt Margaret laughed soundlessly’ (*ibid.* 43). However, their own table manners would not prove to mirror completely their own personality. In view of that, whereas Finn shows possibly a combination of moves that may even be connoted with gentleness and graciousness, all this when eating, Francie also gives an idea of having somehow rough manners: ‘It was as good as a ballet to watch Finn eat but Francie mop gravy with bread and chewed bones from his fingers’ (*ibid.* 47). The use of the verb ‘mop’ instead of ‘clean’ or ‘wipe’ emphasises Francie’s fairly coarseness, but the comparison with ballet when referring to Finn’s eating may accentuate his playing behavior, as almost a court entertainer. In the same meal, Melanie herself judges her aunt’s personality by the way she cooks (‘she must, thought Melanie, be nice if she cooks so well’ (*ibidem*)), agreeing with Finn and Francie’s first comment on their sister.

This can be read as how childless Aunt Margaret portrays mothering, in both its nurturing aspect and as an indicator of disempowerment. Thus, one will see her, on the one hand, ‘economically dependent, enslaved, rendered mute and controlled by patriarchy’ (Sceats 1997, 103) in the person of Uncle Philip, and, on the other hand, she is expressively portrayed through her cooking and caring manners. There is a difference here, implied by Sceats, that the appetite she is required to cater for is Uncle Philip’s, whereas the food’s savour is intended for her [Aunt Margaret’s] brothers and the children (*ibidem*). When in the absence of her husband, Aunt Margaret makes a magically welcoming meal for Melanie and her siblings, presenting a steaming savoury pie; and by doing so, she is not a servant, but benevolently in control of the meal. I agree with Sceats, when she reads the description of the meal as having ‘overtones of a story told to children, with its rhythms and wide-eyed vocabulary reminiscent of Beatrix Potter’s tales and in the bright picture it paints and the satisfaction and comfort it evokes’ (*ibidem*). It is the comfort and the story the children needed to be welcomed with:

He [Francie] was also a noisy eater, as if providing an orchestral accompaniment for his brother. The food was abundant and delicious. There was both white bread and brown bread, yellow curls of the best butter, two kinds of jam (strawberry and apricot) on the table and currant cake on the sideboard ready for when they had dealt with the pie.

Aunt Margaret poured fresh tea from a brown earthenware, Sunday-school treat pot that was so heavy she had to lift it with both hands. They drank their tea very dark and all put much sugar into it. Aunt Margaret presided over the table with placid contentment, urging them to eat with eloquent movements of the eyes and hands. The children ate hungrily, relaxing over the meal; she must, thought Melanie, be nice if she cooks so well. (*MT* 47)

Indeed, it seems that all the feelings which they are not able to demonstrate are represented by the abundance of food. Furthermore, this picture gives the impression to be completed when Aunt Margaret writes on her notepad 'What a fine, plump little girl!' referring to Victoria – 'a sentence that completes the scene with distinctly Hansel and Gretel resonances. But she gives Melanie a 'desperate' stiff embrace, as though 'making an anguished plea for affection' (Sceats 1997, 103). This may be read as an example of the spirit of passionate and anarchic enthusiasm which is released only in Uncle Philip's absence, as it happens later on.

The fact that Aunt Margaret is having company and help from another woman is also expressed by herself:

Even doing the housework with Aunt Margaret satisfied her [Melanie]; she had a part to play in the running of the home. She was a help to Aunt Margaret. As they prepared a meal one day, Aunt Margaret chatted:

'I don't know how I coped before you came. It is lovely to have another woman in the house.' (*MT* 123)

I believe Melanie was contented by helping in the housework because of the theatrical/dreamlike notion she had of her own situation, comparing her life to a mere performance where she had to deal with and get by other performing characters, and her company is seen in the realm of survival, of coping with Aunt's everyday reality as an accomplice, a partner of misfortune. Actually, Melanie can be said to work two jobs a day, as said above about the "cash economy" ('She dried cups, saucers and plates on a soaking

cloth for there was nothing else for her to do' (*ibid.* 77)) even if she does it in a different way as producer and consumer. She shops and helps her Aunt, playing her part in the process of providing and transforming food (as portrayed by Belasco), which I believe stands out in the following descriptions: 'One day, she prepared the brussels sprouts for dinner, cutting a cross on each base as her Aunt had taught her' (*ibid.* 124); 'Then the gong sounded for tea, which somehow had to be endured, the shrimps shelled, the bread buttered, the milk and tea poured into the cups, Victoria's cake to be cut into fingers so that she could eat it all up' (*ibid.* 155). The rhythm in the last description, given by alliteration and the enumeration of the tasks to be performed, reflects the almost mechanic routine of the whole process, assimilated by then.

Cooking takes place in terms of a series of diversified structures, among which the ones of household and class can be discussed. I believe this is the approach that makes more sense when studying Carter's *The Magic Toyshop* and thus I will follow Jack Goody's trust on how the analysis of cooking relates to the distribution of power and authority – even though Goody related such power and authority with the more specific fields of economy and political ramifications, my concern here tends to be more connected with the system of class or stratification. When one focus more on the study of the process of providing and transforming food, in particular, one understands it covers four main areas, that of growing, allocating, cooking and eating, which represent the phases of production, distribution, preparation, and consumption. The following table (table 2) was presented by Jack Goody, who afterwards added an often forgotten fifth phase (the process would be 'disposal', the phase would be 'clearing up, and the 'locus' would be 'scullery'):

<i>Processes</i>	<i>Phases</i>	<i>Locus</i>
Growing	Production	Farm
Allocating/ storing	Distribution	Granary/market
Cooking	Preparation	Kitchen
Eating	Consumption	Table

Table 2 – Jack Goody, *Cooking, Cuisine and Class: A Study in Comparative Sociology* 1982, 37.

If the economic factors most clearly dominate in the first phase (due to aspects of primary production, the work organisation and the technology of producing and storing

food, leading to the distribution of what is produced), and the process of allocation is the most overtly political phase (because of demands for rent tribute and tax intervene, amongst other factors), it is in the third phase, the preparation of food, that one feels the shift from the field and the granary (or market-place) to the kitchen, 'to the arts of cooking and the cuisine' (*ibid.* 38). This is the area where the system of division and stratification of domestic or patrimonial labour is defined and becomes unambiguous. Moving to the fourth phase, the one of the table and of the consuming of prepared food, it is the one that comprises both the cooked and the raw, where the identity and differentiation of a group, for instance, is brought out in the practice of eating together or separately, as well as in the content of what is eaten by different groups or individuals. The fourth phase is the suitable analysis for meals chez Uncle Philip (*The Magic Toyshop*) as mentioned above. Furthermore, as this can be read simultaneously as the arena of feasts and fasts, of prohibitions and preferences, of communal and domestic meals, of table manners and modes of serving and service, it makes it even clearer how it is relevant for the reading of Carter's novel. Although this is my option for studying meals in *The Magic Toyshop*, I have to agree with Jack Goody on how relevant it is that these frames presented by him, general as they maybe, should not be a concern for anthropologists, for example, when they try to discard one in favour of another, since there should be a stronger concern on how there can be a conjunction made between them (*ibid.* 39).

Again in *The Magic Toyshop* one can see a difference between the world Melanie left behind when she moved in with Uncle Philip, and she still believes to be the same – 'All the nice people in the wedding photograph, no doubt each one at this very moment preparing huge turkeys and trimming Christmas trees in preparation for a huge feast' (*MT* 159) – and that in which she finds herself living in. The sense of obligation and generosity are patent here, when, for example, Mrs Rundle, the children's housekeeper, habitually used to feed them, herself and her cat, notwithstanding the overload of bread pudding, and when Aunt Margaret cooks as an act of love but, simultaneously, as an act of defiance. Thus, Melanie is clearly surprised by the dinner prepared for Christmas Eve, which also surprises her uncle:

To her surprise, there was a special dinner, a roast goose, materialising unexpectedly on the table attended by a bowl of apple sauce like a ghost of Christmas past. Aunt Margaret must have ordered it secretly by herself, as a surprise. Old Scrooge Uncle Philip frowned when he saw it and plunged the

carving knife into its belly so fiercely that the stuffing spurted on the best damask tablecloth and Aunt Margaret had to scoop it back up with a spoon. He attacked the defenceless goose so savagely he seemed to want to kill it all over again, perhaps feeling the butcher had been incompetent in the first place and Aunt Margaret had not cooked it in a hot enough oven to finish it off. The reeking knife in his hand, he gazed reflectively at Finn. For a moment, Melanie feared he had merely been trying out the fatal blow on the goose and now, action perfect, would use it on Finn. But in the end all he did was to serve Finn a mean portion of skin and bone which Finn pushed moodily around his plate with his fork, not eating. Uncle Philip made a hearty meal and gnawed on the bones like Henry VIII. It was a gloomy table and they did not linger over it. (*ibid.* 160)

One can perceive in this rather long quotation that Uncle Philip's surprise does not diminish his intense 'attack' on the food, shown by the use of the adverbs 'fiercely' and 'savagely', not trusting his wife's cooking skills. The way he attacks food is overtly presented by Carter with the intention of attacking Finn. This feeling towards Finn had already been showed when Melanie and her siblings first meet their uncle at breakfast and he blames Finn's delay for the cooling porridge. His aversion is compared to his feelings for the young man and is stressed by Uncle Philip himself: "It is cooling because you are so late. If there's one thing that disgusts me it's cold porridge. Besides you Jowles," he added. "Besides you Jowles" (*ibid.* 69-70). Indeed, Finn is bullied by Uncle Philip, who intimidates him in a way bound to his own relationship with food. Even the allusion to a dismal and dreary table ('gloomy table') attests for the spirit shared by the company.

Back to the Christmas Eve dinner, the comparison with Henry VIII stresses his bloody manners and Melanie's conclusion could not be a different one. She ends up comparing the gloomy table they leave and the description of the characters' attitudes with 'all London', which helps to emphasize the gap she feels between this and that 'special' household:

And all over London, men and women in hats of coloured paper were watching the Queen's speech on television, cracking walnuts and toasting one another in tawny port. It was hardly to be believed when, in this house, Uncle Philip and Finn and Jonathon went back to the workroom as soon as the mincepies and brandy butter were eaten, without zest. Aunt Margaret took out the chiffon tunic once the dishes were washed to put the finishing touches to the criss-crossing

ribbons. Victoria was playing with a saucepan, banging it with a wooden spoon. There was brandy butter, already, on her pink woolly cuffs. (*ibid.* 161)

The difference between such two realities lies both on their social and economical interests, and these are reflected not only on what they eat but on how they do it. Whereas it seems that it is a tradition to savour something special while leisurely enjoying the Queen's speech, showing restfulness ('cracking walnuts') and gentleness ('toasting one another in tawny port'), in Uncle Philip's house the men go back to work right after eating and drinking without the appetite and passion of a particular meal ('without zest') and the women clean the kitchen and go on with their usual tasks. Still, when one considers that Uncle Philip embodies a domineering or corrupt political reality 'which has something to do with patriarchy, something with capitalism and something to say, perhaps, about the corruption of power itself' (Sceats 1997, 107), one may easily picture how he becomes capable of murder, which here may be related to eating.²² The perspective of murder is at first outlined as a possibility precisely when he carves the Christmas goose, as seen above, but, later, perceptive Uncle Philip at last sets fire to the house intending to burn them all to death. In this act the kitchen becomes the focal point of his murderous intentions, since it is the room he first destroys, and this is stressed by the need he feels of obstructing their way out at the foot of the stairs by using the table itself, with its tablecloth and the remains of the festive meal.

In addition, any meal described in *The Magic Toyshop* is significant for us to better understand the characters to a greater extent and for the characters themselves to know each other better, for the emotions may not be in the tasting experiencing of the food

²² There can be seen a similarity between Uncle Philip and Albert Spica, the Thief in Peter Greenaway's already mentioned film, *The Cook, The Thief, His Wife and Her Lover* (1989), as pointed out by Sceats: 'Both men's power is primarily economic, and implemented through degradation and brutality, those powerful tools in the service of tyranny (as Carter notes in *The Sadeian Woman*) which appear to allow little scope for any shifting in power relations' (Sceats 1997, 107). What she suggests is that both Albert Spica and Uncle Philip are 'powered by a cannibalistic appetite which is externally unrestrained because driven by an insatiable emptiness' (*ibidem*). This is a perspective Sceats considered in the light of politics, but she suggests mainly a psychoanalytic approach to cannibalism. In psychoanalytical terms she concludes the following:

There is, it seems to me, a clear contradiction between the apparent power of men like Albert Spica and Uncle Philip and the driving emptiness that lies inside, whether we see this as psychic or political lack of substance. It may, of course, be this very contradiction, the subversion of ostensibly inexorable force by its own interior, that is Carter's main point. The external force is subverted both by the insatiability of the monster/cannibal's hunger and in the attempted, wholly self-referential resolution – take, for example, Uncle Philip's love for his puppets, which suggests both the emptiness and the solipsism. (*ibid.* 108)

itself, but the pleasure of sharing it. In Uncle Philip's house not all the meals are taken in the same place, the musty and unused smelling dining-room. The exception was breakfast, which 'was always taken in the kitchen, although Melanie never found out why' (*MT* 71). It is at breakfast, in the kitchen, that Melanie and her siblings first meet their uncle, as mentioned above. When Melanie arrives in the kitchen, Jonathon and Victoria had already been 'sat before untasted bowls of porridge' by Aunt Margaret who nervously directs Melanie to sit beside Victoria. Their aunt's 'dirty apron in dark, printed cotton, which went round her back and fastened with thin tapes, pulled awry over her black skirt and sweater' clearly anticipates an anxious and uncomfortable manifestation ('she appeared flustered'). Her uneasiness clearly spread to the newcomers, as showed by the youngest's unusual behavior: 'Victoria had on her nice towelling bib with a green frog on it but seemed subdued by the ceremonial atmosphere surrounding the meal: the gong and the shouting; for she was unusually subdued, thank God' (*ibidem*). The baby's submission avows for the ritual-like ambiance stressed by the sound of the gong. In what concerns the two Jowles brothers, they sat opposite Melanie and Victoria, 'like a moral picture contrasting tidiness with slovenliness'. To show the formal/official atmosphere the reader has the following description: 'At the head of the table was a large chair, with arms, on which Uncle Philip ponderously seated himself, presiding magisterially over the platter of cut bread and the marmalade jar' (*ibid.* 71-72; my emphasis). It is not only the adverbs emphasized by me that stress the above mentioned atmosphere, but also the comparison between Uncle Philip and his wife's compliance, which added to her kitchen tasks never allowing her to be 'pounderously' seated: 'Aunt Margaret crouched at the table foot, one eye on the kettle to see when it boiled' (*ibid.* 72; my emphasis).

Furthermore, Uncle Philip says the grace and silently imposes the beginning of the meal – 'He took up his spoon. It was a signal. At one accord, they attacked the porridge' (*ibidem*) – but Finn's defiance is also perceivable:

Finn monopolised the golden syrup and made ecclesiastical embroidery with it in his bowl, dreamily, not eating. There was a total silence but for the symphonic range of slurpings and splutterings with which Francie accompanied porridge. Finn continued to make subtle, inter-woven, lacy patterns and the other bowls emptied. Time passed. Uncle Philip darted Finn Medusa glances from beneath his bushy brows.

'Finn,' he said at last, awfully.

‘Yes, sir?’ said Finn briskly, grinning. [...]

‘Stop playing with your food, damn it!’

‘I was only,’ said Finn, ‘designing.’

‘Stop playing with your food or else.’

Aunt Margaret shuddered and closed her eyes. Sighing, Finn cleared his porridge bowl with astonishing quickness. He might have been spooning it into his pocket, not eating it at all. (*ibidem*)

Such defiance is cleverly portrayed not only by his taking over/controlling the golden syrup, by his making ‘ecclesiastical embroidery’ with it, which can imply another sacred ritual, and his uncommon silence, in a dreamily way (in surprising contrasted with his brother’s onomatopoeic slurpings and splutterings when eating his porridge), but also by his choice of not eating, as if he was not complying with Uncle Philip’s signal. Obviously, this non-cooperation is noticed by Uncle Philip who ends up threatening him and to which threat Finn answers by emptying the bowl but still looking like he almost didn’t eat it, still acting bold. Moreover, this defiance happens almost at the level of a rupture with the cadence that the meal appears to have, given the use of verbs in the continuous form; even if Finn pretends to go along with the imposed tempo by answering ‘I was only [...] designing.’

This porridge business evidently helps to underline Uncle Philip’s oppressive authority, besides his ‘patriarchal magesty’ – ‘His authority was stifling’ (*ibid.* 73). Such repressiveness is portrayed through the effect he causes on his wife, not only because she acts intimidated by his presence, but also through the small quantity of food she consumes and how she does it, not even finishing her meal. Aunt Margaret’s frailty, as a ‘frail as a pressed flower’, adds to her feeling intimidated – ‘[she] seemed too cowed by his presence even to look at him [Uncle Philip]’. Such frailty is depicted through the use of superlative forms in the following description: ‘She had only the tiniest portion of porridge, a Baby Bear portion, but she took the longest to eat it, nibbling in tiny crumbs from the edge of the spoon’ (*ibidem*; my emphasis). The simile, using as reference the idea of fairy-tale Baby Bear, would unquestionably imply the easiness from which one derives pleasure and consolation. However, even small portions turn out to be painful and a proof of restlessness. As mentioned at the beginning of this part, even if Aunt Margaret is the woman responsible for the preparation of food, she can only take small or hesitant bites of what is already a minute portion (‘tiny crumbs’). Above all, she eats ‘from the edge of the

spoon', not daring to go further than that. In opposition, Uncle Philip makes himself noticed by ordering around and that does not prevent him from finishing his porridge:

She [Aunt Margaret] had not finished it [porridge] when Uncle Philip crashed down his own spoon on an empty bowl.

'Finn change plates! Pronto!'

Aunt Margaret, leaving her own food, started up to the stove, taking from the warm oven plate after plate of bacon and fried bread, but Finn stretched at leisure, yawned an artificially exaggerated yawn, his throat a crimson tunnel. Uncle Philip glowered.

'Are you trying to annoy me, young man?'

Finn stacked the plates. Passing behind Uncle Philip's broad back with a leaning tower of dishes in his hand, he performed a swift, small, derisive dance where the old man could not see. No one else spoke or moved. The meal passed through bacon and ended in marmalade and the same oppressive silence in which it began. (*ibid.* 73-74)

Aunt Margaret's submissiveness also contrasts with Finn's defiance that leads frowning Uncle Philip to question his intentions, as well. Nevertheless, Finn's irreverent dance, emphasised by the triple adjectivation, is not enough to break the silence, the 'oppressive silence'. The short and almost motionless sentence 'No one else spoke or moved' accentuates the repressive and uncomfortable feeling shared by the rest of the company.

The routine spread to other meals, but Sunday was still a traditional day requiring some exceptions.²³ An example of a Sunday meal is tea:

When she [Aunt Margaret] wore the collar, she ate only with the utmost difficulty. Sunday teas never varied. Always shrimps, bread and butter, a bowl of

²³ A particularity about Sunday meals was the variation of china:

On Sundays, there was a whole service, with vegetable dishes and a soup tureen, of a much finer china, plain white with a green band. Aunt Margaret was proud of this. It had belonged to her own mother, once, in Ireland. This china lived in the sideboard in the dining-room and only came into the kitchen to be warmed before a meal and washed up afterwards. Melanie, after a while, began to notch off the weeks in her mind by the appearance of the green-banded china, 'Here comes another Sunday.' And on Monday mornings, she would look at the little bridge on her willow pattern plate and wish she could run across it away from her Uncle Philip's house to where the flowering trees were. (*MT* 74)

Such variation on the chinaware is another strategy used by Melanie to have a perception of time in a place connoted with imprisonment as she records the weeks spent in confinement ('to notch off the weeks in her mind') and dreams about escaping it.

mustard and cress and a rich, light, golden sponge-cake baked that morning in the oven with the Sunday joint so that it had a faint savour of burnt meat fat. The table was littered with shrimp whiskers, the sponge-cake gobbled up to the last crumb – but all she could do was to sip painfully at a meagre cup of tea and toy with a few shoots of mustard and cress, although she had prepared the extensive meal. Uncle Philip broke the armour off a pink battalion of shrimps and ate them steadily, chewed through a loaf of bread spread with half a pound of butter and helped himself to the lion's share of the cake while gazing at her with expressionless satisfaction, apparently deriving a certain pleasure from her discomfort, or even finding that the sight of it improved his appetite. (*ibid.* 113)

Again the reader is shown through a meal how apart two characters are. Here, Aunt Margaret prepared the 'extensive meal' but still can hardly taste it, let alone enjoy it. The difficulty and pain, cast by the restraining ornate silver choker (a present from her husband), limits her movements and increases her discomfort. Thus, I agree with Sceats reading of her as 'dehumanized, deprived of both speech and sustenance, her mouth unable either to take in or give out' and as such 'a silenced woman, it seems, becomes a starved woman' (Sceats 1997, 106). On the other hand, Uncle Philip, who seems to derive some pleasure from her uneasiness, as he 'feeds off her disempowerment and is nourished by her nullification' (Parker 2000, 145), never loses his appetite, participating in the gobbling up of the sponge-cake. His appetite is stressed by the quantity ('battalion of shrimps', 'a loaf of bread with half a pound of butter' and 'lion's share of the cake') and the steadily way he does it, satisfied by the meal and by his ever visible controlling power.

Because appetite, which can be seen as both sexual and alimentary, is the active counterpart to hunger and yearning, 'Carter exploits its importunate and urgent characteristics in representing those who will not be denied' (Sceats 1997, 106) as is the case of Uncle Philip. He appears a leader among the voracious ones – 'a man whose 'omnivorous egocentricity' suggests him as an embodiment of the late twentieth-century capitalist world' (*ibidem*). Portrayed like 'a domestic tyrant, a patriarchal monster in the mould of a Victorian pit-owner, who insists upon absolute rule of the household and its members' (*ibidem*), Uncle Philip's authority is manifested through physical harassment, dictatorial restrictions, absolute control of the domestic budget and most intensely by his own behaviour at mealtimes, that is clearly suggested by the calmly relentlessness with which he exercises his tyrant power. It is during the meals that one witnesses his

outstanding eating capacity and how his repressive presence ends up by consuming all pleasure from the others’ meals. All in all, whereas Uncle Philip, the forbidding figure who rules the house despotically, has a gargantuan appetite, and gorges himself at meals, his submissive wife, Margaret, timidly nibbles ‘a Baby Bear portion’ (*MT* 73). Thus, I cannot but agree with Parker when she refers how the distribution of power in their relationship is mirrored by the distribution of food, and adds that it is also reflected in body size (Parker 2000, 144).

Likewise, it is interesting to see how these same characters act when Uncle Philip is away – ‘‘When the cat’s away...’ said Finn and there was a feeling of holiday’ (*MT* 97). The ‘feeling of holiday’ expresses their freedom and is shown by their pleasure in everyday food, like the true English classic steak pudding which they ‘ate with exceptional appetite (*ibidem*). The other example takes place at breakfast, without the presence of Uncle Philip and Jonathon,²⁴ and the festivity in the kitchen is such that food participates and rejoices: ‘The very bacon bounced and crackled in the pan for joy because Uncle Philip was not there. Toast caught fire and burned with a merry flame and it was not disaster, as he would have made it, but a joke’ (*ibid.* 183; my emphasis). As for the guests, they all sat around the table and ‘mopped up egg-yolk with breadcrusts’. Aunt Margaret looked beautiful, ‘smiled without strain and her movements were assured and sweet, not jerky’. Finn defied Uncle Philip by seating in his ‘ominous’ chair, a defiance only comparable to the Siege Perilous – ‘the shell of a threat’, a seat, according to the Arthurian legend, reserved by Merlin for the knight who would one day be successful in the quest for the Holy Grail and so strictly reserved that it is fatal to anyone else who sits in it. At the head of the table, Finn is seen as the Lord of Misrule who feeds marmalade sandwiches to the dog – ‘breakfast in Uncle Philip’s absence turns into a mini-carnival of its own’ (Sceats 1997, 111). The chair made him look ‘taller and of more consequence than usual’ and it ‘gave him authority’ (*MT* 184) to propose a closed shop that same day. However, Finn is someone who will not try to take over Uncle Philip’s power, as someone who ‘behaves easily and democratically in a way which soon seems quite normal’ (Jordan 1997, 217).

²⁴ In fact, Jonathon is the only one immune to his uncle’s wrath. This may be due to the fact that he poses no threat to Uncle Philip, as he eats with a respectful but absent-minded enthusiasm and lives mostly in a fantasy world of crafted models – ‘like an embryonic Uncle Philip’ (Sceats 2000, 37).

This was a 'lavish' breakfast to be appreciated – 'Bacon and eggs and mushrooms and tomatoes and fried bread and cold potatoes fried up in bacon fat' (*MT* 183) – and worries could not assault the company. The food itself is very rich and cooked in the larder by Aunt Margaret. In relation to Francie, he had the opportunity to taste tinned beans, which he 'particularly liked'.²⁵ The time spent at meal matches the idea of festivity and so does the quantity of food eaten – 'They took a long time over breakfast and all ate a great deal, even Aunt Margaret' (*ibid.* 184). Aunt Margaret's hunger, which was quite simply disallowed by Uncle Philip's presence, is here appeased. Therefore, it is this subversion that is so clearly visible when he is away and there is no control imposed purely by force.²⁶ Aunt Margaret is only then able to unwind and eat, because they are not in a hurry and eat bountifully and festively. Even Victoria rolls about the floor chasing the bubbles floating in the air from the 'soap-sud carnival' in which they all participated, as in an ideal society – 'Then they all washed up together, giggling and splashing water at one another. It was a soap-sud carnival' (*ibid.* 185).

This seems like the welcoming meal Melanie and the children were greeted with by Aunt Margaret, in the absence of their uncle, even if one may say the balance of power was unstable and shifted throughout the scene, as Sceats pointed out: whereas Aunt Margaret served the food, which is an ambiguous role that combines submission, nurturing and control, she also 'presides' at the table, appeased and delighted with the food she had cooked, presenting herself emotionally powerful, and she and her brothers create an atmosphere of relaxation which indicated balance and equality. Such an atmosphere is the one recreated in the breakfast depicted above. Indeed, this all takes place in the absence of Uncle Philip, 'whose later presence reduces all exchanges to an apparently one-way flow of power and oppression' (Sceats 1997, 104). It is not explicit if Uncle Philip feels his own exclusion, but this may be read in this manner when one considers his anger for control and possession, since he never shares the Jowles' close-knit relationship that reflects their appetites for life.

²⁵ As mentioned before, in the 1960s, tinned foods (already well established during the 1930s) continued to be the most common convenience food, offering out-of-season commodities, like fruit and vegetables and easy-to-prepare meats and fish.

²⁶ Sarah Sceats also reads this appetite in terms of sexuality: 'Aunt Margaret's sexual appetite is secretly satisfied by her brother Francie (thus negating Uncle Philip's marital 'rights'), and her pleasures, satisfactions and nourishment are focused in what the patriarch would undoubtedly see as the margins of the household's life' (Sceats 1997, 106).

Nonetheless, the meals are digested differently by each character in different situations, although the novel emphasizes Melanie’s way of reading others through image and construction.²⁷ Even when the meal did not vary much, Melanie sees it as in a dreamlike performance and it is actually not very far from what the reader had been shown before. The following episode took place at tea time, after having played *Leda with the swan* at her uncle’s private theatre. To start with, the chocolate Yule log with a tiny sugar robin on top is presented as seeming ‘extremely exotic and unlikely, a figment of the imagination’ (*MT* 168). The idea of an unusual appearance would certainly lead to a similarly striking flavour, but it did not, at least for Melanie – ‘she ate her slice and tasted nothing’ (*ibidem*). Through her indirect free speech, she sees the company round the tea-table as ‘distorted and alien’ and the way her uncle consumes food triggers in Melanie the thought of its digestion:

She watched Uncle Philip empty four green-banded cups of tea and thought of the liquid turning slowly to urine through his kidneys; it seemed like alchemy he could transmute liquids from one thing to another could also turn wood into swans. There was chocolate icing on his moustache; what would he turn it into? She waited, rapt. (*ibidem*)

She appears to be spellbound but is still aware of Uncle Philip’s power, as if his supremacy and control, albeit only through silence, was capable of annihilating her own being even while he drinks his tea – ‘His silence had bulk, a height and a weight. It reached from here to the sky. It filled the room. He was heavy as Saturn. She ate at the same table as this elemental silence which could crush you to nothing’ (*ibidem*).

I believe that such obliteration is reflected precisely from the moment food tasted nothing to her or even before that, when Melanie tried to think of nice food not to get depressed when she was about to enter stage to participate in her Uncle’s production of ‘*Leda and the Swan*’, but it did not seem to have worked: ‘she tried to calm her nerves by thinking of something else, fluffy kittens, potato-scones for tea; but oddly, the thought of such things made her want to cry’ (*ibid.* 164). The effect that Uncle Philip has on Melanie had already been portrayed through the impact of Finn’s accident on his routine, amongst other areas, and the food imagery serves this purpose – ‘He was transformed into this sour

²⁷ Also about *The Magic Toyshop* representing ‘man-centred vision’ and revealing feminine desire and fantasy as textual gaps, Elizabeth Mahoney wrote “‘But elsewhere?’: the future of fantasy in *Heroes and Villains*”. See Mahoney 1997, 79-80.

lump of unbaked dough’ (*ibid* 134). This sourness, rawness, seemed to express his inability to step out of the controlling world of Philip Flowers where he was ‘the slippery-tongued Finn’ and who then ignores anyone else ‘because only Uncle Philip was real to him anymore’ (*ibidem*). In addition, one is informed of Finn’s loss of appetite (‘he hardly ate’) as Uncle Philip is the only object of his twisted and fierce gaze, and, thus, ‘mealtimes were desperate’ (*ibidem*), a personification illustrating Melanie’s intense distress.

Finally, all this accounts for the action of digesting and, as such, I find rather motivating Ronald Tobin’s reference based on a suggestion by the *Dizionario dei sinonimi* (1830): replace the word ‘digestion’ by ‘gastronomy’. All the so called civilised nations have the treatises *De re culinaria* and if one attempted to write on this matter, there would not be enough terms to express the secrets of such a grand art to whom the world owes so many good and bad digestions. Thus, digestion becomes one of the most important means to be considered in the human life, since a treaty devoted to the good digestion would consist of a true encyclopedia for it would necessarily contain aspects from physics, chemistry, mechanics, agriculture, history, philology, pathology, aesthetics, moral, economics, and even religion. The question then is whether this is not the best description of the approach already mentioned as gastro-criticism in all its amplitude.²⁸

Still concerning some aspects of the consumption of food, more precisely the kitchen and the table, one may even take these as a starting point to begin explaining the nature of the cuisine. I consider that a cuisine is the root of a culture and I will just focus

²⁸ ‘Dans la dernière entrée du *Dizionario dei Sinonimi* (1830), on trouve une citation qui fait songer, si on remplace le mot «digestion» par «gastronomie»: Toutes les nations civilisées ont des traités intitulés *De re culinaria*. Si l’on se mettait à rédiger un livre sur ce sujet délicat [...], on ne trouverait pas les termes pour exprimer [...] les secrets du grand art auquel le monde doit tant de bonnes et de mauvaises digestions – tant d’heures de plaisir et d’ennui, tant d’actes d’impatience et d’entêtement, de générosité et d’espoir. La digestion est une des choses les plus importantes et les moins considérées de la vie humaine; un traité consacré à la bonne digestion constituerait une véritable encyclopédie parce qu’il comprendrait nécessairement des aspects de la physique, de la chimie, de la mécanique, de l’agriculture, de l’histoire, de la philologie, de la physiologie, de la pathologie, de l’esthétique, de la morale, de l’économie publique et même de la religion. Quoi de mieux pour décrire la gastrocritique, dans toute son étendue et toute son ampleur? (Tobin 2002/2004, 630)

Tobin had already focused his attention on French cuisine in the seventeenth century to study comedy and gastronomy in Molière’s theatre (1990). France was the place where the combination of several social factors determined the emergence of gastronomy in the seventeenth century: the gastronomic theories and literature became an independent branch of knowledge together with the social impact of the need to be different, with ‘the quest for the ‘true’ taste as a vector of development of the culinary arts’, and also with the Catholic ethic (Poulain 2008, 25). This is the opinion of the socio-anthropologist Jean-Pierre Poulain from the Université de Toulouse Le Mirail, with whom I must agree.

my attention on the preparation and consumption phases, as these will be relevant when comparing the portrayal of different characters in Carter's novel *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* (1972) in the next chapter. Therefore, one cannot forget that a distinctive feature of pre-industrial societies is the close link between the processes of production, distribution, preparation and consumption, 'processes that are often carried out within a set of closely related domestic groups' (Goody 1982, 47). This does involve an additional breakdown of these processes into the preparation of food ('in the kitchen') and the consumption of food ('on the table'), if one wishes to present a preliminary archetype for the analysis of consumption. Summarizing the three phases, the *preparation* of food comprises preliminary work, cooking, and the dishing up; while the aspects one needs to consider are the following: who cooks, with whom, and for whom and the technology used for cooking. On the other hand, the phases comprised in the *consumption* of food consist of the assembling of the participants, the serving or distribution of the cooked food, eating the food, and clearing away. Still the aspects which require comment on this matter are the following: the distribution in time (daily meals, feasting, fasting, etc.), the structure of the meal, ways of eating (sacralisation, 'table manners', cleansing, service), the technology of eating (table, containers, instruments, etc.), who eats with whom, the differentiation of the cuisine, and, as a final point, there is the question of the disposal of the left-overs, of great importance in sacred meals (*ibid.* 47-48). Some of these aspects are discussed regarding *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* and *The Passion of New Eve* (1977), since I consider these novels to present a more attentive concern with matters as identity and representation regarding food issues.

Consumption, Gender and Class.

‘The land where the tomato woman would like to live’ (ED 93)

If, indeed, as Tobin observes, humanity has found that the need to eat touches every aspect of life, like the foundation of every economic system and an intricate part of political and domesticity strategies, it also marks the boundaries that separate or unite a community and even the way individuals conceive themselves – ‘It constitutes the great archive where the dossier of an age is filled’ (Tobin 2008).²⁹ In addition, women and their relationship with food is without any doubt a subject of interest for researchers. The relation between eating and the struggle for identity is evidenced by Kim Chernin, for example, already in her mid 1980s introduction to *The Hungry Self* which she kept unchanged in the 1994 edition: ‘The topic of women and food – it is one of those marvelous, unraveling threads that can take us back to the origins of human culture, to the earliest experiences of every human life, through myth and rite and tale and fantasy, without ever departing from an essential relevance to contemporary women’s lives’ (Chernin 1994, xx). Nevertheless, she goes even further in her psychoanalytic meditation with the following assertion in her new “Forward”: ‘an examination of our relation to food is the best possible way to discover the profound ambivalence and disguised guilt that are part of female self-development’ (*ibid.* xxiii). This would imply the disregard and trivialization of the psychological meanings in an eating behaviour.

²⁹ ‘Certes, le besoin de se nourrir touche à tout aspect de la vie. C’est le fondement de toute économie. Il fait partie intégrante des stratégies politiques des États et des foyers. Il sert à marquer ce qui sépare ou réunit une communauté et la façon dont un individu se conçoit – d’où, d’ailleurs, l’intérêt croissant des chercheurs qui explorent le rapport entre le régime et la conception de soi chez les femmes. L’alimentation constitue enfin l’archive où est déposé le dossier d’une époque.’ (Tobin 2002/2004, 623)

In general terms, to think about consumption, one has to think about production, and, thus, go back to the ancient Greeks, since they wrote the very first cookbooks.³⁰ A starting point would be the symposia (the eating and drinking feasts for men) which are, above all, occasions for the Greeks to converse with friends and, similarly to the Greek contempt for manual labor, subjects like cooking and agriculture are regarded as inferior activities, mainly performed by women and slaves. Let us take Plato’s (428-347 B.C.) typical dialogue in *Gorgias* (c. 380 B.C.; reproduced by Lamb) as an example:

SOCRATES: Will you ask me, what sort of an art is cookery?

Polus: What sort of an art is cookery?

SOCRATES: Not an art at all, Polus.

Polus: What then?

SOCRATES: I should say an experience.

Polus: In what? I wish that you would explain to me.

SOCRATES: An experience in producing a sort of delight and gratification, Polus.

(Lamb 1967, 462 d.)

In contrast, Roman philosophers and poets celebrated the hard but also fruitful life devoted to agriculture; they did this by praising the various skills that farmers must have so as to produce good and tasty products – like olives, bread, honey, fruit, and meat. According to Michiel Korthals, treatises like Lucretius’ *On Nature* and Virgil’s *Georgica* served as ‘guides both in the Middle Ages and later for further reflections on the social and ethical meaning of the farming profession and food production’ (Korthals 2004, 8). Apart from the treatises that appeared in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (which glorified the working of the land and food production as a significant economic and political good), and the social meaning of agriculture that was, consequently, given a new accent, a political one, philosophy does not seem to be interested on agriculture or on food. Such a position is quite distinct from those of other cultural fields, like painting and poetry, where much attention is given at this time to the countryside and its products.³¹

³⁰ A well-known example is Archestratus’ surviving cookbook (around 330 B.C.) whose recipes excel in simplicity and taste, similarly to modern Greek kitchen.

³¹ Examples of seventeenth-century painters are the well-known Dutch landscapist Jacob van Ruisdael (c.1628-1682), the Flemish Joachim Beuckeleer (1533-1574), and the still life painter Jan Davidszoon de Heem (c.1606–c.1684), who produced some of the most striking paintings in the Virgilian tradition of the glorification of country life and its products. Among these paintings are the famous *Four Elements* series (containing scenes of kitchens and markets) by Beuckeleer, for



Figure 2 – Joachim Beuckelaer, *The Four Elements: Earth*, 1569.

Oil on canvas, 157 cm (61.8 in) x 214 cm (84.3 in).

National Gallery, London.

(<<http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/joachim-beuckelaer-the-four-elements-earth>>)

On the one hand, reflections in relation to food consumption persistently have a focus that is to a great extent directed at the individual, for they are in general rooted in the quest for individual perfection. Such reflections are not concerned about cooking and the preparation of meals, but they are interested in the moral aspects and the effects on health of food intake. On the other hand, an example from a later group of philosophers (from the second and third century A.D.), whose conversations are recorded in *The Deipnosophists* (or *The scholars at the table*, or *The Banquet of the Learned* or *The Gastronomers*) shows the following: ‘Every study that is led by the principles of nature derives its ultimate goal from the complete satisfaction of the stomach’ (vii, 11; qt. Korthals 2004, 11). One of the

instance. Just as an example of the set of four pictures which take as their theme the four elements, one can see in the painting *Earth* (presented in the following page, figure 2) how the produce is remarkably depicted by the array of vegetables and fruits in a bustling market stall. The individual elements from the baskets cascade towards the viewer and it is said that sixteen different varieties of vegetable and fruit have been identified.

references to the Greeks’ interest in the relationship between food and health is made by Michel Foucault who writes on the subject by analysing their interest in the relationship between food and climate, the seasons, humidity, for instance (Foucault 1984a), and not through the analyses of ingredients. However, I tend to agree with Korthals on how the centre of attention for philosophers on the strictly individual significance of consumption is ‘narrowed further by their views about the status of the senses, such as smell, taste, and sight’ (Korthals 2004, 12), since these are critically termed ‘secondary’, from the seventeenth century onwards, as opposed to properties that can be expressed in mathematical terms, which are classified among the positive, primary characteristics of objects.³²

The individual approach is mainly elaborated by Friedrich Nietzsche in the nineteenth century, who focused entirely on the moral effect of the intake of food. His focal point is the potentially weakening or strengthening effect of food for the strong individual who does act autonomously. This feeling leads Nietzsche to become particularly critical of vegetarianism, for he believes it to be simply driveling as it may even create addiction (Nietzsche 2001, 34). This is a general position, and even though there are exceptions like the nineteenth-century thinker Feuerbach (1804-1872), ‘most philosophical reflections neglect the social enjoyment of eating’ (Korthals 2004, 14). Clearly this is just the traditional philosophical approach to nutrition and there are other disciplines presenting a more adequate approach to the subject, like sociology and psychology. As already seen in the first chapter, mainly about sociology, these disciplines have been concerned with the social dimensions of food issues in general.³³ The circuit of production and consumption is no exception since there have been significant empirical

³² Korthals supports such denying of all reality to the taste of organs and related senses by exploring Galilei’s *De Moto (On movement)* as opposed to Newton’s reflections on the subject, as well as John Stuart Mill’s (1806-1873) (Korthals 2004, 12-14).

³³ This fact can be considered recent if we consider a comment by Alan Beardsworth and Teresa Keil on sociology’s concern about processes as food production fourteen years ago:

[...] in developed, industrialized societies, the processes of food production and distribution (if not of food preparation and consumption) are usually largely beyond the view and concern of the urban, middle-class individual that is the typical professional sociologist. It is frequently only within the confines of the specialized area of rural sociology that such issues come under sociological scrutiny. (Beardsworth 1997, 2)

Indeed, there was a shift in recent years in the centre of gravity of sociology, since it was once more concerned with the analysis of the processes of *production* (in terms of their social organization and their consequences for the social, economic and political dynamics of society) and it is in recent times increasingly turning its attention to the social organization of *consumption*, and to the ideological foundations of consumerism in its various appearances, as already mentioned in the previous chapter.

food studies in the past thirty years, which regard consumption as also engaging the purchase, cooking, and common enjoyment of food. In addition, one way of looking at cooking and the sociology of cooking, for instance, is precisely to examine the link with the processes of production, distribution, and consumption of food, either in a particular society or in a comparative perspective.³⁴

When one considers the 1990s, one finds an increasing interest in the topic of consumption, after decades of comparative neglect, for the reason that some sociologists argued for the new structural role of consumption practice as a central focus of everyday life – ‘In such a view, *lifestyle* increasingly becomes a basis of *social identity*, displacing class as the central organizing principle of social life’ (Warde 1997, 7). In parallel, the interest on seeking producer-centred explanations of social change transferred to interpretive analysis of cultural meaning and communication. Thus, the portrayal of consumer culture, or consumer society, as a world of signs and images shifted from previously dominant materialist approaches which concentrate on labour and production. Until the 1990s, most sociological accounts of consumption tended to start by considering it a matter of survival despite unevenly distributed resources – ‘The classical sociology of Marx, Weber and Simmel considered consumption a function of production, and consumption patterns a corollary of class position’ (*ibidem*).³⁵ Under these theories, consumption was an expression of a central social hierarchy, inequalities of resource being turned into tools of class and status group struggle; theories which revolved around unequal distribution of resources in both areas of production and consumption. All in all, class used to be the dominant social division with respect to consumption.

³⁴ In his third chapter, “Production and consumption among the LoDagaa and Gonja of Northern Ghana”, Jack Goody chooses to take the comparative perspective, for example (Goody 1982, 40-96).

Furthermore, there are those, like Alan Warde, whose theoretical concern is to reconcile the achievements of materialist and cultural analysis, as they try to understand the interrelationship between processes of economic production and patterns of consumption. In Warde’s book *Consumption, Food & Taste: Culinary Antinomies and Commodity Culture* (1997) it is interesting to observe how he starts to point out his currently main barrier: the inadequacy and inconsistency of accounts of consumption – ‘Because it is a comparatively new area of investigation it is inevitably underdeveloped and remains in a condition where each discipline in the social sciences tends to operate with different premises and in the light of a limited and restrictive set of examples. There remains a shortage of systematic and focused analyses of consumption practices’ (Warde 1997, 1). Even more than a decade later, I have to agree with him not only about this underdeveloped area, but also on the diverse premises used by the various disciplines in the social sciences.

³⁵ The consumption patterns are sometimes described in the language of postmodern culture and on other occasions in terms of market segmentation and niche consumption. See Warde 1997, 16.

In view of the fact that class cultures had once been homogeneous, then mechanisms of socialization were sufficient to explain consumption behavior, seeing that the individual learned which appropriate tastes were, as norms of consumption, determined by the social group and, consequently, consumer behaviour occurred within the parameters of such cultures. This mechanism has frequently been clarified by the concept of *habitus*, popularized by Pierre Bourdieu (1979), who claimed consumption behaviour to be an *expression* of class position. Bourdieu offers a multifaceted and nuanced account of everyday practice. It is in the process of class formation and class reproduction that elements like taste, knowledge and the wish for particular commodities are seen as necessary. Since classes may be identified by their consumption patterns, *habitus* relates a person's social and economic position with corresponding position in 'the universe of lifestyles' and 'makes it possible to account both for classifiable practices and products and for the judgments, themselves classified, which make these practices and works into a system of distinctive signs' (Bourdieu 1984, 170). This suggests that people's own practices of classifying and passing judgment are indissolubly linked and, therefore, Bourdieu claims that agents possess 'systems of generative schemes applicable, by simple transfer, to the most varied areas of practice' (*ibidem*).³⁶ Overall, Bourdieu sustains that consumption behaviour, broadly conceived, is a means whereby social classes display their 'cultural capital' and their place in a hierarchical system of social distinction. Therefore, it is *habitus* (a learned set of dispositions that support and produce social and cultural judgments in both familiar and new social situations) that creates consumption practices.

By contrast, Zygmunt Bauman states that most people are less restricted in the field of consumption than in any other part of their lives; i.e. consumption appears to be an area of freedom. Following such perspective, one of Bauman's remarkable insights was

³⁶ Bourdieu also attributes the coherence of lifestyles and the unity of the *habitus* primarily to different social classes:

It [systematicity] is found in all the properties – and property – with which individuals and groups surround themselves, houses, furniture, paintings, books, cars, spirits, cigarettes, perfume, clothes, and in the practices in which they manifest their distinction, sports, games, entertainments, only because it is the synthetic unity of the *habitus*, the unifying generative principle of all practices. Taste, the propensity and capacity to appropriate (materially or symbolically) a given class of classified, classifying objects or practices, is the generative formula of life-style, a unitary set of distinctive preferences which express the same expressive intention in the specific logic of each of the symbolic sub-spaces, furniture, clothing, language or body hexis. (Bourdieu 1984, 173)

precisely the way he emphasized the individual responsibility brought upon himself when dealing with consumer choice. Connected with this idea is a specific social psychology of the self, a self which is defined by the effort of creating and sustaining a 'self-identity', a perspective to be dealt with in the next chapter when studying *The Passion of New Eve* concerning the characters' relation to food – a relation that Bauman does not consider, except for very brief allusions (Bauman 1988, 63; 69). Summarising the differences between the positions of Bourdieu and Bauman on social constraints, one may briefly recall that these are partly due to the way they have estimated the strength of certain social forces operating in the contemporary world. Whereas for Bourdieu there remain dominant group regulatory and normative constraints on the behaviour of individuals, for Bauman, on the other hand, these have significantly attenuated because of people's greater detachment from social collectivities and less submission to authoritative regulation of their social standards and judgments (Warde 1997, 11).

Nevertheless, I consider it to be important to look at Carter's mid 1970s perspective in "Food Fetiches, review of Barbara Tims (ed.), *Food in Vogue: Six Decades of Cooking and Entertaining*" (1977), i.e. her reading of the book (1976) edited by Barbara Tims. I chose this piece because I believe that, in general, 'within their particular literary and commercial context, the food columns in the magazines offer an implicit set of answers to the questions 'what and how shall we eat?'' (Warde 1997, 44). If one looks at food history, one can see that much of it focuses mainly on the ornamental haute cuisine of elites, as seen before in this chapter. Undoubtedly the choice of content categories to be usually studied in magazines must be determined after extensive examination of them, along with reading of the secondary literature on food, leading to the identification of themes liable to the understanding of the continuity and change in British food habit – amongst which can be found the following:

[...] the persistence of tradition; the spread of ethnic cuisines; the attraction of novel foods; the preservation of health; the spread of vegetarianism; the origins of pleasure derived from food; the constraints of time on food preparation; the symbolic significance of home cookery; the reproduction of domestic cooking skills; the significance of cost; the sensual and utilitarian values of foods; the structure of meals; the impact of household composition on food behaviour; the presentation and style of dishes; and the impact of the seasons. (*ibid.* 45)

Since the magazines generally deal in ‘visual fictions around consumption’ and stimulate feminine pleasures, it is clear that their description shows them as being based upon ‘survival strategies and day dreams’ (Winship 1987, 64). Janice Winship’s examination of changing contents of women’s magazines in what concerns wider alterations in the social position of women in modern Britain from the 1950s to the 1980s, made her study them like ‘a chocolate box of treats’ (*ibid.* 52). Clearly the strategies and the contents of dreams may have diversified (Gough-Yates 2003, 153), as observed, for example, by Winship about image and image projection, considering it became rather more relevant in the 1980s – even if some of the most successful new magazines of the 1980s were primarily practical guides (Warde 1997, 44). What would Carter have thought of this?

As for *Food in Vogue*, even though all the recipes in this ‘something more than cookery book are perfectly viable and many are splendid, one can’t escape the feeling that *Food in Vogue* is not purely food. Not food as fuel, pure and simple, but food as an aspect of style’ (ED 90). This is visible right on page 11 of the book, where there is a whole page-size unnamed photograph by Karen Radkai (figure 3) of a girl with an oyster shell in one hand, a fork in the other, and, wedged, ‘to her unsurprise’, firmly between her teeth, a pearl, presumably out of the oyster – ‘It’s a striking image but not so much a concrete sign as a diffuse suggestion of a total environment of high living’ (*ibid.* 91).³⁷



Figure 3 – Karen Radkai, photograph in black and white. Barbara Tims (ed.), *Food in Vogue: Six Decades of Food and Entertaining* (1976), 11.

³⁷ Karen Radkai (1919-2003) was an American staff photographer for *Vogue* during the 1950s-1960s, who worked mainly with models.

Food is portrayed as a sign of style set up from the cover of this ‘luscious production’ with a ‘smashing’ illustration by the French Art Deco painter and designer Erté, a woman dressed up as a carrot (figure 4).³⁸ If Art Nouveau started as a reaction to the academic art of the 19th century and it is characterized by organic, especially floral and other plant-inspired motifs, as well as highly-stylized, flowing curvilinear form, it is simultaneously an approach to design according to which artists should make art a part of everyday life; i.e. attempting to redefine the meaning and nature of the work of art, so that art would not overlook any everyday object, no matter how utilitarian – as is the case of silverware, crockery.

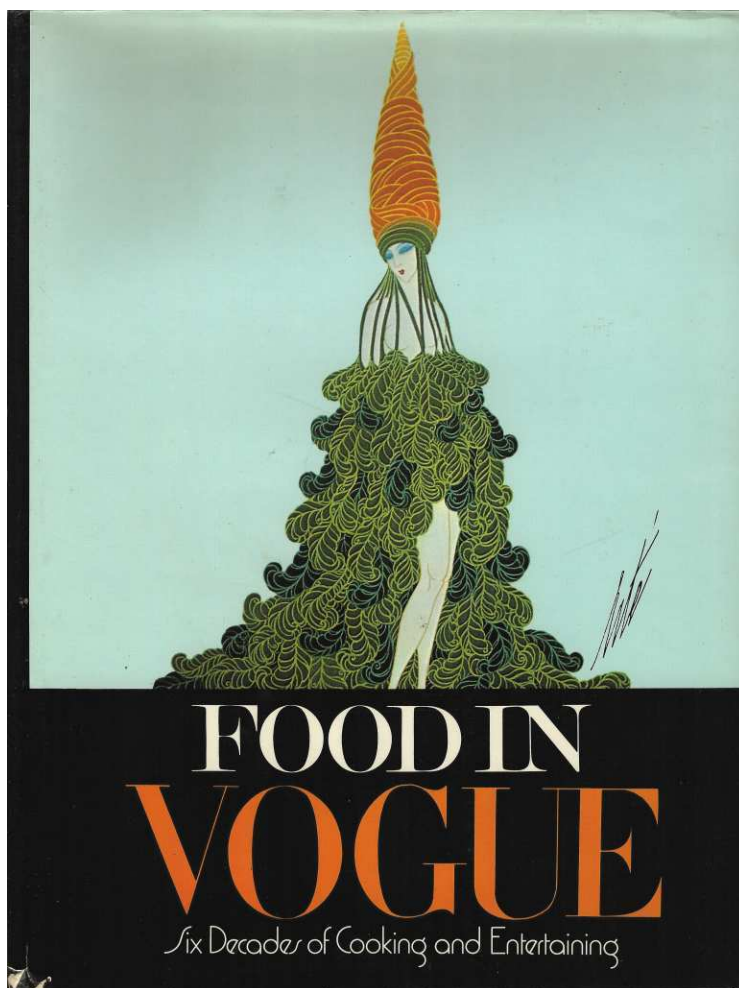


Figure 4 – Front cover of *Food in Vogue*. Barbara Tims (ed.), *Food in Vogue: Six Decades of Food and Entertaining* (1976).

³⁸ This Russian-born French artist was a diversely-talented twentieth century designer who flourished in an array of fields, including fashion, jewellery, graphic arts, costume/set design (film, theatre, and opera), and interior décor. Erté’s illustrations would also appear in publications as *Illustrated London News*, *Cosmopolitan*, and *Ladies’ Home Journal*, besides *Vogue*. His delicate figures and sophisticated, glamorous designs are instantly recognizable, and his ideas and art still influence fashion into the twenty-first century. Erté’s costumes, program designs and sets were featured in the Ziegfeld Follies of 1923, many productions of the Folies Bergère, and George White’s Scandals (1919-1939) – long-running string of Broadway revues – as is the case of the illustration for *Food in Vogue*.

Yet, it is women's relation towards food and society and their choices that become evident in Carter's reading of the book. She starts by referring how the cover's intention 'is by no means that Woman is only another edible, and an everyday, common or garden item of consumption, at that' (*ibid.* 90). The carrot woman has other Erté companions: a celery woman, an onion woman, and a tomato woman – 'These costumes transform the almost commonplace comestibles into something rich and strange via the medium of beautiful women' (*ibidem*). This action of transforming women themselves into food was clearly a preferred twenties trick in stylish circles, as the following account shows:

Next Wednesday sees the grand climax of a record run of large-scale dances in the Santa Claus Ball at the Kit-Kat. A really witty pageant has long been needed, because so many of the parades have become a trifle pompous and pretentious. The characters will present a typical Christmas dinner. Lady Grant will be Plum Pudding, Mrs Redmond McGrath Red Wine, Lady Dunn White Wine, Lady Ashley, Lady Jean Dalrymple, Dorothy Bethell, Lady Scarsdale are all parts of the menu; while Lady Patricia Douglas is Mince Pie and Mrs McCorquodale, who is organising the pageant, is to be Champagne. (Tims 1976, 14)

When one looks more attentively at the choices from Erté (figure 5), there is a carrot, which is a root vegetable, biennial plant (i.e. it takes two years to complete its biological lifecycle); a celery, which is also a vegetable; an onion, another vegetable which together with celery and carrot are one of the primary vegetables used in a *mirepoix* to make various broths; and a tomato, which is a fruit introduced into England as an ornamental plant in 1596, a sprawling plant with woody stem that often vines over other plants and being an annual plant it usually germinates, flowers, and dies in a year or season. It is in view of this that I understand why Carter chooses in her piece to refer to the tomato woman rather than the carrot woman that features in the cover of a quite luxurious edition: it renews every season, in a similar way to Vogue's fashion stylists.

One of Carter's arguments about how interesting things are about the sixty-year trek through *Vogue* back-number cookery columns is the point at which the women to whom those columns were addressed in fact began to cook themselves, rather than paying other people to do it for them. In the early decades, like the 1930s, when *Vogue* prose achieves 'an apotheosis of tinkling breathlessness' (*ED* 91), cookery for the upper classes was introduced as a witty eccentricity. This is a recurring theme all through the cookery

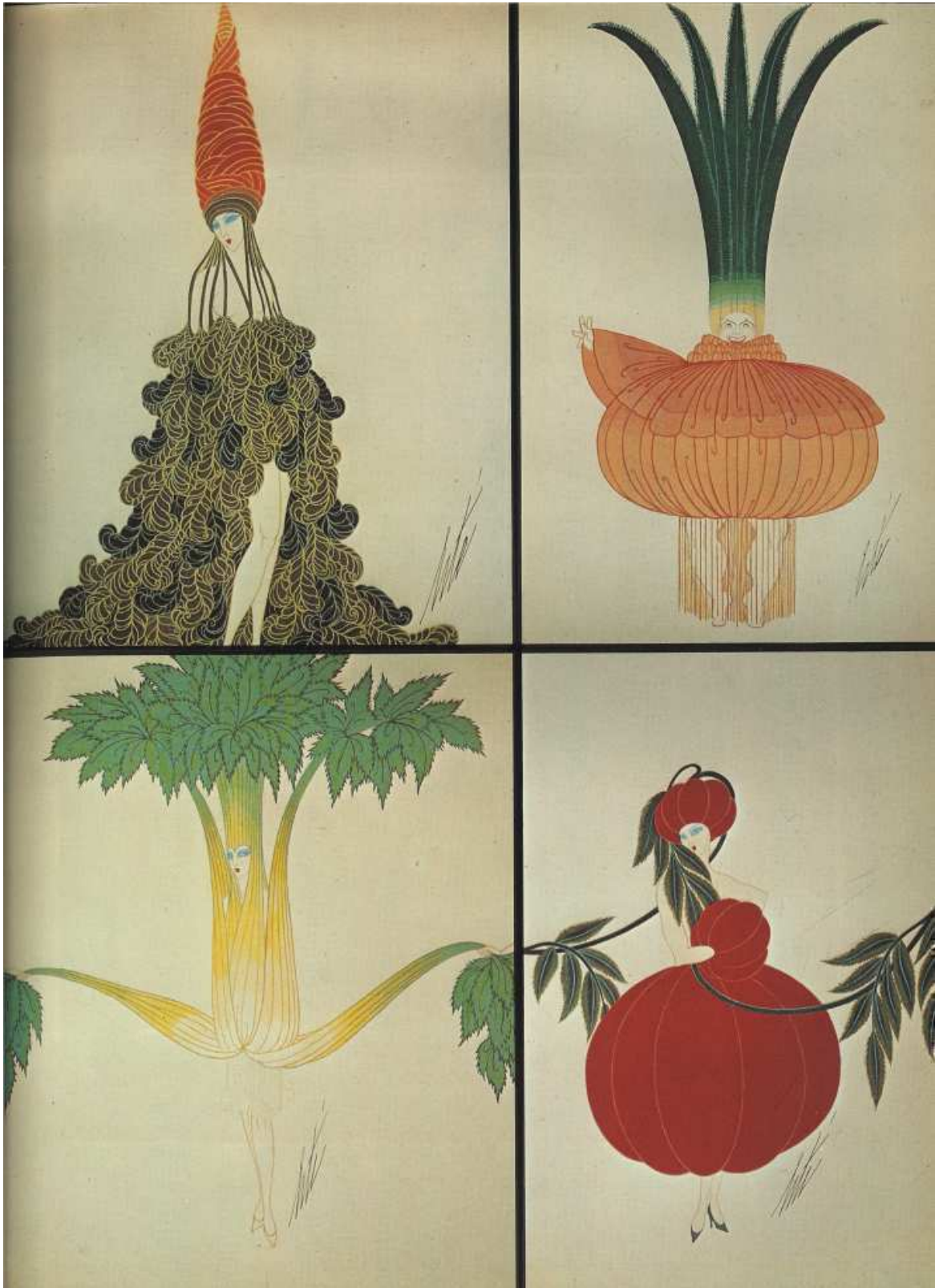


Figure 5 – Erté, costume designs for “George White’s Scandals” in New York, 1926.
Barbara Tims (ed.), *Food in Vogue: Six Decades of Food and Entertaining* (1976), 48.

columns: a curiously magical linking of recipes with famous names – ‘As if something of the mana of ladies or gentlemen of wealth, birth, and distinction may be absorbed via the ingestion of dishes, or entire menus, synonymous with them’ (*ibidem*). Such a tendency did not flow through the 1960s, where the cult of the personality had a propensity to centre itself round the cook as magus, instead of the inspired amateur as cook. Still, some transatlantic exuberance and professionalism did help to ‘make cooking well a classy thing to do. This food has its own mana. It is magic because it is Good. [...] Cooking as dandyism’ (*ibid.* 90). The magazines in the late 1960s could, certainly, have been appealing to new developments in the behaviour of their younger readers, if compared to the early 1990s when the youngest group had become less distinctive. This suggests behaviour consistent with evidence from the magazines that curiosity was greater in the 1960s and that a routinization of the exotic, for instance, occurred subsequently (Warde 1997, 74) – ‘Clearly the magazines in the 1960s regarded the baking of sweet items as the most distinctive element of the British tradition. By contrast, endorsement of novelty and a diversifying cuisine was concentrated on main courses’ (*ibid.* 65). Yet, the 1970s tomato woman considers cooking a ‘stylish accomplishment and may look herself up in the index and find no less than ten ways to cook herself’ (*ED* 91), almost like what she would consider cooking to be in the 1930s, ‘elegant in its excess’ (*ibidem*).

Besides being regarded by Carter as more than a cookbook, in addition to a way Carter finds of denouncing *Vogue* magazine’s use of food as an aspect of English upper-middle class style (*ibid.* 90), *Food in Vogue* is also considered by her an informal history of English illustration for sixty years. From the 1930s, Carter emphasises, precisely, the caption to a charming minimal drawing by Cecil Beaton (figure 6): ‘Here you see a picnic in progress. The Marchioness of Queensberry and Miss Carley Robinson enjoy China tea out of a sprigged teapot and sit gossiping and watching the hovering butterflies’ (Tims 1976, 47). Which may be translated as style being an end in itself – ‘the exquisiteness, the rightness of that China tea, that sprigged teapot – so much glamour would vanish had it been a brown earthenware one with a woolly teacosy’ (*ED* 93). This adds to a sense of the unfeeling innocence of style, ‘of a leisured class that took its leisure as a right and not as a privilege’ (*ibidem*).



Figure 6 – Cecil Beaton, black and white drawing. Barbara Tims (ed.), *Food in Vogue: Six Decades of Food and Entertaining* (1976), 47.

But why does this book reveal to Carter an England where she believes tomato woman would be happy to live in? (*ibidem*). I believe it was because of the fact that the resurrected pages of early *Vogue*, for example, with their menus, their parties, their restaurants, their famous hostesses, and their table settings, is an utter absorption by the frivolous that can, occasionally, aim at the heroic. A good illustration, also pinpointed by Carter is the following wartime caption: ‘On leave, he likes to dine against the sophisticated decor of Popote du Ritz. You in his favourite black, his favourite lace, feminine to the last flounce.’ As wittily put by Carter ‘That’ll show Hitler what we’re made of’ (*ibid.* 92-93). I may conclude, through this piece of writing that Carter’s allegiance to both socialism and feminism echoes in the choice of this theme of consumption, as she highlighted the connection between class and gender politics, also present in others texts of her work.



Figure 7 – Detail of Erté’s costume designs for “George White’s Scandals” in New York, 1926.

It is well known that our relationship with food and eating is very complex, even problematic, regarding, more than ever, the pleasures derived from appetite. One’s concern about what is good to eat reveals not only an interest in a desire to better

understand what is in the food one eats, from a nutritional sense, but also a deep and permanent interest in how one understands himself/herself as social and individual moral agents of food choice (Coveney 2006, ix). A moral history of food and eating, for example, can be traced to earlier systems of thought in Western culture. Again, one can start with ancient Greece and Rome, where codes of appropriate conduct of citizens relied on a concern for the proper daily management of natural pleasures of many kinds, including food and eating. Moderation of one's pleasures was the main attitude that shows us the initial stages of regimes of lifestyle. From such moderation matured an inherent reason based on an understanding of one's capacities as an ethical person (*ibidem*). In fact, if the food pleasure challenges self-control and the other pleasure that matches food in this way is sex, it is no coincidence that for the ancient Greeks pleasure from food and pleasure from sex were regarded in much the same terms. Both were natural appetites and both required the exercise of moderation in order to reveal that one was really civilized (*ibid.* xii). In other words, diet in antiquity constituted a problem with regard to pleasure, given that in early Greece concerns about diet became part of the art of the self and, thus, a daily concern about food and health, as part of the *dietetics*, was central to a philosophy of conduct. The reason why ethics in regard to diet was essential for the Greeks was due to the fact that subjects could display self-mastery in relation to natural or common pleasures through moderation. Since a specific concern, or attitude, for the self was cultivated, citizens showed that they could govern themselves as well as others. In accordance, such aesthetics of existence, based on self-control, lead to natural reason and the 'truth' (*ibid.* 157).

When compared to those in early Greece, 'Roman citizens were required to understand themselves in a more complex and extensive field of power where the details of everyday life, especially pertaining to bodily practices, were opened up for scrutiny and self-problematisation' (*ibidem*). Therefore, it was not by any chance that the early Christian fathers considered the appetite for food to be more harmful and distracting than an appetite for sex in the quest for spirituality. In view of that, the later Christian period changed the Greeks' recognition, or knowledge, of one's self as a fit and proper subject changing moderation into austerity.³⁹ In that period the desire for food was a reminder of

³⁹ The importance of the meal in Christianity has been described by McFague (McFague 1987, 172) as the central motif in Jesus' ministry, and much has been written about the table fellowship of Christ, especially during the 1970s and 1980s. The acts of giving or sharing of food were taken to be central to the ethics of early Christianity, so bonds, friendships and companionships were

the ‘natural’ bodily appetite – a taming to make best use of spiritual pursuits. Accordingly, the practice of ‘fasting’ and deprivation was widely followed, even if it was in fact a need for the poor.⁴⁰ The later integration in the Enlightenment period of Christian thinking, mainly Protestantism, with scientific views of the world presented basis for a rationing of food in terms of the correct amounts the body needed for healthy functioning, and a rationing of pleasure (*ibid.* ix).

To summarise, the central features and considerations of food and health in these historical periods may be considered, for instance, in relation to natural pleasures (for example, eating and drinking) since there ought to be a balance between need, use and desire. In fact, such practices in themselves were seen as *enhancing* pleasure because they proved that one could be moderate and self-masterly. Hence, there is in antiquity a construction of a self by the self in relation to a set of loose principles that derived from, amongst other things, an individual’s concern about the body and health and, ultimately, truth. Because the importance of self-questioning and self-problematisation in what concerns that which one ‘ought to do’, from the Greek to the Roman period, is more significant for one to ‘know thyself’, the whole notion of diet and health in antiquity was, therefore, entirely different from what one understands today. Diet was integral to a philosophy of life and, as part of the *dietetics*, the conduct of eating was important for the construction of the self, and ‘moral values that surround diet today, where guilt, remorse and contrition are frequently expressed in regard to food choice, were absent’ (*ibid.* 158).

On this matter it was not surprising for Carter that, back then, groups like the Aquarians and the New Age Seekers and the Natural Lifers, for example, turned against what they believed to be an ‘unedifying scenario’ (*SL* 82), and their perspective was summarised by Carter through the reference to *Seed*, the Forum of Natural Living, and its

founded on sharing food. In fact, the word ‘company’ derives from *communis* meaning ‘common’ and *panis*, meaning ‘bread’. Therefore, Christian communion begins with sharing, or breaking, bread. This sharing is an act clearly not confined to Christianity, but *agape* love (or the love feast), through the giving of food at mealtimes, was of central importance to early Christians (Coveney 2006, 33-34). The underlying theme which drew the early Christians back to Plato was the reference to take ‘care of the self’, which became important for Christians as ‘knowing thyself’, according to Foucault (Foucault 1988, 23).

⁴⁰ When Christian practices spread throughout the early Middle Ages, their influence over food choice reached a wider audience (Coveney 2006, 37). However, Stephen Mennell in “On the Civilising of Appetite” in *Theory, Culture and Society* (June 1987) thinks that it might be a mistake to believe that the Church had a strong influence over what was actually eaten, since for the majority, the uncertainty of food availability was more important in the Middle Ages. I have to agree with Coveney and consider Mennell’s point a good one that cautions against perhaps putting much emphasis on the role of the Church in people’s everyday lives (*ibidem*).

brisk refutation to Darwin’s constructed theory.⁴¹ The consumption of ‘good food’ is physically and morally nutritious since it is presented most often as a duty. Chef Delia Smith, for example, believes that ‘cooking is contextualized as a practical and social skill’ and thus she uses a key motif of lifestyle – the promise of having and taking the opportunity everyone has of improving themselves through making-over their lives. Furthermore, the concept of ‘good food’ practices no longer simply refers to nutritional value, but carries with it moral and aesthetic values (Ashley 2004, 62; 182). Such assumptions are embodied in the French gastronome Auguste Escoffier’s idea that a good cooking is the base to a good living.⁴² Also regarding the idea of ‘good food’ one can say that nowadays nutritional knowledge does not merely consist of facts, figures and recommendations from scientific experts. Because it is a knowledge about what, when and how much to eat, nutrition provides a guide for individuals to assess their eating habits in terms of what is ‘good’. Indeed, the term ‘good food’, once reserved for notions of tables laden with tasty dishes of food, now suggests something entirely different. Today good food requires one to show less concern with the physical pleasure of eating, and more interest in the good health which results from our dietary habits (Coveney 2006, xii-xiii).

Without a doubt, once civilizations grew to be more sophisticated around the world, and commercial and cultural relations augmented, the human diet became more varied and complex. As such diverse diet developed into a need, food would be a social factor, sometimes even demonstrating social identity. In fact, tastes and culinary skills mirror a group mentality – ‘Tell me what you eat and I will tell you what you are’.⁴³ Regardless of such progress, people with austere moral standards will be likely to live on a meager diet; a famous example is the strong way in which theologians dealt with

⁴¹ In fact, the Aquarians are called Hydroparastatae, because they offer water instead of wine in the Eucharist and they are also known as Encratites because they neither drink wine nor eat animal food (from which they abstain because they abhor them and see these as something evil); in relation to the New age seekers, they believe we are now on the threshold of ‘the Aquarian Age’ where universal love and harmony will come; and the growing cult the Natural Lifers is known for being attracted by the famous non-genetically modified organisms (GMO) food, for example.

⁴² ‘La bonne cuisine est la base du veritable bonheur’ (qt. James 2002, 155).

⁴³ This well-known idea ‘Dis-moi ce que tu manges, je te dirai ce que tu es’ (Brillat-Savarin 1848, ix) was presented as an aphorism in *Physiologie du Gout, ou Méditations de Gastronomie Transcendante* (1826) by the French lawyer and politician, who gained fame as an epicure and gastronome, Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin and shortly after by the German philosopher and anthropologist Ludwig Feuerbach who used the truism ‘man is what he eats’ (‘Der Mensch ist was er ißt’), since Feuerbach stood in opposition to any philosophical system-building for an empirical study of how people respond to the world and to each other. Almost two centuries later Brillat-Savarin’s idea is equally applicable.

nutritional issues at the time of the Counter-Reformation (Toussaint-Samat 2009, 3). Actually, the eighteen-century example of the pioneering physician George Cheyne, who discoursed about lifestyle, wrote about the melancholy of the English society, especially among the classes which could afford a life of luxury and leisure. Cheyne's written material incorporated criticisms of the rich and exotic lifestyle afforded by wealth built up from the expansion of trade and commerce. The new foods available through colonisation were strong and spicy and were, according to Cheyne, playing disorder with the English digestion. Thus, for this physician, there were great benefits in the consumption of simply prepared food, as he favoured plain, simple, frugal, and honest food and lifestyles.

It seems to have been Cheyne's allegiance to ascetic principles that brought his work to the attention of John Wesley (who believed that highly seasoned food was unwholesome) and of other Methodists, he said. One can see, as Coveney points out, in the work of Cheyne, 'the dietary ascetism of the early Christian fathers, for whom the absence of all sensual pleasures, especially those associated with food and drink, was a main method of religious discipline' (Coveney 2006, 55). Therefore, such stress on the *rationalisation* of diet by sixteenth- and seventeenth-century writers concerned the health of the body, the elimination of disease, and the purity of the soul. It is this theology and reverence of the body as the temple of God (and not subservient to spirituality as it is in the Hellenistic origins of Christianity) that may be found in some of the reformist Protestant religions. For early reformers like Martin Luther, the embodiment of Christ in men and women meant that His temple, the body, was to be kept clean and pure (Braaten 1976, 16-17), and one can see a 'theology of hygiene' stemming from ascetic Protestant movements in which self-purification of the soul, through Christian practices, runs parallel to self-purification of the body, through strict dietary practices. Furthermore, these themes on the body and food changed little during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Coveney 2006, 55). Carter comments on such choices in her witty pungent way by weighing Christianity's central metaphor (the bread and the wine) in countries where it would have been incomprehensible against the Asian traditional diet: 'A sacramental meal of shared rice and saké, the nearest Chinese equivalents to the Mediterranean staples, suggests a very anaemic Christ indeed' (ED 96).

The human sciences identify the daily experience of obtaining food with an exclusively human experience in as much as one makes a 'choice', either intentionally or

innately, about what foods to eat. Whereas biologists may consider that food choice can be explained at the level of the cell or physiological systems (‘In matters of food consumption we are at the same time driven and constrained by biological necessity and socio-cultural factors’ (Atkins 2001, 272)), psychologists may argue against this by viewing it as personal values and beliefs that condition an individual to make certain food choices. Moreover, anthropologists debate whether food choice is either the product of so-called ‘materialist forces’ – like social class and economics – or the product of ‘idealism’ which represents the ‘exquisitely human capacity both to deal in symbols and to confer symbolic significance on objects that surround us’ (Murcott 1988, 5). These are some of the debates one can enter regarding food choice. Coveney, for example, decides to applicate the work of Foucault to the area of food choice, because he believes that the whole notion of ‘choice’ at the cellular, the psychological and the cultural level may in fact be part of the same system of thought, or *episteme*, which has a specific history and periodisation (Coveney 2006, 1-2).⁴⁴ This is possible by challenging the idea that the external world is perceived through various ‘prisms’ which allow objects certain realities, and that these realities can alter. For that reason, much of the debate in the human sciences concerns which ‘prism’ (paradigm or theory) best explains what one sees. Nevertheless, I agree with Coveney that this view simply gives precedence to the *already-formed* subject, or consciousness, as the point from which the perceptual views of the world radiate.

Thus, bearing in mind Foucault’s argument that the subject itself requires problematising, a Foucauldian reading allows us to be aware that the modern subject and food choice are both target and effect of the system of thought which informs these disciplines. In other words, the subject is a target in the sense that knowledge about food choice attempts to unravel to a greater extent facts about human habits, desires, deficits, causes, and so on. Let’s not forget, however, that the subject is also an effect because it is simultaneously the product of that knowledge. But, still, for modern subjects the notion of choice in food is normative, as *not* having choice is a problem to be corrected. In this sense, for the modern subject, no food choice is considered to be ‘biologically precarious, psychologically enfeebling, sociologically oppressive or culturally impoverishing’ (*ibid.*

⁴⁴ What Coveney intends to do, at least in chapter three, “The Greeks to the Christians: from ethics to guilt”, is to highlight historical (dis)continuities as important events in the way conduct around food has been understood; i.e. after Foucault, he is set to look at changes in understandings about food and the self from the perspective of difficult differences, rather than easy similarities. Thus, Coveney takes Foucault’s intentions because they were not directed at history for its own sake but at history in the service of understanding the modern soul (Coveney 2006, 25).

44). Actually, in general, choice and variety became key themes in post-war consumerism (*ibid.* 121). Some argue that contemporary consumption is best viewed as ‘a process of continual selection from an unprecedented range of generally accessible items which are made available both commercially and informally’ (Warde 1997, 3). Also, it is in response to the immense diversity of mass- and batch-produced commercial foodstuffs and food services for sale that consumers decide on a range of products which may be considered in one sense personally unique, since, in fact, ‘no two people will exhibit identical behaviour’ (*ibidem*). From this perspective, the unambiguous conclusion is that tastes are still collectively shared to a considerable extent.⁴⁵

On a broad perspective, civilization itself is impossible without food; yet, until recently, scholars were remarkably reluctant to study food, in particular food consumption. However, food production has received significant attention in established disciplines such as economics, chemistry, agronomy, engineering, marketing, and labor relations. In other words, scientists have long explored the negative pathologies of malnutrition, hunger, and adulteration, although when it comes to analyzing ‘the more positive and intimate features of what, how, and why we eat, academics have been considerably more reticent’ (Belasco 2008, 2). Here, I have looked at the link between production and consumption and I must conclude that this relationship must be in balance; if production weighs greatly, the food system becomes subjugated by profit, instrumental action, and economic interests, whereas the supremacy of consumption leads to the rise of consumerism, without any reflection on the particular needs of living material and any thoughts about production processes. What these considerations let us know is that neither a strictly economic, nor a strictly functional explanation of food production and consumption makes sense, since individuals choose their food not merely on the basis of economic considerations or ‘strictly on the basis of the nutritional value needed for survival, of health, or of any other personal function’ (Korthals 2004, 20).⁴⁶ In addition,

⁴⁵ There has been a sudden increase of literature on what has been called ‘cultures of the abdomen’ (Forth and Carden-Coyne, 2004) and an Academic interest and writing about food and the body (occasionally with a health focus) has increased (Coveney 2006, x).

⁴⁶ In fact, one of the most important contributions of the sociology of consumer culture has been to specify the limits of approaches to consumption offered by neoclassical economics, ‘which explains demand primarily as a simple relationship between the income of consumers, the price of goods and a universal desire to maximize utility (Warde 1997, 97). Since consumption decisions are directed by concern with the symbolic meanings of goods, different brands of goods performing identical practical functions, as well as any consideration of cost, are also aimed at by such consumption decisions. Thus, its sociological elaboration has been concerned, in general, with the processes of distinction, and, in this manner, of exclusion, implicated in the social interpretation of consumption. Still, Warde warns us to the fact that the

food is rooted in cultural meanings that individuals attach to nature, both in a moral or wider normative sense and in a symbolic sense, given that a particular type of food stands for an ideal that must be pursued, and this act of pursuing establishes a norm for, and symbolizes, hope, love, or death, for instance. It is such normative and symbolic meanings which are ‘incorporated in the techniques that are used to adapt nature in order to obtain food, in the techniques used to cook meals, and in the meals themselves’ (*ibid.* 21).

Summarising, theories of consumption differ in the reasons they give for the diversity of basic mechanisms involved in decision-making, as well as their historical projections. For instance, whilst many believe that there was a major transformation in the nature of consumption, which occurred between 1970 and 1990, there is no agreement on the direction of the changes or the most possible outcome – some accounts highlight individualization; others, like Anthony Giddens, consider that individualization is visible in an actively determined and selected life-style (Giddens 1991, 81); and still for others, like Mike Featherstone who exemplified about Tokugawa Japan, people nurture greater aesthetic sensibilities exercised through their consumption behavior, because it is a more expressive process (Featherstone 2007, 164-165). Nonetheless, as Warde mentioned more than a decade ago, it is not definite that ‘counter-trends and counter-tendencies, which reproduce group commitments, and perhaps establish new forms of collective judgment, have been vanquished’ (Warde 1997, 21). One goal of the case study of food is, indeed, to evaluate the comparative strength of processes that lead to stylization and the delineation and preservation of social group boundaries through consumption, to which I will return in the next chapter when discussing the role of commodity consumption in the formation of self-identity. There, I will try to show how such a role has not been exaggerated, fighting Warde on an opposite assumption, as an interpretation along with normative regulation and social embedding holds persistently on consumption behavior.

I may also conclude that there are at least two key transformations which can be considered central to any understanding of human foodways: the emergence of domestication and agriculture, and the more recent intensification, industrialization and globalization of food production. Undoubtedly changes in food production, food consumption, and in food symbolism have all been connected to broader processes of change involving industrialization, rationalization, globalization, labour market

strong materialist basis visible in sociological accounts of the 1960s and 1970s has all but dissolved, which, according to him, is ‘unsatisfactory and is in danger of seriously misrepresenting food consumption’ (*ibidem*).

restructuring, long-term modifications in gender roles, and gender expectations (Beardsworth 1997, 255). All in all, it is evident how the act of eating stands in the meeting point of a whole series of intricate physiological, psychological, ecological, economic, political, social, and cultural processes – ‘Such intersections present the human and social sciences with some of their most intriguing questions and challenges’ (*ibid.* 6).

Bearing all of this in mind, I cannot but draw the following conclusion: Carter indeed believed in the existence of a gendered subtext to food-related issues, which is reverberated in much feminist research on food; research, according to Emma Parker, that ‘reveals how ideology is ingested as we eat and how acts of consumption superimpose the body politic on the physical body’ (Parker 2000, 142). Similarly to what I reckoned in *The Magic Toyshop*, there seems to be an undeniable relationship between women’s eating patterns (portrayed not only by Aunt Margaret, but also by Melanie and her former housemaid) and patriarchal practices (such is the case of Uncle Philip). This is suggested by Sally Cline when she states that ‘food and eating have increasingly become terrain for a struggle between the sexes’ (Cline 1990, 1) since through food ‘we can get at the kernel of the political relationship between the sexes’ (*ibid.* 3). This is the kind of argument that Parker finds to be illustrated by Carter’s fiction. Thus, when food is positioned in the realm of the political, and women’s problematic relationship to food is read simultaneously as a product of female disempowerment and a protest against patriarchy, ‘food holds the potential for symbolic representation and for meaningful enactment’ (Chernin 1994, 114). Aware of such issues, Carter’s writing tends to lay bare the idea that consumption can be used ‘both to exercise and to excise patriarchal power relations’ (Parker 2000, 142). I trust this to be evident when studying mainly Carter’s work from the 1960s.

As I intended to show in this chapter, in what are considered to be Carter’s early writings, consumption is illustrated by a struggle for power – whereas female disempowerment is connotated with undernourishment and silence, the patriarchal figure, the tyrannical Uncle Philip in *The Magic Toyshop*, is characterised by a monstrous appetite, by greed, and his metaphoric appetite for power is revealed by his physical capacity for consumption (*ibid.* 144). I agree that ‘almost all of Carter’s early male protagonists exemplify the cannibalistic or vampiric character of male desire and have something in common with Uncle Philip, who is likened to Saturn, the power-hungry god who ate his children’ (*ibid.* 147). Beginning with Carter’s first novel, *Shadow Dance*

(1966), one can avow for it through the male character Honeybuzzard's description of his girlfriend Emily: 'rich, moist and sticky. Fruitcake. My Emily is like nothing so much as the best fruitcake, the kind with rum in it that you can get drunk on. I gorge on her' (*SD* 59). There Carter widens the gastronomic terms of affection 'to their logical and horrifying extreme to highlight the undercurrent of sadism in heterosexual romantic love' (Parker 2000, 147), for example. In fact, the reason for Uncle Philip's vigorous eating equals the reason for bullying and the need for controlling the household: 'his appetite is omnivorous, he wants to eat the world' (Sceats 2000, 38). Sarah Sceats interprets a contradiction between the apparent and external power of Uncle Philip using a psychoanalytic theory and concludes the following:

[...] by her [Carter's] own admission all her characters bear a heavy weight of signification. On large or small scale, incorporation involves a form of colonialism; if the object is taken in, then everything about it may be appropriated by a form of digestion. Like a society or state that seeks to destroy opposition by the assimilation of its minority groups, Uncle Philip moves to bring the children into the same condition of seedy enslavement as the rest of the household. If Uncle Philip is taken as a figure for patriarchy, then 'cannibalism' – subjugation by assimilation and degradation – may be seen as one of its main weapons in exerting power over women, young people, the Irish, and spontaneity of all kinds. Uncle Philip's likeness to a Victorian mill owner and his all-round greed (for food, power and money) extend what Foucault calls the 'the limitless presumption of the appetite' into the realm of western capitalism itself. (*ibid.* 40)

Nevertheless, in Carter's fourth novel, *Heroes and Villains* (1969), even though Carter demonstrates how the yearning to control female consumption, as well as to consume women, is one way of putting into practice the power men believe to have over them, she simultaneously entails that this yearning results from male insecurity and, in particular, anxiety about the consequences of women's competence to consume in due course (Parker 2000, 148). This actually happened before. In the first novel, *Shadow Dance*, Morris considers Ghislaine to be a dangerous threat; in the third novel, *Several Perceptions* (1968), there is Joseph's relation to his girlfriend, Charlotte, and his best friend's mother, Mrs Boulder (Joseph dreams that he is eating the latter as an ice cream but the bowl and its contents grow proportionally to his eating, and not being able to destroy Viv's mother, in the end it is her who incorporates him, swallowing him up; 'you

swallowed me whole’ (*SP* 115)); and in the next novel, *Love* (1971), Buzz is equally afraid of female consumption, which ends up leading him into delusion. In the last example, Buzz treats Annabel like a piece of food, comparing the texture of her skin to ‘chilled rice paper’ (*Lv* 93) and handling her ‘as unceremoniously as a fish on a slab, reduced only to anonymous flesh’ (*ibid.* 94).

These are evidences of what Carter seems to disclose: ‘the contradictions in women’s lives that work to disguise the reality of their subordination and make oppression more difficult to challenge’ (Parker 2000, 150). What Carter implies is how she feels she must mock male authority, since it is presented as immature. Thus, my conclusion, even if not considering the same texts as Emma Parker does in her article “The Consumption of Angela Carter: Women, Food, and Power”, meets this reader’s perspective: Carter ridicules patriarchal power in her early fiction, even if she seems incapable of thinking beyond ‘the binary structures that endorse it’, given that there is a sense of the inexorableness of hegemony, which is conveyed by the strategies of subversion that her earlier heroines enact (*ibidem*). In her early novels and essays, the heroines’ stories imply, and the analysis aims at proving, that, in a culture structured by binary oppositions, the only way to flee from oppression is to grow to be an oppressor – i.e. ‘the best way to avoid being consumed is to become a consumer’ (*ibidem*). Thus, in general, it is in fact feasible to argue that, in most of Carter’s early works, she expresses what may be seen as the unsuccessful consequences of merely reversing binary oppositions. Moreover, even if Carter is able to think beyond patriarchal logic, as Parker concludes, she presents no alternative to such binary reversals. Accordingly, central female characters, like Marianne in *Heroes and Villains* and Annabel in *Love*, show that even when empowered, it is just temporarily and on an individual basis, ‘leaving intact the existing, patriarchal power structures’ (*ibid.* 151).

Not only do the novels already known as the Bristol trilogy (*Shadow Dance*, *Several Perceptions* and *Love*) bring to the reader images of decay, boredom, and disillusion, but the first three seem to share a constant plot (*Shadow Dance* shows life as the real and art as the shadows in which characters deal; *The Magic Toyshop* illustrates the past as the nearest route to the future; and *Several Perceptions* portrays a roving counter-culture). In what concerns *Heroes and Villains*, it does match these other novels by exploring the whole mystique of the otherness along with the idea of complexity when trying to break away from the ominous magic of mythologies. Carter recognizes that

binaries are questioned in the 1960s, but comments what was already declared at the beginning of this chapter: ‘I’m making a conscious critique of the culture I was born to. In a period like this [1960s] of transition and conflicting ideologies, when there isn’t a prevalent ideology, really all artists can do is go round mopping up’ (Sage 1994a, 13). Given that, Carter found vital food for imagination in the shadows, and I believe she used the representations of food as a means to express her feelings towards this period when the illusions broke up, came out in their ‘true colours’ (*ibidem*). She was also ambivalent about the Sixties ‘liberation’, and that is patent when studying the references made to food in some of her writing in this decade – mainly from the cultural method of consumption. All in all, Carter did try from her early writings to refuse to join in the later chorus of disillusion and, as heralded by James Joyce, started to tell the ‘story of whatever it is that is going to happen next’ (“A Happy Bloomsday” *SL* 539).

Reviews	Collections & Exercises	Novels	Stories	Writings Date
		<i>Shadow Dance</i>		1966
		<i>The Magic Toyshop</i>		1967
		<i>Several Perceptions</i>		1968
		<i>Heroes and Villains</i>		1969
		<i>Love</i>		1971
		<i>The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman</i>		1972
"Saucerer's Apprentice"				1976
"Food Fetiches"		<i>The Passion of New Eve</i>		1977
"Elizabeth David: <i>English Bread and Yeast Cookery</i> "				1982
"A Happy Bloomsday"				
"Notes from the Front Line"				1983
			"The Kitchen Child"	1985
"Truly, It Felt Like Year One"				1988
	<i>Expletives Deleted</i>			1992
	<i>Shaking a Leg</i>			1998

Table 3 – Chronology of Angela Carter's writings

mentioned in the second chapter.

III.

Self-reflexive Writings.

'I try to pretend I've never been away'

‘A meal is above all, a phase in a much – but not all – embracing process, a node in a network, not exhausting but still touching or embracing the totality of all existence.’

(Otnes 1991, 101)

In terms of writing subject Angela Carter unquestionably sides herself with the 1970s as a period of change. Nevertheless, in the second half of that decade she resignedly ends the piece “D’You Mean South?” (first published in *New Society* in 1977 and now collected in *Shaking a Leg*) in the following way: ‘So here they [the middle class] come, and I come back, don’t I? And try to pretend I’ve never been away’ (*SL* 181). I believe Carter’s writing practice can be better understood through this doubleness and the co-existence of divergent states. Looking back in time, one sees that even though Carter was born when the essential goal was to maintain a cohesive national identity in the Second World War, she matures when that same identity was crumbling, ‘in spite of ever more ostentatious attempts to preserve it’ (Gamble 2006a, 46). All those changes are observed and recorded by Carter’s off-centre, critical and assessing eye, as ‘the inheritor of a somewhat convoluted sense of national identity’ (*ibidem*). Yet, one of Carter’s well known decisions was taken still in 1969 when she used the proceeds of her Somerset Maugham Travel Award (£500), for her third novel *Several Perceptions* (1968), to ‘run away’ to Japan where she lived for two years. In the early 1970s, as Carter readily states, Japan was starting to boom.¹ This became a relevant prize for her, considering that she did not disregard awards nor reputations, for she truly minded the readers.

Why Japan, whose relationship with the West is not easily categorized for the reason that it ‘has never been directly colonized by the Western world and indeed has its own history of aggressive imperialism’ (Crofts 2006, 95)? For that Carter had the following explanation in *Nothing Sacred*: ‘I wanted to live for a while in a culture that is not now nor has ever been a Judaeo-Christian one, to see what it was like’ (*NS* 28). Such justification based on the nostalgia for a pre-lapsian life outside the Judaeo-Christian

¹ Japan was also starting to boom economically, especially after the 1964 Tokyo Olympics and due to the American pressure – the Japanese financial market would later become liberalised (end of the 1970s). Furthermore, by then everyone, not only fathers, but also mothers were working. Socially, these changes started the latch-key kids’ phenomenon, as well.

tradition is not enough to satisfy Charlotte Crofts, who believes that 'it was also part of a constructive and politically motivated attempt to engage with a non-Western culture in the aftermath of the Vietnam War' (Crofts 2006, 96). Yet, Carter did present a consequence: 'I learnt what it is to be a woman and became radicalised' (NS 28).

Even so, in "Notes from the Front Line" (1983), Carter discussed how her encounter with Japanese culture also troubled and denaturalized her racial identity ("Notes" 72) and Lorna Sage argues that in Carter's journey she 'discovered and retained a way of looking at herself, and other people, as unnatural' (Sage 1994a, 28). This argument is present in Sage's edited collection published in the same year (1994), *Flesh and the Mirror* – 'She [Carter] was compounding, multiplying and confronting her sense of the artificiality of her own 'nature'' (Sage 1994b, 8). In fact, over the 1970s decade Carter's fiction was 'increasingly self-reflexive and experimental, and also deliberately courted controversy' (Gamble 1997, 8). So, one feels entitled to ask whether Carter was the child who saw that the emperor had no clothes.² There may be a parallel to what Anne Enright declares as the need for something foreign, something that would tell Carter how to be foreign, 'which is to say how to be lonely in a more interesting way' (Enright 2011, 38). That was perhaps what Carter also sought, since she wanted to become strange.

Because of Carter's own questioning of the nature of her reality as a woman, and the questioning about how the social fiction of her "femininity" was created, it makes it clear to study in this chapter texts she wrote either while she was staying in Japan or those which are evidently a product of that experience, but only the ones where references to food representations are most relevant to illustrate her questioning. Bearing in mind that idea of the individual and the collective being constructed in Japan in a different way, I will try to read these same texts in terms of identity, even though she wrote in "My Maugham Award" (first published in *The Author* in 1970 and now collected in *Shaking a Leg*) that 'There is no Japanese word which roughly corresponds to the great contemporary European supernotion, 'identity'; and there is hardly an adequate equivalent of the verb 'to be'' (SL 204). Still, I prefer to underline Pet Jacob Otnes' perspective established on the sociocultural food studies since he observes a meal as a stage in an 'embracing process, a node in a network' (Otnes 1991, 101). The epigraph chosen for the

² Alison Lee starts her chapter "Carter's Themes, Style, and Other Writings" by actually stating that Carter is the child who does see that the emperor has no clothes, as she left 'not a single emperor in any doubt as to his nakedness' (Lee 1997, 6) in her heretical imagination.

beginning of this chapter entails the idea of a reunion. In other words, a meal turns to be a merger, for it takes that which is most unique, 'most intimately personal, or non-shareable', with that which is in essence and most intensely shared (*ibidem*). Even though I am not implying that Carter's narratives prior to the 1970s do not envisage such reunions, I still believe the 1970s texts portray those merging moments in a more reflexive way. In that decade the singularity of Carter's experiences can be traced on her writings, from the moment she leaves Britain to her return.

These thoughts on food have, indeed, much to reveal about the way one understands one's personal and collective identities. Hence, apparently simple acts of eating are flavoured with intricate and sometimes conflicting cultural meanings – 'Thinking about food can help reveal the rich and messy textures of our attempts at self-understanding, as well as our interesting and problematic understandings of our relationship to social Others' (Narayan 1995, 64).³ In what concerns the representations of food, the case of the Japanese love affair with rice, for instance, is seen as one of the most conspicuous expressions of identity. As Atkins and Bowles have so clearly pointed out, even if rice no longer prevails in her people's diet, Japan has held strongly to the view that it remains essential to national life. Measures were taken not only at an economical level (by great financial support to rice farmers and a fierce exclusion of foreign grains), but also at a cultural level (by valuing Japanese links with the countryside, for the rural way of life is perceived by them as a continuing cultural foundation). Moreover, such relevance is based upon the spiritual and religious meaning of rice, which is seen as a medium between the earthly and godly realms – 'here we have a commodity that over the centuries has absorbed powerful economic, cultural and political energies, and these are now diminishing only slowly under the impress of westernization and modernization' (Atkins 2001, 274).⁴

³ In her paper, "Eating Cultures: Incorporation, Identity and Indian Food" (1995), Uma Narayan links the colonial British 'fabrication' of curry powder to the colonial fabrication of India, exploring the connections between colonial attitudes to India and to Indian food. The paper also reflects on the notions of 'food colonialism' and 'culinary imperialism' and her final argument is that multi-culturalism and respect for other cultures must also focus on the relationships between the various 'ethnic' groups. From the opposite perspective, concerning the Indian attitudes towards the British, Carter makes a brief reference in "The Kitchen Child", a decade before Narayan's paper – such reference will be considered in the next chapter.

⁴ On this matter, Atkins and Bowles call the readers' attention to Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney's book which is precisely entitled *Rice as Self: Japanese Identities through Time* (1993).

In addition, sharing a meal, in particular a grand one, has always been a complex social mechanism for uniting and dividing people. Such an event could signal peace, a marriage, a victory, an alliance, a coming-of-age, a coronation or a funeral. Sharing it may put forward a fascinating and, eventually, an unusual mirror of society because of its use as a vehicle for flamboyance, for the parade of rank and hierarchy, for flattering and influencing people, and, simultaneously, for providing a theatre in which to exercise the art of conversation and the display of manners. It is the sharing of a meal, either grand or just between a set of two, that makes it possible to draw together from ancient times all the threads which contributed to the phenomenon of the celebratory meal – like the people, the clothing, the food, the setting, the action, and its surrounding circumstances. This becomes so relevant because the origins of every kind of theatre can be found in the consumption of food. However, in an age that has nearly eliminated the shared meal as a central feature of daily living, this becomes a unique opportunity for partaking jointly the social mechanism mentioned above. The sharing of food does continue to be generally portrayed in literature as a communion, too, ‘even though the public festival of the late Middle Ages has, in modern society, become private’ (David 2003, 119).

In *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* (1972) the reader comes across a number of circumstances where the sharing of a meal has a significant role in the construction of a character. I choose to follow Desiderio on what I consider to be a journey of self-discovery, bearing in mind the important influence that the different communities he finds have on him along such a journey. Conversely, there are other characters who acknowledge their own identity while sharing moments of food consumption, like the Count, a tyrannical figure characterised by a monstrous appetite, in a similar way to Uncle Philip in *The Magic Toyshop*. This is not an easy task for a reader because of the uncertainty around the symbolic meaning of specific foods and eating rituals in particular situations. Even if that symbolic meaning is set up by several traditions and rituals, as Sarah Sceats fears from the beginning, they are ‘often largely ‘understood’ rather than articulated’, and, thus, there is the possibility of some ‘error and confusion’ (Sceats 2000, 2).

Likewise, when one considers eating and drinking as a means of exchange, these can be ‘saturated with meanings that are not at all necessarily apparent’ (*ibidem*). A clear example is the front cover chosen for the 1982 edition of *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* (figure 8).

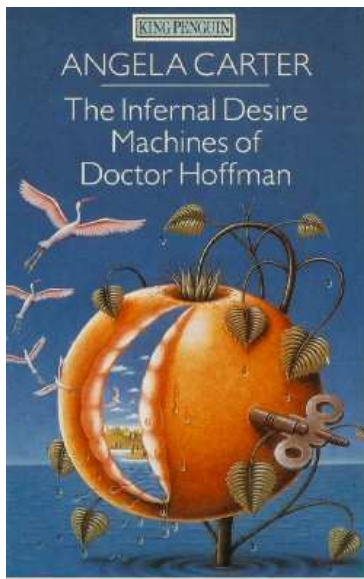


Figure 8 – Cover of *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman*, 1982.

Angela Carter, *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* (1982 [1972]). Penguin Books.

The illustration by James March comes as a tribute to the novel *A Clockwork Orange* (1962) by Anthony Burgess, later adapted to film by Stanley Kubrick (1971). In fact, the disturbing, violent images (which facilitate a social commentary on psychiatry and other social, political, and economic subjects in a dystopian Britain) are featured in both Burgess and Carter's texts.⁵ The fact that the title, *A Clockwork Orange*, alludes simultaneously to a clockwork (mechanical, artificial, robotic) human being and the Cockney phrase from East London, 'as queer as a clockwork orange' (indicative of something bizarre on the inside, which appears to be natural, human, and normal on the surface), can be taken into account when reading the illustration chosen by Penguin for Carter's novel. Nevertheless, I am also aware of the choice of an orange for this cover because of its essence, as the world history proves the orange's worldwide

⁵ Dani Cavallaro apropos of the Surrealist revolution mentions the following about Carter's novel: The social system envisioned by this novel is not simply a metaphor or even an allegory of psychotic derangement: it actually *is* lunacy per se. Accordingly, the reality it evokes is not so much a setting through which some barmy individual wanders in bewilderment and pain as a living entity in its own aberrant right and in the face of which the individual may or may not be able to retain a modicum of sanity depending on the extent to which he or she is equipped to negotiate its hyperbolic delusions. (Cavallaro 2011, 12)

About the political tragedy at the heart of *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman*, it is also interesting to keep in mind what Cavallaro states:

[...] its frank portrayal of a world of rampant egocentrism – a massive prison in which the self relies routinely on acts of misrecognition intended to fashion the other in accordance with its own rapacious fantasies, and hence reduce it to a passive projection or appendage of itself. The reflective imagery deployed by Carter throughout the saga is the perfect trope for a novel about the seeming inescapability of absolutist oppression and about mythology's inveterate tendency to reinvent itself whenever its bastions are challenged. (*ibidem*)

circumnavigation journey, and because of its diverse wedges, different units in themselves, that together create a new unit which is, in essence and most intensely, shared, similarly to Otnes' even wider concept of a meal.⁶ Desiderio's journey and choices, in *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman*, may be read as portraying some of Carter's experiences in the 1970s; even if the 1980s proved to bring her renewed travelling experiences.

Returning to 'identity', as Warren Belasco pointed out, it involves considerations of personal preference, pleasure, creativity, along with the sense of who and where you are. It does also comprise factors like taste, family and ethnic background, plus personal memories (considering the relation between particular foods and past events). When one turns to the cultural aspects of identity, one becomes aware of the way it includes commonly shared values and ideas, and a community's particular food choices and practices that differentiates it from other communities (Belasco 2008, 8). Actually, in terms of identity formation, one is directed by the idea that one defines oneself by a process of differentiation from 'others', and, in addition, that those considered others are the essential element in that process of definition (Ashley 2004, 83). Thus, difference is constitutive of identity, as Philip Schlesinger well conveys: 'identity is as much about exclusion as it is about inclusion and the critical factor for defining the ethnic group therefore becomes the social boundary which defines the group with respect to other groups of the same order, not the cultural reality within those borders' (Schlesinger 1987,

⁶ According to *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, the orange as a fruit and a word went through a worldwide journey:

Oranges imported to China from the United States reflect a journey come full circle, for the orange had worked its way westward for centuries, originating in China, then being introduced to India, and traveling on to the Middle East, into Europe, and finally to the New World. The history of the word *orange* keeps step with this journey only part of the way. The word is possibly ultimately from Dravidian, a family of languages spoken in southern India and northern Sri Lanka. The Dravidian word or words were adopted into the Indo-European language Sanskrit with the form *nāraṅgaḥ*. As the fruit passed westward, so did the word, as evidenced by Persian *nārang* and Arabic *nāranj*. Arabs brought the first oranges to Spain, and the fruit rapidly spread throughout Europe. The important word for the development of our term is Old Italian *melarancio*, derived from *mela*, 'fruit,' and *arancio*, 'orange tree,' from Arabic *nāranj*. Old Italian *melarancio* was translated into Old French as *pume orange*, the *o* replacing the *a* because of the influence of the name of the town of Orange, from which oranges reached the northern part of France. The final stage of the odyssey of the word was its borrowing into English from the Old French form *orange*. Our word is first recorded in Middle English in a text probably composed around 1380, a time preceding the arrival of the orange in the New World.

235). Accordingly, the prime thread in the meaning of 'us' becomes 'not them' and food is without a doubt influential in the identification of 'other' communities or nations.⁷

Aware of these difficulties, I still believe in the importance of studying *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* as a novel where the representations of food and eating help to illustrate the path of its picaresque hero, Desiderio. If travel is a journey into the unknown no matter where you are, Desiderio meets different communities and acknowledges many walks of life, which I think can be studied through their diets and rituals. Indeed, one knows how food provides the material basis for rituals through which people celebrate the course of life stages and their connection to divinity.⁸ Certainly, as food is one of the most powerful factors in the construction of identity, individuals and groups may also be separated from each other by references to food preferences. We physically, emotionally, and spiritually become what we eat (Mason 2004, vii). Carter observed, recorded, and learnt from her constant questioning. Her experience in Japan and later in the United States of America allowed her to see and know better herself and others. In this third chapter the fiction to be studied was either written during that period – a novel, *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* (1972) – or after Carter's return to England – another novel, *The Passion of New Eve* (1977) and a collection of stories, *The Bloody Chamber* (1979) – since they may be read as reflecting the above mentioned exploration of identity.

Both *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* and *The Passion of New Eve* are difficult novels, specially the latter which is considered a 'raw and savage book' busy working through ideas, to 'anatomize the androgynous zone she had so far contrived to inhabit' (Sage 1994a, 36). Carter describes the genesis of *The Passion of New Eve* in a way which puts forward the idea that when she wrote it in 1969 she had the reader in mind:

⁷ As already mentioned in the introduction, I am aware that the concept of identity is fundamental for this study, in a similar way to what happened in my Master's dissertation. Both of these are connected to the ULICES program of "Studies of Identity" and "Modern Difference", from which resulted the following publications: *The Crossroads of Gender and Century Endings* (2000), *Feminine Identities* (2002), and *Studies in Identity* (2009).

⁸ One can return to the Ancient Greeks for a well-known example: Plato's *Symposium* (380 BC) is a series of speeches supposed to have been made during a symposium organized by the poet Agathon, winner of a prize for tragedy. Xenophon had also written a *Symposium* and it was, indeed, a fact that the guests at the reunions liked setting the world to rights, and wine seemed to inspire them (Toussaint-Samat 2009, 240).

It was the height of the Vietnam war, with violent public demos and piles of garbage in New York streets. If you remember, it was the year of gay riots in Greenwich village, when they even chucked rocks; so my scenario of uprisings isn't all that far-fetched. But I wanted to make it as pleasurable as possible, I put the film stars in a real art deco house. I loved writing that glass castle, it's partly inspired by Celtic mythology, partly by the idea of a sterile Fisher King. I give the hero and heroine a fabulous liebestod, they deserve it, and so does the reader. (Haffenden 1984, 36)

When Alison Lee addresses in detail the reader's relationship to the narrative forms in *The Passion of New Eve*, she points out right from the start that 'the reader, even with the whole story in front of her or him, is in a [...] perplexing position if she or he tries to pin down whether the narrative voice or the focalization is male or female' (Lee 1996, 238). It is not easy for any reader, and it is complicated for this study, to clarify in terms of narrative and focalization, whether Eve may be classified as an extra-heterodiegetic or an intrahomodiegetic character, in Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan's terms (*ibid.* 244). This happens for the reason that Eve may be considered a woman separated from Evelyn, but Evelyn may be considered as part of Eve. In fact, and in view of the self-reflexive writings from the 1970s, Carter is capable to constructing an original narrative voice because of its indeterminacy in terms of gender.

According to Carter, Tristessa is the central character of *The Passion of New Eve*, a transvestite movie star 'I [Carter] created [...] in order to say some quite specific things about the cultural production of femininity' (Kenyon 1992, 31). Such call of attention to Tristessa, when the writer was interviewed by Olga Kenyon, shows how obvious were Carter's authorial intentions, for masculinity and femininity are placed under similar incisive scrutiny in this novel (Punter 1985, 38-39).⁹ She also gives an idea of disappointment when she believes the readers had not at all times entirely understood the book's central message: 'I was disappointed that it should be treated as just another riotous extravaganza. It was intended as a piece of black comedy. [...] One of the snags is that I do put everything in a novel to be *read* [...] on as many levels as you can comfortably cope with at the time' (Haffenden 1984, 36). What is interesting here is to understand how Carter in this interview tries hard to draw attention to the fact that *The Passion of New Eve* is no thoughtless 'tract', even if this seems to contrast with the way she had depicted it, a year before, like 'one anti-mythic novel [...] conceived [...] as a feminist tract about the social creation of femininity, amongst other things' ("Notes" 70). This just comes to substantiate what Lorna Sage had already hinted, and Gamble reiterated: 'although her [Carter's] writing of the late 1970s onwards won her popularity with a wider reading public, its aura of accessibility is only a veneer' (Gamble 2001, 109).

⁹ I am aware that the intentional fallacy is essential for this matter, but, once more, this would be better developed in a further and longer study.

In *The Passion of New Eve*, published in the second half of the 1970s, Carter still seems to raise more questions than she answers.¹⁰ Nonetheless, I agree with most critics who tend to consider Carter's seventh novel as marking the end of another stage in Carter's writing career, with regard to her authorial voice and relationship with her audience. A well known example is Lorna Sage's view in 1979, who saw it as Carter's *annus mirabilis* for being a writer who 'began for the first time to be read widely and *collusively* by readers who identified with her as a reader and re-writer' (Sage 2001, 65). The influential event of the end of the 1970s was the publication of *The Bloody Chamber*, Carter's short story collection. This is usually regarded as a time when Carter invented for herself a new authorial persona. Although it was not Carter's first experience with this form, it is considered the most significant one.¹¹ Using a distinctive discourse, she, nevertheless, reinforces the tradition of the fairy tale as a semiotic event and a dramatic structure – 'she [Carter] adopts these ingredients, alongside many related staples and condiments of standard fairy tale fare, in the preparation of her bountiful narrative repast' (Cavallaro 2011, 107).

In view of that, I choose to dedicate the last part of this third chapter to the way Carter seems to apprehend diverse pleasures and appetites in *The Bloody Chamber*. All in all, I hope to illustrate how Carter remained enquiring, controversial and fascinated by narrative risk at the end of the 1970s, even if some of her readers were still caught by the entertaining surface of the texts published during this decade. She was indeed capable of calling attention to the most pointedly corporeal dimension of the fairy tale tradition, and hence 'shatter pure and evocative imagery with the crude'. By bringing to mind that 'there's a materiality to symbols and a materiality to imaginative life which should be taken quite seriously' (Kenyon 1992, 33), Carter possibly tried to 'surprise [...] for dessert with every ice-cream in the ice box' (*BC* 23).

¹⁰ This is also the conclusion that Sarah Gamble (2001) and Lucie Armitt (1996) reach, even if it contradicts Elaine Jordan (1990) and Aidan Day (1998).

¹¹ *Fireworks: Nine Profane Pieces* had already been published in the same decade, 1974. In the following decade, Carter would publish *Black Venus* (1985).

Observing and Questioning in Japan.

'I had, you see, the time to see' (*IDMDH* 15)

In Japan, Carter had 'the time to see', just as stated by the hero of *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman*, published in 1972, right after her return from Japan. Nevertheless, in that novel one is reminded that in exercising the right to vision within a society, one does not operate as spectator but rather as observer. Considering the root of "spectator", *spectare*, it translates basically as "to see" / "to look at", whilst the root of "observer", *observare*, means "to comply with". In view of that, the latter depicts the activity of seeing within given sets of norms, expectations and limitations (Cavallaro 2011, 69). I choose the above epigraph – 'I had, you see, the time to see' (*IDMDH* 15) – because somehow what is proposed by *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* communes with those conventions; i.e. Carter's novel proposes that what people see within the parameters of a certain culture (be it concrete or speculative) is 'a function of what and how they are made or allowed to see, and of the extent to which they are able to sense the invisible therein' (Cavallaro 2011, 69). This is what I trust to have been implied in Desiderio's expression, since it is comparable to Carter's way of observing and questioning Japan. Still, I agree with Cavallaro's stress on the way a recurring preoccupation gains fresh resonance through Carter's keen focus on the intersubjective dynamics of the gaze in *The Passion of New Eve*, published five years later (1977).¹² Thus,

¹² Cavallaro works on this matter and considers that the chief mythology interrogated in *The Passion of New Eve* 'concerns the pervasive power of the eye, which enables Carter to problematize a bundle of issues already addressed in earlier novels: that is to say, the ideological and psychological complications inherent in the politics of visibility' (Cavallaro 2011, 80). It is, thus, by using the concept of the gaze to designate power relations that Carter reiterates how the act of gazing entails acts of probing, penetration, and mastery that typically coalesce into strategies of objectification of the human body (*ibidem*).

whereas the act of seeing is not in general bound up with any ulterior intentions, and glancing constitutes the most casual form of seeing, the capacity to contribute vitally to the fabrication of social identities is unmatched with the gaze – even if observing involves more attentive and discriminate inspection of both one's environment and place within it (*ibid.* 80). In terms of the politics of visibility, one may question whether Carter did not go through the actions mentioned above during the 1970s.

Accordingly, the early 1970s were a time Carter took advantage of in terms of learning how to see and that has an echo on the representations of food one finds in the fictional texts chosen to be studied in this chapter. I decide to begin with the pieces (1970-1972) written by Carter while in Japan, because they portray how disposed she was to take the time to observe and learn. Those pieces were sent to and published in *New Society* and later in the 1982 collection *Nothing Sacred* and again in the 1997 larger collection *Shaking a Leg*. Some (like Hermione Lee) name them 'cultural commentary, reviews and autobiographical pieces' (Lee 1994, 313); others (the case of Sarah Gamble) deem the pieces written while in Japan show 'her [Carter] actively celebrating the possibilities of marginalisation in both form and subject-matter. An Oriental culture offered Carter the experience of alienation writ large' (Gamble 1997, 16); finally, some (like Crofts) identify the experiences during this time in Japan as 'formative' (Crofts 2006, 87), and positive 'radically transformative' (*ibid.* 93). Similarly, Linden Peach argues that 'the influence of Japan on the later novels is evident in their more pronounced sense of the artificiality of culture and of the self as a product of social and cultural projects' (Peach 1998, 21). Yet, it is definitively Lorna Sage's 1994 book *Angela Carter* that is still considered the bedrock for critical interpretations of Carter's time in Japan and its impact on her work – 'Japan (1969-72) had been her rite of passage [...]. This was the place where she lost and found herself' (Sage 1994a, 24). Indeed, I believe the period Carter spent abroad, especially in Japan, gave her the cultural experience which allows these pieces to portray clearly her Western somehow considered stereotyped perspective. What she lived and appraised reflected in terms of food – either through the way she pictured food or through the way it was represented.

Journalism, as autobiography and its kinship form travel writing, is usually a lowly regarded form. However, similarly to what Tim Youngs has already pointed out regarding H. W. Auden (Youngs 2004, 57), I take Carter's accounts to be concerned and witty interrogations of forms of cultural representation. I also think that Carter tries to observe

these representations in a way that what one readily understands as generalisations about Japan may be proved to come from the knowledge she is acquiring by living there. Hers is the perspective of a British woman who has willingly immersed in Japanese life. All the same, and picking up Auden's observation, '[W]hat we see depends on who's observing' (*ibid.* 59). And Carter does attempt to declare her opinions supported by both research and experience. Clearly, as suggested by Sage, in Japan 'her size – and her colour – made her utterly foreign. She compounded her oddity when she stepped into the looking-glass world of a culture that reflected her back to herself as an alien [...]. She must have felt that their built-in strangeness provided sufficient distance, and it does' (Sage 1994a, 26).

This is evident in her first piece, "Tokyo Pastoral" (first published in *New Society* in 1970 and now collected in *Shaking a Leg*), where she starts by using the plural 'we', shifts to 'I' right afterwards in what seems to be a personal comment within the description of the district where she lived – 'It is difficult to find a boring part of Tokyo but, by God, I have done it' (*SL* 231) – and ends up by picturing the children's reaction to her arrival as the 'first coloured family' in the street:

He [a little boy] glanced around and caught sight of me. He did not register shock but he vanished immediately. Then there was a silence and, shortly afterwards, a soft thunder of tiny footsteps. They groped around the windows, invisible, peering, and a rustle rose up, like the dry murmur of dead leaves in the wind, the rustle of innumerable small voices murmuring the word: '*Gaijin, gaijin, gaijin*' (foreigner), in pure, repressed surprise. We spy strangers. *Asoka.* (*ibid.* 234)

One knows then how Carter, dislocated into another cultural environment, experiences being seen as alien, other and foreigner, as well as man's Other.¹³ However, Crofts alerts us to the risk of claiming that Carter is in danger of 'eliding the differences between the experience of being seen as racially other, alien and foreigner, with the experience of being viewed as man's sexual 'other'' (Crofts 2006, 93). That is why one easily agrees

¹³ Anne Enright summarises Carter's experience in the following terms:

The problem of the mirror is fundamental to the creative act. But it is also political. When Carter said that, in Japan, she learned what it is to be a woman, she meant she learned what it is to be seen as Other. The separation of essence and appearance freed Carter into a world of invention and trapped her there. Her energy is spent moving from the fetishised and mechanical to the living and organic. What is metamorphosis, after all, this complete change from one shape into another, except a celebration of essence? (Enright 2011, 39)

that Carter's time in Japan not only 'radicalised' her as a woman but it also pressured her to examine her own cultural identity. She does so in "Notes from the Front Line":

My female consciousness *was* being forged out of the contradictions of my experience as a traveller, as, indeed, some other aspects of my political consciousness were being forged. (It was a painfully and enlightening experience to be regarded as a coloured person, for example; to be defined as a Caucasian before I was defined as a woman, and learning the hard way that most people on this planet are not Caucasian and have no reason either to love or respect Caucasians). ("Notes" 72)

Therefore, Japan seems to be simultaneously a link to Europe and a country of absolute otherness, since she saw it as Other towards what she knew and was seen as an unassimilable Other (Suleiman 1994, 99; Crofts 2006, 94).

In Carter's piece "Mishima's Toy Sword" (first published in *New Society* in 1971 and now collected in *Shaking a Leg*) the first idea is that 'a European could never understand a thing like Mishima did, because Europeans haven't any passion' (*SL* 241). Carter then embarked on a trip that went from her recognition of Yukio Mishima's notion of Japaneseness as a bookish stereotype (but still recognising his use of rhetorical gesture, 'which is particularly suited to a culture where appearance often assumes an abstract importance') to the possibility of him having presented the Japanese 'with an idea that some remember seemed authentic, once' (*ibidem*). Such feelings of Japan towards the prolonged contact with the West, which some believe to have deculturalised Japan, also identify the 'intellectual freedom of a country which has transcended its own cultural boundaries'. Carter cannot prevent herself from concluding: 'It seems a fair bargain' (*ibid.* 242). Was this what she went there looking for? This does not prevent her from noticing how there still remained complaints of 'a confusion of identity – the loss of a sense of self, rooted in a glorious past that everybody accepts as glorious. Japan's past is, on the whole, as glorious as that of any other nation' (*ibidem*).

Furthermore, Carter admits not being able to read Japanese for its inaccessibility, and she uses this shortcoming, and her own experience as a facilitator for ideas. A curious fact is that Carter always travelled with a sketch pad, and (as her literary executor, Susannah Clapp, confesses) drawings and paintings spilled from the drawers in her study (*CR* ix). Not surprisingly, Carter's writing appeals to such a sense of the visual in both imagery and description (Lee 1997, 1). All the same, it is her sense of place that shows an

acute observer looming at a subject from different perspectives and even changing the mind's focus while trying reflections. It is in this way that I believe Carter, who does not limit herself to observation and description, sensitively compares Japanese culture to the West by simply 'looking at them [things] very, very carefully, an involuntary apprenticeship in the interpretation of signs' (NS 28). This comment, along with Sage's – 'the viewpoint of an alien in order to defamiliarize the landscape of habit' (Sage 1994a, 2) – implies the importance of Carter's willing estrangement. Indeed, such a lack of linguistic understanding enables her to conduct semiotic analyses of the Japanese art of body tattooing, *irezumi* (in her piece "People as Pictures", first published in *New Society* in 1970 and now collected in *Shaking a Leg*) and pornographic *manga* comics in "Once More into the Mangle" (first published in *New Society* in 1971 and now collected in *Shaking a Leg*). Carter actually remarks that '[W]hen a translation is provided, it usually turns out to be worse than I could have imagined' (SL 246). This foreignness of the Japanese language, which she repeatedly comments on, is clear right in her first piece, "Tokyo Pastoral", as she sketches the soundscape of a Tokyo suburb (Crofts 2006, 98) exploring the power of onomatopoeias:

The sounds are: the brisk swish of broom on tatami matting, the raucous cawing of hooded crows in a nearby willow grove; clickety-clackety of chattering housewives, a sound like briskly plied knitting needles, for Japanese is a language full of Ts and Ks [...]. (SL 231)

Carter's 'alien' viewpoint seems to defamiliarize the familiar cultural artifacts she explores, and it does, in fact, encourage her readers to look at ordinary things in unusual ways, along with the habit of very careful looking and listening.

Now, as an astute cultural observer, another sense, smell, is also relevant for her experience – 'The smells are: cooking; sewage; fresh washing' (*ibidem*). Within this context there are several references in this piece to another inevitable cultural feature when one thinks of a different country: food. One cannot forget that 'if there is one sure thing about food, it is that it is never just food' (Eagleton 1998, 204). Thus, like the post-structuralist text, food is endlessly interpretable, as gift, threat, poison, recompense, exchange, seduction, solidarity, solitude, and suffocation. The references to food may in some way show how Carter's pieces written while in Japan can be 'littered with clichés and stereotypes about Japanese people and culture, the very language in fact of 'old-

fashioned' Orientalism', as Crofts well points out (Crofts 2006, 98). The first image Carter presents is already the deliberate transference of attributes taken as proper to old Japanese grannies 'Somebody's aged granny trots off to the supermarket for a litre or two of honourable sake' (SL 231; my emphasis). Food looks like an object but is actually a relationship – i.e. eating combines biological necessity with cultural significance – and, as Eagleton adds, the same is true of literary works: 'Food is cusp'd between nature and culture, and so too is language' (Eagleton 1998, 205). Further on there is another reference to cleanliness through food – 'You could eat your dinner off the children.' (SL 232) – followed by a description of how food and meals are almost a living disturbance to the neighborhood's strange calmness underlined by her:

The absolute domestic calm is disturbed by little more than the occasional bicycle or a boy on a motorbike delivering a trayful of lacquer noodle bowls from the café on the corner for somebody's lunch or supper. In the morning, the men go off to work in business uniform [...]; in the afternoon, schoolchildren loll about eating ice-cream. [...]

At night, a very respectable drunk or two staggers, giggling, down the hill. A pragmatic race, the Japanese appear to have decided long ago that the only reason for drinking alcohol is to become intoxicated and therefore drink only when they wish to be drunk. They all are completely unabashed about it. (*ibidem*)

Such unabashed manner completes the image Carter presents of any 'very respectable drunk' and exemplifies what she considers to be a people who are concerned with practical consequences rather than theory. This is so, because 'a sign expresses something but also stands in for its absence' (Eagleton 1998, 204).

The description of places related to food and eating also take part of the general picture of different senses and appetites: 'There is a tintinnabulation of chinking *pachinko* (pinball) parlours, several bakeries which sell improbably luxurious European pâtisserie, a gymnasium and an aphrodisiac shop or two' (SL 232). Carter transfers to food her comments on the Japanese culture, for instance how perfection is appreciated and anything that is out of order is downsized:

Since this is Japan, warped tomatoes and knobbly apples cost half the price of perfect fruit. It is the strawberry season; the man in the open fruit shop packs martial rows of berries the size of thumbs, each berry red as a guardsman, into a polythene box and

wraps each box before he sells it in paper printed with the legend, 'Strawberry for health and beauty'. (*ibid.* 233; my emphasis)

Each fruit has a role to play and they are expected to do so, as Carter later observes in *Fireworks* – '[T]he most difficult performance in the world is acting naturally isn't it? Everything else is artful' (*Fw* 70). Such revelation is achieved on the margins of a culture, since the alien perspective is both creative and critical (Gamble 1997, 23).

This feeling is also evident when Carter refers once again to the extreme concern with hygiene that prevents the true flavor to be sensed and valued. Such artificiality is stressed similarly to a distinctive trait or mark of this nation-state:

Non-indigenous foods often taste as if they had been assembled from a blueprint by a man who had never seen the real thing. For example, cheese, butter and milk have such a degree of hygienic lack of tang they are wholly alienated from the natural cow. They taste absolutely, though not unpleasantly, synthetic and somehow indefinably obscene. Powdered cream (trade-named 'Creap') is less obtrusive in one's coffee. Most people, in fact, tend to use evaporated milk. (*SL* 233)

Japan, as Carter portrays it, inverts the Western habit of thought which treats symbols and signs like pointers to a deep 'truth' (Gamble 1997, 17). Maud Ellmann states precisely that '[...] food is the symbol of the passage, the totem of sociality, the epitome of all creative and destructive labour' (Ellmann 1993, 112). In one of her pieces, "People as Pictures", Carter concludes that '[I]n Japan, the essence is often the appearance' (*SL* 236), thus describing the appearance of artificiality in Japan. She became more aware of the power of a social construction and of the artificiality of Woman, for instance. Later, even Carter seemed to believe that she was 'condemned to perform because she cannot [could not] find an authentic way to be in Japan' (Fisher 2001, 169) as implied in her first-person story "Flesh and the Mirror" (1974).

All the same, what I also find appealing to find out in such a listing is how these stereotypes have their place in Carter's writing, i.e. how they become recycled in effect (Crofts 2006, 98). The suggestion presented by Susan Fisher of a 'dimension of nostalgia' is quite relevant for she explains that even though it was Carter's first time in Japan, 'she was not going there without preconceptions. She was seeking something that she felt nostalgia for, an experience she felt was lost or unavailable in England and that she believed she might encounter somewhere else' (Fisher 2001, 173). Yet, albeit Fisher also

relates this nostalgia to the longing for the idea of the writer as exotic traveller, it is as though Carter is acknowledging the Orientalist tradition while forming her own ideas preconceived about Japan (*ibidem*). On this same subject, Crofts concludes that there is a clear central paradox and conflict that fuels Carter's writing about Japan – 'She is torn between an anti-colonial impulse to renounce Western hegemony and a deep sense of being indebted to the white male predecessors' (Crofts 2006, 99). This is, therefore, pointed out as an ambivalent view of Western culture as both an oppressive and creative force. Since Carter experiences Japan as a real place to live in, in her writings its atmosphere is simultaneously pragmatic and fantastic, while she tries to understand this country and still cannot but marvel at. And for her it was without a doubt an uncomfortable position to realize she was seen as the Other of the Other. It is only later, in her fiction, mainly in the collection of stories *Fireworks* (1974), that Carter's self-reflexive journey denotes her developing 'recognition of her own gaze as Eurocentric' (*ibidem*). More precisely, in "Souvenir of Japan" (collected in *Fireworks*) she wrote: 'I had never been so absolutely the mysterious other. I had become a kind of phoenix, a fabulous beast; I was an outlandish jewel' (*Fw* 7).

Nevertheless, Crofts is incisive on her appeal for some criticism to be re-explored. Sage is a good example for the interesting questions she raises about the nature of Orientalism:

At the time, in Tokyo, whatever she was looking for, she found out the truthfulness *and finality* of appearances, images emptied of their usual freight of recognition and guilt. This was not, in other words, old-fashioned orientalism, but the new-fangled sort that denied you access to any *essence* of otherness. (Sage 1994a, 26)

The Orientalist mode of seeing the other as exotic spectacle is presented and criticised by Carter in her radio play *Come unto These Yellow Sands* (1979) through Richard Dadd and Sir Thomas Phillips, although in different ways. Analysing this play where an Egyptian shopkeeper lectures on how the subaltern is more often a construction of the Western imagination ('We were not responsible for their fantasies about us' (Crofts 2006, 45)), Crofts points out how Guido Almansi (1994) did not understand the irony of Carter's inversion of the 'imperial gaze', suggesting even that Carter's strategy is a risky one that is open to misreading (*ibid.* 90-91).

One should not forget how stereotyping also involves the stripping down of the manifold characteristics of other peoples or cultures, seeing that it attempts to cover all of what is represented of those peoples and cultures. It becomes hard to find something prior to the construction of the stereotyped Other. It does not consist of the misrepresentation of some real or hidden essence, nor is it a simplification because it falsely represents an already existing reality – ‘It is a simplification because it is an arrested, fixated form of representation’ (Bhabha 1997, 75). Clearly, those who are ‘othered’ are unequally positioned in relation to those who are ‘othering’, since these take dwell in a privileged space in which they can define themselves in contrast to the Others who are so nominated as different.

In Michael Pickering’s view, home is a place of intense belonging, and its idealised association with warmth suggests the proper centre from which to proceed, and to which (after emigration, travel exile, and displacement) it is usual to return for restoration and resolution of disparate experiences while away. Still, in modernity, this has become less possible because the home one has left is not the same on the return. The United Kingdom is a good example of this change in Carter’s absence, but Carter herself is no longer the same. Her look is different and things previously familiar become strange. She then becomes something of a stranger – ‘The stranger brings the periphery into the centre, difference into the same, unfamiliarity into familiarity, in ways which unravel the certitude and resolution in the idealisation of home’ (Pickering 2001, 218). The stranger fills a category which only selects generally a different set of life experiences, a different biographical trajectory, a different relation to history to those who look out from the settled space of home, as Carter does – ‘Everything is transitional and contingent, and every safe arrival is another point of relentless departure’ (*ibidem*). Thus, by representing transience and ambivalence, the stranger suggests an alternative to fixed boundaries for it encourages more flexible ways of seeing.

It is precisely a first-person narrative account, as Carter’s, which offers evidence of the link between the personal and the social in the formation of identities. And one important aspect of the process involved in taking up identities is the way in which people represent themselves and recognise others’ eating habits, even if that is achieved by challenging stereotypes. Thus, representation is a key component in linking the personal to the social – ‘Meanings about gender, class and ethnicity are produced through their representation within culture’ (Woodward 2004, 154). Accordingly, Carter had always

integrated the structure from which whiteness tends to be positioned outside, and is used as an invisible marker against which other 'ethnicities' are judged. This makes sense when one remembers that all identities are formed relationally, since some are formed in the context of different types of inequality, and they are not fixed but shift in changing contexts (Lewis 2004, 147), just as food does.

In "Poor Butterfly" (first published in *New Society* in 1972 and now collected in *Shaking a Leg*) Carter describes her bar, Butterfly, where she found herself in the front line of the battle of the sexes in Japan: 'Both customers and hostesses are interchangeable commodities. [...] It is hard to say which sex is most exploited by the system; yet both customers and hostesses, as if in diabolical complicity, remain blissfully unaware of the dubious existential status of the interaction' (*SL* 251; my emphasis). In the same way Carter shows the girls' quite freely ordering extras – 'peanuts, dried fish, chocolate, and so on' – that would increase the customer's bill, it does illustrate how they are considered extras in an evening of watered whisky, by being 'complaisant young women trained in the art of decorously lewd conversation: the last vestige of the traditional arts of the multitalented geisha' (*ibid.* 250). Such multitalented geisha, with her 'dexterous, well-manicured hand for pouring their drinks, lighting their cigarettes and popping forkfuls of food into their mouths; a concealed tape-recording of cheerful laughter' (*ibidem*), goes that far and indeed feeds the customers as large infants: 'Open up!' they pipe, and in goes a heaped forkful of raw shellfish or smoked meat. Unaware how grossly he has been babified, the customer masticates with satisfaction' (*ibid.* 252). Under the circumstances any gesture expressed the ludicrous relation between the two sexes, each playing their expected part.

Another situation that shows how food represents the diversity of Japanese cultural identity is portrayed in Carter's article "A Fertility Festival" (first published in *New Society* in 1974 and now collected in *Shaking a Leg*). Matching the description of the place ('a landscape of imminent despoliation. Tangerines hang on the trees, tea-bushes cover green slopes, but these pastoral landscape accessories already have a timorous air' (*ibid.* 257)) the festival attracts some foreigners and the question Carter poses is: 'Has anthropological curiosity or mere prurience brought us here?' (*ibidem*; my emphasis). The food offered at the stalls equals the ambiance and is presented with a selection of food products that combines a western image with an Eastern flavour: 'waffles filled with chopped octopus; goldfish made of barley sugar; hot chestnuts; hoop-la stalls; bowls of

real goldfish, that you fish for with a little net and take home in a polythene bag. Toffee-apples. Pop-corn. Hot grilled cuttlefish. Candy floss' (*ibid.* 259). The way Carter lists the products shows the sweet-and-sour sides of the fair; as a reader, one feels her need to identify the products and she orders them to illustrate the mixing proper of such an event.

Food is also shaped to represent the fertility festival: 'one stall sells cocks made of bright pink sugar at 75p a time. [...] One other stall, and one other stall only, sells cookies in all manner of phallic and vulvic shapes, as well as lollipops on sticks with a coy little striped candy cock nestling in a bed of pink sugar' (*ibidem*). The celebration ends with the priests throwing a hail of rice cakes from the balcony of a temple building, as in a wedding ritual, celebrating a fertile hope in the future. However, Carter cannot but demonstrate her witty, practical side when she adds: 'The crowd screams and jostles for them; but Harold's girlfriend tells him not to go and take pictures of the scene because the rice cakes are hard and might break his lens' (*ibid.* 262). To conclude, she presents the profitability of such an event through food, seeing that 'the restaurant beside the bus stop has upped its prices by 10p per dish in honour of the festival' (*ibidem*).

Finally, I may suggest that one can choose the image presented to others assuming that one has a choice (Williamson 1986, 91). This ability to visualize and to represent oneself gives one some degree of agency. Still, there are no simple answers and there are tensions between the personal and the social, and between the agency people can exert and the constraints of social structures – 'There are uncertainties, which are historically specific. We live in changing times. We have multiple identities and identities are multifaceted. Multiple identities offer the possibility of diversity and have the potential for reconstruction and renewal. This is why identity matters' (Woodward 2004, 154). Carter seems to retain her sense of being 'foreign' in her cultural critique of Britain, as Gamble underlines:

However, she did not only regard the truly foreign country, Japan, with the eyes of the anthropologist or the travel writer; returning, Carter subjects her own country to the same kind of scrutiny. But there is a crucial difference, for, transferred to home, the point of view of the foreigner [...] becomes modulated into that of the alienated subject [...]. (Gamble 1997, 95)

One must not forget that Carter wrote edge-on to a culture which she increasingly saw as 'foreign and this perception is seen as having been exaggerated after her return from

Japan. In her "Postscript", Peach believes that this sense of 'the foreignness of British culture fuelled a preoccupation with the artificiality and plurality of culture generally' (Peach 1998, 165-166). As for Carter, she had commented ironically on her return to London from Tokyo in the piece "Fin de Siècle" (1972): 'The cure for homesickness is worse than the disease; all you have to do is to come back' (*SL* 154). Carter is entirely conscious of such irony as portrayed in the already quoted remark: 'So here they [the middle class] come, and I come back, don't I? And I try to pretend I've never been away' (*ibid.* 181).

**Desiderio's Journey in *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman*.
'This forest was also cannibal and full of perils'**

Written in a period when Carter set out from her home-country to travel to another continent and immerse in a completely different culture, *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* reveals a dense profusion of values. The most highly regarded rational-secular principles along with diverse self-expression values which Carter finds herself in when in Japan may be portrayed by the image of a 'forest [which] was also cannibal and full of perils' (*IDMDH* 166). In this novel, Desiderio (a bureau member of the main city of an unidentified Latin America country) finds himself in need of embarking on an undercover journey to locate and murder the one responsible for having set on reality distorting machines – Doctor Hoffman. In his city, which had become by then the 'kingdom of the instantaneous' (*ibid.* 18), there were already mendicants who claimed to be refugees from the mountains and made a living by selling 'to the credulous charms and talismans against specters who turned the milk sour or lurked in fireplaces eating up the flames so the fires would not light' (*ibidem*). This situation already implies the relevance given to the food and its preparation, or to the state of affairs that prevented the citizens from having their common diet, by then already seriously endangered.

In a place of sudden uncontrolled insanity and crime, prompting a state of emergency, a 'good meal' was hard to go by (*ibid.* 31). Possibly because of the situation, the reader witnesses the lunch between the Minister of Determination, the Ambassador and Desiderio, described as a banquet by the latter – consommé, fish, *tournedos Rossini* with *pommes allumettes*, truffle paté, salad, red wine, fruit, and cheese (*ibid.* 35). I consider the fact that the order of the courses presented was not corrupted by Doctor Hoffman's desire machines which expand the dimensions of time and space to be a sign of

possible success for Desiderio's mission or, at least, a sign of the possibility of regaining the order the community was already lacking. As the idea of sharing a meal indicates, it is also a way of displaying table manners which can mirror ideologies, or even a community's identity. This is clear through the way the Minister 'put his knife and fork together symmetrically on his empty plate' (*ibid.* 37), which reflects the explanation of the Ambassador on the iconographic objects – 'They are emanations only of the asymmetric, Minister, the asymmetric you deny' (*ibidem*). The collective representations of this people seem to miss their counterparts in order to know true balance, according to the Ambassador.

Being the confidential secretary to the Minister of Determination (*ibid.* 12) and a survivor, Desiderio was asked to write down all his memories of the Great War with the diabolical Doctor Hoffman. One can see that he picks his way through the material things around him, since he is actually writing about past experiences. As Desiderio progresses in his voyage, I believe he shows a significant connection with food, and not a trivial one. In fact, the idea that food is a negligible subject is a prejudice which the classical world seems to have passed on to later generations like ours (putting the pleasures of the mind higher than those of the body was a vital principle of classical culture) even though the body has taken an increasing relevance. Food, after all, comes as the most direct illustration of what man absorbs from the world and how he divides it with other people, and *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* shows this perspective through Desiderio's incursion into other domains and territories.¹⁴

One of the contradictions associated with food is that it can be mentioned both for its own sake and as a symbol of something else.¹⁵ Even so, Mary Douglas, in her

¹⁴ Emily Gowers summarises that illustration concerning the Romans in the following way:

There is something about eating, despite all the inhibitions, that gives us a uniquely graspable sense of the relationship between the Romans and their universe. The fact that what a man ate appears so often in the Roman sources shows what great potential food had for projecting an individual's moral and cultural values. But this embracing of food as a literary subject always went hand in hand with squeamish contempt for the substance itself. (Gowers 1993, 4)

¹⁵ As Gowers exemplifies, an apple on a table is graspable and obvious, and because one can reach out and touch it, smell and taste it, it seems like the essence of uncomplicated matter. In fact, Gowers shows that a piece of fruit on a table repeatedly figures in ancient anecdotes as a test of the nature of reality; a character in Macrobius' *Saturnalia* says that something which looks like an apple may be just be a craftsman's fake, made of wax or stone. Thus, it is only through the sense of smell that one knows whether or not it is genuine. The apple seems, accordingly, to symbolize matter for its own sake; even though it might suggest original sin, a pile of apples might suggest harvest-time abundance, an apple with a worm in it might be an insinuation of mortality. Concluding, 'the significance of food in its literary representations lies both in its simple existence

pioneering essay 'Deciphering a Meal', states that a meal is like a poem, because it is a carefully created artefact offered by one person to another (Douglas 2008, 50; 52). Gowers also pin points that this assertion takes no account, nonetheless, of what happens when a meal *is* a poem (Gowers 1993, 6). Ronald Tobin, as seen in the first chapter, would certainly value its creation awareness, as gastro-criticism does. In the Roman case, for instance, texts that contain food are not just repositories of information; instead, they are frequently ambiguous and compromising attempts at a tricky subject, for diverse forms of evasion are shaped by the cultural restraints that lie at their back (*ibid.* 8). A clear example is the divisiveness in the private meal, which is a distortion of the principle of *noblesse oblige* that ought to govern such meals, rather than a norm. Within this scope, the meal *can* be used in literature as a symptom of social hierarchy, even if it is usually an involuntary or transgressive one (*ibid.* 26).¹⁶ I will try to show how this works in situations like Desiderio's meals with the Count and Doctor Hoffman himself.

When Desiderio sets away on his journey and meets Mary Anne, one learns about how she greeted him in her 'blessedly commonplace kitchen' (*IDMDH* 52). The use of the adverb 'blessedly' may be read in the sense of a holy place, worthy of worship or held in veneration, as well as a place that brings happiness, pleasure, or contentment. It must have been simple since the only objects meaningful to the narrating hero's characterization are a gas stove, a refrigerator, a saucer of milk put down for pussy, and a scrubbed table at which she settled him down 'with a cup of tea and a saucer-ful [*sic*] of shortbread biscuits' (*ibidem*). This affectionate welcoming in such a private part of the house and the way he is fed and taken care of, as her cat is, convey the idea of protection of someone or something that belongs to her, even if it is just for a short period of time, as a guest. Such feelings are also implied in the way Desiderio is greeted at breakfast: 'the housekeeper supplied me so amply with eggs, bacon, sausages, pancakes, coffee and fruit that I guessed, for whatever reasons, she was well satisfied with her house guest' (*ibid.* 56; my emphasis). Her kind of satisfaction, emphasised also by the use of the adverb 'amply', echoes her feeling of liberty and the best way she finds of thanking Desiderio is by feeding him again, in a plentiful way, for when he sees her next she seems to be back in her 'musical box' house

and in a bundle of metaphorical associations, a capacity to evoke a whole world of wider experience' (Gowers 1993, 5).

¹⁶ Actually, by exposing feasts in such way, Roman writers acted as censors putting into effect the regulating laws, 'which decreed that citizens were to dine with their front doors open, and subject their own luxury to the public gaze' (Gowers 1993, 26).

only to be later found dead by Desiderio himself, seeing that her dream comes true and, thus, she must have felt free.

After this short encounter where he ends up being charged of Mary Anne's death and identified as 'the fatherless son of a known prostitute of Indian extraction' (*ibid.* 62), Desiderio finds the peoples living near the coast, with their many surviving Indian tribes. Among these tribes, Desiderio describes one who 'lived beside the sea, a glum, deferential people who subsisted on raw fish' (*ibid.* 69), for example. This idea of rawness seems to attract him as something pure in the Indians when compared to those who resembled the Europeans. Desiderio is soon adopted by this 'isolated and entirely self-contained society' (*ibid.* 70), whom, in turn, is adopted by him – 'I no longer relished the thought of any food except maize porridge and well-sauced fish' (*ibid.* 76). In this tribe, he feels so easy to share their diet because it is not as raw as the other tribe's diet – i.e. although maize is the main cereal from Mexico and South and Central America since pre-Columbian times, he eats it boiled, in porridge, and the fish is also 'well-sauced'. Subsequently, Desiderio takes his time to describe their eating habits and diet:

The stove burned wood and its long chimney puffed smoke out above the cabin in a homely fashion; it warmed us with its great, round, metal belly that glowed red from the heat it contained. Mama set down the bowl of stiff porridge on the table and Aoi brought us the bowl of stewed fish. Nao-Kurai said a few words of pagan blessing over the food and we began sedately to ball our porridge to a firm enough consistency to sustain its freight of fish. We ate sedately; we always ate sedately. And during the meal we exchanged a few domestic trivialities about the weather and the distance we had come that day. Aoi fed the youngest girl because she could not feed herself. The lamp above us moved with the motion of the boat at the whim of the current and rhythmically now illuminated, now shadowed the faces around the table. (*ibidem*)

In the above description, I consider that the expressions used suggest coziness ('in a homely fashion' and 'domestic trivialities') and protection ('warmed us'), implying safety in a motherly nurturing way for Desiderio. Such fostering is emphasised by the fact that it is female characters that bring the food to the table, two generations, a grandmother and a granddaughter, and also by their feeding of the youngest child. There is a sacred moment stressed in the 'blessing over the food' made by the most important member in the family, a reminder of the influence of the Jesuits. And this evident altered form of their

wholesomeness may even be read in the fish being stewed and not raw. Moreover, the whole meal is illustrated by the use of the adverb 'sedately' three times, evidencing a moment serenely deliberate, composed, and dignified in manner. And finally, the last sentence reflects the rhythm of the meal, as an acknowledged ritual.

Similarly, Desiderio presents an enlightening description of the market-place: 'peasant farmers displayed baskets of gleaming eggplants, whorled peppers, slumbrously overripe persimmons and blazing tangerines – all the fruits of late autumn. There were coops of live chickens, tubs of butter and cartwheel cheeses. There were stalls for toys and clothes, cloth by the yard, candy and jewellery' (*ibid.* 77). Being a place which reflects the needs of a community and which mirrors its offer, the market-place is noteworthy as a showroom displaying a lifestyle. Here, the reader is invited to witness this display of a colour and shape celebration of nature's multiplicity, done through the use, not only of different shaped fruit (eggplants, whorled peppers, persimmons and tangerines), but also of different colour, and through the reference to the season of the year liveliness while it vibrates with 'gleaming' and 'blazing' food. Still, all these colours and shapes are complemented with other products altered from nature, like butter and cheese, and with those not so natural products (toys, clothes, candy and jewellery). The way Desiderio just lists the items could be read simultaneously as carelessness for being a casual visitor who just observes an everyday-life scene and as his unawareness of the community's complexity.

Desiderio stays with Nao-Kurai's family, whose grandmother (Mama), in the same way as Mrs Green in *Heroes and Villains*, is in charge of the kitchen: either in the preparation phase even when she delegates tasks ('we went to the corn chandlers and ordered fourteen stone of hulled maize to be delivered to the boat; then we wandered about the market making Mama's commission of purchases' (*ibid.* 78)) or when she visits the couple to be married with a special supper, all extremely natural with nature's variety, and breakfast ('oyster soup thickened with beaten eggs as well as the usual cereal and fish. [...] I [Desiderio] assumed by the presence of the oysters that the soup was an aphrodisiac so I drank the three bowls she gave me' (*ibid.* 82); 'Mama brought us our breakfast in bed next morning, with many expressions of approval and kisses for both of us' (*ibid.* 83)) or even when 'she prepared some savoury messes for our lunch' (*ibid.* 84). As time passes, Desiderio visits Mama in the kitchen 'after breakfast and before lunch' and her kindness to him increased enormously: 'The breakfast she brought Aoi and me included, now, all

manner of specially juicy tidbits, such as grilled eel' (*ibid.* 85; my emphasis). His pleasure is stressed by the use of the adjectives 'savoury' and 'juicy' as in succulent and delicious, preceded by the adverb 'specially' to emphasise the higher level of pleasure and also by the noun 'tidbits' which may refer to a treat, a delicacy.

Food seems to be fit in their traditions as something too sacred to be altered: 'Even the method of pouring a drink was hallowed by tradition and never altered' (*ibid.* 87; my emphasis). Also, for the wedding feast, one understands the relevance of making 'lists of the food they would need' (*ibid.* 81) – a need that can make the reader better understand Desiderio's listing at the market-place, as seen above – and the importance of the tradition Desiderio feels to be prepared to become part of:

They fed me very rich food and nobody called on me to perform any tasks on shipboard at all except occasionally to check bills for loading or bills for purchases for [...] Nao-Kurai began to lay in sumptuous stocks for the wedding. He bought five dozen jars of the very sweet wine they make in this part of the country from plums and honey; a ten gallon cask of raw brandy; a fifteen pound drum of dried apricots; and all manner of other things, including a live sheep which would be slaughtered for the feast. The dry goods were stored down below in the hold but the sheep was tethered to the deck of the barge which followed us and given boiled barley and oats to eat. It grew fatter as one looked at it, until it was almost too fat to bleat. But when I asked if it was to be the main course, roasted whole as a *pièce de résistance*, they said, no; there would be something even better. But they would not tell me what it was because, they said, they wanted to astonish me. Then they would laugh softly. (*ibid.* 86)

Once more the reader is remembered that Desiderio is 'fed', but this time there seems to be an extravagant, a 'sumptuous' need to follow a tradition. It does impress Desiderio who even enumerates such stocking and again it shows how they relate to nature through the beverages produced from plums and honey, the raw brandy from fermented fruit, and through dried apricots. The live sheep, that is also fed on boiled cereals, is what Desiderio expects to become the main course of the feast; for him it would make sense for the sheep to be 'roasted whole as a *pièce de résistance*', but the 'even better' main course, which would 'astonish' Desiderio and which made the tribe 'laugh softly', is Desiderio himself. He would be the main dish because they believed that to eat him (like Snake, the Fire-Bringer, in their fable on which their orally transmitted history was based) would bring

knowledge to them: 'they would all learn how to read and write after a common feast where I [Desiderio] would feature as the main dish on the menu at my own wedding breakfast' (*ibid.* 91). It is also interesting to notice how the roasting of meat is done by directly exposing the meat to the fire and it is, thus, most commonly offered to guests and is associated with men in many cultures. This is usually presented as being opposed to boiling, when meat can lose some parts, and, accordingly, it is connected to destruction and loss, as well.

The preparation of the feast is carefully described, as mentioned above, indicating a tribe well aware of its traditions, organized and obdurate in what concerns its goals. This tribe's evolution is actually based on the moment when they learned about making fire and were thus able to cook food (*ibid.* 88). The idea of toasting and roasting, taught by the Snake (*ibid.* 89), can be read as a natural method, complacent with the tribe's way of being and living. From a more sociological perspective, one can see here how powerful the symbolic potential of food is and, in view of that, it becomes utterly central to one's sense of identity. Although such an argument suggests that the eating patterns of a given group assert its collective identity, its position in a wider hierarchy, and its organization, amongst others, food is also central to *individual identity*. Here, the process one can read as central is that of 'incorporation'; incorporation is here in the sense of the action involving food which crosses the barrier between the 'outside' and the 'inside' world of the body.¹⁷ Such reading becomes possible when one considers taste, as Fischler points out, not only conceived in a physiological way, but also in terms of one's beliefs and collective representations.¹⁸ In Desiderio's case, one can observe how the properties of food are incorporated into the eater; by an analogous process, however, the assimilation of given foods can be studied as also incorporating the eater into a culinary system and into the group which follows it. I believe this happens to Desiderio, and not only with this community, since it is possible to observe in his journey how essential the process of socialization is. Indeed, that is the process through which he internalised the norms and

¹⁷ Whereas Claude Fischler refers to the concept of incorporation (Fischler 1988, 279-282) in the way I use it, Pierre Bourdieu's use of the term 'embodiment' regarding the socially relative concept of 'taste' is also feasible of shaping our understanding of this tribe's communal practices. Thus, taste is present as 'a class culture turned into nature, that is, *embodied*' which 'helps to shape the class body' (Bourdieu 1984, 190).

¹⁸ Fischler had already discussed the tension between the biological and the cultural aspects of taste in 1980 in another article published in *Social Science Information*, "Food habits, social change and the nature/culture dilemma".

values of each social group, and discovered how to perform the social roles in which he found himself. With the river people tribe, and later with the cannibals, Desiderio observes the relevance of this process of socialization, in terms of the formation of individual identity and, simultaneously, in terms of the transmission of culture from generation to generation, for socialization begins in infancy.

Once Desiderio escapes his fate as literally part of the tribe's feast, he is again fed and taken care of with the peepshow man, Hoffman's teacher of physics: 'I [Desiderio] ate his food and let him wrap a blanket around me. [...] He gave me a mug of hot coffee and I warmed my hands on it' (*ibid.* 94). Coffee is the ever present beverage that is able to keep his wits about him (*ibid.* 96). After a while, Desiderio feels like the housewife preparing the meals ('My tasks were simple and housewifely, for he did not allow me to meddle with the set of samples. I assembled our meals' (*ibid.* 100)) for he transmits the idea of collecting, bringing together the stages of a meal, from every step of its preparation, like a construction. However, he is still fed by Madame la Barbe, a woman: 'She would bring me a brioche freshly baked in the oven she had installed in her French provincial caravan' (*ibid.* 101). Desiderio's diet is always present ('I would toast a little cheese on top of the stove, to eat with bread and beer for our suppers' (*ibid.* 105)) either through what he is offered and appreciates ('She [Madame la Barbe] raised the flap of the tent, deposited her gifts of cake, smoking pots of delicious coffee and now and then a savoury cassoulet on our counter' (*ibidem*; my emphasis)) or through what he prepares for others and what he notices others are preparing and eating, as is the example of Manie – 'Her caravan contained nothing but racks of guns, targets and a tiny, inconspicuous afterthought of a cooking stove on which she occasionally cooked burning chili and the leaden biscuits she consumed with syrup and a slug of rye for breakfast' (*ibid.* 109). Within this group, no matter what religion ('both Calvinists and Jansenites' (*ibid.* 114)), they chose to follow the fast of Lent ('when they drank only water and ate only beans' (*ibid.* 115)). Among these, the Arabic Acrobats offer Desiderio Turkish coffee ('[they] invited me to take coffee with them in their mobile home, an unexpected gesture of hospitality' (*ibid.* 116)), and again he is 'fed' coffee (*ibid.* 118).

After this encounter Desiderio meets the Count, who also 'fed' brandy to a starving Desiderio (*ibid.* 122). It is with the Count that we witness a breakfast accounted for as a feast; the feast Desiderio did not witness with the river people, but one in which he does not get to be satisfied either:

[...] we entered [a chapel built by the Jesuits] with the picnic basket, for the Count wanted to eat breakfast. As if from habit, he pissed on the altar while the valet set out the meal; the Count was always iconoclast, even when the icons were already cast down.

Out of the basket came a feast such as I had not eaten since that memorable luncheon with the Minister and Albertina. There was a can of truffled goose liver paté [*sic*]; glasses of game in aspic; a flock of cold roast pheasant; imported cheese whose savourous reek stung the nostrils; a side of smoked salmon from which the valet shaved curling strips; an exotic gravel of various caviars; an insulated box of salad and another filled with grapes and peaches, while an ice-chest contained a dozen bottles of Veuve Clicquot. There was china and sparkling glassware of the finest quality. The cutlery was of solid silver. The boy laid out an incomparable *fête champêtre* and we all fell to with a will. The Count ate very heartily; indeed, he ate with a blind voracity that demolished the spread so speedily the valet and I were hard put to it to seize enough to satisfy ourselves, although there was so much. When nothing was left but gnawed bones, dirty plates, peach stones, and empty bottles, the Count sighed, belched and grasped the valet. (*ibid.* 125; my emphasis)

The count is here presented explicitly as the modern iconoclast who attacks things like ideas and institutions, but he does it 'even when the icons were already cast down'; he is a true *image breaker*. All the setting of the meal, as well as the food, echo the Count's nature, since it is all a consequence of his decision to eat breakfast, and the choice of the expression 'eat breakfast' instead of 'have breakfast' pictures his determination and 'blind voracity'; the use of such personification helps to emphasise simultaneously the Count's eagerness to consume great amounts of food and his insatiable appetite for an extraordinary pursuit. The pleasure he takes from performing is portrayed by the use of 'china and sparkling glassware of the finest quality', and solid silver cutlery which helps to create what Desiderio terms 'an incomparable *fête champêtre*' similar to the Count's uniqueness. By selecting this imagery of an unsurpassed 18th century form of entertainment, the reader again learns about the Count's uncertain intents, since '*fête champêtre*' was in theory a simple form of country feast, but in practice it was much more than that. At least in the 18th century, this form of entertainment was very elegant and most popular at the French court in the Versailles park, where at times whole orchestras

would hide in trees. Therefore, the simplicity of a pastoral festival was frequently contrived, in a similar way to the Count's breakfast.

Concerning the food presented to Desiderio during the meal, there are elements that can be associated to the Count's explicit sophistication by the way they had to be prepared (and even the fact that the salad comes in an 'insulated box' shows the concern with its preservation in order to get the best of it, considering a true gourmet): the truffled goose liver pâté, the glasses of game in aspic, another delicacy, the imported cheese and the bottles of Veuve Clicquot – a brand of premium champagne (founded in 1772) which played an essential role in establishing champagne as a favoured drink of haute bourgeoisie and nobility throughout Europe.¹⁹ These are valued food items, rather expensive and out of the ordinary to be found in a South American country. On the other hand, there are also elements which through the way they were prepared are evidence of a spirit more in tune with nature and its rawness, for instance a flock of cold roast pheasant, a side of smoked salmon, an exotic gravel of various caviars (since these fish roe are only salted and seasoned), the salad, and the grapes and peaches. These are elements that attest the true spirit of a *'fête champêtre'*.

The Count's character is a perfect example of consuming the exotic; such consuming has traditionally a variety of meanings, which may range from the creation of images of other cultures (in this case the sophistication of the European culture), as a means of stereotyping and taming their otherness, to the importation and incorporation of the products of other economies (France is without a doubt the chosen one here).²⁰ The Count would be evidently considered by the reader as the exotic element, but I think he may be considered almost a product of Doctor Hoffman's will to destroy the structures of reason and liberate humanity from the manacles of the reality principle. This subversion (where the European conquerors' food is treated like the exotic) fits Carter's experience of

¹⁹ Whereas the simple pâtés contain pork or calf's liver and are much less expensive, the luxurious fattened goose liver pâtés, like the truffled goose liver pâté (*pâté de foie gras truffé*), come from Perigord, France. Perigord is the largest consumer of goose liver patés and the exporter of substantial quantities of this delicacy.

²⁰ In the case of importation and incorporation of those products, an example of a common feature of the retail experience in rich countries during the last two decades includes the exotic (usually tropical fruits and vegetables, previously known as 'queer gear'), evident in the title of Carolyn Heal and Michael Allsop's work *Queer Gear: How to Buy & Cook Exotic Fruits & Vegetables* (1985). Carter implies this importation and incorporation in the beginning of the 1970s, but still from an opposite perspective.

the viewpoint from the other side of the tracks, similarly to what she witnessed in Japan towards herself and her cultural heritage.

Still, the Count's options concerning food and beverage may be read differently. The consumption of exotic food has yet another function, according to Jon May's article "A Little Taste of Something More Exotic: The Imaginative Geographies of Everyday Life" (1996). By analysing consumer's talk, May's research shows how meanings of commodities are also transnational, with the politics of identity and place closely attached to transnational commodity flows. Consumers actively construct meanings of self, others and transnational commodities in different spaces. This is why foodscapes (a view of place in which food is used to filter out and bring into focus certain human relations) have to a great extent contributed to understandings of consumption (Mansvelt 2005, 96-97). May also argues that a way of ascertaining distinction between social groups is precisely by demonstrating knowledge of other cuisines, other cultures, and of culinary authenticity. This leads to what are known as geographies of displacement, which have become relevant for the way they shape one source of cultural mixing that may produce hybridized forms. Hence, the Count's breakfast showed that eating the 'other' is not an 'innocent' activity, since it bears 'economic, social and cultural implications to add to the political echoes from the past' (Atkins 2001, 285).

Moreover, I believe this episode of the Count's breakfast can also be read as a relevant example of self-expression. Seen from a British perspective something similar would be considered precisely due to the Reformation and the way an imaginative and ingenious cuisine was lost. An interesting example is its remarkable fast day recipes with almonds, used as dairy substitutes, which had far too strong and close associations with Papism for them to endure in the court of King Henry VIII. However, Colin Spencer is convinced that such kind of cooking entered the British national psyche and has made these people ever since eager to taste it again, and he adds that 'twinned with this are the roasted and boiled carcass meats, the exterior burnt and caramelized crusts of great haunches and legs of cattle and boar, always eaten with hot and pungent sauces, mustard, horseradish and garlic' (Spencer 2002, 340). On the other hand, after the Reformation the emphasis was altered to a simpler, plainer cooking type and it was actually used, almost as

propaganda, to signify a Protestant Britishness.²¹ The Count's choice to eat in a sacred spot would be definitively an expression of choice and autonomy.

Back to the nature/culture fusion, it is the only synthesis that seemed possible of settling the Count's energetic hunger, even if he does need to appease his appetite by 'consuming' the valet as well; after all, he is part of the meal, if one considers that he prepared it. The Count, by then 'drained of all vigour', summarises his needs and values, ending with the following thought that would best define him: 'I am an artist; my material is the flesh; my medium is destruction; and my inspiration is nature' (*IDMDH* 126). Even though the Count presents himself as an artist, he is more of a consumer and destroyer than a creator, in the sense studied by Tobin. Indeed, the Count has the most 'voracious appetites imaginable, both gustatory and sexual' (Sceats 1997, 108). Given that eating is an especially personal process, Angela Little indicates eating as the most intimate act of one's existence: 'In this regard, I put eating ahead of sex – usually considered the most intimate act – because the substance of food, and food alone, becomes transformed into our own very substance: we are indeed what we eat!' (Little 1986, 24). Yet, monstrous appetites like the Count's may suggest an inner emptiness, 'fantasies of omnipotence or unfulfillable [*sic*] yearning for an impossible state of wholeness' (Sceats 2000, 6). Such desire for oneness, however, does not have to be necessarily negative or regressive; it can 'fuel the passage to enlightenment' (*ibidem*) as may be the case of Desiderio. In fact, concerning Desiderio's relationship with food in this scene, it can be read by emphasising his feminization and also, as Emma Parker pointed out, it illustrates that 'although femininity is signified by a subject's inability to consume in Carter's early fiction, sex is not necessarily tied to gender' (Parker 2000, 145). I do not consider this novel to be part of Carter's early novels, as Parker does; nevertheless, I agree with her conclusion, in reference to the already suggested feminization of Desiderio through his own name.

The idea of a cannibal feast is later referred to by the Count in the House of Anonymity when he asks for one of the girls in cages, who had been reduced to the undifferentiated essence of the idea of the female – 'Give me my striped tiger woman! Flagellated past the bone, she is bleeding fire, a cannibal feast' (*IDMDH* 135). After

²¹ Colin Spencer reminds the reader that there was something to brag about, as their carcass meat had been famous throughout history, especially the beef cattle and bacon, both British passions – 'At least the British breakfast is famous; bacon and ham have been an essential aspect of our love affair with food since Anglo-Saxon times and we have been faithful to this love ever since' (Spencer 2002, 340).

having visited the House of Anonymity, the food is still a matter of importance even when they are on the run from the police, as shown in Desiderio's description: 'stopping only to buy a loaf of bread or a length of sausages and cram it hastily in our mouths as we stood in the shop' (*ibid.* 140). Here, the choice of the verb 'cram' and the adverb 'hastily' shows how Desiderio values his relation to food, which at this moment has just a feeding sense and not a pleasuring capability, just like before. Clearly, it also mirrors the change of the Count's situation.

After being caught in the Coast of Africa, the Count stoically bears the ennui as he is fed – 'to wait for the thick stews of salt fish and potatoes, all the menus at mealtimes offered' (*ibid.* 142). The Count is no longer in charge and there is no real challenge or threat to break his languor. Similarly to Uncle Philip, the Count is characterised by greed and his metaphoric appetite for power is echoed by a physical capacity for consumption (Parker 2000, 144). Now, theirs were 'meagre rations': 'What were our rations? Traditional fare. The first mate put a tin platter down on the floor twice a day. It contained three segments of ship's biscuit alive with weevils and we had to scabble for it as best we could, all encumbered with our irons. He brought us a small can of stale water, too [...]. I never dreamed I could regret those rank fish stews' (*IDMDH* 145).

This situation is, indeed, described as a struggle. The Count, though, finds energy enough to dramatize an 'imitation of Lautréamont' in which he plays with the notion of eating/being eaten and the mutability of identity, attributed to Doctor Hoffman:

My tumultuous bowels vomit forth flaming wrack! And I did not forget to invite the sharks to dinner, oh, no. They have formed up around the ship, their dinner table; they wait for their meal to cook. They wait for the involuntary tributes of sea-boys' sinewy limbs.

'But when I opened my mouth to order the *plat du jour*, I found my grammar changed in my mouth. No longer active; passive.

'He [my other] has tampered with my tongue. He has bridled it. [...]

'If I am indeed the Black prometheus, I now must ask for other guests to dine. Come, every eagle in the world, to this most sumptuous repast, my liver.'
[...]

'They have eaten me down to an immobile core. I, who was always movement. My I is weaker than its shadow used to be. I is my shadow. I am gripped by the convulsive panic of a mapless traveller in a virgin void. Now I must explore the other side of my moon, my dark region of enslavement.

'I was the master of fire and now I am the slave of earth. Where is my old, invincible I! He stole it. He snatched it from the peg where I hung it beside the mulatto's mattress. Now I am sure only of my slavery.

'I do not know how to be a slave. Now I am an enigma to myself. I have become discontinuous.

'I fear my lost shadow who lurks in every shadow. I, who perpetrated atrocities to render to the world incontrovertible proof that my glorious misanthropy overruled it, I – now I exist only as an atrocity about to be perpetrated on myself.

'He let his slaves enslave me.' (*ibid.* 146-147)

The reference to the Comte de Lautréamont makes all sense if one considers this Uruguayan-born French poet's major influence on modern literature, particularly on the Surrealists and the Situationists. In fact, approaching the former movement, the Count's oration features the element of surprise, unexpected juxtapositions and *non sequitur*, and, similarly to the latter group, the Count advocates experiences of life as alternatives to those admitted by the established order, for the fulfillment of human primitive desires and the pursuing of a superior passional quality. Also, it was for such a purpose that the Count suggested and experimented with the construction of a situation, by setting up an environment that he believed favourable for the fulfillment of his desires, always fantasising of omnipotence.

When these travellers meet the pirates ('a mixed tribe of Kurds, Mongols or Malays' (*ibid.* 149)) who had attacked the ship where they had been imprisoned, they are again fed: 'They [pirates] brought us satisfying and delicious meals of rice, curried fish and pickles' (*ibid.* 150); 'the pirates fed us and left us alone' (*ibid.* 151). The use of the adjective 'satisfying' may be evidently read as providing abundant nourishment and in its other association, as providing freedom from worry; also, 'delicious' accentuates the idea of meals highly pleasing or agreeable to the senses, especially of taste or smell. Both reveal a change from their previous meals. Food is presented as an introduction to every tribe or community, because it is part of its identity. Thus, with the pirates, the choices they offer are clear: rice, a staple food throughout the world; fish, for its evident abundance, and seasoned with curry, as an option; and pickles, as products that have been preserved and flavored in a solution of brine or vinegar. The ever present beverage is rum. This alcoholic liquor distilled from fermented molasses or sugar cane is found in casks in

the forecastle of the ship, and the pirates cannot but greet them with 'obscure grunts' (*ibid.* 149) taking them with their loot. The rum barrels are also mentioned when it is full moon and the pirates, in a traditional way, embark in a drinking process with their leader sitting 'under the shrine with his guest, the Count, beside him and the cask of rum before him' (*ibid.* 152), from which all the pirates drink until they drop on the deck, unconscious. However, even if the leader scoops the first ladleful of rum into his guest's cannikin, the Count does grow disillusioned with their primitive ideas of fun, a behaviour that runs against their 'deathward turning darkness' (*ibid.* 153) that had been admired by him. He, thus, savours the idea of a catastrophe.

Believing that they had reached the coast of Africa, after a tempest had sank the pirate's ship, Desiderio, the Count, and his valet are taken by Amazons to their village, and breakfast is again offered them – 'we were taken into a neat, clean house and offered a breakfast of some kind of pounded grain mixed with minced pork, served on fronds of palm. Lafleur and I ate heartily but the Count, unmanned again, a quaking skeleton, ate nothing' (*ibid.* 156). There is another change of diet here, since from the beginning they are given meat and not the fish they had been fed lately. The river people did eat meat, but not pork, according to Desiderio's description, and the Count has no appetite. In such a society women prepare the cooking: 'we saw the women were busily tending huge cauldrons which hung over fires in the open air' (*ibid.* 157). This seems to be a community where the contact with nature is clear, as well as the social natural order.

Nevertheless, their diet is quite different right from infancy:

[...] not one of those delightful children who seem, each one, to have stepped straight off the pen of Jean-Jacques Rousseau but has not, since he put forth his first milk teeth, dined daily of a grilled rump, or roasted shoulder, a stew, a fricassée [*sic*], or else a hash of human meat. To this usually most abhorred of comestibles they owe the brightness of their eyes, the strength of their limbs, the marvellous gloss of health on their skins, their longevity and a verity as great as it is discreetly practiced [...]. (*ibid.* 159)

This sort of cannibalism seems to result in a physical development of the consumer rather than the improvement on his/her intellectual skills, like the river people believed. Still, one should not forget how a central part of learning to be human involves learning what humans, in opposition to non-humans, eat (Beardsworth 1997, 55). In this case, as in

Western society, physical growth is believed to depend on the control over the children's eating patterns and the community encouraged the consumption of what is considered a suitable diet. Since they are man-eating, they consume the most 'natural' (from nature) meat and also by choosing to roast, or grill the food as a cooking method, no receptacle is used, making this a natural way of cooking – according to the concept of the culinary triangle described by anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss, which involves different types of cooking.

On the other hand, the stew or the fricassee are done through boiling slowly or simmering, and such a cooking method is looked at as a cultural way of cooking because it uses a receptacle to hold water, making it not completely natural, even if it does not lose any of the meat nor its juices. Similarly to most cultures, this form of cooking is represented by women and is usually served domestically to small closed groups, like families. The absolute severity with which the chieftain rules his 'little kingdom' (*IDMDH* 159) reflects on its organization, when he mentions, for instance, the importance of the catering staff and their source of food – 'they [rebels and their entire families] are forthwith shipped directly to the army catering staff and boiled down to nourishing soups which contributes to the excellent, indeed, prolific physique of my army' (*ibid.* 160).²² Here, the most relevant consequence of this cannibalistic diet is the physical improvement mentioned above, unlike the river people who believed in it for being a method to assimilate intellectual skills, like reading. Whereas the former community falls into the group that consumes its enemies in an act of destruction, taking no account of the consequence on the eater – 'other than the satisfying rage of annihilation' (Sceats 2000, 34) – the latter falls into the group that consumes friends, or enemies, as a way of paying homage to them, to keep alive something of the consumed one, or achieving a transformation – 'for if you are what you eat then you become a different individual once you absorb another' (*ibid.* 34-35). Although these are true cannibalistic actions, I agree that there is incorporation in other circumstances, on large or small scale, which involves a form of colonialism: 'if the object is taken in, then everything about it may be appropriated by a form of digestion' (*ibid.* 40).

²² In what concerns human sacrifice in societies where blood or flesh could have been consumed, it happened either as a celebration of the defeat of enemies and, consequently, the absorption of their strength (exo-cannibalism) or as a means of honouring relatives and giving them new life (endo-cannibalism); the former is more adequate to the chieftain's intentions here.

The travellers are designated to become part of the feast, as *'entremets'*, and the Count himself becomes the main course – an honour, considering his lack of meat. In the case of the Count, it seems to be a test to both his and the chieftain's beliefs, since the latter's wish is to understand whether they are themselves 'so much the physical slaves of nature', and the former's wish is to test his capability to suffer 'like any other man' (*IDMDH* 162). Nevertheless, the Count also wants to share the villagers' feeling and he goes further than them, as he constantly does: 'And then I want to learn the savour of my flesh. I wish to taste myself. For you must know I am a great gourmet' (*ibidem*). He shares the chieftain's 'empirical curiosity', even in what concerns new flavours, acting as if the ultimate gourmandize would be to taste oneself. Similarly to most societies, the Chef has to distinguish himself, and here, in a way at once identifiable, the Chef wears a traditional hat and ladles, and he is a man: 'From the ranks of the chief's retinue a plump, giggling being wearing only a white chef's cap and a girdle hung with ladles stepped forward with a jar of salt in one hand and a nosegay of potherbs in the other. He lavishly seasoned the water that now bubbled in the cauldron' (*ibid.* 163). The generous seasoning may be the trigger to the Count's question: 'Don't you think I'm too old and tough and starveling to make a savoury dish?' His concern, I believe, has more to do with his own potential disillusionment towards the whole process and final outcome than with the possible disappointment of the community afterwards. Still, the Count is a performer, an artist, and his 'material is the flesh' (*ibid.* 126).

The final product is something the cannibal had already considered and, thus, he had decided to boil him up for soup. Accordingly, he starts to build the stock, a flavoured liquid base: 'The chef flung a string of onions into the pot, thoughtfully stirred in more salt, stirred and sipped the stock from his ladle' (*ibid.* 163). This must be a white stock, for it is prepared by placing the ingredients directly into the cooking liquid (since in a brown stock the ingredients are first browned in fat),²³ also, in general, stocks are aromatic but not salty, due to the fact that they have to remain unseasoned until the sauce is perfected, but, it is an option to use a pinch of salt to enhance the blending of ingredients and the liquid, as is seems to be the case here. After the nodding of the Chef, the lady soldiers, like a true oiled mechanism, 'marched the Count between them to the fire, took firm hold each one of an elbow, lifted him bodily and plunged him feet first into the water, so that his head stuck over the rim' (*ibidem*). The Count's expression did not change with the heat,

²³ See "Stock" in *New Concise Larousse Gastronomique* (Hill 2007, 1123-1124).

until 'he was red as a lobster' (*ibidem*). As always he is self-absorbed, but he was betrayed by a driving sense of lack, a hunger for the 'homely sensation of pain' (*ibid.* 125), a nostalgia he had recognised before, when mentioning what he believed was his invulnerability: 'a pain I cannot feel' (*ibidem*). It is then, however, that he feels 'pure joy', when he falls back with a 'splash that scalded half the court with broth' (*ibidem*) – 'he has willed his completion and destruction' (Sceats 1997, 109).²⁴ Here it becomes clear by the use of 'broth' (a thin, clear soup based on stock, to which rice, barley, vegetables, or meat may be added, as is the case here), instead of 'stock', that Carter minded the correct use of such culinary terminology.

The Count, seen until then as the latent consumer, bearing in mind that he confesses so to the cannibal chief – 'I wish to taste myself' (*IDMDH* 162) – turns out to be the food itself. Undeniably, the Count's last performance is a success and the account of his departure from the stage of life is described with the rhythm of a musical: 'This time, his head disappeared entirely beneath the rim of the stew pot and presently a delicious steam began to drift from the simmering concoction, so that the entire audience licked its lips in unison. At that, the chef clapped a lid on him' (*ibid.* 163). The alliterative effect based on the strident consonants ('disappeared', 'stew', 'delicious steam', 'simmering', 'so', 'audience' and 'its lips in unison') transmits a feeling of continuity that is put to an end by the Chef's clapping a lid on him. Even the use of the verb 'clap' in its double sense – either to put or place quickly and firmly or to applaud – carries the idea of an orchestra ordered to come to a halt by its conductor. Everyone plays his/her part, and this is when Desiderio realizes that the Count's valet, Lafleur, and he himself were also 'to feature as *entremets* for the ensuing feast'. Indeed, the term 'feast' is a wise choice here for it may be defined as a large, elaborately prepared meal, usually for many persons, and often accompanied by entertainment; or, a meal that is well prepared and abundantly enjoyed; or even, something giving great pleasure or satisfaction. Again, the male chef guides his female apprentices like a well-oiled machine, but the beauty of the orchestrated art devoted to the main course seems to be lost:

²⁴ When applied in the kitchen, the word *stock* reflects the professional cook's approach to sauce making, in general. The word derives from an old Germanic root meaning 'tree trunk' and it has 'more than 60 related meanings revolving around the idea of basic materials, sources, and supplies. It's thus the culinary application of a very general term, and was first used in the 18th century' (McGee 2004, 599). Comparatively, *broth* is much more specific and ancient. Finally, a Germanic root *bru* means "'to prepare by boiling'" and the material so prepared, both it and the boiling liquid' (*ibidem*).

The chef ordered a team of apprentices to prepare long beds of glowing charcoal and himself busily began to grease a gridiron.

'Skin the smallest rabbit first,' commanded the chieftain negligently and he did not bother to season us first with verbiage since we were only so much meat to him. (*ibid.* 163-164)

The lack of attention to those two travellers is natural when one thinks of them in terms of cookery; in other words, they were to be entremets, which is a light dish, in earlier times served at formal dinners between the main course and the dessert, and more recently, just a side dish (for instance, a relish or dessert) served in addition to the main course.

Still another important barrier that can be faced in an episode like the Count's death is turning food into language. Thus, in English, up to now, when a writer wanted to disdain contact with the body, it grew to be a hard task, given that both Greek and Latin vocabulary of taste, appetite, consumption, satisfaction, pleasure, and disgust relied directly on physical metaphors.²⁵ This may indicate that the act of eating manages to steal its way even into the more abstract or sublimated writing that tried to avoid it. What we can learn from the Roman examples is how eating was linguistically ever-present, which is an indication of how useful it was as a conceptual parallel. Subsequently, it is not enough just to extract the 'real' food from a description, because this ignores the engagement between material and metaphorical food. Again this assertion makes all sense in the light of the gastro-criticism approach, that brought from the beginning the understanding of the parallel between the process of creation in literature and the science of cooking. As in Roman literature, resemblances and divergences between eating and the less material pleasures of a meal, or between eating and experience in general, are central to the meaning of food. Furthermore, in such literature, the uneasiness of food descriptions was a symptom of wider cultural inhibitions – since literary works are designed for being a lasting alternative to less enduring forms of enjoyment, and, in Roman society, gift-exchange was a central ingredient of social relations, a poem, and a meal were often interchangeable currency (Gowers 1993, 8).

²⁵ Two examples can be found in the following situations: the Greek word for 'pleasure' comes from 'sweet', and originally meant a taste or flavour; the Latin word for 'wise' originally meant 'juicy' or 'flavoursome' (Gowers 1993, 8).

Returning to Desiderio, he heroically saves himself and Lafleur (Albertina), and this couple runs through a cannibal forest ('this forest was also cannibal and full of perils' (*IDMDH* 166)), and is able to survive starvation by hunting and cooking, applying the traditional roles of man to Desiderio, like hunting and skinning, and those of woman to Albertina, like lighting the fire and cooking, given that they eat mainly roasted animals – 'the only animals we saw, green-fleshed, marsupial, one eyed, crawling things, seemed more an ambulant vegetable than anything else. Roasted on a spit, they tasted like barbecued celery' (*ibid.* 171). Once again, in the wild, the most natural way of cooking used for the meat has to be roasting, which is most commonly associated with men in many cultures. One should remember Desiderio is still in his quest and, expectedly, it is a long journey, similarly to how Carter in Japan found herself in a process of 'compounding, multiplying and confronting her sense of the artificiality of her own 'nature'' (Sage 1994b, 8), as already mentioned at the beginning of this chapter.

While lost in *terra nebulosa*, Desiderio and Albertina meet the centaurs, who, worshipers of the Sacred Stallion, practice fasting – 'they followed them with weeks of fasting' (*ibid.* 174); 'the fast at midwinter' (*ibid.* 185). Among other traits of this community, our picaresque hero underlines from the beginning how they prize fidelity – 'while her [an unfaithful wife's] lover was castrated and forced to eat his own penis, uncooked' (*ibid.* 174). Such punishment for infidelity is even more terrible, for they 'had the most profound horror of meat' and 'they [centaurs] termed this method of execution 'Death by Nausea' (*ibid.* 175).²⁶ This is from the start a completely different experience, indeed, in opposition to the previous one with the cannibals. Furthermore, these centaurs (who recall Jonathan Swift's Houyhnhnms in *Gulliver's Travels*, as seen in the first chapter of this study) built a puritanical society whose rites and mythologies, they live by, are 'wicked parodies of Judeo-Christian religious practices' (Tucker 1998, 10).

Through these centaurs' diet one can read an echo of what Frederick Simoons describes as avoidances and taboos taken by the average Western consumer entirely at the

²⁶ Frederick Simoons' *Eat not this Flesh: Food Avoidances in the Old World* (1961) is still considered as probably the best documented and most detailed study of the diverse customs of meat avoidance worldwide. The basis of this study was the assertion that flesh foods are more liable to be the subjects of influential prohibitions held by punitive sanctions than are vegetable-based foods (Simoons 1994, 108). Hence, such prohibitions require depiction and clarification, and that was what Simoons did by studying the patterns of acceptance and rejection in relation to six types of meat: pork, beef, chicken, horse flesh, camel flesh, and dog flesh. The spatial extent of the taboos on the consumption of such meat is reconstructed through close scholarship of texts, archaeological, and ethnographic evidence.

level of his or her own nutritional culture (Simoons 1994, 297). The exclusion of horse flesh in a wide range of societies and cultural settings, like in Europe, is an example of the influence of Christianity and its gradual purging in relation to the practice of eating horse, which had powerful associations with pagan beliefs.²⁷ Bearing the same example of the acceptability of horse flesh in mind, the teachings of Islam are rather ambivalent and in Hindu India only a few untouchable groups eat horse meat (*ibid.* 193). Simoons' clarification on these matters is based on the premise that what supports these prohibitions are first and foremost the symbolic significance of the foods or animals in question, and, therefore, the avoidance of specific flesh foods can repeatedly be a strong expressive act in itself. In other words, the suggestion here is that the rejection of a particular flesh food may be perceived as 'a powerful cultural device to reinforce and emphasize a particular group's collective identity, as can the acceptance of a given flesh food' (Beardsworth 1997, 205). All in all, the defiance to the belief that meat taboos, in general, have their genesis in the various symbolic significances and cultural meanings related to this particular form of food lies in a much more pragmatic view of such prohibitions. This view argues that meat prohibitions often have a real practical utility, which is, in turn, the elemental reason for their existence. Therefore, this more pragmatic view takes any symbolic or expressive attributes as being simply reflections or reinforcements (*ibid.* 206).

Something else that catches Desiderio's attention right away is the hippolators' reverence for their droppings given that they would idolize 'a loaf of bread or a glass of wine' (*IDMDH* 175). Due to such a comparison with these food products, one is reminded of Carter's piece "The Cult of the True Loaf", published a decade later (in 1982, and now collected in *Shaking a Leg*), on Elizabeth David's publication *English Bread and Yeast Cookery*. Carter's conclusion is unambiguous:

It is appropriate that she [Elizabeth David] leaves religion alone since *English Bread and Yeast Cookery* is already proving to be something like the holy book of the cult of the True Loaf, in which the metaphoric halo surrounding bread is turned back on itself, the loaf becomes not foodstuff nor symbol but fetish.' (*SL* 95)

²⁷ Simoons ends his chapter entitled "Horseflesh" by studying, precisely, the origin of the avoidance of horseflesh.

As already mentioned before, in this piece Carter focuses on the importance of bread for the British diet, since it had been 'secularised in postwar Britain' (*ibid.* 94), changing its function 'while retaining its symbolism' (*ibidem*). What she points out about David's book is its importance to the art of home baking – using the word 'art' instead of 'craft' by explaining that David's audience would be an artist baker, instead of the artisan in the common workshop (*ibid.* 95). In fact, the comparison between British housewives hardwork and other European women, concerning the formers' long-established national cuisine which honours baking, has already been commented in the previous chapter, but makes all sense to be recalled here.

Returning to the centaurs' community, one also finds the females to be the hard-working part: 'but only the males held the secrets of these mysteries. The women were the rank and file of the devotees and had so much to do, working the fields, bearing the children, milking the cacti, making the cheese, grinding the corn, building the houses, they could spare time only to pray' (*IDMDH* 176). Still, the many teachings include: 'the art of singing; the techniques of smithy; of corn growing; of cactus culture from which they take the milk; the cheese making' (*ibid.* 185). The study of the importance of the family as a unit of production and/or consumption, and of the role of women as providers and mediators between the raw and the cooked (between nature and culture) is feasible in such context, I believe. This community, in a similar way to most societies throughout history, seems to portray an inevitable connection between women and the domestic duties of food preparation – 'so deeply rooted are the associated assumptions about women's roles that they were rarely challenged before the late twentieth century' (Atkins 2001, 311). On the other hand, a kind of power can be implicitly drawn from the traditional knowledge and skills passed on from generation to generation of women, even if such reproductive duties have always been shunned by men and given a modest status by society in general. An example from the end of last century is Deborah Lupton's statement, after recalling the Greek philosophers' perspectives on their search for truth, and the possible distractions resulting from the constraints of their bodies: 'philosophy is masculine and disembodied; food and eating are feminine and always embodied' (Lupton 1996, 3).

Another trait of the centaurs' community echoes the barbarians in *Heroes and Villains*, considering that females are also supposed to eat only after males do: 'after that I [Desiderio] ate my breakfast with the family, sitting on a stump of wood his [the mare's] wife found for me while the males all sat on their haunches and ate with their hands from

wooden dishes like sylvan men and the women waited until the men had finished before they took their own meal' (*IDMDH* 182). This can also be seen as an example of what the feminists at the end of the 1970s (after the publication of *The Sadeian Woman* in 1979) accused Carter of: reinforcing patriarchal representations of women that degraded them (Keenan 1997, 139; Palmer 1987, 194-195). In addition, *The Infernal Desire Machines* has been read as a critique of the 1960s notions of sexual liberation and their latent tendency to explore women (Keenan 1997, 141): 'he [the bay] smiled grimly [...] with a tolerant acquiescence in my presence at his breakfast table when I [Desiderio] could not even sit down decently on all fours, and at Albertina's presence as she waited quietly with his mate and daughter for her own share of the meal' (*ibid.* 188-189; my emphasis). Although Desiderio is tolerated with a passive assent, Albertina has to wait for her turn with the other females, in silence. Furthermore, the latter, as a female, works in the fields in the 'harvest time' (*IDMDH* 187) whereas Desiderio is not allowed to do any work, as a male.

In addition, the centaurs' diet is mostly natural, from preserved fruit to raw salads made of fruit and vegetables they cultivated, from the only cooking method which seemed to be roasting to the use of honey as a very natural way of preserving food. Moreover, they are abstemious and vegetarian, inspiring Desiderio's description of a diet which is 'one of rustic simplicity':

The women ground their corn in stone querns and made flat, tortilla-like pancakes which they ate with the wild honey in which they also deliciously preserved fruit. They sometimes roasted the ears of corn on hot coals. Morning and evening, they milked the cactuses into wooden buckets, fermented the milk to make a sour but invigorating drink and also made flat, white cheeses with a sweet, bland flavour and a crumbling texture. They cultivated orchards of fruit and vegetable gardens of roots and tubers; they gathered salads in the forests and also mushrooms, which they particularly liked to eat raw, dressed with oil and vinegar. They made sweet syrup from berries but the Sacred Horse had not revealed to them the mysteries of alcohol so their religion was only a spartan, teetotal variation upon Dionysianism and their grapes went only into jellies and salad dressings. Their abstemious, vegetarian diet filled them out with iron muscle. Their teeth were white and perfect. (*ibid.*182)

The final image of perfection resumes the preserving-method success emphasised by the adverb 'deliciously' ('deliciously preserved fruit') and the 'sour but invigorating drink' made from fermented milk. The adjectives are used here to draw attention not only to the flavour of food ('white cheeses with a sweet, bland flavour') but also to its texture ('a crumbling texture'). There is an evident appeal to the senses. Clearly, these compositions accentuate the distinctive structure of their food which, in turn, parallels their society.

It is this distinctive organization that prevents them from digesting Desiderio and Albertina ('as yet indigestible marvels' (*ibid.* 184)) since they also looked after and fed the latter in her recovery ('fed her warm milk mixed with honey and a rich porridge made from corn' (*ibidem*)). Still, Desiderio feels the need to highlight the diverse actions of feeding, being nourished, and eating, whilst he evokes the idea that, more than ingesting food, nourishing can be the act of providing with food or other substances necessary for life and growth: '[we] ate the bread of the centaurs and were nourished by it' (*ibid.* 186). This action of nourishment accompanies the more spiritual observances, given that the centaurs 'stopped their ceremony to eat their lunches and brought us [Desiderio and Albertina] some milk and cold pancakes' (*ibid.* 191). Desiderio and Albertina will always be outsiders and, therefore, the centaurs understand that their incorporation is a need in order to render them worthless as a threat; this need leads the centaurs to search for a means of 'digesting' Desiderio and Albertina. The mechanism is similar to Jewel's purpose of marrying the outsider Marianne in *Heroes and Villains*, as pointed out by Sarah Sceats (Sceats 2000, 46).

After this encounter with the centaurs, Desiderio is still fed ('I [Desiderio] was given coffee from a thermos flask' (*IDMDH* 193)), but now in accordance to his new situation: 'we had an austere dinner of army rations' (*ibid.* 195). This change of circumstances seems to me to be the closure of a cycle. Such feeling is conveyed not only through the melancholy that the flavours awake in him ('our breakfast, full of nostalgic flavours of bacon, toast, tea and marmelade' (*ibidem*; my emphasis)) but also by the reference to Albertina's 'patrimonial apple blossom' (*ibid.* 197), as he gets to the core of things and feels surrounded by 'the apple orchards' (*ibid.* 199). These are three examples of how Carter shows the permeability of language by anthropomorphically qualifying the the dinner of army rations as 'austere' and the flavours as 'nostalgic', and also by turning nature's free gifts into something that is inherited or inheritable by established rules

(possibly even legal rules), by using the adjective 'patrimonial' to qualify 'apple blossom'. The ordinary, expected order appears to have been subverted.

Even the banquet-like lunch Desiderio had at the beginning, with the Ambassador and the Minister, seems to be reenacted here, but in a more natural order of things, although, simultaneously, it feels so much more artificial to Desiderio:

Another bell rang and I went down the thickly carpeted staircase to the picture gallery where Albertina and her father were drinking very dry sherry. Dinner was served off an English eighteenth-century table in another of those chaste, restrained, white-walled rooms with a flower arrangement in the disappearing Japanese transcendental style on the sideboard and china, glass and cutlery so extraordinarily tasteful one was hardly aware of its presence. The meal was very simple and perfectly in tune with the season of the year – some kind of clear soup; a little trout; a saddle of hare, grilled; mushrooms; salad; fruit and cheese. The wines all matched. With the very strong black coffee there was a selection of *recherché* liqueurs and we all smoked probably priceless cigars. Still no servants appeared. All the courses had been sent up from subterranean kitchens in a small service elevator from which Albertina herself served us. (*ibid.* 200)

There seems to be an unemotional feeling in the air through such extreme care taken in the selection of things and food, but even all this extraordinaire atmosphere does not conceal a woman's role, she is the one serving the meal to her father and his guest. With reference to food and beverage, the choice of a very dry sherry as an aperitif makes all sense since it is a not so sweet fortified Spanish wine. Furthermore, the simplicity of the meal and the perfect synchrony with nature (through the reference to the season of the year) mirrors almost an obsession with an idea of flawless, or even immaculate, reality. Further ahead I will call the attention to Carter's same feeling as she describes Japanese fruit displayed in market stalls.

If one looks more carefully to the list presented by Desiderio, one realizes how it is indeed just a list which does not allow the reader to consider its right balance in general terms as a menu. In other words, the reference to 'some kind of clear soup' does not specify more than just a clear soup made by boiling fruit or vegetables until all the nourishment is extracted, and then strained off the clear liquid, not mentioning whether any sago or macaroni was added or carrots and turnips diced, cooked separately, and again added to the strained soup; 'a little trout' mentions the size and type of fish, which could

actually be any of various food fishes of cool fresh waters mostly smaller than typical salmons; 'a saddle of hare, grilled' identifies the cut of meat consisting of part of the backbone and both loins and the cooking method; and, finally, the allusion just to 'mushrooms; salad; fruit and cheese'. Desiderio's description lacks the passion for food one witnessed in the description of the several dishes presented during the Ambassador's lunch at the beginning of the novel. The meals simplicity is, thus, echoed in its description. The reference to the matching wines just underlines the careful choice, but is not worth noting in more detail (like the Count's meal witnessed by Desiderio), in addition to the 'recherché liqueurs' selected to go with the very strong black coffee. I read this choice of coffee as an attempt to keep the meal balanced, the senses awaken. To top it all, even the cigars mentioned must have been 'priceless', perhaps to match the rest of the meal.

Regarding decoration, since that is considered an important feature of a meal, it reflects the unemotional feeling just referred to, either through the colour of the walls (white) or through the adjectives used by Desiderio: 'chaste' and 'restrained'. Also the perfect choice of china, glass and cutlery gave the hero a sense of blending with the set that makes it unnoticeable – again the use of the adverb 'tasteful' preceded by the adverb 'extraordinarily' underlines the highly exceptional or remarkable work of preparation. The silence is only broken by a background stereo playing a Schubert song cycle, *The Winter Journey*. This cycle of 24 poems, written by Wilhelm Müller, concerns a young man, disappointed in love, wandering through the bleak winter landscape, which reminds the reader of Desiderio's journey. His journey led him to meet the Doctor, who is introduced to Desiderio in a silent manner and with slow movements, showing 'a willed concentration of thought [...]. He seemed to have refined himself almost to nothing' (*ibidem*). However, what Desiderio finds ironic in such a powerful character still relates to the senses, the sense of smell: 'for he could not alter the constituents of the aromatic coffee we sipped by so much as an iota' (*IDMDH* 200). Thus, the coffee he had tasted with the peep-show man has to be present here, taking into consideration that it had been the strongest link with the Doctor during Desiderio's journey, except for Albertina, of course.

On the other hand, Desiderio is changed and all this expression of good taste is but disillusionment to him: 'Here, nothing could possibly be fantastic. That was the source of my bitter disappointment. I had wanted his house to be a palace dedicated only to wonder.

[...] My disillusionment was profound. I was not in the domain of the marvellous at all' (*ibid.* 200-201). This is actually Desiderio's conclusion, when he tries other pleasures, as food, and cannot feel pleasure or its opposite:

The food I begged from cottagers had no savour of either sweetness or rankness. I knew I was condemned to disillusionment in perpetuity. My punishment had been my crime. [...] And so I identified at last the flavor of my daily bread; it was and would be that of regret [...] that insatiable regret with which we acknowledge that the impossible is, *per se*, impossible.' (*ibid.* 220-221)

Nevertheless, until the end, Desiderio is fed: 'When I finish this chapter, they will bring me a cup of hot milk and a plate of lightly buttered digestive biscuits' (*ibid.* 207). With his quest over, this diet proves to be appealing to match his new situation. The 'cup of hot milk' implies comfort and the 'lightly buttered digestive biscuits' emphasise that soothing moment in his life. Desiderio underlines such feeling by reiterating: 'Old Desiderio lays down his pen. In a little while, they will bring me my hot drink before they put me to bed' (*ibid.* 221).

Even though he ends by concluding that these are 'quite meaningless' comforts (*ibidem*), food is still relevant in Desiderio's memory: 'it must have been October because the air smelled of mushrooms' (*ibid.* 208). He recalls finding in the glass vats and tubes a 'biochemical metasoup' by using a triple adjective-description of the way 'a faintly luminous, milky, whitish substance' (*ibid.* 209) bubbled. Such an ending may be studied as mirroring Carter's socially focused, public agenda in which 'the desire for integrity takes the shape of political ideals and concomitant disillusion' (Sceats 2000, 7). Accordingly, in Desiderio's final situation one can see both what was longed for and what still remains an ideal. His apparent just right inclusion in a community, with its idea of a shared cooking and eating, is here deflated by this individual's isolation. Desiderio resists the idea of community because he cannot or will not join the feast, even if he apparently does so, in an obedient way. In fact, it seems to be hard 'to resist an allegorical reading of this novel' (Suleiman 1994, 107), since Desiderio chose to kill the one he still desires and dreams about, allowing Doctor Hoffman to win by imposing the power and reality of dreams to the city's hero.²⁸

²⁸ On *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman's* success in combining allegory and Surrealism as few works had achieved, see Suleiman 1994, 106-116.

In this novel, it is interesting to read how power relations become complicated, as Sarah Sceats also pointed out, when both power and the pursuit of satisfaction relate 'not only to the provider and the eater but also to the *eaten*' (Sceats 1997, 109). Indeed, if cannibalism generally implies the overall supremacy of the consumer, there is also the effect of the eaten on the eater. This happens clearly to the Count who, as food, attains a momentary consummation before dying; but Desiderio experiences cannibalistic yearning as a victim of the river people, even if he desires to be metaphorically consumed, i.e. absorbed into their community. Thus, there seems to be here some instability when it comes to power relations, bearing in mind there is a motivation in a 'life-denying appetite' (*ibid.* 110). A hunger, like the Count's, Desiderio's, and the cannibal chieftain's, can be read as being 'monstrously insatiable because only satisfiable by an arid completion, stasis, death' (*ibidem*). In addition, I can say that Carter explores the general and particular 'construction of victims' (Sceats 2000, 7), being them the eater, the over-eater or the self-consumer, similarly to *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman*. In this period of Carter's production, one can read the way she examines the social meanings of several activities connected with food, even when she does stress disruption (Seats 2000, 10).

In addition, I want to underline that since identity politics and issues of consumption were brought to the forefront in geography, there have been publications which feel the need to aim at grounding 'theoretical debates about identity politics and issues of consumption through an exploration of one of the most universal and mundane features of everyday life' as firstly stated in *Consuming Geographies: We are Where We Eat* by David Bell and Gill Valentine (Bell 1997, i). I believe this is a period in Carter's writings in which it is possible to study the use of the representations of food to confirm the relevance of space and place in identity formation. What is more, I consider here that by exploring geographies of food consumption, it is possible to depict the role food plays in constituting place identities – 'We all think place (and) identity through food: we are *where we eat*' (*ibidem*). The geographical perspective to cultural studies in this area makes all sense when reading Carter's work from the 1970s onwards. Even if the geography of food has been more concentrated on production, there has been a concern from the emerging geographies of consumption on food consumption. This does not certainly imply that the interdisciplinarity of food-cultural studies (already mentioned in the first chapter) will not draw on literatures from anthropological, sociological, and cultural readings of

food consumption, as gastro-criticism does. In the beginning of her journeys, in the early 1970s, Carter will definitively find another cannibal forest, also full of perils.

Looking at Oneself in *The Passion of New Eve*.

'Bread, rather than dreams'

The expression 'Bread, rather than dreams' (*PNE* 7) was used by Evelyn in Carter's seventh and short novel *The Passion of New Eve* (1977) to portray how his cinema goddess Tristessa began to go out of fashion. Tristessa would not fit the mould of the girl next door, which was 'body, all body' (*ibidem*) and not the soul type.²⁹ Having given up on his goddess in puberty, Evelyn still revisits Tristessa, and 'for times' sake at the cinema' (*ibid.* 8), he chooses similar food to that which he had always associated the pleasure of watching her. Additionally, these are associations from Evelyn's very young years, when his then nanny would take him to watch Tristessa. Thus, he later buys an ice-cream to remind him of the feeling produced by choc-ice apiece: 'so that the crackle of the coat of bitter chocolate under the teeth and the sharp, sweet sting of the ice against my [Evelyn's] gums were intimately associated with my flaming, pre-adolescent heart and the twitch in my budding groin the spectacle of Tristessa's suffering always aroused in me' (*ibidem*). The choc-ice is later recalled again when Evelyn, by then Eve/lyn, faces Tristessa: 'the choc-ice melting in my hand, I [Evelyn] sat in childhood cinemas [...]. I licked the melted chocolate from the silver paper, to extract a bit of comfort from it' (*ibid.* 122). The girl that went with Evelyn also has an ice-cream, a 'strawberry sundae', a detail

²⁹ Tristessa does not seem to have undergone what Jody Brooks calls our attention to in her introduction:

In the 1950s and 1960s a new figure began to appear in Hollywood film – the figure of the aging actress undergoing a crisis as she confronts her demise. Produced as the studio system was at its end and the domestic introduction of television was well underway, these films – *Sunset Boulevard* (Billy Wilder, 1950), *Whatever Happened to Baby Jane?* (Robert Aldrich, 1962), *All About Eve* (Joseph L. Mankiewicz, 1950), and *The Killing of Sister George* (Robert Aldrich, 1968) – played out the passing of the old Hollywood through the figure of the aging actress. (Brooks 1999, 232-233)

he remembers as opposed to the girl's name, which he cannot recall. It is as though what they eat reveals a kind of innocence, purity, and comfort traditionally associated with ice-creams, if one considers the reference to the 'empty potato crisp bags and trodden orangeade containers' (*ibid.* 9) as the usual remains on the floor of a more recent visit to the cinema. Then again, the choice of the following triple adjectives used to portray Evelyn when he leaves England and travels to the United States helps to complete his own representation of purity: 'tender little milk-fed English lamb' (*ibidem*; my emphasis).

Albeit *The Passion of New Eve* is usually read through its 'radical portrayals of femininity and masculinity, its invocation of lurid, surreal landscapes, and its persistent undermining of narrative perspective and causality [which] link it to many [...] theories to do with gender, transgender, technology and the postmodern' (Gamble 2001, 88), the goal here is still to study it in terms of the representations of food in the construction of an identity.³⁰ Let us not forget that 'Carter was always very explicit about the fact that this was intended as a novel of ideas' (*ibidem* 89). Representations of food, therefore, facilitate the depiction of a space and identity that will change along the novel. Evelyn, a teacher from England, makes his way to the dark chaos of New York City. This is an interesting point, since the novel 'sparked off by a visit to the USA in 1969' (Haffenden 1984, 36), and this evidences how Carter's travels in the USA, in different occasions, influenced her. Travelling to the 'country where Mouth is King, the land of comestibles', the first memory Evelyn has is of a shop window with an obese plaster gnome chewing a 'giant plaster pie' (*PNE* 10). The only reference he makes to feast concerns the rats as these gorge on a heap of garbage (*ibidem*), and one keeps reading about those ever more 'plump and energetic' (*ibid.* 17) animals and their hurling on other larger animals (*ibidem*). While the situation becomes more perilous so do rats get more dangerous in their incursions in the city; there is a correlation: 'The yellow taxis with their armoured windows roared by and the rats congregated in twittering battalions around the hamburger stands' (*ibid.* 21). Actually, these rats and their increasing size and correlated hunger echo the conflict between order

³⁰ One example is Alison Lee's reading of the fluidity of gender identity which disturbs the stability of the narrative voice, given that she understands gender as performance. She is, in fact, indebted to the work of Judith Butler, as pointed out by Gamble (Gamble 2001, 95). It is by resorting to Butler's perspectives, that Lee argues that *The Passion of New Eve*'s feminist message rests on that sense of performativity: 'For Eve and Tristessa [...] gender cannot help being performative because its liminality provides multiple possibilities. Therefore, Lee concludes the following: '[...] it is the heteroglossia, the multiplicity, the undermining of binaries that make a text like Carter's feminist in both its narrative structure and its Story' (Lee 1996, 248).

and chaos in a futuristic America, which on its turn may be read as a conflict between the genders, between continuance and negation, and myth and history – this will be studied further ahead.

In reality, the friend Evelyn meets in the Big Apple approached him in a delicatessen while he was buying 'a carton of delicious mushrooms and sour cream salad', a typical American combination. Also typical is the 'dark bitter coffee' the friend offers him and so is the borsch and black bread that he is willing to share and which help to characterise him as a Czech. In addition, food helps the reader to learn about economy when Evelyn complained in relation to running out of money, although he never eats meat, 'only rice and vegetables' (*ibid.* 15), and usually eats a 'midday sandwich' (*ibid.* 16) at lunch-counters, where he hears about the social revolution going on, or a carton of milk' (*ibid.* 18). Still, the reader learns from Evelyn that all the time he lives with Leilah, he never lacks money ('We ate well and often from the counter of the neighbourhood deli' (*ibid.* 130)), and one acknowledges that he was by then much more enmeshed in the American culture, to be seen next. When on the road, later on, Evelyn comments on the price of a hamburger that would cost five dollars, which is not worth it for the meat, but for the amount of pickle: 'the meat filling would be a quarter of an inch thick, but there was still plenty of pickle' (*ibid.* 40).³¹ Actually, even if in the USA's fast food sector the greatest competition is between burgers, pizzas, chicken, barbecue, and hot dogs, some of the regional preferences revealed until the mid 1980s show that pizza was the dominant fast food in New York (Atkins 2001, 287-288).

As food aided in the characterisation of the Czech, so it does when Evelyn meets Leilah, typically 'chewing a stick of candy – a Baby Ruth, or some item of edible Americana'. This reference completes the picture of a girl loitering among confessions magazines and singing 'a soft, high, vacant, lonely song' with a 'drugged smile on her face' (*PNE* 19). Just after this description, there is a very similar one, underlying such common behaviour of Leilah: 'she moved away from the rack of papers, sucking at her candy and singing an indecipherable lyric in a dazed, almost incoherent way in that very high, childlike voice' (*ibid.* 20). Leilah seems to transpire the American spirit of its youth in what concerns food; one example is clear when Evelyn follows her through the streets

³¹ In 2008, two books were published on the evolution and symbolism of the hamburger from an American and global perspective: *Hamburger: A Global History* by Andrew Smith and *The Hamburger: A History* by Josh Ozersky.

of the city and she 'posed against a Coke stand [...] placidly drinking a bright pink milkshake' (*ibid.* 23). However, even Leilah's mouth, with a strange flavor, is compared by Evelyn to 'those mysterious fruits, such as the medlar, that are not fit to eat until they are rotten' (*ibid.* 25). The comparison with the medlar reflects Leilah's true nature, since she is in fact Lilith! The common medlar, the fruit of *Mespilus germanica*, has been used as a metaphor for age, particularly premature age, similarly to its trees are self-fertilizing and long-lived (they can be hundreds of years old). Also, the fact that *Mespilus germanica* features the unusual apple-like fruit, medlar, that requires bletting (a process certain fleshy fruits undergo when, beyond ripening, they have started to decay and ferment) in order to be eaten, conveys the idea of a progression, an evolution. Such growth is what Leilah somehow helps her friend Evelyn to understand.

Evelyn, jobless, takes up residence with this club dancer, Leilah. Actually, Leilah says she earns her living in a simulated sex-shop as 'the filling in a chocolate sandwich or a layer in a mocha layer cake' (*ibid.* 26), with flesh replicating food, sweet food: 'Skin is the substance that turns 'meat' into 'flesh'. It transforms the brute and mortal, and births it into the sexual and deathless world of the sign' (Enright 2011, 38). This relates to what Carter observes in Japan when she comments on the irezumi tattoo – "People as Pictures", first published in *New Society* in 1970 and now collected in *Shaking a Leg* (SL 234-238). Indeed, Leilah's 'ritual incarnation, the way she systematically carnalised herself and became dressed meat' (PNE 31) is very exciting for Evelyn, which leads to believe that the novel until this point can be read as following the pattern of the previous ones. If cannibalism, in the other novels, lays bare (in Carter's view, the 'meatiness' of human flesh), in *The Passion of New Eve* this attitude can be read in the same way – 'Skin is a kind of costume, as Carter loved to remind us' (Enright 2011, 39). It is so because, in the same way to 'a fundamental exploitation in which one person is seen by the other in absolutely primitive terms' (Sceats 2000, 48), there is a still vaster abyss between what she calls 'master' and victim. Indeed, such an observation relates to what Carter later identified as the Sadeian libertines' 'economic' theory of sexual pleasure; in other words, if pleasure shared is pleasure diminished, then Leilah cannot be accounted for as the victim, due to the way she is exploited.³² Actually, in *The Passion of New Eve* there is a

³² Furthermore, the 'economic' theory reflects the libertines' sense of one who lives in accordance with Protestant precepts, especially one who regards pleasure or luxury as sinful, since they see flesh as a means of production and as such it must be owned. Accordingly, like any other resource, it must be made to pay for itself.

theme that runs through Carter's fiction (a process analogous to cannibalism) which is the 'apprehension of another in terms of one's own desire and self-image' (*ibid.* 54). Even if he does it later, Evelyn perceives to have done this in his relationship with Leilah. Although I agree with Sceats on how 'all Evelyn can taste is himself at this stage of the novel' (*ibidem*), I do not consider the insensitive and stereotypically 'masculine' way in which he treats Leilah to provide the narrative dynamic of this novel, but his travelling to America and discovering it – discovering different flavours, diverse tastes.

Back to Evelyn's relation with Leilah, I sense a parallel in his association of sex and food. Even the comment 'she did not eat much' (*PNE* 26) does not obliterate the fact that she is part of the game and the consumed one; at least she is presented as such in this beginning. I also feel there is a correlation between the sweetness of her simulation for the sex-shop and her eating habits – '[Leilah] ate hash candy she made herself, so much hash candy her teeth were rotting' (*ibidem*; my emphasis), as the city itself. Moreover, the artificiality of the simulation mirrors the food she is associated to: 'she [Leilah] made me instant coffee on a grease-caked electric hotplate, there was artificial cream made from corn-syrup solids to go with it' (*ibidem*; my emphasis). Leilah's habits lead Evelyn to share the artificiality of sweetness that recalls a 'safe world of early childhood' (*ibid.* 27), in the same way to what was pointed out at the beginning of this part.

Evelyn also finds himself in a chain of events and habits which once more echoes on the food he buys – 'a box of fried chicken or a sack of hamburgers' (*ibidem*); 'I [Evelyn] bought potato salad and cold ham for the journey' (*ibid.* 37). As I commented above, Evelyn is so enmeshed in Leilah's culture that he lists food from their diet which mirrors the American convenience food and which on its turn reverberates their relationship and the city's situation while it developed fast – 'sandwiches (pastrami on rye and so on), salami, cole-slaw, fried chicken, potato salad' (*ibid.* 30) – towards an ever-close ending (dessert) – 'apple pie, blueberry pie, boisenberry [*sic*] pie, raspberry and redcurrant pie, peach pie, pecan pie, etc etc etc, cheesecake and strudel' (*ibidem*). The sonority in the presentation of these dessert sweets, like a crescendo, is given by grouping them alphabetically – 'apple' for *a*, 'blueberry' and 'boisenberry' for *b*, 'raspberry' and 'redcurrant' for *r*, 'peach' and 'pecan' for *p* – as well as through the repetition of 'pie' (concerning the difference or the similarity of the initial sound of the preceding word) and 'etc' – 'etc etc etc' – and finally the climax with 'cheesecake and strudel'. When one looks at the listing itself, it becomes clear that Carter's choices were not at random at all, as

usually they are not. Boysenberry, for instance, is a cross between a European Raspberry (*Rubus idaeus*), a Common Blackberry (*Rubus fruticosus*), and a Loganberry (*Rubus loganobaccus*); and the reference to 'cheesecake and strudel' takes the reader simultaneously to an American deep-rooted product with the former and to a European original creation with the latter.³³

Even the cultural plurality of gastronomy, so typical of New York, is presented here through the way Evelyn and Leilah choose to consume Chinese food but drink America's world-wide consumed beverage: 'We brought home egg foo-yong [*sic*] and wan-tun [*sic*] soup and fried rice in wax cartons from the Chinese restaurant and drank, I recall, a great deal of Coca-Cola from cans sweating with refrigeration' (*ibidem*). This reference recalls the *new ethnicity* which has been clear in the USA since the 1960s. The consequent revival of culinary roots and celebration of the USA's extraordinary multiplicity, led to the proliferation of ethnic speciality restaurants and to the cooperation between them and their customers for a version of 'cultural authenticity which, although reductionist and exaggerated, does satisfy a demand for an exotic consumption experience' (Atkins 2001, 274). Among the ethnic restaurants in the USA, the most popular cuisines are still Chinese, Italian, and Mexican (*ibid.* 287).

Nonetheless, Evelyn's fate does not lie in the ruinous city, and he travels through the desert. After all, the desert here becomes a place of rebirth and the city becomes a desert of death (Armitt 1996, 164). Food as a nourishing need starts to make all sense when on the road (also pointed out above when referring the price of a hamburger). Evelyn lists what he has, confirming, thus, the power these resources gain more and more to him, especially when he is in the desert: 'I had a little water in a plastic container, three halves of a ham-and-lettuce sandwich wrapped in cellophane' (*PNE* 42). The way the sandwich was wrapped is similar to the way he wrapped the money given by the clerk at

³³ Actually, the earliest authors who mention cheesecake are from Ancient Greece, as Aegimus, and from Rome – in *De Agri Cultura* (c. 160BC) Cato the Elder includes recipes for two Cakes for religious uses: 'libum' and 'placenta', being the latter like modern cheesecakes, since a crust is separately prepared and baked. However, the most commonly used cheese for cheesecake was invented in 1912 by James Kraft who pasteurized the heavier and creamier "unripened cheese" created in 1872 by William Lawrence and other dairymen from New York.

Concerning Strudel, the oldest recipe (handwritten) is believed to be from 1696 and it is now at the Viennese City Library. Even if the pastry has its origins in Byzantine (330AD) or Middle Eastern pastries (as baklava), it is agreed that the Western world is familiar with the strudel which sprung from the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In fact, the word 'strudel', which derives from the Middle High German, literally means whirlpool or eddy. Forms of strudel are found all over the world and it was the Pennsylvania Dutch who brought strudel to America.

American Express (*ibid.* 37). This is a sustaining need as Evelyn rations the food: 'I ate one of my sandwich halves, drank a mouthful or two of water' (*ibidem*); 'I ate my last sandwich half, hoarding every mouthful, as if the longer I took to eat it, the longer it would sustain me. I nourished my dry mouth with water' (*ibid.* 43). The idea here is of nurturing and maintaining him alive, a way of truly valuing the simple and essential, or even vital, needs. The desert came as purification from chaotic scenery, but the former's insane landscape and erratic structures are not enough for Evelyn's purification.³⁴

In contrast, when he is made a prisoner, there is a feeling of artificiality that is perceived by Evelyn from the first moment he tastes the offered food, even though he does not dislike its taste at all: 'Then she [the capturer] gave me a few wafers of a synthetic but not bad-tasting bread or biscuit-like substance and had some of it herself. This scientific concoction was nourishing enough, in spite of its ascetic flavour, to sustain me for the rest of the day's terrible journey' (*ibid.* 46). There is already a reference to science and to an ascetic flavour that will prove to be real when he arrives at Beulah. It is his hunger, a natural need he can always trust, that reassured Evelyn of his own existence (*ibid.* 53-54), after having been subjected to surgery that transformed him into a pornographic pin-up, a luscious blonde. Nevertheless, as any newborn, he is fed and here he is fed by a woman – '[she] removed the cover of a dish which proved to contain soup, very welcome, knelt at my side and fed me with a spoon. She administered the soup efficiently but without kindness. It was a synthetic-tasting but not unpalatable broth. Then she gave me some pseudo-milk pudding, an invalid's diet' (*ibid.* 54). The feeling he showed for the food illustrated the environment he was in, where the surfaces were 'unnatural, slippery, ersatz, treacherous, false-looking' (*ibid.* 55-56). Finally, right before the operation that would transform him completely, Evelyn's doubts regarding the outcome are but a simple

³⁴ Rosemary Carroll interviewed Carter over the phone, in September 1986, between New York and Iowa, where she was teaching at the Iowa Writers Program. Naturally there was a question about the American desert in *The Passion of New Eve*:

RC And yet in *Passion of the New Eve* [*sic*] there is this wonderful depiction of the American desert as a place where transformation is easy, almost infinitely possible, even if it's not a desirable transformation.

AC I think the transformation in the novel was certainly desirable. I have actually seen the desert here, though. I made the great cross-country trip Americans always say they want to make. In 1969 my husband, my first husband, and I drove across the United States in a Greyhound bus. We went from New York to San Francisco, by way of New Orleans because we were both fond of the jazz music from there. We went south to El Paso and then through the desert to California. The whole trip only lasted six days but it was quite an experience. (Carroll 1986)

imagery at the time he questioned: 'Sophia, does a change in the coloration of the rind alter the taste of a fruit?' (*ibid.* 68).

When Evelyn meets Mother, he comments on the fact that he can not find a place to lay his head on her fringe of breasts, because these 'were not meant for comfort, only for nourishment' (*ibid.* 60). This comes as natural when he acknowledges her as 'a piece of pure nature, [...] earth, [...] fructification' (*ibidem*). Also, when the aliases and properties of the goddess are succinctly listed, food can not be forgotten: 'Maze-queen corn-queen barley-queen / fructifier quickener pestilence-bringer / queen of the crucible' (*ibid.* 61). She is presented here like the queen of cereals, but simultaneously she is able to be fruitful or productive, to accelerate or vitalise, to remove or delay. The conclusion of these features is brilliant, for she is pointed out as characterising the confluence of powerful intellectual, social, economic, or political forces (being this one of the meanings of the word 'crucible'). Still concerning the cereals, later on, during the celebrations of Evelyn's annunciation, Mother proclaims: 'I see before me the fairest earth ripe for the finest seed. In the most pure womb of Mary, there was sown one whole grain of wheat, yet it is called a garden of wheat-' (*ibid.* 66). Although there are no explicit references to cannibalism in *The Passion of New Eve*, Sceats still points out that 'the cannibalistic allusion relates to Mother as proto-goddess; in a parallel to Desiderio's absorption by the river people, Mother literally engulfs Evelyn, so giving birth to Eve' (Sceats 2000, 55). In addition, when Mother visits the new Eve after the operation, she takes flowers and a bunch of grapes. It is interesting how s/he feels these are the traditional gifts to those who have given birth, as if he has just given birth to himself, and wonders: 'these were the first fruits of a garden I'd seen in Beulah' (*PNE* 75). Indeed, this edible berry grows in temperate zones throughout the five continents, making it a universal symbol. In general, the grape is a symbol of harvest, of sacrifice (Christian rituals, for example, incorporate grapes to represent the blood of Christ) and of conscience. Disconsolated, Eve is again breastfed by Mother and this helps her/him to feel 'a Great peace and a sense of reconciliation, as if he would always be 'nourished' by these [breasts]' (*ibidem*).

If food customs suggest a labyrinth of associations on the part of individual writers, and because the inherent sensuality of food involves other senses besides those of smell and taste, food can evoke a rush of memories and feelings. Food imagery may, thus, appear in literature as a source of profoundly embedded associations leading into the

depths of individual and cultural memory.³⁵ Yet, here the artificiality pointed out just above is explained later in terms of production, based both on scientific manufacturing, on recycling, and on the use of natural sources of energy, when Eve/lyn describes the place:

Sophia showed me [Eve/lyn] the laboratories where they manufactured their synthetic milk and wafers from chemicals, spun their protein from petrochemicals, chipped vegetable substitutes from wood. All night long, all day long, beneath the ground, these round structures hanging below the surface of the sand emitted a low, busy hum like hives of contented bees. Their energy source was the sun above us; they trapped it from the sand. Their water was their own recycled urine; Sophia escorted me through the odorous plant, past the vats of gleaming steel and sterile filters. (*ibid.* 78)

The comparison of the production to the uninterrupted work of thorough and diligent bees spreads to the workers themselves in a proof of 'dedicated expertise' (*ibidem*).

It appears to me that Mother works on the concept that the body has progressively become more of an essential means 'for conveying self-identity, for it is deeply implicated in the performative and cognitive aspects of class, gender and generation' (Warde 1997, 96) 'and one might also add 'race'' (Ashley 2004, 201). As a result, when one considers the idea that the slim body is connected with an idealized feminine body, one is reflecting on the idea that our bodies are also sites where class *habitus* is given a material form. On the same trend of thought, the fat and 'excessive' body denotes a self which is out of control, and in that case such inability to control the body has often been associated with lower social classes; whereas, the middle-class body is connected to the limit and control that both Bourdieu and Bakhtin identify with bourgeois eating practices. It is, therefore, understandable that food-cultural studies focus on the ways in which what we eat and how we eat relate to class cultures and identities, as they look at how the foods we eat are not

³⁵ As an example and perhaps showing the influence of Freudian thought, according to Jonathan David (David 2003, 117-118), Marcel Proust's *Swan's Way* (the first volume of *Remembrance of Things Past*, 1913, commonly known as *In Search of Lost Time*) evolves from the narrator's memories brought out of the unconscious and into his conscious mind as he ate crumbs of 'squat, plump little cakes called 'petites madeleines'' that he had dipped in a cup of tea:

Undoubtedly what is thus palpitating in the depths of my being must be the image, the visual memory which, being linked to taste, is trying to follow it into my conscious mind. [...] And suddenly the memory reveals itself. The taste was that of the little piece of madeleine which on Sunday mornings at Combray (because on those mornings I did not go out before mass), when I went to say good morning to her in her bedroom, my aunt Léonie used to give me, dipping it first in her own cup of tea or tisane. (Proust 2008, 42)

just an expression of individual tastes, but have a wider basis in class cultures and lifestyles (*ibid.* 59).³⁶ Accordingly, they intend to show the ways tastes are not simply a reflection of one's identity but work to build one's cultural identity. David Bell and Gill Valentine, in *Consuming Geographies: We are what we eat*, stress that we may be what we eat, but what we eat also produces who we are, as mentioned above. Identity now comes as much from 'lifestyle' as it does from the classic sociological concepts of gender, class and race/ethnicity – an example is Anna Willetts' discovery that the best part of her self-defined vegetarian interviewees in fact eat meat occasionally, which she reported in her chapter "'Bacon sandwiches got the better of me': meat-eating and vegetarianism in South-East London" in Pat Caplan's *Food, Health, and Identity* (1997).

All in all, one can say that a post-structuralist, in fact, post-modern approach, had progressively incorporated the body into its focus, since the human body is considered a project, as well as a dynamic entity in the process of becoming, and subject to conscious moulding. An example is the already mentioned Lupton who uses Foucault's ideas on the 'practices' or 'technologies' of the self, to note the following:

The practices of the self represent the site at which discourses and physical phenomena may be adopted as part of the individual's project to construct and express subjectivity. [...] Such practices 'inscribe' or 'write' upon the body, marking and shaping it in culturally specific ways which are then 'read' or interpreted by others. (Lupton 1996, 15)

If one recalls Carter's novel *Love* (1971) and Annabel's food choices, they come to terms with nowadays views that illness and even death are failures of the self, and indications of a lack of rational behaviour and self-control. Also, matters of eating disorders are usually closely linked to gendered notions of identity and subjectivity, and to conceptions of the body and health (Caplan 1997, 25). When the issues are food and eating, which are central practices of the self, it becomes clearer, since in times of uncertainty and heightened self-reflexivity, one way of controlling the body is to exercise discipline over eating habits – 'Given the current value of 'self-control', bodies become potent physical symbols of the extent to which their 'owners' possess self-control' (*ibid.* 16). This idea of Eve/lyn's new

³⁶ One of the areas of difference with which Caplan was concerned and which is marked by food is precisely that of class and status, when she makes the assumption that in this respect 'both class-specific subcultures as well as levels of income are significant' (Caplan 1997, 11). She also dwells on the long tradition of concern with food in studies of both affluence and poverty in the West.

body is portrayed by an owner who does not feel as the owner (but probably as a product of Mother and science) with no such self-control and, hence, no power – or a new power, according to Mother's prospect.

Indeed, some postmodern approaches miss the complexity of concepts concerning food and the body, and can riskily leave out crucial issues of agency and power. Stuart Hall, for instance, argues that we need a reconceptualisation which incorporates agency, intention and volition. In accordance with this perspective, one may read Joanne Finkelstein's work on dining (1989), and her implication that what is eaten, and where, makes dining out an expressive manifestation of social value, a symbol of civility; civility is a notion taken from Norbert Elias, characterized by the individual's conscious act, since he is aware of a surrounding culture and a predisposing history, as seen in the first chapter. Thus, Joanne Finkelstein's argument, from four years before (1985), is that dining out has become, in the late twentieth century, an act of unsuccessful civility due to what she names 'high consumerism' and the modernist fragmentation of the self: 'the rampant consumerism of individuals in the industrialized nations [...] demonstrates [...] the transformation of all that is held valuable into material objects' (Finkelstein 1985, 205). Nevertheless, her arguments had already been noticeably anticipated and rebutted by Mary Douglas in the previous year:

On the one hand, the official theory of food is exclusively concerned with physical nourishment [...]. On the other hand, the ordinary consuming public in modern industrial society works hard to invest its food with moral, social and aesthetic meanings. The actual current meaningfulness of food is being overlooked by professional food theorists because their thought is doubly restricted, partly by antique metaphysical assumptions about the separation of spirit and flesh and partly by an intellectual tradition which has desocialized the individual. (Douglas 2003b, 5)

Actually, the concept of identity is directly related to others which have been around for longer in anthropology, like the person and the self (Caplan 1997, 15). However, when considering such key concepts in social theory, one must not overlook the *socially* constructed nature of identity, which is visibly symbolised by food and commensality: 'identity cannot be reduced simply to 'lifestyle', or thought of in purely individual terms' (*ibidem*). In Lupton's above mentioned book on food and the body, there

is a suggestion that post-structuralist approaches commonly benefit the notion of the fragmented and dependent over the unified self. This is why these approaches have had a propensity to adopt the term 'subjectivity' as a more flexible one than identity, since it incorporates the notion that the self is greatly variable and contextual, even though within certain limits imposed by culture (comprising power relations, social institutions, and hegemonic discourses) – 'Subjectivity includes an interest in conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions and the interaction of these with the constitution of the subject through language and discourse' (*ibidem*). While anthropology had been dominated, to a large extent, by symbolic approaches which became disinterested in the individual actor (until the end of the twentieth century), there has been a growing concern with the individual in the real world and a refutation of the western notion of a rational self divorced from lived experience. Thus, since the self is presented as part of the world, the challenge is to become conscious that humans are reflexive.

Returning to the way it has been established that food marks out cultural identities, confirming in common patterns of consumption, and common notions of edibility one's difference from others (Lévi-Strauss 1963b, 24; 27), one may undeniably look at how long and respectable there is a tradition of anthropological work on social and animal classification. In fact, such prejudices and persuasions may be given more clear thought by the patterning of one's actions in other realms, from household management to social intimacies, as evidenced by Douglas. However, there is a stereotyping which usually contradicts the evidence of a great diversity of food preferences within any particular culture, and it is such diversity that sustains both regional specialties and frequently a more local than national food tradition.

On the other hand, it is still accepted and it does occur in popular food writing, a thing known as 'Spanish cooking' or 'Italian food', making such food stereotypes (through a continuous promulgation) that one gets to 'know' what these 'types' of food *should* consist of, in particular when one comes across foreign food – 'Indeed, food is one of the primary ways in which notions of 'otherness' are articulated' (Caplan 1997, 72). A good example is what Sami Zubaida comments for the Middle East, when she underlines how gastro-nationalism is an essential resource for identity marking – 'Communities were always proud of their own food while denigrating that of their opponents or rivals, often in terms of stereotypes' (Zubaida 2001, 37). Nevertheless, this apparent certainty does not eliminate an uncertainty in the way through which food, in practice, sustains images of

cultural identity, as Caplan suggests based on Mennell's (1985) historic approach to food-cultural studies:

First, some awkward historical facts challenge the very idea of there being a traditional relationship between food, culture and identity. Cuisines are not limited by geography or nationhood. Each national cuisine bears the traces of trade, travel and, increasingly, of technology, so that food could more correctly be said to be constitutive of global rather than local cultures. [...]

A second challenge to the presumed role of food as a cultural marker of national identity arises from the ways in which, *within* any local culture, it is also used extensively to register ideas of difference and, in particular, gradations of status. Again, this has been well documented in the traditional anthropological literature [...] and histories of diet [...]. (Caplan 1997, 74)

This second challenge Caplan refers to, reminds me of Carter's use of food in *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman*, where she shows that even in a dream world, food provides a fluid symbolic medium when accounting for identity. Still, this happens through the implicit invocation of sets of inflexible cultural stereotypes, linking specific foodstuffs to specific localised as well as nationalised or, indeed, globalised identities. What Carter's characters eat may not reveal their nationality, but it may disclose whether it is a child or an adult or an international traveller or trendsetter. Besides, it may, more prosaically, be a sign of their social class and status, as Bourdieu (1979) has revealed in his discussion of class distinctions in France, since he put forward that the choices people make over what they eat reproduce symbolically their class position. Though Bourdieu dismisses the notion that just economic explanations by themselves account for class differences and credibly demonstrates this (through detailed statistical and epidemiological analysis), I believe Carter's novel shows how income may be a formative factor in what people eat. Such a perspective does not replace the view that it is also ideas of cultural taste about what constitutes proper food that work to perpetuate class divisions and lifestyles. This may well be one of the main focuses when studying *The Passion of New Eve*.

A good example comes after the scientific, futuristic experience, when Eve/lyn becomes again prisoner of another community that proved to be rather the opposite of Mother's. Captured by Zero, the one-eyed and one-legged poet, Eve/lyn is made slave among a group of other women who actually loves their subjugator. These women's

relation to the misogynistic tyrant Zero, a male counterpart of Mother, is referred from the beginning in terms of consuming food: '[they] did not think they were fit to pick up the crumbs from his table, at which he always ate in solitary splendour' (*PNE* 85). The privacy he demands at meals and the women's extreme submissiveness and humiliation contrasts with the community Eve/lyn has just left and this is observable in the food, as well. Whereas there is the idea of artificiality in the community built by Mother, the food eaten by the women of Zero is presented as more natural: 'the last meal I'd eaten had been a small supper of chemical wafers at the beginning of the night so I [Eve/lyn] gratefully accepted a plate filled with brown rice and puréed carrots but I had to scoop it up with my fingers because they did not have any knives, forks or spoons' (*ibid.* 87). The question concerning cutlery undoubtedly marks the gap imprinted by Zero in his postulants, since these murmur the following:

Zero believed women were fashioned of a different soul substance from men, a more primitive animal stuff and so did not need the paraphernalia of civilised society such as cutlery, meat, soap, shoes, etc., though, of course, he did. However, they seemed grateful to him because, out of his generosity, he allowed them the sophistication of cups and plates although these dishes were of the commonest kind and badly cracked and chipped' (*ibidem*).

Indeed, it is such primitiveness that Eve/lyn describes in every action s/he witnessed at the ranch, emphasised especially when compared to her/his previous experience in Beulah. Interesting is the fact that Zero considers meat to be part of the paraphernalia of civilized society, similarly to Mother's community where one only knows about wafers, soup and a vegetable based diet. All this despite the suggestions that the reservation of the best food for males in certain societies reflects the ancient situation where it was imperative for hunters to be well fed, as seen in *Heroes and Villains*.³⁷ Besides, in worldwide terms, meat eating is undoubtedly associated with wealth (Beardsworth 1997, 200). Whereas some social scientists explain patterns of meat consumption based on the symbolic dimensions of meat, the potent meanings it bears within a given cultural context (with nutritional considerations bearing a second place),

³⁷ Meat has long held a central position in the typical American diet, and such centrality has its origins in the early days of European settlement and the abundance of game species and, some believe, also in 'the long-term influence of British culinary culture, in which meat has traditionally been accorded pride of place' (Beardsworth 1997, 196).

others, in contrast, have argued that the complex symbolic significances which cultures attribute to meat are, actually, manifestations or reflections of this fundamental nutritional attraction.³⁸ We have already discussed this in relation to the centaurs' avoidance of meat in *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* and since there has been an evident lack of resolution on this matter, I believe it is acceptable to keep both possibilities in mind when analyzing the role of meat, either by its preference or avoidance, in any nutritional culture.

Another fact that can be read as parallel and, simultaneously, unlike in both communities is the idea of motherhood; while they equally aim for 'a new breed of Americans' (*PNE* 94), the methods and the goals are completely opposite. While Mother through science promotes womanhood in order to allow their independence and, ultimately, to rid the world of men, Zero, through women's degradation, expects their blind dependence. The latter controls the disciplines of motherhood by using a piglet, dressed in baby clothes, lullabied and fed by his women 'with warmed goat's milk from a rubber-nippled bottle' (*ibidem*). Even Zero himself is carried to bed by the women and fed 'bourbon from a liquor-soaked cloth nipple' that they pressed in his mouth when he fainted after his intense exhibitions of poetry (*ibid.* 104). This may be read as a gendered struggle, because whereas Zero, associated with psychoanalytical negation and with masculinity, corresponds to an urge towards destruction, towards an inevitable and steady deterioration of society and sterile control, Mother is related to change, revolution and a latent fertile chaos. These ideas are also useful to read their relation to the food they provide or the diet they impose, as such diets echo Zero and Mother's social systems.

Women in the ranch start the day by preparing food, either getting water for Zero's coffee, lighting the stove, getting eggs from the chickens, or preparing 'flapjacks with oatmeal scooped out of a spilling sack in the kitchen, while others fed the holy pigs a lavish meal' (*ibid.* 96). Pigs are definitely treated almost as well as Zero, who gets a 'heaping tray of breakfast', and his dog that is given a 'bowl of chopped beefsteak'. Also, the dog and his Master take their first meal of the day in bed, but the wife of the previous night, 'demoted to the ranks with the morning, ate her breakfast in the kitchen' (*ibidem*)

³⁸ One of the social scientists who expresses such belief on the symbolic dimensions of meat is Marvin Harris in his chapter "Meat Hunger" in *Good to Eat: Riddles of Food and Culture* (1985), where he argues that although we are not true carnivores, meat does provide a particularly proper source of nutrients for our species (Harris 1986, 31). Still, the overall thesis of Harris and Ross, a year later (*Food and Evolution: Towards a Theory of Human Food Habits*), is that human food habits serve an evolutionary purpose and this is how they are best understood.

with the rest of the women. Furthermore, Zero took immense pleasure in forcing the women to eat their breakfasts 'in an indigestible hurry' (*ibidem*) leaving them with hardly any time to gobble a single biscuit until lunchtime, since snacks are forbidden. Such imposition resembles Uncle Philip's tyrannical restraint on Aunt Margaret's meals in *The Magic Toyshop*. Anyhow, with their front teeth removed Zero's wives find it even harder to eat and talk. Such particular difficulty makes Parker's comment clearer: 'If consumption signifies power, then toothlessness epitomises disempowerment' (Parker 2000, 164). For example, in *The Sadeian Woman* (two years after publishing *The Passion of New Eve*) Carter would posit an instantly recognizable connection between silence, toothlessness and powerlessness, when she declares that 'as a woman, my symbolic value is primarily that of a myth of patience and receptivity, a dumb mouth from which the teeth have been pulled' (*SW* 4-5). No wonder she considered herself as still having some of her 'own teeth'. This was how Carter saw herself in the mid 1980s (Haffenden 1985, 78).

Going back to women's tasks in Zero's ranch, they take care of production by watering the vegetable garden ('The watered ground was fertile enough to mock the aridity around it with its rich produce of fruit, cannabis and vegetables that soon ripened in the inevitable sun' (*PNE* 97)) and tending the domestic animals, like chickens and goats. Any of these goats will be killed if it slips to the garden and eats something, and the girl responsible will be beaten. The goat itself still has several uses afterwards; it will specially become 'a rare treat of goat stew for a few days, though the incisorless condition of the girls meant the meat must be cooked to a pulp before they could eat it' (*ibidem*). When alive the goats provide milk, useful for another task of production, since the women occasionally attempted to manufacture cheese, even if it never turns out right. The women from the ranch obviously prepare the food and are used to make a garbage run to the supermarket in a town rather far away to supplement their deficient diet of 'plain fare of vegetables, grains, eggs, goats' milk and the occasional meal of pulped chicken or goat' (*ibid.* 98).

Albeit these women's diet has occasionally the introduction of meat, it is mainly based on vegetables, fruit, and cereals. In effect, when meat is understood as a symbol of male dominance, then vegetables, which are considered intrinsically less attractive and less powerful (being even identified as 'women's foods'), can be seen as second-class foods fit just for second-class citizens. This is an idea presented by Carol J. Adams when she underlines the connotation of the word 'meat' with 'essence' or 'most important

feature', whereas 'vegetable' implies monotony and inactivity, as in leading a passive, inactive existence. This latter implication may be a way of reading Zero's wives passivity, for it is possible to base it on a symmetrical symbolism between meat and vegetables, masculine and feminine – since men are active and consume foods imbued with power (from animals' activity), and women are passive, and consume foods resulting from 'inactive' forms of life, i.e. plants (Adams 2010, 60-61). In addition, patriarchal power and female subordination become evident when the responsibility for the cooking of meat for consumption by men is imposed upon women, visible in Zero's ranch.

To increment their diet, however, Zero's women look for the contents of the bins from the supermarket, containing spoiled food and leftovers – 'There would be hands of green bananas; blocks of veinous suet; softening bricks of ice-cream; mice-nibbled wedges of cellophane-wrapped imported cheese, rare treats, gorgonzola, brie, gruyere; packs of butter only a little rancid' (*PNE* 98; my emphasis). It is in this scenery of refuse bins and with such ingredients, wonderfully described through a brilliant use of adjectives, that Eve/lyn senses the women's companionship by considering it a feast: 'the huge plastic bins were cornucopias that spilled a rotten plenty, on which we feasted' (*ibidem*; my emphasis). In general, pleasant social gatherings involve food consumption and according to the concept of *commensality*, 'sharing food has almost magical properties in its ability to turn self-seeking individuals into a collaborative group' (Belasco 2008, 19). A well-known example is the classic French folk tale, "Stone Soup", whose message proves that sharing food makes us wiser, better people. This principle is also expressed in the Latin-based words 'company' (already mentioned in the second chapter) and 'companions', the people with whom one shares bread (*ibidem*).

What is on the plate and the manner in which one consumes food is a kind of 'social digestion' given that one actually breaks down and assembles the building blocks of society (Rosenblum 2010, 45). Furthermore, if we consider the influence of food as a symbol of self-identity which originates in the distinct nature of the symbolic process involved, then the leftovers they dig for may be read as a metaphor of their social community. Thus, the food is consumed by each one of them and they eat like a community, together, and this act of eating has social implications for both individual and group identity. This is possibly what Zero understood and tried to control, restrain or even annihilate: their individual identity. One part of society's leftovers is another part's feast. Although this is a common fact all over the world, it may be clearer for Carter at that point

of her life, after having lived in Japan where she also had to struggle and came to know a similar reality. This does not mean Eve/lyn gets to appreciate this as much as the other women, for she does consider their diet to be 'bad food' (*PNE* 100). Still on the women's tasks from the ranch, one learns that they were the ones financially keeping parasitic Zero and his familiar well-fed throughout the winter. It is because of their prostituting in Los Angeles during the summer, that they have managed to gather enough money to go on buying 'good red meat' from the butchery counter to feed their Master and his lurcher (*ibid.* 98).

As seen above, the symbolic potency of meat in contemporary thought is clear, despite Marvin Harris' arguments, and when one looks at a hierarchy of status and potency, one can find red meat near the top of a conventional ranking based on power, status, and desirability (Beardsworth 1997, 210). It is argued that the red colour of meat is responsible for its supposed power and appeal, and blood, considered the bearer of the special essence of the individual or the animal, is coupled with virility, strength, aggression, and sexuality – all the features Zero emphasises in his walk of life. Also, some authors have argued that women openly relate the importance of the proper meal (which is frequently arranged around its definitive core of meat) to the tastes and needs of men (usually their husbands).³⁹ Consequently, meat based meals are considered to be associated with masculinity and 'with the demands which men make upon women on the basis of what is conceptualized as a dominant and nutritionally privileged position' (*ibid.* 212). Similarly to this idea that women's purchasing and preparation of red meat are influenced by their husbands' perceived views (as almost empirically supported by studies of intentions to consume beef carried out in the USA), Zero's wives attitudes portray such belief.

If one looks back at Desiderio's references to meat while he is still in New York, one may even consider these in accordance to a most radical and far-reaching analysis of the association between meat and masculinity in Western culture which was put forward in 1990 by Carol J. Adams in *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory*. The basis of her study is the vital association in patriarchal societies between meat eating and male power, since meat eating is understood as a fundamentally masculine activity, in parallel with the consumption of meat which is also understood in a clear

³⁹ Beardsworth and Keil summarise well enough these studies from the 1980s and early 1990s. See Beardsworth 1997, 210-213.

relation to virility and male physical vigor. It is, therefore, due to such symbolical equation of meat eating and male dominance, that men must maintain a privileged access to meat – a gender-related difference which increases when there is meat shortage. In Zero's ranch it is his female harem that provides the food. Curiously, when one looks at nineteenth-century ideals of femininity, they stress the role of women in the domestic sphere, but not in any practical capacity in the kitchen, although the mistress of the house would plan or at least approve the menu. Far from that, changes in female employment affected some aspects of food preparation in the twentieth century. While up until the Second World War, this affected upper- and middle-class kitchens, because poorer women left domestic service for offices and shops, and the mistress of the house had to learn how to cook, the daily round of meal patterns persisted in the nineteenth-century mold, prepressively towards formality in dining (Mason 2004, 55). In Zero's case the reader can see some kind of imposed ritual, more like his rules when it comes to the 'formality' of meals.

On the whole, gender is a factor to bear in mind in many cultures, since foods are frequently set as 'male' and 'female'. If the ability to afford meat, for example, has long served as a badge of success, health, and power, especially for men, Zero's wives prove the opposite. An example of another work on gender, food consumption, and taste which normally gives attention to the way one eats and how one eats as reproducing gendered identities, is Deborah Lupton's *Food, the Body, and the Self* (1996). She puts forward the reflection on the fact that people's consumption practices are frequently underpinned by taken-for-granted suppositions that 'heavy' foods (steak, for example) are masculine and 'light' foods (like salad) are feminine (Lupton 1996, 107). At the same time, such gendered tastes are culturally constructed, they are practiced as 'natural', for they were made part of a 'commonsense' fact and are reproduced through practice (*ibid.* 83). Interestingly enough, I can say this is common in Zero's Ranch, only he is the one imposing this 'commonsense' fact and practice. In Lupton's view, gendered preferences for light or heavy foods work to establish conceptions of the feminine body as light and the masculine body as strong and heavy.

Whilst these women are the food providers for Zero, Tristessa is described by him as eater of souls (*PNE* 91). He had been thoroughly researching her and the yellowing magazines in his study present pages 'which the desert air made crisp and friable, like enormous potato chips' (*ibid.* 105). The desert air tends to be the agent of transformation,

like in this comparison. Such magazines contain all sorts of information on Tristessa, like her favourite food – black raspberry ice-cream – and her favourite drink – Russian tea.⁴⁰ A notable feature of Russian tea culture is the two-step brewing process. Firstly, tea concentrate (Russian: *заварка*) is prepared: a quantity of dry tea sufficient for several persons is brewed in a small teapot. Then, each person pours some quantity of this concentrate into the cup and mixes it with hot water. One can, thus, make tea as strong as one wants, according to one's taste. Sugar, lemon, honey or jam can then be added freely. My reading here meets the same idea portrayed by the subtitle of this part – 'Bread, rather than dreams' – for Tristessa becomes whatever the beholder wants her to be, she grows to meet the spectator's dreams.

Returning to the day Zero finds the 'Witches' lair' (*ibid.* 109), it is coincidentally the same day the store in town closes down, after the women become conscious of the scantier pickings in the garbage – 'no treats of suppurating camembert, now' (*ibid.* 108) – because of the decision of the State of California to secede. In contrast, the glass and steel structure of Tristessa's house, considered by Carter herself 'an image of a certain kind of psychic vulnerability' (Haffenden 1984, 36), resembles a wedding cake: 'She lived in her own wedding cake, had burrowed deeply into its interior. She lived in her own mausoleum' (*PNE* 112). These references to two structures that are believed to be so apart make sense when one considers their celebratory symbolism. The amazing structure of Tristessa's house mirrors her own life, as a continuous performance, and the food found in her kitchen echoes such artificiality. Comparatively to this enormous house, the kitchen is a disappointment to the women from the ranch, not only because of its small size, but probably also due to the lack of the lavish selection of food they expected to find. Placed in the basement, the kitchen functions literally as the base of Tristessa's survival. Indeed, what they find is:

[...] only many tins of a powder that could be converted into a liquid diet by means of the addition of water; glass jar after glass jar of vitamin pills; phial upon phial of drugs to make you sleep, drugs to wake you, drugs to procure hallucinations for you. In a cupboard were a number of packets of noodles and a plastic pail in which beansprouts were growing but these must have been the food the Oriental deaf-mute, now defunct, ate. (*ibid.* 130)

⁴⁰ Researching for American references to 'black raspberry ice-cream', one cannot avoid noticing the complaints about it being only available in the mid-Atlantic states, although two of the three species of black raspberry are native to North America and a third one to Asia.

Also, in her decaying, but still affluent apparatus, Tristessa is compared to food: '[she] tried to conceal her face behind the jeweled bars of fingers as long and thin and pale as sticks of canned asparagus' (*ibid.* 121). A spring vegetable, *Asparagus officinalis* is a flowering perennial plant species, i.e. it lives for more than two years, contrasting with opposed to the shorter lived annuals and biennials plants. Known for its finest texture and the strong yet delicate taste in the tips, it has been served as a delicacy along the last two centuries. The comparison goes beyond Tristessa's fragility, since one may infer here a reference to her safeguarding because of the well-known preserving process of pickling of asparagus, which allows it to be stored for several years.⁴¹ The reader should not forget how it all relates to diverse details in Tristessa's house. One example is The Hall of the Immortals where waxworks of the dead martyrs of Hollywood is supposed, according to Carter, 'to be indicating something quite specific about the nature of illusion and of personality which Hollywood did and does invent' (Haffenden 1984, 36). Therefore, Carter emphasises here how this novel is an attentive and precise 'anatomisation of the way in which cinema perpetuates its illusions' (Gamble 2001, 90).

Similarly to other female characters (like Aunt Margaret in *The Magic Toyshop* and Annabel in *Love*, who speaks as little as she eats) Tristessa's femininity is connoted with famine, extreme leanness, and silence. Nevertheless, in *The Passion of New Eve*, Carter problematises the relationship between gender, food, and power that she manifestly delineates by using Tristessa as the quintessence of femininity, when, in fact, biologically s/he is a man. I cannot but agree with Emma Parker's suggestion that Tristessa's appetite is 'a function of her stereotypical femininity but, like her gender, her appetite is produced culturally, which indicates that the repression of female appetite (branded dangerous and sinful ever since Eve offered Adam the apple) is, by no means natural or inevitable' (Parker 2000, 154). This is to say that from the start the figure of Tristessa is even more ambiguous than Mother's for s/he emerges to personify the 'essence' of femininity (even if in reality a man), though there is no such essence. This is the case, as Carter is at pains to point out in *The Sadeian Woman*, because femininity is constructed by history, ideology, and the other social forces that go on to shape subjectivity (Sceats 2000, 55). In view of that, Tristessa's 'femininity' is static, just like her fixed image in celluloid, where she remains unchanging, similarly to the food they find at her house, unchangeable and

⁴¹ Asparagus became available to the New World around 1850, in the United States.

preserved, and this gives her no credibility as a woman. In fact, Tristessa provided such an image of femininity through one of the strongest makers of credibility, Hollywood. If one considers that in this novel the representations of Leilah, Tristessa, and Eve/lyn are caught up in the process of conceptualising the self, their diet also echoes this conceptualisation.

Here one cannot but refer the questions of choice, autonomy, and modernity, and a good example of Western thought can be the well-known nineteenth-century peasant family meal portrayed by Van Gogh in the painting *The Potato Eaters* (figure 9).



Figure 9 – Vincent Van Gogh, *The Potato Eaters* (*De Aardappeleters*), April 1885.

Oil on canvas, 82 cm (32.3 in) x 114 cm (44.9 in).

Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam.

(<<http://www.vangoghmuseum.nl/vgm/popup.jsp?page=4306>>)

There is only a plate of boiled potatoes on the table and while one figure is pouring tea the others are helping themselves to a meal of this solitary food. It is explicit here how the notion of food choice makes problematic the experiences of Van Gogh's *Potato Eaters*. Since choice and the freedom to choose have become part of the normative category of food, not having choice is regarded as a situation in need of correction (already pointed out in the previous chapter). Thus, choice becomes a central element of discourses of the

human sciences (particularly anthropology, sociology, and psychology) which have made food choice the target as well as the effect of their discourses. Moreover, 'food choice becomes integral to health, satisfaction and cultural diversity, while the lack of choice becomes biologically precarious and culturally impoverishing' (Coveney 2006, 93). Even though choice is not based on pleasure but on rational considerations, there is also a modern autonomy.⁴² This may be related to Foucault's version of autonomy that was not supported by tradition or reason, but one based on a *style* of existence – meaning the idea of a work of the self on the self, aesthetics of the self (Veyne 1993, 7).

Indeed, Foucault's work on the historical specificity of the modern subject makes one consider autonomy and choice in more or less counter-intuitive ways, given that one takes these for granted in everyday life. Indeed, after Foucault, having choices, making choices, and not being able to make the right choice are things that stem from a particular understanding of freedom which, itself, was central to the arrival of a particular figure of Modern Individual, making the problem of choice considerable to the human sciences, especially in the area of food and nutrition. As mentioned above, in the nineteenth century, a discourse of nutrition shaped up around a particular kind of food choice supported by expertise and the self-regulation of diet (Coveney 2006, 93). In relation to twentieth-century discourses, the ones about the public's health, for instance, focused more specifically on the behaviours of individuals, and, consequently, food choice took on a new importance. Here is a good example: whereas the habits of the whole population required larger study through discourses on the diseases of 'lifestyle' and perceived problems of wealth and increased food choice, post-war developments in nutrition were made possible by discourses stressing austerity and moderation in what was then believed to be the centre of abundance (*ibid.* 160).

Returning to *The Passion of New Eve*, the idea of consuming the other is given by Eve/lyn when s/he is held down denuded for Tristessa to bed her/him and feels 'exhibited to them all like meat' (*PNE* 137). This comparison places her/him as a commodity, as a product that is displayed for consumption. After escaping and crashing the helicopter in the desert, Eve/lyn believes in a soon to come death and, suddenly, facing the perspective

⁴² The belief that food has been devalued now that consumers and food manufacturers are more interested in the health consequences of food than in the pleasure of eating, comes from the 1980s, when nutrition came under attack from those who believed it had encouraged a 'nutri-centred' food supply and a medicalisation of a nation's diet, as was the case of Australia (Coveney 2006, 105).

of a short lifetime similar to Tristessa's, starts to visualise her/his limbs already dusted with sand, like a golden powder and s/he thought 'how delicious I look! I look like a gingerbread woman. Eat me. Consume me' (*ibid.* 146). S/he feels like the product of technology in a way that s/he becomes the creation of a new order, led by Mother, and, simultaneously, the temptation and the tempter – 'I [...] was in myself the fruit of the tree of knowledge; knowledge had made me, I is a man-made masterpiece of skin and bone, the technological Eve in person' (*ibidem*). Nevertheless, she was not a man-made masterpiece in soul. I believe this idea to be implicit in Eve/lyn's thought that the flesh is a function of enchantment and it 'uncreates the world' (*ibid.* 148). The body, indeed, becomes a metaphor and Tristessa rummages in 'a forgotten word-hoard of metaphor' for a simple smell coming from Eve's intimacy, only to conclude that 'speech evades language' (*ibidem*). In terms of identity, the erotic clock, indeed, halts all clocks; thus the need to scream 'Eat me. Consume me, annihilate me' (*ibidem*). Eve/lyn's true identity was revealed through such sexual consumption. On the one hand, Eve/lyn is a creation, like Tristessa, even if on the opposite side of the spectrum body/soul/dreams. On the other hand, both Tristessa and Eve/lyn are at the same time woman and man, and so, in relation to each other they mutually become consumer and consumed. This is shown when they 'sucked at the water bottle of each other's mouth for there was nothing else to drink' (*ibid.* 149) and such reciprocity dislocates domination in order to produce a form of nourishment that is not, as formerly assumed, an intention upon the principle of negation of the self. By representing sexuality and the relationship between eating and power as such, Carter confirms a new development in terms of mutuality displacing domination (Parker 2000, 155).

In a place like America, religion is so present that it is no surprise how it reflects here in an army of teenager soldiers that intend to restore law and order in the 'godless state of California' (*PNE* 157). Being a religious organization, the prayers are done at sun rise, and only after comes the feeding of the body. Since they consider Eve/lyn to have been wronged by a pervert (Tristessa) they offer her/him 'hot coffee from a thermos flask' (*ibidem*), but s/he refuses to drink and spits it. They carry paraffin stoves and pans to cook and they have plenty to eat. Eve/lyn feels comfortable with this food; the idea of everyday she associates to the smell of frying bacon and the amount of food these *souldiers* offer her is soothing and, I think, provides a kind of peaceful sensation. Even when she cried Tristessa's death, the 'little boys were abashed' and, as expected from them at the sight of

a weeping woman, they bring her/him bars of chocolate to console her/him. Their diet reveals an intense American flavour when one thinks of the Colonel, for instance, who will not drink tea or coffee, only Coca-Cola (*ibid.* 160). The preference for its sweet flavour may have sprung from his house-keeper who had fed him with candy to distract him from the needles when being tattooed, as mentioned at the beginning of this part.

While on the run again, Eve/lyn leaves the 'arid glamour of sterility' to find her/himself 'amid green, rolling country where groves of citrus were coming into odorous blossom, the lovely land where the lemon tree grows' (*ibid.* 165; my emphasis). The senses all appear to feel the change. Here it gives the impression of a journey, as Desiderio went on one in *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman*, but this is where the similarities seem to end. In *The Passion of New Eve* the self discovery journey turns Eve/lyn into 'the interrupted continuum' (*ibid.* 167) at the same time as s/he observes a revolution from 'systems which operated within a self-perpetuating reality' (*ibidem*). S/he comes to this point of a civil war within a civil war when witnessing 'an honest red-neck paterfamilias [...] butcher his entire family and leave his pets to starve' with an untouched sparse breakfast – 'just a packet of cornflakes, a can of dried milk' (*ibid.* 166). An uneaten breakfast filled Eve/lyn with a 'raging curiosity to see the end of the world' (*ibid.* 167) when s/he acknowledge to be in the 'beginning of the beginning' (*ibid.* 166).

The image of Eve/lyn in a Spanish-style bowling alley-cum-bar-cum-restaurant preparing a meal on stoves retrieved from a looted supermarket and then sharing 'chilli con carne' with Lilith (aka Leilath) and a group of uniformless soldiery ('some black, some brown, some yellow, some white, most young, some very young' (*ibid.* 170)) conveys the idea that history did overtake myth – 'Historicity rendered myth unnecessary' (*ibid.* 173).⁴³ However, like Tristessa (described by Lilith as having been abandoned on that great continent like 'a star in space, an atomised, fragmented existence' (*ibidem*)), Eve/lyn feels alone in California, a stranger ('I am a British citizen. I do not understand

⁴³ It is natural that the reference to 'chilli con carne' is done in relation to a Spanish-style restaurant, since the name of the dish derives from the Spanish *chile con carne* (chilli pepper with meat). However, 'chilli con carne' is a spicy stew and, thus, it brings to mind the idea of a combination of ingredients which perfectly matches the combination of the various origins we find in the soldiery described by Eve/lyn. It does not mean those soldiers are not combined in what can be described as a very hot situation of pungency as special as that of a chilli pepper. The traditional versions of 'chilli con carne' are made, essentially, from chilli peppers, garlic, onions, and cumin, along with chopped or ground beef. Even if beans and tomatoes are usually included, there are both geographic and personal variations which may involve different types of meat along with a variety of other ingredients. Curiously, the variant recipes provoke disputes among enthusiastic admirers.

the political situation. There is a war on. And my heart is broken, my heart is broken' (*ibid.* 175)). Then one witnesses her/his rebirth after a small breakfast of coffee and sandwiches (*ibid.* 179) when s/he is ingested and expelled. Lilith awaits her and offers to share a chocolate bar, an energizer. Eve/lyn is given 'a pack of iron rations and a can to collect water in' (*ibid.* 188). With Mother destroyed as a political force, there is the suggestion that power based on domination, whether implemented by women or men, 'leads a vicious circle' (Parker 2000, 152), and Eve/lyn manages to escape both. This is a new Eve, as suggested by the title of the novel, and it shows a concern of Carter to construct new images of femininity – 'a process that involves not only a revision of the Christian myth of creation, but also a reappraisal of the attitudes toward female consumption generated by that myth' (*ibid.* 154). In *The Sadeian Woman*, Carter did consider all myths 'censolatory nonsenses' (*SW* 5), including the feminist mother-goddess myths. Nevertheless, it is still during the 1970s, in *The Bloody Chamber* (1979), that she ensues to offer the reader a different comfort. Carter, as a post-modernist, constructs other myths, even more subversive, to fight traditional myths about the nature of woman, 'and she does so through the folk tale form, which is about as close to myth as you can get' (Atwood 1994, 122).

Also signified by the novel's title, therefore, is Carter's purpose of deconstructing dualistic thought, since I believe it to be an aim that permeates this phase in her private and development as a writer. In view of that, Carter progresses towards a more complex type of consumption than she had previously represented, 'one that exceeds simple binarisms' (Parker 2000, 155); I agree with Parker's conclusion on this matter, since Eve/lyn is a transsexual, and Tristessa is a transvestite with a favourable outcome when performing femininity.⁴⁴ The novel ends on a note of regeneration and possibility, while Eve/lyn sets sail across the sea to an Irigarayan 'elsewhere,' the (utopian) place Irigaray envisages existing beyond the parameters of masculine discourse. Actually, the return Eve/lyn makes to the womb is similar to Joseph's in *Several Perceptions* and Desiderio's in *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman*; even this idea in *The Passion of New Eve* is taken through several stages. In addition, similarly to Desiderio, Eve/lyn does not

⁴⁴ Tristessa's successful performance is what allows her to be capable of producing herself as a woman, if one considers Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity. When one hears about Mother's explanation that Tristessa was already 'too much of a woman' (*PNE* 173) to be given a sex change and Evelyn's observation on how a real woman could never have been so much a woman as Tristessa was (*ibid.* 129), one becomes aware of Carter's gesture towards the idea that identity has no biological property, intrinsic or indispensable, that serves to define it.

get an answer (not even when s/he returns to the womb), but Eve/lyn, by giving birth to herself ('Even symbolically, it seems, the doubly unappeasable hunger of being human and female cannot be satisfied by external agency' (Sceats 2000, 57)), comes across a clarification that sustains the possibility of fluidity and change, which is quite different from Desiderio's final analysis.

I have to disagree with Sceats when she points out *The Passion of New Eve* as having little about eating (*ibid.* 55). If we look at Eve/lyn's path we become aware of Carter's concerns with the individual's nutritional socialization as well as with his/her identity acknowledgement. This is implicit, I believe, when the central character progresses in a Western culture surrounded by an ever-widening multiplicity of agencies that do play a role in her/his socialization (involving advertisers, the mass media in general, different professional groups, state institutions, and ideological or religious movements). In this way, Eve/lyn goes on to recognise some preparation techniques, fitting combinations of food items in diverse environments, and the principles which govern where and when to eat, and with whom. Here, once again, I am thinking in terms of a gastro-criticism approach which can provide some illuminating insights along with scientific premises, proving its challenge to the boundaries of disciplines like sociology and nutrition. Therefore, this socialization can also be read from the point in which it entails the adjustment of the individual, not only to the food categorization system of his or her own culture, but of another culture. This is my suggestion when reading the transformation from the British Evelyn to the American Eve.

Bearing in mind such an idea, it makes sense to return to the five points of a range of general categories which triggers the food classification schemes of most cultures, published a decade before *The Passion of New Eve* in *The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* (1967). These categories were described by Derrick Brian Jelliffe, noted for his cross-culture studies in nutrition, in the following manner: *cultural superfoods* (a concept introduced by him which comprises foods with acknowledged significance, meaning the main staples of the society with an interrelationship with religion, mythology and history (Jelliffe 1967, 279-280)); *prestige foods* (these are consumed only in special occasions or by high-status groups, since they are characterised by their scarcity and high price (*ibid.* 279-281)); *body-image foods* (considered to directly promote health and bodily well-being to maintain the balance in the body, as well as illness (*ibid.* 280-281)); *sympathetic magic foods* (which are believed to have desirable properties imparted to those who eat them

(*ibidem*)); and, lastly, *physiologic group foods* (which are restricted to specific categories of individuals defined in terms of gender, age, and physiological conditions (*ibidem*)).

Although the purpose of food categorisation is frequently a descriptive one, as opposed to the nutritionist and dietitian preference for prescriptive categories, this one suits my purpose.⁴⁵ Either *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* or *The Passion of New Eve* can be read as presenting references to Jelliffe's categorisation, for instance. For instance, I am mentioning the *prestige foods*, which are clearly present in *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* through the Count's sumptuous breakfast barely shared with Desiderio and Lafleur, characterising his implicit social and ideological distance from these other two, and the couple of most relevant lunches that Desiderio described – the first one, between the Ambassador and the Minister, an elite in a city where food was becoming scarce, and the other one, when he was invited to join Dr Hoffman and Albertina in a disenchanting meal.⁴⁶ Eve/lyn, in *The Passion of New Eve*, feels this distinction of prestige foods when referring to Zero's diet in comparison to his wives', even if it is possible to read their imposed diet in terms of physiologic group foods. Another example is the diet Mother forces on Eve/lyn, which clearly fits the category of *body-image foods*.

With the overcoming of these conventions and categories, the satisfaction of the body's nutritional requirements is given its shape as a complex social activity, in opposition to a simple 'set of internally driven behavioural responses to the need for nutrients' (Beardsworth 1997, 55). In view of such an assumption, this is where it is significant to recall how the sociological phenomenon of *appetite*, according to Mennell (Mennell 1996, 20-21), is a result of the physiological and psychological phenomenon of hunger. Still, following Beardsworth and Keil's line of thought, 'appetite, preferences and food symbolism are not necessarily static entities, fixed once and for all in the mind of the individual by the socialization process' (Beardsworth 1997, 56). It is this idea that I consider pertinent when reading Desiderio and Eve/lyn's experiences and transformations,

⁴⁵ Both these needs had already been addressed in 1943 by Herbert Passim and John Bennett in "Social Process and Dietary Change" which is still a useful study; but for a discussion of several other food classification schemes, see Paul Fieldhouse 1986, 45-54.

⁴⁶ According to Jelliffe, the characteristics of *prestige foods* presented in his table IV are the following:

1. Usually protein (often animal)
2. Difficult to obtain and/or prepare (expensive; rare; wild; imported)
3. Socio-historical association with dominant group (Jelliffe 1967, 280).

or just acknowledgement, of their socially formulated appetites, which may even change the meanings which they had attached to particular food items or to the whole process of eating – as in what is termed an individual's 'nutritional career' and the sporadic episodes of 'resocialization in respect of food choices, practices and beliefs' that these may undergo (*ibidem*).

Still, one cannot forget that even if food systems also need the parameters set by economic, climatic, and ecological realities to maintain its continuity in the long term, these parameters do provide frequently enormous scope for one to make use of the multilayered symbolic potential of food for a large variety of expressive and cultural purposes. An example dealt with in this chapter is the meat prohibitions of various types, which undoubtedly carry potent symbolic weight. Because these prohibitions may be loaded with meanings (either explicit or implicit), any attempt to consider the charges of symbolic and practical issues becomes an intricate matter, mostly due to both these readings being inexorably intertwined with each other, as concluded by Beardsworth and Keil (*ibid.* 208). All this is based on the premise that one of the features in the origin and persistence of foodways directly relates to the way they frequently represent a key expression of identity as individuals and, simultaneously, in line with a broader ethnic, class or religious grouping (Atkins 2001, 273). Food does play a dynamic role in the way people think of themselves and others (Ohnuki-Tierney 1993, 3).

Over all, one can state that for being profoundly rooted in childhood, tradition, and group membership, 'the culinary dictates of identity' are hard to change (Belasco 2008, 8). This happens because such considerations tend to raise questions like 'How do I eat it?', 'Should I like it?', 'Is this *authentic*?', and 'Is this what people like me to eat?'. Thus, 'at the identity point, food choices are expressed through rituals, etiquette, symbols, and arts' (*ibidem*). For this reason, when studying food and identity, one looks simultaneously at what, where, and how people eat and *don't eat*, seeing that one studies the way they represent, play with, and think about their food.⁴⁷ I believe both *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* and *The Passion of New Eve* have been read in such a way in this study.

The questions presented above are not as clear as they may seem, since it is a mobile, multicultural world which by itself creates difficulties for being products (these

⁴⁷ For further reading on the relation between food and identity, read Chapters 2 and 3 from Belasco ("Identity: are we what we eat?" and "The drama of food: divided identities").

questions) of the uncertain nature of identity. More precisely, who are 'we' when one asks 'we are what we eat'? And how many persons does it comprise? In what context? These are the questions, for me, that Carter implicitly poses when she describes Japanese food ways, which in fact show that my reading of those two novels (as examples of the construction of an identity) comes together on this perception. Also, how does one classify a group's identity – by bioregion, by foodshed, by arbitrary boundaries from an inaccurate two hundred years map drawn by imperial politicians? Do these doubts spread to the phrase 'what we eat', as from the different foods we eat which do signify deep identity and which simply fill us up?⁴⁸ According to Belasco, not everything one eats has a lot of meaning, similar to what culinarians like to transmit when they draw deep distinctions between human 'dining', (full of deep cultural significance), and animal 'feeding' (a purely biological act) – 'Sometimes we just "feed"' (*ibid.* 32). Belasco also questions the troublesome identity verb 'are': 'What is identity anyway? Can we even be sure of our own personality or "character," much less the defining qualities of broader entities such as "neighborhood," "region," or "nation"? What about those of us who come from several different ethnic or racial backgrounds?' (*ibidem*).⁴⁹ This is a quite relevant perspective when considering both Desiderio's racial background and Eve/lyn's nationality and gender.

An area that I believe would be a proper way of studying the diversity of foodways, and which still receives scarce attention from scholars, is precisely the geographies of food preparation, cooking, recipes, meals, and diet. Not that there are not several trendy books claiming to give insights into regional specialties, mainly concerning the geographies of recipes, but these end up being generally very selective in content and discursive in intent. On the other hand, major contributions to the understanding of food in

⁴⁸ In reality, the concept of identity had been questioned on several grounds, being one of them that it risks 'essentialising notions such as gender, race, ethnicity and nationality' (Caplan 1997, 14). Pat Caplan's counter-argument concerns the 'politics of location' which claims that such concepts do 'make a difference' and have important political implications, as well. Moreover, as Stuart Hall refers, even if such concepts may have been deconstructed, they have not been substituted: 'The line which cancels them, paradoxically, permits them to go on being read', since without these concepts certain questions cannot be thought at all' (Hall 1995, 1-2).

⁴⁹ Some studies of adoptees caught between two or more different national-cultural markers show that a second generation of these adoptees when confronted with their furthest identity may feel even more alienated. An example is the study over Korean-American adoptees that concludes the following: 'Food as an access point creates an awareness of the estranged position adoptees find themselves in and the incompleteness of their cultural memory. Instead of feeding a hunger [for identity], it exposes a void' (Berquist 2006, 150). Therefore, occasionally people may feel most 'complete', most like 'themselves', with what is known as neutral food.

particular settings have been made in the last two decades by folklorists and ethnographers, whose work is usually pointed out as still lacking broader social theory.⁵⁰ In both *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* and *The Passion of New Eve* (which were published in this period of Carter's life, so clearly influenced by her experience in Japan and her visits to the United States), there are references to foodways that I think may be studied bearing in mind food-place associations. Accordingly, one can use recognized variations of such associations, like the following three: highly specialized production regions; foods that may have originated with a traditional recipe in a particular place, but which, over time, have become generic food products (like Coca-Cola), in a similar way to dishes thought to be representative of location-specific cuisine, and which actually developed elsewhere (a well-known example is *chop suey*, a supposedly 'Chinese' meal, in fact developed in America); and, foods that have maintained strong links with particular regions concerning production, quality control, and identity. This is the kind of culinary hybridity that is most likely to expand further (Atkins 2001, 277-278). When one studies Eve/lyn's route through the different North-American communities, one cannot forget that there has been a tradition in American geography of considering landscapes, artifacts, and human behaviours (including food habits) as products of regionalized 'cultures' (*ibid.* 279).⁵¹

⁵⁰ Since there are several examples of how such place-specific research may be useful, for instance in the description of how new dishes or food cultural complexes may arise, see Atkins and Bowles 2001, 275.

⁵¹ Even if such studies may be read today as uncritical, for engaging on a descriptive rather than social process, they are based on detailed fieldwork and a thorough knowledge of a region was essential, as defended by Atkins and Bowles (Atkins 2001, 279).

Perceiving Pleasures and Appetites in *The Bloody Chamber*.

'Surprise me for dessert with every ice-cream in the ice box'

Along with Carter's explicit attentiveness to role-breaking and role-remaking from her first published work, her studies of gender crossovers regarding passivity and aggression are predominantly strong in the two books published in 1979: *The Sadeian Woman* and *The Bloody Chamber*. By supposing that these two books represent a theoretical and a fictional approach to the problem of the 'nature' of women and men, one has to agree with Margaret Atwood when she states: 'in her [Carter's] work such divisions are less useful than in the work of others, since she blends myth-making into her theory and theorising into her myth' (Atwood 1994, 117). In *The Bloody Chamber*, the stories indicate a shift from a feminism that focuses on women's pain, to a politics that stresses female pleasure – 'In making this shift, Carter eschews simple role reversal to create a synthesis between binarisms: masculine and feminine, predator and prey, consumer and consumed' (Parker 2000, 155). I selected *The Bloody Chamber*, and not both books, because I believe that this collection of revised traditional fairy tales may already be read as a 'writing against' de Sade, a talking-back to him, and the references to food evidence her position, in the late 1970s, better.⁵²

One should not forget that Carter's fantasies persistently hold an anchoring in the actual, eschewing escapism and, for that reason, they 'intimate that even though political events are not necessarily fantasies, fantasy is de facto a form of politics' (Cavallaro 2011,

⁵² Atwood's basis to support such an idea comes from the assumption that in *The Bloody Chamber* Carter also looks for 'ways in which the tiger and the lamb, or the tiger and lamb parts of the psyche, can reach some sort of accommodation' (Atwood 1994, 120). Thus, Carter wrote back to de Sade's acknowledgement that unequals cannot be mutually pleasurable, because he considered pleasure to belong to the eater, and not to the eaten.

16). Carter emphasises her take on the political aspect of the social fictions already in the 1960s:

[The] investigation of the social fictions that regulate our lives – what Blake called the ‘mind forg’d manacles’ – is what I’ve concerned myself with consciously since that time [1960s]. [...] This is also the product of an absolute and *committed materialism* – i.e., that *this* world is all that there is, and in order to question the nature of reality one must move from a strongly grounded base in what constitutes material reality. (“Notes” 75)⁵³

The fairy tale tradition makes available what Carter needs, i.e. a strong reference point as the quintessential blend of reality and fantasy (Cavallaro 2011 17). This makes all sense when one thinks of how Carter defines ‘fairy tales’ as ‘stories from the oral tradition, [which] are all of them the most vital connection we have with the imagination of the ordinary men and women whose labour created our world’ (Carter 1990, ix). Even though fairy tales transmit history, sociology and psychology, these are unofficial, according to Carter. Also, the efforts of the people mentioned by her continue over the centuries, but their identities are no more preserved in historiography than the names of those ‘who first invented meatballs’ (*ibid.* x), as already pointed out in the previous chapter.

In *The Bloody Chamber*, Carter argues that if women are to attain an independent existence, there is the need for a certain amount of tigerishness, ‘if they are to avoid – at the extreme end of passivity – becoming meat’ (Atwood 1994, 121). One way of looking at this collection of stories is to read into its categories of meat-eater, given that the book is arranged in the following manner: three cat family stories at the beginning – “The Bloody Chamber”, “The Courtship of Mr Lyon”, and “The Tiger’s Bride” – followed by a kind of comic coda – “Puss-in-Boots” – then, three stories presenting ambiguous supernatural creatures – “The Erl-King”, “The Snow-Child”, and “The Lady of the House of Love” – and, at the end, three wolf family stories – “The Werewolf”, “The Company of Wolves”, and “Wolf-Alice”.

⁵³ In relation to the way in which Carter comes to terms with Blake, it is obvious here that, on the one hand, she is very Blakean by establishing this relation between the social fictions that regulate one’s lives and the ‘mind forg’d manacles’, and, on the other hand, she is the opposite, by declaring herself to be completely committed to materialism. Further ahead this is affirmed by Atwood about Carter’s possible answer to the famous ‘Did He who made the lamb make thee?’, which would be *yes*. Indeed, ‘without Contraries is no progression. Attraction and Repulsion, Reason and Energy, Love and Hate, are necessary to Human existence’ (*Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1793) plate 3, in Erdman (ed.), 34).

As a revision of the Bluebeard narrative, the first story, which is also the title of the collection, gives the reader two carnivores and two herbivores, each one composed of a male and a female (*ibid.* 122).⁵⁴ In this reworking, the Marquis typifies the cannibalistic appetite of previous male protagonists in Carter's writings. The reader witnesses a 'tenderness' which actually contradicts his efforts to 'tenderise' his bride, silencing her in a false secure world (Parker 2000, 155). Right from the time when he offers her the wedding dress that he chose, the Marquis' cannibalistic appetites are implied by the bride's feeling that she was getting 'a Christmas gift of crystallised fruit' (*BC* 7). Such a comparison is decisive to her acceptance of his proposal, since she sees it as a possibility to 'banish the spectre of poverty from its habitual place at our [their] meagre table' (*ibidem*). Whereas the reference to Christmas usually implies an ephemeral blissful period, the image of a gift of crystallised fruit involves the notion of something that has become fixed and definite in form. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that it turns into a way of bridging the deficiency in her life, in terms of both quality and quantity ('meagre table'). Also the next references to food (the 'box of marrons glacés' (*ibid.* 8) which he habitually offers her ('sticky liqueur chocolates' (*ibid.* 16) the maid brings her when rang for, or the 'silver bucket of iced champagne' served to them in the interval of *Tristan* (*ibid.* 10)) indicate his high economical status always in comparison to her low economical condition – 'in the salon of the princess where I'd first met him, among the tea-cups and the little cakes, I, the orphan, hired out of charity to give them their digestive of music' (*ibid.* 13).

During the honeymoon, which the Marquis considers not to be a pressing commitment, the dinner they share before his departure to the United States is worth a listing. The main course is described as 'a Mexican dish of pheasant with hazelnuts and chocolate' (*ibid.* 18); a curious twist of words, and it could have been *a dish of Mexican pheasant*, one of the most common birds known as Chachalaca named after the sound they produce, and in Mexico they are a delicacy food, which would certainly match the rest of the meal described. Being the use of Hazelnuts (extensively utilized in confectionery and also in combination with chocolate) not so usual in game dishes, chocolate, on the other hand, gets to be considered a striking ingredient when combined with meat. As it is well-known, chocolate is a raw or processed food produced from the seed of the tropical *Theobroma cacao* tree, which is native to Mexico, Central, and South America, and has been cultivated for at least three millennia in that region. Thus, cocoa mass was used

⁵⁴ "The Bloody Chamber" made its début precisely in *The Bloody Chamber*.

originally in Mesoamerica both as a beverage and as an ingredient in foods, making the combination with pheasant in the dish served at the Marquis' dinner almost a national North American dish!⁵⁵ The balance of a well structured meal comes with the 'salad', the 'white voluptuous cheese', and a 'sorbet of muscat grapes and Asti spumante' for dessert (*ibid.* 19). The gastronomic aspect of the meal seems to have been carefully planned, since the dishes complement each other, a balance and harmony that is achieved by avoiding repetitious colour, flavour, texture, or ingredients (even when using the Italian Asti spumante and the muscat grapes, from which it is made). Nevertheless, the reader cannot overlook the use of the adjective 'voluptuous' for cheese. Its use anticipates sensual pleasure, since it may give, characterise, or suggest ample, unrestrained pleasure to the senses.

The reference to beverages, like the very prestigious and highly regarded French Champagne Krug, is associated to its celebratory feeling, as evidenced by the choice of words related to commemoration: 'A celebration of Krug exploded festively' (*ibidem*; my emphasis). At the simplest level, beverages are used to define the nature of the occasion, and equally to many Western cultures, champagne is synonymous with celebration and the choice of this most expensive champagne may be read up on its distinctiveness concerning taste and smell. As for the first sense, it is most certainly recognised because of the house's policy of complete barrel fermentation (suppressing the secondary fermentation, melolactic, which converts the tart-tasting malic acid, naturally present in grape must, to softer-tasting lactic acid) and much extended lees aging. Therefore, such fermentation processes make Krug wines usually display a raciness and richness in palate, and a certain oakiness, along with a combination of disgorgement freshness and oxidative maturity, in what concerns smell. The reference to acrid black coffee perfects Krug's almost invariable dryness. That strong and sharp brewed beverage matches the champagne when served in the finest tableware: 'acrid black coffee in precious little cups so fine it shadowed the

⁵⁵ The description of the main course as 'a Mexican dish of pheasant with hazelnuts and chocolate' (*BC* 18) also brings to mind the traditional use of *mole*. It is a name given to any of various spicy sauces of Mexican origin. Usually this sauce is prepared by pounding various sweet and hot chillies. Onion, tomatoes, garlic nuts (mainly almonds), seeds (aniseed and sesame seeds), cinnamon, cloves, and coriander are the base of *mole*. The unsweetened dark chocolate which is added gives the final touch to the sauce which then coats meat or poultry (Hill 2007, 748). In this case it is pheasant that is served at the marquis dinner during his honeymoon. Also interesting is to know how predictable a menu in Mexican fiestas is: 'in Mexican cuisine. Feast food is *mole*, and likewise having mole makes eaters feel that they are celebrating something' (Adapon 2008, 89). The harmonious period of a honeymoon is also seen as the early celebration of a relationship.

birds with which they were painted' (*BC* 19). Even the birds preciousness is overshadowed by the strong beverage, and the newly wedded seems to be feeling eclipsed by her husband.

The other two mentioned beverages are presented in a setting that portrays the feeling I just described: 'I had cointreau, he [the Marquis] had cognac in the library, with the purple velvet curtains drawn against the night, where he took me to perch on his knee in a leather armchair beside the flickering log fire' (*ibidem*). In general, it is common to make some distinction between 'masculine' and 'feminine' beverages – even where no other differentiation is found. I consider the versatility of the beverage imbibed by the narrator envisages this woman's adaptability and resourcefulness, since Cointreau is usually used as an aperitif, but occasionally as a digestive, and it is considered to be either a triple sec or a unique category of liqueur. In what concerns the Cognac, chosen by the Marquis, it is a unique spirit in that is doubly distilled. Also, regarding the role of drinking places, they are usually in a special environment, since these are believed to represent a separate sphere of existence, a discrete social world with its own laws, customs and values. Furthermore, the primary function of drinking-places, in almost all cultures, appears to be the facilitation of social relations and bonding, and I think this perspective applies to private places which are chosen or somehow favour the action of drinking. Drinking, accordingly, 'constructs' the social relationship between the drinkers, often dictating the type of interaction proper to the occasion.

Because drinking is in effect a social act, it is subject to a variety of rules and norms concerning who may drink what, when, where, and with whom. From an ethnographic perspective, it has been considered that in cultures with different types of alcoholic beverages available, these are classified in terms of their social meaning, and such a classification is used to define the social world. Consequently, there are few, if any, alcoholic beverages termed 'socially neutral', since 'every drink is loaded with symbolic meaning, every drink conveys a message' (*Social and Cultural Aspects of Drinking* 1998, 31). Therefore, alcohol, in general terms, is studied as a symbolic vehicle for 'identifying, describing, constructing and manipulating cultural systems, values, interpersonal relationships, behavioural norms and expectations' (*ibidem*).⁵⁶ This is why I believe that in

⁵⁶ Similarly to other areas, there is still a need for further research on the symbolic meanings of different types of alcoholic drinks, since information in this area is scattered, disjointed and incomplete, and as a rule such information is buried in research focused on other issues. This need had already been underlined by the end of the twentieth century:

“The Bloody Chamber”, as we witnessed in the Count’s breakfast (*The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman*), a choice of beverage is seldom a matter of personal taste. Both characters, the Count and now the Marquis, validate the fact that the choice of a beverage is also a considerable indicator of social status and, in general terms, imported or ‘foreign’ beverages have a higher status than ‘local’ ones. Similarly, by sharing their choice of beverage with others (with Desiderio and Lafleur in the Count’s breakfast and here with the Marquis’ bride) a statement of affiliation, a declaration of membership in a particular group, class, or nation and its associated values, attitudes and beliefs may also be implied. Thus, the symbolism of drinking is based on how it is a medium for ‘constructing the world’, in the same way to a ritual.⁵⁷

The newly-wedded narrator is not used to some of the rituals implied in the action of eating, which is clear when she dismisses the housekeeper solicitations for her to choose a late luncheon from a lengthy menu, in a solemn visitation, and afterwards acknowledges that one of her main functions as *châtelaine* is precisely ‘to provide work for the staff’ (BC 23). She does look forward ‘nervously to the solitary meal’ and when aware of the need to tell the housekeeper what she will like to have prepared, she cannot avoid confessing that her ‘imagination, still that of a schoolgirl, ran riot’. Her list reflects a defiance and free-will proper of a newly-empowered but clueless young lady: ‘A fowl in cream – or should I anticipate Christmas with a varnished turkey? No; I have decided. Avocado and shrimp, lots of it, followed by no entrée at all. But surprise me for dessert with every ice-cream in the ice box’ (*ibidem*). She replaces the meat course by seafood, neglects the expected entrée, and asks for plenty of a sweet dessert. The fact that she had had sorbet while dining with the Marquis and now chooses ice cream is an interesting change, for whereas ice cream is based on dairy products with air copiously whipped in, sorbet has neither, which makes it a dense and extremely flavorful product (since it may also contain alcohol, as the Asti spumante) with a softer texture. Her choices perceptibly

Again, there has been no significant cross-cultural study of this phenomenon, beyond the occasional two-country comparison. The anthropological bias towards ‘traditional’ societies or small communities is also evident, with very little material on the complex symbolic meanings and functions of alcoholic drinks in modern, mainstream Western cultures – a fascinating field of enquiry, with wide-ranging implications for policy and education, which deserves further exploration. (*Social and Cultural Aspects of Drinking* 1998, 35)

⁵⁷ To the question why alcohol is the choice for such rituals, the answer seems to lie in the ‘affinity between alcohol and ritual: alcohol is an integral element of rites of passage because drinking ‘performs’ the symbolic, psychological and social functions of these rituals’ (*Social and Cultural Aspects of Drinking* 1998, 45).

shocked the most traditional housekeeper – ‘Such tastes!’ (*ibidem*) – who had previously ordered a maid to serve the solitary bridal ‘delicious’ coffee and croissants and freshly squeezed ‘aromatic juice from an orange into a chilled goblet’ (*ibid.* 22). The emphasis on the senses is obvious: ‘delicious’, ‘aromatic’, and ‘chilled’. The narrator, however, is celebrating her new personal as well as social status, not by imbibing champagne, but by lighting up the castle to make it shine like a ‘seaborne birthday cake’ (*ibid.* 24). At first a comparison to a wedding cake would seem even more appropriate, but the bridal means to celebrate the castle’s longevity and thus establish an interaction; such interaction becomes yet more personal when she compares its lighting to that of the café in the Gare du Nord, a quick stop to a close-by departure.

Still, the Marquis’ cannibalistic desires are evident from right after the marriage, when she perceives the way he studies her: ‘with the assessing eye of a connoisseur inspecting horseflesh, or even of a housewife in the market, inspecting cuts on the slab’ (*ibid.* 11). Again, when consummating their marriage, he strips her as an artichoke – ‘gourmand that he was, as if he were stripping the leaves off an Artichoke – but do not imagine much finesse about it; this artichoke was no particular treat for the diner [...]. He approached his familiar treat with a weary appetite’ (*ibid.* 15) – leaving her ‘bare as a lamb chop’ (*ibidem*) even if he remained clothed. The allusion to the stripping of an artichoke is already representative of their future, considering that it is a Mediterranean thistle-like plant widely cultivated for its large immature flower head, known for its edible fleshy leaves and heart, which usually has to be cooked before eaten. Furthermore, because of its designation in English, it is natural to have been warned to be cautious due to the sharp-tipped bracts toward the innermost part of this vegetable, which in truth has nothing to do with choking.⁵⁸ In addition, apart from the fact that the eating of the artichoke is usually considered sensual, by stripping his fiancé like he would strip the

⁵⁸ According to *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, originally there was no relation between the vegetable and the actual idea of choking:

Our word goes back to an Arabic word for the same plant, *al-harṣuf*. Along with many other Arabic words, it passed into Spanish during the Middle Ages, when Muslims ruled much of Spain. The Old Spanish word *alcarchofa* was variously modified as it passed through Italian, a northern dialect form being *articiocco*, the source of the English word. It was further modified in English, where a potpourri of spellings and explanations are found since its appearance early in the 16th century. For example, people who did not know the long history of the word explained it by the notion that the flower had a “choke,” that is, something that chokes, in its “heart.”

leaves off an Artichoke, the Marquis can be seen as moderating her own mortality, since the artichoke also comes to be a symbol of immortality in Greek mythology. Moreover, before such a reference to her as an artichoke, there had already been another one to a ruby choker, wedding gift offered to her by the Marquis, which looked 'like an extraordinarily precious slit throat' (*ibid.* 11). Curiously, whereas the artichoke has been considered to have aphrodisiacal properties and is, therefore, taken as a symbol of fertility, one may safely believe that artichoke was also something of a cure-all in the Tudor period.⁵⁹ In view of this last statement, the comparison of the ruby choker to death may even further the idea of a near fatality which would prove to be surprising.

Furthermore, there is a last reference to the above mentioned cannibalistic desires, when the Marquis is about to kill his wife and screams 'Don't loiter, girl! Do you think I shall lose appetite for the meal if you are so long about serving it? No; I shall grow hungrier, more ravenous with each moment, more cruel . . . Run to me, run! I have a place prepared for your exquisite corpse in my display of flesh!' (*ibid.* 39). Distinct from her earlier work, here Carter celebrates the power resulting from the destruction of a cannibalistic appetite when the mother usurps the traditional hero's role by blazing in to save her daughter, instead of the previous compliance with the situation. All in all, from the conclusion of this first story the reader is aware that, at the end of the 1970s, energy, for Carter as for Blake, can be positive and creative, as well as negative and destructive – 'The answer to 'Did He who made the lamb make thee?' is obviously, for Carter, *yes*' (Atwood 1994, 124).

In what can be considered Carter's second cat family fable in *The Bloody Chamber*, "The Courtship of Mr Lyon", the reader is immediately transported to 'the mean kitchen' where a lovely girl is doing her chores while waiting for her father who, meanwhile, is exhorted to eat and drink from silver tableware.⁶⁰ The food offered indicates a carnivore host – 'sandwiches of thick-cut roast beef, still bloody [...] with some excellent mustard thoughtfully provided in a stoneware pot' – who is considerate enough to provide an option to the whisky in the decanter, soda. The mysterious and kind host, the Beast, growls the father to bring his daughter, Beauty, to dinner. Similarly to the Marquis

⁵⁹ An artichoke is commonly taken as a natural aphrodisiac, although it has no properties which affect the human body except for reducing hunger. It is believed the artichoke received its reputation more from its association with Catherine de Medici, who was then considered a rather sensual woman.

⁶⁰ This second story, "The Courtship of Mr Lyon", originally appeared in the British version of *Vogue* magazine and it was revised for *The Bloody Chamber* collection (BC 4).

in the previous story, the Beast's social status allows him to offer a luxurious environment – described in a way that shows the increasing admiration of a guest: 'the dining room was Queen Anne, tapestried, a gem' (*BC* 45) – and exquisite food – 'an aromatic soup', 'bird', 'soufflé, cheese' (*ibidem*). However, unlike the Marquis, the Beast overtly acknowledges his otherness and refuses to participate in the meal, which is all cold, except for the soup, and admits to dislike the presence of servants as these are a constant human presence which 'would remind him too bitterly of his otherness' (*ibidem*). Indeed, the lack of other humans turns into an enigma considering that the meals are always prepared while Beauty stays over – 'but the trays of food had arrived on a dumb waiter inside the mahogany cupboard in her parlour' (*ibid.* 46).

Clearly placed in England, the reference the reader has to one meal is quite international, at least in the western world: 'Dinner was eggs Benedict and grilled veal [...]. Then she pulled a sprig of muscat grapes from a fat bunch for her dessert' (*ibidem*). In fact, by mentioning eggs Benedict (a dish consisting of toasted halves of English muffin topped with broiled ham, poached eggs, and hollandaise sauce) of which there are differing accounts concerning their origin, including one that precedes the 20th century claimants, one implicitly acknowledges an uncertainty as to the Beast's origin. Being well treated does not mean that Beauty is not expected to serve her host: 'she found her host, seated beside the fire with a tray of coffee at his elbow from which she must pour' (*ibidem*). Even when she returns to a then rich father, she becomes his precious treasure to show off, stepping out 'on his arm to parties, to receptions, to restaurants' (*ibid.* 48). The Beast's life changes as well, being changed by love from carnivore to herbivore (Atwood 1994, 124), since he 'had not the stomach to kill the gentle beasts', he could not eat on Beauty's absence (*BC* 50) and considers the possibility of eating some breakfast on her return – 'Beauty, if you would eat something with me' (*ibid.* 51).

Even though the reader is, from the very beginning of the "The Tiger's Bride", presented a reference to food through a comparison between the cold distant land Beauty and father come from, and 'the lovely land where the lemon trees grown' and where 'the sun spills fruit for you' (*ibid.* 51), here the reader witnesses a quite different transformation.⁶¹ In this other Beauty-and-the-Beast story, Beauty is determined to give herself, in other words, she is not determined to give the 'cold, white meat of contract' of

⁶¹ Similarly to the first story, "The Bloody Chamber", this one made its début in *The Bloody Chamber*.

the body isolated from the self, but to give her 'existence' (*ibid.* 66). The initial economical situation of the father and daughter is similar to the one from the previous story, but one anticipates Beauty's just mentioned stamina:

I watched with the furious cynicism peculiar to women whom circumstances force mutely to witness folly, while my father, fired in his desperation by more and yet more draughts of the firewater they call 'grappa', rids himself of the last scraps of my inheritance. When we left Russia, we owned black earth, blue forest with bear and wild boar, serfs, cornfields, farmyards, my beloved horses, white nights of cool summer, the fireworks of the northern lights. (*ibid.* 51-52)

Unlike the Beauty of the previous story, this one had already experienced the satisfaction of a life when her survival was assured by the tenure of the referred cornfields and farmyards. Food is once again used as a matter of comparison when the region that welcomes them is also characterised by its 'poor food, pasta soaked in oil, boiled beef with sauce of bitter herbs' (*ibid.* 53). Even the above mentioned grappa may hint their poor condition, since grappa was originally made to prevent waste by using leftovers at the end of the wine season.⁶² In terms of food, like the previous story, there are not many references, except a sporadic allusion to the Beast's 'spurious Eden in which all the fruit was blighted by cold' (*ibid.* 57) and a mentioning of Beauty's changed circumstances as 'a frosted glass of sparkling wine sat convenient to his [her father's] hand beside an ice bucket' (*ibid.* 65). Apart from these, the idea of being gobbled up is explained by the nursery fears – 'if this young lady was not a good little girl and did not eat her boiled beetroot, then the tiger-man would [...]. GOBBLE YOU UP!' (*ibid.* 56). It ends up by being summarized as 'herbivore meets carnivore, meat meets teeth, at the most basic and primitive level' (Atwood 1994, 125). The emphasis in the sexual tension is clear: 'He will gobble you up. Nursery fears made flesh and sinew; earliest and most archaic of fears, fear of devourment. The beast and his carnivorous bed of bone and I, white, shaking, raw, approaching him as if offering, in myself, the key to a peaceable kingdom in which his appetite need not be my extinction' (*BC* 67).⁶³

⁶² Grappa is an alcoholic beverage of Italian origin, a fragrant grape-based pomace brandy of between 35% and 60% alcohol by volume.

⁶³ Carter is probably alluding to a famous painting (figure 8) by the American artist Edward Hicks called *The Peaceable Kingdom* (actually the allusion may be to a series of famous paintings, since "The Peaceable Kingdom" (figure 8) was Hicks' most favored theme, as he painted more than 60



Figure 10 – Edward Hicks, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, c. 1834.
 Oil on canvas, 76.2 cm (30 in) x 90.2 cm (35.5 in).
 National Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C..
 (<http://www.nga.gov/cgi-bin/tinfo_f?object=59908>)

Next is a ‘Rabelsian/Carteresque romp, a tribute to the playful kitten aspect of the cat family’ (Atwood 1994, 126), “Puss-in-Boots”.⁶⁴ In 1976, Carter had described the character Puss in Boots as ‘Perrault’s great hero’, ‘the Cat as Con Man’, ‘a Figaroesque valet – a servant so much the master already’, and the story as ‘a masterpiece of cynicism’

known versions). In fact, the painting is a visual interpretation of the Isaiah passage (Isaiah 11: 6-8) repeatedly referenced in this story:

The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice’ den. (*The Bible* 1997, 775).

Carter’s possible allusion to this painting attests the strong imagistic character of her choice.

⁶⁴ “Puss-in-Boots” also appeared in the 1979 anthology *The Straw and the Gold*, edited by Emma Tennant (BC 4) and published in the same year as *The Bloody Chamber*.

(SL 454).⁶⁵ In Carter's story, Figaro, the protagonist, uses food references in a wide variety of situations, starting with the fact that he moves in with a rakish young man whose lodgings are above kitchen, and he helps his master to cheat at gambling so to earn money and buy food. Actually, the cat is offered a sandwich and 'a snifter of brandy' (BC 69) the first time he shows his smile. Puss knows how to appreciate not only the 'excellent beef sandwiches', given that he relishes 'a lean slice of roast beef', but the beverage he is offered, for he had early learned 'a taste for spirits, since I [he] started life as a wine-shop cat, hunting cellar rats for my [his] keep, before the world sharpened my [his] wits enough to let me [him] live by them' (*ibidem*). The world had clearly sharpened his savouring hability, as he uses food to match, for the most part, his master's mood. They live a carefree existence ('lecherous as liquorice' (*ibid.* 70)), with the cat helping him also in terms of food – 'When times were hard, I'd pilfer the market for breakfast – a herring, an orange, a loaf; we never went hungry' (*ibidem*). Food reflects moods and behaviours; the lady with whom the young man had fallen in love is always in the company of 'an aged hag, her keeper, who grumps along grim as a prison dinner' (*ibid.* 71) and the young man refuses to eat when faced with the impossibility of having that lady: 'I [Puss] brought him a fine pigeon from the inn kitchen, fresh off the spit, *parfumé avec* tarragon, but he wouldn't touch it so I crunched it up, bones and all' (*ibid.* 72). From this description of Puss, the reader learns that he can be simultaneously sophisticated by using the French expression 'parfumé avec', and primal, when he chews noisily with a crackling sound.

The cat's effort to help the sad young man into the bed of his sweetheart are witnessed, not only by this attempt of seducing him through his senses, as the smell, in order to please him in different ways, but also by his description of how his master's appetite slowly returns: 'And we trudge drearily off to dirty sheets and a mean supper of bread and cheese, all I can steal him, but at least the poor soul manifests a hearty appetite now she knows he's in the world and not the ugliest of mortals' (*ibid.* 75-76). The cat's stroll at night is accompanied by 'a choice morsel of salt cod his tabby friend found among the ashes on the hearth', but he will return in time for breakfast, since he still is 'ubiquitous Puss' (*ibid.* 76). The situation evolves in such a way that the next time he mentions a meal is 'one dinner honestly paid for, for a wonder' (*ibid.* 79). However, the

⁶⁵ Carter's piece collected in *Shaking a Leg* where she makes that description was "The Better to Eat You With", first published in *New Society* in 22 July, 1976.

young fool is 'off his feed, again' when he 'pushes his plate aside', because, as the cat concludes, 'Satisfaction has not satisfied him; that soul they both saw in one another's bodies has such insatiable hunger no single meal could ever appease it' (*ibid.* 79-80). Again, the reference could be 'lecherous as liquorice', but Puss does not give up, and a new plan comes to mind while he is fed by the lady's kitty – 'she's saved me a pig's trotter, a whole, entire pig's trotter the Missus smuggled to her with a wink. A feast! Masticating, I muse' (*ibid.* 80). The sound unison of masticating and muse echoes an understandable harmony between the head and the stomach! The idea of feasting can also suggest what the reader might have guessed by then, Puss' 'hitherto-untrammelled heart' had been wormed into.

Another contrast which reflects in terms of food is stated when the rigid and regular habits of the lady's old husband are presented:

Up at the crack, he meagrely breakfasts off yesterday's crusts and a cup of cold water, to spare the expense of heating it up. Down to his counting-house, counting out his money, until a bowl of well-watered gruel at midday. [...] Dinner's luxurious, at four; soup, with a bit of rancid beef or a tough bird in it—he's an arrangement with the butcher, takes unsold stock off his hands in return for a shut mouth about a pie that had a finger in it. [...] Another draught of Adam's ale healthfully concludes the day. (*ibid.* 80-81)

The way his meals are presented mirrors how miserably he lives, which opposes to Puss' intention to make the most of life and, as a result, this story proves to be a 'hymn to here-and-now common sensual pleasure, to ordinary human love, to slap-and-tickle delight, available to all. When compared to the three following stories, this one is 'just a short entr'acte'' (Atwood 1994, 127), in the generally more Baroque context of *The Bloody Chamber*.

The first story of this middle group is "The Erl-King"⁶⁶ (an adaptation of the Erl-king in folklore; a sort of goblin or spirit of the woodlands). The setting of the woods is described by a wandering maiden who is surprised on 'a cold day of late October, when the withered blackberries dangled like their own dour spooks on the discoloured brambles' (BC 84), by 'heavy bunches of red berries as ripe and delicious as goblin or enchanted

⁶⁶ "The Erl-King" originally appeared in *Bananas* and, similarly to "The courtship of Mr Lyon", it was revised for *The Bloody Chamber* collection (BC 4).

fruit hung on the hawthorns' (*ibid.* 85; my emphasis). Any of these various thorny trees or shrubs seems to impress and enthrall the narrator in such a way that she is easily seduced by the sinister Erl-King, a seeming personification of the forest itself. The references to food in this story are both literal and metaphoric. The maiden is clearly warned that 'there are some eyes can eat you [*sic*]' (*ibid.* 86) – later she evidences his 'eyes green as apples. Green as dead sea fruit' (*ibid.* 89) – but she is interested in his way of life and mainly in what he eats and the answer is also clear:

Why, the bounty of the woodland! Stewed nettles; savoury messes of chickweed sprinkled with nutmeg; he cooks the foliage of shepherd's purse as if it were cabbage. He knows which of the frilled, blotched, rotted fungi are fit to eat; he understands their eldritch ways, how they spring up overnight in lightless places and thrive on dead things. Even the homely wood blewits, that you cook like tripe, with milk and onions, and the egg-yolk yellow chanterelle with its fan-vaulting and faint scent of apricots, all spring up overnight like bubbles of earth, unsustained by nature, existing in a void. And I could believe that it has been the same with him; he came alive from the desire of the woods. (*ibid.* 86)

Taking bounty as a reward, an inducement, or payment, especially one that is given for acts deemed beneficial to the woodland, in this case, helps to introduce, and understand better the Erl-king. The bounty, though, is prepared by him before consuming. If one considers his obvious need to stew nettles (because these may be any of numerous plants of the genus *Urtica*, which have toothed leaves, unisexual apetalous flowers, and stinging hairs that cause skin irritation on contact), to season herbs with spices to make these more flavoury, and to cook a once ornament back to its origin, one first acknowledges him as having human needs. Except that he is so much more, since he understands nature's strange or unearthly, even unnatural ways. His knowledge and diet hint his own means, but so does her own description of the homely wood blewits, when she depicts the way to cook these edible agarics, the ingredients, the geometric design, and fragrance. Whereas he is hinted as a product of the environment, so is she, and I believe that is implied in the above quoted paragraph.

The description of the Erl-king's diet is rather long, and one hears about the gathering and delicate handling of his unnatural treasures, 'as he does [to] pigeons' eggs', and the salads of the dandelion that he flavours 'with a few leaves of wild strawberry but he will not touch the brambles, he says the Devil spits on them at Michaelmas' (*ibidem*).

The use of dandelions in salads is common, but its flavouring with the leaves of what I deem to be the typical modern strawberry, of the genus *Fragaria*, is rather interesting when compared to the wild ones.⁶⁷ It captivates my interest because the modern strawberry is a hybrid of both North and South American varieties and the crossbreeding was done in Europe to correct a mistake, since the European horticulturists had only brought female South American plants, and were, thus, forced to cross these with the North American variety to get fruit and seeds. Also interesting is the Erl-king's fear of the bambles, not only because strawberries were considered poisonous berries in Argentina, for example, until the mid-nineteenth century, but also because he respects the Christian feast observed in honor of the archangel Michael, on September 29 (Michaelmas). The preparation of nature's gifts goes on, as the Erl-king gets abundant milk from his nanny goat and makes 'soft cheese that has a unique, rank, amniotic taste', or makes 'a soup or stew, seasoned with wild garlic' (*ibidem*) from a trapped rabbit. The uniqueness of his cheese's taste (here characterised by a triple adjectivation) and the use of wild garlic to season meat, with its pungent onion odor, evidence his individuality in what concerns senses as the taste and smell, which, I think, will also help to understand his choice to imprison the birds that allow him to have the benefit of delightfully indulging the hearing, another faculty by which such outside stimuli are perceived.⁶⁸ This would prove to be a hint to the maiden, when she eventually realises that he planned to imprison her.

Even the description of his spick and span rustic home that confirmed what 'excellent housewife' he is, also emphasises the 'musical and aromatic' (*ibid.* 87) kitchen (a room where there was always 'a wood fire crackling in the grate, a sweet, acrid smoke, a bright, glancing flame' (*ibidem*)), and eases the reader to perceive the maiden's comment: 'He is the tender butcher who showed me how the price of flesh is love; skin the rabbit, he says! Off come all my clothes' (*ibidem*). After this, there is a sharing of the Erl-king's world ('Goat's milk to drink, from a chipped tin mug; we shall eat the oatcakes he has baked on the hearthstone' (*ibid.* 88)) and a stressing of his 'natural' being as the imagery and comparisons show: 'His skin is the tint and texture of sour cream, he has stiff, russet nipples ripe as berries. Like a tree that bears bloom and fruit on the same

⁶⁷ *Fragaria* comes from "fragans", meaning odorous, referring to the perfumed flesh of the fruit.

⁶⁸ Actually there is a number of different plant species of the genus *Allium* which are known as 'wild garlic', like the following: *Allium ursinum* (also known as Ramsons); *Allium vineale* (also known as Crow Garlic); *Allium drummondii*, (also known as Drummond's onion); *Allium canadense* (or Wild onion); *Allium triquetrum*, (or Three-cornered leek).

bought together, how pleasing, how lovely', 'we are like two halves of a seed, enclosed in the same integument' (*ibidem*). Despite acknowledging that she went back to him ('Eat me, drink me; thirsty, cankered, goblin-ridden' (*ibid.* 89)), the maiden finally understands his intentions, and the similarity between his feeding the birds he then traps and her own consumption ('he spreads out a goblin feast of fruit for me, such appalling succulence' (*ibidem*)), and so she murders him. I cannot but agree with Margaret Atwood: if she becomes entirely a part of nature, her human self-consciousness will vanish and she will be bound to nature's cycle. This girl does not want to be defined absolutely and forever by the Erl-King's seductive but obliterating sexuality. In this match of inequalities it is her freedom against his, and she chooses hers, afterwards opening 'all the cages' (Atwood 1994, 127). When one considers Carter's experience in Japan, it is not far from this depiction.

The brief fable "The Snow-Child", in which the Count's desire for a 'perfect' virginal girl-child as a sexual object materialises into a snow-child, has no reference to food, unlike the following story, "The Lady of the House of Love".⁶⁹ Based upon a radio play called "Vampirella", this story shows how it is possible to reverse the gender polarities of the Lyon and Tiger stories, since 'the carnivore here is a female vampire' (*ibid.* 128). She did survive by enticing young men into her bedroom and feeding on them, but then again, so did her ancestors – 'she is the last bud of the poison tree that sprang from the loins of Vlad the Impaler who picnicked on corpses in the forests of Transylvania' (*BC* 94). Thus, from the very beginning not only are her guests seen as food/nourishment, but she is also compared to food itself ('These [fingernails] and teeth as fine and white as spikes of spun sugar' (*ibidem*)) and described as the hereditary commandant of the army of shadows 'who make the milk curdle and the butter refuse to come', and 'milk the cows dry' (*ibid.* 95). Also, the guests were allured to her home, when they proved to be 'unwise enough to pause to drink from the fountain in the square that still gushes spring water from a faucet stuck in a stone lion's mouth' (*ibid.* 93). The

⁶⁹ "The Snow Child", the shortest story of this collection, was originally broadcasted on the BBC Radio 4 programme *Not Now, I'm Listening*, and it was revised for this collection (*BC* 4).

"The Lady of the House of Love", which originally appeared in print in *The Iowa Review* (*BC* 4), is a story written as a radio play entitled *Vampirella*, broadcasted on BBC Radio 3 in 1976. The story was revised from the previous printed version for *The Bloody Chamber* collection. The play *Vampirella* was first published by Bloodaxe Books in an anthology entitled *Come unto These Yellow Sands* (1985) along with three other plays by Carter. This anthology was then collected in *The Curious Room: Collected Dramatic Works* (*CR* 3-151).

vocabulary used, like 'voracious' ('The voracious margin of huntress's nights') and 'gorge' ('All claws and teeth, she strikes, she gorges') contrast with the idea that nothing could comfort her 'for the ghastliness of her condition, nothing'. Even if the Countess would always want 'fresh meat' because 'hunger always overcomes her', she loathes the food she eats and would rather be the provider of food – 'she would have liked to take the rabbits home with her, feed them on lettuce' (*ibid.* 96). At first she does provide some food to the unwise young men, as she serves them 'coffee in tiny cracked, precious cups, and little sugar cakes' and she pours from a silver pot, but just to put them at their fatal ease (*ibidem*).

The recurring situation is only altered by a virginal English soldier who finds himself in the deserted village where he hopes to find a friendly inn to rest the night, since he feels 'hot, hungry, thirsty, weary, dusty', and goes precisely across the Countess' mansion (*ibid.* 97). She is warned of his arrival through the famous two verses in popular culture for their use in the English fairy tale *Jack and the Beanstalk*: 'Be he alive or be he dead / I'll grind his bones to make my bread'. Again, the way of tempting the victims is through food, as the Countess' housekeeper 'rubbed her stomach, pointed to her mouth, rubbed her stomach again, clearly miming an invitation to supper' (*ibid.* 98), when this young man seems to hesitate. For a second time, the reader is reminded of the enticing process with food, but this time clearly in more detail:

The crone took him to a little chamber where there was a black oak table spread with a clean white cloth and this cloth was carefully laid with heavy silverware, a little tarnished, as if someone with foul breath had breathed on it, but laid with one place only. Curiouser and curiouser; invited to the castle for dinner, now he must dine alone. All the same, he sat down as she had bid him. [...] The crone bustled about to get him a bottle of wine and a glass from an ancient cabinet of wormy oak; while he bemusedly drank his wine, she disappeared but soon returned bearing a steaming platter of the local spiced meat stew with dumplings, and a shank of black bread. He was hungry after his long day's ride, he ate heartily and polished his plate with the crust, but this coarse food was hardly the entertainment he'd expected from the gentry and he was puzzled by the assessing glint in the dumb woman's eyes as she watched him eating.

But she darted off to get him a second helping as soon as he'd finished the first one and she seemed so friendly and helpful, besides, that he knew he could count on a bed for the night in the castle, as well as his supper [...]. She made a

pantomime of drinking; he deduced he was now invited to take after-dinner coffee in another room [...] he straightened his tie, brushed the crumbs from his tweed jacket. (BC 99-100)

The gentry-like welcoming he had expected is somehow portrayed by the Countess as she offers him coffee 'patiently filtering her fragrant brew' herself, since the housekeeper left a 'silver spirit kettle, a silver coffee pot, cream jug, sugar basin, cups ready on a silver tray'. Every tableware item has a clear function and this is hinted here through the quoted listing. The comparison between this 'strange touch of elegance, even if discoloured', may hint a possibility of change in the whole situation, albeit the vampiress' automatic behaviour as 'she held out to him a tiny cup of rose-painted china' and 'offered him a sugar biscuit from a Limoges plate' (*ibid.* 102). Yet, after the coffee is all drunk, the sugar biscuits eaten, this sinister 'Sleeping Beauty', although she tries hard to think of any other, 'only knows of one kind of consummation' (*ibid.* 103). Her intentions to feed on the young soldier, supported by the portraits on the walls who clang 'Dinnertime, dinnertime', are moved by 'a ghastly hunger' which gnaws her entrails, except that his purity and virginity has a rather curious effect on her. In view of that, the maiden somnambulist is dead the next morning and her keeper will no longer have to bury bones under her roses – 'The food her roses feed on gives them their rich colour, their swooning odour, that breathes lasciviously of forbidden pleasures' (*ibid.* 105). He leaves to return to his battalion and similarly to the previous story, "The Snow-Child", a fanged rose is all that is left of the vampire and in both cases this is the rose of death.

As mentioned above, *The Bloody Chamber* concludes with three wolf stories. The first, "The Werewolf", retells "Little Red Riding Hood", but here the wolf *is* the grandmother herself.⁷⁰ This very short story presents a cold northern country and in the first half does mention its fears and superstitions where food is an important ingredient. In houses with only 'a bed, a stool, a table', religious icons are as important as 'the leg of a pig hung up to cure, [and] a string of drying mushrooms' and in these upland woodsmen's graveyards, instead of flowers, they 'put out small, votive offerings, little loaves, sometimes a cake' but, yet, it is common knowledge among them that the Devil 'holds picnics in the graveyards and invites the witches; then, they dig up fresh corpses, and eat them' (*ibid.* 108). That is why the traditional wreaths of garlic hang on the doors to keep

⁷⁰ "The Werewolf" originally appeared in *South-West Arts Review* and it was revised for this collection (BC 4).

out the vampires, and they still believe that if some old woman cheeses ripens whereas her neighbours' do not, a witch will certainly be discovered. It is embedded with such understanding that a girl goes to visit her grandmother, who has been sick, and takes her the oatcakes her mother has 'baked for her on the hearthstone and a little pot of butter'. In the second half, when the child denounces the grandmother as a witch and inherits her property, the reader realises that women can also be werewolves and not necessarily victims. At the end of this decade, I believe Carter returns to her demanding 'cold country' and similarly to the good child in this story, she recognises more than ever the need to be a competent child, 'to know how to recognise danger but to avoid being paralysed by fear, to know how to use your father's hunting knife to defend yourself against those who also hunt' (Atwood 1994, 129-130). Indeed, Carter knows the importance of being 'good at'.

"The Company of Wolves", which may be read as a variation on "The Tiger's Bride", presents a virginal, innocent but strong Little Red Riding Hood who makes her way through the forest.⁷¹ Right from the first line the reader is presented to the beast, the wolf, a 'carnivore incarnate' (BC 110; 116; 118), who having once had 'a taste of flesh then nothing else will do', and easily identifies 'our smell of meat' (*ibid.* 110). The introduction mainly portrays the wolf's irrationality and effectiveness as a hunter ('for if you stray from the path for one instant, the wolves will eat you'); when compared to other teeming perils of the night and the forest, like 'ghosts, hobgoblins, ogres that grill babies upon gridirons, witches that fatten their captives in cages for cannibal tables', the wolf is the worst of them all 'for he cannot listen to reason' (*ibidem*). Even when the wolf is described by its slavering jaws, lolling tongue and the rime of saliva on the grizzled chops, one feels there is an implicit validation for being 'grey as famine' and 'unkind as plague' based on the lack of alternative in a winterish cold weather, when all the other animals have either departed or are locked up. It is famine and irrationality that also seemed to justify actions as biting a woman in her own kitchen while she was straining the macaroni or massacring sheep and goats and even eating up a mad old man. However, the wolf still mourns for its own, 'irremediable appetites' (*ibid.* 112).

This long introduction to the wolf's condition leads to what sounds like the original story of Red Riding Hood – wandering through the forest towards her grandmother's house, a girl meets an apparently charming young man (i.e. girl and wolf meet); they bet

⁷¹ Similarly to "The Erl-King", "The Company of Wolves" originally appeared in *Bananas* and it was revised for this collection (BC 4).

about being able to get to Granny's house first; and the wolf eats the grandmother. However, as a 'well-warned [girl], she lays a carving knife in the basket' prepared by the girl's mother to take to her grandmother. The traditional basket of food she carries also deserves to be studied, for her mother had packed it with cheeses, 'a bottle of harsh liquor distilled from brambles; a batch of flat oatcakes baked on the hearthstone; a pot or two of jam' (*ibid.* 113). All the products in it actually result from transforming nature's offerings, and here I am considering cheese as a generic term used for a diverse group of milk-based food products, produced by coagulation of the milk protein casein (either the milk of cows, sheep, goats, or buffalo) in wide-ranging flavours, textures, and forms. In what concerns for the liquor, it was distilled from brambles, whose fruit includes the blackberry and raspberry.⁷² Along with their distinctive growth form, they are known for sending up long, arching canes that do not flower or set fruit until the second year of growth, and many types have recurved thorns that dig into clothing and flesh when the victim tries to pull away from them. This is why the thorny varieties are sometimes grown for game cover, and occasionally for protection.⁷³

Furthermore, the reference to the baking of cereals (oatcakes) is as natural as possible since the cooking process takes place in a natural hearthstone. Finally, the pots of jam which could refer to both fruit juice and pieces of the flesh of fruit or vegetable, or cooked and gelled fruit (or vegetable) purees – mainly the fruit is heated with water and sugar to activate the pectin in the fruit. The general term can imply variations, like strawberry jam (sweet, fruit), or Mint jam (savoury), or even the not so probable Jalapeño pepper jam (hot).⁷⁴ All in all, this is not such an artless basket of food at it may seem at a first glimpse, and the carving knife evidences a well-warned girl in addition to the brambles reference which may hint a maturing and, simultaneously, a defensive girl. She

⁷² Notice that whilst in popular United Kingdom usage the term *bramble* primarily refers to the blackberry bush, in Scotland and the north of England it refers to both the blackberry bush and its fruits.

⁷³ Concerning the diverse uses of brambles, it is interesting to notice what most species are relevant for: conservation and wildlife value in their native range, as their flowers attract nectar-feeding butterflies and hoverflies; as food plants for the larvae of a large order of insects; as a main food source for captive stick insects, when we think of brambles leaves; as food for birds, and some mammals, which feed on the nutritious fruits in autumn; and as protection of other fruits (strawberries) through the use of split bramble stems.

⁷⁴ Within its variations, we cannot forget the uncooked or minimally cooked (less than five minutes) jams, called *freezer jam* for being stored frozen, which are rather popular in parts of North America for their very fresh taste.

is not presented as the inattentive Little Red Riding Hood for she is aware of the forest's potentials even in the middle of winter and cannot avoid thinking in terms of food – an example is the poetic comparison when describing the scenery before her in the following manner: 'the bright frills of the winter fungi on the blotched trunks of the trees [...], a hare as lean as a rasher of bacon streaking across the path where the thin sunlight dapples the russet brakes of last year's bracken' (*ibid.* 114).

She arrives at her grandmother's home, expecting 'hot tea, and a welcome' (*ibidem*) unaware that the young man having arrived before her, and having killed her grandmother, is truly a wolf in disguise. When he instructs her to remove and burn her garments one by one, she makes remarks reminiscent of those in the well-known fairy tale, such as 'What big teeth you have!', but when he replies, 'All the better to eat you with' (*ibid.* 118), the girl laughs at him confidently. She realised that she cannot be rescued by the hunter, since the wolf *is* the hunter and, consequently, she has to rescue herself. The girl then 'freely' gives the kiss she owes him by their bet, because she 'knows she is nobody's meat', and then climbs into bed with the wolf, who by the following morning has become 'tender' (*ibidem*). Atwood's conclusion clearly expresses my perception:

As with all of Carter's would-be steaks and chops, this 'wise child' wins the herbivore-carnivore contest by refusing fear, by taking matters into her own hands, by refusing to allow herself to be defined as somebody's meat, and by 'freely' learning to – if not run with the tigers – at least lie down with them. Whether she has become more wolf-like or he has become more human is anybody's guess, but in this story each participant appears to retain his or her own nature. A consolatory nonsense [...] that tries for the kind of synthesis Carter suggested in *The Sadeian Woman*: 'neither submissive nor aggressive'. (Atwood 1994, 130)

For me this is a clear example of Carter's posture that would determine the 1970s as the turning point in her writing career. Carter has learnt by then what complies running with the tigers or lying down with them; she has seen what it takes to become a wise child.

"Wolf-Alice", the last story, is considered to be the most grotesque of the last group, since it depicts a strange alliance between two oddities, a feral female child who was raised as a wolf and an undead ghoulish werewolf, a Duke, who casts no reflection in mirrors and feeds on corpses – 'he is cast in the role of the corpse-eater, the body-snatcher

who invades the last privacies of the dead' (*BC* 121).⁷⁵ Accordingly, both these characters are the carnivore in its least attractive form and the story explores the journey towards subjectivity and self-awareness from the perspective of the child – i.e. she gradually comes to realise her own identity as a young woman. When she was first taken in by the nuns they managed to teach her 'to recognize her own dish; then, to drink from a cup' (*ibid.* 120) – actions considered to be the basic tricks for someone who is to be part of the human society.

About the Duke, even his bedroom, 'painted terracotta, rusted with a wash of pain', is compared to a place where animals are slaughtered and dressed for food or market – 'like the interior of an Iberian butcher's shop' – and at night 'his eyes see only appetite' (*ibidem*). The image created by the 'rusted wash of pain' implies not only deterioration, involving the passing of time and the way it corrodes things, but also the declining of a lifetime that simultaneously brings pain and causes pain ('rusted' entails various coatings, especially oxides, formed by corrosion that is most likely from blood). To a certain extent he is portrayed as such an oddity that nothing seems to deter him from his 'menus' (*ibid.* 123): 'If you stuff a corpse with garlic, why, he only slavers at the treat: cadavre provençale. He will use the holy cross as a scratching post and crouch above the font to thirstily lap up holy water' (*ibid.* 121). The reference to the French cookery term of a dish prepared with garlic, oil, and often tomatoes lends the description an sharper and intelligent twist. In such a state of affairs only someone 'who is not wolf or woman' (*ibidem*) seemed to get by his walk of life. That was why, having been raised with flesh-eaters, and thus lacking human consciousness, makes the sight of the Count in the kitchen with a man's leg slung over his shoulder something which does not upset her – 'in her absolute and verminous innocence' (*ibid.* 123). Her innocence is characterized as simultaneously supreme / unconditional and relating to, infested with, or even suggestive of vermin. Thus, she is portrayed by being in-between stages and that makes her preferences unique.

From the narrator's standpoint, the ending is neither a hallucinating happy one, nor an unhappy one: the girl had grown up and got what she wanted; although she had played both lamb and tiger, she is neither, only a human grown-up woman. This ending, I believe, also reveals Carter's easiness with her own experiences before travelling to Japan, in

⁷⁵ "Wolf-Alice" originally appeared in *Stand* and it was revised for *The Bloody Chamber* collection (*BC* 4).

Japan and on her return, 'because now she knew how to wear clothes and so had put on the visible sign of her difference from them [wolves]' and, for that reason, she is aware that, similarly to this self-aware woman, 'her footprints on damp earth are beautiful and menacing as those Man Friday left' (*ibid.* 125).

Carter's answering back to de Sade and to what characters like Bluebeard stood for is recreated by Atwood in the following manner: '*You see – she [Carter] appears to be saying [to them] – you didn't have to confine yourself to those mechanistic stage sets, those mechanical rituals. It wasn't just eat or be eaten. You could have been human!*' (Atwood 1994, 132). Evidently, in Carter's world 'human' tends to be always slightly ambiguous – 'She does have a yen for tigerhood' (*ibidem*). Nevertheless, Carter implies that such a feeling is neither merely all one can expect, nor anything one needs despise, as *Nights at the Circus* (1984) comes to prove in the following decade. In fact, *The Bloody Chamber* neutrally calls the reader's attention to the fact that there is no such thing as a free lunch, since every moment of anarchic pleasure and apparently unlimited freedom should be understood as moments – not to be mistaken with permanent achievements (Cavallaro 2011, 118). These can be seen in analogous messages communicated in Carter's last novels, *Nights at the Circus* and *Wise Children*.



Figure 11 – Detail of Vincent Van Gogh's *The Potato Eaters*, 1885.

As one knows, food and the body have created a problem for Western thought since antiquity that has involved diverse forms of individual concern and conduct throughout different historical epochs. Evidently there are various ways through which systems of thought around food become available. Foucault, for example, puts his concern on how problems about conduct become significant matters for the self: 'the proper task of the history of thought, as against the history of behaviours or representations, [was]: to define the conditions in which human beings 'problematize' what they are, what they do, and the world in which they live' (Foucault 1990, 10). For instance, the Greeks and the

Christians cases demonstrate two of the ways that past Western cultures have dealt with problems of pleasure resulting from food and eating, since each period understood the body and pleasures in a different way, and so required singular ethical considerations – whereas for the Greeks it was moderation, the Christians wanted to extinguish pleasure altogether (Coveney 2006, xiv) – ‘Pleasure had to be denied’ (*ibid.* 32).⁷⁶ In order to entirely understand individual conduct one needs to turn to Foucault’s third mode of analysis, which is most clear in his work on the ‘technologies of the self’; i.e. the technologies of the self were appropriated from practices, like self-observation, self-examination, confession and self-renunciation, relating to the formation of the Christian soul. What these practices constitute is the modern subject as one who knows him- or herself, the self-reflective, self-regulating individual (*ibid.* 13). I believe Eve/lyn in *The Passion of New Eve*, and even Desiderio in *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman*, may be read bearing in mind such modern technologies of the self.

These technologies of the self are the strategies by which one develops, as Foucault terms it, *rappports à soi* or ‘ethics’ (Foucault 1986, 342; 352). The notion of ethics here entails the relationship that an individual subject has with him or herself: ‘Ethics determine how the individual is supposed to constitute himself as a moral subject of his own actions’ (*ibid.* 352). Thus, it relates to our individual forms of conduct and Foucault studies the production of ‘the self by the self’ (Coveney 2006, 9). Yet, ethics are not conceived by the individual, but are socially and historically patterned (Foucault 1989, 11). In fact, it is by considering the production of the self by the self that Foucault examines how, by way of specific techniques, practices, thoughts and beliefs, we transform ourselves into beings with certain concerns and ethics (Coveney 2006, 9).⁷⁷ I

⁷⁶ Even though the concern for food in Ancient Greece was related to qualities of food, what foods for what occasions and climates, and the question of amounts, there was very little about which food should be cooked. Thus, it was not the art of cooking that was of concern (Foucault 1986, 347), but it was the art of the self (Coveney 2006, 27).

⁷⁷ Concerning, for example, the Roman period, when there was a valorisation of the conjugal bond and a need to address the problematisation of political activity, James Bernauer focuses on the following:

The emergence of what Foucault calls the Roman ‘culture of the self’ is rooted in the obligation its citizens felt themselves under to define new relations with the self. They felt the pressure of this obligation for two principal reasons. First, the greater prevalence and signification of marriage as an institution required an elaboration of the self in the new context of affective relations between the sexes. More important was a new problematization of political activity. There was a need for the Roman citizen to clarify more fully his understanding of himself, for that self was challenged by an unparalleled multiplicity of potential identities and conflicts

consider this reading of one's transformation to be useful when studying Carter's experience, especially during the 1970s. In terms of her fiction, Desiderio and Eve/lyn's paths and evolution may be read bearing in mind the just mentioned Foucault's perspective.

All in all, in Foucault's later work there is further clarification about his concept of the subject, given that it allows him to explain how subjectivity for the modern individual is constituted through technologies of power and technologies of the self; meaning, 'subjectivity is produced not only through the relationships we have with discourses of power that 'normalise' and 'objectify' us, but also through practices in which we actively constitute ourselves by self-regulation' (*ibid.* 11). As a result, these practices are not invented by the individual, but are 'patterns that [the individual] finds in his culture and which are proposed, suggested and imposed on him by his culture, his society and his social group' (Foucault 1989, 11). Once again, one may read Desiderio's descriptions of food and references to food as practices in which he constitutes himself along his journey, in the most diverse ways. With reference to Eve/lyn in *The Passion of New Eve*, one can see those same patterns imposed on the character by different social groups. Still, as people persist actively to construct meanings around the food consumed (by developing taxonomies, expressing satisfaction or dissatisfaction with food, and refusing to accept advertising or medical messages), they are agents. In other words, issues of power cannot certainly be ignored but such power can be defied, as well as accepted, which is noticeable in diverse ways on the subject of food. Also, Carter's pieces evidence such construction of meanings around food, as seen in this chapter.

In fact, it is through Foucault that one can have an understanding of the conduct around food, for example, in ancient history which is so different from that of today. He does so by turning to the ancients interests in diet – opposed to those in sex – to emphasise the sheer difference with that of 'modern souls'. In antiquity, there is a clear concern for the self which was expressed through moderation and self-mastery over the individual's daily practices, like eating and drinking. Therefore, the individual's pleasure would develop through moderation and self-mastery balancing need, use and desire (McHoul 1997, 99); this balancing also created part of an art of existence. Today moderation is invoked to limit pleasure and, as Foucault emphasizes, the difference between the current

technologies of the self and those in antiquity is that, in the contemporary forms, there is a desire to discover one's *true* self and, in order to decipher its truth, there is a need to separate it from that which may obscure or alienate it (Foucault 1986, 362).⁷⁸

All this desire to discover one's true self is patent in Carter's writing in the 1970s and one can easily imply that what seems strange or frightening among other people becomes perfectly rational when set in context. Thus, understanding their food traditions helps to understand the people themselves (Mason 2004, viii). Clearly, humanity has found that the need to eat makes contact with every aspect of life, since it is the foundation of every economic system, it has also a built-in part in political and domestic strategies and it marks the boundaries that separate or unite the community. Furthermore, this need even makes visible the way individuals conceive themselves, as it becomes evident when one looks at the amount of books published on women and food (Tobin 2008).⁷⁹ Moreover, regardless of the accessibility of individual associations about food to a writer, it is the sharing of food within distinct food cultures that continues to be the main focus of literature about food. This is not so hard for Carter when one reflects on her being in different continents, as Europe, Asia and America, but always returning to England.

⁷⁸ Foucault believed that this and the idea of the search for a self which one then had to renounce developed from Christianity, since, in early Christianity an understanding of self was attained through the revelation of self and through penance (Foucault 1988, 41). However, 'early Christian morality about food was less a personal concern in order to acknowledge oneself as a proper and fit person to rule, than a duty to God' (Coveney 2006, 31).

⁷⁹ Some examples of publications from the mid-1980s to the very beginning of the 1990s show such need in Carter's contemporaneity: Charles and Kerr's "Food for Feminist Thought" (1986) and *Women, Food and Families* (1988); McIntosh and Zey's "Women as Gatekeepers of Food Consumption: A Sociological Critique" (1989); DeVault's *Feeding the Family: The Social Organization of Caring as Gendered Work* (1991); Prout's "Review of Women, Food and Families" (1991); Meadow and Weiss' *Women's Conflicts about Eating and Sexuality: The Relationship between Food and Sex* (1992).

Articles	Collections & Exercises	Novels	Writings Date
"Tokyo Pastoral" (11 June)			1970
"My Maugham Award" (Autumn)			
"People as Pictures" (8 October)			
"Mishima's Toy Sword" (18 March)			1971
"Once More into the Mangle" (29 April)			
"Poor Butterfly" (16 March)		<i>The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman</i>	1972
"A Fertility Festival" (5 September)	<i>Fireworks</i>		1974
"D'You Mean South?" (28 July)		<i>The Passion of New Eve</i>	1977
	<i>Shaking a Leg</i>		1998

Table 4 – Chronology of Angela Carter's writings

IV.

Late Writings.

'Pluck the day. Eat the peach'

'When I [Dora] was young, I'd wanted to be ephemeral, I'd wanted the moment, to live in just the glorious moment, the rush of blood, the applause. Pluck the day. Eat the peach. Tomorrow never comes. But, oh yes, tomorrow *does* come all right, and when it comes it lasts a bloody long time, I can tell you, But if you've put your past on celluloid, it keeps. You've stored it away, like jam, for winter.'

(WC 125)

Just as Carter had began the 1970s abroad, in Japan, she begins the following decade once again abroad. She was actually in America, but not for the same reasons which had taken her to Japan. Carter had already visited the States at the end of the 1960s (already mentioned when reading *The Passion of New Eve*). That trip ended in her running away from her husband to go to Japan, but at the beginning of the 1980s her reasons were professional, for she was at Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island, as a Visiting Professor in their writing programme. Curiously, the settling down of Carter in the 1980s cannot be considered without a reference to the reasonable amount of time she spent abroad, especially in the United States and Australia.¹

Carter had a reputation of being a traveller and she even portrayed herself as having become ‘a connoisseur of cities, of American, Asiatic and even European cities’ (SL 203) in “My Maugham Award” (first published in *The Author* in 1970 and now collected in *Shaking a Leg*). Albeit she claimed this in 1970, before travelling even more, she always returned to London – ‘Indeed, the journey she makes eventually virtually doubles back upon itself, for her upbringing in Balham and her death in Clapham comes close to forming a circle, with Clapham Common at its centre. [...] after all her flights from men, her evasions and adventures, [...] Carter finally returned and formed her own, chosen, family’ (Gamble 2006a, 198).²

¹ Apart from the time spent in Providence, Carter also spent ‘three months as writer in residence at the University of Adelaide in 1984, and short periods of successive years back in America: 1985 in Austin, Texas; 1986 in Iowa City; and 1988 in Albany, New York State’ (Gamble 2006a, 168). Besides being abroad, Carter was also away from her residence in Clapham; for instance, when she taught part-time on the writing MA at the University of East Anglia, between 1984 and 1987.

² London was by no means forgotten by Carter and *Wise Children* was written in what Carter considered to be an era of London fiction: ‘Martin Amis had published *London Fields* three years earlier; Michael Moorcock’s *Mother London* had appeared in 1988; Ian Sinclair was beginning to expand his mystic sociology and East End explorations, and Angela Carter reviewed *Downriver* in the *London Review of Books*’ (Clapp 2012, 93).

Bearing this in mind, when one reads Carter's two last novels, it is not difficult to notice what she had been doing in most of her narratives from the 1970s onwards: 'mimicking in fiction what she was also doing with her own life story' (*ibid.* 197). Indeed, in the same way as Carter's autobiographical essays do, these turn out to be a means of disguise, rather than of revelation, for they create 'a crafted persona for public display' (*ibidem*). What Carter does is select details she reiterates, but which she does not elaborate. Not only is this discernible in the interviews she gives during the 1970s and 1980s, but, as her friend Lorna Sage claims, Carter 'went in for the proliferation, rather than the death, of the author' (Sage 1994a, 58), as seen in the second chapter. Also picking Sage's words, Gamble hints that it is this very multiplicity, 'the creation of a narrative that functions as a hall of mirrors reflecting multiple images', that becomes the author's most effective disguise (Gamble 2006a, 197). An example of the way the mixture of the personal and the political is well pondered in Carter, is what happens when she points for a wider social critique after the accustomed use of her own experience – as in "Notes from a Maternity Ward" (first published in *Newstatement*, 1983).

The 1980s were a decade when I believe Carter used to make the most of the time she had. Yet, by using as a title for this last chapter an observation from Dora, the narrator of Carter's last novel (*Wise Children*, 1991), I am not trying to imply how ephemeral life is: 'Pluck the day. Eat the peach' (*WC* 125). That was not Carter's attitude to life when she was diagnosed with lung cancer. The expression chosen for this chapter brings to mind the Latin term 'Carpe diem', which is regularly translated as 'seize the day'. Nevertheless, searching deeper, 'Carpe' translates literally as 'pluck', which on its turn refers particularly to the action of picking fruit; thus, a more accurate interpretation of this expression is 'enjoy the day, pluck the day when it is ripe'. Again, when looking at the extended version of the phrase 'carpe diem, quam minimum credula postero', the translation would be 'pluck the day, trusting as little as possible in the future'. This assertion makes even more sense when one looks back to the other part of the axiom presented by Dora – 'Eat the Peach' – which has already been read as an allusion to T. S. Eliot's dramatic monologue "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock", since it features a speaker who, similarly to Dora, looks back on the missed opportunities of his life (Sanders 2001, 54). Still, even if one cannot stop the clock ticking – 'Tomorrow never comes, but, oh yes, tomorrow does come all right, and when it comes it lasts a bloody long time, I can tell you' – the art is preserving those glorious days of the past. Accordingly, just as Ronald

Tobin reminds us, one has to look for the creation process in both the science of cooking and literature, since these reverberate in particular the artistic performance of creators. Dora puts this in her own words: 'But if you've put your past on celluloid, it keeps. You've stored it away, like jam, for the winter' (*WC* 125). A motion picture is based on celluloid, just a colorless flammable material made from nitrocellulose and camphor used to make the photographic film. The comparison with jam is simple and direct, for it is a preserve containing fruit, which has been boiled with sugar until the mixture sets. In view of that, it brings to mind the expression 'jam today', which suggests the principle of living for the moment.³

Following such perspective of plucking the day and eating the peach, Carter's interests in other media continued in the 1980s, as the importance she gave to radio until the early years of the decade attested. In fact, whilst her last radio play, "A Self-Made Man" (completed at the end of 1982), was broadcast on 4 May 1984 on BBC Radio 3 (*CR* 505), she had already begun to work on cinematic adaptations of her own fiction: the film script of *The Company of Wolves* which was released in 1984 and, three years later, the adaptation of *The Magic Toyshop* as a feature film.⁴ From Gamble's perspective, 'it may be that this transition from radio to film indicates in [*sic*] a shift in Carter's own conception of her artistic status' (Gamble 2006a, 168). Although it is not within the key scope of this study, I feel that it is relevant to go back to what Carter claimed in the late 1970s about the power of radio because of the impact of words:

[...] as with all forms of story-telling that are composed in words, not in visual images, radio always leaves that magical and enigmatic margin, that space of the invisible, which must be filled in by the imagination of the listener. [...] the way I like to use radio [...] to create complex, many-layered narratives that play tricks with time. And, also, to explore ideas, although for me, that is the same thing as telling stories, since, for me, a narrative is an argument stated in fictional terms. (*CR* 497)

The shift in Carter's own conception of her artistic status, as hinted by Gamble, is perceptible in her growing interest for the power of different media in the 1980s, but I

³ *Wise Children* is often read as quite possibly 'the most cheerfully orgiastic and generous and comic and fulfilled of her books, a celebration of birth, life and continuance, [...] a book all about Will, and will, and legacy, and the legacy of entertainment' (Smith 2007, 16).

⁴ Actually, by the time Carter started working on *The Company of Wolves*, it was already a radio play and a short story. As for *The Magic Toyshop*, it is her second novel (1967).

believe what was central to Carter in the above quoted “Preface to *Come unto These Yellow Sands*” (collected in *The Curious Room*) is what still moves her in the 1980s. The multi-layered narrative that attracted Carter so much in that ‘challenging medium’, that is radio, is most possibly explained by the following: ‘radio retains atavistic lure, the atavistic power, of voices in the dark, and the writer who gives the words to those voices retains some of the authority of most antique tellers of tales’ (CR 502). Carter believed in these voices and, therefore, I consider three narratives for this chapter where the narrator’s voice is emphasised: the story “The Kitchen Child” (1985) and her two last novels *Nights at the Circus* (1984) and *Wise Children* (1991).⁵

The human propensity to orchestrate existence around the incessant staging of acts which are able to offer settings and opportunities for the narration of stories is present in the narratives chosen for this chapter – ‘It is through these acts and the narratives they are made to accommodate that identities may be forged and sustained’ (Cavallaro 2000, 139). This is why one can say that Carter intends to show how one is continuously spinning narrative weaves *about* oneself and other people as well as *to* oneself and other people (*ibidem*). In “The Kitchen Child” Carter uses her profligate imagination to allow the reader to revisit the fairly shaken realm of the real. Whereas in this story the narrator becomes the evidence of a world in-between delicious odours and appetizing sounds, in *Nights at the Circus* the reader is faced with a cornucopian bounty of voices, accents, styles, and traditions. Still, mainly in the two novels to be read in this last chapter, the reader becomes aware of the manner through which one performs particular narrative moves that are with no doubt endowed with theatrical connotations when telling these stories – ‘insofar as the act of narration is inseparable from performance’ (*ibidem*).

In *Wise Children* the narrator, Dora, celebrates her seventy-fifth birthday, triggering every other memory and when the drumroll of memories sounds, she does it by nibbling on these. She feels in charge of a peculiar meal, but she acknowledges not being as moderate as expected. Such recognition that memory is fallible is realistic – ‘more realistic than those first-person narratives where the tellers recall exact dialogue from twenty years past [...]. Yet, the convention of filmic accuracy in first-person narration is so well established that we rarely question the seamlessness of the narrative’ (Deefholts

⁵ In fact, an earlier version of “The Kitchen Child” was first published in *Vogue* in 1979. Still, the date commonly associated to it is 1985 for referring to its publication in the collection of stories *Black Venus*.

2003). Dora's kind of confessions as the narrator end up playing the same role of reminders of fictionality (*ibidem*). She also reminds the reader of Carter's fascination with the almost endless potentialities of colloquial language and slang at their most prosaic. Even though these are traits of her style already successful in Fevvers' register, they do reach new heights in *Wise Children*, 'where they assert themselves as a pivotal contribution to her overall verbal vivacity and passion for baroquely ornate tropes' (Cavallaro 2011, 175).⁶ Besides using a markedly colloquial tone and register, Dora seems to know that readers will unsurprisingly trust the tale itself rather than its teller when it is a first-person narrative. In fact, she is aware of that inherent unreliability and partiality of this form, but she also recognizes the degree to which her materialistic priorities surpass any aesthetic considerations. This makes Dora somewhat prepared 'to exploit her culture's commercial preferences' (*ibidem*).⁷ The main characters in the three chosen narratives face unpredictable enigmas during their lives and, thus, they are imposed by circumstances to adapt their performances and stories to the shifting scenarios as they deal with diverse questions, which on their turn shift into various language games – 'Carter's focus on these issues is, in a sense, a direct offshoot of her ludic sensibility' (*ibid.* 139). In addition, these narratives were mainly chosen because it is investable to read them in terms of representations of food.⁸

⁶ The preference for conversational and markedly informal language is stressed by Cavallaro because of the way it 'impacts on practically all levels of Dora's discourse, affecting her diction, grammar, syntax, figurative language and verbal rhythm in equal measures' (Cavallaro 2011, 175).

⁷ Still comparing Fevvers to Dora, as both turn out to be flamboyantly unreliable narrators, Cavallaro stresses the following:

With Dora, Carter relies to unsurpassed dramatic effect on an especially marked sense of intimacy stemming from the establishment from the start of the narrator's direct dialogue with the reader. The communicational dialectics between addresser and addressee is not, in this instance, filtered by the presence of an intermediary or interviewer as is the case in *Nights at the Circus*. (Cavallaro 178)

⁸ One should not forget that the pleasure of represented food lies in its connotations as well as in the mimesis. The way Roman food was treated as a possible lexicon of symbols illustrates this idea. It has been argued, for example, that the significance of Roman food is clear from its 'raw' state; i.e. to mention the bare name of a foodstuff was enough to make its meaning immediately obvious, since each item has its place on a scale as a social marker. Still, because the meaning of food in Roman literature is rarely just social or economic, the significance of the food the Roman writers use is determined not just by wider cultural codes but also by personal manipulation; the particular connotations evoked are specific to each context. Therefore, the approach to Roman food in its 'raw' state might be adequate for a relatively unadorned representation, but it is not good enough for morally loaded works, where many other important oppositions – between simple and composite, raw and cooked, native and foreign food – are in play, and still less appropriate for the special tricks of imaginative fiction (*ibid.* 35-6). For instance, in the culinary system of the

If *Wise Children* is a clear example of Carter's richness of expression and salty relish, the messages she privately sent her friends seemed to be equally pungent. To illustrate Carter's spirit, I choose a postcard mailed in 1985 from Austin, Texas (United States) to her friend Susannah Clapp (figure 12), recently published in *A Card from Angela Carter* (2012).⁹ It was most probably sent to Clapp because of her working for the *London Review of Books* where some critics on Carter's journalistic piece published in that same magazine on the 24th of January 1984, "An Omelette and a Glass of Wine and Other Dishes" – review of Ann Barr and Paul Levy, *The Official Foodie Handbook* (Ebury Press); Elizabeth David, *An Omelette and a Glass of Wine* (Hale) and Alice Waters, *Chez Panisse Menu Cookbook* (Chatto & Windus). The postcard has a recipe for Texan chili and a terrifying picture of the dish – 'a black cauldron trying to pass as a saucepan. Bubbling with beans and frighteningly red beef, it was sending off a swirl of blue smoke; alongside it lay peppers, an open bottle of Lone Star beer' (Clapp 2012, 38-39).

eighteenth century French *Encyclopédie*, as Gowers refers, stew has two apparently contradictory functions:

In the moral sections, it is treated as a negative symptom of an over-civilized society; in the recipe sections, it becomes a completely harmless dish. The two roles are not hard to reconcile, if we realize that only the most introspective person who cooks or eats stew will think twice about its moral connotations. That does not mean, though, that stew is not extremely prone to moral or aesthetic 'loading' in literary representations, given that it is the supreme culinary example of mixture, spicing, mystery, and so on. After all, the word 'stew' comes naturally to our lips when we want a word for any messy situation (Gowers 1993, 36).

⁹ Although this idea comes from Clapp's considerations on Carter's novels prefigured by the poems written in her twenties, again I believe there is a spiraling which culminates with *Wise Children*.



Figure 12 – Postcard sent by Angela Carter to Susannah Clapp.

(<http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2012/jan/22/angela-carter-postcards-susannah-clapp>).¹⁰

This looks like something that would not work for Carter, mainly in terms of her diet; but it would certainly be suitable for her critics, since her message on the back of the postcard runs the following: ‘Carter’s reply to her critics! Texas chili, it goes through you like a dose of salts. I would like to forcefeed it to that drivelling wimp... preferably through his back passage. (I do think all that fuss was comic, though). Temperatures in the ‘80s. Everybody is loony, here’ (*ibid.* 39).¹¹ In the apparently controversial review, Carter

¹⁰ There is a black and white version of this in Clapps’ book (Clapp 2012, 41); however, in an article entitled “Angela Carter: a portrait in postcards” in the *The Observer* (22 January 2012) one can see the figure as it is reproduced here. In fact, the article is just an extract from the book which was then about to be published.

¹¹ Concerning Carter’s diet along her life, Clapp recalls the following:

Angela herself did not eat cakes. [...] although she was a generous dolloper-out of food, her eating habits had been, for a large part of her life, irregular and sometimes dangerous. As a young girl she had been large, with a chubby face, and had reached her adult height of more than five foot eight by the time she was thirteen. At the age of eighteen she changed [...] shape as dramatically as a creature in one of the fairy tales that fascinated her. She became anorexic.

She was clear about the reasons for this: she wanted to take control of her life and wrest her future away from her parents. (Clapp 2012, 43-44).

Still, Carter’s interest was also practical, personal, as her friend recalls:

In the kitchen in Clapham she served up rabbit and broccoli, and lamb and apricots (the last cooked with a cat sitting on her lap). She was not much of a drinker; the first time I went to supper at 107 The Chase, I was dashed to see that as soon as the first glasses of white wine had been poured, the bottle was stoppered up and put back into the fridge. She had, she said, cooked ‘endlessly, elaborately’ during her first marriage, and claimed that, after they split up, her husband had accused her of having produced batches of wonderful cakes ‘in order to make him fat and unattractive to other women. That was characteristic of my Machiavellian mind’. (*ibid.* 42-43).

had gashed what she termed 'piggery triumphant' (*SL* 97) or '[the] unashamed cult of conspicuous gluttony in the advanced industrialized countries, at just the time when Ethiopia is struck by a widely publicised famine' (*ibid.* 96), through a skillful analysis of manners in a piece of continuous diatribe: 'This mincing and finicking obsession with food opens up whole new areas of potential social shame. No wonder the British find it irresistible' (*ibid.* 96). Against the infuriated letters written then in response to her piece, Clapp sates that what enraged Carter was 'not only the inequity and the waste, it was also what she saw as the snobbery of that newly emerging species, the foodie' (Clapp 2012, 39).¹² Besides being wrong reading Carter as if she meant that foodies had in fact been responsible for famine (like in Ethiopia), these commentators also had the misconception of her as somehow uninterested in food. I cannot but agree that this is far from the truth – 'She [Carter] did take pride in a certain austerity [...]. Yet austerity in her was the flipside of relish and gusto' (*ibid.* 40). This is clearly pointed out by Clapp's accounts of the anthropological curiosity of Carter and her fierce interest in the history of food and in its social implications. A perfect example is when Carter selects *Larousse Gastronomique* (as her book choice) for *Desert Island Discs*: '[Carter] wanted, she said, to take something that would be 'a good read'' (*ibid.* 42).

¹² Among the 'interesting correspondence' (*ED* 82) provoked by Carter's review are letters from Christopher Driver (England), Peter Todd Mitchell (Barcelona, Spain), and John Thorn (Boston, USA) all re-published in *Expletives Deleted*. The furious response from the former even alludes to the pregnancy which had delayed her piece: 'A woman capable of splashing blame for the Ethiopian famine on Elizabeth David is scarcely to be trusted with a baby's pusher, let alone a stabbing knife' (*ibidem*).

Facing a Thatcherite Britain in the 1980s.

'A widespread and unashamed cult of conspicuous gluttony in the advanced industrialised countries'

Wise Children happened to be Carter's last, and arguably most popular, novel and in a way it holds 'a very definite shift in her work'; a shift she credited to her then altered domestic situation in 1988 – 'I find myself thinking much more simply because I'm spending so much time with a small child' (Katsavos 1994, 15). Accordingly, Carter also stated how she then played less complex games with her reader than she used to do – '*Wise Children* bears this out to some extent, being somewhat less obscurely eclectic in its sources than many of Carter's previous novels [although] it is still an intertextual riot' (Gamble 2006a, 180-181). Similar to Carter's previous novel, *Wise Children* reproduces the duality of 'public' and 'private' preoccupations. In this last novel, Carter brings Shakespeare into play 'both as repository of national identity and in the context of his significance within Carter's own family history' (*ibid.* 181). In fact, it was Carter herself who maintained having made free use of biographical material while writing her last novel (Clapp 1991, 26). In it the reader perceives her questioning of the meaning of being 'British' – 'a concern she traces back to her own hybridity, she keeps returning to the tension created by the opposition between north and south; proletariat and petit bourgeois; charm, and the madness that charm conceals' (Gamble 2006a, 199). By laying bare essential aporias, Dora, Carter's narrator in *Wise Children*, implicitly brings to the reader's notice the nature of Britishness and British culture: 'as hybrid realities whose attempts to establish neat partitions between disparate aspects of their makeup cannot finally suppress their inherent plurality' (Cavallaro 2011, 167-168). The representations of food from the "The Kitchen Child" world, from both Fevvers and Lizzie's choices in *Nights at the*

Circus, and from the main characters of *Wise Children* mirror the above mentioned Britishness.

In the 1980s Carter finally became an established literary figure (Gamble 2006a, 166) even if she can be regarded as 'the prime representative of a British personality that had not been privatised away' (Callil 1992, 6). In fact, Carter built up a critique, particularly in her novels written in 1980s, of the very notions of nationalism and empire Thatcherism was trying to revive. The crossroads of class and gender politics in Carter's work evidence her commitment to socialism and to feminism, as well. This is reflected in the theme of consumption (Parker 2000, 146), to which she draws the readers' attention. An example is *Expletives Deleted* where one finds Carter pointing the finger at *Vogue* magazine's use of food as an aspect of English upper-middle class style (*ED* 93), already mentioned in the last part of the second chapter. In the collection of selected writings seen above, she also censures ("An Omelette and a Glass of Wine and Other Dishes", 1984), the editors of *The Official Foodie Handbook* (Barr and Levy) for being frivolous foodworshippers, 'punters of 'foodism'', self-defined 'children of the consumer boom' who consider food to be an art – 'Art has a morality of its own, and the aesthetics of cooking and eating aspire, in 'foodism', towards the heights of food-for-food's-sake' (*ED* 77). Following this, Carter accuses them of taking their 'oral fetishism out of the moral scenario in which there is an implicit reprimand to greed' (*ibidem*). In this piece, Carter's observations represent 'a vitriolic attack on the "greed is good" ethos of Thatcherite Britain in the 1980s' (Parker 2000, 146). For this reason I selected Carter's expression 'widespread and unashamed cult of conspicuous gluttony in the advanced industrialised countries' to better illustrate what she condemned (*ED* 77). Furthermore, her perspectives on these matters echoed in much of her fiction, 'even that which precedes Thatcherism' (Parker 2000, 146).¹³

In fact, there is a clear perception that readers do not find it complicated to infer Carter's political views from her fiction, bearing in mind her suggestion that 'a narrative is an argument stated in fictional terms' (Haffenden 1985, 79). She controls her narrative and

¹³ Emma Parker gives the Count's example (*The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman*) in what concerns Carter's earlier fiction:

Her implicit indictment of the Count's conspicuous consumption, as well as that of all her male characters who selfishly gorge themselves on luxurious foods, expresses her contempt for consumer culture and the worst excesses of Western capitalism which, like the Count's consumption, is ruthless, exploitative, and self-serving, and which works to perpetuate gross inequalities in hierarchies of power. (Parker 2000, 146)

there is a sense of purpose in what she writes – one can say that ‘for most of the time her fiction did not state her subversions but embodied them’ (Clapp 2012, 83). The majority of the themes in *Wise Children*, for instance, echo the context of the 1980s, a time when the Anglo-American relations were also found on a close relationship between Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Regan. Even when one thinks that Thatcher was out of office, a year before the publication of Carter’s last novel in 1991, her policies clearly reverberate in this novel; i.e. it is visible in the way she discloses its national identity. One should not forget, though, that Carter’s television script *The Holy Family Album* is even more merciless when underpinning British national identity.¹⁴ The intention of adding force to a hegemonic imperialist ideology is analogous to Melchior’s project in *Wise Children* when he takes Shakespeare, England’s cultural touchstone, on tour – ‘[t]he description of the tour draws a parallel between Ranulph’s proselytising on behalf of Shakespeare and England’s imperial occupation of – and renaming of – territories across the globe’ (Day 1998, 197). As predictable in a novel by Carter, this is a situation that ‘cannot remain unchallenged for long’ (Gamble 2006a, 183). On the other hand, there’s Gorgeous George, an end-of-pier entertainer with a pink map tattooed on his buttocks, who committed to unsophisticated seaside-postcard humour and portrays Britain’s cultural and political decline. Accordingly, Carter’s last novel is pitiless in its anatomization of the disintegration of Empire. This is the Empire which is presented as incapable of enduring the American incursion into the British cultural arena, echoing the 1980s (*ibid.* 185).

The nationalistic revival idea which comes from Margaret Thatcher’s government makes an effort to redefine Britishness on her own terms. Even though Carter believed that Thatcherism demanded a return to the kind of political activism that had characterised the 1960s, she was still pessimistic about the prospect of this happening in fact in the context of the 1980s. As Gamble underlines, ‘while public protests might have been muted in a dominant atmosphere of passivity, Carter exercised her Scottish ‘facility for vituperation’ through her fiction’ (*ibid.* 166). Indeed, her work revealed exactly what the government would consider most adverse about the arts: ‘the stringent interrogation of current world views, and the dissemination of new and radical ideas (*ibidem*). I share

¹⁴ Carter does so based on Christianity as a key stone in British national identity. In fact, *The Holy Family Album* is perceived as ‘the final, most radical, word on an issue [the image of family] that is explored and debated throughout her work’ (Gamble 2006a, 193). *The Holy Family Album* is a television script Carter was working on when she fell ill (*ibid.* 191).

Gamble's view on how ironic is Carter's relationship with the Thatcherist return to 'Victorian values', especially in her novels. Such positioning becomes clear when one ponders on the moment the Victorian period was approaching, the *fin de siècle*, which is revisited in both *Nights at the Circus* (1984) and *Wise Children* (1991). In a general glance, not only is the setting of both novels commonly read as a move towards undermining culturally-determined categories of class, taste, and nationalism (whereas *Nights at the Circus* is set in the music hall and the circus, *Wise Children* puts the musical revues and pantomime along with the so called 'legitimate' theatrical productions) but their major characters also play a part in such undermining.

Concerning food habits, these remained roughly similar to those of the previous century. Although much food was still seasonal, canned foods (like South African fruit of various types) were then commonly accepted and more convenience foods were introduced, some of North American origin (like baked beans and breakfast cereals). However, most early twentieth-century ingredients used would have been recognizable and acceptable to past generations. In what concerns cookery, it mainly continued 'a solid, conservative tradition of roasted, boiled, and stewed meat served with vegetables and potatoes' (Mason 2004, 55), and French cookery was still a reference point for those who fancied to communicate wealth and taste. From the previous century, the British upper classes employed male French cooks and adopted French dishes, devaluing the homegrown English tradition of cookery, according to Laura Mason.¹⁵ Such preference is unambiguous in "The Kitchen Child", as pointed out in the next part of this chapter.

A clear example that sounds essentially French is meat stewed in red wine sauces, with plenty of added herbs, and covered in pastry. Nevertheless, both France and Britain appreciated this dish in many different forms throughout medieval times and for centuries afterwards; even if the British sometimes used cider or beer as the cooking medium.¹⁶ Still, some writers start by questioning the way the mixtures of people that became the

¹⁵ On example of how 'managing the range' became a perpetual problem of the Victorian kitchen was the introduction of gas as a cooking fuel for commercial kitchens and grand houses in the 1840s, which was widely used only in the 1880s, when electricity appeared (Mason 2004, 41-42).

¹⁶ The British stood out in meat pies too, and perhaps the most really British meat dish is the steak and kidney pudding steamed for many hours over a low fire, although unquestionably so is crisp pork crackling and boiled salt beef. Furthermore, a love of game birds is part of the British character especially since the medieval period, and then simply roasted or else used in a variety of pies.

As for the preserving methods, the British smoke, salt and pickle fish just like the rest of the northern European countries, even though the colder countries further north excel at a much greater variety of fish (Spencer 2002, 340).

British come to have such definitive culinary tastes, and they also inquire about the reason for their particular style of food decline, so directly, that it turned into a world-wide joke (Spencer 2002, 7).¹⁷ Along with these tendencies is the contemporary phenomenon of good pub food which began in the 1980s with its chefs cooking hot food that had a British Mediterranean style to it. This phenomenon is alluded to in *Wise Children* through Saskia's presence in Italy, to be studied later (on the last part of this chapter). Also, the boom in restaurants of all types and grades which has continued throughout this time is implied in the Chance Sisters' choices throughout that novel.¹⁸

Another example already mentioned in the second chapter, concerning the corporate power exerted over food supply, shows how the consumer could take his power back in order to control what was lost when industry took over from cottage produce two centuries ago. This would be a significant step forward if there was a really competitive co-operative movement in the world market, a movement in which the consumers have a say in the actual produce bought and sold and where the profits are shared equitably among the grower, the buyer and the consumer. In fact, Britain is part of the prosperous and industrialised West and, within the last fifty years, the diets of Western countries have gradually become similar. If one considers that the American fast food franchises has also broke into Eastern countries, it should not be forgotten that Britain led the way in the post-war years for being the first disciple of the American culture. Moreover, if the diet of all the Western countries has been now filled by American-style junk food and convenience refined industrialised food, used by the different classes and ages, it is only fair to ask whether this has affected the national cuisine of each country. Though it sounds strange, it seems that 'the traditional cuisine appears to co-exist quite happily and be quite uncontaminated by the newcomer' (*ibid.* 339).

¹⁷ Colin Spencer attempts an explanation in his introduction which is simply based on how good fresh produce was ruined by lack of culinary skill. He does add that around a dozen factors contributed to the decline of the British food, along with the fact that it was despised and systematically neglected (Spencer 2002, 9).

¹⁸ Within the enormous choice of dishes offered it might be difficult to discern that a new form of British cooking has been established, even if there are plenty of chefs working firmly within British traditions, such as Gary Rhodes. It is, in fact, a culinary phenomenon, which has been noticed by foreign visitors who are now beginning to understand the untruth behind the old horror stories about British food. Although this is not within the scope of this work, it is an interesting theme worthy of further attention.

Back to the novels published in the 1980s, they can be viewed as Carter's riposte to the policies and politics of Thatcherism, for it is well known how these attacked the independence of the arts, promoting 'an aggressive patriotism which overtly drew upon the jingoistic rhetoric of war and empire' (Gamble 2006a, 166). Therefore, albeit both of Carter's novels portray a renewed interest in 'Britishness', they reveal this interest in direct opposition to the way Thatcherism accounts for national identity. For example, in *Nights at the Circus* Fevvers' travels through Russia echo Carter's own travels in a piercing and defiant voice which remains Cockney; a Cockney voice also heard in the narrative of Dora Chance, who stopovers in Hollywood could not overrun her identity as Balham born and bred. Bearing this in mind, *Nights at the Circus* can be considered a recipe where critique and celebration tend to blend; the critique focuses on Britain under Thatcherism, but the celebration is more personal when it comes to her new relationship, where she found the satisfaction she kind of wishes for Fevvers and Walsler to achieve. Carter even makes clear her idea behind this novel: 'to entertain and instruct' (Haffenden 1984, 36). This is how *Nights at the Circus* comes to be regarded as both a burlesque fantasia and 'a deadly serious satire on nationalism and identity that positions itself in ironic counterpoint to the public rhetoric of Thatcherism' (Gamble 2006a, 174).¹⁹ In other words, *Nights at the Circus* brings a personal happy ending to its main characters, but it, simultaneously, fills up these characters' optimism with heavy irony when faced with the approaching century. Even though Gamble hinted that one of Carter's intentions was to undercut Thatcher's imperialistic rhetoric in a kind of sad manner (*ibid.* 176-177), I prefer to follow the idea of *Nights at the Circus* conveying the idea of a dichotomy between personal fulfillment and public disillusionment, echoing Carter's own motherhood at the end of 1983.²⁰

¹⁹ I cannot but agree with Gamble's description of what she considers Carter's most vicious satire in *Nights at the Circus* using Malcolm Bradbury portrayal of Thatcherist Britain as 'a patriotic place, ostensibly secure in interests and historical identity. A war in the Falklands and an aggressive policy on cooperation with Europe asserted as much: Britain was Britain, a long-term democracy with a sovereign identity, and not Europe' (Bradbury 2001, 445).

²⁰ A further perception on this matter is Marina Warner's argument about what she considers to be Carter's 'comic disguise' which constituted 'even an admission of defeat' in the face of Thatcherism (Warner 1994, 254), regardless of what she calls the 'heroic optimism' in the declaration of joy in the last novel. Later, Sceats confirms Warner's persuasiveness, but advises 'a more Carterish eye' should be cast over the novel, and 'heroic optimism' should translate into heroic defiance (Sceats 2000, 181).

Revisiting the shaken realm of the real in “The Kitchen Child”.

‘For it is, you understand, the time for seasoning’

The brilliant and neglected *Black Venus* was first published in 1985 (Hanson 1997, 61), but it is a collection of stories which had all been published separately elsewhere between 1977 and 1982.²¹ For such reason, this collection does not function in the same interlocking manner as the narratives in the other collection seen in the previous chapter, *The Bloody Chamber* (1979). Neither does this collection ‘wholly share the bawdy humour of the later novels’, even if “Overture and Incidental Music for *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*” may be considered ‘a glorious exception’ (Gamble 1997, 149). On the other hand, this is a collection which by all accounts resurrects episodes and versions of events ‘that have not made it into the official records’ (Peach 1998, 146). Moreover, although we recognize the way these narratives ‘demonstrate that the demythologizing project which had preoccupied Carter throughout the 1970s had not come to an end’ (*ibidem*), this collection also confirms how Carter uses her extravagant imagination to allow the reader to revisit the somewhat shaken realm of the real. In what concerns the world of food, “The Kitchen Child” illustrates precisely this project. Nevertheless, what I consider relevant is the way this story becomes an expression of Carter’s progressively more evident concern about the role of food in the last decade of her life and career.²²

In “The Kitchen Child” we witness what Aunt Margaret in *The Magic Toyshop* and Mrs Green and Marainne in *Heroes and Villains* had already portrayed as a potentially

²¹ The American edition was published the following year by Viking Penguin and it was entitled *Saints and Strangers* (1986).

²² There was a television adaptation to “The Kitchen Child” which is not addressed in this study because Carter did not play a part in either its adaptation or production, according to the director Joy Perino in conversation with Crofts (Crofts 2003, 19).

powerful role: the cook. If the essence of a cook's power is that it is exercised covertly (Sceats 1997, 104), as in the characters just mentioned, it is clear that such power unravels mainly in this short story and in *Wise Children*. In other words, I am here considering this last decade of Carter's production, but even in "The Kitchen Child" and later in *Wise Children*, the cook undergoes a change. In the story, the cook's influence is exercised through her skills to create lobster soufflés. Yet, this skill is not relevant in the beginning, when the cook is interrupted by seduction and its outcome may be taken as disempowerment. It is in the reprise, however, that the cook shows how she is meticulously in command, when she prevents the soufflé from being spoiled by using a wooden spoon to hit her would-be seducer. The cook does get rewarded on her single-mindedness and dedication as she 'brings forth the veritable queen of all the soufflés, that spreads its archangelic wings over the entire kitchen as it leaps upwards from the dish in which the force of gravity alone confines it' ("The Kitchen Child" 69). From Sceats' view, this tumescence suggests simultaneously sexuality, culinary perfection, social rise (given that the cook marries the Duc), and 'a peculiarly female triumph' (Sceats 1997, 104). I agree, but would stress that it does not suggest a professional rise since she is still a cook, not a chef.

In "The Kitchen Child" the setting is what actually shapes the characters. The reader is presented to the titular kitchen child, for instance, as a product of the kitchen and that is almost all one knows about him – 'who else could I claim as my progenitor if not the greedy place itself, that, if it did not make me, all the same, it caused me to be made?' ("The Kitchen Child" 64). This unnamed narrator starts by describing his conception in terms of the cooking time of a soufflé in the oven, specifying its main ingredient, the cooking time, and temperature – 'A lobster soufflé, very choice, twenty-five minutes in a medium oven' (*ibid.* 62). The other characters, also unnamed but for their titles, are immediately described in terms of their food preferences: the Madam, whose diet reflects 'the refinement of her sensibility', as she eats 'nothing but oysters and grapes on ice three times a day'; the Sir, victim of an Indian cook's revenge with hotted up curry; the guests, who joined the Great Grouse Shoot and are judged by the narrator as having 'palates like shoe leather'. This last comparison is based on their choices of sandwiches. The description (and listing) can be read similarly to a menu, in terms of its structure – 'all they wanted was sandwiches for hors d'oeuvres, sandwiches for entrées, followed by sandwiches, sandwiches, sandwiches, and their hip flasks kept replenished, oh, yes, wash

it down with the amber fluid and who can tell how it tastes?' (*ibidem*); 'as for *haute cuisine*, forget it; sandwiches, sandwiches, sandwiches, all they want is sandwiches' (*ibid.* 66). Here the reader can feel the strong bites through the repetition of 'sandwiches'. These could be the undermining of the so called acclaimed critics who actually do not know or care about the difference between *haute cuisine* and sandwiches.

If the Oxford English Dictionary defines 'cuisine' as a manner or style of cooking, kitchen, or culinary department, it also points out that its use in Britain dates from 1786. This date actually signals the eve of the French Revolution and, consequently, the flight to England of many French chefs who had been employed by the aristocracy (Spencer 2002, 339) – the word 'chef' came into English in the first half of the nineteenth century and it is in fact an abbreviation of *chef de cuisine* used to indicate a male cook in a professional kitchen (Mason 2004, 54). Here, it is the staff who manages to keep up the standards in that English country house. Those who best understand and enjoy are the ones who are behind the scenes, who actually create.²³ The housekeeper is an example of the knowledge of good food and beverage and she takes advantage of that when Sir and Madam are away in London: 'the housekeeper maintains a fine style all by herself, sitting in her parlour partaking of the best Bohea from a Meissen cup, to which she adds a judicious touch of rum from the locked bottles to which she's forged a key in her ample leisure' ("The Kitchen Child" 64). The housekeeper enjoys the kind of oolong Chinese tea, then regarded as the choicest grade, emphasised by the superlative 'best'. Furthermore, she does so in a cup of the rare and expensive Meissen porcelain.²⁴ However, the sensible and well-judged touch ('judicious') comes from the rum she adds.

As recently pointed out, this story may be read as a 'whodunit' (Conejos 2011); in other words, here one is also presented a complex plot story in which the mystery of the father's identity is the main feature of interest (a birth instead of the usual murder); clues are made available for the reader to discern the identity of the doer, and the investigation is also conducted here by an unconventional amateur in matters of investigation, the

²³ Curiously, when Susannah Clapp went to "Women's Hour" (BBC 4) on 2 February 2012 to talk about her just released book on Carter and the postcards she mailed her friend, she mentioned Carter's review of several books about food and referred to the finicking obsession with food. It was this obsession that Carter saw as a class based thing, as a way of dividing people, as a middle-class thing, which was too exquisite for words.

²⁴ Its high prices and rarity meant that in the beginning only the upper classes could afford it, since Meissen accepted orders mainly from the elites of Russia, France, and England.

kitchen child, who resulted himself from the action of the doer. When one accepts such a reading, one accepts the fact that the premise is based on acts of regret and deceit, as well. In addition, these acts induce the cook to further perfect her craft in an impressive way, even if the cadence in her sentences express that regret: 'First, she wept for shame because she'd spoiled a dish. Next, she wept for joy, to see her son mould the dough. And now she weeps for absence' ("The Kitchen Child" 67).

To start with, the preparation of the soufflé, as a witnessing action, is detailed from the choice of the 'beast itself' to be as fresh as possible, to its mixing with other ingredients after being boiled alive and diced. It was the cook's first soufflé and more important than knowing the identity of the one who grabbed her from behind was actually the worry about 'the wallop I [cook] give the oven door would bring the soufflé down' (*ibid.* 63). But there was too much spice involved in both actions and the cook always regretted that seasoning and not the new life which sprang from such over-seasoning of life and passion. The result was an 'exemplary dish [received] amidst oohs and aahs and of the assembled kitchen staff' (*ibidem*), but 'not quite exemplary' for the eater who, according to the jealous, spiteful housekeeper said '*trop de cayenne*' (*ibidem*).

The malicious lie from the housekeeper brings along the comparison with other houses based on their chefs, all male:

'What we need here is a congtinental – hic – chef to improve *le ton*,' menaces the housekeeper [...]. And the housekeeper is pricked perpetually by the fancy for the importation of a Carême or a Soyer with moustaches like hatracks to *croquembouche* her and *milly filly* her as is all the rage.

'For isn't it Alberlin [*sic.*], chef to the dear Devonshires; and Crépin, at the Duchess of Sutherland's. Then there's Labalme, with the Duke of Beaufort's household, doncherno ... and the Queen, bless her, has her Ménager ... while we're stuck with that fat cow who can't speak nothing but broad Yorkshire, never out of her carpet slippers . . .?' (*ibidem*).

The references are impressive, amongst which Marie-Antoine Carême (1784–1833), known as 'The King of Chefs, and the Chef of Kings', who was one of the first exponents of the elaborate and grandiose style of cooking known as haute cuisine, favored by both international royalty and by the newly rich of Paris (this is why he is frequently regarded as an early internationally renowned celebrity chef); and Alexis Benoist Soyer (1810–

1858), who was also a French chef and the most celebrated cook in Victorian England.²⁵ The other references, John Burnett specifically turns his attention to a noted gourmet, Abraham Hayward, who wrote the following in the *Quarterly Review* in 1835: ‘The most eminent cooks of the present time in England are Pierre Moret of the Royal Household; Aberlin, chef to the Duke of Devonshire; Crépin, of the Duchess of Sutherland’s household; [...] Labalme cook to the Duke of Beaufort’ (Burnett 1989, 73-74). In Burnett’s book one also comes across the reference to the Queen’s kitchen staff of forty-five when she was in residence at Windsor, which was presided over, ‘in the closing years of her reign, by the Royal Chef, M. Ménager’ (*ibid.* 194). This just proves the knowledge of the relevance of choice in the selection of food by the rich, despite the differences on their ranks. In fashionable circles, French cookery and service turned out to be mandatory by the 1930s and 1940s (*ibid.* 70).

Similar references are made at the end of the narrative, as the housekeeper, after the cook’s departure, comforts herself with the notion that Sir and Madam can be persuaded ‘to find her a spanking new chef such as Soyer or Carême to twirl their moustaches in her direction and *gâteau Saint-Honoré* her on her birthday and indulge her in not infrequent *babas au rhum*’ (“The Kitchen Child” 69). The sexual connotations are clear when we think that St. Honoré Cake, named for the French patron saint of bakers and pastry chefs, Saint Honoré or Honoratus (d. 600 AD), bishop of Amiens is a classic French dessert with a circle of puff pastry at its base and a ring of *pâte à choux* piped on the outer edge. After the base is baked, small cream puffs are dipped in caramelized sugar and attached side by side on top of the circle of the *pâte à choux*. This base is traditionally filled with *crème chiboust* and finished with whipped cream using a special St. Honoré piping tip. About *rum baba* or *baba au rhum*, it is a small yeast cake saturated in liquor, usually rum, and sometimes filled with whipped cream or pastry cream and it is most typically made in individual servings – thus the plural form here, as a repetition of pleasure.

Back to the other quotation, the way the narrator uses two references to French cooking terminology as verbs just evidences how comfortable he is in this domain: a *croquembouche* is a French high cone-shape cake, a sort of centre ‘assembled piece’ often

²⁵ Apart from his many innovations (like cooking with gas, using refrigerators which were cooled by cold water, and ovens with adjustable temperatures) Soyer was also famous for trying to alleviate suffering of the Irish poor in the Great Irish Famine (1845–1849) by inventing a soup kitchen, and improving the food consumed by British soldiers in the Crimean War (1853–1856).

served at important celebrations; *milly filly* most probably stands for *mille feuille*, a French-origin pastry made up of three layers of puff pastry which alternates with layers of pastry cream. Actually, he works the language as well as he does in the pastry section of the kitchen in order to create this sexual imagery. Yet, the French references go on, while the narrator stresses how the housekeeper spied a way to relieve the cook of her post when he was born with the intention of nagging ‘Sir and Madam to get in some mincing and pomaded gent to *chaudfroid* and *gêlée* and butter up’ (*ibid.* 64). *Chaud-Froid*, an 18th century creation by Marie-Antoine Carême in France, refers both to foods that were prepared hot and served cold and to a jellied sauce used to decorate serving platters or to coat generally cooked and cooled poultry. Similarly, *gêlée* is a soft rather elastic food product made usually with gelatin or pectin, resembling jelly in consistency (implying new methods, new attitudes, not so practical that they would seem basic). That explicitly relates to the housekeeper’s inner feelings *vs.* her public attitude; one can ask whether language is not as resilient as *gêlée*...

In fact, the British still feel deep inferiority about their food while they praise the French one. Yet, writers like Colin Spencer believe that the British have a great cuisine and one that goes back to the tenth century, a thousand years of history, even though the British people still have some trouble recognizing the value of their own cooking, mainly because it is so diffuse. Nevertheless, the last sixty years, in their ‘embrace of ethnic food, the more esoteric, aromatic and spicy the better, are a clue to our [their] own traditions; for this kind of cooking remained for almost 500 years the feasts of kings and princes in our own land’ (Spencer 2002, 339); although only two per cent of the population sat down to these feasts, the thousands of cooking staff tasted and nibbled on it, as is evident in Carter’s story, which was actually written about thirty years ago. In 1984, Carter published the already mentioned controversial *An Omelette and a Glass of Wine and Other Dishes* where it is explicit what she thought about cookery in terms of social distinctions and those who claimed to have ‘an enlightened interest in food’:

If a certain kind of upper-class British cookery represents the staff’s revenge upon its masters, an enthusiasm for the table, the grape, and the stove itself is a characteristic of the deviant sub-section of the British bourgeoisie that has always gone in for the arts with the diligent enthusiasm of (as they would put it) ‘the amateur in the true sense of the word’. (*SL* 98)

As already mentioned, food has not, in general, been respected as a characteristic of wider British culture in recent times and attitudes towards it occasionally suggested how it was considered a sore need. It does depend on the context, clearly, and if one takes the 1950s as an example, plainness in food was even seen as a virtue. Commonly, English domestic cookery had gained a reputation for being heavy and monotonous, prepared without any particular skill or enjoyment in food. Such an attitude is clear afterwards in Carter's piece "Saucer's Apprentice" (1982), which was referred to in the second chapter of the present study apropos of the way British women follow up with their long-established national cuisine – 'Oddly enough, in all of Europe, the British housewife is, historically, the only one of all who found herself burdened with this back-breaking and infinitely boring task [...]' (*ibid.* 92). Carter reflects on this as resulting from the distinction of British baked goods: 'Of course, it's always been more difficult, given British cuisine, for our housewives to get away with that excuse. Since we've got to have something to shine at, it turned out to be baked goods, didn't it?' (*ibidem*).

Apart from the obvious consequences of food rationing during both World Wars, the uniformity and blandness that characterised much of the early twentieth-century cooking, as well as a perception that food should be cheap, may, in part, have been a legacy from the extreme poverty of the nineteenth century, when most people could not afford more than the most basic foods. On the other hand, conservatism in food was probably more apparent than real, seeing that, in earlier centuries, the British absorbed and reinterpreted many dishes from other cultures (Mason 2004, x).

Also, later the narrator illustrates the duc's approach on his mother as 'he *gooses* her' ("The Kitchen Child" 68) and the whole situation; the cook's reactions are illustrated by her acting towards food:

My mother fetches out a sigh, big enough to blow away the beaten egg-whites but, great artist that she is, her hand never trembles, not once, as she folds in the yolks. And when the ducal hands stray higher – not a mite of agitation stirs the spoon.

For it is, you understand, the time for seasoning. And in goes just sufficient cayenne, this time. Not a grain more. Huzzah! This soufflé will be – I flourish the circle I have made with my thumb and forefinger, I simulate a kiss.

The egg-whites topple into the panada; the movements of her spoon are quick and light as those of a bird caught in a trap. She upturns all into the soufflé dish.

He tweaks.

And *then* she cries: 'To hell with it!' Departing from the script, my mother wields her wooden spoon like a club, brings it, smack! down on to the duc's head with considerable force. He drops on to the flags with a low moan.

'Take that,' she bids his prone form. Then she smartly shuts the soufflé in the oven. (*ibid.* 68-69)

The way this narrative is constructed looks indeed as light and rich as the lobster soufflé around which it is constructed; i.e. the lightness is transmitted by the easy flow and access to detail and the richness of detail. This description brings to mind the creating process itself; i.e. the importance of being precise not only in terms of measures, of choosing the right ingredients (as seen above), but simultaneously the weight of being true to one's own identity, echoes Carter's creating process. The 1980s gave Carter the opportunity to make use of her seasoning in yet another creative approach. Ronald Tobin's gastro-criticism focuses precisely on such parallelism.

The birth of this child, for instance, is heralded by the kitchen music from 'improvised instruments' – '*batterie de cuisine*' (*ibid.* 68) – and his whole infancy spent in the kitchen is witnessed by the same kitchen brigade 'chanting in unison: 'The kitchen child! The kitchen child!'', who could not remember the visitor in the morning of his conception – 'Not one scullery maid nor the littlest vegetable boy could remember who or what it was which visited my mother that soufflé morning' (*ibid.* 64-65). From his toys ('colanders, egg whisks and saucepan lids') to his basic needs ('took my baths in the big tureen in which the turtle soup was served [...] as for my crib, what else but the copper salmon kettle?' (*ibid.* 65)), his memories come from the kitchen's sounds, smells, and contact: 'And this kettle was stowed way up high on the mantelshelf so I could snooze there snug and warm out of harm's way, soothed by the delicious odours and appetising sounds of the preparation of nourishment' (*ibidem*; my emphasis).²⁶ Why then not feel as

²⁶ In Carter's journals there is this concern with the smells from childhood in reference to her own son's experience: 'She [Carter] wondered what smell Alexander would remember from his childhood home' (Clapp 2012, 8). About the sounds, these are often stressed by Carter as, for instance, in her plots for radio, where there is an enormous range of sounds – 'She [Carter] claimed that the wireless was 'the most visual of mediums because you cannot see it'' (*ibid.* 18).

the household deity high in his tiny shrine, if this kitchen child acknowledges 'something holy about a great kitchen' (*ibidem*). The comparisons in terms of decoration and acting are clear and well designed:

Those vaults of soot-darkened stone far above me, where the hams and strings of onions and bunches of dried herbs dangle, looking somewhat like the regimental banners that unfurl above the aisles of old churches. The cool, echoing flags scrubbed spotless twice a day by votive persons on their knees. The scoured gleam of row upon row of metal vessels dangling from hooks or reposing on their shelves till needed with the air of so many chalices waiting for the celebration of the sacrament of food. And the range like an altar, yes, an altar, before which my mother bowed in perpetual homage, a fringe of sweat upon her upper lip and fire glowing in her cheeks. (*ibidem*)

Origins do limit us and, consequently, define us, as it does with this kitchen child, whose link to the place of his conception is so explicit.

The sacramental food is also what sets the tone on the highlights of his development as a child, like a true acolyte of the woman cook. Even time, the narrator's different ages, is presented concerning his skills in food preparation and all the consequent bliss and rewards on his precocity. The listing runs the following way:

At three years old she gave me flour and lard and straightaway I invented shortcrust. [...] tears of joy at my precocity trickling down her cheeks, lets me dollop on the damson jam and lick the spoon for my reward. By three and a half, I've progressed to rough puff and, after that, no holding me. [...] my own Hollandaise. So I become her acolyte. [...] First, I stand on that stool to my saucepans; then on an upturned bucket; then on my own two feet. Time passes. (*ibid.* 65-66)

Time is often compared to food preparation, as the description of the mist rising over the moors in an October day – 'like the steam off a *consommé*, the grouse taking last hearty meals like condemned men' (*ibid.* 66). In addition, his education, in what concerns reading and writing, revolves around the world of food. In view of that, Carter manages to create a whole world entangled in the kitchen culture, from religion, to society, education, and expertise. What is hard to fit in this universe is ignored for having no relevance, as the letter X:

A for asparagus, *asperges au beurre fondue* (though never, for my mother's sake, with a *sauce batarde*); B for *boeuf*, baron of, [*sic*] roasted mostly, with a *pouding Yorkshire* patriotically sputtering away beneath it in the dripping pan; C for carrots, *carottes* [*sic*], *choufleur*, *camembert* and so on, right down to *Zabaglione*, although I often wonder what use the X might be, since it figures in no cook's alphabet. (*ibid.* 65-66)

In 1975 Martha Rosler had already presented a feminist parody video entitled *Semiotics of the Kitchen* where she mimed the use of different kitchen hand utensils from A-Z for six minutes. This illustration of how the notion of language speaks the subject is also in the way she showed the kitchen utensils structurally, i.e. alphabetically.²⁷ Rosler's intention had been to defy the common system of everyday kitchen meanings (i.e. the firmly acknowledged signs of food production and domestic industry) by placing linguistics as the focal point. Let us not forget that eating can be a mental and a physical pleasure – 'I can feast on the history and derivations of words as well as the things they name' (Halligan 1990, 113). In addition to pleasure, the naming of food processes, for instance, can be illustrative of a cruel streak in mankind, as pointed out by Jean-Paul Aron long ago: 'Culinary terminology is a mirror in which one sees accents of cruelty, an extraordinary lust and joy of possession' (Aron 1975, 120). When one looks at verbs connected with the preparation of food, for example, it is not hard to find the following: beat, boil, chop, crack, crush, grind, mash, mince, pound, sear, strip, stuff, tear, whip... There is the suggestion of images of torture – '*sauteur* is to make jump in the pan by applying heat, there is skinning and peeling and bleeding and hanging and binding, not to mention skewering and spitting, topping and tailing' (Halligan 1990, 118).

Still, I consider Carter to have achieved a short but significant list in the above quotation. A close reading to that child's alphabet evidences a wide variety of flavours, textures, ingredients, and colours; but it also testifies Carter's attention to detail. The alphabet starts with the English spring vegetable 'asparagus' and the French dish '*asperges au beurre fondue*' (which can also refer to soufflé) associated to a very simple sauce ('*sauce batarde*') by Careme (which makes a good start for all kinds of unusual butter

²⁷ This video was brought to my knowledge by Alison Hoffman-Han in her paper entitled "Cooking Up Rage: Second Wave Feminist Experiments in Domestic De-Programming" presented at the Conference *Food Networks: Gender and Foodways* (26-28 January 2012, University of Notre Dame, Indiana).

combinations); the next letter is all about meat – a cut of beef, the cooking method ('roasted') and the side dish for meat garnished by a sound imagery and a personification that confirms its proud origin ('*pouding Yorkshire* patriotically sputtering away'); more vegetables follow, showing the naturally possible correlation between the English and the French ('carrots, *carottes* [*sic*]'); finally, the alphabet ends with a light foamy dessert for which she chooses the Italian designation ('*Zabaglione*'), probably because the French version would be 'Sabayon'. In addition, the remark on the lack of utility for a letter which does not fit this culinary world, 'X', is just a pretext to emphasize its significance over language itself.²⁸ All this world translates into another creative imagery: 'I stick as close to that kitchen as the *croûte* to a *pâté* or the mayonnaise to an *oeuf*' (*ibid.* 66). The kitchen becomes part of the narrator's essence and he is aware of that – a correlation notorious by the reference to the celebrated *Pâté en croûte* in French or Belgian cuisine, when *pâté* is baked in a crust as pie or loaf; or the allusion to the most familiar mayonnaise whose main ingredient is the egg, depending, thus, on its freshness and quality.

Later, as a young chef, the kitchen child will use his 'best culinary French, [...] *petit poi de française*' (*ibid.* 67) to address the French duc. Interesting is the way he learns the alphabet in terms of both the trendy French cuisine and the patriotic English foodstuff. I believe such harmony illustrates simultaneously Carter's industrious search for and concern about the specific terminology and detail and her broad knowledge of the subject. Accordingly, I understand such concern to parallel her pleasure for acknowledging the power of combining cultures, here in terms of different cuisines. This becomes clear when one thinks about her choices until the 1980s. The cook in this case also perfects her recipe every year, even if there is no one to order the dish and no one from the kitchen battalion has the heart to eat it – 'So, fifteen times in all, the chickens got that soufflé' (*ibid.* 66). As if she is following a magic ritual, the cook prepares her lobster soufflé – 'send the grinding boy off for the lobster, boil it alive, beat the eggs, make the panada etc. etc. etc.' (*ibidem*) – and eventually she constructs 'the airiest, most savoury soufflé that ever lobster graced' (*ibidem*).

Even the kitchen child's feelings are compared to foodstuff, as he blanches like an endive (*ibid.* 67), when he hears about the death of the valet believed to be his father.

²⁸ Actually, a look into a list of fish through the scientific name 'Xiphopenaeus spp' would bring to mind the English version 'Xiphopenaeus shrimps nei' and even the French 'Crevettes xiphopenaeus nca' or the Spanish 'Camaron xiphopenaeus nep'.

Also, in the description of the preparation of the béchamel for the lobster soufflé, the then young chef compares the melting of the butter to the way the duc's heart had melted while listening to his story (*ibid.* 68). It is in such mood that he visits the kitchen and is impressed by the narrator's mother, a perfectionist cook who was impregnated by an unidentified devotee, because she had not turn for fear of spoiling the dish. When this happens again, the duc is once more overcome and awestruck by this Yorkshire woman, a superb cook, who will stand no distractions when the soufflé is in the oven. She does manage to cook a true divine soufflé, 'the veritable queen of all the soufflés, that spreads its archangelic wings over the entire kitchen as it leaps upwards from the dish in which the force of gravity alone confines it' (*ibid.* 69), as seen above. As if another child is born, 'all present [...] the kitchen brigade [...] applaud and cheer' (*ibidem*). Actually, now that her child has grown older (the wise child who decides to discover the identity of his father) is her sole heir and he concludes humorously: 'how can the housekeeper complain? Am I not the youngest (Yorkshire born) French chef in all the land? For am I not the duc's stepson?' (*ibidem*). Even if his origins in the kitchen make this place and food his way of life, these same origins also motivate him to expand his boundaries.

With what one may consider a farcical style, in this story the reader is faced with the characters' speech patterns which are piercingly ventriloquised. This is in accordance with what Carter stated in the introduction of *The Bloody Chamber*: 'The short story is not minimalist, it is rococo' (*BC* xix). It is an idea easily identifiable in "The Kitchen Child", mainly due to its intelligence, sensuous details and exceptional set-pieces. The story itself mimics an admirable soufflé for its light tone and the perfectly drawn measurements of the characters (Conejos 2011). Still, as an excellent soufflé, I believe that this story gives rise to a decade where food is a matter openly dealt with by Carter and more central than ever in her writing. The reader should not forget, though, that Carter entitled her 1979 story 'The Kitchen Child', not 'The Cuisine Child', which proves that her interest was practical, as well – she declared 'I'm a domestic person' to her friend (Clapp 2012, 42).²⁹

²⁹ Susannah Clapp states from her knowledge of Carter's house in Clapham, that the downstairs 'was carnival: true, there was a serious kitchen, but there were also violet and marigold walls, and scarlet paintwork' (Clapp 2012, 1). This is the feeling I have after studying this short narrative. It is a serious issue, the domestic kitchen, which this unique artist portrays through a rich language and grand pounces of imagination.

A cornucopian bounty of voices, accents, styles, and traditions in *Nights at the Circus*.

'Thirsty work, this autobiography'

'Thirsty work, this autobiography' (NC 57) are the words of Fevvers, the aerialist from *Nights at the Circus* (1984), whose biography is far from being conventional. In fact, it is not difficult to use her own allusion to a beverage to facilitate illustrating the way in which she is 'a wonderfully fleshly creation, a creature of sweats and appetites, of belches and farts' (Waters 2006, ix), just like Sarah Waters suitably remarks in the introduction to the 2006 edition of this novel. Presenting Fevvers as such opposes the first impression that Carter's heroine bears the qualities of a mythical entity. In reality, this is clearly shown in Carter's reaction to Anna Katsavos' question on whether Fevvers 'is out to create her own myth', since she ripostes 'No, Fevvers is out to earn a living' (Katsavos 1994, 13).

As shown in the previous part, Carter had been facing several changes while writing this novel (for almost a decade). She felt the need for more after returning home and Fevvers' narrative proves to be energetic and it expresses this character's *joie de vivre* (not to mention the fact that most of the criticism on this novel focuses on Fevvers). Being a performer she had been publicised in a poster under the question 'Is she fact or fiction?' (NC 3) and the genre of magic realism allows for both alternatives, because there is undoubtedly magic in a winged woman. All the same, she is a character preoccupied with the material elements of her existence, just as Carter proved to be – indeed, Fevvers' motto 'Is she fact or is she fiction?' could also have been Carter's motto 'both on the page and in life' (Clapp 2012, 23).³⁰ This is the case of the food Fevvers eats and the beverages

³⁰ 'Is she fact or is she fiction?' (NC 3) becomes the question used by Carter as a narrative leitmotif.

she selects. In fact, Carter presents a somehow thorough realistic world through mostly the material forms of Fevvers' life – being food one of these markers of verisimilitude. This piece of information makes all the difference in a realist narrative whose inner fact is fantastic. Instead of an idealized body, the reader is presented one full of vulgar appetites: food, sex, money and jewelry, and copious amounts of champagne – the personification 'she [Fevvers] invitingly shook the bottle until it ejaculated afresh' illustrates some of these features during the interview she gives to Walser (*NC* 12). The exuberance and inventiveness of the stories in *Nights at the Circus* equals the used language: creative and lively.

Fevvers' huge appetite is connotated with food and it is presented by Walser himself when he describes her performance as a trapeze artiste similarly to the way 'the valkyries at last approached Valhalla' (*ibid.* 17) – the hall in which the souls of slain heroes dwelled and feasted, according to the Scandinavian mythology. In what is termed 'Fevvermania' one is told that she had already had her capability associated to food preparation through baking powder: 'if you added a spoonful of the stuff, up in the air went your sponge cake, just as she did' (*ibid.* 8). Even when describing her physical traits, Fevvers' 'broad and oval' face is compared to a meat dish (*ibid.* 12) and from the back row of the gallery her white teeth are 'big and camivorous as those of Red Riding Hood's grandmother' (*ibid.* 18), who had actually been acted by the wolf. Her teeth are often mentioned as she manages to open a 'chilled magnum of champagne between her teeth' (*ibid.* 8). Furthermore, Fevvers' long eyelashes bear a too close resemblance to the fake ones which are compared as follows: 'hairy as gooseberries' (*ibid.* 40). In addition, Ma Nelson is described by Lizzie through another comparison involving food: 'her little plump thighs like chicken cutlets in her doeskin britches' (*ibidem*).

In addition, the meal Fevvers takes in the second chapter can be considered gargantuan and unladylike. In effect, she interrupts her narrative to eat 'hot meat pies with a glutinous ladleful of eel gravy on each; a Fujiyama of mashed potatoes; a swamp of dried peas cooked up again and served swimming in greenish liquor' (*ibid.* 22). The portions are not ladylike, either, but enormous as her appetite: 'ladleful' confirms the quantity of gravy; 'Fujiyama' illustrates the shape and the huge amount of mash potatoes, through the reference to the extinct volcano which is the highest peak in Japan and celebrated for its symmetrical snow-capped peak; 'swamp' shows the food's consistency; and the verb form 'swimming' hyperbolically underlines the liquid texture. For the

American journalist, Walser, this is the traditional English food which one needs to grow to enjoy and he teases Fevvers implying that if in fact she is one of the Seven Wonders of the World, then English cuisine would be the eighth.

Another question to ask is whether this applies to Britain, where the public is not conscious of possessing a strong endemic cuisine. In reality, British consumers can buy goods from almost any country in the world and they can eat in almost any style, since the different cuisines, like the French in the nineteenth century, are adapted to their tastes – i.e. not authentic, but a debased version of the genuine cooking. This British freedom of choice is amazing and echoes a thriving world trade in almost any food. As also stated in chapter two, the British people live in a global village and such a rich diversity of foods brought into the United Kingdom, and sold to the public, might lead to the conclusion that their traditional cuisine is in danger of being lost. Still, there is a comprehensible uncertainty over this very question since the British are unsure as to what their traditional cuisine is or whether they have one at all. Sybil Kapoor, in her introduction to *Simply British*, concludes that even her critical friends could not give a clear definition as to what makes British food British, for some of them questioned the value of writing about British food at all, since they believed their indigenous food is so inherently bad as to be not good enough for any special attention (Spencer 2002, 339).

Concerning the table manners, both Fevvers and her foster-mother Lizzie ‘fell to with a clatter of rented cutlery’ (NC 22). In addition, Fevvers’ vile behaviour and gluttonously eating, not to be expected from a nice woman, are emphasised by expressions like ‘gorged’ and ‘stuffed’ and by the fact that she splattered about gravy and ate peas from her knife, wiping her lips on her sleeve and belching. Accordingly, her diet is considered to equal that of a cabdriver but in a superlative manner: ‘her mouth was too full (...) as she tucked into this earthiest, coarsest cabbies’ fare with gargantuan enthusiasm’ (*ibidem*). This is how Fevvers’ eating is described in a grotesque way. In short, Fevvers’ enormous appetite translates into ‘a gullet to match her size and table manners of the Elizabethan variety’ (*ibidem*). Yet, this spectacle of her gluttony is a conscious exhibition to drive the interviewer away and since this does not produce the desired effect, Fevvers sighs and belches again. Her attitudes prove to be exceedingly vulgar – not only because of her manners and language, along with a loud voice, but also due to her immense appetite – as if she is performing a parody of femininity. Fevvers is a

voracious figure in many aspects, but she draws power from her talent for resisting others' expectations of her, since she intends to be more than a symbol.

Walser starts to witness all this, but he does not eat what he is offered, and describes English food as 'an acquired taste' (*ibidem*); he is not that affected by the champagne and the tea. Therefore, he turns out to be challenged by Fevvers' large and uninhibited feasting. This is where the eating focus lies. Furthermore, it also serves as a statement of Cockney solidarity towards her peers, when she eats eel pies, food of the cabbies, which will later be remembered by Walser as one of his most dear and even familiar memories. This is why I agree with Sarah Sceats when she concludes that the main significance here is 'the interplay between the storytelling, the food and drink and gender politics' (Sceats 2000, 178). Indeed, most of Fevvers' narration during this first part has to do 'with sisterhood and with female surmounting of adversity' (*ibidem*).

Every stage of life should be celebrated and food becomes an essential part of such celebration. Thus, during Fevvers' description of her performance as Cupid at Ma Nelson's house, Lizzie reaches for another bottle and suggests 'Let's drink to little Cupid' and as expected she accepts it by proffering her glass (NC 23). After narrating her first flight, it is Fevvers herself who asks Lizzie for another bottle, drinks thirstily a filled up glass of 'bubbly', and pours herself another one (*ibid.* 35). Still, despite all the excitement described by Fevvers about her new-found skills, she recalls having brought Lizzie 'a handful of the fruit [from the cherry tree] that had just reached perfect ripeness upon the topmost branches' (*ibid.* 36). The peak season for cherries is in the summer and Fevvers must have acknowledged that moment as the perfect maturity to undergo whatever followed such well-achieved flying attempt, and not to leave 'fruit that customarily we [they] were forced to leave as a little tribute to the thrushes' (*ibidem*). Later on, Lizzie runs to Fevvers with a bottle of brandy after the latter comes down from the Charivaris plot of cutting her rope; the intention is either to help her regain her wits from the anxious position she supposedly finds herself into or to once again celebrate another triumph by having the troop sacked and her protégée present her number – while she gulps brandy (*ibid.* 161). The same feeling is implied when Fevvers 'raised the brandy bottle to her lips' (*ibid.* 164), as Walser is about to face the tigress for a dance after being attacked by the same animal. After this, Fevvers 'toasted Walser with the empty brandy bottle' (*ibid.* 165) in recognition of his well achieved performance and celebrates it. I believe Fevvers' toasting and drinking stress her constructive agency, for she 'is not just a destroyer; she is

a mender, a builder, a unifier [and] what she destroys are the cages that confine the socially oppressed [...]. What she builds are human relationships' (Gass 1994, 75).

Nevertheless, Fevvers' need for drink is also related to bad moments that need an extra strength to be remembered, as she asks Lizzie for any 'fizz left' when she is about to enter her narrative on how she was seventeen and the bad years began. At this point, having drunk 'the lot', tea is the next beverage available (NC 42). In a dressing-room equipped for making tea, and no milk available, Fevvers settles for black tea and gets her strength from sugar before carrying on her narrative: 'Fevvers had a powerfully sweet tooth. She dispensed with measure and tipped the sugar into her steaming mug directly from the bag, in a stream' (*ibid.* 43). Along this narrative, food and beverages are brought in, or prepared, and consumed. One can actually notice how Fevvers narrative becomes unique if one accounts for the passing of time, which in fact confuses Walser. For instance, the second time Big Ben strikes midnight Lizzie is making the first cup of tea and the third time it strikes midnight, she makes more tea and brings in bacon sandwiches. Such parallel between narrating, time, and eating is consequently related: 'The tea-drinking, eating, storytelling thus take place in a piece of suspended time, somehow achieved between Fevvers and Lizzie and Ma Nelson's clock, proof in itself, according to Fevvers, that time stands still' (Sceats 2000, 178).

With a voice that enchanted Walser, Fevvers describes Ma Nelson's sudden death as she slipped and fell beneath the hooves and wheels of a brewer's dray and 'was mangled to pulp in a trice' (NC 43). The use of the verb form 'mangled' may be read in terms of the universe of mechanics (like a clothes wringer), but also in terms of batter-like texture, as in culinary terminology, specially because of the choice of the noun 'pulp'. Also, the use of the adjective 'funeral' in 'we were breaking a funeral baked meat or two amongst ourselves' (*ibid.* 44) relates meat-pie to a ceremony, or it may resemble a funeral, or it may be, I believe, a reference to Hamlet's remark – 'The funeral baked meats / did coldly furnish forth the marriage table' (*Hamlet* II, ii, 1.179-180, in Wells 1986) – since the hot meat-pies served at the funeral and, not eaten, were brought cold to the marriage banquet in the bard's tragedy. Similarly to the Shakespearean character who comments on the swiftness of the twist of his mother's status from a recent widow to a new bride, Fevvers brings into play this situation that is rapidly interrupted by the knocking at the door by the ruthless elder brother of the deceased owner of the house 'like Judgment Day', given that the girls will be forced to leave the only home they had known (NC 44).

Ma Nelson's nonconformist brother turns over the pork pies and vintage port in moral rage as he gives the notice to leave. The order had been reversed and the girls choice of food illustrates such an upturn of events and even time when they are compared to gloomy birds: 'At the end of the night, there we clustered like sad birds in that salon and sipped our port and nibbled a bit of fruitcake Lizzie had put up for Christmas but there was no point in keeping it' (*ibid.* 48). However, these women still have the last laugh after this departing bottle of port and piece of fruitcake, as they give Ma Nelson a heroic farewell celebration by setting fire to the house – 'the farewell snack [...] precipitates their collective act of reprisal' (Sceats 2000, 176). It is rather interesting to notice how the solidarity of women at Nelson's brothel does not bring any other reference to food or eating until Ma Nelson's death, unlike the 'freak' women of Madame Schreck's house, which will be seen briefly.

The unexpected change and departure lead to a life in Battersea related to the preparation and selling of ice-cream, when they helped with Lizzie's family business. Such a change is presented by Fevvers as supposedly redemptive. The adjectives used portray this 'positive purification': 'merry' in 'merry rhymes' lispied by the little ones; 'innocent' in 'innocent way of earning a living'; 'good' and 'modest' in 'sell good ice-cream at modest prices'; 'well-scrubbed, shinning' for the ice-cream parlour (*NC* 51). Still, as one learns in the end, this was a cover-up operation for the anarchist operations of Lizzie's family and Fevvers question and attitude make it easy to guess there would be a veiled maneuver somewhere: "'Don't you think, sir [Walser], that in heaven we shall *all* eat nothing but ice-cream?" Fevvers smiled beatifically, belched, and interrupted herself: 'Here, Liz... is there a bite left to eat in the place? I'm starved, again' (*ibidem*). It seems the gargantuan meal was not enough, since during the interview, Fevvers is again hungry and it is Lizzie who leaves to get a bacon sandwich.

Thus, food is clearly fuel for Fevvers' narrative, since it will 'put fresh heart into the *aerialiste*' (*ibid.* 53). Walser, on the other hand, refuses to eat a bacon sandwich described by 'the strips of rusty meat slapped between the doorsteps of white bread' (*ibidem*). The use of both 'rusty' and 'slapped' show, once again, Carter's resourceful imagery when we reflect on Walser's possible change of heart towards the sandwich only for 'dire extremities of hunger' (*ibidem*). The description also serves to emphasise again (but now by opposition) how Fevvers takes pleasure in eating, her dynamics and rude manners, as she 'tucked in with relish, a vigorous mastication of large teeth, a smacking of

plump lips smeared with grease. [...] she wiped her mouth once more on her sleeve' (*ibidem*). By then, the conclusion could not be other than the following: 'Everything aggressively normal about all this, except the hour' (*ibidem*). Indeed, Walser becomes confused not only due to the proliferation of details, but also because of the champagne Fevvers offers, for instance. His enchantment begins to follow a continuous loss of the sense of objective reality throughout the novel. One cannot forget that Fevvers' appetite is not only for food, but also for words: 'she [Fevvers] seized the narrative between her teeth' (*ibid.* 32).

Even if the ordinary and the fantastic coexist with consistency, *Nights at the Circus* is picaresque, according to Carter's own words: 'I purposely used a certain eighteenth-century fictional device – the picaresque, where people have adventures in order to find themselves in places where they can discuss philosophical concepts without distractions' (Haffenden 1985, 87). Still, during these adventures that Fevvers finds herself in, food somehow plays an important part in the lives of the characters she comes across. After the experience with Lizzie's family, Fevvers visits Madame Schreck's house where she is invited to a cup of hot chocolate at her arrival and which she willingly accepts for feeling starving. Even so, that warm greeting proved to be an exception, as later Fevvers informs on how 'very poorly' the inhabitants/performers all do in that 'morbid sepulchre', specially when the 'old crone in the kitchen' would pass out because of a drinking problem (*NC* 71). At Madame Schreck's house of freaks, the reader is a witness of female solidarity, as they look out for each other (although the drunken cook is not included in the lot). Sleeping Beauty, for instance, depends on the competent and affectionate Fanny to be fed. It is also Fanny who ends up preparing food for the others while the drunken cook appears to be comatose.

The allusions to their scanty diet of 'boiled beef and carrots, spotted dog' (*ibid.* 62) and the Sunday dinner indication of 'Beauty's invalid diet' (*ibid.* 71) of 'a little minced chicken or a spoonful of junket' (*ibid.* 64) are not the only references to food in Madame Schreck's house. Both Sleeping Beauty and Wonder of Wiltshire's lives are remembered by Fevvers in terms of food, as well. Thus, whilst the former just eats and empties her bowels during the few moments a day when she is awake ('I think I could fancy a little bowl of bread and milk' (*ibid.* 63) had been her only words to her parents at the beginning of her condition when she was fourteen), the latter had her whole life revolving around the world of food. This is evident from Wonder's conception, after her mother had had a

‘snack of bread and honey’ (*ibid.* 65) – the choice of two of the oldest food products in our diet (long associated to symbolism that goes beyond its use as foodstuff), which are here consumed at night in a place commonly believed to bring curious fates and transformations to human beings, makes it easier to believe Wonder’s father to be ‘who but the King of Fairies’ (*ibidem*)³¹ – to when she was sold to a Pastry Chef, at the age of seven. The Pastry Chef used her as a surprise centerpiece on birthday cakes for wealthy children and threatened to bake her in a *vol-au-vent* if she did not obey him. What I consider to be one of the most interesting issues in this episode is the perspective on the not so enjoyable side of working with food in general and catering services in particular, even if it is in the business of sweetness.³²

The mother of the child who saves Wonder from her own escape summarises the feeling one can only guess from the description of the flight from the birthday cake: ‘I am ashamed. I never thought that horrid trick with the cake might cause suffering to a living creature’ (*ibid.* 67). The child who saved Wonder shares her mother’s feeling as she accuses the pastry cook ‘how dare you torture a human creature so!’ (*ibid.* 66). Wonder had described how her claustrophobia got the better of her and articulated her feeling through expressions of torment:

I clambered in my coffin, suffered the lid to close on me, endured the jolting cab-ride to the customer’s address, was cursorily unloaded on to the salver (...). Half-fainting, sweating, choking for lack of air in that round space no bigger than a hatbox, sickened by the stench of baked eggs and butter, sticky with sugar and raisins, I could tolerate no more (*ibidem*).

The difficulty she faces first from climbing into a hollowed cake that under the circumstances equals to a sarcophagus is afterwards followed by the suffering of enclosure and hard movements on the way to the customer’s house and the degradation of being put

³¹ In what concerns honey’s religious significance, for instance, it ranges from being considered one of the five elixirs of immortality by Hinduism, to a symbol for the new year, Rosh Hashana, in Jewish tradition. Also there are many references to honey in the Hebrew Bible (The Book of Judges and The Book of Exodus), the Christian New Testament, and in the Islamic Qur’an, there is an entire Surah called al-Nahl (the Honey Bee) and it strongly recommends honey for healing purposes. Moreover, in Buddhism, honey plays an important role in the festival of Madhu Purnima, celebrated in India and Bangladesh, in commemoration of Buddha’s making peace among his disciples by retreating into the wilderness, where he was brought honey by a monkey.

³² The use in the text of ‘pâtisseries’ as the pastry-maker guarantees some knowledge of the culinary world.

on a serving dish. Wonder's senses are portrayed through her enumerated affliction – mainly touch and smell are here explicitly focused. Furthermore, even during her attempt to escape, the reader becomes conscious of the humiliation of being 'crusted with frosting, blinking crumbs from my [her] eyes', having her hair and tulle skirt on fire from the scattered candles, and being 'pursued by the furious pastrycook wielding his cake knife and vowing he'd make a *bonne bouche*' of her (*ibidem*). Carter seems to intertwine in Wonder diverse meanings of consumption, as this character is nearly consumed in three different ways: by the cake, the pastry chef and the fire (Toye 2007, 493).

Before Fevvers runs into another story of survival where food then becomes a comfort, she narrates her encounter with Christian Rosencreutz, showing her natural enthusiasm while eating. Even if the first impression is not that inviting – 'nor does he offer me so much as a cup of tea' (NC 75) – Fevvers is presented a 'very substantial meal' from which she recalls vaguely 'salad, and cheese, and a cold bird'. However, Fevvers feels that this last piece of food calls for an explanation, mainly because of Walser's still inquiring mind about her being 'fact or fiction'. That may be why she avoids having poultry unless there is no other option, i.e. for 'not wanting to play cannibal' (*ibid.* 77). This turns out to be an exception because she is in severe need, and Fevvers decides on whispering a prayer 'for forgiveness to my [her] feathery forbears and tuck in' (*ibidem*) with the claret she was also offered. Later on, Fevvers will respond to the Colonel's speech on omnivores by slipping 'the nasty thing [veal cutlet] on [her] plate across to Sybil' (*ibid.* 203), after pigs had been described as similar in taste to humans.³³ When Fevvers pours the last of the claret without sharing it with her host, she makes it clear that another bottle is in order and specifies to the assistant 'Let's try the '88 vintage, this time, if the cellar will run to it' adding to Walser on the side '(For I do like a nice glass of good wine, when I get the chance, Mr Walser)' (*ibid.* 80). Still, for the obsessed Mr Rosencreutz these are just 'base vapours' which would dull her 'vital spirits' and, thus, 'upends the claret into the jug of white roses, which blush' (*ibidem*). Indeed, Fevvers is the only thing that he believes to be his rejuvenatrix and when she flies away, it is as though 'his fleshy bottle of *elixum vitae* take off' (*ibid.* 83). After her narrow escape, food

³³ Sarah Sceats only mentions the two times Fevvers resists being associated with cannibalistic behaviour: 'when describing to Walser the dinner she is offered at the house of Mr Rosencreutz' and 'later, on the train in Russia' (Sceats 2000, 57). Still, even if she does not mention this episode, it is clear that Fevvers' large appetite, matching her size, is not a predatory one: 'her appetite is for life, experience and change, an antidote to the 'frozen' and hopeless appetite of the cannibal' (*ibidem*).

is a needed comfort provided by Lizzie who fixes her up a 'nice cup of coffee with milk and she had a couple of boiled eggs and some toast and soon was all smiles again' (*ibid.* 84).

The comfort provided by food is visible again when Fevvers herself acts as a mother towards another circus performer, Mignon. The moment the abandoned girl enters Fevvers' luxurious hotel room, 'drinking everything in', the host presents her with an equally sumptuous box with 'layer upon layer of chocolates packed in frilly tutus of white paper'; Fevvers' practical sense is patent in her invitation 'Go on. Stuff yourself. Essen. Gut' (*ibid.* 128). Actually, Mignon's name literally means dainty, something delicious, a delicacy, and Fevvers just appealed to her instincts. However, Mignon acting 'gawky as a boy, clasped the box to her bosom', not devouring it, but on impulse chooses to simply sniff with half-closed eyes, just about losing consciousness, the 'mingled odours of infantine voluptuousness, cocoa, vanilla, praline, violet, caramel, that rose up from the ruffle depths' (*ibidem*). These feelings by themselves are almost enough for an abused girl, who does not even dare to touch the chocolates, and they may come for fear of diminishing the enchantment. Yet, Fevvers insists and, as expected, 'brusquely chose a fat choc with a lump of crystallized ginger pressed on top of it and propped it into the pale pink mouth that opened like a sea-anemone to engulf it' (*ibidem*). The feelings that the offered chocolate box arise in Mignon are strong enough for her not to let go of it – 'She [Mignon] hugged the ribboned box so close you would have thought she had fallen in love with the chocolates' (*ibid.* 129). Even though Fevvers' capacity for consumption is overpowering, she does not get any satisfaction from another's deprivation, but from sharing. On this matter, Emma Parker emphasises how 'in contrast to a 'proper' economy, she [Fevvers] represents what Cixous calls a feminine or 'gift' economy, a form of social organisation characterised by generosity and openness to others' (Parker 2000, 159). This is why Fevvers clearly satisfies herself and still manages to feed others.

Fevvers, Lizzie and Walser then hear about the details of Mignon's life to date in an analepsis that explains how her passiveness turns her into easy meat. They hear about how she 'found the loaf [of bread] by touch on the table in the dark and broke pieces off it for her sister and herself' (*NC* 129) when her parents did not return home after her father had gone out to look for the breadknife (with which he had murdered her mother and had left both in the pond); how she only recalled 'a smell of stale meat' from her father who worked at the slaughterhouse; how she stole for food after running away from the city's

orphanage; and how she moved in with a medium who lived above a grocer's shop where 'delicious odours of cloves, dried apricots and ham sausage seeped up through the cracks in the floorboards and, for the first time in her life, Mignon got enough to eat' (*ibid.* 133).³⁴ Even after washing herself in Fevvers' bathroom, Mignon 'still clutched the drum of chocolates under her arm but all that was left of the top layer was a mass of chirruping papers' (*ibid.* 142). Nevertheless, Fevvers insists on feeding Mignon and orders her some food: 'Fevvers raised the lid of the tureen – bread and milk for the abused child, a maternal touch. She scooped some up on her finger, tasted it, made a wry face, sprinkled sugar lavishly from the silver caster. She replaced the lid and tucked a napkin around the tureen, to keep its contents warm' (*ibid.* 132). After these 'hospitable preparations' she serves Mignon 'a nursery bowl of bread and milk' at which the latter looks a mite upset and rejects this gesture of being served a very English childhood meal, despite the fact that 'she perked up when she saw the champagne, sat down at the table with lamb-like obedience and tucked in willingly enough' (*ibid.* 142). Fevvers had managed to also order in Russian some champagne, the international beverage, revealing herself a woman of the world acting as a mother towards Mignon.

Through Fevvers' choices of food one learns more about her personality and although she knows how food can be a means of comforting, she is also undoubtedly aware of its use as a bitter revenge. This happens when the Charivaris children suggest that Fevvers can be dropped in order to see her reaction, and she then 'turned the children's stomachs with her gift of poisoned pies' (*ibid.* 158). The possibility of Fevvers' bounce forces the high-wire dancers to 'peter out in a pizza concession' and their children never to quite recover 'from the secret policeman's pies' (*ibid.* 160).³⁵ Food acts both as a sweet welcoming treat for Mignon and as a sour farewell present for the Charivaris. In addition, Fevvers' food is equally about feelings and business, as it turns to be the case in the description of her dinner with Colonel Kearney, a mock heroic figure, regarded as an exact caricature of a businessman whose only concern is profit.

³⁴ Herr M., the medium, used Mignon to impersonate dead young girls before their grieving relatives and, therefore, always looked for news on epidemics of diphtheria and scarlet fever. When he read about such cases in the obituary columns, over breakfast, this would 'set him a-tapping at the top of his egg with an especially jaunty air. After he consumed his egg, his cheese, his salami, his toast and a couple of spoonsful of preserves – he enjoyed a hearty breakfast – he settled down with a second cup of coffee' (*NC* 134).

³⁵ Here Carter seems keen on reminding the reader that 'to challenge culturally sanctioned compartments is not a move to be performed with levity but rather an onerous political act – however humorously we might choose to play it out' (Cavallaro 2011, 155).

In fact, the first half of the short chapter nine (Petersburg section) of *Nights at the Circus* depicts Fevvers and the Colonel's food choices. The reader is presented a seduction dinner, for which 'the Colonel spared no expense', and Fevvers is portrayed like an 'old hand' who 'believed in making a hearty meal' (*ibid.* 171). The ever thirsty Fevvers evidences both her and the Colonel's selections of beverage right from the opening courses:

To wash down the caviare-stuffed pancakes and sour cream, the jellied carp, marinated mushrooms and smoked salmon, the Colonel preferred bourbon to vodka. After that, he found bourbon made the borsht go down better. Fevvers had some white burgundy with the first course, red burgundy with the soup, and plied her silverware with a will. (*ibidem*)

The description of the Colonel's appetite seems to reflect his hurry to move to another level of intimacy by the use of the phrasal-verb expressions 'wash down' and 'go down better', which also emphasise the immense quantities of food consumed. The beverage which helps him on this task is bourbon, favoured over Russia's national drink, vodka. In fact, according to the gastronomic significance of vodka and how it should be consumed, the 'correct role for vodka as a table drink is to accompany and to highlight exclusively Russian national dishes', similarly to what happens here (Pokhlebkin 1992, 190). Regarding the choice of Bourbon, it is considered to be a type of American whiskey, which makes all sense when one thinks of the Colonel's nationality. His preference of bourbon over vodka is even more significant when one keeps in mind how the name of this corn-based spirit derives from its historical association with an area known as Old Bourbon, Kentucky (which, in turn, was named after the French House of Bourbon royal family). Therefore, whilst bourbon may be made anywhere in the United States, it is mainly related to Kentucky, specifically, and the American South, in general. Another allusion to the Colonel's preference for bourbon had already been made when he 'upset the wastepaper basket entirely and disclosed within its susurrating depths a cache of Old Grandad' (NC 102). The 'Old Grand-Dad' is a bourbon whiskey distilled in Boston, Kentucky (more precisely at the Booker Noe Plant).

The association one can make between the impresario Colonel Kearney and Colonel Sanders from Kentucky Fried Chicken is clear even in the reference to the former's diet: 'the Colonel himself had consumed fried chicken dinners in his entire life'

(*ibid.* 174).³⁶ During the dinner with Fevvers, the Colonel sticks to bourbon and later she has to remove the bourbon bottle from his fist 'as he lapsed into slumber on the couch beside her' (*ibid.* 171). Curiously, in the previous novel, *The Passion of New Eve*, bourbon is also the beverage chosen by Zero to be fed in 'a liquor-soaked cloth nipple' pressed in his mouth when he loses consciousness, after his extreme exhibitions of poetry (*PNE* 104). Furthermore, let us not forget that later on the Colonel takes 'ample supplies of bourbon with him' and soon teaches the steward in the restaurant car of the Trans-Siberian train how to fix a 'passable julep using sprigs from a pot of mint he'd had the forethought to pick up from a Petersburg horticulturalist' (*NC* 201). The well-known favourite passable mint Julep in the south of the US is clear in Kentucky, which is borderline south and adopted it as the official drink of the Kentucky Derby. Here the Colonel's anticipation on picking up mint beforehand shows how resourceful he is, how much he is into his drinking habits, and, not surprisingly, he almost immediately acquires the reputation of a 'character' in the train. This happens not only because of his prudence on taking mint with him, but also because it is a fresh beverage for hot weather and not exactly fit for the cold Siberia.³⁷

On the other hand, burgundy is Fevvers first choice of beverage – white and red. The most famous wines produced in the Burgundy region in eastern France, generally referred to as 'Burgundies', are white wines made from Chardonnay grapes or red wines made from Pinot Noir grapes. Once again, I believe this choice is far from innocent. Burgundy classifications are geographically-focused, making it one of the most *terroir*-oriented regions in France and the area of origin is deeply taken into account, not considering the wine's producer.³⁸ By the end of chapter nine in *Nights at the Circus*, the reader witnesses precisely how Fevvers is as much a business woman as the Colonel, for

³⁶ Colonel Harland Sanders passed through several professions in his lifetime and was still actively travelling around the world until the age of 90 when he died (1980). The idea of Kentucky Fried Chicken's fried chicken actually goes back to 1930 and the company was founded as KFC by the Colonel in 1952, though. While KFC's primary focus is fried chicken, it also offers a line of grilled and roasted chicken products, side dishes and desserts.

³⁷ Because of its deep-rooted cultural heritage, the mint julep has too many variations depending upon place, time, and even the one who prepares it. Therefore, whereas several variations require muddling the mint, others need infusing it and whilst some methods demand simple syrup others call for superfine or granulated sugar. Still, the ingredients used seem to be consensual: bourbon, sugar, mint, and ice.

³⁸ Such focus reflects on the wine's labels, for instance, where designations are most prominent in relation to the producer's names, which commonly appear in much smaller text at the bottom of the label.

her pupils narrow down 'to the shape of £ signs' when she is offered a glittering diamond bracelet from an unknown sender (NC 172). The product is what matters for Fevvers, not the fact that the stranger knows her favourite flower to be Parma violets, sent with the bracelet. Fevvers knows precisely what she is offered and how to take pleasure from it.

Back to the dinner, for the first course of 'caviare-stuffed pancakes and sour cream, the jellied carp, marinated mushrooms and smoked salmon' the Burgundy is white (*ibid.* 171). These are all traditional Russian dishes based on fish and Fevvers chooses the classic white wine. The first dish is actually best-known as *blini*, since the traditional Russian *blini* are made with yeasted batter, are then baked in a traditional Russian oven (albeit the process of cooking they undergo is still referred to as baking in Russian, nowadays they are almost universally pan-fried, like pancakes) and they are typically served with sour cream and caviar or smoked salmon. Being already presented in another dish, the choice in this menu is caviar (most probably from sturgeon), rather than smoked salmon. In the Russian cuisine appetisers are rather light when compared with many of the soups and main courses, which are very nutritious. Accordingly, fresh water fish (like perch, carp or sazan) are frequently used as fish jelly appetisers – in this case Fevvers is presented 'jellied carp' – and mushroom is also a very common ingredient in appetisers. In the Russian cuisine, *borscht* usually includes beetroots (responsible for the characteristic deep reddish-purple colour of this soup), meat, cabbage, and optionally potatoes. Finally, the use of the verb 'ply' in '[Fevvers] plied her silverware with a will' illustrates the idea the reader already had of her tremendous appetite.

On the other hand, Fevvers' option for an alternative meat dish of venison is comprehensible, if one thinks in terms of a latent cannibalistic choice when offered 'roast goose with red cabbage and apples' (*ibidem*). The beverage is then changed to a chateau-bottled claret (a dry red wine produced in the Bordeaux region of France), which is an appropriate selection. Finally, while the Colonel 'confined his eating to crumbs from the bread rolls he agitated with nervous fingers', Fevvers still finds room for dessert, an 'icecream, to finish up, plus a glass of Chateau d'Yquem' (*ibidem*), a wine from the southern part of the Bordeaux vineyards known as Graves. One witnesses once more Fevvers' table manners, as she 'belched companionably' after the meal, but her final choice of a wine granted a special classification of *Premier Cru Supérieur* ('Great First Growth') reveals her knowledge of the superiority of this wine and, most probably, its higher prices over all other wines of its type. The success of Yquem stems largely from

the susceptibility of being attacked by 'noble rot' (*Botrytis cinerea*) which only occurs when drier conditions follow wetter ones. Clearly, Fevvers selects this wine because the wines from Château d'Yquem are differentiated by their complexity, concentration and sweetness, and due to their relatively high acidity which helps to balance the sweetness of the wine, it would be perfect for desserts. However, ice-cream does not fit very well the general suggestions pointed out. It goes in a combination with *foie gras* or Roquefort cheese. In fact, it is a wine hard to be in harmony with. Furthermore, Château d'Yquem wines are known for their longevity, since a bottle will keep for a century, or more, with proper care. This is probably what Fevvers is looking for, to be unique, superior, celebrating life, and gradually adding layers of taste and earlier undetected overtones through long years. The description of such a gargantuan meal is condensed in terms of a paragraph and leaves the reader full! Yet, there is time for a goodnight night-cap in the Colonel's suite, where Fevvers enjoys a 'well-chilled champagne' (*ibidem*). Had she been the one to order it, probably the reader would know specifically which one it was (in a similar way to what was pointed out in the previous chapter with the imported bottles of premium champagne Veuve Clicquot drunk by the Count in *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* or the Marquis' celebration with Krug in "The Bloody Chamber"). In opposition, the reader may deduce it was the Colonel's choice, due to the fact that only the right temperature is stressed. Also, the chapter, accentuates, once more, Fevvers' greed not only for food, but for money and possibly sex.

Such greed leads Fevvers to another encounter, this time with the Grand Duke. Characteristically her status is signified by her will to consume: 'She was feeling supernatural tonight. She wanted to *eat* diamonds' (*ibid.* 182). Lizzie, who knows about Fevvers' greed to consume, warns that her intrinsic value as a human being is none and that her economic value comes from being a freak: 'the baker can't make a loaf out of your privates, duckie, and that's all you'd have to offer in exchange for a crust if nature hadn't made you the kind of spectacle people pay good money to see' (*ibid.* 185). Fevvers' value is, thus, that of a commodity, as the encounter with the Duke proves. Fevvers clearly knows that she is bound to be 'bought and sold by those who collect unique and exotic objects' (Gass 1994, 73) and she takes advantage of her value as a commodity. When she meets the Duke, she finds a 'table laid for an intimate supper' (NC 186). There are several details that strike Fevvers, besides the life size ice figure of herself, like the case of the 'black gravel of caviar' where the sculpture stood and the 'little for

vodka, [and] funnels for champagne' (*ibidem*). Actually, the Grand Duke arranges thirty-five glasses to spell Sophia (Fevvers' christened name) and drinks a toast of vodka to her from every single glass. He then offers her caviar which she does not refuse: 'She [Fevvers] enjoyed caviare, which she preferred to eat with a soup spoon, and judged it best to fortify herself against whatever might happen next' (*ibid.* 187). Food accompanies Fevvers purposes and she relies on its comfort but mainly on its nutritive power, being a big woman. Yet, later in this encounter, when she perceives the Duke's intention of making her feel afraid, she chooses to avoid what might interfere with her vigilance or reaction: 'For the first time in her life, she [Fevvers] refused champagne' (*ibid.* 188). Her fear makes all sense and she manages to escape from the Duke's trap directly to the Trans-Siberian train, proving that appearance makes reality.

In the last part of *Nights at the Circus*, entitled "Siberia", the first chapter is told in Fevvers' voice, except that by now the usual third-person narrator intermingles with it. Even so, because the aerialist's position in the narrative is now different, her narrative diverges from the description of her early life presented in the first part of the novel. Indeed, Fevvers aims not to entertain the press and, therefore, she does not feel the need to play the part of the performer, since she no longer knows how the narrative ends. Furthermore, she will find herself missing an audience that would bring back some glint. In fact, Fevvers mediates the reading of both herself and the novel, since she is a storyteller, a performer, and she manages to control perception. This is the mediation that Margaret Toye believes Carter to foreground as a theme (Toye 2007, 483) and Mary Russo argues that '*Nights at the Circus* is unique in its depiction of relationships between women as spectacle, and women as producers of spectacle' (Tucker 1998, 233).

Still, in the restaurant car of the Trans-Siberian train the reader finds a Fevvers who 'absentmindedly [...] bit into a chunk of bread that had the colour and texture of devil's food cake' (NC 204). This distraction mood is remarkable in a character that is always attentive. The fact that the colour and texture of the chunk of bread resemble an American dish (devil's food cake) may accentuate such distraction and foretaste a change of focus from Fevvers to Walser, as will be noticed later.³⁹ The description of the various

³⁹ In general the Devil's Food Cake is accepted as being strictly from the United States, given that there is no noteworthy reference to it in European baking books. It makes all sense if one considers it hard for the Victorians to name a cake after the Devil. Christopher Kimble in "Heavenly Devils Food" points out that the latter part of the nineteenth century 'saw the development of a lot of imaginative cakes with fancy names [which] also gave birth to one cake whose popularity hasn't

sounds and movement are quite vivid and invites the reader to join the party in the restaurant car:

Spoon chinked upon soup-plate; knife ground against cutlet; the fringed pink lamps swayed this way and that, reflected in the dark windows as if they might be blooms upon the branches of the enfilades of trees through which they now were passing; the waiters rolled suavely to and fro as if on invisible wheels with dishes lined along their arms; from the invisible kitchen came the clatter of pans. There was a macedonia of fruit for dessert. (*ibidem*)

The reference to a fruit macedonia at the end of the paragraph reflects the idea of a complex set of elements arranged to create the idea of the paraphernalia of sounds and movement. The narrator knows how to build its own macedonia of elements. Such orchestration, similar to the one in *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman*, suddenly ends its performance with a loud crash – ‘there came a thunderous boom [...] as if at the command of the biggest drum-roll in the entire history of the circus, the dining-car rose up in the air’ (*ibidem*). What a grand finale for a composition where Fevvers kept herself absentminded. All the paraphernalia comes briefly together, thanks the audience and fades away: ‘For a split second, everything levitated. Then, before shock or consternation could cross their faces, the whole lot fell down again and, with a rending crash, flew apart in a multitude of fragments’ (*ibidem*).

From this moment onwards, Fevvers’ character can be portrayed by food in three different occasions, not including the reference to the Maraschino cherries among the mixture of fruits in the macedonia, which just shows Carter’s concern with detail – ‘The giantess found herself [Fevvers] trapped under the collapsed table at which she’d been engaged in picking pale maraschino cherries from her macedonia and spooning them into

waned from that period to ours, the Devil’s Food Cake’ (Kimble 2000, 141). As for its colour, it is the reddish tint left by the natural cocoa which probably named it in the first place. Today’s processed (more alkaline) cocoa and regular cocoa give it a deeper dark, almost black color, which causes the branching off of the Devil’s Food Cake with names like Demon Cake, Black Midnight Devils Food, Elegant Devils Food, Mahogany Cake, Red Velvet Cake, and Oxblood Cake. However, the main ingredients have always included cocoa or chocolate liquor, hot water, flour, whole eggs, shortening or butter, and baking soda. These ingredients only changed for a brief time during the World War II due to rationing of sugar and, therefore, lard and beet juice were briefly introduced to give the cake a reddish tint.

the dish of the pet pig [Sybil]' (NC 205).⁴⁰ Initially, Fevvers senses herself as the main course among the outlaws who had caused the explosion (*ibid.* 226). Even though the group of survivors ends up kindly treated, being offered hot beverages ('hot tea and ardent spirits') and cold food ('cold roast, I [Fevvers], moose'), Fevvers' shock (according to Lizzie) leaves her with no appetite, which is indeed a cause of worry (*ibid.* 226-227). Notwithstanding the sorrow she feels, there is still hope and the 'goodish breakfast of sour milk, black bread and tea' offered by the leader of the outlaws gives Fevvers strength to return to her true self – 'So, in spite of my sorrow, I [Fevvers] dipped my bread into the buttermilk and got a little something down' (*ibid.* 229). Later, the last reference to food matches Fevver's misery/desperation for having a broken wing and for being near Walser (who had been missing since the accident and, even if reunited, had a wandering mind): 'She [Fevvers] spooned fish broth, tasted, grimaced, poked in the Maestro's cupboard and found no salt. The last straw. Lots of grub but nothing fit to eat. Had she not been so proud, she would have broken down' (*ibid.* 272). Nonetheless, this last reference also proves Fevvers' pride, which will be so obvious in her powerful laugh at the end of the novel. In fact, the need for food affects everyone in the circus party and not only Fevvers. With the Maestro in the 'Conservatoire of Transbaikalia' they learn how to fish from the frozen river, and it is the old man who actually provides for the whole group in diverse ways.

Actually, Walser's first decision on interviewing Fevvers presented at the beginning of the novel, and his sequent decision on joining the circus to be closer to her, show a parallel path of self-knowledge. In this process his relation to food and beverage echoes such a path. During the first contacts with Fevvers, Walser is offered wine (*ibid.* 13) and allows his glass to be refilled, although his brain shows proof of being already 'confused' by it (*ibid.* 19-20). Such confusion, probably, makes him note 'with renewed enthusiasm' Lizzie's reference to humbugs. Essentially, Lizzie was just describing Fevvers' pleasure on reading by herself and refers humbugs as a term used for certain types of candy – '[with] nothing but a poke of humbugs for company' (*ibid.* 40). However, humbug is also an old term meaning hoax, and presently it concerns a fraud,

⁴⁰ The Maraschino cherries are preserved in a brine solution, soaked in a suspension of food coloring, and sweetened with sugar syrup. They are generally made from light-colored sweet cherries. The name 'maraschino' comes from the marasca cherry originally from Croatia and from the liqueur in which these cherries were preserved. The Maraschino cherries were initially produced for royalty and the wealthy and were, therefore, consumed as a delicacy.

which meets Walser's goals, since it entails a factor of unsubstantiated publicity and spectacle that would help on his presentation of Fevvers as 'fact or fiction'.⁴¹ Bearing in mind critics like Alison Lee, Fevvers is regarded as 'not just a character [...] but a clue as to how to read the novel' (Lee 1997, 93), because she manages to control 'the gaze of the spectators, but also that of the reader' (*ibid.* 94) and of Walser.

Later, when Walser joins the circus as part of the Clowns' troupe, in the second part of the novel, one is invited to share an evening meal where 'the white faces gathered around the table, bathed in the acrid steam of the baboushka's fish soup, possessed the formal lifelessness of death masks, as if [...] they themselves were absent from the repast and left untenanted replicas behind' (NC 116). The steam from the soup helps in this process. Along the description of the table one understands the hierarchy with Buffo the Great sitting at the 'magisterial *middle* of the table, in the place where Leonardo seats the Christ, reserving to himself the sacramental task of breaking the black bread and dividing it between the disciples' (*ibidem*). It is an intended analogy with martyrdom, except that Buffo irreverently stands for Christ and the Saints' martyrdoms in the circus by seating as if in Leonardo da Vinci's fresco *The Last Supper* (c. 1497). This becomes the *real* version of their favourite 'Clowns' Christmas Dinner', where again 'Buffo takes up his Christ's place at the table, carving knife in one hand, fork in the other [...] but *this* roast, such is the way of Buffo's world, gets up and tries to run away...' (*ibid.* 117). Also, he turns out to be a hallucinating Christ who drinks vodka, as he acknowledges that the clown grows to be 'the very image of Christ' (*ibid.* 119). Being a drunkard, Buffo goes on a huge alcoholic spree in the last night of the circus stay in Petersburg, since he has a 'tremendous and perpetual thirst', even if his extraordinary drinking seems to be evermore insufficient.

Buffon's sermon, the fish soup served, and the black bread, 'food sad and dark as the congregation of sorrow assembled at the ill-made table', help to portray Carter's perspective. Therefore, this dinner ends in a bergomask or dance of the buffoons and the leftover crusts of black bread, as well as the vodka bottles, are used to bombard and wet each other (*ibid.* 123) – 'The radical content of the Clowns' supper threatens the disintegration of time and space, asserting the potential to invoke the end of the world' (Sceats 2000, 177). It is such a 'dance of disintegration; and of regression; celebration of the primal slime' (NC 125) that becomes a kind of initiation to Walser, similarly to an

⁴¹ One cannot forget that Walser had planned 'a series of interviews tentatively entitled 'Great Humbugs of the World'' (NC 11).

‘incantatory surrender to the forces of entropy and negation’ (Sceats 2000, 58). Afterwards, having already acquired ‘enough of the instinct of the trouper’, Walser faces a homicidal Buffo who presides ‘at the white board, at supper, with his disciples’ during their performance (NC 176). However, Buffo cannot find the loaf of bread and the bottle of wine and, therefore, brings the carving knife on the entrée, the Human Chicken. Indeed, the troupe of clowns represent the bitter foundation of comedy and Buffo’s hunger for the world seems to be insatiable for being powered by despair: ‘Buffo’s hunger is a cruel hunger and this makes his comedy cruel, playing out his cannibalistic and ultimately murderous impulses at the expense of the hapless Walser’ (Sceats 2000, 58). Luckily Walser manages to escape from Buffo’s Last Supper and gets brandy from Fevvers, as a way of calming down.

After this episode, seen as Walser’s christening process in the circus, the other reference one has to food on account of his character appears in the last part of the novel. After the restaurant car explosion Walser loses his memories and is adopted by the Shaman of a secluded tribe, who believes the world and dreams to be continuous. In a sanctified amnesia, considered by the Shaman to be part of a holy hallucination, Walser, who usually shared the Shaman’s suppers, is on one occasion fed the same diet that the Shaman offered to the idols. The Shaman reads the signs of Walser’s slow remembering through his diet, shown in the following sequence:

They thrived on a porridge made of crushed barley mixed with pine nuts and broth from boiled capercaillie. Walser supped up suspiciously, then pushed the porridge round and round the wooden bowl with his horn spoon. The dried herbs crackled above the stove. Walser’s eyes fused.

‘Hamburgers,’ he ruminated aloud. The Shaman pricked up his ears. Walser rambled off down a gastronomic memory lane; who can tell what litany the Shaman thought he was reciting?

‘Fish soup.’ Walser’s face was the mirror of his memory; he grimaced. He tried again. ‘Christmas dinner ...’

His face convulsed and he whimpered. The words, ‘Christmas dinner’, reminded him of something most fearful, of some hideous danger; they reminded him of the main course, they reminded him of ... ‘Cock-a-doodle-do!’

He cried aloud, assailed by dreadful if incomprehensible memories, then fell into a haunted silence until another happier thought came to him:

‘Eel pie and mash.’

At that, he beamed and rubbed his stomach with his hand. [...]

Eel pie and mash, me old cock,' said Walser appreciatively.

The Shaman decided Walser must mean the time had come to make him his shamanising drum. (NC 256)

The porridge offered to Walser is made with products from the region, both grains, nuts and capercaillie (also called capercaillie and wood grouse).⁴² It is natural to find such a large grouse, native to northern Europe in this region, since the open structure of the boreal forests (due to the harsh climate) are optimal habitats for Capercaillie and there turns to be no human influence.⁴³



Figure 13 – Ferdinand von Wright, *The Fighting Capercaillies*, 1886.
The Ateneum Art Museum, Helsinki (<<http://www.ateneum.fi/en>>).

However, this porridge does not interest Walser that much; what does trigger his brain are the sounds from the dried herbs crackling on the stove. Wandering ‘down a gastronomic memory lane’, what comes to his mind are hamburgers, fish soup, and the Christmas

⁴² In what concerns the importance of barley, Jared Diamond, in the 1998 Pulitzer Prize-winning book *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fate of Human Societies* (1997), supports the accessibility to barley in southwestern Eurasia to have greatly contributed to the broad historical patterns that human history has followed over approximately the last 13,000 years. In other words, this American scientist argues that this grain, together with the other eight ‘founder crops’ and domesticated crops and animals, contributed to the Eurasian civilizations, as a whole, to have survived and conquered others (Diamond 1997, 141-142).

As for the pine nuts in Asia, besides the two species which are widely harvested (Korean Pine (*Pinus koraiensis*) in northeast Asia and Chilgoza Pine (*Pinus gerardiana*) in the western Himalaya), there are four other species: Siberian Pine (*Pinus sibirica*), Siberian Dwarf Pine (*Pinus pumila*), Chinese White Pine (*Pinus armandii*), and Lacebark Pine (*Pinus bungeana*).

⁴³ Capercaillie’s distinctive behaviour is portrayed by Ferdinand von Wright in *The Fighting Capercaillies* (1886), one of Finland’s most well known paintings. This painting is presented in this same page (figure 13).

dinner.⁴⁴ Whereas the former brings some memories, probably pleasant, as he ‘ruminated aloud’ (mind the double meaning of ‘ruminare’, since it can refer to his reflection and meditation on the subject or to chew and take in solid food), the second memory makes him grimace. Still, what makes him quiver and moan is the Christmas dinner and the danger he escaped from as a main course in Buffo’s circus performance. The troubled silence brought with the frightening memories is broken by the traditional London working class food, ‘Eel pie and mash’. The effect on Walser turns his bleakness into light, pain into pleasure and comfort, while he rubs the stomach. Being a reader of signs, the attentive Shaman awaits for further revelations while he pours him some more broth. Yet, the later memory is the one Walser most values and pleasures, for it brings to his mind the Cockney Aerialist, Fevvers – ‘‘Eel pie and mash, me old cock,’ said Walser appreciatively’. Constantly reading the signs, the Shaman interprets them as Walser’s progress as a Shaman. For me, this intense peripatetic way ‘down gastronomic memory lane’ shows precisely recognition of his self-discovery and his stronger relation to Fevvers.⁴⁵

Other characters, also somehow in relation to Fevvers, refer to food. In the case of Lizzie, besides helping Fevvers with the comfort of a bottle of brandy (*ibid.* 161) or offering Walser some wine – ‘‘You [Walser] ‘ave a spot more wine, ducky, while you’re waiting’ (*ibid.* 13) – she proudly mentions to the journalist the episode when her family accepted her and Fevvers on their retreat, by underlining how appreciated their ice-cream was: ‘My sister, Isotta. Best ice-cream in London, sir. Best cassata outside Sicily. Old family recipe. *Il mio papa* brought it with him. As for our *bombe surprise* –’ (*ibid.* 47). She is, in fact, interrupted by some kind of Fevvers clumsiness. Yet, later, one learns about this family’s link with explosives and, therefore, that early reference to the cassata, a traditional sweet from the Italian area of Palermo, Sicily, and to ‘bombe surprise’, makes all the sense. If indeed the Sicilian word *cassata* derives from ‘caseata’ (meaning ‘cheese

⁴⁴ Later on, while the Shaman is busy fixing the drum for Walser, there is a reference to ‘a stew of fish’ bubbling away for supper (*NC* 262).

⁴⁵ After this experience, Walser is no longer the circus’ fellow traveller, as Yvonne Martinsson concludes:

[...] his [Walser’s] travelling through the symbolic where reading is a reductive sighting that enables him to reject the violence and oppression inherent in the symbolic, the outcome of which is, on the one hand, a novel social stance based on solidarity with the oppressed and the underprivileged and, on the other, a restructuring of his former self that brings the self-critical event in reading to the fore. And *that*, which cannot be foreseen, happens to Walser because he has recuperated the imaginary and fallen in love...’ (Martinsson 1996, 119-120).

concoction'), according to John Dickie, who also observes that only in the late 17th century did *cassata* suggest a dessert (Dickie 2007, 27), the idea of being a concoction already implies a preparation of mixed ingredients, as well as the use of skill and intelligence to contrive. Unsurprisingly, family becomes even more important in Sicilian businesses, here stressed by Lizzie. The last hint comes from the interrupted reference to the family's 'bombe surprise' (also called 'bombe glacée'), a dessert of ice cream frozen in a spherical mould (hence its name) usually lined or filled with custard or cake crumbs. Clearly, Lizzie involves herself in the two 'businesses' and not just 'chopping candied peel' (NC 54); her Marxist ideals are present throughout the novel. She does accentuate how unwise it is to embrace the future in total disrespect for the past. This is why it is possible to follow Lizzie's agency, because it implies the way Carter believes that by acknowledging the ascendancy of the 'past historic' (*ibid.* 240) one may also reach some understanding of the multifold processes through which 'our flesh arrives to us out of history' (SW 9).⁴⁶

As seen before, Colonel Kearney is another character who shares a meal with Fevvers and, still, he distinguishes himself for his relation with the pig Sybil. Even if he threatens Sybil when he feels vexed for not having her support his opinion on signing a new contract with a chimp (the Professor who would take over the business management of the "Educated Apes"), the Colonel trusts Sybil's powers as an oracle. Therefore, during the negotiations, the Colonel offers the Professor a glass of his favourite drink, bourbon (NC 169), but after signing the new contract, he warns Sybil: "Pork and beans," he threatened Sybil. "Spare-ribs. Hickory-smoked ham" (*ibid.* 170). The first reference, to pork and beans, implies several variations from the rich Spanish bean stews 'Fabada Asturiana' and 'Olla podrida' to American canned pork and beans. The Colonel most probably alludes to the typical American canned pork and beans which is commonly made of navy beans stewed with pork, or rendered pork fat, and even tomato. Having been commercially introduced in the United States during the late nineteenth century, it is a dish that is routinely bought canned and reheated on a stove. Accordingly, the second threat, the 'spare-ribs', is another down-grading of Sybil as pork, since these are the most

⁴⁶ Cavallaro concludes the following on *Nights at the Circus*:

Nights at the Circus could be said to capture the essential spirit of historical materialism as a brave preparedness to see the past – and indeed history at large – as a process of constant metamorphosis with an unremitting flair for triggering abrupt and random commotions. (Cavallaro 2011, 163).

inexpensive cut of pork ribs. I believe the threats present to Sybil the wide range of other possible utilities in the cooking world, culminating in the reference to 'Hickory-smoked ham' (a cured ham smoked by necessarily hanging over burning hickory wood chips).

On the other hand, the Colonel later shows respect for pigs, when he ties a napkin round Sybil's neck, fascinating the buffet car waiter. He then cares to explain the similarities between pigs and men's diets and the explanation ranges from what they consume, to what they taste like when consumed: 'Pigs eat everything a man eats [...] That's why a man tastes same as a pig. That's why cannibals called roasted *homo sapiens* "long pig", yessir! Omnivores, see; mixed feedin'! Gives us both that gamey taste' (*ibid.* 203). Just to prove his assertion, the Colonel turns his attention to his meal with recharged energy, even though the enthusiasm will grow fainter because of the food's preparation: 'As if the notion of cannibalism refreshed his appetite, he attacked a veal cutlet with gusto, although, by its texture, the cutlet had been cooked in the station buffet at Irkutsk several days before, loaded on the train and reheated in a gravy far too bright a brown for authenticity' (*ibidem*). His claim undoubtedly implied food in the correct catering condition, or even the consumption of food right after being cooked, and not a piece of food whose texture, transportation, and garnish are far from the expected quality.

After the explosion of the buffet car, when already sheltered by an old forgotten Maestro whose larder was practically empty, the Colonel finds himself to be the true protector of Sybil and faces the starving group lead by the Escapee. The strong divergence between the Escapee and the Colonel over Sybil comes from the fact that while the former sees the pig as 'a good dinner', the latter believes Sybil 'to lay under the protection of the taboo against the slaughter of beasts whom we love' (*ibid.* 248). The voting proposed by the Escapee – 'All those in favour of roast pork, raise your hands!' (*ibidem*) – makes Sybil burrow for cover down into the Colonel's waistcoat, and the comparison of her quivering ('like a disturbed paunch') clearly depicts her probable future. Even if the Colonel's emotional blackmail is ignored by the Escapee ('Eat me before you eat her! [...] Make a supper of *long pig* before you tuck into *my pig*, you cannibal!' (*ibidem*)), and a reluctant majority raises its hands, Sybil is put aside by another animal, the clown-dog who had tagged along with the group and unwisely drew attention to himself. Still, the pig does not forget the Escapee's suggestion of roasting her and, from then on, she 'thought of apple sauce every time she looked at the Escapee' (*ibid.* 274).

Actually, being one of the most relevant issues raised by *Nights at the Circus*, it is the theme of anthropomorphism which in fact questions the meaning of humanity. Accordingly, the nature of our humanity is accentuated in this novel by the way both people and animals show signs of equal bodily needs, and food is one of them. Proof of the materiality of food can be seen in the moment of revelation when Walser dances with the tigress and loses his power because the tigress's bad breath diverts him – 'The breath of the tigress was wonderfully foul because of the putrid remains of breakfast still stuck between her teeth' (*ibid.* 164). Along the novel, we witness the demystification of some moments precisely by juxtaposition with analogous displeasing material facts. Even the impression of the circus becomes another example when the reader is presented with the contrast between the Imperial State Circus luxurious entrance, with gilt and velvet, and the depressing and saturating scents of the performing animals.

Finally, I believe there is another group of characters in Carter's novel which is relevant to a great extent when we think of the loaded interdisciplinary considerations based on literal and symbolic questions of identity concerning a variety of cultural, political, and economic institutions. Within such institutions that eventually structure one's life one can find in particular the broad areas of food production, distribution, and consumption. Therefore, it is not surprising that Maragaret Toye focus precisely on the female panopticon in *Nights at the Circus* ("Eating Their Way Out of Patriarchy: Consuming the Female Panopticon in Angela Carter's *Nights at the Circus*").⁴⁷ This is the group of characters I find essential to end a reading of this novel, through which it is possible to explore the intricate interaction between food, culture, and society from a social-literary perspective, even if Fevvers already does so. The way Carter portrays the space and the relationships in terms of consumption is what matters here. Chapter three of part three of *Nights at the Circus* begins with a reference to the setting up of the private asylum for female criminals by Countess P., who had 'successfully poisoned her husband over a period of years with an arsenical compound and got away with it' (*ibid.* 210). The broad areas of production, distribution, and consumption mentioned above are present in the description of the Countess, who 'never forgot the precise nature of the seasonings she'd added to her late husband's borsht and piroshkis' (*ibidem*). Whereas 'borsht' is a red

⁴⁷ Others, like Dani Cavallaro, believe the panopticon, which seems at first a relatively marginal textual presence in *Nights at the Circus*, actually proves 'crucial to the world picture informing its narrative fabric' (Cavallaro 2011, 141).

colour soup (usually containing beet juice as a foundation) which would easily hide any extra seasoning added by the Countess, 'piroshkis', as finely chopped meat or vegetable small triangular pastries, boiled, baked, or fried, would be much harder to add the extra seasoning to if not done from scratch. This implies that either the Countess cooked herself the 'piroshkis' or she had a partner in crime.

About the panopticon, it is first described as 'a hollow circle of cells shaped like a doughnut' (*ibidem*), and its cells, when in the dark, 'were lit up like so many small theatres in which each actor sat by herself in the trap of her visibility in those cells shaped like servings of *baba au rhum*' (*ibid.* 211). The significance of this Panopticon passage is pointed out by Toy because of the way through which there is a connection between an 'interest in subverting imprisoning structures' and 'the importance of inverting economies of consumption' (Toy 2007, 480). In addition, this is where Toy considers Carter's work to be avant-garde:

[...] her identification of the need to subvert and refigure economies of consumption as a central component for creating new economies of identity, aesthetics, ethics, and politics, in particular, is a crucial one. [...] I argue that Carter's deconstruction of these economies of consumption allows for the creation of new ones; in particular, she makes possible a new aesthetics through her practice of new genres of writing and she also points the way towards a new ethics, based on new economies of desire, touch and love. (*ibid.* 481)

In my opinion, the choice of comparing the circle of cells to a doughnut is important mainly for being in a context which shows how Carter plays loose with institutions, as she plays loose with language. In view of that, the prison cell is also compared to the form of a '*baba au rhum*', which is a small yeast cake saturated in liquor (rum as a rule) and often filled with whipped cream or pastry cream. Similarly to the cells, it is typically made in individual servings.⁴⁸ Therefore, Carter's figurative representation of the Panopticon's structure refers to sweet desserts; sweet desserts turn out to be food imagery with debatable implication for their feminine associations. This may be considered a disturbing and strangely comic image in its context, but it follows the shift in register to which the reader had already become used along the narrative. In the case of the prison cell

⁴⁸ The original form of the *baba* was identical to a tall cylindrical yeast cake, the *babka*. In fact, *babka* is a diminutive of *baba* which means 'old woman' or 'grandmother' in the Slavic languages.

reference, a vertiginous effect is created and it becomes loaded with incredible juxtapositions and metaphors.

There is a revolution from the women in the Panopticon and it is possibly a result from different actions of consumption – ‘both literally and symbolically, they eat their way out’ (*ibid.* 490). When analysing the way women live in the Panopticon and leave it, one comes across various intertwined allegorical layers which end up linking prisons with consumption (*ibidem*). Apart from what has already been mentioned regarding the Panopticon’s shape when compared to sweet desserts, there is also the imagery of a ‘perverse honeycomb’ (*NC* 213), and the complex part played by bread. From the start there is an intricate subversion of bread in terms of the Christian sacrament in which bread and wine are consecrated and consumed in communion. Bread was part of the morning and evening feeding: ‘the food, black bread, millet porridge, broth, was delivered through a grille’ (*ibid.* 211).⁴⁹ Yet, the hollowed-out centre of the bread rolls carried messages, as they were used to hide inside love notes written in feminine bodily fluids. Accordingly, bread was both a product to be consumed and a means of exchange – ‘a literal exchange of women’s bodies, [which] allows the women to touch each other. Bread, notes, words, fluids, and touch all operate as mediators among the women and makes possible a new economy of consumption and effectively overthrow the Panopticon’ (Toye 2007, 490). The exchange was more than satisfying for these women and I believe here lies the comfort food provides as a means of exchange: ‘She [Olga] devoured the love-words more eagerly than she would have done the bread they replaced and obtained more nourishment therefrom’ (*NC* 216). Indeed, the food imagery of sweet desserts and honey helps to call the reader’s attention to a predictable deconstruction of the Panopticon, seeing that it implies food commodities that actually indulge the body for these are recognised as ‘objects of pleasurable excess’ (Toye 2007, 490). Moreover, I must agree with Toye when she argues that by transforming the Panopticon into food, Carter proposes that ‘the structure is consumable and can thus be eliminated’ (*ibid.* 492).

Yet, it is not the excessive sweet food that literally sets these Panopticon women free. Instead, it is bread, considered to be the simplest and most basic form of sustenance, which is used in the women’s escape, like the bread rolls used by guard Vera Andreyevna

⁴⁹ Sarah Sceats calls our attention to the following comparison: ‘The space and time in which the women are located are brought together under control, parcelled up like the black bread, broth and porridge the prisoners are fed, morning and evening’ (Sceats 2000, 176).

to pass notes to the guarded Olga Alexandrovna. Also mentioned by Toye, it is possible that the character of Olga was inspired by the Russian/Lithuanian anarchist, Emma Goldman (1869–1940), since she was one of the few references that Carter presents in a non-ironic manner. Actually, in the early 1900s, in New York, Goldman urged unemployed workers to take direct action rather than depend on charity or government aid: “‘Give us work’ said Emma Goldmann [*sic*]; ‘if you do not give us work, then give us bread; if you do not give us either work or bread then we shall take bread’” (Cleyre 1893). As seen before, in the first chapter of this study, the symbolism of bread is poignantly deconstructed in Carter’s review-piece of Elizabeth David’s *English Bread and Yeast Cookery* (published two years before *Nights at the Circus*). In it, Carter observes the following: ‘When one does not live by bread alone on a varied and interesting diet, bread changes its function while retaining its symbolism. Ceasing to be the staff of life but ever redolent with its odours of sanctity [...] bread turns into a mere accessory, the decorative margin to a meal’ (*SL* 94).

In relation to the free women from the House of Correction, they take food with them (bread and sausage), and when they are faced with the white world around them, looking newly made (‘a blank sheet of fresh paper on which they could inscribe whatever future they wished’ (*NC* 219)), they move from the whole and regulated world of the panopticon to the anonymity of the taiga, where they find the remains of the exploded train. In the ruins of what had been the restaurant car, Olga’s inner turmoil, matches the chaos these women find, with piles of table-linen, ‘the shattered remains of tables, vases, bottles and silverware around them [women]’ (*ibid.* 222). The women’s practical nature makes them pick over the detritus of the kitchen near at hand, separating food from kitchen equipment, as they put ‘on one side all manner of things that would come in useful – saucepans, kettles, cauldrons, knives, all of such large sizes as would suit communal kitchens’ (*ibidem*). These women know what suits them best and their choice shows it: ‘They carried out stocks of food, sacks of flour and sugar and beans, although they left behind the gravy browning with which the kitchen was so plentifully stocked’ (*ibidem*). The surprise of finding great many eggs, in wire baskets, ‘that, on a whim of the explosion, had escaped destruction’, is lessened by comparison to the revelation of sweet food, as they exclaimed: ‘Here’s strawberry jam!’ ‘I say, chocolate!’ ‘Would you believe, my dear, a patent *icebucket*!’ (*ibidem*). In the middle of these clattering of kitchen tolls and exclamations, Olga saves the wandering Walser. Once again the practical and mother

instinct is probably what makes Olga set Walser on his feet and feed him (*ibid.* 222). In a similar way to what he would do later on with the Shaman, Walser uses the common sign of rubbing his stomach when hungry and he gets fed.

All in all, I believe that, for Carter, eating is a crucial force when one considers the cultural order and its transgression and transformation. In *Nights at the Circus* it is Fevvers who better portrays such transgression and transformation, as illustrated by her financial insight and skillful handling of those who try to deceive and control her. It is Fevvers' attitude towards food and eating which is also a sign of her power to bewilder every conventional binary. The heroines from Carter's two last novels, Fevvers (whose other name is Sophia, meaning 'wisdom') and the Chance twin sisters, Nora and Dora (who are also 'wise children'), appropriate 'subversive aspects of carnival in their relationships to food, [and] those relationships ultimately exceed the carnivalesque to constitute a more permanent and profound challenge to the dominant order' (Parker 2000, 158). Indeed, the heroines in Carter's last two novels have voices that are empowering on a personal level and subversive on a social level, i.e. voices of their own. They contrast with the silent women of Carter's early fiction: in *Nights at the Circus* it is Fevvers who narrates most chapters in the first person, and in *Wise Children* the unquestionable narrator is Dora. These two novels lead the reader into a world of game, public spectacle, stage-playing, and private amusement where the narrators draw together on the public and the private domains, 'playing' with language, for they are 'self-conscious about language and literary form, making all language a *ludus*, a knowing public display of rhetoric, a game' (Cavallaro 2011, 139).

Nibbling on every other memory in *Wise Children*.

'Drunk in charge of a narrative'

Seeing that Dora self portrays like a 'drunk in charge of a narrative' (*WC* 158), the reader is faced with this narrator of *Wise Children* who continually shows to be keen on drawing attention to her narratorial identity. Whilst Dora evidences the inherent artificiality of that role, she strives to embrace 'a disparity of tongues, perspectives and sensibilities within her commodious narratorial wings and, most vitally from a psychological angle, to remind us that no narrative which tries to revisit the past could ever be expected to yield accurate results due to its dependence on the most fluctuating of human powers' (Cavallaro 2011, 179). The reader will just have to follow what Dora considers to be the great tradition of the Hazard family, 'the willing suspension of disbelief' (*WC* 36), and go along with this narrator. Dora's narrative is characterised by an outrageous optimism, as emphasised by Sarah Gamble: 'while she [Dora] has lived long enough to experience tragedy, she keeps it at arm's length, thus transforming what could have been a sob-story into a comedic triumph' (Gamble 2006a, 189). It may be that the Chance twin sisters' position in life reminded Carter of how to accept fate with stoicism – 'Her voice is that of a mature woman who recognizes that nothing is as serious as comedy' (Nussbaum 2005).⁵⁰ This suggestion is given by the particularly tantalizing passages where the first-person narrator candidly admits to the frailty of her mnemonic powers and then continues to spin an improbable narrative web – 'At such moments, any

⁵⁰ Salman Rushdie remembers Carter's stoic attitude in his piece "Angela Carter 1940-92: A Very Good Wizard, A Very Dear Friend" (Rushdie 1992, 5). As for the Chance twins, they have regrets, lost loves, failed ambitions; however, when they wake up on their seventy-fifth birthday, each sister is ready for her life to begin again.

reader equipped with a modicum of curiosity is bound to wonder what might have truly taken place instead' (Cavallaro 2011, 179).

Even when *Wise Children* is read bearing in mind the theme of the quest for identity as the ultimate mission animating singular individual and whole cultural formations (*ibid.* 187), it never loses sight of the virtue which is the ability and the need to reinvent oneself afresh at any moment. Because the Chance twin sisters have always lived among intense self-dramatisers, it comes easy for them to see every moment as a link in a chain of stagy climaxes or tragic downfalls. Consequently, these twins acknowledge the importance of that virtue at once. Also, they even become conscious of the fact that when the song and dance are over and the curtains are drawn, the way to grow is to accept that real life itself is just a series of events with no clear plot or resolution, as pointed out by Abigail Nussbaum: 'The secret, the sisters know, is to hope for the best, prepare for the worst, and always be ready for a new beginning' (Nussbaum 2005). Yet, one cannot forget that Carter's last novel is full of contradictions and reversals. Furthermore, the set piece feasts, which are read as the formal 'social eating' organised by those at the top of the hierarchy, are always undermined: Melchior's party that culminates with the burning down of Lynde Court; the sabotaged Hollywood Elizabethan engagement celebrations; and Melchior's one hundredth birthday party with its surprising revelations and poisoned cake (Sceats 2000, 179-180).

Still, returning to the epigraph of this chapter, one can see how Dora considers old age to be the 'fourth guest at the table' (*WC* 189) and with old age she knows 'memory becomes exquisitely selective'. The examples of what she is able to remember 'with a hallucinatory sensitivity, sense impressions' (*ibid.* 195) cannot but include food and the senses awakened by them: 'The taste of a bacon sandwich back in the days when bacon in the pan buzzed like a bee in a lavender bush' (*ibidem*; my emphasis). The vivid comparison allows the reader to share the feeling. However, there are other things that become harder to search for in her memory; among these is, of course, an example of an episode that involves a beverage which allows the reader to be aware of the kind of relationship Dora and Irish had:

I couldn't for the life of me remember the brand name of Irish's favourite tippie, when I tried, the other day, even though he chucked a bottle of it at me when we parted in lieu of farewell. A full bottle, to boot. It smashed against the wall and trickled down. 'Oh, look,' I said, 'it's left a map of Ireland.' He couldn't see the

joke. 'He must have loved you very much, to toss a whole bottle,' said Nora, when I told her.

But what was the brand? If you get little details like that right, people will believe anything. Old Bushmills? Perhaps it was Old Bushmills. Poor old Irish. Gone to the great distillery in the sky these many years. I've got a perfectly serviceable memory in some respects but not in others [...]. (*ibid.* 195-196)

I believe this expresses clearly what Carter achieves by her writing. Details make the reader take part in the experience, and the preference for Bushmills Irish Whiskey, after this contextualization, is just another example of such concern for details. Indeed, that is Ireland's oldest working distillery in County Antrim, Northern Ireland. The idea of a distillery and an operative memory for someone who intends to tell a story is brilliant, if one considers that to distill is to extract the volatile components of a mixture by the condensation and collection of the vapors that are produced as the mixture is heated. Is it not what Dora does from the beginning? Is she not making a meal of it?⁵¹

Wise Children, Carter's last novel starts by appealing to one of the five senses, smell: 'The house smells of cat, a bit, but more of geriatric chorine – cold cream, face powder, dress preservers, old fags, stale tea' (*WC* 2). This is not the only occasion. Later, Dora recalls 'the noise, the smoke, the smell of garlic, the blaring lights [which] were beginning to discompose [her]' (*ibid.* 154) during Melchior's engagement party to Daisy Duck. Smell seems to have always been what actually distinguished the two Chance sisters compared to 'two peas' – 'She [Nora] used Shalimar, me [Dora], Mitsouko' (*ibid.* 5) – being one 'the other half of the apple' (*ibid.* 217).⁵² But this is just the outset to get Dora started on how things changed through the years and obviously it is also a way for her to prove the authenticity of her narrative: 'Nowhere you can get a decent cup of tea, all

⁵¹ It was Dora herself who used this expression when Lady A. mentioned some unknown details of her relationships during Melchior's hundredth birthday party, instead of just apologizing, as expected – 'But she couldn't just *say* that, could she? She had to make a meal of it' (*WC* 215).

⁵² Actually, Dora uses another expression with a reference to food in order to show how different the twins Melchior and Peregrine were, even if there was the possibility of being confused with each other: 'Chalk and cheese' (*WC* 22). This pair of alliterating words just names two products which are specifically different.

Furthermore, when they were younger, the twin sisters performed as foodstuff: 'Dora and Nora. Two girls pounding the boards. At Christmas, we did a panto. One year we did *Jack and the Beanstalk* at Kennington. [...] Alive and kicking. Beans, in green tights; our speciality number was Mexican jumping beans, in red tights' (*ibid.* 75). The rhythm of the description even invites the reader to join the number and go with the flow of the twins' breathtaking jumps; they would later perform as the two fairies Peaseblossom and mustardseed in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (*ibid.* 134).

they give you is Harvey Wallbangers, filthy cappuccino' (*ibid.* 3). It is interesting to register how Dora complains about the poor quality of the beverage considered to be so typically appreciated by the English, then replaced, according to her, by the international prominence of an alcoholic beverage and a traditionally Italian coffee drink.⁵³ These are the first impressions one is given from a narrator who claims to be working on her memoirs, researching family history, and can see back into the past but is interrupted by this wind of change, perhaps, that turns over 'empty cat-food cans, cornflakes packets, [...] tea leaves' (*ibid.* 3).

Tea is definitely present in their lives; an example is when Nora pours herself another cup of tea and the narrator explains 'She's a regular teapot' (*ibid.* 7).⁵⁴ Still, all these changes and reading tea leaves come together after the Chance sisters go to Notting Hill to watch Hollywood's version of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, directed by Melchior. While they look for somewhere to have a cup of tea, they recall Joe Lyonses, 'gone the way of all flesh' (*ibid.* 111). As she asks 'Do you remember the Lyons teashops?' she describes them in the following way: 'Thick, curly white plaster on the shopfronts, like walking into a wedding cake, and the name in gold: J. Lyons' (*ibidem*). The comparison brings back the suggestion of merriment and bliss and she goes on recalling feelings and sensations of coziness, textures, warmth, and safety:

Poached eggs on toast keeping snug in little tin pigeon holes as you shuffled down the counter. The moist and fruity Bath buns with crumbs of rock candy glistening on the top, and a little pat of butter lined up alongside. The girl would pour hot water, whoosh! in a steaming column into a fat white pot and there you were, your good, hot cup of tea, with the leaves left in the bottom of the cup, afterwards, to tell your fortune with. I haven't had a cup of tea with leaves in it for years. For decades. I wonder what the fortune-tellers do, these days. Palms? (*ibidem*)

Dora can only imagine that one gets nostalgic for such an institution as Joe Lyons when it no longer exists, since she recalls only using it during the hard times of their careers and

⁵³ The Harvey Wallbanger is a cocktail made with vodka, the Italian Liqueure Galliano L'Autentico, and orange juice. It is believed to have been invented in 1952 by the three-time world champion mixologist or bartender Donato 'Duke' Antone (Paolantonio). As for the cappuccino, which is prepared with espresso, hot milk, and steamed-milk foam, it derives its name precisely from the Capuchin friars, in a reference to the colour of their habits.

⁵⁴ Even so, when Nora was called by Genghis Khan to his office, she chooses to have her coffee black (*WC* 145).

they would spend 'a tanner each on something with chips, a banger, some beans' (*ibidem*). The reference to chiefly British terms is obvious through the choice of 'tanner' (a sixpenny coin formerly used in Britain; a sixpence), and 'banger' (the informal expression meaning pork sausage). There had actually been a reference to Lyons before this one, when Dora remembers the sisters' schedule after the matinée on Wednesdays and Saturdays, allowing them to get home in time for tea and save the money they would have spent 'on a poached egg at a Lyons teashop' (*ibid.* 76). Change is indeed a major theme in late twentieth-century food habits in Britain, but if there is a single theme it is lack of cohesion. Accordingly, diversity appears to be the most used adjective to describe British food culture at the beginning of the twenty-first century. That diversity includes some who adhere to the conservative eating habits of earlier decades, and many who may not subscribe to them, but remember them. This applies as much to cooking techniques and meal composition as to food choices. Anyone born before 1960 will have clear memories of a plain, semiformal regime of eating (Mason 2004, xi), as Carter does. What allowed that change in eating habits are the social and economic factors which reach back, in some cases, to the late nineteenth century, and include developments in retailing, cooking technology, and the start of commercial advertising and mass media (*ibid.* xii). These last two areas are represented in *Wise Children* by Saskia, to be seen later.

Still concerning beverages, Nora and Dora's choices do not differ that much: 'I [Dora] had a go at the teapot, too, but too late, got half a cup of sodden leaves, went out to the scullery to put the kettle on, again. Here we sit [...] sometimes [...] all day, drink tea, chew the fat. [...] At six we switch to gin' (*WC* 8). Furthermore, beverages set the rhythm of the twins' daily-routine – 'now sit [...] in the basement of a house in Brixton, drinking tea' (*ibid.* 16). Even when things get serious and Tristram visits the twins' house and faces Brenda, these sisters, stepping out of the breakfast room into the scullery simply 'watch the kettle bounce and hiss on the gas' and at the feeling of more bad news decide to take the tea in (*ibid.* 49).⁵⁵ Tea may also be enhanced with other beverages, as the Chance sisters do when they celebrate their birthday and add rum to their tea (*ibid.* 51). Moreover, an invitation for tea may be denied if the company is not desired, as happened when Nora declined to have tea with Lady Atalanta Hazard (*ibid.* 77), though afterwards the latter suggests a cup of tea to ease up the eminent situation of her own divorce, while she feels

⁵⁵ The breakfast room seems to be central to the house and it is even on its door that Grandman would make pencil marks for the girls to practice at home their high kicks (*WC* 60).

the cold side of the teapot – ‘Evidently the temperature was no longer satisfactory’ (*ibid.* 147) – just before hugging and kissing the sisters as part of her family. She will end up being taken care of by these two sisters, indeed. Even on the day of Melchior’s one hundred birthday party, they will take care of her, like a baby, before they get themselves ready and, again, tea makes her comfortable: ‘We dusted her with talc, tucked her in a rug and left her in the kitchen with the fire on and a fresh pot of tea, watching *Brief Encounter* on afternoon television’ (*ibid.* 184).⁵⁶

On the other hand, when the twins cannot find a place to drink their cup of tea, there are always alternatives (like gin) ‘to fortify’ them (*ibid.* 111). It is interesting the choice of this verb, since gin is a spirit used to fortify other beverages; in this case it fortifies the twin sisters. It fortifies anyone, according to them. When Lady A. does not find the strength to face Melchior at his one-hundredth birthday party, Nora recommends a ‘stiffener’ which is actually accepted by Old Nanny – ‘she knocked a quick one back herself once Nora got the gin out of her gilt-mesh bag [...] she [Lady A.] had another snifter and settled down’ (*ibid.* 201). Yet, for them any beverage goes, as is the case of the bottle of Scotch Nora remembers to take home from the Hazard sisters’ twenty-first birthday – ‘though never my favourite tippie, any port in a storm’ (*ibid.* 178). Stout beer Guinness has also some relevance in the Chance sisters’ memories. In reality, the need they feel of changing in order to stand out came from Grandma’s suggestion, even if it was based on the colour of her beer:

It was Grandma and Guinness caused us to become brunettes. One night, when we were resting between engagements, we were all sitting round this very kitchen table, our one and only kitchen table, having a few drinks. [...]

Grandma was partaking of the bottled stout she never knew would later prove her downfall.

‘Not red,’ said Grandma, eyeing her glass. ‘Black.’ (*ibid.* 79-80)

Perhaps Grandma was considering the original meaning of the adjective ‘stout’ – proud or brave – or she was possibly thinking about its later connotation of ‘strong’. It is well known that at the end of the 19th century, stout porter beer grew the reputation of being a

⁵⁶ The very first reference to Wheelchair’s staying in the Chance sisters’ house and not leaving much is exactly because of the riots she caused when going out shopping with Nora – ‘she says to the bloke at the salad stall: ‘Have you got anything in the shape of a cucumber, my good fellow?’’ (*WC* 7).

healthful and strengthening beverage.⁵⁷ As remembered by Dora, it was because Grandma had run out of stout that she had to go out one night and was taken out by a flying bomb – ‘Oh, Grandma! Talk about the ‘fatal glass of beer’! If you’d been able to curb your thirst that night, you’d have lived to see VE-day. [...] The siren blared but she wasn’t going to let Hitler inconvenience her drinking habits, was she?’ (*ibid.* 79). Not even Hitler would stop Grandma’s will, and when the girls return home they can only stare at ‘the empty glass, with the lacy remnants of the foam gone hard inside it’ (*ibidem*) as if mourning the drinker in the kitchen table, the centre of their house.

Nevertheless, life does go on and when the much older Chance twins meet Gorgeous George for the last time, he asks them in a voice which had been destroyed by time and liquor ‘Spare us half a bar for a cup of tea, lady’ (*ibid.* 196). Hope makes him ask for a shilling and to that Dora can only but offer him twenty pounds: ‘Take it for the sake of *The Dream*. You can have it on the one condition, that you spend it all on drink’ (*ibid.* 197). She still encourages him to ‘go off and drink a health to bastards’ (*ibidem*). As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the eating habits of the ‘illegitimates’ in *Wise Children* appear to be ‘endorsed as a traditional, potentially nostalgia-inducing diet of the impoverished’ (Sceats 2000, 182) – besides drinking cup after cup of tea and gin, the Chance sisters eat bread and dripping and jam, along with Grandma’s odorous cabbage, crumpets, poached eggs at Joe Lyons, sausage rolls and Scotch eggs, as young dancers, and bacon and bacon sandwiches, as adults. Sarah Sceats even ends her readings by suggesting a further consideration of the novel’s overall championing of the illegitimate being politically relevant, ‘and whether whatever might be called social eating in *Wise Children* in any way radicalises the spurned and marginalised (*ibidem*).

All the world is a stage and time and place do not change that. Looking back in time, the reader is shown how the little wine stains and smear of marmalade on Estella’s frock are covered up by pinning ‘a bunch of frangipani over the worst of it’ (*WC* 18), for instance. On those days, when Estella and young Peregrine come across an organ-grinder, she manages to bring strange street people together to a group dance, arriving late at some ladies’ lunch club.⁵⁸ Dora concludes that Peregrine, in his full of laughter and dancing

⁵⁷ More recently, in an article entitled, the old advertising slogan ‘Guinness is Good for You’ is reevaluated by researchers. (“Guinness could really be good for you” 2003).

⁵⁸ Estella’s joie de vivre is also evident in her professional life. For instance, when Dora describes Ranulph, Estella’s husband, as ‘one of the great, roaring, actor-managers’, she illustrates this by telling the reader about what she has read concerning his Macbeth and how he would scare one

memories, was the lucky one, and 'he always remembered the good times', since the description is done by Peregrine himself:

'We missed soup, we missed fish, we arrived at the table at the same time as the chicken. [...] There was mango ice-cream for dessert, our favourite. We had three bowlfuls each. In Melbourne, they named a sundae after her, 'Ice-cream Estella', mango ice-cream topped with passionfruit purée. If ever we get to Melbourne, together, Floradora, I'll treat you to an 'Ice-cream Estella'. (*ibidem*)

Here dessert, found irresistible by both mother and son, is another memory Peregrine feels the need to share, and even to repeat. This treat of two exotic fruits is quite remarkable. When one studies the cultural meaning of mango in Australia (the Hazard family was there at the time), one comes across the way this fruit is regarded as a symbol of summer and, by tradition, the first tray of mangoes of the season is sold at an auction for charity. About the passion-fruit, Carter chooses the way it is written in New Zealand and Australia, where it is called 'passionfruit'. The passionfruit's fresh fruit pulp or its sauce is frequently used in desserts, as a topping for *pavlova*, for instance, or ice cream, a flavouring for cheesecake, or in the icing of the *mille-feuille*, also known as the Napoleon or vanilla slices. Even if I could not find any reference to Ice-cream Estella from Melbourne, I can see a correlation with the regional meringue cake *pavlova*. The latter was also a dessert named after the Russian ballet dancer Anna Pávlova, and it was allegedly created in honour of her either during, or after, one of her tours of Australia and New Zealand, in the 1920s. Similarly to the idea implied in the creation of 'Ice-cream Estella', *pavlova* is a popular dish and would have become a central part of the national cuisine, being often served throughout festive meals, like Christmas dinner or New Year's Day brunch. The dessert named after Estella would, indeed, be synonym to the celebration of life, since one of its special ingredients, the passion-fruit, had a religious association given

witless in the banquet scene. The banquet scene is rather relevant since it is an occasion when the characters get together and share a meal, in this case with the purpose of celebration. In this case the banquet scene is both a high point for Macbeth, for it is his first celebration as King of Scotland and the beginning of the end for him. As a celebration, it is not that strange for the audience to notice Estella's shoulders shaking for being caught by a fit of giggles with her, when she had her back to the audience. She had a good point: 'Peregrine said she'd told him she thought the Macbeths ought to sack the cook' (*ibid.* 14).

by Catholic missionaries who thought that certain parts of the fruit bore some religious connections, because they saw in it a way of illustrating the Crucifixion.⁵⁹

Moreover, according to Peregrine's memories, with the tragic death of their parents, the two brothers stranded in New York, barely survived on a diet based on candy, hot dogs and pie à la mode – 'stuffed [...] by the lovely ladies [...] who went about their business in the hotel lobby' (*ibid.* 21). The choices in their diet are interesting: the concentrated solution of sugar to which flavorings and colorants are added in candies has a long history in popular culture; despite the different claims about the invention of the hot dog, the placing of the sausage on bread or a bun as finger food is commonly associated to the United States; but most curious, in my opinion, is the reference to the Pie à la Mode, a pie (usually apple pie) served with a scoop of ice cream (usually vanilla) or cream which was first named precisely at a hotel – the Cambridge Hotel in Cambridge, Washington County, New York (Stanley 2004).⁶⁰

Another character that became extremely relevant for the Chance sisters is Grandma Chance, who was famous for her choice, a vegetarian diet which matched her

⁵⁹ Jesus' redemptive suffering and death by crucifixion is commonly referred to as the Passion, representing also the doctrines of salvation and atonement. The Catholic missionaries saw the following connections: the three stigmas of the passion-fruit flower reflect the three nails in Jesus' hands and feet; the threads of the passion flower were a symbol of the Crown of Thorns; the vine's tendrils were likened to the whips; the five anthers were seen as representing Christ's five wounds; finally, the ten petals resembled the Apostles, with the exclusion of Judas and Peter, as a source of betrayal and denying.

⁶⁰ Among the different theories, I chose the three most well-known: the German immigrant Charles Feltman is pointed out as the one who first sold sausages in rolls around 1870, on Coney Island (New York); Antoinette Feuchtwanger's wife is also regarded as having supposedly invented the hot dog when she sold these on the streets of St. Louis (Missouri) in 1880; Anton Ludwig Feuchtwanger, a Bavarian sausage seller, is believed to have served sausages in rolls at one of the World's Fair (either the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago or the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St Louis).

The history of Pie à la Mode goes back to the 1890s, when Professor Charles Watson Townsend ordered a slice of apple pie with ice cream, while visiting the Cambridge Hotel. Another guest, Mrs. Barry Hall, named the concoction *pie à la mode*. This was the name Professor Townsend subsequently used daily to order it during his stay. Later, when he ordered it by that name at Delmonico's Restaurant in New York City, the waiter ignored what it was and Prof. Townsend chastised him by stating: 'Do you mean to tell me that so famous an eating place as Delmonico's has never heard of Pie à la Mode, when the Hotel Cambridge, up in the village of Cambridge, NY serves it every day? Call the manager at once, I demand as good serve [*sic*] here as I get in Cambridge' (Stradley 2004). When called, the manager stated the following: 'Delmonico's never intends that any other shall get ahead of it... Forthwith, pie à la mode will be featured on the menu every day' (Byrd 2010, 275). Because a reporter for the *New York Sun* newspaper overheard the disturbance, an article about it came out the next day and, soon, pie à la mode became a standard on menus across the country (*ibidem*).

walk of life – ‘She was a naturist, she was a vegetarian, she was a pacifist’ (*WC* 57).⁶¹ Actually, I consider Grandma an example of a mostly twentieth-century phenomenon (above all since the Second World War and later on, in particular since the 1970s) which incorporates the household structure that had changed towards a one-parent household. The references to her being in the market denounce a somewhat preview of how stores (later supermarkets) would develop a great control of the food chain, along with the development of centralized production units (as cook-chill convenience meals), which may have both encouraged individuality in eating and eased it. This is apparent when the twin sisters no longer have Grandma to care for them. One cannot forget that with the pattern of meals changing, issues relating to food tend to center more on health and environmental features (Mason 2004, 12).

From the beginning, when Dora describes Melchior’s stay in her house, she manages to imply Grandma’s choice: ‘day after day, back to the boiled cabbage at Bard Road’ (*WC* 24). Right after this, Dora remembers being in the market picking over the greens and Grandma’s passion for salads: ‘it went with all that naturism. During her strictest periods, she’d make us a meal of a cabbage, raw in summer, boiled in winter’ (*ibid.* 27). The power of this remembrance lingers probably through the smell not only of boiled cabbage, but also of Grandma’s drinking habits:

To this day I swear, [...] there’s a smell of crushed mint that lingers in the breakfast room, sometimes, because her favourite tippie was crème de menthe frappé, with a sprig of mint, in season, but she’d drink whatever she could lay her hands on the rest of the time. And that boiled cabbage of hers. There’s an aroma in the area we can’t get rid of, no matter what we try. At first we thought it was the drains. We never touch cabbage, ourselves, not now we’re grown up. I couldn’t look a cabbage in the eye after what Grandma did to them. Boiled them to perdition. The abattoir is kinder to a cow. (*ibid.* 28)

Dora acknowledges that Grandma drank moderately but regularly (‘tippie’) crème de menthe, poured over shaved ice garnished with a mint sprig, as her favourite – another example of her preferred choice is presented later by Dora when she describes the long evenings of gossiping between Perry and Grandma ‘hugely wedged in the breakfast-room

⁶¹ As for Grandma’s choice of being a naturist, Dora keeps that part of her influence on the twin sisters always present: ‘I saw more nipples in those last five years of touring after World War II than in all my life till then and I was brought up by a naturist, don’t you forget’ (*WC* 59).

armchairs [...] breaking into fruity chuckles, the bottle of crème de menthe, the bucket of ice beside them – nothing but the best for Grandma Chance' (*ibid.* 92). However, she was not selective on beverages.⁶²

The boiled cabbage, nonetheless, is emphasised here not only because of the strong odour the sisters still feel in the house, but also because of their being over boiled. Dora's expression 'look a cabbage in the eye', seconded by the association of the over boiling to the loss of the soul or eternal damnation ('perdition'), culminates with yet another hyperbolic association when she uses the comparative of 'kind' concerning the procedures on animals in abattoirs. Yet, the twins diet does not include only vegetables, for their friend 'Our Cyn' (a foundling guided by Peregrine towards Grandma's house) believed in a more meaty diet: 'If Grandma lingered too long down the local and forgot to grate the evening carrots, Cyn would do us a couple of lamb chops, a bit of liver and bacon. Forbidden fruit! Delish' (*ibid.* 35). Dora's very short remarks at the end of the description give the idea of both its illicitness and delight – I believe 'delish' to be very appealing to the senses, especially to the taste or smell. Moreover, it was Cyn who had prepared a birthday cake for the girls the very first time they were told Melchior was their father. The use of the verb 'to blaze' in 'its candles were blazing' (*ibid.* 57) matches their feelings perfectly, given that it implies being resplendent, a brilliant, striking display, and a sudden outburst, as of emotion. But who lit the candles on their cake? Grandma did (*ibid.* 58).

Once the girls grow older and more independent they start to make choices disapproved by Grandma, being one of them, their diet. The girls clutch, for instance, 'a greasy paper package of bacon sandwiches' they would have picked up from the cabbies' coffee-stall on the other side of Battersea Bridge, when they go to Melchior's party which is indeed a cover for an audition (*ibid.* 97). Also, there is a point when the twins 'lived off the Scotch eggs the landladies put out for late supper, after the show' (*ibid.* 77). The

⁶² For instance, when with Miss Worthington and her old mother who played the piano, Grandma 'often enjoyed a port and [a] lemon or two' (*WC* 59) and when the girls make their first professional appearance on a stage, Grandma escorting them always takes 'a half-bottle of gin in her handbag just in case' (*ibid.* 60). Dora even presents the reason: 'In case the pubs run dry, ducky, she said' (*ibidem*). However, the reader is also told that Grandma put on a kettle when the girls arrived at dawn or late (*ibid.* 88; 92), although it was after drinking her favourite crème de menthe with Perry (*ibid.* 92). Still, not finishing an open bottle would be something strange coming from Grandma and only the arrival of Perry would allow for it – 'Why was she dealing the *coup de grâce* to a freshly opened bottle of liqueur? [...] My uncle had come home again' (*ibid.* 88). As Dora wonders why, she uses the expression *coup de grâce* figuratively to describe the last in a series of events which brings about the end of some entity, but the fact that originally it refers to killing, execution, and wartime, makes its usage by her more interesting.

Scotch eggs are in fact quite practical and somehow nutritious, since they consist of a de-shelled hard-boiled egg, wrapped in a sausage meat mixture, coated in breadcrumbs before being deep-fried, and are generally eaten cold. Understandably Grandma had to go 'spare when she heard about the Scotch eggs' (*ibidem*). Dora's explanation is correct in what concerns the egg, but the meat part is rather subverted by her – 'It's only sausage meat [...]. They wrap some sausage meat round the hard-boiled egg. You know what they make sausage meat out of, sawdust and the bits of old elastic' (*ibidem*). Grandma is not senile and is not tricked by such explanation and accusingly calls them cannibals. The same happens when she just utters 'Dead bunny' once she sees the girls investment 'in some little bits of rabbit fur to snuggle into when the wind blew chill' (*ibidem*). Disapproving does not imply not loving and Dora stresses that.

Still, when Dora recalls the bombardments, it is Grandma's immense capacity of nurturing that is highlighted in short but potent sentences, as the bombs themselves: 'She'd cuddle us. She lullabyed us, she fed us. She was our air-raid shelter; she was our entertainment; she was our breast' (*ibid.* 29). Grandma Chance can, thus, be read as elliptically echoing the traditional female storytellers; these storytellers are recognised by Carter as 'pivotal presences in the evolution of that discourse and in its cross-cultural perpetuation over the centuries' (Cavallaro 2011, 169). After Grandma's death, the listing of unattended needs cannot but include food: 'Without Grandma in it, minding the fires, [...] up in the morning putting on the kettle, banging the big brass gong to tell us she'd scrambled the dried eggs already, and they were congealing on the plate' (*ibid.* 165). In opposition, after her departure the house turns into a cold shelter and the expressions used in the description picture the uneasiness lived by the twin sisters: 'the house was nothing but a barn and we rattled around uncomfortably, piles of dirty dishes in the sink, the steps filthy, baked beans fossilising at their leisure in the bottoms of pans on the cold stove, etc.' (*ibidem*; my emphasis). The image of a typically hot staple food, as baked beans, cold and turning into a fossil depicts the degradation of their diet, way of living and, consequently, of themselves.⁶³ Another example comes from Old Nanny's visits, when she would accept a cup of tea – one more illustration of the Chance sisters' interest in tea – but drank her tea from the wrong side of the cup, perhaps because 'admittedly, Nora was a careless washer-

⁶³ As for food habits, these remained roughly similar to those of the previous century. Although most food was still seasonal, canned foods (like South African fruit of various types) were commonly accepted and more convenience foods were introduced, some of North American origin (as baked beans and breakfast cereals).

up, especially after sundown' and Dora wonders whether they are 'letting standards slip' (*WC* 182).

Food rationing was also a hard reality for everyone and the Chance sisters feel it when they visit Lady A. and are asked for the rationing coupons:

The food was nothing much. We lived in hopes she'd get the East Sussex black market organised but Old Nanny always asked us to be sure to bring our coupons and served up cottage pie, shepherd's pie, nothing ever looked like whatever it was made of although the plates were Chelsea and the knives and forks were silver, knobbed, blackened, engraved with the Lynde seal, a pelican pecking at its breast. Rotten food. All the same, we were still nervous as to which ancestral fork to use. (*ibid.* 168)

The silverware matches the description of a class that even the decadent, expensive shabbiness of the whole place had, including the food, and to which the sisters knew they could never aspire. The weight of the classy ancestry does not elude the direct, plain thought of 'rotten food'. Additionally, the rationing is visible in brief references, either to Dora's appreciation for 'hot dinners' offered by Mr Piano Man (*ibid.* 88) or to 'the occasional black-market egg' Dora would take his mother to (*ibid.* 89). Another reference to rationing comes in opposition to Peregrine's being 'filthy rich' which impresses Dora: 'the back of the Bentley was stacked with cans and packages and bottles, most with labels from Rio, Paris and New York, I was glad to see, because, back here in Brixton, it was still half a rasher of bacon a week, a little pat of butter, that was your lot, that was rationing' (*ibid.* 170).

Moreover, food even acts as a compensation when the girls are rejected by their father, at an age when they 'fancied a bit of bread and dripping', and get 'double rations, two slices each, and a bit of raspberry jam on it, too' (*ibid.* 30). Peregrine, in his visits to Grandma and the girls, brings joy and shares the delights of food. The first example comes from his visit to finally meet the twins and they all go into the kitchen, drink tea, and ransack Peregrine's pockets to find a Fuller's walnut cake, 'which Grandma accepted with wary politeness' (*ibid.* 31). The reference to this frosted walnut layer cake is rather appropriate, in view of the fact that it was very often taken as a treat and according to the Joe Lyons & Co website the company was founded by an American William Bruce Fuller who 'demonstrated his Fudge, Peppermint Lumps and Walnut Cake' in the United

Kingdom, opening afterwards a shop in Oxford Street and expanding over the years.⁶⁴ While Dora reminisces over having the original Fuller's walnut cake, she grumbles about missing it in their old age, for everything seems to be decaying: 'Fuller's walnut cake has gone the way of all flesh, worse luck, I wouldn't mind a slice of Fuller's walnut cake right now. It turned out we were all very partial to Fuller's walnut cake so we had some slices of that and things eased up a bit' (*ibidem*). Actually, the cake was last produced commercially by Fuller's in 1969 (Poole 1983, 13).⁶⁵ Gorgeous George is another character who appreciates this cake and his wish for it leads the Chance sisters and Perry to meet Melchior who was playing *Macbeth* – it all started when Gorgeous George asked for a cup of tea: 'We went into town to look for a Fuller's Tea Room because he fancied a bit of walnut cake, too and that is how we came to find ourselves outside the Theatre Royal' (*WC* 69).

One of the ideas that developed considerably during the nineteenth century was eating out, as the number and types of places to buy ready-prepared foods increased. A characteristic of the urban Victorian landscape was the chophouse or eating house, which presented an 'ordinary' (a fixed price, set meal of meat, greens, and potatoes or bread); such a meal had been served at taverns and eating houses since the seventeenth century. Another place to eat, for men who were wealthy, fashionable, or aristocratic, was the gentlemen's club – developed from the eighteenth century coffeehouses to become establishments offering food, drink, sitting rooms, and temporary accommodation to their members, although they were not open to women. There were also dining rooms, providing meals to both residents and non-residents in Hotels. As for light refreshments – fruit, cakes, ice creams, and some drinks – these could be taken in confectioners' shops. From abroad came another concept imported from France during the nineteenth century, the restaurant, along with the word 'chef'. Even though most cookery was considered low-status work, a few chefs achieved wealth and fame; of continental origin, Escoffier, for example, was responsible for reorganizing the logistics of the restaurant kitchen, introducing the *partie* system, with its hierarchy of chefs. By the end of the century, the

⁶⁴ Joe Lyons & Co website is the following: <<http://www.kzwp.com/lyons2/fullers.htm>> According to this same site, they had 82 shops by the 1950s and continued to expand until they were finally taken over by Lyons at the end of 1968.

⁶⁵ Nonetheless, there is presently at least one company in the United Kingdom making a version of Fuller's Walnut Cake, Okemoor Products in Okehampton, Devon.

restaurants as well as the tea room were the two types of establishments where respectable women could take meals in public (Mason 2004, 54).

Back to Grandma's diet and the Chance sisters' options, the reader learns that there was a 'patriotic pig in the back garden' which was fed with swill, in their case it meant potato peelings and tea leaves (*WC* 163). It was because of Grandma's love for the pig that the slaughterhouse was never mentioned, but the animal 'ended up [as part of] the funeral baked meats after Grandma copped it'. This reference to funeral baked food had already occurred in *Nights at the Circus* when Ma Nelson dies (*NC* 44), showing celebrations where food becomes important. In this case, the deceased would be shocked to know about the mourners feasting off 'her beloved porker, nicely roasted' (*WC* 163). This happened right after Grandma's cremation and, in a way, the pig followed its owner's faith, being roasted. This pig ends up coked and eaten up, in opposition to Sybil, in *Nights at the Circus*, who still manages to escape such a fate (*NC* 274). It was a hard choice for the sisters but there seemed to have been no other alternative for the funeral tea – 'People had come for miles, we couldn't give them grated cabbage. Old Nanny brought up a bushel of apples for the sauce from the Lady A.' (*WC* 163) – even if they stick to Grandma's principles on not having any flowers. At least, the pig, whose meat is considered to taste similarly to human flesh, met the same fate as its protector and in a wartime period: 'we'd burned the bones – because that pig met its fate strictly on the q.t. [quiet/secretly], it was a hanging matter, to slaughter your own meat in wartime' (*ibid.* 164). This comment reflects Grandma's belief in wars as 'a way to get the young men out of the picture' (*ibid.* 67). Nevertheless, beverages are also essential in such circumstances and Peregrine, albeit not present, unsurprisingly pays his respect to an old friend by sharing Grandma's favourite drink with the guests, as if he was to take care of a last toast: 'there was a knock at the door, a jeep, an army driver, a dozen crates of crème de menthe, a barrel of Guinness, so the mourners all went home with grease on their chins and strong drink on their breath and that was how Peregrine paid his respects to Grandma' (*ibid.* 164).

The happy glorious days of Peregrine's visits are always remembered in terms of magic and food, as the following reference:

Every other Sunday, he arrived with parcels from Hamleys and Harrods and Selfridges, he'd pull red ribbons out of our ears and flags from his nostrils, he'd sit us on his knee and feed us Fuller's walnut cake and then he'd wind up the

gramophone and we'd dance. After that, he and Grandma would have a couple of drinks and a few laughs; they were like conspirators. (*ibid.* 34)

This shows, indeed, how partial they all are. Even when he leaves and is away, Peregrine gets his girls food and products that can make them dream.⁶⁶ Most would be ruined because they are too fragile to endure long travels, but it just added to his image the idea that anything would be possible for him, without commonplace limitations.

In another one of Peregrine's visits, he provides a day of simple happiness to the girls, according to Dora, when he takes them for a ride to the pier on the seafront at Brighton and shows that for him life has, indeed, to be 'a continuous succession of small treats or else he couldn't see the point' (*ibid.* 61). The centre is evidently food:

There was a linen tablecloth to spread out on the beach over the shingle and Perry and the cabby [...] toddled off arm in arm to pick up some bubbly while we put out the ham and chicken and cut up the loaf and opened the can of foie gras, nothing but the best when Uncle Perry stood the treat. [...] Grandma filled the glasses, gave her toast: 'Champagne to all here, *real* pain to the other bastards.' Perry picked hard-boiled eggs out of our noses and gave us our coffee piping hot poured from the neb of the cabby's cap.

When we'd all done eating, Perry took hold of the two corners of one end of the cloth and – whoosh! the fine china, the knives and forks (good, heavy silverware, nothing mean), the bones, the crusts, the empties, vanished clean away. He said he'd sent them back to the shop. How did he do it? Search me. Our Uncle Perry knew a trick or two. Bloody marvellous conjurer. Should have set up professionally. (*ibid.* 62)

The linen tablecloth comes similar to a cloak that involves the group in a magic moment with only the best quality products and celebrated with bubbly champagne, though Grandma's toast brings to mind that their identity will be out in the open at all times, but always celebrated. Undoubtly, Perry cannot do without his tricks, like the food products (coming from unlikely and unexpected places) that disappear at once without leaving even crusts as a clue. His existence is similar to his tricks; everything vanishes on his will, from

⁶⁶ When Peregrine leaves them, Dora simply recalls the following: 'He dropped off a crate of crème de menthe for Grandma, tap shoes for me and Nora'. From some of his presents this is what she most remembers: 'Every Christmas we'd get a hamper full of rotten fruit or a box of straw and shards that had been fine china when he packed it from places we could never find on the map. He never knew what would travel and what wouldn't' (*WC* 34).

the essentials to the bits and pieces, the odds and ends. Perry is portrayed as a character whose presence on the scene is 'invariably enshrouded by a potent aura of enchantment, revelry and ludic disorder' (Cavallaro 2011, 171). He has, indeed, the power to cause all of the crockery and cutlery used in this picnic to vanish in one fell swoop (*WC* 62) or to summon a couple of cream buns out of Grandma's cleavage alongside a cloud of talcum powder (*ibid.* 73). Yet, Grandma Chance is still the mediator between this world and the *real* world, as she takes a crème de menthe frappé, to settle her digestion, and belches. The girls are even allowed to have a glass of bubbly, each, at lunch – 'Everything conspired to make us happy' (*ibid.* 63).

The girls' senses are marveled and this comes out when Dora recalls the citric brisk smell of Perry's cologne along with the odour in the Pier Pavilion as it was 'moist and warm, inside, and full of holiday scents of Evening in Paris and Ashes of Violets mixed with dry fish, that is, fried, from outside, and wet fish, that is, dead, from down below, and hot tin, from the roof, and armpits' (*ibid.* 63). This is how the reader perceives once more how Peregrine stands out in the common world.⁶⁷ To sum up, he is a man of unlimited and generous appetite, the source of crème de menthe, Fuller's walnut cake and cream buns drawn from Grandma's cleavage. However, just as Sceats evidences, Peregrine's gargantuan size is not only a product of Dora's desire, but also 'an indication of largeness of function', since it is his erotic force that actually offsets 'all the negating and entropic influences at work in the novel, including physical decline' (Sceats 2000, 180).

In addition, food equals this declining time in the characters' lives. Melchior, for instance, when already muffing his lines and old age started 'creeping up behind him', opted for 'old buffers in pipe tobacco, vintage port and miniature cigar commercials' (*WC* 37). Nevertheless, Melchior's voice when he is celebrating one-hundred years is a 'thick, rich, vintage port voice' (*ibid.* 211). Dora also describes Melchior 'fixing himself a Scotch and soda at the drinks tray' (*ibid.* 86), and they choose to take Lady A. a bottle of Scotch when visiting her on the worst Sunday lunch of their lives (*ibid.* 170). Later on, Melchior's looks are commented in terms of food-preservation by his first wife,

⁶⁷ Sarah Sceats dwells on the carnivalesque side of *Wise Children* from a Bakhtinian perspective and Peregrine single-handedly embodies carnival in this novel; in short, she considers the following: 'This towering, Falstaffian figure stands for and emphasises the comprehensiveness of carnival, which through him encompasses all appetites – murder, incest, poisoning, cruelty, gourmandism, as well as 'laughter, forgiveness, generosity, reconciliation'' (Sceats 2000, 180).

Wheelchair, who had known him since his first glory days: 'Well, well, well! He's awfully well preserved, I must say! He looks quite *pickled!*' (*ibid.* 41). Peregrine, on the other hand, is often portrayed wearing clothes whose colour is a reference to food: 'vanilla tussore suit' (*ibid.* 62); 'his suit was a chocolate brown in colour, with a broad, white stripe; his shoes were dappled white and chocolate' (*ibid.* 114). Besides, when Peregrine picks the Chance sisters to take them visit Lady A., he is described as 'brown as a berry from the Brazilian sun' (*ibid.* 170), and his hair is 'as red as paprika' (*ibid.* 207) when he meets the whole family on his one-hundredth birthday. Gorgeous George also reveals a tattoo 'filled in a brilliant pink, although the limelight turned into morbid, raspberry colour that looked bad for his health' (*ibid.* 67).

Daisy Duck drinks champagne, which clearly matches her life style (*ibid.* 116) and when she leaves for California, with the twin sisters as part of her entourage, she is welcomed by the 'starving' fans as 'the dish of the day' and in a similar register the Chance sisters are compared to 'side salads' (*ibid.* 117).⁶⁸ In fact, the sisters will end up the big birthday party at the end of the narrative in 'the back of the van along with several plastic vats of salad which Saskia had forgotten to serve up' (*ibid.* 228). However, Dora characterises Daisy Duck as being able to 'put away the gin like nobody's business' (*ibid.* 118). Indeed, when Daisy is faced with pregnancy and seeks advice from the Chance sisters, she accepts the orange juice they were having, but 'poured into her goblet a slug from the silver flask she always carried with her' (*ibid.* 144). The choice of the informal use of the noun 'slug' leads to the idea of a shot of liquor. Even if her sudden visit on the Chance sisters comes as a surprise in the morning, and Daisy is still uncombed in her *café au lait* chiffon nightie, she had not forgotten to take with her the silver flask, plus a breakfast of lox and bagels (*ibid.* 144). She will always keep her flask, since, later one hears from Dora that Nora and Daisy had 'evidently copiously refreshed themselves from Daisy's hip flask' (*ibid.* 213) during Melchior's birthday party, as well as Lady A. who 'exhaustedly accepted a pull at Daisy's flask' (*ibid.* 216). In fact, before this, she ends up becoming Melchior's second wife and at their engagement party, shows up in her Titania gown 'wrapped round Melchior like skin round sausage' (*ibid.* 153). The last comparison

⁶⁸ On the other hand, Genghis Khan had an entourage of media and staff around him which 'Irish's acid-tipped pen' described as 'irresistibly reminiscent of the movements of maggots upon rotting meat' (*WC* 131). Actually, he has a plate of steak tartare on his desk beside the photograph of Daisy to feed an unidentified animal (*ibidem* 145).

is done during Melchior's birthday party, as she is 'brown and glossy, like a Sunday roast, plump brown shoulders, bright brown hair with a few grey strands' (*ibid.* 202).

Characters even get nicknames for their actions, notwithstanding the fact that these somehow involve food, as is the case of Lady Margarine – 'Her *pièce de résistance* was a turn in a long yellow frock with a ruff, standing on a rampart, gazing sternly at a half-pound pack on a dish before her: "To butter or not to butter ..." My Lady Margarine' (*ibid.* 37-38). The relationships between characters can also be defined in terms of sharing food, like Lady Margarine, who never fancied 'breaking bread with her husband's by-blows' (*ibid.* 38).

Tony, an Italian American and Nora's fiancé, is always related to the stereotyped love for food and eating in what concerns the stereotyped Italians. Everything is passionate:

[...] Nora was eating pasta and making love with the magnificent simplicity I always envied. She was learning how to make cannoli, too, and cannelloni – and she was still all ablaze with love, no sign of cooling, yet, helping out at Tony's uncle's business every spare moment, in fact, apart from whatever else they did together. Sometimes she even sported a domestic air on her return to the Forest of Arden, a smudge of flour on her frock, a trace of tomato paste on her cheek. (*ibid.* 123-124).

When compared to Dora's relationship and the difficulties she faced in the sexual area with her boyfriend (the writer Ross 'Irish' O'Flaherty), there is a clear stress on Nora's unproblematic action of making love. However, such simplicity reflects on food, too. Whereas Dora and her American boyfriend would 'send out for a hamburger and attack his well-used library' (*ibid.* 124), Nora would help in her boyfriend's family business. The latter would learn from dessert to main course; the two examples given were understandably chosen for their phallic shape (tube-shaped shells), but also for being served hot and prepared immediately before serving, because the Cannoli shells should be filled with cream at once or their shells will lose their crisp texture. Furthermore, this Sicilian pastry dessert was historically prepared as a treat during Carnevale season (Carnival), probably as a fertility symbol and one legend even assigns its origin to the harem of Caltanissetta, a city in the western interior of Sicily. Though *cannolo* is an

essential part of Sicilian cuisine, in the United States it is known as a general Italian pastry.

Later on, Dora complains about her sister's absence on weekends, since she would be busy making ravioli. This reference to a traditional type of Italian filled pasta, before concluding that the narrator felt they were 'drifting apart' (*ibid.* 142), is rather ironic, if one considers ravioli to be composed of a filling sealed between two layers of thin egg pasta dough and the word itself to be reminiscent of the Italian verb *riavvolgere*, which means "to wrap". For me, this does imply that unlike the cooking calling, their relationship was no longer sealed properly, as before. The last reference to the Italian cuisine comes with Nora's engagement party catered by Tony's uncle, who did it not quite seasonally for an Elizabethan feast and overdid the garlic and marinara sauce (*ibid.* 152), causing the fairies to start on serious drinking at the bar. A vat of the marinara sauce is also emptied all over Nora by Tony's Mamma (*ibid.* 159) and the tomato-based sauce emphasises what could be seen as a massacre from then on, coupled with a barrage of champagne corks blasting off in unison backing up the uncontrolled situation (*ibid.* 160). This is one of the situations where the narrator admits being 'punch-drunk' (*ibidem*).

In terms of stylistic devices, food is also used by Dora to make comparisons – 'In those days, all everybody else saw was a little grey rectangle the size of a cornflakes packet, with vague forms flickering across it [television], like Trafalgar Square in a peasouper' (*ibid.* 37) – or even to explain a character's behaviour, like Grandma's at the time she sat down by the door watching the Chance twins dancing lessons, and looked grieved, not because she feared for the girls getting sprained, but because 'she was sucking on a Fox's glacier mint' (*ibid.* 53).⁶⁹ When the twins turn seventeen, Dora asks her sister to have her 'fella for a birthday present' hoping he would not notice the difference between them. She considers him to be 'as innocent as asparagus, his heart as pure as Epp's cocoa, poor lamb' (*ibid.* 83). Such an out of the ordinary comparison of innocence with this vegetable makes all sense if one reflects on how the fleshy green spears of asparagus are both succulent and tender, having, therefore, been regarded as a delicacy from ancient times. The fact that asparagus is harvested when its shoots break through the soil and reach 6-8 inches of length makes it a highly prized vegetable.

⁶⁹ Grandma's love for mint makes her choice natural. Fox's Glacier Mints are the leading, branded boiled mint in the United Kingdom and they have been manufactured by Fox's Confectionery in Leicester since 1918 (*Fox's Confectionery* 2010).

Moreover, the tips, *points d'amour* ('love tips') have also a sexual connotation, because of the fine texture and the strong and nonetheless delicate taste. Concerning the comparison of the boy's heart to the purity of Epp's cocoa, it is a quality that James Epp, the homoeopathic doctor, turned into a reference.⁷⁰

It seems birthdays, as commemorations, are dates that Dora points out without forgetting the reference to food and/or beverages. Among the several examples, still before the war, Dora recalls how they frequented 'fashionable nightclubs, smart restaurants and flash hotels', and on one of the sisters' birthday, Perry took them and Grandma to the Savoy Grill (*ibid.* 93).⁷¹ What she does not forget is how they managed to convince Grandma to go out when she did not really enjoy it: 'we'd had to push and prod her into her corset and bribe her with gin into the taxi' (*ibidem*). It is the girls method of convincing which will prove both their embarrassment and Perry's delight once they get to the restaurant and a hovering waiter suggests the following: 'For the first course may I suggest oysters, caviar, smoked salmon...' (*ibid.* 94). Grandma decided on all of them 'washing them festively down with crème de menthe, lifting her pinky like a dog lifts its leg as she raised her glass' and she toasted 'Bottoms up, ducky!' (*ibidem*). The reader knows by then that the food takes an extravagant turn with Peregrine – a good example of this is the Brighton beach picnic, with ham, chicken, foie gras, and champagne. The common diet of the 'illegitimate' Chance sisters is, thus, offset by the eating occasions with the 'legitimate'. When these occasions occur in a highly 'legitimate' and public space, as the above mentioned Chance sisters' birthday at the Savoy Grill, there is a factor

⁷⁰ Looking for information in historic newspapers, I found the following reference to Epp's cocoa at the end of the nineteenth century in *The Altamont Enterprise & the Albany County Post*:

Grateful – Comforting. Epp's Cocoa. Breakfast.

'By a thorough knowledge of the natural laws which govern the operations of digestion and nutrition, and by a careful application of the fine properties of well-selected Cocoa, Mr. Epps has provided our breakfast tables with a delicately flavoured beverage which may save us many heavy doctors' bills. It is by the judicious use of such articles of diet that a constitution may be gradually built up until strong enough to resist every tendency to disease. Hundreds of subtle maladies are floating around us ready to attack wherever there is a weak point. We may escape many a fatal shaft by keeping ourselves well fortified with pure blood and a properly nourished frame.'—*Civil Service Gazette*. Made simply with boiling water or milk. Sold only in half-pound tins, by Grocers, labelled thus: JAMES EPPS & CO., Homoeopathic Chemists, LONDON, ENGLAND. (my emphasis)

(*The Altamont Enterprise & the Albany County Post*)

⁷¹ Later on, after Grandma's death, Dora recalls their visit to Lady A. and taking her 'a big bunch of hothouse carnations. Cost more than a supper at the Savoy Grill' (*WC* 166).

of discomfort – ‘There is a certain deflating of waitery unctuousness, but it occurs at the expense of a poignant lack of solidarity’ (Sceats 2000, 182).

Nevertheless, the most memorable birthday party is definitively the one the Chance sisters attend when they are in their thirties. It takes place at Lady A.’s estate and the celebration is for the Hazard sisters. With Old Nanny banished from the kitchen, it is Saskia who caters her own lunch party: ‘trying out a roast duck and green peas’ (*WC* 172). The evolution from generation to generation is obvious here, as Lady A. is presented belonging to the class or generation that did not cook, itself, but still ‘doing her fumbling, incompetent best to help’ (*ibidem*).⁷² The other twin sister, Imogen, also helps by laying the table out in the garden. It starts with a toast as ‘Perry popped a cork’ and after the second bottle things begin ‘to thaw, a bit’. The meal is served as in a succession of paragraphs. Then comes soup and to depict it, since it’s not a common soup, Dora uses the reactions to account for its edibility. The service is important, as always, and it is proud Old Nanny who brings the steaming tureen out of the kitchen. The soup is described as being made from nettle, the stinging, or prickly plant, as it seems to be the spirit:

Soup. [...] so we had some of that, to start with, a nettle soup Saskia had discovered in an old book, or so she said. An old, Elizabethan soup. Perhaps Shakespeare had eaten just such a soup! [...] Shakespeare may well have eaten that filthy soup but I doubt he’d kept it down. I forced in a spoon or two out of politeness and it was very, very bitter, but the men, foolish fond, drank it all and Perry asked for seconds. (*ibid.* 173)

Dora’s politeness is comprehensible and the effort of having two spoons of soup the most, is reasonable, but the men’s attitude is already ‘foolish’ for seconding the ‘filthy soup’, or extremely unpleasant soup. As for the main course, the men’s reaction is similar. Dora’s response is still an attempt to prove worthy of being part of such a respected family, trying everything, even if it means to choose a slender piece cut of an over-cooked duck and undercooked peas. However, Dora will not forget this special soup, that she believes to have been taken from a strange old book. This is evident when she comments on Tristram’s out of the ordinary attraction for Saskia, which could also be based on the power of food:

⁷² As mentioned in the second chapter of this study, apropos of the sixty-year trek through *Vogue* back-number cookery columns, the women to whom these columns were addressed began to cook themselves, instead of paying others to do it. Nonetheless, Lady’s A. social position still reflects the early decades, like the 1930s, when cookery for the upper classes was introduced as a witty eccentricity (*ED* 91).

'Perhaps that Saskia put something in young Tristram's food, some love potion she'd got out of the same old book in which she found that emetic Shakespearian nettle soup we'd had on her birthday' (*ibid.* 183).

The beginning of another paragraph gives way to one more almost unbearable course:

Then the duck came in, swimming in blood. I gagged, had a spot more champagne, to fortify myself, picked out, for my share, the merest sliver of blackened skin – that duck was certainly well-cooked on the outside – but the peas, when I helped myself, bounced off the server and Saskia gave me a dirty look, as if she'd known I'd show my true colours at some point during her elegant repast so, to spite her, I scooped the peas up and ate them with my pudding spoon. But the men finished off that duck between them, engaging in a battle as to who could eat most and praise her best although I was racked with hunger and heartburn until it occurred to me: 'Has she done it on purpose?' A poison meat! Her face gave nothing away, calm and oval as a cake of soap. (*ibid.* 173)

Dora's suspicion proves to be true. Lady A. herself praised the cooked food and Saskia's skills but nearly equaled the narrator's meager portions – 'she ate like a bird, herself' (*ibidem*). Even before dessert is presented to the guests, Dora cannot resist but sum up the gathering as 'a peculiar meal' (*ibidem*). The explanation starts by the confirmation of 'the ugly food' and then exemplifies how uncomfortable eating in the garden becomes, especially when it is comparable to 'the precarious peace among the Hazard clan'. All in all, every one of these condiments contributed as a special flavouring, 'sweet and sour, like Chinese pork'. Still, there's the reference to a 'disgusting syllabub' the guests toyed with. The adjective emphasises the nauseating feeling which had characterised the meal until then and I believe 'syllabub', as a cookery term, alludes to the British reference to a cold dessert made generally with sweetened milk or cream, thickened with gelatin and beaten with wine, and lemon juice. This consistency would mostly allow for the toying mentioned by Dora and would complete the idea of sweet and sour mentioned above. However, 'syllabub' may also refer to a often hot spiced drink made of sweetened milk or cream curdled with wine or spirits like rum, port, or brandy.

It was after this that the cake came to the table and the narrator feels comforted for being presented a cake ordered from Harrods. The description at this point is almost only based on fact, as Dora stresses the twenty-one candles and summarises everything to the

following: 'They blew, we clapped' (*ibid.* 174). From the several meanings of the verb 'to blow', most fit here, since it may refer to the physical action of blowing the candles, but also to an unexpected shock or calamity, or to fail or break down, as it seems to be case after the Hazard sisters receive their birthday presents from Peregrine and Melchior. It seems the multiple meanings match the various reactions to these sisters' meal. Its end clearly perpetuates such feeling, from the different reactions to Melchior's announcement of his third marriage, Saskia, for instance, immediately seizes the cake knife showing her option of cooking as a defense and mostly an assail mechanism. She then picks up the birthday cake and pitches it against an apple tree; again, for her, food, becomes a weapon and a means of showing frustration and aggressiveness. With the cake shattered and scattered all around, Lady A. shows her time-honored breading by commenting: 'Don't go before you've had coffee' (*ibid.* 177). They do leave, but to finish the meal properly the Chance sisters and Peregrine open and share the bottle of Scotch by then forgotten in the back of the car (*ibidem*).

Wise Children seems to be somehow about celebrating and Dora surely nibbles on her memories while reliving those moments. Another example is one of Melchior's extravagant parties which culminates with the destruction of his own house. In that party, when faced with 'stuffed swan on the buffet' (*ibid.* 98) Dora would not even consider having poultry, just like Fevvers in *Nights at the Circus*. As the waiter, who turned out to be Dora's blonde tenor, carves it for her, she gags and is only able to say 'I couldn't fancy swan [...] Too many feathers. Have you got anything else a girl could nibble?' (*ibid.* 99). After recognizing each other, they 'leaned towards each other across the carcass of the violated swan [...] hid behind the feathers, [...] kissed, and kissed, and kissed' (*ibidem*). The ambience and the running on fours along the whole length of the buffet, under the table, bring to her mind imagery, comparisons, and idiom from the catering world: 'The big, white tablecloth hung down on either side, it was like bolting down a hospital corridor. I put that midnight date with the haggis out of my mind; I'd got other fish to fry' (*ibidem*). Indeed, Dora had other matters to attend to; while the fire spreads through the house they jump out of the window to the lawn and find themselves 'chilled to the marrow, singed at the edges, half frozen cod, half barbecued spareribs' (*ibid.* 101). The choice of vocabulary alternating very cold ('chilled', 'frozen') with extremely hot, almost burnt ('singed', 'half barbecued') illustrates not only the difference of the temperatures

inside and outside the house, but also the shock between their feelings and the physical reality.

Moreover, even when Dora suddenly remembers Nora may be in the house she comments on the possibility as 'burned to a crisp' and Saskia as having 'torched the family seat out of some small pique such as not enough cream on her strawberries' (*ibid.* 102). The latter is immediately spotted by Dora:

She, oblivious of her distracted mother, was tucked away under a rosebush, pigging it. She'd dragged out with her the entire carcass of the swan from the Great Hall. Its feathers were so blackened by the soot it looked more like an upstart crow but *that* didn't put the little greedyguts off as she crouched, legs akimbo, disarticulating one by one its limbs and chewing off the meat with every appearance of enjoyment. Of course, later on, she made a career out of piggery. She'd half-inched a bowl of salad, too, but unaccountably left behind the haggis, no doubt upon discovering that it was hollow. (*ibidem*)

This party ends up showing Dora's true feelings for the sister – 'I love her best and always have' – and portrays Saskia manners as a glimpse of her future attitudes.⁷³ Saskia will prove to ignore her mother; to become a person regarded as being piglike, greedy, or crude ('pigging'); to deal with food in a filthy, dirty way; to act according to her 'greedyguts' ('disarticulating one by one its limbs') and enjoy it to the most ('with every appearance of enjoyment'). Even when the family and guests get all together in the lawn, Saskia is described as 'still sucking on a charred wing of swan' (*ibid.* 106). It is ironic how the traitorous women who shun sisterhood are often themselves cooks, as Saskia, or the drunken cook at Madame Schreck's house of freaks in *Nights at the Circus* (Sceats 2000, 175).

Dora recognises that the fire had unleashed some kind of madness: 'A babble of agitated chorines cross-dressed in ruched knicks and hose had commandeered a crate of bubbly on their way out and now, pop! with a fusillade of small explosions, opened the bottles and hurled the contents into the fire, whinnying helplessly under the strain of their fruitless endeavours' (*WC* 103). To describe all of those who had succumbed to nature, as herself, Dora keeps the cold and hot imagery: 'like guests at a masquerade who've all gone suddenly to hell. It was a keen and icy night and the stars were sharp as needles'

⁷³ Even later, Dora describes Saskia as a 'mercenary bitch' from her early days, with her 'skin like milk and amber eyes' (*WC* 141).

(*ibidem*). To the 'pop!' from the discharge of the bottles as if they had been fired simultaneously or in rapid succession, Dora later associates the clink of the toast with Melchior's glass of champagne when he sat on an armchair. It had been served by a waiter who had 'popped up like a conjuring trick with a silver ice-bucket on a sterling salver' and Melchior acts as though he was witnessing a mere scene played at his stage-like house and enjoy the unrepeatably moment, similarly to any play – 'Can't a man enjoy a glass of wine at his own fireside?' (*ibid.* 104). The moment is unique and so is savouring a glass of wine. Again, though, Dora, in a moment of weakness, even wishes she had saved Melchior's cardboard crown for him, but she still recognizes that albeit her 'front was toasty warm due to the flames of Lynde Court, [her] backside was bitter cold and so were [her] spirits' (*ibid.* 104-105). In a world of performance, the waiter who was supposed to be on the station where the fire deflagrated was away, since he was not a professional, he 'wasn't a *serious* waiter, no pro, just a body hired for the big do' (*ibid.* 106).

Melchior, nevertheless, tries once more to create his own world when in Hollywood since he lorded over what was known as 'the English Colony':

The English Colony was a rum lot. The men all wore monocles, the women all wore tiaras, and they turned up in costume dramas as Gladstone and Disraeli, Queen Victoria and Florence Nightingale, etc. As a group, they kept themselves to themselves, away from the hoi polloi, held tea parties on Saturday afternoons when everybody else was having group sex, played cricket on Sundays, drank pink gin at sundown and talked as if their upper lips wore plaster casts. (*ibid.* 127-128)

The use of rum as an adjective is mainly British and it does stand for odd or strange, which matched the behaviour of the whole group. The conventional tea parties could not be missing, along with traditional British sport, the lack of sex, the snobbish attitude and the typically British way of enjoying gin, as pink gin. The latter is a cocktail of Plymouth gin and a dash of pink Angostura bitters (a dark red extract of gentian and spices) which became trendy in the United Kingdom in the mid-19th century.⁷⁴ Even before the description quoted above, Dora depicts the setting Melchior creates to his private house,

⁷⁴ Its flavour is normally complemented by a lemon rind which is used as a garnish. It is generally agreed that the drink was first created by members of the British Royal Navy who brought the idea to bars in Britain and by the 1870s, gin was becoming gradually more popular and numerous of the finer establishments in Britain already served Pink Gin.

known to the Chance twins through the newspapers. She comments on the overdoing of the decoration through imagery where the colour and texture of cooked food are used in the following way: 'the walls turned out the colours of very rare roast beef and gravy, too Garrick Club for words' (*ibid.* 96).⁷⁵

Besides all these situations, it is Melchior's invitation to his own one-hundredth birthday party that triggers every other memory. That is *the* party to remember and to be remembered. The setting is impressive, as always, and when the Chance sisters arrive to be received by a decoration which they are not surprised by, but also by 'a ten-gallon wedding cake in the shape of a chandelier hanging by a chain, winking, blinking and sending out rainbows and it was lit with real candles' (*ibid.* 198). Not only the weight, but the shape and the position, along with the most unique accessories, make this cake an extraordinary construction. The essential waiters circulate amongst the crowd and seem to complement the effect of the cake with the 'fizzing flutes of bubbly on silver salvers, reflected upside down like a conjuring trick in the parquet underfoot' (*ibidem*). Nervous Dora manages to keep calm by snatching at the champagne 'a couple of times as it waltz past' and later on when she ponders on her feelings for Peregrine – 'I'd properly shocked myself and I had to knock off another glass of champagne to cool myself' (*ibid.* 208). Nevertheless, starving Dora declines the offer of 'a doublet and hose [that] tottered past beneath a groaning tray of chicken-legs' (*ibid.* 199). The food turns out to be described in the most interesting way, like the use of the verb 'waltz' for champagne's rhythmical movement and the adjective 'groaning' in relation to chicken-legs, showing complaint.

'In came the cake' (*ibid.* 205). This most important dish deserves a paragraph of its own. The baker is Saskia and the cake 'her masterpiece'. The description gasps for air, illustrating the general feeling, and then it sounds like the guests and the audience get a closer look and the details and reactions are revealed:

It was enormous. It was a model of the Globe Theatre, I tell no lie. It was spherical, in tiers, roofed with chocolate frosting ridged to simulate tiles. It was big enough to ring a hundred candles all around the roof and they were blazing away as a dozen little pageboys bore in this edifice at shoulder-height, on a sort of

⁷⁵ The Garrick Club (founded in 1831) is a private members' Club situated in the heart of London's West End and Theatreland. Announced from its beginning as a place where 'easy intercourse was to be promoted between artists and patrons', this Club was named after the great eighteenth century actor David Garrick (*The Garrick Club*).

litter, amidst roars of applause in which Daisy enthusiastically joined, [...] we didn't feel like applauding ourselves, not at all, at all.

A pageboy handed Saskia a sword, the kind they fence with. Nora and I sharply ingested breath, recalling another birthday, another cake, a sudden act of shocking violence – but, in what was obviously a well-rehearsed routine, she offered it by the hilt to Melchior [...].

There was a hush; there was a drumroll. (*ibidem*)

The drumroll is defined as the emphatic support for a cause, but here Melchior's cause will take a second place after the 'genial tempest' caused by the entrance of his brother Peregrine. The evolution of the cake's condition mirrors the spirit and feelings in the room. The personification of the cake through the reference to the dozen little pageboys who held it at shoulder-height facilitates it: 'The uncut cake on its dozen legs hovered in front of Melchior uncertain what to do' (*ibid.* 207). The guests questioning about who Perry is and Melchior's incredibility are clearly portrayed by the cake's uncertainty.

Furthermore, the cake feels the approach of the heavy-footed surprise guest and 'veered off to one side' (*ibidem*). Later, as the guests acknowledge the presence of the three Lady Hazards in the same room and Dora wonders about the presence of her mother's ghost, she pictures it 'floating in the smoky air above the cake, which was waving about, a bit, because its arms were getting tired' (*ibid.* 209). The construction and presentation of the cake demanded that it would have to have arms and legs, assimilating its carriers. Still, someone would have to try the cake sooner or later. From Dora's description of Lady Margarine's reaction when she had addressed Melchior before preparing himself to cut the cake, one is to believe Dora's suspicions: 'You could tell, from the power of her smile, *that* cake wasn't made with butter. Another fine trouper' (*ibid.* 206). This would explain Lady Margarine's temper when she feels frustrated with Saskia's power over her beloved son Tristram, as she 'snatched up a lump of cake, that had sunk down to the ground out of sheer weariness, pulled off a candle that had burned down to a stump, and pressed the cake into her son's hand' (*ibid.* 212).

The absolute fatigue of the carriers of the cake stands for the exhaustion of the multiple feelings shared by the guests and audience. The idea of grabbing a chunk of cake instead of the habitual slice, along with the sinking down of the young carriers, brings to mind some decadence. Lady Margarine's defiance is directed at Saskia through Tristram ('Eat something, my dear,' she said. 'Just a mouthful, to give you strength'), but this was

something beyond Saskia revenge will, visible in her reaction: 'a piercing screech and crumbs everywhere because Saskia dashed the cake from Tristram's lips and collapsed in a fit' (*ibidem*). After recovering, the chef could not but confess that she 'had slipped something into the cake she'd baked with her own hands for her father's birthday, though whether it would have made him rather ill or very ill or finished him off altogether I [Dora] never found out' (*ibidem*). Some secrets are always kept by a chef; here, the undisclosed ingredient is not the most relevant point, but the intensity of its consequences on the consumer. This becomes a clear example of how cooking is an activity like building a trap-as-artwork, 'with the intention of constructing bait in a particular way to ensnare the loyalty of kin and ritual kin' (Adapon 2008, 126).⁷⁶

The cake has accomplished his mission as a witness of the celebration of faith in the future, in this case the 'inexpressively moving reconciliation'. It is cleared away by the waiters similarly to the guests dispersing to discuss the events and it did make all the wishes come true. As with the course of events and the relations solving each almost by itself, so do the candles go out 'of their own accord' (*WC* 217); they are no longer needed, the main guests are just 'gleaming'. Without the rest of the guests and the people from the media, the family is left with the odds and ends, 'dirty glasses fallen on their sides, crumpled serviettes, chicken-bones'. They are finally just a family and thus they could sit around 'convivially picking away at a big platter of leftover chicken' (*ibid.* 225).

One can undoubtedly perceive in Carter's last novel how food and eating constitute a domain wherein 'social settings exist for people to eat together, making social relations between persons via the meal' (Adapon 2008, 47).⁷⁷ Here I am thinking of cooking as an artistic practice, just like Tobin advocates. This means that one cannot disregard the artwork and the ideas and meanings which surround cooking, not even the social relations that are generated. In view of that, if cooking is creative by its artistic nature, then it is not a predetermined, particularly controlled activity. Joy Adapon makes this point by underlining the following: 'It *is* controlled, but the one in control is the artist, or the cook,

⁷⁶ The intention pointed out by Joy Adapon would be no different from 'the desire of a food vendor to entice customers with a certain taste to her own delicious food' (Adapon 2008, 126).

⁷⁷ Food carries meaning, and foodstuffs can be social or cultural symbols. In *Culinary Art and Anthropology* (2008), Joy Adapon aims to 'illuminate some of the deeply symbolic meanings of food by focusing on cooking and cuisine rather than on direct metaphorical connections between foodstuffs standing for other things' (Adapon 2008, 47). This aim follows Alfred Gell's theory which explores a domain where objects merge with people through 'the existence of social relations between persons and things, and persons and persons *via* things' (Gell 1998, 12).

herself' (*ibid.* 48). Although, the cook here is openly assumed to be female, what is essential in my opinion is the fact that cooking is considered an activity which depends upon creative liberty, 'and this liberty extends beyond the walls of the kitchen' (*ibidem*). In *Wise Children* this matter is clearly portrayed by Saskia, who makes 'a career out of piggery' as a television chef, just like Dora had predicted (*WC* 102). The twin sisters refer to her in culinary terms as well, when they decide not to warn Saskia about her missing boyfriend – 'Let her [Saskia] stew in her own juice' (*ibid.* 51). The expression which is commonly used to mean suffering (unaided) the consequences of one's actions, makes all sense here. It is during the disastrous birthday party of the Hazard sisters that we first meet Saskia in the kitchen – 'Saskia, it turned out, was doing the honours in the kitchen' (*ibid.* 171). The news on her first appearance on stage playing a witch in *Macbeth*, help to better understand her relationship with cooking, as 'she'd shown more interest in the contents of her cauldron' than on playing, while she 'tinkered with the pans' (*ibidem*). The clumsiness associated with 'tinker' implies, simultaneously, the idea of a meddler. This is also when we learn that Saskia 'ended up as television's top cook, of course' (*ibid.* 172). She would be a constant presence on television but instead of the traditional cooking, Dora describes it as a list of repulsive actions: 'there she is, eviscerating something, skinning something else, having a go at some harmless piece of meat with her little chopper' (*ibidem*).

In fact, Dora never believed in Saskia's cooking skills and thought her fame was mostly based on her lovely nape – 'her nape was on display in all she did, intimate, exposed and sexy as she bent over the stove to poke around with a spoon suggestively in a pot or stick a prong into a drumstick with quite sadistic glee. I never saw anything so rude as her TV shows' (*ibid.* 180). It is the vicious and cruel delight that apparently Saskia feels when cooking that is stressed in Dora's narration concerning the stewing of a hare in an earthenware jug when she was just beginning her career as a television chef:

She cut the thing up with slow, voluptuous strokes. 'Make sure your blade is up to it!' she husked, running her finger up and down the edge, although the spectacle of Saskia with a cleaver couldn't help but remind me and Nora of how she'd run amok with the cake knife on her twenty-first. Next, she lovingly prepared a bath for the hare, she minced up shallots, garlic, onions, added a bouquet garni and a pint of claret and sat the poor dismembered beast in that for a day and a half. Then she condescended to sauté the parts briskly in a hot pan over a high flame until they singed. Then it all went into the oven for the best part of another day. She

sealed the lid of the pot with a flour-and-water paste. 'Don't be a naughty thing and peek!' she warned with a teasing wink. Time to decant at last! The hare had been half-rotted, then cremated, then consumed. If there is a god and she is of the rabbit family, then Saskia will be in deep doodoo on Judgment Day. 'Delicious,' she moaned, dipping her finger in the juice and sucking. She licked her lips, letting her pink tongue-tip linger. 'Mmmm...' (*ibid.* 180-181)

The whole paragraph is indeed a 'spectacle', for it is a mixture of the effect intended to have on the audience – an appealing, inviting and even sexual one – and the reaction of a specific audience raised by a vegetarian woman – 'genuinely disgusting transmission' (*ibid.* 181). Therefore, the choice of the adjectives 'slow' and 'voluptuous' is directed towards or anticipates sensual pleasure; the act of running the fingers through the edge of the blade while removing the husk stresses the emotional touch; the notion of preparing a bath as a gentle action is underlined by the use of the adverb of manner 'lovingly'; her own use of the noun 'naughty' associated to the 'teasing wink' also foresees the physical pleasure, that of a teaser; to end with her own comment 'Delicious' and 'Mmmm...' in a moaning way and, simultaneously, dip the finger, suck, and lick the lips, is a perfect conclusion to the pleasuring show.

Used to acting in shows, the narrator recognises the techniques and points out what she believes to be unnecessary cruelties inflicted on a victim, the hare. The bath that is prepared is a common usage of ingredients for recipes like the 'Royal Hare Sénateur Couteaux', but the marinating time indicates Saskia is probably cooking the French dish 'Hare Civet'. What is indeed not so usual is the day and a half Saskia takes to marinate what Dora calls the 'poor dismembered beast', instead of the more common twenty-four hours. The use of the verb 'to condescend' in relation to sautéing evidences that Saskia is doing something that she would regard as below her dignity. The description portrays the actions as stages of a cruel punishment, like the reference to 'singe' (i.e. to burn superficially or to scorch). The long time of cooking in the oven, along with the certifying that there's no possible escape, accentuate the delight in torturing, according to Dora. Another way she finds of describing the successive tortures undergone by the animal are summarised as having been 'half-rotted, then cremated, then consumed'. The only hope is that there will be some kind of divine punishment for unnecessary pain. Here I can perceive Carter's belief in the morality of food, even while drawing attention to the ghost of Grandma which would manifest itself 'in a sharp blast of cabbage' (*ibid.* 181) and to

how the Chance sisters considered it to be wrong to eat meat when confronted with such torturing methods – to a great extent the cooking methods seem to ease the hurting. However, that seemed not to be enough for the twins who did not give up on meat for being scared that eating ‘too much salad’ would turn them into Grandma.

Similarly to other chefs, Saskia also accepts work in television advertising. One knows of her making friends with her stepmother because they ‘even did a ketchup commercial together’ (*ibidem*). Interesting is not only the fact that implicitly these two women want to show their renewed friendship through a well-paid work contract, but the product that gets them together, ketchup. If it is a sweet-and-tangy condiment characteristically made from tomatoes, vinegar, sugar or high-fructose corn syrup, and an assortment of vegetable seasonings and spices, ketchup is sometimes used as a basis or ingredient for other sauces and dressings, as well. What is remarkable is that it seems that only the third wife of Melchior, best known as ‘My Lady Margarine’ by the twin sisters, consents to participate in a commercial on a processed product which is also often an ingredient in the preparation of many foods and in recipes. On the other hand, I believe it is possible to read her choice for advertising these products in accordance to the definition of processed food, since processing can be described as a series of actions or changes that lead to a particular result; this is exactly the best way to describe Lady Margarine’s life until then. Besides all these implications, ketchup is widely associated to the fake blood used in low budget soap operas and Saskia and her stepmother’s story resembles a possible soap opera plot – including betrayal, revenge and a fake murder.⁷⁸

Of course television shows could not be missing from Saskia’s career as a chef, or as a member of the Hazard family.⁷⁹ There is a clear similarity with Elizabeth David’s

⁷⁸ Concerning Saskia’s relationship with her stepmother, Dora recalls the following episode:

Saskia jugged a hare for Tristram, once, that cooked his goose. [...] She must have thought long and hard as to how to revenge herself upon the third Lady Hazard for taking away her father and finally she wrote to little Tristram, then only a lad, at Bedales, hinting at Hazard mysteries to which only she, Saskia, held the key. God knows what she wrote or promised, who can tell; or whether he came ringing her doorbell on his half-term holiday out of prurience or duty, but she had his bondage trousers off before you could say *creme renversée*, although she was old enough to be his mother. (*WC* 181)

⁷⁹ Another example of commercialization of oneself is Saskia twin sister, Imogen, as she takes a fishbowl on her head with a fish in it to her father’s one-hundredth birthday party:

A live fish. The flashes popped and flared like Guy Falwkes’ Night and Imogen turned this way and that, nodding, bowing and smiling and acknowledging the attention, the goldfish slopping around at considerable danger to itself. I furiously pondered the significance of the fish, then it clicked: *Goldie the Goldfish* – her kiddies’ programme. She had come to the party as a commercial for herself. (*WC* 204)

experiences not only with the media, but also in what concerns the location of their preferences. An understandable choice is Italy and the Mediterranean diet knowledge. The description comes from a visit by Tristram and Tiff to Saskia's villa and it could be also the cover picture of one of David's book, previously depicted by Carter in "Saucerer's Apprentice" (1976):

[the] villa was perched on a hill between Florence and Siena, among the fields of Chianti, pine trees up the drive, you know the kind of thing. You may even have seen it featuring in her bloody programme. She wrote it off against her taxes because she'd done a series there, *In Bocca Toscana*. I caught it once, repeated in the afternoons [...] there was Saskia, caressing a ham. 'Lucky the porkers of Parma!' she intoned. 'They dine every day on curds and whey, like so many little Miss Muffets, and posthumously achieve porcine apotheosis – prosciutto!' (*ibid.* 185)

To the description of the house, one may add Tiff's reference to the 'spacious room with the tiled floor and view of vineyards' (*ibidem*). The admiration for the product is constant, as is the pleasure Saskia demonstrates by caressing what is ham for Dora, but 'prosciutto' for the connoisseurs.⁸⁰ The porker itself is but a pig fattened to provide meat, but Saskia accentuates its mission, as they take a sweet life, on a diet only comparable to little Miss Muffets's cottage cheese (the character of the famous nursery rhyme). As in an almost sanctifying process, it is only after death that the animal is worth of deification. The process of aging, dry-curing and spicing this Italian 'prosciutto' is enough to serve it without cooking and, thus, it does gain such a distinction.

That description does not prevent Dora from being curious on what would that chef actually serve to her family and guest. When first questioned, Tiff chatters about ripe figs and fresh basil, two obvious Italian elements distinctive of a Mediterranean diet. Then, she mentions some gastric disorders, which Dora attributes to Saskia's having 'slipped a little

⁸⁰ The allusion to this detail on how the Parma pigs are fed had already been done by Carter in the mid 1970s on the piece "Saucerer's Apprentice" concerning what Elizabeth David's readers learned by reading her books:

Indeed I still know several women who cook marvelous food out of Elizabeth David and who've never set foot outside the British Isles, though they talk with consummate authority about the regional specialities of Bresse and the Ardennes and tell you exactly what it is that the natives of Parma feed their pigs with that gives the local ham such a very fine flavor. (*SL* 84)

It is also the 'consummated authority' shown by Tiff that Dora mocks in *Wise Children*.

something extra into the *trippa fiorentina*' (*ibidem*). Florentine tripe (*Trippa alla Fiorentina*) is a big part of Tuscany's popular and ancient traditional cuisine. Known for being very tasty (mainly tripe cooked with several common Mediterranean vegetables in a tomato based sauce), it would not have been hard to add 'something extra' to it. There is another reference to 'a stack of Saskia's videos' watched by Tiff which give her so much confidence as to propose preparing the Chance sisters a spaghetti *carbonara*, a classic Italian dish made with spaghetti, bacon, eggs, cheese, and served sprinkled with Parmesan – 'although she'd [Tiff] never even boiled an egg before' (*ibidem*). Even though this sounds like a simple dish, it is promptly refused by the twins. The feeling towards Saskia's cooking skills and intentions does not fade with time and Nora proves that when she finds out that Melchior's one-hundredth birthday party is catered by her. Nora actually refuses to eat any more chicken, even if she is starving: 'A spike of herb trapped between her front teeth; she hooked it out with her fingernail and looked at it. 'Rosemary,' she said. 'At Table in Tuscany, BBC1, Friday evenings, eight thirty. That's Saskia's doing the catering.' She dropped the thigh half-eaten in an ashtray' (*ibid.* 201). This attitude, I believe, also reflects a criticism to the great amount of attention given to cookery books and television programs 'but much less to developing practical cookery skills in the population' (Mason 2004, xii).

Coming from an ever-performing family tradition, Saskia uses the media which have always played a significant role in distributing knowledge about food, even concerning discourses on nutrition, for example.⁸¹ Furthermore, she even publishes, if not

⁸¹ From John Coveney's view, the scope to which media information perfectly echoes the ideas of nutrition experts turned itself into an area of research (Coveney 2006, 94).

Several matters common in the nineteenth century continued into the first four decades of the twentieth, as the population continued to increase, and from which 75 percent lived in towns and cities. Also, poverty and under-nutrition remained a major issue, and getting enough food to meet energy requirements was a struggle for many people. Nevertheless, the discovery of vitamins and their role in preventing disease was a foremost matter relating to food during the 1930s (the essential work on it was done between about 1895 and 1935). It became vital during the Second World War, when the knowledge was applied to help make the best of limited food rations (Mason 2004, 55). One should also bear in mind that government and ethics of nutrition reached something of an apogee in Britain, as well as in the United States and Australia, during the Second World War, since the dietary rationing that took place at that time was based on nutritional knowledge of the physiological food needs of individual groups in the population. In addition, it was during this period that professionals, the media, food manufacturers, trade unions and others spread nutrition discourses to families, especially women, with an explicit message about the need to make the most of what was available and to reduce waste. These food and nutrition messages provided information and, simultaneously, encouraged patriotism – 'cooking and eating for

a book, at least the occasional article for *Harper's Bazaar*. Originally American, this fashion magazine aimed at members of the upper-middle and upper classes, and intended to convey a sophisticated perspective into the world of fashion, beauty, and popular culture. The style brought by Dora's example implies that Saskia perfectly fits that monthly magazine style: 'Eel ... oh, curvaceous, curvilinear, cursive denizen of the deep!' (*WC* 201).

As already mentioned, the increasing interest in food is due, partly, to a growth in advertising, in food, and cookery as a subject for printed and electronic media, and the expansion in the number and range of places to eat out. In addition, foreign travel became a possibility for many British people in the 1970s and 1980s, introducing them to the eating habits of Mediterranean countries; these habits that the British were already familiar with from books by Elizabeth David, for instance. On the other hand, different people settled in the United Kingdom, bringing new ideas, new products, such as an increasing range of fresh produce sourced from all over the world and sold through a handful of highly competitive retail chains, having also helped to motivate interest. Another factor are kitchens and their equipment, as well as food and its cooking. These have become a means of expressing cultural capital (Mason 2004, x-xi). Finally, the supermarket is believed to dictate the vastness of the national diet, associated to effective television advertising; it has become more like the Orwellian concept of Big Brother, increasingly watchful to the slightest longing, ready to fill it (Spencer 2002, 331).

All in all, eating habits in general have also changed, as women work more outside the home and have, thus, less time to cook, and supermarkets have become the main source of food with many more pre-prepared foods available. Whereas an unspoken

victory'. As a result, the success of rationing schemes, at least in Britain, depended on the kindness of traders and housewives.

As Coveney concludes, 'the war years made food austerity both a private and a public virtue, and, in doing so, provided another condition of possibility for the insertion of nutrition discourse into public discourse' (Coveney 2006, 91). Still, in the post-war era, nutrition is not so much regarded as the social problem it was considered to be in the early part of the century. On the contrary, it came to be seen much more as a 'bio-problem', a problem of life and living, since it had been a transformation which required new considerations and problematisations (*ibid.* 92). On the whole, the rise in popularity of nutrition in the post-war era took place just as discourses in affluence and choice were beginning to herald new possibilities countries like Australia. In the post-war era, the lifestyle of the population was increasingly characterised by convenience, leisure and enjoyment, and, consequently, food pleasures, made available by more affordable and convenient foods, were being eagerly enjoyed. Still, these pleasures of eating accorded by post-war affluence provoked a growing anxiety (*ibid.* 106).

consensus about meal patterns, timings, and ideas about the structure of meals appears to have existed into the 1970s, afterward, according to Laura Mason, eating habits have become less formal, more people eat out and in the final three decades of the twentieth century, observers became united in stating that British ideas about food are changing, although the nature, depth, and direction of those changes are unclear:

The last 30 years have seen many new ideas superimposed on historic patterns of eating. Eating habits have become individualized to an extent that would have been extraordinary 50 years ago. Many people still alive can recall constraints imposed by lack of money and stronger social conventions in the first two-thirds of that century; and also by lack of access to food, particularly severe in rationing during and after the Second World War. Since the 1950s, the variety of ingredients available, recipes for using them, and the combinations considered appropriate for meals have shown much change. What is undeniable is that the closer one got to the end of the twentieth century, the faster the process appeared to become. (Mason 2004, xi)

Besides the introduction of the principle of self-service, another American import in the 1950s was the fast food shops, which were then independently-owned eating rooms giving a standardised meal which could be eaten in house or taken away – even with a few variations, the main component were roast chicken, pizza, steaks or hamburgers, along with non-alcoholic drinks and tinned fruit, cream or ice cream desserts. As with the principle of self-service, the fast food outlets instantly thrived; and younger people gathered there, using these as meeting places. Within two decades they became established as a regular part of the British diet, despite being first criticized by older people.

Essentially, fast food has entered the home as part of the same cycle of refrigerators, freezers and microwaves, 'to complete the chain which extends the reach of the food factory into the home by providing the technology to store and prepare its products easily, and with minimal ability' (Spencer 2002, 331). Thus, most people now do not have the basic skills required to transform a relatively few, inexpensive ingredients into meals, as the need seems to be only a simple thawing and heating up. This can be read as a clear result of the fact that cooking was removed from the curriculum of schools in the early 1980s under a regime of educational cuts under the Thatcher government (*ibidem*). Carter does mention similar matters of regulation that did affect education, as the

Education Act of 1944. Its importance makes sense, according to Carter in "Saucer's Apprentice" (*SL* 84), if we consider that one of its effects was to educate and mobilise women and the working class, and increase their awareness of their disadvantaged social position. Carter recognises that equal opportunities and an educational system do not necessarily guarantee social equality. In terms of Bourdieu, moral reproduction (i.e. the transmission of values, virtues and competences) serves as a base to the legitimate filiation of distinct habitus, considering that habitus is grounded on the principle of the immediate affinities which coordinate the social relations and choices. Carter views such experiences as playing an important part in one's life, which David's work takes advantage of, as Carter acknowledges in a 1982 article about *English and Yeast Cookery*, a book also by David.

Solidarity becomes part of the matter in *Wise Children*, as pointed out earlier. The theme of legitimacy and illegitimacy have been widely discussed by the critics, but the way these oppositions are recognizable in the eating occasions is a matter only brought up by Sceats, precisely on the solidarity shown among the 'illegitimate'. Indeed, the big 'legitimate' public eating occasions are all subverted: from the subversion of the swan-centred party at Lynde Court with the building's immolation; the cake-destroying tantrum of the disdained Saskia and Imogen during their own birthday party (mind the menu of bloody duck, syllabub, Harrods' birthday cake); to the subversion by several reasons of the 'Elizabethan' style wedding feast in Hollywood (including the already mentioned excess of garlic in the marinara sauce). Many factors also contribute to the subversion of Melchior's final birthday party. Not only does Saskia's catering help this subversion, but the chain of comic revelations and resolutions alters Melchior and his third wife's planning. This is why, I totally agree with Sceats when she concludes that the only group that appears to establish or validate its sense of coherence in eating together is the English colony in Hollywood, 'who have tea parties instead of sex, and calmly eat their kippers and toast with Cooper's Oxford marmalade when Daisy Duck arrives to drop her bombshell' (Sceats 2000, 182). The fact that this group is mostly upper-middle-class does not make it a question of radicalisation. In fact, it may be through the novel's celebration of the illegitimate that the social eating becomes political: 'at home in their own (impoverished, South London, working-class) sphere, or when its effect is subversive, puncturing the intended patronage or power-wielding of the rich and privileged and going

some way to reducing the odds of material inequality. [...] the implication is of a politics of refusal' (*ibid.* 183).

In Carter's last novel, the future rests on Perry's surprises for the Chance sisters: 'Brown as a quail, round as an egg, sleepy as a pear' (*WC* 226). Therefore, in the end, the Chance sisters plan to stop not in one of the many pubs in Picadilly, but in 'all-night Boots [...] for formula and bottles' (*ibid.* 227) for the babies they were just offered. When one returns to *Nights at the Circus*, there is the essential truthfulness of Fevvers' tall tales which is guaranteed by the firm thump of her large feet on the stage. Even though she may have wings and fly, Fevvers is a creature of earth, as well. She does wolf bacon sandwiches and swills expensive champagne. Still, the ageing dancers of *Wise Children* live long enough to be symbolic of their century and this may be just due to the way they always had an eye for the main chance: food first and morality later. This was what Brecht said he would be remembered for, his line in *The Three Penny Opera* 'Food is the first thing, morals follow on' (1928), in which he satirised his German bourgeois audience, and its sizeable respect for both religion and money. Although Carter is not especially remembered for writing about food, the representations of food are clearly relevant in her writings. Furthermore, despite what Sceats considers to be carnival's predominance when reading Carter's novel (Sceats 2000, 182), it is certainly not the only frame within which food and eating may be examined.

Articles	Collections & Exercises	Film Scripts	Novels	Radio Plays	Stories	Television Scripts	Writings Date
			<i>The Magic Toyshop</i>				1967
			<i>Heroes and Villains</i>				1969
"My Maugham Award"							1970
			<i>The Infernal Desire</i> <i>Machines of Doctor Hoffman</i>				1972
"Saucerer's Apprentice"							1976
"Food Fetiches"			<i>The Passion of New Eve</i>	<i>Come unto These Yellow Sands</i>			1977
							1978
	<i>The Bloody Chamber</i> <i>The Sadeian Woman</i>				"The Bloody Chamber"		1979
"Elizabeth David: <i>English Bread and Yeast Cookery</i> "				<i>A Self-Made Man</i>			1982
"Notes from a Maternity Ward"							1983
"An Omelette and a Glass of Wine and Other Dishes"		<i>The Company of Wolves</i>	<i>Nights at the Circus</i>				1984
	<i>Black Venus</i>				"The Kitchen Child"		1985
		<i>The Magic Toyshop</i>					1987
			<i>Wise Children</i>				1991
	<i>Expletives Deleted</i>					<i>The Holy Family Album</i>	1992
	<i>Shaking a Leg</i>						1998

Table 5 – Chronology of Angela Carter's writings

mentioned in the fourth chapter.

Conclusion / Envoi

If Fevvers in *Nights at the Circus* is characterised by a boundless appetite, as seen in the last chapter, it is not just for food and drink, but for money, narrative, and life as well (Toye 2007, 483). So is Angela Carter – even if money is just part of the process. I selected Fevvers to begin this conclusion as I could have chosen a reference to Dora in *Wise Children*, for their transformation and learning from experience. In these two novels the reader concludes that the worlds depicted are based on the structured world of and/both, and not on the common binary opposition of either/or which is evident in Carter's first writings. This is clearer through Fevvers, the *cockney* Venus who is simultaneously divine and human, a symbol; a figure from dreams, but at the same time a firm material being, with dreams of her own – 'a symbol come to life *as a character*, who makes meanings on her own account, and evades the symbol-hunters' (Sage 1994a, 48). Set with ambiguous 'nature' the position of the 'woman on top' allows this character to be superior, because the convergence of these two, uneven and reconstructed, puts forward 'a healing reciprocity in which both taste but neither gets eaten' (Sceats 2000, 60). In fact, Fevvers' spirit of continuance and the restorative power of her ultimate laughter are reminded by Carter in her final *Omnibus* interview: 'the inextinguishable, the unappeasable nature of the world, of appetite, of desire...' (Evans 1992). These were Carter's words at fifty-one when she was suffering from lung cancer.

Looking at Carter's literary life, one has the perception of a life story that merges with her fiction. This had already been mentioned by her friend Lorna Sage – 'you cannot, in the end, separate the woman and the writer' (*ibid.* 1) and later by Sarah Gamble, who perceives the possibility of putting the story of the life alongside the work and see these as operating on the same level, 'for while the life informs the work, the work also informs

the recording of the life' (Gamble 2006a, 197). One cannot avoid recognising Carter as concurrently deeply English and also acutely not. This is a position accepted as being somehow self-constructed, from which seems to crop up her concern with issues of national identity, for instance – 'Carter is both drawn to and refutes an English identity, and much of her writing vacillates around this very issue. She deplored many facets of the English character as she saw it' (*ibid.* 198).¹ Food and its representations are clearly part of such an identitary world. Besides, even when contemplating Carter's flights of fantasy, one can without doubt witness how these are coupled with a wise understanding of simultaneously place, time, and social context (*ibid.* 200).

In an unpublished interview to Kate Webb in 18 December 1985, Carter put emphasis on the following: 'All art is political and so is mine, I want readers to understand what it is that I *mean* by my stories...' (Webb 1994, 339, n.5). Through this observation it becomes clear what Carter means her readers to understand: implicit in her baroque and mannered narratives is a materialistic practice. What this means is that for Carter fantasy is not inevitably opposed to realism, even if she believed her readers had the propensity to consider these incompatible, as she vehemently stresses in her last interview:

I've got absolutely nothing against realism, but there is realism and realism. I mean, the questions that I ask myself, I think they're very much to do with reality. I would like, I would really like, to have had the guts and the energy, and so on, to write about people having battles with the DHSS [Department of Health and Social Security], but I haven't, I've done other things. I mean, I'm an arty person. OK, I write overblown, purple, self-indulgent prose. So fucking what? (Evans 1992)

In these statements Carter places herself as a literary persona created on the conflation of coexisting opposites, 'unreconciled into a seamless whole' (Gamble 2006a, 201).

In view of that, I believe this study of Carter's work becomes an evidence of the way she conveys consumption to be found where power relations are explored and reconfigured throughout her writing. I still sustain my decision to group Carter's work in three phases – the 1960s, the 1970s and, finally, the 1980s until her death on the 16th of February 1992 – equivalent to the last three chapters. That division corresponds to the

¹ In a recent study, *Cuisine & Culture: A History of Food and People*, Linda Civitello presents the question of identity as an antipasto/antojitos/amuse-bouches and simply states the following: 'Identity – religious, ethnic, national – is intensely bound up with food' (Civitello 2011, viii).

evolution of Carter's narrative technique, which had attained a high level of maturity by the time of her premature death. The 1970s are still, in my opinion, the axis when considering Carter's production, for this decade distinguishes itself by the strong transformations both at a personal and historical level. This was the period in Carter's life where one feels her determination to free herself, even if temporarily, from a castrate perception of her culture, mainly through her experience in Japan, a different space where she felt the Other, and a new perception of the American experience. Furthermore, the turning from the 1960s to the 1970s proved to be a moment where the illusions seemed to break up.

On the other hand, looking at the theme of food and eating in Carter's work, essentially through the way these helped the portrayal of her characters, evidences how the flavour of her fiction changed during her career (Parker 2000, 165). In fact, while making an effort to redefine her cultural environment, Carter also redefined her own response to that environment (Gamble 1997, 4-5), and this echoes in her changing representation of consumption. As concluded in the second chapter, the characters are caught in an 'eat or be eaten' dialectic in the earlier texts and women are consistently the objects of consumption – *The Magic Toyshop* was presented in this study as the main narrative to consubstantiate this dialectic. Comparatively, in later texts studied here – from "The Kitchen Child" to *Wise Children* – Carter puts forward the notion that women are able to attain pleasure and empowerment from food. This path shows her fruition from the perspective of the mouth as a reminder of women's vulnerability to the mouth as a source of power.² Eventually, one can state that Carter's work grows to celebrate a form of power which makes it possible for her heroines to rise above the binary opposition between 'eat or be eaten' – in "The Kitchen Child", for instance, the magic of rich human cravings is conveyed in particular through sensory detail. For that reason, I cannot but agree with Emma Parker on how Carter's later female protagonists suggest that 'this new relationship to food is both predicated upon and the product of a transformed socio-symbolic order, a new economy in which women can have their cake *and* eat it' (Parker 2000, 166). Still, in terms of a stylistic analysis, even if this could have been done more meticulously, there is an evident use of comparisons and metaphors built from allusions to food, as witnessed from the first chapter of this study. This just comes to prove Carter's particularly imagistic

² Emma Parker presents this matter in the following way: 'while the earlier fiction seeks to dispute patriarchal logic, the later texts strive to displace it' (Parker 2000, 166).

style, with a special emphasis on the use of adjectivation.³ In her writings there is not the easy usage of what Huggan termed ‘gastronomic imagery’ (Huggan 2001, xi), nowadays so evident in texts ready to be consumed.⁴ There is, however, in Carter’s imagery a dimension which favoured the inclusion here of many more figures than I had initially predicted.⁵

From the time I decided to study Carter’s writings from a gastro-criticism perspective, I believe there have not been other incursions in the domain of representations of food in her work. Nonetheless, recently there have been a couple of brief references that bring to my mind Carter’s dealing with William Shakespeare, the theme of my Master’s dissertation; yet, they somehow allude to food. For instance, in a very recent publication of postcards sent by Carter to her friend and literary executor Susannah Clapp, the latter considers the possibility of acknowledging two Falstaffs planted by the former in *Wise Children* (Peregrine and Grandma Chance), along with the possibility of even reckoning Saskia as a reference to the play apparently not mentioned in this novel, Shakespeare’s *Titus Andronicus* – ‘the Roman’s frightful pie’ (Clapp 2012, 35). In addition, Clapp recognises how the bard was to play the part of yeast on Carter’s plots and quotes her observation: ‘Shakespeare’s a bit of a vegetarian, good on fruit and veg, but rotten on meals’ (*ibidem*). Furthermore, there have come up references to this same matter while using culinary terms: ‘Variably explicit references to that body of works [the Bard’s corpus] pepper Carter’s fabulatory bill of fare so profusely as to transcend the status of optional seasoning and rise instead to the level of key gastronomic ingredients’ (Cavallaro 2011, 165).

Food was a matter that underlined Carter’s creativity and range of interests, as Clapp found in her exercise books in her study-room: ‘She [Carter] wrote of the ‘silver gilt light on Brandon Hill’ in 1969, jotted down a recipe for soup using the balls of a cock and, in her later pages, took notes on Ellen Terry’s lectures on Shakespeare’ (Clapp 2012, 8). Carter’s literary executor claims that she had specialized in the lyrical natural description and dark anecdote, and what better example than the following explanation by Carter to Clapp: ‘She observed that the pork pies favoured by her mother’s family for wakes, in part

³ Even though was not the aim of my Master’s dissertation, I came to the same conclusion concerning the allusions to Shakespeare’s characters and plays in Carter’s novels.

⁴ ‘[textos] aptos para ser consumidos’ (Maeseneer 2010, 10).

⁵ Such need made me even choose details of the most relevant figures presented in the second and third chapters to introduce a new conclusion to each of these chapters.

because they could be bought ready-made, ‘possess a semiotic connection with the corpse in the coffin – the meat in the pastry’, and added, referring to Beatrix Potter’s most chilling tale of fluffy life: ‘Tell that to Tom Kitten’ (ibidem). Clapp’s enchanting memories of Carter brought by the postcards she received from the latter create this fresh, vivid, and first personal portrait which evidence how the different forms of writing get across each other. Publishing *A Card from Angela Carter* (February 2012) is part of the celebrations relative to the twentieth anniversary of her death. There have been a few celebrations but not that much publishing on her work.⁶ Actually, only from 2011 is there an increase on revealing these personal experiences with Carter or in terms of criticism, as is the case of Anne Enright’s “Diary: Lessons from Angela Carter” (2011) and Dani Cavallaro’s *The World of Angela Carter: A Critical Investigation* (2011), Maggie Tonkin’s *Angela Carter and Decadence: Critical Fictions/Fictional Critiques* (2012) or *Angela Carter: New Critical Readings* edited by Sonya Andermahr and Lawrence Phillips (2012).⁷ In a similar way to Gamble (2006a) the latter calls the attention to the relevance of locating Carter’s work historically. However, the collection goes a little further by putting her work ‘in a broader genre context, given that her career encompassed such a variety of different genres’ (Andermahr 2012, 1-2).

The last couple of years have also been prolific in terms of new academic journals on food studies, culinary history societies, and publishers who are announcing food series. Berg, a Bloomsbury Company, for instance, has already presented the *Food 2013 Catalogue* where the following titles are announced: *Writing Food History: A Global Perspective* (August 2012) edited by Kyri W. Clafin and Peter Scolliers; for October 2012 there is Shelley L. Koch’s *A Theory of Grocery Shopping: Food, Choice and Conflict*, and *Culinary Capital* by Peter Naccarato and Kathleen LeBesco; *Food Words: Essays in Culinary Culture* (March 2013) edited by Peter Jackson and Warren Belasco, who are also editing with Anne Murcott *The Handbook of Food Research* (August 2013); Brian

⁶ Apart from the several occasions where Clapp was present to talk about her most recent publication and Carter, there was a literary day in Bath. Small events have taken place, like the seminar in the Université d’Angers (France) on the 3rd of February entitled *In-betweenness in Angela Carter’s Short Narratives*.

⁷ Tonkin’s very recent publication was not mentioned before in this study because it deals mainly with the way Carter’s novels and short stories make reference to several misogynistic male-authored texts from the literary canon, especially from the tradition of European Decadence. This series of juxtaposed readings of her fictions through the allusions to canonical texts presents also a re-examination of Carter’s writing practice, observing how she claimed that her fiction is a form of literary criticism.

Gardner's *Global Food Futures: Feeding the World in 2050* (April 2013); David Evans' *Food Waste: Home Consumption, Material Culture and Everyday Life* (June 2013); Isabelle de Solier's *Food and the Self: Consumption, Production and Material Culture* (June 2013); Ken Albala's *The Food History Reader: Primary Sources* (August 2013); Nicola Humble's *The Literature of Food: An Introduction from 1830 to Present* (September 2013); Kaori O'Connor's *The Never-Ending Feast: The Archaeology and Anthropology of Feasting* (September 2013); Christina Grasseni's *Alternative Food Networks* (October 2013); *Geographies of Food: An Introduction* (December 2013) by Mike Goodman, Lewis Holloway, Moya Kneafsey, and Damian Maye; finally for January 2014 there will be the four-volume collection *Food History: Critical and Primary Sources* edited by Jeffrey M. Pilcher, and *Fun Food: Children's Food Marketing and the Politics of Consumption* by Charlene Elliot.⁸ In 2011 Leo Coleman had already edited *Food: Ethnographic Encounters* and in 2012 Fabio Parasecoli and Peter Scholliers edited the set of six volumes *A Cultural History of Food*. Some of these listed publications can be easily placed as reference publications, and others belong to History, Literature, Geography, Sociology, Anthropology, Material and Popular Culture, and Cultural and Communication Studies. This clearly shows the magnitude of the current interest in food issues, but also how the literary approach is outnumbered by historical and anthropological approaches in the food studies which are oriented towards the human sciences. In spite of this phenomenon, I witness a certain reluctance from some scholars in acknowledging an evident interdisciplinary contextualization.⁹

On the other hand, in spite of such a proliferation of diverse perspectives on the study of food all over the world (as the Sociedade Portuguesa de Gastronomia (Portuguese Gastronomy Society) that recovered in 1994 and now in 2012 its founder's publication *Culinária Portuguesa* (António Maria de Oliveira Bello, *alias* Olleboma), the first systematic collection of Portuguese traditional recipes) I still feel there is a failure to recognize Ronald Tobin's contribution through his work on gastro-criticism.¹⁰ The only

⁸ The forthcoming titles listed here will not be referred to in the list of references, because they could not have been read or consulted.

⁹ This came to my notice at the British Sociological Association conference *Food and Society* organized by the Food Study Group in 2-3 July 2012 in London.

¹⁰ Another example from Portugal is the celebration of Bulhão Pato's centenary in 2012, "Bulhão Pato 100 anos depois", coordinated by Luís Machado from Associação Portuguesa de Autores. Apart from the writer, there was the intention of bringing to mind Pato's appreciation of Portugal's

influences I found did not relate to the English or French literature, as expected from an American Professor working on Molière's plays. Apart from Ronald LeBlanc's *Slavic Sins of the Flesh: Food, Sex, and Carnal Appetite in Nineteenth-Century Russian Fiction* (2009), I have only come across Rita de Maeseneer's "Cuando la gastrocrítica se hace carne... y papel" in *Saberes y sabores en México y el Caribe* (2010) where she alludes to her book *El Festín de Alejo Carpentier. Una lectura culinário-intertextual* (2003) inspired by Tobin's essay "Qu'est-ce que la Gastrocritique?", and, more recently, Anne Holden Rønning's reading of the non-fiction of the Australian writer Marion Halligan's in "Halligan's Love Affair with Food" (2011).¹¹ Rønning points out how, for instance, a ragout is a hotchpotch of ingredients and Halligan posits that both the work of the cook and that of the poet/writer is bricolage – 'cooking too is a creative art' (Rønning 2011, 134). Indeed, the very language of food indicates bricolage – We 'dress' a chicken, and a salad, for example. To the same question I posed in the introduction, Rønning foretastes that the response may lie in the manner in which Halligan portrays food as a thematic link between places, stating an evident desire to inform her readers. Concerning Maeseneer and her study of *Alejo Carpentier's* work, she makes clear the following: 'Mi aproximación gastrocrítica consistía en estudiar las múltiples connotaciones de la comida en lo social, racial, geográfico, histórico, sexual, político, filosófico, médico, cultural, ideológico-político, genérico... y en reflexionar sobre su funcionalidade en determinados textos literários' (Maeseneer 2010, 10). In the *Saberes y sabores en México y el Caribe*, which she edited with Patrick Collard, Maeseneer acknowledges that the social connotations, the identity and sexual implications are more appealing and predictable when discussing culinary references (*ibid.* 12).

As a final point, I want to emphasise how Carter's writings, which remain in print, are read by general readers and studied at universities and still bear their capacity to shock, startle, and delight (Gamble 2006a, 205). In fact, one can clearly see there is already a relevant maturity in terms of critical readings of her work, after only twenty years from her death. A perfect example is the attention given to her postcards and other non-fiction writings (even if these deserve further thought). I believe Carter would appreciate both

rural gastronomy ("cozinha de campo") in the presentation of the poet José Manuel de Vasconcelos on the subject of literature and gastronomy ("Literatura e Gastronomia").

¹¹ *Saberes y sabores en México y el Caribe* is another example of a collection resulting from an international conferences devoted to food –University of Antwerp, 22-24 Novemver 2007 – as many others mentioned in the introduction.

these situations, albeit she had written to some extent prophetically in 1983 that ‘posthumous fame is no comfort at all’ (“Notes” 73). This study is just a way of reading Carter from a different angle, the representations of food as a form of characterising fictional characters.¹² Notwithstanding the articles, and parts of books on the matter of food representations in Carter fiction, there is no study that attempts at reading the representations of food in what concerns the just mentioned characterisation. I hope to have done this in relation to those characters that are central to/in the development of the plot of the fictional writings studied here.

Even if this last part was to be simply entitled ‘conclusion’, it becomes very hard to conclude what is still solely prospective in analysing Carter’s diverse work.¹³ In this same context, one would be respecting her own reluctance to commit to definitive conclusions.¹⁴ I believe a curious example of how even her close family and friends understood this idea, is the invitation created for the memorial service (held at the Ritzy approximately five weeks after Carter’s death) by her friend and artist Corinna Sargood (figure 14). This ‘shocking-pink’ invitation that celebrated the life and works of Carter and the choice of a cinema theatre (suggested by her husband Paul, instead of the more appropriated Granada Tooting) were clearly a homage to her ‘love of the flicks; the hoofing heroines of her last novel would have felt at home there’ (Clapp 2012, 99).¹⁵

¹² Still on the multiplicity of the representational forms, Lorna Piatti-Farnell concludes her study on food and culture in contemporary American fiction by stating the following:

The critical interest in ‘the fiction of food’ lies precisely in its ability to adapt to shifting cultural and ethnic contexts and its refusal to be tied to a single discursive or representational form. Attention to how American writers represent food in fiction allows us to explore and to critique ‘the tacit assumptions and unspoken rules’ that govern everyday experience ‘within the social order. (Piatti-Farnell 2011, 155)

¹³ Gamble stresses this same aspect concerning Carter’s literary life: ‘Complete closure is impossible in the case of a literary life, for such a life continues for as long as an audience for that author still exists’ (Gamble 2006a, 205-6)

¹⁴ Linden Peach decides to qualify his final chapter of *Angela Carter* as ‘Postscript’ – ‘I have deliberately avoided writing a ‘conclusion’ to this critical study. A ‘Postscript’ seemed more appropriate because the book is not intended as a final word on Carter’s work, as if there ever could be, and because I do not believe that Carter herself approved of conclusions’ (Peach 1998, 159) – and Charlotte Crofts chooses ‘Envoi’ in *Anagrams of Desire: Angela Carter’s Writing for Radio, Film, and Television* and refers back to Peach’s statement in its first line: ‘I side with Linden Peach when he suggests that Angela Carter did not approve of conclusions’ (Crofts 2003, 194).

¹⁵ Even though the following description is presented by Clapp in her recent book on Carter’s postcards, she starts by underlining that it is a card:

Not exactly a postcard, but a card certainly, covered in curling black drawings. This was a miniature work of art, by a friend who had been in tune with Angela since they had met in a Bristol shop when they were in their twenties. The card folded over on itself from both ends, its

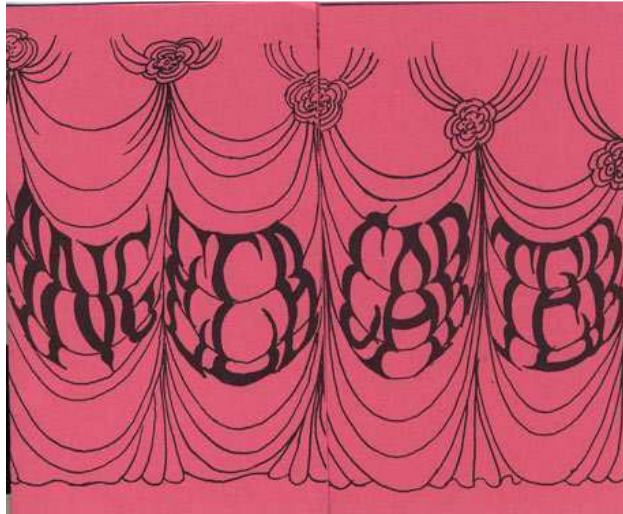


Figure 14 – Corinna Sargood, invitation to Angela Carter’s memorial service, 1992. (<<http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2012/jan/22/angela-carter-postcards-susannah-clapp>>)¹⁶

Her constant questioning and sharp remarks are evident from her early writings, and I believe Carter’s interest in food issues comes from her own perception of the changing appetites in cultural, social, economic, and political tendencies. Little did she know how the same writers who inquire about the decline of the British particular style of food, also question the way it is now climbing back into eminence a decade after her death (Spencer 2002, 7). Still, she persistently focused on the renewed interest for food matters which has been stimulated by the media and can be traced back to the late 1970s, for, by the 1980s, most national newspapers had a weekly food page – Carter’s piece on *Food in Vogue* in 1977 is just one example, as seen in the second chapter.¹⁷ Appealing as it may

outside flaps were drawn with swagged curtains, gathered at their tops in rosettes, and it opened like a small theatrical event onto its invitation. Two Ionian pillars, on either side of which hovered a wheeling owl and a parrot, contained an onstage menagerie; in front of a row of footlights, on bare boards, were a giraffe and a peacock, a dive-bombing swallow and a leering goose. A pair of workmen’s boots were [*sic*] climbing a ladder; a paintbrush was waving; there was a spade, a bucket, a crescent moon, a shooting star and a hand holding out from the wings a glass of bubbling-over champagne. (Clapp 2012, 98-99)

I suppose Carter’s characters would feel invited for this event.

¹⁶ Curiously this figure cannot be found in Clapp’s book but on the already mentioned article entitled “Angela Carter: a portrait in postcards” in the *The Observer* (22 January 2012).

¹⁷ Clearly one reason for such interest is the stable arrival of new foods and products on sale in supermarkets, ethnic stores, delicatessens and quality greengrocers. Such ethnic shops, which in general have a fresher supply of products, satisfy the British medieval liking for new flavours, oriental spices and Mediterranean ingredients. If previously the British people would have most likely passed these foods by feeling both suspicious and ignorant of their nature or even how to cook them, they started to benefit from cookery books like Elizabeth David’s, as mentioned by Carter.

seem to study how she deals with different appetites, it is simultaneously complex and what a better way to bring to a close this *course* than to quote, once again, Carter:

‘It is all very confusing indeed and, hypocrite that I am,
I’ve made it sound absolutely delicious, haven’t I?’ (SL 181)¹⁸

¹⁸ I chose to quote in two lines from the piece “D’You Mean South?” (first published in *New Society* in 1977 and now collected in *Shaking a Leg*) just to emphasise the complexity of reading Carter’s diverse appetites.

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