MALMÖ STUDIES IN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE, CULTURE AND MEDIA

MALMÖ STUDIES IN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE, CULTURE AND MEDIA

Eating Cultures in Children's Literature

National, International and Transnational Perspectives

Anna Gasperini, Björn Sundmark and Laura Tosi

Eating Cultures in Children's Literature

Edited by
Anna Gasperini, Björn Sundmark and Laura Tosi

Malmö Studies in Children's Literature, Culture and Media

Series editor: Björn Sundmark

Editorial Board: Anna Kérchy, Chrysogonus Siddha Malilang, Karin Nykvist, Åse Marie Ommundsen, Anette Svensson, Olle Widhe, & Maria Österlund

Books in the series

A Companion to "Jabberwocky" in Translation
Edited by Anna Kérchy, Kit Kelen, and Björn Sundmark

Eating Cultures in Children's Literature
Edited by Anna Gasperini, Björn Sundmark and Laura Tosi

Eating Cultures in Children's Literature

Editors: Anna Gasperini, Laura Tosi, and Björn Sundmark

Cover and Inside Pages Design: Chrysogonus Siddha Malilang
Front cover image: © Design Ilon Wikland AB 1965

Published by Malmö University Press
Printed by Media-Tryck
ISBN 978-91-7877-564-4 (print)
ISBN 978-91-7877-565-1 (pdf)

DOI 10.24834/isbn.9789178775651

Media-Tryck is a Nordic Swan Ecolabel certified provider of printed material. Read more about our environmental work at www.mediatryck.lu.se

MADE IN SWEDEN

Eating Cultures in Children's Literature

Edited by
Anna Gasperini, Björn Sundmark and Laura Tosi

Malmö University Press
2024

Table of Contents

Introduction[1]

Anna Gasperini

A few months ago, I taught a class on children's cookbooks in my module on food and health in children's and YA literature. Of course, I wanted to show a specimen of children's cookbook to my students, and I chose my ancient, battered, egg-stained 1980s copy, translated into Italian, of Angela Wilke's *Usborne First Cookbook*. In Italian, the title is "Imparo a cucinare", "I learn how to cook".[2] Asking myself why I was choosing that book, instead of buying one for the occasion, I found out the answer was: because, to me, it is special. It is the book that guided me through my first cooking experiments as a child, my first attempts at making food for myself and others (sometimes with disastrous results, to which my mother would patiently try to remedy). It also introduced me to the idea that people around the world eat different foods. Leafing through the book, I see the recipe for "Hamburger all'americana" (American hamburgers in original), with a big USA flag flapping in one corner and one of the iconic little cooks, dressed like a cowboy, recommending the reader to accompany their burger with ketchup and a roast potato (*Imparo a Cucinare* 16). The French flag is stuck on the recipe for "Soufflé al formaggio" (Cheese soufflé in original), where the very first lines explain the meaning of the French word "soufflé" and invite the aspiring cook not to feel intimidated by this "capolavoro dell'arte culinaria" (*Imparo* 18).[3] Finally, a little man with thick, black handlebar moustaches proudly waves the Italian flag over the "Spaghetti alla Bolognese", just above the lines explaining how to cook spaghetti "al dente" (*Imparo* 20).[4]

However we may perceive these representations today, back then they conveyed to me the sense that some recipes were Italian, and some belonged to different people, with different eating habits and cooking techniques, and that I, an Italian child, could learn how to cook them.[5] Over time, this awareness developed into curiosity and passion, as well as into a growing collection of cookbooks dedicated to specific cuisines – Irish, Caribbean, Chinese, and Indian, among others – that exceeds by far the true capacity of my bookshelf. So, I showed to my students *Imparo a cucinare* because it is connected to food memories and practices that are part of my story and my identity, including my use of food as a tool to learn about the world. It allowed me to open a channel of communication between myself, an Italian woman, and my Irish and American students.

Cultural Identity, Encounter, and Conflict: Theoretical Background

The interconnection between food and identity – cultural, but also individual – and food's power as a symbol of cultural encounter or conflict have been a matter of academic discussion since the 1980s.[6] Massimo Montanari summarised this interconnection and this power in the axiom "food is culture" (xi). At the core of Montanari's conception of food as culture is the idea of choice: of what food to eat, how to prepare it, and when and how to consume it. So interwoven are these choices with the background of the people who make them, Montanari asserts, that their strengths as cultural signifiers, as vehicles and vessels of culture, can be compared to that of languages (133). Perhaps, he suggests, food can be even more effective a vehicle of cultural exchange than language is because, while it effectively encapsulates the other's culture, "[e]ating the food of the "other" is easier […] than decoding the other's language" (133).

Montanari's idea of understanding the "other" by eating their food successfully applies to the daily practices and cultural tools – including literature – that adults use to regulate the relationship between themselves and young people. Adults use food as an enculturation tool to ensure that young individuals "belong", fundamentally by conforming to the rules of their (adult) culture; and young people use it as an age-specific identity-making tool, with a parallel set of rules that sometimes contrast with adult eating practices (Ludvigsen and Scott 433).[7] In this regard, it is helpful to turn to Wendy Katz's (justly) much-quoted words from her seminal article *Some Uses of Food in Children's Literature*. Proposing an approach to children's literature that would "[yield] a sort of sociology of childhood", she suggests: "understand the relations between the child and food […] and you understand the workings of the world of the young […] an examination of what's eaten, by whom, when, and where gives one a portrait of children's manners, problems, and preoccupations" (192). In this sense, Katz's observations resonate with Montanari's reflections on food as a vehicle for cultural exchange, in this case between young people's and adult culture. Katz's words invite us to remember that this exchange is to be understood not only in terms of adults enculturating the young, but also in terms of the young creating their own eating culture, which adults must endeavour to understand, if they want to truly understand young people. Kara K. Keeling and Scott Pollard's *Critical Approaches to Food in Children's Literature*, the first collection of essays entirely dedicated to this subject, added a further layer to our understanding of food as a cultural signifier in young people's literature. Food, they argue, not only is a cultural sign to be read, but is endowed with the energy of an action catalyst: "[f]ood makes things happen. It is acted upon (cooked, elaborated), but as a cultural force it also acts" (13),[8] moving the plot forward.

Katz and Keeling and Pollard help us understand the capability of food to signify and "project" culture towards an onlooker in young people's literature, acting as a cultural bridge; other studies, by contrast, highlight what could be defined the "shadow" side of food in general, and in young people's literature in particular: its power to enculturate,

and mark clear distinctions between "us" and "them" in terms of conflict. After all, cultures can meet, but they can also clash. Tapping into some of the harsher aspects of food consumption in this genre, Carolyn Daniel summarized the enculturation aspect, that is, the capability to convey – or even create – cultural identity in children's literature with the help of food: food scenes, she asserted, teach the reader "what to eat, what not to eat, or who eats whom" (4). From this perspective, by learning how to eat one learns how to *be* in the world either as "one of us" or not – an idea that conflates the symbolic and material power of food to "make" an individual, perhaps best represented by Jean-Anthelme Brillat-Savarin's most famous aphorism: "Dis-moi ce que tu manges: je te dirai ce que tu es" (8).[9] It also clarifies that, depending on the position of the onlooker, one can be eater or food, in both metaphorical and literal terms. This idea is also key to Bridget Carrington and Jennifer Harding's 2014 edited volume *Feast and Famine*, which reflects on responses to food and its absence in young people's literature, on its capability to empower or displace characters, of immediately marking them as "one of us" or "other", as eater or eatable. This need to assert boundaries, to clearly mark who eats what (or whom), can be tied to young people's literature's function as a tool to convey *national* identity. Reflecting on the role the concept of nation plays in defining people's identity, Kit Kelen and Björn Sundmark identify the "[making] and [education of] future citizens" as one of the key-tasks of young people's literature (1). While "culture" does not always necessarily coincide with "nation", food as a cultural element can be powerfully connected with matters of nation, nationalism, and nationhood, becoming a ground for both encounter and conflict.

Why "Eating Cultures"?

It must be remembered that texts for young people are seldom, if ever, written by the young. Consequently, it is a literature that expresses both nostalgia for and adult concerns for what children eat – physically and metaphorically. The way these preoccupations interlace with the relationship between food and culture is at the center of the reflections collected in the present volume. The collection investigates how the child is positioned as the recipient/eater of the "cultural food" in narratives from different national contexts, and it also highlights some elements that are to be found in more than one national menu, so to speak – that are, in fact, transnational. Each chapter explores what it means to serve a cultural meal to a young person, identifying the discourses that are added to the recipe, cooked, and served to them. By analyzing authorial or translational choices, the different chapters unpack the thematic and ideological roots of the stories that authors, illustrators and translators offer their young readers. Within the narratives here explored, young people are represented as the eaters who are fed the food culture, including its nightmares and fantasies, by the author. Through these books, adults imagine (or perhaps remember themselves as) children reflecting on food and eating; they make these imagined children approach the matter of food philosophically, connecting it to ontological reflections on

who they are and what makes them *them*, with a sort of Kristevan awareness that anything I ingest will become (part of) me, hence I must care about what I ingest.

The first section of the book focuses on narratives with a strong "enculturetion" aspect: Canani observes how anxieties about changing foodscapes and political measures for food regulation merge with concerns about changes in traditional family roles in 1980s England in Susan Townsend's *Adrian Mole* series; the strong connection between traditional family roles, food policies, and nurture is also at the core of Waddilove's analysis of post-war English children's literature. In both cases, the parents' ability to nurture their children, to present appropriate cultural (food) models represents a core concern in food scenes in the texts. Food as a marker of cultural identity in narratives from contexts with strong concerns about their political and economic autonomy, tinged with nostalgia for a glorious past, is at the centre of Myers's comparative analysis of two specimens of British and Italian children's literature. In this case study, food's power to define "us" versus "them" is key to understanding these narratives within their national and political contexts.

The second section is dedicated to inter/national and transnational nightmares, as in, narratives addressing the supreme threat lurking in young people's literature: being eaten. Analyzing the figure of the man-, or rather, all-eating giant, Kalogirou notes how this figure transcends national boundaries – and sometimes the boundaries of the page – to signify ingestion anxieties at all levels. The ability of ingestion anxieties to travel across space, time, and art forms is the starting point of de Rijke's analysis of a story that begins where many – at least in nature – end: a prey is devoured by a predator. Children's literature, however, provides an imaginative space where tragedy becomes opportunity, and notions of death, consumption, homely and un-homely are subverted. Subversion is also at the core of Gordon Ginzburg's analysis of consumption images in nonsense poetry from the two sides of the Atlantic Ocean, in which death by consumption – which the poet bestows on the consumed and on the consumer with equal jollity – happens at a crossroad between dread, threat, and laughter. A similar ambiguity about consumer and consumed, and laughable or nightmarish matter emerges from Orestano's study of images of the child as pig in the Victorian context. Analyzing these representations of fat children as both desirable and undesirable (as fatness was interpreted both as a sign of good health and as a sign of greed), Orestano also examines how they changed after the development of fat studies.

The closing section is dedicated to dreamed and imagined food cultures across and within national borders, where food emerges in all its catalyst energy and transforms societies. Kérchy's chapter analyses food in the Alice books and in their adaptations across a variety of media, highlighting how the nonsensical food of Carroll's texts has proven itself a powerful tool to imagine, and sometimes materialise, cultures of eating both monstrous and wonderful over time in different cultural contexts. In juxtaposition

to the nonsense-embracing creativity explored by Kérchy, in Löwe and Planka's chapter the analysis of food systems in cli-fi dystopias both produced and set in different national contexts highlights how the interaction between food systems, food culture and climate change poses questions to the young reader about possible futures where food shortage is a global reality. Plenty, on the other hand, is at the heart of Wieczorkievicz's chapter on dreamed banquets of Arcadian British authors and how this motif translates into different languages and food cultures. The analysis focuses on the key-feature of food in children's literature, that is, dreams of abundance, and zooms in on what happens when one food culture's concept of "abundant delight" must be translated into another language – or even if this can be done at all. Sundmark's chapter on Astrid Lindgren's books offer a different perspective on abundance and its opposite, hunger. The chapter explores how Lindgren's distinctive humorous approach to both plenty and lack of food becomes an occasion for showing empathy, building a community and creating occasions for encounter between different lifestyles. These elements also emerge from Travagliati's analysis of the Italian picturebook *Storia di panini*, where the sandwich, symbol of unseen female labor within the domestic environment, becomes a powerful trigger of change in the hands of a little girl, enabling her to bring about a more equal society. The collection closes with an afterword by Peter Hunt, where Hunt explores the complexity inherent to any attempt at formulating an overarching theory of food in children's literature, based on the "symbiotic" connection between food and culture, using British children's literature and food culture from the Victorian era to the present as a case study.

Enjoy.

Works Cited

Brillat-Savarin, Jean-Anthelme. *Physiologie Du Goût: Ou Méditations de Gastronomie Transcendante - Tome I*. Ligaran Éditions, 2015.

Carrington, Bridget, and Jennifer Harding. *Feast or Famine? Food and Children's Literature.* Cambridge Scholars Publisher, 2014.

Daniel, Carolyn. *Voracious Children: Who Eats Whom in Children's Literature*. Routledge, 2006.

Fitzgerald A, et al. "Factors Influencing the Food Choices of Irish Children and Adolescents: A Qualitative Investigation: Health Promotion International." *Health Promotion International*, vol. 25, no. 3, Sept. 2010, pp. 289–98. *EBSCOhost*, https://doi.org/10.1093/heapro/daq021.

Katz, Wendy R. "Some Uses of Food in Children's Literature." *Children's Literature in Education,* vol. 11, no. 4, Dec. 1980, pp. 192–99. Springer Link, https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01130849.

Keeling, Kara K., and Scott T. Pollard, editors. *Critical Approaches to Food in Children's Literature*. Routledge, 2009.

Kelen, Kit, and Björn Sundmark. *The Nation in Children's Literature: Nations of Childhood*. Taylor &

Francis Group, 2012.
Ludvigsen, Anna, and Sara Scott. "Real Kids Don't Eat Quiche: What Food Means to Children." *Food, Culture & Society*, vol. 12, no. 4, Dec. 2009, pp. 417–36. *DOI.org (Crossref)*, https://doi.org/10.2752/175174409X456728.
Montanari, Massimo. *Food Is Culture*. Translated by Albert Sonnenfeld, Columbia University Press, 2006.
Wilkes, Angela. *Imparo a Cucinare*. Translated by Maria Casati, Gruppo Editoriale Fabbri, Bompiani, Sonzogno, Etas S.p.A., 1984.
---. *The Usborne First Cookbook*. Usborne, 1987. *Internet Archive*, http://archive.org/details/usbornefirstcook0000ange.

Notes

[1] The contributions included in the present collection, and part of the research presented in this Introduction, were part of the "Food and/in Children's Culture International Online Conference – National, International and Transnational Perspectives" hosted at Ca' Foscari University of Venice in April 2021, which had received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No 840686.

[2] My translation.

[3] Literally, "masterpiece of the culinary art." In original: "A soufflé looks like a masterpiece but is surprisingly easy to make" (Wilkes, *The Usborne First Cookbook* 16).

[4] In original: "It should be soft but with a bit of 'bite' to it" (Usborne 18).

[5] In fact, the Italian translation attributed a nationality to dishes that either did not have one or had a name that would not be familiar to an Italian audience in the original English: "Perfect Rice" (*Usborne* 20) becomes "Riso alla cinese" (Chinese-style rice) (*Imparo* 22) and "Kebabs" (*Usborne* 23) become "Spiedini alla turca" (Turkish-style skewers) (*Imparo* 25).

[6] For an overview of the development of food studies as a field, and its interrelationship with children's literature, see Kara K. Keeling and Scott Pollard, *Critical Approaches to Food in Children's Literature*.

[7] In a study analysing "children's food culture" among British children, Ludvigsen and Scott and note the contradiction between adult expectations about healthy eating in childhood and adults' "collusion" in fostering cultural expectations about children preferring "food that tastes good (sweet, salt and high in fat)" (433). In general, their investigation found that children's food culture stems from young people's need for agency, and for a way to differentiate themselves from the adults around them (433). The study performed by Fitzgerald et al. to ascertain the extent to which Irish children's food choices were determined by awareness of health matters reached similar conclusions (292–96).

[8] In their most recent collection of essays, *Table Lands: Food in Children's Literature*, published in 2020, Keeling and Pollard reflect on their decade-long work, addressing its developments and changes.

[9] Literally: "Tell me what you eat: I will tell you what you are."

Food and National Identity:

Assimilating One's Culture

The "Toad in the Hole": Food and Foodways in Sue Townsend's "Adrian Mole" YA Saga

Marco Canani

Created by Leicester-born writer Sue Townsend (1946-2014), Adrian Mole is the eponymous hero of a book series for young adults. The saga first gained success as a radio play, *The Diary of Nigel Mole, Aged 13¼,* in 1982, and was turned into a novel later in the same year. The book, *The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole*, introduces the readers to the everyday difficulties, the fleeting ambitions, and the largely unattainable expectations of a teenager growing up in the Midlands in the 1980s. The enthusiastic response of the public convinced Townsend to expand the series and portray Adrian's transition into adulthood.[1] The following two novels, *The Growing Pains of Adrian Mole* (1984) and *True Confessions of Adrian Albert Mole* (1989), narrate the boy's secondary-school years and his first job as a librarian. Readers thus learn of Adrian's teenage insecurities as he fights against pimples and bullies at school, of his love for the pretentious, upper-class Pandora Braithwaite, and of his literary and intellectual aspirations, which harshly come to an end when he fails his O levels.

After Adrian's stories became a successful TV series on ITV in the mid 1980s, Townsend further extended her media franchise to represent Adrian's adult life.[2] The writer created a 'feuilleton diary' that reads as a modern-day *Bildungsroman* for an entire generation – that is, the British who grew up in the post-industrial, unemployment-ridden Thatcher years. Similarly, the readers grow up with Adrian, and a central feature of his diaries is the ubiquitous, and at times obsessive presence of food. Food accompanies various moments and stages in his coming of age, and it is crucial to his emancipation in *Adrian Mole: The Wilderness Years* (1993) and *Adrian Mole: The Cappuccino Years* (1999), where

he finds employment at a restaurant in Soho.

In this chapter I focus on the first three novels in the series, which depict Adrian's teenage years and are characterized by the constant memorialization of food, eating rituals, and consumption habits. Adrian's distaste for the processed, ready-to-cook meals that he is served at home, and his praise of the "proper food" lovingly prepared by his grandmother, foreground Townsend's interest in food but also in foodways, that is, the practices that surround the preparation and consumption of food, and endow it with social significance.[3] Adrian's memories tell of an average teenager from a Midlands working-class family, but when one reads his multiple references to food and eating habits as signifying units of a complex socio-cultural system, as Roland Barthes (20-27) and Mary Douglas argued (249-275), his diaries bear witness to the transformations of the British society throughout the 1980s.

Consequently, I argue that Townsend's book series raises numerous psychological, affective, and social issues. These relate to the search for social and financial security, which is a staple of the modern consumerist society, but they are also indicative of changing gender relations and the crisis of the traditional family model in the 1970s and the 1980s. Moreover, I suggest that Adrian's obsession with food testifies to the advent of mass-market, fast-moving consumer goods, which is epitomized by his frequent references to brands and retail chains as opposed to dishes, and his friends' complaints about the "toad in the hole" served at the school canteen. Finally, I contend that Adrian's attention for the meals served at the school canteen reveals Townsend's criticism of Thatcher's neoliberal politics and its effects on children's and teenagers' education and nutrition.

The Affective and Social Implications of Food in Adrian Mole's Diaries

The beginning of Adrian's first diary is quite telling as far as his obsessive interest in food is concerned. After listing his New Year's Resolutions, the boy complains that "Eight days have gone by since Christmas Day but my mother still hasn't worn the lurex apron I bought her for Christmas! She will get bathcubes next year. Just my luck, I've got a spot on my chin for the first day of the New Year!" (Townsend, *Secret Diary* 11). On the following day, he notes that the pimple "is getting bigger" and blames his mother "for not knowing about vitamins" (11), thus relating the breakout to his poor diet. On 3 January his remarks take on a slightly dramatic tone when he writes that "the spot" is probably "a boil. Just my luck to have it where everybody can see it. I pointed out to my mother that I hadn't had any vitamin C today. She said, 'Go and buy an orange, then.' This is typical. She still hasn't worn the lurex apron" (11-12). Adrian's interest in food therefore emerges in connection with what he believes to be the effects of inadequate eating habits, for which he blames his parents' neglect of household duties such as cooking. When one reads between the lines, his mother's lack of interest in the apron that he gave her for Christmas,

and her indifference to the boy's concerns over proper nourishment, suggest dysfunctional parental relationships that will be made clearer throughout Townsend's book series.

Endlessly struggling to make ends meet, and wasting their savings on alcohol and cigarettes, George and Pauline Mole are self-indulgent individuals who fail to perform their duties not only as parents, but also as grown-ups. The couple are on the verge of divorce due to their financial problems, but also because of Pauline's 'elopement' with Mr. Lucas, whose wife has recently come out as lesbian. Significantly, her extramarital affair abruptly comes to an end because of Mr. Lucas's demands for a relationship based on stereotypical gender roles,[4] and so will George's short-lived passion for the younger Doreen Slater. Moreover, Pauline's and Doreen's pregnancies further complicate the family's instability in that both women are uncertain of the paternity of their babies. In an attempt to better understand this complex network of dysfunctional relationships, in *The Growing Pains of Adrian Mole* (8-9) Adrian sketches a spider graph or "basic table of interpersonal relationships" that is reminiscent of contemporary soap operas.[5] This never-ending emotional turmoil entails an ironic reversal of family roles that foregrounds the significance of food as a symbol of security and protection. When Adrian's parents come down with the flu, the boy feels compelled to look after the two of them. Accordingly, he oversees a number of daily chores, including cooking:

> I have been up and down the stairs all day. I cooked a big dinner for them tonight: two poached eggs with beans, and tinned semolina pudding. (It's a good job I wore the green lurex apron because the poached eggs escaped out of the pan and got all over me.) I nearly said something when I saw they hadn't eaten *any* of it. They can't be that ill. My grandmother is coming tomorrow morning, so I had to clean the burnt saucepans, then take the dog for a walk. (Townsend, *Secret Diary* 14, emphasis in the original)

Acting as the adult in the house, Adrian prepares the family dinner and almost reprimands his parents for not eating their supper. Unlike the implied teenage reader, adults are likely to smile at Adrian's definition of poached eggs and a tinned side dish as "a big dinner." Despite their naïveté, the boy's remarks, along with his concern over nutrition, point to the role of food as a source of *nourishment* as well as of *nurturing*, which is precisely what Adrian feels is missing at home. Thus, I suggest that this brief excerpt introduces readers to a constant feature of the Moles' saga, that is, a process of parentification whose emotional and behavioral implications may be perceived in Townsend's representation of food and eating rituals.

Introduced by family psychology in the 1970s, parentification is a process of role reversal whereby a child or teenager takes on a parental role, therefore blurring – and

in extreme cases obliterating – generational boundaries. As a consequence, children and teenagers may sacrifice their demand for attention in order to "accommodate and care for the logistical or emotional need" of the adults (Chase 5). More specifically, researchers have outlined two recurring models, which they identify as "emotional" and "instrumental" parentification. Whereas emotional parentification entails children and teenagers putting the psychological necessities of their parents or siblings before their own, examples of instrumental parentification include children's and teenagers' commitment to a variety of household chores, from arranging meals to managing day-to-day financial issues (cf. Hooper 217-218).

Even though Townsend's ironic stance leaves doubts as to whether this may be the result of Adrian's tendency to overdramatization, his diaries include several instances of both parentification modes, often in connection with food and eating rituals. This is the case, for example, when Pauline and George are about to divorce and deliberately avoid each other despite living under the same roof. Since they eat "different things at different times," Adrian records in his *Secret Diary*, "I usually have six meals a day because I don't want to hurt anyone's feelings" (50). Similarly, he feels compelled to look after his father when his mother moves out with Mr. Lucas. George sleeps till lunchtime, while Adrian arranges the meals and takes care of the house in an attempt to relieve his father's depression:

> After we had eaten our frozen roast-beef dinner and I was washing up, he shouted from the bathroom for his razor. I lied and shouted back that I didn't know where it was. I then removed every knife and sharp instrument from the kitchen drawer. […] I like to think that I am broad-minded but the language my father used was beyond the pale, and all because he couldn't have a shave! Tea was a bit of a drag. (Townsend, *Secret Diary* 61)

Townsend's irony suggests that Adrian's involvement with his parents' emotional well-being is to a considerable extent the result of a process of self-imposed parentification. This is also manifest in his decision to join a local charity group and look after Bert Baxter, an elderly pensioner who is reliant on social services for daily care. Nonetheless, his recollections provide several instances of instrumental parentification that reveal his effort to counterbalance his mother's and father's failure of acting as responsible adults. Significantly, the textual indicator of the Moles' dysfunctional familial model is food, which may thus be viewed as a token of the changes occurring in the British society of the 1980s. As Roland Barthes famously argued, food ceases to be a mere source of sustenance as soon as it is prepared, served, or consumed. As "an organic system," Barthes claimed, food is "charged with signifying the situation in which it is used. It has a twofold

value, being nutrition as well as protocol, and its value as protocol becomes increasingly more important as soon as the basic needs are satisfied" (Barthes 26). The most relevant symbolic implications of food protocols in Adrian's diaries, it is my contention, are the transformations that family structures and models underwent in the 1980s. In this regard, Townsend is especially keen on representing the impact of socio-economic change on gender roles, and therefore on parenting.

Unsatisfied with her family routine, Pauline Mole joins an assertiveness workshop where she is initiated to one of the foundational texts of the second feminist wave, Germaine Greer's *The Female Eunuch* (1970). Greer particularly lambasted the patriarchal model of the suburban, nuclear family, which she believed to be the major obstacle to women's empowerment. By endorsing the social model outlined by the Old Testament and enforced by Christianity, the middle class consolidated the myth of love and marriage, which eventually deprived women of free will and independence (Greer 250-251). Townsend's gaze captures the zeitgeist of the times, and the element that catalyzes this aspect is again food. One evening, Adrian flips through his mother's copy of *The Female Eunuch* after having a quick dinner on the street because no one is cooking at home. The passage is characterized by a certain degree of irony that suggests Townsend's criticism of the impact of Pauline's militant feminism on her parenting skills:

> Nobody cooked any dinner so I went to the Chinese chip shop and bought a carton of chips and a sachet of soy sauce. I sat in the bush shelter and ate them, then walked about feeling sad. Came home. Fed dog. Read a bit of *Female Eunuch*. Felt a bit funny. Went to sleep. (Townsend, *Secret Diary* 29)

As a result of her newly endorsed feminism, Adrian's mother carefully redistributes the domestic chores among the family. Implicit in Pauline's rebellion is Greer's criticism of marriage as an unbalanced "give-and-take" relationship, and her views on the mother-child relationship as a bond based on dependence and exploitation (Greer 265; 376). Adrian's diary entries suggest teenage-like and overdramatic reactions, but they also foreground the affective and identitarian implications of food and foodways within the changing social system of the early 1980s:

> Cleaned toilet, washed basin and bath before doing my paper round. Came home, made breakfast, put washing in machine, went to school. […] Had Domestic Science – made apple crumble. Came home. Vacuumed hall, lounge, and breakfast room. Peeled potatoes, chopped up cabbage, cut finger, rinsed blood off cabbage. Put chops under grill, looked in cookery book for a recipe for gravy. Made gravy. Strained lumps out with a colander.

> Set table, served dinner, washed up. Put burnt saucepans to soak. […] Just my luck to have an assertive mother! (Townsend, *Secret Diary* 43-44).

When Pauline is busy with her workshops, Adrian and his father's dinners mostly consist of ready meals, such as "boil-in-the-bag cod in butter sauce and oven-cooked chips" (Townsend, *Secret Diary* 43). Again, the boy relates his problems with acne to his diet, and paradoxically wonders if his skin might be suffering from an allergy to plastic wraps:

> Woke up this morning to find my face covered in huge red spots. My mother said they were caused by nerves but I am still convinced that my diet is inadequate. We have been eating a lot of boil-in-the-bag-stuff lately. Perhaps I am allergic to plastic. […] I couldn't believe it when she said she was going to work as usual. Surely her child should come before her job? (Townsend, *Secret Diary* 45)

Townsend's skepticisms, however, is not directed against feminism *tout court*. In *True Confessions*, for example, Pauline's conversations with Adrian's girlfriend Pandora foreground feminist claims on identity, empowerment, and self-realization. This outlook also enables them to endorse broader political causes, from the need for a new environmental consciousness to the fear of missile attacks.[6] At a closer look, Townsend's criticism of contemporary changes in gender roles and gender relationships is directed towards women as much as it is towards men. Her novels expose the difficulty of a generation, the post-World War II "Boomers," in acting as responsible adults and, by extension, as parents. Adrian's processed meals are often arranged by his father, whose shopping lists, from "tins of salmon, crabs and shrimps" to "cream crackers and tuna" (Townsend, *Secret Diary* 36, 77) are inadequate because of the family's little purchase power, but also because of George and Pauline Mole's chronic immaturity.

The attainment of psychological maturity may be defined as the ability to "deal effectively and resiliently with experience" when performing, cognitive, or social tasks that are "characteristic of one's age level."[7] Counterbalanced by Adrian's melodramatic tendency to self-imposed parentification, George and Pauline's difficulty to act as mature adults also affects their parenting skills. This is evident in their neglect of basic responsibilities, from paying the bills to arranging the meals. As a result, the Moles often replace cooking with mass-produced substitutes or delegate this responsibility to Adrian. That their scarce attention to food is indicative of their lack of maturity is evident in that Townsend often represents foodways by comparing two different generations, that is, Adrian's parents – the Boomers – and his grandmother May.

In the wake of Roland Barthes's semiotic analysis, Mary Douglas read food and

foodways as part of a socio-anthropological network of signification within which eating practices may be intended as linguistic signs. "If food is treated as a code," Douglas claimed, "the messages it encodes will be found in the pattern of social relations being expressed," communicating "different degrees of hierarchy, inclusion and exclusion, boundaries and transactions across the boundaries" (249). This layer of signification is patent in Adrian's praise of the meals cooked by his grandmother, which meet his need for emotional inclusion and well-being. Disappointed for not receiving a Valentine from Pandora, on 15 February he notes: "I cleared off to my grandma's at dinner-time. She cooked me a proper Sunday dinner with gravy and individual Yorkshire puddings. She is never too busy to make real custard either" (Townsend, *Secret Diary* 32). Likewise, when Adrian is worried about his skin, he turns to "grandma" in search for the affection and care he misses at home:

> I rang my grandma and she came round in a taxi and took me to her house and put me to bed. I am there now. It is very clean and peaceful. I am wearing my dead grandad's pyjamas. I have just had a bowl of barley and soup. It is my first proper nourishment for weeks. (Townsend, *Secret Diary* 45)

Adrian is satisfied with the simple and healthy supper prepared by his grandmother, but his contentment also depends on the attention he receives. His grandfather's pyjamas, like Linus's blanket, is the simulacrum of a sense of protection and security, and Adrian's bond with his grandmother continues even after his parents get back together. In *The Growing Pains of Adrian Mole*, the couple face the difficulty of unplanned pregnancies, and May's house provides the boy with a 'comfort zone' characterized by affection and low stress levels. The lady treats him with Sunday meals consisting of "roast lamb and mint sauce made from the window box" (45), and the affective implications of food are even clearer in the following novel, *True Confessions of Adrian Mole*. With a concealed allusion to Proust's madeleine, the boy imagines coming back home at the end of an ordinary, uneventful day: "The warm scent of home baking does not greet me as I enter the kitchen. So I create my own smell by baking scones" (59). In spite of Adrian's pretentiousness, this act preludes to his emancipation as an adult, which begins when he leaves Leicester for London. As he explores the multicultural scenario offered by Soho in *Adrian Mole: The Wilderness Years* and *Adrian Mole: The Cappuccino Years*. Adrian finds employment as an assistant cook at the "Savage", and eventually becomes a chef at the "Hoi Polloi." Food, therefore, remains a central aspect of his affective and family life even after he becomes a husband and a father.

From Consumerism to Thatcherism: Food as an Icon of 1980s Britain

From the family to the society at large, Adrian's constant memorialization of food also enables Townsend to portray a significant transition in the recent history of Britain. In the 1980s, changes in the national economy and the industrial system profoundly transformed consumptions, fostering a new consumerist attitude and promoting fast-moving consumer goods among the lower middle classes. This outlook is manifest in the Moles' preference for processed foods, but also in Adrian's – and his school friends' – obsession with brands as opposed to products.

Recalling his childhood in Staffordshire, food journalist Nigel Slater observes in his autobiography, *Toast: The Story of a Boy's Hunger* (2003), that processed foods were already perceived as a sign of upward mobility in the 1960s. A paramount example of this sentiment was Arctic Rolls, a frozen dessert consisting of a spongy cake filled with ice cream and fruit sauce that was considered as "a status symbol" (Slater 21). Families regarded it as a "treat," and served it "with as much pomp as if it were a roasted swan at a Tudor banquet" (21). An enticing and colorful dessert for children, Arctic Rolls was also welcomed by adults in that its consumption indicated modernity and purchase power. This frozen dessert, Slater explains, was "a subtle reminder to the assembled family and friends of how well my father's business was doing" (21). However, it was at the end of the 1970s that ready meals and branded products became staple food in Britain thanks to changing tastes and habits, the spread of household appliances, and large-scale cold-chain distribution systems.

As Mary Gwynn recalls in *Back in Time for Dinner* (2015), Marks & Spencer was the first retailer to launch a chilled ready meal in 1979, Chicken Kiev. Although the product was quite pricey, stocks sold out within a few days (262-263).[8] This is well documented on the retailer's website, which devotes a whole section to the history of their ready meals. The headlines ("A Taste of India," "Buon appetito," "Still a favourite," and "All about convenience") indicate that Marks & Spencer marketed these products by leveraging on taste and time/cost benefits, but also on an international appeal that possibly aimed to relieve the feeling of guilt experienced by working or careless parents, like George and Pauline Mole.[9]

In representing the Moles' consumption habits, Townsend portrays the development of a market dominated by brands, ready-to-cook meals, and chain stores, with Sainsbury's standing for upward mobility as opposed to the Co-Op.[10] Adrian is keen on Vesta products such as curries and Chow Mein, which he offers to old Bert Baxter as if they were a delicacy. Again, Townsend's critical stance is patent in the reaction of the Moles' Indian neighbor, Mrs Singh, upon seeing Adrian's dinner:

> Had Vesta curry and rice for dinner, during which Mrs Singh came round

> and talked Hindi to Bert. She seemed to find our curry very funny, she kept pointing to it and laughing. Sometimes I think I am the only person in the world who still has manners. (Townsend, *Secret Diary* 133)

Mrs Singh's laughter is reminiscent of Nigel Slater's recollections about the popularity of Arctic Roll despite its "cold cardboard" taste (*Toast* 21). However, Vesta curries were the object of massive advertising in the 1970s and the 1980s, claiming to offer complete and tasty meals in 20 minutes. This selling proposition leveraged the new daily needs imposed by the changing family patterns, but it also responded to a demand for social inclusion. The consumption of advertised and mass-marketed products, in other words, also testifies to one's ability to "keep up with the Joneses," that is, to meet the socio-economic standards of one's peer group.[11]

Besides suggesting a process of adult de-responsibilization, Pauline and George Mole's scarce cooking interests bear witness to a new consumeristic approach, which also characterizes Adrian's obsession with brands such as Mars, Milky Way, Lucozade, and Vesta. This craving for candies, snacks, and carbonated drinks rests on diets that, despite Adrian's concerns over "proper food," imply the overconsumption of sugar, paving the way for issues that are still relevant at present. Adrian incessantly feeds on Mars bars, and as a token of its popularity among teenagers the candy is even accepted as a substitute for money by the school bully, Barry Kent. However, Adrian's 'guilty pleasure' is Lucozade, an energy drink he repeatedly consumes as if it were an elixir:

> Wednesday June 24th
> A "get well" card from my mother. Inside a five-pound note. I asked my father to spend it on five bottles of Lucozade. (Townsend, *Secret Diary* 92)

> Wednesday July 1st
> The truant officer came round this afternoon; he caught me sitting in a deckchair in the front garden. He didn't believe I was ill! He is reporting me to the school! The fact that I was sipping Lucozade while wearing pyjamas, dressing gown and slippers seemed to have escaped him. (Townsend, *Secret Diary* 97)

> Thursday July 9th
> […] My skin is dead good. I think it must be a combination of being in love and Lucozade. (Townsend, *Secret Diary* 99)

> Saturday April 16th
> […] Spent the day on the settee sipping Lucozade. (Townsend, *Growing Pains* 189)

Originally named "Glucozade" because of its formula, Lucozade was first marketed in the 1920s as a cure for hypoglycemia before it became a popular soft drink among teenagers. Its consumption is so widespread that in 2016 and 2023 Liverpool City Council promoted an information campaign targeting parents in order to raise awareness of the potential health damage linked to the excessive consumption of sugar. The programme, named "Save Kids from Sugar", includes a website where parents can determine the maximum daily allowance of sugar for their children depending on their gender and age and their food habits. Excessive sugar intake can lead to serious conditions such as obesity, type 2 diabetes, and cardiovascular disease, as well as tooth decay, which costs Adrian one incisor and the dentist's reprimand for his gluttony: "As I was stumbling out of his surgery clutching my frozen-up jaw," the dentist, Adrian writes in *Growing Pains* (21), "said that he had often seen me walking home from school eating a Mars bar, and it would be entirely my own fault if I was toothless at thirty."

In the wake of Roland Barthes and Mary Douglas, Kathleen LeBesco and Peter Naccarato argue that "buying, consuming, and serving food" are signifying practices that communicate and validate individual and group identities insofar as these acts are "circulated," "enforced", or even "transgressed" (1). These keywords suggest that foodways entail a political meaning, and this is often the case in Adrian's diaries. Unlike the boy's rather naïve teenager's perspective, Townsend's shrewdly makes brief but poignant comments on Margaret Thatcher's neoliberalist politics and their socio-economic impact. When Adrian visits his mother in Sheffield, the writer's ironical stance on the deindustrialization and deregulation plans of the 1980s is manifest in the boy's remark, "I didn't see any knife and fork factories. I expect Margaret Thatcher has closed them all down" (Townsend, *Secret Diary* 69). Back in Leicester, a picture of the Iron Lady at Adrian's school is disfigured with a moustache and the words "Three million unemployed" written on her cleavage (175).

The early years of Thatcher's Britain were marked by severe unemployment, which particularly affected the Midlands industrial system with an estimate of 330,000 job losses between 1979 and 1983. "Almost overnight," historian Dominic Sandbrook remarks with reference to Thatcher's first mandate as Prime Minister, "the world that Dickens and de Tocqueville had described with such horrid fascination […] had almost entirely disappeared. Where there had once been the sound of hammers, there was only silence" (76). Consequently, recession and soaring unemployment fueled nationalist sympathies that almost create a short-circuit when one compares them with the cosmopolitan tastes

promoted by retailers and the food industry. At Sainsbury's, the leader of the "Off the Streets" youth club instructs Adrian on the importance of grocery shopping as an "overtly political act," and encourages him to buy national fruits and boycott imported produce (Townsend, *Secret Diary* 120). This new nationalist outlook, however, is to a considerable extent the result of the social discontent following the neoliberalist revision of welfare politics. Dissatisfaction with domestic matters is thus projected onto foreign products, and voiced through claims whose nationalist bent would be echoed by the populist resentment against the economic and immigration policies of the European Union that led to Brexit in 2016.

Interviewed by Alex Clark, Townsend admitted to being "a passionate socialist" (Clark, "I Didn't Know What Adrian Mole Looked like") and her criticism of neoliberal politics was often connected with child nutrition and the declining quality of meals offered at schools. The first reference occurs in a scene that features the so-called "toad in the hole." Consisting of sausages in Yorkshire pudding batter, and usually served with onion gravy and vegetables, Isabella Beeton defined the "toad in the hole" as a "homely but savoury" course in her *Book of Household Management* (1861), consecrating it as a staple British dish (Beeton 170). In a fun episode that is reminiscent of Oliver Twist's request for more food, Adrian's best friend, Nigel, gets "thrown out of school dinners" after "swearing at the toad-in-the-hole, he said it was 'all bleeding hole and no toad'" (Townsend, *Secret Diary* 27). What might seem like a comic interlude is in fact rife with political tones. "School dinners," Adrian complains,

> are complete crap now. Gravy seems to have been phased out along with custard and hot puddings. A typical menu is: hamburger, baked beans, chips, carton of yoghurt or a doughnut. It's not enough to build healthy bone and sinew. I am considering making a protest to Mrs Thatcher. It won't be our fault if we grow up apathetic and lacking in moral fibre. Perhaps Mrs Thatcher wants us to be too weak to demonstrate in years to come. (Townsend, *Secret Diary* 120-121)

In her office as Minister of Education in the early 1970s, Thatcher abolished the free school milk programme that had been introduced thirty years earlier as a dietary supplement for children. Due to its costs, the government limited daily milk servings to students under the age of seven. The decision raised mass protests, resulting in popular demonstrations under the claim "Maggie Thatcher, the Milk Snatcher" (Schwarez 2017; Flakin 2020). Moreover, it is significant that as part of her campaign for the 1979 General Elections, Thatcher encountered representatives of the Food and Drink Industries Councils in London. During the speech that she delivered in London on 31 March 1978, the future

Prime Minister insisted on the need for a new economic course based on tax reduction and a more prominent role of the private sector. As far as schools were concerned, her government would approve financial cuts that resulted in school food services being outsourced to private suppliers. As one understands from Adrian's diary entries, this decision led to job losses and poor-quality meals:

> Our school-dinner ladies have got the sack! The dinners now come in hot boxes from a central kitchen. I would have staged a protest but I have got a Geography test tomorrow.
> Mrs Leech was presented with a microwave oven for her thirty years of toil over the custard jug. (Townsend, *Secret Diary* 177)

Implicit in these brief and ironic remarks is Townsend's criticism of Thatcher's reforms, which, consistently with the neoliberal support of the private sector, also entailed cuts on the expenses related to education. Adrian's (and Townsend's) concerns would be confirmed by a 1997 report of the Medical Research Council, which took into consideration changes in children's diet in Britain since 1980. The reduction of costs consequent to Thatcher's privatization of school canteens often implied serving easy and less expensive "popular fast-food items such as burgers and chips" (Gillard). Higher consumption rates of fats and sugar, the report concluded, posed considerable health risks for children, who were thus much more likely to develop osteoporosis, cancer, and cardiovascular disease than in the post-war years. Figures alarmingly suggest that this trend has only been exacerbated over the last few years, with nearly one in four children aged 10-11 and one in five teenagers aged 17 suffering from obesity in Britain (Gregory). Moreover, the socioeconomic distribution of weight problems clearly reveals another element, that is, a strong association between low household income and obesity (Fitzsimons and Bann). The triangulation between food, health, and democracy, is at the core of Townsend's criticism of neoliberal educational policies, with irony helping to establish a different dialogue with young and adult readers.

Conclusion: The Socio-Affective Implications of Food

Townsend's attention to food and foodways branches out far wider than the memorialization of the quotidian that one expects from a teenager's diary. In *The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole, Aged 13¾*, *The Growing Pains of Adrian Mole*, and *True Confessions of Adrian Moles*, food emerges in a variety of contexts that state its role as an essential human need due to its physiological and emotional functions. Choices and preferences, the selection of specific ingredients and dishes, and preparation and consumption rituals and habits all indicate that food is the expression of a social behavior. As such, it also caters for some basic psychological necessities of the individual by providing a sense of acceptance, love, and

security. The noun "companionship," after all, derives from the Latin words *cum* and *pānis*, that is, "with bread." In the first three novels in Townsend's saga, sugary drinks and candy bars are examples of comfort food, and so are Adrian's grandmother's lovingly prepared meals. Their constant memorialization foregrounds the complex nexus between eating practices and the socio-affective, as well as the socio-economic, development of the individual. In representing food, eating habits and rituals, Townsend brings to the page a complex system of reference whose meanings extend beyond nutrition. From this perspective, food becomes a blatantly audible voice, and its message is a prismatic snapshot of the cultural, economic, and political transformations that were to leave a profound mark on the British society of the 1980s.

Works Cited

APA Dictionary of Psychology, https://dictionary.apa.org.

"Back in Time for Dinner." *BBC*, https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b05nc5tv.

Barthes, Roland. "Towards a Psychosociology of Contemporary Food Consumption." *Food and Culture: A Reader*, edited by Carole Counihan and Penny Van Esterik, Routledge, 1997, pp. 20-27.

Beeton, Isabella. *Mrs Beeton's Book of Household Management*, edited by Nicola Humble. Oxford UP, 2000.

Chase, Nancy D. "An Overview of Theory, Research, and Societal Issues." *Burdened Children: Theory, Research, and Treatment of Parentification*, edited by Nancy D. Chase, Sage Publications, 1999, pp. 3-33.

Clark, Alex. "I Didn't Know What Adrian Mole Looked like – Well, Not until I Saw John Major on the Telly." *The Guardian*, 7 Nov. 2009, https://www.theguardian.com/books/2009/nov/07/sue-townsend-interview-alex-clark.

Counihan, Carole. "Gendering Food." *The Oxford Handbook of Food History*, edited by Jeffrey M. Pilcher, Oxford UP, 2012, pp. 99-116.

Douglas, Mary. *Implicit Meanings: Selected Essays in Anthropology*. 1975. Routledge, 2003.

"Explore the List of 100 Novels that Shaped Our World." *BBC*, 9 Nov. 2019, www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/articles/494P41NCbVYHlY319VwGbxp/explore-the-list-of-100-novels-that-shaped-our-world.

Fitzsimons, Emla and David Bann. "Obesity Prevalence and Its Inequality from Childhood to Adolescence. Initial Findings from the Millennium Cohort Study Age 17 Survey." *UCL Centre for Longitudinal Studies*, December 2020, https://cls.ucl.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/

CLS-briefing-paper-Obesity-prevalence-MCS-age-17-initial-findings.pdf.

Flakin, Nathaniel. "Ilhan Omar Calls Margaret Thatcher 'Inspirational.'" *Left Voice*, 27 May 2020, https://www.leftvoice.org/ilhan-omar-calls-margaret-thatcher-inspirational/.

Gillard, Derek. "Food for Thought: Child Nutrition, the School Dinner and the Food Industry." *Education in England: The History of Our Schools*, June 2003, https://education-uk.org/articles/22food.html.

Greer, Germaine. *The Female Eunuch*. 1971. Granada Publishing, 1981.

Gwynn, Mary. *Back in Time for Dinner. From Spam to Sushi: How We've Changed the Way We Eat*. eBook, Bantam Press, 2015.

Hooper, Lisa M. "The Application of Attachment Theory and Family Systems Theory to the Phenomena of Parentification." *The Family Journal: Counseling and Therapy for Couples and Families*, vol. 15, no. 3, 2007, pp. 217-223.

LeBesco, Kathleen and Peter Naccarato. "Introduction." *Edible Ideologies: Representing Food and Meaning*, edited by Kathleen LeBesco and Peter Naccarato, State University of New York Press, 2008, pp. 1-11.

Sandbrook, Dominic. *The Great British Dream Factory: The Strange History of Our National Imagination.* Kindle Edition. Penguin, 2015.

Save Kids from Sugar, https://savekidsfromsugar.co.uk.

Schwarez, Joe. "Thatcher, Thatcher, Milk Snatcher." *McGill Office for Science and Society*, 20 March 2017, https://www.mcgill.ca/oss/article/food-history/thatcher-thatcher-milk-snatcher.

Slater, Nigel. *Toast: The Story of a Boy's Hunger*. Harper Perennial, 2003.

Thatcher, Margaret. "Speech to Food and Drink Industries Council, Fri, 31 Mar. 1978." *Margaret Thatcher Foundation*, https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/103647.

"The History of M&S Prepared Meals." *M&S*, https://www.marksandspencer.com/c/style-and-living/the-history-of-marks-and-spencer-food.

Townsend, Sue. *The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole, Aged 13¾*. 1982. Methuen Mandarin, 1989.

___. *The Growing Pains of Adrian Mole.* 1984. Teens / Mandarin, 1989.

___. *True Confessions of Adrian Albert Mole*, *Margaret Hilda Roberts, and Susan Lilian Townsend*. 1989. Mandarin, 1990.

Notes

[1] See the BBC Arts webpage "Explore the List of 100 Novels that Shaped Our World."

[2] Over the years, Townsend's saga spawned three successful TV adaptations. The first, *The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole, Aged 13¾*, was shown on ITV in 1985. The sequel, *The Growing Pains of Adrian Mole*, appeared in 1987, while the adaptation of *Adrian Mole: The Cappuccino Years* aired on BBC One in 2001.

[3] Modeled on the socio-anthropological concept of "folkways," the term "foodways" identifies the system of "beliefs and behaviours" that surround the "production, distribution, and consumption" of food, therefore endowing eating practices with cultural, socio-economic, and political implications" (Counihan 100).

[4] As Pauline tells Adrian, Lucas "expected his evening meal cooked for him" (Townsend, *Secret Diary* 152).

[5] The diagram lists Adrian's parentage, his mother's and father's extramarital affairs, as well as his friends and enemies, Margaret Thatcher included. Adrian's "Basic Table of Interpersonal Relationships" may also be viewed online at https://archive.org/details/adrianmolefrommi0000town_m8b0/page/184/mode/2up (last access 3 September 2024).

[6] "I went back to my room," Adrian records in *True Confessions* (37-38), "to find Pandora and my mum having one of those sickening talks that women have nowadays. It was full of words like 'unfulfilled,' 'potential,' and 'identity.' Pandora kept chipping in with 'environment' and 'socio-economic' and 'chauvinistic attitude.'"

[7] See "Psychological Maturity" in the *APA Dictionary of Psychology*.

[8] Gwynn's book is the spin-off of the homonymous docuseries shown on BBC Two in 2015. The program featured a family traveling back in time to explore eating habits and trends in post-war Britain, from homemade meals and processed foods to the "mad cow" scare and the advent of organic produce ("Back in Time for Dinner").

[9] After testing the market response with foiled-packed ravioli in cheese and ham sauce in 1973, Marks & Spencer launched a variety of frozen, ready-to cook Indian dishes and Italian lasagna in 1975 and Chicken Kiev in 1979. In the 1980s, the retailer expanded their offer with convenient microwavable and low-calorie products to meet the increasing demand for such products. See the section "The History of M&S Prepared Meals," in the M&S corporate website, https://www.marksandspencer.com/c/style-and-living/the-history-of-marks-and-spencer-food (last access 24 August 2024).

[10] In *True Confessions* (26-27) Adrian explains to his American pen pal, Henri Mancini, that Sainsbury's is "where teachers, vicars and such-like do their shopping," whilst the Co-Op is "a grocery chain run on Socialist principles."

[11] Townsend's interest in the consumeristic attitude of the 1980s and the advent of mass-marketed consumer goods is further connected with the role of food as a symbol of nourishment and nurturing. When Adrian's grandmother resorts to processed ingredients, this is because of her desire to feed him properly, as for example when she cooks Bovril soup. A meat extract, Bovril was a cultural icon throughout the 1970s and the 1980s, when it was advertised in commercials featuring mountaineer Christ Bonington drinking it on the Everest to promote its nutrient power.

[12] See the website *Save Kids from Sugar*, https://savekidsfromsugar.co.uk (last access 9 September 2024).

From Sardines to Sponge Cake: Heritage Preservation and Gastronationalism in Anna James' *Tilly and the Bookwanderers* and Laura Walter's *Mistica Maëva e l'anello di Venezia*

Lindsay Myers

Food and the consumption of food has always been a staple ingredient in children's literature, no doubt because in addition to providing comfort and safety it functions as an important vector of cultural and national identity (see Keeling and Pollard; Katz; Carrington and Harding). The recent, international drive to safeguard the world's gastronomic traditions from the homogenizing effects of global capitalism has seen home-cooked fare make a come-back in contemporary children's literature and given rise to a plethora of cookbooks based on the foods in children's classics,[1] some of which have even been written by the authors themselves.[2] The use of food, its history, preparation, production and consumption to promote nationalism and national identity has been described by Michaela De Soucey as "gastronationalism" (432-55). This chapter sets out to explore the relationship between heritage preservation and gastronationalism in two contemporary children's fantasy novels: *Mistica Maëva e l'anello di Venezia* by the Veronese author Laura Walter and *Tilly and the Bookwanderers* by the British author Anna James.

These works lend themselves particularly well to a comparative study because in addition to having remarkably similar heroines, magic portals and dynamic quests, they are both set in an idealized imperialist past. Walter's fantasy world is located in the eighteenth-century Venetian Republic, a period when the country's trade with the Middle

East was at its height. *Tilly and the Bookwanderers,* on the other hand, takes its protagonists back to Victorian Britain, a time when a large proportion of the spices and other exotic ingredients used in the country's iconic cakes – including Queen Cakes, Chelsea Buns, Scones, Teacakes, Crumpets, Simnel Cake, Trifle, Battenberg Cake and the ubiquitous Victoria Sponge Cake[3] first arrived on British soil. Moreover, the eating and cooking scenes in these novels must be read within the broader separatist context in which they emerged. Recent years have witnessed a surge in anti-foreigner discourse in both Venice and Britain, a rhetoric which has had a significant impact on national as well as global politics. Twenty-first century Venice comprises two groups: those who want the city to remain Italian and those who, led by the right-wing ideologies of the region's separatist party, the Liga Veneta, would rather see the city regain its seventeenth-century autonomy. Present-day London, similarly, contains two groups of Londoners; those who view themselves as Europeans and those who believe that the country will only be "great again" if shakes off the "shackles" of its European neighbors, a conviction which has resulted in the country's withdrawal from the European Union.

Saving Cultural Heritage through Local Food Culture: *frittelle* and Currant Buns

Mistica Maeva e l'anello di Venezia describes how Mistica Maëva Vendramin and her friend, Giacomino Monti (Giaki), save their heritage city from sinking into the lagoon by tracking down the *commedia-dell-arte* figure, Arlecchino, and stealing a wedding ring from under his hat. The children enter the secondary world where Arlecchino resides by passing through a magic portal at the top of the *Scala Contarini del Bovolo*, a fourteenth-century tower with an external spiral staircase that has become one of the city's most treasured possessions. The ring that the children are looking for is the one that was thrown into the lagoon from the Bucentaur, the Doge's ceremonial barge, to commemorate the city's "Marriage with the Sea" every year until Napoleon ordered the destruction of the barge in 1797. The children are convinced that by re-enacting this public ritual they will be able to reassert the city's autonomy and restore the delicate balance between the city and the lagoon. *Tilly and the Bookwanderers,* meanwhile, relates how Tilly and her friend Oskar Roux secure the future of "book-wandering", that is, the ability some humans have to travel in the world of stories through books, by travelling to the British Underlibrary, and saving its source texts from oblivion. The Underlibrary is positioned directly underneath its twenty-first century counterpart, and the children reach it by taking a magical lift from the ground floor of the British Library to the hidden basement beneath.

The British Library and the *Scala Contarini del Bovolo* are both cultural repositories with historical significance. They are in this sense *lieux de mémoire* (Nora 7-24), and it is the national and folk literatures associated with these buildings that enable the children

to succeed in their respective quests. It is, however, the love that they have for their favorite foods that serves as the impetus for their magical adventures. Mistica decides to follow Arlecchino into the Carnivalesque world of *La Corte del Tempo* after she has tasted the fragrant and enticing *frittelle* that her grandmother has baked. *Frittelle,* sugar-coated doughnuts that contain raisins, pine nuts and orange zest, have become synonymous with the Venetian Carnival. Venice was the first city in Europe to use sugar, thanks to the cane crops that they possessed in Cyprus and Crete[4], and these fragrant fritters were such a popular delicacy in sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that they were immortalized in a painting by Pietro Longhi (1701-1785) entitled "The Fritter Seller" (currently on display in the Venetian Museum, Ca' Rezzonico). Tilly, on the other hand, is pulled into Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* after its eponymous protagonist offers her one of her jellybeans.

One of the reasons why food is such an effective cultural lure in children's books is because the intergenerational transmission of recipes and cooking skills lies at the heart of both personal and national identity (see Gunawan; Porciani and Montanari). Tilly and Mistica both have grandmothers who are excellent cooks, and it is the foods that they make for their granddaughters in their cosy kitchens that solidifies the intergenerational bond between them. Mistica's favorite meal is *sardée in saor*, a Venetian dish which is made of fried sardines that have been left to marinate in onions and vinegar. This delicacy is traditionally prepared on the Feast of the Redeemer, a holiday which celebrates the city's deliverance from a terrible plague in 1577. The predilection that Walter's protagonist has for this particular dish may have been intended to instill a sense of patriotism in its young Venetian readers, the majority of whom would be familiar with the festivities and fireworks that mark this historic occasion. Sweet foods are, of course, far more tempting to children than are their savory counterparts, and the Venetian biscuits and cakes that Mistica's grandmother makes for her include *zaleti* and *baicoli* as well as *frittelle*. *Zaleti* and *Baicoli* are the most well-known biscuits from the Veneto region and their history can be traced back to the eighteenth century. *Zaleti* biscuits are made from maize flour, butter, sugar, pine nuts and raisins and were traditional eaten during Lent (on account of them having no egg). *Baicoli* are simpler biscuits made from butter, sugar, yeast and egg, and they were often taken on board ship on account of their having a long shelf life.

The children's books in which Tilly bookwanders all contain many famous eating and baking scenes. The most famous of these is the Mad Hatter's Tea Party, a topsy-turvy celebration that has come to symbolize the British tradition of Afternoon Tea, even though no food is actually consumed. L. M. Montgomery's novel, *Anne of Green Gables*, is also replete with puddings, cakes and biscuits, and Anne particularly enjoys raspberry tarts, pound cake, fruit cake, apple dumplings, gingersnap, lemon pie and plum pudding. She is taught how to bake by Marilla, her adoptive mother, and the scene in which she

accidentally puts liniment into the layer cake she makes for the Minister's wife is one of the funniest in the book. The most important literary baking scene in *Tilly and the Bookwanderers,* meanwhile, is that in which Sara Crewe, the young heroine of Frances Hodgson-Burnett's *A Little Princess,* finds a four-penny piece on the street and uses it to buy some currant buns. This scene in which: "a cheerful, stout, motherly woman with rosy cheeks [is] putting into the window a tray of delicious newly baked hot buns, fresh from the oven—large, plump, shiny buns, with currants in them" (*A Little Princess*, p.186) is the scene in which Tilly first spots her mother (a figure who she later learns has been trapped for eleven years in the novel's Source Edition).

The sixteenth-century Venice that Maëva and Giaki visit is associated in the book with quintessentially Venetian delicacies, even if these do not feature in the alternate Venice that the children discover, with the exception of the sugary ***frittelle*** that the Carnevale figure, Dottor Balanzone is eating. They appear instead in the dishes and delicacies that Maëva's grandmother leaves in the *calle* (street) outside her house in an attempt to trap Arlecchino. These local specialties, which include the Venetian dishes *sardée in saor* and *risi e bisi*, a soup-like dish that consists of rice and peas, all date back to the early years of the Venetian Republic, and these, like the foods that Tilly sees on her book-wanderings, are firmly embedded within the intergenerational fabric of family life. Maëva is convinced that she can save Venice because her grandmother is Venetian in origin, and she uses the word "*doc*" (an abbreviation that is commonly used to indicate the authenticity of Italian wines) to convey her grandmother's quintessential Venetianness. Tilly also has an "authentic" British lineage having been born to a real-life English mother and a fictional British father (Tilly finds out the true identity of her father when she enters an altered version of Hodgson-Burnett's *A Little Princess,* and witnesses a scene in which her mother falls in love with the father of the book's protagonist, Sara Crewe).

This authenticity is, however, problematized by the very nature of the foods that the protagonists prepare and enjoy. Indeed, as well as subordinating other cultures, imperial rhetoric elides difference, and the manner in which Venetian and British cuisines are regarded as national is problematic (see Grasseni; Capuzzo). It should not be forgotten that the Venetian dish, *sardée in saor*, is flavored with spices that arrived in Venice from the Middle East and that the raisins and vanilla in the cakes that Tilly's grandmother makes for their *Alice in Wonderland*-themed Tea Party were imported from the New World. Even the tea that Alice attempts to drink at the afore-mentioned Tea Party is not native to Britain but was brought to the country in the late seventeenth century via the Dutch East India Company.

Local Nationalism and Gastronationalism: Asserting Identity through Food

A key component of gastronationalism is the conviction that the authentic and distinctive cuisines of the nations of the world need to be protected from foreign influences, and Venice, a city that has been on UNESCO's World Heritage List since 1987, is currently imperiled by tourists. The city's tourist population far outnumbers that of its resident population, and the city is experiencing irreversible damage from the abundance of tourists that visit its narrow *calli* and historic *piazze* every day as well as by the cruise ships whose presence in the lagoon is destroying its native flora and fauna. This process of "touristification" has forced the city's native Venetians to retreat to the suburbs of Mestre and Porto Marghera (see Bertocchi and Visentin), and the mass exodus has led to a rise in anti-foreigner sentiment, a rhetoric that can be discerned throughout Walter's novel. The conversations that take place in the novel between the stray cat, Baicolo, and his pigeon friend, Pastoccio, are emblematic of this attitude. Pastoccio's motto is "crappy tourists, crap on the tourists" (21),[5] and his admission to the cat that "I have bombarded half a dozen" (21) is justified in his eyes by the fact that "these Italians, Japanese, American, Hungarian and French tourists, all these humans in short, were always taking photographs with their digital cameras without ever putting their hands in their pockets for the poor birds" (22).[6] The fact that Walter's list of tourists includes Italians may seem surprising given that Venice is a city in Italy; recent years, however, have, as previously mentioned, witnessed a significant growth in separatist ideology, and the Venetian political party, the Liga Veneta, now occupies a prominent position in Venetian politics. This right-wing party is known, not just for its anti-Southern mentality, but for its strong racist ideologies, and it is striking that Maëva's grandmother has a deep-rooted dislike for the illegal African immigrants who sell their counterfeit leather handbags and belts in the Campo San Marco. These foreign nationals who have been disparagingly referred to since the mid-1980s in Italy as *Vu cumprà* (on account of their poor pronunciation of the phrase *vuoi compare*, "would you like to buy") are described by Maëva's grandmother as duplicitous individuals whose only reason for learning Venetian is to better sell their wares.

Tilly and the Bookwanderers does not contain the same overt racist sentiment as does Walter's novel; James' choice to include only British children's novels and picturebooks is,[7] however, rooted in a nineteenth-century imperialist perspective, and it is not by chance that the three novels in which Tilly bookwanders were written during Britain's "Age of Colonialism" or that Sara Crewe's father has made his fortune in the diamond-mining business in India. The colonial ideologies that these books espouse are of significance when they are contextualized within contemporary British politics, a politics which has witnessed a rise in separatist ideology. The notion that Britain will only be great again if it removes itself from the EU is fueled, in part, by a long-held anti-German sentiment, a

sentiment which was solidified during the Second World War and exacerbated in recent years by Germany's economic growth and its dominant position within the European Union's law-making institutions. *Tilly and the Bookwanderers* hints to this past and present tensions through the strong resemblance between the training that Tilly and Oskar receive before they are officially allowed to bookwander and that of Britain's secret operatives during the Second World War. Like these undercover spies who were taught how to get in and out of enemy territory safely, Tilly and Oskar acquire their book-wandering prowess by being sent into Ladybird books.[8]

The parallel that is drawn in *Tilly and the Bookwanderers* between Tilly and Oskar's undercover operations and those of British spies during the Second World War is an important "undercurrent" of the novel's gastronationalist ideologies. The first scene in which the young Sara smells the aroma of the currant buns, enables Oscar and Tilly to meet Tilly's mother and exposes them first-hand to the deliciously fragrant buns, cakes that like so many other baked goods almost disappeared during the second world war due to the strict rationing that was imposed upon the British people. Milk, butter and sugar were all hit by rationing and in the absence of these staples the nation's baking traditions was brought almost to a halt. The survival of a country's culinary traditions is dependent on transmission down the matriarchal line, an intergenerational bond that is depicted as being under threat in James' novel. The pivotal scene in the book that contains both Tilly's mother and the quintessentially British buns exerts a powerful gastronationalist message.

In *Mistica Maeva e l'anello di Venezia* the survival of local culinary traditions is threatened not by the loss of ingredients but by the glut of mass-produced inferior produce. This threat is exemplified in the book by showing how local producers of the Veneto's high-quality wines were obliged in 1963 to use the word "doc", an abbreviation for "denominazione di origine controllata" (of guaranteed origin) on their bottles of wine in order to distinguish their high quality. Mistica is effectively telling her grandmother that the culinary lore passed down over generations of Venetian women will be safe with her. She refers to her as "veneziana doc" because wine is an essential part of a Venetian meal and because the Venetian dishes that the children leave outside their grandmother's house to catch the one true Arlecchino, are always accompanied by a glass of wine.

Conclusion

The analysis conducted in this chapter shows that studies of food in twenty-first century children's literature have the potential to offer valuable insights into the connection between food heritage preservation and gastronationalism. The love that the protagonists of *Mistica Maeva e l'anello di Venezia* and *Tilly and the Bookwanderers* have for the dishes and cakes that their grandmothers make in their cosy kitchens is portrayed as in integral part of their genetic ancestry. The familial rhetoric that surrounds their ethnic background

is the very same as the discourse used to describe love of nation, region or political community. Their quests can thus be seen as symptomatic of contemporary, separatist politics, a discourse which is rooted in the erroneous belief that foreign threats can be countered by the recreation of a glorious imperialist past.

The gastronomical ideologies in these books are especially problematic when one considers that they, like almost all children's books, have been written by adults with explicitly didactic purposes. Their plot and characters are different, but their separatist messages are the same. They are both fundamentally political as well as cultural texts; analyzed together they serve as a caution not to be fooled by the fragrant *sardée in saor* or the wonderfully decadent Victoria sponge cake.

Works Cited

Appadurai, Arjun. "On culinary authenticity." *Anthropology Today*, vol. 2, no. 4, 1986, p. 25.

Bertocchi, Dario, and Francesco Visentin. "The Overwhelmed City: Physical and Social Overcapacities of Global Tourism in Venice." *Sustainability*, vol. 11, no. 2, 2019, pp. 1-19.

Bond, Michael. *A Bear called Paddington.* Collins, 1958.

---. *Paddington's Cookery Book.* Harper Collins, 2020.

Capuzzo, Paolo. "Food and Locality: Heritagization and Commercial Use of the Past." *Food Heritage and Nationalism in Europe*, edited by Ilaria Porciani, Routledge, 2019.

Carrington, Briget, and Jennifer Harding. *Feast or Famine? Food and Children's Literature*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014.

Carroll, Lewis. *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland.* Macmillan, 1865.

Cotler, Amy. *The Secret Garden Cookbook: Inspiring Recipes from the Magical World of Frances Hodgson-Burnett's A Secret Garden*. Harvard Common Press, 2020.

Craig, Elena. *Alice in Wonderland: The Official Cookbook*. Insight Editions, 2023.

Dahl, Roald. *Marvellously Revolting Recipes*. Puffin, 2025.

De Soucey, Michaela. "Gastronationalism. Food Traditions and Authenticity Politics in the European Union." *American Sociological Review*, vol. 75, no. 3, 2010, pp. 432-55.

Di Fiore, Laura. "Heritage and Food History: A Critical Assessment." *Food Heritage and Nationalism in Europe,* edited by Ilaria Porciani, Routledge, 2019, pp. 35-50.

Donaldson, Julia. *Gruffalo Crumble and Other Recipes*. Macmillan, 2016.

Farrow, Joanna. *The Official Harry Potter Baking Book*. Scholastic, 2021.

Grasseni, Cristina. *La reinvenzione del cibo. Culture del gusto fra tradizioni e globalizzazione ai piedi delle Alpi.* QuiEdit, 2007.

Gunawan, Rudy. "The Role of the Family in Forming Nationalism". *Historia*, vol. 20, no.2, 2019.

Hodgson-Burnett, Frances. *A Little Princess.* Oxford UP, 2012.

James, Anna. *Tilly and the Bookwanderers*. Harper Collins, 2019.

Katz, Wendy. "Some Uses of Food in Children's Literature", *Children's Literature in Education*, vol, 11, no. 4, 1980, pp. 192-199.

Keeling, Kara and Scott, Pollard. Critical Approaches to Food in Children's Literature. Routledge, 2008.

MacDonald, Kate. *The Anne of Green Gables Cookbook: Charming Recipes from Anne and her Friends in Avonlea*. Race Point Publishing, 2017.

Montgomery, L. M. *Anne of Green Gables.* L.C. Page & Co., 1908.

Nora, Pierre. "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire", *Representations*, vol. 26, 1989, pp. 7-24.

Porciani, Ilaria and Massimo Montanari. "Careful with Heritage." *Food Heritage and Nationalism in Europe,* edited by Ilaria Porciani, Routledge, 2019.

Rosen, Michael. *We're Going on a Bear Hunt.* Walker, 1989.

Walker, Barbara. M. *The Little House Cookbook: Frontier Foods from Laura Ingalls Wilders Classic Stories*. Harper Collins, 2016.

Walter, Laura. *Mistica Maeva e l'anello di Venezia.* Bur ragazzi, 2014.

Notes

[1] See for example: T*he Little House Cookbook: Frontier Foods from Laura Ingalls Wilders Classic Stories* by Barbara M. Walker (Harper Collins, 2016), *The Official Harry Potter Baking Book* by Joanna Farrow (Scholastic, 2021), *The Anne of Green Gables Cookbook: Charming Recipes from Anne and her Friends in Avonlea* by Kate Mac Donald (Race Point Publishing, 2017), and *Alice in Wonderland: The Official Cookbook* by Elena Craig (Insight Editions, 2023). The cakes in Frances Hodgson's Burnett's *A Little Princess* have not appeared in their own book; there is, however, a cookbook dedicated to one of Burnett's other novels, *The Secret Garden Cookbook: Inspiring Recipes from the Magical World of Frances Hodgson Burnett's A Secret Garden* by Amy Cotler (Harvard Common Press, 2020).

[2] Some recent examples of these are *Paddington's Cookery Book* (Harper Collins, 2020) which was written by Michael Bond, *Marvellously Revolting Recipes* by Roald Dahl (Puffin, 2025) and *Gruffalo Crumble and Other Recipes* by Julia Donaldson (Macmillan, 2016). Laura Walter's *Mistica Maeva e l'anello di Venezia* has three recipes at the end of the novel each of which has been mentioned in the book. These are: AttiraBaicolo in saòr, Bigoli in salsa and Zaletti. Her novel can thus be considered a hybrid text and Walter tells her readers that "they give even more flavour to the text" [danno più gusto all'Avventura!] (191).

[3] These are the some of the cakes that are made by the contestants in the popular, long-running British TV series, *The Great British Bake Off* (2010-present).

[4] Cyprus was colonized by Venice in 1571 and Crete between 1654.

[5] "turisti di cacca, cacca ai turisti" (21).

[6] "ne ho bombardati un mezza dozzina" (21) and "quegli italiani, giapponesi, americani, ungheresi, francesi, insomma, tutti quegli umani, però, erano sempre presi dalle foto con le macchine digitali e non mettevano

spesso mano al portafoglio per i poveri pennuti" (22).

[7] Other British books that are referenced in the novel include the much-loved children's classic, Micheal Bond's *A Bear called Paddington* (1958) and one of England's most famous children's picturebooks Michael Rosen's *We're Going on a Bearhunt* (1989).

[8] The most iconic of these are the ones that recount the everyday exploits of the two well-behaved children, Peter and Jane in their local village. The comparison that is drawn in the novel between these "early-readers" and the "early-training" books in which Tilly and Oskar acquire their "book-wandering skills" would, of course, only be funny to an English reader.

Motherhood at Table in Post-War Britain: The Family Meal as a Cultural Ideal

Kay Waddilove

Enid Blyton's novel *Six Cousins at Mistletoe Farm* opens with the Longfield family enjoying high tea. Mother Linnie Longfield is smiling contentedly as she "look[s] at her family sitting round the table, eating the things she had cooked" (5-6). The concept of a family sharing home-cooked food around the table is a widely naturalized image in Western culture; these meals represent a system of values inscribed in family life that promulgate the ideal of a perfect mother serving abundant, well-cooked meals in a situation that 'feeds' her family physically, emotionally and culturally. Such mealtimes are, according to Davidoff et al, "the ultimate test of motherhood" (120).[1] For Linnie, the exemplary wife and mother of this text, her provision of good food is both an expression of good mothering, and a crucial element of maternal identity. Her dining-table is an arena of maternal focus that is a forum for family discussions, a place of family bonding and the customary location for celebrations. The scene is a cultural signifier, one that reappears in all the texts discussed in this chapter. Children's novels are a form of cultural script which can, as Karen Coats and Lisa Faustino observe (2015), condition the practice of mothering, and such episodes establish the importance of the family meal as a pre-eminent site wherein motherhood is validated.

This chapter provides an innovative reading of the ideological and symbolic function of the family meal in the UK during the post-war period. My consideration of the 'ideal mother' paradigm as both empowering and constraining draws on the empirical research of feminist scholars in their analysis of the role of mothers as food providers. The discussion goes on to investigate the operation of maternal power at both micro (domestic) and macro (societal) levels, utilising Michel Foucault's concept of power relations in an examination of the boundaries of maternal influence. The investigation is informed by

the work of social theorists Roland Barthes and Pierre Bourdieu on the place of food consumption in the transmission of cultural identity and nationhood. I focus on two highly popular twentieth-century British writers of children's literature, Enid Blyton and Noel Streatfeild, and offer a historically contextualized close reading of their novels in order to analyze the maternal subject as meal provider.

In *Popular Children's Literature in Britain* Matthew Grenby seeks to define the "peculiarly slippery" concept of popular literature for children in terms of reader experience; he points out that while the term 'popular' can be understood in literary terms as implying, "the quotidian [and] the ephemeral", it also encompasses narratives that have been "well-liked or commercially successful, or both" (1-2). The child-focused readability of the work of the two authors discussed here has ensured both their commercial success and long-lived reader loyalty. Since 1936 when Streatfeild's first novel for children, *Ballet Shoes*, was published, neither writer has ever been completely out of print, and the ubiquitous Blyton has sold over 600 million copies worldwide. Alongside its broad constituency, popular fiction has an acknowledged potential for reader identification and focalization, especially when written for children (see research by Charles Sarland and J. A. Appleyard), and the works discussed here are, I assert, capable of imaginatively resolving contradictory images of maternity to create divergent subjectivities for the reader. I focus on texts produced in the long 1950s: Blyton's *Six Cousins at Mistletoe Farm* (1948), *Six Cousins Again* (1950), *Those Dreadful Children* (1949), Streatfeild's *White Boots* (1951), *The Bell Family* (1954) and *New Town* (1960).[2] Food rationing during those years was more severe than any imposed previously, and the social conditions were extremely demanding for mothers in their role as food providers. I argue that these popular authors offer constructions of maternity which are in dialogue with society's narratives on the changing maternal role and the re-affirmation of national identity in post-war Britain. Furthermore, while the novels have the capacity to illuminate contemporary motherhood, they also have continued relevance to subsequent configurations of maternity. Food in children's literature, as Wendy Katz (1980) and Carolyn Daniel (2006) have discussed, is a famously iconic symbol of adjustment to the social order and I contend that it is even more significant as a litmus test for the quality and influence of mothering. I show how the semiotics of cooking and eating, defined by Lynne Vallone as the "culinary sign", are played out at the family meal table (47). This space is a locus of cultural stricture where performative motherhood is emblematized and judged, functioning as a demanding measure of idealized motherhood. It can also, I suggest, be construed as a site of influence, where maternal identity and empowerment may be affirmed and where mothers establish familial and societal identity, exercising agency as conduits for cultural conditioning and the awareness of nationhood.

The Good Mother

Food was a major preoccupation of British society in the post-World War Two era from 1945 until the ultimate end of rationing in 1954. In the aftermath of an all-inclusive war, the social, economic and political situation in the UK created fertile conditions for a reconsideration of motherhood, and these years were, according to Ann Dally, "the age of idealization of motherhood" (92). The landslide victory of the Labour Party in 1945, followed by the establishment of the welfare state, heralded an era of social change that was intended to create a new and just society. However, the period was also one of extreme austerity. This was partly the result of accumulated war debts and extensive damage to the physical infrastructure of the country, but was also a continuation of economic decline that had begun in the pre-war era and was accelerated by the post-war loss of empire and waning international power. In 1942 British politician William Beveridge, the social architect of the welfare state, published *Social Insurance and Allied Services* (The Beveridge Report), which became the blueprint for development of post-war society. His introduction declared that "Mothers have vital work to do in ensuring the adequate continuance of the British race and of British ideals in the world" (52).

Beveridge's vision was very much within the context of its time and the reality of a waning empire, but was nevertheless instrumental in creating a climate in which mothers were required to accept responsibility for the enculturation of future generations, alongside the reproduction and feeding of the 'race'. This version of the maternal role was pervasive, and reinforced by prominent 1950s child psychologists, such as John Bowlby and Donald Winnicott. The correlation of the ideal mother-figure with the good society and the well-adjusted child was closely linked to her role as food-giver. Her responsibilities in feeding her children were, according to such theorists, far more than the basic task of putting food on the table; they were crucial for the child's healthy development towards individual adulthood. In offering nourishment, both physical and emotional, to her children, the mother exercises responsibility for the type of persons they will become. Intimidating standards were created for this maternal nurture. In moulding the corporeal and psychological development of their children, mothers were exhorted by Winnicott to "Enjoy yourself! […] the mother's pleasure has to be there or else the whole procedure is dead, useless and mechanical" (*Child and Family* 26-27). In a 1946 talk on delinquency Winnicott used food-based metaphors to designate maternal deprivation as a root cause of youth crime: "Put it this way. When a child steals sugar he is looking for the good mother, his own, from whom he has a right to take what sweetness is there" (111).

The food motif, representing good mothering and good food as synonymous, appears frequently in post-war cultural texts – maternal quality is evaluated by and celebrated through the medium of food provision. Expert advice was considered crucial in facilitating the desired outcome for both society and individual. In a 1945 speech urging continuing

involvement of the government in feeding guidance for mothers, Lord Woolton, the influential wartime Minister of Food, who managed the successful food rationing system, declaimed:

> The young need protection and it is proper that for them the State should take deliberate steps to provide it. […] Food must be chosen in the light of knowledge of what a growing child needs for the building of a sound body. And when food has been well-chosen, it must be well-cooked. This task calls for the highest degree of scientific catering; it mustn't be left to chance. (qtd in Hardyment 12)

Food was thus simultaneously a powerful socializing agent, a marker for the psychological quality of maternity, and a political tool. Acceptance of the family meal as the criterion of good motherhood has been confirmed in later sociological studies; the 1980s mothers interviewed by Nickie Charles and Marion Kerr informed researchers that: "a proper meal is […] where everybody will sit down together and take time over eating a meal and do it properly" (20). In their furnishing of the product that literally and metaphorically sustains the family, these women interviewees felt judged, by themselves and others, as good or bad mothers according to the quality of food they provided and how it was served and consumed.

The Bell Family and White Boots

Streatfeild's 'Bell Family' duology mirrors and reinforces this traditional model of motherhood, assuming conflation of the good cook and good mothering. *The Bell Family* and *New Town* chronicle day-to-day events in the nuclear family of vicar Alex, wife Cathy, their four children, Esau the dog, and the daily helpmeet Mrs Gage. The obligation to provide a 'proper' cooked meal in compliance with the prevailing good mother paradigm is illustrated by a dining-table scene in *The Bell Family,* when Cathy, generally constructed as the 'good' mother of this text, fails on this occasion to create an acceptable meal for her children. On a hot day Cathy has "tried to please the family by preparing a cold breakfast. She had made a brawn" (183). However, as she explains worriedly to Mrs Gage, "I read in a paper that all the family would love it, but it doesn't seem to have turned out right somehow" (183). In response to Mrs Gage's ill-concealed horror at "what seemed to be a cross between cold soup and a half-jellied jelly […], Cathy shuddered. 'Don't Mrs Gage, dear. I had already taken a dislike to it, but now it makes me feel sick'" (183). At the dining-table, the children respond predictably. Well-behaved eldest Paul politely enquires "I thought brawns stood up", while outspoken middle-child Ginnie pushes her plate away, declaring "To me it looks as if it was something somebody had eaten, and…"

(185). Eventually the more sensitive Jane speaks for them all:

> "Don't wear your suffering-martyr face, Mummy. We know you meant it to be a nice cold breakfast, but, darling, we can't eat it, honestly we can't. […] How about letting Esau have this?" (184-5)

Esau also rejects the dish, which ends up in the pig bucket. Cathy's identification with the food she has brought to table signifies its role as a test of good mothering and her own internalization of normative motherhood. She takes her maternal food responsibilities seriously, as evidenced in her newspaper search for appetizing recipes. As Winnicott argues, the offering of food is psychologically significant, being both a symbolic representation and a practical demonstration of maternal love, so its rejection has significance beyond that of poor cooking technique. Cathy's "suffering-martyr face" indicates her internal distress that she has this morning failed to fulfil her nurturing maternal role; the rejection of the brawn that refuses to "stand up," which even the dog, let alone her children, will not eat, temporarily consigns Cathy's maternal self-image to the pig bucket.

In her representation of maternal quality Streatfeild deploys oppositional tropes; her "good" mother constructs are invariably presented alongside exemplars of inadequate mothering. The ideological power of such binary oppositions as a narratological technique lies in their simplistic counterpointing of the characters, which labels the values implicit to the text. While Cathy's brawn fails for once to meet the received ideal, her wealthy sister-in-law Rose Bell delegates cooking entirely to paid servants and prioritizes her social life over presence at family meals. Rose, whose main interests are her clothes and foreign travel, is relentlessly portrayed as shallow and unaware of her daughter's needs, either nutritionally or emotionally. "Aunt Rose was out a lot, and Veronica left to herself had to find her own amusements" (195). Nine-year-old Veronica "hate[s] being parked first here and then at home" when her parents holiday abroad and "cried if anything was refused her" (75/23). It is clear that Rose's withdrawal from the family table and domestic life signifies the emotionally inadequate mothering that has produced a lonely and immature daughter.

A similar binary opposition depicting maternal alienation from cooking and absence from the dining-table as a marker of poor motherhood appears in *White Boots*. Ten-year-old Lalla lives with Aunt Claudia, her official guardian, and Nana, a totemic Streatfeild nannie-mother-substitute. Unsympathetic Aunt Claudia's main interest in her ward is as a potential ice-skating champion, and interactions between them focus on this goal, ignoring Lalla's emotional needs. Like Rose Bell, Claudia employs staff to cook, only entering the kitchen to give instructions on Lalla's restrictive diet regime, designed to remove the "naughty curves" that could hinder Lalla's skating prowess (92). There are

no family meals in this wealthy upstairs-downstairs household, but devoted co-mother Nana 'cooks' for Lalla, sharing the great treat, in their top-floor nursery, of making hot buttered toast in front of the fire. As the oppositional nurturing mother-figure, Nana refutes Claudia's utilitarian attitude to food, declaring, "the moment I see Lalla looking peaky, it's hot dripping-toast for her tea and plenty of it" (95). As foil to the unmotherly and food-restricting Claudia, Nana's abundant provision of shared comfort food marks her as the 'good' mother.

The importance of the family meal-table is further reinforced with the description of mealtimes in the poverty-stricken household of Lalla's friend Harriet. Mother Olivia Johnson's consideration that "perhaps it was nicer to laugh over the funny food you had to eat, than to have the grandest dinner in the world served in lonely state to two people in a nursery" confirms the ideological message of this text (42-3). The enjoyment of familial togetherness and communication at Olivia's dinner table, whatever is on it, foregrounds the values of the mother-centred Johnson household in contrast to the isolated grandeur of Lalla's wealthy home.

The Six Cousins

The message that sharing good food at table connotes the maternal ideal is even more explicit in Blyton's 'Cousins' books. Sisters-in-law Linnie and Rose Longfield are, like Cathy and Rose Bell, juxtaposed as templates of 'good' and 'bad' motherhood. In *Six Cousins at Mistletoe Farm*, the three town-based Longfield children, Cyril, Melisande and Roderick are sent to live with country-dwelling cousins after the family house is burned down. The conflicts that arise between the two sets of siblings are attributed to their contrasting experiences of mothering, and maternal quality is specifically expressed through each mother's competence at cooking and familial presence at table. The comparison is most marked in a Christmas dinner scene. Times of celebration, such as birthdays and Christmas, are, according to Charles' and Kerr's empirical research, particular flashpoints for measuring maternal worth, so this calibration is especially pointed. The family now have a new home, but as Rose decides "she didn't really feel up to coping" with Christmas, she and her family are invited by Linnie to Mistletoe Farm (61). The description of the celebration spread is linked directly to an appreciation of Linnie's maternity:

> The dinner was magnificent. "You're the best cook in the world! Goodness knows what you do with a turkey to make it taste like this", said Mr Longfield [and] called out a toast. "To Linnie – all our love – we couldn't do without her!" The children raised their glasses and shouted at the tops of their voices. "Mummy! My love!" "Best mother in the world!" (63-64)

The affiliation of Linnie's food-table with her mothering role is counterpointed by the implied narrator's description of the internalized reaction of Rose, who is excluded from such appreciation: "Would anyone ever toast her like that, with delight and joy and love? She couldn't help feeling just a little bit doubtful" (65). The point is emphasized by niece Susan remarking "I shouldn't think you could boil an egg, could you, Aunt Rose?", while Rose's husband David "turned jovially to his wife. 'It's a pity *you* can't cook like this, Rose,' he said" (63). As Daniel points out, "it is often the case that food is used to make implicit judgements about a woman [...] including her capacity to love and nurture, and her willingness to sacrifice herself for her family," a judgement made brutally clear in the family's tactless comparisons between Rose and Linnie (108).

The imagery of Linnie's bountiful table is the more powerful since this plenitude was a rarity in the time of austerity. Such idealistic constructions of motherhood, encompassing culinary abundance and maternal competence, occupied an influential place in post-war domestic discourse; as Woolton had stated "Feeding is not enough, it must be good feeding [and] it must be well-cooked" (qtd in Hardyment 12). It is significant to Blyton's message that Rose is ultimately afforded redemption via culinary skills; when her cook and maid walk out, she is faced with the choice of either providing family meals herself or leaving the farm and her family. In accordance with the alignment of table meals and good motherhood, Rose's production of a plentiful farmhouse high-tea, with "cheese and ham and all" that the family eat together around the table, signifies the character's ultimate transformation from 'bad' to 'good' mother (154). This narrative reversal confirms the relevance of food in evaluating motherhood and positions the *Six Cousins* duology within contemporary maternal discourse. As in Streatfeild, the performance of the mother as cook and at table is crucial to an approved model of maternity The importance of family mealtimes, key to the explicit ideology of these texts, is an overtly discursive contribution to the construction of the motherhood ideal.

The values promulgated are, however, occasionally subject to question in textual glimpses of less-obvious effects of compliance with the ideal on the quality of maternal life. The representation of Linnie as a model 'good' mother – she "took it for granted that these things were her job, to be done well and lovingly for her husband and children, and she did them, and was happy in the doing" – is an example of Blyton's explicit ideological message that is contradicted in the narrative (69). Linnie's acceptance of normative maternity involves a denial of her wider interests, and the service aspects of her role are evident when her husband shouts for his lunch: "'Linnie! LINNIE! Do come here!' [...] 'Can you get me some sandwiches quickly?'" (59). This summons leads Linnie to confess to her bookish nephew that her love of music and literature has to be denied: "poetry hasn't much place in my life now, Cyril, with so much to do and think of" (59). Streatfeild's Cathy is similarly limited; a keen gardener, she is constrained by her maternal foodwork

duties to "let the garden she had dreamed of making drop. There are no time-spenders like gardens, but she had meant to sneak some. Now […] she knew she had been wrong" (220). Dedication to servicing family meals may be an overt marker of good motherhood, but, for both these characters, it involves personal sacrifice. So, the 'explicit' values of the texts are overtaken by an unexamined ideology. The "powers of reinforcement vested in […] unconscious ideology" should not be underestimated, and the conflict revealed beneath Linnie and Cathy's acquiescent compliance with the motherhood ideal allows for contradictory readings (Hollindale 13).

Such contrasting representations of maternal lifestyle have the potential to undermine surface depictions of contented motherhood in ways that could influence the subject position of the implied reader. Furthermore, the simplistic construction of 'good' and 'bad' mothers opens these narratives to resistant reading which, as Judith Fetterley discusses, "make possible a new effect" on the reader that may "in turn provide the conditions for changing the culture that the literature reflects" (xx). Adrienne Rich describes this process as one of "re-vision – of seeing with fresh eyes [and] from a new critical direction", that empowers readers in the process of constructing their own subjectivities (18). The covert acknowledgement of the price of acquiescent compliance with normative maternity constitutes an alternate strand of the contribution these texts make to maternal discourse, opening possibilities of a challenge to the received maternal ideal.

Power and Maternal Identity

In her discussion of *Food, Consumption and the Body*, Sarah Sceats asserts that food is "not bound within any single discourse but *impregnated with meanings from the many and various frameworks* within which it figures" (126 my emphasis). While food matters are a demanding measure of the maternal ideal in the texts, they can also be construed as a Foucauldian ingredient of power, both at the micro-level of the dinner table and the macro-level of national reconstruction. Foucault's exploration of the microphysics of power in *Power/Knowledge* – its "capillary form of existence" – is especially relevant to the position of mothers; it can be applied to their control of bringing food to table, their insistence on culturally-acceptable table-manners once there, and ultimately to their political influence (39).

In the post-war years, when food strategies were intrinsic to the political and economic recovery of nation-states, maternal feeding responsibilities became a revealing indicator of the power structures in operation at micro and macro levels. This political aspect of food provision as a primary tool for restructuring the UK created conflicting positions for mothers, who bore the brunt of the practical effects of restrictions imposed by the severe rationing of the long 1950s. As Townswomen's Guild member Constance Hill declared: "the smiling mother of yesterday is the bad-tempered mother of today

[...], we are under-fed, under-washed and over-controlled" (qtd in Hinton 133). The food controls, which exceeded wartime conditions, were imposed by parliament for economic reasons, but even the ultra-patriotic Blyton was moved to protest, sending '"Lament of a Housewife"' to the national press when bread rationing was proposed in the wake of a disastrous 1946 UK wheat crop:

> Has no M.P. an angry wife
> Who threatens with a carving knife,
> And vows that if he rations bread
> She'll see the boys and girls are fed,
> And he must give up half his share
> Because HE makes the cupboard bare?

Resentment over the long hours mothers spent queuing for food was the catalyst for the establishment of the British Housewives' League in 1945; initially they collected 17,000 signatures from so-called 'ordinary housewives,' which were presented to parliament in protest against the prevalence of queues. Working within groups such as the BHL, mothers remained highly vociferous in the ongoing protests around food supplies, collecting 600,000 signatures on a petition for government protesting bread rationing. There was a political outcome to this maternal discontent; the bread rationing scheme was suspended, and food protests played a role in a surprising reversal of political ideology in the country at large. In 1951, and notwithstanding its establishment of the much-valued welfare state, the Attlee Labour government was soundly defeated by the Conservatives under Winston Churchill – who had declared that he would fight the election on "houses [and] red meat" (qtd in Hardyment 38). As one mother expressed it, "the election was lost mainly in the queue at the butcher's or the grocer's" (qtd in Pugh 291).

So, although maternal food responsibilities could and did become oppressive, their very importance in the national and political realm also, paradoxically, enhanced the status of mothers, enabling them to exert influence in the public arena. The role of food as a cultural signifier of burgeoning public power was also reproduced in the private realm; foodwork struggles of mothers at the practical level of bringing food to the table had unintended consequences in enhancing the influence over others that Carole Counihan describes as "a major component of female identity, and an important source of female connections to and influence over others" (52). The difficulties of cooking appetizing meals with limited, often unappetizing ingredients, alongside the need of good nutrition for children, was addressed across the media, a staple feature of magazine articles, government advice pamphlets and broadcasting directed at mothers. When *Woman's Hour* was introduced to BBC radio in 1946 as "a daily programme of

music, advice, and entertainment", it always included food advice. The tradition was ongoing – in 1953 listeners were entertained by a talk on 'How to Buy a Cabbage' (*Radio Times*). Limitations to the foodstuffs available inevitably exacerbated maternal problems in providing acceptable meals, and the government advocated unusual foods, such as whale meat and pigeon, to swell rations in the face of increasing shortages. The infamous canned snoek, a barracuda-like fish, was imported as a replacement for canned salmon, but overly optimistic governmental advice, and recipes such as "'Snoek Piquante,"' failed to convert mothers.[3] The Ministry of Food, operative from 1939 until 1955, was central to this discourse, and state directives on feeding children continued into the 1950s and beyond. As in other areas of maternal practice 'expert' opinion, predominantly male, took precedence over practical experience; mothers, it was assumed, no longer knew best. Consequently, well-meaning intentions to create a "healthy generation, guarded by regulation orange juice, halibut-liver oil and milk" were often seen as official interventions questioning maternal competence; an uneasy relationship between mothers and state was being forged over dinner (Cooper 36). Yet the plethora of advice and recommendations in this intense focus on mothering – a belated recognition of the vital function mothers performed in putting food on the table – ultimately elevated their role.

In her essay "Deciphering a Meal", social anthropologist Mary Douglas explores how the work of feeding the family utilizes food to organize people and activities, showing that the power structures in operation within the family can be defined by its food habits: "if food is treated as a code, the messages it encodes will be found in the pattern of relations being expressed" (61). The feeding role of mothers thus illuminates the operation of familial power dynamics; food, being essential to physical survival, and important in creating psychological attachment between mother and child, inevitably confers power on the food-supplier. In *Power/Knowledge* Foucault asserts that power does not invariably operate negatively, as it would then become self-defeating:

> If power were never anything but repressive, if it never did anything but say no, do you really think one would be brought to obey it? What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted [is] that it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse. It needs to be considered as a productive network. (119)

The status of mothers that is implicit in their control of food matters can be considered as a Foucauldian "productive network," one that "induces pleasure," "traverses and produces things" and influences discourse. The food power of mothers in the fictional texts mimics this reality as a form of influence that reinforces maternal identity while creating a coherent cultural identity for the family and its members.

Marjorie DeVault concludes in her study *Feeding the Family*, based on her detailed empirical research with a diverse range of families in 1980s Chicago, that setting-up the meal and arranging for all family members to sit down and eat it together, actually *produces* the family, bringing together its individual members from their separate activities into a "consciously crafted structure of family life" (78). Mealtimes create "times of coming together that are thought of – although not entirely consciously – as *making a family*" (78 my emphasis). The situation governing cooking and serving the family meal transcends geographical and temporal boundaries and continues to be an important marker for maternal identity and status. The meal-table is a place of familial cohesion, a site where the exercise of maternal power, as a 'productive' tension between pleasure and control that "forms knowledge [and] produces discourse", is seen to be played out.

The Private and Domestic Realm of Family Meals

Accordingly, the cultural work of the texts in establishing a logistic of maternal power is most evident in their depiction of the domestic realm of the family meal-table. The first paragraph of *Six Cousins at Mistletoe Farm* is a classic model of what Katz refers to as "the extent to which tea-time in particular is used to dramatise states of harmony or disharmony" (193). It reveals the construction of the maternal figure as lynchpin of the family:

> It was half-past five one April evening at Mistletoe Farm. In the big sitting-room sat five people, finishing high-tea. Three children sat at the table with their father and mother. Mrs Longfield was half-smiling now as she looked at her family sitting round the table eating […]. She liked this time of the day best of all, when she had the whole of her family there together in peace. (5-6)

Linnie's power over the table is metonymic of her empowered status in the family, and such scenes are a repeated trope in Blyton's work. The meal-table scenarios are positive exemplars of maternal power in that they serve to establish the cultural identity of the family group, a positive Foucauldian "productive thing" that "induces pleasure" and is "held good" by family members.

When maternal power is not exercised effectively, meals at table can demonstrate a more problematical familial dynamic, while a fragmented meal, where individuals eat separately, has disruptive power; it is indicative of the troubled family. In *Six Cousins Again*, Mr Longfield initially delights in the vision of his family having their first meal in their new home: "What a glorious sight! […] It was wonderful to see you all sitting round the table like that" (23). However, problems become evident when ten-year-old Roderick, horrified

by the scarce quantity of food his mother has provided, first protests, and then leaves to eat in the scullery; he continues to eat separately from the family. The fragmentation of family mealtimes accelerates when incompetent cook Rose fails to produce dinner, and her husband also absents himself from the table:

> "If I don't get something to eat soon I shall have to go out without anything," said Mr Longfield. "For goodness sake – does it take an hour to get a bit of meat and potato and bread and cheese on the table?" In the end he got a hunk of bread and cheese for himself and marched off angrily. (109)

This breakdown of mealtimes reveals the splintering of familial power structures as both Roderick and his father choose to exercise individual authority over where they eat. Mr Longfield's dinner and Roderick's teas, eaten away from the table "on a tray anywhere he liked", indicate the damaging fissures in family structure that open up in the face of ineffectual maternal power (70). Lacking food skills, Rose cannot hold the family together at mealtimes, and the locus of power shifts from a communal meal-table, anchored by maternal presence, to sites of isolation, such as farmyard and scullery, occupied by disaffected individuals rather than a cohesive group. Sister-in-law Linnie eventually comes to the rescue "with her hands full of food [and soon] everyone […] was sitting around the table tucking into ham and sausage rolls and cheese and cake [with] lots of talk going on!" (114). "Lots of talk" affirms the family table as a space for communication, and the message is that, with food consumed around the table in the presence of a mother, familial fragmentation could be repaired.

Since the refusal of Rose to conform to the good mother paradigm (as exemplified by Linnie) diminishes her maternal role to the extent that she is powerless to unite her family, she suggests they leave the farm and return to the town life she prefers. When neither her daughter nor her sons agree to leave with her, Rose, "staring into the darkness, realized that she couldn't do without them" and makes the "tremendous resolve" to adopt the conventional motherhood role modelled by her sister-in-law (152). Her subsequent belated compliance with the cultural ideal is expressed in her provision of a "really good high tea, just like Mistletoe Farm" that restores cohesion to the divided family, just as Linnie's meal had done previously (154). While they are now, Roderick declares, "a proper family again," Rose's reinstatement at the hub of family life comes at a personal cost (158). As with Linnie's renunciation of poetry and Cathy's rejection of gardening, Rose is constrained by motherhood to deny herself the urban life she yearns for. Yet again, the overt message that maternal empowerment requires conformity to a traditional model of motherhood is implicitly questioned, allowing the reader to invoke resistant as well as complicit readings.

The family meal is revealed as a different engine of power in the maternal duty to impose codes of proper behavior at table. As Kara Keeling and Scott Pollard note, "the rituals of eating and the rituals of the table are compact metaphors for the power […] inherent in family dynamics" (132). In the texts it is the mother-figures who exercise such power, while fathers are generally detached, focusing on non-domestic work responsibilities – Blyton's Mr Longfield "eat[s] quickly, frowning as he thought of all the work to be done [and] rarely said anything at mealtimes" (*Mistletoe Farm* 5-6). Similarly, Streatfeild's Alex Bell "turn[s] over his letters" at the breakfast-table while Cathy imposes the rules: "this is breakfast-time, and you three ought to be sitting on your chairs at the table" (*Bell Family* 166). Such maternal inculcation of table manners establishes what Bourdieu describes as cultural capital, "the expression of a habitus of order, restraint and propriety which may not be abdicated" (196). Bourdieu deploys the term "habitus" to encapsulate ways in which individuals are socially positioned; meal-time rituals, "the manner of presenting and consuming food, the organization of the meal", are, he avers, "an affirmation of ethical tone and aesthetic refinement" (196). In Charles and Kerr's 1980s research on food and families the mothers regarded good table-manners as vital for ensuring children are socialized into their prevailing culture and class and become acceptable to the adult world. Reinforcing Bourdieu, they said that "it was important for a child to learn table-manners [...] so that their behavior was socially acceptable" (21). Over twenty-five years later these findings were replicated in the investigations of Kate Cairns and Josee Johnston, whose study concludes that "children's food practices are widely seen to reflect the success or failure of mothers' socialization efforts" (67). The 1950s children's texts engage with an ongoing maternal discourse that positions mothers firmly in the role of cultural arbiter. In transmitting values of family, class and society the dining-table is a location, ideally presided over by both parents, but controlled by the mother, in which family members come to internalize those values.

Nationhood at Table

Maternal exercise of the microphysics of power through control of table-manners extends beyond the domestic realm into the macro-areas of class and national identity. In the post-war embourgeoisement of British society, facilitated by slowly increasing economic prosperity and the socially supportive welfare state, middle-class values were held to be desirable for a unified national identity and "there was greater emphasis on the desirability of extending middle-class taste and standards" (Wilson 125). As Barthes demonstrates in *Mythologies*, food consumption is a vehicle for the transmission of ideology that is infallibly linked to social and national identity. The participation of the texts in promotion of the manners and mores of the unifying middle-class ideal through the conduit of polite table-manners grounds them in contemporary establishment of the more egalitarian society

that was held to be necessary in re-creation of post-war nationhood.

The ideological function of table-manners is affirmed in *Those Dreadful Children*, another Blyton text that features binary depictions of mothers. The English Mrs Carlton and the Irish Mrs Taggerty each create a different habitus wherein the dining-table is established as a metaphor for class and nationality. The mothers have different views of appropriate mealtime behavior, as the lively but undisciplined Taggerty children are dismayed to discover when they go to tea with their new neighbors, the polite, ultra-conventional Carltons. Asked to wash their hands before eating, and to shut their dog outside, they horrify Mrs Carlton by their behavior:

> They really had no manners at all at table. They never passed each other anything. They didn't wait to be asked to take this or that, they just stretched out and took it. They didn't say please and they didn't say thank you. They were certainly not at their best at meals. […] "How dreadful they are!" thought Mother. "Why weren't they taught their manners?" (48)

A subsequent teatime in the Taggerty household, however, reveals unexpected advantages to Mrs Taggerty's laissez-faire expectations. Despite her failure to impose polite manners on her family, she provides prodigious quantities of food, an infallible Blytonesque marker for positive motherhood. In contrast to the scanty Carlton tea, the children feast on:

> Thick buttery slices of bread […] fruity home-made cake, and the slices were enormous ones. Margery couldn't help comparing them to the thin little slices they had at home. These big, thick slices looked rude and greedy, but they really were lovely and big when you were hungry. (69-70)

The culturally stereotypical contrast between Irish Mrs Taggerty, "a big plump woman, with untidy hair" and English "neat, well-dressed Mrs Carlton" underlines the class and national identity issues that are emblematized at the meal-tables (19/88). The racist undertones of this crude stereotyping (not untypical in Blyton's fiction) are here expressed through food as well as appearance and behavioral expectations. Mrs Taggerty's "thick buttery slices" of bread compared to Mrs Carlton's "thin little slices" are inferential of the differences in social class and nationality revealed in modes of consumption as discussed by Bourdieu. However, the maternal binary is not so clear-cut, unlike the stark antithetical representation of the pairs of mothers in the Bell Family and Six Cousins series. Mrs Taggerty may be untidy, but she is also, as evidenced in her generous food provision, a demonstrative and loving mother whose children "clung round her" (88). The neat Mrs Carlton imposes polite table-manners, but is also a "stuck-up" mother who has raised

"namby-pamby and priggy-wiggy" children (38). In the configuration of manners and class this story echoes Victorian moral tales, such as those by Mrs Molesworth or Charlotte M. Yonge, emphasizing notions of duty, self-sacrifice, contrition and self-improvement. The "rude and greedy" Taggerty children are reformed through family misfortune and religious observance. Acknowledging "how rough we were, we didn't even know our table-manners!", the Taggertys finally adopt the Carltons' more formal patterns of behaviour in order to please their mother after she has an accident (152). And ultimately each mother comes to appreciate the other's positive qualities, and their cultural differences are merged in mutual recognition of shared values. The overall message is that manners do matter, being important in promoting social cohesion, and that it is the mothers' role to impose these, in order to reinforce the national values common to both their cultures.

Barthes' 1957 essays on wine and steak as foodstuffs which acquired mythological significance as "alimentary sign[s] of Frenchness", while milk is "now the true anti-wine", establish associations of food and nationality that emphasize how cultural investment in particular foods enhances their importance (60-64). The fact that "the Carltons always had milk for tea at home" is an indication of their quintessential Englishness; eating such foods signifies their participation in familial and national identity (70). Although Blyton was at her most prolific in the UK period of extreme rationing between 1945 and 1954 (publishing forty titles in 1951 alone), her meal-tables do not acknowledge external reality. The sugar-laden spread on Annette Carlton's party table, with "ice-creams, and crowds of cakes and jellies and blancmanges and a big birthday cake", is nevertheless typically Blytonian, offering a plenitude of archetypally English foods that signify a vision of restored Britishness equivalent to Barthes' Francophone symbols of red wine and steak (99).

The markers of nationhood that feature at Streatfeild's meal-tables are more realistic, featuring edible symbols of 1950s austerity such as bread-and-jam. Cathy Bell first appears "spreading jam on bread" (*Bell Family* 23). Despite rationing, these iconic foodstuffs were always available, being filling, cheap and, crucially, home-produced – using British wheat with home-grown fruit and sugar-beet for jam. The ubiquitous bread-and-jam teas serve as Barthesian signifiers of nationality, representing "the mental life of a given society [and] constituting information" regarding the endemic drabness and shortages of post-war Britain (*Psychosociology* 29). Since the Women's Institutes had elevated jam-making into a rousing symbol of British national unity and survival in adversity, the foods also evoke a proud imagery of positivist nationalism. By providing such meals, the mother-figures enact a powerful re-establishment of national identity, operating at the domestic micro-level of the family table to feed into the macro-level of re-building the nation-state. The characters are in effect consuming their national culture, upholding both family and nation; their meal tables combine physical nourishment of "the British race" with potent

edible symbols of nationhood symbolic of the continuance of "British ideals in the world" (*Social Insurance* 52).

In delineation of maternal responsibility for the content and conduct at meal-tables, both authors engage with contemporaneous notions of received middle-class values as a socially cohesive force. Insisting on certain behaviours and provision of appropriate foods, mother characters formulate an awareness of class alongside national identity for their children. As two-way conduits for societal and institutional power, their influence at mealtimes contributes to social cohesion, ensuring the future of the rebuilt nation-state. It is through the creation of such cultural capital that the power of maternal influence is realized. While the habitus of the family meal is a context in which maternal identity is affirmed, they are also "structuring structures [that] implement distinctions between what is good and what is bad, what is right and what is wrong" (Bourdieu 170-2). In a social climate where food was an important factor affecting political stability, family meal-tables became key to national images of unity and strength, inculcating the healthy (and thus powerful) nation that politicians were so eager to convey to the world. The control of this iconic site illuminates the micro (domestic) and macro (societal) power of mothers; their "capillary" exercise of power at the dining-table flows into the larger blood-vessels and arteries of social and national influence. In overcoming the practical constraints of food responsibilities to build psychologically strong and physically healthy families, mothers are shown as essential operators in the creation of a stable, politically healthy and powerful nation.

Conclusion

The image of mother and family at table carries connotative meanings. As a semiotic tool the family meal in these texts is a revealing signifier for constructions of maternity, quality of mothering, and the power of mothers to enculturate their children. Mealtimes represent a system of values inscribed in family life that elevates the status of mothers, while showing that, as creators of a stable present and investors in a positive future, they have an impact beyond domestic confines. At a time when food matters dominated national discourse these stories connect the imagined world closely with reality. Their metonymy marks them as significant participants in the cultural discourse of motherhood, playing a part in constructing the social conditions within which fiction operates, and to which popular fiction, with its wide constituency, makes an important contribution.

Locating these works in a social context serves to confirm the importance of reading such popular texts as a means of accessing the past, uncovering new understanding of post-war discourses of maternity at a significant time for British cultural development. Moreover, later empirical studies such as the 2015 research of Cairns and Johnston demonstrate that we remain ideologically linked to the long 1950s as far as the maternal

role is concerned – in the Western world cultural expectations of mothers have lagged behind socio-economic and legislative change. As the mother's role today, in preparing and bringing food to the table, remains a potent aspect of twenty-first-century maternal discourse, these mid-twentieth-century texts can still have resonance.

Works Cited

Appleyard, Joseph A. *Becoming a Reader: The Experience of Fiction*. Cambridge UP, 1991.

Barthes, Roland. *Mythologies*. Vintage, 1957.

---. *Towards a Psychosociology of Contemporary Food Consumption*. 1961. Routledge, 2013.

Blyton, Enid. *Six Cousins Again*. Evans Brothers, 1950.

---. *Six Cousins at Mistletoe Farm*. Evans Brothers, 1948.

---. *Those Dreadful Children*. Lutterworth Press, 1949.

Bourdieu, Pierre. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Routledge, 1984.

Cairns, Kate and Josee Johnston. *Food and Femininity*. Bloomsbury, 2015.

Charles, Nickie and Marion Kerr. *Women, Food and Families*. Manchester UP, 1988.

Coats, Karen and Lisa R. Fraustino, Eds. "Mothering in Children's and Young Adult Literature." *Children's Literature in Education*, vol. 46, no. 2, 2015.

Cooper, Susan. '"Snoek Piquante': Trials and Tribulations of the British Housewife." *Age of Austerity 1945-1951*. Hodder & Stoughton, 1963.

Counihan, Carole M. "Female Identity, Food and Power in Contemporary Florence." *Anthropological Quarterly*, vol. 61, no. 2, 1988.

Dally, Ann. *Inventing Motherhood: Consequences of an Ideal*. Hutchinson, 1982.

Daniel, Carolyn. *Voracious Children: Who Eats Whom in Children's Literature.* Routledge, 2006.

Davidoff, Leonore, et. al. Eds. *The Family Story 1830-1960.* Longman, 1999.

DeVault, Marjorie. "The Work of Feeding a Family." *Feeding the Family: The Social Organisation of Caring.* Chicago UP, 1991.

Douglas, Mary. "Deciphering a Meal." *Daedalus*, vol. 101, no. 1, 1972. Web. 12 October 2017.

Fetterley, Judith. *The Resisting Reader: A Feminist Approach to American Fiction*. Indiana UP, 1978.

Foucault, Michel. *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*. Harvester, 1980.

Grenby, Matthew O. "General Introduction." *Popular Children's Literature in Britain*. Ashgate, 2008.

Hardyment, Christina. *Slice of Life: British Way of Eating Since 1945.* Penguin, 1995.

Hinton, James. "Militant Housewives: The British Housewives' League and the Attlee Government." *History Workshop Journal*, vol. 38, no.1, 1994.

Hollindale, Peter. "Ideology and the Children's Book." *Signal*, vol. 55, no. 1, 1988.

Katz, Wendy R. "Some Uses of Food in Children's Literature." *Children's Literature in Education*, vol. 11, no. 4, 1980.

Keeling, Kara K. and Scott T. Pollard. *Critical Approaches to Food in Children's Literature.* Routledge, 2009.

"Lament of a Housewife." *Sunday Graphic Newspaper*. 23 June 1946.

Langhamer, Claire. "Feelings, Women and Work in the Long 1950s". *Women's History Review,* vol. 26, no. 1, 2017.

Pugh, Martin. *Women and the Women's Movement in Britain 1914-1959.* Macmillan, 1992.

Radio Times. (1923-2009). Web. 25 October 2018. https://genome.ch.bbc.co.uk

Rich, Adrienne. "'When We Dead Awaken': Writing as Re-Vision." *College English*, vol. 34, no.1, 1972.

Sarland, Charles. *Young People Reading: Culture and Response.* Open University Press, 1991.

Sceats, Sarah. *Food, Consumption and the Body*. Cambridge UP, 2000.

Social Insurance and Allied Services (The Beveridge Report). HMSO, 1942.

Streatfeild, Noel. *New Town: A Story about the Bell Family*. Collins, 1960.

---. *The Bell Family*. Collins, 1954.

---. *White Boots*. Collins, 1951.

Tinkler, Penny. "Revisioning the History of Girls and Women in Britain in the Long 1950s". *Women's History Review*, vol. 26, no. 1, 2017.

Vallone, Lynne. "What Is the Meaning of All This Gluttony?" *Papers*, vol. 12, no. 1, 2002.

Wilson, Elizabeth. *Only Halfway to Paradise: Women in Postwar Britain 1945-1968.* Tavistock, 1980.

Winnicott, Donald W. *The Child and the Family*. Tavistock Publications, 1957.

---. "Some Psychological Aspects of Juvenile Delinquency." *Deprivation and Delinquency.* Routledge, 1984.

Notes

[1] See empirical research findings of Charles & Kerr; DeVault; Cairns & Johnston.

[2] The "long 1950s" is a concept encompassing the UK post-war era from 1945-1960, as a period characterised by common socio-economic and cultural conditions. See Langhamer, Tinkler.

[3] This recipe title came to symbolise the less-successful aspects of rationing policy.

Inter/national Nightmares of Gluttony and Canibalism:

Eating and (not) Being Eaten

Voracious Nonsense: The Cannibalistic Pleasures and Gluttonous Delights of Edward Lear's and Laura Richards's Nonsense Poetry

Etti Gordon Ginzburg

Victorian Nonsense, which is known for its eerie balance between violent content and restrained form (Thomas 119), is replete with scenes of unrestrained consumption and wild feasting.[1] This is true for the famous poems of Edward Lear (1812-1888), as well as for the verses of his less-known American female contemporary, Laura Richards (1850-1943). In their poems, food is often associated with bizarre, horrific deaths that nevertheless arouse a strange sense of satisfaction and vicious joy. Lear's poems, when they include food, tend to focus on the victims of food-related disasters (which are often self-inflicted); Richards's verses, by contrast, focus more on acts of feeding and eating (and sometimes devouring) from the perspective of an authority figure, often a mother, who joyfully avenges herself on the source of her responsibilities and obligations (i.e., the children). In both cases, the result is often the kind of guilt-ridden pleasure that is surely well-known to anyone who has ever enjoyed an extravagant meal. Indeed, both Nonsense and food seem to share what Hugh Haughton describes as a "pleasure principle": they are seasoned with "delight in transgression, [and] a protest against the arbitrariness of order" (8).

Such outrageous representations of food are not common in children's literature and may be dismissed as nonsense (in the denotative sense of the word), in accordance with the Victorians' association of Lear's and Richards's verses with silly humor and juvenile fun. However, the poems' carnivalesque reversal of the traditional role of food (as a

source of nourishment, warmth, and joy, among others) can also be seen as undermining the long-established role of children's literature in supporting a bourgeoise sense of order and morality. Instead, the poems destabilize social and parental authority, or challenge ingrained Victorian rituals around mealtimes as well as deep-rooted concepts such as maternal devotion.

Accordingly, this chapter will examine violent representations of food in Lear's and Richards's poems and attempt to understand the *Schadenfreude*, or malicious joy, each trigger. Paying close attention to the association of food with extreme brutality and death in both Lear's and Richards's verses, this chapter challenges these poems' classification as mere children's literature altogether.

Edward Lear (1812-1888)

Grotesque deaths caused by the consumption or preparation of food are ubiquitous in Lear's poems. Lear's violent limericks generally depict an assortment of social outcasts—lonely, isolated, and mostly elderly men and women—who in the specific case of his food-related poetry either eat or are eaten, hunted, or baked, sometimes to death, often by an anonymous "they." The "Old Man of Berlin" (77), for example, is accidentally baked by a group of "they," gendered female in the illustration (fig. 1), perhaps as befitting their occupation – baking:

Fig. 1
Edward Lear. "There Was an Old Man of Berlin."

Likewise, the "Old Man of Peru" is baked in a stove by his wife. Although the limerick describes the wife's act as unintentional, a "mistake," Lear's accompanying illustration (figure 2) – depicting a feisty housewife commandingly shoving a horrified man, likely her

husband, into the stove – clearly suggests otherwise:

Fig. 2
Edward Lear. "There Was an Old Man of Peru."

As noted, Lear's perpetrators tend not to be socially powerful actors and include women, animals and even children. "The Old Man of Leghorn" (73) is devoured by no other than a puppy, which the illustration (figure 3) renders a mighty dog:

Fig. 3
Edward Lear. "There Was an Old Man of Leghorn."

There is a cannibalistic twist to such scenes, as "salads and people can both get dressed for dinner" to quote Peter Robinson's witticism (117). Here and elsewhere, however, Lear's unfortunate protagonists are never the agents of such fatal cannibalistic mishaps, but always their victims. With the victims as vulnerable as the perpetrators, Lear's

carnivalesque, hierarchical topsy-turviness is neither liberating nor egalitarian (as a warranted allusion to Bakhtin might suggest). Notably, the illustration (figure 3) of the Old Man's helplessness in the face of the beast of a puppy renders him child-like and exposes the vulnerability underlying this seemingly absurd foolery. Thus, although Lear's "puppy" is not anthropomorphized, a phenomenon that is common in Richards's poems, and its role as perpetrator may be a random poetic choice, the image successfully conveys a state of existential (emotional and social) impotence.

When Lear's eccentric characters *actively* engage in gastronomic activities (rather than when they are acted upon), these acts are innocuously nonsensical, as in the poem about the "whimsical Man of Apulia" (95) who "fed twenty sons, upon nothing but buns." However, a similar absurdity ends tragically when the "Old Man of the East" dies upon feeding his children. The nature of the children's deadly "conduct" is never explicitly stated, though it seems to be related to gluttony:

> There was an Old Man of the East
> Who gave all his children a feast;
> But they all ate so much, and their conduct was such,
> That it killed that Old Man of the East. (99)

Worse still, in "There was an Old Person of Rheims" (84), for example, Lear's famous "they" use food a means of torture, force-feeding the poor "Old Person of Rheims," a fact that is only revealed by the accompanying illustration (figure 4):

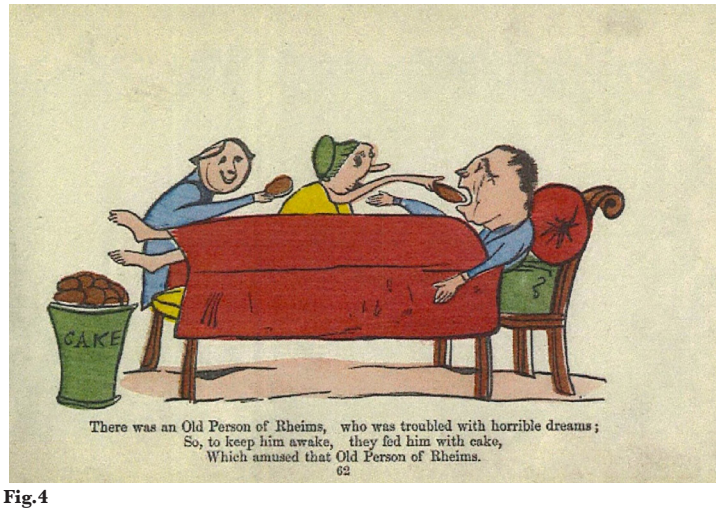

Fig. 4
Edward Lear. "There Was an Old Person of Rheims."

Lear's "they" similarly force-feed the "Old Person of Prague" (86), who, although ostensibly cured by this act, is shown in the illustration (figure 5) to suffer from it:

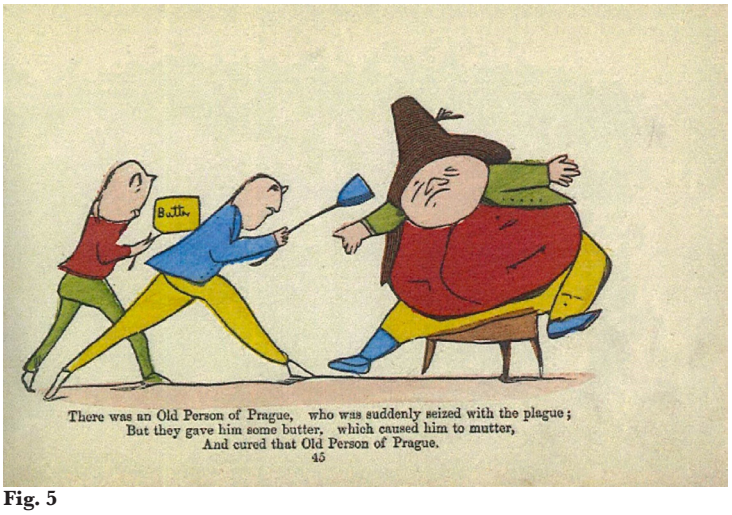

Fig. 5
Edward Lear. "There Was an Old Person of Prague."

Although in both poems the acts of feeding others are depicted as beneficial to the recipients' parties—staving off bad dreams or curing a plague – they are simultaneously coercive and violent. However, the victims either ignore or deny the violence: The Old Person of Prague mutters incomprehensibly in response, while the Old Person of Rheims is said to be "amused."

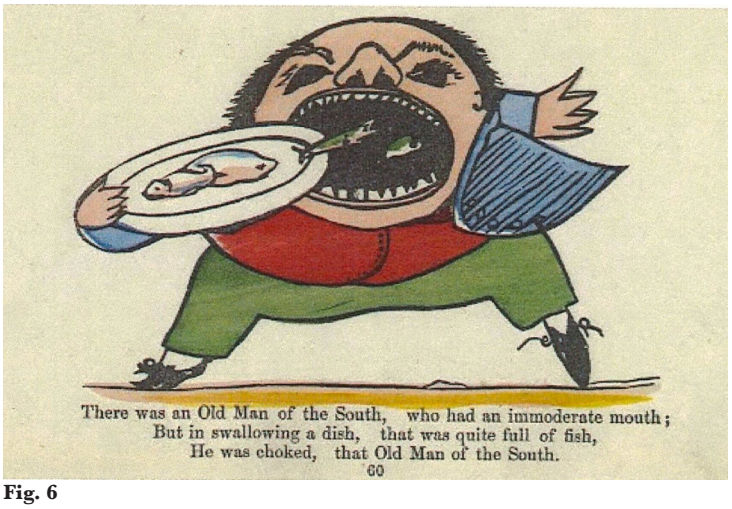

Fig. 6
Edward Lear. "There Was an Old Man of the South."

Thus, the protagonists are also the victims, albeit in a self-inflicted manner, of the many poems where deaths are caused by food and excessive eating (but always of real food; significantly, there is no cannibalism in this category). This is manifest in the case of the "Old Man of the South/ Who had an immoderate mouth" and "in swallowing a dish, that was quite full of fish, / He was choked, that Old Man of the South" (90).

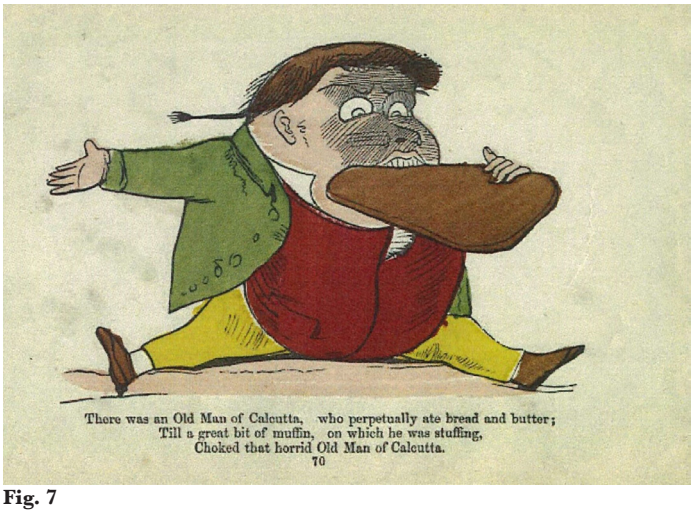

Fig. 7
Edward Lear. "There Was an Old Man of Calcutta."

If the illustrations to both poems (figures 6 and 7, respectively) are evocative of the universal maxim – *don't eat with your mouth open* – such a didactic reading is nowhere supported by the words of the limericks (unless one reads "immoderate mouth" metaphorically, as referring to the diner's insatiable appetite), leaving the readers to puzzle over the poems' incongruities or dismiss their silly absurdities altogether.

Indeed, reading each poem disjointedly renders them utterly absurd. However, reading them in succession (or syntagmatically, to evoke Mary Douglas approach to food),[2] reveals the pattern already noted, of recurrent queer and eccentric protagonists who are always the victim, even of their own follies. This pattern of self-inflicted and misery-induced humor is also evident in a poem unrelated to fatal food disasters, "There was an Old Man with an Owl" (176), as the owl that uncannily resembles its master (see figure 8) even joins him for a drink; that both man and owl bear an eerie resemblance to their creator, Edward Lear, is telling.

Such illustrated self-portraits suggest an autobiographical reading. Lear's career as a Nonsense writer began when he was employed as a painter in Knowsley by Lord Derby and entertained his employer's grandchildren during dinnertime: "We owe the *Book of Nonsense* to the Earl of Derby's grandchildren" wrote an early critic, Emile Cammaerts, in 1925 (33). Lear, while comfortable in the nursery, where "he found an exuberant

enthusiasm" (Noakes 34), was much less so among the distinguished adult society he encountered when his success with the children resulted in an invitation into Lord Derby's dining room (Noakes 33-34).

Fig. 8
Edward Lear. "There Was an Old Man with an Owl."

Lear was a life-long traveler whose engagement with food was greatly patterned upon, and dictated by, his nomadic lifestyle. A perpetual guest and eternal outsider, he was always on the receiving end of social interactions—the more vulnerable side of the table—as the following amusing excerpt from a letter to his sister Ann in 1829 suggests:

> They stuffed me with pudding—chops—cutlets—and pies,
> Wine and cakes (I was going to say up to my eyes
> But I thought 'twas so vulgar it lacked this addition
> They crammed and they stuffed me, yea, unto repletion.) (Lear, *Selected Letters*, 10)

The hosts, significantly described in this letter as "they," stuff their guest to the point of inconvenience. As the above description implies, being an eternal guest was not necessarily a positive experience.

Attending numerous dinner parties also accentuated Lear's lonesomeness, "for amidst all the hustle he could still feel as lonely as he had sometimes felt at Knowsley" (Noakes 41). It likewise made him acutely, sometimes even painfully, aware of the social functions and rituals surrounding food: "Food and its poetry are at the heart of host-and-guest cultural encounters, with the ever-present dangers of causing offence through a hapless ignorance of culinary customs" (Robinson 117). In Lear's case, these dangers must have

further intensified due to his epilepsy. Maintaining a reputation as a good entertainer, let alone observing the rituals of table manners, could be taxing as well. Indeed, "Lear *could suffer* from too much hospitality" (Robinson 119; emphasis mine).[3]

Lear's endless dinner parties, which both sustained him and were a source of stress for him, left their mark on his poetry. Peter Robinson maintains that "Lear's foodie limericks and poems are as regularly metered and rhymed as the most orderly of mealtime arrangements" (124). In this way, Lear's poems can be viewed as constrained as he himself was, by the same rules "which control the internal ordering of the meal itself" (Douglas 163). Yet, it is also possible to read the drama of disparity, the famously contradictory relations between the rhymes and their illustrations, as expressing his ambivalence on the matter. In Lear's illustration to "There Was an Old Man of the East," for example, the children who seemingly commit patricide are no children at all; ironically, nor does the old man die (figure 9):

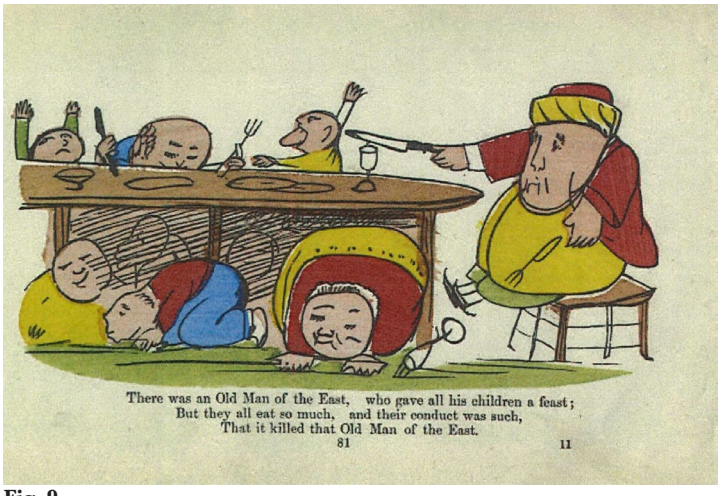

Fig. 9
Edward Lear. "There Was an Old Man of the East."

Thus, the conflict being referenced in this poem may well have more to do with adults than children. The anti-climactic and senseless endings of the poems may further insinuate that this is a joke at Lear's own expense, perhaps mocking himself for his dramatizations.

Laura Richards (1850-1943)

Unlike Lear's volume of limericks, Laura Richards's poems are more diversified in tone and form. Additionally, whereas most of Lear's food poems are teeming with human adult figures, Richards's food poems consist of children and anthropomorphic young animals, the latter of whom become the victims of Richards's violent mayhems. The brutality

of this violence is often overlooked, either due to the poems' light-hearted musicality or because of their dismissive classification as children's Nonsense rhymes. What is more, as Richards successfully nurtured a public authorial image as a role-model of Victorian American motherhood (Gordon Ginzburg, "American Sister" 465), it is even more unlikely that her contemporary readers would take seriously the violent retributions she visits upon the poems' anthropomorphic young victims.

Whereas Lear's limericks draw on meals as social events (if events with odd and fatal consequences), Richards's food poems focus mainly on food as service, where feeding children plays the major role. Also, unlike Lear's senseless plots and similarly pointless endings, Richards's rhymes usually tell a story and end with a climax. Moreover, in contrast to the disparity between Lear's limericks and their illustrations, Richards's illustrations enhance her poems' contents rather than disrupt them. Like Lear's food poems, however, Richards's verses benefit greatly from an autobiographical reading. Born in 1850, four years after Lear published his *Book of Nonsense*, the American Laura Elizabeth Richards was a busy mother of seven (unlike Lear, who never married or had any children). Nevertheless, Richards was hardly engaged in feeding her own children; like her mother, the poet Julia Ward Howe, she always preferred intellectual pursuits over the burdens of childrearing and housekeeping. Indeed, Richards's rather slender cookbook bears witness to her lack of interest in this aspect of domesticity. Richards never prepared a meal or washed a dish; her domestic struggles were far more likely to involve the servants than the children (the family employed two maids in the house until 1988) (D. Smith, Interview).

Several of Richards's poems not only capture this aspect of her home life but are explicitly autobiographical: The child in "Alice's Supper" (*In My Nursery* 42-43) is not only named after Richards's eldest daughter, Alice, but also receives the same level of service Richards's children were apparently accustomed to. In the poem, which also demonstrates the high status of children at the time in general, adults reap, grind, knead, bake and bring, all in the service of little Alice. In "Would n't" (*In My Nursery* 85), another typical though not overtly autobiographical example, Richards renders the parents' perspective of a stubborn toddler being cajoled into disciplined behavior:

> She *would n't* have on her naughty bib!
> She *would n't* get into her naughty crib!
> She *would n't* do this, and she wouldn't do that,
> And She *would* put her foot in her Sunday hat.

The patient parents never lose their temper until they finally manage to extract a promise from the stubborn toddler:

We tickled her up, and we tickled her down,
From her toddling toes to her curling crown.
And we kissed her and tossed her, until she was fain
To promise she wouldn't say "wouldn't" again.

Both "Alice's Supper" and "Would n't" successfully convey the spirit of "the cult of the child" that culminated in the second half of the nineteenth century, when new parenting standards required that American mothers exercise their authority only by means of gentle and affectionate behavior. At the same time, and as emphasis shifted from the children's duties to their parents, children became more unruly and obedience to parents was no longer absolute (Grylls 37). Consequently, "mothers were robbed of some of the social acclaim and confirmation that their difficult jobs deserved" (Ryan 145).

A nuanced reading of Richards's poems reveals a similar tension between the idealized view of children and the actual, strenuous practice of childrearing. Specifically, whereas Richards's "children" poems (where children are the main characters) seem to coincide with the new Victorian view of childhood, the more aggressive "animal" poems express a much more complex view of children than was typically held in the Victorian period, as well as a longing for stricter child-rearing practices. As I mention elsewhere, death is also ubiquitous in these rhymes, and the animals that end up dead are usually young: The three *little* chickens, one of the seven *little* tigers, one of the five *little* monkeys (Gordon Ginzburg, "There Once Was" 182), and the narratives surrounding these deaths are strongly reminiscent of traditional cautionary tales.

As in "Alice's Supper," an adult cook also features in "The Seven Little Tigers and the Aged Cook" (*In My Nursery* 143-44). The cook, who "was ninety-six years old, an authority I'm told" is dedicated to the service of seven little anthropomorphous tigers (seven is coincidentally the number of Richards's own children). The spoiled tigers, upon finding no sauce for their pie, are upset with the cook and decide to fry him for dinner:

"Mr. Sparrow-piper Tup, we intend on you to sup!"
Said the eldest little tiger very sweetly;
But this naughty aged cook, just remarking, "Only look!"
Chopped the little tiger's head off very neatly.

Then he said unto the rest, "It has always been confessed
That a tiger's better eating than a man;
So I'll fry him for you now, and you all will find, I trow,
That to eat him will be much the better plan."

So they tried it in a trice, and found that it was nice,
And with rapture they embraced one another;
And they said, "By hook or crook, we must keep this aged cook;
So we'll ask him to become our elder brother."

Fig. 10
Unknown illustrator. "The Seven Little Tigers and the Aged Cook."

The neat and sweet description of the seven young tigers may initially encourage young readers to identify with their anthropomorphous counterparts (who behave like spoiled children when they do not get what they want), only to discover that they risk either ending up in a pan or eating a sibling.

Similar aggression is bestowed on a youngster, again by an adult figure, in Richards's version of the "The Monkeys and the Crocodile" (*In My Nursery* 153-54), where a young monkey is eaten upon teasing "uncle" crocodile:

FIVE little monkeys
Swinging from a tree;
Teasing Uncle Crocodile,
Merry as can be.
Swinging high, swinging low,
Swinging left and right:
"Dear Uncle Crocodile,
Come and take a bite!"

Five little monkeys
swinging in the air;

Heads up, tails up,
Little do they care.
Swinging up, swinging down,
Swinging far and near:
"Poor Uncle Crocodile,
Aren't you hungry, dear?"

Four little monkeys
Sitting in the tree;
Heads down, tails down,
Dreary as can be.
Weeping loud, weeping low,
Crying to each other:
"Wicked Uncle Crocodile,
To gobble up our brother!"

The adult speaker in "Little Black Monkey" (110-12) also plans to kill the monkey that throws a coconut on his occiput and "placidly, wickedly" grins, but misses and decides to postpone his revenge for later: "I took up my gun and I walked away, /And postponed his death till another day."

The anthropomorphous chickens in "The Three Little Chickens Who Went Out to Tea, and the Elephant" (119-21) are not as insolent as their fellow tigers and monkeys, and perhaps this is why they are not eaten up. Still, they are portrayed as conceited and silly enough to cause their own demise; they admire themselves and ask the elephant to sing about them (among other things):

Sing of us and sing of you,
Sing of corn and barley too,
Beauteous beast with eyes of blue
Cackle, wackle, wackle!

The ensuing violence is unmistakable, and the aggressor is, again, the adult:

Elephant next began to dance:
Capered about with a stately prance
Learned from his grandmother over in France,
Cackle, wackle, wackle!

Fast and faster 'gan to tread,
Trod on every chicken's head,
Killed them all uncommonly dead,
Cackle, wackle, wackle!

The chickens' demand that the elephant sing about "corn and barley too" is reminiscent of the speaker in "Alice's Supper," who sings of "the finest wheat that ever did grow" and "the finest dough by near and far, /And it is for Alice's Supper, ha! ha!" This time, however, the adult figure's aggressions are not repressed, and the elephant has its revenge. If "tea-time in particular is used to dramatize states of harmony or disharmony" (Katz 193), then the social and emotional discord that is implied in "The Three Little Chickens Who Went Out to Tea" (*In My Nursery* 119-21) is colossal indeed. The tea ritual, like the cook and the uncle—all key symbols of safety and domesticity—becomes the loci of violence, where eating turns into a cannibalistic feast of vicious retribution in the hands of an adult protagonist.

Some of Richards's poems about children, although less violent, hardly portray them in a more favorable light. "Prince Tatters" (*Tirra Lirra* 45), for example, depicts a self-centered and spoiled child who drives his mother, his nurse – and eventually the whole neighborhood – berserk. Similarly, in "Higgledy-Piggledy" (*In My Nursery* 69), the child's puerile absentmindedness is juxtaposed with its consequences for his parents, who must work hard, fishing for a lost shoe (father) and mending, sewing, and ironing the son's school uniform (mother).

However, whereas in these "children" poems, Richards cautiously and shrewdly obeys the dictates of Victorian culture, old-fashioned mores are more daringly reflected in the poems where the protagonists are animals and hence eligible for hunting and eating. The contrast between Richards's rude or conceited yet powerless anthropomorphic animals and the all-powerful, almost tyrannical human-children in her poems is noteworthy. When the young animal-children are naughty, silly, or mean, Richards scarcely gives them a second chance, and upon playing a mischievous trick or simply being gullible, they are "gobbled," cooked and eaten, or simply die. By contrast, the aggression projected onto animal-children is held back when it comes to actual human-children. Notably, the aggressors in these poems are gendered male, and none of their anthropomorphic young victims evokes the Lacanian yearning for the oneness between child and mother or is charmingly and irresistibly desired (Williams 167).[4] These canniballistic or violent fantasies may be read didactically (Daniel 276); however, I do not think this is their only function. Considering the associative link between animals and children, and, again, the fact that most animals that end up dead in these poems are young (Gordon Ginzburg "There Once Was" 182), it seems that the poems can also be understood as concealing

the writer's maternal aggressions and wishful retributions.[5]

In Conclusion

Both Lear's and Richards's poems convey an adult perspective, and most consumers of risky diets in these verses are adults as well. In fact, the vast majority of Lear's characters are described as "Old," and are also illustrated as such; few are young, let along children. While food is bestowed, and more often forced, upon Lear's characters *as if they were children,* this is a vehicle for depicting adult struggles, perhaps his own, with helplessness and vulnerability. This is in contrast to Richards's poems, where food is described from the perspective of the adult whose *work* or duty it is to bestow it on the children.

Bearing in mind that both authors' food poems convey adult plights from adult perspectives, one wonders whether their classification as children's poems shouldn't be reconsidered in order to grant them the designation of adult poetry, or at least crossover poetry. In fact, until the nineteenth century and Lear, Nonsense was generally regarded as an *adult* genre; its historical origins are deeply rooted in the sophisticated world of scholarly learning, particularly in the comic tradition of mock scholarship (Malcolm 15). Perhaps we should pay serious heed to Emile Cammaerts, who declares Lear's verses to be better food for adults than for children: "It is not the child, it is the sensible man, who urgently requires the comforts and blessings of Nonsense, and it is generally he who enjoys them most" (35). Indeed, for a long time now, Lear has been more popular among a limited group of educated scholars than among the general public, especially children.[6] While this is not yet the case for the less famous Richards, such readings of her poems as this essay offers may change this state of affairs. More importantly, it may further the view of children's literature as something worthy not only to be tasted or devoured but also to be chewed and digested thoroughly.[7]

Works Cited

Cammaerts, Emile. *The Poetry of Nonsense*. Routledge, 1925.

Daniel, Carolyn. "Without Food Everything is Less than Nothing." *Food, Culture & Society*, vol. 9, no. 3, 2006, pp. 275-285.

Denisoff, Dennis. *The Nineteenth-Century Child and Consumer Culture.* Ashgate, 2008.

Douglas, Mary. "Deciphering a Meal." *Implicit Meanings: Selected Essays in Anthropology*. 2nd ed., Routledge, 1999, pp. 161-174.

Flegel, Monica. *Conceptualizing Cruelty to Children in Nineteenth Century England*. Ashgate, 1998.

Gordon Ginzburg, Etti. "Edward Lear's American 'Sister': The Nonsense Poetry of Laura E. Richards Reconsidered." *Transatlantic Conversations: Nineteenth-century American Women's Encounters with Italy and the Atlantic World*, edited by Beth L. Lueck and Sirpa Silenius, University of New Hampshire Press, 2016, pp. 287-306.

---. "'There Once Was a Lady Called Laura:' Laura E. Richards's Nonsense Poetry." *Childhood,* vol. 1, 2015, pp. 176-187.

Grylls, David. *Guardians and Angels: Parents and Children in Nineteenth-Century Literature.* Faber, 1978.

Haughton, Hugh. Introduction. *The Chatto Book of Nonsense Poetry*, edited by Hugh Haughton. Chatto & Windus, 1998, pp. 1-32.

Katz, Wendy R. "Some Uses of Food in Children's Literature." *Children's Literature in Education*, vol. 11, no. 4, 1980, pp. 192–99.

Lear, Edward. *Edward Lear: The Complete Verse and Other Nonsense,* edited by Vivien Noakes, Penguin, 2002.

---. *Selected Letters*, edited by Vivien Noakes, Oxford UP, 1988.

Malcolm, Noel. *The Origins of English Nonsense.* HarperCollins, 1997.

Noakes, Vivien. *Edward Lear 1812-1888.* Royal Academy of Arts, 1985.

Richards, Laura E. *In My Nursery*. 1890. Little, 1899.

---. *Tirra Lirra: Rhymes Old and New*. Little, 1932.

Rieder, John. "Edward Lear's Limericks: The Function of Children's Nonsense Poetry." *Children's Literature*, vol. 26, 1998, pp. 47-60.

Robinson, Peter. "Edward Lear: Celebrity Chef." *Edward Lear: The Play of Poetry*, edited by James Williams and Matthew Bevis. Oxford UP, 2016, pp. 115-133.

Ryan, Mary. *The Empire of the Mother: American Writing about Domesticity 1830-1860*. The Institute for Research in History and the Haworth Press, 1982.

Smith, Danny. Personal Interview. 28 March 2012.

Sewell, Elizabeth. *The Field of Nonsense*. Chatto, 1952.

Thomas, Joyce. "'There Was an Old Man...:' the Sense of Nonsense Verse." *Children's Literature Association Quarterly,* vol. 10, no. 3, 1985, pp. 119-122.

Williams, Karen. "'Edible' Children in Early Nineteenth Century Children's Literature." *Feast or Famine? Food and Children's Literature,* edited by Bridget Carrington and Jennifer Harding, Cambridge Scholars, 2014, pp. 165-181.

Notes

[1] Nonsense is capitalized throughout in accordance with Elizabeth Sewell's definition of capital-N Nonsense as a genre. See Sewell, *The Field of Nonsense.*

[2] Mary Douglas's approach to food aims to "discover the social boundaries which the food meanings encode by an approach which values the binary pairs according to their position in a series" (161).

[3] Unlike John Rieder, who maintains that Lear's limericks address "some of the most basic social conventions with which children struggle" (51), I suggest that these struggles, though similar to those children face, are very much Lear's own. Rieder's explanation derives from his association of "basic areas of socialization – eating, dressing, grooming, speaking, and so on" with "the kinds of tensions inherent in familial relationships" (54) but fails to acknowledge the social settings of hospitality that might have evoked similar tensions for Lear.

[4] Nor do Richards's "edible children" have to do with adult exploitation, as Monica Flegel suggests (1998), or with children as consumers (Denisoff 2008).

[5] Such aggressive contents are indeed "incongruous with nineteenth-century American notions of maternity"; however, "at a time that associated motherhood with tenderness and childhood with naiveté, there was no other way the American Victorians could classify Richards's buoyant yet disturbing poems except as nonsense if they were to accept her poetic offerings" (Gordon Ginzburg, "There Once Was" 182).

[6] Regarding Lear's reception into the (adult) canon and Richards's exclusion from it, see Gordon Ginzburg's "Edward Lear's American 'Sister': The Nonsense Poetry of Laura E. Richards Reconsidered."

[7] The allusion is of course to Francis Bacon's famous aphorism: "Some books should be tasted, some devoured, but only a few should be chewed and digested thoroughly."

Children and Pigs, from the Victorian Age to the Twentieth Century

Francesca Orestano

The question of food is not a new subject within the area of children's literature.[1] Childhood and food intersect as different discourses, and within different genres connected through culture, religion, class, gender, race, iconology; such areas of mutual overlapping contribute, in a prismatic way, to the delineation of the identity of the child in dialectic relationship with the adult, inasmuch as both can be defined by the act of eating. Back in 1957, Roland Barthes had argued that food is a powerful cultural signifier: "When he buys an item of food, consumes it, or serves it, modern man does not manipulate a simple object in a purely transitive fashion; this item of food sums up and transmits a situation; it constitutes an information; it signifies." As a consequence, "these acts – and the broad range of cultural representations that support and are supported by them – also serve as vehicles through which ideological expectations about those very identities are circulated, enforced, and transgressed" (Barthes, qtd in LeBesco and Naccarato 1).

My contribution focuses on the adult/child relationship in a tangential way, in order to place greater emphasis on the relationship between children and animals, namely pigs, when discourses of food are not just linked to nutrition, growth, starving or abundance, but embrace the fundamental question of identity. In order to do so, the critique of anthropocentrism and the critical perspective of post-humanism provide the relevant steps toward the core of the problem.

In a study by Jonathan Safran Foer, *Eating Animals*, the author's childhood memories bring forward his sentiments about food, made of terror, dignity, gratitude, vengeance, love; these feelings he would revisit later in life, as "the sentimental vestiges of childhood" but never with indifference: "I didn't know what animals *were*" (9).[2] The point is conceptually relevant, as the category of anthropocentrism extends toward a very

slippery borderline, strengthened and secured by religious dogma, especially monotheism, ousting the animal out of the spiritual universe of the human. Such borderline, however, is crossed then and again in children's literature, where the frontier between child and animal is often trespassed. Not surprisingly so, insofar as children's literature, the inheritor of the oldest traditions in storytelling and myth, still revisited in today's contemporary scenario, provides the central stage where the relationship child/animal has been and is best represented without the safety net imposed by adult literature. I shall focus here on the Western tradition, specifically on Anglophone children's literature, in agreement with Erika Fudge who, in *Animal* (2002), dwelt on the fact that animals are a constant presence in children's literature. The powerlessness of the young protagonists, their innocence and lack of experiential knowledge, their apparent freedom from the laws of adulthood, allow for texts in which many back-and-forward transformations between child and animal occur, with instances of a shared language, mutual understanding, and emotional, psychological, behavioral closeness. Book illustrations, and advertising in which animals are often portrayed in anthropomorphic guise, whether owing to posture or clothes, add the visual discourse to the well-established literary connection. To conclude this preliminary view of the subject, I refer again to Jonathan Safran Foer who epitomizes the question – and his critical stance – by defining:

> Anthropocentrism. The conviction that humans are the pinnacle of evolution […]. Anthropodenial. The refusal to concede significant experiential likeness between humans and the other animals […]. Anthropomorphism. The urge to project human experience onto the other animals. (46)

Such anthropocentric attitudes operated in unison during the long Victorian century: they invested fattening procedures with capitalist and imperialist innuendos;[3] they proliferated owing to Victorian mass visual culture; they also brought forward the question of cannibalism, as the consequence of starving and famine conditions, or the habit of inferior races (cf. Orestano 25-44).[4]

In recent years, however, post-humanism, both philosophically and culturally, seems to have restricted the area of anthropocentrism. Michel Foucault unsettled its epistemic foundation and hierarchies in *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*.[5] Hence the critical tracks directly leading from post-humanism into animal studies, examined by Benjamin Bolton in "Post-humanism and Animal Rights: Rethinking 'The Human', Rethinking the 'Self,'" and by Anna Barcz in "Post-humanism and Its Animal Voices in Literature." Bolton's and Barcz's essays suggest a fundamental re-conceptualization of the human/animal relationship, unmasking areas in which human

supremacy is dissolved. Mieke Roscher in "Animals as Signifiers: Re-Reading Michel Foucault's *The Order of Things* as a Genealogical Working Tool for Historical Human-Animal Studies" acknowledged Foucault's seminal role in opening up the epistemic area of Animal Studies. More recently, in "A Post-human Approach to Human-animal Relationships: Advocating Critical Pluralism," Nicklas Lindgren and Johan Öhman add their voices to a forum of debate that aims at shaking epistemic and religious notions, and their given hierarchies, while also materially intervening on the ingrained habits of animal consumption. By addressing the categories of human and non-human animals Lindgren and Öhman challenge the anthropocentric characterization of European education, thus entering a major area of children's literature and allowing us to adopt it and investigate it as the central area where such challenges and such epistemic questions take place.

The Victorian Age: The Child and the Pig, Literature and Science

The texts here examined from a post-humanist perspective belong, in the main, to the Victorian age, when the relationship between child and pig was invested with grotesque, jocose, and frankly gothic overtones, clearly addressing the question of "who eats whom?" Fear of being dealt with as-if-a-pig is the recurring imagery in Charles Dickens's *Great Expectations* (1860-1861), a novel where the association of Pip, the human protagonist, with a "pig," is stated from the very beginning, when the starving convict Magwitch licks his lips and remarks about the fat cheeks of the boy Pip (36); it expands in the admonitory words of Mr Wopsle, who advises Pip on the detestable gluttony of pigs and boys, sanctioned by the Biblical parable of the prodigal son (58); Mr Wopsle also suggests that if Pip had been born a pig, Dunstable the butcher would have killed and bled him, and disposed of him "for so many shilling according to the market price of the article" (58).[6] With the imagery that relates Pip and pig, this novel aligns the human and the animal, both ensconced within the shrewd system of Victorian capitalism and within its scenic stage – the market place – where both child and pig are brought to, whether metaphorically or materially, as valuable articles destined to consumption (cf. Kuskey).

The classic fantasy text *Alice in Wonderland* (1865) provides the most telling instance of such transformations when Alice has to nurse the baby of the Duchess, in the chapter appropriately entitled "Pig and Pepper." With the human baby in her arms, Alice notices that

> As soon as she had made out the proper way of nursing it, […] the little thing grunted in reply (it had left off sneezing by this time). "Don't grunt," said Alice; "that's not at all a proper way of expressing yourself." The baby grunted again, and Alice looked very anxiously into its face to see what was the matter with it. There could be no doubt that it had a VERY turn-up

> nose, much more like a snout than a real nose; also its eyes were getting extremely small for a baby: altogether Alice did not like the look of the thing at all. "But perhaps it was only sobbing," she thought, and looked into its eyes again, to see if there were any tears. No, there were no tears. "If you're going to turn into a pig, my dear," said Alice, seriously, "I'll have nothing more to do with you. Mind now!" The poor little thing sobbed again (or grunted, it was impossible to say which), and they went on for some while in silence. Alice was just beginning to think to herself, "Now, what am I to do with this creature when I get it home?" when it grunted again, so violently, that she looked down into its face in some alarm. This time there could be NO mistake about it: it was neither more nor less than a pig, and she felt that it would be quite absurd for her to carry it further. (55-56)[7]

Fig. 1
John Tenniel, "Alice holding a pig in her arms". *Alice in Wonderland* (Wikimedia Commons)."

If fantasy secured the fittest ground for the transformation of a human baby into baby pig, science would offer further and poignant evidence of the species' proximity. It was Charles Darwin who remarked that "there is no fundamental difference between man and the higher mammals in their mental faculties" and also added that "the lower animals, like man, manifestly feel pleasure and pain, happiness and misery. Happiness is never better exhibited than by young animals, such as puppies, kittens, lambs, etc., when playing together, *like our own children*" (*Descent* 45, 47).[8]

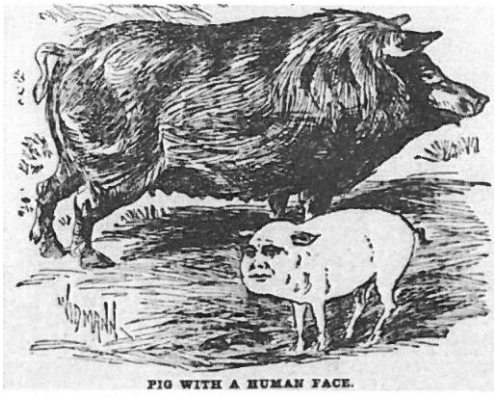

Fig. 2
"Pig with a Human Face." A picture from the St. Louis, Missouri, *Post-Dispatch*, Aug. 26, 1896, p. 29 (Wikimedia Commons)

With the Darwinian link between higher mammals, lower animals, and children, pigs and children would be intimately connected by scientific discourse, which was poetically subscribed to in Alfred Tennyson's famous line about "nature red in tooth and claw";[9] the fear instigated by the Darwinian discourse would surface in articles about pigs with human features

(cf. McCarthy) and other disturbing reports about hybrids – hybrids that even today have a much-debated role in scientific research, especially as providers of replacement organs for human animals (Armstrong 193).

The Ideology of Fatness in Victorian Children's Stories, Rhymes, and Images

Victorian food culture, loaded with symbolism, wrapped in understatement, pervasively emphasized by mass visual culture by the popular press and ubiquitous advertising, teemed with discourses of food, addressing real or metaphorical wealth and poverty, abundance and starvation. The workhouse diet kept inmates just at a bare survival level, as in Dickens's *The Adventures of Oliver Twist, or the Parish Boy's Progress* (1837-1839), where children lived on a very poor diet which made them lean towards cannibalistic temptations (55-56).[10] Actually children's literature defined and dictated the norms for the diet and the body size of the child; with its extremes of starving vs. cramming, the Victorian age offered telling instances of such cultural policies.

If children were too thin, and refused eating, awful-warning stories advised on their sad inevitable destiny, as in the cautionary tale of Suppen-Kaspar in Heinrich Hoffmann's *Der Struwwelpeter* (1845), soon translated into English as "slovenly Peter" in 1848; after Kaspar's death, as a last ironic touch, Kaspar's distressed but still sermonizing parents place a tureen over the dead child's tombstone. If children were too greedy, and too fat, they would be likened to pigs and also branded as "prodigals" or seen as a valuable market article.

With their combined power of word and image, popular penny dreadfuls contributed to the notion of transgressive eating habits, especially with the story entitled *The String of Pearls: A Domestic Romance*, published as a serial in 1846–47, subtitled *The Barber of Fleet Street. A Domestic Romance*. The customers of Sweeney Todd, the demon barber of Fleet Street, would be slaughtered and cooked as meat pies and sold to the delight of hungry London customers. Verbal descriptions of food, ensconced in a variety of literary genres ranging from fairy tale to journalism, from fiction to children's literature, and indeed cookbooks, would overflow into visual communication, not only in book illustrations but in adverts, posters, labels, greeting cards, magic lantern slides (cf. Daniel).

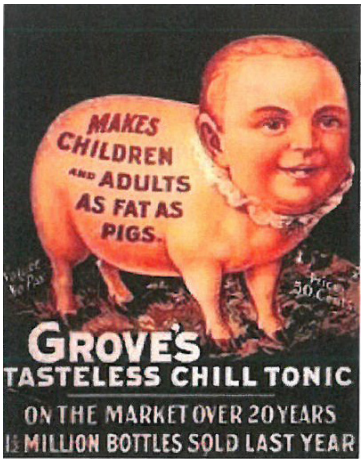

Fig. 3
Grove's Tonic, poster (Wikimedia Commons).

Was it then desirable or dangerous for a child to look like a pig? The Victorian child, according to this bold advert, for Grove's Tonic (fig. 3) seemed to be brought up in order to look like a pig, to be round, rosy, fatty, and very happy. His education also went under the eating metaphors of "starving" versus "cramming" (De Stasio 299-306). A nursery rhyme circa 1880 tells the story of a greedy boy who becomes, even visually, similar to a pig.[11]

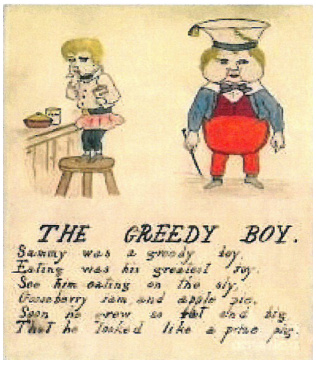

Fig. 4
"The Greedy Boy," original watercolor and lines from nursery rhyme, ca. 1880
(Wikimedia Commons).

The rhyme teaches a moral lesson (not to be sly, not to be materialistic) rather than suggesting a non-fattening diet. To become like a prize pig meant indeed to become a valuable market item. The image of a fat-child competition, with the prize-winning baby, Lottie, in the centre, tells a lot about the cultural reception of fatness and obesity.

The *topos* of the market – a dramatic synecdoche for the shrewd economic scenario of the Victorian age – is evoked once again in a popular Victorian rhyme,[12] and in the book *The Five Little Pigs*, published in London in 1866. The rhyme went in unison with finger play with the small toes of the child's feet:

Fig. 5
W. Hollmann's Giant Children and Prize Baby
(Wikimedia Commons)

This little piggy went to market,
This little piggy stayed home,
This little piggy had roast beef,
This little piggy had none,
And this little piggy cried "wee wee wee"
all the way home.
(Opie and Opie 349-50)

Ensconced in the playful tone of the rhyme there is a darker message. Inevitably, if a piggy went to market, it was to be sold and butchered at a slaughterhouse. The little piggy who stayed home had a limited chance to survive but shared the same ultimate destination. The old-fashioned book-cover (fig. 6) shows the game played by a maternal woman with the toes of a human child, while an adult male pig, in full human attire, indeed a fatherly figure, opens the house door with a complacent smile.

The proximity of human animals and non-human animals, when seen from either

perspective, charges these images with sinister forebodings; even more so in the illustration of the pig eating roast-beef at home, where fatness, greed, indeed the suspicion of cannibalism, infect the cozy atmosphere of the pigs' house. Agatha Christie would not miss the bloody innuendos of the rhyme in her crime story *Five Little Pigs* (1943); and a recent social media post reveals the unsettling truth about the first little piggy, who went to market to be slaughtered; while the second awaited its turn, the third was being fattened, the fourth was yet too small and the fifth cried in fear of its destiny (cf. Zorn). Behind an innocent nursery rhyme a dark scenario unfolded; and the face of the standing pig in figure 7 tells a lot about the dark innuendos of the scene. Meanwhile the auspicious image of the pig would be a popular favorite in greeting cards and new year cards not only in England, but soon all over Europe. The child-pig connection is emphasized in the image below by the champagne bottles drank by the pigs (fig. 8).

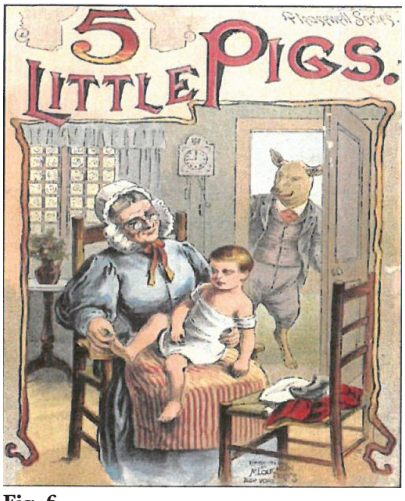

Fig. 6
Five Little Pigs, New York, McLoughlin Bros., 1890, Pleasewell Series
(Wikimedia Commons)

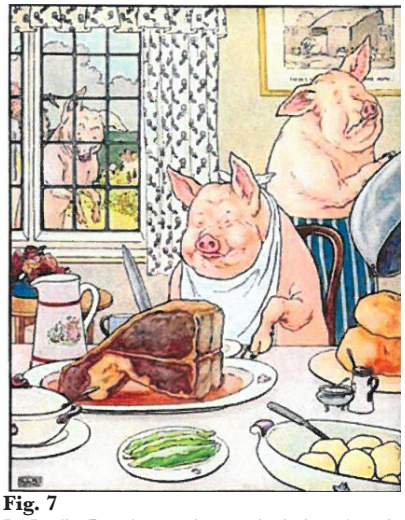

Fig. 7
L. Leslie Brooke, a picture depicting the pig who had roast beef in the nursey rhyme, "This little piggy", *Ring o' Roses: A Nursery Rhyme Picture Book*, London, Frederick Warne, [1922] (Wikimedia Commons)

Adverts were not slow in endorsing the fattening policy of the age. Food to make children fatter, hence healthier, was advertised in images of children drinking sarsaparilla in order "to quicken the appetite" (fig. 9).

The sinister innuendos of the rhymes about anthropomorphic pigs going to the market were described and illustrated by the author of children's literature who did never endorse or dissimulate the pathetic fallacy about the animal world, but rather never lost sight of the food chain, making very clear the connexions between those who eat, and those who are eaten. Beatrix Potter, whose role as a scientist is nowadays well acknowledged,

Fig. 8
Victorian greeting card (Wikimedia Commons)

wrote several stories about pigs.[13] *The Tale of Little Pig Robinson* (1893-1930) and *The Tale of Pigling Bland* (1913) have piggies as protagonists, speaking, dressing, and acting like human animals. Pigling Bland ends up at a farmer who wants to sell his sow, Pig-Wig, at the market. Bland and Pig-Wig manage to escape and regain their freedom. Little Pig Robinson's aunts, Miss Porcas and Miss Dorcas, send him to the market to sell produce from their farm, but he is kidnapped by a sailor who wants to cook him for the ship's crew. With the help of a cat, Little Pig Robinson escapes and eschews an untimely but predictable death. Both stories make clear the fact that a pig, although intelligent and capable, and depicted in human attire, is inevitably viewed as good food by other species.

Fig. 9
Advert for Ayer's Sarsaparilla (Wikimedia Commons)

In Beatrix Potter's stories, pigs are portrayed with a distinct anthropomorphic quality that makes them look like children in their posture, dress, and speech, but they are coveted, kidnapped, or sold because of their edible fatness, which makes other species of animals – human animals especially – greedy and unreliable. The cruel laws of food consumption are there, to threaten the young pigs with their

ultimate destiny.[14] In Potter's stories to be fat is not the consequence of blamable greed: the condition pertains to pigs and children within the general late-Victorian cultural context in which fatness was considered as a desirable marker of health and wealth for both children and pigs. The fattened child or pig enjoyed a positive relationship with food, whether in active or passive fashion, whether as eater, or as the eaten subject.

Today, the story that seems to best encapsulate the lesson taught by Beatrix Potter is *Charlotte's Web* (1952), by E. B. White. The friendship between Charlotte, the wise barn spider, and Wilbur, the intelligent piglet who is fattened in order to be slaughtered, is a story of animal paradise regained through human language, where the theme of death is present both as the violent destiny awaiting Wilbur at the market, and as the natural death closing the spider's life span.

Turning the Page: Fatphobia and Fat Liberation

In twentieth-century children' literature the relationship with food has undergone several eventful turns. In synthesis, these can be described at once as fatphobia *and* as fat liberation. Fatness has become a code that identifies those who are lazy, slow, gluttonous, and morally corrupt. In sum, a fat body is the emblem of negativity as suggested by Rebecca Rabinowitz in "Who's that Fat Kid? Fat Politics and Children's Literature" for the Children's Book Council Diversity Blog. Fatness seems to provide visible evidence of inner moral flaws in young protagonists. In Roald Dahl's *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (1964) the fat boy Augustus Gloop is publicly exposed to shame by his act of eating, and the Oompa-Loompa's song makes his moral failings even more explicit: "Augustus Gloop! Augustus Gloop! The great big greedy nincompoop! Augustus Gloop! So Big and Vile! So greedy, foul, and infantile."[15] In 1974 the novel *Blubber* by Judy Blume told the story of a bully, Jill Brenner, and of the victim of the bully, Linda, a fat and overweight girl ostracized by all her classmates. More recently, in the Harry Potter series, Vincent Crabbe and Gregory Goyle are two fat boys allied with the enemy character Draco Malfoy: stupid, violent and wicked, they act as bullies and their pig-like obesity is the visible stigma of a serious moral flaw.[16]

In contrapuntal relationship with the attitude described as fatphobia, and since the 1960s, the trend described as "fat liberation" or "fat lib", under the aegis of Fat studies, is set in opposition against stories about fat bullies or fat victims of bullies, and against images in which the obese boy or girl is unfavorably portrayed, and almost becomes an invisible body.[17] Blogs and lists of books about fat children who are not stigmatized because of their body weight now abound (cf. Ashia). Fat studies is a full-fledged academic discipline, and acceptance of obesity an urgent issue in children's literature (Rothblum and Solovay). Once again, the pig, who could figure as an outdated vestige of the Victorian era owing to its anthropomorphic dress and posture, appears nowadays as an endearing and happy

character, and, more remarkably, the bearer of an entirely new message.

According to Carlson's book, pigs nowadays are energetic, even athletic; their identity provides a positive model of identification for the child, insofar as it promotes healthy exercise to lose body fat, without stigmatizing obesity (fig. 10).[18] In this case, as elsewhere, children's literature helps uncovering fractures and unbalance already existing in the past, while promoting different attitudes. Today the inclusive pluralism recommended by Bolton's post-humanist perspective reshapes not only the relationship between human and non-human animals, but the cultural stereotypes attached to the relationship between children and pigs during the Victorian age, and in Victorian children's literature. The discourses of food are extremely telling, especially when the child and the pig meet across history, fiction, and images, and when we realize that whether fat or thin, lazy or energetic, they incorporate our obsessions, fears, and desires about the bodies we inhabit.

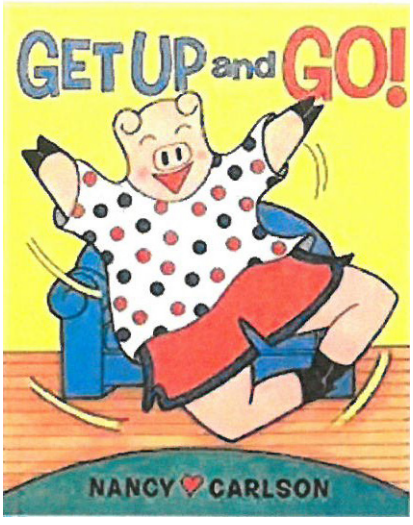

Fig. 10
Nancy L. Carlson, *Get Up and Go!* 2006 (Wikimedia Commons)

Works Cited

Anderson, Joseph Leslie. *Capitalist Pigs. Pigs, Pork, and Power in America*. West Virginia UP, 2019.

Armstrong, Philip. *What Animals Mean in the Fiction of Modernity*. Routledge, 2008.

Ashia. "Daring Stories Championing Fat Liberation – Adipositive Kids Books." *Books for Littles. Igniting the Next Generation of Kind & Courageous Leaders*, https://www.booksforlittles.com/fat-liberation/.

Barcz, Anna. "Post-humanism and Its Animal Voices in Literature." *Teksty Drugie*, no. 1, 2015, pp. 248-269, https://rcin.org.pl/ibl/Content/59984/WA248_79781_P-I-2524_barcz-posthuman_o.pdf.

LeBesco, Kathleen and Peter Naccarato, "Introduction." *Edible Ideologies: Representing Food and Meaning*, edited by Kathleen LeBesco and Peter Naccarato, State U of New York P, 2008, pp. 1-11.

Bekoff, Marc. *The Emotional Lives of Animals*. New World Library, 2008.

Bolton, Benjamin. "Post-humanism and Animal Rights: Rethinking 'The Human', Rethinking the 'Self.'" *Animal Studies Journal*, vol. 3, no. 2, 2014, pp. 48-56, https://ro.uow.edu.au/asj/vol3/iss2/9/.

Carroll, Lewis. *Alice in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass*. Edited by Peter Hunt. Oxford UP, 2009.

Dahl, Roald. *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. Alfred A. Knopf, 1964.

Daniel Carolyn. *Voracious Children: Who Eats Whom in Children's Literature.* Routledge, 2009.

Darwin, Charles. *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex* (1871), https://charles- darwin.classic-literature.co.uk/the-descent-of-man/ebook-page-47.asp.

de Stasio, Clotilde. "Starving vs Cramming: Children's Education and Upbringing in Charles Dickens and Herbert Spencer." *Dickens Quarterly*, vol. 27, no. 4 (2010), pp. 299-306.

Derrida, Jacques. *The Animal That Therefore I Am*. Edited by Marie-Louise Mallet. Translated by David Wills. Fordham University Press, 2008.

---. "The Animal That Therefore I Am (More to Follow)." Translated by David Wills. *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 28, no. 2 (2002), pp. 369-418.

Dickens, Charles. *Great Expectations*. Edited by Angus Calder. Penguin, 1973.

---. *The Adventures of Oliver Twist, or the Parish Boy's Progress*. Edited by Peter Fairclough. Penguin, 1966.

Foer, Jonathan Safran. *Eating Animals*. Back Bay Books, 2009.

Forni, Dalila. "Coraline: Frozen food vs a Warm-hearted Family?" *Not Just Porridge: English Literati at Table*, edited by Francesca Orestano and Michael Vickers, Archaeopress, 2017, pp. 165-176.

Foucault, Michel. *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*. Pantheon Books, 1970.

Fudge, Erika. *Animal.* Reaktion Books, 2002.

Gorini, Francesca. "A. A. Milne: Tea (and Lots of Honey) in the Hundred Acre Wood." *Not Just Porridge: English Literati at Table*, edited by Francesca Orestano and Michael Vickers, Archaeopress, 2017, pp. 135-144.

Herrmann, Anja. "Of Whales and Monsters: Visual Fat Politics in Contemporary Children's Picture Books." *Food, Fatness and Fitness: Critical Perspectives*, https://foodfatnessfitness.com/2018/05/01/fat-in-childrens-books/.

Hoffmann, Heinrich. *Der Struwwelpeter* (1845), www.gasl.org/refbib/Hoffmann Struwwelpeter.pdf.

Iuliucci, Angela Anna. "Roald Dahl's Revolting Food Fantasies." *Not Just Porridge: English Literati at Table*, edited by Francesca Orestano and Michael Vickers, Archaeopress, 2017, pp. 145-152.

Kuskey, Jessica. "Pigs in Great Expectations. Class, Dehumanization, and Marxist Animal Studies." *Victorians and Their Animals: Beasts on a Leash*, edited by Brenda Ayres, Routledge, 2018, pp. 86-100.

Labbe, Jacqueline M. "To Eat and Be Eaten: Appetite in Nineteenth-Century Children's Literature." *Critical Approaches to Food in Children's Literature*, edited by Kara K. Keeling and Scott T. Pollard, Routledge, 2009, pp. 93-104.

Land of Nursery Rhymes, https://www.landofnurseryrhymes.co.uk/

Lear, Linda. *Beatrix Potter: A Life in Nature*. Allen Lane, 2006.

Lindgren, Nicklas and Johan Öhman. "A Post-human Approach to Human-animal Relationships: Advocating Critical Pluralism." *Environmental Education Research*, vol. 25, no. 8, 2019, pp 1200-1215.

Mazzeno, Laurence W. and Ronald D. Morrison, editors. *Animals in Victorian Literature and Culture: Contexts for Criticism*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2017.

McCarthy, Eugene, M. "Reports on Mammalian Hybrids." *Macroevolution*, http://www.macroevolution.net/pig-primate-hybrids-news-stories.html.

Moja, Beatrice. "Mrs Beeton: Cooking, Science, and Innovations in the Victorian Kitchen." *Not Just Porridge: English Literati at Table*, edited by Francesca Orestano and Michael Vickers, Archaeopress, 2017, pp. 69-80.

Murray, Jenni. *Fat Cow, Fat Chance: The Science and Psychology of Size.* Transworld Doubleday, 2020.

Nayder, Lillian. *The Other Dickens: A Life of Catherine Hogarth.* Cornell UP, 2012.

Opie, Iona and Peter Opie, editors. *The Oxford Dictionary of Nursery Rhymes*. Oxford UP, 1997.

Orestano, Francesca. "Gastroliterature: Victorian Transgressions and the Dickensian Perspective." *Transgressive Appetites: Deviant Food Practices in Victorian Literature and Culture*, edited by Silvia Antosa, Mariaconcetta Costantini and Emanuela Ettorre, Mimesis, 2021, pp. 25-44.

Rabinowitz, Rebecca. "Who's That Fat Kid? Fat Politics and Children's Literature." *CBC Diversity*, https://cbcdiversity.tumblr.com/post/58272494202/diversity-101-whos-that-fat-kid.

Rollin, Bernard. *The Unheeded Cry: Animal Consciousness, Animal Pain, and Science*. Oxford UP, 1989.

Roscher, Mieke. "Animals as Signifiers: Re-Reading Michel Foucault's The Order of Things as a Genealogical Working Tool for Historical Human-Animal Studies." *Beyond the Human-Animal Divide. Creaturely Lives in Literature and Culture*, edited by Dominik Ohrem and Roman Bartosch, Palgrave Macmillan, 2017, pp. 189-214.

Rothblum, Esther and Sondra Solovay, editors. *The Fat Studies Reader*. New York UP, 2009.

Taylor, Chloë. "Foucault and Critical Animal Studies: Genealogies of Agricultural Power." *Philosophy Compass*, vol. 8, no. 6, 2013, pp. 539-551.

Tennyson, Alfred. "In Memoriam A.H.H." (1850), https://allpoetry.com/In-Memoriam-A.-H.-H.:-56.

Trivizas, Eugene. *The Three Little Wolves and the Big Bad Pig*. Illustrated by Helen Oxenbuty. Egmont, 2015.

Zorn, Eric. "Social Media Post Reveals the Unsettling Truth about the First Little Piggy." *Chicago Tribune*. Aug. 28, 2018, www.chicagotribune.com/columns/eric-zorn/ct-perspec-zorn-piggies-nursery-rhyme-market-grim-0829-20180828-story.html.

Notes

[1] The collection *Not Just Porridge: English Literati at Table*, edited by Francesca Orestano and Michael Vickers, includes essays on Mrs Beeton (Moja), A. A. Milne (Gorini), Roald Dahl's revolting food (Iuliucci) and frozen food in Neil Gaiman's *Coraline* (Forni). Also see Keeling and Pollard, and Carrington and Hardy, who focus on the issue from a multicultural perspective but invoke as a preliminary step on the question of food as a cultural signifier the work by Roland Barthes.

[2] Author's emphasis; Jacques Derrida's *The Animal That Therefore I Am* (2006), provides the philosophical architecture to the question posed by Jonathan Safran Foer.

[3] In the United States, as described by Anderson; also see Mazzeno and Morrison.

[4] The notion of cannibalism would percolate from the fairy tale tradition into discourses of otherness, which would include the representation of the poor, of the Irish, especially during the famine years, and of the colonised populations, whose cultural inferiority was emphasized as a trait coincident with their cannibalistic habits and beastly animal behaviour. The cannibalistic implications of fairy tales such as "Haensel und Gretel" would also infect Victorian children's literature: *Max and Moritz: A Story of Seven Boyish Pranks* (*Max und Moritz. Eine Bubengeschichte in sieben Streichen)* is a black humour story, written and illustrated by Wilhelm Busch and published in 1865. The bad boys Max and Moritz steal, kill and eat the chicken of an old widow, but they end up being made into flour, baked, and eaten by ducks.

[5] Foucault's perspective directly led to Animal Studies, as argued by Taylor; also Jacques Derrida's L'*Animal que donc je suis (à suivre)* (1997), translated as "The Animal That Therefore I Am (More to Follow)", has become a foundational text in animal studies.

[6] On Dickens's response to fatness in women as a sign of capitalist economy and the "fat- emblazoned scandal" that led to his divorce in 1858, see Nayder.

[7] Far from fantasy, mammalian hybrids provided instances of the pig into human transformation (McCarthy).

[8] Darwin's perceptive statement would be later confirmed in his *The Expression of Emotions in Men and Animals* (1872). Also see Rollin's *The Unheeded Cry* and Bekoff's *The Emotional Lives of Animals*.

[9] "In Memoriam A.H.H" (1850), Canto 56.

[10] Also see Orestano 29-30, and Labbe 93-104.

[11] Another version of the rhyme goes: "SAMMY SMITH would drink and eat / From morning unto night; / He filled his mouth so full of meat / It was a shameful sight. / Sometimes he gave a book or toy / For apples, cake, or plum; / And grudged if any other boy / Should taste a single crumb. / Indeed, he ate and drank so fast, / And used to stuff and cram, / The name they called him by at last / Was often Greedy Sam" (*Land of Nursery Rhymes*).

[12] The rhyme dates back to 1728, when the first line "This pig went to market" appeared in a collection entitled "The Nurses Song". The first full version of the rhyme was included in *The Famous Tommy Thumb's Little Story-Book*, published in London about 1760. The rhyme continued to appear, with slight variations, in many late 18th- and early 19th-century collections: www.bl.uk/collection-items/tommy-thumbs-pretty-song-book (accessed February 2024).

[13] For the scientific profile and research achievements of Beatrix Potter see Lear.

[14] With a reference to Upton Sinclair's novel *The Jungle* (1906), Armstrong (231, n. 2) treats animals like machines in a factory, from their birth until they are slaughtered.

[15] The quote refers to the song from the musical *Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory* (1971), directed by Mel Stuart, produced by David L. Wolper, and starring Gene Wilder as Willy Wonka. See https://www.wattpad.com/2639815-funny-quotes-charlie-and-the-chocolate-factory-%2B/page/2 (accessed February 2024).

[16] Also see Murray, who discusses fat characters in books and cartoons, both humans and animals, from a personal, non-fatphobic perspective.

[17] The visual issue is addressed by Herrmann.

[18] In an ulterior cultural somersault affecting traditional identities and roles in storytelling, the 1922 story *Three Little Piggies*, has become *The Three Little Wolves and the Big Bad Pig*. The story of T*he Three Little Pig*s has been adapted from different sources. The primary sources are *English Fairy Tales*, retold by Flora Annie Steel (1922) with illustrations by L. Leslie Brooke from the 1904 version. I am very grateful to Peter Hunt for pointing out and sending me the story by Eugene Trivizas, *The Three Little Wolves and the Big Bad Pig* (2015).

Gargantuan Appetites

Tzina Kalogirou

> *Because food is such a quotidian and common element in the world and the individuals' experience of that world, it is often included in narratives by authors from different geographical origins and historical backgrounds; yet, food is not tied to one cultural or representational context, but has the ability to morph into a symbolic depiction of the literary structure in which it is placed.* (Piatti-Farnell and Brien 2)

Taking the epigraph above by Piatti-Farnell and Brien as a starting point, this chapter investigates the fantastical literary figure of the giant and his gargantuan appetite through the prism of Bakhtin's Rabelaisian carnival with specific reference to children's literature. It is important to note that, despite the historical and geographical variety of examples, these literary and critical examples remain eminently relatable across time and space. The embodied spirit of M. M. Bakhtin's carnival forms a conceptual framework for the investigation of what can be termed the "Gargantua script" (the giant endowed with enormous strength and insatiable appetites in François Rabelais' *La vie de Gargantua et de Pantagruel* from 1532) and its appropriation in literature and culture. The lineage of this carnivalesque creature is astonishing, examples being found in a multitude of national contexts and eminently translatable across such boundaries.

This Gargantuan script and its characters see varied expression both nationally and transnationally and can be traced, with several metamorphoses or disguises, through the artistic works and cultural products of, for example, African and European folktales, the illustrations of Gustave Doré, and the novels of Charles Dickens etc. These are familiar figures that are found in diverse traditions and with legacies in modern-day popular culture, such as Elgar and Zak's children's picture book *The Brother's Gruesome* (2000), which is the primary focus of this chapter.

In taking this approach, I utilize M. M. Bakhtin's view of the medieval carnival as a social celebration with a subversive and popular character that turns class domination upside down, challenging and disintegrating, at the same time, the solemnity of those

who are possessed by its spirit. The ideas found in Bakhtin's carnival, with its topsy-turvy nature and complex relationship between food, feeding, excess, and the body can be uncovered in the more modern context of children's literature through a mode that can best be described as *carnivalesque*, particularly in relation to the excessive consumption of food. This is because food and its mode of consumption often stands as a metaphor for the historical and contextual focus of the author and their readers. For Vallone "[t]he inclusion of scenes of eating, appetite, fasting or cooking may be especially important in fantasy literature for children, as food is real, while fantasy is an extension *of* the real" (47).

Central to all aspects of the Bakhtinian concept of carnival is the principle of the material body with an emphasis on its lower section—this is often manifested through the reckless and excessive consumption of food. In *Rabelais and his World*, Bakhtin points out that the open, unfinished nature of the body is revealed more fully and completely in the act of eating, because the "body transgresses here its own limits … Here man tastes the world, introduces it into his body, makes it part of himself" (281).

The world of food and the bodily functions related to it are all central to childhood experiences of growing and learning, particularly in relation to practices of restraint, such as those found in relation to admonishment by the parent: excess, in terms of greed/gluttony and its consequences and transgression, in the consumption of the "wrong" thing. This may be considered common to the experience of childhood and growth across national boundaries. Again, Vallone notes how "[w]riters often resort to the food metaphor, the 'culinary sign', as Louis Marin describes the semiotics of cooking and eating in Perrault's tales of marvel as a means to discuss identity and belonging, moral character, children's behavior, power relations and gender roles" (47).

An analysis of a carnivalesque picture book is offered here in which the Gargantua/ogre figure is transposed and reappropriated through visual and verbal modalities. The medievalist character of the illustrations registers a variety of artistic representations that are centered on the image of the grotesque body. This line of argument is also enriched with particular references to paintings, particularly concerning food and eating, by various artists working in, and also defining, a number of national artistic contexts over the centuries.

The Bakhtinian Carnival: A World Upside Down

The ideas of the Russian thinker Mikhail M. Bakhtin (1895-1975) on the dialogic nature of the novel and on the medieval carnival, with all its polysemous ramifications, have opened interesting perspectives for reading and interpreting literature, aligning literary texts with the powerful laughter and subversive folly of carnival. For Bakhtin, the historical carnival that characterized the Middle Ages up to the time of Rabelais (as discussed in *Rabelais and his World* and *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*) was not only a social celebration of subversive

and populist, perhaps even revolutionary character, but also as a textualized element with artistic manifestations across generic traditions. Having a powerful liberating effect on the lives of the ordinary people who participated in its festivities, carnival subverted the hierarchies of society, creating temporary social spaces characterized by reversal, laughter, and excess. Bakhtin suggests that, in the Middle Ages above all carnival offered an alternative to the seriousness of official culture, "a completely different, nonofficial, extra ecclesiastical and extra political aspect of the world, of man, and of human relations" (6).

Post-Renaissance culture, Bakhtin argues, witnessed a decline in the significance of carnival as feudalism was replaced by the new bourgeois order, which placed greater emphasis on the private sphere. As a result, the ritual practices associated with carnival—spectacles, pageants, and folk festivities—were either eliminated or assimilated by the private sphere. As part of this shift, a new-found (bourgeois) focus on restraint, considered in terms of rationality and order, came to the fore. In discussing restraint in the context of Victorian Britain, Scholl makes the point that "[e]xcess and moderation are unavoidably culturally contingent…" (4). After all, "…in the cultural context of food consumption, diet is rarely solely to do with nutritional requirements" (16).

In the process, popular laughter lost its carnivalesque connotations and acquired, instead, a more negative and restricted significance and carnival stopped playing such a prominent role in the lives of ordinary people. However, even though carnival as a specific cultural practice has been diminished, its tradition and function are still alive today. Vice (150) has suggested that the medieval carnival, as studied by Bakhtin, can be considered the precursor of today's carnivals, such as the Mexican Day of the Dead, Mardi Gras, and the Brazilian Carnival. Moreover, traces of carnival can still be detected in many aspects of today's cultural practices, rituals, and celebrations.

Bakhtin argues that carnival introduced a totally inverted world—a world upside down.[1] Carnival subverted the hierarchical structure of the society such that:

> The laws, prohibitions, and restrictions that determine the structure and order of ordinary, that is non carnival, life are suspended during carnival: what is suspended first of all is hierarchical structure and all the forms of terror, reverence, piety, and etiquette connected with it—that is, everything resulting from socio-hierarchical inequality or any other form of inequality among people (including age). (*Dostoyevsky's Poetics* 122-123)

In much the same way, one might suggest a similar distinction between the formal, "adult," everyday world, and the confusion of sights, sounds, and smells and hyper-emotionalization of carnival. The carnival provided a space where adults could let their hair down and enter a state of childlike wonder in a world where the normal rules no

longer apply.

As such, carnival can be seen to reverse all the normal hierarchical positions, which is clearly shown in its central ritualistic act—the crowning, enthronement, and subsequent dethroning of a false king. Often this mock carnival king was a fool or jester, or merely a person of humble origin.[2] This all took place against a backdrop of *carnivalesque laughter*, all-encompassing and "full-throated" (Gibson 15) and having physical and psychological effects on participants.

Physical, and often scatological, laughter in the Middle Ages was embraced with great enthusiasm by people of all kinds, classes, and conditions and was even commodified (Gibson 146) and circulated throughout western Europe via the performances of professional jesters and, of course, the joyful, playful, and bizarre activities that took place during carnival festivities: masquerades and feasts, processions and spectacles, and games and jokes.

Carnival also celebrated the *hic et nunc* (the "here and now") pleasures of the body, in defiance of the morbid gravity of official religion and culture. The *debasing* of things is another carnival feature, since, in carnival, everything is brought down to earth, to the level of the body, albeit a body which is grotesque, exaggerated or distorted comically. In the context of children's literature, another form of carnal excess, one that is also found in the free-for-all of carnival, is often represented by food, where "[t]he sensuous delight of these descriptions of food reveals that in children's fiction, eating seems to occupy the place that sex does in adult fiction" (Nodelmann 196).

Conclusively, the Bakhtinian carnival presents, above all, a social and cultural realm of multiple meanings, interrelated opposites, and transgressive identities. The literary examples that follow sketch out a historical and transnational trajectory, culminating in the modern children's picture book *The Brothers Gruesome* (2000). We can clearly see how the topsy-turvy world of carnival and its celebration of excessive consumption and the grosser functions of the body are engaged in the generation of wondrous stories of the strange and unreal that continue to entertain and enthuse children today.

Gargantua and the Ogre

Bakhtin's point of departure for the study of carnival was the work of François Rabelais and his irreverent masterpiece, the pentalogy *La vie de Gargantua et de Pantagruel* (1532-1564). Gargantua is a giant endowed with enormous strength and insatiable appetites. He is a glutton—possibly the glutton *par excellence* in literature, as the etymology of his name indicates (the root "garg" in Latin means throat)—who motivates certain scatological motifs throughout the books and, most importantly, the principle of grotesque realism, which serves as the *dominant* of the whole oeuvre. In a world often plagued by famines and against the backdrop of increasing religious oppression and misallodoxy,[3] Rabelais

offers a utopia through the figure of a character who eats and drinks to excess, indulging repeatedly in the pleasures of the body. According to Bennett (68-69) Gargantua's extravagant bodily action is a metaphor that seeks to destabilize Christian morality and subvert the established social order.

Gluttony is one of the seven deadly sins (or the seven vices) and is therefore invested with a certain theological significance. In the art of the contemporary Flemish painter Pieter Bruegel (ca. 1525-1569), however, it acquires (as the other deadly sins) strong comic overtones (Gibson 34-35), thus aiming to amuse and not to warn against the consequences of fallen human nature. The same humorous and satirical vein can be detected in Rabelais' hero who is accompanied in his gluttonousness by other gluttons, such as "the drunkards," who are monks and therefore totally ridiculous.[4] Several banqueting images in *La vie de Gargantua et de Pantagruel*, situated in the broader context of medieval literature, are usually centered on this figure of the monk, portrayed as a glutton, drunkard, and lecher.

Nevertheless, except for his blasphemous affinity with religious yet sinful persons, Gargantua is also a creature of mythological origin and can be seen as a positive manifestation of the figure of the *ogre* in folktales. With his voracious appetite, he resembles the ogre in Perrault's *Little Tom Thumb* who ate a whole spitted sheep for supper (Bouloumié 913). The ogre is a familiar figure in folktales from differrent traditions of African and European origin with various avatars in folklore and popular culture. The lineage of this figure is very long and has deep roots in mythology and the collective imagination (Bouloumié). Among the common features that Gargantua shares with the ogre, beyond their common etymological link with the lexical root "garg," are his enormous appetites and physical capacities, as well as his frightful bogeyman appearance. However, the ogre has some typical features of its own that are often characterized as weaknesses, such as weak eyesight (from Polyphemus in *Odyssey* to the child-eating ogre in Guillermo del Toro's dark fantasy movie *Pan's Labyrinth* in 2006) and, most importantly, low intelligence; these are characteristics that make the ogre vulnerable to deception (as in *Little Tom Thumb*), while remaining an extremely dangerous, carnivorous, or even anthropophagic creature, and one that is both fear-inducing and intriguing to those with fertile imaginations.

By tracing, in a more detailed manner, the fundamental characteristics of the outward and facial appearance of both Gargantua and the ogre, we can seek to better understand their symbolic significance and archetypical quality, as well as their deeper bonds with the collective unconscious. Looking at some selected engravings of Gustave Doré for *Little Tom Thumb* (a fairytale from 1862) and *Gargantua and Pantagruel* by François Rabelais (1873), we can easily detect some similarities between the two giant creatures. They have blank unfocused eyes, prominent mouths edged with teeth (sharp in the ogre's case), and features that associate the ogre with its primal avatar, the wolf, whose fearsome sharp-toothed jaws are used to tear its prey to pieces. It might be interesting (even important) to consider that

Rabelais and Perrault wrote in the 1500s, 1600s, while Doré made his illustrations in the 1800s. This reveals the way that this imagery has travelled through time. There is also a prominent connection that can be drawn to the infernal figure of Goya's imagination, Saturn/Cronus, who, with the same blank eyes, tears at his headless child with his teeth, goggling with the paranoia of his insatiable bulimia and utterly reversing the normal relationship of the parent feeding their child (Figure 1).

Another striking feature of both the ogre and Gargantua is the wide-open cavity of the mouth, establishing an ambiguous link between the idea of the devouring and swallowing mouth and the notions of both life and death: the shadow of the tomb and the abysmal darkness of the womb. The yawning mouth stands simultaneously for tomb and womb, it is a *bocca dell'inferno*, and a spring of life—this is a powerful iconological motif and can be seen in Bruegel's painting *Dulle Griet* (1562) where the entrance to Hell is portrayed as a gaping mouth edged with teeth.

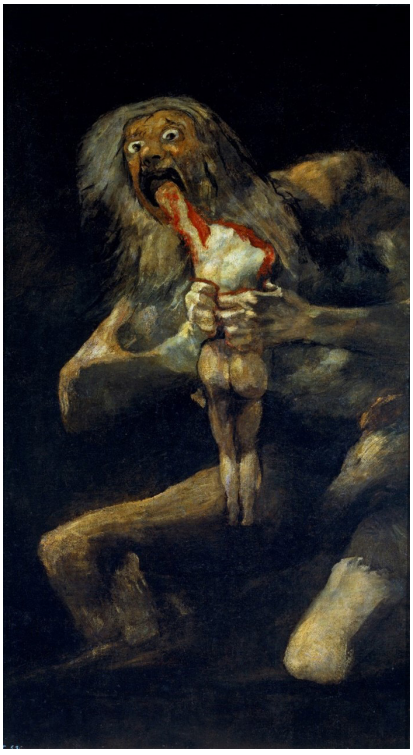

Fig. 1
Francisco Goya, Saturn Devouring His Son

It is worth noting that these characteristics—an open mouth with ferocious teeth; devouring and swallowing—persist throughout the long history of the metamorphoses of the Gargantua/ogre figure. One of the most impressive examples of the ogre's representations in the modern period can be found in the work of Charles Dickens. The author appropriated his primal fear of the dissembling wolf in Little Red Riding Hood, "who ate her grandmother, without making any impression on his appetite, and then ate her, after making that ferocious joke about his teeth," for the creation of one of his most disturbing fictional characters. This is the villain of *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1840-41), Daniel Quilp, who is portrayed as a gargantuan glutton, a devouring ogre. He is described as eating "hard eggs, shell and all, devoured gigantic prawns with their heads and tails on, chewed tobacco and water cresses at the same time and with extraordinary greediness drank boiling tea without winking" (Dickens 46). Quilp is usually illustrated (or played) as an ugly hunchback with the mouth and teeth of a predator. His prey is Little Nell, a virtuous young girl to whom he is the complete antithesis.

Contemporary Gargantuas and villainous ogres can also be found in popular

culture—in comics, films, and TV series. The figure is always present behind various evil characters who have horrifying teeth, big, open mouths, and voracious appetites to consume anything that can be eaten. Examples range from *Gargamel* in the Smurfs (with the same lexical root)[5] to Jaws, the James Bond villain, a giant assassin so named because of his weapon of choice—a set of stainless steel teeth; to V. M. Varga, a contemporary bulimic ogre with a prominent mouth, rotten gums, and horrendous teeth in the Coen Brothers' TV series *Fargo* (Season 3, Episode 6: *O Brother, Where Art Thou?*, 2017).

It is apparent that the Gargantua/ogre figure is inherently ambivalent and constantly shifting between good and evil, life and death. Gargantua's gluttony and his excessive bodily functions (urination for instance) are clearly linked to the reproductive power of the earth and the body. The banqueting imagery, frequently recalled in Gargantua, is ludic, because eating and drinking signify the ambivalence of the grotesque body. Characterized as both positive and negative activities, they reveal how the body transgresses its own limits 'and takes in the world' (Bakhtin, *Rabelais* 281). In contrast, the ogre is more strictly malevolent, a lethal enemy, whose gluttony serves as a powerful signifier of wickedness. However, the ogre is equally transgressive, violating many dichotomies or taboos associated with eating: the taboo of cannibalism, most importantly, since it devours or gulps, literally or metaphorically, living, animated beings. Another dichotomy that the ogre transgresses is that of the binary opposition described by Lévi-Strauss in terms of the raw and the cooked. It is, then, an ambiguous creature that crosses the boundaries of a number of categories, shifting constantly between nature and culture. Young children have a similarly complex, and at times transgressive, relationship with food, their bodies (particularly the body's responses to consumption), and the world around them. Children are drawn towards novelty and excess, and the development of self-control in relation to what they consume often happens through a process of discipline, treated as a vital stage on the path to the formal, non-*Rabelaisian/carnivalesque* world of adulthood. For example, it has been argued that food in children's literature constitutes a measure of the child's adjustment to the social order' (Katz 193). As such, it should come as no surprise that these themes, characters, and contradictions are addressed in children's literature.

Gargantuas and Ogres in Children's Literature

The concepts of dialogism, polyphony, and carnivalesque revolt help us to understand more profoundly and more completely that literature "is not merely an ideational phenomenon but has to be considered as a unique epistemological instrument that concerns intellectual, imaginative and emotional attitudes" (Bemong et al.: iii).[6] The work of Bakhtin also proves useful in the analysis of children's literature because the latter is often marked by what John Stephens has called "a playfulness which situates itself in positions of nonconformity" (Stephens 121). Several works of relevant scholarship, such

as those by Stephens (1992), McCallum (1999), and Nikolajeva (2010), have recognized Bakhtin's theories as powerful constructs for understanding literature written for children and young adults. Stephens suggests that carnivalesque texts "interrogate the normal subject positions created for children within socially dominant ideological frames" (120). McCallum uses a Bakhtinian approach to discuss matters of dialogic subjectivity, language, and narrative in children's and young adult fiction, while Nikolajeva utilizes carnival theory to address issues of power in texts written for children.

Carnivalesque features can be found not only in postmodern/contemporary books, but also in older literary works for children, and, as a matter of fact, in many books throughout the history of children's literature. Some Greek satirical poems, for example, published in the early 20th century, easily lend themselves to a carnivalesque reading. However, Bakhtin's analysis of carnival and the carnivalesque offers a theoretical framework that critics and educators can apply to the analysis of books written for young readers and to pedagogical practices related to teaching literature (Kalogirou and Economopoulou; Flegar).

Carnivalesque imagery draws on the mischievous and playful spirit of carnival, which mocks authority, subverts power relationships and hierarchies, and, by emphasizing the body, laughter, and reversible oppositions, creates a new upside-down world. A book that can be considered carnivalesque is one characterized by one or more of the following: a mocking attitude towards everything that is supposed to be official, authoritarian or sacred; an emphasis on the lower section of the body and its concerns with food and drink; a focus on things gross and degraded; a subversive attitude towards socially established ideologies concerning children's behavior, morals, parenting, and schooling, etc.; the use of taboo language and the employment of polyphony and dialogism via multiple narrators; the mixing of diegetic levels; and the multiplicity of focalization.

In general, as Stephens has suggested (121-57), carnival in children's literature is playful and subversive in nature. Books that retain the nature and function of the medieval carnival as described by Bakhtin express opposition to authoritarianism and seriousness, represented by parents, teachers, and political or religious institutions. They challenge adult authority by breaking social norms and overturning social hierarchies. Carnivalesque texts often use taboo language or wordplay and make fun of conventional social manners; by doing so, they offer an escape from the habitual constraints of society. They also cause uncanny feelings within readers, raising ambivalent responses. According to Nikolajeva (10), a carnivalesque text shows features such as: interrogation of authority; distortion; an "upside-down-world"; the creation of a topsy-turvy reality; imagery of the grotesque body; hyperbole; and the transgression of limits, etc. A carnivalesque text is often written in an amusing, extravagant, and *satirical* vein, featuring much crudity, *scatological humor*, and even violence, though in a humorous literary style.

The Brothers Gruesome written by Susan Elgar and illustrated by the Czech artist Drahos Zak, is a powerful example of a challenging children's book that clearly displays carnivalesque features. It can be connected to other picture books from the turn of the millennium, as a representative example of carnivalesque books which is an important tendency in contemporary writing (McCallum). At once disturbingly funny, nightmarish but beautiful, haunting, but teasingly amusing, it appropriates the basic tenets of carnival theory, as well as the figure of the Gargantua/ogre in all its recklessness and excessive behavior, transgressing the barriers of logic and conformism.

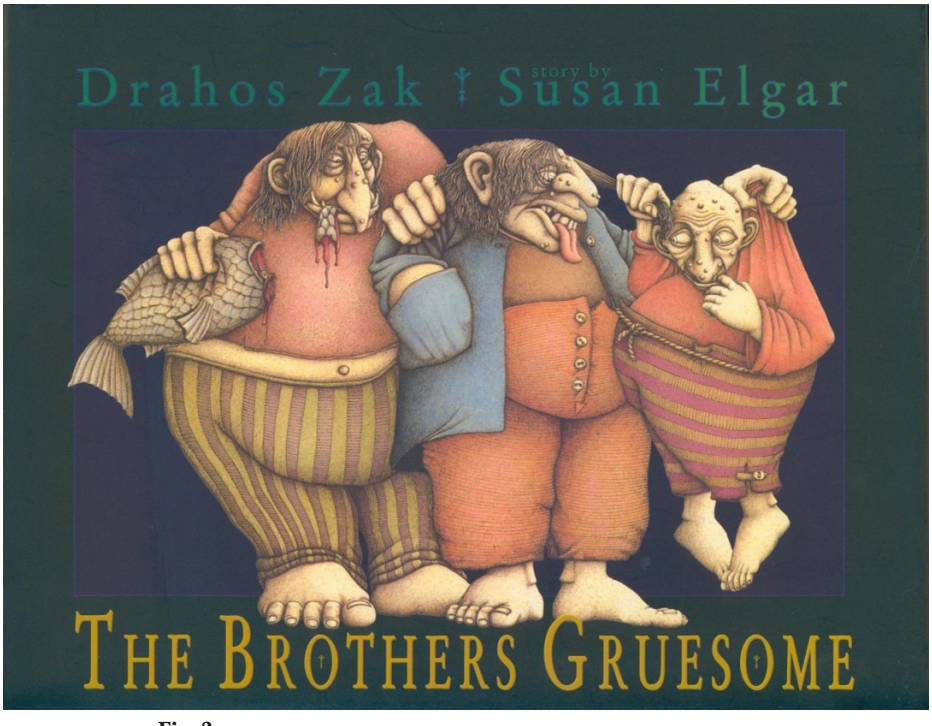

Fig. 2

Susan Elgar and Drahos Zak, *The Brothers Gruesome* (cover).

The Brothers Gruesome celebrates the Bakhtinian category of the open, unfinished nature of the body and its interactions with the world. In *Rabelais and his World*, Bakhtin points out that the open, unfinished nature of the body is revealed more fully and completely in the act of eating, because the "body transgresses here its own limits" (281). He notes how, through different bodily openings, such as the mouth, nose, and anus, that, within them, the confines between bodies, and between the body and the world, are overcome. In the following passage Bakhtin describes the most important events in the life of the grotesque

body:

> Eating, drinking, defecation and other elimination (sweating, blowing of the nose, sneezing), as well as copulation, pregnancy, dismemberment, swallowing up by another body—all these acts are performed on the confines of the body and the outer world, or on the confines of the old and the new body. (317)

Almost all the above notions (excepting that of copulation), have been drawn to an extreme extent in *The Brother Gruesome*, contributing to its overall carnivalesque nature. The grotesque bodies of the three brothers and the animals featured in the illustrations are in a constant and excessive mingling—they merge into each other, losing track of their boundaries and their individual characteristics. Within the limits of this absurd, cruel, and repulsive world everything must eat and be eaten. The three brothers are undoubtedly gruesome, abnormal, horrible, and voracious beings and, like their literary prototypes, the giant Gargantua and the ogre, they have an apparently insatiable appetite—not only are they gluttons with an irrational desire to consume food, but they are also carnivorous, even anthropophagic creatures. It is clear, that they transgress all the cultural barriers and taboos associated with food, since they devour or swallow everything. They consume food both raw and cooked; all sorts of living animals, from sheep to mice; and they are also cannibals, eating each other and even their own mother whom they swallow without thinking—a deeply disturbing, taboo-violating, and unthinkable act that totally defies sense and moral order, for as Daniel puts it, "[o]ne of the most fundamental cultural messages that children have to learn concerns how to eat correctly, that is, to put it simply, what to eat and what not to eat or who eats whom".

The brothers' whole existence goes beyond any logic and is reduced to the excessive consumption of any kind of food. They keep on eating, cannibalizing, and destroying everything until another creature, bigger, hairier and hungrier than the three brothers, gobbles them up. In a series of highly ironic pictures, they are depicted as ridiculous and idiotic in their ignorance of the upcoming danger. The book exemplifies the carnivalesque, characterized in its entirety by visual and verbal irony, hyperbole and grotesquery. It is also heavily invested with intertextual allusions, thus embracing a long tradition of food and drink imagery in literature and the arts.

Ostensibly, the direct linking of maternity with the act of eating in the book—the mother of the gruesome trio gives birth to them only to be devoured by her own children—is something that draws the book closer to Rabelais and his giant hero, Gargantua. It is worth noting that Bakhtin insisted on the importance of the scene in *La vie de Gargantua et de Pantagruel* (Book 1, Chapter VI) in which Gargamelle, Gargantua's mother, gives birth

to her son. Her labour begins once she feels disturbed in her lower parts (because she has eaten too much tripe):

> A little while later she began to groan and wail and shout. Then suddenly swarms of midwives came up from every side, and feeling her underneath found some ill-smelling excrescences, which they thought were the child; but it was her fundament shipping out. (52)

Gargamelle dies shortly after, and her child is delivered through his mother's ear. This is a pivotal scene in terms of carnival poetics precisely because it confuses the devourer with the devoured, the belly with the womb and, more importantly, the dying body with one that gives birth. As with Gargantua's birth scene, so *The Brothers Gruesome* draws attention to the image of the grotesque body, which, in this case, also presents the image of two bodies in one: "the one giving birth and dying, the other conceived, generated and born" (26). Equally as ironic and provocative as the illustrations is the accompanying text by Elgar, the rhythmic (iambic pentameter) and rhyming nature of which enhances the absurdist character of the very act of eating: "When their mother could not fill up their bellies, they gobbled her up with her raincoat and wellies."

The pervasive medievalism of the illustrations increases in the reader the overall feeling that they have entered a Bakhtinian cosmos of medieval laughter and carnival feast. At the same time, "medievalism" as an artistic style[7] raises important questions concerning the use and implementation of the past by the illustrator. It could be said that he employs the Middle Ages as a metaphor, suggesting something beyond the conventionally historical. An interpretative reading here would suggest that the illustrator chose the medieval era not only because it is a period typically connected with ignorance, filth and violence, but also, more importantly, because it evokes Rabelais and his insatiable giant, Gargantua—the literary progenitor of the gruesome brothers. However, the medieval trope here has the capacity to signify something beyond the conventionally historical by pointing out several correspondences between the medieval (that of the gruesome brothers) and postmodern/contemporary (our) world, which is equally punctuated by absurdity and suspiciousness, fear and despair, violence and catastrophe. The suffering, misshapen, and tortured body of poverty, and greed and hostility between individuals, have both been part of the core of human existence uninterruptedly up to the present.

It is also painfully ironic that the book concludes with an apocalyptic calamity of nature, both real and symbolic, in which there is nothing left to be destroyed. It is almost certain that the bigger creature that ate the three brothers soon will itself be gulped down and eliminated.

Indeed, if the reader looks more closely at the framing and point of view of this

Fig. 3
Susan Elgar and Drahos Zak, *The Brothers Gruesome*.

last picture (the real reader peers at the creature from behind), then they will understand that there is something lurking outside the pictorial space ready to attack the greedy creature who, at the same moment, is ironically unaware of this threat at its back. The monster is vulnerable to the (devouring) reader's gaze, as well as to any kind of danger.

The medievalism of the book is also closely connected to the symbolic pattern of the topsy-turvy universe or upside-down world (Babcock) of carnival, which is introduced through the seventh picture where the three newborn gruesome brothers, along with their mother, are depicted in Hell, standing on top of a huge birthday cake and surrounded by devilish creatures. This picture enhances the teasing nature of the overall illustration and its carnivalesque tendency, both reversing and inverting the traditional form and order by placing an event associated with nativity unequivocally in the Underworld. The artist subverts the visual representation of Hell commonly found in painting (in the mediaeval artistic tradition, or the work of Hieronymus Bosch and Pieter Bruegel) and playfully reappropriates some of the most important iconographic elements of the theme.

Another feature of the illustrations is their highly elaborate and painterly style. They evoke the paintings of Northern Renaissance and Baroque art, respectively the works of painters such as Hieronymus Bosch and Pieter Brueghel, conveying the same bizarre, *avant la lettre* surrealistic atmosphere expressed by both artists in their depictions of a gamut of boisterous peasants, quarrelsome people, and fantastical hybrid creatures. Likewise, the whole book could be considered a visualization à la manière de Bruegel of the proverb "the big fish eats the little fish," a Flemish saying frequently illustrated by the artist who would visually render proverbs, common expressions, and sayings for humorous effect. The illustration may also recall a nightmarish detail of the left-hand panel of Hieronymus Bosch's "The Temptation of Saint Antony" (ca. 1501, Lisbon, Museu National de Arte Antiga) where a demonic fish with a cathedral tower on its back eats a smaller fish. A

later artist, Salvador Dali, was long fascinated and inspired by this disconcerting and imaginatively powerful image of Bosch. In his painting "Dream caused by a flight of a bee around a pomegranate, one second before awakening" (1944, Madrid, Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza) a similar image can be found—an enormous fish is depicted spewing a pair of leaping tigers. In a similar vein, *The Brothers Gruesome* provides a palimpsest code, weaving texts and artworks together in a meaningful context that is intertextually open to comparisons with works of painting (those of the mediaeval period, the Northern Renaissance, the Baroque, and Surrealism) and literature (such as Rabelais' masterpiece).

In Lieu of a Conclusion

If, as asserted in Gadamer's hermeneutics, the reader begins to negotiate the meaning of the text from within their present situation and an 'anachronism of the present' occurs inevitably in any interpretative process, then we may be right to approach the figure of Gargantua/ogre and its mythic obsession with eating, in terms of their embeddedness in our current social and cultural milieu. My personal experience from teaching *The Brothers Gruesome* and other carnivalesque texts (such as the picture books of Tony Ross, or the funny stories of the Greek writer Antonis Papatheodoulou, or the poems of the great satiric canonical author Georgios Souris to name a few) to different classes and in various educational contexts (primary schools, vocational schools, and, of course, universities) has shown that the reading of such books is always a stimulating and open-ended aesthetic experience for readers of all ages. Many readers choose to see the gluttonous, predatory figure as a powerful allegory of our highly competitive, aggressive, hostile, conspicuously consumptive, and ecologically unsound societies. They also often assert that they had felt more empowered after having read and reflected upon such provocative narratives, which, while being disgusting, absurd, or annoyingly amusing, are never boring and always challenging. Inherently elusive or contradictory as signifiers, the Gargantua/ogre figure invites readers to engage in a constant dialogue about our current situation in the world and situates them squarely in the camp of the carnivalesque. We should perhaps recall here Bakhtin's optimism about the potential for carnival to enact anything new or transgressive and to suspend social oppression by invigorating and empowering people. Likewise, through the reading of carnivalesque texts, readers can become more capable at deciphering the conflicting discourses contained in literature and deconstructing texts to tease out their complexities.

Rabelais used the metaphor of eating to offer some brilliant advice to his readers in the "Prologue" to *La vie de Gargantua et de Pantagruel* about how they should read his book. What they should do, he says, is to read the book wisely and intensely so as to break up its bones and suck out its marrow:

> Now you must follow this dog's example, and be wise in smelling out, sampling, and relishing these fine and most juicy books, which are easy to run down but hard to bring to bay. Then, by diligent reading and frequent meditation, you must break the bone and lick out the substantial marrow … in the hope and assurance of becoming both wiser and more courageous by such reading. (38)

Carnivalesque texts are often full of substance and their reading can be a powerful and imaginative experience, a form of resistance against dogmatism, and part of a life-enduring quest for the freedom and independence of thought.

Works Cited

Allen, Valerie. *On Farting: Language and Laughter in the Middle Ages*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.

Alexander, Michael. *Medievalism: The Middle Ages in Modern England*. Yale University Press, 2017.

Bakhtin, Mikhail. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*, edited by M. Holquist, translated by C. Emerson and M. Holquist, University of Texas Press, 1981.

---. *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, edited and translated by Caryl Emerson, introduction by Wayne C. Booth, University of Minnesota Press, 1984.

---. *Rabelais and his World*, translated by H. Iswolsky, Indiana University Press, 1984.

---. *Speech Genres and other Late Essays*. Edited by C. Emerson and M. Holquist and translated by V. W. McGee. University of Texas Press, 1986.

---. *Epic and Novel: Toward a Methodology for the Study of the Novel*. Translated into Greek by Yiannis Kiourtsakis. Polis, 1995

Babcock, Barbara, editor. *The Reversible World: Symbolic Inversion in Art and Society*. Cornell University Press, 1978.

Bemong, Nele et al. editors. *Bakhtin's Theory of the Literary Chronotope: Reflections, Applications, Perspectives*. Gingko Academia Press, 2010.

Bendiner, Kenneth. *Food in Painting: From the Renaissance to the Present.* Reaction Books, 2004.

Bennett, Tony. *Formalism and Marxism*. Routledge, 2003.

Berrong, Richard M. *Rabelais and Bakhtin: Popular Culture in "Gargantua" and "Pantagruel."* University of Nebraska Press, 1986.

Bouloumié, Arlette. "The Ogre in Literature". *Companion to Literary Myths, Heroes and Archetypes.* Edited by P. Brunel and translated by W. Allatsonet al. Routledge, 1988, pp. 912-924.

Bridgham, Elizabeth A. *Spaces of the Sacred and Profane: Dickens, Trollope, and the Victorian Cathedral Town*.

Routledge, 2012.

Coletti, Theresa. *Naming the Rose: Eco, Medieval Signs, and Modern Theory*. Cornell University Press, 1988.

Daniel, Carolyn. *Voracious Children: Who Eats Whom in Children's Literature*. Routledge, 2006.

Dickens, Charles. *The Old Curiosity Shop*. 1841. Edited by E. M. Brennan, Clarendon Press, 1997.

Dickens, Charles. *A Christmas Tree*. 1850. Available at: https://etc.usf.edu/lit2go/pdf/passage/3952/dickens-christmas-stories-002-a-christmas-tree.pdf.

Emerson, Caryl. *The First Hundred Years of Mikhail Bakhtin*. Princeton University Press. 1997.

Elgar, Susan. and Zak, Drahos. *The Brothers Gruesome*. Houghton Mifflin, 2000.

Flegar, Željka. "The Alluring Nature of Children's Culture: Fairy Tales, the Carnival and the World Wide Web." *International Research in Children's Literature*, vol. 8, no. 2, 2015, pp. 169-184.

Gadamer, Hans-Georg. *Truth and Method*. Translated by J. Weinsheimer and D. G. Marshall, Continuum, 2004.

Gibson, Walter S. *Pieter Bruegel and the Art of Laughter*. University of California Press, 2006.

Kalogirou, Tzina and Economopoulou, Vasso. "History, Culture, Folklore and Fantasy in Contemporary Greek Children's Fiction." *Realismo Social y Mundos Imaginarios: Una Convivencia Para el Siglo XXI*, editores J. S. F. Vázquez, et al, Universidad Alcala, 2003, pp. 295-308.

Kalogirou, Tzina and Economopoulou, Vasso. "Tracing M. M. Bakhtin's theories in contemporary Greek children's books: Dialogism, Heteroglossia and Medieval carnival". *International Conference Proceedings: Literature and cross-cultural routes*. School of Languages, Literature and Civilization of Black Sea Countries, Democritus University of Thrace, Komotini 30-31 May 2014. Available at: utopia.duth.gr/~mdimasi/cng/index_htm_files/Kalogirou.pdf [in Greek]

Karatsinidou, Chr. *The Resurrection of Meaning: M. M. Bakhtin and Contemporary Cultural Theory*. Indiktos, 2005. [in Greek]

Katz, Wendy. R. "Some Uses of Food in Children's Literature." *Children's Literature in Education,* vol. 11, no 4, 1980, pp. 192-99.

Klaniczay, Gabor. "The Carnival Spirit: Bakhtin's Theory on the Culture of Popular Laughter" *The Uses of Supernatural Power: The Transformation of Popular Religion in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, edited by K. Margolis and translated by Susan Singerman, Princeton University Press, 1990, pp. 10-27.

Lachmann, Renate et al. "Bakhtin and Carnival: Culture as Counter-Culture". *Cultural Critique*, vol. 11, 1988, pp. 115-152.

Lévi-Strauss, Claude. *Mythologiques*, vol. 1: *The Raw and the Cooked*. Translated by J. and D. Weightman, Jonathan Cape, 1969.

McCallum, Robyn. *Ideologies of Identity in Adolescent Fiction: The Dialogic Construction of Subjectivity*. Routledge, 1999.

Nikolajeva, Maria. *Power, Voice and Subjectivity in Literature for Young Readers.* Routledge, 2010.

Nodelman, Perry. *The Pleasures of Children's Literature*. Longman, 1992.

Rabelais, Francois. *The Histories of Gargantua & Pantagruel*. Translated and with an introduction by J. M. Cohen, Penguin Books, 1972.

Piatti-Farnell, Lorna, editor. *The Routledge Companion to Food and Literature*. Routledge, 2021.

Scholl, Lesa. *Food Restraint and Fasting in Victorian Religion and Literature*. Bloomsbury, 2022.

Shahani, Gitanjali G. *Food and Literature*. Cambridge University Press, 2018.

Stephens, John. *Language and Ideology in Children's Fiction*. Longman, 1992.

Vallone, Lynne. "'What Is the Meaning of All This Gluttony?': Edgeworth, the Victorians, C.S. Lewis and a Taste for Fantasy." *Papers: Explorations into Children's Literature,* vol. 12, no. 1, 2002, pp. 47-54.

Vice, Sue. *Introducing Bakhtin*. Manchester University Press, 1997.

Notes

[1] The symbolic reversal correlates to many inverted patterns of culture, involving not only religious inversion, but also linguistic, artistic, social, and political inversions. See, Babcock (1978).

[2] Most carnival festivities in Greece, for example (as in many other cultural traditions), usually culminate in the ridiculous burning of the effigy of a mock Carnival King.

[3] The war between Catholics and Huguenots (1562–1598) marked the sixteenth century.

[4] The figure of the monk as drunkard, glutton, and lecher constitutes a comic topos in Medieval Latin recreational literature of the twelfth and thirteen centuries. It belongs to an entire literary tradition that Rabelais drew upon for his chapter "Why monks love kitchens" (Coletti 129-30).

[5] The name is a homophone of that of Gargantua's mother, Gargamelle.

[6] The theories of Bakhtin on popular laughter have been widely discussed. See, Emerson (1997, Ch. 4: 162-206); Berrong (1986); Lachmann, Eshelman, and Davis, (1988); Klaniczay (1990); Karatsinidou (2005); Allen (2007).

[7] For the concept of medievalism as an artistic style, I follow Alexander (2017).

Swallowed but not Eaten: Images of the Totemic Meal and Children's Culture

Victoria de Rijke

tirallo, sing tirralay, the Wuggley Ump lives far away/
how uninviting are its claws / how even more so are its jaws---
Sing glogalimp, sing glugalump / From deep inside the Wuggly Ump
Edward Gorey "The Wuggley Ump"

Will you please tell me if, on this island, there are places where one may eat without necessarily being eaten?" asks hungry Pinocchio of the dolphin (Collodi, Ch. 24), before being swallowed by the terrible dogfish sea monster. Food is never necessarily just food, especially in literature. Neither is swallowing or being swallowed. They are all metaphors of gastronomic proportion. In this chapter, I will argue that being swallowed is also not necessarily the end of a story; in fact, it might be a whole new beginning. To serve my argument, I explore a number of totemic works of visual and performance art that I believe are important to think with and may well have been influential to picturebook depictions and metaphors of being swallowed but not eaten, ending with contemporary children's literature, including Mac Barnett and Jon Klassen's subversive picturebook *The Wolf, the Duck and the Mouse* (2017).

Swallowing/Reading/Knowing

Beginning with metaphors of reading itself, literary kinds of devouring or digesting of books, consuming literature, reading aloud, words rolled on the tongue, suggests a sensory, embodied experience. Francis Bacon relished reading-as-eating metaphors: "some books are to be tasted, others swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested" (Essays 185), later parodied by Jonson. In the brilliantly titled *The Fury of Men's Gullets: Ben Jonson*

and the Digestive Canal, (2015) Boehrer's study of Jonson's fascination with 'alimentary matters' reveals how he disliked Montaigne, because in his opinion the French essayist did not digest his reading, and thus did not produce well-considered literature, but "brings it to the stake raw and undigested" (118). Jonson's own recommended method was to read… "not, as a Creature, that swallowes, what it takes in, crude, raw, or indigested; but, that feedes with an Appetite, and hath a Stomacke to concoct, divide, and turne all into nourishment" (118). Such metaphors abound: we can devour or savor all-consuming books, crave or gobble up literature, chew, or binge on a book, as food o' the mind or a poisonous read, digest a book's ideas, read voraciously or be starved of reading. Jacques Derrida pictured writing and reading words as forms of eating (assimilating the text), where for the "meal" to be good for us to "eat well" it must be nourishing not only for ourselves but ethically, for the other.

In Oliver Jeffers' picturebook *The Incredible Book-Eating Boy* (2015), a child has a voracious appetite for books - literally - starting with a word, then a sentence, then whole books, and "the more he ate, the smarter he got." Driven by the desire to be the smartest in the world, Henry eats three or four books at a time, but just as Jonson warned us many centuries before, "Henry was eating too many books and too quickly at that" and swallowing them undigested made things go "very very wrong." Jeffers' humorous illustration shows Henry plagued by nightmares like an "A-Z of Monsters" book chasing after him with the threatening speech bubble "I'm going to EAT YOU!" Due to gobbling so many books unthinkingly fast, Henry suffers digestive problems, and his speech and knowledge become mixed up. The books' moralistic ending – Henry realizing that reading normatively is the way forward (and showing him eating broccoli) – retains a tiny ironic twist, as a little bottom corner of the page has apparently been nibbled out.

For C. S. Lewis and many of us, eating whilst reading are two pleasures that combine admirably, though it is hard to imagine a child choosing broccoli for this purpose. Jeffers' metaphor in his book is a curiously mixed one: both a darkly comic, surreal condemnation of competitive "mastery" through book-bingeing, retreating to a didactic healthy eating/literacy lesson. For me, the book raises a further question, one that feminist scholarship has critiqued as the human need to believe (in religion rather than creative possibility); in other words, "letting go what Kristeva calls the need to know" (Arndt in Diaz-Diaz and Semenec 10). Are complex metaphors of eating, being swallowed but surviving, thus associated with equally complicated notions of literacy and reading: for competition, mastery and domination, for consuming "unlived" knowledge, or for pleasure and well-being? Whatever our answer, there are still darker sides of being swallowed, which I shall now dive into.

Swallowing as Being Damned

Hieronymus Bosch's *De Visie von Tondal* (c.1550s) [*The Vision of Tundale*], picturing an Irish C12th poem of visionary infernal literature, describes the knight Tondal having a seizure at dinner, and being led through Heaven and Hell by an angel, experiencing some of the torments of the damned. As a kind of northern European popularist variant on Dante's *Divine Comedy* (1320) – itself indebted to Islamic philosophical texts – Tondal is guilty of eight deadly sins: pride, covetousness, lust, anger, gluttony, envy, sloth, and treachery. Generously invited to stay to dinner by an aggrieved debtor, he is stricken with a violent fit that results in his imminent death. Poetic justice, we might think, but more punishment is to come. Tondal passes through the hell-mouth and is bitten by lions, adders, and snakes within the belly of Acheron; sees lustful clergy who have broken their vows swallowed by a great bird and infested with vermin that creep in and out of their bodies, and so on. Bosch was painting in a time of great barbarity and change at the tail end of the Hundred Years' War, in which over three million people were slaughtered, and Joan of Arc burned alive. It was also what western Europe calls "The Age of Discovery" (when western powers began their global mapping of places that had long been there before any white westerner "discovered" them) and religious cynicism. Bosch turned from the Bible's view of hell to a fantastical vision of human sin separated from God, characterized by chance, with bird-like figures vomiting dice and a monster digesting the souls of sinful clergy. *The Vision of Tundale* makes it horrifically clear that this punishment of being swallowed into the mouth of hell and vomited out into a cesspool was reserved for clerics guilty of sexual vice.

Pieter Bruegel the Elder's painting *Dulle Griet* (1562/3) owes much to Bosch, with Griet leading an army of women to pillage Hell and looking fearlessly into the hellmouth (Fig 1). With several powerful female monarchs on the thrones of Europe adding to a general unease caused by the religious and societal upheavals of the period, the painting is likely to be poking fun at female power, since, in Flemish folklore, Dulle Griet is a shrewish peasant woman. Women were beginning not to 'stay in their place' and Griet personifies this. Both Bruegel's original painting and Carll Cneut's illustrations to the picturebook Dulle Griet (with Geert de Kockere, 2005) depict Griet entering the

Fig. 1
Hellmouth detail, Bruegel's *Dulle Griet* (c1562/3).

mouth of hell without fear. The text reads "it was crawling with evil, so for a moment Griet hesitated. But then she kicked and chopped her way in. Through the mouth of the devil. The mouth was wide open. The mouth that was a gate, the gates of hell." Direct intertextual reference is made to Bruegel's work in Cneut's illustrations, by collaging cut-outs from the original into the design, as if the book itself had swallowed and spat out half-digested gobbets of the painting; self-conscious parodic reference that Beckett (2010) and Van Meerbergen (2012) describe as typically postmodern, but which is also likely to refer to - and continue - a long-established practice of artistic allusion throughout different periods of Flemish art and into works of children's literature (DeLuca, 1984; Beckett, 2010). As Bruegel followed Bosch and Cneut followed Bruegel, DeLuca points out that iconic picturebooks "created some of the schemata that shaped the field" (23), suggestive that the idea of being eaten has been slowly digested over centuries and is now also shaped by children's culture and the self-conscious materiality of the children's book, where the threat of being eaten is depicted as no longer that of damnation, but a challenge to a resourceful, resilient self.

Swallowing as Transforming

To face the mouth of hell and to be swallowed by the monster is clearly an existential crisis, however. In her Reith lecture of 1994, Marina Warner calls cannibal tales "The Hunger for Conquest." From the ogre in the fairytale "*Jack the Giant-Killer"* who dines on the flesh of Englishmen to Dante's *Inferno*, where the damned eat their own and each other's flesh, cannibalism is tied to fears of swallowing and being swallowed: the loss of personal identity, of soul. We instill the fear of cannibalism in our children with traditional tales of *Jack and the Beanstalk* or *Hansel and Gretel*, and that fear in turn serves other functions as well. An old variant of "Little Red Riding Hood" titled "The Story of Grandmother" has the child bring her grandmother bread and milk, yet the wolf (in bed having eaten grandmother) directs her to eat the meat and drink he has left on the shelf. "As she ate, there was a little cat that said: "A slut is she who eats the flesh and drinks the blood of her grandmother!" (Dundes 1991). One reading might be that Red Riding Hood engages in anti-Christian acts including a pastiche of the mass through cannibalism of a family member, plus sexual immorality in lying down with the wolf, but another that the pubertal child symbolically takes on her new place (replacing the grandmother by the ritual eating of her flesh and drinking of her blood) as the female generations of the family are passed on in their time.

Ostensibly to censor female initiative and remove gory or erotic allusion, later versions of the tale (eg. Perrault and Grimm) feature male patriarchs such as hunters to step in, kill the wolf and cut it open to rescue both child and grandma from the belly of the beast.

In this extraordinary engraving (Fig. 2), a man with a large sharp knife between his teeth and a larger chopper resting on the table, is tearing the entrails of a wolf open, revealing a little girl curled inside, apparently alive and well, with a woman looking somewhat faint in the background. As with Cneut following Bruegel and Bosch, Henry Duff Linton's engraved copy of Henri de Montaut's illustration of Little Red Riding Hood for Librarie du Petit Journal, changed purpose when, intriguingly, it ended up in London's medical Wellcome Collection where it was presumably of interest or entertainment to surgeons in the historic development of surgical methods. The image is one of comparisons: the hugely muscled arms of the man, his dark features and possibly afro hair echoed by the hairy pelt of the wolf's snout and leg, contrasted with the paleness of the women behind and the white skin and draped clothing of the child. The inference is the innocence of the eaten and the feminine requiring (male) protection, as rescued by the knowing violence of the hunter/surgeon/wolf.

Fig. 2
Little Red Riding Hood. Wood engraving by H. Linton after H. de Montaut, ca. 1865. Public Domain Mark. Source: Wellcome Collection. (c1562/3).

There are non-western challenges to this formula, such as depicting children themselves with huge appetites, as with the Hindu myth or epic tale Rakshahsa, which Madhubanti Banerjee also links to racial fears of those with dark bodies cast out or defeated "so that others would fear Aryan power" (Banerjee 150). In the tale, Putana tries to kill Krishna when he was a baby, but when she offers to nurse him at her toxic breasts, she is suckled to death by his voracious appetite. For indigenous and tribal peoples, traditional tales can feature being eaten as transformative acts stemming from ancient ritualistic practices where to eat your enemy is to perform an extreme act of physical dominance, symbolically taking on their strength for future battles or territorial expansion (the fat of the land). In his study of children's literature, Jonathan Cott considers cannibalism to be an obsessive theme in fairy tales. He suggests scholars have argued that "it represents simply a vestigial memory of a time when human beings did in fact eat each other both ritually and in combat; or perhaps rather the vestiges of an attempt to exorcise that primordial hunger and the guilt it occasions" (Cott xiv). This view chimes with Rituparna Das's (2020) postcolonial reading of cannibalistic tales from Bengal, emphasizing the narrative trope of races, cultures and marginalized "others" being traumatized and "devoured" by white colonialism in its search for agency and political domination. This brings us to metaphors of eating as related to politics.

Political Swallowing

Food, cooking and eating is of course gendered, as German Dada artist Hannah Höch was well aware. In a kitchen self-portrait she collaged herself blurred, looking away, whilst the pots and pans of the kitchen behind her are super-realist. Her text for the image reads: "I risk eating the maddest of dishes." She reminds us that cooking is hardly domesticated. It is material experiment, like that of collage itself. It is risk. Portuguese artist Paula Rego recalls the uncompromising, blunt work of Höch, though in different media. Her etchings and aquatints of Nursery Rhymes suggest new gendered positionings: a feisty, kicking Miss Muffet rather than a spider frightening her away from her curds and whey. A painting of an older Snow White – still dressed in traditional children's Disney garb – is pictured moments after eating the poison apple, sprawled amidst overturned furniture, clutching at her skirts. Her body lies twisted over a pool of red, Rego perhaps suggesting that swallowing the apple construes aging towards death, culturally for women, a form of physical and psychological violation

Höch's (1919) large-scale photomontage *Cut with the Kitchen Knife Through the Last Weimar Beer-Belly Cultural Epoch* in Germany is a forceful commentary on the gender issues erupting in postwar Weimar Germany – and one of the most prominently displayed and well-received works of the International Dada Fair of 1920. Höch cut, overlapped and juxtaposed photographic fragments of politicians and artists of the time in disorienting ways to reflect the confusion and chaos of the postwar era. Though she probably used a scalpel or scissors to produce her work, her naming of the kitchen knife suggests a more roughly hewn collage, hacked from popular magazines using a domestic cooking tool. Höch cuts up and cuts through individual bodies to serve up the epoch: a Weimar "beer belly" full of social and cultural actions, people and ideas, many difficult to swallow. In this way, Höch's photomontage also announced emphatically that art was under new management, in angry response to the political context that while generals and politicians banqueted, citizens, including the war-injured, were starving. The hope was that art would no longer serve the ritualized dining of the wealthy bourgeois connoisseur. In this photomontage, ingredients are collected, mixed and cooked using non-traditional art practices for what the Dadaist called 'anti-art'.

Like Höch's "Beer-Belly" artwork, intended expressly to oppose the Weimar constitution of 1919 and the chaos of the Weimar Republic that would position Germany for the rise of Hitler and the Nazi Party, Rego's Salazar "Vomiting the Homeland" is a savage criticism of Prime Minister Salazar's authoritarian government that would ruthlessly rule Portugal until 1974. Rego was sent to England at the age of 17 on the advice of her father, but she points out that "To a great extent, I was protected because my father had an engineering company and we weren't poor. The poor starved, particularly in the countryside." In the image, a figure vomits a looped stream of yellow bile beside

abstract shapes of female form and fruit. These works picture cannibalistic images of eating and being eaten, countered by the wishful undoing by its reversal: regurgitation. Can what we eat live on, somehow?

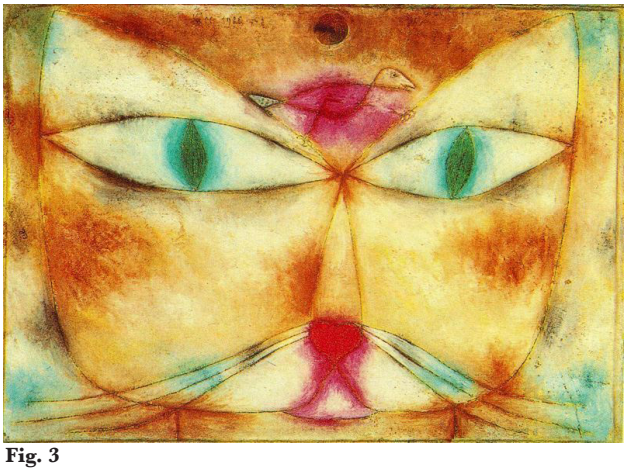

Fig. 3

Cat and Bird. Paul Klee, oil and ink on gauze (1928)

Like his earlier "Cat and Bird" (1928, Fig 3.), Paul Klee's *Hungry Girl* and *Child Eater* (1939) depict beasts with glaring eyes who are dreaming of or who have assimilated their prey. Hunger is thus animal, evoking early childhood experiences as an amalgam of fantasy and reality, characterized by untamed infantile impulses and anxieties. Hunger stirs a wish to swallow up everything, yet also the fear of being swallowed up by everything else. Klee's intense colour pastes and simple pencil lines create a convergence between the child-like and then called "primitive" aesthetic set to challenge the times. Inspired by Klee, Dutch artist Karel Appel was a member of the avant-garde CoBrA group, using child-like methods to approach expressionist artworks. In 1949, Appel was commissioned to paint a mural for the cafeteria of Amsterdam's city hall (Fig. 4). Given the title *Vragende Kinderen* – meaning either "questioning children" or "begging children" – Appel's work caused an uproar. Where the artist saw openness to a new future, Dutch civil servants saw violence, rickets and starvation, things they had known all too well in the war and of which they had no wish to be reminded. This was a place to eat in, not to recall how Holland itself had momentarily been swallowed by national socialism under occupation, when the people of the rural south had starved. The mural was quickly whitewashed over and remained so for 20 years. Appel, furious, moved to France.

War carries its own food-related associations: metaphors of starving, eating and being eaten – the "fruits of war" actually "seeds of destruction" that reap "bitter harvests" for those who have "the stomach to fight." Providing or denying physical sustenance – food or

the lack of it – in these works of visual art, becomes a metaphor to wider social injustice in settings where a life, not just a meal, lies in the hands of others. The beer-belly, the vomited homeland, the starving children gazing at the diners in the canteen, all become totemic: food as sacrifice, marking moments in history that are very hard for us to swallow.

Swallowed by the Wolf

Being swallowed thus operates metaphorically, even totemically, as in the case with Prokofiev's musical tale *Peter and the Wolf*. Prokofiev apparently rejected the initial propogandist "Young Pioneer" tale offered, rewriting "Peter and the Wolf" with Natalya Sats, the first female opera director and director of several children's theatres. It premiered in Russia in 1936 with Sats narrating, then in America in 1938. By that time Sats was already serving a sentence in the gulag. She was convicted as a traitor to the motherland by association (her lover, who was shot). She refused to sign a confession and was sentenced to a labor camp in Siberia. In the musical, the duck is swallowed by the wolf but can be heard still alive and quacking from inside his belly, represented by the oboe. For me, the duck is always Natalya Sats, spending sixteen years of her life inside the belly of an oppressor, swallowed but not eaten. On her release from exile, Sats continued her own "synthesized" method and re-opened the theatrical birthplace of *Peter and the Wolf*, whose performances then toured the world. It is now renamed in her honor, The Natalya Sats Children's Musical Theater and features a statue of her with Little Red Riding Hood, Peter and the Wolf.

Being swallowed by a wolf carries special totemic significance for humans. In Norse mythology, wolf characters chase the sun and moon to devour them and return us to perpetual darkness. Freud tended to over-read the wolf – the parent who pretends to gobble his children up in play – so what is edible is oedipal – representing a threat, linked to repressed sexual desires. Being eaten is thus linked to oral expression and to being castrated. In the book *Animal lessons: How they Teach Us to Be Human* Oliver argues that "For Freud, cannibalism is an essential element of the totemic meal that inaugurates humanity and human civilization against animality and animal nature" (258). Melanie Klein recognized that, for Freud, the fear of being devoured by the "totem father" was "an undisguised expression of the fear of total annihilation of the self" but her observations were that cannibalistic urges begin with children's teething, combined with the "oral impulse to suck dry, bite up, scoop out and rob the mother's body of its good contents" (Klein 7) which in turn is a source of anxiety and guilt. Our fear of being eaten thus shapes the brain and is a powerful force across the natural world. Ecologists have long known that predators play a key role in ecosystems, shaping whole communities with the knock-on effects of who eats whom. But a new approach is revealing that it's not just being eaten, but also the fear of getting eaten, that shapes everything from individual brains and

behavior to whole ecosystems.

Fear Ecologies

This new field, exploring the non-consumptive effects of predators, is known as fear ecology. Historically, as migrants moved across the continent during colonization, dispossessing Indigenous peoples from the land, the dominant settler perception was that the best way to avoid livestock losses was through widespread predator eradication. So, anti-predator sentiment of the times saw the cougar, bear and the wolf almost eliminated, with wolf culling still practiced and remaining a contentious issue today. By the 2000s, it was observed that animals behave and distribute spatially in response to predation risk in a "landscape of fear." The current concept, fear ecology, focuses on how animals make decisions about what, where and when to eat, how they forage, hunt and farm for food and whether it is sustainable. Evidence of intergenerational fear effects is being seen across a number of species, including birds, mice and humans.

It was during this historical era of widespread predator killing that biophysicists began to tackle the ecologic underpinnings of predator-prey interactions. In nature, everyone needs to eat, from the few predators to the many prey and plants. Thinking about the complex ways in which ecosystem puzzle pieces fit together, ecologists conceived of biological communities structured either from "top down" or "bottom up." Bottom-up communities are defined by an abundance of plants, such as grass, available for grazing herbivores. Top-down thinking led to the idea of a keystone predator like the wolf, whose near-disappearance proves the disproportionately large role that keystone species play in maintaining the balance and biodiversity of communities.

Fig. 4

REBVIK's *The A-Z of Dangerous Food* (2012)

My own picturebook collaboration, *The A-Z of Dangerous Food* (Fig. 4), is a playful take on a constructivist collage design featuring food eaten by humans but that also eats or

endangers us, such "B for Bats" which are both endangered, eaten and carry pandemics, or "C is for Crocodiles" as steaks or child-eaters. Resisting the idea of the keystone predator as a pantomime threat, like Roald Dahl's *Enormous Crocodile* sadistic musing "For my lunch today, I would like a nice, juicy little child," Mini Grey's picturebook *The Last Wolf* begins by unexpectedly picturing Little Red dressed up as a hunter, off to catch a wolf. Her mother doesn't worry, as a wolf hasn't been seen in over a hundred years. Happening upon the tree-cave containing the last wolf, last lynx and last bear, Little Red is served tea and told all about the "Good Old Days," when

> "there were endless miles of forest to run through, and a thousand tasty grazing beasts to bite… when you could just lie on a branch and wait for lunch to wander right under your paws. Nowadays, catching a square meal is a difficult business: the pickings are slim and the packing is hard to get into." They looked longingly at Little Red. "My, what huge hungry eyes you all have!" she said. (*The Last Wolf*)

Grey's text points ironically to that famous moment in traditional Little Red Riding Hood tales when the refrain begins: "What big eyes" and finishes with "What big teeth you have," to which the wolf replies "All the better to EAT you with!" followed by eating her, falling asleep and getting his belly cut open by a passing hunter, to free the child and her grandmother. In this modern rewrite, Little Red (a hunter in role-play only) simply shares her packed lunch with the beasts and they kindly walk her home, through "the last woods." Grey's illustrations set a sharp contract of the life before environmental destruction, including a double page spread, fully forested, and idyllic images of nature's bounty set against modernity, where the animals have to break into private property and go through rubbish bins for scraps. Little Red (as Mini Grey's blogspot advises) determines to plant more trees.

Ultimately, these fables and motifs relate powerfully to our flawed relationship with animals and nature in our greedy late capitalist world. "Eating and being eaten preoccupy fairy tales where heroes are turned into animals, children are roasted in ovens," suggesting both "the fear of dependence on the other (and) also tapping into the real *fear of being eaten* as just another kind of meat" (Hudson). In Amy Dykman and Zachariah O'Hora's *Wolfie the Bunny* Dot is convinced the wolf her rabbit parents adopt is bad news. All the parents can do is admire Wolfie. "He's a good eater" says Papa. "Speaking of eating," says Dot. "He's going to eat us all up!" "But they were too smitten to listen." The joke here is that the youngest child appears to be the only realist with knowledge of a wolf's natural eating habits, so her concern about being both his sister and his dinner seems reasonable. However, the twist in the tale is that by being adopted into the bunny family Wolfie (who

wears a pink bunny suit over his wolf pelt) is not a risk to his own family members. It is only when both he and bunny Dot meet a hungry bear that the risk is suddenly real, but for Wolfie! "'DINNER!' roared the bear." But Wolfie is rescued by Dot, shouting: "Let him go!... or I'LL EAT YOU ALL UP!" The last scene shows the two hand-in-hand shopping at the Carrot Patch Co-op, with Dot saying: "Come on, little brother. Let's go home and eat."

There is a kind of magic in the refrain "I'll eat you all up" from many traditional tales, as illustrated (Fig. 6) by Kay Nielsen's Troll waiting under the bridge, mouth open, whilst the goat promises "Eat me when I'm fatter," from what translates to "The Three Billy Goats Gruff." Similarly, works of more contemporary children's literature still employ the tropes found in "The Gingerbread Man," being chased then eaten bite by bite by the fox carrying him over the river, crying "I'm quarter gone...I'm half gone...I'm three-quarters gone...I'm all gone!" Max, in his wolf suit, threatens, "I'll eat you up!" to his mother, and then is sent to bed "without eating anything" in Maurice Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are*. When in turn Max threatens to return home, the Wild Things say – just like the Jewish relatives Sendak said he recalled leaning over his pram, who had been in his mind when making the book – "We'll eat you up, we love you so." But Max said "No!" In the final act of reconciliation, he finds his supper waiting for him "still hot" at the end of all his adventures. Traumatic threats can be reversed by facing one's "wild things" – fears, frustrations, rages, expectations, others) – the inner stress is calmed (safely chewed over or digested), and no one is "eaten all up," after all.

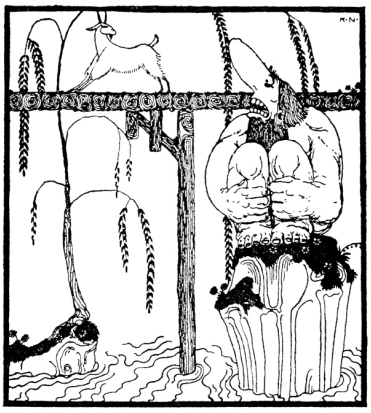

Fig. 5
Illustration by Kay Nielsen from *East of the Sun and West of the Moon* [The Three Billy Goats Gruff] (1914)

It is not surprising that 21st-century children's literature is also playfully subverting long-held notions of predation risk, as reminders that we humans are now more conscious than ever of our morally reprehensive role as a top predator, knowing it carries very real risks to our own happy survival. Ryan T. Higgins' jolly, didactic picturebook *We Don't Eat Our Classmates* features dinosaur Penelope Rex who initially eats her classmates (because children are delicious) but then must learn from the aptly named teacher Mrs Noodleman that she is going to have to spit the tasty children out if she wants to stop feeling lonely so she can play with them. Such texts are, in essentials, pragmatic analogies for what unbridled human greed's cause and effect will do to planet Earth. Perhaps more adults should read *We Don't Eat Our Classmates*.

Being Swallowed but Not Eaten

As in Jean de la Fontaine's fables, humans and animals often play equal roles in children's literature. A prominent element of the American Indian hybrid of myth and fable is the Pourquoi story or etiological tale, which answers a "why"? question of nature, often to illustrate the pitfalls of (human) silliness, naughtiness and weakness. Why spiders eat flies, why plover birds clean crocodiles' teeth, why the cat purrs. These are often metaphoric plays on factual knowledge. Mac Barnett and Jon Klassen's picturebook *The Wolf, the Duck and the Mouse* (2017) can be categorized as a pourquoi tale of sorts. The tale begins early one morning when a mouse meets a wolf and is quickly wolfed down. So it goes with alpha predators, nature's way, you might say. Here the book's design features a clever page split of the front and back end of the wolf, signifying mouse's moment of primal separation from the world outside to the inner.

> "Oh, woe!" wails the mouse. "Here I am caught in the belly of the beast. I fear it is the end." "Be quiet!" someone shouted. "I'm trying to sleep." A light was lit. A duck lay in bed. "Well?" Said the duck. "Oh," said the mouse. Duck makes breakfast. The meal was delicious. "Where did you get jam?" asked the mouse. "And a tablecloth?" The duck munched a crust. "You'd be surprised what you find inside of a wolf." "It's nice", said the mouse. "It's home", said the duck. "You live here?" "I live well. I may have been swallowed, but I have no intention of being eaten." (*The Wolf, the Duck and the Mouse*)

This witty picturebook is like a playful illustration of Derrida's philosophical idea "we must eat well," or learn "to-give-the-other-to-eat." He sees a distinction between animals simply swallowing whilst the human animal incorporates abstractly, thereby creating a symbolic or inner space that is the subject. He also makes a distinction between assimilating, whether food, ideas or friends, in ways that respect and nourish, or ways that conquer them as trophies (Birnbaum and Olsson).

The duck and the mouse may therefore have been swallowed but have not been annihilated. For lunch they make soup. They wear chef's hats, aprons, and have a well-equipped kitchen including 5 large knives. (The wolf has clearly had to swallow quite dangerous items for their convenience). "The mouse cleared his throat. "Do you miss the outside?" "I do not!" said the duck. "When I was outside, I was afraid every day wolves would swallow me up. In here, that's no worry."

Fig. 6

The Wolf, the Duck and the Mouse (2017) Feasting inside the wolf's belly

Introducing the mouse to the high standard of living inside the wolf (top hats, bow ties, dinner jackets and all, as in Fig. 6) compared to the anxiety of being prey outside, the duck has chosen to interpret being swallowed not as separation, isolation or marginalization, but as integration. In a humorous twist, the creatures that have been swallowed actually increase in agency by negatively controlling the wolf as when they party and dance, causing the wolf's insides (indicated in Klassen's comic illustrations as the smeary darkness surrounding the candlelit dinner party) to suffer, as he wails "Oh, woe! Surely it must have been something I ate!" As the blurb says, "The book is more than funny, it's a howl". As a witty phonic twist, even "Oh, woe!" stands for the sound of a wolf howling.

The duck then suggests to the wolf that he eats "a hunk of good cheese, a flagon of wine and some beeswax candles." That night duck and mouse feast and toast, with some irony: "To the health of the wolf!" But of course, the wolf feels worse, exclaiming: "I feel like I'll burst." This precipitates a potential crisis that will affect them all as a human hunter hears the wolf moan and fires a shot. The duck and mouse then "CHARGE!" out of the wolf's wide-open mouth "to defend our home" in kitchen-implement-inspired battledress: tablecloth cape, with saucepan and colander helmets (Fig. 7).

The duck and the mouse defeat the hunter, and the wolf grants them any favor in return, admitting "you saved my life when I thought not to spare yours." "Well, you can guess what they asked for," reads the text laconically. To return to the belly and party. And that is why the wolf howls at the moon.

Animals are not "by nature" secondary entities in children's literature. As Levi-

Strauss maintained, "Animals are good to think with." In fables, they stand for us, as us. In his essay "What has literature got to do with it?" Nigerian novelist Achebe refers to animal fables about class division, privilege and the seeds of revolution they contain, arguing that they often carry the suggestion of the dissolution of an incompetent oligarchy. In this subversive tale, the wolf is immature, over-eating and punished with stomach-ache. Which of us has not done the same in our childhood with too many sweets or green apples? Thus, the wolf and the hunter – stereotypically alpha male keystone predators – are reduced to (child-like) incompetent oligarchs, tortured by greed or their fears.

Fig. 7

The Wolf, the Duck and the Mouse (2017) charging out of the wolfs mouth

But the wolf is also depicted as the mouse and duck's home: his belly houses his and their fictional tropes, indeed, all fictional tropes, from reading as eating, damnation, salivation or salvation, the cannibalism of folk and fairy tale, art and anti-art regurgitation. For the mouse and the duck, being swallowed followed by regurgitation is disintegration then reassembly; thus, they choose to return to the belly as home. They live well and eat well, there. The wolf and what he eats belongs to them, under their control, reminding us animals are the relational metaphor, placed in a receding past, some once threatening, now threatened in their turn. The picturebook offers a comic reversal of fear ecology, in that being swallowed keeps you safe from something worse (something human). I have

argued in the past that the fable genre has a special relationship to biopolitical intensity, an often unconscious relationship of children's literature to the symbolic order cracking under political pressure. *The Wolf, The Duck and The Mouse* seems to suggest the 21st-century is truly one of a landscape of fear, where ironically, only being swallowed keeps us safe from being eaten.

Fictional swallowing suggests metaphoric assimilation – like the alarm clock inside Peter Pan's crocodile – though living beings in the belly are in the liminal stage between separation and incorporation, such as pictured by the death-rebirth cycle of Pinocchio in the belly of the whale. For Freud, cannibalism was an essential element of the "totemic meal" that inaugurates human civilization against animality and animal nature. Yet, European avant-garde art movements such as CoBrA, embodied by the expression of children, drawing inspiration in particular from children's culture, suggest we re-question these positions – especially now, in light of Donna Haraway's posthuman "companion" vision drawn from Derrida's insistent "we must eat well" cultural concept of shared food: "eating well- together" for exceptional humaneness. "I fell in well with you, so I remain," writes Derrida (Lavenz), which is pretty much the same conclusion the duck and the mouse come to, inside the wolf. Barnett and Klassen's 21st-century picturebook, exploring a bodily experience represented visually and viscerally through cannibalistic ideas of eating and being eaten, is countered by its reversal – swallowing as regurgitation, and disintegration as cheerful reassembly of animal, posthuman self. It opens up the possibility that being swallowed is not to be eaten whole (assimilated, annihilated) but rather deconstructed, dispersed, ex-appropriated, resulting in relating to and protecting one another, including (via the metaphor of gastronomic proportions) the wider home that is this planet. It is a fable of our times and our only hope.

Works Cited

Bacon, Francis. *The Works of Francis Bacon. Essays: Civil and Moral*. Carey & Hart, 1842.

Barnett, Mac & Jon Klassen. *The Wolf, the Duck and the Mouse*. Walker, 2017.

Beckett, Sandra. "Artistic Allusions in Picturebooks." *New Directions in Picturebook Research*. Edited by Teresa Colomer, Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer and Cecilia Silva-Díaz, Routledge, 2010, pp. 83–98.

Bettelheim, Bruno. *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*. Vintage, 1975.

Birnbaum, Daniel and Anders Olsson. "An Interview with Jacques Derrida on the Limits of Digestion." e-flux.com. 2009. Accessed 13 Dec 2023.

Boehrer, Bruce Thomas. *The Fury of Men's Gullets: Ben Jonson and the Digestive Canal.* University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997.

Collodi, Carlo. Pinocchio. 1862. MacMillan Collector's Library, 2017.

Cott, Jonathan and Leslie Fiedler. *Beyond the Looking Glass: Extraordinary Works of Fantasy and Fairy Tale.* Stonehill, 1973.

Dahl, Roald & Quentin Blake. 1978. *The Enormous Crocodile*. Puffin, 2016.

Das, Rituparna. "Haun-Maun-Khaun: A Postcolonial Reading of the Cannibals in Some Fairy Tales from Colonial Bengal." *Exchanges Interdisciplinary Research Journal*, vol 7, no. 2, 2020, pp. 229-248.

Diaz-Diaz, Claudia and Paulina Sememec. "Posthumanist and New Materialist Methodologies: Research after the Child." Interview with Sonia Arndt. Springer, 2020.

Dundes, Alan. "Interpreting Little Red Riding Hood Psychoanalytically." *The Brothers Grimm and Folktale*, edited by James M. McGlathery, University of Illinois, 1991.

Dyckman Ame, & Zacariah O'Hora. *Wolfie the Bunny*. Andersen Press, 2016.

Gorey, Edward. *The Wuggly Ump*. 1963. Pomegranate Communications, 2007.

Higgins, Ryan T. *We Don't Eat Our Classmates*. Disney-Hyperion, 2018.

Katz. Wendy R. "Some Uses of Food in Children's Literature." *Children's Literature in Education*, vol 11, 1980, pp. 192-199.

Klein, Melanie. "Envy and Gratitude and other Works." *The International Psychoanalytic Library,* vol 104, no.1, 1975, pp. 1-346. https://ccmps.net/PT10/envy.pdf. Accessed 13 Dec 2023.

De Kockere, Geert and Carll Cneut. "Dulle Griet." Uitgeverij De Eenhoorn, 2005.

Lavenz, Timothy. "Eating Well: Derrida on Subjectivity." June 8. https://fragilekeys.com/2015/06/08/eating-well/ 2015, Accessed 13 Dec 2023.

Van Meerbergen, Sara. "Play, Parody, Intertextuality and Interaction: Postmodern Flemish Picture Books as Semiotic Playgrounds." *Barnelitterært Forskningstidsskrift*, vol.3, no.1, 2012.

Oliver, Kelly. *Animal Lessons: How They Teach us to Be Human*. Columbia University Press, 2009.

Rebvik. *The A-Z of Dangerous Food*. Tate, 2012.

de Rijke, Victoria. "'Creaturely Life': Biopolitical Intensity in Selected Children's Fables." *Politics and Ideology in Children's Literature*, edited by Marian Thérèse Keyes and Áine McGillicuddy, Four Courts Press, 2014.

Sendak, Maurice. *Where the Wild Things Are*. 1963. Red Fox, 2000.

Warner, Marina. *Six Myths of our Time*. Vintage Books, 1995.

Trans/National Imagined Food Cultures:

Dreamed Spaces and Alternative Meals Across National Borders

Gastronomical Nonsense in Lewis Carroll's Alice Books

Anna Kérchy

The "EAT ME" cake and the "DRINK ME" potion are the most easily recognizable, memetically[1] reproducible, enchanted edibles consumed by curious, orally fixated little Alice during her Wonderland adventures. As memorable appetizers to the deliciously disturbing oddities which distinguish the chaotic dreamrealms imagined into being by Lewis Carroll's Victorian fairy-tale fantasy dilogy, cake and potion – both communicating in human language "beautifully printed on them in large letters" (Carroll 16) to urge their own destruction – function as iconic emblems of the very carnivalesque spirit, the sensorially stimulating, cognitively confusing surprise-effect of the nonsensical Wonderland experience. My chapter aims to explore how foods and drinks in the Alice books and their adaptations – besides eliciting the heroine's unpredictable magical metamorphosis by making her alternately shrink or grow – function as gustatory equivalents of the unstable signifiers of literary nonsense. They impose an impossible challenge for any interpretive attempts at solidifying meanings, yet they also tease appetites by promising that "*something* interesting is sure to happen […] whenever [we] eat or drink anything,"[2] whenever we dare to 'have a bite of nonsense,' to embark on unprecedented gourmet explorations of how a reinvented language or/and reinvented flavour tastes in our mouth.

The "DRINK ME" potion's label reminds of Victorian medicine bottles on John Tenniel's illustration and holds the suspicious aura of a potentially poisonous fluid, therefore Alice ventures to taste it only after she has carefully verified it is "not labeled poison." Her erroneous deduction (the fact that the bottle is *not marked* poison does not necessarily entail that it does *not contain* poison) belongs to the logical games of Carroll's mathematically motivated nonsense that revels in grotesque fooleries of a topsy-turvy world yet still manages to offer a lesson in logical reasoning to young readers. This ludic pedagogy often takes place through easily relatable gustatory experience.

Moreover, the taste of "DRINK ME" potion described as an unusual assortment

of flavors of "cherry-tart, custard, pineapple, roast turkey, toffy and hot buttered toast" (17) represents a proliferation of sense and an epitome of undecidability similar to the semiotic, syntactic confusion strategically generated by verbal maneuvers of literary nonsense's language games, like the whimsical Carrollian portmanteaus which merge two words into one to create revolutionary poetic neologisms.[3] The "EAT ME" cake's occasional interchangeability with pebbles blurs the edible/inedible divide to illustrate the unreliability of signifiers and the arbitrariness of meaning construction (i.e. whatever we call food, may become edible).

The Alice books consistently tease readers' imagination with culinary curiosities which can take a wide variety of different forms ranging from chimeric creatures reminiscent of Renaissance bestiaries' anomalous beings (like a sub-species of the Looking Glass insects, the endangered Bread-and-Butterfly that only lives on weak tea with cream so scarce that it is often sadly doomed to die of starvation) to logical impossibilities (like the Unicorn's plum cake that becomes bigger with each new slice cut from it) and category confusions (wine offered when there is nothing but tea). Some of the wondrous foods have been inspired by the specialties of the Victorian cuisine, like the plum cake made surprisingly not of plums but of hazelnut and apples, or the mock turtle soup, a broth prepared of a calf's head seasoned with brandy and thyme to simulate the taste of the much more expensive turtle meat.

This meal, the mock turtle soup inspired Carroll's figure of the Mock Turtle, a curious hybrid composite of a calf and a turtle, who cries without sorrows as if lamenting his genuine inauthenticity, while he melancholically performs a Lobster Quadrille and sings a song about the "Beau-ootiful Soo-oop of the e-e-evening." His "voice choked with sobs" (112) distorts the words of the lyrics to make them both recall and radically deviate from a conventional linguistic utterance in a way similar to how the faked flavor of the mock turtle soup recreates the taste of the original meal (the real turtle soup) with a difference while openly acknowledging its own pretense. One can draw a parallel between this culinary feat (it tastes like a fancy feast but is not the real thing) and nonsense language games' verbal stunts (it sounds/reads like language but "there is something wrong with it") which are both reminiscent of the *legerdemain* magic tricks so dear to Carroll (see Fisher 1973).

Many of the food items gain their enchanting quality because of immediate interconnection with Carrollian language games. The visualization of nourishment gains phenomenological philosophical implications in riddle-like dilemmas like "'I see what I eat' is the same thing as 'I eat what I see'" (73). The White Queen's mock-proverb "Jam to-morrow and jam yesterday--but never jam to-day" (206) creates a comic effect because of the interlingual humor involved in the mnemonic for the usage of the Latin word "iam" which means "at this time," but only in the future or past tense, not in the

present (which is "nunc" for "now" instead). By courtesy of the acoustic pleasures of literary nonsense foregrounding the sonic dimensions of signification through alliteration, rhyming, rhythm, or repetition, one can nearly feel the flavor of words. This is the case in the dormouse' tale about the treacle well where the three little maids live and learn to draw all manner of things beginning with an M like mouse-traps, and moon, and memory, and muchness (80).

The treacle well illustrates the complexity of the meanings assigned to food in nonsense literature. The multiplication of Ms into "mmmm" creates a preverbal sound-effect to express gustatory satisfaction with a delightful flavor and embeds the sense impression of taste within the somatized text. Yet the treacle well also offers an example for the ambiguous in-between status of food and drinks. Treacle wells were believed to be invested with curative, restorative, even spiritual powers in Victorian England (treacle as a broader semantic category referred to healing water), while actual treacle was also traditionally used for medical purposes (to lower blood pressure). However, by the end of the 19th century cooks also started to use treacle similar to molasses as a culinary ingredient in savory-sweet recipes.

The embedded narrative's fictitious little girls' and their implied reader Alice's entrapment within the treacle also evoke the engendering of appetites, how raw, spicy, meaty food and voraciousness have been coded as masculine whereas having a sweet-tooth, finicky eating habits, and inappetence were regarded as feminine conforming to the binary dietary standards of patriarchal culture (Talaiarch-Vielmas 54). The adventuress Alice breaks these gender norms by curiously craving to taste all sorts of strange nourishments she comes across throughout her adventures. Her hunger to bite, to open her mouth to speak back also remind us how children have too often been hushed, reduced to the idea of sweetness, disempowered through the ideology of cuteness,[4] metaphorically consumed by adult parental figures willing to discipline youngsters according to their aetonormative restrictions (Nikolajeva 13).[5]

Alice mockingly recalls how infantile gluttony has been conventionally associated with disobedience. However, the recycling of the biblical or mythical alimentary prohibitions, resurfacing in cautionary fairy tales of consumption where the tasting of a forbidden food traditionally results in catastrophic consequences is left without punitive, disciplinary moralization in Carroll's anti-tales which reimagine curiosity in a positive, empowering new light. Alice's gustatory curiosity, a sign of her female adventurousness is not so much used as a warning but rather an invitation to a daring play to discover the taste of the world.

Talairach-Vielmas notices how the prefatory poem to *Wonderland* disrupts conventional expectations with "the metaphorization of storytelling as beverage" to quench the thirst of young female bodies who "are drying up the 'weary' male taller—as vampires might"

with their insatiable thirst for a female fantasy realm (51). ("And ever, as the story drained/ The wells of fancy dry" (Carroll 7)). Although Talairach-Vielmas later contends that this appetite is later contained to turn food into a trope that disciplines, diminishes, and tames the female body, nevertheless, we cannot help noticing how Carroll's tales find an anarchic joy in images of voraciousness as in the misquoted embedded poem where the little crocodile "welcomes little fishes in, with gently smiling jaws" (23). The slip of the tongue in Alice's incorrect recital (she is distorting an educational poem about a diligent busy bee) allows her repressed desires to come to surface.

Michael Heyman and Kevin Shortsleeve argue that nonsense literature's ancestral connection with the medieval carnivalesque tradition's transgressive intent, fantastic extravaganza, and grotesque (de)compositions (165) can be tracked in the genre's strategic destabilization of coherent meanings, conventional interpretive strategies, and logical reasoning. Victorian readers could indeed enjoy the carnivalesque breaking of bourgeois table manners prescribed by the era's popular conduct books: in scenes like the mad tea party participants systematically violate the dinner etiquette. The Hatter and his companions revel in impoliteness by shouting nonsensical riddles and random insults, running around the table, wasting, misusing and mocking food (putting butter in a pocket-watch, squeezing the dormouse in a teapot, throwing tea trays to make them fly like bats, and mistaking wine for tea), and dishonoring hospitality (inviting Alice to join the table and then denying her food and drink). Theirs is a harsh parody of the traditional British five o'clock tea, perhaps also evocative of how this custom was used as a therapeutical method in Victorian madhouses – often with chaotic consequences – by means of an attempt to train inmates how to reintegrate into normal society (Kohlt).

It might seem dubious how this carnivalesque parody benefits Alice herself, who somehow remains an outsider to the madness enacted by the adult figures, and eventually leaves the party behind without having appeased her appetite. However, Carroll's description of Alice-at-the-table simultaneously reveals his interest in child psychology and his awareness of the socio-culturally contextualized, affectively charged changing meanings of food and nourishment. Due to her bourgeois upbringing Alice is clearly upset by the lack of table manners, but within the brief "Mad Tea-Party" chapter she also expresses a wide range of other emotional responses to Wonderland's strange feeding habits. She oscillates between being indignant, angry, curious, puzzled, alarmed, thoughtful, offended, humbled, confused, and disgusted. Carroll uses more than a dozen terms to describe her affective reactions to the absurd presentation of ordinary or fictitious meals and hence directs the attention to a largely neglected participant of social gatherings, the child with a taste and a will of her own. Alice gains agency, as she "helps herself to a little bread and butter and tea," reflects on her culinary interests upon realizing how she had "always took a great interest in questions of eating and drinking"

(78), and eventually leaves the tea-partyers to venture on nibbling mushrooms –magic food items instead of mundane meals – which help her to enter the garden where she longs to be. Even Alice's positioning as a "non-eater" amidst a Feast of Fools is not necessarily a stigma of her debilitating marginalization as non-belonging other, but rather a sign of the relativity of social constructions of normativity, the malleability of cultural significations (even bread-and-butter can become bizarre if served in a twisted manner), and a symbol of her superiority, as she is the one who dreams into being the adventures which function as enactments of her anxieties and desires.

Another example for the carnivalesque overturning of the hierarchical power structures emerges in the final feast beyond the Looking Glass where the lamb chop and the pudding speak up and rebel against being eaten at the royal dinner organized for Queen Alice's celebration. The food talking in human speech (the pudding has "thick, suety sort of voice" (276)) might be an allusion to emerging vegetarian movements and animal rights activism, a common controversial topic of public debate often parodied in Alice-illustrator Tenniel's *Punch* magazine illustrations too. But the blurring of the boundaries between species (humans, animals, and even flowers are seated side-by-side at the table) also holds posthumanist philosophical implications challenging the anthropocentric assumption about humankind's supremacy above all the other earthly lifeforms (see Jaques).

In a delightfully troubling finale simultaneously reminiscent of a silly nursery rhyme imagery and a biblical apocalyptic vision, even the animate and the object worlds mingle, as candles grow up to the ceiling "like a bed of rushes with fireworks at the top," bottles fit on plates as wings and forks as legs and flutter bird-like in all directions, and the White Queen transforms into the leg of mutton and disappears in the soup. This scene of culinary chaos represents the peak of nonsensification. Unsurprisingly, Alice decides to jump up, seize the tablecloth with both hands, and with one good pull, makes "plates, dishes, guests and candles all come crashing down together in a heap on the floor" (279). Her vehement undoing of the table elicits the moment of waking up, a transitioning from the dream-realm to the consensual reality. Here, in waking life, food has more mundane implications: Alice remembers that she must feed her cat in the morning and promises that she will repeat to Kitty the story of the Walrus and the Carpenter, so that the dear pet "can make believe" it is eating oysters (285). With a democratic gesture of infantile imaginativeness, even animals are attributed the gift of gustatory fantasizing.

A memetic marker of Alice's dinner party, the final Looking Glass Feast is the gaping mouth. The mouth is an orifice connected to devouring, then digesting, and defecation, as well as rebelliously speaking back, singing, and laughing is the embodied metaphor of carnivalesque subversion in Mikhail Bakhtin's cultural historical analysis of medieval festivities' earthly stagings of cosmic merriment. Curiously, we find traces of the carnival festivities' low-cultural transgressive tradition in Carroll's fantasy narrative targeting an

educated bourgeois readership.

However, the recurring references to eating, hunger, and starvation in the *Alice* books also hold specifically Victorian cultural implications and attest Carroll's scientific curiosity: they symptomatically indicate the interest in the Darwinian theory by staging the relativization of our position on the food chain, the possibilities of alternately becoming predator or prey throughout the struggle for the survival of the fittest. Already during her fall down the rabbit hole, Alice speculates if "cats eat bats or bats eat cat" (14) and hence playfully introduces the dilemma caused by the perplexing multifunctionality of the animal ambiguously positioned in the human world both as food, pet, predator, trophy, alternately demonized, bestialized, or anthropomorphized. Alice is frightened by the Cheshire Cat's sharp claws and big teeth, but she also enjoys pretending that she is a hungry hyena, and her nurse is a bone she will eat. Thus, the fear of being eaten and the desire to devour are immediately intertwined with one another in her childish games (see Lovell-Smith; Kérchy).

Edibles in Wonderland also reflect the era's increased interest in children's relation to food: these range from egalitarian political concerns about working class youngster's rights for proper alimentation, and medical examinations of a healthy diet,[6] or psychological anamnesis of gluttonous and picky eaters,[7] to the association of infantile imaginative agency and "the utter trust only children have" (Carroll 1887, 223) with daring culinary endeavors – exemplified by Alice's readiness to drink a bottle of unidentifiable liquid and her fantasmatic analytics in describing its curious taste. On the other hand, Alice's wondering about whether the DRINK ME bottle's contents are dangerous illustrates how Carroll's novel records the anxieties concerning food adulteration that became a public health concern of the 1850s' lived realities. As Anthony Wohl puts it, the list of poisonous additives in regular Victorian food items "reads like the stock list of some mad and malevolent chemist," ranging from strychnine in beer, copper in bread, lead chromate in mustard, lime sulphate of iron in tea, and chalk in milk to mercury in confectionary and bedbugs, lice, doghair and cocci bacilli in ice cream (53). These unwanted ingredients are represented in *Wonderland* by the Duchess's cook contaminating her dishes with sneeze-inducing, bitter ground pepper. As a *Punch* magazine's caricature attests, even a single

Fig. 1
Punch Magazine: A drop of Thames water, 1850

drop of London water was believed to abound in bacteria and parasites (fig. 1) – a whole microcosm of monstrosities perceived only by the curious scientific gaze peeping through the microscope to discover a wonderland of oddities invisible to the naked eye and consumed on a daily basis (see Seibold-Bultmann).

Contemporary readers are likely to associate Alice's appetites with further intriguing connotations. Here, I wish to provide just a small appetizer to the rich variety of critical approaches which attempt to make sense of food, eating, and orality in the Alice tales. While Björn Sundmark (1999) has convincingly demonstrated that the oral performance of songs, rhymes, and tales embedded within Alice's stories indicate the Carrollian narrative's indebtedness to the oral storytelling tradition, the psychoanalytically motivated interpretations argue that omnivorous delights belong to the oral phase of the Freudian account of human psychosexual development where the mouth of the infant is her primary erotogenic zone, and the urge to consume the world is a basic libidinal drive foundational of the ego's constitution through its social repression (see Schilder). Apart from contrasting the biologically innate, evolutionary imprinted versus the culturally conditioned nature of taste, the Western aesthetical tradition metaphorically connects the critical appreciation of Arts and Nature to the gustatory experience of "fine taste." Still other philosophical readings, comment on the ethics of eating well, like Jacques Derrida, who argues for the human species' moral obligation towards the more vulnerable lifeforms it feeds on and relates table manners to the imperative to respect differences by learning to distinguish between trophy and food.

The philosophical interest of linguists in the difficulty of verbalizing sense impressions concerning odors, flavors, and textures (to make words mean what we want them to, as Humpty Dumpty claimed), highlights how Alice's description of the DRINK ME potion's taste reminds of a sommelier's "aesthetic evaluation based upon fanciful associations" (Sweeney 29). As Kevin Sweeney contends, the specialized vocabulary in wine reviews – a hybrid discourse that mingles scientific *terminus technicus* (oxidation, sulfide, acetonic) with poetic metaphors (mousy, rotunde, airy) and neologisms (cinchonous, cherish, peely, tautening) – largely relies on imaginative associations, the defamiliarization of the familiar, and the creative wording of sensual-corporeal intensities, just like literary nonsense does. This whimsical mode of gustatory writing pleases the taste buds of language-erudite (sophisticated fans of wines/haute cuisine) and language-gamers (curious, omnivore, orally fixated childish consumers) alike. The resulting ambiguous effect evokes how Carrollian nonsense delights both readers interested in the self-reflective metalinguistic and the sensorially stimulating, transverbal, acoustic dimensions of signification.

Alice's Culinary Nonsense and Transmedia Storytelling

Culinary translations of literary nonsense take a wide variety of forms throughout

transmedia storytelling practices whereby the easily recognizable, canonical fictional universe of Wonderland expands beyond the pages of the print and paper book, and through media transitions is adapted into different cultural entertainment forms – film, puppet play, computer game, graphic novel, theme park attraction, cookbook, and so forth – which enter into dialogue with one another to enhance the source-text with new multimodal/multisensory experience (see Jenkins; Kérchy). We can talk about transmediation with a culinary metaphor: the source-text can be regarded as a recipe that includes a list of ingredients and instructions about the preparation of dish, but this recipe can be realized in individual ways. There is place for improvisation, deviation, creativity, a pinch of this can be added, a constituent ignored or replaced, and the outcome will never be fully identical with the original authorial intention. As Angela Carter, a veritable master of postmodern rewritings and an expert in the "demythologizing business" put it with a culinary metaphor: "There is no definite recipe for potato soup. This is how *I* make potato soup" (10).

If language games seem untranslatable to non-verbal media, how can the sensorially stimulating oral/acoustic energies of literary nonsense be still remediated into other artforms? Nonsense literature invites us to feel the taste of words, but remediations continue teasing our tastebuds in inventive new ways: Tim Burton's cinematic Wonderland foregrounds food as simulated spectacle, Jan Švankmajer's surrealist puppetry plays with tactile impressions and haptic visuality synesthetically connected to gustatory experience, the cookbook adventure *Alice Eats Wonderland* presents a faux food history fantasized by a voracious child, while masterchef Heston Blumenthal transforms nonsense into a stunning culinary *Gesamtkunstwerk* ("total work of art"). In the following sections, I offer a brief comparative analysis of transmediations of Wonderland food in these artworks moving from the least complex towards more challenging adaptations.

Tim Burton's 2010 3D CGI cinematic adventure movie *Alice in Wonderland* has often been criticized for radically deviating from the original non-moralizing, non-teleological nonsensical agenda by transforming Carroll's dream vision into a coming-of-age fantasy that communicates a postmillennial feminist message while simplifying original ambiguities to fairy tales' dialectics: the Jeanne-d'Arc-like action heroine saves Underland by slaying the queen's evil dragon, and flees the Victorian marriage market to sail away towards mysterious Oriental seas in search of new adventures. The movie omits most of the trademark language games but recreates in another medium the defamiliarization effect of Carrollian nonsense discourse. By courtesy of the 3D CGI technology a hyperrealistic replica of 'what has never been' creates life-like, nearly tangible beasts, and distorts in uncanny ways familiar features of star actors. Burton recreates nonsense's humorous surprise effects by visually staging the self-contradictory meanings generated by parody, pastiche, a hybrid ambiguity of the familiar and the unfamiliar. This process is

particularly interesting when the intermedial shift (from verbal to visual) is combined with an intersensorial translation (of flavor into image/text).

In Burton's film the EAT me! cake and DRINK me! potion gain nonsensical names: they are called Upelkuchen and Pishsalver respectively. Hence their meanings are simultaneously fixed and destabilized: instead of things without names, they become names without things, referent-less signifiers where curious neologisms of nonsense words have no real-life referents. While in Carroll, the origins of these food/drink items remain unknown, in the movie it is the White Queen who prepares the potion to help gigantic Alice regain her normal size.

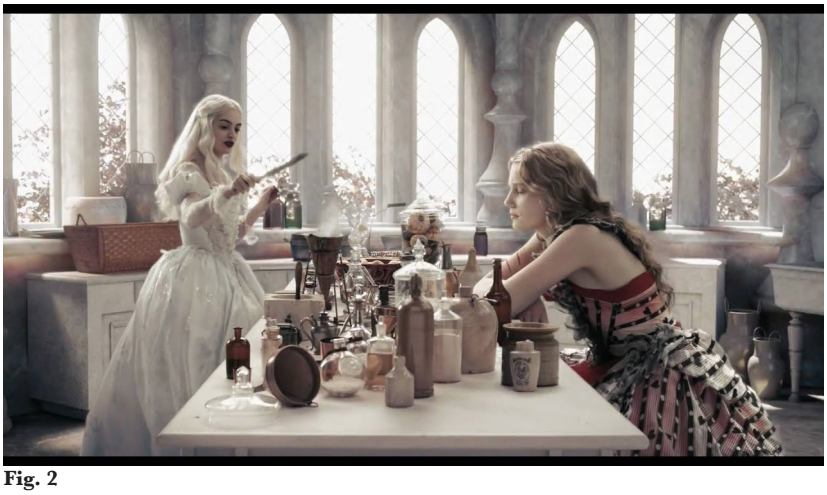

Fig. 2

The White Queen (Anne Hathaway) making a magic potion for Alice

The White Queen is the rightful heir removed from her reign by her evil sister the Red Queen; she is a good monarch beloved by her subjects who assist her in reclaiming her throne. Dressed in an all-white dress, with white hair, in a white castle she resembles a fairy-figure, yet the immaculate purity of her radiant whiteness is contrasted by the disgusting, dirty, abject ingredients of her spectacular potion recipe she is describing as "a pinch of worm fat, urine of a horsefly, buttered fingers, three coins from a dead man's pocket, and two teaspoons of wishful thinking." The recipe reaches the peak of abjection when, as a final ingredient, she spits her own saliva in the potion and offers it to drink for Alice with a gentle smile.[8]

Burton cunningly plays with weaving a parodic web of intertextual references: the Queen's kitchen recalls a fairy-tale castle, an alchemist laboratory, and a perfume factory. Her graceful dancing movements provide a tongue-in-cheek reenactment of Disney princesses' recherché fragile femininity's mannerisms. But they also mockingly evoke

female cooking show hosts' television performances, which associate culinary feats with both a commodified version of old-school domestic femininity and creative, rebellious feminist empowerment. The White Queen seems like a fantasy-version of Nigella Lawson, the sexy celebrity star chef, mocking her epitaph of the "queen of food porn" by turning the sensual excitement of culinary degustation from delight to disgust. The taste of the potions surpasses and challenges the five taste modalities – sweet, sour, salty, bitter, savory – by blurring referential meanings with metaphorical and abstract ones. The Queen's cooking performance combines food magic with word magic. Gastronomical nonsense is created by making-up a taste that resists representability and imaginability.

Jan Švankmajer's stop-motion animation *Alice* (1987) adaptation takes menacing meals to surrealist extremes. A leader of the Czech neo-surrealist movement, Švankmajer is interested in nonsense fantasies' breaking of bodily boundaries, transgressing limits of language, and experimenting with sensorial stimuli. His animated films are renowned for their tactile dimensions. "Heads devour one another in devastating conversations, objects collide painfully with mismatched intentions, lovers' bodies melt into one in tender embrace," as Cathryn Vasseleu puts it. He combines audiovisual sensations with tactile stimuli, permeating tactile visuality with gustatory impressions. This multisensorial agenda is encapsulated in his *ars poetica*: "I am a hand with six fingers with webs in between. Instead of fingernails I have petite, sharp, sweet-toothed little tongues with which I lick the world" (Vasseleu 91).

Fig. 3

Jan Švankmajer's stop-motion animation *Alice* (1987).

His adaptation of Carroll's classic, a combination of stop-motion puppetry and live action shots holds metamedial implications: it begins with a close-up on Alice's lips uttering "Alice thought to herself…. Now, you will see a film made for children perhaps. But I almost forgot, you must close your eyes, otherwise you won't see anything". This insistence on orality predominating visuality is enhanced by the camera's browsing through a random collection of Alice's treasure trove of worthless object: buttons, dead bugs, apple cores, a wooden mushroom, needles, pins, shells, pebbles, and dismembered doll heads. Waste residue becomes the protagonists of the movie as non-edible things are offered to be tasted to evoke the "decay at the heart of Wonderland" (Cherry) and mock the 'bad taste' of the cineaste's provocative anti-aesthetics. Švankmajer alienates us from our customary numbness, arouses our curiosity, to bring us closer to the child's intense way of communicating with the world conceived as an infinite playground plentiful of surprises.

Food ceases to be boring alimentation and is rather used for absurd or monstrous ends. Alice throws pebbles in her teacup instead of drinking. The white rabbit behaves in a masochistic cannibalistic manner: transformed into a taxidermized object, it stages the animation of the inanimate when it cuts open its own belly with huge scissors and feeds on the sawdust pouring out from its insides. Alice tastes her own bodily fluids: on pricking her finger she licks off her blood, then gulps from her pool of tears. Instances of disembodiment, abjectification and mutilation occur in a disturbing sequence of images: Alice drinks ink to shrink into a tiny puppet replica of herself, animal skulls wearing jester hats persecute her trying to devour her miniaturized body mistaken for meat, and when she finally grows up again a rat makes campfire on the top of her head to cook his meal in a cauldron placed on the tripod of sticks he hammered into her skull before he sets her hair on fire. Objects come alive to feed on each other, as hungry shoes chase socks and bite them, or tongues separated from bodies lick scratchy, thorny, sharp, dusty surfaces. Food is associated with violent corporeal impressions: Alice sticking her finger into an orange marmalade jar filled with nails provokes in spectators a gut reaction of food horror and a sense of extreme vulnerability.

These shots offer par-excellence examples for Julia Kristeva's notion of abjection. They stage a crisis of the self, a violation of the bodily boundaries, and a return of the repressed psychic contents. As the nauseously un-eatables are consumed, the eaten turns against the eater, and the human flesh is reduced to meat, the aggressive and libidinal impulses, unspeakable dreads, desires and anxieties surface. The disturbing confrontation with the taboo aspects of corporeality contributes to the destabilization of the socially solidified, sanitized speaking subject. The recurring close-ups on Alice mouth focus on her lips, teeth, and tongue – body parts connecting bodily inside and outside, creating spatial and temporal confusion, opening up cavities which are associated in the Bakhtinian theory of

heteroglossia with carnivalesque rebellion (metonymically marked by the crying, yawning, shouting, singing, biting, devouring, munching, kissing mouth). They allow a peep into the dark depths of meaning, while associating storytelling with gustatory experience, getting a troubling *taste* of the sound of words, of unintended meanings, unconscious subtexts, accidental discursive byproducts of sleep talking, slips of the tongue, glossolalia of baby language, and speaking in tongues, or delusionary gibberish.

Švankmajer's art provides a political commentary on regimes of oppression in gleefully absurd or nightmarishly grotesque filmic fantasies which are difficult to comprehend yet were still censored at the time of their making for their anti-Stalinist message. His surrealist visions of "food turning against its eater" rebel against the social realist propaganda art to ruthlessly criticize the rigid communist system of the 1980s' Czechoslovakia that "devoured" differences stigmatized as deviant by the ruling party. His thematization of the revengeful return of the "undigestable" coincides with the celebration of children's curious appetites – the spontaneous desire to lick, slurp, and nibble – as a token of daring, empathic openness towards the wondrous diversity of being.

August Imholtz's and Alison Tannenbaum's *Alice Eats Wonderland: An Irreverent Annotated Cookbook Adventure in which a Gluttonous Alice Devours Many of the Wonderland Characters* shares a sense of dark humor with Švankmajer. In this book childish insatiable voraciousness is a decisive character-feature of a predatory yet naively innocent Alice whose hunger motivates all her actions. Right at the beginning of the storybook-turned-cookbook, she abandons the pursuit of the rabbit to rush home and get a snack; and after gulping down the all too tiny EAT ME cake, she yearns for more. Her journey is all about her seeking something to eat. She is experimenting with Victorian recipes and fantasizes about the meals she could prepare practically from all the Wonderland inhabitants whom she encounters throughout her dream voyage. It seems as if the cookbook Alice wanted to compensate for her having been too often denied the simple joys of eating and the pleasurable satisfaction of hunger in Carroll's original novels.

Alice dreams of Mumbled Rabbit, Pickled Oysters, Pigeon Pie, Stuffed Dormouse, Gypsy-Style Roast Hotchi-Wichi (the latter made from a hedgehog stolen from the Queen's croquet ground). The preparation of these meals is introduced to the readers in archaic recipes. Alice's thoughts are playfully associative and increasingly ravenous: cutting her finger with a knife while preparing the currant cakes reminds her of the recipe her grandmother had used for blood pudding. She does not shy away from toying with the idea of cooking the anthropomorphic creatures of Wonderland, considering how she could transform into a dish the baby turned pig, or bake a King Cake and Queen Cake, too. Her imagination runs wild towards nonsensical vistas of weird gustative blends, coining culinary portmanteau, pondering how "She heard of an elegant poultry dish called TurDuckEn, which consisted of a stuffed boned chicken inside a boned duck, inside

a boned turkey, all roasted together. It would be a little complicated but perhaps she could do something similar with the species at hand, the dodo, the duck, and the mouse, and perhaps create a DoDuckMus?" (23)

In her cookbook adventure, the recipes' instructions are complemented by annotations on the natural and social history of the animals, food ingredients and culturally specific culinary practices thematized by Carroll. We learn about myths associated with the curative powers of treacle wells, Victorian butchers' techniques for dissecting meat, the chemical composition of black pepper, as well as the anatomical components of the human heart. All mix with historical recipes to reach fantastic gustatory registers (Pig Uterus Sausage from Ancient Rome, Roman Roast Flamingo, with the original recipe in Latin), exotic delicacies from international cuisine (Silkworm Omelet from China, Iguana Tamales from El Salvador) and British national meals which might surprise American target audiences (marmite soldiers). Like the DRINK ME potion blending incompatible flavors, *Alice Eats Wonderland* presents a curious international composite of odd bites from a variety of different fields.

Spilling way beyond the page of the book, the experimental culinary art-project of transforming eating into a surprising adventure is the aim of British celebrity chef Heston Blumenthal. He is a pioneer of multisensory cooking, food pairing and flavor encapsulation, an advocate of a new scientific attitude to cuisine called "molecular gastronomy." He unsettles established alimentary habits "to realize the full expressive potential of food and cooking" as a "comprehensive performative art" combining the finest ingredients, fantastic design, and historical tradition with cutting-edge scientific innovations, and (retro)futuristic "techniques, appliances, information, and ideas" (Blumenthal). His revolutionary agenda is reflected in the titles of his TV programs *Kitchen Chemistry* (2002), *Adventures in Search of Perfection* (2004-2007), *Heston's Feasts* (2010), *Heston's Mission Impossible* (2011), or *Heston's Fantastical Food* (2012).

Blumenthal's imaginativeness earned him the label "the Lewis Carroll of cooking whose snail porridge and egg and bacon ice-cream lured a skeptical public through a door into a Wonderland of fantasy food" (Gerard). His show *Heston's Feasts* recreated famous Victorian period dishes for a 21st century banquet, paying a tribute to the Mad Hatter's Tea Party. The master chef's mission combined myth, science, and history to create a multisensory food adventure.

Blumenthal's Wonderland menu opened with an aperitif served in flamingo-shaped glasses, a DRINK ME potion that combined the five incongruent flavors of Alice's original drink in a layered way so that guests could never find out what they were drinking because with each new sip they reached a new layer, a different taste of the all too complex gustatory experience. The Mock Turtle Soup was served in a china cup with a watch-shaped, ticking "tea bag" – that actually comprised consommé (beef broth from a cow's

head) covered in golden leaf – that dissolved into soup under a cascade of hot water, and had to be poured into a bowl where turnip mousse mimicking an egg, a terrine of pressed, cured pork fat and oxtail, and enoki mushroom were arranged in homage of Wonderland's hookah-smoking caterpillar. An Edible Insect Garden gained inspiration from a Victorian cookbook for the poor to turn creepy crawlies into a feast and included undersoil made of bread, anchovies, and chopped herbs; soil made out of grape nuts, pumpkin seeds and black olives; a gravel path made of fried eel, tapioca, and waffle cones, baby vegetables, potato pebbles, and fried insects – silk moth pupa, crickets and grasshoppers – injected with onion cream and tomato concentrate "to give a realistic ooze when bitten into." The dessert was an absinthe-based jello with a giant wobbling fluorescent centerpiece powered by vibrators Victorians invented for the therapeutical treatment of hysteric women.

Blumenthal's new cuisine aims to combine taste, smell, spectacle, and sound to transport the diner, through an integrated appeal to the senses and the mind, to another world. His meals exercise imaginative faculties and invite to reconsider preconceptions and initial meanings for the sake of entertaining ambiguities. Food is made to look and to taste different, it calls forth fanciful idiosyncratic associations, memorial/fantasmatic agency, and sensorial delights. Eating turns into a magical experience, a real fall down the rabbit hole, evoking the dreamy feel of transformation. This new post-postmodern culinary art combines skills of scientists, food chemists, psychologists, artisans, performing artists, architects, designers, and industrial engineers to produce a multimodal adaptation of Wonderland as a *Gesamkunstwerk*. It pays a genuine homage to the gourmandise of Alice's "discriminating palate" (Sweeney 17) distinguished by a spontaneously 'acquired taste' that can differentiate between distinct layers of flavors and appreciate radically unfamiliar gustatory sensations which are first considered unpleasant by most and usually need substantial exposure to learn to enjoy. Through a curious feat of culinary transmediation, the surprise effect caused by the strangely uncategorizable taste is reminiscent of nonsense language games' strategic destabilization of endlessly proliferating meanings.

In Place of a Conclusion

Lewis Carroll's original nonsensical storyworld is distinguished by a unique interactive quality that invites readers to fill in narrative gaps with their own meanings. The appeal to audience participation prevails particularly strongly in contemporary transmedia adaptations of the Wonderland franchise designed for children: the Mad Tea Party spinning teacups family ride in Disneyland theme parks, the Alice's Wonderland Bakery computer game, a spin-off to the animated television series created for Disney Junior (2022-24), the Cooking Wonderland chef play, or the numerous useful online tips and hints on how to host an Alice in Wonderland Tea Party with mismatched teacups, minuscule desserts, DIY decorations and surprising combinations of flavors all urge readers turned players

to try theirs hands at 'making potato soup' to their own liking, to return to our earlier culinary metaphor. These programs offer an immersive experience: their pro-baking message represents the kitchen as a site of creative play, cooking and eating as means of intergenerational bonding, and – as blogger GeekMom puts it – they "celebrate diversity through the use of food to highlight culture, collaboration, and the value of community" (2023). Unlike the Red Queen in Carroll's Wonderland, today no one complains any longer about who stole the tarts, because the point of culinary artistic edutainment is to show that the true joy of food resides in preparing it in as many inventive ways and sharing it with as many people as imaginable.

Works Cited

Bakhtin, Mihail. *Rabelais and His World*. 1965. Translated by Helene Iswolsky, Indiana University Press, 1984.

Beyl, Chelsea. *Alice's Wonderland Bakery*. Disney Junior TV series. 2022-2024.

Blumenthal, Heston, Ferran Adria, Thomas Keller, Harold McGee. "Statement on the New Cookery." *The Observer*. 2006. Dec. 10.

----. *Heston's Feasts*. Cooking show. Channel Four. 2009-2010.

Burton, Tim, director. *Alice in Wonderland.* Walt Disney Pictures, 2010.

Carroll, Lewis. *The Annotated Alice: The Definitive Edition. Alice's Adventures in Wonderland (1865), Through the Looking Glass (1872)*, edited by Martin Gardner, Penguin, 2001.

----. "*Alice on the Stage." Alice's Adventures in Wonderland (appendix C), edited by Richard Kelly, Broadview, 2011, pp. 223–227.*

Carter, Angela. *The Virago Book of Fairy Tales*. Virago, 1990.

Cherry, Brigid. "Dark wonders and the Gothic sensibility. Jan Švankmajer's *Něco z Alenky* (*Alice*, 1987)." *KinoEye: New Perspectives on European Film*. 2.1. 7 Jan 2002. www.kinoeye.org/02/01/cherry01.php#7

Derrida, Jacques. "Eating Well, or the Calculation of the Subject: An Interview with Jacques Derrida." *Who Comes After the Subject?* edited by Eduardo Cadava et al., Routledge, 1991, pp. 96-119.

Fisher, John, editor. *The Magic of Lewis Carroll*. Bramhall House, 1973.

Gasperini, Anna. "The 'Gluttonous Child' Narrative in Italy and Britain: A Transnational Analysis." *Journal of Victorian Culture* vol. 27, no. 1, 2022, pp. 30–45,

Gerard, Jasper. "Heston Blumenthal: My New Alice in Wonderland Menu." *The Telegraph*. 2009 Jun 1.

GeekMom. "GeekMom's Exclusive. Alice's Wonderland Bakery." *GeekDad.Com* 2022. web.archive.org/web/20230227060251/https://geekdad.com/2022/02/geekmom-geekmom-exclusive-alices-wonderland-bakery-2/

Heyman, Michael and Kevin Shortsleeve. "Nonsense." *Keywords for Children's Literature*, edited by Philip Nel and Lissa Paul, New York University Press, 2011, pp. 165-169.

Imholtz, August and Alison Tannenbaum. *Alice Eats Wonderland: An Irreverent Annotated Cookbook Adventure*. Applewood Books, 2009.

Jaques, Zoe. *Children's Literature and the Posthuman: Animal, Environment, Cyborg.* Routledge, 2015.

Jenkins, Henry. "Transmedia Storytelling 101: Confessions of an Aca- Fan." Mar. 22, 2007.
henryjenkins.org/2007/03/transmedia_storytelling_101.html

Kérchy, Anna. *Alice in Transmedia Wonderland: Curiouser and Curioser New Forms of a Children's Classic*. McFarland, 2016.

Kérchy Anna. "Alice's Non-Anthropocentric Ethics: Lewis Carroll as a Defender of Animal Rights." *Cahiers Victoriens et Edouardiens*, vol. 88, 2018. journals.openedition.org/cve/3909

Kohlt, Franziska. "Alice in the Asylum: Wonderland and the Real Mad Tea Parties of the Victorians." *The Conversation*, 2016. Online.

Kragh-Furbo Mette & Richard Tutton. "Spitting Images: Remaking Saliva as A Promissory Substance." *New Genetics and Society*, vol. 36, no. 2, 2017, pp. 159-185.

Kristeva, Julia. *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. Translated by Leon S. Roudiez, Columbia University Press, 1982.

Krugoyov Silver, Anna. *Victorian Literature and the Anorexic Body*. Cambridge University Press, 2002.

Lovell-Smith, Rose. "Eggs and Serpents: Natural History References in Lewis Carroll's Scene of Alice and the Pigeon." *Children's Literature,* vol. 35, 2007, pp. 27–53.

Moore, Sarah G et al. "That's So Sweet: Baby Cuteness Semantically Activates Sweetness to Increase Sweet Food Preference." *Advances in Consumer Research,* vol. 46, 2018, p. 926.

Ngai, Sianne. "The Cuteness of the Avant-Garde." *Critical Inquiry* vol. 31. No. 4 (2005), 811–847.

Nikolajeva, Maria. "Theory, Post-theory, and Aetonormative Theory." *Neohelicon*, vol. 36, no. 1, 2009, pp. 13-24.

Ratner, Dan. "Victorian Hunger and Malnutrition in Alice in Wonderland." *The Victorian Web,* 1995. victorianweb.org/victorian/authors/carroll/ratner1.html

Schilder, Paul. "Psychoanalytic Remarks on *Alice in Wonderland* and Lewis Carroll." 1938. *Aspects of Alice,* edited by Robert Phillips, Vintage Books, 1977, pp. 283-293.

Seibold-Bultmann, Ursula. "Monster Soup: The Microscope and Victorian Fantasy." *Interdisciplinary Science Reviews*, vol. 25, no. 3, 2000, pp. 211–219.

Sundmark, Björn. *Alice in the Oral Literary Continuum.* Lund University Press, 1999.

Švankmajer, Jan, dir. *Alice. (Něco z Alenky*) Channel Four Films, 1987.

Sweeney, Kevin. "Alice's Discriminating Palate." Alice's Discriminating Palate." *Philosophy and Literature,* vol. 23, no. 1, 1999, pp. 17-31.

Talairach-Vielmas, Laurence. "'Drawing Muchnesses' in Lewis Carroll's Alice's Adventures in Wonderland." *Moulding the Female Body in Victorian Fairy Tales and Sensation Novels.* Routledge, 2007, 49-67.

The Storytellers Cottage. "How to Host a Wonderland Tea Party." *Instructables*. 2023. www.instructables.com/How-to-Host-an-Alice-in-Wonderland-Tea-Party/

Vasseleu, Cathryn. "The Švankmajer Touch." *Journal of Animation Studies*. 2009 July, pp. 91-101. journal.animationstudies.org/cathryn-vasseleu-the-svankmajer-touch/

Wohl, Anthony S. "Adulteration and Contamination of Food in Victorian England." *Endangered Lives: Public Health in Victorian Britain*. Harvard University Press, 1983.

Zipes, Jack. *Why Fairy Tales Stick*. Routledge, 2006.

Notes

[1] Here the term "memetic" refers to meme-like reproduction, or spreading, of an idea, based on Jack Zipes's argument that fairy tales are like memes: units of knowledge culturally repeated, transmitted and co-evolving with humanity (5-16).

[2] Alice is the epitome of the bold gourmet reader: "I know *something* interesting is sure to happen," she said to herself, "whenever I eat or drink anything; so I'll just see what this bottle does" (Carroll 39).

[3] For example, the poem "Jabberwocky" abounds in portmanteaus. Slithy toves are both lithe and slimy, the furious Bandersnatch both fuming and furious, and "brillig means four o'clock in the afternoon, the time when you begin broiling things for dinner." Humpty Dumpty's explanation in this latter definition is hilarious because its confident matter-of-fact tone disregards the ambiguity involved in the term, perplexing readers.

[4] As Sianne Ngai convincingly argued, our Western notions of cuteness are deeply asscociated with softness, roundness, the infantile, the feminine and represent an aestheticizing of powerlessness (814). The child figure is an epitome of vulnerability, innocence, sweetness, and helplessness. The 19th century nursery rhyme perfectly illustrates this cultural heritage: "What are little girls made of? Sugar and spice, and Everything nice." Recent cognitive scientific research and consumer habits analysis have agreed that images of cute babies semantically and somatically activate embodied memory traces of sweetness and induce a preference for sweeter food (see Moore et al.).

[5] Adult control appears as a straightforward cannibalistic act in the embedded song about the Walrus and the Carpenter who manipulate the oyster babies to obediently walk onto their plates and into their mouths.

[6] Throughout her adventures Alice is aware that she must eat in order to grow up, but she also pays special attention to the kind of food she is eating. Her distinction between "the right thing to eat" and "the right thing to eat under the given circumstances" sheds light on how certain Victorian social groups had to reconsider their dietary choices because of the shortage of food. "I suppose I ought to eat or drink something or other; but the great question is 'What?'" The great question certainly was "What?" Alice looked all round her at the flowers and the blades of grass, but she could not see anything that looked like the right thing to eat or drink under the circumstances" (Carroll 47). According to Dan Ratner, eating mushroom as a gift from nature or even the very experience of hunger attest the malnutrition the era had to witness and illustrate the author's search for possible ways of saving his starving society. Alice's curiosity about what Looking Glass Insects live on, and the Gnat's confirmation that they must often die because of starvation portray hunger as a universal,

inevitable, global experience (Ratner).

[7] The psychologically ambiguous relation to food is illustrated by Alice's admitting to eating eggs as part of a healthy diet and her being ashamed when the pigeon mistakes her for a serpent because of her egg consumption. Eating eggs even has cannibalistic implications considering that Humpty Dumpty is an anthropomorphic eggman Alice meets beyond the Looking Glass. According to Anna Krugoyov Silver, Alice's shapeshifting body (that is often eating to become smaller) validates the pre-pubescent girl's body over that of the adult woman; Carroll's symbolically arresting the development of her heroine parallels the behavior of the anorexic woman who starves herself in order to forestall sexual maturation (Krugoyov-Silver 1).

[8] Her gesture reminds us of the ambiguous biocultural value of saliva: although it is made up 98% of water and has an essential role in digestion and sensing taste, the spitting of saliva is largely prohibited and tabooed in the name of politeness and sanitary reasons, for fear of repulsion and contamination. Archaic societies however have likely used human saliva to ferment alcoholic drinks (see Kragh-Furbo and Tutton).

What and How Will We Eat in Future? Food Culture, Food System, and Food Memory in Cli-fi Novels for Young Adults

Corina Löwe and Sabine Planka

When reading fiction about the future, food may not be the first thing that comes to mind, especially when thinking about dystopian worlds that deal with new technologies that facilitate a change in urban living conditions. While looking back into the past it becomes clear that food has played and still plays an important role in literary texts, as Renate Brosch notes in relation to English texts: "During the nineteenth century the inclusion of food in literary texts became more pervasive: it infiltrated all genres" (229). Our study explores whether this applies to fiction that looks forward into the future. In this article we focus on three Cli-fi novels for young readers and analyze the role and function of food.

The term Cli-fi novel, introduced in 2007 by Dan Bloom, is an emerging but not yet well-defined literary genre (Leikam and Leyda) with its origins in popular culture, film and media. With its main focus on anthropogenic climate change and its devastating effects on nature and society, this kind of fiction systematically investigates what daily life might look like after a climate emergency. The genre has been recognized as "a powerful medium to explore hopes and fears about climate change and imagine potential solutions" (Malpas).

The settings of Cli-fi narratives vary from scenarios in the present, as in Saci Lloyd's *The Carbon Diaries 2015* (2008), to near-future stories, such as Mats Söderlund's Swedish novel *Hotet* (2018) (in English *Threat*), to novels depicting a far-off future, like Emmi Itäranta's *Memory of Water* (2014). The texts we aim to discuss here are placed in a far-off future and highlight the intersection of "both lived experience and otherworldly, a projection of a credible future" (Einsiedel, Chiang and Whiteley 28). Climate change appears in the novels

as part of a dystopian, post-apocalyptic, sci-fi setting with hegemonic social structures, marked by economic imbalance, a collapse of nature and society, and a faith in technical innovation (Loock; Einsiedel, Chiang and Whiteley; Johns-Putra; Schneider-Mayersson). Food and eating are important aspects of the narrative and serve as special indicators for climate change (Muñoz-González; Höglund and Salmose). According to Diane Wain and Penelope Jones, the representation of food can fulfil several functions in narratives, "including food as structure, food driving the narrative, hunger, speciesism, individual ethics and identity, belonging and family, culture and group belonging, cannibalism and food symbolism" (Wain and Jones 3).

Highlighting representations of food and discussing changes in the food system and food culture, provides a fresh way of analyzing the novels through a cultural lens. This is also a way of understanding environmental issues on a more specific level. When Timothy Morton talks about overwhelming spatio-temporal phenomena such as "climate change" or "global warming" in general, he refers to them as "hyperobjects" because, on the one hand, they are difficult to grasp and think about. On the other hand, they begin to infiltrate our thinking, so that hardly anyone can say 'nice weather today' without having the ulterior motive of global warming (Morton 1, 99). His assumptions can be applied to the consumption of foods, for example, avocados, cucumbers or meat, where water scarcity or other extensive use of resources should also be taken into account. Awareness of the production and consumption of food as a driver for environmental problems is growing, and against the background of socio-political debates on environmental protection, sustainability and related topics, it is not surprising that children's and youth literature has also been increasingly addressing these issues since the mid/late 2000s, often in form of future scenarios in the speculative fiction genre.

While scientific-theoretical considerations on these works of children's and young adult literature usually analyze works from English-speaking countries, including translations, for this paper we have chosen to examine works from Germany and France, which demonstrate that climate and environmental issues are also addressed in non-Anglophone language areas in order to sensitize readers to the fragility of the environment, including the production and preparation of food. Accordingly, we have chosen literary works that imagine different ways how future life on Earth could be affected by global warming, and which therefore address the production and availability of, as well as the handling of and concern for, food in the plot. As a result, climate change also has an impact on social rituals associated with food. These combinations result in different concepts of food memory, which aim to preserve memories of food.

David Moitet's novel *New Earth Project: Tödliche Hoffnung* (2020) depicts a society affected by climate change and divided into two social strata. In the novel, some residents strive to regain lost knowledge about food production in order to help those who are

starving due to climate change and are dependent on food donations. Daniel Höra's novel *Das Ende der Welt* (2011) also plays with the concept of lost knowledge. However, his novel is much more dystopian, set in a distant future where today's knowledge has been forgotten. At the same time, the novel shows that life as a whole has undergone a change in meaning, which also has an impact on nutrition: eating is no longer a pleasure, at least for the majority of humanity, but only serves to maintain vitality. This contrasts with the third selected novel: Ursula Poznanski's novel *Cryptos* (2020) offers the protagonists pleasurable moments of eating, which are, however, subject to the dualism of artificial and natural. Poznanski creates a story whose dualism depicts a reality in which the majority of people have to be fed artificial food due to climate changes. This reality is juxtaposed with a virtual, artificial world in which people spend most of their day and therefore consume food that is modeled on natural food in terms appearance and consistency. Poznanski thus plays with the artificial and the natural by including food into the game both as a means of pleasure and as a means of sustaining life.

Food System, Food Culture and Eating Narratives for Young Readers

Writing and reading about food and eating has a long tradition (Gilbert and Porter). As a topic in children's literature, it is complex; food is very often not foregrounded in the novels, but rather, it adds another layer to the description of the protagonists' life, for example when families sit around the kitchen table and discuss daily problems while having breakfast, lunch, or dinner. Other stories present a variety of food and highlight eating situations, such as Roald Dahl's *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (1964), where both food system and culture are extensively discussed. With the term *food system* we mean "all activities, infrastructure, social institutions, and cultural beliefs within a social group across stages of the production, processing, transport, and consumption of food" (Zhen 19). Connected to the food system is the *food culture*, defined as "what we eat, as well as how and why and under what circumstances" (Edge 8); or, as Counihan puts it, food culture is about "the beliefs and behavior surrounding the production, distribution, and consumption of food" (Counihan 2).

Food and eating are closely related to the term cooking. Cooking is a cultural process and, therefore, mainly part of the food culture, but it also belongs to the food system when taking into consideration the accessibility of food. The anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss has developed the "culinary triangle," an influential model, to qualify the level of culture expressed by cooking in a society. Lévi-Strauss' triangle contains three states of food: raw, cooked and rotten. Its basic idea is that more developed cultures prepare more food by cooking and use more kitchen appliances and more complex methods for food preparation. "Humans were the agents of the transformation from the raw to the cooked, from the natural to the artificial," argues Bosch (218). Interestingly, she assumes

that "raw" means "uncultivated" while "cooked" is associated with "belonging to a higher culture."

Today, however, an increasing variety of popular diets includes raw food, which is associated with the idea of healthy living.[1] Conversely, another contemporary trend involves an increase of cooked, processed convenience food, which has entered homes and kitchens from the 1950s onwards. Despite well-equipped kitchens in modern homes and a sufficient variety of food in supermarkets, the arrival of convenience food has resulted in a loss of culinary skills. The result is that people lose contact with nature and with unmediated, natural food (Caraher).

This short discussion demonstrates the difficulty in drawing a line between food system and food culture. The food system cannot exist without the food culture and vice versa. The food system, with the production, delivery, and access to food, influences the food culture that develops eating habits and food traditions. The food culture likewise affects the food system because the food and ingredients for which people ask will require production and delivery.

When it comes to its literary function in novels for young readers, food "offer[s] the researcher a snapshot of prevailing culture. Reading fictional food events provides us with knowledge about the social and family relationships, manners and morals of a given period" (Daniel 1). Research has linked food in children's literature to culture and history, but also to relevant social topics like "politics, poverty, morality, lifestyle, health, social interaction, identity" (Webb 103), and has highlighted the ritual function of food as part of *rite de passage* or discussed it as a surrogate for sexuality (Bergstrand et al.; Nikolajeva 11ff). Other studies emphasize food as a symbol for sensuality and emotion, and the extensive discussion of table manners in many books alludes to the educational function of children's and YA literature (Jäkel; Daniel). Special food products like honey or oranges have been interpreted as a link between home-loving and tradition, which can place a story in a certain time and culture (Keeling and Pollard; Everett). Additional topics in which researchers are often interested include eating disorders, and the children and young adults who seek to express their individuality through food and eating habits (Blackford; see also Carrington and Harding). Daniel sums this up by arguing that literary food images are a "particularly good vehicle for carrying culture's socializing messages […]" (Daniel 4).

In light of this, our analysis of the three novels will be guided by the following questions: how does human society react and adapt to the transformation of current food systems? What kind of new food and food systems have emerged in worlds transformed by climate change? How does this affect food memory?

The Dualism of Artificial and Natural in Ursula Poznanski's *Cryptos*

The story world in Ursula Poznanski's novel *Cryptos* is complex and divided into a real world in which global warming makes life almost impossible, and many virtual worlds that vary widely in the lifestyles and offer, therefore, an alternative to reality. The population in the real world is grouped according to their social status. The first group consists of a small minority of rich people that own IT-companies. They employ IT-specialists, creating and building the virtual worlds, that can be identified as the second group. Jana, the main protagonist, is one such world designer. The bottom of the population pyramid consists of the majority of people, and form the third group, spending their lives in living depositories, apartment buildings with thousands of tiny cells, each of them equipped with an incubator that enables its inhabitant to enter a virtual world. Sometimes, people are forced to leave virtual reality in order to work in the real world. In return they earn climate-points to buy, for example, access passes for new virtual worlds.

The complex field of tension between nature and technology is already established in the first chapter, with an idyllic description of a Irish landscape in a computer-animated world with sheep, mushroom pickers and lots of greenery, contrasted by the reality of life for the game programmers, who can choose between lemon flavored iced tea or synthetic chocolate as a drink, which is described as "inedible" (Poznanski 7).[2] Thus, food serves as a structural element of the narrative, describing the daily routines of the inhabitants and as a means of demonstrating power relations, as the dualistic division of the social strata in the real world shows, where class and social status define available food options. The rich elite has access to a full supply of food and is protected from the rest of the population. In contrast, intravenous, artificial nutrition keeps the majority alive in incubators during their time in virtuality, whilst world designers because of their higher rank have access to real food, offered in cafeterias. Climate points limit the monthly consumption: "I load a small portion of beet puree on my plate. Points: zero. Appetite: Zero" (Poznanski 39). The reaction of Jana gives the reader the feeling that food mainly fulfills a physiological function in the real world. Obviously, the sensory qualities and social aspects of eating and drinking are no longer of great importance, a fact underlined by the intravenous food, which is more of a nutrient solution than a tasteful meal. Real food experiences are no longer an option for the majority of inhabitants. They cannot experience food through tact or taste – the senses are no longer involved. Food is reduced to something fed intravenously. What could be interpreted as care is actually perverted into an element of control, with the aim of keeping people alive in their incubators during their visits in the virtual worlds.

In contrast to the real world, where class and social status function as access to food, in the virtual worlds boundaries are blurred, and good food is accessible to nearly everybody. In general, the computer-animated worlds meet all interests. They imitate places and ages

– people can spend time in seventeenth-century London, in places for dinosaur fans, or take vacations on dreamy islands – as well as live in futuristic places, created in order to try out new forms of social togetherness. These virtual worlds perform the same function as the "bread and circus" combination in ancient Rome. They cover up the shortcomings of the real world, where fewer and fewer people can be fed due to global warming and mismanagement. The virtual worlds become a true culinary Garden of Eden. In the Austen world (Poznanski 108), inspired by Jane Austen-narratives, for example, people eat ham and sandwiches and drink cider at a garden party and do not have to worry about the lack of food.

The rich selection of delicious dishes, like meat, fish, cheese, bread, porridge, chocolate, beer or sushi in these different virtual worlds awakens nostalgic memories of the good old days before climate change. As Jana reflects, it was crucial after the climate emergency and the transformation of society to recreate the "good old times" through virtual reality, because people expected to "live in a familiar environment" (Poznanski 9), even though in current times there is no one left who can remember the past (Poznanski 9). Many virtual worlds imitate different historical epochs and the food takes on at least a superficial cultural and historical - and at the same time democratic - meaning. Since all residents have access to these worlds, food provides a common ground, a global canon. In addition, however, the food depicted in the novel mainly reflects Western eating habits, and enables the Western reader to identify more easily with the story.

While food culture – or should we say food *cultures* due to the variety of worlds – as well as the food system in the virtual worlds remain constant, both are at risk in real life. Drinking water is scarce, desalination systems are inadequate, fields can no longer be used (Poznanski 369), feeding the world population is in general problematic. By contrast, people nourish nostalgic dreams about food in the different virtual worlds: "Lisa and Emil put on a barbecue with pieces of meat and fish. The smell arouses an appetite in me, that I haven't felt in months. Steak. Potatoes and grilled vegetables. I take a huge portion […] This is a feast. I am vaguely aware that this behavior – eating meat! – would greatly reduce my chances in the real world" (Poznanski 66). Jana's struggle with self-control is not limited to avoiding unhealthy foods or counting calories: climatic conditions and regulations such as climate points have a strong influence on her eating behavior. In addition, she is aware that wasting food is not an option and is, in fact, prohibited.

Poznanski, therefore, develops a double food system in her novel: one that exists in the real world and one in the virtual world. For Jana, eating in the real world is always accompanied by regulations and restrictions, such as climate points, as seen above. The dishes are tasteless and monotonous, whereas food intake in the virtual world is described as something that stimulates the senses. It is not just the abundance of different foods that keeps people in the virtual world, but also the taste experiences and the chance to eat

their fill. In addition, social interactions, which in the virtual world are not subject to class constraints, play an important role. Eating porridge in 1622 London or being guest at a Jane Austen tea party may be a way to preserve collective memories about worlds history, but as Jana's brother remarks: "we have freedom of design. […] it is not a history lesson, it is living space" (Poznanski 129). People in the virtual worlds are aware that everything that happens – eating included – only happens in their imagination, regulated and controlled by game designers. Celebrating a barbecue is a virtual social activity as the food itself is. Therefore, food culture in the virtual worlds has a double function: it is connected to memory and reproduces a shared experience.

The novel ends somewhat optimistically. After an uprising, arranged by Jana and her friends, the new rulers try to recultivate the earth and make the world a place worth living in again. Jana and her boyfriend celebrate this with an "exquisite meal" in a fancy restaurant (Poznanski 443) in the virtual world, which again illustrates the cultural importance of food, but also how long the road is towards a sustainable food system in the real world.

Scarcity as a Driving Force in Daniel Höra's *Das Ende der Welt*

While the protagonists in *Cryptos* still have a lively memory of food and food traditions, the protagonists in Daniel Höra's novel have lived for generations in a damaged world, and their connection to food culture is lost. The repartition of society into poor and rich people and the difference between rural and urban lifestyle underpin the novel and decide resident's access to food. Food as a topic is not foregrounded in the narrative, which indicates the general food shortage. No one in this society can afford to be picky. The most important function of food is to satisfy physiological needs, with the result that people eat simply everything – moles are, for example, a special delicacy. Usually, people eat spoiled food or muesli bars with an indefinable taste (Höra 131). In Berlin, where the main part of the story takes place, the apocalyptic living conditions, with constant rain and poor weather, lead to social decline and people would almost kill each other for food. Hunger forces people to humiliate themselves, as illustrated in the scene where a half-naked man approaches a group of soldiers. "The man held out his hand pleadingly and bowed incessantly. Prüm kicked him in the side so that he fell over howling and peed in fright" (Höra 30). The city of Berlin has become an unpleasant place to live. Its former glory has faded.

After a riot, the two young main protagonists Leela and Kjell flee to the countryside, where people in a village invite them for dinner. The dichotomy between city life and the village is evident. A closeness to nature in the form of food production and consumption as well as a closeness to culture in the form of social eating rituals is ascribed to village life. Arguing against Lévi-Strauss' triangle, in this novel, it is not the use of cooking or kitchen

tools that defines a higher cultural value but closeness to nature which enables people to maintain civilized habits, such as eating together the food they have grown. These skills indicate that the inhabitants still have agricultural knowledge apparently passed down for generations. Even Kjell discovers he has a sense for nature. He can for example detect eatable tree fungi. Leela, who is from a wealthy city family disrespectfully comments that he is a "nature child" (*Naturbursche*) (Höra 131). However, being a nature child also means surviving. The return to nature becomes the new culture. In Lévi-Strauss's culinary triangle, the use of cooking tools is linked to culture, while the non-use of tools is linked to nature. One interpretation of this paradigm is that culture has greater value than nature. However, what Höra's novel proposes, and can also be observed in our world, is a general trend that can be described as 'back to nature' – back to the roots. Among the wealthier portion of the world population today, "back to nature" symbolizes an awareness of food and health and above all an awareness of ecological responsibility, which translates into the increasing success of plant-forward, vegetarian, and vegan diets. In Leela's and Kjell's world, the return to nature is born out of necessity. The novel's representation of the future is overall pessimistic, and it does not imagine a solution to the food shortage; it rather pleads for a responsible relationship with nature, whereby food is sourced by learning agricultural skills again.

David Moitet's *New Earth Project: Tödliche Hoffnung.*

David Moitet presents the world of 2125. Rich people in New York live in town centers protected from pollution by big fresh-air bubbles, while the poor live in the flooded water zones. Living in the latter means sharing little space, rarely having access to knowledge and education, and fighting for food. Isis, the protagonist, comes from a poor family and lives in Manhattan, which in 2125, due to the global warming and rising sea level, is "a swimming slum" (17) plagued by pollution (16). Isis is selected to visit a mixed school, where rich and some poor kids are educated together. In school she meets Orion, son of the founder of the New Earth Project that is about to send one billion people per week in the companies' spaceships in search of a better life elsewhere. What the lucky winners do not know is that they are facing their death, because Orion's father is responsible for organizing a massive genocide in order to reduce population on Earth.

In the poor water zones, where Isis lives with her family, the food supply is scarce. People drink seaweed tea (Moitet 18) and their survival depends on food distributions in form of energy bars or dried insects (Moitet 24). In markets, salesmen offer seaweed, old fish and chicken for those who can afford it (see Moitet 69). Attending school gives Isis the chance of social advancement, but it also gives her a warm meal a day (see Moitet 51). Even if "poverty is a creeping poison" (Moitet 76) and hunger a constant companion, in contrast to Höra's novel, the living conditions are good enough to guarantee that cultural

and social values of eating still exist. The family gathers for a meal, Isis's mother cooks the vegetable Isis has delivered, and she reminds her daughter that eating regularly is important (Moitet 49). The novel highlights the value of family connectedness through food as part of the upbringing of Isis and her brother. Despite the fact that continued food distribution is never guaranteed, the novel leaves the impression that family meals provide quality time for parents and children, and are a place to develop a relationship with food, in line with scientific studies that state that eating at home to a great extent forms the eating habits of young children, prevents health issues, and fosters intelligence and empathy (Fruh et al.; Skafida; Vidgen 159).

What makes the novel especially interesting is the depiction of the food system. Isis is smart and understands that a lack of job opportunities and dependence on social welfare neither helps people in her neighborhood nor solves the food problem. In an old library – unused and destroyed as in most dystopian novels (see Planka) – she finds books on plant cultivation and learns more about it. This trait of her character aligns with what Goddek and colleagues have said about young people, that even if they "are statistically not interested in being the farmers of the future, they do want to be future farmers if technology is involved and [if] they can adapt these technologies to live closer to urban environments and have a better quality of life than in the rural past. Kids of all ages are fascinated by technology, and it is no wonder as technology solves many problems" (Goddek et al. V).

This aspect emerges when Isis and her best friend Flynn find out how to cultivate vegetables and provide their families with fresh food, after trying several different methods, like aquaponics and recultivation of plants in low nutrition soil (84-86). Here, books as part of human cultural memory are the key to success – and to food. While the generation of Isis' parents has accepted and adapted to the poor and unhealthy living conditions, the young generation fights it.

In contrast to Poznanski's novel with a virtual world that pretends to serve real food and by doing so still brings back memories of food from a bygone era, Moitet's novel demonstrates how memories come true by using special techniques to cultivate plants. *New Earth Project* is the only example in our selection of texts where ongoing scientific experiments, connected to the food system, have been included in the story. The story ends optimistically. The overthrow of the ruling class centered on Orion's father, who tried to solve the environmental crisis with inhuman methods, succeeds. A cross-generational change process begins, to which Isis contributes through her knowledge of recultivation.

Food Memories

What the authors of these three cli-fi novels highlight is the interconnectedness of climate change, the political and moral solutions of politicians and stakeholders, and their effect

on society and on individual living situations. In all three novels, food memories or their loss play an important role in defining people and their actions. It is possible to analyze this in relation to individual protagonists as well as to the collective memory of the society in question. John S. Allen notes that "[f]ood has meaning, it evokes memories, and it shapes identities" (2). He continues:

> [f]oods are cultural objects, invested implicitly and explicitly with meaning and significance beyond their nutritive value. We also expand our food universe with cultivation and preparation techniques, some of which may date back millions of years and others that are far more recent. How we eat and how we think reflect the unique natural history of the human species. (3)

Through the selection, combination and configuration of the narrative, literary texts condense memories and thus contribute to the formation of a collective memory (see Erll 144-145). Cli-fi novels are special because they anticipate memories and thus direct the reader's gaze towards their own present. What it is necessary to carry into the future is a question the novels try to answer.

In Moitet's novel the food system and culture are an important aspect. Isis, the main protagonist, acts much as Allen has described above: she is able to cultivate food and by doing so she not only expands the food options of her family; with her knowledge on plant cultivation, she also saves lives. Following her discussions with Flynn and Orion, and through her actions, the reader learns more about sustainable food production. Food is the link between the present and the past, connecting new agricultural methods of the reader's contemporary time to preserved and almost forgotten knowledge in Isis' own present. Education is the cultural capital passed on through books and social interaction.

In contrast to Moitet's novel, a double connotation of memory is part of virtuality in Poznansky's novel. In the virtual worlds people indulge in food memories; it is only there that a variety of food exists. This leaves a bitter aftertaste. When we ask (with Allen) how we might define people's identities, we come to the conclusion that the protagonists in *Cryptos* still mentally live in the "good old times". They pretend to live a "normal" life in virtual reality, where they maintain and cultivate knowledge about food, and where they practice social rituals such as table conversations.

In Höra's novel knowledge about food is either not conveyed, or is only very rudimentary. In the world presented here, the protagonists know nothing about the cultural food traditions of their ancestors. Life and society have changed drastically and can no longer be compared with a reality familiar to the readers of the novel. It is important to mention that not only the original knowledge about food is lost, but also knowledge about

the social aspects that are strongly related to food. Sharing food, eating and enjoying it together with other people in a social event are unthinkable. Food simply exists to satisfy physiological needs, as is partly the case in Poznanski's depiction of the real world. Food in the real world shares the same function in both novels. No cultural rites guide the intake of food in the real world.

Comparing the three novels, food memories in real world-scenarios live on in such institutions as food markets (Moitet) or in the designing process of the virtual worlds (Poznanski). Another feature embedded in the texts is the mentioning of special dishes or food, for example iced tea with lemon flavour (Poznanski 7) or orange juice (Moitet 181), food that the protagonists like and with which they associate positive memories and nostalgic feelings. In Höra it is eatable trees fungi that form the frame of references for Kjell and connect him to his ancestors. John S. Allen observes that

> [f]or humans, whose culture and consciousness provide the collective power to isolate and promote certain aspects of the struggle for life over others, food (along with sex and status) has become one of the touchstones of social life. Food memories are important not just because they concern sustenance but also because they have extensive connections to other memories of people, places, and things. (Allen 2012, 152)

We can conclude that these kinds of memories are partly lost in novels whose future settings no longer serve as a social environment for its inhabitants.

Conclusion

According to Alexa Weik von Mossner, "writers [...should] scrutinize whether their dystopian scenarios actually allow for an at least partially hopeful ending". She admits that this is difficult to achieve in "eco-dystopian novels dealing with climate change, [...] because, as is well known, the effects of climate change will only be visible when it is way too late for mitigation" (Weik von Mossner 799). The authors of the analysed Cli-fi novels try different ways to highlight the long-term effects of climate change. In all three novels there is a close connection between the degree of destruction of living conditions and food memories.

In *Cryptos* and *New Earth Project*, people still have vivid memories of earlier times and miss familiar and beloved dishes. In Moitet's *New Earth Project*, nostalgia is also linked to the food system, when the protagonists do research on "old" agricultural methods like aquaponics, which then benefit the population. However, the notion of nostalgia is absent in Höra's *Das Ende der Welt* where people fight to survive – there is no space left for comforting food memories or other cultural expressions. The more the environment is

destroyed by climate change, the more people lose touch with what we consider normal eating habits, providing a pessimistic forecast on what adaptation process society might undergo.

In terms of what new systems and modes of eating the novels propose, the books mention inventions such as artificial food in form of liquid nutrients. Delivered intravenously, this food also represents a new way of eating. A clear sign of climate change is the lack of food variety. In addition, processed foods such as orange juice or cereal bars are similar to what readers might know from their own menus. Virtual food is a new category; whether it contributes to a healthy diet is another question. In general, we conclude that in all these books a plant-based diet is the norm, and what remains of nature becomes the new culture.

What we only have touched upon in our analysis are the social and power implications connected to the food system and culture. When Roland Barthes notes that food "is not only a collection of products that can be used for statistical or nutritional studies but is also, and at the same time, a system of communication, a body of images, a protocol of usages, situations, and behaviour" (Barthes 24) we can only agree. Eating habits are closely related to class issues. Used as a narrative strategy, tension is created in all books when discussing how the decadent behavior of the rich contributes to global warming. The poor cultivate some knowledge about the use of natural resources, and protagonists like Isis try to teach others how to produce food on a local basis. Both in *Cryptos* and *New Earth Project* people have lost connection to the real world, due to their wish to live in virtual or extraterrestrial worlds.

The 'partially hopeful ending' to which Weik von Mossner refers to is an attempt to direct our gaze back to the earth and, with small steps, to recultivate the soil and grow food. The treatment of food in theses novels provides a glimpse into the near future.

Works Cited

Allen, John. *The Omnivorous Mind: Our Evolving Relationship with Food.* Harvard University Press 2012.

Barthes, Roland. "Toward a Psychosociology of Contemporary Food Consumption." *Food and Culture. A Reader*, edited by Carole Counihan and Penny Van Esterik, Routledge, 2013, pp. 23-30.

Bergstrand, Ulla et al. *Läckergommarnas kungarike: Om matens roll i barnlitteraturen* (Centrum för barnkulturforskning, 31). Centrum för barnkulturforskning, 1999.

Brosch, Renate. "Visual Victual: Iconographies of Food and Dining in Nineteenth-Century

England." *Eating Culture. The Poetics and Politics of Food*, edited by Tobias Döring, Markus Heide and Susanne Mühleisen, Winter, 2003, pp. 209-235.

Caraher, Martin. "Food Literacy beyond the Individual: The Nexus between Personal Skills and Victim Blaming." *Food Literacy: Key Concepts for Health and Education*, edited by Helen Vidgen, Routledge, 2016, pp. 118-133.

Carrington, Bridget and Jennifer Harding, editors. *Feast or Famine? Food and Children's Literature: Food and Children's Literature*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014.

Counihan, Carole. *The Anthropology of Food and Body: Gender, Meaning, and Power*. Routledge 1999.

Dahl, Roald. *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. Puffin, 2014 [1964]

Daniel, Carolyn. *Voracious Children: Who Eats Whom in Children's Literature*. Routledge, 2006.

Edge, J. T. "Foodways." *The New Encyclopedia of Southern Culture* edited by J.T. Edge, University of North Carolina Press, 2007.

Einsiedel, Edna , Chiang, Angie and Andrea Whiteley. "Climate Change Imaginaries? Examining Expectation Narratives in Cli-Fi Novels". *Bulletin of Science, Technology and Society* 36 (1), 2016, pp. 28-37.

Erll, Astrid. *Kollektives Gedächtnis und Erinnerungskulturen*. Metzler, 2005.

Everett, James. "Oranges of Paradies: The Orange as Symbol of Escape and Loss in Children's Literature." *Critical Approaches to Food in Children's Literature,* edited by Kara K. Keeling and Scott T. Pollard, Routledge, 2009, pp. 193-206.

Fruh, Sharon et al. "The Surprising Benefits of the Family Meal." *The Journal for Nurse Practitioners*, vol. 7, no. 1, 2011, pp. 18-22. DOI: 10.1016/j.nurpra.2010.04.017

Gilbert, Sandra M. and Roger J. Porter. *Eating Words: A Norton Anthology of Food writing*. Norton, 2016.

Goddek, Simon et al. *Aquaponics Food Production Systems: Combined Aquaculture and Hydroponic Production Technologies for the Future.* Springer Open, 2019.

Höra, Daniel. *Das Ende der Welt. Bloomsbury*, 2011.

Höglund, Johan and Niklas Salmose. "Climate Diaspora and Future Food Cultures in *Snowpiercer* (2013) and *The Road* (2009)." *Food, Culture & Society*, vol. 1, no. 16, 2024. doi:10.1080/15528014.2024.2342627

Itäranta, Emmie. *Memory of Water*. Harper Voyager, 2014..

Jäkel, Sonja. *Inszenierungen des Essens in der Kinder- und Jugendliteratur. Aufklärung – Romantik – Biedermeier.* Peter Lang, 2015.

Johns-Putra, Adeline. "Climate Change in Literature and Literary Studies: From Cli-fi, Climate Change Theater and Ecopoetry to Ecocriticism and Climate Change Criticism". *Wiley interdisciplinary reviews (WIREs): Climate Change*, vol. 7, no. 2, 2016, pp. 266-282. DOI: 10.1002/wcc.385 (accessed on January 09, 2024).

Keeling, Kara K. and Scott T. Pollard. *Table Lands: Food in Children's Literature*. University Press. of Mississippi, 2020.

Leikam, Susanne and Julia Leyda. "Cli-Fi in American Studies: A Research Bibliography". *American*

Studies Journal, no. 62, 2017, http://www.asjournal.org/62-2017/cli-fi-american-studies-research-bibliography/ (accessed on January 09, 2014).

Leikam, Susanne and Julia Leyda. "Cli-Fi and American Studies: An Introduction". *Amerikastudien / American Studies*, vol. 62, no. 1, 2017, pp. 109-114.

Lévi-Strauss, Claude. "The Culinary Triangle." *Food and Culture: A Reader*, edited by Carole Counihan and PennyVan Esterik, Routledge, 2013, pp. 40-47.

Loock, Kathleen. "Cli-fi and the Dystopian Tradition". *The Dystopian Impulse of Contemporary Cli-Fi: Lessons and Questions from a Joint Workshop of the IASS and the JFKI (FU Berlin)*, edited by Julia Leyda et al, 2016 https://www.rifs-potsdam.de/sites/default/files/files/wp_nov_2016_the_dystopian_impulse_of_contemporary_cli-fi.pdf (accessed on January 09, 2024).

Lloyd, Saci. *The Carbon Diaries* 2015. Hodder, 2008.

Malpas, Imogen. "Climate Fiction is a Vital Tool for Producing Better Planetary Futures." *The Lancet Planetary Health,* vol. 5, no. 1, 2021, e12-e13.

Moitet, David. *New Earth Project. Tödliche Hoffnung.* Edel, 2020. Original French: *New Earth Project.*, 2017.

Morton, Timothy. *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World*. University of Minnesota Press, 2013.

Muñoz-González, Esther. "The Anthropocene, Cli-Fi and Food: Margaret Atwood's *MaddAddam*." *Atlantis*, vol. 43, no. 1, 2021, pp. 39–54. https://www.jstor.org/stable/27088735

Nikolajeva, Maria. *From Mythic to Linear: Time in Children's Literature.* Scarecrow, 2000.

Planka, Sabine. "… und von hier oben sieht es so aus, als wären die Trümmer der alten Bibliothek mit riesigen schwarzen Spinnen bedeckt." Die Bibliothek in dystopischen Jugendromanen des 21. Jahrhunderts ["... and from above it seemed as if the ruins of the ancient library were covered by giant black spiders" – The library in dystopian novels for young adults in the 21st century."]. *Bibliotheksdienst*, vol. 53, no. 1, 2019, pp. 12-36.

Poznanski, Ursula. *Cryptos*. Loewe, 2020.

Schneider-Mayerson, Matthew. "Climate Change Fiction." *American Literature in Transition 2000-2010*, edited by Greenwald Smith Rachel, Cambridge University Press 2017, pp. 309-321.

Skafida, Valeria. "The Family Meal Panacea: Exploring how Different Aspects of Family Meal Occurrence, Meal Habits and Meal Enjoyment Relate to Young Children's Diets!" *Sociology of Health & Illness*, vol. 35, no. 6, 2013, pp. 906-923, doi: 10.1111/1467-9566.12007.

Söderlund, Mats. *Hotet*. Rabén & Sjögren, 2018.

Vidgen, Helen. "The Development of Food Literacy." *Food Literacy: Key Concepts for Health and Education*, edited by Helen Vidgen, Routledge, 2016, pp. 151-164.

Wain, Debra and Penelope Jones. "Food, Fears and Anxieties in Climate Change Fiction." *TEXT* 22, vol. 51, 2018, pp. 1–13. https://doi.org/10.52086/001c.25582

Webb, Jean. "Changing Approaches to Food in the Construction of Childhood in Western Culture". *(Re)imagining the World: Children's Literature's Response to Changing Times,* edited by Yan Wu et al.,

Springer Berlin, 2013, 93-104.

Weik von Mossner, Alexa. "Hope in Dark Times: Climate Change and the World Risk Society in Saci Lloyd's The Carbon Diaries 2015 and 2017." *Contemporary Dystopian Fiction for Young Adults*, edited by Carrie Hintz et al., Routledge, 2013, pp. 69-84.

Zhen, Willa. *Food Studies: A Hands-On-Guide*. Bloomsbury, 2019.

Notes

[1] We cannot answer the related question: could raw food be the new symbol for a higher culture, in contrast to what Lévi-Strauss and Brosch have suggested?

[2] Translations, unless otherwise stated, are our own.

A Feminist Strike in the Kitchen: Gender and Food in Adela Turin's *Storia di panini*

Anna Travagliati

Food is one of the fundamental themes of human reflection and artistic production. It is rich in philosophical questions – food "bad to eat" is firstly "bad to think about" (Scarpi 14) and practical issues, such as the possibility, introduced by the invention of individually packaged snacks, to eat anywhere at any time (Bays 167-168). However, only recently have we witnessed the development of "food studies," which are particularly interesting for their interdisciplinary nature, spanning from anthropology to history, passing through art and literature. Precisely from this perspective, Keeling and Pollard observe that food, the physicality of which captivates all our senses, is not simply bland nutrition, but a powerful and pervasive cultural object, essential to the "cultural imagination," and therefore fundamental to literature (5-6). They also note that "whether in memoir, fiction, or poetry, writers continually hark back to childhood experiences of food, even when the intended audience is adults rather than children, as with Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past*" (10). Furthermore, Blackford remarks that "food lies at the center of socialization rituals for children" (42), while Daniel emphasizes adults' urgency to teach children how to behave and how to eat in a controlled and civilized manner, in accordance with the cultural rules of the society in which they live (12).

As noted by various scholars, children's literature and picturebooks play a crucial role in educating young readers and presenting desirable models. Unfortunately, among other problematic issues, they often offer gender role models that are "extremely rigid, stereotyped, and even anachronistic", as observed by Biemmi ("Not only Princesses and Knights" 100). The author continues:

> While the condition of women changes, children's books seem not to

> acknowledge it and continue to perpetuate stories more tied to the past than the present, imprinted with tradition more than change or a reading that has been updated by reality. (100)

Indeed, in spite of second-wave feminism and its fierce attempt to lead women out of the kitchens and into the workplace – "Don't Assume I Cook" was a popular American feminist slogan (Williams 59) – the old-fashioned belief that preparing and serving food is a fundamental female chore was and still is instilled through education: "While some current (public) female role/image alternatives appear to exclude the domestic, in popular media representations and in reality, the domestic and, in particular, food provisioning, are still very much linked to the feminine" (Daniel 105). Similarly, Fraustino, in her examination of various children's books, highlights "how food is used, both literally and metaphorically, in the reproduction of patriarchal mothering" (58).

Fortunately, alongside this conservative production, some brave authors and publishers have put forth books that are less stereotypical and more attentive to gender role representation. After touching briefly on the origin and the mission of Adela Turin's Dalla parte delle bambine (On the Side of Little Girls), Italy's first publishing house for feminist children's literature, and its approaches to food, this essay will use interdisciplinary theoretical-methodological tools from literary studies (especially concerning children's narratives), gender studies, and cultural studies to close read and analyze the 1976 picturebook *Storia di panini* (Turin and Saccaro). While in 1977 Writers and Readers Publishing Cooperative translated this title as *The Breadtime Story*, a more literal English rendition of the Italian name would be *Sandwiches Story*.

This work will demonstrate how *Storia di panini* can be a stimulating instrument to open a dialogue with children about women's exploitation and domestic labor, encouraging questions about the preparation and consumption of food. This chapter will also highlight how Turin connected female unpaid culinary work with other urgent feminist matters, such as the necessity of collective organization and the dangers of an otiose culture that ignores women's struggles. Additionally, given the complexity of picturebooks, based on the "interdependence of word and image" (Hintz and Tribunella 160), special attention will be paid to the illustrations and their role in reinforcing the message of this unconventional tale. Finally, this work will reflect on the significance of *Storia di panini* nowadays, particularly regarding the persistence of the association between femininity and cooking.

A Publishing House for Feminism's Children: Adela Turin's *Dalla parte delle bambine*

In 1975, Italian feminist Adela Turin reacted to the sexist messages commonly found in

children's literature by founding Dalla parte delle bambine, Italy's first feminist publishing house for children. The name was inspired by Elena Gianini Belotti's famous essay *Dalla parte delle bambine*, which harshly criticized the traditional education reserved for young girls, aimed to create dependent and frail women. Turin, who wrote or edited almost all of her publishing house's books, presented innovative and subversive narratives that reached wide and unexpected critical and commercial success. This achievement was bolstered by her co-publishing project with French feminist publishing house Des Femmes, her collaboration with Spanish publisher Lumen, and the translations produced in various languages (Salviati 41). Salviati notes that Turin, who also created books for Mondadori, one of the biggest publishing houses in Italy, initially wished to distribute her picturebooks via traditional publishers in order to guarantee them the widest circulation possible. Unfortunately, no publishing company responded to her proposal, forcing Turin to independently establish Dalla parte delle bambine (40-41).

During its brief but intensely productive lifespan, Dalla parte delle bambine published about fifty titles, including books aimed at teenagers, such as the collection "Dalla parte delle ragazze" ("On the Side of Girls"), and at adults, such as the miscellaneous *Sessismo nei libri per bambini* (Sexism in Children's Books), edited by Belotti herself. Despite this variety, Salviati (37) observes that the publishing house's most successful publications were its first picturebooks, written by Turin and illustrated by artist Nella Bosnia, winner of the prestigious "Andersen - Il mondo dell'infanzia" prize[1] in 1996. These books offered their young readers alternative stories with independent heroines who chose their destinies and achieved unconventional happy endings. Bosnia herself highlights the importance of the first four titles,[2] stating that their messages were "direct and unambiguous."[3] Beyond their importance as overtly engaged feminist stories, Pederzoli commends the picturebooks' artistic and literary quality (*Adela Turin e la collana Dalla parte delle bambine* 264), which was overseen by Turin, who was both an art historian and a designer (Donzel). Hamelin also praises Turin's brave decision to challenge sexist stereotypes through picturebooks, a genre that typically reinforces normative gender roles (165).

Among the themes debated by Dalla parte delle bambine's books – including divorce, domestic violence, the arbitrariness of gender roles, and unpaid domestic labor – the intertwined topics of nourishment and gender injustice appear frequently. In *Rosaconfetto* (*Sugarpink Rose*),[4] young female elephants are encouraged to eat edible but bland flowers in order to become beautifully pink; in *Una fortunata catastrofe* (*A Fortunate Catastrophe*), the male head of the household evolves from a petty self-appointed *gourmet* to a good cook himself; in *Melaracconti* (*Of Cannons and Caterpillars*), natural organic food is unknown in a dystopic world destroyed by men's wars; in *La vera storia dei bonobo con gli occhiali* (*The Real Story of the Bonobos Who Wore Glasses*), female primates have the onerous task of foraging for the whole herd. Finally, in *Storia di panini* (*The Breadtime Story*), the sandwiches symbolize women's

invisible and unpaid domestic labor. This essay will analyze this last book, written by Turin and illustrated by Margherita Saccaro. It was a critically successful book, as shown by its special mention in the *Critici in erba* category at the 1977 Bologna Children's Book Fair. First published in 1976, a revised edition of *Storia di panini* was proposed in 2001 by Motta Junior, following the republishing project undertaken by French Actes Sud in 1999.[5] Although this book was translated into English in 1977 by Writers and Readers Publishing Cooperative, this paper will focus only on the original Italian version. All English translations of the quotes from *Storia di panini*, provided to ensure international readers' understanding, are my own.

A Tale of Exploitation, Political Awakening, and Sandwiches: A Close Reading of *Storia di panini*

Storia di panini opens with a description of the main character's small village (literally: the grass and the flowers tower over the buildings), composed of thousands of little houses inhabited by women and children. The narration immediately emphasizes the contradiction between the importance of the town (thousands and thousands of residents) and its invisibility: "the village was so tiny that no one had ever thought of giving it a name" (Turin and Saccaro).[6]

Interestingly, the story makes it clear that only adult women live in the village, but the gender of the children is left ambiguous: at the beginning the author speaks of "bambine" ("female children"), but in other parts, the word "bambini" is used instead, suggesting the presence of little boys, too. Be that as it may, in this little nameless village, women and children (only female ones) have an important and unpaid task: every day, they must prepare giant sandwiches for the men, who are human-sized and work far away, in the Big House of Men. As Belotti comments in her presentation of Dalla parte delle bambine's catalog, "In the women's village, everything is minuscule. Everything except the sandwiches that are prepared for the men, who live in the *big* house" (Salviati 39). The women are proud of their job, and they even compete with their neighbors, since each woman wants to cook the best meal for the men. With irony, the author shows the patriarchy-fueled rivalry between women, already identified by second-wave feminism. A few pages later, it becomes clear how useless this competition is: the men devour the sandwiches thoughtlessly, without appreciating either the variety of the flavors or the women's labor.

The women spend many hours making sandwiches, which are a symbol of unpaid kitchen chores and domestic labor, and daughters are expected to learn how to cook from their mothers. This situation is called into question by the curious and independent main character, Ita (the name is evidently derived from that of the illustrator, Margherita Saccaro), whose objecting is a poignant subversion of the traditional trope of the young

daughter fascinated and charmed by her mother's culinary abilities. As observed by Blackford, in children's books female characters are often urged to learn how to cook for the whole family as a sort of initiation ritual:

> In girls' novels young female protagonists are often apprenticed to mother figures that are engaged in cooking activities. Such novels typically emphasize cooking at the expense of eating, partaking in the politics by which girls learn to curtail their own desires and sacrifice for others. Cooking is a form of self-control and a way to prepare the female character for repressing inner needs, packaging the self and female body for the pleasure of others. (42)

Even more significant, then, is the stance taken by Ita, who not only never makes a sandwich nor picks up any culinary tool but also inspires adult women to abandon the kitchen and, with it, their traditional subordinate role in society. The little girl starts to wonder what goes on in the Big House of Men, but the women's answers make it clear that they do not know what it means to "make a budget" or "send documents via registered mail." The narration's open disdain for office workers (a topic also prominent in *Una fortunata catastrofe*) is a reaction to their common depiction in children's books, where the briefcase of the head of the family is a prestigious object, a counterweight to the humble apron that characterizes the housewife (Du Côté des Filles, *Quali modelli per le bambine?* 7). The job of the father in picturebooks is rarely described, but nonetheless the children always think it is very important and superior to the mother's labor (Du Côté des Filles, *Cosa vedono i bambini negli albi illustrati?* 4).[7]

Returning to the plot, Ita, dissatisfied and determined to discover the truth, hides in one of the trucks that carry the sandwiches and makes her way to the Big House of Men. Here, the men, surprised by the little girl's presence, find her a job: sharpening pencils, with which they can write important things in their "biannual, monthly, weekly, daily, bimonthly, and also annual papers." The first bitter surprise arrives with lunch: Ita, seeing the sandwiches, expects some compliments, but, instead, the men devour the food without comments. Women's work is deemed unworthy of praise, a low and humble chore, and therefore the men do not concern themselves with the sandwiches or the efforts of the cooks. To use Loft's words, Ita discovers "that these men give no recognition to the nourishing, creative, and life-sustaining work accomplished by the women, who painstakingly prepare sandwiches – raise children – in their cloistered, protected existence" (224).

In the meantime, Ita thinks she did right to leave the village, because now she has an "important job." She even tries to draw the men's attention to the sandwiches, but no one notices her or the deliciousness of the food. These scenes introduce the young readers

to the feminist criticism of ancillary, poorly paid, autonomy-lacking jobs, of which the secretary was the emblem. In this respect, it is significant to recall the position taken by the Italian feminist monthly *Effe*, which claimed that the "golden islands" of secretaries were in fact just "ghettos," and that the job was characterized by women's exploitation and subalternity (Maggiori).[7] Similarly, Ita realizes that sharpening pencils does not mean having a role in the men's work: she is not the one who writes, she is not the one who makes decisions, and therefore there is no emancipation. She also grows disappointed with the topics the men write about, as they are often otiose and irrelevant. Additionally, women never appear in their texts, even though in reality they carry out essential tasks.

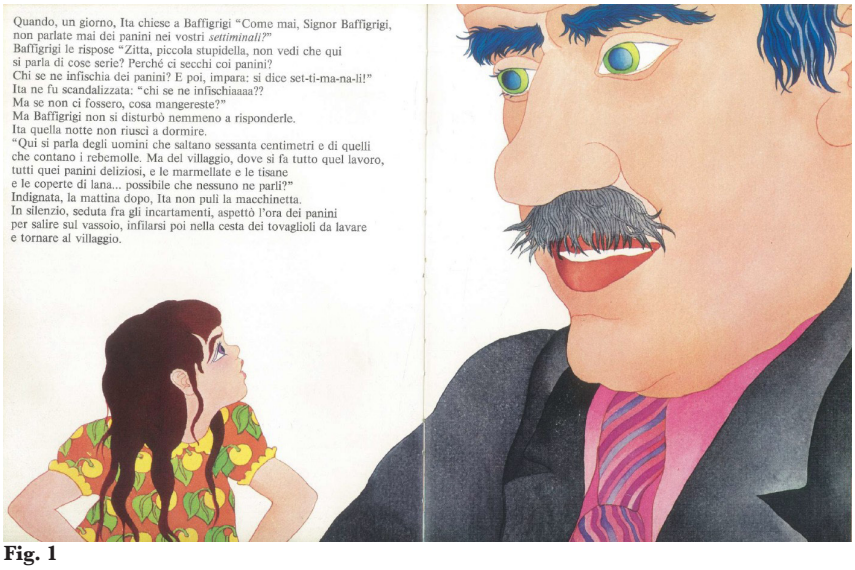

Fig. 1

Ita arguing with Mr. Baffigrigi

Ita's disdain harks back to the feminist distrust of traditional male culture: as many feminist theorists have observed, very few male thinkers had addressed the issue of female subalternity – for example, Kate Millet in *Sexual Politics* praised very few men, among which were Friedrich Engels, John Stuart Mill, and Jean Genet.

In a powerful scene (fig. 1), highlighted by the oblique composition of the accompanying image – the diagonal transmits force, dynamism, and rupture of balance (Boulaire, *Lire et choisir ses albums* 112-113) – Ita fully realizes the low regard in which the men hold the women and their work. The moment occurs in an exchange with Baffigrigi [Greymoustaches]:

> "How come, Mr. Greymoustaches, you never talk about sandwiches in your weekies?"

> "Shut up, you little fool, can't you see that we talk about serious things here? Why are you bothering us about sandwiches? Who cares about sandwiches? And then, learn: it's w-e-e-k-l-i-e-s!"
> "Who caaaaaaaaaaares?? But if they weren't there, what would you eat?"
> But Greymoustaches didn't even bother to answer her.
> That night Ita couldn't sleep.
> "Here they talk about men who jump sixty centimeters and those who count musical flats. But about the village, where all that work is done, all those delicious sandwiches, and jams and herbal teas and woolen blankets... can it be possible that no one talks about it?"

Outraged, Ita decides to return home and tell the women what is really going on in the Big House of Men and how no one cares about the sandwiches, their work, or the village. Shocked, the women reflect on Ita's words, becoming aware of their subalternity. Now, they have neither the time nor the energy to work in the kitchen: instead of competing to make the best sandwich, the women unite, talk to one another, and take political action, organizing the sandwiches strike.

The women's refusal to cook is a powerful, revolutionary action. Concerning the "sociocultural imperatives involving feeding," Daniel reports DeVault's and Murcott's observations that the mother's task of serving homemade meals to the family is considered vital to the health and welfare of the family itself (106-107). It is no coincidence that in children's books problematic families are frequently characterized by the children's disappointment in poorly prepared lunches, so different from the meals cooked with love (and hours of work) by idealized housewives (109). Furthermore, Daniel observes the persistence of the idea that "the good boy is the product of good mothering and good food," and therefore of the belief that mothers who refuse to cook are bad mothers, destined to raise bad children (109).

In *Storia di panini*, on the contrary, the women, inspired by a brave little girl, reject both cooking and the whole paradigm of the patriarchal, sexist society. The strike is therefore presented as courageous and necessary.[9] Precisely because of this new political awareness, "a strange and wonderful thing happened: the village began to grow." At first many men were outraged, but finally, "little by little, people started seeing in the streets of the village some dads playing with their children and some dads working together with the moms. Ita and all the other children were very happy about it."

Thus, *Storia di panini* concludes with a happy ending: the start of a new, more equal, and fairer society, without rigid distinctions based on gender (albeit clearly women-led). This ending is particularly interesting, as it is the product of a compromise between differing artistic and ideological needs. The resolution is very different from the one

proposed in *La vera storia dei bonobo con gli occhiali*, where the female bonobos, exasperated by the constant discrimination they experience, leave with their children to form a new, peaceful society without males. The story suggests that some male bonobos later decided to change their obnoxious ways and follow the women, but this is presented as a mere possibility. In *Storia di panini*, on the contrary, the children are delighted at the prospect of living with their mothers and fathers, and in the last picture, they are seen spending time together with both parents, even though it is clear that not all men have agreed to live in this new women-led society. Interestingly, in a recent interview,[10] illustrator Saccaro disclosed that the original draft ended differently, with a separatist all-female society. Saccaro had objected to this ending, and ultimately Turin and the editorial staff of Des Femmes, partner of the co-edition project, agreed to revise it.

Cute Ribbons and Feminist Signs: An Analysis of Saccaro's Illustrations

As mentioned earlier, picturebooks are hybrid literary objects – Boulaire calls them iconotexts (*Lire et choisir ses albums*, 13). It is therefore essential to pay particular attention to the images, not only because in picturebooks the illustrations are usually predominant but also because in children's books pictures may be more conservative and sexist than the text (Biemmi, *Educazione sessista* 139). Thus, it is especially interesting to analyze what a socially engaged book like *Storia di panini* offers.

Leafing through the book, it is clear that, despite the story's revolutionary nature, the accompanying images are aesthetically pleasant and superficially traditional. The rebellious protagonist herself wears a dress with a fruit print, has long hair embellished with ribbons, and dons white socks and cute shoes. This choice is characteristic of Dalla parte delle bambine, which used captivating stories, pleasant illustrations, and subversions of common children's literature tropes to make their feminist books attractive and appealing to young readers. In the same way, the visual (or iconic) narrator closely follows the textual (or verbal) narrator – to use Boulaire's[11] words – focusing on Ita with a traditional third-person perspective. There are some notable exceptions, however, starting with the first page of the book.

The tale opens with a view of the village from above, which immediately suggests that the story is not just Ita's, but that of a whole society. The smallness of the nameless village is effectively conveyed by the flowers that overwhelm it. Similarly, the journey to the Big House of Men is also shown from an outside perspective, allowing the reader to observe a cold, technological world, with giant screens reminiscent of Orwellian supervision (it is however worth mentioning that the protagonist, just arrived, describes the Big House as "definitely beautiful"). The pages relating to Ita's stay at the Big House also feature some disturbing images: Ita's pencil sharpener (also shown on the back cover) has a vaguely anthropomorphic and monstrous shape (fig. 2), with clearly recognizable eyes and

mouth, and some of the other office tools look threatening and ominous. The fact that Ita, while sharpening pencils, is almost covered (and thus again rendered invisible) by the by-products of her work helps to create an unpleasant atmosphere.

Fig. 2

Ita sharpening pencils in the Big House of Men

At the beginning of the book, Ita is always depicted below the adults, either the mothers who are not interested in her questions, or the towering men in the Big House. It is only after she returns home that Ita finally occupies the top of the page, rising above the other characters. When she communicates what she has discovered, the women look at her and listen carefully in a remarkable change from earlier in the story. Inspired by the child's words, the adult women themselves take a social and political stand. Ita briefly disappears – she is missing from the page about the sandwiches strike – but the reader finds her immediately afterward, a symbol of the development and new visibility of the female world: Ita's size gets bigger, exceeding the borders of the page that is now too small to contain her.

In the book's last picture (fig. 3), the viewpoint changes to a bird's-eye view of the village, reconnecting to the beginning of the story, and Ita herself is no longer visible. She was the catalyst for change, but this is no longer just her tale: it is the story of the liberation of the women and of the whole village. This final image is particularly important. Firstly, it is drawn in a different style, and, on the surface, it may be considered naïve. In truth, it is very complex, and children must look at it for a long time to grasp all the details. In the picture, mothers, fathers, and children are living together happily. For example, men sell

(or offer) sandwiches and sweets, little girls and boys climb a tree (a pastime often reserved for males in picturebooks), children watch a play together, an all-female musical group performs a concert, and some couples spend time together. In general, girls and boys, men and women, are engaged in various activities; there are no longer rigid gender-based distinctions.

Fig. 3

End scene – the village, after the sandwich strike and the change

In sum, Adela Turin offers children a captivating story, using pleasant illustrations and subversions of common children's literature tropes, such as the themes of the absent father, employed at his important workplace, or the little girl elated at the idea of cooking lunch for the whole family. At the same time, the author was attentive to the adult readers, a significant element in most children's literature (Hintz and Tribunella 6-7). The consideration for the adult audience – in this case, progressive mothers – is evident in the allusions to the Italian feminist movement: for example, in the last picture a sign reads "Edizioni delle donne" ("Women's Editions"), the name of an actual Italian publishing house, while a woman is writing on a wall the feminist slogan "Io sono mia" ("I belong to myself"). Of course, these inclusions also provided children the opportunity to familiarize themselves with these concepts. Additionally, this book offers young readers the opportunity to reflect on the concept of invisible labor. Domestic work is indispensable and tiring, but because it is invisible (the village is literally hidden by the vegetation), not only do men not care about it, but they are not even able to think about it. Only political and social self-awareness enables the village to grow and become visible, allowing the

creation of a new, fairer society.

Conclusion

While the historical context of second-wave feminism cannot be ignored and some of the book's content is outdated (e.g., the complete dichotomy between men and women), *Storia di panini* still manages to make several important points. Today, nearly fifty years after second-wave feminism, many people wonder whether women have ever really left the kitchen, and various answers are possible. Certainly, the association between femininity and cooking (and the importance of teaching it to children) has never disappeared, as is evident in the toy and publishing industries, as well as in advertising and popular media. Concerning the issue of modern sexist toys, Benn writes:

> These types of advertisements are consistently forced onto girls and not boys. Traditionally, girls are pushed into home-maker roles, taking on tasks such as cooking, cleaning, child-care, etc. Even at a young age, girls are being groomed to unquestionably take on these roles suggested by these products. (17)

And a little further on, commenting a commercial for "Barbie Gourmet Kitchen" (a sparkly pink playset).

> This is a prime example of manded altercasting because the influence is aggressive; the obvious purpose of the product and its commercial is to push girls into the specific role of homemaker, as no boys are present in many of these types of commercials. When young girls view that commercial or play with that product, they're being altercasted into associating the play with their self-images (18).

Concerning children's books, Daniel (105-106), quoting Duindam, notes the permanence of the connection between femininity and domesticity, as well as the scarcity of men engaged in domestic chores (including cooking for the whole family). Regarding contemporary women's domestic labor, already in the 1980s *The New York Times* observed that women may have left the house, but they were not out of the kitchen:

> A quarter of a century after Betty Friedan wrote "The Feminine Mystique," the book credited with igniting the feminist movement, women are still doing almost all the cooking and grocery shopping.
> […]

> [Women] are still the primary care-givers and the people who pay attention to how, when, what and where their families eat. (Burros)

And yet, browsing through magazines, newspapers, bookshops, and cyberspace, from America to India, from teenage bloggers to experienced journalists, there is a common condemnation of (and guilt expressed by) women abandoning the kitchens, allegedly leaving their families and children at the mercy of fast-food companies and increasing the risk of obesity. This problematic assumption ignores the responsibilities of fathers, the affordability of healthy food, and the concurrent causes of weight gain. The deeply-rooted bond between femininity and cooking seems ubiquitous: in the 1990s Nigella Lawson climbed the best-sellers' chart with a book that taught its reader how to become a "domestic goddess" through the art of baking;[12] in the middle 2000s *The Guardian* published an article named "Why a woman's place is in the kitchen," whose abstract read: "Back in the 1970s, when she launched the feminist magazine Spare Rib, Rosie Boycott was adamant that women should not waste their time cooking. Now she wonders if she went a bit too far..." (Boycott); in a recent Indian survey, 52% of the young interviewees declared that a woman's main role is taking care of household chores – including cooking – and raising children (FP Staff). And, of course, in countless blogs and forums, women rejoice in narrating "the smell of the bread baked and cooked in the home oven" (Lipperini 81). In the meantime, the Council of Europe has highlighted the permanence of the unequal division of domestic labor and its harmful consequences for women's work-life balance and well-being ("Sexism: See It. Name It. Stop It").[13]

As important as it is to counter unhealthy eating habits – even Adela Turin, in Melaracconti, presents the joy of cooking with children delicious homemade food, contrasting it with the blandness of canned food (quick and easy!) – there is something disturbing about the renewed conviction that the kitchen (and the home) is the natural place for female creativity and self-realization. This resurgence is especially concerning given that data provided by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) demonstrate that women "still do most unpaid work" (190), with Italy being one of the countries where the gender gap is particularly egregious. As Lipperini observes: "How creative all this is. How industrious. How frightening it is to condemn themselves, and go back to being the proud owners of those hands that are always active, that sew and embroider and never stop" (82).

In the midst of current trends, there is still value in an alternative narrative – especially aimed at children – in which women abandon the kitchen, discover solidarity and political action, and enable the creation of a fairer society. Thus, *Storia di panini* still proves to be able to offer revolutionary and stimulating content for its readers, even nearly fifty years after its publication.

Works Cited

Bays, Jan Chozen. *Mindful Eating: A Guide to Rediscovering a Healthy and Joyful Relationship with Food.* Rev. ed., Shambhala Publications, 2017.

Belotti, Elena Gianini. *Dalla parte delle bambine: l'influenza dei condizionamenti sociali nella formazione del ruolo femminile nei primi anni di vita*. Feltrinelli, 1973.

---, editor. *Sessismo nei libri per bambini*. Dalla parte delle bambine, 1978.

Benn, Abigail. *The Pink and Blue Problem: Altercasting in Gendered Advertising*. 2020. Arcadia University, Bachelor thesis. *ScholarWorks@Arcadia*, https://scholarworks.arcadia.edu/showcase/2020/media_communication/1. Accessed 5 February 2024.

Biemmi, Irene. "Not only Princesses and Knights: How Gender Image Changes in Italian Picture Nooks." *The Borders of Fantasia*, edited by Antonella Cagnolati, Fahrenhouse, 2015, pp. 99-118.

---. *Educazione sessista. Stereotipi di genere nei libri delle elementari*. Rev. ed., eBook, Rosenberg & Sellier, 2017.

Blackford, Holly. "Recipe for Reciprocity and Repression: The Politics of Cooking and Consumption in Girls' Coming-of-age Literature." *Critical Approaches to Food in Children's Literature*, edited by Kara K. Keeling and Scott T. Pollard, eBook, Routledge, 2009, pp. 41-55.

Boulaire, Cécile. "Les deux narrateurs à l'œuvre dans l'album: tentatives théoriques." *L'Album ou le parti pris des images*, edited by Viviane Alary and Nelly Chabrol Gagne. Presses Universitaires Blaise-Pascal, 2012, pp. 21-28.

---. *Lire et choisir ses albums*. Didier jeunesse, 2018.

Boycott, Rosie. "Why a woman's place is in the kitchen." *The Guardian*, 26 April 2007, www.theguardian.com/world/2007/apr/26/gender.lifeandhealth. Accessed 5 February 2024.

Burros, Marian. "Women: Out of the House But Not Out of the Kitchen." *New York Times*, 24 February 1988. www.nytimes.com/1988/02/24/garden/women-out-of-the-house-but-not-out-of-the-kitchen.html. Accessed 30 April 2021.

Daniel, Carolyn. *Voracious Children: Who Eats Whom in Children's Literature*. eBook, Routledge, 2006.

DeVault, Marjorie L. *Feeding the Family: The Social Organisation of Caring as Gendered Work*. University of Chicago Press, 1991.

Donzel, Marie. "DU COTÉ DES FILLES. Rencontre avec Adela Turin." *Éditions Le Manuscrit*, 2001. https://web.archive.org/web/20061204063118/http://www.manuscrit.com/Edito/invites/Pages/MarsJeun_ATurin.asp. Accessed 31 January 2023.

Du Côté des Filles. *Quali modelli per le bambine? Una ricerca sugli albi illustrati.* 1998.

---. *Cosa vedono i bambini negli albi illustrati? Risposte sugli stereotipi*. 1998.

Duindam, Vincent. "Men in the Household: Caring Fathers." *Gender, Power and the Household*, edited by Linda McKie et al., Macmillan, 1999, pp. 43-59.

FP Staff. "52% of Young India Thinks a Woman's Place is in the Kitchen, Shows Survey." *Firstpost*, 23 January 2015, www.firstpost.com/india/52-of-young-india-thinks-a-womans-place-is-in-the-kitchen-shows-survey-2059039.html. Accessed 5 February 2024.

Fraustino, Lisa R. "The Apple of Her Eye: The Mothering Ideology Fed by Best-selling Trade Picture Books." *Critical Approaches to Food in Children's Literature*, edited by Kara K. Keeling and Scott T. Pollard, eBook, Routledge, 2009, pp. 57-72.

Hamelin. *I libri per ragazzi che hanno fatto l'Italia*. Hamelin, 2011.

Heywood, Sophie. "Fighting 'On the Side of Little Girls': Feminist Children's Book Publishing in France After 1968." *Nottingham French Studies*, vol. 59, no. 2, July 2020, pp. 206–20. https://doi.org/10.3366/nfs.2020.0285.

Hintz, Carrie, and Eric Tribunella. *Reading Children's Literature: A Critical Introduction*. Bedford/St. Martin's, 2013.

Keeling, Kara K., and Scott T. Pollard. "Introduction: Food in Children's Literature." *Critical approaches to food in children's literature*, eBook, Routledge, 2009, pp. 3-18.

Lawson, Nigella. *How to Be a Domestic Goddess: Baking and the Art of Comfort Cooking*. Chatto and Windus, 1998.

Lipperini, Loredana. *Ancora dalla parte delle bambine*. Feltrinelli, 2007.

Loft, Leonore. "Eve Reconceived: Religious perspectives in feminist children's literature in France." *Women's Studies International Forum*, vol. 13, no. 3, Jan. 1990, pp. 221–28. https://doi.org/10.1016/0277-5395(90)90007-k.

Maggiori, Sandra. "Le segretarie. La catena di montaggio." *Effe*, vol. 3, no. 2, March 1975.

Millett, Kate. *Sexual Politics*. Doubleday, 1970.

Murcott, Anne. "On the Social Significance of the 'Cooked Dinner' in South Wales." *Social Science Information*, vol. 21, no. 4–5, July 1982, pp. 677–96. https://doi.org/10.1177/053901882021004011.

OECD. "Gender Inequality in Unpaid Work." *The Pursuit of Gender Equality: An Uphill Battle*, OECD Publishing, 2017, pp. 189-97. OECD*iLibrary*, https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264281318-18-en.

Pederzoli, Roberta. "La traduzione letteraria per l'infanzia in una prospettiva di genere: alcune riflessioni a partire dalla collana 'dalla parte delle bambine'/'du côté des petites filles." *Minding the Gap: Studies in Linguistic and Cultural Exchange: for Rosa Maria Bollettieri Bosinelli, volume II*, edited by Chris Rundle, et al., Bononia University Press, 2011, pp. 545-555.

---. "Adela Turin e la collana Dalla parte delle bambine. Storia di alcuni albi illustrati militanti fra Italia e Francia, passato e presente." *Tessere trame Narrare storie. Le donne e la scrittura per l'infanzia*, edited by Antonella Cagnolati, Aracne, 2013, pp. 263-282.

Salviati, Carla I. *Raccontare destini. La fiaba come materia prima dell'immaginario di ieri e di oggi*. Einaudi, 2002.

Scarpi, Paolo. *Il senso del cibo. Mondo antico e riflessi contemporanei*. Sellerio, 2005.

"Sexism: See It. Name It. Stop It." *Human Rights Channel*, human-rights-channel.coe.int/stop-sexism-en.html. Accessed 5 February 2024.

Turin, Adela, and Nella Bosnia. *Arthur and Clementine*. Writers and Readers Publishing Cooperative, 1976.

---. *Arturo e Clementina*. Dalla parte delle bambine, 1976.

---. *A Fortunate Catastrophe*. Writers and Readers Publishing Cooperative, 1976.
---. *La vera storia dei bonobo con gli occhiali*. Dalla parte delle bambine, 1976.
---. *The Real Story of the Bonobos Who Wore Glasses*. Writers and Readers Publishing Cooperative, 1976.
---. *Rosaconfetto*. Dalla parte delle bambine, 1975.
---. *Sugarpink Rose*. Writers and Readers Publishing Cooperative, 1976.
---. *Una fortunata catastrofe*. Dalla parte delle bambine, 1975.
Turin, Adela, and Margherita Saccaro. *The Breadtime Story*. Writers and Readers Publishing Cooperative, 1977.
---. *Storia di panini*. Dalla parte delle bambine, 1976.
Turin, Adela, and Sylvie Selig. *Melaracconti*, Dalla parte delle bambine, 1977.
---. *Of Cannon and Caterpillars*. Writers and Readers Publishing Cooperative, 1977.
Williams, Stacy J. "A Feminist Guide to Cooking." *Contexts*, vol. 13, no. 3, Aug. 2014, pp. 59–61. https://doi.org/10.1177/1536504214545763.

Notes

[1] The "Andersen - Il mondo dell'infanzia" prize is promoted by the homonymous Italian review. It is not affiliated with the Hans Christian Andersen prize promoted by IBBY.

[2] *Rosaconfetto, Una fortunata catastrofe, Arturo e Clementina, La vera storia dei bonobo con gli occhiali.*

[3] Quote taken from e-mail interview with Nella Bosnia on 24 November 2016. Translation provided by me.

[4] All the following English titles are the translations proposed by Writers and Readers Publishing Cooperative in the 1970s.

[5] Regarding this peculiar republishing project, I recommend Pederzoli's essay "La traduzione letteraria per l'infanzia in una prospettiva di genere: alcune riflessioni a partire dalla collana 'dalla parte delle bambine'/'du côté des petites filles.'"

[6] This picturebook, like all the others published by Dalla parte delle bambine, does not use page numbers.

[7] These observations were made by Adela Turin and sociologist Sylvie Cromer in the 1990s, following the research project "Attention album!" (organized by Turin's association Du Côté des Filles), which studied the 1994 production of picturebooks in France, Spain, and Italy, and then investigated how a sample of young readers interpreted the illustrations from a gender perspective. The results were published in booklets distributed by Du Côté des Filles in French, Spanish, and Italian.

[8] http://efferivistafemminista.it/2014/07/la-catena-di-montaggio/

[9] Concerning this, it is interesting to note that American feminists had actually organized kitchen strikes. Williams (59) remembers the one held in 1970 in New York City, when feminists marched with signs reading "Don't Cook Dinner. Starve a Rat Tonight."

[10] From telephonic interview with Margherita Saccaro, 15 February 2021.

[11] Les deux narrateurs à l'œuvre dans l'album.

[12] Lawson, Nigella. *How to Be a Domestic Goddess: Baking and the Art of Comfort Cooking.* Chatto and Windus, 1998.

[13] https://www.coe.int/en/web/human-rights-channel/stop-sexism

Humor, Hunger and Humanity: Food and Eating in the Works of Astrid Lindgren

Björn Sundmark

They ate and ate and ate. It was the feast of a lifetime, and they would never forget it.
(Lindgren, *The White Rose Rescue* 111)

In Astrid Lindgren's works – just as in real life – food is something both pleasurable and satisfying – and necessary! Food in Lindgren is not decoration, but integral to the fiction: hunger and/or excess drive the plot forward, the food scenes are meaningful, eating is part of characterization and world-making, and feasts and picnic build friendship and community. Other children's authors may explore the fictional uses of food and eating too, but few, if any, indulge in food in such rich and varied ways as Lindgren. I also believe that a "kitchen approach" to Lindgren's fictions can yield new insights into her work, as well as provide a critical perspective on food and children's fiction in general. For this purpose, a section on previous research on Lindgren and food will be presented, followed by a summary of the still emerging critical discourse on food and (children's) fiction. After these food criticism "hors d'oeuvres" the chapter will continue with the main course of this chapter: an exploration of food and eating in Lindgren's books. The aim is to show how Lindgren, with the help of the food motif, addresses the themes of humor, hunger and humanity.

Lindgren Food Criticism

Lindgren's appetite for fictional food and eating has not gone unnoticed. In her inventory of the food motif in Lindgren in *Läckergommarnas rike* ["Gourmet Kingdom"] Maria

Nikolajeva fittingly labels Lindgren "matmästaren" ("the food master/maestro"). In a subsequent publication, *From Mythic to Linear: Time in Children's Literature*, Nikolajeva returns to this material and shows how food and meals function structurally and symbolically in the narrative. Another critic, Eva-Marie Metcalf, regards the food scenes as part of Lindgren's professional skill as a storyteller for children, giving children what they want – food (95). Vivi Edström, moreover, analyses Pippi Longstocking's "Gargantuan" tall tales about eating in the context of her "lies and boasting" (123-124) and identifies the farcical aspects and sensual pleasures of Emil's culinary pranks (161-167; 174-178). A more recent contribution by Anne Malewski focuses on the Pippi Longstocking and Karlsson trilogies and argues that the positive attitude to excessive eating to be found in these books "is a rare phenomenon in children's literature. There are not many examples in classic children's stories where food is as essential and freely available and gluttony as unrepentantly joyful" (114).

Ulla Lundquist's historical and biographical reading of *Pippi Longstocking* represents another approach to food in Lindgren's work. Among other things, Lundquist traces the manifold uses of food in *Pippi Longstocking* to Lindgren's preoccupation with food (and its rationing) during World War II. Lindgren's published *War Diaries* are indeed much about food, but in rather unexpected ways; there is rationing, of course, but if anything, Lindgren repeatedly stresses how *well* her family, and Sweden as a whole, fares in comparison to people in other nations. At Christmas 1940, Lindgren writes "We stuffed ourselves, just as usual. We must be the only nation in Europe able to do that, at least to that degree" (69). In other words, the food excesses in *Pippi Longstocking* is like Lindgren's (and other Swedish families) in relation to the hungering families of war-ravaged Europe. In other words, the food scenes in *Pippi Longstocking* do not seem to be a humorous and subversive reaction to any personal plight, but rather to the looming threat of deprivation, and even more so to the tribulations of others. In any case, food and eating is certainly a concern for Lindgren in the period when she is writing her first books. In this context it can be mentioned that her second published book, *Kerstin och jag* ("Kerstin and I" – not translated into English), issued the same year as *Pippi Longstocking* (1945), about the twin teen sisters Barbro and Kerstin, takes place on a farm (Lindgren called it her "peasant book" in a letter to her parents) and revolves as much around food production and farming, as of falling in love and growing up.

Lindgren's biographer, Margareta Strömstedt, brings up another formative wartime experience, World War I – a conflict in which Sweden was not directly involved, but one of food shortages and inequality between different classes of people. Lindgren and her siblings did not have to go hungry, but many others did. As a child, Lindgren took note. For her, the packed school meal, for instance, mercilessly displayed who had enough food to eat and who had not (Strömstedt 163). According to Strömstedt, Lindgren makes

creative use of such memories in the *Mardie* books, and even more poignantly in the short story "The Red Bird." In this dark fairy tale, the orphaned siblings, Matthew and Anna are scorned and shamed for their poverty:

> [W]hen it was time to eat their lunch packet, both Matthew and Anna were ashamed. Where they had only a few cold potatoes, the other children had bacon or cheese sandwiches, and Joel, the grocer's boy, had pancakes, a whole bundle of pancakes. Matthew and Anna stared at Joel's pancakes until their eyes grew shiny, and Joel said, "Little paupers, never seen food before?" (unpag.)

Fittingly for a fairy tale that opens with the subverted fairy tale-formula "Long time ago in the days of poverty" the two children die from cold and hunger at the end of the story (alternatively pass through a door in the snowy forest that leads "into the everlasting spring of Sunnymead").

So, although she did not have to go hungry herself either as a child, nor as a housewife during WWII, Lindgren shows a keen and commiserating eye for those who hungered. The one time in her life when she was quite poor, and at times went hungry, was when she worked as an underpaid office girl in Stockholm in the 1920's (Strömstedt 208-212). Lindgren's own account of this period in the short article "Jag läste Hamsun" ("I read Hamsun") is well worth quoting, not least because it shows how she identifies with the starving protagonist of Knut Hamsun's autobiographical novel *Hunger* (1890) and how she savors its absurd humor.

> Next Sunday I sat under the bird-cherry tree and read *Hunger*. And everything led to an intensive feeling of happiness over this book and of the young Hamsun and everyone else who wandered hungry through the cities of this world. Like me, for example. Well, well, I wasn't starving nearly as much as Hamsun who was over there in Kristiania [Oslo] chewing on a piece of wood. Here in Stockholm it was more like never having enough to eat. But it was possible to identify with that Kristiania madman and wonder how he had managed to come up with such a moving and incredibly funny book about hunger. How I laughed when I sat on my park bench; I had to hold up the book before my face so that people passing wouldn't think me crazy. (81, my translation)

In her article, Lindgren specifically points to *Hunger* as an inspiration to the tall tales, exaggerations and lying in *Pippi Longstocking*, but the influence may go even deeper. It is not

unlikely that the obsessive and absurd hunger fantasies in Hamsun's book also might have inspired some of the humorous representations of food and eating in *Pippi Longstocking*.

Theoretical Approaches to Food and (Children's) Literature

There are of course many other ways in which Lindgren's – or any author's – fictional representations of food may be analyzed. And conversely, there are numerous ways in which social and cultural phenomena surrounding the consumption of food can be "read" as meaningful narratives. The cultural and literary study of food can be traced to sociology, anthropology, linguistics/semiotics and sociologically inspired literary studies. The centrality of food to social theory is apparent already in Norbert Elias's idea of a general "civilizing process" from 1939, in which meals and etiquette play an important role. Likewise, eating (and humor) are instrumental to Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of carnival as a social institution, as well as of carnival's attendant literary mode, grotesque realism. With semiotics and structuralism the analysis of food in culture took another step. Roland Barthes, for instance, argues that food can be seen as a "system of communication, a body of images, a protocol of usages, situations and behavior" (21). And as Barthes, and anthropologists like Claude Lévi-Strauss, Mary Douglas, and Edmund Leach show, the preparation and consumption of food, and the taboos surrounding what you can and cannot eat are deeply meaningful culturally and socially. In other words, food is a rich signifier (or *can* be, I should hastily add – sometimes a banana is just a banana!).

Clearly a "social" (or socializing) approach can be particularly fruitful in relation to children's literature, since social codes are often explicit, and presented as imperatives in literature for children. As Carolyn Daniel notes, "children must … learn all sorts of rules about food and eating. Most important, they must know who eats whom. Food events in children's literature are clearly intended to teach children how to be human" (13). A fine example of the "who eats whom"-agenda can be found in Edmund Leach's article "Babar's Civilization Analyzed." One of the categories Leach applies in the analysis of social distance between the different animals is precisely the edible/inedible dichotomy, expressed in terms of "edible strangers", "edible neighbors," "edible strangers," "inedible strangers," "inedible family members" (181).

Besides social theory, psychoanalytical and psychological approaches have also contributed to the analysis of food in fiction. Bruno Bettelheim's controversial but influential *The Uses of Enchantment* is a prime example. A central notion in psychoanalytical theory is that early experiences of food and eating (and hunger) during the "oral stage" (0-3 year) are deeply formative and profoundly affect our psychological development. If left ungratified (or over-indulged) at this development stage the child is prone to develop psychological disorders, it is claimed. Bettelheim maintains, for instance, that Hansel and Gretel suffer from "oral greediness" and "fixations", and hence are largely to blame

themselves for their dire situation (159-166). All psychological food-and-fiction analyses are not as orthodox and unapologetic as this – Nikolajeva's interpretation of food in Lindgren is one example – but it is not unusual that analyses of gluttony and/or the "providing mother figure" are presented in "psychoanalytic-light" terms.

An implicit psychological frame of reference might go some way towards explaining why some children's critics interpret food as "the sex of children's literature" (Katz 192; Carrington & Harding 1-2). Or suggest that "an appetite [sexual desire] is absent, perhaps displaced by that other primal and atavistic pleasure of eating" (Briggs 27-28). Other critics beg to differ and argue that food is indeed important in adult literature too and that it is misleading to view food and appetite in mainly (psycho)sexual terms (see Kara K. Keeling and Scott Pollard 3). It could certainly be argued that in life as in fiction, food is more central and fundamental to discourse than intercourse.

Humor, Hunger and Humanity

To be sure, food can represent so many things other than displaced sexual appetite: hunger, satisfaction, excess, enjoyment, work, play, power, belonging, alienation, identity, conflict, life, and death – and many other things. In Astrid Lindgren's works food is present in many different contexts and for different purposes. Very often food is associated with either the making of food, either as work or play (or both). There are also a great many descriptions of eating or being hungry. Thematically, the food motif can be understood in terms of humor, hunger, and humanity. In the end, the aim of this chapter is to clarify the ways in which Lindgren uses the food motif to explore these themes.

Fig. 1

Bertil and Simon Small share a meatball

Of course, the themes tend to be interrelated in complex ways. In the story *Simon Small Moves in* (1949) the boy Bertil gives Simon Small a meatball to eat (1949). Motif-wise it is simple, but the eating here is both about hunger (Simon is ravenous), humor (the play on relative size), and humanity (the sharing of food; Bertil's act of kindness). Ilon Wikland's illustration from the picture book version reinforce the theme of sharing, with both boys holding the meatball between them while eating it. Precisely because the themes of hunger, humor and

humanity tend to overlap and blend, the chapter is instead divided into on the one hand the making of food and, on the other, the act of eating.

Humor and the Preparation, Cooking and Selling of Food

In Lindgren's "farm" books – *Kerstin och jag* [Kerstin and I], the Emil series and the Bullerby books (sometimes referred to as the Noisy Village-series in English), both adults and children grow and make food. They harvest and fish and pick berries, they cook and bake, they prepare, serve, and eat. It is everyday activity, and holiday feast, and it is hard to distinguish between food work and food play. In the first Emil book, for example, Emil's mother and the maid, Lina, are making ready for a party on the farm, Katthult. They "prepared [meatballs and] spareribs of pork and calves' liver and salmagundi and apple pie and smoked eel and stews and puddings and two giant cheesecakes and a special kind of sausage that was so delicious that people drove all the way from Vimmerby and Hultsfred so as to have some" (37). In this example, the description and naming of different foods conjures up an atmosphere of plenty and industriousness – smell and taste is activated.

An even more elaborate food scene is evoked in a Christmas preparation scene from "The Great Obliteration Party" from the second Emil book, quoted here, *in extenso*:

> Now there was hustle and bustle in Katthult, for they celebrated Christmas there thoroughly. First of all, there was a great wash day. Lina and Krösa-Maja stood on the icy jetty by the brook and did the rinsing. Lina cried and blew on her frozen fingertips which were very painful. Then they slaughtered the great Christmas pig, and after that there was scarcely room for anything or anybody else in the kitchen, Lina observed. For there were the black puddings, pork sausages, oatmeal sausages, meat sausages, and potato sausages crammed among bacon preserves, spare ribs of pork, and I don't know what else. Juniper berry juice was brewed by Emil's mother in the brewhouse, in a big wooden vat, for the Christmas celebrations. And enough cakes and bread were baked to make you dizzy – rye bread, malt bread, saffron bread, wheaten bread, gingerbread, and delicious rolls, meringues, and pastries – oh, beyond number. --- And Emil's father went to the barn and brought back a couple of sheaves of oats which he had saved for the sparrows. 'It's a stupid thing to do,' he said, 'but after all, the sparrows must have their Christmas.' (83)

As wonderful and gastronomically evocative as this description is, I do think that the illustration by Björn Berg also perfectly captures the "hustle and bustle" of the scene,

and even expands on it. Everyone in the household is energetically preparing food: Emil and Ida are making ginger snaps, Lina is baking, Alma is taking out bread from the oven, Anton is tasting the broth, Alfred enters with fire-wood, and Old Krösa-Maja is grinding coffee beans. Even the cat takes an interest. The description is humorous in its excessive listing, but also warm and humane, with the whole household engaged in the preparations and working together. It is worth noting too that generosity and food-sharing is even extended to the sparrows.

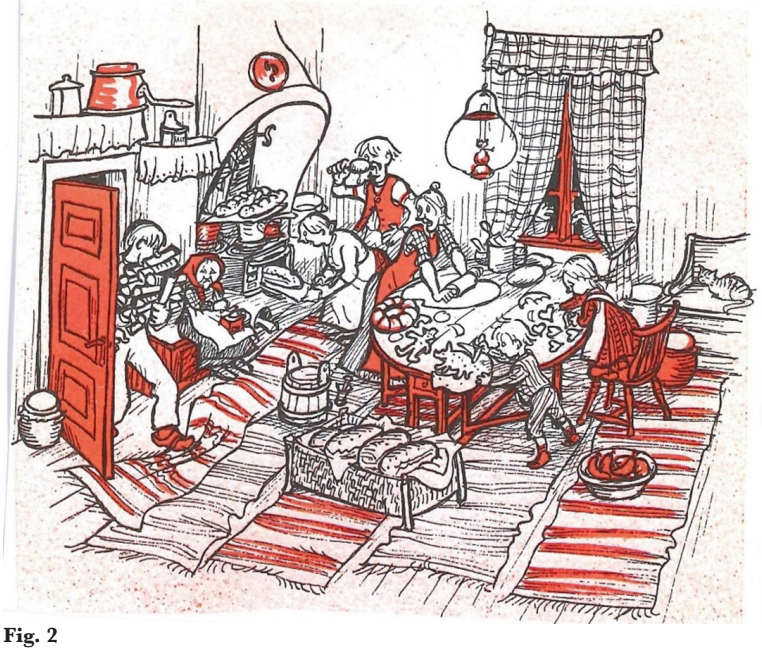

Fig. 2

Christmas preparations in Katthult

If the Svensson household described here can is an example of a collective food-making effort, *Brenda Brave* (1950) represents more of a solitary achievement. In this story, seven-year-old Brenda sells candy in the market square a few weeks before Christmas. The reason Brenda is there at all is that her grandmother has hurt her leg and is bedridden. Later in the story, Brenda also cooks the Christmas dinner. Food is central to this story: food as work (child labour, perhaps, for the cynically minded), and cooking as an essential skill when growing up. But food transactions are also shown to be acts of friendship and solidarity – between Brenda and her grandmother, certainly, but also between Brenda and the market goers, who flock to Brenda's candy stall. Unlike H. C. Andersen's Match-girl, Brenda sells her wares to the monied, yet (!) helpful townspeople, she survives the cold,

and returns to a living grandmother. The message is that, as human beings, we help each other, even if we are small (and, more remarkably perhaps, even if we are big!).

In the chapter "When it rains" in the second Bullerby book, Lisa quarrels with Anna and Britta, and ends up not knowing what to do. Her mother gives her the idea to make a sponge cake, something she has never done before. The baking is successful, however:

> I made a sponge cake all by myself, and very good it was too --- Oh, how exciting it was when mum took my cake out of the oven! She tipped it out onto a clean tea towel and it was all light brown and spongy. I had no idea I was so good at making sponge cakes. (81)

She then hastily "forgives" her friends so that she can offer them some of the cake. Soon after, Anna and Britta rush home to ask if they too can make sponge cake. In this example work turns out to be fun, and also leads to reconciliation between Lisa and her friends.

A more anarchic approach to making food is displayed in the Pippi Longstocking books (Ingrid Vang Nyman's illustration here is from the 1947 picturebook version). With Pippi work becomes play. With enormous energy she makes pancakes and bakes huge quantities of cookies. She is not playing with the food. Yet the way she prepares the food turns work into play. Unlike the well-behaved Brenda or the Bullerby children, Pippi does not follow instructions or recipes. She breaks conventions as easily as eggs, and gets yolk in her hair when making pancakes. As we can see in Vang Nyman's illustrations she has her kitchen utensils all over the place, and Mr Nilsson has to hide under a pancake during the flipping frenzy. But the result is "fantastic" according to Tommy and Annika. In another scene, Pippi rolls out dough on the kitchen

Fig. 3

Pippi making pancakes

floor, for "the counter is just not big enough when you are baking at least five hundred cookies." Pippi's baking is both carnivalesque, excessive, and joyful.

Another example of playing with food (or food as play) is in the episode in *Mardie* (or Meg as she is referred to in some English translations), when Mardie and her sister Lisbet are sitting astride a rooftop with a picknick basket full of meatballs and small sausages between. But before they have time to eat any of it, Abe, the next-door boy, appears. He plays a trick on them: "Shall we have a bet that you can't chuck a meatball straight into my mouth however hard you try?" (33). They think it is a marvelous idea, "No one but Abe could think of so many nice things to do" (33). They keep throwing, and in the end, he has eaten all their meatballs. A subtle twist to this food-episode is of course that Mardie and Lisbet can afford to play with the food – their family is well to do, and they won't have to go hungry, while Abe, who is a working-class adolescent, also sees this as an opportunity to get an extra meal.

This tactic is in some ways similar to that employed by Karlsson when he tricks Smidge out of his toffees and chocolate in the chapter "Karlsson makes a bet" in the first Karlsson book. If Karlsson wins, Smidge has to give him his candy; if Smidge wins, he is cajoled into giving Karlsson the treat anyway (to comfort the disgruntled loser); and when neither of these tactics works, Karlsson simply takes the prize anyway, swallows it and says that it has "disappeared by magic" (64-72). The same episode also has an example of making food, or "medicine," rather – "Karlsson-on-the-Roof's cock-a-doodle-moo medicine". Karlsson needs it since he says he is feeling ill, and Smidge makes the medicine according to Karlsson's recipe:

> He took some acid drops and raspberry jelly sweets and toffees and mixed them in a cup with the same number of squares of chocolate, and then he crumbled the almond cookies and sprinkled them on top. (65)

For Karlsson the medicine-making is of course just another way of tricking Smidge into giving him as much as possible of the sweets and candy.

It is interesting to compare this scene with the medicine-making scene in the second Pippi Longstocking book, *Pippi Goes Aboard*. Since Lindgren's two supernatural companions, Karlsson and Pippi, are each other's antithesis in so many ways – Karlsson is egotistical while Pippi is a helper; Karlson takes, Pippi gives – it is logical that the events unfold differently. In *Pippi Goes Aboard*, the medicine is not about tricking Tommy and Annika into giving her candy, but about Pippi making and tasting her own medicine. At the pharmacy Pippi asks for "six pints of medicine," and specifies that it should be good for "whooping cough and blisters on the feet and tummy-ache and German measles and a pea that's got stuck in your nose, and all that kind of thing." It should also be good for

"polishing furniture" (20). Pippi then mixes and drinks a large dose of it. Annika worries about this and asks how Pippi will know that she has not been poisoned.

> I shall find out, said Pippi gaily. I shall find out tomorrow at the latest. If I am still alive then, it's not poisonous, and the smallest child can drink it.
> Tommy and Annika considered this. After a while Tommy said doubtfully, and rather dolefully.
> Yes, but supposing it is poisonous after all, what then?
> Then you'll have to use what's left over for polishing the dining-room furniture, said Pippi, and poisonous or not, the meducin won't be wasted. (22-23)

In both Karlsson and Pippi, the making (and ingestion) of the food/medicine is presented in a humorous way. Medicine is neither made of sweets and cakes, nor of the random mixing different kinds of medicine (some of it intended for skin diseases). The humour is also manifested in both Karlsson's cunning and trickery and in Pippi's superhuman ability to consume just about anything (which also ensures that no one else is put at risk). As in the lists of food items in Emil we again encounter a vocabulary of excess, exaggeration and imagination in the absurd listing and naming of ingredients (or illnesses).

As Carolyn Daniel has pointed out, children's literature teaches children about food (13). Lindgren gives readers numerous examples of how children prepare, bake and make food. The line between play and work is fine. Children learn how to make meals through play and stories. Pippi's carnivalesque pancake-making and Lisa's earnest (and successful!) attempt at baking sponge-cake point to the centrality of food in children's lives.

Hunger and the Joy of Eating

Turning now from making to eating food, the focus shifts towards food in relation to hunger, appetite, and enjoyment. Ulla Lundqvist notes that "enjoyment of food permeates Lindgren's work" (150). But Lindgren also understands the nature of hunger and appetite, and that hunger is what brings out the greatest enjoyment. In the Kalle Blomkvist[1] mystery *The White Rose Rescue* (quoted in the epigraph), Kalle and Anders gorge themselves after an involuntary period of fasting:

> They ate and they ate. They cut thick slices of ham, and ate. The carved chunks off the best salami, and ate. They found a large, soft, wonderful delicious loaf, and ate. They peeled the foil off small triangles of cheese, and ate. They plunged their fists into the big box of raisins, and ate. They took bars of chocolate from the sweet counter, and ate. They ate and ate and

> ate. It was the feast of a lifetime, and they would never forget it. (111-112)

The urgency and appetite for more resonate in the text through the repetition of "and ate" (separated from the rest of the clause with a comma for effect) and the parallel phrasal constructions. As in previous examples, the naming and listing stimulate the imagination and sensory perception of the reader. But appetite is of course also a sign of the boys' robust health and vital energy.

By contrast, loss of appetite is a bad sign in Lindgren's stories. In the final story of the third Emil book Emil realizes that: "If Alfred wasn't hungry, there was something seriously wrong with him" (158). But poor appetite can also be employed for humorous purposes. When Tommy and Annika have no appetite after having had the measles, Pippi urges them (with a subversive dig at disciplinarian parenting) to eat their porridge with the argument that if they do not, they will never grow up and be strong enough to be able to force their own children to eat porridge. When this does not help, she goes on to tell the story about how the sailor Fridolf was cured of his lack of appetite with a "strengthening meducine" which gave him back his appetite: fifteen plates of porridge and 117 potatoes, including the breadboard, the jug the fifteen plates:

> Then he set about the table. He broke off all four legs and gobbled them down so the sawdust literally whirled around his face, but he said for asparagus it was on the woody side. Seems he thought the table top was tastier because he smacked his lips as he ate it and said it was the best sandwich he'd had since he was a little lad. (58)

Excessive and absurd, the story of Fridolf's boundless appetite is still life-affirming. The humor no doubt defuses some of the pressure on Tommy and Annika (or child readers) to be well-behaved and finish their porridge. If anything, it might even help children develop an appetite.

It is easy to get the impression that food in Pippi Longstocking is all about humor. But eating, which takes place in most chapters, is just as much about being together and about sharing, like in the birthday party, to which even the horse is invited to the table. Or the finale of the episode with the burglars, in the first book in the series, where Pippi after having tied them up and forced them to dance with her, offers them food.

> Pippi went to the pantry and took out bread and cheese and butter, ham and cold roast and milk; and they sat around the kitchen table – Bloom and Thunder-Karlsson and Pippi – and ate until they were almost four-cornered. (114)

When the more realistic characters also eat enormous quantities of food, like in the example from Kalle Blomkvist, it is always motivated by real hunger. And in Lindgren hunger must always be stilled. In the first Emil book, when he has been locked away and forgotten in the toolshed (to prevent him from doing mischief during a party) he eventually gets hungry. He manages to escape from his prison into the food store instead, where he eats all of the special sausage and then falls asleep. After a while the party guests and Emil's family remember Emil but fail to find him. Increasingly desperate they search for him. Finally, when they have given up hope, Lina finds him on the shelf where the sausage had been: "There was no sausage there now. But – Emil was there!" (50). Despite the loss of the famous special sausage, everyone is relieved, "it was a thousand times better to find him on the shelf than two kilos of sausage" (50).

In the context of food theory, it is interesting to note that eating, even excessive or reckless eating, is not criticized in Lindgren's stories (see Malewski). There is no threat of Freudian-Bettelheimian punishment for "oral greed." Hunger is natural. From a sociological point of view, the rules and etiquette surrounding eating are often challenged, and thus, in a sense reinforced, since they are made visible. Similarly, the social taboos surrounding who eats who is humorously challenged in *Pippi Longstocking in the South Seas* when Pippi says that if she were to be eaten by cannibals she would absolutely refuse to be stewed with carrots. Another example is when she sheds tears for the shark who misses his human meal.

Shared Food, Shared Humanity

Food is important and so is eating, but people more so. If someone needs food, like Emil in the example above, they should not be denied it. Sharing food signals friendship and solidarity. In *Rasmus and the Vagabond*, Paradise-Oskar (the tramp) shares his breakfast meal with the hungry Rasmus (the orphan): milk and rye bread with pork. This is the first of many food scenes in this book, and the most significant. It marks the start of the deep friendship between the man and the boy. The choice of food in this scene is probably not coincidental; milk and rye bread with cold pork was Lindgren's staple lunch during her school years, and in an interview, she conceded, "it is the best food I know. I could still give my life for it" (quoted in Strömstedt 163, my translation).

An even more urgent example of sharing food is in *Ronia, the Robber's Daughter*. When Ronia finds Birk in the cellars under the castle he is not just hungering, but starving:

> "Eat if you are hungry," she said.
> There was an extraordinary sound, almost like a little scream, from Birk.
> And he took the coarse chunks of bread, one in each hand, and ate. It was

> as if Ronia was not there. He was alone with his bread, gulping it down to the very last crumb. Then Ronia handed him the jar of milk, and he put it greedily to his mouth and drank until it was empty. (69)

When Ronia shares bread with Birk their "brother and sister"-bond is further strengthened. It is one of several actions where their mutual dependence on each other is manifested. Starvation, or the threat of it, is also what in the end drives Ronia and Birk back to their parents (to "Lovis's bread") from the bear cave where the two of them have lived together during the summer months. And it is only because Ronia also will perish if they stay in the cave, that Birk gives up his stubborn self-reliance. Bread/food forges (and forces) bonds with family, with kin, and with others. Food and eating unites.

In *Mio, my Son,* Mio and his companion Pompoo become friends with the shepherd boy Nonno, whose grandmother gives them bread: "It was brown and crunchy, and it was the best bread I had tasted" (xx). Mio asks, "What is the name of this bread?" Nonno answers, "I don't know if it has a name; we call it the Bread That Satisfies Hunger" (29). A little bit later they drink water from a well: "It was the best water I had drunk in my life." Mio asks, "what kind of well is this?" Nonno answers, "I don't think it is a special well; we call it the Well That Quenches Thirst" (30). Bread and water are simple things, and Nonno and his grandmother are simple people – yet they come to acquire the deepest form of symbolism: the staff of life, the salt of the earth. The sharing of simple, nameless bread and water become symbolic of shared life and man*kind*.

In *Mio, my Son* we also see the opposite. After the evil Sir Kato has captured Mio and Pompoo he decides that they should be starved to death in his "Tower of Hunger" (146). This shows the depth of Kato's malevolence, and that he has completely separated himself from humanity. For in Lindgren there can be no greater evil than starving someone to death. But Mio and Pompoo survive their night of hunger in Kato's prison. Mio has been given a silver spoon that has belonged to one of Kato's victims, and in desperation he puts it in his mouth to ease his hunger. To his surprise he finds that,

> there was something in the spoon to eat. Something that tasted like the Bread That Satisfies Hunger and like the Water from the Well That Quenches Thirst. Bread and water were in the spoon and it had the most wonderful taste. It replenished my strength and my hunger disappeared. Strangely enough the spoon did not become empty. It filled completely with more food each time I ate, and I ate till I could eat no more. (151)

The saving grace comes in the form of a spoon from a victim. In this communion of humanity bread and water are magically transubstantiated out of thin air to overcome

hunger, death and isolation/alienation.

Mio, my Son is fairy tale filled with symbols and poetry, but a similar message is conveyed in the realistic-burlesque stories about Emil. I have referred to some of the food scenes above, and also written elsewhere at length about intergenerational solidarity in the series (Sundmark). However, I now return to the chapter "The Great Obliteration Party" in the second book of the trilogy. In that episode Emil invites the inmates of the poorhouse to a Christmas party at Katthult when his parents are away. In the beginning of the chapter Emil and his sister carry a basket with food to the poorhouse.[2] At that point the narrator turns directly to the reader:

> I don't expect you to know what destitute means, or what a poorhouse is, come to that, and be glad you don't. The poorhouse was something they had in the old days and if I were to tell you what it was really like, well, that would be far worse than all Krösa-Maja's stories about murderers and ghosts and wild animals. Can you imagine a small, run-down cottage with a couple of rooms full of poor, worn-out old people who have nowhere else to go and who live there all together in one big muddle of dirt and lice and hunger and misery, well, then you know what it is to be destitute and live in the poorhouse. (103-104)

What happens next is that the so-called "sergeant-major" who runs the poorhouse confiscates all the food. Emil, however, lures her away from the poorhouse, and together with his sister Ida and the farm-hand Alfred (whose grandfather is Batty-Jack, one of the inmates) they take the inmates to Katthult. The hunger and appetite of the famished poor is described in great visual and aural detail:

> And here was all the food disappearing in all directions. She listened to the crunching and munching and the slurping and the smacking of lips around the table. It was as if a herd of ravenous wild animals had thrown themselves over the bowls and dishes and plates. Little Ida understood that only desperately hungry people eat like that, but it was still a terrible thing to hear. (126)

The "crunching and munching and the slurping and the smacking of lips" is a "terrible thing to hear". The poor people are likened to a "herd of ravenous animals." When a plate has been completely emptied, the one who takes the last morsel calls out that it has been "obliterated." Soon everything has been "obliterated," and "that is why to this very day the party has been known as 'The Great Obliteration Party at Katthult'"(127).[3] When

Ida reminds Emil that they are expecting guests for dinner the next day he says, "They're fat enough as it is... surely it's better the food goes where it's needed most" (126). When everything has been devoured, they drive the inmates back to the poorhouse on a log sled.

In the final part of the story, the sergeant-major is trapped in a wolf-pit that Emil and Alfred have dug. At first, they pretend not to see who it is, and say that they have caught a werewolf:

> "Are you sure that's a werewolf?" said little Ida, her voice shaking.
> "It certainly is," said Emil. "A bad-tempered old lady werewolf is what it is, and they are the most dangerous of all."
> "Yep, for them's so greedy," said Alfred. (136)

They discuss what to do ("hand me my gun, Alfred!"), and compare wolves and werewolves favorably to the greedy Sergeant Major, to teach her a lesson. But when she admits to everything and shows remorse, they "recognize" her and help her out of the pit.

Conclusion

In "The Great Obliteration Party" many of the motifs and thematic strands come together that I have explored in this chapter. Many of the other examples marshalled in this chapter could be summarized and understood in a similar way. The episode begins with the making of food, an enterprise that engages the entire household across generations (see the quotation and Björn Berg's illustration in the beginning of this chapter). The listing and naming have both humorous and world-building functions; the description conveys a sense of excess and the exotic. Moreover, the food preparations are celebratory (it is Christmas time), almost ritualized, and serve to provide for the family, the household, and relatives, as well as for the poor, and animals (the sheaves for the birds). In this episode the preparations also include Emil's scheme for the obliteration party.

The food motif is explored further when the poor "obliterate" enormous quantities of food, and Ida realizes that "only desperately hungry people eat like that." One aspect of eating that I have not dwelt on in this chapter is closure, the end of the meal, when there is no room for more, when you are full and sated. Mio eats till "he can eat no more." Kalle Blomkvist experiences "the feast of a lifetime" (112). Bloom, Thunder-Karlsson, and Pippi eat until they are "almost four-cornered" (114). Emil's Katthult party is no exception, afterwards the people of the poorhouse are "so full that they could hardly move" (128). It is worth noting that this state of being is never criticized. Even if hungry people can be likened to "ravenous animals" and the sounds of eating can be a "terrible thing to hear," eating (more than) one's fill is never described in negative terms, not as excessive or nauseating. It is only if one person's overeating leads to others going hungry

that excess is bad, as with the Sergeant-Major. Finally, in this chapter I have endeavored to show how the food motif is employed for humorous purposes in Pippi Longstocking, the Emil books and many others. I have also shown how descriptions of food are used in descriptions of appetite and hunger, of eating and enjoyment of food. The third thematic focus has been on "humanity." The sharing of food is essential in Lindgren. It is the mark of humanity. Sharing food builds friendship and society. Greed, as in the description of the "werewolf"-like Sergeant-Major, who denies her fellows in the poorhouse their Christmas treats, is the opposite of humanity; greed is the sign of corruption and evil. Emil, on the other hand, represents Lindgren's ideal when he gives food to the hungry. Lindgren's "The Great Obliteration Party" is a perfect example of how humor, hunger and humanity can find thematic expression through food and eating.

Works Cited

Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Rabelais och skrattets historia.* 1965. Anthropos, 1986.

Barthes, Roland. "Toward a Psychosociology of Contemporary Food Consumption." 1961. *Food and Culture: A Reader.* Edited by C. Counihan & P. Van Esteric, Routledge, 1997.

Bettelheim, Bruno. *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*. Thames & Hudson, 1976.

Briggs, Julia. "Critical Opinion: Reading Children's Books." 1989. *Only Connect: Readings on Children's Literature.* Third edition. Edited by Sheila Egoff et al., Toronto UP, 1996.

Carrington, Bridget and Jennifer Harding. *Feast or Famine? Food and Children's Literature*. Cambridge Scholars, 2014.

Daniel, Carolyn. *Voracious Children: Who Eats Whom in Children's Literature*. Routledge, 2006.

Mary Douglas. *Food in the Social Order.* Russell Sage, 1984.

Edström, Vivi. *Astrid Lindgren: A Critical Study.* Translated by Eivor Cormack, Rabén & Sjögren, 2000.

Elias, Norbert. *The Civilizing Process*. 1939. Blackwell, 1994.

Katz, Wendy. "Some Uses of Food in Children's Literature." *Children's Literature in Education*, vol. 11, no. 4, 1980, pp. 192-199.

Keeling, Kara K. Pollard, Scott T. *Critical Approaches to Food in Children's Literature*. Routledge, 2009.

Leach, Edmund. "Babar's Civilization Analyzed." 1962. *Only Connect: Readings on Children's Literature*. Second edition. Edited by Sheila Egoff et al., Oxford UP, 1980, pp. 176-182.

Lévi Strauss, Claude. *The Raw and the Cooked.* 1964. Chicago UP, 1969.

Lindgren, Astrid. *Kerstin och jag* [Kerstin and I]. Rabén & Sjögren, 1945.

---. *Pippi Longstocking.* 1945. Translated by Florence Lamborn, Puffin 1977.

---. *Pippi Goes Aboard.* 1946. Translated by Marianne Turner, Oxford UP, 2015.

---. *Pippi in the South Seas*. 1948. Translated by Susan Beard, Oxford UP, 2020.

---. *Do You Know Pippi Longstocking?* 1947. Illustrated by Ingrid Vang Nyman and translated by Elisabeth Kallick Dyssegaard, Oxford UP, 2015.

---. *Happy Times in Noisy Village*. 1949. Translated by Susan Beard, Oxford UP, 2015.

---. *Simon Small Moves In*. 1949. Illustrated by Ilon Wikland and translated by Marianne Turner, Burke, 1965.

---. *Brenda Brave Helps Grandmother.* 1950. Ill. Ilon Wikland. Transl. Kay Ware, Webster, 1961.

---. *A Kalle Blomkvist Mystery: The White Rose Rescue.* 1953. Transl. Susan Beard. Oxford UP, 2017.

---. *Mio, my Son*. 1954. Ill. Ilon Wikland. Translated by Jill Morgan, Purple House, 2003.

---. *Karlsson on the Roof.* 1955. Translated by Sarah Death, Oxford UP, 2008.

---. *Rasmus and the Vagabond*. 1956. Translated by Gerry Bothmer, Plough, 2014.

---. *The Red Bird.* 1959. Illustrated by Marit Törnqvist and translated by Patricia Crampton, Arthur A. Levine, 2005.

---. *Mardie.* 1960. Illustrated by Ilon Wikland and translated by Patricia Crampton, Mammoth, 1979.

---. *Emil in the Soup Tureen*. 1963. Illustrated by Björn Berg and translated by Lilian Seaton, Brockhampton, 1970.

---. *Emil's Pranks*. 1966. Illustrated by Björn Berg and translated by Susan Beard, Follett, 1971.

---. *Emil and the Piggy Beast*. 1971. Illustrated by Björn Berg and translated by Michael Heron, Follett, 1973.

---. *Samuel August och Hanna i Hult*. Svanbäck & Nyman, 1973.

---. *Ronia, the Robber's Daughter.* Translated by Patricia Crampton. Puffin, 1985.

---. "Jag läste Hamsun – och därför ljuger Pippi Långstrump så förtvivlat." *Det gränslösaste äventyret*, edited by Lena Törnqvist. Eriksson & Lindgren, 2007, pp. 79-84.

---. *War Diaries 1939-1945*. Yale UP, 2018.

Lundqvist, Ulla. *Århundradets barn* [The Child of the Century]. Stockholm, 1979. Diss.

Malewski, Anne. "Unpunished Gluttony in Astrid Lindgren's Children's Books." *Feast or Famine? Food and Children's Literature*, edited by Bridget Carrington and Jennifer Harding, Cambridge Scholars, 2014, pp. 99-120.

Metcalf, Eva-Marie. *Astrid Lindgren.* Twayne, 1995.

Nikolajeva, Maria. "Matmästaren Astrid Lindgren." *Läckergommarnas kungarike: Om matens roll i barnlitteraturen* [In the Kingdom of the Epicureans: The Role of Food in Children's Literature], edited by Ulla Bergstrand and Maria Nikolajeva, Centrum för barnkulturforskning, 1999, pp. 213-250.

Nikolajeva, Maria. *From Mythic to Linear: Time in Children's Literature*. Scarecrow, 2000.

Strömstedt, Margareta. *Astrid Lindgren: En levnadsteckning*. Rabén & Sjögren, 1977.

Sundmark, Björn. "'You and I Alfred': Intergenerational Solidarity in the Emil Series." *Intergenerational*

Solidarity in Children's Literature and Film, edited by Justyna Deszcz-Tryhubczak and Zoe Jaques, UP of Mississippi, 2021, pp. 31-43.

Notes

[1] In the first English translation Kalle Blomkvist is named "Bill Bergson."

[2] In her biographical essay "Samuel August från Sevedstorp och Hanna i Hult" (no complete translation in English, unfortunately), Lindgren mentions the local poorhouse, and how her own mother, like Alma, provided food for the poor (215-216). In the same essay Lindgren also remembers the enormous and elaborate traditional dinners with relatives of her childhood (233).

[3] In the Swedish original the dialect word "tabberas" is used, a corrupted form of tabula rasa, and presumably picked up from hearing church sermons. The connotations of the word of course reinforce the near-Biblical proportions of Emil's deed. "Tabula rasa" also suggests the clean slate (and clean plate), renewal, starting over, whereas "obliteration" is destruction, plain and simple.

Delights of Dinners, Pleasures of Picnics in the "Make-believe": Food Fantasies of the Edwardian Children's Literature Translated into Polish[1]

Aleksandra Wieczorkiewicz

During the Golden Age of English juvenile literature – from Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* to A. A. Milne's *Winnie-the-Pooh* – "food fantasies" and images of eating played a key role in the construction of the textual world. This chapter explores literary representations of eating in Edwardian and post-Edwardian Golden Age children's classics, focusing on "food fantasies" in works by the "Arcadians" (Carpenter 100): Beatrix Potter, Kenneth Grahame, A. A. Milne, and J. M. Barrie. It analyses the functions of food in literature, its imagery and specificity (including national and temporal), as well as its translation implications in transferring the source texts from English into Polish.

"The pleasure of the table belongs to all ages, to all conditions, to all countries, and to all eras; it mingles with all other pleasures and remains at last to console us for their departure" (Brillat-Savarin 25). Thus reads aphorism VII in Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin's famous *The Physiology of Taste, or, Transcendental Gastronomy* (1825). Brillat-Savarin regards the pleasure of eating as a universal, profoundly human condition regardless of times, nationality or social status drawing also our attention to the connection between the "pleasures of the table" and other pleasures (presumably both physical and intellectual), as well as to their comforting dimension. Eating is, in this approach, closely related to nostalgia: it rekindles past sensations and serves as an impulse awakening memories, as in a famous scene from Marcel Proust's *In Search of Lost Time* in which "the taste of the piece of *madeleine* soaked in decoction of lime-blossom" (Proust 51) evokes happy memories

from the narrator's childhood.

The role of food and eating in Western culture and literature – from Homer's epics to Salman Rushdie's postmodern novels – has already been highlighted (see for example Boyce and Fitzpatrick), always including the observation that food is never just food. It organizes the collective cultural imagination and can be even perceived as culture itself (Montanari). Food generates meanings and is "not only the product of a culture but one that gives shape to the *mentalities* that structure thought and expression" (Keeling and Pollard 4). As Carolyn Daniel notes, food events are always significant, in reality and in fiction, as they reveal the fundamental preoccupations, ideas, and beliefs of society, providing us with knowledge about social and family relationships, manners, and morals of a given period (1). Mervyn Nicholson observes that while reality and biology require us to eat, characters in literature do not eat to live because they are not alive (Nicholson 38). Hence, whenever food appears in a literary work, it is always there for specific reasons.

The association of the pleasures of eating with the pleasures of reading is not new in the humanities: Terry Eagleton has compared food to post-structuralist texts that can be subject to endless interpretations, while the process of writing – creating texts from "raw" language – is often compared to the process of cooking (Shahani 2). No wonder, then, that the famous phrase from Brillat-Savarin's gastronomic meditations "[t]ell me what kind of food you eat, and I will tell you what kind of man you are" (25) has been transformed into "[t]ell me what you read, and I will tell you who you are". If we agree to see writers as cooks, translators should also be considered in this line of profession, as proposed by Elżbieta Skibińska in her book *Kuchnia tłumacza. Studia o polsko-francuskich relacjach przekładowych* [The Translator's Kitchen. Studies on Polish-French Translation Relations]:

> Among these spiritual cooks are also the translators. But they are cooks of a special kind: their role is to prepare dishes from the distant world for the feasting guests [...]; to use new, unknown, imported ingredients [...] but also, if there is no other way, to replace them with local products – which, applied in a new recipe, will reveal their hidden flavours; and finally – sometimes – to change or revive traditional dishes, either by using new ingredients or changing the way the old and well-known ones are used. (Skibińska 14)[2]

The translation of culinary nomenclature – culturally specific elements, closely linked to the realities, history and traditions of a given community and language (Dymel-Trzebiatowska 186) – is particularly demanding in the case of children's literature, where food plays an important role, but which is also characterised by readers' specific cognitive

capacities. Food translation strategies are thus situated between two poles: that of adapting to the target culture in order to facilitate their reception by the readers (domestication) and preserving their foreign flavour (foreignisation),[3] building on children's ability to absorb stimuli and rapidly expand their knowledge of the world (Paruolo 52). As Elena Paruolo notes, these two trends are often interwoven in one translated text (51).

The fact that children's literature is filled with food-related images, notions, and values was already noted by Wendy Katz in her pioneering article (192). Since then, studies on the functions of food in children's literature have developed extensively (see Daniel; Keeling and Pollard; Carrington and Harding; Keeling and Pollard). As Daniel points out, food fantasies are effective vehicles of socialisation and acculturation: literary food

> acts to seduce readers; through mimesis it 'naturalizes' the lesson being taught; and, through the visceral pleasures (sometimes even jouissance) it produces, it 'sweetens' the discourse and encourages unreflective acceptance of the moral thus delivered. (4)

The persuasive power of food descriptions invites the reader to immerse themselves in the book and identify with the characters, thus supporting its didactic message. By absorbing "nutritious" literary instructions about how and what to eat, the child – who since the eighteenth century has been perceived as a nature-bound being at a lower stage of cultural development – learns to live according to the rules of civilization, and to control carnal lusts and desires.

On the other hand, food – sweets in particular – is a favorite object of childish interest. British literature is no exception here: one of Britain's most famous works for children, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, tells the story of a girl, who finds in the rabbit hole "a little bottle" labelled "DRINK ME" and "a very small cake" labelled "EAT ME" (Carroll 9, 13). In the words of Carolyn Daniel,

> Food fantasies are a traditional ingredient in classic British children's literature. These stories often include sensuous, mouth-watering descriptions of the foods the characters eat […] lavish descriptions of food, in the context of British classic fiction for children […] have important social, cultural, and psychological functions (Daniel 62).

But children's literature was associated with food also on a higher level: in the turn-of-the-century Britain, reading was perceived as consumption according to the principle "you are what you read" (Galbraith 1), and critics and educators have attached increasing

importance to what is "good" (wholesome, nutritious) literature for children.[4] The culmination of the literary production of the Golden Age goes hand in hand with the peak of the British Empire's power and prosperity in the Edwardian era, on which George Orwell tellingly comments in *Such, Such Were the Joys* (1947):

> It was [...] the age of *The Merry Widow*, Saki's novels, *Peter Pan* and *Where the Rainbow Ends*, the age when people talked about chocs and cigs and had scrumptious teas at the Troc. From the whole decade before 1914 there seems to breathe forth a smell of [...] brilliantine and *crème-de-menthe* and soft-centred chocolates – an atmosphere, as it were, of eating everlasting strawberry ices on green lawns to the tune of the Eton Boating Song. (357)

The image of the Edwardian era – a brief but culturally intense period, beginning with the 20th century and lasting until World War I – became mythicized in later years and came to appear as a kind of "golden age," a celebration of wealth, often expressed in elaborate cuisine. Children's literature of the time undoubtedly contributed to such an image of the era and – on the other hand – reflected much of its preoccupations. For Edwardians, the idealized childhood was established as a symbol of their times and a counterbalance to the fast-changing urban life and its anxieties. It became an arcadian realm of freedom and imagination in which time flows slowly and allows for an unhurried, carefree tasting of life (Gavin and Humphries 1–19). Unsurprisingly, then, the Edwardians celebrated a "boom" of writing for and about children, in which, even more than in Victorian era, the child and the adult audiences were mixed, and the Golden Age of children's literature reached its climax (Rose 181).[5] In this chapter I will discuss food fantasies in the Edwardian and post-Edwardian children's literature translated into Polish, arranging the texts from the most realistic to the most fantastic ones: from the nature-immersed *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* (1902) and *The Tale of Squirrel Nutkin* (1903) by Beatrix Potter, through the idyllic worlds of Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows* (1908) and Milne's *Winnie-the-Pooh* (1926), to the Neverland of Barrie's *Peter and Wendy* (1911).

Eat or Be Eaten: Beatrix Potter

Humphrey Carpenter calls Potter "an ironist in Arcadia" – and indeed, in the opening of *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*, the irony involves and directly relates to food. Mrs. Rabbit warns her children against excursions into Mr. McGregor's forbidden garden: "your father had an accident there, he was put in a pie by Mrs. McGregor" (*Peter Rabbit* 10–11). This prohibition triggers a chain of events in Potter's narrative: for Peter, the garden becomes a forbidden fruit worthy of disobedience. Just as Eve in Eden is tempted with the promise of the pleasure of eating and breaking the rules, so Peter squeezes under the gate to

savour the vegetable delights: "first he ate some lettuces and some French beans, and then he ate some radishes" (*Peter Rabbit* 23). It is worth noting here that Polish translations of this passage – by Małgorzata Musierowicz (*Powiastki Beatrix Potter*) and Anna Matusik-Dyjak (*Historyjki Beatrix Potter*) – differ in an important detail of Peter's in-garden diet. While Musierowicz retains the original vegetable, in Matusik-Dyjak's version "radishes" are replaced by "carrots" (*Historyjki* 12), probably in adherence to the stereotypical image of a carrot-eating rabbits. Such a decision may have also been supported by Potter's illustration for this scene: in the picture Peter is munching on oblong radishes, which resemble carrots in shape (only their leaves testify that they are not actually carrots). Thus, it can be considered that the translator was trying to achieve a correlation between the illustrations and the text, a quality that Riitta Oittinen pointed out as one of the most essential characteristics of translation for children (Oittinen).

Needless to say, Peter is caught in the act of damaging the vegetable beds by Mr. McGregor himself; the rabbit manages to escape, but in his panic-stricken flight he loses all his human attributes: his shoes and blue jacket. These metamorphoses of the protagonist – from the ordinary rabbit from the opening illustration, through strongly anthropomorphized character, to the re-presentation in his natural state – seem significant since anthropomorphic strategies (especially the equipping of literary animal characters with the ability to speak) problematizes Western food rules and, through empathic identification, breaks down the boundary between human and animal, subject and object, eating and being eaten (Daniel 29). The *Tale of Peter Rabbit* is governed by a fairy-tale scheme, though it is well hidden under a rural, realistic staffage: Potter follows a plot similar to that of stories about giants or that of the Brothers Grimm's *Hansel and Gretel*, in which children want to savor a gingerbread house but are themselves in danger of being eaten. In the end, Peter is punished for his disobedience and gluttony – although he manages to escape from the garden and return home safely, his experiences deprive him of his appetite and instead of supper he must take a dose of bitter chamomile tea. Potter includes a moral in her story, but also equates childish greed with animal instincts of acquiring food, thereby subscribing to the then-popular trend of approaching children as primitive beings, "wild" and, at the biological level, similar to animals.

This primordial element emerges even more strongly in *The Tale of Squirrel Nutkin* (1903), a story of the squirrels setting out to gather nuts on a lake island inhabited by an owl named Old Brown, who serves in this world as a kind of a primordial deity. Each day the squirrels perform a ritual of sorts, presenting the owl with propitiatory offerings – a mole, a couple of fat mice, minnows, beetles, or a pot of honey; they feed the owl so as not be eaten themselves. However, Nutkin, the impertinent squirrel, does not adhere to this convention and prefers to tease the owl with traditional rhymes and songs, almost all concerning food. Particularly interesting is the song for the day in which the squirrels

pay the owl tribute of six fat beetles wrapped up carefully in dock leaves which were "as good as plums in *plum-pudding*" (*Squirrel Nutkin* 32) thus referring to the English traditional Christmas dessert prepared in a linen bag. On this occasion Nutkin performs a traditional rhyme about the *plum-pudding*:

> Flour of England, fruit of Spain,
> Met together in a shower of rain;
> Put in a bag tied round with a string,
> If you'll tell me this riddle, I'll give you a ring." (*Squirrel Nutkin* 32)

The rhyme is a Christmas riddle, but we can trace also references to Queen Mary's betrothal to Prince Philip of Spain in 1554 (hence the names of the two countries and the ring in the last verse, as indicated by the authors of *The Oxford Dictionary of Nursery Rhymes* (Opie 161–162). Interestingly, both Polish translators of Potter's tale retain the traditional dessert and render it in Polish as "pudding" thus adopting foreignizing strategy, but Matusik-Dyjak substitutes "a ring" for a "cream roll" ("rurka z kremem"; *Historyjki* 37), apparently unaware of the nursery rhyme's deep cultural references and in the belief that another delicacy might serve the translation well, especially in regards of the rhythm and rhyme.

Nutkin, like Peter, is punished for his disobedience – eventually, Old Brown catches the squirrel and intends to eat him, but Nutkin manages to escape leaving his tail in the owl's clutches. Beatrix Potter's tales show the harsh natural world in which chances for survival depend on one's place in the food chain: the stronger devours the weaker, and eating involves the risk of being devoured. Potter tames the realities of nature with irony, humour, and convention, but the reader can feel that this icing is thin and easy to melt away. Although concerned with the world and the laws of nature, Potter's tales are nevertheless strongly imbued with cultural signals that set them in a British context. It is worth noting that the Polish translations retain the message of the tales, but through slight lexical shifts modify this context: Musierowicz's version retains this cultural specificity, while Matusik-Dyjak's more recent translation tends to neutralise the foreignness of the texts, not least through the use of food names familiar to Polish readers.

Dulce Domum: Kenneth Grahame

While Potter's tales are stories about animals disguised as humans, Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows* is rather a story about humans disguised as animals. Grahame's book is a praise of home and domesticity (see Sullivan; Wieczorkiewicz), lavish afternoons, prosperity, abundance, and comforts of life in nature – but a nature that is tamed and domesticated because it can be eaten. This approach is evident in the first description

of the Mole's encounter with the River – the river is "full-fed" (Grahame 6), filled, well-nourished; the Water Rat calls it his "food and drink", and compares the smell of the patches of mud in the spring to the smell of a plumcake (Grahame 9). *The Wind in the Willows* is an intertexture of domesticity and eating, also in the sense that the reader is constantly treated to a feast of home-made culinary delights. A taste of this is provided by the scene of a picnic to which the Rat takes the Mole, a novice to the riverside life, along with the picnic basket filled with duly cooked natural goodies:

> "He [...] climbed up into his hole above, and after a short interval reappeared staggering under a fat wicker luncheon-basket. [...]
> "What's inside it?" asked the Mole, wriggling with curiosity.
> There's cold chicken inside it," replied the Rat briefly:
> "coldtonguecoldhamcoldbeefpickledgherkinssaladfrenchrollscresssandwic hespottedmeatgingerbeerlemonadesodawater—"
> "O stop, stop!" cried the Mole in ecstasies. "This is too much!" (Grahame 8)

Grahame arranges the enumeration of picnic food in a single line, without spaces, thus imitating the speed of the Water Rat's answer and at the same time putting the reader in the position of the Mole – confused, unable to follow the flow of his companion's utterance, the deluge of treats. Not all Polish translators choose to render this effect: Godlewska, the author of the first translation (*O czym szumią wierzby*, 1938), dispenses with it altogether and records the enumeration in a standard way, thus adapting it to the child readers and making it easier to understand; the authors of later versions – Bohdan Drozdowski (*Wierzby na wietrze*, 2009) and Maciej Płaza (*O czym szumią wierzb*y, 2014) – retain the original spelling. The three translators also differ in their choice of meals, which clearly shows how different types of food and drink are rooted in the given culture and the difficulties this causes in translation. "Ginger beer", for example, is rendered only by Płaza, the author of the most recent translation, presumably because this beverage has become popular in Poland relatively recently; Godlewska and Drozdowski drop the designation of the drink's type and simply translate it as "beer". Also "French rolls" ("A small crusty bread roll" – as explained by the Oxford English Dictionary) are translated in three different ways: in Godlewska's version as "paszteciki" [small pies with filling, usually meat] (14), in Drozdowski's as "paszteciki francuskie" [French small pies with filling] (16), while in Płaza's simply as "bułeczki" [rolls/buns] (14). Only Drozdowski retains the reference to the country of the rolls' origin, while only Płaza renders their correct type (French rolls are made without filling).

The riverside picnic scene fulfils the Victorian and Edwardian ideal of living (and eating) in nature (see Hunt, "Fantastic Food"), but while still at the same picnic, Mole

learns that in this Arcadian world there is a strict "animal etiquette", which forbids "any sort of comment on the sudden disappearance of one's friends at any time, for any reason or no reason whatever" (Grahame 12) – which is probably when those friends eat other friends or are themselves being devoured. The animal nature seems at times to prevail in Grahame's characters over human nature, though the amalgam of these two is otherwise quite solid. This is evident in the novel's opening scene when the Mole addresses some rabbits with the dismissive remark "Onion sauce, onion sauce". In the annotated Oxford edition of *The Wind in the Willows*, Peter Hunt explains this remark as an allusion to a popular Victorian culinary recipe for rabbit in white onion sauce from Mrs. Isabella Beeton's famous *Book of Household Management* (1861) (Grahame 148). The Mole insults the rabbits with a reference to a human dish made of them and at the same time threatens that he might eat them in the onion sauce, despite the obvious biological absurdity of this remark (moles, of course, do not feed on rabbits). This is also a very interesting moment in translation: Płaza omits "onion sauce" altogether, replacing it with the dismissive phrase "Tere-fere kuku!" [Fiddle-dee-dee!] (9), whereas Godlewska not only retains "onion sauce" but expands the phrase according to its meaning: in her version the Mole calls out to the rabbits "Zjem was w cebulowym sosie!" ["I will eat you in the onion sauce"] (7). The most humorous solution, however, was adopted by Drozdowski, who employs Polish idiom "put your nose in the sauce" i.e. mind your own business instead of others; in his translation, the Mole addresses the rabbits: "Wsadźcie nos w sos! Cebulowy zresztą!" ["Put your nose in the sauce! Onion sauce, by the way!"] (13).

In *The Wind in the Willows* food sets the boundaries between Culture and Nature: the "civilized" consuming of meals versus primordial eating of one another. For most of the story, it is Culture that seems to reign over the tamed Nature, but there are moments when the latter reveals its true self: during his lonely journey through the Wild Wood, the Mole experiences the awe and terror of Nature, which can easily devour a small and helpless animal. His adventure, however, ends well in the kitchen of the Badger's underground house – "a home from the old days", steeped in tradition, history, and sacred customs. In Grahame's description of the kitchen scene the whole space seems to come alive and join in the rituals of eating and drinking: "The ruddy brick floor smiled up at the smoky ceiling; the oaken settles, shiny with long wear, exchanged cheerful glances with each other" (Grahame 38). The house – animated and anthropomorphized – appears to be a living creature with its feelings, thoughts, and an invigorating force, which is, of course, edible goods ladening the tables and filling up the pantries.

Robert Hemmings, who analyses the fantasy of food in *The Wind in the Willows* from the perspective of nostalgia studies, emphasizes a strong connection between food rituals and domesticity. This intertwining is also noted by Frances E. Dolan in her study of domesticity and familiarity in Graham's classic in which she points to the prison scene

when the gaoler's daughter brings Toad typically English, home-cooked food: "bubble and squeak" and buttered toast, inducing in him a desire to return home:

> It was bubble-and-squeak, between two plates, and its fragrance filled the narrow cell. […] When the girl returned, some hours later, she carried a tray, with a cup of fragrant tea steaming on it; and a plate piled up with very hot buttered […] with the butter running through the holes in it in great golden drops […] The smell of that buttered toast simply talked to Toad […] of warm kitchens, of breakfasts on bright frosty mornings, of cosy parlour firesides on winter evenings, […] and the purring of contented cats […] (Grahame 82)

The typically English tastes of home, which fill Toad with comfort and happy memories, prove problematic in translation, as Polish cuisine does not have the equivalent of "bubble-and-squeak". Neither of the Polish translators of *The Wind in the Willows* proposes a Polish substitute name for this dish, but all employ a degree of neutralization (not domestication, though): Godlewska renders it as "smakołyk nielada" [a delicacy of no mean sort] (Grahame 1938: 167), Płaza simply as "danie" [a dish] (140), while Drozdowski translates it in a descriptive way as "coś, co jeszcze parkotało pod przykrywką, coś skwierczało między dwoma talerzami" [something that still bubbled under the lid and sizzled between the two plates] (111); interestingly, Drozdowski attempts to render the onomatopoeic aspect of "bubble-and-squeak" by using Polish verbs "parkotać" (to make a specific sound, e.g. when boiling) and "skwierczeć" (to make a creaking and squeaking sound e.g. when frying).

The Land of Milk and Honey: A. A. Milne

A. A. Milne, fascinated by Grahame's idyllic world, created a kind of unique extension to it. *Winnie-the-Pooh*'s safe, arcadian landscape is populated not by humanized animals, but by animated toys that have their prototypes in the childhood plays of Christopher Robin, the writer's son. Milne's Arcadia – more artificial, imaginative, and abstracted than those of Potter or Grahame[6] – is also devoid of the horror associated with the laws of nature. Here no one eats anyone, nor is the fear of being devoured evidently present. But still, the world of *Winnie-the-Pooh* constantly revolves around food, as does the mind of its main protagonist. Milne, a "Punch" humorist, builds his book's humor on the Bear's childish gluttony, as it is Pooh's appetite and honey-loving that get him into all sorts of funny scrapes. In the first chapter Pooh tries – and fails – to steal honey from the tree bees by pretending to be a cloud floating on a blue balloon; the second tells about his visit to Rabbit when Pooh eats all the supplies – then he cannot leave Rabbit's burrow and has

to wait until he loses some weight. In this scene literature (reading) and food are clearly connected: when the trapped Pooh learns that he will have to spend a whole week stuck in Rabbit's burrow, and Christopher Robin proposes to read to him, Pooh asks to be read "a Sustaining Book, such as would help and comfort a Wedged Bear in Great Tightness" (Milne 30). Irena Tuwim, the first Polish translator of Milne's (*Kubuś Puchatek*) does not render "sustaining book" literally but translates it as "książka kucharska" [a cookbook] (Milne 31), further enhancing both the humorous and symbolic dimensions of the scene.

Milne constructs humour on the theme of food, both in situations and in language: as in the chapter on the search for Eeyore's tail, when Pooh consults Owl about the best way to find the missing tail:

> "Well," said Owl, "the customary procedure in such cases is as follows."
> "What does Crustimoney Proseedcake mean?" said Pooh. [...]
> "I generally have a small something about now—about this time in the morning," and he looked wistfully at the cupboard in the corner of Owl's parlour; "just a mouthful of condensed milk or what not, with perhaps a lick of honey—" (Milne 50)

For Pooh, the formal phrase "customary procedure" has no meaning and can be only associated with eating: "crusty" and "seedcake". The importance of these food associations for the comic dimension of Milne's narrative is noticed by both Polish translators of *Winnie-the-Pooh*. Tuwim translates "Crustimoney Proseed cake" as "najgęściej polukrowane postękiwanie" (46) basing her pun on the combination of "lukier" [buttercream/icing] and "postękiwanie" [grunting/honing], while Monika Adamczyk-Garbowska, the second Polish translator of *Winnie-the-Pooh* (Fredzia Phi-Phi), proposes the phrase "Trzydżemowa Prosię¬kura" combining words "dżem" [jam], "prosię" [pig] and "kura" [hen/chicken] (44).

However, food in *Winnie-the-Pooh* serves not only to create an amusing plot but has also a symbolic dimension: Pooh's favourite "little something" is honey and condensed milk, and these dainties become symbols of a child's Arcadia, associated with the biblical "land of milk and honey", an earthly paradise in which childhood is sweetness itself. While honey is often associated with children[7], milk represents a symbol of femininity and motherhood (Boyce and Fitzpatrick 12; Daniel 87–95): two qualities of which the world of the Hundred Acre Wood seems in some sense deprived. This is noticeable in the predominance in the story of male characters who, although anthropomorphized toys, resemble English country gentlemen living in their bachelor dwellings (this is true of Winnie-the-Pooh, Rabbit, Piglet and especially Owl); the element of femininity and motherhood only arrives in the Hundred Acre Wood with Kanga, but it is treated

ironically and exaggerated somewhat grotesquely, further emphasizing the masculine nature of the world. Even more so, in *Winnie-the-Pooh*, the taste for sweet, condensed milk can be seen as a nostalgic desire to return to maternal care and love that would be pure and essence-like, but at the same time devoid of entanglements in the difficulties of real relationships. Perhaps, then, Milne points to the impossibility of fully returning to childhood even through literature, which resembles condensed milk: it is an improved but artificially produced substitute for the real thing, the real experiences of childhood.

In the Polish versions of *Winnie-the-Pooh*, both translators retain honey, but condensed milk was not introduced in Poland until the 1960s. While Adamczyk-Garbowska, who was working on her translation in the 1980s, had no trouble finding an equivalent for this sweet treat, Tuwim, who translated Milne before World War 2, opted for "sweet cream" (Milne 47), losing the association with artificiality or industrial production that – if we agree with the interpretation discussed above – would be crucial to the book's symbolism. The symbols of milk and honey in *Winnie-the-Pooh* are charged with nostalgia: artificial, processed milk and literature are the only food available to those who, from within the bitter experiences of adulthood, long for a return to the honey-sweet past and the nourishing milk of maternal care. The sweetness of childhood proves to be tinged with bitterness, and the paradise becomes a lost paradise since childhood always remains in the shadow of adulthood.

Bitter-sweet: J. M. Barrie

The dichotomy between sweet childhood and bitter adulthood reappears in Barrie's *Peter and Wendy* (1911) – the most far-reaching in the realm of fantasy of the analyzed works and at the same time the only one in which the theme of eating seems deliberately marginalized. Food and consumption are not a central or even vital motif in the story. The theme of food is shortly represented in the first description of Neverland, in which Barrie describes a child's imagination as consisting of two overlapping maps: fantasy and reality. Significantly, the only example of food here ("the chocolate pudding") is placed on the side of reality, not fantasy. The story begins with the medicine (i.e. not exactly food, something connoting bitterness and distastefulness, in opposition to sweet treats) that Mr. Darling applies to his youngest son Michael. The boy is only persuaded to follow his father's instructions when he promises to take his own medicine at the same time:

> Michael took his medicine, but Mr. Darling slipped his behind his back. [...] 'I have just thought of a splendid joke. I shall pour my medicine into Nana's bowl, and she will drink it, thinking it is milk! (Barrie 32)

Mr. Darling tricks his son into obedience through cunning, power and, authority: the

adult is thus presented as the one who uses coercion and deception in the area of eating, manipulating food to his own ends. Similarly, Captain Hook (a sort of Neverland double of Mr. Darling, usually performed in the stage play by the same actor), intends to use food to destroy Peter Pan and the Lost Boys. First, he plans to smuggle them a poisoned cake:

> [To c]ook a large rich cake of a jolly thickness with green sugar on it. [...] They will find the cake and they will gobble it up, because, having no mother, they don't know how dangerous 'tis to eat rich damp cake. [...] Aha, they will die! (Barrie 75)

When this plan fails, Hook adds poison to Peter's medicine, thus repeating the opening scene of the novel and confirming himself as the "dark double" of the father.

During the flight to Neverland, Peter Pan feeds Wendy, John, and Michael with "food suitable for humans" (53) plucked from the beaks of passing birds. However, in Neverland, meals are not always real, and they depend on Peter's whim:

> Their chief food was roasted breadfruit, yams, cocoa-nuts, baked pig, mammee apples, tappa rolls and bananas, washed down with calabashes of poe-poe; but you never exactly knew whether there would be a real meal or just a make-believe, it all depended upon Peter's whim. He could eat, really eat, if it was part of a game, but he could not stodge just to feel stodgy, which is what most children like better than anything else [...]. Make-believe was so real to him that during a meal of it you could see him getting rounder. (Barrie 90)

Maria Tatar notes that this contamination of various tropical fruits and exotic foods (mammee apples are from South America, while poe-poe is a Hawaiian food made from the corm of the taro plant), including non-edible products that can stimulate the reader's imagination (tappa rolls – rolls of unwoven cloth made from the paper mulberry tree in Polynesia), does not place Peter Pan's island in any particular geographical space (90), thus serving not so much to concretize the narrative as to further its fictionalization. This is also an interesting moment in translation: while Polish translators (those who render this passage at all)[8] have no trouble with cocoa-nuts or baked pig, other elements of the Neverland menu seem problematic. In the latest 2015 translation by Andrzej Polkowski (*Piotruś Pan i Wendy*), mammee apples are replaced by "rajskie jabłka" [paradise apples] (i.e. the Polish customary name for crab-apples), an interesting translational choice insofar as it indicates the tropical, paradise-like character of the island and at the same time carries a biblical connotation of original sin and the "lost paradise" of childhood;

inedible tappa rolls, on the other hand, in Polkowski's version are translated as "naleśniki z dżemem morwowym" [mulberry jam pancakes], indicating the translator's attempt to render the botanical specificity of Peter's island. In Maria Czerwinska's translation (*Piotruś Pan i Wendy*), the exotic dishes are simplified and domesticized: instead of yams the translator employs plain, local "ziemniaki" [potatoes], breadfruit and mammee apples become pome-granates and mangoes (still tropical fruit but more familiar to the readers as they can be easily bought in Polish groceries) while mysterious poe-poe is replaced by simple raspberry juice (122). The results of the best translational research, however, are presented in Maciej Słomczyński's 1991 version (first published in 1958 without the passage on Neverland food), in which the translator proposes the archaic form "kalabasy" (84) – the exact equivalent of original "calabashes." He also translates "mammee apples" as "owoc przesłoczy"; "przesłocz" is an old term for the mammee tree, which appears in Ignacy Rafał Czerwiakowski's *Botanika szczególna* [A Peculiar Botany] (volume five published in 1860 in Kraków). Such archaic and "exotic" names – especially in the ears of contemporary young readers – perfectly fulfil the function of Peter's menu designed by Barrie: food in Neverland is something extraordinary and mysterious, something that belongs to the realm of fantasy rather than reality.

All in all, this is the only passage in the entire novel that discusses food more broadly – a notable absence of this theme was noticed also by reviewers of the play *Peter Pan, or the Boy Who Would Not Grow Up* (1904); a few days after the premiere, L.F. Austin of *The London Illustrated News* wondered:

> What do the children in Peter Pan [...] live on? [...] My belief is that they eat nuts all day, for the only visible game consists of wolves, an ostrich, and a crocodile, animals not mentioned in any cookery-book. (Austin)

However, Neverland is not free from the terror of being eaten, which interestingly does not apply to Peter Pan or any other child protagonists but to Hook, whose chopped-off right arm Peter once used to feed a crocodile: "It liked my arm so much, that it has followed me ever since [...] licking its lips for the rest of me" (Barrie 74) – as Hook confides in Smee. The crocodile has also devoured the clock and its sound warns the pirate of the approach of the hungry beast: the ticking crocodile is clearly a symbol of passing time and impending death, as is the food itself, linked to the biological need for nourishment inseparable from growth and development. In *Peter Pan*, food is not presented as a symbol of pleasure and fulfilment, but rather as a suspicious, ambiguous and threatening feature: a symbol of death and an instrument in the hands of adults who feed children to deprive them of their childhood, since the need to eat leads to growing up and adulthood.

In Conclusion: What's Eating?

Food fantasies in Edwardian classics serve different purposes: on the one hand, they can tell a story about reality, revealing the truths of nature and at the same time providing a moral, as in Beatrix Potter's tales; on the other hand, they serve as a line of demarcation between Nature and Culture, the human and the animal in *The Wind in the Willows*, or as an element that evokes humor and nostalgia, an important determinant of the Arcadian world and the sweetness of childhood, as in *Winnie-the-Pooh*. These three examples may be called real "food fantasies", in which food is valued positively and occupies a central position. They are clearly distinguished from Barrie's *Peter and Wendy* "food dystopia", where eating is placed on the margins and food becomes a tool through which adults manipulate the child's world, as well as a symbol of growth and death.

Food is an indispensable ingredient of almost every textual world – especially in children's literature; it also builds our language, best witnessed in phrases and idioms, "metaphors we live by" (Lakoff and Johnson) that revolve around food. What we eat is ultimately "eating us" in some sense – as in the phrase "What's eating you?", exactly the same in Polish "Co cię gryzie/zżera?". On a textual level, "eating passages" are often a challenge for translators, since almost always the subject of food is specifically linked to the realities of the presented world and is an important transmitter of tradition, place, and time. They can refer to stereotypes (like carrot-eating rabbit in the Polish translation of *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*) or history (*Squirrel Nutkin*), nostalgic link between food and home that turns out to be untranslatable (onion sauce and bubble-and-squeak in *The Wind in the Willows*), or seemingly insignificant details, all the more important in the co-creation of the symbolic dimension of the presented world ("condensed milk" in *Winnie-the-Pooh*, tropical fruit in *Peter and Wendy*). In all these cases every choice of the translator – whether domestication, neutralization or foreignization – will be fraught with consequences for reading and interpretation. Ultimately, it is only fair to say that in children's literature, especially the classics, it is most frequently the food that is eating the translators away.

Works Cited

Austin, L. F. "Our Note Book." *London Illustrated News*, 7 January 1905.

Barrie, J. M. *Przygody Piotrusia Pana*. Translated by Maciej Słomczyński, Wydawnictwo Dolnośląskie, 1991.

– *The Annotated Peter Pan*, with an introduction and notes by Maria Tatar, W.W. Norton & Company,

2011.

– *Piotruś Pan i Wendy*. Translated by M. Czerwińska, Book House, 2009.

– *Piotruś Pan*. Translated by A. Polkowski, Media Rodzina, 2015.

Boyce, Charlotte and Joan Fitzpatrick. *A History of Food in Literature: From the Fourteenth Century to the Present*. Routledge, 2017.

Brillat-Savarin, Jean Anthelme. *The Physiology of Taste, or, Transcendental Gastronomy*. Translated by Fayette Robinson, Lindsay & Blakiston, 1854.

Carpenter, Humphrey. *Secret Gardens: A Study of the Golden Age of Children's Literature*. Houghton Mifflin Company, 1985.

Carrington, Bridget, and Jennifer Harding. *Feast or Famine? Food and Children's Literature*. Cambridge Scholars Publisher, 2014.

Carroll, Lewis. *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, with forty-two illustrations by John Tenniel. Macmillan, 1867.

Chiaro, Delia, and Linda Rossato. "Introduction: Food and Translation, Translation and Food." *Translator*, vol. 21, no. 3, 2015, pp. 237–243.

Daniel, Carolyn. *Voracious Children: Who Eats Whom in Children's Literature.* Routledge, 2006.

Dolan, Frances E. "Toast and the Familiar in Children's Literature." *Food and Literature,* edited by Gitanjali G. Shahani, Cambridge University Press, 2018, pp. 287–302.

Dymel-Trzebiatowska, Hanna. T*ranslatoryka literatury dziecięcej: Analiza przekładu utworów Astrid Lindgren na język polski*. Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego, 2013.

Eagleton, Terry. "Edible Écriture." *The Times Higher Education Supplement*, no. 1303, 1997, p. 25.

Galbraith, Gretchen R. *Reading Lives: Reconstructing Childhood, Books, ad Schools in Britain,* 1870–1914. Macmillan, 1997.

Gavin, Adrienne E. and Andrew F. Humphries. *Childhood in Edwardian Fiction. Worlds Enough and Time*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.

Grahame, Kenneth. *O czym szumią wierzby.* Translated by Maria Godlewska, Towarzystwo Wydawnicze „Rój", 1938.

– *Wierzby na wietrze*. Translated by Bohdan Drozdowski, Vis-à-vis, 2009.

– *The Wind in the Willows,* with an introduction and notes by P. Hunt. Oxford University Press, 2010.

–*O czym szumią wierzby.* Translated by Maciej Płaza, Vesper, 2014.

Green, Roger Lancelyn. "The Golden Age of Children's Books". *Essays and Studies,* edited by B. White, John Murray, 1962, pp. 59–73.

Gubar, Marah. *Artful Dodgers Reconceiving the Golden Age of Children's Literature.* 1st ed., Oxford University Press, 2009.

Hemmings, Robert. "A Taste of Nostalgia: Children's Books from the Golden Age-Carroll, Grahame, and Milne." *Children's Literature*, vol. 35, no. 1, 2007, pp. 54–79.

Hunt, Peter. *The Wind in the Willows: A Fragmented Arcadia*. Twayne Publishers, 1994.

–"'Coldtonguecoldhamcoldbeefpickled-Gherkinssaladfrenchrollscresssandwidgespottedmeatginge

rbeer Lemonadesodawater....' Fantastic Food in the Books of Kenneth Grahame, Jerome K. Jerome, H. E. Bates and Other Bakers of the Fantasy England." *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts*, vol. 7, no. 1, 1996, pp. 5–22.

Katz, Wendy R. "Some Uses of Food in Children's Literature." *Children's Literature in Education*, vol. 11, no. 4, Dec. 1980, pp. 192–99.

Keeling, Kara K., and Scott T. Pollard, editors. *Critical Approaches to Food in Children's Literature*. Routledge, 2009.

– *Table Lands: Food in Children's Literature*. University Press of Mississippi, 2020.

Keyser, Catherine. "Guilty Pleasures in Children's Literature." *The Cambridge Companion to Literature and Food*, edited by J. Michelle Coghlan, Cambridge University Press, 2020, pp. 146–160.

Lakoff, George and Mark Johnson. *Metaphors We Live By*. University of Chicago Press, 2017.

Magid, Annette *M. You Are What You Eat Literary Probes into the Palate*. Cambridge Scholars, 2008.

Coghlan, J. Michelle. T*he Cambridge Companion to Literature and Food.* Cambridge University Press, 2020.

Milne, A. A. *Kubuś Puchatek*. Translated by Irena Tuwim, Nasza Księgarnia, 1983.

– *Fredzia Phi-Phi.* Translated by Monika Adamczyk, Wydawnictwo Lubelskie, 1986.

– *Winnie-the-Pooh*, New York: Dutton Children's Books, 2009.

Montanari, Massimo. *Food is Culture.* Translated by Albert Sonnenfeld, Columbia University Press, 2006.

Nicholson, Mervyn. "Food and Power: Homer, Carroll, Atwood and Others." *Mosaic (Winnipeg)*, vol. 20, no. 3, 1987, pp. 37–55.

Oittinen, Riitta. *Translating for Children*. Garland, 2000.

Opie, Iona Archibald. *The Oxford Dictionary of Nursery Rhymes*. Oxford University Press, 1988.

Orwell, George. "Such, Such Were the Joys." *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell*, Vol. 4, edited by Orwell, Sonia and Ian Angus, Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968, 330–370.

Paruolo, Elena. "Translating Food in Children's Literature." *Testi e Linguaggi*, No. 4, 2010, pp. 49–70.

Potter, Beatrix. *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*, Frederick Warne, 2002.

–*The Tale of Squirrel Nutkin.* Frederick Warne, 2002.

– *Historyjki Beatrix Potter.* Translated by Anna Matusik-Dyjak, Olesiejuk, 2016.

Proust, Marcel. *Remembrance of Things Past,* Vol. 1. Translated by C.K. Scott Moncrieff and T. Kilmartin, Penguin Books, 1986.

Rose, Jonathan. *The Edwardian Temperament,* 1895–1919. Ohio University Press, 1986.

Rowe Fraustino, Lisa. "The Apple of Her Eye: The Mothering Ideology Fed by Best-selling Trade Picture Books." *Critical Approaches to Food in Children's Literature,* Keeling, Kara K. and Scott T. Pollard, Routledge, pp. 57–72.

Shahani, Gitanjali G. *Food and Literature.* Cambridge University Press, 2018.

Sorby, Angela. "The Golden Age". *Keywords for Children's Literature,* edited by Nel, Philip and Lissa Paul, New York University Press, 2011, pp. 96–99.

Stevenson, Laura C. "Literary Ladders in the Golden Age of Children's Books." *The Sewanee Review*, vol. 119, no. 3, 2011, pp. 428–444.

Sullivan, C. W. III. "Chops, ... cheese, new bread, great swills of beer: Food and home in Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows*." *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts*, vol. 15, 2004.

Venuti, Lawrence. "Strategies of Translation." *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, edited by Mona Baker, Routledge, 2001, pp. 240–244.

– *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation*. Routledge, 2008.

Wieczorkiewicz, Aleksandra. "'Nie ma to jak w domu.' Literackie reprezentacje przestrzeni domowej w utworach angielskiej klasyki dziecięcej (na przykładzie powieści 'O czym szumią wierzby' Kennetha Grahame'a". *Literackie wizerunki przestrzeni domowych*, edited by M. Błaszkowska et al., AT, 2017.

Notes

[1] This chapter was written as a part of the OPUS 21 grant of the National Science Centre, Poland, project no. 2021/41/B/HS2/00876: *Half a Century of Children's Literature in Poland. Texts for a Young Audience in the Context of Cultural Production and Power: The Recipient of Literature – Literature as a Recipient.*

[2] See also Chiaro and Rossato 238.

[3] Lawrence Venuti, who introduced the terms "domestication" and "foreignization" to Translation Studies, defines the former as "an assimilative approach to a foreign text, appropriating it to support native canons, publishing trends, political alignments", and the latter as "motivated by the impulse to preserve linguistic and cultural differences by departing from dominant national values" (Venuti "Strategies of Translation" 420; see also Venuti *The Translator's Invisibility*).

[4] Catherine Keyser points out that in the late nineteenth century, which "saw the advent of industrial food, artificial flavours, […] and nutrition science, major transformations in food substances and systems that made food ever more available and yet potentially treacherous", children were seen as the most vulnerable consumers, whose proper diet should be particularly cared for (Keyser 146–147). This can also be said of the child book-consumers of the period, whose proper intellectual diet was of particular interest to authors and critics (see Stevenson 2011).

[5] For various periodisations and canons of the Golden Age of English children's literature, see Green, Carpenter, Gubar, Sorby.

[6] This artificiality is explicitly marked by the novel's composition, based on storytelling; throughout the book, the narrator repeatedly reveals his presence, drawing the reader's attention to the textuality and artificiality of the presented world.

[7] As noted by Daniel, sweetness (especially the sweetness of honey) connotes in everyday speech feelings of love and tenderness, often directed towards children. Daniel also notes the linguistic equating of the subject (children, loved ones) with food objects, but also with animals; see Daniel 34.

[8] In two versions – by Michał Rusinek (*Piotruś Pan i Wendy*, 2006) and by Władysław Jerzyński (*Piotruś Pan i Wanda*, 2014) – it disappears altogether, most probably due to the fact that these translations were based on the New York editions of 1911 or subsequent ones, in which the eating scene is also missing.

Afterword: In Search of a Theory: from Potter, B. to Beaker, T.

Peter Hunt

1908

Jemima Puddle-duck was a simpleton: not even the mention of sage and onions made her suspicious. She went around the farm-garden, nibbling off snippets of all the different sorts of herbs that are used for stuffing roast duck.

(Potter, *The Tale of Jemima Puddle-Duck* 39).

1950

And really it was a wonderful tea. There was a nice brown egg, lightly boiled, for each of them, and then sardines on toast, and then buttered toast, and then toast with honey, and then a sugar-topped cake.

(Lewis, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* 19-20).

1991

I used to have this horrid foster mother called Aunt Peggy and she was an awful cook. She used to make this slimy stew like molten sick and we were supposed to eat it all up, every single bit. Yuck…. [But today] I ate a Big Mac and a large portion of french [sic] fries, and washed it down with a strawberry milkshake.

(Wilson, *The Story of Tracy Beaker* 13, 141).

Texts for children have a symbiotic relationship with the culture of which they form an inextricable part: they feed off each other, react to each other, and influence each other. And within texts for children, food is a ubiquitous trope, theme, motif, and flavor: it has been seen as a substitute for sexuality and a *disguise* for sexuality; as a metaphor for home, love, comfort and motherhood, or for dysfunctional families and society; as a symbol of freedom and a means of repression; as sacramental and redemptive and as a focus of carnival; a signifier of class and gender and national differences, and much else

– with, it must be said, different degrees of plausibility. "Food and children's literature" would therefore seem to be ripe for an overarching theory – but any such theory is likely to founder on the intricate *specificity* of every manifestation of food in texts. Food might seem to be a universal feature of texts for children, like power-imbalance, or variations of cognitive development, or the use of structures from folklore. But food in books is not an abstract: it takes a specific form – so much so that it could be seen as a powerful way of reading texts for children precisely because it *does not* transfer across cultures (see Tosi 88-94). Thus, when Harry Potter sits down to his first meal at Hogwarts school, he is overwhelmed by food:

> Harry's mouth fell open. The dishes in front of him were piled with food. He had never seen so many things that he liked to eat on one table: roast beef, roast chicken, pork chops and lamb chops, sausages, bacon and steak, boiled potatoes, roast potatoes, chips, Yorkshire pudding, peas, carrots, gravy, ketchup... (Rowling 92)

At first sight, this may seem to simply appeal to a (widely assumed) universal need (or greed) for food by children. An acquaintance of C. S. Lewis, commenting on the food in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe.* summed up this prejudice:

> Ah, I see how you got to that. If you want to please grown-up readers you give them sex, so you thought to yourself, "That won't do for children, what shall I give them instead? I know. The little blighters like plenty of good eating." (Lewis, *Of Other Worlds* 22)

Yet, as translators into some 80 languages have found, the Hogwarts menu is widely incomprehensible, revolting, or culturally unacceptable. "Should it be read in the context of nation – this is what the True English eat, if perhaps a "retro" version of it; or as part of the timeless (or out-of-time) ethos of the Potter universe; or as nostalgia by (and for) a generation of (adult) readers for whom food was important, as opposed to a generation of younger readers for whom food is not particularly important? After all, in 1946 British families on average spent 34% of their income on food, while in 1997, that figure was around 10% (Bulman; Hickman).

Context, then, is all – but far from leading to debilitating complexity, contextualization liberates children's literature from its critical isolationism: reading *through* food opens up, as it were, a banquet of critical investigation. This rich à la carte feast, which may or may not yield a coherent (table d'hôte) theory, can be illustrated, summarized, by a brief trip through the cultural context of twentieth century texts for children – bearing in mind that

as around 500,000 such texts were published in Britain in that period, we must proceed by honestly and pragmatically admitting the partiality of any history.

The manipulation of food in children's books of the first thirteen years of the twentieth century in Britain reflects very closely the suppressed national anxieties of the period. The "popular press" – children's magazines and periodicals – had been anticipating war with Germany for at least twenty years before it broke out (Clarke; Hunt "Afterword"), but a general anxiety is pervasive in the supposedly gentle and bucolic "children's classics." Holdovers from the nineteenth century, such as Frances Hodgson Burnett's *A Little Princess* (1905) and *The Secret Garden* (1911), and E. Nesbit's *The Railway Children* (1905*)* pivot on (often melodramatic) food scenes. Rudyard Kipling's parable of the rise and decline of the British empire, *Puck of Pook's Hill* (1906) uses food symbolically in terms of nation, loyalty, and family.

Of the nineteen innocent-looking books published by Beatrix Potter between 1902 and 1913, almost all are about eating and being eaten, and they grow progressively darker as war looms. And that quintessentially Edwardian book for adults, masquerading as a children's book, and fraught with the social and gender issues of the day, Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows* (1908) is built around food – much of it uncomfortable and ambiguous. It may substitute for heterosexual sex (the gaoler's daughter and the buttered toast), or gay sex (Badger's supper); for the longing to escape (Rat's lunch with the Sea Rat); for nostalgia (Mole and the mouse choir); or for the violent assertion of power (the final banquet) – and a good deal more. Texts for (or appropriated by) children therefore shadowed the uncertainties of the period, and food focuses this very vividly.

It also contributes to pure history. During World War I, food in boys' stories became part of the propaganda machine, with scant regard for the deadly reality. In Henry Newbolt's *Adventures of a Subaltern* (1915), where things were "all very jolly," an officer in reserve in France enjoys "first-class pic-nic teas spread out on sheets in the corner of a field" (cited in Paris 33). By 1916, when supplies to British front-line troops meant that meat was a rarity (and sometimes – an anathema to most British – horsemeat), and bread might be made from ground turnips, the front-line soldiers in boys' books, according to Capt. F.S. Brereton in *Under Haig in Flanders* ate "frizzling bacon not to be beaten anywhere, bread that might have graced the table of the Ritz hotel, and jam that would have been the envy of any housewife" (53).

Children's literature histories have until recently tended (for good academic reasons) to ignore what was going on in adults' texts, but to use food as part of comparative studies is invariably instructive. Thus, in 1922, James Joyce's modernist masterpiece, *Ulysses*, was published, full of new narrative ideas, and passages such as this, emphasizing the rawness of human nature, and saying the usually unsayable.

> Mr Leopold Bloom ate with relish the inner organs of beasts and fowls. He liked thick giblet soup, nutty gizzards, a stuffed roast heart, liverslices fried with crustcrumbs, fried hencods' roes. Most of all he liked grilled mutton kidneys which gave to his palate a fine tang of faintly scented urine. (57)

In contrast, A. A. Milne, who had once described World War I as "a nightmare of mental and moral degradation" (Thwaite 161), was creating a retreatist, pacifist, protected, idyllic, and domestic fictional world for children. Food is integral, and can be part of a shared joke, as in *When We Were Very Young.*

> *What* is the matter with Mary Jane?
> She's crying with all her might and main,
> And she won't eat her dinner – rice pudding again –
> What *is* the matter with Mary Jane? (48)

Similarly, in 1928, a year that saw the publication of two radical, and subsequently banned books, Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness*, and D. H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, children could be reading Joyce Lankester Brisley's Milly-Molly-Mandy series. No scandal here: Milly-Molly-Mandy's nuclear family lives in a thatched cottage with a large garden, where they grow their own food.

> Once upon a time, one fine evening, Milly-Molly-Mandy and her Father and Mother and Grandpa and Grandma and Uncle and Aunty were all sitting at supper (there was bread-and-butter and cheese for the grown-ups, and bread-and-milk for Milly-Molly-Mandy, and baked apples and cocoa for them all). (24)

Food as social history is a sub-menu in itself. In the 1930s, the vogue for "camping ad tramping" (the fashion for healthy outdoor activity owing something to the German *Wandervogel* movement – with its fascist overtones) produced its own genre, best remembered, perhaps, for the "Swallows and Amazons" books by Arthur Ransome (Bird 18-34). This was typically a middle-class genre, with groups of children roaming the countryside – in the case of Gary Hogg's *Explorers Awheel* (1938), by bicycle – and experiencing rural hospitality on a scale not seen again until nostalgic post-World War II days.

> There was porridge in a huge bowl, with a mound of Devonshire cream near it…; there was another bowl of corn flakes, with bowls of raspberries, loganberries, apples and early whortleberries ringing it round. Piles of

> scones and home-baked bread and oatcakes and pancakes filled the middle of the table, and the blocks of butter were exactly the colour of buttercups. ... Honey from their own bees, and damson jam and bilberry jelly and lemon curd. [They sat] wolfing coffee and slice after slice of bread and bilberry jelly with cream on it almost as thick as the bread beneath! Good stuff! (101-102)

But this was children's book land. Conditions in the real world, observed by social(ist) activists such as George Orwell, were somewhat different, and often described in terms of the disgusting food consumed by the workers. Orwell's analysis in 1937 reads uncannily like a riposte to the campaigning celebrity chefs of the 2020s, who seek to change the eating habits of the lower classes:

> The basis of their diet, therefore, is white bread and margarine, corned beef, sugared tea and potatoes – an appalling diet. Would it not be better if they spent more money on wholesome things like oranges and wholemeal bread or … ate their carrots raw? Yes, it would, but the point is that no ordinary human being is ever going to do such a thing…the less money you have, the less inclined you feel to spend it on wholesome food. (88)

Food may also be a key to unsettling established historical and literary narratives. Thus, almost all the most distinguished British children's fiction about World War II was written in the 1960s or later, most famously, perhaps, Nina Bawden's *Carrie's War* (1973) and Michelle Magorian's *Goodnight Mr Tom* (1981). The theme of many such books was the sad plight of the poor displaced city children, who were evacuated to a strange and hostile environment in the country. This was not, however, how appeared in 1941. Richmal Crompton's William Brown, the *enfant terrible* of children's books, who had first appeared in 1922 and who remained the same age through the war and beyond, attended, in *William Does His Bit*, a birthday party for local village children, organized by a well-meaning mother.

> "Remember, dear children," she ended, "that we are at war. Let us show a spirit of comradeship this afternoon by eating as little as possible – as little as possible, dear children – so that what is left may go to the strangers we have welcomed into our midst, the evacuees."
> As one man the little guests fell upon the feast… The thought that the residue was to go to the evacuees had whetted their appetites. Not one but had suffered from the hands of the evacuees (tough young guys from the

> East End of London whose methods of warfare were novel and unpleasant) and the thought that their tormentors might profit from their abstinence urged them on to yet greater feats of gastronomy. (212-213)

The 1950s and 1960s in Britain have the reputation of a period of radical change, the era of the "angry young men" challenging norms in theatre (John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* (1956)) and the novel (Kingsley Amis's *Lucky Jim* (1954)), and "youth culture" characterized by the music of the Beatles. And yet children's books remained deeply conservative – as indicated by their use of food. Enid Blyton, still the bestselling children's author in English, became famous (or notorious) for descriptions of rural eating almost identical to those Gary Hogg. C. S. Lewis's Narnia series was even more reactionary: good plain food means stability; exotic food is positively evil. Foods of the past were *wholesome*: the eponymous hero of Philippa Pearce's much vaunted and supposedly revolutionary *Tom's Midnight Garden* (1958) is nearly poisoned by his aunt's over-rich fancy modern food – "shrimp sauce and rum butter" "being particularly indigestible" (7)

The final years of the century were characterized by the homogenization of food and the homogenization of publishing. The first McDonald's opened in London in 1974; today, the fast-food market in Britain is worth around £25 billion, and McDonald's alone has over 1300 outlets. In the 1960s there were 72 independent children's book editors (Reynolds and Tucker); by the 1990s more than 65% of publishing was in the hands of five conglomerates (Hunt, "Children's Novel" 318-323). The "commodification of childhood" (Zipes 93-80) made texts more predictable, tropes more standardized. Possibly the most famous (and influential) book of the period, Roald Dahl's *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (1967) ruthlessly borrowed eighteenth and nineteenth century devices of food as melodrama – Charlie's parents, virtuous but poor, survive on bread and margarine and cabbage: greed is punished, and virtue rewarded with … food (Dahl 14 and *passim*; Hunt "Roald Dahl"). In Dahl's *Matilda* food is a class marker (the Wormwoods eat in front of the television); is punishment (the evil Miss Trunchbull makes the hapless Bruce Bogtrotter eat a huge cake) – and is a symbol of rural redemption and purity, in the frugal diet of the anorexic Miss Honey.

Such crude manipulations of food became common – and sometimes confusing. The neo-realism (or pseudo-realism) of the end of the century was epitomized by the work of Jaqueline Wilson, a good many of whose 40 million sales featured the serial foster-child, Tracy Beaker. As we can see from the extracts quoted at the outset, the Victorian horrors of vile food are replaced by junk food - an improvement in the eyes of the protagonist, but not necessarily in the eyes of other readers.

Literary food as an emotional, dramatic, and political trope has lost little of its potency, but a comprehensive theory must evade us because of the complexity of context,

and the complexities of power involved. As Lewis Carroll noted of *The Hunting of the Snark*, "words mean more than we mean to express when we use them" (22), and the same might be said of food in texts for children. To adapt the novelist L. P. Hartley: "The past is a foreign country: they eat things differently there."

Works Cited

Bird, Hazel Sheeky. *Class, Leisure and Identity in British Children's Literature, 1918-1950.* Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.

Brereton, Capt. F. S. *Under Haig in Flanders*. Blackie, 1916.

Brisley, Joyce Lankester. *The Milly-Molly-Mandy Story Book*. 1928. Macmillan, 2008.

Bulman, Joanna. "Celebrating 60 years of Family Spending." blog.ons.gov.uk/2018/01/18/celebrating-60-years-of-family-spending/. 18 January, 2018.

Carroll, Lewis. *The Annotated Snark*, edited by Martin Gardner. Penguin, 1974.

Clarke, I. F., editor. *The Great War with Germany, 1890-1914: Fictions and Fantasies of the War-to-come*. Liverpool UP, 1997.

Crompton, Richmal. *William Does His Bit*. 1941. Macmillan, 1988.

Dahl, Roald. *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. 1967. Puffin 1973.

---. *Matilda*. Jonathan Cape, 1988.

Grahame, Kenneth. *The Wind in the Willows*. Methuen, 1906.

Hickman, Martin. "Survey of Family Spending Charts Half Century of Consumer Culture."
www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/survey-of-family-spending-charts-half-century-of-consumer-culture-775185.html 1957-33. 29 January 2008.

Hogg, Gary. *Explorers Awheel*. Thomas Nelson, 1938.

Hunt, Peter. "Afterword – Prophesying War: The Hidden Agendas of Children's Literature, 1900-1914 … and 2015." *Children's Literature and Culture of the First World War*, edited by Lissa Paul, et al., Routledge, 2016, pp. 319-327.

---. "Roald Dahl and the Commodification of Fantasy." *Roald Dahl*, edited by Ann Alston, and Catherine Butler, Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, pp. 176-189.

---. "The Children's Novel." *British and Irish Fiction Since 1940*, edited by Peter Boxall, and Bryan Cheyette, Oxford UP, 2016, pp. 310-327.

Joyce, James. *Ulysses.* 1922. Penguin, 1971.

Paris, Michael. *Over the Top: The Great War and Juvenile Literature in Britain.* Praeger, 2004.

Pearce, Philippa. *Tom's Midnight Garden*. 1958. Oxford UP, 1970.

Potter, Beatrix. *The Tale of Jemima Puddle-duck*. 1908. Frederick Warne, 2002.

Reynolds, Kimberley. *Left Out: The Forgotten Tradition of Radical Publishing for Children in Britain 1910-1949*. Oxford UP, 2016.

Rowling, J. K. *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone.* Bloomsbury, 1997.

Lewis, C. S. *Of Other Worlds: Essays and Stories*. Geoffrey Bles, 1966.

---. *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe.* 1950. Penguin, 1959.

Milne, A. A. *When We Were Very Young*. 1924. Methuen, 1984.

Orwell, George. *The Road to Wigan Pier*. 1937. Penguin, 2001.

Reynolds, Kimberley and Nicholas Tucker, editors. *Children's Book Publishing in Britain Since 1945*. Scolar/Ashgate, 1988.

Thwaite, Ann. *A. A. Milne, His Life*. Faber and Faber, 1990.

Tosi, Laura and Peter Hunt. *The Fabulous Journeys of Alice and Pinocchio. Exploring their Parallel Worlds.* McFarland, 2018.

Wilson, Jacqueline. *The Story of Tracy Beaker*. Corgi, 1991.

Zipes, Jack. *Sticks and Stones: The Troublesome Success of Children's Literature*. Routledge, 2001.

Contributors

Marco Canani is Associate Professor of English at the "G. d'Annunzio" University of Chieti-Pescara, Italy. His research investigates the literature and culture of the long nineteenth century with a focus on Romantic poetry, fin-de-siècle aesthetics, and Anglo-Italian studies. He is the author of *Ellenismi britannici. L'ellenismo nella poesia, nelle arti e nella cultura britannica dagli augustei al Romanticismo* (2014), and co-editor of monographic issues of *La questione Romantica* (2020, "Romanticism and Cultural Memory") and *The Keats-Shelley Review* (2021, "Peterloo at 200: Histories, Narratives, Representations"). He has recently co-edited the volume *The Language of Science in the Long Nineteenth Century: Cultural, Lexical, Textual Insights* (2023).

Anna Gasperini is Lecturer in Children's Literature and Culture at the University of Galway, Ireland, where she also researches the history of child health from a literary and historical perspective. She is the PI of the Irish Research Council Laureate Project "MILC - MedIcal Literature and Communication about Child health (1840-1914)", a transnational comparative study of childcare literature. Previously, she received funding within the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions scheme to develop a transnational comparative project on children's literature and child nutrition in England and Italy at Ca' Foscari University of Venice. She is the author of the 2019 Palgrave Macmillan monograph *Nineteenth Century Popular Fiction, Medicine, and Anatomy - The Victorian Penny Blood and the 1832 Anatomy Act*.

Etti Gordon Ginzburg Ph.D., is a Senior Lecturer of English Literature at Oranim College in the north of Israel. Her research interests include children's literature, representations of children and childhood in literature, and canonicity. In the main, she

has been recovering the Nonsense poetry (among other works) by nineteenth-century American children's author Laura E. Richards.

Peter Hunt was the first Professor of Children's Literature at a UK university (Cardiff). He has written or edited 37 books on the subject, which have been translated into ten languages. International awards include the Brothers Grimm Award, from the International Institute for Children's Literature, Osaka (2003), and a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Università degli Studi Suor Orsula Benincasa, Naples (2018), and he has been a Visiting Professor at Unversità Ca'Foscari, Venice. His most recent books include *Alice's Oxford* (forthcoming 2025), and he contributed to Laura Tosi's award-winning *The Fabulous Journeys of Alice and Pinocchio* (2018).

Tzina Kalogirou is Professor of Modern Greek Literature and Literature Teaching in the School of Education at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens in Greece, and Director of Postgraduate Programmes in "Rhetoric, Communication, and Creative Writing in Education" and "Social Studies and Humanities in Education". She is the author, editor or co-editor of academic books and numerous chapters and journal articles. She is on the steering committee of The Child and the Book International Conference and co-editor -in-chief of the international Journal of Literary Education. She is supervisor in-chief of the New National Curriculum for the Teaching of Literature in the Middle Level.

Anna Kérchy is Professor of English literature at the University of Szeged in Hungary, where she is the head of the Doctoral Program in Literatures and Cultures in English, and director of Children's and Young Adult Literatures and Cultures Research Centre. She is interested in Victorian and postmodern fantastic imagination, literary nonsense, fairy tales, body studies, humanimal studies, posthumanism, as well as the transmedial, corporeal-narratological, and political/ethical dimensions of children's/YA literature. She authored the monographs *Alice in Transmedia Wonderland*, *Body-Texts in the Novels of Angela Carter*, and *Poetics and Politics of Literary Nonsense* and co-edited ten essay collections including *Postmodern Reinterpretations of Fairy Tales; The Fairy-Tale Vanguard* (with Stijn Praet) and *Transmediating and Translating Children's Literature* (with Björn Sundmark).

Corina Löwe is Associate Professor of German Language and Literature at the Language Department of Linnaeus University, Sweden. Her research interests include East German children's literature, the works of Astrid Lindgren, intermedial aspects in texts and films for young readers and the didactics of literature and language teaching. As a member of the Centre for Intermedial and Multimodal Studies (IMS) at Linnaeus

University, Sweden, she works with Intermedial Ecocriticism, focusing in particular on the importance of food. Löwe is also a member of the ChiLLL (Children's Literature, Language and Learning) research center at LNU.

Lindsay Myers is a Lecturer in Italian and Children's Literature at the University of Galway, Ireland. Her research areas include picturebooks, multingualism, translation, children's fantasy, theatre for children and children's film adaptation. She has written extensively on how children's literature serves as a vehicle for the transmission of social and political ideologies and has published in both Italian and English. In 2017 her monograph, *Making the Italians: Poetics and Politics of Italian Children's Literature* (Peter Lang, 2012) was published by ETS under the title, *Un fantasy tutto italiano: Le declinazioni del fantastico nella letteratura italiana per l'infanzia dall'Unità al XXI secolo* (2017).

Francesca Orestano taught English Literature at the State University of Milan. She authored books on John Neal, on William Gilpin and the picturesque, on visual culture in nineteenth-century literature. In 2008 she was awarded the Lavinia Taverna prize for "Letteratura del giardino" – garden literature. She edited three books on children's literature; launched the first Italian website on "Children's literature in Italy"; edited *Strange Sisters: Literature and Aesthetics*; *Dickens and Italy*; *History and Narration*; *New Bearings in Dickens Criticism*; *Not Just Porridge: English Literati at Table*; *Some Keywords in Dickens*; *Lady Gardeners: Seeds, Roots, Propagation from England to the Wider World*. She is a Companion of the Guild of St George.

Sabine Planka, Dr. phil. is a literary scholar with a focus on children's and young adults' literature/media from 19th to 21st century with a particular interest in cookbook literature and literary food studies as well as in the field of film studies. She also works as a literary critic and author. Her research is widely published both in English and German: she has published various articles, has (co-)edited essay collections and has presented lectures. She works as a visiting lecturer in the field of children's literature at the Bielefeld University (Germany). For more details visit her homepage: www.sabine-planka.de.

Victoria de Rijke is Professor in Arts & Education at Middlesex University in London and Co-Chief Editor of *Children's Literature in Education Journal*. Her research is transdisciplinary across the fields of literature and the arts, children's literature, play and animal studies, through the associations of metaphor. Publications include "The Carrier Bag theory of Fiction as a Means of Reciprocal Researching with Children" (2023), "Reading Children's Literature" and "The Values of Savagery: Pathologies of Child and Pet Play" (2017). Her first picturebook is *The A-Z of Dangerous Food* (RebVik 2012).

Björn Sundmark is a scholar and critic of children's literature, and Professor of English literature at Malmö University (Sweden), where he teaches English literature and Children's literature. He has published extensively on children's literature and is the author of the study *Alice in the Oral-Literary Continuum*. He is, moreover, the editor and co-editor of several essay collections, including *Translating and Transmediating Children's Literature, The Nation in Children's Literature, Child Autonomy and Child Governance in Children's Literature: Where Children Rule,* and *Silence and Silencing in Children's Literature.* Sundmark was the editor of Bookbird 2014-2018 and is a member of the ALMA-jury.

Laura Tosi is Full Professor of English Literature at the University Ca' Foscari in Venice. Her primary research fields are Elizabethan drama and children's literature. She has written monographs on Ben Jonson and John Webster and co-edited essay collections for Ashgate and Palgrave Macmillan. In the field of children's literature, she has written extensively on literary fairy tales in England, adaptations of Shakespeare's plays for children, and the history of children's literature in England. Her latest monograph in the field of children's literature is *The Fabulous Journeys of Alice and Pinocchio* (McFarland, 2018). She is responsible for the website Children's Literature in Italy pric.unive.it/projects/childrens-literature-in-italy/home

Anna Travagliati earned her PhD in Contemporary Italian Literature from the University of Bologna in 2023 with a dissertation focused on Adela Turin's "Dalla parte delle bambine," the first Italian publishing house for feminist children's literature. In 2024 she started a postdoc at the University of Clermont Auvergne (France), within the project "Représentations sexuées et genrées du « féminin » dans les albums de jeunesse / Sexual and Gendered Representations of the 'Feminine' in Picturebooks." Her main interests include gender and women's studies and children's literature – particularly picturebooks. She is currently serving as the Social Media Officer of the International Research Society for Children's Literature.

Kay Waddilove is a postdoctoral researcher, currently completing a monograph investigating constructions of family life in austerity Britain during the long 1950s. Research interests include twentieth and twenty-first century children's literature, with a focus on women authors, domestic novels, historical writing, and the ideological role of popular literature in the transmission of cultural identity. She has published on children's book awards, careers series for girls, representations of motherhood, fathers in picture books, and a range of children's authors including Jacqueline Wilson, Penelope Lively, and Noel Streatfeild. Kay works with the Prison Reading Groups charity to facilitate emergent adult readers. She is affiliated to the National Centre for Research in Children's

Literature (NCRCL), University of Roehampton, London, UK.

Aleksandra Wieczorkiewicz is an assistant professor at the Faculty of Polish and Classical Philology and a researcher in the Children's Literature & Culture Research Team at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Poland. She received her doctorate on the Polish translation reception of works by George MacDonald, J.M. Barrie and Cicely Mary Barker. Her academic interests include English children's literature of the Golden Age, Polish juvenile writings, and children's literature translation studies. She has authored two monograph books and numerous academic articles and book chapters; she is also a literary and academic translator.

Eating Cultures in Children's Literature

National, International and Transnational Perspectives

Eating Cultures in Children's Literature – National, International and Transnational Perspectives investigates how the child is positioned as the consumer/eater of cultural food. It also highlights some ingredients that are to be found on more than one national menu, so to speak. We interrogate what it means to serve a "cultural meal" to a young person, identifying the discourses that are inscribed in the recipe. By analyzing authorial or translational choices, the different chapters explore the thematic and ideological roots of the stories that authors, illustrators and translators offer their young readers. The essays in this collection are organized around three themes in children's cultural and literary texts about food and eating. In the first section, the political dimensions of food narratives are explored. Food's power to define "us" versus "them" is key to understanding food narratives in their national and political contexts. The second part is dedicated to inter/national and transnational nightmares, specifically narratives addressing the supreme threat lurking in young people's literature: being eaten. Finally, the collection features a section on food fantasies in young people's narratives, and addresses the disconcerting capability of food to transform, translate, transcend and become abundantly surreal, without ever losing the power to marvel and satiate, even when it conveys complex concepts and ideas.

Enjoy!

MALMÖ UNIVERSITY PRESS
205 06 MALMÖ, SWEDEN
MAU.SE

MALMÖ UNIVERSITET

ISBN 978-91-7877-564-4 (print)
ISBN 978-91-7877-565-1 (pdf)