

ENGL 4384: Senior Seminar
Student Anthology

Fall 2017
Dr. Patrick Erben, Professor
Department of English & Philosophy



Printed on campus by UWG Publications and Printing.



“Savage Delight”: Food and Eating in Literature and Popular Culture

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	pg. 5
You Can Take the Girl Out of Sicily, but You Can't Take..... Sicily Out of the Girl <i>by Bekah Allred</i>	pg. 7
The Magic of Chocolate and <i>Chocolat</i> <i>by Anna Batten</i>	pg. 19
I love you, I love me, and I love food: The Importance of..... Food in the Film <i>Pride & Prejudice</i> <i>by Katie Cardin</i>	pg. 28
The Rastafari Movement: How Certain Foods Can..... Determine Your Way of Life <i>by Emani Collins</i>	pg. 37
Food Consumption and the Human Body: Anorexia as a..... Disorder in <i>To the Bone</i> <i>by Jasmine Day-Duncan</i>	pg. 46
I'll Be There For You, Because My Stereotype Tells Me To:..... <i>Friends</i> and Feminine Stereotypes <i>by Kelsey James</i>	pg. 54
Fight the System..... <i>by Melissa Johnson</i>	pg. 62
Human Consumption: Cannibalism as Exploitation in..... Jonathan Swift's <i>A Modest Proposal</i> and William Wordsworth's <i>The Discharged Soldier</i> <i>by Logan Lowman</i>	pg. 69

Exploring the Ethics of Corporate and Personal.....pg. 77
Responsibility in *Super Size Me* and *Food Inc.*
by Ma'Katelyn Shepherd

Laura Esquivel's *Like Water for Chocolate* and Rosario.....pg. 85
Castellanos' 'Cooking Lesson:' A Paradoxical Confinement
within the Mental and Domestic Sphere
by Tiana Young



In director Gabriel Axel's 1987 film *Babette's Feast*, the title character quotes the famed French opera singer Achille Papin summing up the true nature of art: "Through the entire world there goes one long cry from the heart of the artist: Give me leave to do my utmost!" Babette, of course, applies this motto to the great artistry of cooking one pivotal meal for the parishioners of a small, radical Pietist church in Denmark, who have given her—a refugee—a second home. She endows her food with the transformative power of love, desire, dedication, emotion, skill, and the affirmation of human community. Though she has little in common with the abstinent, misanthropic, and belligerent members of the congregation, Babette meets them on a plane of human experience they share through their religious zeal—the search for a fleeting yet transcendent moment of perfection and bliss.

In the film as well as much of literature and popular culture, food functions as a cognate for many of the highest and lowest reaches of humanity. Food and eating (as well as the many stages of producing, harvesting, and preparing food) express our striving for happiness, identity, assurance, joy, and, above all, fullness; yet in the process we also stoop to violence, excess, meanness, and a barbarity that comes from the inextricable connection between life and death: food is life, but it also requires killing, cutting, consuming, and excreting. Understanding food and eating, for the budding literary critic, therefore, is an act of interpretation, deciphering a text and participating in a community of readers (as well as eaters).

In our class, we read, wrote, talked, discussed, laughed, and also ate together. The senior seminar, like Babette's feast, is a moment of emergence and a culmination of training and achievement. Everyone in the class both urgently and wistfully anticipated the end of a college experience. The fullness and fulfillment of graduation would, like the end of a feast, also mean the end of a fleeting joy.

The essays in this anthology cover much of the spectrum—from depraved savagery to spiritual apotheosis and love—achieved by and expressed in both food and literature. In Anna Batten's essay on the film *Chocolat*, Emani Collins's work on food in the Rastafari movement, Katie Cardin's essay on *Pride and Prejudice*, and Bekah Allred's paper on eating, community, and

identity in *Golden Girls*, the function of food to bond people together, preserve cherished identities, and congeal emotional connections most apparently bubbles to the top. Yet Kelsey James's and Tiana Young's respective essays also demonstrate the ways in which literature and popular culture often deploy food and eating as frameworks for constructing or critiquing gendered scripts of identity formation, subjectivity, and social interaction. Finally, Makatelyn Shepherd, Logan Lowman, Jasmine Day-Duncan, and Melissa Johnson inspect the many pathologies of food and eating represented in literature and digital media—from industrial food, to warfare as cannibalism, to eating disorders, to savage spectacles of post-colonial liberation and neo-imperialism. Finally, Susan Holland in the Department of English created a beautiful and appealing design for this anthology. They have all joined in creating a feast of intellectual inquiry. Enjoy!

Dr. Patrick M. Erben



You Can Take the Girl Out of Sicily, but You Can't Take Sicily Out of the Girl

by Bekah Allred

“Four women, friends - they laugh, they cry, they eat. They love, they hate, they eat. They dream, they hope, they eat. Every time you turn around, they eat.”

What does food mean to us? Is it what we cook together for holidays? Is it a meal that is laughed over at dinner? Or perhaps, it's the dish that is brought to the neighbor who just lost his wife of 50 years. Food stands as a reminder of things passed, it holds meaning to things we once knew, it can teach us lessons, and can even symbolize people and their connections with one another. Such is the case with the 1980's Buena Vista sitcom, *The Golden Girls*. The show uses food to symbolize the family that Sophia, Dorothy, Blanche, and Rose become while living together as roommates. These ladies have come from all walks of life and four different backgrounds, much like the food through which they are represented. But what connection does the audience of the show make between cuisine and character? This question can be answered by simply “unpacking” the food choices that the girls utilize throughout the show, as well as by examining the events that are happening in their lives when this food appears. What we choose to eat as individuals tends to be representative of what is comfortable and familiar to us. It also stands as reminders of events and items that are dear to us, that are perhaps no longer with us. Likewise, it often times echoes our personality, to a certain extent. These factors of food all spawn from one common force—science. And because of scientific ideals, the food that we eat, as it meshes and melds together and forms meals, coming from all varieties of places and industries, becomes symbolically psychological. Likewise, each of the four characters in *The Golden Girls* provides her own specific “ingredients” to the meal that is their family, and

more largely, to the society in which they thrive—these ingredients being characterized through the girls’ personalities, heritages, and knowledge.

The show is set in what was present day Miami, in one of the main characters, Blanche Devereaux’s, bungalow styled house, and aired from 1985 to 1992. Blanche, a promiscuous middle-aged woman (and in denial about being a day over 45) opens her house to three women, Rose Nylund, a “bubble-headed farm girl” from St. Olaf, Minnesota, Dorothy Zbornak, a divorced “Brooklyn Italian” substitute teacher, and her mother, Sophia Petrillo, a senile Sicilian, who stands as the matriarch of the entire household. Throughout the show, these backgrounds are referenced typically during conversation among the girls, as well as when one of them is cooking. However, the relationship that these women have is explicitly illustrated through the relationships that each of them share with food.

Each woman obviously has her own personality, and each of these personalities are portrayed through their immensely specific tastes in foods. Blanche considers herself the most desirable of the bunch. She also constantly references chocolate—chocolate ice cream, chocolate cheesecake, chocolate chip cookies...all of which allude to the romantic aura she exudes. Its cheese for Rose, which only naturally makes sense, seeing as she’s from the cheese capital of the country. Sophia, born and raised in Sicily, and an alleged best friend of Mama Celeste, the pizza-maker, is an expert on pizza, whose “go-to’s” when cooking are spaghetti and lasagna. Then there’s Dorothy. The “smart one” of the four, and also the one criticized for being the most common, most boring, and downright plain roommate of the house who typically references chicken—possibly the most boring bird, and certainly the plainest on the market. These food choices made by each of the women, individually, differ based on their personal composition; and the reasoning behind their choices and how the choices seem to represent who they are is explained by “Sensory Science” (Pacchioli).

The notion of sensory science and why the Golden Girls eat food groups that hold meaning to them is explained by John Hayes, the director of the Sensory Evaluation Center at Penn State’s research of “why people eat the foods they do,” and the conclusion that “Technically...it’s a subset of food science. But it has roots in neurobiology and psychology as well.” Hayes’ research “explores variations in individual taste perception, with recent studies showing biological differences in people’s abilities to taste salt and judge the qualities of wine. In 2011, he embarked on a large multiyear project aimed at sorting out the welter of genetics, biology, and personality factors involved in chemesthesis, or what he calls ‘all the non-taste stuff that goes on in the mouth’” (Pacchioli). This research begins to identify the reasons that the girls eat what they do—specifically because of their genetics and their personalities. One of these personality factors that

contributes to the food choices made on the show is that of Blanche and her craving for sweets—especially anything chocolate. She prides herself on being irresistible to men, and a rare delicacy, much like sweet treats. On multiple occasions, she references her desire for cake... “Piece of cake. Nice big piece of chocolate cake. Devil’s food, smothered in whipped cream and coconut flakes...” which alludes to the sexual “desire” that constantly clings to her, as well as the one she supposedly inflicts on every man that comes in contact with her (What).

Within his studies, Hayes focuses on the burn that a person experiences when he eats a chili pepper. His work was prefaced in the 1970’s by Paul Rozin at the University of Pennsylvania, who “coined the term ‘benign masochism’ to explain why a person would develop an affinity for the ‘biologically aversive stimulus’ of a mouth that feels like it’s on fire. To him it seemed akin to the thrill of gambling or riding a roller coaster, slaking a desire for new and slightly dangerous sensations” (Pacchioli). The people in the study chose to eat the chili peppers, subconsciously, because of their genetics and effects that their genetics had on their personalities—for instance, Blanche’s “sensual, luxurious” personality. Even though his focus was on the specific relation to taste and chili peppers, the reactions that our bodies produce when we eat certain foods, and in Blanche’s case, chocolate, stem from the same reflexes.

A graduate student at Penn State and colleague of Hayes’, Meriel Harwood, conducted a study to see how a group of people reacted to chocolate—milk chocolate versus bittersweet dark chocolate. “In the end, the dark chocolate group had a “rejection threshold” more than 2.5 times that of milk chocolate lovers” (Pacchioli). Due to her findings, Harwood suggests that tests of rejection thresholds in food may be a simpler and more direct way to test food preferences than the more commonly used detection threshold. This could suggest that the golden girls have specific flavors and tastes that each one can process easier than each of the others due to whatever region of the world she is from: thus, leading to a preference of the foods of which each of them chooses to eat. For example, Sophia coming from Sicily. Being Italian, she loves the stereotypical Italian foods—pizza, spaghetti, and lasagna, among other staples. This is explained by the article, saying “Since everyone must eat, what we eat becomes a most powerful symbol of who we are” (Fox). Sophia, as well as each of the girls, and everyone else in the world, rely on eating. We wouldn’t survive without it. In her case, her heritage is symbolized and kept revived through her cooking. Because of this heritage, Sophia prides herself on knowing immaculate Italian food. In Season 4, she meets a television director who’s interested in filming a commercial about a new pizzeria in Miami and offers Sophia and Dorothy a “mother-daughter angle” to advertise the pizza. During filming, Sophia

takes a bite of the pizza she is advertising, having never tasted it before. However, after tasting the pizza, she spits the bite into a napkin, exclaiming “That’s a mighty lousy pizza!” (High). Refusing to further her acting career, she explains to Dorothy that, even though there is “a lot of money at stake,” “[t]here are two things a Sicilian won’t do: lie about pizza, and file a tax return.” She justifies her opinion of the pizza with this statement that a Sicilian won’t lie about pizza—therefore, she is an expert on the food simply because of her background.

Along with her renowned knowledge of pizza, Sophia’s past also gives a nod to her choices in cooking. In season 3, Sophia boasts about her how her cooking skills, at one point in her past, kept her marriage to Dorothy’s father afloat. In episode 5, “Nothing to Fear but Fear Itself,” Sophia is telling a story to Dorothy in the kitchen, as she is cooking spaghetti sauce—the same sauce Sophia uses to make veal parmesan. She explains to Dorothy that veal parmesan was her “luckiest dish.”

It saved my marriage once... Picture this. New York City, 1931. The Depression. Your father and I are newlyweds. One rainy night, we have our first fight. He says he’s leaving, I say fine. He goes out the door, I start to cook. A few hours later, he comes back. He says he couldn’t find a cab. We eat in silence. Halfway through, I look up. He’s got tears in his eyes. He tells me, ‘This meal is like our marriage.’ The veal is like him, tough and stubborn. The tomato sauce is like me, hot and spicy. And the mozzarella is like our love: It stretches but it never breaks. (Nothing)

From these two anecdotes, we learn how much Sophia’s past means to her and how proud of it she really is. The Social Issues Research Centre published an article entitled “Food and Eating: An Anthropological Perspective,” unpacking the reasons that we eat what we do. The baggage referred to later on in this essay can be thought of in a more abstract idea using the phrase, “you are what you eat,” which also happens to be the title of one of the subheadings within the journal. Dorothy, Rose, Blanche, and Sophia, because each of them come from four very different backgrounds, each use those backgrounds as representation in their food choices.

what the Social Issues Research Centre’s journal is describing—the fact that where we are from holds a powerful resemblance of who we are and that, because of this fact, both who we are *and* where we’re from is mirrored within our cooking. Sophia’s choices to cook the spaghetti sauce she originally knew as a young wife, and her decision to “never lie about a pizza” personify the notion that she is what she eats. However, in her instance, the structure of that statement is inverted. Quite literally, she was and always

will be a Sicilian, therefore, she chooses to eat as one—and vice versa as well. The fact that she eats as a Sicilian, in turn, makes her a Sicilian at heart. This notion is also explained in the journal, saying “There are as many kinds of food identification The obvious ones are ethnic, religious and class identifications. Ethnic food preferences only become identity markers in the presence of gustatory “foreigners,” such as when one goes abroad, or when the foreigners visit the home shores. The insecure will cling desperately to home food habits. . . .” (Fox). Sophia often reminisces on her voyage from Italy, typically classifying herself as a “young peasant girl” coming to a “strange country.” This notion of being a “foreigner” as Fox refers to, and being from another country solidify the reasoning behind Sophia clinging to the familiar foods which she knows from Sicily.

Another of these specific “flavors” that certain individuals can process more easily is Dorothy and her taste for chicken. Although we don’t explicitly see Dorothy eating chicken, unlike Blanche with her cookies and cheesecake, Dorothy references the bird on numerous occasions throughout the duration of the show. During the first season, a conversation between Dorothy and Sophia revolves around what to eat for dinner:

Dorothy: How are you, sweet Mother?
 Sophia: We’re out of pepperoni. . . . I’m starving.
 Dorothy: I defrosted some chicken. We’ll eat in half an hour.
 Sophia: I can’t eat chicken. . . . It repeats on me.
 Dorothy: Ma, you don’t have to make excuses. If you don’t want chicken, just say “I don’t want chicken.”
 Sophia: I don’t want chicken.
 Dorothy: Good.
 Sophia: It repeats on me. . . . I want pepperoni.
 Dorothy: Blanche. . . . Blanche, would you like some broiled chicken? (Job)

A few seasons later, Dorothy and Blanche come home with dinner for all four of the girls in a flat, square box—obviously a pizza. However, Rose, being the “ditz” that she is asks what they have brought home, to which Dorothy dryly replies, “A bucket of chicken,” emphasis on the “dry” part, which also stands as personification of the bird—chicken is often times too dry and “lack-luster” after being cooked. . . .mockingly, Rose, Blanche, and Sophia all three constantly comment on the lonely Saturday nights that Dorothy spends by herself, her nonexistent social life, and the ugly clothes that “[accentuate] the many folds of [her] turkey-like neck,” and “draw attention to the nonexistent bosom” (And). Two seasons later, an ill Dorothy visits multiple doctors to try and figure out what illness is ailing

her. During one of these numerous visits, Sophia even relates Dorothy to the bird, saying “my daughter may be no spring chicken...” (Sick). The fact that her own mother references a chicken while describing her daughter acts as a solidifier to the character trait with which Dorothy is perceived. Her adamancy towards having chicken for dinner in season one and then her choice to reference chicken before any other option of food in season three speaks to Dorothy’s traits that were in the previous paragraph, as well as her observed characteristics.

A fellow researcher of Hayes’ at Penn State, Nadia Byrnes, made preliminary findings of her own, regarding the same area of spicy food study. Byrnes’ results showed that “subjects who reported liking the burn would eat more spicy food.” This is because people who prefer one particular food group, in this instance, spicy foods, will naturally eat more of that type of food. However, this research also found interesting parallels between “personality traits and the liking of spicy foods.” Byrnes explains, “We expected the sensation-seekers to rate spicy meals higher, for example, and they did. But there was variation in their responses depending on the type of spicy meal. Some people like Asian cooking—which may include capsaicin but has other chemesthetic ingredients, too, like ginger and Wasabi—yet they don’t like chili barbecue. Why do they like one type of spicy and not another?” She denoted this as “predictability” and that people who seek sensation didn’t seem to report the intensity of the heat from the peppers they were consuming. “They don’t rate it as intense. And we’re not sure if that means that biologically they’re not getting as much of a response, or if they’re desensitized, or if they are the type of person who went skydiving the day before, so the burn of capsaicin in relation to the rush of adrenalin doesn’t rate that high.” This explains why the girls’ primary flavor choices seem to mimic her personality, such as Blanche and her chocolate and Dorothy and her chicken. Harwood finishes her study with the quote that “We bring a bunch of cultural and emotional baggage with us when we eat. What you grow up with, what you are used to, what you know, for example, can all influence your preferences” (Pacchioli). Likewise, these women bring their cultural “baggage” with them to the table each time they eat—in turn, this baggage becomes symbolic and representative...even metaphorical.

Same as Sophia’s background from Sicily, Rose’s heritage is evident through her cooking throughout the show. Many times, she talks about “back in St. Olaf,” and about their abundant herring, along with all the different ways in which it can be served and eaten—candied, pickled, and in “Kerflugenglugen” with “red hots for the eyes” (Triple). St. Olaf is in Minnesota. Due to this, the ancestral background that makes up the St. Olafians are Scandinavian Vikings; and the audience is constantly reminded of this by Rose’s stories of her Viking heritage throughout the entire show.

Although she is not from another country and she is not a foreigner, her people are. This characteristic is portrayed through Rose's cooking style. Dishes such as "Genurkenflurken Cake," "hupaflagel cake," "gerflokennokkin," "Sperheovevn Krispics," and "Eggs Gafloofen," to name a few, are some of her "traditional Scandinavian recipes," as she often refers to them; and to see the other women's reactions to her cooking, they taste atrocious. But to Rose, because she comes from such a drastically different region of the country than Miami, these represent her childhood and her early life as an adult, so she holds tight to these familiar foods. These foods evoke memories. They are Rose's personal taste. And according to webmd.com, "Personal taste, family preferences, cultural influences, emotional reasons... all come into play when we choose what to eat," (Zelman). Rose and Sophia both choose to recapture their pasts by returning to the foods with which each of the women are familiar. These personal tastes, while also being cultural influences, are simultaneously, heretically influential on what these two women choose to eat throughout their present lifestyles. These foods evoke memories and allow them to keep the lives that they once knew alive. "We all grew up with fond memories of foods that bring us joy... How could I possibly give up fudge? I don't. [SIC] I eat it infrequently, but the very thought that it would be stricken from my acceptable food list is heresy. It's [SIC] human nature..." explains Zelman. This example of fudge and the "human nature" of not wanting to give familiar foods up echoes in both Sophia's choices to cook dishes from her Italian home, as well as Rose's decision to do the same with Scandinavian meals. Just because neither of these women are in their homelands any longer, doesn't mean that they cannot still revert back to the unique cooking that both of these places possess.

This idea of being foreigners, however, also helps us understand why these food groups with which Dorothy, Rose, Blanche, and Sophia envelop their livelihoods play roles within their community. If we analyze Miami and think of it as a huge melting pot with people from all different walks of life, the majority of people in the city are considered foreigners, not necessarily to the United States, but almost certainly to the city—much like each of the women: Sophia from Sicily, Dorothy from Brooklyn, Rose from St. Olaf, and Blanche from Atlanta. Looking at the demographic of Miami, it is noted that 51.7% of the population is "foreign born persons" which would include Sophia, and 78.3% of the population is Caucasian, which would encompass all four of them (Quick). However, the rest of the population is made up of African, Indian, Asian, Pacific Islander, and Latino races, with a few others. Coincidentally, NONE of the most iconic, famous, "you-haven't-been-to-Miami-if-you-haven't-eaten-these" dishes in Miami are American. The top four dishes in Miami are: number four,

Chicharrones from El Palacio De Los Jugos, number three, Ceviche at My Ceviche Brickell, number two, Cafe con Leche y Tostada Cubana from David's Café, and number one, Arepas, served at La Latina Miami. Likewise, each of these preeminent dishes come from Spain, Peru, Cuba, and Colombia and Venezuela, respectively (Staff). Each of the women come from different places, but all of them contribute to their household...much like each of these dishes contribute to the entire community of Miami. All four of these dishes are known throughout Miami and without them and the restaurants from which they come, Miami would not stand out from other cities. Correspondingly, "home" for the girls would not be home, missing one of them—this fact is made known with the conclusion of the series, as Dorothy marries Blanche's Uncle Lucas and moves out. Without one of the characters, their community does not survive, just like Miami would not be Miami if it were lacking these dishes.

The girls add their own special "ingredients" or personalities to the family that they make up—the dishes add their own flare to Miami. The cultural makeup of the population, i.e. Latino-American, Asian-American, and so on, the food groups that give Miami its recognizable cuisine options; thus, mimicking the girls and their contributions to mealtime. For example, Sophia could cook lasagna for dinner, Rose might bake her "vanskapkaka" for dessert, Blanche would insist on chocolate ice cream on the side, and Dorothy would most likely complain...that or make the others feel dumb. Each woman has her role to play within the household, just as each ethnicity and race has theirs to play within the Miami culture. During the 1970's that preceded the show, television producers were paying close attention to "reasserting the importance of [these] women[ly] familial roles" while still incorporating the "functional nuclear family" angle (Dow). From these two points, we see the scenario that I just presented emerge—that of cooking dinner, dessert, adding to dessert, and Dorothy adding her "two cents worth" of condescension. All four of the women contribute to the "family" that they make up, but each of them still has the domestic traits that were important to the 1980's society.

But pause to examine these exchanges among the girls...where do they occur? In fact, where do 90 percent of the conversations amid the girls occur? Answer—in the kitchen. Studies have shown that conversations that would be considered difficult to have are more easily "digested"...pun intended...when the subjects are in a place of familiarity, such as their own home—and particularly, in their kitchen (Norlander). Because of this, we see that many of the girls' conversations, especially uncomfortable ones, occur within the kitchen, and most usually at the kitchen table. For example, in season six, Rose has a routine cleaning at the dentist's office, but comes home distressed. Dorothy and Blanche are both already at the table when

Rose walks through the door. Both Dorothy and Blanche invite her to sit down with them as she tells them of her misfortune and the conversation continues as they remain planted around the table:

Dorothy: Hi, Rose.

Blanche: Oh, hi, honey.

Dorothy: Rose? Honey? Is something the matter?

Rose: I just got back from having my teeth worked on.

Dorothy: Oh, what was it, a wisdom tooth?

(all laughing)

Rose: My dentist touched me. I think he felt my breast.

Blanche: Oh, Rose, that's terrible. What happened?

Rose: Well, when the nitrous oxide wore off, and my head began to clear, Lou, that's my dentist, said he was checking my heartbeat, but I think he was up to more than that.

Dorothy: Well, why, Rose? I mean, what gave you that idea?

Rose: I don't think "wowie-wow-wow-wow" is a medical term.

Blanche: How could he do a thing like that?

Dorothy: Believe me, just because men in the medical profession wear white, does not mean that they're angels.

Blanche: He did something horrible and unethical, and he has to answer for it. (Feelings)

This conversation causes discomfort for each of the girls, equally, but nevertheless, it occurs in the kitchen. However, it is made easier for them to talk over because, subconsciously, they are comfortable in their own kitchen. For instance, if they had been outside on the lanai, it is likely that Rose would not have told the others all of the details, if she had spoken of it at all. Granted, the lanai is still part of their house and they would still likely be comfortable there, the kitchen provides a subconscious sense of security and connection to the other individuals involved in the conversation. Likewise, a more lighthearted conversation among all four of the girls occurs at the kitchen table in season three.

Not only is food used to display personalities, express personal desires, and recapture lost youth, but it is also used as a teaching mechanism—particularly through Sophia. During this particular episode, Rose comes to Sophia, who is sitting at the kitchen table, in search of advice of what to do about her boss that made a pass at her. Within a matter of a minute, Dorothy and Blanche both seek advice from her as well, and all four of them have taken seats around the table. Sophia uses a particular anecdote involving a pepperoni to subside each of their curiosities. She tells them of a "young peasant girl," as is usually the protagonist of her stories, who is on

her way home with a pepperoni for her family when it turns up missing. She's panicked because it's the only food she has to bring home...

Sophia: She runs through the field, the meadow, over the hill until she comes to a raging river filled with pepperoni swimming upstream.

Dorothy: Ma, pepperoni swimming upstream?

Sophia: I know it's odd. Pepperoni is a land meat, but there it was. She wades into the river, grabs an armful and races home to feed her family. When she tells the story, they think it's an act of God. But as it turned out, a disgruntled pepperoni stuffer had blown up the factory in a neighboring town, causing pepperoni to rain down over a hundred square miles...(Three)

After the story concludes, Sophia asks if her anecdote has helped any of the younger women with their problems, to which Rose replies, "It's helping me, Sophia. What I got out of the story was that I should take a bad situation and make it better. I'm gonna tell my boss off." Blanche, who was seeking help about her cheating boyfriend answers, "You were trying to tell me to dump my boyfriend because there's lots of pepperoni in the sea...Thank you, Sophia." Blanche and Rose both leave the kitchen and Sophia looks to Dorothy to see if she benefitted her in any way, not knowing what the problem was: "Dorothy, did I help with your problem?" "You sure did. I didn't know what to have for dinner. How about splitting a pepperoni pizza?" (Three). Sophia's use of pepperoni as a teaching mechanism to benefit each of the three women, albeit in alternate ways, stands as the final way that food holds importance to these women. Her 85 years' worth of knowledge that she imparts upon the others often makes its appearance over dinner—and every once in a while, it comes through food on its own.

Whether flavors shine through a character's sensuality or seem bland with boringness, whether they come with crazy words and weird tastes or are bold and illustrious, and whether or not they teach lessons, food ties people and places together, alike. Blanche's exciting sexuality and craving for decadence go hand in hand, just as Dorothy's plain dryness resounds in overcooked chicken. Rose hangs on to her Scandinavian ancestry with "stupid words," as Sophia's pride and knowledge shine through her problem-solving storytelling and marriage-saving cooking skills. Particular flavors make their way into our everyday lives, whether it's because we choose to hang on to familiar ideas or because our brains subconsciously send us messages of what to choose that correspond with our personalities; this subconscious choosing being referred to as "sensory science." This idea is what explains why our food choices either reciprocate our identity or recall

our histories to us. Each of the four characters in *The Golden Girls* exemplify these different options that food presents to them. Dorothy, Rose, Blanche, nor Sophia would tie together as cohesively as they do if they didn't each contribute individual tastes to their familial "meal." And their family adds its own flavorful flare to the community of Miami. The family would not exist without any of their *personal*, key ingredients and Miami would lack a certain zest without their aromatic family.

WORKS CITED

- "And Ma Makes Three." *Golden Girls: The Complete Third Season*. Buena Vista, 1987.
- Dow, Bonnie J. *Prime-Time Feminism: Television, Media Culture, and the Women's Movement Since 1970*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996.
- "Feelings." *Golden Girls: The Complete Sixth Season*. Buena Vista, 1990.
- Fox, Robin. "Food and Eating: An Anthropological Perspective." *Social Issues Research Centre*, pp. 1–22., doi:1997-2017.
- "High Anxiety." *Golden Girls: The Complete Fourth Season*. Buena Vista, 1988.
- "Job Hunting." *Golden Girls: The Complete First Season*. Buena Vista, 1985.
- Pacchioli, David. "Why Do We Eat What We Eat?" *Penn State University*, The Pennsylvania State University, 2015, www.psu.edu/feature/2013/03/05/why-do-we-eat-what-we-eat.
- Norlander, Linda, and Kerstin Mcsteen. "The Kitchen Table Discussion: A Creative Way to Discuss End-of-Life Issues." *Home Healthcare Nurse*, vol. 18, no. 8, 2000, pp. 532–539., doi:10.1097/00004045-200009000-00012.
- "Nothing to Fear but Fear Itself." *Golden Girls: The Complete Third Season*. Buena Vista, 1987.
- "One for the Money." *Golden Girls: The Complete Third Season*. Buena Vista, 1987.
- "QuickFacts: Miami City, Florida." *U.S. Census Bureau*, 1 July 2016, www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/miamicityflorida,miamidadecountyflorida/PST045216.
- "Sick and Tired (1)." *Golden Girls: The Complete Fifth Season*. Buena Vista, 1989.
- Staff, Eater. "The 25 Most Iconic Dishes in Miami." *Eater Miami*, 12 July 2016, miami.eater.com/maps/iconic-dishes-austin-must-eat.
- "Three on a Couch." *Golden Girls: The Complete Third Season*. Buena Vista, 1987.
- "Triple Play." *Golden Girls: The Complete Fifth Season*. Buena Vista, 1989.

- “What a Difference a Date Makes.” *Golden Girls: The Complete Sixth Season*. Buena Vista, 1990.
- Zelman, Kathleen M. “Why We Eat the Foods We Do.” *WebMD*, WebMD, 2005, [www.webmd.com/diet/features/why-we EAT-the-foods-we-do#1](http://www.webmd.com/diet/features/why-we-EAT-the-foods-we-do#1).



The Magic of Chocolate and *Chocolat*

by Anna Batten

“In this village, if you saw something you weren’t supposed to see, you learned to look the other way. If perchance your hopes had been disappointed, you learned never to ask for more. So, through good times and bad, famine and feast, the villagers held fast to their traditions. Until, one winter day, a sly wind blew in from the North...” (Hallstrom, *Chocolat*).

Chocolate is a sweet delicacy that has been around for thousands of years and is a treat that is enjoyed by many. Whether you are young, old, or in between, chances are you have experienced the joy that comes with eating some delicious chocolate. Chocolate has been shown to carry antioxidants, relieve stress, and raise blood sugar levels when they are low. Some may even say that chocolate possesses magical properties. Within the 2000 film *Chocolat*, the magical properties of chocolate are front and center, and they fuel the plot of the movie by changing characters’ lives and teaching them valuable lessons. The presence of chocolate goes so far as to even challenge the traditional order that the townspeople within the film adhere to. Obviously, chocolate plays a prominent role in the movie. Its role offers a sense of liberation and unity to many of the characters and provides a transformative eating experience through its magical elements as well. Through the liberation, unity, and transformation experienced by all the villagers, the chocolate helps them learn the value of acceptance, kindness, and love.

Chocolat begins with the arrival of a young mother named Vianne and her daughter Anouk to a small French Catholic village in 1959. Upon her arrival, she proceeds to open a chocolate shop but is soon informed by Comte de Reynaud (the mayor of the village) that lent season has just begun and everyone has given up sweets as a result. However, Vianne is not

deterred by this news and continues to go about running her business. For Vianne, her shop and her chocolates provide a sense of liberation from the traditional societal ideals. She is able to express herself through her baking and the different chocolate treats that she concocts. Running her own shop allows her to wear colorful clothing of her choosing—clothing that is inherently more colorful than what the women of the village wear—and she is able to express herself through the way she decorates her shop as well, which is later on referred to by one villager as “early Mexican brothel” decor.

Unfortunately, both Vianne and her sense of liberation and freedom are met with a mix of acceptance and rejection from the townspeople. Many of them look down on her because she is a young, unmarried mother who doesn't go to Mass on Sundays and is a free spirit. This is something that the people of the village cannot seem to get on board with. They don't understand why someone would shun the societal norms; as a result, this creates a rift between Vianne and the villagers. But there are a few townspeople, who through the magic of her chocolate, begin to form friendships with Vianne and accept her as one of their own.

Vianne's first friend in the village is her landlady, Armande. She is a cranky, eccentric, elderly woman who eventually falls under the spell of Vianne and her chocolate shop. She comes into the shop one day to converse with Vianne, who offers her a cup of hot chocolate. Although she is diabetic, Armande accepts the hot chocolate, and the first sip instantly hooks her. Thus, a friendship is struck between the two women, and Armande returns frequently to enjoy a hot treat and converse with her friend.

Another friend of Vianne's is “Josephine (Lena Olin) the abused and apparently feeble-minded creature who blossoms when Vianne takes her in and treats her with respect as she works in the chocolate shop (Jim Stark 93).” One night when Vianne and Anouk are in the bar that Josephine's husband owns, Vianne goes to the back to strike up a conversation with her. Even though Josephine is timid and withdrawn, Vianne encourages her to stop by the chocolate shop one day and leaves her a bag of sweets to enjoy. After that night, Josephine begins to come by the chocolate shop to indulge her taste for the treats that Vianne makes, and a friendship is soon formed between the two women.

Josephine starts to help Vianne around the shop, and her confidence in herself is soon restored which inspires her to leave her abusive husband for good. Although he makes several attempts to win her back, Josephine manages to stay strong, stands her ground, and makes a life for herself as an independent woman. Through the experience that she has with that first taste of the chocolate Vianne gave to her, and through learning how to create the chocolate treats herself, Josephine is given her own sense of

liberation and finds a way to free herself from the oppressive and abusive home life that she was being subjected to.

One other instance of liberation-through-chocolate that is seen within the film is the relationship between Armande and her young grandson Luc. Armande and her daughter (Luc's mother) have been estranged for several years, and as a result Luc's mother does not want him to spend any time with Armande. She believes that Armande would have too much of a negative effect on Luc and does not want any of her "nonsense ideas" placed in his head.

Luc, however, begins to feel drawn to the chocolate shop, and once he realizes that his grandmother can be often found there, that desire to go there grows even stronger. Luc finally goes in one day and enjoys a delicious cup of Vianne's homemade hot chocolate and a conversation with his grandmother. He shows her some of his artwork, and she encourages him to come back each day so that they can spend some time together and work on his art. Once again, Vianne's chocolate shop and the chocolates themselves offer freedom and liberation to both Luc and Armande: freedom for both of them from the strict rules of Luc's mother, which offers them the ability to form a friendship and special bond, and freedom for Luc to fully express himself in his artwork.

Rand Richards Cooper harks on this exact idea of chocolate as a symbol of liberation in his article "HALLUCINOGENS FOR ALL: 'Chocolat' and 'Traffic'". He writes:

Indeed, Vianne's sweets contain a secret powder, traceable to South America, where years ago her father married a wild beauty and discovered a Mayan drink that could "unlock hidden yearnings". With this magic ingredient, Vianne works an all-purpose salvage operation on the village's citizenry giving a battered woman the strength to leave her brutish husband, drawing out the artist in a young boy suffering under a rigid mom, and blowing away amorous doldrums right and left (Rand Richards Cooper 19).

Cooper also writes that "...in the Northern European romance of exotic (read: sexually free) southern lands and gypsy freedoms (represented here by a band of riverboat travelers, led by Johnny Depp) the Catholic church looms as a major joy killer, against which Vianne's regime of sweet seductions poses a kind of liberation chology" (Cooper 19). Vianne and her chocolates not only offer her customers the individual liberations that they experience, but also freedom from the stuffiness of the Catholic church and the monotonous lives that it expects them to live.

Vianne's chocolate also possesses elements that are magical and transformative. We first see this magical side of the chocolate when a middle-aged

married woman named Yvette timidly comes into the chocolate shop to see what it is all about. After striking up a conversation with her, Vianne realizes there seems to be a lack of passion and fire within Yvette's marriage and knows just what to offer her. She sells her a bag of chocolates that are made with a hint of chili pepper, informing her that they act as a sort of aphrodisiac. While she is skeptical, Yvette takes the chocolates anyways and heads home to her husband. She doesn't truly believe that a bag of chocolate could possibly have that much of an effect on her husband and tosses them out. However, her husband Alphonse soon finds them and samples a few. There is an immediate change in his demeanor—as if a magical spell has been cast upon him—and he goes from a man lacking passion to one who promptly begins to lust after his wife. Yvette returns the next day to the chocolate shop one very satisfied customer and proceeds to buy every bag of those chocolates that Vianne can offer her.

Through this experience, we see the magical properties of chocolate not only transform Alphonse, but it turns the married couple's relationship from one that is sexless and dull to a marriage that is once again full of fire, romance, and passion. From Vianne herself to the set-in-his-ways Comte de Reynaud, the magical effects of chocolate provide a unique experience for all who live in the small village.

If chocolate is to be considered the magical element within the film, it can be argued that the character of Vianne is a witch. In his article "Chocolat", Jim Stark writes, "and Vianne—wrapped in the mystery and magic of a mythic sorceress—instantly senses what is wrong with each of her neighbors; she knows exactly what each one needs" (Stark 93). Vianne is able to immediately pin point the root of each customer's problem and in turn, knows exactly which chocolate or treat would be best suited for them. She very much takes on the role of a witch and her chocolates and goodies are her potions.

Stark shares in his article the story behind Vianne's father and how he was a pharmacist who traveled to South America to study medicinal herbs and their uses. The natives soon "exposed him to one of their most prized secrets: a special hot chocolate drink (apparently spiced with hot pepper) that had marvelous and transformative effects on the drinker" (Stark 94). Stark continues on to say that "this story, of course, echoes the real history of chocolate. Made from pods of the *theobroma* (literally, "food of the gods") cacao tree, chocolate was used by the Maya as early as 600 A.D. in sacred rituals and to treat fevers, coughs, and a variety of ills (the Olmecs knew it even earlier)" (Stark 94). The author of the book that the film is based off of used this historical background of chocolate herself when writing the novel: "It is not hard to understand why Joanna Harris, author of the book on which the film is based (and who grew up in a sweet shop, the great-

granddaughter of a Frenchwoman locally famous as a witch and a healer), would seize on chocolate as the vehicle for spreading Vianne's magic. In this, *Chocolat* echoes other, ancient myths about the magical properties of food" (Stark 94). As stated, chocolate has historically been seen as more than just the main ingredient in a delicious treat. It was used thousands of years ago to cure ailments and illnesses. Even today certain forms of chocolate carry antioxidants, women use chocolate to relieve pre-menstrual syndrome, and it is advertised around holidays such as Christmas and Valentine's Day as a delicious concoction that adds to their magic. Casting Vianne in the light of being a witch in a small catholic town makes perfect sense—especially when thinking about the fact that Joanne Harris' great-grandmother was famously known as a French witch.

Vianne transforms each villager one by one, and opens their eyes to liberations and freedoms they never knew existed. In several instances her chocolates can be seen as love potions, rekindling the spark and passion in one couple's marriage and bringing together a lovesick elderly man with the town's widow all at once. Her "potions" inspire people of the town to free parts of their self and identity that they were hiding from themselves and the rest of the world, repair damaged relationships between estranged mothers and daughters, and even brings about a larger change in a once stuffy French town.

The magical and transformative properties of the chocolate extend through its symbolic connection to Catholicism and communion. Communion within the Catholic church is meant to be a transformative experience, connecting you to Christ and cleansing you of your sins. "We see the sacramental wafers placed on tongues in church, then cut to chocolate wafers melting on the tongues of her faithful" (Cooper 19). While the transformative effects of chocolate and the transformative effects of communion are different, they are also both similar. The people of the town attend Catholic mass and take part of communion not only because their Catholic religion is a big part of their lives, but because it offers them a transformation. Most importantly, it provides them with that spiritual connection to Christ. In the same manner, Vianne plays the role of Catholic priest and her chocolates are the wine and bread of communion. They too provide the people of the town a transformative and spiritual experience, one that they continue to return to in the same way they return to Mass every week. But to take this idea one step further, religion itself as a whole, not just Catholicism, is a transformative and magical experience. Those who are religious or participate in any sort of religion or spirituality generally express the transformation that that said religion had on their lives. In the film, chocolate has the exact same effect on the people of the town. At the end of his article Jim Stark says:

Still, there is something transporting in the idea at the root of *Chocolat*: the arrival of a rich, sweet, and luscious food suddenly brings out the best in people and enables them to break out of their conventional lives and become what they always wanted to be. Eating can be a transforming experience. And certainly food like chocolate, surrounded as it has always been by an aura of passion and magic (in its early days, at least) is, in many ways, the perfect vehicle for such a story (Stark 95).

The chocolate and religion within the film go hand-in-hand with one another. They both offer each person a change and a break from their conventional lives—chocolate through the liberation and magic each person experiences and religion through the mass service that each person attends at the end of every week. And in many ways, both chocolate and Catholicism (and religion as a whole) are surrounded by passion and magic. The passion and the magic may be of different sorts, but they surround both elements nonetheless.

Vianne and her magical chocolate soon began to have a beautiful impact on many people of the town. Her friendships with Armande, Josephine, and her other customers continued to blossom. She begins to see several other townspeople make their way into her shop. We as the viewers see the final element that the chocolate holds and it is one that is unifying. The first instance we see of this is when a group of riverboat gypsy travelers make their way into town, led by a handsome man named Roux (appropriately played by the devilishly charming Johnny Depp). The townspeople are turned off by the arrival of the gypsy travelers and begin to deny them service—all of them except for Vianne. She leaves her shop open for all of the gypsies and manages to strike a friendship between Roux when he brings in one of the gypsy children who is hungry for a snack. Vianne and her chocolate shop serve as a symbol of unity and equality. She does not look down on the gypsy travelers because of their lower status in society but sees them as her equals. Her shop and treats provide an opportunity to create friendships with them, thus creating a perfect example of how food, and specifically chocolate, can bring people together and unify them. By forming a friendship between Roux through the use of her chocolates and her shop, Vianne breaks down even more societal barriers which in turn gets several other townspeople to reconsider their ill feelings towards the gypsies.

Editor of the journal *Gastronomica*, Darra Goldstein writes, “We discovered long ago that the simple sharing of a meal eases conversation and lubricates otherwise difficult discourse” (Darra Goldstein 3). This concept of unity through food is seen in a moment during a lavish birthday din-

ner party that is being thrown for Armande. Roux is invited to the dinner party by Vianne and Armande much to the dismay and shock of the other guests. Armande will not tolerate Roux being alienated by the rest of the guests and when Vianne announces that dessert will be served on his boat she responds with, “any complaints, see me” (Hallstrom, *Chocolat*). The rest of the dinner party guests decide to throw their distastes for Roux and the gypsies aside and trek down to his boat to enjoy delicious desserts created by Vianne herself. A grand time is had by all with singing and dancing, and once again Vianne and her magic chocolates have worked to cast aside social differences and unite groups of people who were once divided.

One of the final and arguably the most important acts of unity in the film is between Comte de Reynaud and Vianne. Through the entirety of the film, the Comte has tried his best to bring Vianne down and ensure that no one visits her chocolate shop and make it a success. He grows increasingly frustrated at how people begin to flock to Vianne and her shop and give up the “no sweets” pact they made for lent. In a moment of extreme frustration and anger, the Comte breaks into Vianne’s shop in the middle of the night to sabotage the food she has made for the towns Easter festival and the beautiful window display that she has created.

Unfortunately for him, he has not yet experienced the effects of Vianne’s chocolates and upon tasting one goes into a state of what can only be described as manic bliss. Margarita De Orellana talks about this exact reaction the Comte has to the sweets in her article “Chocolate III: RITUAL, ART AND MEMORY”. “People’s facial expressions are transformed, their eyes shine. You can almost hear them salivate and their desire to eat some is overwhelming” (Margarita De Orellana 73). The Comte not only destroys her window display, but proceeds to eat as much of the chocolate that he can and soon falls asleep. He awakens the next morning, still in the window display, to a dismayed Vianne and several other townspeople looking upon him in shock. While this moment doesn’t lead to an immediate unification and reconciliation between Vianne and Comte de Reynaud, it sets up the building blocks for their unification by the end of the film.

This pivotal moment brings members of the village together and unifies them for the good of Vianne. Her hopes have finally been dashed by the Comte and she gives up on staying in the town and continuing her work at the chocolate shop. But just as she’s preparing to pack up and leave with Anouk, she discovers Josephine and many of her other friends hard at work in her kitchen preparing her Easter festival meal that had been destroyed by the Comte. This is a beautiful illustration of how the effects of Vianne and her chocolates have not only transformed the people of the town, but they have taught them importance of not only accepting themselves but accepting others as well. To them, Vianne was once an outsider and they looked

down on her because of how different she was from them. But through her kindness towards them and her acceptances of them, they realized the value in accepting others even if they may be different and their love for Vianne brings them all together to recreate her meal for the town's Easter festival.

“Of course, the holiday season always seems to heighten the importance of tolerance and respect among peoples. But it's not a sentimental phenomenon. Through points of both commonality and divergence in culinary traditions, food can help to unite, rather than divide, us in an increasingly fractious and fragmented world” (Goldstein 4). During the Easter festival, a reconciliation between The Comte de Reynaud and Vianne is finally made. The Comte not only experienced his own transformation through Vianne's chocolates, but he realized that having a unified and accepting town was more important than his agenda to ostracize Vianne. Vianne quickly forgives the Comte and it is clear to see that a new friendship is budding between the two, and not just a cordial relationship for the Easter festival. It is a genuine friendship and the Comte has cast aside his judgmental demeanor for one that is more kind, open, and accepting.

In his article “Food and History” John C. Super writes, “for the most enthusiastic, food is the ideal cultural symbol that allows the historian to uncover hidden levels of meaning in social relationships and arrive at new understandings of the human experience” (John C. Super 165). The chocolate in *Chocolat* certainly allows viewers to discover changes in social relationships and how food can transform the human experience. The town itself has been transformed as a whole with blossoming friendships amongst all the villagers. All of the people have finally put their differences aside, damaged relationships have been repaired, and the stronghold that everyone has on traditions has been let go. Even Vianne herself, the one who from the beginning played a role in inspiring and transforming her new friends, has learned how to let go of her nomadic past and settles into life as a fellow villager. The effects of the chocolate are seen deeply among the people. The lessons they have learned through their transformative experiences and the magic of the chocolate changed their lives and their town from stuffy and monotonous to full of energy, passion, friendship, and love.

WORKS CITED

- Chocolat*. Directed by Lasse Hallstrom, Miramax Films, 2000.
- Cooper, Rand Richards. “Hallucinogens for All: ‘Chocolat’ & ‘Traffic.’” *Commonweal*, vol. 128, no. 3, 2001, p 19.
- De Orellana, Margarita, et al. “Chocolate III: Ritual, Art, and Memory.” *Artes De México*, no. 110, 2013, pp. 72–96.

- Goldstein, Darra. "Beyond Table Talk." *Gastronomica*, vol. 3, no. 1, 2003, pp. iii-iv.
- Stark, Jim. "Chocolat." *Gastronomica*, vol. 1, no. 3, 2001, pp. 92–95.
- Super, John C. "Food and History." *Journal of Social History*, vol. 36, no. 1, 2002, pp. 165–178.



I love you, I love me, and I love food: The Importance of Food in the Film *Pride & Prejudice*

by Katie Cardin

Pride & Prejudice is a story that encapsulates the time old tale of romantic love between Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth Bennet. With the majority of love stories, comes the entrance of food into the fold. From chocolate strawberries, to a bubbly champagne, food shapes love into a story of its own. *Pride & Prejudice* is no outlier to this rule. The love that has lived through the ages and sparked many artists to create their own version also has a significant influence from the food within. The 2005 movie adaptation of Jane Austen's novel is just that. The movie, *Pride & Prejudice*, tells the story of Elizabeth Bennet, who is one of five Bennet sisters striving to find a financially ideal relationship, as well as one filled with love, within Georgian England. Elizabeth meets the very wealthy Mr. Darcy. Initially turned off by their encounter, the two ultimately form a connection based on their mutual struggle with their pride. Eventually, through many different scenarios in which Darcy shows his affection towards Elizabeth, Elizabeth realizes that Darcy is not the prideful character she initially thought and the couple live happily ever after, eating all along the way. Yet throughout the timeless love story, the influence of food drives the plot onward. Through the use of food, the differences explained in the historical context of the movie versus the time in which society is experiencing now, a challenge to change and progress out of the typical gender roles of society are brought to the forefront and abolished to make way for a more progressive and equal society of tomorrow. In doing so, analysis of the movie *Pride & Prejudice*, gives way to a springboard into a more equal and progressive look on the way food transcends typical gendered roles, establishes character's narratives, and becomes a facilitator to the change needed within the gendered society of Georgian England.

The movie challenges the differences in class structure, and the progression of characters, by showing the contrast in binaries each instance food is seen. Because the movie adaptation allows the audience to absorb the food visually, its use then becomes an additional character, cementing the individual characters to their roles, and allowing the characters to be viewed in a more realistic way. Food is also used to shape Elizabeth Bennett's transition throughout the film, by adding an additional layer to the different relationships found within the movie. The movie uses food to move the characters into their different changing roles, by being used as a mediator, and as an alignment with individual characters. Through the movie, the stereotypical gender roles are also challenged, as seen primarily in scene revolving around food, thus allowing food to become a catalyst for progression in Georgian England. This can be seen primarily through the exaggeration of the typical gender roles within the time, and how food creates a space in which those can be challenged. The argument then becomes that of food in a costume drama and how it is used as an additional member of the cast to progress the plot and character development.

Throughout the movie, the significance of the breakfast table within the Bennet home transforms into the basis for all sisterly and family discourse. As the kitchen is the heart of a home, so it is with the breakfast table in Bennet family. With the hearth fires kept burning, the table becomes the focal point of the Bennet family, forging paths of individuals, even without their knowledge. For example, the morning after a town ball, the family is seen sitting at the table, while Mrs. Bennet is engulfed in the latest gossip from the night before. In this particular scene, the food, and how it is eaten, is a representation of the family therein. The closeness felt within the Bennet household, as each individual reaches and grabs for the food on the table, is a representation of their everyday life. It places them within the Georgian framework, because unlike today's family breakfasts, they are all out of their pajamas, and ready for the day. Yet, it also shows the difference from a society breakfast. With the Bennet's being a member of the gentry' class they were the Georgian equivalent to the Middle class. The "Historical Context of *Pride and Prejudice*" says, "In *Pride and Prejudice*, the Bennet's are, like Jane Austen herself, members of an educated upper middle class known as the "gentry" or the "landed gentry". Considered socially eligible to mix with the landowning aristocracy, but quite a step beneath them in wealth, resources and precedence" (Chicago Public Library). Knowing this the fact the movie portrays the family as close, begets the notion of a loveable and relatable family, similar to that of the audience watching the movie. The community within the Bennet household is described in Community and Cognition in *Pride and Prejudice*, by William Deresiewicz, by stating, "*Pride and Prejudice* can also be seen as

beginning with the introduction of one of its principal figures, only here that figure is a community” (152). This communal entity is seen within the family spaces. Even so, the breakfasts are full of food, conversation (mostly gossip), and always laughter. In this particular scene, the movie depicts Mrs. Bennet’s character cracking an egg into her milk. While this was not normal for typical English breakfasts, it was a nod to a twenty first century hangover cure. With this addition, the characterization of Mrs. Bennet’s excessive drinking habits is furthered, thus accelerating her character’s individual plot. Still however, the breakfast provides the audience with a development into the family life, not typically seen in a costume drama.

With the movement of the character Elizabeth, away from her family home and into the role of wife, the role is challenged due to her independence and feminist views. The movie represents Elizabeth as separating herself from her family as the time passes. In a pivotal scene of the movie where Lady Catherine encroaches upon the Bennet space by inserting herself into the house to speak with Elizabeth, Elizabeth distances herself from her family, ultimately standing her ground to the imposing force of Lady Catherine. It is in this moment that again, food drives the plot along. As Lady Catherine enters visibly upset about the conversation she is about to have, Mr. and Mrs. Bennet offer a cup of tea. This is a representation of how food is also a comforting existence within the movie. Tea is seen to calm and reminds all of the societal normative for which they are a part. Yet, with the refusal of the tea, Lady Catherine is stating that the cultural normative will not be followed in her conversation with Elizabeth following. This challenge of societal constraints by both Lady Catherine and Elizabeth show the fact that Elizabeth has to stand on her own to accomplish more in life. Within the discourse of femininity as seen in “Knowing Better: Feminism and Utopian Discourse in *Pride and Prejudice*, *Villette*, and *Babette’s Feast*” by Sarah Goodwin, it says, “Elizabeth deserves a happy ending precisely because she is flexible enough to change profoundly important attitudes in the face of contradicting testimony” (Goodwin 286). While this is fundamentally true, it also means that the change for Elizabeth will be from the confines of her familiar home, to a new role as wife.

Food and societal pressures drive Elizabeth’s connection to her environment, within the movie. First, the pressure of marriage is one that every woman in that time was feeling. She is pressured into the need for a relationship rather than a want. “the pursuit of happiness in a political program, her finely-tuned reading of the novel shows that happiness, both a fantasy and a right for the individual, is also part of any larger goal for the community” (Fraiman 243). Elizabeth’s challenge of the societal pressures is in part a risk she is willing to take to set herself apart.

While the movie shows the movement away from her family and into a different role, the feminist views of independence are not typical for Georgian England, or costume dramas. Femininity is viewed as being an accomplished woman. The “Historical Context of *Pride and Prejudice*” says, “Accomplishments were sets of skills encouraged and cultivated in young women, skills which were thought to help make a home more lively, entertaining or beautiful” (Chicago Public Library). Yet, in correlation to a scene within the movie, Elizabeth possesses no accomplishments. This atrocity is played out at a dinner thrown by Lady Catherine. Lady Catherine asks Elizabeth about her schooling, with Elizabeth replying that she had a minimal schooling, no governess and all the sisters were out in society. Where did this conversation take place? At the dinner, table of course! A thematic note being that throughout the scene Elizabeth is continuously trying to take a sip of soup, only to have it interrupted by the constant questioning from Lady Catherine. This is a representation of the independence Elizabeth wishes to have based in her feminist outlook. With every try of that bite of soup, Elizabeth is brought back to her reality. Lady Catherine is shocked to find out Elizabeth did not have a governess, was not accomplished in any way, and was out in society along with all of her sisters. Fraiman writes, “Enabled by her father, this unique Bennet daughter sets out with a surplus of intellectual confidence and authority which, in the course of the novel, she must largely relinquish” (244). Finally, in an Elizabeth way, she silences Lady Catherine by refusing to confess her age in front of the party. It is then that Elizabeth gets the satisfaction of finishing her initial bite, ultimately representing the small, but monumental win for the role Elizabeth wishes to have. It is a smack in the face of the social order. She is always based in her pride and this was another boost. Instead of being caught off guard, she shows who she is no matter the consequence. William Deresiewicz writes, “in crucial ways she is not free and very little of an individualist, ways in which her story must be seen, not as an exercise of freedom, but as an effort to achieve freedom, not as a light footed dance away from a community that cannot contain her, but as a struggle to wake herself out of a community in which she is all too comfortably embedded” (153). It is the reaction Elizabeth has in the moment at Lady Catherine’s table, which shakes her out of the confines of her community, and into the feminist narrative within the text.

Within the movie, many different food-centric scenes move the story along, creating moments in which food develops a character. One of these examples is a scene in which Mr. Collins comes to join the Bennet family. Mr. Collins is the character that is to inherit the Bennet estate because the Bennet family has only female daughters. The “Historical Context of *Pride and Prejudice*” expresses this notion by saying, “By law and by custom, a

woman was granted very little control over money, even money that we would today consider her own. A woman of the upper classes could expect to be granted a “fortune” from her family upon marriage or the death of her father” (Chicago Public Library). It is because of this that there is an appearance of Mr. Collins. During the scene, the Bennet’s and Mr. Collins sit down for dinner in which Mr. Collins remarks, “What a lovely featured room and what excellent boiled potatoes” (Wright, 2005). It is in that moment that food becomes a spur for movement within the character development of Mr. Collins. Mr. Collins is a bland man; he has no special features that set him apart. In fact, he is the representation of the potatoes. The dishware in the particular scene is obviously one of the nicer pieces, as to impress Mr. Collins, yet it holds only boiled potatoes. There is no substance or addition to the potatoes that was added, just the potatoes themselves. In comparison, Mr. Collins comes with fanfare being that he is to inherit, yet when he arrives, he is as bland as the potatoes. It is the fact that Mr. Collins chose to point out the dish that was not the most extravagant that speaks to his character development based in this scene. Mr. Collins lives in the dichotomy of non-extravagance versus extreme extravagance. He tries to live a life of non-extravagance, yet he is continually remarks on his relationship with high society. At every point possible, Mr. Collins adds that he knows Lady Catherine. The facetious fact that Elizabeth turns his marriage proposal down, that is ultimately the end of Collins’ infatuation with the excellent featured room, and the potatoes within.

The moment in which Mr. Collins imposes on the family dynamic of the Bennet’s breakfast routine, by asking for Elizabeth’s hand, again shows the character development aided by food, within the movie. It is again this transformation from a food-based moment to a movement within the plot line. The necessity of marriage is prevalent for both Elizabeth and Mr. Collins, yet with the interruption of the breakfast the dynamic of the family is thrown, just as a marriage would break up the niche of the Bennet family. The fact that he was not present at the breakfast shows his displacement within the Bennet family, an acts as a foreshadowing of the fact Elizabeth rebukes his proposal. He was not originally at the breakfast and the distance he has to the family in that scene, shows his dislocation. Having asked for the hand of Elizabeth’s friend Charlotte, Mr. Collins now remains a happily married man. In fact, Susan Fraiman, states within, “The Humiliation of Elizabeth Bennet,” that the difference within Charlotte and Elizabeth is the demand and necessity for marriage. Fraiman writes, “a vocabulary of feeling conflicts with actions driven by material need, for the story of Elizabeth’s sentimental education is countered by the story of Charlotte’s simple exigency (246). It is because of this that Charlotte ultimately ends with Mr. Collins, yet the two find happiness in their settling. The final Mr.

Collins scene is again food centric, showing full circle Mr. Collins relationship to food. This is represented by the fact that he is chowing down on the soup at Lady Catherine's house, that shows how his nervousness around the food-centered, plot driving, scenes is gone, and he gets to remain a happily married man. Mr. Collins' character development is seen in the corresponding scene in which food furthers his narrative perspective.

While comparing the scenes of the book and the movie one must think about the difference perspective has on the moments therein. The perspective in the movie differentiates between different characters, especially between Darcy and Elizabeth. In contrast, the book is based solely on Elizabeth's point of view and the fact that she grows apart from her family with the passing of time, and the changing of her role. The movie adaptation allowed the perspective to be changed to permit the audience to see a different side of some characters. By a simple angle change, or camera shot, the perspective within changes. By seeing into a different side of Darcy, for example, we see that he truly is nice, kind, sweet, and well natured, instead of being proud. Yet in the book, the sole perspective is seen through the narrative of Elizabeth. This is best represented through the scene of Darcy helping Bingley with the proposal to Jane. This jovial moment really captures the true friendship that is found between the pair, something that is lacking in the book. Darcy wants happiness for Bingley and he wants happiness for himself as well, and thus helps Bingley. This scene not only allows the audience to rally around Darcy's love for Elizabeth, but also Darcy as a character. It also brings some much-needed comic relief and allows Darcy's character to be the one that conveys it.

The scenes, within the movie that have a food centric emphasis also represent the class system within Georgian England. The movie depicts Elizabeth's family as a lower class, than that of the Mr. Darcys. In the initial Mr. Collins scene, Mrs. Bennet remarks that they are perfectly able to keep a cook. It is in comments like that that the question of the Bennet's social order is called into question. Within the Netherfield Park Ball, the lavishness of food and atmosphere heavily outweighed the homeliness of the food scenes within the Bennet Household. As stated previously, the plot that is based within the Bennet house is always family based. The director chooses angles and scene blocking to show that no matter what the Bennet's a close family is. Even with the introduction of Elizabeth's Aunt and Uncle, you see everyone around the fire in the kitchen. The central fixation of the Bennet home is that of the people in it, whereas in the houses of Darcy and Bingley, the focus is on the lavishness and elegance. The vast difference of the house representation shows the gaps within the social orders. Goodwin writes of the book by saying, "If the women of the community buzz when they hear of Darcy's income, the reader has little trouble unearthing the wish that they

might learn better values, if only for their own benefit”(283). It is this notion that others want what they cannot have that is scene from the contrast of family meals within the movie. AS stated previously, the Bennet house is full of warmth and laughter around the table, yet as seen through the scene of Elizabeth entering Netherfield Park, the breakfast is much more different from a family affair. Covered in ornate lavishness, Elizabeth walks into the scene with her hair down, and mud-covered boots on. This scene also has an imposing special awareness seen as she enters. She is placed across the room from Netherfield’s breakfast members. The servant lets her in, and another is seen serving breakfast. In contrast, the Bennet home has no servant for breakfast, and the area is much smaller and more intimate. At Pemberley, Darcy and his sister are the closeness. At the Bennet house, the closeness is found within the actual home itself, partly due to lack of space but also closeness between the sisters. It is only at the end of the movie that Elizabeth and Darcy share a closeness that is seen within the family structure previous created with the movie. It is through scenes like these that allow food to become a commentary on social status within Georgian England.

Food as a force of community is seen through the setting of the different balls. For example, the scene at the first ball shows the community for the first time within the movie. “The community itself steps forward, through a kind of disembodied collective consciousness, to engage in acts of observation and judgment that set the course of the rest of the narrative” (Deresiewicz 153). Mr. Lucas, Mr. Bingley, and Mr. Darcy all lined up in class order as a representation of the different class images. It also happens to be that the three of them ascend in height order too. This representation of the different classes can also be seen through those that they interact with. Mr. Bingley is about meeting all the new neighbors, trying to become a member of his community. With that comes the transmission of information about the new comers. “Such informal circulation of information and opinion is the focus of communal life. Even dancing seems a mere pretext; what matters is what is assumed, learned, known, believed, communicated (Deresiewicz 154). The representation of the lower class is seen through the alcohol within the different balls. For example, the communal space of the town ball shows a punch bowl filled with some sort of alcohol. Yet, the gowns, suits, food, and drinks were all much classier at Mr. Bingley’s ball. The differences in balls are a representation of the different class structures. “Revisionism saves the community from an admission of error and what seems an even greater threat, of uncertainty, but at the cost of subordinating perception and reason to expediency, desire, and self-conceit” (Deresiewicz 154). The ball where Bingley and Darcy are first introduced, it was more of a town gathering that happened to have everyone there. The Netherfield Park ball was exactly that, a ball. It is interesting because a number of the

invitations to the Netherfield Park ball were made at the town dace. All the same people went to both, which shows that this particular community can transcend the social confines of a dance versus a ball.

Drink is also a very important role within the text of the movie, especially through the character of Mrs. Bennet. Elizabeth is looked down upon due to the drinking habits of her family. She cannot seem to overcome them no matter the good she does for herself. Thus, another reason as to why she is trying to distance herself from her family towards the end of the novel. A perfect example of this is Elizabeth's mother and sister, Lydia. Both are fond of a drink and many characters comment on that fact throughout the movie. Mrs. Bennet is seen at the assembly jumping about, wine glass in hand. Following that scene and moving onto the Netherfield Park ball, the audience sees her sitting with other women gossiping to the extreme, again glass in hand. In the majority of the movie scenes featuring Mrs. Bennet, a glass of wine is not far behind. Her drinking tends to make her act a fool, thus making it more difficult for her daughters to find husbands. This is an exact contradiction from Mrs. Bennet's life purpose. She strives to make sure her daughter have a suitable husband, yet she also hurts their chances with her copious amounts of drinking. Lydia giggles around at all the balls, and assembly is holding a drink, just like her mother. The difference is Lydia is the youngest Bennet sister out in society. She has created a reputation, just like her mother. In the initial scene with Mr. Collins at dinner, Elizabeth changes her glass of water with Lydia's glass of wine because Lydia made a sassy comment towards Mr. Collins. The movie portrays both Mrs. Bennet and Lydia as wine crazed women content with the outcomes of their drunkenly behavior. With another drink, Mrs. Bennet chooses to say exactly what is on her mind, which usually makes the moment extremely awkward for those not drinking. It is through the use of alcohol that the character development of Mrs. Bennet and Lydia Bennet can be seen.

Overall, food plays an important role within the movie adaptation of *Pride & Prejudice*. Within the different characters, from Elizabeth to Mr. Collins the trace of food can be directly connected to that their individual narratives. The placement of Elizabeth within her community, the placement of the community itself, and the social dynamics are all challenged in a framework of food and drink. Through many different examples the use of food, challenges the society in which the characters are placed. It serves as an aspect of change for some characters, and it also serves as a necessity to represent the closeness felt between those that dine together. Through the use of food, the individual character development is made stronger. In addition, the historical context of the movie argues that the time in which society is experiencing now, should challenge change within typical gendered roles, and ultimately strive for a community driven society.

WORKS CITED

- Deresiewicz, William, et al. "Community and Cognition in *Pride and Prejudice*." *Critical Insights: Pride & Prejudice*, 16 Sept. 2011, pp. 152-191. EBSCOhost.
- Fraiman, Susan, et al. "The Humiliation of Elizabeth Bennet." *Critical Insights: Pride and Prejudice*, 16 Sept. 2011, pp. 240-277. EBSCOhost.
- Goodwin, Sarah Webster, et al. "Knowing Better: Feminism and Utopian Discourse in *Pride & Prejudice*, Villette, and Babbalanza's Feast" *Critical Insights: Pride and Prejudice*, 16 Sept. 2011, pp. 278-297. EBSCOhost.
- "Historical Context of *Pride and Prejudice*." *Chicago Public Library*, Chicago Public Library.
- Wright, Jow, director. *Pride and Prejudice*. StudioCanal, Working Title Films. 2005



The Rastafari Movement: How Certain Foods Can Determine Your Way of Life

by Emani Collins

Food is a very important aspect to different religious acts as well as movements across the world. Food can be used in celebratory moments but also in one's everyday life. The types of foods that certain people consume plays a big role in society. Some individuals believe that certain types of foods are good or bad for them, while others merely consume whatever their taste buds may desire in the moment. These individuals may follow certain traditions on their own, but some may be part of different groups which help to foster their beliefs and way of thinking. There are different groups of people all over the world who are members of cultural groups and intersectional identities. One cultural group includes people who follow the Rastafari movement. The movement is historical as it dates as far back to the period after the transatlantic slave trade. The Rastafari movement, along with its history, cultural aspects, and food rituals, proves that there are people who intend to follow specific beliefs of a culture. Rastafarians actually eat based on their culture's beliefs on healthy versus unhealthy foods. Some may not be aware of the Rastafari movement because the movement is not extremely popular. The culture is mostly known through works of the late, Bob Marley. As a musical genius, Bob Marley paved the way for positive thinking not only with his music, but with his lifestyle as a whole. The Rastafari movement is based on a certain thinking of the "right" way of life. Through the group's dietary needs and wants, the followers of the movement show that there is more to the Rastafari culture than mere dreadlocks and marijuana, which are two of the most represented items that individuals equate to the movement's followers. The detestation of certain foods is established within the culture and is followed in order to access the greatest way of life in the Rastafari belief. Their beliefs include that certain foods, such as pork and beef, should not be consumed by mankind. In the book, *Rastafari; Beliefs & Principles: Rasta beliefs & Principles*

about Zion and Babylon and the Bible, author Empress Yuajah examines the beliefs of people within the Rastafari movement in order to showcase the culture's food choices as examples of living the "right" way, if one chooses to follow the Rastafari way of life. What an individual consumes and digests within their body establishes what type of beliefs and principles they may have. When it comes to the Rastafari society, food may be the defining factor of whether one lives a holy and appropriate life versus a non-spiritual and abysmal life.

The Rastafari movement is a way of life which showcases individuals who believe in fairly uncommon teachings. The teachings of the social movement include, but are not limited to the belief in one God, Jah, Africa as the "Promised Land," and the former emperor of Ethiopia, Haile Selassie, as the ultimate human prophet. Many outsiders believe that the Rastafari movement is a religion, but it is not deemed so by its followers. The social movement does have a monotheistic view of life, but does not perform extreme, religious acts. The continent of Africa is extremely important to the movement's beliefs as well as the actions that must be performed for one to consider themselves "Rasta." For instance, the deep knowledge and understanding of Haile Selassie as a human prophet, or the incarnation of their God, Jah, reveals that Africa is a main hub of information: "The connection of the Rastafari to Ethiopia is two-fold. Most Rastafari claim Haile Selassie to be their 'God and King'" (Stratford 148). Originating in Ethiopia around the 1930's, the movement has never shied away from advertising the beliefs that establish the "right" way to live on Earth. The beliefs include the exclusion of pork, or any other meat in one's dietary life. People who follow the teachings of Rastafari are only supposed to eat healthy foods, such as vegetables and grains—an "ital" lifestyle. Along with their dietary nuances, there are a number of other ways that people of the Rastafari culture show their love for Jah and healthy living. For instance, many people know Rastafarians as lovers of natural, mystic settings and herbs. Many people believe that to be a follower of the Rastafari culture, one must accept the popular belief of Rastafarians as marijuana addicts. This is not the case. Also, Rastafarians are pinned as people who must only wear dreadlocks to possess the true identity, but the claim is also false. People who follow Rastafari's regimens mainly like to be known for the peaceful ways in which they live life, and most of the time, that serenity stems from their nourishing eating habits.

The history of the Rastafari movement and why the group of people decide to live the way that they do could be quite simple, yet complex. Rastafarians are usually deemed as members of an outcast society, or of a lower-class system. The Rastafari movement is packed with individuals who disregard the rules of society, and people who establish their own daily

regimen to live life to its fullest potential. It is presumed that “historically, [Rastafarians] have suffered discrimination and persecution [...] but this did not reduce the number of followers” (Stratford 148). Because of their way of life being non-harmonious when compared to certain individuals around them, Rastafarians are mainly deemed as rebels. The culture’s musically inclined followers have also furthered the claims of Rastafarians as rebellious, natural individuals in reggae songs. Due to the history of slavery, and African people being transferred from Africa to other nations across the globe, the Rastafarian movement has now become extremely popular in not only the Caribbean, as many people are aware, but all over the world. Because of the enslaved people losing their former cultures, “this loss of identity and cultural reference has allowed the descendants of Africa to create new hybrid identities; one of these was the Rastafari Movement” (Stratford 148). From history, one can determine that the numerous amounts of actions that Rastafarians portray in order to complete their “right” way of life may stem from the hatred and terror that their ancestors may have been put through. Although the movement was established in Ethiopia, many individuals used that piece of cultural relevance to further their love for the “Mainland,” or the “Promised Land.” The history of the movement and how it formed can be a main factor in why the followers eat the way they do, and believe that their way of life is deemed healthier or more natural than others.

As stated previously, Rastafarians’ dietary system is not their only mode of showcasing their beliefs in society today. The followers believe that many different acts constitute whether or not one will successfully live a healthy and bountiful life. Similar to other movements and/or religious acts, some individuals who consider themselves practitioners of the Rastafari movement do not fully engage in all acts that society has displayed as the cultural group’s main ideals. Not all followers of the Rastafari movement commit the same acts: “Some follow dietary restrictions, some keep knotted locks of hair, and some consume cannabis, while others refrain from these activities” (Chakravarty 152). Because of the many, different beliefs that society has pinned as the main objectives to becoming a Rastafarian, many individuals do not understand that one does not have to perform every act in order to be considered a follower of the social movement. The movement’s followers are similar to believers in religions, such as Christianity. Many understand that Christians trust in their faith and religious beliefs, but some believers do not always fulfill every religious act listed within the Bible. Some may find the Rastafari movement as unusual, but “Rastafari is not, however unique. The same insight holds true for the individual adherents of most any theological movement. For [example], the Hindu notions of Brahma and Atma” (Chakravarty 159). The same instances of other movements

and religions are established within the Rastafari movement, and society may not understand the claims due to lack of educational exposure that the Rastafari movement faces. Many of the culture's followers represent the colors, red, gold and green and listen to reggae music, which heavily influences their natural and mystic ways of living. The colors of red, gold and green are extremely important to the movement's beliefs and illustration. The color red represents the bloodshed that many Rastafarians' ancestors suffered due to the transatlantic slave trade. Gold symbolizes the abundance of riches on the "Promised Land." Finally, green exemplifies the natural vegetation that Africa possesses. Because of media and lack of knowledge, many outsiders do not know that Rastafarians are much more than mere marijuana smokers and haters of meat. Their love of herbs and prohibition of meats are not the only ideas that comprise their belief system.

Rastafarians' main approach to living a natural life includes, of course, the food in which they consume. According to Rastafari belief, the food that one digests may affect their day-to-day lives, but also their life after death. Rastafarians are strong believers in reincarnation, and the way in which one eats may determine a good or bad life in another realm. Within the primary text, scholar and expert on the movement, Empress Yuajah, reveals the different types of foods that are deemed acceptable in the Rastafari culture. Seeds and nuts, dried fruit, vegetables are some examples of food categories that equate to the "right" way of living per the Rastafari belief system. Empress Yuajah states that "Many Rastafari shop at health food Grocery stores, or bulk food stores because [they] can meet most of [their] Ital food needs by shopping there" (Empress Yuajah 1442). Because of Rastafarians having to shop at stores that are mostly overlooked, or not important to other individuals within society, it is proven that the movement's followers possess a way of life that may be deemed unusual to some, although it is proven that many religions and movements have to conduct the same behavior in order to fulfill their social movement's theories. Certain Rastafarians go above and beyond to satisfy the requirements that they deem necessary in order to live a positive and natural life that they adorn. Empress Yuajah lists many, specific items which are accepted as foods of healthy living. First Empress Yuajah states that "seeds and nuts: sunflower seeds, cashew, peanuts [and] almonds" are all important to the dietary life of a Rastafarian (Empress Yuajah 1426). The naturalness of the seeds and the nuts inhabit a source of energy, as well as portray the healthiness that Rastafarians search for within their daily food intake. Seeds and nuts may be deemed as bird food to certain individuals today, but the Rastafarians want to live healthy lives, and it is against their movement to eat in a way that will cause bodily harm. Dried fruit is next on the list as Empress Yuajah states, "raisins, dried apricots, dried cranberries, dried ginger, dried mango and

dried pears” as go-to items for consummation (Empress Yuajah 1427). Listing off such food items reveals the great difference in societies’ norms versus the Rastafari movement’s beliefs. Society does not usually accept these items as sources of “real food.” Many would most probably choose a hamburger over pears that have been dried to no return. Eating healthily has taken on a new popularity in society today, but not as extreme as Rastafarians are involved in such a healthy association. Vegetables, including “pumpkin, yam, potatoes, squash, plantain, string beans, okra and spinach” were also items that were added to the list of acceptable foods in which Rastafarians may encounter (Empress Yuajah 1434). The vegetables that are listed are pretty usual within society’s standards of eating today. Although, in pop culture, many younger viewers must interpret vegetables, such as spinach, as negative and revolting nourishments, Rastafari people exemplify the mode of staying healthy, all while maintaining a positive way of life by controlling the types of foods that they put into their bodies. Fruits were also on the list as, “bananas, oranges, strawberries, apples, plums, peaches and mangoes” made the cut in order to establish popular fruits that are consumed by followers of the Rastafari movement (Empress Yuajah 1442). The fruits listed are popular within society, and also deemed natural and sweet, similar to how Rastafarians may find the foods. Although the Rastafarian people use these fruits in order to maintain a healthy and happy lifestyle which will transfer into their afterlife, the binary when compared to other individuals in today’s society reveals that certain people merely use the fruits to placate tasteful pleasures. Lastly, Empress Yuajah reveals an important item that may be overlooked. In society today, we are faced with many options when it comes to the types of milks that we find acceptable or appealing to our appetites and cultures. When it comes to the Rastafari way of life, “almond milk or soy milk [are the] only [acceptable items]. Rasta do not believe in drinking Cow’s milk. It is nonsensical, and deemed “unclean”” (Empress Yuajah 1442). The type of milk that one consumes is important to other individuals within society today. The ongoing debate of whether or not two percent or whole milk is better for you is not an issue when it comes to living as a Rastafarian. Rastafarians find any type of milk that comes straight from a cow to be distasteful. Drinking almond or soy milk is extremely important to the Rastafari movement, and one could mark this as a defining factor of whether or not one fully believes in the dietary conditions that Rastafarians believe heavily in. Many people want to eat healthily in order to lose weight, manage their health conditions, etc., but Rastafarians eat with caution in order to promote healthy, natural living and to be content with their afterlife destination.

In Western civilization, the importance of food is tremendous, but the positive or negative happenings that may come along after consuming that

certain meal is insignificant. In the Rastafari culture, what one consumes is extremely important, as it shows what type of life one lives, as well as they type of afterlife that one will be involved in. Rastafarians are known as healthy, peaceful individuals who are constantly searching for the positive ways of life. They take their time cooking their food as it is imperative that they make it the right way, in order to promote healthiness. Western culture is extremely different than the Rastafari traditions, and surprisingly, there are many Rastafarians who inhabit the North American continent. Researchers, Kristen Broady and Aisha Meeks, reveal how individuals of Western culture simply rely on speed, not health, for their everyday food consumption: “Fast food restaurants franchises are becoming more prevalent, [American] consumers are buying more food” (Broady and Meeks 202). In American culture, fast food restaurants are stated as high value. In the Rastafarian culture, fast food restaurants are usually despised, unless they sell a healthy, vegetarian option, which is usually difficult to find. People of the Rastafari culture believe that taking care of one’s body is the way to a healthy life, and in the media, American living is portrayed as the exact opposite. Because of the popular food industry, many are subjected to unhealthy options for consumption within their everyday lives. Rastafarians have not allowed the industry to control their way of eating. Rastafarians all over the world find ways to remain true to their dietary desires, but it is difficult due to the market that is present today. Unhealthy risk factors that stem from an individual’s dietary life is a result of “the capitalist market [which] influences the obesity epidemic [and has] become so influential that obesity can be seen as a sign of market success” (202). As easy as it is for one to consume fast food products because of the accessibility, Rastafarians make it a goal of theirs to stick to a natural, healthy diet. Of course, due to the world that we live in today, it is hard, but the movement’s followers muster up the strength by thinking of the way that they will live after they leave Earth. Eating is considered an activity that may constitute where one will end up in the future, so the task is not as simple as going to McDonald’s and ordering a number five from the Value Menu. Western culture can totally destroy a person’s health. From commercials, to many other advertisements that promote the addictive, fast-food options, Rastafarians choose to stay true to their goals in life. There are Rastafarians all over the world, and many of them choose to follow Jah’s belief of not consuming certain foods in order to make it to a better life after one passes. Whether past Rastafarians have really made it to a sacred place after death is impossible to know, but the group of people rely on their known facts to support their decisions on Earth. Eating is of the utmost importance to many human individuals. Eating can foster one’s survival, and even how one eats may be more important than how much one consumes. Rastafarian culture bans the teachings of Western life and

fast-food addictions. Although it is almost certain that some individuals do not follow all of the culture's teachings, in order to live righteously as one may desire, it is proclaimed that an individual must inhabit those beliefs of their accepted religion, movement or society.

Because of the types of restrictions that Rastafarians have when it comes to their diet, one may ensue that the conditions are quite similar to other religions within society today. Religious people who practice Muslim beliefs are faced with similar tasks as their Rastafarian counterparts. Ironically, the response to Muslim faith in the Caribbean is on the rise, which is where most Rastafarians are located: "This overseas community has made a continuous and concerted effort to communicate and express their Islamic faith, to foster in-group cohesion, especially to the newer Muslim generation, to promote a better understanding of Islam to the wider host society, and to achieve their own economic goals" (Roopnarine 62). Not only are Muslim believers and Rastafarian practitioners both part of social groups that have certain rules and restrictions on how to live the best life that one can, but the groups also possess similar constructs within their own societies. Neither group is very popular per society's norms or standards, so they tend to choose their own ways of living, or continue to live the ways in which they deem necessary. It is hard to break the faith of a Rastafarian, but similarly, it is difficult to change the ways of a Muslim follower: "Muslims tend to take their Islamic faith wherever they go, which is generally supported by strong traditional cultural roots and various international networks" (Roopnarine 65). Individuals who consider themselves Muslim, and who follow the Islamic faith may be under a set of restrictions, similarly to the Rastafarians. In comparison to the Rastafarians' restrictions on food, people of the Islamic faith are faced with similar restrictions. Again, what one consumes and digests within their body, or temple, reveals what type of person they are interested in being here on Earth, and what type of person they have decided to take on in their afterlife. A lot of the Islamic teachings are similar to the teachings of the Rastafari movement, although some of the labels are more extreme on one end than another. For instance, it is known that Rastafarians do not eat any type of red meat at all. Although an occasional fish may be accepted, meat is not a product that is traditionally accepted within the culture. For the Islamic faith, Muslims follow the Qur'an, which institutes that eating pork is unhealthy for one's body. Although the two have different extremes listed for their actual restrictions, the constraints are similar in nature. Food is extremely important to many groups of people. Food can sometimes be used as a celebratory outlet, and of course, food is important to these two groups of people. But food can also be a notion of how you live your life and how well you would like your body to work on Earth. Both groups, financially and socially lowered on the main scale within society,

find it within themselves to continue these restrictions within their cultural group in order for their beliefs to survive. To continue the restrictions is to continue with a way of life that is deemed necessary by the individuals who have decided to follow the teaching of both Islamic and Rastafarian faith. The two groups, having to fight for their socioeconomic status only shows how strong the binary pairs are when subjugated by society.

Upon further research of Rastafarians' belief of their diet constituting the happiness of their lives, one may presume that followers of the Rastafarian movement may run out of ideas of what to cook or consume on a daily basis. One may also believe that because of the ways in which Rastafarians have to eat, they are not given enough nutrition, or filled in order to move about their day with the utmost energy. The claims are heard all too often by Eugene Collins, a follower of the Rastafarian movement, who has moved from St. Thomas, United States Virgin Islands, to Atlanta, Georgia. Eugene Collins has been a follower of the movement for over 40 years, and he believes that eating healthily and following the restrictions that the Rastafari movement is the "right" way to live: "Eating healthily, or Ital is not only good for your body, but good for your mind and spirit. Many people believe that I follow this movement just because I am from the Caribbean but that is false. I follow the movement because I truly believe that the theories and way of life proclaimed by its claims may fulfill a positive life and afterlife for me" (Collins). Having an actual follower of the social movement relay personal stories, as well as opinions on certain societal claims proves that there are individuals who actually willing to speak on incorrect assertions. Pinning the group of people into modes of certain stereotypes, such as "marijuana lovers" and "dreadlocked or nappy headed fiends," defeats the full purpose of the movement and the followers. The Rastafari movement is set to promote the betterment of living by using natural elements for support. The Rastafari movement, as Eugene Collins would agree, is a movement which enables the followers to live happy and prosperous lives by following some, if not all, declarations of the "right" way of life.

In conclusion, Rastafarians are people, just as any other cultural group of people that one may come into contact with. They are not just individuals who should only be known for their negatively portrayed, cultural acts, such as smoking marijuana, or ganja. It is important that people refrain from judging others simply based off of their outer appearances. In the Rastafarians' case, they should not solely be judged negatively because of the way that some choose to wear their hair, in dreadlocks. Also, it is crucial that individuals find their own judgments against a group of people and not continue the negative judgments made by others. Rastafarian individuals are proud of their beliefs and teachings. Wearing bright colors that represent

Africa and reading different books that educate them on the slave trade and their history is important to them, and society should not try to take that away. The way that Rastafarians intake food is precise and crucial. Not all followers of the movement only eat vegetables, grains, and seeds. Some of the followers of the movement actually consume fish, which is not considered a true meat to society. The culture mainly wants its followers to stay away from red meat, which is deemed unhealthy, and may place you somewhere that you will not enjoy after you pass from the Earth. Since food is such an important outlet to all individuals within society today, regardless of the type of background you wish to pursue, it is helpful if people rely on their own opinions and faith to determine right from wrong, such as the Rastafarians do. For instance, people of the Rastafari culture understand that they have chosen that way of life for themselves. They are true believers in the Emperor, Haile Selassie I, and believe that not eating certain foods will definitely benefit them in the future. Along with the belief in such a historic cultural group, one must have their own opinion on how far they are willing to go when it comes to the rituals and practices of their culture. As stated before, certain Rastafarians, Christians and Muslims do not always follow every, single rule set forth within their culture or religion. Food may be one of the main sources of cultural acceptance within all of the cultural groups, but it should not be the only reason why a person decides to follow a certain practice or cultural group. As many people who follow the Rastafari movement would say, "It is a way of life."

WORKS CITED

- Broadly, Kristen and Aisha Meeks. "Obesity and Social Inequality in America." *Review of Black Political Economy*, vol. 42, no. 3, Sept. 2015, p. 201.
- Chakravarty, K. Gandhar. "Rastafari Revisited: A Four-Point Orthodox/Secular Typology." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, vol. 83, no. 1, Mar. 2015, pp. 151-180.
- Empress Yuajah. *Rastafari; Beliefs & Principles: Rasta beliefs & Principles about Zion and Babylon and the Bible*. Amazon Digital Services, LLC., 2014, Toronto.
- Eugene Collins. Personal Interview. 21 Oct. 2017.
- Roopnaire, Lomarsh. "Muslim Faith and Work Ethic in the United States Virgin Islands." *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, vol. 36, no. 1, Mar. 2016, p. 62.
- Stratford, Maria. "Image, Identity, and the Rastafari Movement in Ethiopia." *International Journal of the Image*, vol. 1, no. 3, Oct. 2011, pp. 147-154.



Food Consumption and the Human Body: Anorexia as a Disorder

by Jasmine Day-Duncan

In the 2017 Netflix original film *To the Bone*, the main character, Ellen, along with other main characters in the film struggle with their idea of perfecting their body image. The film takes the audience on a journey of how not eating and being thin has become a cultural disorder known as anorexia. The film brings all forms of media into the forefront as the cause of young women (and men) putting extreme amounts of pressure on themselves to achieve a body statue that does not exist, and as a result, men and women are damaging their bodies to keep from getting fat. Though *To the Bone* is not the first film to discuss food and anorexia as a growing disorder in the United States, it sheds a spot light on the notion of how the media depersonalizes the human body by creating a type of otherness through the illusion of the beauty ideal as people begin to lose touch with their identity. The media has totally taken away the notion that people should cater to their body. People no longer have ownership of their bodies and the effect of this is that people have become unhealthy with food anxieties and depressed because the disorder has grown to be extremely overwhelming. *To the Bone* brings a form of awareness to the public because not only does this disorder, like many others, need to be televised, but it is a case that no one believes is a real problem in today's society and this film shows that anorexia is an on-going occurrence. Many women primarily derive their satisfaction on modifying their body, constructing a new identity on the outside to make themselves feel like they belong within the hierarchy of society, but the reality is that anorexia is not solely about the embodiment of eating or not eating, it is about how a person actually feels. The media has cut off how people feel and replaced it with all the things that does nothing to help the body. Through character representation, *To the Bone* provides a modern day forum of how the media has caused people to transform food

and their body into an illness that takes complete control of their lives and throws them into different forms of depression.

Spending most of her teenage years in rehab facilities and finding herself a little lighter every time she leaves, 20 year old anorexic Ellen, has lead a life unwilling to change how she is seen in society, but works hard to keep her already broken family together, while they make the choice to keep sending her to rehab programs. In the last attempt to help Ellen defeat her anorexia when all she believes is that she is not that sick, Ellen moves into an inpatient house with seven other roommates, six women and one male. Though each person has their own personal testimony, they all share one thing: the disorder of anorexia. The film heavily beats down the media as the cause of many young people wanting to become skinny, but through this program, the end goal of it all is that patients gain self-acceptance, finding their identity, the importance of not allowing their disorder (anorexia) and the depression that comes with the disorder kill them, but to help them to see that life is beautiful and that there are other ways to deal with a melancholic life.

The same society that is giving, through the media, self-reflected 'dos and donts' in the world of body shape and food is the same society that leads protagonist Ellen down a road of anorexia, all the while having her believe that she "has it [her weight] under control." With the panoramic view of Ellen, the viewer sees the discoloration in her skin, her long skinny neck, the bones in her spine shown in the outline of her shape, and her barely visible arms and legs, while Ellen explains "I don't feel that unhealthy. If I want to be thin, don't they [media] say that's better?" From the beginning to the end of the film, there are close up shots of Ellen, detailing the outline of her deformed body. The body is a deformed and abstract being. The disfigurement of her body exudes to the audience that the scarcity of food in her body is, ultimately, what is killing her. Being anorexic has cultivated the young mind of Ellen, tricking her into believing that no matter what happens in life, being thin is the "prerogative of a woman" (Darmon 19), but in reality, it allows women to see food as a vulgar natural essence that they should stay away from. As a twenty year old and millennial, Ellen is hyperaware of what the media has deems as acceptable, especially what the media deems acceptable pertaining to body image. Ellen understands that female thinness has become more and more mandatory and the media and the imperfect ideals/goals have raised young women to believe that there is "glamour in not eating" (Bohme 373), almost as if it is an art form, a form of self-expression, but anorexia is more than eating; it is a way of being and staying in a melancholic state. The film portrays anorexia as a developing psychological and physiological destruction that is ruining the life of its human carrier. So while eating may seem like a "social faux pas" (Brumberg

170) to Ellen, she unknowingly gives the disorder command. Ellen is a primary example for using anorexia as a way to run away from her family problems like her daddy and mommy issues, mental breakdowns, sex, and an accidental suicide that she believes is her fault. The damage that these problems have brought upon Ellen has torn her to pieces, which means that the disorder has a stronghold on Ellen and the only way that she can have some kind of control of her life is through controlling the amount of food that she consumes.

While eating dinner with her sister in the dining room, Ellen's sister, Kelly jokes that Ellen's obsession or fear of food makes it known that Ellen actually has a disorder, which is significant because it ties the medical (disorder) aspect of anorexia to a "joke" diagnosis when, in fact, it is very serious. Picking over her peas and carrots at the dinner table, Ellen completely allows her anorexia to have mastery over her, and this disorder swallows her whole; developing what her sister calls "calorie-Asperger," counting all of the calories that her food contains. In doing so, Ellen consciously throws herself further and further into depression because of the disorder, and also continues to separate herself as the other. By keeping herself from eating, Ellen rejects the notion of ever getting better and does not allow her body to function normally. Because she rapidly and constantly loses weight, Ellen's body has a hard time keeping up with her and produces more body hair to keep herself warm. But refusing to eat is not enough for Ellen. She still has to do sit-ups to maintain her invisible anorexic appearance. When depression has taken over one's life, there is a fight between on whether to let go or give in, and Ellen has given into anorexia disorder/depression and the disgust that she has toward food because she trusts that, in the end, she will have the ability to beat anorexia when an illness is not something that she can defeat on her own, she needs help. But having anorexia as an illness has automatically put blinders on Ellen's eyes to make it seem as though she will always have a disorder when she can have freedom. Ellen desperately tries to express her power over her life. She is willing to do whatever it takes, for example, choosing to starve herself. Writer Hilde Bruch addresses that, "starving is a channel of achievement" (214) in the lives of anorexics because starving seems to be the only thing that brings anorexics some form of comfort and, as a result, it leaves Ellen with the feeling that she is winning against anorexia. In Ellen's mind, she does not accept herself any other way because she has been dealing with this condition for years and the insufficient chronicle of the media forces Ellen to not only starve herself, but to begin to have anxiety towards all food. While Ellen is speaking with one of her new rehabilitation inpatient roommates, Luke, she states, "I get all panicky just thinking about it [food]." The embodiment of eating is often seen as a satisfaction, for many that take delight in food, but

for Ellen, it turns out to be just another form of an internal fight. Though Ellen seems to take a stand against the cause of her disorder, the media, it turns out to be just another outcome that keeps Ellen imprisoned. With her imprisonment, as a result, she does not give her body the proper nutrients that it needs in order to survive nor does she become her own person.

In addition to her anorexia sickness/depression, lack of food in her body, and chaotic mental state, the film comments on how the cultural creation of the anorexia ailment has turned many people dealing with this into mean people as Ellen displays a nonchalant attitude towards everyone and everything that she encounters. When Ellen is speaking with her inpatient house mother, Rosa, Ellen sarcastically utters, "Thanks for that, I am finally scared straight." Due to her anorexia complex, Ellen turns into a miserable, vampire-like robot that sucks the life out of everything. Ellen exhibits no respect to Rosa when Rosa gives her a bit of knowledge on what she can do to save herself, but this does not spark Ellen's interest. Because of her own unhappiness and her inner wrestling, she ignores Rosa when she is talking, but the film indicates that the deficiency of food makes Ellen an angry person. Since Ellen never permits herself to eat anything, the absence of food has an emotional reaction to Ellen, and in turns to not eating it, she becomes angry. Also, considering anorexia as a form of depression that messes with the psyche, mixing that with no food, it makes Ellen numb to reality of her feelings and to the feelings of those around her. Sobo stresses that, "kind people give what is asked for and also offer things." In the film, Ellen does neither of these things because she does not know how to do so. Ellen does not know how to be anything other than a downhearted anorexic because being this way is all she has ever known. Anorexia as an affliction has deemed Ellen unworthy and because of it, she checks out entirely. The dehumanization of her body through anorexia given to her by the media totally strips Ellen away from what actually makes her a human: having friends, laughing, smiling, and even having love. The otherness of Ellen's body as an anorexic gives Ellen the chance to be utterly removes her from her feelings. She does not know how to interact with people, so she pushes them away as the media subconsciously teaches her, but also as her anorexia/depression supports her in doing so.

To the Bone fills in the gap of how the pressures of media has become extraordinarily overwhelming that even Ellen's inpatient roommate, Anna cannot begin to fully let go of their ideals and leads her to become unknowingly depressed as well. After returning home from a movie, Ellen wakes up to Anna putting a brown paper bag full of vomit underneath her bed and as Anna proceeds to tell Ellen about the movie, she criticizes actress Emma Stone for her body weight stating: "Emma Stone is kinda fat, don't you think? Like at least a size 6." Anna's mind has been taken captive by

the media, even as she continues to live in a rehab program. The media has, in a way, branded Anna with their unattainable manner and it has become hard for her to break away from it. Through simply vomiting in a bag and criticizing Emma Stone, like Ellen, Anna reveals to the viewer that she believes that she has her anorexia disorder under control. Anna has been an inpatient longer than Ellen and the audience would suspect that Anna has to be getting better and becoming healthier, but Anna still desires to be thin and Anna hints that she wants to be thin because being “a size 6” is still too fat. As Anna continues to treat her product and not something that should be taken care of, it results in her disorder becoming her sole identity and compared to Ellen, Anna does not accept all the aspects of herself just yet. The embodiment of eating or not eating renders food as an unimportant figure and without food, Anna keeps her disorder ongoing.

Another interpretation of food and the cultural anorexic disorder being shown as seen as detrimental is when the film introduces Ellen’s other inpatient roommate, Pearl. Pearl’s disorder is so bad to the point where she has to get a tube through her nose and to her stomach because she refuses to even chew her food and having a tube shoved into her stomach is the only way that she can survive. When sitting in a meeting with the rest of the other inpatient roommates, Pearl confesses, “I got tubed today and you know, it hurts. Now I feel all hot. I can’t stop thinking how many calories are in that drip. They won’t say.” There is no nourishment in the “food” that she is being fed nor is there any “pleasure in eating that food” (Counihan 119). Having an anorexic illness and not eating like a regular human being pushes Pearl as the other because with the tube in her stomach and her not chewing, it degrades her as a human being. Pearl expresses that getting tubed hurt, but not a literal hurt, hurt as in the tubing process was embarrassing for her. The food that Pearl is medically consuming takes away from the satisfaction of eating and the luxury of having the ability to chew food. Food is its own entity or diametric dimension that is being conveyed to Pearl as just another unnecessary entity. Like Ellen and Anna, Pearl has her anorexia sickness/depression begin to make her feel as though her life is devalued, self-consciously saying repeating throughout the film, “disgusting, I know.” The story that the media has given does not explain to Pearl that she would not have a sense of normalcy as she leaves food behind and becomes anorexic. The media gives concise and specific haves and have nots of a great body and that having a nice figure is a good thing, but the media does not let the people trying to achieve this goal know that with this comes a misunderstanding that does not tie in with food. This media creates a sensation that has mentally broken down, not only the female mind with anxiety and depression, but has made women feel completely separated from who they are and where they fit into the world,

which are some of the lessons that is to be learned while in the inpatient rehab program.

To the Bone communicates to the watcher that treating food as the ‘other’ and attempting to remove food, altogether, from the body forces the body to shut down. While inpatient Megan has had many experiences with rehab, she still has trouble with letting go and not letting the process of getting better have a grasp on her life, even after she finds out that she is twelve weeks pregnant. Although Megan proclaims “I want my baby to be healthy,” she continues to lose weight and after she loses the baby, she becomes dejected from everyone and leaves the rehab. Studying food and the body, Counihan states, “women are food to the fetus.” Megan objectifying food, automatically cancels her from the chance of carrying or actually having a baby, unless she is to get better. While battling this anorexic condition, Megan unintentionally renders herself vulnerable to disappointments. When speaking to the inpatient housemates, Rosa tells everyone that “once the body has finished burning fat, it moves to muscle matter, and then organ tissue.” Though Megan believes that food is damaging, the lack of food turns out to be even more damaging to her body because it eliminates her from doing what women are designed to do, which is have a baby. The film branches together the female anatomy and food as somewhat of a relational aspects that coincides with one another to be able to bring forth a communion with each other, but though this film speaks a lot about how women deal with this anorexic disorder, it does guide the on-looker in the life of the only male anorexic in the film, Luke.

Despite the fact that the media popularizes the body, telling anyone that will listen that they should have a great body, the gods and goddess’ of the media never explain how to actually reach that certain perfect physique. After becoming the front runner to be the best ballet dancer of the New Jersey Ballet, Luke gives into the media fascination of being skinny and he quits eating, in order to reach perfection. Luke explains, “I was 89 pounds when I first arrived.” The stereotype of a masculine man is that a man has to have a macho figure with bursting muscles and a tones physique, but Luke does not exemplify any of that. But what Luke cannot escape is the anorexia disorder turning him into a depressed anorexic, similar to Ellen, Anna, Pearl and Megan. Luke becomes extremely obsessed with the idea of having the perfect ballet body. He wants to become so perfect that when he actually reaches his “ideal” weight goal, he blows out his knee. The anorexic disorder has also made Luke sightless when it comes to pushing himself so hard that he gets hurt and this, along with not eating provides Luke with what he believes is “simulating his dance creativity,” when in reality, he is hurting his chances. Luke starving his body to keep his mind clear of distraction actually meant that he is depriving himself of a better future in ballet.

Ballet is everything to Luke, but breaking his knee due to not eating broke his spirit. *To the Bone* exposes how this cultural disorder hinders Luke from reaching his dreams, but unlike his other inpatient roommates, Luke wants to get better and he gets better by eating and accepting himself for who he is. When talking to Ellen about food, Luke acknowledges, "I'm two years' worth of hungry." Through the program, Luke begins to understand that he only gets one body and he has to maintain it, in order for his body to grow stronger. Luke realizes that the best version of himself is a healthier version of himself. Different from the rest of his roommates, when Luke eats, he feels energized. The once conditioned Luke, now understands that being slender is not the key to success. In comparison to his other roommates dealing with the anorexia sickness, Luke is happier because though he is still thin, he has let the process of sincerely wanting to get better and actually getting better to enter into his life and change him. He is no longer depressed, nor is he continuing to hurt his body. Luke's anorexia disorder shifts because he embraces the inpatient end goal and he makes the extremely hard attempt to change his circumstance.

The film gives a visual character breakdown of how the media contorts the idea of food and the body, contributing to a growing cultural disorder within young adults. Through these characters whom are struggling with anorexia, *To the Bone* reveals the truth that more and more teens and adults are looking to the media for guidance. They look for guidance to show them how they should be, instead of knowing who they are internally and let that guide them. The anorexia disorder is an ailment that many people are complicit in judging, but not willing to help. Many women and men today are falling under the influence of what they think is an alluring body and it is killing them. Yes, in the end, Ellen comes back to the inpatient house, but it takes her almost dying in an Arizona desert to figure out that she wants to live. The film brings hyperawareness to a cultural obsession of wanting to be thin, but when being thin means that a person becomes sick, then that is when things become a little dangerous. Being the best version of one's self is the healthy version of one's self, and though we live in a crazy, chaotic world, in the end, being alive is beautiful.

WORK CITED

- Bohme, Hartmut. *Fetishism and Culture: A Different Theory of Modernity*. De Gruyter, 2014.
- Bordo, Susan. "Anorexia Nervosa." *Food and Culture: A Reader*. Routledge, 1997. 226-250.
- Brumberg, Jacobs Joan. "The Appetite as Voice." *Food and Culture: A Reader*. Routledge, 1997. 159-179.

- Bruch, Hilde. "Body Image and Self-Awareness." *Food and Culture: A Reader*. Routledge, 1997. 211-225.
- Counihan, Carole. "Food Rules in the United States." *The Anthropology of Food and Body: Gender, Meaning, and Power*. Routledge, 1994. 113-128.
- Darmon, Mureil. *Becoming Anorexic: A Sociological Study*. Routledge, 2017.
- Noxon, Marti, dir. *To the Bone*. Mockingbird Pictures, 2017. Netflix.



I'll Be There For You, Because My Stereotype Tells Me To: *Friends* and Feminine Stereotypes

by Kelsey James

In the media-filled world today, consumers are constantly engaging with various texts (both traditional and modern) that continuously shove gender stereotypes down their throats. The media portrays genders and their associated roles in a particular manner, one that is not very favorable, and completely stereotypical. Within the popular 1994-2004 television show *Friends*, food works together with a domestic space to blatantly showcase these generic gender roles. One might not correlate the fluidity between the domestic spaces of food and (mis)representations of femininity, however, most viewers imbibe the show's messages without critically analyzing how the show conveys these stereotypes. While the text pretends to be an equal-opportunity show with three men and three women, the characterization of the individuals is biased and unbalanced. By portraying seemingly "feministic qualities" such as hyper-emotionality, sexuality, and passivity, the women lack any sort of depth or independence. In addition, despite there being three male and three female characters, one of the male characters is portrayed in a very feminine light: one that correlates with the prejudiced treatment of women. While the packaging of the show looks wholesome, the ingredients combine to make something toxic. With the substantial appearance that food plays in *Friends*, combined with the distorted representations of the feminine characters, the unwholesome show contributes to societies stereotypical thoughts regarding gender.

Friends revolves around six friends that live in New York City. The characters: Phoebe, Joey, Ross, Rachel, Chandler, and Monica, all interact together on a daily basis, completely immersed in one another's lives. The sitcom is meant to depict the life experienced by the average American. Many of these scenarios would truly never happen in real life — even though they

try to make it seem like it could — and they utilize informal strategies to engage the audience, such as slang and informal conversations. The medium of relatability places the six friends on a similar level with those watching, creating a sense of togetherness. According to Keel Reed, “the producers of the show wanted to explain people of that age and time to themselves; the aimlessness, the cappuccino drinking, the searching for spouses, the feeling that they were stuck in second gear,” as the theme song explicitly says (8). This level of interaction between viewer and actor proved successful for the sitcom, as it lasted for ten seasons, each including over 20-25 episodes in each. For this paper, I will focus on season three (1996) and season nine (2002).

The space of the television show revolves primarily around the kitchen and dining area of Monica’s home and a local coffeehouse. When in either of these places, a bubble of comfort is placed around them. Within the confines of these spaces, the characters feel comfortable to exchange playful jokes and mannerisms — or so called “playful”. Their interactions between each other are easy to distinguish because of how relaxed they are with each other. It is not solely focused on the rhetoric of the individuals, but their interactions with each other and the occasional miscellaneous individual included in the episode. The sensationalized actions of the characters are reflected tenfold in these domestic spaces.

As a long-term viewer of *Friends*, even I fell into the hole of the seemingly playful banter between the group. In reality, the jokes said continue to build on the gender stereotypes within the show. The repetitiveness of the portrayed stereotypes becomes a cycle, not only between the six characters, but between the viewers as well. Goodall explains that “the media does this through the presentation of images of men and women, which allows the media [to] advance ideals of what is desirable in men and women because the media have provided the audience with models of what it means to be male or female, or in a relationship as well as images of what men and women are and should be” (Goodall, 2011). In some of the episodes, the television show upholds these ideals multiple times in single episodes.

Food ties into both the rhetoric and actions of the characters in the domestic spaces they interact in. In a ritualistic way, the characters are indulging themselves in food or drink in 90% of the scenes. As a side note, they are not engaging in exercise. The show revolves around them talking, eating, working, and interacting with themselves (and sometimes other miscellaneous friends).

The show problematizes the representations of masculinity and femininity. There are episodes found within the two seasons I hone in on where the women are in the kitchen cooking, and the men are doing “manly” activities. By playing into how the media wants the roles to be portrayed, viewers are exposed to these cookie-cutter interactions and never second-

guess. Sitcoms, like any cultural object, are shaped by the societies in which they emerge, but also by the specific people, processes, and industries that produce them (Alexander, 2003; Griswold, 1981). What is shown is very generalized in regards to the countless characteristics and personality quirks that each character could have.

Friends has a field day with the varying levels of stereotypical masculinity. The representation of masculinity has drastically changed from what was shown in the 1950's. What was once a representation of a providing and loving father figure of the household is now much cruder. In modern shows, the representations of masculinity range everywhere from sexually-driven to extremely irresponsible. It is important to denote the separate characteristics contained by each male character. As said previously, Chandler is arguably placed in the feminine category. Due to misogynistic interactions that are similar to the ones experienced by the women, Chandler is constantly thrown under the bus, yet always in a "funny" and seemingly playful manner.

Ross is the money-making dominant male. He has a Doctorate's degree, which is consistently mentioned, and makes the most money out of the six friends. While he is a highly intelligent character, he is also seriously sarcastic to those he finds "inferior" to him, which is everyone. The dominant complex leads to his need for constant attention. Whenever he walks into Monica's kitchen/dining room area or the coffee house, he demands consolation or engagement, taking attention away from the others.

Joey neatly fits the role as the man who never grew up. The evidence is there in his name alone; Joey: a baby kangaroo. His stereotype is inappropriate, irresponsible, and immature (Miller, 2011). His hypo-emotional tendencies contradict greatly with the overemotionally portrayed women, which indicates he is afraid to show his own feelings. He is always engaged with various women and never settles down, the only constant factor in his life is his friends. Contrasting him with the other female characters is paradoxical in its own way due to the fact that the men the women despise, is the gluttonous, sexually-driven character qualities Joey possesses.

Contrary to Joey and Ross, Chandler represents the anti-masculine, feminine character. Chandler is stereotyped throughout the sitcom as the running homosexual joke, even though he is not. Because he has very feminine qualities, he is casted out as the "homosexual" other. Simply because of the things he says and the way he acts around others, he is constantly criticized for being feminine. From beginning to end he is picked on because of his lack of interest in sports and his I.T. job; his characterization is overstressed and satirized. Through the constant masculine characteristics he lacks, he is pushed further away from being a dominant male figure.

The women, however, are not so easily broken down into categories as the men are. Together, the three women fit into similar categories of vary-

ing domesticity and female gender roles: they cook, they clean, and they do all the things “women should do.” Rather than having women that defy societies standards, they fit effortlessly with the stereotypes that society perceives women to have. The women all have similar gendered characteristics, which allows them to be analyzed very closely together. The women stereotypes revealed in the show are stereotypes still experienced by women today. Included in the (mis)representation is hyper-emotionality, passivity, and objectivity.

Understanding their gender stereotypes and roles is important in examining how they all interact with food and the domestic space. As the viewer, the stereotypes are masked due to the fact that men and women are exposed to these ideals every day. In season two, the occurrences happen much more frequently compared to season nine. As the seasons progress, the years continued to grow with the times and the show should have reflected this; however, they did not. With season three filmed in 1996, America was undergoing many changes regarding the equality of genders. Thus, the show makes the line between the two genders ambiguous, and going backwards in time instead of relishing in the accomplishments of change.

Up until this point, I have discussed the broad generalities of the show. When broken into seasons, the television show’s representation of feminism remains the same. The jokes are still there, the sexual undertones are still made. The domestic situations (both in the home and in the coffee house) are ever-present. Season three focuses heavily on the struggles of relationships as the feminine “ideals” continue to fit the mold of their respective stereotype.

In season three, episode three, as the friends sit in the coffee house drinking coffee and enjoying snacks, Monica arrives with a rather large tub of jam to gift to Joey. When Joey sees the gift, he orgasmically moans as Chandler asks the question: “The girl from the xerox place buck naked, or a big tub of jam?” The “xerox girl” remains nameless and is equated to a jar of jam. The sexism in this is imploding, yet the tactic is utilized simply to enact laughter from the viewers. The identity of the woman is compared to a food item, one that is messy and sticky. The underlying meaning illustrates a rigid category of women, creating a divisive line between one’s actual views of gender. There is no instance in the show where a man is compared to a food item, placing this scenario strictly on the level of female representation. In this make-believe patriarchal society, women are worth as much as a jar of jam.

Comparing food to women and vice versa has been a long-standing metaphorical battle in multiple mediums: food magazines and other popular sitcoms of the time (*Seinfeld*, for example). Though the jar of jam does not correlate as a phallic object, equating the naked woman to the jam brings the imagery of food and sex. Both activities are (usually) enjoyable and can be seductive. The way food is construed in this exact scene is not

necessarily representative of the other times food is mentioned or handled, it is however an important representation of the binary created between food and women. Through this explicit interaction, the commodification of women is quite literally placed on the table. The language used codes women as something to be enjoyed like a food item, nothing else.

Season three, episode four creates an interaction solely based on the sexist connotations of ice cream and women. Episode four teases the stereotype that when women go through a breakup, they are sad, cannot function, and eat ice cream. “Social rules about emotional display, including when and how certain emotions should and should not be expressed, correspond closely to gender-emotion stereotypes” (Averill, 1982; Brody & Hall, 2000). Ice cream as a female necessity food item has always been a sexist representation. In addition to being sexist, the connotation with the food also links back to sexual activities. The eating of ice cream, especially on an ice cream cone, is sexualized when women are eating it. However in this scene, both male and female explore their so-called “feminine side” through crying, talking, and eating ice cream. The women take on the nurturing caregiver role with Chandler as he continues to express his sadness, even though he seems to be out of his comfort zone. Monica and Rachel resort to the ice cream, which fits the sexist representation that the food will make everything okay. The generic belief that women need desserts and/or sweets to make themselves feel better during an emotionally trying time is one that continues to be overused to this day.

Episode six is explicit in the domestic obsession that Monica has. She is the female Mr. Clean, the embodiment of a hyper-traditional domesticated woman. This distinction is made in season one, episode one, and continues to progressively get worse as the show continues. Many of the joking rhetoric revolved around her character includes how insane she gets when things are done incorrectly. This in itself is a stereotype: the woman’s way or no way. In this specific episode, Monica is having a conversation with Phoebe, who for the past couple months slowly moved out of their apartment - without saying anything to Monica.

I couldn’t sleep for a month because I got a dot on one of the sofa cushions.

You could’ve turned it over.

Well I would’ve except I had a big spaghetti stain on the other side.!

WHAT?! [...] Well you can spill...in the sink.

Oh honey, it’s not your fault. This is who you are. (15:07)

My critique on this interaction is simple: the producers crafted Monica’s characterization quite easily; she is the literal epitome of the emotional,

shrill, single lady. Later in this episode she directs these questions to Chandler: “Am I so hard to live with? Is this why I don’t have a boyfriend?” Instead of modern feminist techniques today such as embracing the flaws and loving who you are, Monica relies heavily on her interactions with others to boost her confidence. In a study with Kelly and Huston-Comeaux, “they demonstrated that the stereotypes about women’s expressions of happy and sad emotions tend to be associated primarily with interpersonal, social situations, such as relationships with family or friends” (1). This applies to the television show as a whole because the entire dynamic thrives on relationships. As a note, it is valid to also point out that all emotions put out by all characters, not just Monica, are explicit. Not one character keeps their true feelings locked away, but rather it is shared with the other characters, the audience, and the television viewers.

In season nine, there are quite a few storylines that developed through five seasons which are important to discuss prior to analyzing the episodes. At this time, the show contains one more season prior to the show’s finale. Their personalities are the same, and according to the content analysis done by Reed, there is nothing noticeably increased or decreased over time (14). Some major character storylines that made for an excellent plot twist include Chandler and Monica getting married and Ross and Rachel having a baby together.

Season nine, episode eight is one of ten different Thanksgiving episodes in the show. The episodes centered around holidays focus heavily on the ritualistic action of eating and togetherness. There is no true blood family connection between all six of them (besides the brother/sister relationship that Monica and Ross have), solely the family they created. It is an odd situation, especially on a holiday, but this reiterates the relationship that they all have. The power of such a strong ritual holiday connects to the societal conditions on which we, as Americans, are prescribed. This places Monica and Chandler in a portrayed mother and father light, as Monica does all domestic duties of cooking the grand meal prior to everyone arriving, and Chandler watches the Thanksgiving Day Parade. Despite the unlikely couples marriage and a five year gap between these seasons, Chandler’s feminine qualities are still made fun of. The characters [on sitcoms] portray feminine attributes that cause viewers or other characters to label them as homosexuals (Fingerhut & Peplau, 2006). To prove this notion, Chandler notices that the china plates they are placing on the table are not the ones he chose for the couple’s wedding registry:

Wait a minute, this isn’t the china we picked out.
I know. After you left the store, I chose different ones.
Why?

Well, no offense honey, but your taste is a little too feminine for me.
Oh! Suddenly flowers are feminine? [...] They may not be as nice
as the pretty pink ones I picked out... (7:03)

This interaction is viewed as funny and entertaining, but still continues to make it look like something is wrong with Chandler because of his tastes. In a continuation of the analysis done by Reed, the results from *Friends* “showed that this stereotype [the homosexual stereotype] was the second highest male and third highest overall stereotype represented” in the featured sitcom. His presence is used simply as a laughing tool and does not shed light on the feminine male.

Phoebe’s unusual behavior has been prevalent since the start of the show. In season nine, episode twelve, her weirdness increases when the audience (and her boyfriend in the show) learns that she has a rat in her kitchen. The social conventions of the domestic space, the kitchen, within the family home typically represent tradition; much of the show relies on the kitchen as an area for the women to cook. The men are never the ones cooking. There are many places that the directors could have chosen the rats to be placed in this particular, but they picked the most domestic area in the house to place an animal one does not want in their space. The irony lies in the fact that Phoebe is not the typical female type; she is never seen cooking nor cleaning, yet these intruders find themselves in her kitchen despite its lack of use. This atypical situation contributes to Phoebe’s particular stereotype because this would only happen to her, the odd-ball of the group. Since episode one, her character has been casted out from the others. With her vegetarian diet, environmentally-friendly heart, and her carefree personality, her prescribed role is that of the “hippie.” Overall, this intrusion of the domestic space represents the intrusion of Phoebe and her unusual personality on the friend group. Using the word “intrusion” does not necessarily mean that Phoebe is a nuisance to the group; but rather like the rats intruding Phoebe’s home and her letting them live, Phoebe’s friends did the same for her.

The conclusion of the series finalizes the end of the stereotypical happy-go-lucky sitcom. The various female stereotype representations contributed to how society portrayed gender roles in the specific time period that the seasons were filmed. One marketing manager from the *Friends* team discussed how “some of the humor does reinforce stereotypes, but it is also creating a sense of identity and community and it shows we are ready to be able to laugh at ourselves in a positive way” (Reed 1997). Even though the primary goal was to entertain, the show conformed. It made people think the mannerisms in how they were portraying the genders and their characteristics were normal when in fact, they were not. Despite a six year

gap in shooting season three and season nine, the issues were still prevalent as ever. Even today, various issues regarding femininity and feminine studies are combated and brought to awareness, the correct way. The sitcom is the ultimate traditional American generic medium. It tells a seemingly relatable, although will more than likely never happen, plot line filled with generic undertones. Instead of fitting the mold, they should have been breaking it. During that ten year span, there is undoubtedly one thing *Friends* does not do: redefine femininity in the domestic space.

WORKS CITED

- Averill, J. (1982). *Anger and Aggression*. New York: Springer.
- Brody, L. R., & Hall, J. A. (2000). Gender, emotion, and expression, *Handbook of emotions*, New York: Guilford Press, pp. 338-349.
- Fingerhut, A. W., & Peplau, L. A. (2006). The Impact of Social Roles on Stereotypes of Gay Men. *Sex Roles*, 55(3-4), 273-278.
- Goodall, H. (2011). Media's Influence on Gender Stereotypes.
- Hutson-Comeaux, Sarah L. and Janice R. Kelly. "Gender Stereotypes of Emotional Reactions: How We Judge an Emotion as Valid." *Sex Roles*, vol. 47, no. 1-2, July 2002, pp. 1-10,
- Reed, Keel. "Gender Stereotypes in the Sitcom FRIENDS: Content Analysis" pp. 1-51.
- Reich, A., Cohen, T. (Writers), & Bright, K.S. (Director). (1996). *Friends*. New York National Broadcasting Company.
- Reich, A., Cohen, T. (Writers), & Bright, K.S. (Director). (2002). *Friends*. New York National Broadcasting Company.



Fight the System

by Melissa Johnson

“Food nourishes but it also signifies;” food has more importance than just that of sustenance (Pietrykowski 310). Human life and all other life revolves around food. Gatherings are typically accompanied by food, activities are planned based on food, even traditions find their grounding in food. Food allows expression of “ethnicity, regional affiliation, values, aspirations, gender, and care” as well as class and community (Pietrykowski 311). Food also has an attachment to the true definitions of savagery and primitiveness. The way food is obtained and what the food is allows for a better understanding of how food affects choices, behaviors, and society.

Starve, a graphic novel created by Brain Wood, Danijel Zezelj, and Dave Stewart, depicts an apocalyptic America that is struggling to survive. Food finds its significance in sustenance and becomes a competition that allows further separation in social class and blurs the line between the definitions of savage and primal. A professional chef, named Gavin Cruikshank, produces a television show called “Starve.” This show started off as a “travelogue, a hip little show where [he] roamed the planet, exploring local food culture and technique” (Wood 24) but turned into a vicious display of superiority designed to keep the elite in power.

Starve is best understood through the post-colonial lens which illuminates the stark differences between what it is to be primal versus what it is to be savage. It also helps in understanding the characters within *Starve* and their motivation for behaving the way they do. The food choices throughout the novel may be viewed through this lens as well which further separates the social classes. By using a post-colonial view point, the distinction within *Starve* between social class and the state of being primal or savage can be made through analyzing the characters and the food as they relate to forming the post-colonial identity.

The differences between primitiveness and savagery are vital in understanding why the colonialist mindset is harmful and the post-colonial

mindset is conducive to positive change. Savagery carries a negative connotation which is pushed to the limits throughout this graphic novel with excessively violent illustrations and undeniably ferocious acts; “The savage satisfies his natural desires without remorse... The man who wraps his body in the entrails of animals repels the philosophe...” (Womack 101). Savagery is violence just for the sake of violence whereas primitiveness is simply “in itself more natural” because it is reverting back to the basics and using only what is vital rather than extravagant and overabundant (Turnbull 514). Both of these terms are used throughout the novel and the line between them is paper thin when it should be miles apart.

Post-colonialism is a concept that most countries are striving towards because it not only acknowledges the existence of native peoples, but it also allows their culture to flourish without fear of being labeled uncivilized or primal and therefore forced into colonization. Post-colonialism attempts to unveil the human consequences of external control and economic exploitation of native people and their lands which is pertinent to *Starve* because many of the characters are struggling to find their identity outside of the colonial state they are being forced into. Edward Said states that “oriental texts come to inhabit a realm without development or power-it is a realm that exactly corresponds to the position of a colony for European texts and cultures” (Said 17) which mirrors the struggles that countries and people are undergoing in order to obtain a freedom from a controlling, Colonialist mindset.

The problem with Colonialism is the delusion the colonizers have that they are helping the people they are colonizing. Because the colonized people are seen as uncivilized or primal, the colonizers believe they are superior to the indigenous people and therefore force them to renounce their religion and customs to better fit into the new colonized society. Gayatri Spivak, a well-known post-colonialist, notes that “class mobility is increasingly lethargic” in these colonialist countries which adds to the suppression of the indigenous people (Spivak 83). For this reason, many countries are coming to realize the dangers of Colonialism and are making their way towards Post-colonialism. Some of the characters within *Starve*, however, seem to believe in the ways of Colonialism and fight to keep the social order the way that it currently stands.

The transition from Colonialism, however, is not swift and in most cases not complete. Neo-colonialism, which is the middle ground between Colonialism and Post-colonialism, has its good side and its bad. The good being the movement from the negative mindset of Colonialism to the more inclusive Post-colonialism. The bad being the vulnerable, transitional stage the countries are left in which lead to other colonizers attempting to recolonize these countries. This applies to *Starve* in that the rich, civilized

people of the society are trying to force the less fortunate into social classes that hold them in check and allow the upper class to stay in power.

The battle is defining what the post-colonial identity is and how that functions within *Starve*. Because of the uncertain state of America at the time this graphic novel is set in, many things are changing and morphing to fit the new world while some things are holding steadfast to the ways of the old world. One of the main issues in establishing a post-colonial identity is the fact that the “colonized subjects [struggle] for their cultural identity and the social formation of the new independent nations” and this struggle leads to “conflict with the colonizer’s culture” much like Gavin’s ideas conflict with those of the producers of the show (Dizayi 1000). By rejecting the colonizer’s forced identity, Gavin takes on the task of trying to form a post-colonial identity despite the colonial influences that surround him.

The fact that *Starve* is set in a post-apocalyptic setting would lead one to believe that finding the Post-colonial identity would be easy due to the break-down of the previous system; however, there are many characters that struggle to find their place. Greer, wife to Gavin, has come accustomed to the high life and cannot come to terms with a more primal nature invading her space. Angie, Greer and Gavin’s daughter, grew up mostly with her mother shielded from the uncivilized things that are part of Gavin’s world. This makes her naturally curious about her father but also threatens the luxury of her civilized world. Gavin, who goes from celebrity to street rat, fights to take down the system that he helped create. This external fight mirrors the internal conflict within Gavin to control his primal side yet maintain some civility.

Greer struggles to overcome the savagery that Gavin reinserts into her life and tries to eliminate him completely because of the threat he poses to her reign. Her first ploy to reduce Gavin’s threat is by limiting his time with his daughter; “and stay away from Angie” (Wood 21). Greer knows that Gavin still loves his daughter regardless of his absence from her life. He confirms her suspicions by asking “they can’t keep me from my daughter can they?” (Wood 21). This display of power “forcibly [limiting Gavin] to specific areas” shows the side of her that identifies with the “colonizing power [that has] the means of conquering” (Parker 295). Her play for power that places her in superiority and Gavin in inferiority prevents her from fully reaching the Post-colonial state.

The language that Greer employs throughout the novel further separates her from the Post-colonial state. She manipulates with her power and creates a binary by “defin[ing] [her] own identity as the reverse characteristic when labeling [Gavin] (civilized/barbaric, hardworking/lazy, progressive/primitive, cultivated/savage, developed/underdeveloped” (Hanschmann 124). She calls Gavin “a hooligan and a drug addict” and sets him up for

failure by using her power over the TV show to “give him something he can’t handle. Cripple him. Make him fail” (Wood 60, 76). She depends on the social class system already in place to justify her mentality and her savage behavior towards Gavin. Her actions are “so brutal that if [she] owned up to it, [it] might [lead her] to reject colonialism and give up the privilege of power” but because of her need for control in her domain and the risk of losing her daughter she holds her colonialist title with a vice grip.

However, in contrast to her typical colonialist behavior, Greer crosses the line into Post-colonial territory by performing an act of savagery. She does not say anything or give any warning of her plans because she does not have first-hand experience with being a savage, but she has watched Gavin perform his savagery on the TV show. She is a high society woman with money, power, and status but reduces herself to savagery when her words and influence do not bring about the results that she desires. She stabs Gavin in the chest because he has successfully taken over the things that she loves. Her daughter sways more towards her father’s influence and actions and the TV show now revolves around Gavin again. Her actions during this moment erase the solidified label of Colonialist and replace it with a sense of duality. This duality can be compared to “cultural hybridity” which “comes from the way that colonized people and the colonizers have taken on many of each other’s ways of living and thinking” (Parker 288). While Greer’s dominant state is Colonialist, she is clearly capable of taking on characteristics of both.

Greer’s struggle to find her place on the scale of Colonialism and Post-Colonialism and the scale of primal and civilized illuminates the difficulties related to becoming fully one side of the binary or the other. For in order to become a true Colonialist one must renounce all uncivilized behaviors since that is what makes others inferior and in order to become a true Post-Colonialist one must renounce the privileges and powers that come with being a conquering people. Greer cannot seem to completely distance herself from either identity and thus falls into the liminal space between these polarizing concepts.

Angie struggles to maintain her colonialist position while trying to embrace the savage nature introduced by her father’s return. Her hold on her colonialist position comes from many sources, one being her still living with her mother and tolerating her mother’s berating her father. She says that her mother “said some pretty hateful things about dad” but makes no move to defend him. Even when she and her mother discuss her father, Greer tells Angie that her “father, a man in his fifties, acting like an imbecile. Like he doesn’t have a wife and child at home” and Angie says nothing more than “maybe [he’s] not [changed] the way you want him to...” (Wood 94). She falls under her mother’s Colonialist control which “is designed to position

[Greer] as [the] privileged class” and position Angie as her “subject marching toward an ever unfolding, grand, and universal history” eliminating Gavin completely (Reworlding). Her timidity in rebuking her mother for talking badly about her father and trying to eradicate his influence in her life shows her unwillingness to relinquish her colonialist lifestyle.

Angie’s reconnection with her father brings to light her dormant savage/Post-Colonial nature. She agrees to appear on the TV show with her father and butchers a pig nose to tail. Her father compliments her saying “you’re a natural” and she responds with “Cruikshank birthright” (Wood 68). Her comment communicates that she understands that she has savagery ingrained in her and that this savagery means that she “is not in contradiction with [herself]” for embracing it but rather realizing that her “savage state then shows up the deficiencies” of the Colonialist society which thrives on the consuming of lesser people. Her savage nature allows her to force some of the Colonialist concepts out of her head and bring into the conversation some Post-Colonialist ideas such as the fact that the “savage state not only balances the demands of independence and sociality but also occupies ‘a just mean’ between the indolence of the primitive state and petulant activity of [human] vanity” (Marks). Angie, through contact with her savage father, comes to the understanding that her savage nature should be embraced and not stifled.

Angie’s two different identities collide when she accepts a deal to take her father’s place on the TV show. Her colonialist identity is found in the business deal itself. She is promised money and fame which would normally prevent her from resorting to savagery however, she chooses to hold fast to her post-colonial identity taking her “Cruikshank birthright” and using it to go “above and beyond” while cooking and “only need[ing] to puke a couple time, but [not]” (Wood 68-69). Her identity is neither colonial nor post-colonial but rather neo-colonial because even though she has been liberated from the controlling forces of her mother and embraced the primal and savage natures from her father she is now being colonized by the producers of the TV show.

Angie, like her mother, cannot be placed on either side of the colonial/post-colonial binary. Her unwillingness to renounce her wealth and fame prevent her from forming a post-colonial identity while her refusal to adhere to the requirements and social statutes placed on her by the producers prevent her from accepting the colonialist identity. This inability to become one or the other places her next to her mother in the liminal space between identities.

Gavin’s blatant disregard and denial of the elitist rules placed on him by the producers is the beginning of his struggle to form the post-colonial identity. Gavin leaves his place as a “rich, powerful, famous, and globally

recognized celebrity chef” and “went native” (Wood 8). He lives in the slums of Southeast Asia staying drunk and living among the lower class willingly giving up his name but when he is called back to the TV show he says “I won’t play the game they want me to play. This is my fucking show. I’m going to do my eight episodes and burn this whole place to the ground. Watch” (Wood 28). Gavin’s refusal to conform and his desire to burn everything the elitist have worked for displays his need for a primitive existence.

Another way he attempts to forge the post-colonial identity is through his treatment of food. Not only does Gavin have primitive skills but he also possesses savage skills. When he is asked to cook Bluefin Tuna he comments on the fact that the tuna he is cooking might be “the last Bluefin in existence” and that “people pay close to a hundred grand an ounce on the black market” for it (Wood 41, 50). He highlights the judges’ hypocrisy by serving “raw Bluefin, naked on a plate” using only his knife skills to show the beauty of the fish without adding decadence and pomp (Wood 49). He shows his savage cooking skills by eating dog meat raw. He realizes that dog is “common meat”, “garbage”, and used for “poor people” yet he takes a piece and eats it raw to show that it is disgusting that he is “expected to make it palatable for a rich person’s stomach” (Wood 27). The poor people’s food is not good enough of its own and therefore must be doctored somehow to make it more civilized for the elite. Gavin’s refusal to fancy things up simply to win a round rejects the colonialist way and places Gavin further towards the post-colonialist side of binary.

Lastly, Gavin forms the post-colonial identity by renouncing his title once and going underground again. When his daughter agrees to take his place on the TV show, Gavin goes back to living in the slums with the poor people who do not fit into the colonialist system. He uses his savage and primal cooking skills to survive and helps other survive as well. He understands the “pleasure of being alone while also enjoying those social pleasures that cause him, even if they do not obligate him, to consider the desire of his fellows” which gives him the advantage of being able to survive on the basics in a more natural state of being away from the luxuries of his fame (Marks).

Gavin rebels against the colonialist mindset in each move he makes. His sole purpose is to bring down the empire he built because while he understands class division, environmental crisis, and reality television what he does not understand is “the waste and the abuse of food and talent, serving only to make the privileged feel privileged” (Wood 43). This opinion and the actions he takes to spread his opinion places him closer to the post-colonialist rather than the colonialist and provides a solid basis on which to form the post-colonial identity.

WORKS CITED

- Dann, Philipp, and Felix Hanschmann. "EDITORIAL: Post-Colonial Theories and Law." *Verfassung Und Recht in Übersee / Law and Politics in Africa, Asia and Latin America*, vol. 45, no. 2, 2012, pp. 123–127. *JSTOR*, JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/43256847.
- Marks, Jonathan. "The Savage Pattern: The Unity of Rousseau's Thought Revisited." *Polity*, vol. 31, no. 1, 1998, pp. 75–105. *JSTOR*, JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/3235368.
- Muthyala, John. "Reworlding America: The Globalization of American Studies." *Cultural Critique*, no. 47, 2001, pp. 91–119. *JSTOR*, JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/1354582.
- Pietrykowski, Bruce. "You Are What You Eat: The Social Economy of the Slow Food Movement." *Review of Social Economy*, vol. 62, no. 3, 2004, pp. 307–321. *JSTOR*, JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/29770263.
- Turnbull, Colin M. "Human Nature and Primal Man." *Social Research*, vol. 40, no. 3, 1973, pp. 511–530. *JSTOR*, JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/40970151.
- Womack, William. "Guillaume Raynal and the Eighteenth-Century Cult of the Noble Savage." *The Bulletin of the Rocky Mountain Modern Language Association*, vol. 26, no. 3, 1972, pp. 98–107., doi:10.2307/1346651.



Human Consumption: Cannibalism as Exploitation in Jonathan Swift's *A Modest Proposal* and William Wordsworth's *The Discharged Soldier*

by Logan Lowman

Would you eat a kid? I hear they are quite delicious, as well as nutritious. They are in season all year round, and provide a pretty hearty meal if they were fed well before distribution. Wait, you are not interested? I cannot say I blame you, I would prefer to never taste human meat, although there have unfortunately been many throughout history who were adamant proponents of such a notion. There have been those who resorted to cannibalism as a final means of nourishment, and those that simply enjoy the thrill of consuming another human being.

However, there are those who support or discuss cannibalism as a means of communicating meaning that would just not work without the added hyperbole. Now, cannibalism is not a new trope in literature. It appears in films such as *Silence of the Lambs* (and now the new T.V. show, *Hannibal*), and is prevalent in many tales of gothic horror. Cannibalism has been employed by such media as a means to shock their audience, teach them, or make them question their morality. Indeed, some even use it as a metaphor with which they may explain other such grievous topics. In this paper, I aim to explore the ways in which Jonathan Swift and William Wordsworth employ the trope of cannibalism as a metaphor for human exploitation in *A Modest Proposal* and *The Discharged Soldier*, respectively. We will look at the background of each writer, the context of their writing, how those two factors influenced their lives, and finally I will attempt to explain why cannibalism is such an apt metaphor for the ills of the day and age in which these two authors lived and wrote.

Jonathan Swift was an Irish author and satirist born in Dublin, Ireland, on November 30, 1667. His father was also named Jonathan Swift, and was

an attorney, but died two months before Jonathan Junior was born. Like the unfortunate souls of which he writes in *A Modest Proposal*, Jonathan Swift was born poor, as at the time, a single mother could not easily take care of even a single child. On top of that, Swift had a disease of the inner ear, making him nauseous and hard of hearing, making his mother's task of caring for him all the more laborious. Realizing the bleakness of her situation, his mother gave him up to Godwin Swift, his late father's brother. Under his uncle's care and financial support, he was able to rise among the ranks of society to fill a variety of roles in life, such as a statesman's assistant, a secretary, a parson, and of course, an author. (biography.com)

Given his humble beginnings, one can understand why Swift would write an entire essay devoted to a means by which they may be provided for. It is equally understandable as well why he would also wish to work the same means toward the benefit of the upper tier of society which he no doubt tasted throughout his life. All things considered, Swift's decision to write *A Modest Proposal* was entirely logical and beneficial for all. So what does he so modestly propose, exactly? I will let Swift explain himself: "I have been assured by a very knowing American of my acquaintance in London, that a young healthy child well nursed is at a year old a most delicious, nourishing, and wholesome food, whether stewed, roasted, baked, or boiled; and I make no doubt that it will equally serve in a fricassee or a ragout" (paragraph 9). Are you shocked? Not many people during Swift's time (*A Modest Proposal* was published in 1729) were shocked. In fact, many thought that Swift's *Proposal* was meant as pure humor. However, most of the people who were able to read Swift's work were of the upper class, and most likely did not understand that Swift was openly criticizing them. He did so because during the time of the *Proposal's* publication, the Irish were under the control of the British, and were being unfairly treated. Many died of hunger, disease, or if they lived, turned to thievery, or servitude. The *Proposal* came at a time when many people were attempting to use rational methods and logical means by which they might have fixed the perceived problems of the Isles. Swift, in turn, attempts to parody the cold, calculating nature which some people had when approaching such matters as starvation and poverty.

George Wittkowsky, in his paper, *Swift's Modest Proposal*, insinuated just such a reason for Swift's attitude in the text. He believes that it was the thought of that time period that anything could be fixed through numbers and logic. However, I say that the main purpose which Swift had in mind when writing *A Modest Proposal* was to illuminate the fact that the Irish people were being exploited like a commodity, like cattle or grain. It is for this very reason that Swift employed the use of the cannibalism metaphor. To Swift's mind, when the British affluent deprived the Irish of resources for their own benefit, they were, in effect, feeding off of them. The results

were surely the same. The children died and the rich were fed, the same as if they had been eaten.

However, Swift could not have directly commanded the rich to eat children, no, he was much more civilized than that. Instead, he commodified the desolate Irish as a way of making them more appealing for consumption, because that is almost exactly what was already being done to them already by the affluent. Lewis Landa echoes this sentiment, saying that the British degraded the Irish by denying them basic human rights, one of course being food. In her mind, and surely in Swift's mind as well, the Irish people were a simple commodity, ready and waiting to be consumed by their betters. The critic Johnson argues that "human depravity is such that men will attempt to justify their own cruelty by accusing their victims of being lower than human", which means that people will justify their evil actions by turning their victims into something less than human, which, in this case, is an exploitable commodity, or as Swift says, a delectable source of food.

Landa states that his use of "the vocabulary of animal husbandry" is what transforms "people into animals, then meat, and from meat, logically, into tonnage worth a price per pound". This is the heart of *A Modest Proposal*. Swift realizes that people cannot go directly from children to meals, and so turns them into livestock, and then food, and then a salable commodity which may be freely exploited. This process is the same process by which the British exploited the Irish in Swift's time. Robert Phiddian, another Swift critic, believed that at the time, the British believed that "people are the riches of the nation", yet they had the backwards notion that workers must be paid less rather than more, or else they would work less than the desired amount of hours. Their views of humanity were so skewed that Phiddian even states "in the mercantilist view no child was too young to go into industry", meaning that not even children were off limits to the employers. They were little better than slaves to them, yet another commodity. Phiddian goes so far as to say that a "somewhat more humane attitudes of an earlier day had all but disappeared and the laborer had come to be regarded as a commodity", echoing the sentiments of the other critics mentioned here.

Yet, there is an inherent paradox within this outmoded way of thinking, one that Landa believes Swift was aware of. He suggests that the British were wrong in assuming that a country may become rich from making its lower classes poor, because how could they expect to become wealthy through such means if their strength is in their people? In a similar form of absurdity through cannibalism, Swift uses his *Modest Proposal* to reveal a paradox such as this, to show the British people that their means of achieving financial stability were inherently flawed, and likely as unethical as cannibalism obviously is.

We see then, in *A Modest Proposal*, that wherever Swift is commodifying the people, he also opens up a means of speaking of the people in terms of an exploitable resource, mirroring what the British had already accomplished. Swift even states that “I grant this food will be somewhat dear, and therefore very proper for landlords, who, as they have already devoured most of the parents, seem to have the best title to the children” (paragraph 12). He uses this as an incredibly snide way of implying that the landlords (most likely British as they owned much Irish land), have already “eaten” (exploited) the parents, meaning that the powerful British had already taken everything they were capable of from the parents, so they may as well eat the children also. To even further commodify the Irish child, Swift makes such statements as

I do therefore humbly offer it to public consideration that of the hundred and twenty thousand children already computed, twenty thousand may be reserved for breed, whereof only one-fourth part to be males; which is more than we allow to sheep, black cattle or swine; and my reason is, that these children are seldom the fruits of marriage, a circumstance not much regarded by our savages, therefore one male will be sufficient to serve four females (paragraph 10)

As Lewis points out, Swift uses language one commonly employs when speaking of livestock, thereby demeaning and dehumanizing the Irish children. Yet not only are they made less than human by being indirectly compared to livestock, but they are also referred to by numbers. Personally, being referred to as a number statistic is of the most dehumanizing actions one could ever be the victim of, because at least animals oftentimes have names, which are unique and give character to their holders, whereas a number only communicates basic numerical information about that group or individual which it represents.

Swift continues on to further degrade the Irish people so as to make them easier to consume when he states “I have already computed the charge of nursing a beggar’s child (in which list I reckon all cottagers, laborers, and four-fifths of the farmers) to be about two shillings per annum, rags included...” (paragraph 14). This reinforces the idea that to Swift, and therefore also to the British that he is parodying, Irish children are only object which are raised up in order to be used in some profitable way later on for the good of the British elite.

In summation, Swift makes certain that his audience views his fellow Irishmen as a commodity so as to make them a more exploitable resource. When they cease to become human and are simply a resource to be drawn from, the metaphor of cannibalism may be easily applied. If I were to be

asked to eat a dear friend, I would obviously object. But if I saw a hunk of red meat at the store for a fair price, I would be likely to buy it and eat it. It is for that very reason that Swift also attempts to turn the Irish into hunks of meat, so as to make them more easily exploitable by the British. It is a tactic that has been proven to work over and over again. During the Salem Witch Trials, the enraged townspeople did not hunt innocent women, they hunted witches. During the expansion into the American West, the mighty conquerors did not displace and murder men, women, and children, but dirty savages. When a man is made less than a man, he can be beaten, thrown out of his home, or even, in Swift's case, eaten.

Having discussed at length Swift's blatant recommendation of outright cannibalism, I would now like to examine the more subtle form of cannibalism which is unsurprisingly still carried out by the British. Before I dive into the more heavily veiled form of cannibalism within *The Discharged Soldier*, I would like to examine its author, William Wordsworth. I believe that understanding his background and his beliefs will aid in understanding the reasons why he may have written on a ghostly soldier that was abused by his government, and therefore will help in understanding how the poem works as well.

William Wordsworth was born on April 7, 1770, in Cockermouth, Cumberland, England. He was born to wealthy parents in a sizable mansion, and received an excellent education. He was very close with his sister, the poet Dorothy Wordsworth, and remained close to her their entire lives. He studied all of the literary greats such as Milton and Shakespeare, and went on to write for magazines. In his youth he traveled often, preferring the majesty of the Alps, and beautiful scenes of nature in general. In short, Wordsworth was well-educated, blessed with a wealthy family, and loved his family as well as nature.

Though Wordsworth was born into wealth and opulence, he never lost sight of the true beauty of the human race and the wonderful world in which they lived. He wrote about natural beauty often, and in so doing began the British Romanticism movement, which gave emphasis to preserving and cherishing natural beauty. His poem, *The Discharged Soldier*, is rumored to have been inspired by true events, happening very similarly in real life as in portrayed in the poem. The poem itself, however, was not written until years after the fateful walk was said to have taken place, so the ghostly man must have become stuck in his mind. Not only that, but some critics of Wordsworth says that the poor fellow trope turns up throughout his other written works, potentially being inspired by that single man.

Interestingly, Wordsworth had first-hand experience with war, which most likely made him uniquely able to understand some of the plight of the *Discharged Soldier*. Near the beginning of the French Revolutionary

War, Wordsworth traveled to France and fell in love with a woman named Annette Vallon. Unfortunately, he was forced to leave when hostilities rose, leaving his pregnant lover behind. Years later, when he was able to return because of a temporary peace, he was able to meet his past lover and their child. Again, he was soon forced to leave by one of the bloodiest stretches of the French Revolutionary War: The Reign of Terror. Many, many people were killed during this time, and Wordsworth could stay no longer. He fled back to England, where he produced such pieces as *The Discharged Soldier*. When he speaks of the emptiness of the frame of the man along the road, I believe that Wordsworth saw that same look many times when fleeing France those two times. He saw first-hand what power can do to those who wield it, and to those who are subjugated to its will.

The time in which Wordsworth wrote his poems also happened to be during the time of British Imperialism, so it is fairly likely that the man he encountered that night was off fighting for some colony a world away, defending the greed of politicians and generals. This is all speculation, of course, but it would be in line with what the British Romantics hated most: industrialism and human greed, but most of all, the need to consume. In *The Discharged Soldier*, Wordsworth paints his readers a picture of a lonely man beside a road at night, quietly leaning on a mile stone. When asked about his history, the veteran says “That in the Tropic Islands he had served, / Whence he had landed scarcely three weeks past; / That on his landing he had been dismissed, / And now was travelling towards his native home” (lines 38-41). He explains his reason for being alongside the road, which is because he is travelling home. He is travelling home because he was dismissed from the military, and the reason why he was dismissed from the military is because of the same reason why Swift said that children were proper for the landlords to eat: because they had already devoured the parents. Here, Swift breaks from the common theme of outright cannibalism to imply a more metaphorical kind of cannibalism, which is the same brand which we the readers can see in *The Discharged Soldier*.

In his essay *Discharged Soldiery: Wordsworth, Cobbett, and Military Corruption in the 1790s*, Chris Murray examines the negative side effects of serving as a soldier in the British military, and how the works of Wordsworth and Cobbett reveal such tragedies. He states that “Others interpret the Discharged Soldier as exhausted by the war effort. For example, John Williams writes, ‘the soldier is a victim of his country’s aggressive foreign policy, and its callous disregard for him once sickness has rendered him useless’”. Here Murray is referencing Williams’s stance on the issue, which is that the veteran of the poem is being used up by the British, and when his usefulness has reached its end, he is cast aside. It is this careless disregard for the soldier’s well-being and the abrupt discarding of him and his

services that brings to mind themes of cannibalism, showing how soldiers can also be exploited in a means similar to actual consumption.

Just as in Swift's *Proposal* the helpless were easier to exploit when demeaned and dehumanized, Murray also explains how himself and others believe that the soldier, in order to be more easily exploited, is similarly demeaned and dehumanized: "Scholars such as Quentin Bailey, Celeste Langan, and Alan Liu have accentuated social conditions that disadvantage individuals like the Soldier. These critics study community problems that include vagrancy and high unemployment. They observe that marginalized figures become figures of fear, often unjustly, and may resort to crime to survive". Here Murray is stating that the people who may be on the bottom of the totem pole, so to speak, are often portrayed as something to be feared, and are therefore pushed to the fringes of society and left to defend themselves and care for themselves however they can. When the narrator first encounters the veteran, he is alone, and is so troubling to the narrator that he at first loiters a moment so as to determine whether or not the man is a threat, because he must surely have looked threatening based on Wordsworth's almost supernatural depiction of him. It is this scene which establishes the veteran as a marginalized figure, as he is alone, at night, and quite startling to approach.

Because of the soldier's position on the fringe of society and on the side of the road, he is in a place from which others may easily exploit him, as they have before. Having been cast out from the military, he is just as powerless as the poor Irish children in *A Modest Proposal*. Other than being given the fact that the soldier was released from his position in a strenuous war, we can also surmise his fate by Wordsworth's physical description of the veteran: "Though weak his step and cautious, he appeared / To travel without pain, and I beheld, / With an astonishment but ill suppressed, / His ghostly figure moving at my side..." (lines 47-50). The description of the soldier is one of a frail, ghost-like man, someone who appears to have the life drained out of him. I believe that this is exactly the effect that Wordsworth was attempting to achieve, as it fits Murray's assumption that the veteran was drained of all usefulness before being tossed aside. What we see is a man that has been used up, or in Swift's language, devoured. In a less literal sense, the British military is using their soldiers, and Wordsworth's veteran especially, in the same way that the British landlords would squeeze as much money or labor out of their tenants as possible. Clearly, the veteran is commodified and exploited through cannibalistic means much like the Irish in *A Modest Proposal*.

It is easy to see, once one has the entire picture, just how neatly the pieces of these two texts, *A Modest Proposal*, and *The Discharged Soldier*, fit together. With the historical and personal background of each author

we can see why both chose to write about their respective topics, and how being exposed to the same consuming force, Great Britain, can influence each similarly. Finally, we the readers can see how exactly cannibalism functions within both texts, and why it is such an appropriate metaphor for the exploitation of a veteran and poor Irish children. They are both made to be less than human in order to have their lives stolen so that they may fulfill the needs of those above them, namely the aristocracy and the military. It is my understanding that by shocking their readers with tales of almost supernatural veterans and plans to eat human children, Swift and Wordsworth meant to dissuade their audience from treating the impoverished or battle-weary poorly. Just maybe they were attempting to teach their readers a little compassion for their common man. In the end, one message is clear: People are not safe for Human Consumption.

WORKS CITED

- Editors, Biography.com. *Jonathan Swift Biography.com*. n.d. Web. 30 November 2017.
- Editors, Biography.com. *William Wordsworth Biography.com*. n.d. Web. 30 November 2017.
- Landa, Louis. "A Modest Proposal and Populousness." *Modern Philology* (2017).
- Murray, Chris. "Discharged Soldiery: Wordsworth, Cobbett, and Military Corruption in the 1790s." *Liverpool University Press* (2017): 35-52.
- Phiddian, Robert. "Have You Eaten Yet? The Reader in A Modest Proposal." *Studies in English Literature* (2017).
- Swift, Jonathan. "A Modest Proposal." 1729. Quotidiana. Ed. Patrick Madden. 19 Dec 2007. 17 Feb 2010 <>http://essays.quotidiana.org/swift/modest_proposal/>.
- Wittkowsky, George. "Swift's Modest Proposal: The Bibliography of an Early Georgian Pamphlet." *Journal of the History of Ideas* (2017).
- Wordsworth, William. "The Discharged Soldier." *Biblioklept*. 11 November, 2010. Web. 5 December 2017.



Exploring the Ethics of Corporate and Personal Responsibility in *Super Size Me* and *Food Inc.*

by Ma'Katelyn Shepherd

Ever chow down on a piece of chicken, beef or pork and wonder where it came from, how it was processed and ultimately how it made it to your table? Likewise, have you ever wondered what big corporations did or failed to do to help ensure the consumer of these facts? Big corporations all over the country today are being sued and taxed on the account of keeping the consumer from the truth. Making the consumer practice personal responsibility while they fail to disclose corporate responsibility. Both *Food Inc.* and *Super Size Me* document how such corporations leave a great deal of responsibility on the consumer. It is safe to say major corporations like McDonalds shown in *Super Size Me* and those mentioned in *Food Inc.* have failed at putting a demand on corporate responsibility which neglects the health and overall respect of the consumer.

Personal and corporate responsibility are terms that have a large number to do with the success and failure of most food corporations and companies. Corporate responsibility deals with the company's effect on law, ethics, the corporation as a whole and the environment in which it is in. Personal responsibility responds to the responsibility of a company as it relates to challenges and circumstances that company may present. Nonetheless, it also deals with the importance of both society and the individual. Both have a great deal to do with how these corporations lack in responding to problems brought on by both personal and corporate responsibility. Over the year's people have indeed sued these big companies in hopes to drawing attention to the corporate responsibility anticipated. Where does it stop and where does corporate responsibility begin? Through close observations of the above mentioned documentaries my it is my goal to denote how both documentaries respond and argue the claim against personal and corporate responsibility.

John Grierson, also considered the father of documentary, wrote many things about what film and documentary aim to accomplish. He was the first to apply the term documentary to film back in the 1920s. His definition of documentary, aside from being clumsy, meant giving a film sequence that made the use of natural material the vital distinction, as he states in his article "First Principles of Documentary." As I read these principles I totally agree that both *Food Inc.* and *Super Size Me* capture both. The first principle he notes is it must master its material on the spot and come in intimacy to ordering it (Grierson 22). This just means documentaries are always going to start in a way that instantly gets the viewers attention to want to watch more. When *Super Size Me* begins it starts with Kids singing, followed by giving a quote from the founder of McDonald's. "Look after the customer and the business will take care of itself." Instantly we are pulled in by this quote and our attention is now focused on if the documentary, by the end, will argue this point. However, *Food Inc.* starts off by presenting the fantasy of farms displayed on majority of the food we see within the supermarkets. Further showing how the industry does not want us to know what is in our food and where our food is really made because we might not eat it at all. In reality, the beginning of this film demonstrates that farms have since turned into factories and they all being controlled by bigger corporations.

The second principle, it must follow in distinction between description and drama (Grierson 22). If anyone says the two films have no drama, one would have to disagree. Both films not only have a fair amount of description which is needed, but the drama is also what keeps you watching. Scenes within *Food Inc.* that back this assertion up are the ways in which they go about interviewing farmers and the many slaughter houses. For lack of better words, the way they process the food in the plants. Whether it is for the cows, the pigs or chickens it is considered dramatic because it is something that no one really wants to see. However, it is informative to know what goes on behind the closed door of food production and this documentary describes that in detail throughout the whole film. The drama within *Super Size Me* is seen viewing him eating McDonald's day in and out. Not only that, but as the film progresses so do health complications and his weight gain. So as we are viewing and becoming aware of the dangers of eating McDonald's everyday we also become aware of the bodily changes. Both principles correlate with why these directors may have chose to go towards the documentary approach. It gets the consumer to listen from the very beginning because both films give facts that support the viewer in becoming aware of personal and corporate responsibility concerns.

Super Size Me is a documentary centered around director Morgan Spurlock's experiment to eat McDonald's everyday, for every meal, for an entire month. His goal by the conclusion of the month, is to eat everything on

the menu. If asked to Super Size his meal, he must agree to have it Super Sized. During the time of his experiment, Spurlock experiences an increase in his weight, horrible side effects, a decrease in energy, and major concerns with his health. At the start of the documentary he allows the audience in on his doctor visits and the into the inside of his home where his girlfriend is a vegan chef. Spurlock focuses our attention on how good of health he was in before the start of this experiment. Over the course of the film we watch his health begin to decline, even before reaching the third day. The purpose of Spurlock taking on this attempt at eating fast food is to draw awareness to big corporations, like McDonald's and expose their absence in taking corporate responsibility. Spurlock shows here that they place more responsibility on the consumer, including that of kids, and through the film exposes their methods of brainwashing people.

Food Inc. examines how big corporations have taken over the food industry. Something that is distinctive about *Food Inc.* is director Robert Kenner calls attention to production, farms where our food is grown, local food chains, and fast food restaurants. *Food Inc.* highlights in the beginning of the film, why McDonalds is the biggest motivation behind foods like beef and potatoes being changed by the industry. Exposing how small meat companies are being ran by even larger companies. The film also displays the mentality behind fast food answering questions about where our food comes from, who it is produced by and most importantly what this means for the health of the consumer. The film is split into three main parts. When the film starts, similar to *Super Size Me* it begins with facts on advertisement and the harsh reality of where our food comes from grounded on the representation of farmers. The first is the presentation of the production of meat, specifically the process of watching how cows, chickens and pigs and treated and processed. The second is focused on the production of soybeans, corn and how farmers plant and may get fined for planting. The third part of the film attempts to tie together the first two parts, by responding to what the government and big corporations have understood about personal and corporate responsibility. *Food Inc.* ends giving names and numbers of contact to these corporations therefore again putting more personal responsibility on the consumer while showing lack to take responsibility regarding what the film itself commented on corporate wise.

From beginning to end, *Food Inc.* exposed an ample amount of information. Along with the controversy seen within the film, it created an up rise among farmers and those among the agricultural community, most of which would not be interviewed. When *Food Inc.* was released in 2009, there were many protest among corporations portrayed in the film aiding other farmers to protest this movie. Critic Anna Swindle wrote on the film, commenting that The National Corn Growers Association, one of

the companies negatively portrayed in the film, was a major corporation that protested this film from being nominated for an Oscar. Not all farmers disagreed with this film however. In fact, many thought it was an important movie to be publicized. Joel Salatin, a farmer, who also appears in the film, commented and said that Kenner “connects the dots,” on what the government tries to keep from us concerning what we know about our food. He realizes that the film notes these things, making the consumer aware that they have no knowledge about what they are consuming and the government doesn't really want them to know.

Where *Food Inc.* mentions the production and corporate responsibility, *Super Size Me* shows this through the ends of consumption. When *Super Size Me* came out, McDonald corporations immediately wanted to discontinue it. The amount of evidence in the movie indicate that when eaten three times a day, McDonald's can have a negative effect on your health. This includes your mental, sex life as well as body performance. Causing many people to litigate McDonald's, which is also talked about within the film. It opened the eyes of many people who regularly consumed fast food throughout their work week. Robert Erbert comments on the choice the consumer is given to go to fast food restaurants and order a healthy meal. Like nutritionist suggest in the film, it is less likely. By incorporating interviews with real people, and their thoughts on the lawsuits he comments “They all look and sound like perfectly reasonable people with the perfectly reasonable belief that if they can exercise personal restraint and take full responsibility for their dietary choices, why should those who cannot do so be entitled to sue McDonalds.” This comment puts demands on the consumer as the critic also suggested. He comments how he, himself also used to eat fast food, went on a diet program and lost a lot of weight. Another critic comments as says that within the film McDonald's doesn't treat their customers like consumers, but as “users.” Mentioning that McDonald's is aware of the addictive qualities of their food. Spurlock tells his audience, through his use of dramatics and comics the potential dangers of fast food.

Together, both films drive to ensure the consumer act on their own personal responsibility. Not only that, both films through interviews, show how the corporate end of food companies provide us food containing hazardous bacteria. We get representation of this through the following and interviewing of a mother having to take her own action by practicing personal responsibility in *Food Inc.* Mother and daughter Barbara Kowalcyk, shares her story in the film of loosing her son due to him dying from Ecoli. She talks about the process to fight for her son taking six years to pass a law. This tragedy and its response formed Kevin's Law. Kevin's Law is a law which supports and gives power back to the USDA to shut down plants that have produced contaminated meat. Ms. Kowalcyk explains how her mother, Patricia Bick

and herself have had to fight on their own to bring awareness to this tragedy because food companies refuse to express their concern. She also comments in the film, how she felt the industry was more protective over themselves, rather than the life and protection of her own son. This caused Kowalczyk to become an advocate for food, for the life of her son and the prevention of it happening to another family. She further reveals that she did not receive an apology from any of the meat companies after the passing of her son. Her story is just one of many that we get a glimpse of in *Food Inc.* that exemplify big industry corporations disregarding the cares and concerns of the consumer. It is evident that they are more concerned with making money and concealing what is really happening with the production of the food we eat. Eldon Roth also in *Food Inc.* speaks concisely on the industrial food system and the machinery used to make our beef products. He states when this movie was made in 2008 that their beef, which contained ammonia which purpose is to kill off bacteria, was already in seventy percent of hamburgers around the country. He projected in five years that same percentage would reach one hundred percent (Roth). Author of *Omnivores Dilemma* stated his concerns of the industry when he says, "the industries approach when they have a systematic problem is not to go back and check the system, instead the industry is to come up with high tech fixes that allow the system to survive" (Michael Pollan). Knowing this and the story of Kevin, further prove that the industry is absent in owning up to corporate responsibility. However, they do expect the consumer to make more effort in personal responsibility, as it seems just to be ignored or pushed away.

Personal responsibility puts pressure on the consumer to make the changes, when in fact it is the corporations that have the capacity to make change. As we see in *Food Inc.* big corporations do not give options to farmers or those working in the industry. They make farmers spend and borrow money that they do not have to keep their corporation or food product moving. Ignoring the danger, they are putting the chickens, pigs and cows in. Big corporations mainly want to see their businesses flourish rather than the lives of those working in the factories, slaughter houses and feeding fields all together. Farmers are borrowing more money than they make in a salary year which is causing a deficit. This is because corporations including those mentioned in both films make sure there is no way you are selling or trying to produce on your own. It shows that they do not care about the well-being of the farmers or factory workers, only the crops and what the farmers can produce and/or sale.

Food Inc. deals a lot with targeting corporate responsibility as it details with specific examples of the industry becoming an industry of technicians (Salatin). Rather than having food production made in open, clean farming or a factory, corporations rather industrialize and control these farm-

ers instead of fixing the big problem. Problems consisting of feeding cows corn and viewing pigs as structure. Smithfield Hog Processing Plant is the biggest slaughter house in the country. Where the plant is located, in the small town of Tar Hill, it is around poor below income families that these corporations hire. They also go as far as bringing in workers from out of town just to work at their plant. Someone from the film also comments “they have the same mentality towards workers as they do the hogs,” showing that big companies, like Smithfield do not care about the person as much as they do not care about the product. They have workers working in their slaughter houses performing the same task over and over, day in and out. Putting them at risk to carry home bacteria and diseases. Smithfield also began bringing in immigrant workers to work at their meat processing plant because of the demand for work. Only to fire and/or deport fifteen people a day sending them back home if the company feels their work is no longer needed. Here we see the industry will ignore real problems concerning their treatment of people show that they do not care about the lively hood of the workers that pack their food.

We get the same illustration in *Super Size Me*. Throughout the film Spurlock continues to ask the question “where does personal responsibility stop and corporate responsibility begin?” It is the question on which the entire documentary is centered. Not only does the quote at the start of the film from the founder draw attention, Spurlock argues this quote by showing that at some point corporations, including McDonalds, must take responsibility for the health of the consumer. The film places Spurlock on the same page as his audience to figure out why America chooses to take advantage of personal responsibility in order to make business profitable. Tapping into McDonalds, commenting on tobacco companies and further watching Spurlock’s health spiral out of control all call upon corporate responsibility. Also, by sharing how big tobacco companies and McDonalds directly target children also show these companies motives. By targeting children with sugar, playgrounds and toys McDonalds creates childhood memories that will then pull that same child in when they are an adult by continuing to eat McDonalds. John B, a man who has sued big tobacco companies and won previously comments on the same thing within the film. When Spurlock and himself try to locate charts showing the nutritional value of McDonald’s food. When they locate and find few to none he comments “You can’t argue people should exercise personal responsibility and not give them the information on which to base it.” His claim shows to be the direct explanation for America’s obesity and the lack of care the corporations have concerning the consumer and the consumer’s health.

At the end of *Food Inc.*, we are reminded by encouraging music and words that remind the consumer that even when facing corporate responsibility,

we still have to take our own dietary actions. Informing the viewer about options that draw awareness to the issue to end or vote towards ending the problems caused of the FDA and USDA. Concluding with a promising "You can change the world." *Super Size Me* closes with Spurlock sharing that the lawsuit failed to show that McDonalds was responsible for others weight gain. He makes a call for McDonalds to change their menu also offering better health sides. Like *Food Inc.*, he also requests that the consumer should begin to make better choices when choosing what to eat calling attention towards both corporate and personal responsibility. When corporations continuously show the consumer their lack of care towards their health, in return it makes the consumer feel disregarded in numerous ways. It makes the consumer think twice about where they put their money with which is why both films end reminding the consumer of those facts. Reminding the consumer, although facing adversity in the eyes of these corporations they still have power to change the way the industrial food system is ran. *Food Inc.* and *Super Size Me* draw awareness to the lack and the change that could be made after the awareness brought on by the films. The reason why both films created so much controversy is because it is in fact the "ugly truth," behind what we consume.

"As soon as you grasp for that growth you're going to view your customer differently, you're going to view your product differently, you're going to view your business differently, you're going to view everything that is the most important -- you're going to view that differently." Joel Salatin commented this when talking about his perspective on hidden cost and why he chose not to expand to big companies like Walmart. His main goal was never to compromise his integrity or that of his cattle. Although, a small time farmer compared to bigger industries, I believe his claim is the reason for the vast separation between corporate and personal responsibility that is still seen within businesses today. Not only do both films draw out examples piece by piece throughout their films, it shakes the corporations because of their secret being exposed. People are switching over to local farmer's markets instead of eating corporately. Both films show how having to choose between eating healthy or eating fast food puts consumers in a lose lose situation if they can not provide the cost to eat healthy. I believe what is shown in these films still exists today, if not worst. The facts and predictions shown make you think about today's industry and how it has gotten worse with feeding the consumer what it wants. A perfect example of this within the fast food industry is the new five dollar meals. Almost every known fast food restaurant markets meals under five dollars as a way to draw consumers, no matter the social class, back to their establishment. What they fail to tell us, however, is that because of these high demands industries have now added more things to our food that we cannot name.

Food Inc. and *Super Size Me* successfully answer and bring knowledge to the problems concerning personal and corporate responsibility. Not only that, but from beginning to end they aid the consumer to remember after viewing both films what is told concerning these responsibilities and to continue to do the same.

WORKS CITED

- “A Critical Analysis of the Documentary ‘Supersize Me’.” *UKEssays*, www.ukessays.com/services/example-essays/film-studies/a-critical-analysis-of-the-documentary-supersize-me-by-morgan-spurlock.php.
- DuBois, David, et al. “Super Size Me: Product Size as a Signal of Status.” *Journal of Consumer Research*, vol. 38, no. 6, Apr. 2012, pp. 1047-1062. EBSCOhost, articles.westga.edu:2048/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=bth&AN=73304230&site=eds-live&scope=site.
- Ebert, Roger. “Super Size Me Movie Review & Film Summary (2004) | Roger Ebert.” *RogerEbert.com*, Robert Ebert, 7 May 2004, <http://www.rogerebert.com/reviews/super-size-me-2004>
- Gleiberman, Owen. “Food, Inc.” *EW.com*, Time Inc, 10 June 2009, ew.com/article/2009/06/10/food-inc-2/. “Important but Flawed: A Review of Food, Inc.” *Liberation BC blog*, liberationbc.org/2009/07/important-but-flawed-a-review-of-food-inc/.
- “Personal and Corporate Responsibility in “Super Size Me” and “Food Inc.”” *Ripley’s Blog*, 4 May 2010, brianripley.wordpress.com/2010/05/05/personal-and-corporate-responsibility-in-super-size-me-and-food-inc/.
- Swindle, Anna. “Food, Inc. Draws Criticism From Agricultural Community.” *Pastemagazine.com*, 5 Mar. 2010, www.pastemagazine.com/articles/2010/03/food-inc-gets-criticism-from-agricultural-communit.html



Laura Esquivel's *Like Water for Chocolate* and Rosario Castellanos' "Cooking Lesson:" A Paradoxical Confinement within the Mental and Domestic Sphere

by Tiana Young

Rosario Castellanos and Laura Esquivel are two authors who both showcase different twentieth century Mexican women through their literary works to delve beyond the world's view of these women as submissive, domestic beings. Laura Esquivel is a contemporary Mexican novelist, screenwriter and politician who is well-known for her bestselling novel *Like Water for Chocolate*, which was published in 1989 yet set during the Mexican Revolution. Rosario Castellanos is one of Mexico's most influential authors during the mid to late 1900s and already has become a huge symbol of Latin American feminism. Through their literary works, Castellanos and Esquivel consciously create characters who both acknowledge the constructs of a society that assigns women limited, domestic spaces, thus producing endless obstacles for these women. Both characters, Tita De la Garza and a nameless narrator, function as inversions of the other being that the character with the most radical thoughts expresses her frustrations through an internal monologue, while the other character, who is literally born in the domestic space, paradoxically discovers and obtains agency within confinement thus becoming a revolutionary.

Even though Esquivel and Castellanos come from different literary eras, both are puzzle pieces to a movement of authors' contributions to the Mexican literary genre as a whole. Therefore, beginning with these authors does no justice without first gathering an overview of Mexican literature to better understand how this literary sphere functions as a continuum from the pre Colombian era to female writers such as Esquivel and

Castellanos. Mexican literature begins in the sixteenth century during the pre-Colombian era. Most literary works during this time are not created in the ways that people produce literature today; instead these works are oral storytelling treasures that the country's indigenous people pass down from generation to generation. As a result of colonization and the Spanish conquest, however, Mexico's old identity and origin are replaced by European cultures and customs that overpower these previous traditions. For centuries, representations of indigenous peoples from the Tlaxcaltecas, a tribe who was under the Aztec empire, to tribes who preceded the Aztecs become ancient ghosts until Mexico strives to redefine its identity after the Mexican Revolution. According to Anne Doramus, "responding in part to the identity crisis triggered by the Revolution, many artists and intellectuals set out to define what it meant to be Mexican" (Doramus 2). The first step in this search begins with literary works such as Carlos Fuentes' "Chac Mool," and Elena Garro's "It's the Fault of the Tlaxcaltecas," which bridge the gap between ancient indigenous culture and modern Mexico. As Mexico unveils its identity issues as manifestations of the Spanish invasions in the early 1500s, this movement also reveals how the invasions create flawed societal systems of inequalities such as racism and sexism. With the exception of Juana Inés de la Cruz, the emergence of female authors does not occur until the mid to late twentieth century.

Laura Esquivel's *Like Water for Chocolate* is a magical realism novel that follows the life of Tita De la Garza. The novel's narrator is Tita's grandniece who unfolds her life through a twelve month installment of recipes. *Like Water for Chocolate* also includes major characters Mama Elena, Gertrudis, Pedro and Rosaura. Characters such as Nacha, Roberto, José Treviño, Juan De la Garza, Esperanza and John Brown are only present in the novel for a short amount of time, yet still have a large impact on the development of the main characters. In the first chapter, the narrator introduces readers to Tita's unfortunate fate. According to her family's tradition, the youngest daughter can never marry or have children and must take care of her mother for the rest of her life. This tradition conflicts with Tita's own desires to marry her love, Pedro. Instead, her mother, Mama Elena, marries her daughter, Rosaura, off to Pedro. As the novel progresses, readers watch how the triad of Mama Elena's maternal authority over the household, Tita's rejection of her fate and her love for Pedro despite his marriage to her sister serve as a foundation of the novel's ending. Ultimately, this triad creates a life full of obstacles that transform her food and domestic sphere within her household, thus manifesting an almost magical power within Tita.

Rosario Castellanos "Cooking Lesson" is part of her short story book *Álbum de familia*, which consists of three short stories. The story is a first person narrative following a newlywed who does not know how to cook

and instead resorts to using a cookbook. When she realizes that she cannot create any of the recipes, she becomes frustrated and decides to cook a steak before her husband comes home from work. Unfortunately, the steak burns causing the narrator to express her frustrations through an internal monologue. In this monologue, she struggles between being herself and being who her husband expects her to be. Even though she is alone in the kitchen, her true feelings remain thoughts in her mind to suggest that she feels voiceless in her societal role. In the rest of the story, she struggles with upholding the image of domesticity her husband thinks she is or shattering this image and rejecting the Mexican woman's submissive role in the twentieth century. This short story contains a triad of the narrator's internal monologue, external monologue and masculine power over the domestic sphere. The narrator leaves the story open-ended, so readers never find out what decision she chooses.

In "Cooking Lesson," the narration differs greatly from *Like Water for Chocolate* to suggest that the narrator of this short story represents the inner psyche of Mexican women who do not fit the ideal of the domestic, submissive woman, or even women who do fit this ideal, yet are unhappy with its' restrictions. This story is a first person narrative and readers get more than a glimpse of how she truly feels. Since the narrator is nameless, she exemplifies an entire group of women who feel the same way she does. These women, however, have no agency to outwardly express their frustrations, so readers must also remember that she spends the entire story thinking; she does not vocalize her true feelings about anything but the burnt steak which speaks volumes about how her society conditions her to keep her thoughts to herself. She is aware of this reality because she states "What do I care? My place is here. I have been here since the beginning of time. In the German proverb, a woman is synonymous with *Küche, Kinder, Kirche*. I was lost – in classrooms, on the streets, in offices, in cafes – throwing away skills, which I must now forget, to acquire new ones" (Castellanos 1). According to Herminia Valdez, "this statement represents the moral tradition women perform, since the kitchen is the here" (Valdez 4). Everything that she has learned no longer matters because her new duty is to take care of the household and her husband.

This narrator is nothing like Tita and can relate more to Rosaura instead, which bridges the two texts to argue that regardless of how these women's' places in their household setting appear, they still remain trapped in the same category. Whereas Tita never gains the chance to marry and sees it as freedom to love and be with who she wants, Rosaura and this narrator feel like prisoners. This story gives readers what *Like Water for Chocolate* does not: a first person perspective into the mind of a woman who cannot cook and does not have a loving relationship. She describes her marriage to her

husband towards the middle of the story: “When your body drops on top of mine, I feel like a tombstone is over me, full of inscriptions, other names, memorable dates. You moan inarticulately and I want to whisper in your ear my name so you remember who you own” (Castellanos 3). She literally feels as if her headboard is a tombstone and there is no love when she and her husband are intimate. Like Rosaura and Pedro, who use a nuptial sheet when they have sex, this marriage is dead. The narrator feels the disconnect between her and her spouse because she even describes his moans as inarticulate meaning that she feels as if he is unaware that she is there. The tombstone is also full of other names which implies that her husband is unfaithful. When she speaks in this quote, it is evident that she wants to say these same words to her husband, but she cannot. Her husband has superiority over her even when he is not present in the house. In her article, Helena López argues that “we can rehearse a response from an understanding of the subjectivity that not only recognizes its discursive framework -for the case of “Cooking Lesson” a speech of protest anchored in the feminist climate of the 1970s- but also the emotional circuits that traverse the body in unsuspected routes” (López 86). Yes, the narrator in the story does take on a feminist stance, but it is also unfortunate that she does not feel like she is in a safe space to let her stance be known to anyone other than herself. Esquivel’s novel is set during the Mexican Revolution, while this story is set in 1971. This text showcases that Mexican society still places its women in a domestic space over forty years later, even if the women do not want to be in that limited space.

While the wife in “Cooking Lesson” only thinks about her frustrations with the social constructions that limit women in her society, Tita utilizes her own dissatisfactions to make a change within her spatial setting. Tita initially uses food as a medium of communication to express her discontent, frustrations and hidden desires, but as the novel progresses, her utilization of food also serves as a magical element that has powerful effects on the other characters ultimately forcing them to face and consciously acknowledge their suppressed emotions, memories and dissatisfactions. The first example of her domestic magical powers begins with Nacha in the second chapter of the novel. While preparing a wedding cake for Pedro and Rosaura’s wedding, Tita’s tears force Nacha and the wedding guests to literally taste sorrow. After Nacha tastes the icing, she is “suddenly overcome with an intense longing... at eighty-five, there was no longer much point in crying, lamenting the wedding banquet she’d been waiting for that had never come, or the wedding she had never had, even though she had had a fiancé. Oh yes, she had! But the mama of Mama Elena had sent him packing” (Esquivel 36). Tita is not the only person unhappy with the events that occur within the De la Garza household, but she is the start of a fight

for change. Her family has a revolutionary war on the verge of exploding in their house during the Mexican Revolution. Hence the title, Janice Jaffe explains that “‘Como agua para chocolate’ is a Mexican idiom which means extremely agitated or, in the English equivalent, boiling mad” (Jaffe 220). Members of this household are all in a sense victims to a system, and when people are a part of a system that they are conditioned to follow from the moment they enter the world, whether they like that system or not, those members usually do not have the agency to deconstruct and rebuild it.

Additionally, Rosaura and Gertrudis sit at opposite spectrums of Tita’s domestic power. While Tita’s magical food sparks Gertrudis’ liberation, implications of Rosaura’s disconnect from her younger sister become clear the day Pedro finds her dead. Both character’s development and lack of development centers around food. Maite Zubiaurre contests that “Tita does not share her power with other women. She seems much more interested in bewitching men than in offering solidarity and nurture to her female friends” (Esquivel 35). Her argument, however, overlooks the evident reality that her power does not need to nurture her female friends because it instead unleashes the secrets they hide; whether or not the outcome for these women are positive is arbitrary to the credit Tita deserves. For instance, Gertrudis would have never become a general in the revolutionary army if Tita had not liberated her through the power in her rose petal sauce. Gertrudis is then able to assume a position that exists outside of the domestic sphere. Rosaura’s fate is less fortunate since she dies from digestive problems: “her burial was very poorly attended, because the disagreeable odor Rosaura’s body gave off got worse after her death” (Esquivel 233). Her digestive problems correlate with the complicated relationship she has with Tita, and since the author continuously implies that the protagonist has a power, the idea that Rosaura’s misfortunes are an unintentional punishment is not absurd.

On the contrary, the novel’s circular element of beginning and ending with Tita’s grandniece, Esperanza’s daughter, as the narrator suggests two important aspects that readers may not actually become aware of until they have finished reading the novel. First, there is a parallelism between Tita and Esperanza that readers must take note of because the second aspect deems Tita an immortal figure “who will go on living as long as there is someone who cooks her recipes” (Esquivel 246). In the first page of the novel, the narrator makes it clear that the chapters to follow will uncover generations of her family’s secrets, including the similarities between her mother and great-aunt: “Tita was so sensitive to onions...they say she would just cry and cry; when she was still in my great-grandmother’s belly her sobs were so loud that even Nacha, the cook, who was half-deaf, could hear them easily. Once her wailing got so violent that it brought on an early labor” (Esquivel 5). Like Tita, Esperanza was born prematurely and as her mother’s youngest

and only daughter, she “was destined to take care of her [mother] until the day she died” (Esquivel 150). As much as Tita tries to limit her connection to her sister’s children, especially after the death of her nephew, Roberto, it seems as if her bond with Esperanza becomes maternal as well. In her article, Maria Zanetta argues that “Esperanza’s daughter, Tita’s granddaughter-niece shares the recipes or written history of her grandmother-aunt with the reader to keep the tradition alive and invite the reader to participate with her” (Esquivel 159). Since Rosaura marries Pedro, the love of sister’s life, the connections Tita develops with Rosaura’s children are inevitable because it seems as if they were supposed to be her biological children. Biologically, she is Esperanza’s aunt, but spiritually, she is her mother and this maternal bond only heightens as the novel continues.

At surface level, Mama Elena is the main obstacle that stands between Tita and her desires, but she is also an authoritative figure who experiences traumas in her life that lead to her cold demeanor, which is ultimately conflicting because one would think that she would give her daughters the opportunity to make their own decisions since she did not have that same luxury. Mama Elena is arguably one of the novel’s most complex characters because beneath her exterior is a woman who endures similar familial issues between what they want and what she wants, just like her daughter does. In the fourth chapter of the novel, she says “I’ve never needed a man to defend the house; all by myself, I’ve done all right with my ranch and my daughters” (Esquivel 80). At this point, her rejection of masculinity makes sense because readers do not yet know much about her past and how she comes to be who she is now. Even the soldiers who attempt to invade her house restrain from challenging her authority: “it really was hard to meet Mama Elena’s gaze, even for the captain. There was something daunting about it. It produced a nameless fear in those who suffered it; they felt tried and convicted for their offenses. They fell prisoner to a childlike fear of maternal authority” (Esquivel 90). It is hard to decide if Mama Elena would still have the same leadership position in her household if her husband was still alive, or if she ultimately gains this authority through the fact that she is a widow. Even though critics do not address this observation often, patriarchal power faintly shadows over their household and infiltrates their liminal space. To further explain this statement, Mama Elena exemplifies one who internalizes the constructions that oppress her and then knowingly utilizes those same ideologies on future generations, instead of going against these ideologies because she knows that it would not be acceptable in her society.

Furthermore, the battle between Mama Elena and Tita correlates with the eventual struggles between Rosaura and Esperanza first as a reminder that the novel is set during the Mexican Revolution, meaning that these characters represent their own revolution. Mama Elena and Tita both pos-

ness agency within the confinement of their society resulting in the better fates of Esperanza and her daughter. Secondly, the correlation is a suggestion that Mama Elena is the start to the deconstruction of a societal system that attempts to choose women's destinies for them. The saddest part of this reality is when these women feel that they have no other choice but to play into the same roles that oppress them, just as Mama Elena does. After Mama Elena dies, Tita finds a diary and a packet of love letters from her mother's true love, José Treviño. In these letters, she discovers the true cause of her father's death: "Gertrudis was José's child and not her father's" (Esquivel 137). When Gertrudis' first son is born evidently biracial, Tita must reveal the truth to her sister in effort to save her marriage. Mama Elena's forbidden love showcases the issues of racism present in Mexico during her time. Her secret relationship with José even at the expense of her family's disapproval transgresses through her daughter and her daughter's son who "got his dark skin from his grandfather and his blue eyes from Mama Elena" (Esquivel 234). Even though she never voices her rebellion to her children, it does not necessarily need to be said because Mama Elena's love affair is the first deconstruction of her society's problems of racism, and although this issue is not the centerfold of the text, this minor part of the novel has a major effect because it demonstrates that sometimes change cannot happen without rebellion.

As an extension, maybe if Rosaura discovered the struggles her mother had to endure, she would have not wanted to carry on the De la Garza family tradition. After Esperanza is born, John's son, Alex, "stuck his face up to the cradle to see Esperanza and was struck by the girl's beauty. Like all children his age, he didn't have any secrets, and he declaimed: "Papa, I want to get married too, just like you. With this little girl" (Esquivel 150). Rosaura immediately explains to him that she will never marry because she has to take care of her mother until the day she dies. Even though Tita is unaware of how she will prevent Esperanza from enduring this cruel fate, she knows that she cannot let the same tradition cause suffering for her niece. It is important to acknowledge that the English translation for Esperanza is Hope. Esperanza is the true breakthrough to the deconstruction that Mama Elena and Tita begin; unfortunately, the course of her fate does not change until her mother dies, which is yet another parallel to her aunt. Herminia Valdez describes this breakthrough as a necessity: "Tita not only writes an inventive recipe book; she not only writes a diary that contains the secret of her love without proving that the true recipe of love and life is the fight to defend one's right to live" (Valdez 9). When she marries Alex at the end of the novel, she literally becomes the embodiment of hope.

Even though Pedro is a main character who spends much of the novel in a love triangle between himself, Tita and John Brown, Esquivel's incorpora-

tion of nearly all of the novel's male characters as minor characters aid in giving critics a better understanding of the female characters. These minor male characters influence their female counterparts' discovery of obtaining power within the domestic sphere. For Tita, John Brown may not be the man she chooses to be with, but he does support her through every choice she makes. The most interesting aspect about John Brown is the fact that he is a doctor, but he never tries to fix Tita. While taking care of Tita after she has a mental breakdown, he urges her to communicate without forcing her to:

The doctor took a piece of phosphorus in a rag and gave it to Tita. "I don't want to break the rule of silence you have imposed, so as a secret between us, I'm going to ask you to write the reason you won't talk on that wall over there as soon as I leave all right? Tomorrow, I will divine the words before your eyes."...

That night when John Brown entered the laboratory, he was pleased to see the writing on the wall, in phosphorescent letters: "Because I don't want to." With those words Tita had taken her first step towards freedom. (Esquivel 118)

John Brown wants her to heal on her own. He does guide her through her development as a person, but he does not do so in an aggressive way, like her mother. While her mother feels that tough love is necessary through how she raises her daughters, the gender roles between Mama Elena and John Brown blur and invert. John transforms into a complex character as well because he takes on the motherly role of her nurturer.

For Mama Elena, the fate of her love with José Treviño is the punishment that comes with disobeying her family, which is similar to the punishment her daughter, Tita, endures. In a packet of letters, Tita discovers her mother's deepest secret. José Treviño was Mama Elena's one true love, but she was unable to marry him because he had African ancestry. Her parents were mortified and immediately forced her to marry Juan De la Garza instead: "A colony of Negroes, fleeing from the Civil War in the United States, from the risk they ran of being lynched, had come to settle near the village. Young José was the product of an illicit love affair between the elder José Treviño and a beautiful Negress" (Esquivel 137). In this case, her situation is much sadder than Tita's because she is unable to be with the one she loves simply because of his skin color. Like everyone else, José does not have the luxury to choose his ethnicity, so it is unfortunate that his mother escapes a country that hates her merely for her skin color, just to come to another country that does the exact same thing to her. The relationship she has with José's father, however, showcases that love is purely love regardless of appearance.

Mama Elena learns this reality as well and even though she is strict and at times harsh, she would not wish the pain she has to endure on anyone. For this reason, she does not handle the love affair between Tita and Pedro in a positive manner because she only does what her parents conditioned her to do.

The narrator's introduction of Gertrudis' soldier, Treviño, also comes along with intentional clues the author hints at to her readers to suggest that he may be her half-brother. After Gertrudis becomes a general, Treviño becomes her right hand man and best soldier. At a certain point during the war, she gave him the task of finding a spy who "had infiltrated the troop" (Esquivel 194). When he found the traitor, he beat him to death as an act of revenge because "a man who had a red role in the shape of a spider between his legs had raped his mother and his sister" (Esquivel 195). First, it is crucial to note that Sergeant Treviño shares the same last name as Gertrudis' biological father. Esquivel's choice in name selection is not coincidental because it is yet another example of how some of the characters parallel to the others. Readers never receive a physical description of Treviño, but the fact that Gertrudis rejects his romantic advances towards her may be because they are related, even though she is not aware. Another important hint is when he seeks revenge on his sister and mother's rapist, there is no mention of his father because his father may be José which would make sense because he is dead. Additionally, Gertrudis' husband shares the same name as her sisters' father. This chapter in the novel contains so many tiny hints and parallels that connect the female characters that it is easy to overlook them. Mama Elena tries to bury her past in her closet, but her past is inescapable and connects to people both within and outside of her household.

Tita and the narrator of "Cooking Lesson" appear to have many differences, but they still deal with the same main problem: they do not have the power to choose their fates, and if they do decide to change the course of their futures, they must fight for it. One woman does fight, while readers never find out if the other does the same or submits to a system that she has grown up in. Neither of these women's decisions are wrong or better than the other and I want to make this point very clear. The overall argument of this paper sums up to the fact that the issues these women endure are beyond them because these issues result from a system. The problem is not that they must obey or disobey because this issue is not a binary one: there is no in between. The complexity of this problem is that a systematic structure tries to hinder these women from having the opportunity to freely choose whether or not they want to remain in the domestic setting, attend college or both, for instance. Transgressing expectations is still an issue today because people acknowledge that life is not a one size fits all, but still

may reject that reality because they feel obligated to fulfill a societal role. Texts such as *Like Water for Chocolate* and “Cooking Lesson” demonstrate that a woman’s experience in life is much more complex than the limited space they receive and these complexities should be celebrated.

WORKS CITED

- Castellanos, Rosario. *Álbum De Familia*. [2d ed.]. ed., México, J. Mortiz, 1975.
- Esquivel, Laura. *Like Water for Chocolate: a novel in monthly installments, with recipes, romances, and home remedies*. n.p.: New York: Doubleday, 1992., 1992.
- Jaffe, Janice. “Hispanic American Women Writers’ Novel Recipes and Laura Esquivel’s *Como Agua Para Chocolate* (Like Water for Chocolate).” *Women’s Studies*, no. 2, 1993, pp. 217-230. EBSCOhost.
- López, Helena. “Pedagogía, Feminismo Y Emociones: Una Lectura De “Lección De Cocina” De Rosario Castellanos.” [“Pedagogy, Feminism and Emotions: A Reading of “Lección de cocina” [Cooking lesson] by Rosario Castellanos”]. *Revista La Palabra*, no. 29, jul-dic2016, pp. 79-88. EBSCOhost.
- Saneleuterio, Elia. “La Subversión De Conciencia en Rosario Castellanos: Un Acercamiento Didáctico a “Lección De Cocina.” [“Subversion of consciousness in Rosario Castellanos: a didactic approach to “Lección de cocina”]. *Literatura Mexicana*, vol. 28, no. 1, Jan. 2017, pp. 99-116. EBSCOhost
- Tyutina, Svetlana V. “Magical Realism and the History of the Emotions in Latin America.” *Latin Americanist*, vol. 60, no. 2, June 2016, pp. 309-311. EBSCOhost, doi:10.1111/tla.12080_10.
- Valdez Alemañy, Herminia M. “Entre Olores Y Sabores: El Erotismo en Tres Narradoras Hispanoamericanas: Castellanos, Esquivel Y Buitrago.” *Cuervo*, vol. 19, Jan. 1998, pp. 3-11. EBSCOhost.
- Zanetta, Maria A. “Rebelión Y Reivindicación en *Como Agua Para Chocolate* De Laura Esquivel Y Las Pinturas De Remedios Varo.” *Latin Americanist*, vol. 58, no. 2, June 2014, pp. 157-174. EBSCOhost.
- Zubiaurre, Maite. “Culinary Eros in Contemporary Hispanic Female Fiction: From Kitchen Tales to Table Narratives.” *College Literature*, vol. 33, no. 3, Summer2006, pp. 29-51. EBSCOhost, doi:10.1353/lit.2006.0047.