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Dangerous Appetites:
Violent Consumption in the Works of Flaubert, Baudelaire, and Césaire

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By

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M.A., The University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, 2003

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An abstract of
A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the
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In “Dangerous Appetites,” I reveal the often surprising ways in which eating, generally associated with nourishment, is instead depicted as a destructive act. In each work, edible matter surpasses its assumed role as mere prop, and the violence it incites is a galvanizing force in the creative process. In the first chapter, I demonstrate how, in *Madame Bovary* and *Salammbô*, Flaubert’s abstraction of food serves to elaborate his aesthetic ideal more generally. Emma Bovary is constituted, paradoxically, by her emptiness, resulting from an inability to consume as she wishes. Food, though visible everywhere, is inedible and ultimately unavailable as nourishment. In *Salammbô*, where consumption *is* conspicuously present, feasting fuels more overt acts of violence, the intoxicated soldiers who turn on each other enacting Flaubert’s claim, “J’éventre des hommes avec prodigalité. […] Je fais du style cannibale.”

Cannibalism resurfaces in my second chapter. Unlike Flaubert, Baudelaire enters into the economy of consumption he creates, posing at times as the one who eats, and at others as the one who is eaten—both “victime et bourreau.” The poet’s self-avowed “goût de la déstruction” is elaborated in this economy, particularly through such figures as woman and the heart, which is transformed from the metaphorical locus of affect into an anatomical heart, prone to physical harm and consumption. I argue that the pain inflicted through violent acts of consumption is a *mal* necessary to the creation of the text.

Flaubert and Baudelaire’s explorations of exotic others, as well as Césaire’s own “cannibalization” of the latter writer, lead to my final chapter on *Cahier d’un retour au pays natal*. For those mired in “le marais de la faim,” what would intitially seem to offer nourishment ultimately does not. For even when they *are* fed, it is with violence, as they are stuffed with the spines of a sea urchin, for example, rather than its soft, inner flesh. I demonstrate how Césaire uses consumption as a vehicle for illustrating the violence done to a people, and most importantly, as a means of reclaiming that violence in order to move beyond it.

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Entrée

If literature provides, in its status as art, an obligatory removal from immediate reality, it cannot help bearing some marks of the material world in which its creators must live. It is hardly surprising, then, to find that food and drink occupy a place in it; for these things, aside from the biological needs they fulfill, play an important role in the everyday generation and fulfillment of desire—a key, originary element of all art. It is even less surprising that this would be the case in the *French* literary tradition. Grimod de la Reynière (*L'Almanach des gourmands*) and Brillat-Savarin (*La Physiologie du goût*), in the early part of the nineteenth century, paved the way for an increased popular interest in food and drink, modern precursors of the contemporary (and now ubiquitous, I might add) food writer. Alexandre Dumas – known for his prodigious appetite – when not writing fiction, also had his foray into the genre of food writing. His lengthy *Grand dictionnaire de cuisine* exemplifies the emergent establishment of a more complex public conversation about food, going beyond the more utilitarian cookbook, the domain to which writing about food was generally limited, and leaving no doubt as to the burgeoning dialogue around the topic of consumption in post-Revolutionary France.

The French restaurant changed the urban social landscape by mixing the public and the private and intermingling the classes, in ways *salon*-goers of centuries past could never have predicted.[1] Whatever tensions the intermingling and blurring of these

[1] Although the French restaurant has its beginnings earlier in eighteenth-century Paris, even in the late eighteenth century, Rebecca Spang argues in *The Invention of the Restaurant*, a "restaurant" was still widely understood to be a bowl of broth, drunk for its restorative properties (Spang uses Nicolas

previously well-defined categories (the public and the private, not to mention the various social classes) around the space of the table may have created, it amounts ultimately to the creation of a social space in which food and words can be shared in equal measure. Roland Barthes argues in an introduction to Brillat-Savarin's aforementioned *Physiologie du goût*, "La conversation (à plusieurs) est en quelque sorte la loi qui garde le plaisir culinaire de tout risque psychotique et maintient le gourmand dans une 'saine' rationalité: en parlant – en devisant – cependant qu'il mange, le convive confirme son moi et se protège de toute fuite subjective" (12). In this insistence that the act of consumption should be a social event, there is then the suggestion that the sharing of words and the sharing of food occasioned by gatherings around the table represent a necessary balance, which – if disturbed – could have dangerous consequences. His language suggests, after all, that the consumer "protect himself." But as I hope to show, Flaubert, Baudelaire and Césaire will not protect their characters from this implicit danger. Indeed, the violence we will witness in each of the works in question is a vehicle each writer uses, as I will argue, to significant ends.

Lawrence Schehr has argued that in literature, food is "never there for the sake of food (125)." In the following study, I will demonstrate not only that food is never just food, but that the consumption it occasions in literature should be carefully considered. For if we tend to think of consumption as a sustaining act in reality, I show that in writing, it is often anything *but* nourishing. The complexity of this thematic in the works treated in the following studies can be traced back, I would suggest, to a fundamental

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Lavreince's 1782 drawing "The Restaurant," in which a maid brings two lovers a bowl of bouillon, to illustrate that still-common use of the word, 81).

disjunction in the Western tradition between "elevated" discourse and consumption, as philosophy has long struggled against the intrusion of the senses and the plurality they represent upon the domain of Reason. In *Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche proclaims, "'Reason' is the cause of our falsification of the evidence of the senses" (46). He goes on, "We possess scientific knowledge today to precisely the extent that we have decided to *accept* the evidence of the senses," insisting that "no philosopher ha[d] hitherto spoken [of the nose] with respect and gratitude" (46, emphasis in original). Where philosophy *has* continued to reflect on food and drink, it has been from an implicitly embattled perspective—which is to say, rarely without the compulsion to defend the relevance of the topic. Admittedly, food and drink are central, for example, to Roland Barthes' *Mythologies* in such essays as "Le vin et le lait," or "Le bifteck et les frites," works in which these foods are seen as foundational to French culture. Most notably today, Michel Onfray applies a philosophical approach to his studies of food, drink, and the pleasures they bring. This is something he began to do so early in his career, with *Le ventre des philosophes: critique de la raison diégétique* (1989).[2] In 2006, he founded the *Université populaire du goût* in his hometown of Argentan. Observing Kant's hierarchy of the senses in which the sense of smell is denigrated, labeled as "sans noblesse," Onfray advocates ultimately for an approach whereby "le plaisir ne s'affiche plus comme

[2] *Le ventre des philosophes* was published in 1989. Onfray has since written the following works, which bear directly on the topic at hand: *La raison gourmande*, *philosophie du goût* (1995); *Les Formes du temps: Théorie du Sauternes* (2009); and *La sagesse des abeilles* (2013), which, though less obviously concerned with comestible matter than the former works, carries a common thread, which is – to borrow a description from Onfray – "l'obtention d'une jubilation"—an embrace of pleasure in the material world that Onfray argues is not in opposition to the world of ideas, but is in harmony with it.

honteux," which is something he argues Brillat-Savarin succeeds in doing, calling him "le philosophe qui ose penser les sens" (206).

However, the famous gastronome's treatise ultimately has less to do with actual physical involvement in the foods he writes about, and more to do with a *philosophy* of consumption, and of taking pleasure, in the material world. Despite his embrace of pleasure, Brillat-Savarin's work cannot resist attempting to give words to – and so, in a sense, to impose an order upon – something that, because of its relationship to the senses, can never be fully captured by language. Daniel Sipe writes of the similar tendency of Brillat-Savarin's contemporary, philosopher Charles Fourier, to "identify and catalogue every imaginable passion, making it impossible for desire to escape the mastery of language" (231). The paradoxical attempt to contain the discourse of desire within a framework of reason is a reflection of more general shifts in thought from the eighteenth century to the nineteenth. Barthes describes the opposition well: "C'est que le dix-neuvième siècle commence son double voyage, positiviste et romantique […]: d'une part une sorte de réhabilitation des joies terrestres, un sensualisme, et d'autre part une explosion grandiose du mal de vivre" (33).

As the following readings will suggest, however, this inability of Reason to entirely control or assimilate the physical processes of appetite and consumption has serious consequences within the space of literature. Striking acts of violence emerge from this tension. The violent death of Emma Bovary, for example, is a death of sensualism and immeasure that keeps the tragic heroine empty—a victim to parallel Flaubert's artistic ideal. This most famous of modern literary deaths can be traced back, I would

propose, to some of the earliest texts defining the complicated relationship between literary discourse and consumption.

Literary food has abounded for millennia, as has the disorder feasting can introduce into the world of the text. Plato's *Symposium* is a particularly early literary example of this exchange of words and sustenance occasioned by a gathering round the table.[3] Because reason is central to the project of the *Symposium*, it is significant to note that its author keeps the disorder associated with food and drink firmly outside of the space of representation, thereby preventing its encroachment on the dialogue (the hallowed space of reason), in two ways. The first is temporal: the dialogue is recounted after the event took place, effectively eliminating the possibility that any revelry would impinge on the measured dialogue before it has occasion to work through the questions at hand, and affect those who hear it and read it. The excessive indulgence a symposium implies is allowed to enter in only when the dialogue is reaching its conclusion. Furthermore, like Alcibiades' drunken entrance earlier in the supper, these drunken celebrants' lack of composure has its origin *outside* the world of the text: "So Agathon got up to go and lie down beside Socrates. Suddenly, a large group of revelers came to the front door. […] There was noise everywhere, and all order was abandoned; everyone was forced to drink vast amounts of wine" (63). Following this final intrusion, Socrates indulges along with his companions, but is nevertheless able to outlast them all, watching

[3] A symposium is etymologically a drinking party (*symposion*, derived from *sympotes* 'fellow drinker', from *syn-* (together) and *posis* (a drinking), but such parties would also involve feasting, as Plato affirms in the opening page of his *Symposium*, in reference to "Agathon's supper" (697).

them fall sleep while he argues a point: “He was getting them to agree to this, though they were sleepy and not following very well” (63). Reason, then, is preserved.

Similarly, Petronius’s lusty *Satyricon* begins with a warning of the dangers of excess for the creative mind. Extracted from the poet Lucilius’s poem “Advice to a Young Poet” and recited extemporaneously by the narrator, it warns, “Don’t snuff your genius in your wine” (6). Although the *Satyricon* by no means pretends to be a model of decorum, it is nevertheless remarkable that the work begins with a reminder of the advantages of measure in consumption to creative pursuits, yet ends with the most excessive transgression imaginable of reason and measure that a simple act of ingestion could allow: cannibalism. The work concludes with Eumolpus’s decree that all who benefit from his will are to accept what he has left to them on the condition that they will eat him when he dies: “they must slice up my body into little pieces and swallow them down” (181). Eumolpus states no reason for this, other than that it is fair payment for the “years of blessings” his money gifts will ultimately impart to his survivors (181). Beyond the motive of fair payment in exchange for their gain, we might reasonably infer that such a ritual would allow for the deceased to live on in the bodies of those who consume him, much in the way that a writer lives on in his work. Interestingly, however, the surviving text ends abruptly on Eumolpus’s outrageous demand, its last lines trailing off in an anecdote of cannibalism, saved for the outer fringes of the work in a way similar to the intrusive revelers at the end of Plato’s *Symposium*: “And when Scipio captured Numantia, the Romans found a number of mothers cuddling the half-eaten bodies of their children in their laps…” (182). Though surely only a lacuna created by the passage of so many years, this ellipsis is a strangely poetic ending to an awful scene, for in silencing

excess as it does, it would seem to restore to "right" (by which I mean reason) the economy of consumption, leaving the impression, however unintended, that eating and literature don't belong together.

Early on in the Western tradition, then, ritualized consumption and violence are recognized as being interrelated on some level; and yet, problematically so, disrupting the space of the text. This is why murder, rape, and other acts of extreme violence are historically kept offstage in Greek tragedy, and are narrated instead (safely, and in the third person) by the Chorus, just as later in French tragedy, *bienséance* confines such acts to the *hors-scène*. This is why it is so striking that in literature, consumption is often viewed in the same terms: not simply as sustenance, something mundane, but rather as something more complex, allowing for an expression of violence comparable in force to those other, unspeakable acts.

In the first chapter of my dissertation, devoted to this theme in *Madame Bovary* and later *Salammbô*, I demonstrate how Flaubert's abstraction of food is an elaboration of his aesthetic ideal. Emma Bovary is constituted, paradoxically, by her emptiness, the result of her inability to consume as she wishes. She articulates her discontent in terms of consumption—or rather, the *impossibility* of it: "Un homme, au moins, est libre; il peut parcourir les passions et les pays, traverser les obstacles, *mordre* aux bonheurs les plus lointains. Mais une femme est empêchée continuellement" (153). Jean-Pierre Richard famously noted, "On mange beaucoup dans les romans de Flaubert" (119). But this is precisely the problem: *on* mange beaucoup; Emma does not. And when she does eat or drink, she is rendered dangerously empty, left with "un trou dans sa vie"—a mortal wound (116). Food, though visible everywhere, is inedible and ultimately unavailable as

nourishment. I argue that this is also the case in *Salammbô*: though conspicuously present, it does not satisfy, but rather incites violent desire. Flaubert writes of his novel, "J'éventre des hommes avec prodigalité. […] Je fais du style cannibale" (*Correspondance* III, 30). This extends to the mercenary soldiers of *Salammbô*, who are essentially "éventrés" by their creator, unable to eat in a sustaining manner.

Cannibalism resurfaces in my second chapter, devoted to the particularly visceral representation of eating in the works of Baudelaire. Unlike Flaubert, the poet himself enters into the economy of consumption he creates, posing at times as the one who eats, and at others as the one who is eaten—in his own words, both "victime et bourreau." Baudelaire's self-avowed "goût de la déstruction" is elaborated in this economy, particularly through such figures as woman (the always equivocal *monstre délicat*), and the heart, which is transformed from the metaphorical locus of sentiment to an anatomical heart, prone to physical harm and consumption. This shift is emblematic of Baudelaire's place at the vanguard of modern poetry. Looking closely at the poet's complete works, and considering the context from which Baudelaire's unique aesthetic arises (his sources of inspiration range from the Troubadours, Dante, and the Frenetics, to Hogarth and Goya), I argue that the pain inflicted through violent acts of consumption is a *mal* necessary to the creation of the texts.

Césaire's own "cannibalization" of Baudelaire, not to mention Flaubert and Baudelaire's explorations of exotic others, lead to my third and final chapter on the violence of consumption in *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal*. In this work, for a people violently empty and mired in "le marais de la faim," what would at first seem to offer nourishment is a mirage, pure language: "[…] on mange *du bon*, et l'on en boit *du*

réjouissant," writes Césaire (15). And when the people *are* fed, it is with violence, as they find themselves stuffed with the spines of a sea urchin, rather than its soft, inner flesh, or choked on a baguette, the totem food of their oppressors. Here, not only food, but the act of violent consumption, is Césaire's most powerful instrument in illustrating the lack that defines a people, and ultimately a means by which the poet reclaims that violence, in order to overcome it.

The significance of the violence that defines consumption in these works has not been fully exposed by existing criticism. Analyses of Emma Bovary as consumer have been largely confined by critical discourse to her role as reader. The questions raised by *le bovarysme*, first identified in 1892 by Jules de Gaultier, revolve around reading and subjectivity and define an audience that, like Emma, was unable or unwilling to clearly separate the dream world of the text from a less appetizing reality. As Gaultier explained it, *le bovarysme* is a question of "le pouvoir départi à l'homme de se concevoir autre qu'il n'est" (10). In recent studies devoted to this theme, Marielle Macé proposes that Emma is a montage, a self-made assemblage of parts plucked from the texts she has consumed: "des imitations choisies à plusieurs sources, des "flux imitatifs" contradictoires" (8). Borrowing a phrase from Jules Vallès, Colette Camelin in turn raises the question of Emma as a "victime du livre" (3). Similar matters surface in Jacques Rancière's "La mise à mort d'Emma Bovary," as his explanation of Emma's death implicitly recalls a central problem of *bovarysme* : "Telle est l'erreur d'Emma, sa faute contre l'art. Nous pouvons lui donner un nom: esthétisation de la vie quotidienne" (68). Though her appetite for literature is, admittedly, an unhealthy one, these studies neglect the most obvious form of consumption—one that is perhaps even more dangerous for the heroine of the novel. For

while food is ever-present in *Madame Bovary*, and would seem to represent bounty and plenitude, it is, for Emma, a violent point of absence.

Current criticism has rarely and incompletely addressed the role played by consumption in Baudelaire as well. In a chapter of *Baudelaire and Intertextuality*, Margery Evans argues that for Baudelaire, writing is an act not unlike cookery in the potential for creativity that it holds. Evans' approach has its limitations, however, for, as I will argue, Baudelaire is much more than a cook in the economy of consumption he creates; he is also by turn both the consumer and the consumed. Furthermore, Evans considers only *Le Spleen de Paris*, thereby neglecting a treasure trove of passages dealing with consumption in *Les Fleurs du mal* and beyond. In a recent article dealing with the theme of digestion in *Les Fleurs du mal*, Joseph Acquisto recognizes food's complex role in that collection: "ingestion often proves either impossible or nefarious. As the prosecutors in Baudelaire's trial were quick to point out, Baudelaire's *Fleurs* were more poisonous than nourishing" (32). Poisonous, indeed—and not only the *Fleurs* themselves, but the actual moments of consumption taking place within them, in which food consistently has a negative function, rather than the positive one with which we naturally associate it. Acquisto then goes on to say, "The first image of ingestion lies within 'Tu mettrais l'univers entier dans ta ruelle'" (32). This claim neglects entirely the opening poems, however, the aforementioned "Au Lecteur" and "Bénédiction" – not to mention a host of texts in the poet's *Oeuvre* – in which a form of consumption even more violent than what we encounter in the poem Acquisto cites figures prominently.

Critics have also recognized the poetic resonance between Baudelaire and Césaire. Jeannie Suk, for example, has noted that in the *Cahier*, Césaire's "taste of the

'lait jiculi'" is reminiscent of the smell of the woman's hair in Baudelaire's "Parfum exotique" (43). Both, she proposes, evoke a "vision of wholeness" associated with the respective native lands being evoked by the poets, adding that the function of this taste in Césaire is "similar in rhetoric to Baudelaire's elsewhere" (43). However, Suk fails to note that it is only through sensory consumption – in this case, taste and smell – that these "other" places may be reached. Such analysis linking the two poets correctly emphasizes certain common elements of their work, but manages to overlook the importance of ingestion, where it is most crucial. Mireille Rosello has written memorably of consumption in Césaire, focusing primarily on the role of regurgitation as a form of agency, a refusal to assimilate French culture. She argues, "Dans les textes de Césaire, la hantise de l'avalement, du gavage, […] est contrecarrée par une tendance à rendre, à vomir, à régurgiter" (603). Vomiting may symbolize the rejection of colonial domination, but consumption, in the *Cahier*, is more than an act of defense and self-protection, as I will argue. It becomes, over the course of the poem, a powerful and offensive act that repeats the violence done to the people of Martinique, in order to liberate them *from* it.

The need to consume unites us all, across cultures, languages, and time, drawing us to the table. This in itself is nothing new; Renaissance humanists understood man as a being defined by appetite, and of course precedent for the literary table of the western tradition can be found in the Greek and Roman works I have evoked, for the banquet is a space in which words are meant to be exchanged, and food shared, together. Yet something much more complex is going on than the bounty of Flaubert's raucous feast in ancient Carthage, his rustic *table normande*, Baudelaire's passing references to consumption, or Césaire's Martinican Christmas feast, suggest at first glance. This

perhaps unexpected grouping of writers will allow us in the study that follows to chart the emergence of food as an abstract, aestheticized entity in the nineteenth century, to a substance which is ethically and politically engaged. For Flaubert, food is an architectural construct with an emptiness that not only mirrors Emma's fatal inability to be nourished, but also serves as a microcosm of the text as a whole. By contrast, in Baudelaire, eating is a particularly visceral act, fueling *le mal* that largely defines his aesthetic.[4] Finally, Césaire uses consumption, first as a vehicle for illustrating the violence done to a people, and ultimately as a means of reclaiming that violence in order to move beyond it. My study, through close textual analysis and careful attention to the context from which the work of each writer emerges, seeks to fill the voids left by existing criticism that I have just described. But most importantly, I demonstrate not only that the violence of consumption in the works in question must be accounted for, but that it is for each of these writers a critical, propulsive force in the creative process.

[4] In *Discours sur le colonialisme*, Césaire relates the *mal* of colonialism to other forms of evil, situating it in a lineage with the mal evoked by Baudelaire. Here, he cites and then comments on Baudelaire: "'Tout en ce monde sue le crime: le journal, la muraille et le visage de l'homme.' C'est du Baudelaire, et Hitler n'était pas né!" (53).

Chapter One:

Nothing Consumed: The Dangerous Space of Food in Flaubert

Part One: *Madame Bovary*

> "I know *something* interesting is sure to happen," she said to herself, "whenever I eat or drink anything."
>
> – Lewis Carroll, *Alice in Wonderland*

The economy of consumption in *Madame Bovary* does not allow for desires to be fulfilled. It is a novel about emptiness, and about not being able to eat well; Emma cannot consume food or experience other pleasures in a way that sustains her. This is why the act of consumption – of food and drink, which will be the focal point of this study, but also of material goods and of lovers – is so crucial to Flaubert's novel: it is fatally problematic to the heroine, for whom the pleasures it yields are at once a reason for living and a reason for dying. It is important to note that Emma understands her discontent in terms of consumption, or rather, the *impossibility* of it: "Un homme, au moins, est libre; il peut parcourir les passions et les pays, traverser les obstacles, *mordre* aux bonheurs les plus lointains. Mais une femme est empêchée continuellement" (153, emphasis mine). This unfulfilled desire, the inability to consume as she wishes or to "mordre aux bonheurs," will be the cause of her undoing and, eventually, her death— which, of course, is a result of "bad" consumption.

As Baudelaire pointed out in his own remarks on *Madame Bovary*, published only months after the novel (he noted that already, *Bovary* had been extensively reviewed and commented upon), "Il ne reste plus à la critique qu'à indiquer quelques points de vue oubliés, et qu'à insister un peu plus vivement sur des traits et des lumières qui n'ont pas été, selon moi, suffisamment vantés et commentés" (76). In the same spirit, I hope that through close readings of important scenes centered around the consumption of food in the novel, I will be able to show the extent to which the *space* that Flaubert accords to food can serve as a microcosm of the work itself— a model of the perfect form Flaubert famously aspired to in his art.

Even the most incisive criticism touching on the alimentary motif in *Madame Bovary* fails to expose the utter emptiness that characterizes food in the novel. In his seminal *Littérature et Sensation,* Jean-Pierre Richard devotes several pages to this topic in *Bovary*, in a chapter he begins with the following claim, with which few would argue: "On mange beaucoup dans les romans de Flaubert" (119). But this is precisely the point: *on* mange beaucoup. Emma does not, however, eat a lot. In fact, the actual act of eating is kept decidedly vague despite the bounty of food in the text. This vagueness renders Richard's sentence truer than ever, though not in the way that he intended. Interestingly, we find this very *on* in the novel itself: Flaubert writes of the wedding banquet, "*on* resta seize heures à table, and "Jusqu'au soir, *on* mangea," without there being a single act of consumption by any one individual (86, emphasis mine). At a lunch following the Vaubyessard ball, Flaubert again notes the duration of the meal, reducing what should be a pleasurable event to a quantifiable entity, thus dematerializing it with the very language used to describe it: "Il y eut beaucoup de monde au déjeuner. Le repas dura dix minutes;

on ne servit aucune liqueur" (114, emphasis mine). Again, on the night when Berthe is baptized, the celebratory meal is entirely devoid of edible matter and the "on" surfaces again: "il y eut un grand dîner; le curé s'y trouvait; *on* s'échauffa" (155, emphasis mine).

The repeated use of the impersonal subject pronoun contributes to the sense that when eating takes place in Flaubert, it doesn't really take place in the space of representation. As I will later elaborate, it is instead relegated to a kind of *hors-scène* of the text. And when it does take place, it is negatively valorized, as with Charles, whose unrestrained, undiscerning appetite and uncomplicated satisfaction following meals seems to earn him the bovine image that his name evokes: "[…] satisfait de lui-même, il mangeait le reste du miroton, épluchait son fromage, croquait une pomme, vidait sa carafe, puis s'allait mettre au lit, se couchait sur le dos et ronflait" (102). As Lilian Furst has observed, "food has the function in *Madame Bovary* of a mirror, almost of an objective correlative to character" (60). Brillat-Savarin, long before Furst, famously posited one's chosen food as a mirror of the self. And here, as I will show, the emptiness that characterizes Flaubert's representation of food is indeed mirrored in Emma in a remarkable way: her empty food is echoed in Flaubert's representation of her as an empty being. Even her life is conceived as a sort of spatial construct, something Flaubert compares to an attic room, all cold and dark corners, devoid of the grain that lends the room its name: "sa vie était froide comme un grenier dont la lucarne est au nord, et l'ennui, araignée silencieuse, filait sa toile dans l'ombre à tous les coins" (15); and, as I will later discuss in detail, "Son voyage à la Vaubyessard avait fait un trou dans sa vie" (116). Flaubert also writes of Emma, "Son mal, à ce qu'il paraît, était une manière de

brouillard qu'elle avait dans la tête" (174), and her heart, too, is described as empty:"son coeur, de nouveau, resta vide" (123).[5]

If Emma consumes with abandon, she rarely *eats*. And when she does, she is left violently empty. Admittedly, Richard recognizes her bulimic relationship to consumption: "voulant tout immédiatement consommer, elle ne peut rien retenir" (124). But his claim encompasses Emma's material and carnal appetites, too, allowing food to be subsumed by, and treated together with, the ensemble of desires which – as Flaubert tells us – Emma herself feels so violently that she is unable to distinguish one type of longing from another: "Alors, les appétits de la chair, les convoitises d'argent et les mélancolies de la passion, tout se confondit dans une même souffrance" (173).[6] Furthermore, though aware of Emma's inability to retain anything of her experience with food, Richard nevertheless writes, "l'offre des nourritures vient combler le désir de l'héroïne" (120). I would suggest instead that, far from ever fulfilling Emma's desire, food is a point of absence in the novel, which, through Emma's interaction with it, only

[5] Despite all that he eats, Charles, too, is left utterly empty. Upon his death, an autopsy is performed, revealing that nothing was found in Charles, as if nothing itself had become a very deadly something which, like a malignant growth, had taken root in Charles and made life impossible: "M. Canivet accourut. Il l'ouvrit et *ne trouva rien*" (424, emphasis mine).

[6] The majority of critics who have analyzed consumption in *Madame Bovary* have focused on the topic of Emma's appetite for books and magazines. The desire Emma manifests for beauty in her life – her desire for love and for beautiful things, in particular – is paralleled in the text, as Anne Herschberg Pierrot suggests, in an interesting way. Studies of Flaubert's revisions to the novel reveal that he intentionally leaves out descriptions, all the better – she claims – to generate a space of desire within the text itself, upon which the reader can project her own thoughts. Flaubert does so, she claims, "afin de solliciter davantage la lecture, de la rendre indéterminée" (732).

serves to make the absence that defines it, and which also comes to epitomize Emma, even more visible.[7]

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Flaubert's Troubles with Food

Flaubert's own relation to food was remarkably problematic, albeit less dramatic than Emma's. Before looking more closely at scenes centered around Emma's problems with consumption in *Bovary*, I would like to bring to light some of the author's own troubles with eating, which seem to transfer onto his representations of food in the novel, particularly in the person of Emma. It is hardly surprising to discover such a parallel, especially since Flaubert supposedly once claimed, "Madame Bovary, c'est moi, d'après moi."[8] But something more complex than a simple rapport between the writer and his heroine is at work in Flaubert's representations of eating and drinking, for there is – in these scenes – something very personal, and revelatory, about the writer's relationship to

[7] If, in the eyes of the readers of Flaubert's time, sensory pleasure contributes to the corruption of Emma, the text is also dangerous to Flaubert's lady readers, just as reading was for Emma herself. As Dominick LaCapra has noted in *Madame Bovary on Trial*, from the perspective of those who condemned *Bovary*, "The cold light of reason is weak in comparison with the heat of the imagination and passion. […] The fatal declension from the imagination to the senses that it effects is especially dangerous for women, who are particularly prone to its allures" (38).

[8] Although this utterance is noted in all sorts of publications, from peer-reviewed academic journals to online blog entries, the original source of this claim proves elusive. Did Flaubert ever really proclaim this? Perhaps not, but this sentence has certainly taken on a life of its own and judging from the parallels between the author and Emma, we would not be wrong to entertain the possibility that he did.

his art. To consecrate his artistic endeavor to form requires a sacrifice; Flaubert sacrifices himself, we know, for his correspondence attests to this: "Le style, qui est une chose que je prends à coeur m'agite les nerfs horriblement, je me dépite, *je me ronge*. Il y a des jours où j'en suis malade et où la nuit j'en ai la fièvre" (475, emphasis mine). Aside from the problem the author or his heroine experience as consumers of food or drink, there is also the problem of being consumed: in the case of Flaubert, art is the consuming force. Indeed, the sacrifices Flaubert makes to his art (he is *eaten* by it, after all) correspond to a marked tendency toward excess in the life of Flaubert more generally speaking, as we will soon discover. This lack of measure is also mirrored in Emma's inability to consume well, and ultimately contributes to her undoing.

Emma's own troubles with eating, which we will soon explore in greater detail, are strikingly similar to Flaubert's own. From his earliest correspondences, he – like Emma, as I have noted - expresses disillusionment in terms of appetite. When he is only twenty-five, he writes, "C'est étrange comme je suis né avec peu de foi au bonheur. J'ai eu tout jeune un pressentiment complet de la vie. C'était comme une odeur de cuisine nauséabonde qui s'échappe par un soupirail. On n'a pas besoin d'en avoir mangé pour savoir qu'elle est à faire vomir" (261). An abcess tooth adds to his troubles with food, making eating painful. Flaubert oscillates between moments of abstinence from food, to moments of overindulgence. He writes, early in the correspondence, "La mâchoire me fait toujours horriblement souffir," "Je suis encore pour longtemps au régime" and then, "Je me suis fait enlever trois dents de la mâchoire" (183, 214). His discomfort is clear: "Seulement mon bouton à la langue augmente. Quelle farce!" (222).

But when his appetite does return, it is without measure: “Je mange vigoureusement par exemple, c’est un progrès, j’ai un appétit d’enfer” (232). It is clear from his correspondence that his weight fluctuations preoccupy him. Still earlier in his letters, he writes to Ernest Chevalier, “Quant à moi je deviens colossal, monumental, je suis boeuf, sphinx, butor, éléphant, baleine, tout ce qu’il y a de plus énorme, de plus empâté et de plus lourd au moral comme au physique” (83). Later, in a letter written from Egypt, he tells his mother, “J’ai engraissé depuis que je suis parti, si bien qu’à ce moment même il y a deux pantalons à moi, qui sont chez M. Chabannes, tailleur français, occupés à se faire élargir pour que mon ventre y puisse tenir sans gêne” (530). Whether or not Flaubert’s weight increases quite so remarkably in Egypt is uncertain; he was, after all, identified as having a nervous temperament and instructed to eat in order to right it. Moreover, in Flaubert’s time, this account of weight gain would be associated with well-being; it would also comfort his mother, who sent him to Egypt in the hope of improving his health. He later writes to his her, “Quant à moi, qui ne fais que contempler la nature, fumer des chicheks et me promener au soleil, j’engraisse. Mais je deviens bien laid. Mon nez rougit et il m’y pousse des poils comme à celui du capitaine Barbey” (613). Passionate as he is about beauty and perfection of form, Flaubert is unable to control what are apparently remarkable changes to his own appearance. His relationship to food and eating would seem to be at the heart of this transformation. He sacrifices his own physical beauty by eating excessively, in order – he believes – to improve his health. He is full, but entirely too full; conversely, the emptiness that inhabits Emma is exaggerated; she is much *too* empty. As I will show, this intemperance is later expressed, both in Flaubert’s letters and in his text, in terms of the excess of cannibalism.

The imbalance in Flaubert's own appetite and in his body weight and overall appearance is symptomatic of a tension that surrounds consumption in his letters, and it is also a principal characteristic of Emma's personality. She is plagued by the same inability to control her own appetite; where food and drink are concerned, her tendency is to consume very little and without pleasure, while her material desire, on the other hand, would have her spend far too much. Her tendency toward melancholy, too, is reflective of Flaubert's own; he expresses the feeling of having lost happiness in terms of having lost the ability to consume as he once did, just as Emma, as I have noted, explains her own unhappiness in terms of an inability to consume ("mordre") to satisfaction: "Te souviens-tu, vieux, du pâté d'Amiens que j'ai englouti à moi tout seul un vendredi saint et du petit vin de Collioure que je humais si lestement? Étions-nous gais alors, et nous nous croyions tristes! Nous l'étions aussi: mais que de bonnes bouffées de verve! Maintenant tout s'est aplati, nivelé" (451). Having once found pleasure in eating – in his recollection, anyway – he speaks of these happy meals as a thing of the past, the joy he once found in them inaccessible to him now.

Emma's appreciation of form, too, certainly springs from her creator's insistence on beauty. Her tendency to focus on the visual aspect of the table is hardly surprising, considering that it was above all beauty that Flaubert wished to create:

> On reproche aux gens qui écrivent en bon style de négliger l'Idée, le but moral; comme si le but du médecin n'était pas de guérir, le but du peintre de peindre, le but du rossignol de chanter, comme si le but de l'Art n'était pas le Beau avant tout! (350).

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The Art(ifice) of the Table

Emma's desire to cultivate beauty manifests itself in her manipulations of food, both in her own consumption, and – as I will show – in her approach to the space of the table. Long before it is the cause of her death, consumption is complicated for her. Soon after Charles begins to visit the farm where she lives with her father, M. Rouault asks Charles to "stay for a bite." Flaubert draws our attention to Roualt's invitation by using italics: "Une fois le pansement fait, le médecin fut invité, par M. Rouault lui-même, à *prendre un morceau*, avant de partir" (74). Flaubert thus puts consumption on stage in the text itself, emphasizing its function as a sort of theatrical enactment, something artificial.[9] The italicized words relate Rouault's invitation verbatim, but they also separate all words touching on consumption from the surrounding text, calling attention to the scripted nature of this invitation, reminding us that these could be anyone's words, for this is an *act* dictated by convention.

While this detail may seem insignificant, it points to a much larger issue surrounding consumption within the novel: since Emma finds her reality unappetizing, she makes of consumption – an act that would necessitate a sort of ingestion of reality, of what present circumstance can afford – a thing separate from real life, like theater. In a later scene, also at her father's house, a courting ritual that would normally involve drinking is a moment of pure theatricality. The coded, artificial nature of this offering of drink is made clear in a kind of dance in which she must offer, he must refuse, and she in

[9] By putting a formulaic invitation such as this in italics, Flaubert stresses his sensitivity to bourgeois clichés, which he and Emma would like to avoid.

turn must persevere so that the offering is taken: "Selon la mode de la campagne, elle lui proposa de boire quelque chose. Il refusa, elle insista, et enfin lui offrit, en riant, de prendre un verre de liqueur avec elle" (81). This rite is not a spontaneous gesture but a routine, an act carried out because – as with Rouault's aforementioned invitation to Charles - *this is how it should be*, "[s]elon la mode de la campagne." The stage is set, but the real moment of theater is yet to come:

> Elle alla donc chercher dans l'armoire une bouteille de curaçao, atteignit deux petits verres, emplit l'un jusqu'au bord, versa à peine dans l'autre et, après avoir trinqué, le porta à sa bouche. Comme il était presque vide, elle se renversait pour boire : et, la tête en arrière, les lèvres avancées, le cou tendu, elle riait de ne rien sentir, tandis que le bout de sa langue, passant entre ses dents fines, léchait à petits coups le fond du verre (81).

Having deliberately poured a full glass of curaçao for Charles and hardly a drop for herself, Emma performs a sort of erotic dance at the table, as she must purse her lips, bare her neck and lick the bottom of the glass, if she is to consume anything at all. Therefore, what should be a sip of drink taken in the company of her suitor is hardly that; instead, it is a dramatization of the act of consumption, an imitation of life. Emma might well be drinking Mallarmé's "goutte de néant,"[10] for her glass is mostly empty, an emptiness made visible in her gesture. Just as a still life feeds only the eyes – the food is posed, intended for the paintbrush and not the mouth – Emma's drop of drink is not destined for the stomach, since it is more fully realized as a dramatic gesture, a visible act, rather than as an internal moment of ingestion. Indeed, throughout the novel, food for Emma is most

[10] "Igitur ou La Folie d'Elbehnon" (842).

often pure art(ifice): stripped of its alimentary value, it is a representation *within* representation, the act of consumption amounting to mimicry, an imitation of life.[11]

This is not simply a manifestation of Emma's psychology, but is determined by the world of the text itself. Famous for his formal perfectionism, Flaubert is naturally more concerned with the surfaces of the table, the things that lend it its shape – its containers, and their colors and textures – than the food they bear, and the sensory plenitude one tends to associate with food. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that in his own life, the pleasure of actual consumption seems often to elude him, or to be located in some past or future time, rather than in the present. Flaubert anticipates the pleasure of a meal with his childhood friends Ernest Chevalier and Alfred Le Poittevin, ("Nous passerons de bons moments, ainsi tous trois à philosopher et à Pantagruéliser,") but soon after, predicts that he won't be able to derive pleasure from the dinners to which he is invited: "Je suis dans une atmosphère de dîners. […] demain j'y déjeune, j'y dîne, je recommence à m'empiffrer. […] Et avec tout cela je m'ennuie, je m'emmerde. J'ai le coeur plus vide qu'une botte." (*Correspondance* I, 32, 45). I would propose that this inability to be present to pleasure, which extends itself to the alimentary in *Bovary*, is not only echoed in Emma's own inability to be fulfilled by what is available to her, but lends a unique significance to the formal representations of food which dominate the text.

An example of this complexity can be found in an early scene, soon after Charles and Emma have first met. Upon arriving one day at les Bertaux, where Emma lives with

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[11] The theatricality of eating in Flaubert comes as no surprise, considering his interest in theater: "[…] il n'a guère cessé de penser à l'art dramatique, au sens large du mot. Pour tout dire, le théâtre fut un peu [son] 'violon d'Ingres'" (*Autour de Flaubert*, Descharmes and Dumesnil, 201).

her father, Charles is immediately met with the sight of a perfect *nature morte*, a scene which might just as well have been painted by Manet as written by Flaubert.[12] Here he stresses the control he exercises over the act of consumption by once again situating eating and drinking firmly outside of the framework of the novel. But in this instance, it is not italicized text that marks the division between consumption and everything else, as in Rouault's invitation; it is time:

> Il entra dans la cuisine […], les auvents étaient fermés. Par les fentes du bois, le soleil allongeait sur les pavés de grandes raies minces, qui se brisaient à l'angle des meubles et tremblaient au plafond. Des mouches, sur la table, montaient le long des verres qui avaient servi, et bourdonnaient en se noyant au fond, dans le cidre resté […] (81).

The act of consumption itself is left to the imagination while the flies are attracted to this *nature morte* as if to something truly dead. [13] They buzz avidly around the dregs of cider, remnants of an act that is relegated to the past ("verres qui *avaient* servi") without ever having taken place within the narrative itself. Since this meal was taken in the past, the

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[12] The intersection between Flaubert and painting was well recognized by Flaubert's contemporaries, and since by critics. Sainte-Beuve encourages Flaubert with telling words: "Appliquez cette faculté d'observation et de peinture à d'autres sujets […]" (*Autour de Flaubert*, 55).

[13] The presence of the fly in this *nature morte* suggests the *trompe l'oeil*, in which flies were commonly included to heighten the work's realistic appearance. Some art critics claim that its inclusion in a painting was intended to function as a sign of the artist's prowess. I have suggested that Flaubert infuses his works with theatricality based on his own interest in theater. Might this fly also be a sort of artist's signature, a painting within the text, suggesting some comparison between his own prowess as a writer and the paintings of the old masters?

forms of the table define this space, which is stripped of the weighty "matière" of food itself, leaving only containers—empty shells. The only noise or movement in the scene, created by the buzzing of the flies, is put to an end by their natural impulse to consume, which for them – as for Emma – proves fatal; even in the smallest details of the text, we are reminded that consumption leads to death. This scene illustrates Flaubert's separation of food from its function as edible matter.[14] It suggests a sort of death of *real* food – consumption being entirely removed from the world of the text, located in a kind of vague, irretrievable past – in favor of food as surface, or rather, food as structure— a construct which, as I will show, comes sharply into focus at Emma's and Charles's wedding.

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The Architecture of Desire

The emergence of food as empty structure unavailable for consumption at the wedding banquet presages the absence that comes to define the economy of consumption in the text as a whole. Many critics have recognized Emma's incapacity to be nourished by what she consumes; Barbara Vinken, writes, "Mme. Bovary does not find such enjoyments in food or in love; in contrast to her husband, she is always only briefly satiated" (772). Although such an observation is certainly valid, I would not locate this problem entirely in the person of Emma. I would contend that, as a close reading of this

[14] If we applied the same dynamic to language, there would result a separation of signifiers from meaningful communication. Interestingly, such a gap is already present in the mutual alienation of Charles and Emma.

scene would suggest, she is not satiated by food at all, because food was never imbued with the capacity to nourish in the first place; it was only ever an elaborate construct, inedible to Emma before she proves herself unable to be fed by it.

Flaubert valorizes the appearance of the table and builds on and around it an elaborate architecture where appearances are everything. Here, the Flaubertian artifice of consumption – Emma's aforementioned theatrical gesture occasioned by a mere drop of drink, for example – comes to suggest *actual* artifice, in three dimensions, with an outside and an inside, itself capable – unlike a *nature morte*, restricted to the canvas – of containing. Thus, the table becomes an almost spatial structure, rather than a purely narrative one. In the following description of the banquet, we witness Flaubert's passion for form; the position of each thing is accounted for, as is the vessel that contains it:

> C'était *sous le hangar* de la charretterie que la table était dressée. Il y avait *dessus* quatre aloyaux, six fricassées de poulets, du veau à la casserole, trois gigots et, *au milieu*, un joli cochon de lait rôti, *flanqué* de quatre andouilles à l'oseille. *Aux angles*, se dressait l'eau-de-vie, *dans* des carafes. Le cidre doux *en bouteilles* poussait sa mousse épaisse *autour des bouchons* et tous les verres, d'avance, avaient été remplis de vin *jusqu'au bord*. De grands plats de crème jaune, qui flottaient d'eux-mêmes au moindre choc de la table, présentaient, dessinés sur leur *surface unie*, les chiffres des nouveaux époux en arabesques de nonpareille (87-88).

Numbers abound where notes on taste or smell would otherwise logically appear: "quatre aloyaux, six fricassees de poulet, [...] trois gigots." Flaubert accounts for the quantity rather than the quality of the foods at the wedding banquet, contributing to what

already appears to be a representation of food as inedible structure, rather than comestible matter. But the most striking example of this structuring of the Flaubertian table is to be found in Charles and Emma's wedding cake, the famous *pièce montée*, a feat of culinary wizardry which – in the 19th century – was also appropriately known as an *extraordinaire*. This cake, central to the wedding table itself, is also central to the novel, as I have suggested; it is a crowning symbol of the emptiness of food in the novel:

> On avait été chercher un pâtissier à Yvetot pour les tourtes et les nougats. Comme il débutait dans le pays, il avait soigné les choses; et il apporta, lui-même, au dessert, une pièce montée qui fit pousser des cris. *A la base*, d'abord c'était un carré de carton bleu figurant un *temple avec portiques, colonnades et statuettes* de stuc tout autour dans des *niches* constellées d'étoiles en papier doré; puis se tenait *au second étage* un *donjon* en gâteau de Savoie, *entouré de menues fortifications* en angélique, amandes, raisins secs, quartiers d'oranges; et enfin, sur la *plate-forme supérieure*, qui était une *prairie verte* où il y avait des *rochers* avec des *lacs de confiture* et des bateaux en écales de noisettes […] (87-88, emphasis mine).

Structures are made to define boundaries, to divide space; they are not made to be consumed. The fact that certain bits of the *pièce montée* are edible does little to make this imposing edifice more appealing, since they are interspersed with, not to mention outnumbered by, inedible elements. This structure indeed seems to defy consumption; after all, the "gâteau de Savoie" forms a donjon – a defensive, forbidding structure – and the decorations one would normally consider edible (almonds, raisins, oranges) are now

commingled, by virtue of their shared function as "fortifications," with the inedible (carton, stuc, papier doré, angélique, rochers and écales de noisettes). This confection thus appears made to repel anyone who might dare to disturb its form; furthermore, as with any carefully constructed piece of architecture, the disappearance – or in this case, the consumption – of an important part could result in its collapse. The mouth's only involvement in the presence of this *pièce montée* is in the admiring cries it provokes ([elle] fit pousser des cris"). Moreover, most of its ingredients would be more at home in the construction of a building than they would in a cake, and even the hulls of the nuts suggest the *shell*-like structure toward which Flaubert's literary food leans.

It is appropriate, then, that elaborate *pièces montées* such as this were in fact not necessarily intended to be consumed. They were little works of art, meant to please the eye alone.[15] Nevertheless, any *pâtissier* worth his weight – and especially Marie-Antoine Carême[16], the nineteenth-century chef whose interest in architecture translated seamlessly into the elaborate *pièces montées* he made famous – would have taken care to make such a cake of edible ingredients. Even certain purely decorative elements fashioned from *pâte morte* or *pâte d'office*, and glued together with gum arabic, were – unlike the marzipan and spun sugar, also commonly included in such cakes – not tasty; nevertheless, they were certainly comestible.[17] Flaubert would have been aware of this, for his

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[15] Flaubert may also be pointing to a problem with the architecture of this particular structure, for it is made of disparate elements (temple, donjon) that don't fit together harmoniously.

[16] Carême's passion for architecture is evident in his book titles alone, among them *Projets d'architecture pour l'embellissement de Paris* (1926) and *Le Pâtissier pittoresque, précédé d'un traité des cinq ordres de l'architecture* (1842).

[17] Ian Kelly, *Cooking for Kings: The Life of Antonin Carême*

correspondence attests to his own complicated preoccupations with food, and his admiration of Carême's craft, which he regarded as fine art on a par with writing: "J'ai lu ces jours derniers une belle chose, à savoir la vie de Carême le cuisinier. […] C'est magnifique comme existence d'artiste enthousiaste; elle ferait envie à plus d'un poète" (*Correspondance* II, 160). However impressive it may appear to the wedding party ("[elle] fit pousser des cris"), Emma and Charles' *pièce montée* must remain just *that*: a cake which rises up only for the sake of appearances, recalling the fine art of the great *pâtissier* only in its architectural form.

The emptiness made visible in the *pièce montée* extends to other foods at the wedding table as well. It is significant, for instance, that Emma and Charles's wedding date is written in *nonpareilles* on the surface – not of the cake – but of the *crème jaune*. The writing of this mark of the couple's union on a viscous surface stresses – even more so than if it were written on the cake itself – the instability of their alliance ("De grands plats de crème jaune, qui flottaient d'eux-mêmes au moindre choc de la table […]") (87). The materials used for the writing are tiny, decorative sprinkles made of sugar that, though edible, are intended to enhance looks rather than flavor.[18] Aside from the faint sweetness they bring to what is usually already sweet (which, of course, means that their flavor is lost), they are unremarkable—purely visual, they disappear in the mouth. They are empty of gustatory value, just as they are empty of nourishment. Their most salient trait is their size; they are exceedingly small. Like the "petit Amour" balancing on the

[18] Moreover, they should be eaten with caution; in *Le grand dictionnaire de cuisine*, Alexandre Dumas warns, "ces dragées ne sont pas sans quelque danger, il faut s'informer des substances qui ont servi à les teindre, surtout les vertes" (401).

chocolate swing perched at the top of the *pièce montée,* this attribute seems significant: both are notably tiny representations of a similarly small sentiment on the part of Emma.[19] Despite the overwhelming presence of food at the table, the impression of food we glean from this passage is largely negative. Not only are these things small, but they point to a lack: a lack of flavor, a lack of nourishment and a lack of love.

Once it is determined that the vessels are empty of food that functions as real food, what remains is a perfect structure—an architecture of the table that is exactly what we would expect of Flaubert, for whom perfect form is the ultimate beauty: "Encore maintenant ce que j'aime par-dessus tout c'est la forme, pourvu qu'elle soit belle, et rien au-delà" (*Correspondance* I, 278). Made to resemble architectural space, this is precisely what the *pièce montée* yields to the "consumer:" *space*. Stylized space, *absence*. Fashioned in the shape of a grand château complete with colonnades, statues and a tower, the *pièce montée* resonates with Emma's interest in the surface of things. But it is even emptier and unsatisfying than mere inedibility would suggest, for it represents the kind of space Emma cannot expect to inhabit as Charles's wife. It is a decorative embodiment of absence, and its centrality to Emma's wedding banquet anticipates the lack that, as I will show, also haunts the conjugal table.

[19] Beyond the emptiness of the nonpareils, these are an especially ironic topping to a cake celebrating the union of Charles and Emma: after all, such a union, together with the trouble and dissatisfaction it brings with it, is in fact very common, *pareil* to many.

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The Inedible Food of Married Life

Conjugal life is of course filled with disappointment for Emma, whose disgust for Charles's unrefined mannerisms and expanding waistline is acted out, among other ways, in her complicated relationship to food. And if food was only ever intended to be surface matter for Emma, as I have suggested, then it is not surprising that the only way for her to make it more appealing to her senses would be to alter its appearance. Accordingly, her table is set for aesthetic, rather than culinary pleasure. Having made of consumption a theatrical act in her "pre-nuptial" drink with Charles, she also makes of their conjugal table a theatrical space, filled with visual flourish: "Quand ils avaient, le dimanche, quelque voisin à dîner, elle trouvait le moyen d'offrir un plat coquet, s'entendait à poser sur des feuilles de vigne les pyramides de reines-claudes, servait renversés les pots de confitures dans une assiette, et même elle parlait d'acheter des rince-bouche pour le dessert (101-102).

Dressed as it is in this scene – for "coquet" applies more readily to the clothing she covets than it does to a plate of food – the table becomes an imitation of the life Emma would like to lead, a fictional space filled with the kind of loveliness she doesn't find in reality. Her organization of greengage plums in pyramid form[20] recalls the

[20] Flaubert looked upon books as monuments— like pyramids, built methodically to stand the test of time. He opines, "les livres [se font] commes les pyramides […] et ça ne sert à rien! et ça reste dans le désert! mais en le dominant prodigieusement" (*Correspondance* II, 783). It would seem that Emma's representation of food in (monumental) form is an attempt to make something enduring out of something inherently perishable, as well.

architectural table of the wedding banquet. In her rearrangement of plums and jam, Emma makes of them decorative objects, models of the forms found at elegant tables depicted in the ladies' journals she devours; as such, they do not threaten her; by taking other forms – pyramids, or inverted shapes – they become elements of design whose primary function, as decided by the hostess herself, is no longer alimentary. Therefore, she is in no danger of eating and thereby assimilating foods so representative of the social milieu she longs to escape. As long as Emma can maintain the pleasure she derives from sharing the beauty of form at the table, (as opposed to the disorder that the actual act of eating requires) she is content. But, when others are not there to be served this kind of fiction, reality takes hold, and it is unbearable, inedible:

> Mais c'était surtout aux heures des repas qu'elle n'en pouvait plus, dans cette petite salle au rez-de-chaussée, avec le poêle qui fumait, la porte qui criait, les murs qui suintaient, les pavés humides; toute l'amertume de l'existence lui semblait servie sur son assiette, et, à la fumée du bouilli, il montait du fond de son âme comme d'autres bouffées d'affadissement. Charles était long à manger; elle grignotait quelques noisettes, ou bien, appuyée du coude, s'amusait, avec la pointe de son couteau, à faire des raies sur la toile cirée (126).

In *Mimésis*, Erich Auerbach defines this scene as the culminating point of Emma's dissatisfaction, and it is certainly true that everything goes downhill for Emma from this point on, and that food plays an essential role in Flaubert's illustration of her fall (478). But as I have shown, it should be noted that food has already been made inedible by this point, so that if Emma does not eat here, it is not simply because she is psychologically

unable, but more importantly, because food is never really made present to her— food, indeed, is never fully present in the text itself. "Charles était long à manger," Flaubert writes, with not a single mention of actual food. Meanwhile, Emma nibbles on a few hazelnuts, an act that cannot sustain her, and the only tangible result of which would be the hulls and shells that remain—little forms echoing the emptiness food represents in *Bovary*.

Though Emma eats very little, what she does consume – rather than a meal shared with her husband – is the bitterness of life, contained for her in this small dining room, with its dampness and its smells. Despite the fact that her desires have nothing to do with hunger for or lack of food, it is, nevertheless, when seated in the dining room, poised to be served, that she feels most empty and bitter. Any attempt at nourishing herself ("elle grignotait quelques noisettes") seems halfhearted, and intended to cure boredom rather than hunger (126). The word "grignoter" itself implies a certain disinterestedness with eating. Moreover, "grignoter" connotes reluctance to let food enter: "Manger très peu, du bout des dents."[21] It is thus appropriate that – in one of the rare moments where Emma eats – she does so by hardly ingesting anything. She plays with her food to avoid truly eating, as a child would; utensils become like toys in her hands ("elle […] s'amusait, avec la pointe de son couteau, à faire des raies sur la toile cirée"126). These sharp instruments and the language suggestive of destruction that we find at the conjugal table are signs of things to come, for Emma's fate is bound up in this increasingly complicated relationship with food.

[21] *Le Petit Robert*, 1048.

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Emma in Wonderland

Looking back, we find that the wedding banquet scene, with the *pièce montée* at its center, not only presages, ironically, the disjunction between Emma's ideal life and her reality, but also an actual ideal world— the Château de la Vaubyessard. The château represents in reality what up to this point were merely the "assouvissements imaginaires" Emma gleaned from romantic novels and magazines, full of glimpses of a material world that always eluded her (118). The same sort of architecture that defied consumption at the wedding banquet in the form of the *pièce montée* now seems to be expanding in a way that calls to mind Alice's fantastical adventures with food in Wonderland.[22] Indeed, it seems that Emma has passed into another world when she enters the château, as the inedible surface of the cake is transformed into a three-dimensional decorative space that opens up, offering its beauty for her consumption. The structure of the *pièce montée*, with its "colonnades et statuettes," surrounded by a lake made of jam, is echoed in the château, with its similarly grand architecture and grounds, its "deux ailes et trois perrons," "immense pelouse" and "rivière [qui] passait sous un pont" (88, 106). But, more

[22] Emma and Alice share similar problems with food, which is something I plan to elaborate in a future study. Both are deprived of food by their creators; the "food" made available to Emma is largely limited to empty space and surface matter, as I explain in the present study, while Alice's "food" is mostly nonsensical language: "Have some wine?" the March Hare said in an encouraging tone. Alice looked all round the table, but there was nothing on it but tea. "I don't see any wine," she remarked. "There isn't any," said the March Hare" (69).

extraordinary than the immensity and reality of *this* edifice is the fact that Emma is actually able to enter the château, ushered into it by the Marquis himself – thereby entering, in a sense, the romanticized world of the cake. Although it may be true that Emma reaches the height of her disgust for life earlier in the novel, I would suggest that it is in the rapport between these two spaces that the tragedy of Emma's inability to "mordre aux bonheurs" is ultimately played out (126). This might initially appear paradoxical, since a scene I will soon present, one of the few instances in which Emma eats of her own accord, takes place at the ball. But the particular circumstances of this act render the scene more complex than prior readings have accounted for: despite the fact that she seems to be having an ideal (even ecstatic) experience, we will find that Emma is herself transformed into an object here; she is rendered strangely immobile by the act of eating, rather than enlivened by it.

Things are not what they appear at La Vaubyessard. The château represents *all* that Emma wishes to consume, and both the ball and banquet to which she is invited seem to provide her with an unprecedented opportunity to derive pleasure from reality, to drink of the beauty that surrounds her. If Emma is, in a sense, entering into the world of the wedding cake as she enters the château, the reader should be immediately suspicious of the bounty it seems to offer to her, since such structures in *Bovary* ultimately prove to be incarnations of absence. And indeed, by closely reading this world, we find that Emma's emptiness will only be further emphasized by the inassimilable spaces she encounters there. The architecture of the Château de la Vaubyessard seems to extend embracingly, first horizontally, but ultimately, vertically: "Le château, de construction moderne, à l'italienne, avec deux ailes avançant et trois perrons, se déployait au bas

d'une immense pelouse […]. […] Il était pavé de dalles en marbre, très haut […]. En face montait un escalier droit […]" (106-107). This vertical ascent recalls the vertical display of the *pièce montée*, which Flaubert begins "à la base" and ends with the "sommet." Emma wants to interiorize this space, to appropriate its grandeur: "Elle regarda les fenêtres du château, longuement, tâchant de deviner quelles étaient les chambres de tous ceux qu'elle avait remarqués la veille. Elle aurait voulu savoir leurs existences, y pénétrer, s'y confondre" (114). But her desire seems blighted from the start by the knowledge that these pleasures are truly fleeting: "elle faisait des efforts pour se tenir éveillée, afin de prolonger l'illusion de cette vie luxueuse qu'il lui faudrait tout à l'heure abandonner" (114). Once again, architectural space substitutes for edible matter—hardly surprising, since Emma's appetites hew so closely to the surface of things. The past tense assures us, despite the fact that Emma hasn't yet left La Vaubyessard, that her desire to incorporate all of this will not be fulfilled; despite the elaborate display of exotic, actually *edible* foods (in contrast to the *pièce montée*) with which she will be presented in the following banquet scene, eating – the most obvious vehicle for assimilation – will remain an almost exclusively visual act.

This is such a purely visual space, in fact, that not only is food reserved exclusively for visual consumption, but even the landscape surrounding the table is subject to this denaturation. While Emma is incapable of controlling her experience at La Vaubyessard as she would like to by assimilating it, Flaubert himself, paradoxically enough, exercises remarkable formal control over the space he creates around the table, even going so far as to tame the nature surrounding the lunch scene following the ball: "Le repas dura dix minutes; […] puis on s'alla promener dans la serre, […] où les plantes

bizarres […] s'étageaient en pyramides sous des vases" (114). Like the apples Emma arranges in pyramid form, these plants are given an altogether new function in the text as tamed (after all, they were "bizarres") objects, deprived of their natural form and reimagined as architecture.

Once in the dining room at the ball, Emma, not surprisingly, focuses less on indulging herself in food and drink, than on continuing to visually devour all of the small details of the opulent setting. The full experience of eating is elided, and consumption remains largely visual. Although such visual consumption can certainly be pleasurable initially, the desire it ignites in Emma's case leads usually to more desire, rather than to fulfillment. As at the conjugal table – where we observed her constructing a pyramid of plums, or adorning a particular food with a "nom extraordinaire" – but on a much grander scale here, food's function is almost exclusively decorative (121). The placement of a lobster on a serving platter, for instance, could as easily be a blot of paint on a canvas, for it is the shape of the object – its situation on the platter and whether it remains within the bounds of its intended structure – that matters: "Les pattes rouges des homards dépassaient les plats" (108). We read almost nothing of the characters' experience of eating, for in the rare moments where consumption does take place, gustatory pleasure is absent. In Emma's reaction to a sip of Champagne, we can see the pervasiveness of the visual at Flaubert's table; the Champagne is cool and causes a shiver, but we know nothing else of it, for the visual register is dominant: "On versa du vin de Champagne à la glace. Elle n'avait jamais vu de grenades ni mangé d'ananas" (109). Taste and smell are eclipsed entirely, and instead, after the mention of Emma's shiver, the narrative shifts abruptly to the sense of sight (Elle n'avait jamais *vu* de grenades…"). Also contributing

to the rich décor, “de gros fruits dans des corbeilles à jour s’étageaient sur la mousse; les cailles avaient leurs plumes, des fumées montaient” (108). The feeling of overabundance is accompanied, inversely, by a suggested impossibility of eating, apparent here in the lavish display of fruit, offset by a description of game birds still covered in their feathers and which are surely more suited, once again, for a still life painting, than for actual consumption (108).

In one of the most marked scenes of consumption at the ball, Emma eats vicariously through an elderly aristocrat. There is an undeniably erotic, if grotesque, undertone to this passage—Emma, herself an empty vessel, ingests this man visually, while he eats, unperturbed and utterly absorbed by the food on his plate:

> Cependant, au haut bout de la table, seul parmi toutes ces femmes, courbé sur son assiette remplie et la serviette nouée dans le dos comme un enfant, un vieillard mangeait, laissant tomber de sa bouche des gouttes de sauce. […] C’était le beau-père du marquis, le vieux duc de Laverdière, […] qui avait été, disait-on, l’amant de la reine Marie-Antoinette […]. Il avait mené une vie bruyante de débauches, pleine de duels, de paris, de femmes enlevées, avait dévoré sa fortune et effrayé toute sa famille (109).

With his napkin tied behind him, “comme un enfant”, and his pendulous lips dripping sauce, he is hardly the conventional object of a young woman’s desire. His unbecoming appearance mirrors his destructive nature, realized throughout his own history of *over*consumption, which – like Emma’s destructive appetites – “avait *dévoré* sa fortune et effrayé toute sa famille” (emphasis mine). Improbably, Emma finds him provocative, and cannot control her urge to continue looking, attempting to absorb what she sees: “sans

cesse les yeux d'Emma revenaient d'eux-mêmes sur ce vieil homme à lèvres pendantes, comme sur quelque chose d'extraordinaire et d'auguste. Il avait vécu à la Cour et couché dans le lit des reines!" (109). Though joined in parallel acts of consumption, these two individuals remain anchored in two unbridgeable worlds, in a way that defines Emma; for this aged *débauché* embodies, both in the story of his past and in his present appetite, that capacity she envies to "mordre aux bonheurs."

I have suggested that *Madame Bovary* is a tragedy of consumption; less for the famous self-poisoning that concludes the novel, than for the heroine's continual inability to eat in a way that sustains her. No matter how impressive the *pièce montée* may be, it is ultimately inedible; Emma's attempt to reduplicate it at the conjugal table will only increase her disgust for real food. It is logical, then, that even when Emma is eventually able to enter into this ideally formed world, no matter what she consumes during her evening at the ball, she is left violently empty: "Son voyage à la Vaubyessard avait fait un trou dans sa vie, à la manière de ces grandes crevasses qu'un orage, en une seule nuit, creuse quelquefois dans les montagnes" (116). The abundance of food and beauty at the table of the day before stands in sharp contrast to Emma's impoverished spirit.[23] Indeed, it seems that the more Emma consumes, the emptier she becomes.

The way in which Emma and Charles come to be invited by the Marquis d'Andervilliers to the ball at la Vaubyessard is not a negligible detail, given that they are

[23] Flaubert expresses a nearly identical feeling of emptiness following acts of consumption he might expect to find fulfilling, but doesn't: "J'ai été au bordel pour m'y divertir et je m'y suis embêté. Magnier me ronge, l'histoire me tanne. Le tabac?!! j'en ai la gorge brûlée. Les petits verres? j'en suis hérissé, il n'y a plus que les repas dans lesquels je me bourre à rester sur place. Aussi ai-je considérablement engraissé, mais j'ai furieusement maigri d'esprit" (37).

drawn there through a turn of events beginning with the Marquis' abscess tooth, a momentary distraction followed by a quick recovery, made all the more evident in the manifestation of his appetite for Emma:

> [Le Marquis] avait eu, lors des grandes chaleurs, un abcès dans la bouche, dont Charles l'avait soulagé comme par miracle […]. L'homme d'affaires, envoyé à Tostes pour payer l'opération, conta, le soir, qu'il avait vu dans le jardinet du médecin des cerises superbes. Or, les cerisiers poussaient mal à la Vaubyessard, M. le Marquis demanda quelques boutures à Bovary, se fit un devoir de l'en remercier lui-même, aperçut Emma, trouva qu'elle avait une jolie taille et qu'elle ne saluait point en paysanne; si bien qu'on ne crut pas au château outre-passer les bornes de la condescendence ni, d'autre part, commettre une maladresse en invitant le jeune ménage (107).

Charles quickly heals the Marquis' abscess tooth (thereby supporting somewhat his role as cuckold), and then obliges the invitation that ensues by accompanying his wife to the ball. The Marquis' request is granted, then, yet another example of what Emma perceives as the male privilege of being able to "mordre aux bonheurs." She, on the other hand, seems indecipherable from the cherry with which she is associated (and which satisfies the Marquis)—she is a pretty thing, a decorative object offered for consumption, drawn like one of Dracula's victims to his castle. As we will soon see, cherries resurface at the ball, and once again, they are involved in the objectification of Emma.

*

Mémoire glâcée

Although sights are what Emma most hungrily consumes at the ball – empty glasses, a bounty of lobsters stretching beyond the bounds of their platters, candles flickering, and the old duke as he eats – they are not her only "sustenance." In a rare moment of voluntary consumption, she eats a maraschino ice.[24] This is much more than a simple act of eating, and its significance is emphasized through Emma's reaction, which removes her entirely from the reality of the world around her:

> Mais, aux fulgurations de l'heure présente, sa vie passée, si nette jusqu'alors, s'évanouissait tout entière, et elle doutait presque de l'avoir vécue. Elle était là; puis, autour du bal, il n'y avait plus que de l'ombre, étalée sur tout le reste. Elle mangeait alors une glace au marasquin, qu'elle tenait de la main gauche dans une coquille de vermeil, et fermait à demi les yeux, la cuiller entre les dents (112).

Elisabeth Cardonne Arlyck sees the highly structural yet nevertheless edible sorbet ("édifié pour être détruit") of Proust's Albertine as the antithesis of the defensive edifice of Flaubert's pièce montée.[25] To propose another contrast in the two authors'

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[24] Although I cannot detail here each instance where Emma eats or drinks, it may be useful to note that in another rare moment of voluntary consumption, Emma eats cherries while similarly afloat in a kind of dream world in which, as at the ball, she would prefer to remain permanently: "[Emma et Léon] mangeaient […] de la crème et des cerises. […] Et ils auraient voulu, comme deux Robinsons, vivre perpetuellement dans ce petit endroit" (329).

[25] "Pièce montée et sorbets: Flaubert et Proust" (58).

representations of food, I would suggest that this cherry ice has the reverse effect of Proust's famous madeleine, which, by comparison, permits his narrator not only to regain desired access to the past, but to do so while aware of the effect that this food has on him: "je tressaillis, attentif à ce qui se passait d'extraordinaire en moi" (45). Emma couldn't possibly be more different: she loses her past entirely during this moment. If food aids in the recuperation of lost time in Proust, it does just the opposite here. The cherry ice, a special and fashionable food also particularly light in texture, helps perhaps to erase the heavy boredom she feels, when immersed in her reality.

With this bite of cherry ice, the site of consumption shifts, unusually for this novel, from the eyes to the mouth. And this is where the emptiness that defines food in *Bovary* becomes particularly dangerous to its heroine, despite appearances. What happens here is indeed much more complicated than prior readings would suggest. In *Crack Wars*, Avital Ronell claims that Emma is a "grand self-medicator," who experiences "hallucinogenic, analgesic, stimulating, euphorizing effects" resulting from such things as religion, reading and eating (63, 74). Emma does self-medicate by drinking and eating, of course—early in the novel, for example, she drinks vinegar in an attempt to lose weight. But there is also the famous final act of consumption, which as everyone knows results in the ultimate act of self-negation, rather than the altered states that Ronell's descriptions of a drug trip suggest. Similarly, and more significantly, nothing is produced by this seemingly "euphorizing" consumption of cherry ice: this is an inverted act of consumption, which – like most of Emma's "eating" – involves an erasure rather than a sustenance of the self. Although she does use the cherry ice as a means to an end, as one would use a drug, she is utterly negated by the experience. Drug use would require some

degree of consciousness, for in order to experience the effects of drugs, one must be somehow present to the experience—attendant to a shift in the state of one's mind. But is Emma present? "Elle était là," Flaubert writes (112). But where? Her past has disappeared and her surroundings are covered in shadow.

This scene points to a moment of absolute emptiness. The absence of smell and taste, as we know by now, are characteristic of eating in Flaubert. But remarkably, sight, too, is absent from this particular act: Emma partially closes her eyes as her mouth closes upon the spoon, and she is for once blind to the surfaces around her ("[elle] fermait à demi les yeux, la cuiller entre les dents"). It is as if the event of eating itself took place in a vacuum, kept carefully out of contact with the rest of the text. Mouth and eyes closed, looking inward, she drowns out thoughts of her father under his apple trees ("Elle revit son père en blouse sous les pommiers" […] Mais […] sa vie passée […] s'évanouissait tout entière")—links to her humble past (112).[26] Closed off to the world, Emma is suspended in a liminal state between life and death. Elissa Marder's description of her general state as "falling out of time" applies well to this instance, in which Emma seems neither here nor there. [27] But in this scene, with its abrupt and absolute erasure of her past ("sa vie s'évanouissait *toute entière*") and the absolute darkness that envelops the room

[26] Cherries would be an apt antidote to these memories, since the bitter cherries used to make marasquin liqueur, which flavors Emma's cherry ice, came from Italy, the fashionable source for "exotic" products in Emma's time. The apples Emma remembers, by contrast, have decidedly humble associations; they were both a common fruit in her region, and a common sight in the rural background she wants to forget. Therefore, it is not surprising that they flash through her mind when she sees the peasants looking through the window of the château.

[27] *Dead Time* (132).

("il n'y avait plus *que* de l'ombre, étalée sur *tout le reste*"), Emma seems not only to be out of step with time, but to have disappeared altogether (emphasis mine). She inhabits a truly dead space—her physical reaction to this bite of cherry ice seems at once suggestive of *la petite mort*, and, moreover, seems to anticipate, if not displace, the violent death by the willed act of consumption soon to come.

It is thus not only when consuming something blatantly poisonous, as she ultimately does, that eating is dangerous for Emma. Moreover, it is important to note that even in this rare instance where she eats of her own accord, paradoxically, her mouth closes upon more hollow space than edible matter. There is a startling emptiness to what is ostensibly an act of consumption; Flaubert writes that Emma has "la cuiller entre les dents," which conjures up an image of the hard surface of her teeth closing upon the equally hard surface of the spoon—a concave form, an empty shell. More important than what Emma actually ingests of this sweet is her pose: closing her mouth upon the scooped shape of the spoon, she appears poised to consume emptiness.

The "extase" Emma seems to be experiencing is a strange one, for ecstasy is a state of being outside of oneself ("hors de soi et du monde sensible").[28] Emma's ecstasy is terribly close to death, though, for here, she *isn't* at all; she is reduced to a kind of petrified physical form—a statue.[29] This scene recalls the aforementioned theatrical drink

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[28] *Le Petit Robert*, 870.

[29] Ecstasy is tightly interwoven with death in stories from the lives of Christian saints, and certainly, Emma's experience seems more like a death than a drug experience or any other temporary state. One story particularly resonant with Emma's comes from the life of Saint Cecilia, whose ecstasy was said to have occurred when, just before death, she heard celestial music. Emma, of course, also hears music just before death, though it is hardly celestial.

of a mere drop of curaçao, for here – as there – a purported moment of ingestion serves to make emptiness visible, to give form to absence. The Flaubertian table – and in fact, to a larger extent, the novel as a whole – owes its shape to the hollowness it holds. And this is entirely appropriate, since Flaubert famously believed, as we are reminded in often-cited parts of his correspondence, that in order to create the most beautiful art, a certain emptiness was necessary: "Les oeuvres les plus belles sont celles où il y a *le moins de matière*" (*Correspondance* I, 31 emphasis mine).

Recognizing the author's desire to preserve this particular emptiness, Auerbach observes, "Il ne se passe rien [dans Madame Bovary]." More importantly though, he continues, "mais ce *rien* est devenu un *quelque chose* qui est lourd, diffus et menaçant" (484). Nowhere is this truer than in Flaubert's representation of food.[30] Indeed, not only is the nothingness at the heart of the novel menacing, but it is deadly, and eating – paradoxically, since it is something we tend to relate to sustenance and plenitude – is, as I hope to have demonstrated, Flaubert's most powerful embodiment of this absence. And it is a particularly violent one, for it evacuates Emma, not only in the famous scene on her death bed, but also at the ball, in a moment of ecstasy which, as I have suggested, seems to have been overlooked as an act of dying (a "petite mort," in fact), a moment of complete and utter absence anticipating Emma's final, deadly "meal." The representation

[30] Elizabeth Goodstein's reading of the nothingness that is central to *Bovary* is complementary to Auerbach's. Goodstein argues that "Madame Bovary made the nothingness at the heart of desire into an object of knowledge" (185). In light of the present study, we might add to Goodstein's remark that food emerges as a primary object of knowledge for Emma, who discovers too late its dangers. The link between knowledge and taste (both come from the Latin root, *sapere*) makes such a *rapprochement* even more natural: tasting is a way of knowing.

of food in *Bovary* helps to assure that Emma will remain the ultimate empty form of the novel—always desirous, but never fulfilled. And although food is more vital to life than love and material things (and the pursuit of them also proves destructive for the heroine), it makes life impossible for her; it is forever a point of absence, an empty *space* unintended for consumption by Emma, who must remain the sacrificial victim to Flaubert's idol of form.

Emma emerges, like the cake, as a crowning example of what I have called Flaubert's architecture of desire. She is an empty shell, a form onto which the text itself is grafted. In the case of wedding cake, as I have noted, the elaborate structure represents the grandeur Emma would like to assimilate, but which ultimately proves to be devoid of nourishing properties—utterly inedible. But this very structure and all that it represents is, I believe, a microcosm of Flaubert's novel, for its emptiness is essential to the aesthetic Flaubert sought to maintain. Absence generates desire which in turn generates text, and this suspension of lack makes of the text itself a kind of receptacle of desire—desires which, in order to be sustained, can never be fulfilled. Jean-Pierre Richard writes of something he calls "la verve," which he suggests Flaubert experienced intensely in his own life, and sought to maintain. It is the moment in between the start of one's desire for something, and the consumption of that thing. It is a moment of pleasurable anticipation, empty of the weight and effort of consumption, and preceding any disappointment that may result from the eventual act. The notion of verve dovetails with this architecture of desire we find at the flaubertian table, for in the deferral of consumption it implies, there is a place in which the promise of fulfillment is always suggested, but remains just beyond reach. Although Emma is, ultimately, effaced by an act of consumption, until

then food serves as a space in which Flaubert's *form*al perfectionism is inscribed, and where desire is sustained.

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Part Two: *Salammbô*

> J'éventre des hommes avec prodigalité. Je verse du sang. Je fais du style cannibale.
>
> – Gustave Flaubert to Madame Jules Sandeau

In *Salammbô*, too, food is highly problematic, and no less dangerous than it is in *Madame Bovary*. From the very beginning of the first chapter, devoted to a raucous scene of feasting, food is invested with a transgressive, even perverse, function. The destructive banquet of the novel's opening scene pits mercenary soldiers against one another and Carthage, going beyond the more general discord we tend to associate with the conclusions of feasting scenes in literature.[31] Flaubert very consciously makes of the table a place of discord, with food and drink its most powerful instruments. He announces this at the start of the novel: "comme le maître était absent et qu'ils se trouvaient nombreux, ils mangeaient et ils buvaient en pleine liberté" (31). By removing the authoritative figurehead of Carthage, Flaubert invites chaos into his immaculately constructed world, where the architectural *cadre* provided by the palace and, paradoxically enough, nature – structures which frame the space of the table – is

[31] For example, we may return to the conclusion of Emma's and Charles's wedding feast, in which the celebrants get a second wind, and the good order of the banquet, embodied by the description of the pièce montée, dissipates ("tout se ranima; […] on disait des gaudrioles, on embrassait les dames […]" (88).

dramatically juxtaposed with the destructive elements of food and drink. The problematics of form and containment at the table which haunt *Bovary* resurface here, as food is endowed with the capacity to inspire revelry that not only has the power to change the forms of the table itself, but also those of the men who surround it. Food and drink provide the fuel that makes a battlefield of the banquet table.

The central tragedy in this novel, which overflows with acts of violence and human sacrifice, is the impossible love of Salammbô and Mathô, who represent the two worlds – that of the orderly city of Carthage and its mercenary soldiers – whose conflict begins at the table, and continues throughout the novel. Indeed, the table – with an initial order that rivals an architect's blueprint, filled as it is with elaborately chiseled serving vessels – marks a great point of tension between order and disorder in the text, as the food and drink overspill their bounds, inviting an orgy of eating and drinking. "Le festin," as Flaubert calls it, has been read by many as a proleptic scene, anticipating the war to follow. It is easy to see in the many objects so carefully described here an exercise in Flaubert's love of material things, "a museum of dead objects," as Victor Brombert writes (93). Brombert's reading of this chapter, though rich and nuanced, nevertheless summarizes it as an exercise in "immobility," aligning the voracity of appetites with a search for the absolute (101). I would argue instead that food, that harbinger of the story to come – though admittedly absorbed into Flaubert's sacred world of objects and devoid of the ability to truly nourish as in *Bovary* – nevertheless *functions* in *Salammbô*. More than a pure object, it has a dynamic, even incendiary quality. In the feverish chaos of the soldiers' feast, it fills them up, as I will show, only to remind them of their lack.

Flaubert obviously had food in mind from the beginning of *Salammbô*, as it appears he often did in his own life. "Nul doute," opines Jean-Pierre Richard, "que l'obsession alimentaire ne tienne dans son imagination [une] place privilégiée […]" (120). In the above epigraph, an excerpt from a letter to Mme. Jules Sandeau, Flaubert summarizes the mood of *Salammbô*, which he was writing at the time. The spirit of violence revealed in these lines indeed punctuates the entire work, and nowhere is it more fully realized than in the "appétits de cannibale" that Flaubert brings to the dramatic first chapter. [32] The author even went so far as to send the Goncourt brothers the following outlandish invitation to a dinner which was to be accompanied by a reading from his work in progress: *"*A 7 heures, dîner oriental. On vous y servira de la chair humaine, des cervelles de bourgeois et des clitoris de tigresse sautés au beurre de rhinocéros" (*Correspondance* III, 152). Such an imagined violence is telling of the content of the first chapter, and if we follow Sainte-Beuve, it is telling of a more general tendency of Flaubert's toward the sadistic. And indeed, its shocking ingredients would fit seamlessly into the dark passages of Lautréamont's *Chants de Maldoror*. Although Flaubert apparently denied such tendencies, it is hard not to see in the violent movements fueled by the soldiers' feast a certain *jouissance* on the part of the author, the god of his text, marveling at his own ability – through the use of food and drink – to create and destroy at whim.[33]

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[32] "Quand on a son modèle net, devant les yeux, on écrit toujours bien, et où donc le vrai est-il plus clairement que dans ces belles expositions de la misère humaine? Elles ont quelque chose de si cru que cela donne à l'esprit des appétis de cannibale" (*Correspondance* II, 377).

[33] The inclusion of the sexual organ of a tiger at this imagined supper contributes to a sense of "jouissance" derived from the exploitation of the exotic. Flaubert's imaginary oriental banquet is further

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Architectural Spaces: Order Imposed

The soldiers' violent and disorderly feast is located in a highly orderly, distinctly architectural space. The tension between container and contained is already familiar to readers of *Bovary*. But it is present here even in nature, which is tamed for the purposes of surrounding the palace, which in turn surrounds the feast:

> Des figuiers entouraient les cuisines; un bois de sycomores se prolongeait jusqu'à des masses de verdure […]; des vignes […] montaient dans le branchage des pins; un champ de roses s'épanouissait sous des platanes; […] et, au milieu, l'avenue des cyprès faisait d'un bout à l'autre comme une double colonnade d'obélisques verts (31-32).

Later in the chapter, nature is once again absorbed into the architectural forms it took earlier, but it now seems to have fallen victim to the violence surrounding it, recalling in the color of its trunk not only the red of blood, but a limb having been made to bleed: "des troncs d'arbre barbouillés de cinabre, qui ressemblaient à des *colonnes sanglantes*" (40, emphasis mine). This immaculately ordered nature frames the palace, which recalls in the attention Flaubert accords to its architectural details the grandeur of the Château de la Vaubyessard:

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emphasized by the inclusion of rhinoceros butter. Rhinoceros horns, phallic symbols, were used commercially in aphrodisiacs. I would like in the future to further develop this discussion of Flaubert's appetite for the exotic.

> Le palais, bâti en marbre numidique tacheté de jaune, superposait tout au fond, sur de larges assises, ses quatre étages en terrasses. Avec son grand escalier droit en bois d'ébène, portant aux angles de chaque marche la proue d'une galère vaincue, avec ses portes rouges écartelées d'une croix noire, ses grillages d'airain qui le défendaient en bas des scorpions, et ses treillis de baguettes dorées qui bouchaient en haut ses ouvertures […] (32).

However, the presence of this structure has more complex implications than one might first think, for in fact, immobile though this grand architecture may be, it casts an imposing shadow upon the mercenary soldiers who have penetrated its walls. Moreover, its features are anthropomorphized, reminding the men of Hamilcar's face: "il semblait aux soldats, dans son opulence farouche, aussi solonnel et impénétrable que le visage d'Hamilcar" (32). Since the soldiers haven't yet received the payment they expect from Hamilcar, there is already a spirit of revolt among them. Their reaction to the recognition of his face in its looming shadow illustrates the tension between the wealthy, ordered city and the soldiers' needs and resentments, anticipating the order and revolt soon to come.

While much attention is accorded to the architectural features of nature and the palace itself, the table, too, presents a highly ordered architectural space. Flaubert's careful placement of objects here recalls the precision of Emma and Charles Bovary's wedding banquet, where food, serving vessels and other parts of the table setting were situated with similar care; typically of Flaubert, great emphasis is placed on containment: "*Dans* des gamelles en bois de Tamrapanni flottaient, *au milieu du* safran, de grands morceaux de graisse"; "Les lueurs vacillantes du pétrole qui brûlait *dans* des vases de poryphre, *au haut* des cèdres"; "Des flammes oblongues tremblaient *sur* les cuirasses

d'airain"; "Toutes sortes de scintillements *jaillissaient des* plats incrustés de pierres précieuses"; "Les cratères *à bordure* de miroirs" (34, emphasis mine). As in *Bovary*, Flaubert's interest in these objects and the materials that comprise them overshadows his attention to their contents. And food never transcends its one-dimensional role as an object, incapable of feeding. However, there is – in the interaction of the soft and the hard, the stationary and the mobile – a tension that, sustained throughout the scene, builds and suggests not only movement, but a sort of imbalance threatening to explode. The flickering of the fire contained in the stone vases is notable, not only because it is an element present throughout the book in scenes of sacrifice and destruction, but more precisely because fire is a consuming force. It *eats* its victims, and serves as a frighteningly apt metaphor for the kind of consumption that laps away at all of the victims of this feast, and – more generally – destroys characters such as these soldiers, as well as Emma Bovary, who are consumed by the fiery intensity of their own unbridled desires.

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Things Come Apart

The objects representing the initial order of the feast – the serving vessels, even the bodies and clothing of the soldiers – are, of course, eventually overwhelmed by excess and disorder: "Tout débordait," writes Flaubert (34). And he speaks, of course, of the dishes *and* the men: "Ils avalaient à pleine gorge tous les vins grecs qui sont dans les outres. […] Il y en avait des flaques par terre où l'on glissait" (35). The overabundance of certain foods encroaches on yet others, causing an implosion of certain elements even

before the destruction necessitated by consumption begins to take place: "Les pyramides de fruits[34] s'éboulaient sur les gâteaux de miel" (34). Brombert cites "an inner struggle between the stable and the unstable" as an "important feature of [Flaubert's] work" (100). Although Brombert does not elaborate further, we might return to earlier citations from this study for excerpts from Flaubert's own letters, in which the author cites perfect form as his utmost goal, the pinnacle of beauty in his own writing. Of course, the instabilities of the author's body – his epileptic fits especially, and, according to his correspondence, his fluctuating weight – may also contribute to this anxiety surrounding the stable versus the unstable.

The many forms Flaubert creates at the table are soon destroyed amidst the general delirium. Many items – serving platters, jugs of wine – are broken on the ground ("ils brisaient, ils tuaient," 40). Remains of the once-orderly, whole forms of the foods at the banquet, broken down into bite-size pieces, also litter the ground, contributing to the chaos of the scene: "Les Gaulois […] s'arrachaient les pastèques et les limons qu'ils croquaient avec l'écorce. […] les Grecs rasés, plus blancs que des marbres, jetaient derrière eux les épluchures de leur assiette" (34). The heterogeneity of the foods at the banquet, combined with that of the many races of men present, plays a role in the disorderliness of the banquet, for men who are not accustomed to eating certain foods

[34] This pyramid of fruit, as noted in my study of food in *Bovary*, in a commentary occasioned by a similar pyramid of plums made by Emma, corresponds to Flaubert's remembrance of a trip to Egypt, and more specifically, to his idea of a solid and thoughtfully constructed structure built to endure, like a well-written literary work. That this symbol of order, the pyramid, should destroy a component of the likewise orderly table by causing it to collapse, hints at the implosion of overall order soon to follow, as the soldiers fuel themselves with the abundant food and drink.

find themselves victimized by the banquet offerings, lacking as they are in the experience of breaking down the whole foods offered to them. Consequently, the Gauls, as cited above, eat rinds of watermelon and lime. And the hard outer shells of crawfish, more than simply unpleasant, prove harmful to those who bite through them rather than first cracking them: "Des Nègres n'ayant jamais vu de langoustes se déchiraient le visage à leurs piquants rouges" (34). Indeed, it would seem that to the same degree that Flaubert's elaborately formed food is constructive, it is destructive: here, even alimentary structures such as these, which impose order and form, can cause harm.

One of the most violent scenes of ruptured form at the banquet takes place when the mercenary soldiers descend upon the limpid basins of water holding the sacred fish of Hamilcar Barca's family, at once breaking through the boundaries of this sacred space and feeding their own animal urges: "L'idée de commettre un sacrilège r*anima* la gourmandise des Mercenaires" (41, emphasis mine). Here we see gourmandise associated not only with the animal, but also with the perverse: "ils placèrent vite du feu sous des vases d'airain et s'amusèrent à regarder les beaux poissons se débattre dans l'eau bouillante" (41). The boiling alive of these fish is a transgressive act of violence which anticipates the human sacrifices that abound later in the novel, in the name of the god Moloch.

Not only does the sacred become edible, but it seems that here, *everything* is edible. We have seen that the soldiers eat rinds of fruit and crustacean shells; hard forms do not derail their animal appetites. But in the following scene, it truly seems that their appetites know no bounds: "les plus hardis coururent aux éléphants, ils voulaient leur abattre la trompe et *manger de l'ivoire*" (40). The men are caught up in such a delirious,

feverish appetite that we are reminded of Emma, who felt so many desires at once that she was unable to distinguish one from another ("tout se confondit dans une même souffrance," 173). Even after boiling the sacred fish of the Barca clan, the soldiers are hungry: "ils promenaient à l'entour leurs gros yeux ivres, pour dévorer par la vue tout ce qu'ils ne pouvaient prendre" (41). The men, it seemed, stop at nothing to consume, eating with their eyes when the forms they perceive cannot be taken in through their mouths. Even the act of eating through the eyes, which is a common occurrence in novels of the nineteenth century, is a destructive act here; it is not a question of eating with the eyes to experience pleasure and beauty, as Zola's Claude of *Le ventre de Paris* would do, with his painterly eye. It is an act of violence ("dévorer"); Flaubert gives the impression that these soldiers, though they cannot pillage and plunder everything, nevertheless cast a hungry eye over *all*, assuring that nothing remains untouched by them.[35]

We soon see the destruction of these vessels containing food and drink echoed in the bodies of the soldiers themselves. The initial order accounted for in the pomp of their regalia stands in sharp contrast to their changing forms as the disorder wrought by

[35] We may recall that the majority of Emma's consumption at La Vaubyessard is visual, too; however, unlike the soldiers who consume visually what they cannot otherwise manage to gorge themselves on, Emma consumes very little and she does not seeks to exert force through consumption. Rather, she tries – on her rare occasions of actual consumption (champagne, cherry ice) – to escape her reality and to map herself onto another, more beautiful, world than her own, fueled by the desires stirred by the beauty she sees. For the soldiers, as for Emma, the sight of something desired engenders more desire; but the soldiers' visual consumption of food and drink at the lavishly set table is followed by the consummation of that desire through the acts of eating and drinking—a tension which is rarely relieved for poor Emma, whose eyes must indeed be bigger than her stomach.

consumption comes into play. At first, they are all carefully dressed and recognizable, either by their physical builds or their chosen garments. Some even resemble statues, in striking conformity to Flaubert's desire to create beautiful *form*:

> Le Grec se reconnaissait à sa taille mince, l'Égyptien à ses épaules remontées, le Cantabre à ses larges mollets. Des Cariens balançaient orgeuilleusement les plumes de leur casque, des archers de Cappadoce s'étaient peints avec des jus d'herbes de larges fleurs sur le corps, et quelques Lydiens portant des robes de femmes dînaient en pantoufles et avec des boucles d'oreilles. D'autres, qui s'étaient par pompe barbouillés de vermillion, ressemblaient à des statues de corail (33).

However, just as the food and drink in the containers overflow their bounds, so do they break the order established in the outward appearance of the soldiers: "Ils imitaient le cri des bêtes féroces, leurs bonds. […] Un Lusitanien, de taille gigantesque, portant un homme au bout de chaque bras, parcourait les tables tout en crachant du feu par les narines" (36). These animal cries and fire escaping from the once-contained bodies, however, do not represent the most visible breaking of physical boundaries in these men.

The soldiers become remarkably like animals, as seen not only in their beastly table manners but also in their physical form. They are zoomorphized— trans*formed* by eating and drinking, they come to resemble by turn lions, camels, leopards, and wolves. The transformation happens slowly; first, we see a group of men hunched over their bowls like animals, and their garments are telling: "des pâtres du Brutium, vêtus de peaux de loups, dévoraient silencieusement, le visage dans leur portion" (34). Already, a "portion" is a serving more readily associated with a dog's serving of food than a man's.

Their table manners also have them assume the posture of animals: “Ils mangeaient accroupis autour de grands plateaux, ou bien, couchés sur le ventre, ils tiraient à eux les morceaux de viande, et se rassasiaient appuyés sur les coudes, dans la pose pacifique des lions lorsqu’ils dépècent leur proie” (33). Their feline gestures are later replaced, as they drink water in a way that befits a camel: “ils s’enfonçaient la tête dans les amphores, et restaient à boire, sans s’interrompre, comme des dromadaires altérés” (36). Flaubert continues to note the resemblance of men to animals (a soldier looks at Salammbô “en écartant les narines comme un léopard qui est accroupi dans les bambous”), but more remarkably, it seems for a moment that the men have actually *become* animals (46). As with Charles Bovary, whose animal name – as I have noted – predetermines his relationship to food, the soldiers’ animal appetites signal a descent into subhuman behavior. Here, having eating and drunk too much, the lines between the eater and the eaten are blurred, and the aforementioned “appétits de cannibale” are realized as the soldiers turn violently upon one another: “ils s’imaginaient être à la chasse et couraient sur leurs compagnons comme sur des bêtes sauvages” (41). They wound many of the slaves serving their meal, believing they’ve been served poisoned food; they turn their arrows against lions, too. Men and animals, tossed together in this fury and disorder, are no longer distinct from one another. When Flaubert ends the bloody scene by noting, “les lions blessés rugissaient dans l’ombre,” readers might just as understandably imagine a wounded man practically become a lion, tending to his wound in the shadows, as an actual lion. (41).

Although one might expect all of this consumption to be followed by resultant satisfaction, readers of *Madame Bovary* know already that one must be wary of food in

Flaubert, and that eating can have very unexpected results. For even if food is eaten in Flaubert, it does not fulfill. In an essay comparing the treatment of food in Proust and Flaubert, Elisabeth Cardonne-Arlyck writes that in Proust, "l'objet culinaire n'est édifié que pour être détruit et absorbé" (58). Even if food is highly ordered and carefully constructed in Proust, it is still edible; but Flaubert's characters are denied this satisfaction. *Salammbô* certainly fulfills the first part of Cardonne-Arlyck's claim, as I have demonstrated, for not only is food consumed, but violently so. Nevertheless, the latter part of the claim proves impossible to sustain in the case of *Salammbô*, for in fact, it appears that despite all that has been consumed, *nothing* has been absorbed. Though exaggeratedly bountiful, here – as in *Bovary* – food is devoid of the ability to fulfill, for in the orgiastic throes of excess, the mercenary soldiers do not revel in what they have seen, tasted or smelled, but instead complain of what they do *not* have: "ils demandaient du vin, des viandes, de l'or" (41). Theirs is a negative economy of consumption; the amount of food or drink they consume seems to be in inverse proportion to their ability to be fulfilled by it.

The negative economy of consumption in *Salammbô* is illustrated not only in the consumption of the soldiers, but also, as I will show, in their leaders and in that of Salammbô herself. The soldiers' greedy devouring, paradoxically, rather than filling and satisfying them, instead reminds them of the money they haven't been paid by Hamilcar, whose kitchens they are emptying of food and drink: "Mais leurs fatigues, revues à travers les vapeurs de leur ivresse, leur semblaient prodigieuses et trop peu récompensées" (36). The violence that escalates as a result of consumption also plays a great role in this negative valorization of consumption. After all, the banquet fuels such

violence that soldiers kill one another, as I have noted, chasing and hunting one another like animals. Angered by the recently heightened awareness of their lack and impaired by overconsumption, *they* become the cannibals of Flaubert's aforementioned "style cannibale" (*Correspondance* III, 30). Not surprisingly, then, soon after the feast has concluded, the cannibalism suggested when the soldiers begin to kill one another in the space of the banquet is confirmed as the Mercenaries are tortured for their misdeeds in Carthage:

> On leur reprocha tous les crimes des Mercenaires: leur gourmandise, leurs vols, leurs impiétés, leurs dédains, et le meurtre des poissons dans le jardin de Salammbô. On fit à leurs corps d'infâmes mutilations; […] on les suspendit par morceaux chez les marchands de viandes; quelques-uns même y enfoncèrent les dents (73).

Zarxas, a Mercenary leader, is also reduced to cannibalism and necrophagia: "affamé, malade, vivant de racines et de charognes" (73). It would seem, in the end, that the men have little choice but to make victims of one another, "consuming" one another violently, whether through mortal wounds or actual acts of cannibalism.

The soldiers are not the only characters in *Salammbô* to demonstrate the effects of an overabundance of food and drink through a display of animal behavior. Indeed, the consumption of certain exotic animals seems to serve as fuel to an equally animal violence on the part of Hannon, a *suffète* of Carthage whose attempt to overcome his illness at times involves the consumption of large quantities of food: "pour se prouver à lui-même qu'il se portait bien, il entamait les farces de fromage et d'origan, les poissons désossés, les courges, les huîtres, avec des oeufs, des raiforts, des truffes et des brochettes

de petits oiseaux" (139). Like Emma, who is left with a hole in her life following the luxurious ball at La Vaubyessard, and thereafter becomes increasingly self-destructive, Hannon is not only unsatisfied but rendered harmful through his consumption of the profusion of goods available to him. Rather than the sort of indolence one might expect from someone who has eaten such a great amount of food, Hannon feels nothing but dissatisfaction and a desire to destroy: "Tout en regardant les prisonniers, il se délectait dans l'imagination de leur supplice. Cependant il se rappelait Sicca, et la rage de toutes ses douleurs s'exhalait en injures contre ces trois hommes" (139). Just before, in a similar moment of indulgence during which the ailing leader is fed an exotic meal of flamingo tongue while he soaks in a luxurious bath of cinnamon oil, food seems to provide the fuel for violent meditations: "[Hannon] mangeait, sur une peau de boeuf étendue, des langues de phénicoptères avec des graines de pavot assaisonnées au miel […] et, comme on venait de faire des prisonniers, il se demandait quel châtiment terrible inventer" (137). It certainly seems – as with Emma Bovary – that eating has done nothing for Hannon but exaggerate the feelings of desire he already had, rendering him emptier than he was before he began to eat.

While such a close look at consumption in *Salammbô* suggests that these feelings of lack and emptiness experienced by the soldiers, and the violence stemming from it – not to mention the desire to negate as it is experienced by Hannon – are a result of consumption, Salammbô herself does not need to consume in order to be defined by absence. In fact, she is defined by lack from the start of the book; her own purity is protected by the careful control of consumption, and more specifically, by what she *cannot* eat or drink: "Elle avait grandi dans les abstinences, les jeûnes et les purifications

[…]. Jamais elle n'avait goûté de vin, ni mangé de viandes" (81). Food is indeed a defining force in her identity, accompanied by strict boundaries which are transgressed in every way, first by the foods present at the feast (wine and meat, both taboo, as the above citation reveals, are consumed in great quantity by the soldiers), and then by the violence and death that ensue ("Jamais elle n'avait […] posé ses talons dans la maison d'un mort") (81). In an uncanny resemblance to Emma Bovary, Salammbô's demise is intertwined with consumption: her ill-fated love of Mâtho ends with his violent death, a scene of sacrifice in which the Mercenary's heart is cut from his body: "D'un seul coup [on] fendit la poitrine de Mâtho, puis en arracha le coeur, le posa sur la cuiller, et […] l'offrit au soleil" (367). The sight of this act, accompanied by the offering of a celebratory drink directly after Mâtho's death by a man she doesn't love, proves fatal to her: "Salammbô se leva comme son époux, avec une coupe à la main, afin de boire aussi. Elle retomba, la tête en arrière, par-dessus le dossier du trône, – blême, raidie, les lèvres ouvertes, – et ses cheveux dénoués pendaient jusqu'à terre" (367). Her lips parted in death, Salammbô seems to assume a posture that emphasizes the desire that is never quelled in her. Already defined in terms of consumption by lack ("Jamais elle n'avait […] ni […]"), Salammbô is also eaten by desire: "Ô père! s'écria Salammbô […]; la curiosité de sa forme me dévore!" (84) Hamilcar's response to her admission is like a death sentence, an assurance that her desire cannot be fulfilled, that she will be consumed by it in some way: "Jamais! Ne sais-tu pas qu'on en meurt? […] Ton désir est un sacrilège" (84).

But of course, Flaubert is behind all of this pulling the strings. Because he has killed his heroine, her lover and many others besides, readers might eventually ask themselves if Flaubert himself is posing as the "cannibale" of this text. And certainly,

some have argued that this work, generally considered a novel, should instead be read as an epic poem, an argument that would support the notion that the very style of *Salammbô* is itself an act of literary cannibalism.[36] This is one way in which we might interpret the manifestation of Flaubert's aforementioned "style cannibale" in *Salammbô*. But by using food, paradoxically, to accentuate emptiness and incite anger – in short, by investing in food a purely negative value – Flaubert denies the soldiers the possibility of truly incorporating the spoils of their stolen banquet in a way that could nourish, making of them victims from the start of the novel. To further unpack Flaubert's remark to Madame Sandeau, "J'éventre des hommes avec prodigalité. […] Je fais du style cannibale," I would suggest in fact that, in order to understand Flaubert's use of food in *Salammbô*, we should take the first part of his statement quite seriously: "J'éventre des hommes." The men are, in fact, deprived of their stomachs, *éventrés*, by their creator. Despite their prodigious appetites, they are – as I have shown – incapable of containing, unable to absorb what they have consumed. Likewise, Salammbô, whose youthful privations recall Emma's youth in the convent and her attempts at asceticism, is defined by her negative relation to food; and when the soldiers fill her garden with the taboo meats and wines, and she "consumes" freely, tempted by material things (the coat of tanit) and love (Mâtho), her indulgences prove fatal. She, like the soldiers who are "éventrés," and Hannon, in whom food only ignites the desire to destroy, cannot eat what she is fed in a way that sustains or nourishes. They are all, in various ways, microcosms of Flaubert's

[36] Théophile Gautier, to whom Flaubert dedicated *Salammbô*, insists that it should be read as an epic poem, rather than a novel: "Ce n'est pas un livre d'histoire, ce n'est pas un roman : c'est un poème épique !"

ideal of beauty: pure form, stripped of the weighty matter that sometimes accompanies it. In a way that recalls Emma Bovary, they not only embody, but are nothing *but* the "style" of their creator's own, self-avowed "appétits de cannibale."

Chapter Two: The Consumption of Baudelaire

Part One: Baudelaire et l'autre

Any mention of consumption in a discussion of *Les Fleurs du Mal* would likely bring to mind for many readers of Baudelaire an idea of tuberculosis, of *maladie*, rather than thoughts of the *other* consumption, the ingestion of food or drink. And it would not be wrong to make such a connection. After all, we are predisposed to the former reading, since *mal* is the defining term of the collection. But the other form of consumption – though not inherently *bad* like the aforementioned sickness – is just as vile, and just as resonant with, *le mal* in Baudelaire. Eating is problematic throughout Baudelaire, and certainly this is the case from the very beginning of *Les Fleurs du mal*, in which the first two poems – "Au Lecteur," and "Bénédiction," which I will soon discuss at length – hinge on acts of violence, in which the poet is consumed.

Admittedly, not all consumption is devalorized by Baudelaire. Drink in particular provides a portal to another world. It is linked – as he puts it – to the "aspiration à sortir de mon *moi*" (379). Wine, especially, facilitates the state of mind the poet most embraces; one might even argue that it is allied with his concept of beauty: "J'ai trouvé la définition du Beau, — de mon Beau. C'est quelque chose d'ardent et de triste, quelque chose d'un peu vague, laissant carrière à la conjecture" (657). For wine induces reverie, blurs boundaries, helps one to forget gnawing thoughts. In "Femmes Damnées," Baudelaire writes, "Ô Bacchus, endormeur des remords anciens!," and then, "J'ai demandé à des vins captieux / D'endormir pour un jour la terreur qui me mine" (114, 115). Indeed, in Baudelaire's view, wine's effect is so powerful that in its alteration of the

mind, it brings forth something new; he asserts that, through the effects of the drink on the drinker, a third thing is produced, a sort of third entity: "la faculté d'augmenter outre mesure la personnalité de l'être pensant, et de créer, pour ainsi dire, une troisième personne, opération mystique, où l'homme naturel et le vin […] engendrent un Saint-Esprit, qui est l'homme supérieur, lequel procède également des deux" (387).[37] The consumption of food, on the other hand, offers no such respite from reality. After all, one must eat in order to live; we drink wine for pleasure, not out of biological necessity. Eating, meanwhile, is a reminder of the body's needs in a domain (poetry) that should surely be less concerned, according to Baudelaire, with the physical than with the metaphysical.[38]

Like drink, vapors – whether smoked in a pipe or simply breathed in – are appreciated for their intoxicating qualities, which often provide escape, whether in time or space: "la saveur et le parfum incomparables donnaient à l'âme la nostalgie de pays et de bonheurs inconnus" (326).[39] Indeed, in Baudelaire's use of the verb 'humer' in "La Chevelure," drink and vapor are elided in a single act of consumption through which the woman – who so often in Baudelaire serves as an unwelcome if not violent reminder of

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[37] Similar accounts of wine as a transformative, elevating substance go so far as to suggest that wine allows access to the sublime: "dans l'ivresse il y a de l'hyper-sublime" (383).

[38] This distate is reflected in the poet's misogyny, for instance: "La femme a faim et elle veut manger. Soif, et elle / veut boire. / Elle est en rut et elle veut être foutue. / Le beau mérite! / La femme est *naturelle*, c'est-à-dire abominable" (*OC*, 677).

[39] Probably the best-known example of this is to be found in "La Chevelure": "La langoureuse Asie et la brûlante Afrique, Tout un monde lointain, absent, presque défunt, / Vit dans tes profondeurs, forêt aromatique!" (26).

the physical body and its needs – provides a welcome escape to another time: "N'es-tu pas l'oasis où je rêve, et la gourde / Où je hume à longs traits le vin du souvenir?" (27). In fact, in the latter case, drinking provides a means of restoring through memory something that would otherwise be lost. It is a recuperative act, something that accomplishes a task we normally assign to food—that of serving as a source of nourishment, a *restaurant* in the literal sense, whose job it is to *restaurer*. As long as the matter being consumed is amorphous, it belongs to the realm of the "vague" the poet embraces, and all is well. Eating, on the other hand, rather than serving as the constructive substance it is generally thought to be, is in Baudelaire synonymous with violence and destruction. With eating, though, something entirely different is at stake.

The economy of consumption is problematic from the very start of *Les Fleurs du mal*, for in the opening text, "Au Lecteur," humanity itself is consumed. A destructive force is visited not only upon the poetic subject, but his audience as well: "La sottise, l'erreur, le péché, la lésine, / Occupent *nos* esprits et travaillent *nos* corps, / Et nous alimentons nos aimables remords, / Comme les mendiants nourrissent leur vermine" (5, emphasis mine). The body is under the control of something *other*, and the language we normally associate with nourishment (*nourrir*, *alimenter*) in fact connotes just the opposite: the body is being depleted, not nourished, for it is itself being eaten; the body feeds parasites, and is passive when the act of consumption takes place. Baudelaire's use of the word "remords" accentuates the visceral, literal meaning of the word. The poet and his audience – this collective *nous* – actually seem to be bitten in the flesh, in an outward, gnawing, physical manifestation to match the inward and ongoing pain of remorse.

The negative space occupied by food in Baudelaire has, as I have noted, not escaped critics. In *Baudelaire and Intertextuality*, Margery Evans recognizes that food represents that which the poet holds in the greatest contempt: "food is associated with the material world and stands in antithesis to the phantasmagoria which absorbs the poet" (105). Beyond the observation that food itself is negatively connoted, Evans's conclusion hinges on the claim that Baudelaire's ability to merge the "kaleidoscopic concentration" of *Le Spleen de Paris* into a single work essentially makes of him a great cook, an impressive *bricoleur*.[40] But, although Baudelaire himself – as cited earlier – likened the creative potential inherent in cooking to that of writing, his role as consumer (and consumed) is a much more compelling impetus in his creative process than the mere metaphor of cooking as writing supported by Evans suggests. It is on consumption, then, rather than cooking, that my study will focus. For the violence already inherent in consumption is intensified by Baudelaire, and it is precisely in such instances of taking apart by consumption—of the woman, of the poet (and *of* the poet *by* the poet!), and not simply in a *bricolage* of disparate elements – that Baudelaire's work is constituted.

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A Recipe for Reading

In the poet's letter to Arsène Houssaye, which opens the *Le Spleen de Paris*, violent consumption is not only expected of the reader, whose mind – in the poet's view

[40] Baudelaire sees himself this way, too; recognizing his own ability to merge disparate elements, to transform matter as a cook would, he famously writes: "Car j'ai de chaque chose extrait la quintessence, / Tu m'as donné ta boue et j'en ai fait de l'or" (192).

– is prone to wander, as a natural result of his "volonté rétive" (275). It is in fact *demanded* of him, in a striking gesture through which the poet, having designed his text to resist the harm of any further reduction by readers or editors, invites or rather *commands* us, in the imperative tense, to break it to pieces. In a way that calls to mind performance art, the poet seems to elicit from those who read the text a certain kind of interaction, indeed an *active* participation in its intentionally broken structure. For the strength of this lengthy assemblage of various *morceaux* that is *Le Spleen de Paris* lies, paradoxically, precisely in the fact that it is comprised of these fragments. It is edible in "pieces," after all (275).[41]

This is truly an unusual gesture, for poetry is usually based on the creation of form and structure rather than on disassembly. One might argue that it serves as a sort of preemptive buffer against further mangling by wayward readers. If the poet himself has already reduced this work by breaking it into small morsels, what further violence can be done to it? The poet presents himself, just as he famously does at the start of *Les Fleurs du mal* ("Hypocrite lecteur, — mon semblable, — mon frère!"), as one who is complicitly involved, together with his editor and his audience, in an act of violence (6). Yet his text will maintain its integrity, despite this; he assures Houssaye confidently, "*Nous* pouvons couper où *nous* voulons, moi ma rêverie, vous le manuscrit, le lecteur sa lecture […]" (275, emphasis mine).

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[41] A "tronçon" (a much less dainty piece of something than a "tranche," or slice) is something we might in English call a chunk. It is unwieldy in comparison with a slice, but most of all, it is a crude and unappealing thing to consume (furthermore, the way in which the poet dares his reader to divide them is equally crude: "hâcher"). This is why "tronçon" is particularly well-suited to the *Spleen*, which seeks to hide nothing of the ugliness of modern life that inhabits is pages.

While in "Au Lecteur," Baudelaire and his audience are the victims being eaten, in his letter to Houssaye, they (we) are eating. If publication alone is implicitly an invitation for readers to consume the text, such is rarely so explicitly the case as it is here. And consumption is unquestionably central to the collection, something the poet makes clear through the use of verbs we generally expect to find in a recipe, rather than in a letter to an editor: "Nous pouvons *couper* où nous voulons […]. […] *Enlevez une vertèbre* et les deux *morceaux* se rejoindront sans peine. *Hachez-la en nombreux fragments*, et vous verrez que chacun peut exister à part" (275, emphasis mine). These instructions would seem, at first, to align neatly with Margery Evans's study of Baudelaire and cookery; verbs in the imperative tense are commonplace, even *expected*, in recipes, and these seem to be the words of a cook; *cut*, *remove spine*, *slice*. However, usually something is prepared – not *ingested* – according to a recipe. Looking closely, we discover that in fact the poet's directions codify our *consumption* of the work, rather than its preparation, which – of course – the poet has deftly managed without our help. Paradoxically, this particular attempt at controlling the reader's reception of the work ultimately introduces an element of disorder, since the poet encourages us to do anything we choose to the text.

From the poet's labor a finished product emerges, the 'pieces' he hopes will be pleasing: "Dans l'espérance que quelques-uns de ces *tronçons* seront assez vivants pour vous plaire […]" (ibid).[42] Baudelaire has invited the reader to a very unusual banquet of

[42] Cheryl Krueger correctly notes, "while some small worms (planaria) will regenerate if cut lengthwise, no snake could survive the sort of vivisection Baudelaire prescribes," later adding that "Poetic license justifies such biological imprecision" (56). I would argue that this is, perhaps, not a case of biological imprecision. For is it not in the imagination of readers that the poems will live on, and does

words that require cutting, mincing and slicing in order to be consumed. But if these acts of violence result in bite-size pieces of text that – as morsels – are daintier to swallow than the whole from which they are divided, the matter they contain certainly doesn't match their civilized proportions. It is not benign, and its most violent matter is made up largely of acts of consumption. Such is the case, not only in the prose poems, but throughout *Les Fleurs du mal* and beyond.

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The Impossibility of Positive Eating in Baudelaire

For all of the biting and gnawing and eating that take place in Baudelaire, there is indeed very little, if anything, positive about it. When consumption takes place, it yields little in the way of nourishment, as in the now familiar "Au Lecteur": "Ainsi qu'un débauché pauvre qui baise et mange / Le sein martyrisé d'une antique catin, / Nous volons au passage un plaisir clandestin / Que nous pressons bien fort comme une vieille orange" (5). Both of these "edible" objects are past their prime. Even when what would appear to be edible matter does appear, it has a negative effect, symbolizing not what sustains, but instead debases humanity.

Baudelaire not cultivate an aesthetic that has at its core *le mal*? In other words, the "slices" the reader consumes in reading *Le Spleen* do not, I would suggest, necessarily have to be taken from a figure capable of regenerating itself. Certainly, *le mal* inhabits the writhing slices of a snake more easily than those of a creature capable of reconstituting itself; moreover, *Le Spleen* is intended, after all, to be a whole comprised of distinct *fragments*.

While the poet is denied communion - that most codified form of consumption – in "Bénédiction," it is offered to him in "Les Tentations ou Éros, Plutus et la Gloire." This time, however, it is not a redemptive libation he is invited to partake of, but instead a demon's blood:

> À [sa] ceinture vivante étaient suspendus, alternant avec des fioles pleines de liqueurs sinistres, de brillants couteaux et des instruments de chirurgie. Dans sa main droite il tenait une autre fiole dont le contenu était d'un rouge lumineux, et qui portait pour étiquette ces mots bizarres: "Buvez, ceci est mon sang, un parfait cordial" (308).

The narrator refuses the urgings of three demons in quick succession, musing at the end, "je les invoquai à haute voix, les suppliant de me pardonner […] mais je les avais sans doute fortement offensés, car ils ne sont jamais revenus" (310). Even when libation is freely offered (and Baudelaire is not one to be turned off by "objets répugnants") it is impossible. The control exercised by the narrator is echoed, interestingly, in the poet's occupation of an unexpected and decidedly less compromised position in the text. One might argue that the poet, not only the chosen victim of the dream, is present elsewhere. As Philippe Bonnefis notes, "Quant à Baudelaire, il démasque déjà le fer qu'il tient caché dans les plis de son nom. Un Baudelaire, à tout prendre, n'est qu'une sorte de sabre (du bas-latin *baldarelus*). Comme dit Du Cange, 'un petit coutel portatif appelé baudelaire'" (122). These shiny little knives, dangling menacingly from the waist of this Satan, may put the poet in two places at once, as the would-be "victime et bourreau," which the poet aspires simultaneously to be in "Mon coeur mis à nu" (676).

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"Consumption is equally fraught in "Le Gâteau," in which food brings out the worst in humanity. Alone at first, hiking in the country, the narrator finds himself in an ideal state: "je me sentais, grâce à l'enthousiasmante beauté dont j'étais environné, en parfaite paix avec moi-même et avec l'univers" (297). Taking a rest from his walk, he looks to food as a restorative substance: "je songeai à réparer la fatigue et à soulager l'appétit causés par une si longue ascension. Je tirai de ma poche un gros morceau de pain […]" (298). But what ensues is a "guerre parfaitement fratricide," witnessed by a bemused narrator, between two uncivilized types ("sauvage[s]") determined to seize and eat his bread, which they believe to be cake (299, 298). The presence of food, though admittedly necessary for life, incites violence and serves as an intrusion in the world of the text, an interruption of poetic *rêverie*. Ultimately, their scuffle scatters the bread – now reduced to mere crumbs – to the extent that the minute pieces are indistinguishable from the landscape: "il n'y avait plus, à vrai dire, aucun sujet de bataille; le morceau de pain avait disparu, et il était éparpillé en miettes semblables aux grains de sable auxquels il était mêlé" (299). Here, food is removed entirely from the world of edible matter, its function anything but nourishing.

Elsewhere in *Le Spleen de Paris*, food serves as a weapon in a comical anecdote in which a madman hurls a cooked chicken at another's head: "Je me souviens que j'ai eu deux amis que le crépuscule rendait tout malades. L'un […] maltraitait le premier venu. Je l'ai vu jeter à la tête d'un maître d'hôtel un excellent poulet" (311). The chicken is aestheticized, absorbed into a kind of performance art that removes the chicken from its role as a source of gustatory pleasure. Similarly, in *Le jeune enchanteur*, art takes the

place of food. A meal taken in the presence of great works of art ends in the visual consumption of the pieces surrounding the narrator, rather than of what is on the plate: "je viens pour converser avec [les tableaux] aussi loin que possible du tumulte général; et pour rendre notre conversation encore plus intéressante, je prends mon souper dans leur gracieuse compagnie" (525-26). There is no subsequent mention of the food, and "delicious" – a word we tend to associate with the edible – is applied instead to the figure in a painting: "sa beauté était délicieusement vivante" (527). In the same text, the apartment in which the painting hangs is described as "délicieusement sculpté" (525). Nowhere, though, does this apply to food. What is delicious is, in fact, more likely to be dangerous than nourishing.

Baudelaire savors the application of adjectives normally used to describe comestible matter to inedible, and even *dreaded*, nouns. He pairs, for example, the following: "douleur / savoureuse," "torture / délicieuse," and "mort / savoureuse" (128, 129, 316). I noted earlier that the poet admits to his own "goût de la destruction," so it will not be surprising that elsewhere, the verb "gouter" is used to suggest the consumption of what is not only inedible, but deadly: "[…] *goûte* les voluptés de son *anéantissement*" (679, 316, emphasis mine). On the subject of Baudelaire's predilection for opposing terms, Susan Blood writes: "We are already familiar with the way in which Baudelaire's poetry involves a playful figuration and refiguration of opposing terms; at times these appear strictly antithetical, at other times they seem to approach a kind of reconciliation" (125). These contrasting ideas signal just such an event in Baudelaire. The pairing of contradictory terms has a jarring effect, and the divide between them at first seems clear. Through them, what is "delicious" is made dangerous ("douleur," "torture")

and deadly ("la mort," "anéantissement"). Nevertheless, perhaps in the poet's estimation, they *do* belong together; perhaps his aesthetic depends not only upon the juxtaposition, but also the connection of them. Maybe there is, as Blood writes, the possibility of reconciliation between them, for he seems to claim acceptance of just such a reconciliation not only on his own behalf, but on behalf of humanity: "Aux objets répugnants nous trouvons des appas; / Chaque jour vers l'enfer nous descendons d'un pas, / Sans horreur, à travers des ténèbres qui puent" (5).

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The Model of "Bénédiction"

"Bénédiction," the second poem of *Les Fleurs du mal*, directly following "Au Lecteur," provides a revealing model for Baudelaire's use of consumption throughout his work. Here, the juxtaposition of the pure and the impure, of *spleen* and *idéal*, which are at the heart of the Baudelairian aesthetic, are elaborated through the figure of consumption. It is a crucial text for establishing the centrality of this figure as a theme in Baudelaire's work, and its connection to the work at large.

"Bene," connoting "well" or "good" in Latin, is an unexpected start to a poem dealing so blatantly with evil. The entire word suggests "dire du bien," and saying good words in Baudelaire demands, as we will discover, a sacrifice.[43] The first of these sacrifices takes place through the inversion of the maternal role, which is realized through the withholding of nourishment. A mother's biological relation to her child is

[43] Saying well, as I have argued, certainly requires a sacrifice in *Madame Bovary*: the life of Emma herself.

traditionally a positive, creative one: whatever necessary separation must take place between the two, the mother generally represents a source of nourishment. But here, the poet's mother wishes for a reversal of that very act of creation, invoking the very moment of pleasure in which she believes her son's conception took place. Notably, she articulates her disgust for him in her expression of the desire to starve him: "Ah! que n'ai-je mis bas tout un noeud de vipères, / *Plutôt que de nourrir* cette dérision! / Maudite soit la nuit aux plaisirs éphémères / Où mon ventre a conçu mon expiation!" (7, emphasis mine). The order of nature is reversed with the mother as an unwilling creator who nourishes despite herself; whose body was not under her control at the time of conception (it is her body, from which she seems divided, that conceives: "mon ventre a conçu"), and who wishes to go back in time to annihilate her son—a parasite, in her view.[44] The poet will be cut from his natural life-source, his growth stunted, like a plant deprived of water. The mother proclaims, "Et je tordrai si bien cet arbre misérable, / Qu'il ne pourra pousser ses boutons empestés!" (7). The mother herself, consumed by her own hatred, is also unable to be nourished. Though she is the perpetrator, she herself – like her son – cannot be sustained through the act of consumption. She embodies hate, and can swallow nothing but that which defines her: "Elle ravale ainsi l'écume de sa haine" (7). She swallows her own hatred, thereby – in a strange kind of autophagy.

[44] It is certainly not negligible that at this point in his life, Baudelaire's well-known dependence on the financial support of his family had contributed to strife and a certain amount of self-loathing, which could cause him to think of himself as a parasite. As Philippe Bonnefis has noted, "Baudelaire, en effet, n'eut jamais pour habitude de mesurer ses désirs à l'étendue de ses ressources. L'endettement, on ne l'a pas oublié, règle son commerce avec l'art" (142).

The mother's violence is matched by that of all those the poet cares for: "Tous ceux qu'il veut aimer l'observent avec crainte, / […] Et font sur lui l'essai de leur férocité" (8). This sets the tone for the problematic function of consumption throughout *Les Fleurs du mal*; for the violence visited upon the poet here arrives, once again, in the form of denied nourishment, and of the most symbolic sort: communion. For, although the poet does not say so explicitly, the bread and wine he wants to consume must surely be that, not only for this telltale pairing but also because he is concerned with their purity: "Dans le pain et le vin destinés à sa bouche / Ils mêlent de la cendre avec d'impurs crachats" (8). Not only, then, is he denied these most basic and humble symbols of sustenance – bread and wine – but he is, I would propose, suggesting that in the rupturing of this particular moment of consumption, the "férocité" of these people who would do him harm resides in their denial of the poet's communion with something divine.

This is further supported in the stanzas that follow, in which the poet's wife, in an attempt to lure him away from his "hommages divins," plans to disguise herself as an "idol[e] antiqu[e]" (8). And she will do so by gorging herself, not on the humble ingredients that made up the simple meal the poet was denied, but on luxurious balms and vapors, and – most importantly here – on meat and wine: "Et je me soûlerai de nard, d'encens, de myrrhe, / De génuflexions, de viandes et de vins" (8). Where the poet's humble meal was utterly free of meat, his wife's appetite calls for that alone—an early indication of the woman's place in Baudelaire's economy of consumption.

After she has toyed with him sufficiently ("Et, quand je m'ennuierai de ces farces impies"), she will arrive at the poem's most remarkable act of sacrifice: that of the poet's

heart (8). The ceremonial meals that preceded – the poet's, resembling communion, and hers, meant to invoke idol worship – lead, finally, to this *feeding*, by far the most graphic:

> Et mes ongles, pareils aux ongles des harpies,
> Sauront jusqu'à son coeur se frayer un chemin.
>
> Comme un tout jeune oiseau qui tremble et qui palpite,
> J'arracherai ce coeur tout rouge de son sein,
> Et, pour rassasier ma bête favorite,
> Je le lui jetterai par terre avec dédain! (8)

While Catholic communion, based on a belief in transubstantiation, already requires a type of cannibalism, if only symbolic – the faithful, after all, are invited to consume the body of Christ – this act of consumption makes of the poet's heart a distinctly physical organ, prone to violation. But Baudelaire intensifies the woman's gesture, for in yet another act of violence, she rejects the poet's heart and instead offers it to her dog. The poet was, until now, the victim of others' various "férocités," all of which were somehow carried out through consumption: he was first denied nourishment by his mother, then denied communion by those whom he would love. But now, the oppression is visited upon his very body, as he finds himself eaten ruthlessly.

George Blin's portrait of the masochistic poet in *D'un certain consentement à la douleur* seems an accurate description of Baudelaire's tendency toward self-consumption: "Le masochiste veut être lésé. Les sens ne lui offrant plus qu'une pointe mousse et trop incomplètement engagée, il sait ne pouvoir sortir des régions neutres que par l'effet de quelque viol. Pour connaître la mesure de la sensation, il la doit porter à son

plus haut point d'incandescence et comme à sa dernière limite acceptable" (13). In "Bénédiction," however, this self-imposed pain, which the poet excercises through these moments of violent consumption, seems to serve a purpose. For, in contrast with the negative (*spleen*) that abounds in these moments of violence, there is a contrasting *idéal* that emerges to counterbalance them, and which is realized, paradoxically, in the very way the harm befell him—through consumption.

First, the poet emerges from his mother's assault on him through the aid of an invisible celestial being, who makes possible the consumption that was denied him earlier in the text:

> Pourtant, sous la tutelle invisible d'un Ange,
> L'enfant déshérité s'enivre de soleil,
> Et dans tout ce qu'il boit et dans tout ce qu'il mange
> Retrouve l'ambroisie et le nectar vermeil (7).

Deprived of the tangible, earthly matter originally meant for him ("le pain et le vin destinés à sa bouche"), the poet manages instead to avail himself of a superior food: poetic inspiration. Eating, for once, is a positive, even recuperative, act. But what is "eaten" is ethereal matter, to nourish the life of *l'esprit*. The poet's exhilaration incites jealousy:

> Il joue avec le vent, cause avec le nuage,
> Et s'enivre en chantant du chemin de la croix;
> Et l'Esprit qui le suit dans son pèlerinage
> Pleure de le voir gai comme un oiseau des bois. (8)

This leads to the interrupted communion, discussed above, followed by his wife's ultimate violence. Nevertheless, through the pain he is forced to endure, the poet eventually comes to an understanding that this suffering will provide access to a purer state, an *idéal*: "Soyez béni, mon Dieu, qui donnez la souffrance / Comme un divin remède à nos impuretés" (9). We discover that it was necessary, after all, for the poet to undergo this pain, all of which – as I have explained – was visited upon him in the form of consumption. It is not surprising, then, that he articulates his ultimate expression of freedom from pain in terms of eating, or – more precisely – of having moved beyond susceptibility to being eaten: "Je sais que la douleur est la noblesse unique / Où ne *mordront* jamais la terre et les enfers" (9, emphasis mine). "Bénédiction" illustrates the complexity of the theme of consumption in Baudelaire, its function as a common source of *mal* in the text—a means of engaging with the *douleur* that seems essential to his work.

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The Edible Woman

Baudelaire's penchant for juxtaposing *spleen* and *idéal* is perhaps nowhere more evident than in his portrayal of women. And consumption – with its obvious links to desire – proves his greatest means of articulating both the attraction and the disgust he feels for them, not to mention the violence their presence inspires in him. The more conventional, positive types of consumption readers would most probably expect to find in poetry are certainly present in Baudelaire. At times, the poet's desire makes of the woman an edible object, an Arcimboldo-like assemblage of tempting fruits, ripe and

demanding to be eaten. In one poem, the woman possesses a "bouche de fraise," and in another, "une grande bouche, rouge et blanche, et délicieuse" (159, 340). The sight alone of the mouth summons desire, which for the poet is elaborated through his anticipation of its consumption. Baudelaire's edible woman is capable even of embodying an entire cuisine, a "cuisine poétique," insofar as the culinary tradition and the woman are mutually "grasse et excitante à la fois" (301). The woman's body, capable of bearing fruit ("tes fruits"), is a reflection of the poet's desire for her; fittingly, she bears the fruits of escape, of *l'oubli*: "Et son ventre et ses seins, ces *grappes de ma vigne*" (158). This familiar type of consumption – lustful and erotic – though worth mentioning in any analysis of the edible woman in Baudelaire, does not correspond to the unconventional and violent acts of consumption more typical of Baudelaire's depiction of women, however.

First of all, when the woman is consumed in a positive light, it is most often either through liquid or vapor. Drink, amorphous, is not imbued with the complications of solid form, as we have already observed: cooking, chewing and other destructive acts necessary in the preparation and consumption of food are nowhere present in the imbibing of drink. And so it follows that, as the woman's body is in some manner imbibed, such violence is impossible. As I have observed, the drinking in of the woman is abstract. It involves a sort of vague absorption of the *essence* of the desired other; a restorative – and in this case, erotic – act: "Je voulais m'enivrer de l'énorme catin / Dont le charme infernal me rajeunit sans cesse" (191).[45] At other times, when particular parts

[45] Although the gesture is simple, an account of the satisfaction achieved through intercourse – the poet seeking to intoxicate himself on the 'charm' of this prostitute – it is worth noting a trademark tendency

of the woman's body serve as sources of drink, they provide a longed-for escape. In "Sed non satiata," the poet drinks in the woman's kiss, as well as her eyes, repositories of a divine liquid that functions as a balm for the poet's *ennuis*:

> Je préfère au constance, à l'opium, au nuits,
> L'élixir de ta bouche où l'amour se pavane;
> Quand vers toi mes désirs partent en caravane,
> Tes yeux sont la citerne où boivent mes ennuis (28)

And in "Le serpent qui danse," the woman's saliva is a similarly precious and exotic substance: "Quand l'eau de ta bouche remonte / Au bord de tes dents, / Je crois boire un vin de Bohème, / Amer et vainqueur, / Un ciel liquide qui parsème / D'étoiles mon coeur!" (30)

This escape from reality into an idealized world through the interiorization of the woman can also be achieved through smell. Ephemeral and amorphous though perfume is, the poet seeks it out, breathing it in not out of necessity, but in an intentional gesture through which he gains access to an ideal state which recalls the "bain de paresse" of the languorous paradise in the first half of "La chambre double" (280). In "La Chevelure," he writes:

> Je plongerai ma tête amoureuse d'ivresse
> Dans ce noir océan où l'autre est enfermé;
> Et mon esprit subtil que le roulis caresse
> Saura vous retrouver, ô féconde paresse,

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of Baudelaire's which comes to light here: the marked discrepancy between the poet's claim of the woman's charm, and his indelicate description of her as an "énorme catin."

Infinis bercements du loisir embaumé! (26)

Similar invocations of memory by smell are also to be found in the well-known poems "Parfum Exotique" and "Un Hémisphère dans une chevelure." In the former, drinking in the smell of the lover invokes thoughts of a distant place: "Guidé par ton odeur vers de charmants climats, / Je vois un port rempli de voiles et de mâts / Encor tout fatigués par la vague marine" (25). Such positive valorizations of the poet's consumption of the woman have not been ignored in critical discourse. Margery Evans accounts for this in her chapter on poetic cookery: "Not all the descriptions of young women in the poems involve a negative association with an inferior substance. In poems such as 'L'Invitation au voyage' and 'Un Hémisphère dans une chevelure' the woman is celebrated as a source of poetic inspiration rather than a distraction from poetry" (103).

Evans does not account for the complicated shift in consumption that takes place in "Un Hémisphère dans une chevelure," however. In the poem, consumption is initially relegated to a breathing in of the lover's scent: "Laisse-moi respirer longtemps, l'odeur de tes cheveux […] pour secouer des souvenirs dans l'air" (300). But this is precisely the sort of consumption a reader would initially expect in Baudelaire, because this is what we find most often in the poetic tradition: consumption that prizes the intangible over the truly edible, the imaginary over the real.

However, in the last lines of the prose poem, there surfaces a much less ethereal lover. She is rendered so by her mane of hair; formerly merely a vehicle for perfume, it has now become physically present. Through the verbs *mordre*, *mordiller* and *manger*, the woman materializes: "Laisse-moi *mordre* longtemps tes tresses lourdes et noires. Quand je *mordille* tes cheveux élastiques et rebelles, il me semble que je *mange* des

souvenirs" (301). Despite the usual relegation of biting and eating to more violent, destructive acts, this particular act – perhaps by virtue of its association with the vaporous, amorphous type of consumption that immediately precedes it – remains a recuperative gesture, rather than a destructive one. Indeed, the tangible body is particularly susceptible to biting, gnawing, and chewing in Baudelaire. The poet describes beautiful women of another time as "Fruits purs de tout outrage et vierges de gerçures, / Dont la chair lisse et ferme appelait les morsures!" (12). The smooth perfection of the body calls attention to itself; it cannot endure, and demands ("*appelait*!") to be ruptured. There is, after all, very little *idéal* to be found in Baudelaire that is not somehow coupled with a corresponding dose of *spleen*.

There are degrees of violence to Baudelaire's consumption of the woman once the body is made tangible enough to fall prey to biting. In the three examples immediately following, the full presence of the flesh emerges through the acts of licking and biting in lovemaking. Here, the woman consents to be consumed: "j'abandonne aux morsures mon buste," "je la tète et la mords"; "Je la lèche" (159; 203). These lines begin to suggest, through the poet's choice of verbs, not only the attendant pleasures in, but also the vulnerability of, the body. While I have noted that drinking, rather than eating, is the poet's usual preference, it would seem in this unusual instance that the tangible matter of a solid body demanding to be bitten and sucked on, rather than drunk, brings about the desirable escape. Baudelaire writes of "la science / De perdre au fond d'un lit l'antique conscience" (159). If we think, then, of sex as a nearly indescribable, sensual way of moving for a while from one state into another, of being *outside* of oneself, even – then we can better understand how the carnal "eating" of Baudelaire is in many cases similar

to his positive representation of drinking: these are acts that allow the poet to, as mentioned earlier, "sortir de [son] *moi*" (379).

However universal the pleasure taken in this particular type of ecstasy may be, Baudelaire's tastes are certainly not conventional. While the lyric tradition (not to mention culture at large) tends to sing the praises of youth, Baudelaire uses the alimentary metaphor in his description of the edible woman as one means of deviating from this tradition. For there is a point at which Baudelaire's edible woman *turns*; already bearing fruit, she begins to ripen. This ripeness, at first appealing, inevitably changes for the worse, and it is here that the *mal* so present in Baudelaire begins to surface. That is not to say that in this "ripened" state she no longer appeals to *him*; to the contrary, this is an illustration of one of the tenets of Baudelaire's poetic philosophy, so well put in "Au Lecteur": "Aux objets répugnants nous trouvons des appas" (5). That once-perfect surface of the body, tasting of "du melon et du giraumont" – lush, round vegetables synonymous with late summer and early fall and, one might argue – taste, by extension, of the later seasons of life (164). If it seems heavy-handed to extract a hint of morbidity from the mention of such agreeable flavors, we have the example of another text, in which Baudelaire himself makes such a connection. In "L'amour du mensonge," he asks, "Es-tu le fruit d'automne aux saveurs souveraines?" (99). And in the same poem, there is an even better example of the fine balance Baudelaire strikes between the appealing and the revolting: "et son coeur, meurtri comme une pêche, est mûr, comme son corps, pour le savant amour" (99). Her features are softened by the lamplight, and the poet allows himself to be charmed by the illusion of her youth (she is "bizarrement fraîche"), wearing a brittle mask of youth, which he knows is false (99). But this is inconsequential, he

insists: “Masque ou décor, salut! J’adore ta beauté” (99). His willing embrace of this woman declared to be past her prime would at first seem purely benign, a positive gesture; after all, he claims that his heart rejoices at the sight of her. But the alimentary metaphor *isn’t*, for her heart has been bruised like a peach, and her body is mature – *ripe* – and therefore better for *eating*, and better prepared for death. What at first appears to be simply a laudatory text, an ode to the living, resembles a eulogy, ultimately: the alimentary metaphor serves as a *memento mori*, a thinly veiled death sentence.

This shift away from more traditional depictions of the edible woman and toward a more violent use of consumption is intensified in “Une charogne.” That the poet’s *destinataire* should appear prone to consumption as an object of desire is one matter; but for the poet to anticipate her eventual consumption by a third party, which he does in “Une charogne,” is something else altogether. While observing the rotting carcass filled with parasites (“de noirs bataillons / De larves, qui coulaient comme un épais liquide”), the narrator fervently and repeatedly reminds his beloved that *she* will one day be just such a carcass: “Et pourtant vous serez semblable à cette ordure / […] Oui! telle vous serez […] Alors, ô ma beauté! dites à la vermine / Qui vous mangera de baisers, / Que j’ai gardé la forme et l’essence divine / De mes amours décomposés!” (31, 32).[46] Baudelaire’s representation of the woman as something other than an eternal youth is nothing new; both Shakespeare’s sonnets and Ronsard’s *Amours* famously remind addressees of their mortality. But in “Une charogne,” this gesture is particularly violent,

[46] The parasite is a recurring figure in Baudelaire, and “Une charogne” is certainly not the only text in which the poet carves out a place for its gnawing presence. In “Remords posthume,” for example, the woman is its victim, as he reminds her: “Et le ver rongera ta peau comme un remords” (35).

for the poet's reminders that his love will resemble the corpse he has just described in the most rotten, putrid state of decay possible are repeated, like blows being dealt. He tempers the ugliness with which she is faced with terms of endearment, as if to protect her from it – "mon âme," "étoile de mes yeux," "soleil de ma nature," "mon ange et ma passion," "reine des grâces," "ma beauté" (31, 32). Yet he reminds her ceaselessly, in a way that he himself cannot stand to be reminded of his own body, that she will be eaten. She is a future victim ("la vermine vous mangera"), but she is also victimized by the poet in the present—sacrificed, in order to be preserved in the text itself.

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Le "Monstre Délicat"

Although women are often "eaten" in Baudelaire, we know already from the example of "Bénédiction" that they also occupy the role of predator. In "Au Lecteur," Baudelaire's description of *l'Ennui* as a "monstre délicat" could, I would propose, just as readily be applied to his portrayal of women as edible objects throughout *Les Fleurs du mal* and *Le Spleen de Paris* (6). The etymologies of the two words reveal on a deeper level the extent to which they are – though clearly intended to oppose one another from the start – truly warring terms, revelatory of something essential about the Baudelairian aesthetic. *Le Petit Robert* defines the word *délicat*, which stems from the Latin *délicatus*, first as "1. Qui plaît par la qualité, la douceur, la finesse. *Parfum délicat. Couleur, teinte délicate. Nourriture, cuisine délicate*" (576). Clearly, then, we are already in the realm of consumption; that which is delicate tempts us, invites us to partake of it, whether through

smell, sight or taste.[47] The second definition of the word attests to the unique nature, the *singularity*, of a delicate thing: "2. Dont l'exécution, par son adresse, sa finesse, fait apprécier les moindres nuances" (576). That said, the contrast between *monstre* and *délicat* is, I would suggest, twofold.

First, a monster is a more plural than a singular thing, its physical constitution comprising an unusual blend of parts, always a departure from the norm: "Être vivant ou organisme de conformation anormale (par excès, défaut ou position anormale de certaines parties de l'organisme). *On exhibait des monstres (ou des monstres prétendus) dans les foires. Les veaux à deux têtes, les moutons à cinq pattes sont des monstres. Monstre humain.*" (*Le Petit Robert*, 1434). The monster is a hybrid and in the work of Baudelaire – as well as in the Ancient traditions he knew well – both human and animal, or two or more animals in one.[48] Secondly, the monster is generally unappealing, if not downright revolting; or, as Henri Goezler's definition of *monstrum* in his *Dictionnaire Latin Français* explains, an "être répugnant"— anything but *délicat* (380).

The woman's role as predator is nuanced, and appropriately so, since her place in Baudelaire's work is overwhelmingly equivocal; she is his "inévitable et impitoyable muse" (350). In "Le Galant tireur," he writes, a man's wife is his "chère, *délicieuse* et exécrable femme," a description he repeats later in the same poem (349, emphasis mine).

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[47] Interestingly, the Latin *delicata,* close to delicatus *(delicate)* translates to *délicieux* in French.

[48] A striking example of this can be found in "Le Masque," in which the narrator, enraptured by the beauty of the sculpture he is describing (directly inspired by a sculpture of Ernest Christophe, about which Baudelaire writes in the Salon de 1859), halts and exclaims in shock that things are not at all what they seemed "Ô blasphème de l'art! ô surprise fatale! / La femme au corps divin, promettant le bonheur, / Par le haut se termine en monstre bicéphale!" (23).

He begins "Un cheval de race" with the line, "Elle est bien laide. Elle est délicieuse pourtant !" (343). But by the same measure that she both delights and disgusts, she also functions in the overall economy of consumption in Baudelaire – just as the poet himself will – as both *victime* and *bourreau*. In "Le Désir de peindre," the poet expresses tenderness for a woman who seems to defy description as: "celle-ci [qui] donne le désir de mourir lentement sous son regard" (340). Having been the one who consumes, he now makes himself submissive to her, remarking (embracing, even) in her countenance the look of a predator: "Dans son petit front habitent la volonté tenace et l'amour de la proie" (340). Of course, the woman's place in this must be considered carefully; for, if the poet attributes to her some amount of agency, imbuing her with the ability to carry out acts of violence, he does so by transforming her into an animal, incapable of embodying the feminine virtue the lyric tradition generally prizes.

The most salient example of this is borne out through the figure of the *femme sauvage*. A mainstay of country fairs in nineteenth-century France, she was literally a freak show, denigrated and animalized, caged. Her wildness was a spectacle made visible not only in her disheveled person, but perhaps most strikingly – at least in Baudelaire's account of her – in the food she ate and her manner of eating it: raw meat, for example (the very essence of the *uncivilized*, as Lévi-Strauss's work reminds us) – left dangling from her teeth, as he writes in "La Femme sauvage et la petite-maîtresse:"[49]

[49] The title of Lévi-Strauss's *The Raw and the Cooked* (*Le cru et le cuit*), is derived from the terms' inherent opposition of animality and humanity, savagery and culture. In his study, Lévi-Strauss examines the myriad ways in which myths both confirm and play with these categories. For example, he recounts a humorous myth in which a frog, despite a valiant attempt to appear civilized by cooking, is true to his nature, unaware of the proper cooking method to use. The frog "imitates the world of culture, but in

> Faites bien attention! Voyez avec quelle voracité (non simulée peut-être!) elle déchire des lapins vivants et des volailles piaillantes que lui jette son cornac. 'Allons, dit-il, il ne faut pas manger tout son bien en un jour', et, sur cette sage parole, il lui arrache cruellement la proie, dont les boyaux dévidés restent un instant accrochés aux dents de la bête féroce, de la femme, veux-je dire (290)

Intended to be an affront to propriety, depicted as a savage predator, she is nevertheless and above all a victim and a prisoner. Her audience must feel – together with whatever disgust the sight of her provokes – a tinge of pity, for she is a pathetic figure. Of course, this is the poet's way of dominating her. He writes of her anecdotally, tells her story through another's voice, and further distances himself from the narrator's role through humor. Despite this distance, the narrator's portrait of the *femme sauvage* rings true, in a wide-sweeping sense, with Baudelaire's typical depiction of women: "Ce monstre est un de ces animaux qu'on appelle généralement 'mon ange!' c'est-à-dire une femme" (289). Is she a monster, or an angel? Delicious, or execrable? For him, she is both, alternately and even sometimes at once—but it seems that her dominant role is that of *monstre*, however "delicious" and "exquisite" she might otherwise be.

Baudelaire's descriptions of women's teeth in particular provide a provocative visual representation of their complex role in the text. The teeth, *conventionally* hidden

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reverse," by ordering the heroine of the story (also an animal) "to skin the game, arrange the meat on the barbecue, and put the skins in the fire; this is to go against common sense, since normally game is cured in its skin" (275).

behind the lips, are of course innate symbols of violence.[50] He seems to recognize in their visibility the potential for a kind of elaboration of the *aigre-doux*, a meeting of the savage and the sweet: for the same teeth that are revealed in a snarl are also uncovered in a smile. In "Portraits de maîtresses," the woman, already a complicated figure typical of Baudelaire in that she is both animalistic and prone to daydream ("Elle mangeait, mâchait, broyait, dévorait, engloutissait, mais avec l'air le plus léger et le plus insouciant du monde"), declares her hunger to the narrator incessantly, managing consequently to reveal her teeth to him repeatedly: "Elle avait une manière douce, rêveuse, anglaise et romanesque de dire: "J'ai faim!" Et elle répétait ces mots jour et nuit en montrant les plus jolies dents du monde, qui vous eussent attendris et égayés à la fois" (347). How the woman managed through these words ("J'ai faim!") to bare her teeth fully enough to inspire the poet to qualify them in this way is worth questioning, for neither of those words requires such movement of the mouth. Most probably, the poet's insistence on the

[50] In *Madame Bovary*, teeth figure prominently in Flaubert's description of Emma's provocative drink of curaçao, at once emphasizing her "primal" appetite for Charles and animalizing Emma, who licks her glass daintily, like a cat: "le bout de sa langue, passant entre ses dents fines, léchait à petits coups le fond du verre" (81). Her teeth are conspicuous in yet another rare instance in which she consumes, this time at the ball with the cherry ice "[elle] fermait à demi les yeux, la cuiller entre les dents" (112). In *Salammbô*, Flaubert uses teeth, much like Baudelaire, as a sign of animality. When a group of mercenary soldiers are punished for their postprandial destruction of Carthage, Flaubert writes, "on les suspendit par morceaux chez les marchands de viandes; quelques-uns même y enfoncèrent les dents (73). Teeth in this instance go beyond their obvious utility in chewing, stressing instead an act of cannibalism, and the intent to add an act of insult to injury.

figure of the teeth hinges less on the likelihood of such teeth-baring articulation on the woman's part, than it does on his desire to further his depiction of her as an ambiguous figure, both wild and delicate—voracious in her hunger, yet feminine.

When Baudelaire's La Fanfarlo threatens Samuel Cramer, the poet focuses on her teeth; she is, appropriately, not muttering sweet nothings under her breath, but rather a desire for revenge: "Tu me le paieras, dit-elle entre ses dents" (579). The poet's focus on the teeth intensifies the effect produced by the sharp words of the woman's threat. Whatever violence she displays in showing her teeth, however, it is remarkable that even when caught with raw intestines dangling between her teeth, as the case of the *femme sauvage*, the woman manages to remain an ambiguous figure, for she is, as I have noted, *made* a predator, a pawn in the Baudelairian economy of consumption.

Baudelaire's female predator is not always such a pitiable figure. The cruel mother and equally cruel wife of "Bénédiction" certainly are not. But what role does natural human appetite play in the violence he often imputes to women? Aren't woman allowed to be hungry, to consume? Baudelaire famously abhors the "natural" woman, whose appetites, in his eyes, define her. Only the woman as passive object is desirable, *délicieuse*; we may think once again of "La Chevelure," in which the object of desire is sleeping, entirely prone. But the body that is subject to biological need, and – even worse, the body capable of *speaking* its hunger – is reviled.

Not surprisingly, the poet notes silence as a positive attribute of the meals he shared with his mother in their house at Neuilly, remembering – in an untitled poem – "nos dîners longs et silencieux" (99). This poem is not written in a spirit of contempt but out of love and affection; in the poet's own words, these are memories of a time in which

he and his mother shared – as he reminds her in a letter – "De longues promenades, des tendresses perpétuelles!" (1036). The poet's memory values their shared silences over any words they might have exchanged. The supper table, though generally thought to be a place of communion – one where not only food is shared, but also words – is, as we have seen, not so in Baudelaire.

The woman's voice is tantamount to a weapon in "La soupe et les nuages," in which food is acceptable, as long as it is a purely intangible, aesthetic construct: "Ma petite folle bien-aimée me donnait à dîner, et par la fenêtre ouverte de la salle à manger je contemplais les mouvantes architectures que Dieu fait avec les vapeurs, les merveilleuses constructions de l'impalpable" (350). But – as in "La Chambre double," in which the poet is rattled out of his *rêverie* by a violent knock at the door – the narrator is soon violently disturbed, this time by the voice of his wife, who not only reminds him that he should eat his soup, but chides him for daydreaming:

> Et tout à coup je reçus un violent coup de poing dans le dos, et j'entendis une voix rauque et charmante, une voix hystérique et comme enrouée par l'eau-de-vie, la voix de ma chère petite bien-aimée, qui disait: '—Allez-vous bientôt manger votre soupe, s…. b….. de marchand de nuages? (350).

Just as – in her role as *femme sauvage* – she is at once predator and victim, it is also clear that, paradoxically, even in her stereotypical role as nourisher (or perhaps, precisely *because* she occupies this role) she is also a sort of *bourreau*. Capable of feeding the poet's imagination, of nourishing him in that sense, she must also accept the blame for

rendering a perpetual imaginary impossible, and for reminding and tempting the poet to eat.

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Le poète morcelé

If women are multifaceted in Baudelaire, their bodies taken apart by him, whether in acts of love or of violence, the poet himself is similarly fragmented within the space of his own text.[51] The poet's vulnerability in his own work, ostensibly his domain *par excellence*, is important. Baudelaire sometimes follows in the footsteps of his troubadour predecessors in vaunting – as they would in the *envois* toward the end of their *chants* – the perfection of his own work. He reminds us of his mastery of form in texts such as "Rêve parisien," in which he depicts himself as a "peintre fier de [s]on génie," and later writes, "Architecte de mes féeries, / Je faisais, à ma volonté, / Sous un tunnel de pierreries / Passer un océan dompté." (101-102). Baudelaire was also known to be exacting with publishers, and took great care in his directions for punctuation and capitalization. In a note to Carjat, to whom he submitted "L'Imprévu," he notes, "Si ceci est imprimé, je veux absolument voir les épreuves" (1155).

However, a feeling of *lack* of control is more abundantly expressed by Baudelaire. Indeed, for all of its bravado, even Baudelaire's letter to Arsène Houssaye reveals his insecurity with writing: "Sitôt que j'eus commencé le travail, je m'aperçus que non

[51] The woman's various parts – hair, breasts, lips – are separated by the poet from the rest of the body and in order to feed his rêverie and the text; and she is more violently taken apart, stabbed for example as in "À une madone," or eaten as in "Une charogne."

seulement je restais bien loin de mon mystérieux et brillant modèle […] " (276). This fear of the inability to express himself exactly as he chooses through his art translates to the poems themselves, not surprisingly. Consumption is one of the poet's chief means of making such lack of control visible. In "Au Lecteur," as I have noted, the poet and his audience are consumed: "La sottise, l'erreur, le péché, la lésine, / Occupent nos esprits et travaillent nos corps" (6). In "La Fontaine de sang," the poet's feeling of having lost control is made clear in his incapacity to resolve his suffering, or even to find its source: "Il me semble parfois que mon sang coule à flots, / […] Mais je me tâte en vain pour trouver la blessure" (115). The poet's suffering is made physical through the poem ("la blessure"); his vulnerability is distinctly physical, for he realizes that even love can afflict him in the flesh: "Mais l'amour n'est pour moi qu'un matelas d'aiguilles / Fait pour donner à boire à ces cruelles filles!" (115). This physicality is dangerous to the poet, who, consequently, finds himself consumed.

Although Baudelaire cheekily exhorts his lady readers to bite his "tail" ("Si vous voulez me voir hagard, / Lectrices, mordez-moi la queue"), in fact he expresses extreme anxiety at the thought of being eaten (210). In "L'Irréparable," he describes himself as one who will soon be eaten by a wolf. The repetition of this fear, and the intensification of the poet's expression with the added adjective "pauvre" the second time, emphasize his horror at the thought of coming death: "cet agonisant que déjà le loup flaire […] / Ce pauvre agonisant que déjà le loup flaire!" (55). This anxiety seems inextricably linked to the creative process, and – more specifically – to the fear that his talents will dwindle in

time.[52] During the first years of his career, in *La Fanfarlo*, Baudelaire (through Samuel Cramer) articulates this fear of dwindling poetic genius in terms of being eaten: "Le soleil de la paresse qui resplendit sans cesse au-dedans de lui, lui vaporise et lui mange cette moitié de génie dont le ciel l'a doué" (553). Elsewhere, in an address to fellow poets – those he expects feel utterly *consumed* by this desire to create as he does – he writes, "Vous tous qui nourrissez quelque vautour insatiable, —vous poètes […]" (546). Conversely, in "La muse vénale," the poet posits writing as a means of eating; something to stave off hunger: "Il te faut, pour gagner ton pain de chaque soir […] / Chanter des Te Deum auxquels tu ne crois guère" (15). Of the former lines, Jérôme Thélot writes, "Le poète ne peut se passer de prier, sous peine de finir affamé, et cependant il ne croit pas,

[52] The fear of losing poetic inspiration can be found in Hugo's "Les tronçons du serpent," published in *Les Orientales*, about thirty years before *Le Spleen de Paris*. In Hugo's poem, the writhing slices of an axed snake search fruitlessly to be reunited: "Ces tronçons déchirés, épars, près d'épuiser / Leurs forces languissantes, / Se cherchaient, se cherchaient, comme pour un baiser / Deux bouches frémissantes !" (387). In Hugo's text, it is clear that these broken pieces are a metaphor for poetic genius, which cannot be restored. Baudelaire, whose difficulties with writing are well documented in his letters, was no stranger to the fear of such a loss. However, in his letter to Arsène Houssaye, there is in this assurance that the poetic "morceaux" will join back up no matter how they are taken apart, the suggestion of a more successful outcome than we encounter in Hugo. Baudelaire may have been thinking of Hugo's text (and the successful safeguarding of his own *génie*) when, having described his text as a snake ready to be chopped apart, he concludes his letter to Houssaye, "Dans l'espérance que quelques-uns de ces *tronçons* seront assez vivants pour vous plaire" (275). Whether or not Baudelaire's "tronçons" do in fact relate to Hugo's, they are certainly related to the poet's concern with mastery of the text (and, as he explains to Houssaye, they are essential to the success of the prose poem).

ou guère, en ses prières. Sauf que si 'ton pain de chaque soir' désigne un quelconque repas, c'est pour autant que le repas quelconque est le lieu de l'absolu, et la faim baudelairienne une faim essentielle" (89). But even if Baudelaire's desire to create is indeed – as Thélôt opines – related to an overwhelming essential hunger not dependent upon "un quelconque repas," Baudelaire's repeated references to food and the act of consumption demand to be considered carefully, not only in light of their link to the poet's creative process, but also – and perhaps more importantly – for elucidating the purpose they serve in that process.

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The Forces at Work

When thinking of consumption, and particularly of *eating* in Baudelaire, readers may first tend to think of the worms whose gnawing punctuates his work, tiny but repugnant creatures synonymous with death: "Serré, fourmillant, comme un million d'helminthes, / Dans nos cerveaux ribote un peuple de Démons, / Et, quand nous respirons, la Mort dans nos poumons / Descend, fleuve invisible, avec de sourdes plaintes" (5). That the ubiquitous *ver* should be given such a starring role in the economy of consumption in Baudelaire is not surprising in a work riddled with *le mal*. It is, after all, dependent upon death and decay for its own subsistence.

Time, already a consuming force in the lyric tradition more generally speaking, also plays an important role in Baudelaire.[53] But in his work, time's effect seems

[53] That time should be a recurrent force to be dealt with in the lyric tradition is no surprise; after all, what better antidote to the inevitable passage of time than monumental verse? We may think, for

particularly physical, for as he notes in "L'Ennemi," "Le temps *mange* la vie" (16, emphasis mine). We are not merely rendered feeble by time in his estimation; we are *eaten* by it.[54] In "L'Horloge," we are similarly consumed by time, rather than simply diminished by it, and the poet's voice seems to underline the universality of this plight, spoken to us in the familiar 'tu': "Chaque instant te *dévore un morceau du délice* / À chaque homme accordé" (81, emphasis mine). The poet could have said simply that time deprives one of life – and a general reaction to this realization can be found in the sort of *carpe diem* message expressed, for example, in Ronsard's "Mignonne, allons voir si la rose…" But in much more intense and violent terms, Baudelaire's time *devours*. The doom it announces is not merely an eventuality, but also pervades the present. In "L'Imprévu," a clock speaks a man's impending doom, proclaiming him ripe for consumption, which is to say, for death: "L'horloge […] dit à voix basse, "Il est mûr, / Le damné! […] / Comme un mur / Qu'habite et ronge un insecte!" (171).

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example, of Shakespeare's Sonnet 55, in which the poet's love is preserved forever in the poem, kept safe there by the poet, who is edified by the superiority of his craft in the face of ravaging time: "Not marble, nor the gilded monuments / Of princes shall outlive this powerful rhyme; / But you shall shine more bright in these contents / Than unswept stone besmear'd with sluttish time" (71).

[54] Troubles with time also haunt *Madame Bovary*. In *Dead Time*, Elissa Marder compares the temporal disorders evident in *Madame Bovary* and *Les Fleurs du mal*, two works published in the same year, and which both exhibit a remarkable "failure of experience" (51). Marder qualifies Baudelaire's relationship to time as one of trauma, writing of "the traumatized voice of a subject "possessed" by time" (51). On the other hand, Emma's experience with time, she argues, is one of addiction, defined by a desperate need to find an event (which the ball at La Vaubyessard seems to promise) to anchor her in time. Marder argues that "Emma's gradual discovery that her life consists of a monotonous temporal vacuum motivates her growing dependency on fictional models" (54).

Clearly, then, even when the *bourreau* is abstract and intangible in Baudelaire, the effects of its consumption can be devastatingly physical. The poet often finds himself consumed by a force beyond him, one not so easily identifiable as *vers* or time. Such is the case with *l'Ennui*, for example, a defining component of *spleen*. In "Au Lecteur," after having listed all of the wild creatures capable of harming and devouring, the poet famously names the worst enemy of all, *l'Ennui*, which will not only consume the world, he predicts, but will do so – mouth fully agape – in a yawn: "Dans la ménagerie infâme de nos vices, // Il en est un de plus laid, plus immonde! / Quoiqu'il ne pousse ni grands gestes ni grands cris, / Il ferait volontiers de la terre un débris / Et dans un bâillement avalerait le monde; // C'est l'Ennui!" (6). In "Une Martyre," the poet imagines, as he surveys the body of a decapitated woman, that she was "gnawed": "Elle est bien jeune encor! — Son âme exaspérée / Et ses sens par l'ennui mordus / S'étaient-ils entr'ouverts à la meute altérée / Des désirs errants et perdus? " (113). In "L'Ennemi," another obscure power, the eponymous agent of the poem, consumes the poet. Here, Baudelaire identifies what initially appears to be a malaise similar in its intangibility to *l'ennui*, *le temps*, *le remords* and *l'irréparable*—all forces of negative consumption in his work. The text concludes with the following lines: "— Ô douleur! ô douleur! Le Temps mange la vie, / Et l'obscur Ennemi qui nous ronge le coeur / Du sang que nous perdons croît et se fortifie!" (16). L'Ennemi could be any vampiric force that diminishes life: time, boredom, melancholy – and it loses none of its potency for the obscurity ("*l'obscur* Ennemi") of its source.

There are still other intangible forces that gnaw mercilessly at the poet. In "L'Irréparable," remorse and something called *l'irréparable* consume the narrator. Of

course, the word remorse (*re-mordre*) implicitly denotes negative eating, a biting back. When taxed with a feeling of remorse, if we follow the etymology of the word, one is not only consumed but bitten again. The poem begins, "Pouvons-nous étouffer le vieux, le long Remords, / Qui vit, s'agite et se tortille, / Et se nourrit de nous comme le ver des morts, comme du chêne la chenille?" (54) Desperate to overcome this affliction, the narrator desperately asks himself, "Dans quel philtre, dans quel vin, […] / Noierons-nous ce vieil ennemi" (54). It is relentless, and Baudelaire describes it as "Destructeur et gourmand comme la courtisane" (54). But the damage being done by remorse is met if not exceeded by that of *l'irréparable*, a feeling of malaise that is just what it purports to be: unshakable, irreparable. Painful though it is, there is nothing in the word remorse that defies the possibility of ridding oneself of it, while conversely, *l'irréparable* does just that, leaving no glimmer of hope. Indeed, being eaten by *l'irréparable* sounds like a sure death sentence, by comparison. In his notes on the poem, Pichois clearly defines the difference between *le remords* and *l'irréparable*: "L'irréparable…est un sentiment qui hante Baudelaire ainsi qu'il a hanté les héros romantiques ravagés par le Mal. Il n'est pas lié, comme le remords, à une faute précise, mais à une culpabilité latente, générale, associée à l'irreversibilité du temps" (931). It accomplishes, then, something that a nostalgic like Baudelaire most fears, by making impossible the retrieval of lost time. The violence of *l'irréparable* is visited upon the poet through the continuous action indicated by the verb "ronger." Baudelaire writes and then repeats the line, "L'Irréparable ronge avec sa dent maudite!" (55).[55] That the poet articulates the pain he experiences while in

[55] *Le Petit Robert* affirms that *ronger* suggests an ongoing act: "User peu à peu en coupant avec les dents, les incisives, par petits morceaux" (1998).

the grip of this most fundamental horror through violent acts of eating – and in this case, gnawing, which is an especially slow torture – affirms the centrality of consumption in expressing the *mal* that haunts the poet and defines his work.

Like Baudelaire's victimization of women, theirs of him ranges from erotic to more openly violent scenes of consumption. Their ability to inflict harm is never far from the poet's mind. In "Chanson d'après-midi," a woman gives kisses and bites in equal measure: "Tu prodigues, sérieuse, / La morsure et le baiser" (60). Her carnal appetite as depicted by Baudelaire has a decidedly dark side that accords well with the image of the vampire, a figure with obvious erotic connotations. In "Les métamorphoses du vampire," Baudelaire compares a woman's erotic act to the consumption of an everyday food. Yet even in lovemaking she is dangerous; for, in "taking" him, she is, by his account, effectively sucking the marrow from his bones, the very essence of life: "Quand elle eut de mes os sucé toute la moelle, […]" (159). There is in this text a confusion between the woman as source of pleasure and as pitiless predator that serves well as a model, more generally speaking, for woman's overall role as consumer in Baudelaire. Here, the woman is transformed from self-described irresistible seductress ("lorsque j'étouffe un homme en mes bras redoutés […]; "Les anges impuissants se damneraient pour moi!"), to a receptacle of blood, proof of her insatiable appetite (mannequin puissant / Qui semblait avoir fait provision de sang," 159). From the embodiment of such violent appetites, she then becomes a mere sack of skin ("une outre aux flancs gluants"), and ultimately is nothing but creaking bones ("des débris de squelette") (159). These shifts, which are the "métamorphoses" of the title, could – I would propose – mirror her complicated role as

consumer within the work. Often in possession of a virile appetite, she is also *consumed* within the text, reduced to mere bones, for example, or made an animal.

Not all depictions of the woman-as-consumer are nuanced, admittedly. The shifts of "Les métamorphoses du vampire" depict a woman who is first an oppressor, but also a victim. In many texts, however, her role is unequivocally violent; she is the "buveur du sang du monde" (28). It is worth remembering that the negative connotation of women's drinking stands in stark contrast to the poet's own drinking, positively connoted as an escape from the world and from the self. Meanwhile, her thirst makes of her a "salutaire instrument," in his view (28). In "La fontaine de sang," bereft of the obvious erotic bent of "Les métamporphoses du vampire," the woman's cruel misuse of the poet's affection makes of her a bloodthirsty villain: "l'amour n'est pour moi qu'un matelas d'aiguilles / Fait pour donner à boire à ces cruelles filles !"(115). Baudelaire's depiction of women as vampires recalls his portrait of the *femme sauvage*. For in both cases, the woman seems to occupy two roles: initially, that of a cruel, monstrous being bent on stripping the poet – through violent acts of eating and drinking – of his life-force, depleting him both physically, and – more importantly for the poet – mentally: "la nature […] / De toi se sert, ô femme, ô reine des péchés, / […] — pour pétrir un génie" (28). Yet she becomes, paradoxically, a victim in her role as predator. Through the ugliness attributed to her, largely owing to her own violent expressions of appetite, she is reduced to playing the role of – as Baudelaire puts it – "vil animal" (28).

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Part Two: Baudelaire Autophage

Though the poet is consumed from many angles and by various parties, the danger of consumption appears even more emphatic when the acts of violence are self-inflicted. Consumption proves just as effective a means of self-mortification to the poet as it does a means of dominating others. In "La Destruction," the narrator harms himself by *swallowing* "Le Démon," an entity that is more an idea – an abstraction, one would think – than something tangible. But, in a manner we have by now seen is typical of Baudelaire, it not only possesses a strong physical presence, but is capable of inflicting pain: "Je l'avale et le sens qui brûle mon poumon" (111). This is a physical body, susceptible to pain, and to being eaten. But why is this necessary? I have already cited George Blin's description of masochists, which resonates with this tendency of Baudelaire's to turn the *mal* he expresses through means of consumption upon himself. But I believe that one of Baudelaire's more famous utterances may also provide us with a clue to better understanding the violence the poet does to himself as he poses as victim of his own work. In "Mon coeur mis à nu," Baudelaire writes the now oft-cited lines, "De la vaporisation et de la centralisation du *Moi*. Tout est là" (676). These lines have as their origin a sentence from Emerson's *The Conduct of Life*; however, Emerson's original statement is quite different from Baudelaire's own version, significantly. "The one prudence in life is concentration; the one evil is dissipation," writes Baudelaire in his direct translation of the original Emerson in his *journaux intimes* (674). Obviously struck by this idea, an appropriate mantra for an ambitious writer, Baudelaire returns to it in *Mon coeur mis à nu*. But in his reformulation of the original phrase, something else

emerges. Emerson's version is morally charged with the words "prudence" and "evil," opposing tendencies, while Baudelaire's language doesn't privilege one over the other, but in fact seems to *depend* on the interaction between them ("De la vaporisation et de la centralisation du Moi. Tout est là"). The "et" joining the opposites suggests a necessary copresence of the two. This is consistent with the aesthetic Baudelaire establishes through his use of consumption, whereby he is by turn both victim and predator, the *vaporisé* and the *vaporisant*. The dispersion of the poet posing as victim, the one who is eaten, is duly matched by the poet who – through the *mal* he thereby introduces into his work – edifies himself, effectively touching on the "centralisation du Moi" which, in his words, is *everything*.

I have already suggested that the poet's violent fragmentation of self within the work could be considered an act that aims at rendering a whole – like the *hostie* which in a Catholic communion are intended to represent the body of Christ – into edible pieces, thereby forging a community around a shared act of consumption. The idea of "la vaporisation et de la centralisation du *Moi*" may be related to this. The dispersion of the *moi* may be necessary in order for the *centralisation* of which the poet speaks to take place. In the essay "Nous ne goustons rien de pûr," Montaigne notes, "L'aise nous masche" (673). [56] He also cites the epicurean poet Lucretius, who wrote: "De la source même des grâces s'élève une amertume qui nous angoisse au milieu même des fleurs" (673). In his insistence on the "et" in his reformulation of Emerson's original words, and in his recognition of a certain necessity of bitterness in pleasure – on the necessity of *vaporisation* to an eventual *centralisation* – Baudelaire echoes these writers. Indeed,

[56] This may be understood today as, "Le bonheur nous blesse."

Montaigne's choice of vocabulary, "L'aise nous masche," or happiness *chews* us, gnaws at us, is particularly appropriate here. We are not immune to this inevitable eating, even in a state of happiness. And the act of consumption itself – this gnawing and chewing – is, in Baudelaire's view, most appropriately accompanied by the reminder of death. In "Le tir et le cimetière," the narrator voices his approval of a café situated within plain view of a cemetery: "À coup sûr, le maître de ce cabaret sait apprécier Horace et les poètes élèves d'Épicure. Peut-être même connaît-il le raffinement profond des anciens Égyptiens, pour qui il n'y avait pas de bon festin sans squelette, ou sans un emblème quelconque de la brièveté de la vie" (351). Yet another admission by Baudelaire of the necessity of darkness to any expression of consumption in his work.

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Eating His Heart Out

I would like to conclude my analysis of the danger of consumption in Baudelaire with a study of the particularly complex role the poet assigns to the heart—for no figure is more troubled in the Baudelairian economy of consumption than this one. "Bénédiction," which I have suggested serves as an apt paradigm for Baudelaire's use of consumption in a broad sense, contains one of the most violent scenes of eating in *Les Fleurs du mal*, with the poet's heart torn out and devoured, an act that is carried out by the woman he desires. She mercilessly tosses his palpitating heart to her pet, who is fed while he is destroyed ("Comme un tout jeune oiseau qui tremble et qui palpite, / J'arracherai ce coeur tout rouge de son sein, / Et, pour rassasier ma bête favorite, / Je le lui jetterai par terre avec dédain!") (7-8). The poet's suffering defines him; it is the means

by which he – the misunderstood genius – receives a benediction of sorts, an induction into a lyric tradition in which suffering – and in particular, suffering through the heart – plays an integral role. With Baudelaire, however, this trope is radically transformed, as I will now show. Before examining in greater detail the function of this figure in Baudelaire's work, it is important to understand the role the heart plays in the lyric tradition preceding Baudelaire. Identifying the poet's sources of inspiration will, I hope, reveal how his own use of the heart ties him to these former movements. But even more importantly, I propose to show how he uses the heart – especially the violent consumption of it – to set himself apart from the examples that preceded him.

Although Baudelaire's primary sources of inspiration were gleaned from (secular) literature and the visual arts, probably the Catholic portrayal of the *Sacré Coeur*, both in iconography and in liturgy, influenced the poet's violent renderings of the tortured heart. For the heart in Baudelaire emerges from its purely metaphorical status to become a real heart as organ, subject to all sorts of pain and torture. In this sense, it is not unlike the *Sacré Coeur*, which – in the Catholic tradition the poet knew so well – was represented not only as bleeding and surrounded by thorns, but consumed in flames—*cooking!* Let us consider, for example, the following lines from *Les Fleurs du mal* : "l'enfer allumé dans ton coeur"; "Nos deux coeurs seront deux vastes flambeaux"; "cet abîme est mon coeur! / Brûlant comme un volcan, profond comme le vide" (97; 126; 154). Among these, we find a more traditional representation of the heart as a seat of sentiment, burning ardently with love ("deux vastes flambeaux"). Yet there is also a heart illuminated with the fire of hell, and a heart (that of the narrator, in fact) described as a gaping chasm filled with fire ("abîme […] Brûlant comme un volcan"). These fiery representations of the heart seem to

suggest the burning *Sacré Coeur*, but they also represent – in contrast to this ascendant other – a notable shift away from sacred imagery, and toward a distinctly Baudelairian aesthetic.

Though the latter examples of Baudelaire's wounding of the heart involve hearts being engulfed by flame, the harm done as a woman's heart is smoked like a ham being prepared for the banquet table is even more striking: "Son coeur! coeur racorni, fumé comme un jambon, / Recuit à la flamme éternelle!" (171). The burning heart in Baudelaire, far from its celestial counterpart, is flawed, and deserving – as the poet would seem to suggest (for he does, after all, qualify it morally, specifying that it is a hardened heart) – of punishment. Furthermore, the torture to which it will be subjected is intensified by the poet's suggestion that it is being cooked in order to be eaten. But by whom? In *The Book of the Heart*, Eric Jager notes, "Already in the twelfth century, Bernard and other authorities evoked the wounded heart of the crucified Christ as an object of worship" (91). If Baudelaire was indeed influenced by images or texts describing the Sacred Heart, the version he puts forth in the latter text represents a departure from that example. This text is consistent with the *mal* that generally defines consumption in Baudelaire, for the subject is not immolated through the burning heart but is instead destroyed – made *edible* – by the flame surrounding it.

Though we may question the degree to which (or even the probability that) Baudelaire was influenced by the cult of the *Sacré Coeur* in his depiction of the heart, there is no doubt that the poetic tradition preceding him deeply influences his representation of the consumed heart. The heart occupies an important place in the lyric tradition, going back to the troubadours. It is a troubled space in their work, a seat of

emotion, perpetually afflicted by a distance – without which there would be no poem – between the poet and the loved one. There is a darker and lesser-known side to the depiction of the heart in the troubadour lyric, however, one that pushes the heart beyond metaphor and into the physical realm. It is in this expression of the heart, recorded centuries before Baudelaire, that the poet's work most clearly echoes theirs. For, while the particular figure of the heart in Baudelaire resonates at times with the lyric tradition, (the poet's heart is at times still a seat of emotion, as in "La Béatrice," for instance: "La reine de mon coeur au regard nonpareil,") it most often reflects a significant, if not violent transition (117). From the lyric beauty of the poetic tradition, and through the Romantic movement that precedes Baudelaire, there emerges, in the poet's representation of the heart, something entirely other.

Although the troubadours' depiction of the heart is most often metaphysical (the heart suffers with the spirit, for example, and stands to be nourished and renewed in the presence of the loved one), it is also portrayed, in certain of their *chants*, in its full, bloody, pulsating physicality (23).[57] In Renaut de Beaujeu's *Lai d'Ignaure*, for example, the wronged husband feeds his wife her lover's heart and penis (22).[58] In the *Roman du châtelain de Couci et la dame de Fayel*, the lover's heart is removed from his body upon his death, at his own bequest, and sent to his mistress, whose husband intercepts the heart and bids the cook prepare it for her to eat. Upon learning what she has consumed, the

[57] We encounter an example of the more traditional, abstract depiction of the heart as affective locus in a *chant* of Guillaume IX, Duc d'Aquitaine: "De là où est toute ma joie je ne vois venir ni messager, ni lettre scellée; aussi mon coeur ni ne s'endort [dans la quiétude] ni ne rit [de joie]" (25).

[58] Doueihi, Milad. *A Perverse History of the Human Heart*.

lady dies.[59] In each case, the perversity of the act of consumption is evident on several levels: first the lover is killed, then the lady is unwittingly made a cannibal by her husband, and he in turn gleans satisfaction from watching her ingest the most vital organ of her lover. Although the perversity that defines these acts of cannibalism is dependent upon the transgression of societal norms, and the angry husband's delight in these transgressive acts, there are nevertheless certain boundaries that the troubadours do not cross in these stories. As Milad Doueihi points out, "the husband never partakes of the rival's heart. In fact, it seems that the heart of the dead lover is perceived as a taboo for all except the lady" (42). And it is not taboo for her, only because she eats it unintentionally, with no desire to do violence, and because – of course – her lover's heart is rightfully hers.[60] Baudelaire, not surprisingly, does not draw the line at such points, does not recognize the same taboos. In his version, neither the woman's heart, as we have seen, nor his own is safe from malicious intent.

These stories of unwitting cannibalism, though perhaps lesser-known examples of the great lyric tradition of the troubadours, nevertheless deserve to be recognized in any

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[59] In a complexity of this particular story, her lover's heart is also figuratively her own heart, which makes this "an act of autophagy" which "echoes the Christian last supper" (Douehi, 41).

[60] Although I have not discovered any instances in the troubadour lyric in which a man is made to eat a woman's heart, the stories of women saints' lives sometimes involve a sacrifice of their own hearts, which they "feed" to Christ in exchange for his gift of the *Sacré Coeur*. As Barbara Newman notes, such is the story of St. Catherine of Siena, who prayed for a "clean heart" (10). Then, "Christ appeared to her, opened her side, and extracted her heart. This was no mere vision," she notes, but was said to be a "physically compelling" experience (10). St. Catherine continued to insist that she had no heart, so "Christ returned with his own heart, 'ruby in colour and ablaze with light,' and placed it within her breast" (10).

exploration of consumption or of the heart in French poetry. And in fact, Baudelaire was not the first French writer of the nineteenth century to express interest in the figure of the eaten heart. Stendhal, not long before him, was impressed by these stories. As readers of *Le Rouge et le noir* may remember, Madame de Rênal fears that her husband's punishment of her own adultery will inspire him to trick her into eating Julien Sorel's heart: "Elle se figurait sans cesse son mari tuant Julien à la chasse, comme par accident, et ensuite le soir lui faisant manger son coeur" (80).[61] Stendhal certainly seems to have taken inspiration from the troubadours, whether directly or indirectly. Was Baudelaire familiar with troubadour poetry? Hélène Cassou-Yager expresses doubt: "Si Baudelaire connaissait Pétrarque, il n'est pas sûr que les chantres de la Fin'Amors lui aient été familiers" (94). Whatever the answer, the troubadour influence certainly trickled down to him, for his work seems to bear the mark of their influence.

Dante, whose love of troubadour poetry is well documented, draws Baudelaire nearer to their influence. In what I would propose is a remarkable transformation of a scene from Dante, Baudelaire juxtaposes the violent gesture of the unnamed woman in "Bénédiction" with a passage from *La Vita Nuova*. The discrepancy between the title of Baudelaire's poem (*dire du bien*, as I have noted) and its violent contents hints at the striking reversal, which I will soon discuss at length, of the scene from Dante. After all, in Dante's poem, Love (Eros), a benevolent figure, hands the poet's heart, enveloped in flames, to Beatrice. Dante writes, "Joyous to me seemed Love, holding / my heart in

[61] Stendhal also based a chapter of *De l'amour*, which he titled "La Provence au XII siècle," on a *razo* of the troubadour poet Guillem de Cabestany, wherein a woman unwittingly consumes her lover's heart, fed to her by her husband who – exactly as in the tale of *Le Roman du châtelain de Couci et la dame de Fayel* – reveals the sordid truth of her meal only after she has consumed it. (di Maio, 83).

hand, and in his arms he had / my lady wrapped in a cloth asleep. / Then he wakened her, and this burning heart / to the frightened one he humbly fed" (51). Baudelaire surely read Dante and was inspired by him; for, as Pichois writes in his notes on "La Béatrice," Baudelaire was referencing Dante, or he would otherwise have used the French spelling, "Béatrix."[62]

But the violence and bestiality with which Baudelaire infuses his own scene of the consumption of the heart marks an important departure from that of *La Vita Nuova*. For, while in both poems the poet is divested of his heart, in the case of Dante, this is not carried out destructively. Love, though a formidable presence, weeps, and Beatrice gently accepts his offering of her beloved's heart. Moreover, since the heart Beatrice consumes is a burning heart, itself undoubtedly a reference to the *Sacré Coeur*, it is important to note that, while incorporating the heart of her lover (for Love says to Dante "vide cor tuum," assuring the poet that it is indeed his own heart being offered to Beatrice)[63], she is solemnly accepting the sort of offering one would expect in the rite of communion—*establishing* a connection rather than refusing one, as Baudelaire's women – first his

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[62] "C'est par dérision que la femme aimée reçoit ici le nom de Béatrice — qui fait bien allusion à Dante" (*Oeuvres Complètes*, 1066)

[63] Since *La Vita Nuova* was written after Beatrice's death, and the poet recounts this particular episode of the work as a dream sequence, we can easily explain the separation of the poet's heart from his own body as he watches Beatrice consume him as a feat accomplished out of time, in a non-reality. However, it may be useful to note that in the tradition of the troubadours, it was understood that the poet and his beloved lived at a distance from one another, and that his heart was not with him, but with her. This vision of the poet watching calmly as his own heart is devoured seems less surprising in the context of that tradition.

mistress, and the woman who is the object of his desire – do. In Baudelaire's re-imagining of this classic scene, the poet is unwilling and victimized—not at all like Dante's subject. Furthermore, his "Béatrice" does not eat reverently, as Dante's does. The poet's heart is doubly rejected by her, first destroyed metaphorically, as the seat of romantic love, and then physically, as she feeds it to her waiting dog. Indeed, the cruelty of her gesture is intensified by her refutation of his flesh, which she has destroyed; and this refusal to ingest him herself is even more remarkable for the bestiality the poet introduces to the scene. The dog, a lurking figure always poised to seize a morsel in Baudelaire, adds not only to the violence of the passage, but to the outrageous indignity done to the poet there. Through her brutality, Baudelaire emphasizes the corporeal; the heart must be made to suffer violently and visibly, as it does at the hands of this woman ("Et mes ongles, pareils aux ongles des harpies, / Sauront jusqu'à son coeur se frayer un chemin. / Comme un tout jeune oiseau qui tremble et qui palpite, / J'arracherai ce coeur tout rouge de son sein," 8). The heart is vividly exposed in this remarkable passage from the start of *Les Fleurs du mal*, in an act that not only makes us rethink Dante's "vide cor tuum" (for Baudelaire might well be exhorting us, "vide cor meum," or behold *my* heart, in a text so prodigiously filled with the words "oeil" and "coeur.")[64] But the exposure of

[64] A search of Robert T. Cargo's Concordance to *Les Fleurs du mal* reveals that in that collection alone, Baudelaire uses the word "coeur" one hundred forty-two times. Only the word "oeil" appears with greater frequency, one hundred forty-three times altogether. In his concordance to *Petits Poèmes en Prose*, Cargo explains the value of assembling a concordance by citing Baudelaire's own writings on Théodore de Banville: "Pour deviner l'âme d'un poète, ou du moins sa principale préoccupation, cherchons dans ses oeuvres quel est le mot ou quels sont les mots qui s'y représentent avec le plus de fréquence" (vii).

the poet's heart also resonates with the title he accords to a well-known collection of personal writings, *Mon coeur mis à nu*, in which we are invited – albeit in a much less physical way than in "Bénédiction" – to partake of the poet's "heart."

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The Dark Art of Consumption

If Baudelaire's violent representations of the heart's consumption may hearken back to a lesser-known, darker side of the troubadour lyric, or to Dante, as I have proposed, these are not the poet's most immediate sources of inspiration. I would now like to show how two creative movements more contemporary to Baudelaire – the engravings and paintings of William Hogarth and Francisco de Goya, as a literary movement confined to the first half of the nineteenth century called la littérature frénétique – all influenced the violent aesthetic that marks Baudelaire's work, not least of all in his portrayal of the consumed heart.

That painting should inspire Baudelaire to the extent that it does is hardly surprising, given his famous admission, "Glorifier le culte des images (ma grande, mon unique, ma primitive passion)" (631). Baudelaire's critical writings reveal his admiration of the paintings of Hogarth and Goya, more particularly, whose often macabre representations of the body provided ample fodder for Baudelaire's aesthetic, which – like the Frenetic movement that inspired it – defines its departure from that established movement (in fact, both the Frenetics and Baudelaire derive from and oppose themselves

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Applying this claim to Baudelaire himself, we see that the frequent appearance of "coeur" indeed corresponds to the importance and complexity the poet accords to the heart throughout his work.

to Romanticism) in part through precisely the sort of grotesque display of the body that we find, for example, when the bloody, beating heart is torn from the poet's body, as we have recently witnessed that it is in Baudelaire. Or when, as in the following example from the work of Hogarth, the body is emphatically organic, placed under the scalpel. The fourth engraving in a series of four that Hogarth undertook on the topic of cruelty, "The Reward of Cruelty" depicts the public dissection of a criminal whose sentence to die by hanging is legible in the image of the cadaver, with the rope still tied around its neck. In this image, the entrails of the cadaver are hanging from the table where it rests, and the heart has fallen to the floor, where a dog gnaws at it. Meanwhile, the eye cavities are being emptied with a knife and placed under close examination by one of the party of doctors avidly surrounding the cadaver.[65] The two most frequently used words in *Les Fleurs du mal*, – "oeil" and "coeur," respectively – are blatantly under siege in this engraving, in a very real and grotesque way which, as Baudelaire's critical writings assure us, certainly made an impression on the poet. In *Quelques caricaturistes étrangers*, Baudelaire observed, "le talent de Hogarth comporte en soi quelque chose de froid, d'astringent, de funèbre. *Cela serre le coeur*" (224, emphasis mine).[66] However, Baudelaire seems to have been blind to the fact that not just any human remains, but the *heart* in particular, was the dog's choice morsel. In an essay in which he touches on this work among others, and which was certainly written from memory, he notes, "Dans un

[65] The scene of Hogarth's engraving echoes resoundingly with the evisceration of the hanging man in Baudelaire's "Un Voyage à Cythère": "Les yeux étaient deux trous, et du ventre effondré / Les intestins lui coulaient sur les cuisses" (118).

[66] All citations from *Quelques caricaturistes étrangers* are excerpted from the Folio text compiling Baudelaire's art criticism.

coin, un chien plonge goulûment son museau dans un seau et y pille quelques débris humains" (225). It is interesting that Baudelaire does not record this detail, clearly traced in the foreground of the engraving, lying visibly *outside* of, rather than buried *in* the bucket, as he claims.

Considering the attention the poet clearly affords the dog, it is difficult to imagine that he didn't notice what it was eating, specifically, especially since he is aware of its effect upon him: "Ce chien anthropophage m'a toujours fait rêver au cochon historique qui se soûlait impudemment du sang de l'infortuné Fualdès, pendant qu'un orgue de Barbarie exécutait, pour ainsi dire, le service funèbre de l'agonisant" (225). The poet's neglect of this detail does nothing to undermine the importance of the heart in his work; his frequent and complex use of it assures that. But here, he has excised the heart from his critique; in fact, I would propose that he *emphasizes* the consumption of the heart, paradoxically, by *failing* to mention it in an instance where the work under review would seem to demand it.

We may also read in the fantastical, dark scenes of consumption we discover in Baudelaire's writing the influence of Goya. Baudelaire certainly has the painter in mind when he writes, in the second quatrain of "Un fantôme": "Je suis comme un peintre qu'un Dieu moqueur / Condamne à peindre, hélas! sur les ténèbres" (38). For, as he notes in *Quelques caricaturistes étrangers*, "À la fin de sa carrière, les yeux de Goya étaient affaiblis au point qu'il fallait, dit-on, lui tailler ses crayons" (229). The aesthetic Baudelaire most appreciates in the work of Goya's late years could just as well be applied to the poet's own writing:

> Goya est toujours un grand artiste, souvent effrayant. Il unit à la gaieté, à la jovialité, à la satire espagnole du bon temps de Cervantes, un esprit beaucoup plus moderne, ou du moins qui a été beaucoup plus cherché dans les temps modernes, l'amour de l'insaisissable, le sentiment des contrastes violents, des épouvantements de la nature et des physionomies humaines étrangement animalisées par les circonstances. (228)

The similarities between the two artists are noteworthy: Baudelaire, of course, occupies a place in the French literary tradition that – similar to his description of Goya's marriage of the classic and the modern – represents a turning point, a form that resonates with the tradition from which it emerges, all the while defining itself most essentially in its break from that tradition. Also, the dark, funereal quality Baudelaire identifies in Hogarth might also be applied to his depiction of Goya, as expressed in "Les Phares": "Goya, cauchemar plein de choses inconnues, / De foetus qu'on fait cuire au milieu des sabbats, / De vieilles au miroir et d'enfants toutes nues, / Pour tenter les démons ajustant bien leurs bas" (228). The most famous of Goya's so-called Black paintings (*Pinturas negras*), a dark image of Saturn (entitled *Saturn devouring one of his sons*), realized on a black background in the house known as *La Quinta del Sordo* (*La Maison du Sourd*), is an intensification of Goya's earlier representations of cannibalism ("Cannibals Preparing their Victims" and "Cannibals Savoring Human Remains"), which were stylized and much softer in palette. Goya's Saturn, rendered in red and white on black, surely inspired Baudelaire's cannibalized fetuses. Nowhere in Baudelaire's work does his commentary on Goya's modernism ("physionomies humaines étrangement animalisées par les circonstances") resonate more strikingly than in the transformation of individuals through their violent

appetites, and not least of all in the destruction and consumption of the heart. In the following example from "Causerie," which we have already examined briefly, this transformation from human to animal is brought about through an act of consumption: "Ta main se glisse en vain sur mon sein qui se pâme, / Ce qu'elle cherche, amie, est un lieu saccagé / Par la griffe et la dent féroce de la femme / Ne cherchez plus mon coeur; les bêtes l'ont mangé" (56). Woman is animalized by the poet, her wounding of him described first in terms of a clawing and biting of the heart. Reading closely, we see that this devouring of the poet's heart begins with "la griffe et la dent" of woman, but finishes with "les bêtes," which seem to be the women, transformed into animals.

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The Frenetics

Having discussed several of Baudelaire's sources of visual inspiration and their influence on his violent representation of the heart, I would like to return to the question of literary tradition and, more precisely, to the question of Baudelaire's referencing of, and eventual departure from it, through the figure of the consumed heart. The violent, macabre imagery to which the poet is drawn in the art of Hogarth and Goya is also a defining characteristic of the Frenetic movement (so named by Charles Nodier), which was inspired by the English Gothic novel and elaborated in the writings of Pétrus Borel, Gérard de Nerval, and Victor Hugo, among others. Baudelaire's depiction of the heart as an organ susceptible to harm accords perfectly with the Frenetic taste for the macabre, and was unmistakably influenced by it.

The Frenetic movement ended well before Baudelaire first published *Les Fleurs du mal*. By 1857, the general public may have largely forgotten this recent movement of which Baudelaire's collection unquestionably bears the mark. This is perhaps one reason why the poet presents himself to the public as an anachronistic, misunderstood genius ("Lorsque, par un décret des puissances suprêmes, / Le Poète apparaît en ce monde ennuyé […]," 7). As Anthony Glinoer notes, Théophile Gautier, to whom Baudelaire dedicated *Les fleurs du mal*, described Frenetic writing as a "littérature de morgue et de bagne, cauchemar du bourreau, hallucination de boucher ivre et d'argousin qui a la fièvre chaude" (122). This sort of aesthetic fills Baudelaire's *oeuvre*, and Gautier's identification of a "roman-charogne" is echoed there, not only in the putrid, teeming excess of "Une charogne," which seems immediately derived from the frenetic movement, but in the poet's positioning of himself in other texts, not only as a victim, but as a consumed body susceptible to the same vermin permeating that corpse.

Admittedly, not all works of the frenetics are exceedingly grotesque; for example, some hew to the movement only in their choice of setting, as Glinoer explains in *La littérature frénétique*. In one such work by Pétrus Borel, "[l'auteur] évite les scènes trop scabreuses mais s'inscrit dans la lignée noire par les localisations gothiques […]" (122). Baudelaire, however, finds his inspiration in the darker, more physical elaborations of the movement. For example, in *Sous les tilleuls*, an 1831 novel by Alphonse Karr, a man exhumes his beloved's body for a final kiss, and is horrified to discover the extent to which she has already been consumed: "mais il jette un cri et s'enfuit, car il a vu le corps. / Le corps, les chairs tombent en lambeaux, et des vers rongent ses yeux" (310). To Karr, the revolting consumption taking place in "Une charogne," not to mention "Un Voyage à

Cythère," would have been familiar. We might also trace the violence with which the narrator afflicts his beloved in "A Une Madone" (a portion of which I cited earlier) back to the influence of the Frenetics. Particularly evident here is the transformation of the heart into something terribly real, no longer confined to metaphor: "Prenant le plus profond de ton amour pour cible, / Je les [couteaux] planterai tous dans ton Coeur pantelant, / Dans ton Coeur sanglotant, dans ton Coeur ruisselant!" (59). Though this portrayal of the heart first recalls the romantic notion of the heart as the locus of "amour," it quickly becomes a distinctly tangible thing, prone to corporal injury. His plan to attack her involves physical violence against the heart in all of its beating, bleeding reality, for he describes it alternately as "panting," "sobbing," and "dripping." Importantly, though, he too falls victim to this violence. Imagining himself a "bourreau plein de remords," he will be – as a direct result of his own plan – bitten back, *consumed* within his own text, paradoxically, by his own malicious intent.

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Darkness and Light

"Un Voyage à Cythère" may bring us closer to answering the preponderant question of this chapter, particularly as it concerns the heart: what is the role of consumption in Baudelaire?[67] Significantly, the poem both opens and concludes with the

[67] The heart is less of a preoccupation in *Madame Bovary*, and in any case it is not a heart as organ, as it is in Baudelaire. As we discover in his essay "*Madame Bovary* par Gustave Flaubert," he holds Emma's "heart" in high esteem (albeit from a remarkably misogynistic perspective) for her abandonment of the heart as a receptacle of sentiment (which he views as a feminine, even animal, trait) in favor of a

heart; it begins, “Mon coeur, comme un oiseau, voltigeait tout joyeux / Et planait librement à l’entour des cordages” (117). The imagery of a light, ascendant heart is reminiscent of the poem “Élévation,” in which the poet’s *esprit* is lifted up, “Par-delà les confins des sphères étoilées” (10). The sublime ambience continues on through the stanza: “Le navire roulait sous un ciel sans nuages, / Comme un ange enivré d’un ciel radieux” (117). But, as is so often the case in Baudelaire, this peaceful state is harshly interrupted. However, this time it is not by sound – as in the violent knocking at the door that ruptures the peace of “La Chambre double,” or the voice that rattles the poet out of his rêverie in “La Soupe et le nuages” – but instead, it is by sight. From an angel drunk on sunlight, we soon move to a much darker spectacle:

> De féroces oiseaux perchés sur leur pâture
> Détruisaient avec rage un pendu déjà mûr,
> Chacun plantant, comme un outil, son bec impur
> Dans tous les coins saignants de cette pourriture;
>
> Les yeux étaient deux trous, et du ventre effondré
> Les intestins pesants lui coulaient sur les cuisses,
> Et ses bourreaux, gorgés de hideuses délices,
> L’avaient à coups de bec absolument châtré. (118)

The light so pervasive at the start of the poem is notably absent here; rather than ascending (“voltigeant” or “planant”), we descend, into empty eye sockets, and the

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more “virile” heart: “L’imagination, faculté suprême et tyrannique, substituée au coeur, ou à ce qu’on appelle le coeur, d’où le raisonnement est d’ordinaire exclu, et qui domine généralement dans la femme comme dans l’animal” (127).

physical lack of this man, who is being actively consumed. Furthermore, his heart is buried: "et j'avais, comme en un suaire épais, / Le coeur enseveli dans cette allégorie" (119). The poet finds himself overcome by an allegory of his own making, and claims to suffer along with the hanging man: "Ridicule pendu, tes douleurs sont les miennes!" (119). This is not merely a feeling of empathy, but something that seems to exceed it; for the poet himself claims to experience the physical affliction of the cadaver:

> Devant toi, pauvre diable au souvenir si cher,
> J'ai senti tous les becs et toutes les mâchoires
> Des corbeaux lancinants et des panthères noires
> Qui jadis aimaient tant à triturer ma chair (119).

This is not the sort of sacrifice we witness in *Madame Bovary*, where Flaubert demonstrates control through the orchestration of his heroine's downfall. This is the writer *himself*, self-projected into the grotesque scene he has painted, posing there as a sacrificial victim. Beyond the unnatural physical connection he establishes between himself and the hanging man, the poet's own corporeality is emphasized in his very physical reaction to the gory scene: "Je sentis, à l'aspect de tes membres flottants, / Comme un vomissement, remonter vers mes dents" (119).[68] There is a significant shift

[68] The narrator's vomiting marks the end of the depiction of the body as a physical entity in the text, just as Emma Bovary's does in her infamous deathbed scene. Because he insists that it is the result of a *douleur* that has built up over the years ("le long fleuve de fiel des douleurs anciennes"), however, it appears to be a productive, cleansing act in Baudelaire, and not purely a sign of death, like Emma's. In this poem, the residue of unresolved pain is disgorged in its contents, the narrator thereby disencumbered, freed to return again to the intangible body we encountered at the start of the text, a body "enseveli" in "allégorie," by a poet who pleads for the ability to live with *coeur* and *corps*.

away from the tone we encounter at the start of the text and toward this tangible, revolting body of the hanging cadaver, not to mention the revolt*ed* body of the poet, which displace that original *coeur*, "tout joyeux."

There is, by the end of the poem, a final and critical return to the heart as metaphor, a heart subject to being buried in allegory – as the poet has told us – rather than to being consumed by predators. The heart and body are still central figures, even in the very last lines: "Ah! Seigneur! donnez-moi la force et le courage / De contempler mon coeur et mon corps sans dégôut!" (119). But they are no longer the organic heart and body, prone to earthly predators, for they are now objects of contemplation, interior rather than exterior. The movement we encounter over the course of the poem – from elevation and light, to a descent into the depths and the tangible mass of the body and finally back to a heart and body offered up for contemplation – is a movement occasioned entirely by the act of consumption: the visual consumption of the poet, of course, for we witness his revulsion at the sight of the cadaver as the boat rounds the coast and the body comes into focus. The visibility of this body is central to the effect of the violent eating that takes place in this poem; it is the sight of this dead object being consumed that causes the narrator to vomit. The narrator aspires to a different kind of "seeing" (the ability to "contempler" his heart and body "sans dégoût"), once consumption reaches its violent crescendo and pushes the heart and the body once more beyond the physical and visible, where it is matter for contemplation rather than ingestion. The driving force in this marked progression from euphoria (which is achieved, interestingly, through the *drinking*-in of sunlight) to the dark and physical and finally back to the intangible, is consumption.

This movement resonates with a similar progression I have noted in "Bénédiction." For in that text, the poet is starved and eaten throughout; but the pain, he suggests, is productive: "Je sais que la *douleur* est la noblesse unique / Où ne *mordront* jamais la terre et les enfers / Et qu'il faut pour tresser ma couronne mysique / Imposer tous les temps et tous les univers" (9). Eating – ever brutal and violent – proves central to both texts, for it is the means by which *la douleur* is inflicted, and the means by which the poet moves beyond susceptibility to it. Sainte-Beuve argues, "Les poètes, indépendamment des organes communs à tous, des chagrins qui sont le fond de l'humanité, sont doués d'une trompette et d'un aiguillon. Cet aiguillon, ils prennent plaisir à se l'enfoncer eux-mêmes dans les flancs, pour se donner occasion de sonner plus fréquemment de la trompette" (985). Baudelaire is guilty of this, of course, and he says as much within the poems themselves; in "L'Héautontimourouménos," he writes, "Je suis la plaie et le couteau! Je suis le soufflet et la joue! / Je suis les membres et la roue, / Et la victime et le bourreau!," and finally, "Je suis de moi-même le vampire" (79). And in "Mon coeur mis à nu," he muses, "Il serait peut-être doux d'être alternativement victime et bourreau" (676). But there is something more to all of this. By actually consuming himself in these poems, it is no longer simply a question of masochistic self-absorption. Rather, it is as if for Baudelaire, being both the one who eats and is eaten, he is in all places—the alpha and the omega, the beginning and the end, in the world that he has created. What initially seems to be mere self-victimization, could in a sense be seen as the ultimate form of control.

If Baudelaire claims an ability to transcend suffering through poetic creation, a work that cannot be "bitten" by the forces of earthly existence, why then do the poems

that follow insist so strongly on the physicality of the body—and a heart more prone to surgery than redemption? Because to create that, the pain made possible by a body more flesh than fiction, a body that both engages in and invites consumption, was necessary. Without the gnawing, the remorse, the smoking and burning hearts, there is not enough to temper the beauty of the poet's work. And what is the Baudelairian *oeuvre*, if not a balance, a dance between beauty and evil, tradition and modernity, pain and pleasure? Consumption, with its inherent paradox, provides Baudelaire his most powerful means of elaborating his complex aesthetic.

Chapter Three

Something out of Nothing: Rewriting Consumption in Césaire's *Cahier*

> ce que je veux / c'est pour la faim universelle /
> pour la soif universelle // […] de produire de son
> intimité close / la succulence des fruits
>
> – Aimé Césaire, *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal*

A bridge between the French writers of the nineteenth century and Aimé Césaire requires no tenuous negotiation. Although my analysis of the thematic of consumption in the works of Flaubert, Baudelaire and Césaire may represent an unexpected grouping of writers, Césaire and his Antillean predecessors paved this path themselves. In his essay "Culture et colonisation," Césaire avers, "la voie la plus courte vers l'avenir est toujours celle qui passe par l'approfondissement du passé" (193). Césaire's work nourishes itself openly on works from the French tradition, as the present study will show. And although his relationship to these works is comparable to the one Michel Jeanneret describes in reference to Renaissance *imitatio* in *Des mets et des mots* ("le rapport complexe de soumission et de transgression avec les maîtres — cette opération de reécriture où toute littérature classique retrouve son identité […]), this inspiration reverberates through his work in a spirit of transgression rather than of submission (250). Indeed, the poet calls for a culture that goes beyond the mere consumption and regurgitation of its examples, both old and new, concluding "Culture et colonisation" by stating his hope for "une synthèse qui sera réconciliation et dépassement de l'ancien et du nouveau" (205). Césaire's *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal,* I would argue, accomplishes just that: not only through the

irreverence and unpredictability of its poetic language, but also through its engagement with the world beyond it, the desire it represents – through words – to address and transform the suffering of a people.[69] Césaire's language carries with it an active revolt, clearly resulting from the poet's sense of duty as expressed in his literary call to arms: "gardez-vous de vous croiser les bras en l'attitude stérile du spectateur, car la vie n'est pas un spectacle" (*Cahier*, 22). Césaire repeats a similar call to arms in his presentation of the first issue of the journal *Tropiques* (co-founded by Aimé Césaire, Suzanne Césaire, and René Ménil): "Mais il n'est plus temps de parasiter le monde. C'est de le sauver plutôt qu'il s'agit. Il est temps de se ceindre les reins comme un vaillant homme" (5).

That words can achieve something, that they can *act*, is nothing new. Manifestos abound, texts articulate revolution and gifted orators are aware of the power they wield over their audiences. Poetry would seem a privileged domain for such active words, especially given that the Greek root word itself, *Poïesis*, connotes creation, meaning – in a general sense – *to make*. And indeed, I would argue that, to the extent that any text *can* be, Césaire's *Cahier* is performative. In the Leiner interview, Césaire expresses the belief that poetry harbors possibilities for individual expression that no other genre does; this makes it particularly ideal as a vehicle for someone who wishes to accomplish something in writing, to put his words to work: "mon effort a été d'*infléchir* le français, de le transformer pour exprimer, disons: 'ce moi, ce moi-nègre, ce moi-créole, ce moi-

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[69] Henceforth, the text will be referred to simply as the *Cahier*.

antillais.' C'est pour cela que je me suis beaucoup plus intéressé à la poésie qu'à la prose, et ce *dans la mesure où c'est le poète qui fait son langage*" (xiv, emphasis in original).[70]

Accordingly, when Césaire writes, "Je dirais orage. Je dirais fleuve. Je dirais tornade. Je dirais feuille. Je dirais arbre," one might be reminded of similar lines from the book of Genesis, and in that context it would not be at all surprising to see Césaire's "dire" followed by the same sort of coming-into-being we witness in the Bible (21). For these words seem to carry us to the edge of an event to come; the 'dire' suggests a resulting 'faire,' as in the aforementioned scene from Genesis: "And God *said*, Let there *be* light: and there *was* light" (1). But the poet's incantation is followed by no such direct result, no such instant magic.[71] All the better for Césaire's readers, though, for in the pages to follow, they will savor the *work* of the poet, of these words that seek to

[70] All citations of Césaire's interview with Jacqueline Leiner are from the first volume of the journal *Tropiques*.

[71] There is a good reason for this. Handley explains in *New World Poetics* that there is an Adamic tendency to want to name something for the first time, and in doing so, to oversimplify it, to "year[n] for purity and innocence and facilely dismis[s] the claims of history" (2). Césaire's *Cahier* insists not only that we look the consequences of history in the face, but that we engage with the problems remaining in its wake. Handley defines an "adamic" approach to naming, different from the aforementioned type designated by a capital "A," as one in which the speaking subject has struggled with the problems of the New World, and created something beautiful, despite a violent history: "The adamic poetry is an expression of "awe" before the wonders of a New World whose beauty has survived or has even, paradoxically, been nurtured by the wreckage of colonialism" (2). And this, precisely, is what Césaire's *Cahier* sets out to accomplish: to nourish growth even from a place of lack, of hunger and thirst, and a place ravaged by colonialism.

transform and to *make* something new, not only by testing the limits of the French language, but by challenging the problems of colonialism.[72]

For Césaire, the gravest of these problems is his people's loss of voice, a resounding silence brought about through hunger. And this will be the project of the text: to find and reclaim that voice. But how? Why can't words be found, and how can they be excavated? Césaire senses that the sound of revolt is buried somewhere, *next* to his people, as he puts it—extant, somehow, but maddeningly inaccessible, as if it had been swallowed by something and couldn't find its way out. "À côté de son cri, […] à côté de son vrai cri, […] à côté de son *cri de faim*," he repeats (9, emphasis mine). Hunger, because it is a root cause of this oppressive silence, must be addressed in order for the voice to reemerge. And this is why consumption in all of its forms is crucial to the work of Césaire's *Cahier*. The economy of consumption, skewed against the poet's people, must be overturned.

Through my analysis of *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal*, I seek not only to demonstrate the significance of this rupture of the dominant economy of consumption, but also – and perhaps more importantly – to show that it is, paradoxically, through his own reenactments of the violence being done to the people of Martinique, carried out in the poem through violent acts of consumption, that the poet will attempt to resolve this imbalance. In the process, the lost land and people will be consumed, but, if he is

[72] Baudelaire also believes in prose poetry's ability to act: "car la fantaisie est d'autant plus dangereuse qu'elle est plus facile et plus ouverte; dangereuse comme la poésie en prose, […] dangereuse comme toute liberté absolue" (*Oeuvres complètes* II, 644).

successful, they will rise up, and reclaim the tongue with which they might both nourish themselves, and speak.

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Consuming Words: On Césaire's Literary Inheritance

Like Flaubert and Baudelaire, whose work I analyze in the previous chapters, Césaire has both nourished himself on the works of his predecessors, and taken his distance from them. For the purposes of the present study, tracing the progression of consumption as a violent and overwhelmingly aesthetic force in the works of Flaubert and Baudelaire into something engaged in Césaire, careful consideration of Césaire's literary influences, with particular attention to the ways in which consumption functions as the nineteenth century moves into the twentieth, must be given.

It is through the figure of cannibalism that I will draw the primary parallel between Flaubert and Césaire.[73] The irony of studying a writer whose appetite for the exotic is as great as Flaubert's together with Césaire, whose *Cahier* decries the extent to which Martinicans have been exotic objects, has not escaped literary critics. As Jeannie

[73] Later in this chapter, I elaborate further on the question of Césaire's literary consumption, particularly concerning passages in the *Cahier* clearly appropriated by Césaire from his predecessors and which consequently might be considered instances of literary cannibalism. Although here I will concentrate mainly on the resonance between Césaire's text and the works of Flaubert and Baudelaire, as I will later show, the influence of Lautréamont (not to mention Rimbaud, which I will address further on) is unmistakably present, and in perfect accordance with the tone of Césaire's written revolt.

Suk has written and others have acknowledged, "If exoticism itself becomes a trope for the French literary legacy, how much the more so for Antillean poetry, in which the black poet engages a tradition of which he is the exotic object" (35). The opening scene of *Salammbô*, with its raucous feasting, leaves no question as to Flaubert's taste for the exotic, or the role that consumption – violent consumption, even cannibalism – plays for him in illustrating his version of it. In *Salammbô*, the function of consumption is all the more evident for the progression from the feast's immaculately constructed, exotic beginnings, in which everything has its place and even nature takes on an architectural precision ("Des figuiers entouraient les cuisines"), to its frenzied conclusion, in which – as I noted in the previous chapter on Flaubert – men become at times nearly indistinguishable from animals (drunken, they are "des dromadaires altérés," while a man is described as being "comme un léopard") (31, 36, 46).

Furthermore, Flaubert leaves behind pages of correspondence written home to France during his travels abroad with Maxime du Camp that emphasize this hunger for the exotic—its people, but also its sights and tastes. Determined to escape the sameness of bourgeois life, a reality still all too present in his mind following the completion of *Madame Bovary*, he writes from Egypt, "Je me foutais une ventrée de couleurs, comme un âne s'emplit d'avoine" (*Correspondance I*, 528). The abandon with which Flaubert himself takes in beauty and is drawn to *difference* (and even becomes different himself, as the above quote suggests) in his travels abroad also characterizes Emma Bovary's relationship to consumption, as I demonstrated earlier in my study. Emma's oft-evoked desires for love and sensual pleasures overflow. But the consumption that takes place in *Salammbô*, as demonstrated previously, reaches far beyond the visual absorption of the

exotic by the occidental writing subject of the sort we witness in the aforementioned phrase from Flaubert's letter home, and even beyond Emma's prodigious appetites. There, Flaubert sets the stage for an excess that devolves into cannibalism. This occurs both at the level of the narrative itself – for exotic food makes of the equally exotic mercenary soldiers vehicles of violence, who consume one another at the site of the feast – *and* at a more abstract, formal level, a fact the author articulates when he writes to a friend, "J'éventre des hommes avec prodigalité. Je verse du sang. Je fais du style cannibale" (*Correspondance III*, 43). As Frank Lestringant rightly notes, Flaubert's record of having visited "des Cafres de l'Afrique du Sud," a people he labels "sauvages," is revelatory of a much less nuanced approach to difference, than Montaigne's much earlier observations of the "Toupinamboux" people (25-26). Flaubert's conclusions, unlike those of Montaigne, are not drawn from actual interaction with the Africans he encounters, but are instead utterly superficial, based only on appearances: "l'entretien se limite à l'éclat des yeux," writes Lestringant, who might find Flaubert's insistence (we read this in his disapproval of Leconte de Lisle's reticence to immerse himself in the unpleasant before writing about it, something I will soon explain further) that full contact with a situation precede written judgment about it highly hypocritical (26).

Certainly, Flaubert's "style cannibale" might be understood as a sort of literary cannibalism.[74] After all, he may have been channeling epic poems of old (as noted in my

[74] In its most general terms, literary cannibalism involves the obvious appropriation of one text by another: Césaire's "Une tempête," for example, might be understood as a cannibalization of Shakespeare's "The Tempest," while Maryse Condé's *Windward Heights* blatantly announces its original inspiration, Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*. In her 2009 dissertation, "Literary cannibalism: Almost the same, but not quite/Almost the same, but not white," Felisa Vergara Reynolds asserts that such cannibalism does not

first chapter, Théophile Gautier himself insisted that this was the case, after having read *Salammbô*), not to mention the *Bible*, via Victor Hugo, when writing the novel's opening scene, in which men become as animals, indecipherable from the actual beasts roaming around in the lush darkness surrounding the lavishly set table.

In the same letter in which he writes of his "style cannibale," Flaubert mentions that he has just finished reading Hugo's recently published work (this would have been Hugo's *La Légende des siècles*, published in 1859), and the experience has left the sound of roars lingering in his ears.[75] This was surely in reference to Hugo's "Les Lions," a retelling in verse of the biblical story of Daniel in the lions' den.[76] Moussa Sarga has affirmed, based on Flaubert's correspondence, that the Hugolian influence is present in *Salammbô* largely due to the author's desire to distance himself from a less romantic tone in favor of something more heroic: "Hugo est bien sûr à l'opposé de ce que Flaubert condamne comme une poésie efféminée et dégénérée. […] La force poétique [d'Hugo]

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necessarily connote subjugation to the original, as people often tend to think, but that rewritings of the canon can allow for a new and powerful form of agency. It is from this perspective that I understand this act in Césaire. I would argue that Césaire's unique style, not to mention his abundant neologisms, though directly inspired by the French canon with which he was so familiar, marks a divergence from, as much as a mimicry of, its examples. Similar arguments have been made by others. Suzanne Césaire notably asserted in Misère d'une poésie, "La poésie martiniquaise sera cannibale ou ne sera pas" (50). Similarly, Oswald de Andrade's *Manifesto Antropofágo* asserts that Brazil's cultural appropriations result in a strength, rather than serving as indications of a shortcoming.

[75] "Je suis tout étourdi et ébloui par les deux nouveaux volumes d'Hugo, d'où je sors à l'instant. J'ai des soleils qui me tournent devant les yeux et des rugissements dans les oreilles" (*Correspondance* III, 43).

[76] The story is recorded in the sixth chapter of the book of Daniel, in the Hebrew *Bible*.

est à l'évidence l'un des attributs stylistiques que Flaubert rêve d'aquérir" (21). Flaubert's "style cannibale" is, then, by some measure a form of literary cannibalism. But Flaubert's version differs from Hugo's retelling of Daniel's story; for in the *Bible*, and its faithful reproduction by Hugo, God comes to the aid of Daniel, staying the lions' mouths, even in their hunger. Hugo writes, "Les lions dans la fosse étaient sans nourriture. / Captifs, ils rugissaient vers la grande nature […]," and soon after, "Soudain, dans l'angle obscur de la lugubre étable, / La grille s'entr'ouvrit; sur le seuil redoutable, / Un homme […] Apparut […] / L'homme avec les lions resta dans les ténèbres […] Et l'homme dit: "La paix soit avec vous, lions!" / L'homme dressa les mains; les lions s'arrêtèrent (55, 59). No such measure or reason is apparent in Flaubert's tale, in which the soldiers called to the feast are transformed into animals in their food and wine-fueled excess.

Flaubert defended his "appétits de cannibale" in a letter to Louise Colet, in which he decries Leconte de Lisle's unwillingness to visit the *Hôtel Dieu*, in order to immerse himself in the reality of the unpleasant experiences he evokes in his work. In Flaubert's view, this results in a poorer lived experience, and a corresponding lack of authenticity in the resulting work. One must truly be immersed in the subject of one's writing, Flaubert believed, in order to render it convincingly. He opines, "Quand on a son modèle net, devant les yeux, on écrit toujours bien" (*Correspondance* II, 377). But as the sentence progresses, we gain a clearer picture of the approach Flaubert took to his depiction of the *other*, and it is an approach that doesn't surprise, in light of the author's orientalist leanings: "où donc le vrai est-il plus clairement que dans ces belles expositions de la misère humaine? Elles ont quelque chose de si cru que cela donne à l'esprit des appétits de cannibale" (*Ibid.*, 377). The suggestion – even hypothetical – of such a scientific,

clinical approach to the witnessing of human misery, reveals a level of remove that would befit a writer such as Flaubert, whose keen observation results in the particularly rich, layered aesthetic of the people and places he describes. It also makes it easier for us to see Flaubert himself, not only as the avid observer of Egypt, Turkey or Carthage, as we know that he was, but also as a bit of a *cannibal*, in the misunderstood, cliché way—a savage, bent on consuming with abandon not only the *real* exotic Carthage he visits in preparation for writing *Salammbô*, but even the *fictional* exotic world he creates to mirror it, through the wanton destructiveness and violence that characterize the soldiers' feast.[77] While the tourist Flaubert absorbs the ruins of nineteenth-century Carthage, the writer Flaubert reduces ancient Carthage to ruin.[78] As the feasting scene unfolds, the exotic setting creates an apt ambience for cannibalism: "[Les soldats] dévor[aient] par la vue ce qu'ils ne pouvaient prendre. Ils demandaient du vin, des viandes, de l'or. […] Ils déliraient en cent langages. […] ils s'imaginaient être à la chasse et couraient sur leurs compagnons comme des bêtes sauvages" (41). In a sense, nothing seems out of range of Flaubert's appetite, in which the multiplicity – not to mention the confusion – of languages matches the scene's cannibal excess.

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[77] As Lestringant reveals in *Le Cannibale: Grandeur et décadence*, the word "cannibal" was born of a misunderstanding on the part of Christopher Columbus, who – upon his arrival in the New World – conflated the term *cariba* (a word the native Caribbean arawak people used for themselves) and *canis*, which connotes a devouring dog (43-44).

[78] To the extent that cannibalism can be understood to dissolve the boundaries between the self and the other, we might argue that Flaubert can be included in this group of animalized men, too; through his "style cannibale," and all that he consumes of the exotic, he becomes, in a sense, one of them.

And this is one of the most striking points of resonance between Flaubert and Césaire, one that both links and divides them. For both writers lay claim to cannibalism, but they do so in different places, and for very different reasons. As discussed earlier, Flaubert writes in his letters of his own "appétits de cannibale." That he articulates this explicitly reveals the extent to which the author's own appetites for observing the experience of others inform his writing. The fictional cannibalism of *Salammbô* is the ultimate result of a gradually mounting violence; it is first and foremost an aesthetic figure that suits the baroque excess of the table Flaubert imagines, a table belonging to another time and place. It is neither anchored in the author's reality, nor does the effect of it seek to reach beyond the bounds of the text itself. It is an expression of Flaubert's attention to form; it is, for want of a better expression, *art for art's sake*.

Césaire's cannibalism, however, is morally and ethically charged. It is something of which the author accuses himself, a way of assuming responsibility and of articulating through irony the cruelty in which he himself realizes he has participated. Directly following an oft-cited scene of the *Cahier*, in which the writing subject's condescension toward his own people becomes clear to him, he articulates his fault. I will address this famous scene from the *Cahier* in greater detail later in the chapter, but for the moment it is enough to note that, while taking the public tram, the narrator finds himself face to face with a man who embodies the oppressed people of the African diaspora. He experiences a crucial moment of self-awareness in which he realizes that he, too – along with the European colonizer from whom he seeks to distance himself – also has participated in the mocking of this man. He admits, "Tiens, je préfère avouer que j'ai généreusement déliré […]," and soon after, "Je me cachais derrière une vanité stupide" (43). It is significant

that the poet articulates his mistake in terms of having been on the wrong side of consumption from the poor "nègre" he describes ("un nègre hideux, un nègre grognon, un nègre mélancolique, un nègre affalé"), and from the suffering "Africans" that figure represents. He aligns himself with a Caribbean bird of prey, the *menfenil*, poised to consume the people of Martinique. It is no surprise, then, when – in the following line – the poet admits to what he calls "mes cruautés cannibales," a phrase he emphasizes through repetition: "Sur ce rêve vieux en moi mes cruautés cannibales" (42, 43). I would suggest that this ironic confession of cannibalism, which later in the poem becomes an outright embrace of cannibalism over reason, mirrors Césaire's use of consumption in the text more generally. His willingness to play this violent role by assuming the savage characteristics with which his people is labeled (by acting out the colonizers' "cruautés cannibales") and – most crucially for my analysis – acting this violence out through consumption, as I will soon show, plays a crucial role in the poet's effort to reclaim agency for his people.

For Césaire, there is something very real at stake in this effort to address the oppression and "consumption" of Martinicans that takes place in colonization. It is in his interest to reverse, if he can, an economy of consumption turned entirely to their disadvantage. For Flaubert, on the other hand, cannibalism is altogether different, as it is both an aesthetic force and fuel for the imagination, something we witness clearly in the aforementioned letter to Louis Bouilhet, in which Flaubert recounts an experience of viewing "savages" in Rouen, where, as Lestringant notes, "Flaubert n'aperçoit qu'une horde de "primitifs" dont la vision suscite en lui une horreur presque sacrée" (26).

Consequently, the cannibalism of which Césaire accuses himself is serious, something akin to remorse; it contributes to the resolve of his own engagement. Flaubert, meanwhile, toys with the figure of consumption, putting his own "style cannibale" to work for aesthetic purposes. The theatrical scene of cannibalism in which *Salammbô* appears, paradoxically since it is ensconced in a work of fiction, is of a more literal sort: these men are throwing themselves upon one another, tearing one another apart, while monkeys – resembling the soldiers in the coexisting human and animal traits they possess – are singed by flame, and falling from the trees directly into the men's plates, like smaller but no more beastly versions of themselves.

By contrast, in the *Cahier*, a text in which real hunger is actually at issue, the cannibalism to which the poet admits is a figurative one, an articulation of his guilt at having participated in a culture that has sought to consume his own. The recognition of Flaubert and Césaire's claims on cannibalism is crucial to an understanding of the way these writers use consumption in their work. In both cases, consumption is a violent act, rather than a nourishing one. But in the case of Flaubert, as I have suggested, the effect of this violence remains rooted in the world of the text itself, while for Césaire, cannibalism represents a point of excess it seems it was necessary for the writer himself to reach, not merely for aesthetic purposes, as with Flaubert. Rather, Césaire sees the cannibalism to which he lays claim in the *Cahier* as a central element of his work's engagement, echoed also in the opening lines of an abridged version of the *Cahier*, published in *Tropiques* and entitled, significantly, "En guise de manifeste littéraire." Therein, he repeats, "Parce que nous vous haïssons, vous et votre raison, nous nous réclamons de la démence précoce, de la folie flambante, du cannibalisme tenace" (7, Vol. 5). Cannibalism becomes, in this

context, a political act—a point of excess the poet embraces in order to move the poem *beyond* the bounds of art, and into the public domain of political engagement, in which those words act. Moreover, for the art of a Martinican to be engaged is not for Césaire a matter of choice, but it is rather an imperative, as he explains clearly to Jacqueline Leiner: "Je ne peux imaginer, je considérerai, comme *un monstre d'égoïsme*, un Martiniquais qui ferait de l'art pour l'art! Cela signifierait qu'il n'a jamais regardé en face de lui, ou à côté de lui. Il y a une sorte d'*intolérance* de la situation collective, *cela m'engage* (xxiv, emphasis in original).

Cannibalism (though used, as I have noted, very differently) is not the only thread linking Flaubert and Césaire. I have argued that significant violence characterizes both writers' uses of consumption, and in fact there is a shared peculiarity in their manifestations of this violence that binds them in a remarkable way. For both writers, the plenitude that food would seem to represent is instead replaced by lack; where there would seem to be something good to eat, there generally isn't. In Flaubert, the spectacle of the table – and it truly *is* a spectacle, meticulously constructed – is revealed to be just that: an empty shell. There is a similar tendency in Césaire to render what appears to be edible utterly empty of nourishment; or, as in the following passage, to attribute to what is eminently *in*edible, an adjective that suggests its edibility: "à la nuit *farineuse* avec les *pondaisons* d'or des / lucioles incertaines / à la chevelure qui tremble tout au haut de la falaise / le vent y saute en inconstantes cavaleries *salées*" (34, emphasis mine). Flour, eggs and salt are evoked—separate elements commonly blended together to create bread or cake, for example. However, despite vocabulary that hints at the contrary, there is nothing edible here. And secondly, that what *is* evoked by this experience – exoticism –

is going to be rejected—a gesture that will be carried out by the poet precisely through a *refusal* to consume: "je lis bien à mon pouls que l'exotisme n'est *pas provende* pour moi" (34, emphasis mine). And, of course, this is where Césaire will differ from Flaubert, who so hungrily and unabashedly *does* consume the exotic. For, although they both trouble the notion of consumption at times, reminding us ultimately that food in literature is *never* really just food (and sometimes isn't food at all!), their reasons for doing so are, as I have argued, entirely different. And the exoticism at issue here, which amuses Flaubert and nourishes the ancient décor of *Salammbô*, certainly does not nourish Césaire, who emphatically rejects, on behalf of the people of Martinique ("je me sens solidaire des miens"), the objectification so inherent in it (*Tropiques*, Tome 1, xxiv).

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The Bodies of Baudelaire and Césaire

In approaching the topic of consumption in Césaire, a reflection on Baudelaire's similar elaboration of this thematic may be a productive means, not simply of understanding how Césaire both gleans inspiration and sets himself apart from the earlier poet, but even more importantly, of demonstrating how Césaire's project in a sense *completes* the work begun by his predecessor. In doing so, I would first like to linger for a moment on the message contained in the preceding passage, in which Césaire seeks to distance himself from exoticism. For there is a notably abrupt shift from the intangible to the tangible, and this has implications for the overall thematic of consumption in the *Cahier*. Indeed, it is precisely this sort of fleshing-out of the otherwise intangible, this

determined physicality of matter we encounter in Césaire, that will make the body – or the many bodies – of the *Cahier* at once susceptible to, and capable of, consumption.

The distinct physicality with which Césaire invests even the most ephemeral, intangible of phenomena leaves them strangely bare, and prone to harm. In Césaire's world, for example, the sun appears consumptive (in the nineteenth-century medical sense, connoting tuberculosis), possessed of a small cough, which is nevertheless capable of causing it to spit out its lungs: "Au bout du petit matin le soleil qui toussotte et crache ses poumons […]" (28). The particular move the poet makes in the aforementioned *exotisme* passage, shifting from that which most definitely does *not* have a body (wind, night, light) to an evocation of the human body, also demonstrates this Césairian physicality. The body, besieged as it is – and this is one of Césaire's many links to Baudelaire – is omnipresent in the *Cahier*. In this world, where the intangible becomes remarkably visceral, many more things (the sea, the land, houses, ships) that do not possess human and animal bodies are nevertheless endowed with them.[79]

[79] Further examples will emerge as my analysis continues, but for example, in the *Cahier*, the sun and the wind have lungs; the sea is like an infinite mouth; the land has wounds; the country has bones, veins, and blood. René Hénane comments on the striking brevity of metamorphoses in Césaire, noting that this creates an effect of shock within the work (we might think of it in terms of the way an odd amalgamation of parts come together in unexpected ways to create a monster). He writes, "La métamorphose césairienne a vocation d'arme aggressive : le trait est fulgurant […]" (254). Hénane further hypothesizes that the abundance of metamorphoses in Césaire is linked to his desire to access a place of mythic origin, which seems particularly applicable in the context of the *Cahier*; Hénane cites Aliko Songolo on this point: "On reconnaît là les éléments d'une quête mythique, un retour aux sources: '[…] une quête mythique – le mythe de la métamorphose […] par un retour aux origines'" (254).

The most tangible matter in this passage, tellingly, is that of the slight, darting "lucioles incertaines," weighing nothing, visible only by their light. Césaire jumps from the ethereal figures of night and wind, to the reading of his own pulse (as cited above, "je lis bien à mon pouls que […]"). This shift from the aerial and intangible to a reminder of the poet's own physical body is important. For a pulse, though itself only a barely perceptible movement, is nevertheless dependent upon a vital physical presence. Furthermore, it is not just a disembodied rhythm, but carries with it the physical *presence* of the poet and is something he himself heeds, allowing it to signify something.

This depiction of nature as a sick body (and, even more central to Césaire's project, his depiction of the people of Martinique whose suffering bodies are being consumed) resounds with Baudelaire's representation of the modern subject as a similarly sick body, being eaten despite itself (in "Au Lecteur," the oft-cited opening poem of *Les Fleurs du mal*). Through the collective *nous*, Baudelaire aligns the suffering of his "hypocrite lecteur, [son] semblable" with his own: "Et nous alimentons nos aimables remords, / Comme les mendiants nourrissent leur vermine" (6). For Baudelaire, the sick body – and quite often, the body in a state of being consumed – is an apt metaphor for the plight of the modern subject, and for the misunderstood poet himself. Like Baudelaire, Césaire will use violent scenes of consumption to illustrate suffering. But suffering in Césaire goes far beyond that of the poet himself, as it affects an entire people as well as the land in which they live. The Césairian extension of suffering to the impoverished land and to the natural elements is appropriate, given that the suffering he describes is more

than existential; this is no case of a poet being eaten by "irréparable" remorse.[80] Rather, it is an imminently physical lack of hunger that is faced: a people unable to eat. Jack Forbes argues eloquently in *Columbus and Other Cannibals* that colonialism should be understood as a form of cannibalism, a "disease of aggression against other living things and, more precisely, the disease of the consuming of the creatures' lives and possessions" (xvi).[81] In the poet's native land, even nature consumes itself violently, echoing the violence of colonialism which the poet decries; the land, for example, is eaten away by the relentless hunger of the sea ("la mer est un gros chien qui lèche et mord la plage aux jarrets, et à force de la mordre elle finira par la dévorer, bien sûr, la plage et la rue Paille avec") (19-20). In this embattled environment where the oppressed and the land are one, clearly no body is safe from consumption.

The visceral representation of the bodies we encounter throughout his work – and moreover, that by now familiar tendency he has at times to attribute a body even to the

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[80] In "L'Irréparable," (*Les Fleurs du mal*), Baudelaire begins, "Pouvons-nous étouffer le vieux, le long Remords, / Qui vit, s'agite et se tortille, / Et se nourrit de nous comme le ver des morts, / Comme du chêne la chenille? / Pouvons-nous étouffer l'implacable Remords?" (54). Although the suffering with which Césaire is concerned goes beyond his own, using his depiction of it is a means of attempting to help others rise above oppression, he will also be concerned – as Baudelaire was – with an apolitical, more general *malaise*. His "L'Irrémédiable" is a sure nod to Baudelaire's poem by the same name; both confront the problems inherent in existence that, for Baudelaire, is characterized as an inescapable evil.

[81] Forbes is not alone in his assessment. In *Consuming the Caribbean*, for instance, Mimi Sheller suggests the same, asking, "Was the Caribbean truly a place where Europeans were at risk of being eaten? Or were they in fact the ones who posed a threat to the bodies, health, and lives of the indigenous people of the region, and later to the enslaved and indentured workers who were consumed in the system of […] colonial capitalism?" (143)

vast and unformed – at once binds Césaire to Baudelaire, and separates them in an important way. As I hope to have demonstrated in my prior chapter, for Baudelaire, who shares Théophile Gautier's distaste for engaged art (Gautier was famously a proponent of *l'art pour l'art*), this violent aesthetic remains firmly rooted in its own causes. Violent eating in Césaire, on the other hand – swallowed tongues, and the forced consumption of the spiny and inedible, as I will later show – will affect a world beyond that of the text itself, serving as a propulsive and galvanizing force for a people the poet will implore to *eat*, so that they will no longer be eaten.

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I would like to conclude this analysis of some of Césaire's literary influences with a meditation on the considerable influence of Isidore Ducasse, Comte de Lautréamont. Césaire's essays attest to his appreciation of the nineteenth-century writer, and the viscerality and excess of the Césairian aesthetic reflect this. When, in the *Cahier*, Césaire writes, "J'ai assassiné Dieu de ma paresse de mes paroles de mes gestes de mes chansons obscènes," we may be reminded of one of several instances in which, in *Les Chants de Maldoror*, the protagonist kills God. Césaire was quite probably in some measure thinking of this. But in Césaire's hands, such a proclamation takes on another potential layer of meaning. For if the "Dieu" the poet is addressing is the authorizing force of the colonizer's aggression, it might also be – by association – the language and the literature of the colonizer. Paradoxically, then, Césaire at once aligns himself with the tradition he candidly admired in his work, and distances himself from it, indeed "kills" it. In *Tropiques*, Césaire wrote of Lautréamont that he was "le premier à avoir compris que la

poésie commence avec l'excès, la démesure, les recherches frappées d'interdit" (6-7, February 1943). Such obvious admiration may have resulted in the possibly Lautréamont-inspired assassination of God. But Césaire's emulation of Lautréamont's irreverence results in no obvious imitation of the earlier poet's work, no glaring instances of literary cannibalism. Rather, it is through a continued spirit of innovation and creativity, of disregard for norms, that Césaire's admiration of Lautréamont is evident—a kind of acceptance through revolt.[82] It is a more powerful use of language than any direct imitation could be—an approach that serves Césaire well in this politically engaged text.

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The Pulse

There is an undeniably pulsating physicality to the *Cahier*. Indeed, the word pulse "beats" regularly throughout the poem, appearing three times, and at regular intervals: in the opening pages, near the middle, and once more in the final pages. I would like to suggest that, in fact, the pulse can be read as a means of tracing – as a doctor would the health of her patient – the progress of Césaire's written revolt, as it unfolds. It is at once tied to the entwinement of the land and its people in mutual suffering, and to the

[82] Later in this chapter, in my analysis of the function of cannibalism in the *Cahier*, I will also discuss the critical approach to Césaire's literary appropriation. Consistent with my ideas here, in no instance I have been able to find does his "consumption" of earlier texts subjugate him to them. Rather, this intertextuality reflects not only a mastery on the part of Césaire, imparting richer layers of meaning to his text, but they are surrounded ("consumed," in a sense) by his remarkable innovation, an inimitable style that prevents any citation from becoming mere imitation.

elaboration of Césaire's tendency to flesh out even inanimate "bodies," heightening their susceptibility to oppression and consumption.

Looking closely at Césaire's three uses of the word, it becomes clear that there is an important progression between the pulse of the natural world, to that of the poet himself: while they are at first distinct from one another, they will not remain so. The implications of this merging together will – I believe – be critical to the project of the *Cahier*. Early on, the presence of the sick body is established through nature, which is worried, malarial, and feverish. Such a depiction of inanimate matter is typical of Césaire, whose work René Hénane describes as being of an "exceptionnelle densité charnelle" (*Le chant blessé*, 16). For example, in addressing himself to the land, he speaks as if to a wounded body, saying of his return, "je reviens vers la hideur désertée de vos plaies" (22). Equally visceral in its depiction of the land is the passage in which the poet's first use of "le pouls" appears: "Au bout du petit matin, le morne au sabot inquiet et docile – son sang impaludé met en déroute le soleil de ses *pouls* surchauffés" (10, emphasis mine).

Having attributed this pulse to nature early on, it is hardly surprising that the writing subject later emphasizes his own physical presence, when – toward the midpoint of the work – he writes, "je lis bien à mon *pouls* que l'exotisme n'est pas provende pour moi" (34, emphasis mine). While the pulse does indicate life, it serves here not as a gauge of health, but as a recognition of what is *wrong*: the objectification of a people, the problematic of "exotisme."[83] It is the final use of "pouls" that most demands our

[83] Suzanne Césaire's essay, "Le Grand Camouflage," describes the tourist's mindless consumption of the exotic, characterized by a blindness to human misery, camouflaged by the beauty of the Antilles.

attention, however, for it unites the pulse of the land with that of the narrator. It serves as a sort of resolution of these two threads, as Césaire writes of "le gigantesque *pouls sismique* qui bat maintenant la mesure d'un corps vivant" (57, emphasis mine).

At first, the poet reads the pulse as a sign that his voyage is not yet complete, that the oppressed "bodies" in question, both land and people, are still ill. Then, he embraces the "gigantic," seismic pulse of the land, like a living body. The merging that occurs in this embrace echoes the already-established thematic engagement between the people and the land. The shift from the narrator's body (made present through the "moi") to the land is elided: "Et voici soudain que force et vie m'assaillent comme un taureau […], et voilà toutes les veines et veinules qui s'affairent au sang neuf et l'énorme poumon des cyclones qui respire et le feu thésaurisé des volcans" (57). This surge of life seems at once to resuscitate the sick body of nature, and the poet's own.

By according to nature a body, he has opened it to physical harm and thus to consumption. But it would seem that for Césaire, as a body, it is by the same measure capable of *receiving* life, of being restored on the occasion of his "return" (57). The pulse seems to have been the answer to the problems of fragmentation Césaire evokes: "et le nègre chaque jour […] plus séparé de soi-même […] moins immédiat avec soi-même" (56). For, if we accept that the people of Martinique are – in the context of the *Cahier* –

Such an interaction cannot be sustained, Suzanne Césaire writes, but must eventually bring about change: "Sur les routes bordées de glyciridia, les jolis négrillons qui digèrent en extase leurs racines cuites avec ou sans sel, sourient à l'automobile de grand luxe qui passe. Ils sentent […] la nécessité d'être un jour les maîtres d'une bête aussi souple et luisante et forte. […] Il y a dans des centaines de hangars sordides […] une invisible végétation de désirs. Les fruits impatients de la Révolution en jailliront, inévitablement" (271, *Tropiques* Vol. 13-14).

indivisible from the land, as Césaire suggests that he himself is ("ce pays dont le limon entre dans la composition de ma chair"), he is – in a sense – returned to *himself* when he is returned to the land (22). The return to the "pays natal" is not only a return to the native land, but a return to the native *earth*—earth that vibrates in unison with the pulse of the people.

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The *Noyau*

That pulse linking the poet's body to the land is not surprising, of course, in a work whose very title states as its project a return to the land. Césaire has been living in Paris for five years when he begins writing the *Cahier*, and so is envisioning not only a transformation of the problems of this land, but also a physical return to the place itself. But there is something elemental still to be recovered, something the poet is convinced the land holds within it.

The land seems a furtive thing in the *Cahier*, harboring the potential for renewed life: a precious *noyau*, a seed of regeneration.[84] Imagining the island restored to his liking, Césaire writes, "Au bout du petit matin, ce plus essentiel pays *restitué à ma gourmandise*, non de diffuse tendresse, mais la tourmentée concentration sensuelle du gras téton des mornes avec l'accidentel palmier comme son germe durci, la jouissance saccadée des torrents" (14, emphasis mine). He states clearly, later in the text, that his

[84] *Noyau* is a particularly apt term for the thing Césaire seeks to protect and desires to see flourish, for a *noyau* is, firstly, the "Partie centrale et dure dans un fruit"; secondly, it is the "partie centrale, fondamentale d'un objet" (*Le Petit Robert*, 1504).

hope is to see the hunger of his people sated through self-sufficiency; but this will require a phoenix-like emergence from the ashes, a production of something from nothing (out of "faim" and "soif"): "ce que je veux / c'est pour la faim universelle / pour la soif universelle / la sommer libre enfin / de produire de son intimité close / la succulence des fruits" (50). The latent potential the land holds within it is directly related to this desire: after all, Césaire presents the land itself as a kind of self-sufficient, hermaphroditic body with hills as breasts ("gras téton") and trees as seed ("germe durci"), capable of achieving its own "jouissance," the results of which flow around it in "torrents" (14). If the land itself can achieve this sort of self-sufficiency, perhaps its people can.

Interestingly, it is in gustatory terms that the poet expresses a desire for its renewal ("restitué à ma gourmandise"). But, in order for the land to be to his *taste*, it must be productive—which would seem an impossible feat when it is "famélique," as it is at the start of the poem. Césaire writes, "Au bout du petit matin, le morne famélique et nul ne sait mieux que ce morne bâtard pourquoi le suicidé s'est étouffé de son hypoglosse en retournant sa langue pour l'avaler" (11). This land – bound as it is to the potential but also the plight of the people – has knowledge (and the poet does use the verb "savoir") of that most essential vehicle for surmounting enslavement: the voice. In his interview with Jacqueline Leiner, Césaire explains that he exists only insofar as he is able to express himself through words: "je ne m'appréhende qu'à travers *un mot*, qu'à travers *le mot*" (xii, emphasis in original). It is not surprising, then, to see the importance he attaches to the retrieval of the voice of Martinique in the *Cahier*: the subjectivity of the individual depends, he believes, upon verbal expression.

Roland Barthes evoked something ineffable, a quality of the voice he called "le grain de la voix," in his eponymous book. Barthes' term seems particularly appropriate here, where its application could be decidedly less abstract. Here, it could be understood as more than an inexplicable quality of the voice, but instead it would be the very thing that allows for the voice to express itself anew (the idea of the 'seed' alone suggests continuity); for this lost *noyau* contains the particularity, the expression of a people; it is a *grain of the voice*. And this is the point of the text: to recover this lost voice, to summon it forth, and to make it grow, from its still-hidden place.

The poet's effort to recover the lost voice is accompanied by a move to protect it, naturally, once it is found: "Je retrouverais le secret des grandes communications," he vows, and then soon after: "Je roulerais comme du sang frénétique sur le courant de l'oeil des mots […] en pierres précieuses assez loin pour décourager les mineurs" (21). Implicit in the return of this voice worth protecting is the consequential recovery of self-expression. There is a notable resonance between Césaire's protective impulse, and a similar tendency on the part of Rimbaud, who, in "Après le Déluge," writes: "Oh! les pierres précieuses qui se cachaient — les fleurs qui regardaient déjà […] oh les pierres précieuses s'enfouissant, et les fleurs ouvertes!" (53-54). There is the obvious echo of "precious jewels," but these poets seem also to have a shared recognition of a sort of cult knowledge that has been buried, a sentiment we can read even more clearly at the conclusion of Rimbaud's poem: "et la Reine, la Sorcière qui allume sa braise dans le pot de terre, ne voudra jamais nous raconter ce qu'elle sait, et que nous ignorons" (54).[85] But

[85] In the present context, it is also interesting to note that Rimbaud identifies with his ancestors, the Gauls, rather than with the invading, "civilizing" force of the Latin culture; in *Une saison en enfer*, he

Césaire is not content to leave this knowledge hidden. Rather, it is just this sort of expression – hidden, buried – that he seeks to expose.

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The Swamp of Starvation and the Emergent Voice

The responsibility Césaire feels to speak out against the violence of colonialism permeates the *Cahier*, but naturally it also informs his poetic process more generally. The act of finding the proper words to express the realities of an impossible situation, and bringing those words to light, is essential to him. And this is, as he reveals in the interview with Jacqueline Leiner, precisely how he understands poetry: as a *process* of inner reflection, a dance between thought and its eventually emerging verbal expression: "Je porte [les choses] très longtemps en moi, et puis, elles sortent et je les profère. À ce moment-là, c'est de la poésie" (xvi). This project of recovering the Martinican voice from the silence to which it has been confined, not to mention the voyage of self-discovery the

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writes, "J'ai des mes ancêtres gaulois l'oeil bleu blanc, la cervelle étroite, et la maladresse dans la lutte. Je trouve mon habillement aussi barbare que le leur. […] D'eux, j'ai : l'idolâtrie et l'amour du sacrilège; — oh! tous les vices" (107). Rimbaud's claim on savagery also resonates with Césaire's claim on cannibalism in the *Cahier*, an inherited vice, he suggests – like Rimbaud's self-proclaimed "love of sacrilege" – coming from a sort of unspoiled point of origin, which of course for Césaire is the native land before colonialism. He is determined to recover "mon originale géographie aussi; la carte du monde faite à mon usage, non pas teinte aux arbitraires couleurs des savants, mais à la géométrie de mon sang répandu" (55-56).

Cahier entails for the narrator, who plays with notions of identity throughout its pages, could, I would like to suggest, be understood as a model for Césaire's poetic creation.[86]

Articulation is agency, as Frantz Fanon explains: "parler, c'est exister absolument pour l'autre" (15). In the *Cahier*, the voice is a gauge, then, of power. The changes we witness in the voices of the *Cahier* are crucial to the movement of the text away from the European dominance the poet decries. Indeed, the agency of the voice shifts remarkably over the course of the poem. As the poet seeks to regain the lost voice of his people, he notes meanwhile that the effort of the "white world" to sustain control is growing difficult, and he hears strain in the collective European "voice": "*Écoutez* le monde blanc

[86] "Moi" appears frequently in the *Cahier*, but the narrator entertains the possibility of multiple identities, in passages such as the following: "Comme il y a des hommes-hyènes et des hommes- / panthères, je serais un homme-juif / un homme-cafre / un homme-hindou-de-Calcutta / un homme-de-Harlem-qui-ne-vote-pas" (20). His interest in preserving the "moi" is expressed throughout: "c'est moi rien que moi" is repeated three times in quick succession (34). The protection of identity – not just that of the poet, but also the collective identities of Antilleans – is in fact the founding principle of the review *Tropiques*, as Césaire explains, for he begins it in order to fill a lack of self-knowledge he believes plagues the Antilles. And it is important to note that he understands filling this lack as an overturning of a problematic economy of (cultural) consumption, which will – significantly – take place through engaged writing. He thus resolves to produce something *in the Antilles* for consumption *in the Antilles*, in order to address the problem of *over*consumption of cultural products coming from elsewhere, namely Europe: "C'est moi qui ai eu l'idée de mettre sur pied la revue; c'est moi qui lui ai donné son nom. J'ai toujours été frappé par le fait que les Antilles souffrent d'un manque. Il y a aux Antilles un vide culturel. Non que nous nous désintéressons de la culture, mais les Antilles sont trop exclusivement une société de consommation culturelle. Aussi ai-je toujours travaillé à ce qu'elles puissent s'exprimer elle-mêmes, parler, créer" (v). This is a literary answer to an ultimate goal of the *Cahier*: for Martinicans to be able to feed themselves what they have succeeded in growing in their own soil.

/ horriblement las de son effort immense / ses *articulations rebelles craquer* sous les étoiles / dures" (48, emphasis mine).[87]

But the lost voice is not going to emerge easily. The poet senses from the start of the text that the people's voice is present somewhere, but detached from them. He writes of a people "à côté de son vrai cri, à côté de son cri de faim" (9). But it soon becomes clear that he perceives this elusive voice also to be contained somehow by nature. Since the people and the land are bound together by suffering in the *Cahier* (not to mention by the instances in which a human body is entwined with the land, as when the narrator speaks of "ce pays dont le limon entre dans la composition de ma chair"), it is not surprising that it is precisely from the land, from nature, that the voice will have to be retrieved. With the body and the land joined by hunger and oppression, we might read the body itself as a "marais de la faim," which harbors hunger and silence. Early in the poem, Césaire writes that the voice itself is mired in a swamp of hunger; a silent "négrillon," a human symbol of the oppression inherent in colonization, is rendered unable to speak, "car c'est dans les marais de la faim que s'est enlisée sa voix d'inanition" (11).[88] He

[87] "Articulation," as it is used here, is translated by most as the "refractory joints" of a body. However, the sound of an articulation would just as often (if not more often) connote listening to a voice—a voice expressing a thought, giving form to an idea. Here, as is generally the case in the *Cahier*, the presence of the body announces itself loudly. But, since words are what the poet seeks to recover for his people, couldn't these particular "articulations rebelles" be the "unruly words" of the "white world," "cracking" and losing some of their power, finally?

[88] As Eshleman and Smith note in their translation of the *Cahier*, "négrillon" is a pejorative term meaning "little nigger." They also note that Césaire's use of the root word "nègre" marks a departure from the way the more mobile classes referred to themselves (as "Noirs") (60). They insist on this translation, reasoning that Césaire "was making up a family of words based on what he considered to be the most

continues, “car sa voix s’oublie dans les marais de la faim, / et il n’y a rien, rien à tirer vraiment de ce petit / vaurien, / qu’une faim qui ne sait plus grimper aux agrès de / sa voix / une faim lourde et veule, / une faim ensevelie au plus profond de la Faim de / ce morne famélique” (12). [89] The voice, then, is buried in hunger. As Valérie Loichot argues in *The Tropics Bite Back*, “Hunger with the lower-case, which represents the boy’s individual hunger, is itself engulfed in absolute *H*unger” (179).

Indeed, lack is so all-consuming here, that it is almost palpable. It is a nothing become *something*, so much so that requires that capital ‘F’ (“la Faim de ce morne famélique”) (12). Furthermore, Césaire calls it a “faim *lourde*,” an expression that juxtaposes lack with weight (12, emphasis mine). It is worth remarking, too, that we find hunger buried *within* hunger in two of the figures in this passage: the *morne* already labeled “famélique” contains hunger; and a man who already represents lack has nothing within himself to yield but hunger. But from hunger and thirst, the poet envisions succulent fruits growing; as cited previously, from the “intimité close” of a race defined by its hunger and thirst, he seems to be willing “la succulence des fruits” into existence (50). Just as speech must be called out from the depths of hunger, so must these

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insulting way to refer to a black” (60). Mireille Rosello and Annie Pritchard translate the term in the same way.

[89] Why would the *morne* (the word the Martiniquais use for a small hill, a common feature of that landscape) in particular be *famélique*, and not some other feature of the land, the air or the water? As Mireille Rosello writes in the notes accompanying her translation of the *Cahier*, the *morne* is associated with slave revolt. Runaway slaves would maroon there, and they sometimes succeeded in establishing settlements. Perhaps the *morne*, with an inherent tendency to be bound up – as I have noted the land tends to be in *the Cahier* – with the plight of the people, is “hungry” for just that: revolt.

miraculous fruits the poet envisions emerge from the ground, symbols of the self-sufficiency the poet so desires for the people of Martinique.

This voice that Césaire persists in summoning from the silent void must, therefore, speak words that *act*. The poet's tone is determined: "Je retrouverais le secret des grandes communications et des grandes combustions," he vows (21). A godly act, this regeneration of "grandes communications" from the void. And what would these "great communications" be? The voice the poet seeks to recover might also speak – in the same breath it uses to decry colonization, and "les courants silencieux de la désespérance" – to a desired independence from the French canon—works that are certainly their own kind of "grandes communications" (34, 21). In words which I suggested previously gesture toward the opening of the book of Genesis, Césaire approaches *the* original text of reference. Césaire's "Je dirais orage. Je dirais fleuve. Je dirais tornade. Je dirais feuille. Je dirais arbre" (21), seems a likely echo of its ancient counterpart, "And God said, Let there be light: and there was light," (1). There is another resonance with the *Bible* worth mentioning here: one might think of that oft-cited first verse, from the first chapter of the Book of John: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (621). Of that phrase, poet Mary Reufle says, in a lecture on the topic of Beginnings, "Western civilization rests upon those words. And yet there is a lively group of thinkers who believe that in the beginning was the Act. That nothing can precede action—no breath before act, no thought before act, no pervasive love before some kind of act" (2). Brilliantly, Césaire demonstrates how words can *themselves* be acts; poetry can itself be a performance. For in the *Cahier*, acts are impossible for a people immobilized by starvation, mired in "les marais de la faim." The

voice *must* come first, to serve as the guiding force for acts to come. Césaire writes, "Nous dirions. Chanterions. Hurlerions. / Voix pleine, voix large, tu serais notre bien, notre / pointe en avant" (18).

I would argue that the "dire" repeated in the poet's vow to recover "le secret des grandes communications" could very appropriately be interchanged with the verb connoting the most elemental of acts, that of *being*: "Je [serais] orage. Je [serais] fleuve. Je [serais] tornade. Je [serais] feuille. Je [serais] arbre" (21). The people's entwinement with the land is already clear to us, so it follows that from this particular "dire" there seems to be an inherent "faire," the promise of an action to follow. In *New World Poetics*, George Handley explains Caribbean poet Derek Walcott's poetic "rechristening of trees" in a way that may shed light on the above passage from the *Cahier*: "Rechristening is also misnaming, and that is precisely the point of poetry […]: to take possession by means of renaming" (291). The project of the *Cahier* is, after all, not only to "take possession," but to *re*possess a land, a voice, and with them, the well-being of a people. All the more reason for Césaire to leave his own mark on this particular passage, an originary example of a text that brings life and action to words. Furthermore, if we apply Handley's perspective, we might argue that – beyond the personally motivated reclaiming of the "pays natal" – Césaire is doing his duty as a poet more generally, by restating this biblical verse in his own words: "Poetry is a rechristening that sees the New World as a palimpsest and poetry as the adamic task of turning away from the allure of fading names, histories, and meanings in order to keep language fresh and alive" (292). If colonialism has marked his native land in an unacceptable manner, his own literary

inscription on a founding myth of creation is a powerful gesture in Césaire's poetic process of restoring Martinique "to [his] taste" (14).[90]

Slowly, the lost (or forgotten, "oubli[é] dans les marais de la faim") voice finds its way out: "En vain dans la tiédeur de votre gorge mûrissez-vous vingt fois la même pauvre consolation que nous sommes des marmonneurs de mots" (33). But there is perhaps more to this muttering than meets the eye; "marmonneurs" may in fact be a veiled suggestion of the word "maronneurs," a reference, in times of slavery, to revolt ("la fuite des esclaves") (*Dictionnaire Étymologique des Créoles français*, 304).[91] More generally speaking, "maron," a "mot des 'isles,'" could be applied to anything wild and uncultivated, plants and animals alike (304). Both applications seem appropriate here: the suggestion of a word connoting revolt, hidden in plain sight, anticipates the scene of revolt still to come in the poem, and even more importantly, superposes upon a word that suggests a certain weakness of expression, a hidden form of agency.

The body's role in speaking words, in the physical production of sound, is important here. Knowing the viscerality that tends to mark Césaire's work, it is not surprising to discover a passage in which not only the figures represented in the work, but the *words* themselves, become strangely visceral and material: "Je roulerais comme du sang frénétique sur le courant de l'oeil des mots en chevaux fous en enfants frais" (21).

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[90] Ronnie Scharfman describes Césaire's poetry as "an alienated subject's attempt to reinstate and reinsert itself as the subject of history" (12). From this perspective, Césaire's rewriting of certain Biblical passages would be a most archetypal form of reinstatement, one that would allow not only for the reinstatement of the subject, but a reinstatement in a wider, originary context.

[91] Like muttering, to "marmonner" is to produce a type of speech that may be halting or spoken under the breath, a paradoxical word to use as a possible euphemism for another.

Words become here like an eye, appropriately since they embody – make *visible*, in their way – the desire of the poet—the "je," here represented as the blood that circulates around the words, giving life to them.

And how does Césaire direct the action of these words? What purpose will they serve, other than to fill the void of silence the poet seeks to break? Césaire clearly sees them as a means of giving voice to the oppressed: "Ma voix sera la bouche des malheurs qui n'ont point de bouche, ma voix, la liberté […]" (22). This is not the only time the poet explains how he intends for his words to perform: "Des mots? […] ah oui, des mots! mais des mots de sang frais, des mots qui sont des raz-de-marée et des érésipèles et des palaudismes et des laves et des feux de brousse, et des flambées de chair, et des flambées de villes" (33). These words, the poet writes, are words capable of consuming violently, through fire and disease. And what do they leave in their wake? Mirroring the violence being done to this people through the acts of destruction the poet declares them capable of, they also mark a separation from the dominant literature, in effect *consuming* the old to make way for something new—creating a place, as I have said, where that lost voice can emerge from the void to which it has been relegated, and from the land where it has been buried, like a phoenix rising from the ashes.[92]

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[92] In *L'Intention poétique*, Glissant also recognizes the earth as a repository of a lost voice, and – as in the *Cahier* – one that must be called up from the depths—resurrected. The striations he describes are particularly evocative, capable of conveying a complex past, in which the native people, and then the African slaves, suffered: "Ici les rochers semblent de terre; amalgamés d'un sang de craie ils s'épongent et s'enracinent dans le tuf rouge. Leur antre est encombré des cadavres perdus, des corps fantômes […] eux qui ne flamboient pas dans l'unique lumière de la postérité vérifiée mais veillent en la surdité de ce roc, pour attendre qu'un cri de nous les convoque" (39). There is a beautiful resonance here between the two

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False Food

Nourishment is impossible in the *Cahier*, and all seemingly edible foods are somehow not so in the end; likewise, all instances of *un*forced consumption are relegated to a past or future time, or they are dissolved, as I will soon show—suspended in a dream. Early on, Césaire depicts pleasure as an elusive thing, a privilege of the past, their attempts at its recovery difficult, if not futile. It is important to note that he articulates the successful transmission of pleasure – beginning with the act that produces it, to its effect in the body – in terms of nourishment, carried through the umbilical cord: "Et nos gestes imbéciles pour faire revivre l'éclaboussement d'or des instants favorisés, le cordon ombilical restitué à sa splendeur fragile […]" (13). The bridge between this people and their source of nourishment has been broken, so that any attempt at repairing it requires a return to the past, an attempt to resurrect what once was.

In the only scene I have been able to find in which the speaking subject – or anyone else in the poem, for that matter – actually consumes something by choice *sur scène*, it is confined to memory, and a complicated one, at that: "moi sur une route, enfant, mâchant une racine de canne à sucre" (30). A simple thing, really; children love sweets, after all. But, one might ask, what does sugar cane mean to a child whose family

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writers' interest in summoning what seems in each case to be a sort of relic (in Césaire, the lost voice of Martinicans; in Glissant, the suppressed Amerindians of Martinique's past, summoned from the earth by a cry), in order to restore something authentic and essential to the people of Martinique, whose former homeland disappeared beyond remembering long before.

members are forced laborers in the fields producing sugar cane? Or, perhaps a better question would be: what is sugar cane to an adult remembering that childhood pleasure, aware now of what that particular crop – sweet though it was – symbolizes?[93] Whatever significance the reader may attribute to this, one thing is certain: this is a pleasure – and, based on the questions I have just posed, a complex one, I would argue – that is firmly rooted in the past, a childhood memory hermetically sealed, kept from the present tense of the text like a relic suspended in amber.

In another passage, what we can only imagine would be grain or root vegetables is being stored in a silo: "silo où préserve et mûrit ce que la terre a de plus terre" (46). This recalls my earlier discussion of the *noyau*, something precious the poet valorizes and seeks to preserve. It is the essence of the earth, buried in that earth for protection. It is also, presumably, something edible, or it can be made to become so. For now, it is enough simply to note that the comestible substance suggested here is not to be eaten in the present, but is instead being kept for the future; it will require transformation through cooking, in order to be eaten (it is likely that the said food is cassava, or manioc, which – if not cooked – can be deadly to eat).

There is a similar relegation of edible matter to a point in time that is not the present in the poet's observation of decomposing jack fruit: "la décomposition des fruits du jacquier" (42). So much consumption takes place in the *Cahier*, yet so little of what seems to be made available is actually edible matter. And the time for consuming this

[93] The irony of the sweetness of sugar and the bitterness of enslavement in the Caribbean has been amply covered by critics; in *Tasting Food, Tasting Freedom*, Sidney Mintz confirms that "enslaved peoples [of the Caribbean] were consigned principally to agricultural labor, particularly on plantations and especially sugar plantations" (37).

fruit has passed, it belongs to the past, like the food of the silo belongs to the future. Like the scenes of consumption in which Emma Bovary is suspended in a dream, or like the relegation of scenes of eating to offstage in works by Plato and Petronius, Césaire's subtraction of scenes of nourishment from the present tense demands our attention, and is a sure sign of the complexity of consumption in the *Cahier*.

The next scene, filled as it is with edible matter, and set – it would at first appear – in the present tense, seems more promising. But in the *Cahier*, where it appears that there is plenty, something is amiss. There is a familiar echo with Flaubert's empty food here; as with the famous *pièce montée*, which serves as the centerpiece of Emma and Charles Bovary's wedding banquet, and which is, furthermore, *the* central alimentary figure of the text, the Christmas feast of the *Cahier* is both central to the economy of consumption of this poem, and resoundingly hollow at its core.

The desires piqued by the anticipation of the feast are abundant: "Il s'était annoncé d'abord Noël par un picotement de désirs, une soif de tendresses neuves, un bourgeonnement de rêves imprécis […] et alors c'était parmi le bourg sa vertigineuse retombée qui éclatait la vie des cases comme une grenade trop mûre" (14). A place has been created within the people, then, for the fulfillment of these desires; the "soif" and the "rêves imprécis" await the realization of imagined pleasures. But the figure at the end of the passage anticipates, I would suggest, the coming failure of the feast to fulfill these overflowing desires. For the only mention of food in this short passage on the anticipation of a feast is strictly metaphorical, and it is that of a fruit which has exploded, and whose seeds therefore may nourish the ground, but are nevertheless scattered, never to be consumed, already "trop mûre"—already relegated, in its ideal state, to the past. A

shadow of the military meaning of "grenade," current in both language and in action during World War II as Césaire was completing the *Cahier*, also haunts this passage, emphasizing the nefarious role food plays in the poem.

A pomegranate is a particularly beautiful fruit, both in color and form; it attracts the eye, and the seeds that fill it suggest not only nourishment, but the possibility of regeneration, which heightens the effectiveness of Césaire's negation of consumption in this scene. We may recall a similar scenario in *Madame Bovary*, for there, as here, what appears to represent bounty is utterly incapable of nourishing. Moreover, during the rare instances in which Emma chooses to actually consume something, she too is suspended in a dreamlike state: the cherry ice at *La Vaubyessard* is eaten with eyes closed to the room and to the world; likewise, the champagne and cherries she shares with Léon during a romantic picnic are enjoyed in a state Emma herself recognizes as being like a dream. Césaire relegates food – or the enjoyment of it, at least – to a comparable space of non-reality. The aforementioned "rêves imprécis" of the Christmas feast in the *Cahier* are appropriate markers of longing, for what ensues is like a mirage, a dream of plenty.

Christmas was problematic from the start, since it is the crowning celebration of an imposed religion. Consequently, the revelry surrounding Christmas is built on a sort of chasm, or at most, a shaky foundation. There is a sort of muted enthusiasm about the people's approach to it, relative to the more exuberant, customary rituals, such as Carnival: "Noël n'était pas comme toutes les fêtes. Il n'aimait pas à courir les rues, à danser sur les places publiques, à s'installer sur les chevaux de bois, à profiter de la cohue pour pincer les femmes, à lancer des feux d'artifice au front des tamariniers" (15). "Noël" becomes personified, in the second sentence, and seems – in its negation of the joys of

Carnival – to represent the European colonizer, whose quieting of the people extends here to the imposition of a religious ritual that clearly feels unnatural to them. Each of the things the poet lists in the aforementioned citation describing the activity of Carnival suggests an outwardly-directed movement typical of what such celebratory rituals normally would entail, but which are absent from Christmas. Christmas comes, then, to be defined not by what it is, but rather by what it is *not*.

The negative valorization of Christmas continues, for rather than the usual *trop-plein* we tend to associate with feasts, the celebrants are plagued by a fear of *lack*: "d'inquiétudes, de-peur-que-ça-ne-suffise-pas, de-peur-que-ça-ne-manque, de-peur-qu'on-ne-s'embête" (15). Even the church where the Christmas Mass is held, is defined by what it is not: as if to quiet the anxiety brought on by the holiday's official formalities, it takes place in "une petite église *pas* intimidante" (15, emphasis mine).

But the most remarkable negation is that of the nourishing potential of food itself. The edible matter that makes up the feast is eclipsed by language, and reduced, paradoxically, to almost nothing: "et on en mange du bon," writes Césaire, "et l'on en boit du réjouissant" (15). (What are these things? Pure language. "Du bon" and "du réjouissant" are, after all, not comestible.) It is important to note that this is the only moment of the text where (supposed) consumption takes place willingly, and purely for the sake of pleasure. However, despite this, the verbs "manger" and "boire" here apply only to abstract entities, which are hardly up to the task of fulfilling those desires piqued at the start of the Christmas passage.

When food and drink do finally appear at the table, it is in list form. As with Flaubert's profusion of foods at the famous wedding banquet or at *La Vaubyessard*, both

of which I describe at length in my first chapter, the items in question are dematerialized by the very language used to describe them: "et il y a du boudin, celui large et trapu, le bénin à goût de serpolet, le violent à l'incandescence pimentée, et du café brûlant et de l'anis sucré et du punch au lait, et le soleil liquide des rhums" (15). Just as "manger" and "boire" were applied to abstractions, there is a similar move here to negate consumption through language; for, reading closely, we see that that once food and drink appear in the scene, it is only through the phrase "il y a" that they are made available. The fact that they are there for the taking, that there are boudin sausages to eat, and hot coffee to drink, after all, would seem to prefigure eating and drinking. But the verbs "manger" and "boire" are significantly absent, having already been spent – it is important to note – on that which cannot be consumed. Instead, we have simply "il y a"; they are *there*, but to what end? The fare is listed and described: the sausages, seasoned and either hot or mild, the coffee both spiked with rum and spiced. The cultural specificity of the food and drink would seem to redeem somewhat the foreignness of Christmas for the celebrants: even if the decorum of the ritual itself feels forced to them, the foods are both familiar and appetizing. But no act of consumption ensues, and in fact immediately after the list, the poet is content to continue simply by noting that there are "toutes sortes de bonnes choses," taking his distance from the particularities of the banquet table and accounting for it only generally, as one would in passing (15).

It is also worth noting that there is an odd disparity in the Christmas scene between the emptiness that food represents there, and the plenitude of certain inanimate forms, rendered almost animal in the viscerality the poet attaches to them. For example, to demonstrate just how full of "all sorts of good things" the humble houses are on

Christmas day, Césaire describes them as "des cases aux entrailles riches en succulences" (15). An economy of consumption in which a house's "entrails" are grotesquely full, but in which people do not fill themselves in any concrete way, is terribly upside-down. Looking at the scene from a distance, it at first appears that all of the requisite luxuries of a feast are rightly there, just waiting to be consumed; but a closer look – as I hope to have shown – tells us otherwise. It seems, ultimately, that for the people involved, the "rêves imprécis" of their initial desires are never filled, nothing is ever realized from this feast, for it ends as it began, in a dream: "et l'on vit comme dans un rêve véritablement, et l'on boit et l'on crie et l'on chante comme dans un rêve, et l'on somnole aussi comme dans un rêve" (16).

As with Flaubert, in whose work food is overwhelmingly present but corresponding acts of consumption are rare, there is no obvious act of ingestion at the Christmas feast; no eating or drinking takes place *sur scène*. The supposed presence of food is an excuse for revelry, the ultimate result of which is inevitable disappointment: "Arrivé au sommet de son ascension, la joie crève comme un nuage" (16). And not only is one left with nothing in the end, not only does joy dissipate too quickly, but the physical presences fleshed out in the feasting scene: the flavored sausages, the warm, spiced drinks—recede into what we are assured was indeed a dream: "dans les fines sablures du rêve" (16). The presence of the food, the frenzied physical movement, all of it collapses, "insensiblement," back into the dream sequence with which – as we recall – the passage began ("rêves imprécis") (16, 14).

Because the suspension of the Christmas scene in a dream sequence, together with the very language of the passage, as I have argued, conspire to dematerialize the bounty

that at first appeared present there, what happens when the celebration finally concludes is particularly important. For after such an erasure, punctuated by the unraveling and ending of the feast, one might expect that the poet's focus on edible matter would dissolve accordingly. After all, the peak of the celebration has passed, the poet notes, and the "dream" of the feast's end mirrors the dreams of its beginning, emphasizing its lack of substance. But there is something still to come; first, the "dream" resurfaces, and then there is a sudden shift into the light of a new day: "et l'on somnole aussi comme dans un rêve avec des paupières en pétales de rose, et le jour vient velouté comme une sapotille" (16).

Having relegated the Christmas feast to a dream, he then superposes onto it the image of a sweet, tropical fruit (the "sapotille"), so bound to the tropical climes in which it grows that it cannot be easily transported to Europe for consumption (furthermore, the sapotilla is a fruit common in the Antilles, and is even the proper name of a town in Haïti). Add to this the pervasive odor of coconut that immediately follows the "sapotille" sunrise ("et l'odeur de purin des cacaoyers"), and we have before us the reification in the form of native colors and flavors, of the edibles that dematerialized and were never actually *consumed,* in the dream sequence of the feast. Here, I would suggest, the poet has brought about a regeneration of native, and, significantly, emphatically non-European tropical fruits, upon the ruins of a feast that was problematic in the imposed ritual that it entailed. Furthermore, fertilizer ("l'odeur de purin des cacaoyers") is evoked, as if to assure the growth, the successful superposition, of what belongs on the inside upon what has invaded from the outside.

This is one important way in which Césaire uses the figure of consumption – which in this case, takes place through the senses of sight and smell– as a means of carrying out the work of this engaged text: if he hopes through his poem to help "la succulence des fruits" emerge from nothing (to be exact, from the "intimité close" of hunger and thirst), here – we might argue – is one realization of just such an emergence (50). There is a gesture of triumph, certainly, in leaving upon the ruins of the now-dispersed Christmas revelry (that celebration of the imposed culture) the colors and smells of these fruits of the native land.

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Insides and Outsides

Critics have recognized widely and elaborated on the tension Césaire creates in the *Cahier* between interior and exterior (not to mention vertical and horizontal, but that is another, albeit related, story).[94] This tension creates a complex dynamic, with roots stretching far beyond what I will have time to elaborate here. Nevertheless, it seems necessary to discuss this briefly, in order to better illuminate consumption's role in this opposition. For criticism has largely neglected the crucial role consumption plays in illustrating – and even more importantly, helping ultimately to *resolve* – this tension, which is central to the text.

[94] Suk even conflates the two oppositions: "Horizontal is transposed to vertical, and simultaneously, the two sides of the disaster are transposed to an oppositional relation between inside and outside" (39).

It is helpful in this instance to remember that while writing the *Cahier*, the poet is, as I have noted, writing a return to his homeland from the outside, from Paris; addressing himself to his native land, he writes, "J'ai longtemps erré" (22). The homecoming he envisions, then, involves a return to the inside from the outside. In the course of such an undertaking, it is not surprising if the poet should wrestle with these issues himself, as articulated through the writing subject's own self-image. "Je force la membrane vitelline qui me sépare de moi-même," he writes. These words appear on the same page where he defines Europe in the following way: "l'Europe peureuse qui se reprend et fière se surestime" (34-35). The simultaneous move on the part of the writing subject who endeavors to make himself *whole* again, all the while disparaging Europe, which in this passage is oppressed, *broken apart* by its own cries (Césaire writes of "l'Europe toute révulsée de cris," 34), is remarkable. It seems to be an attempt at addressing the problems inherent in the war and in colonialism; for here, a representation of the oppressed grows stronger, while the strength of the "outside" force weakens. The forcing of the "membrane vitelline" (a layer of protein serving as a barrier between the interior and the shell of an egg) is a visceral metaphor for the writing subject's own resolve to reclaim a part of himself to which he feels he has lost access.[95] It also serves to remind us that this

[95] The writing subject's desire to become whole again is echoed later in the poem, in another passage in which opposing poles once again serve as a means of determining his place in the work: "faites de moi un homme de terminaison / faites de moi un homme d'initiation / faites de moi un homme de recueillement / mais faites aussi de moi un homme d'ensemencement" (49). This may be perceived as a scattering rather than a concentration (as with the dissolution of the aforementioned "membrane vitelline") of the self. But it may also be a declaration of the poet's desire to be omnipresent: to be a man of endings

revolt is both politically and personally engaged, and that the voyage of return is also a return to the self.

Because the act of consumption inherently opposes outside and in–, it is a particularly apt figure for illustrating the imbalance of power that characterizes colonization—the oppression of a native ("inside") culture by an outside force. The physical rupture of the boundary separating inside and out– that takes place in any act of ingestion will be particularly important, as I will soon explain further, as a means of illustrating the violence being done to the poet's people. But the emphatic tension that arises between these two poles in Césaire's depiction of consumption can also be an effective means of illustrating identity. We tend to understand ourselves, after all, as part of a collectivity (or a group of collectivities), whatever distances we may choose to take from it. By ingesting (interiorizing) certain foods or drinks, we are identifying ourselves as part of (we are *in*) a group that chooses to do the same, both in our immediate surroundings and in the wider world. The opening feast of Flaubert's *Salammbô* is an especially colorful illustration of this point, which we can read through the nineteenth-century epicure Brillat-Savarin's oft-cited aphorism, "Dites-moi ce que tu manges et je te dirai ce que tu es," often misquoted as "[…] et je te dirai *qui tu es*" (37). There is an important distinction to be made here, and it applies to Flaubert's feast as well as to Césaire's. For, as Brillat-Savarin argues, our habits of consumption can reveal that we are not all civilized; therefore, the original "I'll tell you *what* you are" is more appropriately

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and beginnings, to control entirely the world of his own text (we may recall Baudelaire's desire to be at once "victime et bourreau"), to make of himself the alpha and the omega—the God of his own work.

stated than in its altered state, “I’ll tell you *who* you are.” In *Salammbô*, at first, the distinctions to be made based on what the celebrants consume are made along lines of nationality: “Les Gaulois aux longs cheveux retroussés sur le sommet de la tête s’arrachaient les pastèques et les limons qu’ils croquaient avec l’écorce. Des Nègres n’ayant jamais vu de langoustes se déchiraient le visage à leurs piquants rouges. Mais les Grecs rasés, plus blancs que des marbres, jetaient derrière eux les épluchures de leur assiette” (34). Like those at the Christmas feast in the *Cahier*, Flaubert’s celebrants are identified as having a taste for a particular sort of food, collectively (the celebrants are, admittedly, a homogenous bunch in the *Cahier*, and as such, they prepare typical, native foods to eat). But, in both *Salammbô* and in the *Cahier*, as if the mere presence of food were enough to invoke it, the celebratory atmosphere devolves quickly into one of pandemonium, and the question to be asked ultimately is not “*qui* tu es,” but more one of “*ce que* tu es”: “Ils imitaient le cri des bêtes féroces,” writes Flaubert, who in the same breath describes the mercenary soldiers at the feast as “des dromadaires altérés” (36). Similarly, in the *Cahier*, as the feast reaches its climax, Césaire writes, “la *créature* tout entière […] se liquéfie en sons, voix et rythme” (16, emphasis mine). Furthermore, the celebrants seem to lose their human form: “Et chacun se met à tirer par la queue le diable le plus proche” (16). There is here, as in *Salammbô*, a remarkable fluidity between the human and the animal—an ease of transformation made possible through the (supposed) act of consumption. The limits between inside and out – between oneself and that self become *other* – are elided. But the temporary elation following the Christmas feast does not resolve the imbalance of power Césaire is addressing here.

If anything, the people are disempowered by this particular event, rather than united by it; they are reduced to fragmented versions of themselves. At first they are a unified group, represented consistently by impersonal pronouns: "*on* en mange du bon, et l'*on* en boit du réjouissant"; "et toutes sortes de bonnes choses qui *vous* imposent autoritairement les muqueuses ou *vous* les distillent […]" (15, emphasis mine). Then, they are systematically disassembled by the poet; already dehumanized by the crowd they comprise, no single one of them standing out, they are soon reduced to anonymous organic fragments of themselves, a confusion of body parts in rhythm with one another: "Et ce ne sont pas seulement les bouches qui chantent, mais les mains, mais les pieds, mais les fesses, mais les sexes […]" (16). They are, paradoxically, unified in this fragmentary state—an incongruous body which, eventually, as cited above, is liquefied ("la créature tout entière […] se liquéfie en sons, voix et rhythme") (16). Not only does the feast not nourish them in any real way, but they come apart completely here. They have not yet risen above the dynamic that keeps them victim to what assails them from the outside, for they are still *outside* of themselves.

While the violent acts of consumption I will soon detail are elaborations of this familiar literary trope, it is important to note that they are not at all pleasurable. For in the *Cahier*, no willing act of consumption takes place within the space of representation that is not relegated either to a past tense, or to a dream state. What consumption we *do* witness is forced. The tension between inside and outside remains a central element of this violence—the constant forcing of the outside upon the inside. Whether in the form of a bamboo shoot being pushed down another's throat, or the exterior of a spiny sea urchin

(*only* its forbidding outer shell, significantly), being proffered as food, consumption is a form of violation in the poem, a forced rather than a willing act.

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Eating . . .

We know already that lack of voice follows from lack of food, and that the poet, by extension, associates misery with silence, writing of "les courants silencieux de la désespérance" (34). It is not surprising, then, to see the voice of the speaking subject stifled – just as the voice of the people has been, under colonization – by a form of consumption that not only does not nourish him, but is excessively violent: "Mais qui tourne ma voix? qui écorche ma voix? Me fourrant dans la gorge mille crocs de bambou. Mille pieux d'oursin. C'est toi sale bout de monde. Sale bout de petit matin" (31). These objects are obviously, even exaggeratedly, inedible; the bamboo cane, raw and whole, is more akin to a weapon than to food. And the sea-urchin shell is even more insulting an object, as it is more emphatically empty of nourishment, suggesting the remains of another's feast. In this instance, the rupture of boundaries that inherently accompanies any act of ingestion enables the poet to tell the story of the violence of colonization, and the resulting suppression of the voice of a people, through the figure of consumption.

The presence of "baguettes" in a text so fraught with violence immediately seems less likely to suggest the totemic French bread, than the term's original signified. After all, we more readily expect to see violence done with sticks than with loaves of bread. Accordingly, translators of the *Cahier* have uniformly – and perfectly logically, of course – translated this word as "sticks." I would suggest, however, that there is as much – if not

more – of that reviled bread in Césaire's "baguettes" than there is of sticks. First, in the poet's words: "Mon bon ange broute du néon. J'avale des baguettes. Ma dignité se vautre dans les dégobillements" (36). Mireille Rosello's translation of the passage reads as follows: "My good angel grazes on neon lights. I swallow sticks. My dignity wallows in puke" (103). Certainly, a stick could be used to induce the vomiting that follows immediately the consumption in question; but why would a representative of this oppressed people need to self-induce vomiting, after having stuffed himself with this French food *par excellence*? René Hénane seems on the verge of suggesting that the narrator's vomiting could result from consumption of "unassimilable" French baguette (the bread) when he writes, "La nourriture culturelle, mal assimilée, mal digérée, conduit à une régurgitation, à un vomissement de révolte," but he never addresses the possibility of this particular euphemism, this departure I am suggesting from translators' universal interpretation of "baguettes" as "sticks" (83). In the space of a text whose purpose is to reject European domination, wouldn't the revulsion necessary to induce vomiting come upon the narrator naturally, without the help of a "stick," after having "swallowed" the objects in question?[96] Valérie Loichot has noted that in Martinique, "Tasting French food

[96] The consumption of light by an "angel" ("mon bon ange broute du néon") serves as a reminder, yet again, of the insubstantial nature of the "edible" in the *Cahier*. Light may be appropriate fodder for a being which is itself made of light, but there is no such acceptable food for tangible beings in need of real nourishment. Instead, we have a case of "nothing" eating "nothing," or at best, one visual impression consuming another. On another note, Césaire's choice of neon light for the angel also provides an interesting counterpoint to the celestial light such a being typically consumes or constitutes in poetry (in Baudelaire's "Bénédiction," for example, the poet, having ascended to a celestial realm and taken his place among "les rangs bienheureux des saintes Légions," is made of "pure light," from an ancient source: "Car il

necessarily implies tasting French language and ideology. A "taste" of France, colloquially, has come to mean a violent lesson, a bad medicine to swallow" (5). Understanding these "baguettes" as "bread" allows us to read this violent act in a more nuanced manner: the stick alone is merely a weapon, an instrument of violence the victim is being forced to swallow; the baguette carries with it, as I have argued, the original signified, but also serves as a reminder, in a way the stick alone does not, of the harmful nature of consumption in the *Cahier*.

A baguette, that most anodyne of foods, takes on an altogether nefarious connotation in the colonial context. Indeed, in the *Traité du tout-monde*, Glissant writes of "france-flour," (farine-france), a problematic substance, as are other products imported from France (44). For, as Loichot further notes, in consuming them, "the subject activates the global machine of production while also developing the illusion of becoming subject by ingesting the other's food" (7). Admittedly, such excessive consumption of the dominant culture is a serious problem, more generally, well beyond such references to consumption of European food. We may recall that Césaire begins publishing *Tropiques* during wartime misery because he has identified a "vide culturel" that he wishes to fill with cultural production from the Antilles, rather than France ("les Antilles sont trop exclusivement une société de consommation culturelle. Aussi, ai-je toujours travaillé à ce qu'elles puissent s'exprimer elles-mêmes" (*Tropiques*, Tome I, v).[97]

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ne sera fait que de pure lumiere, / Puisée au foyer des rayons primitifs" (9). By using instead an ultramodern version of light, Césaire engages with but departs from tradition, much as – one might argue – his work does more generally.

[97] In his *Discours antillais*, Glissant also acknowledges this problem, citing "le problème de la consommation passive" in Martinique (791). He also recognizes how difficult it would be to interrupt these

The following fragment contains an equally violent act of war waged through consumption, which raises questions about the relationship of the act of eating to that of speaking, and further confirms the extraordinary power with which Césaire invests words in the poem: "Les balles dans la bouche salive épaisse […]" (42). In this mouth, words *and* the consumed object become weapons. Words, things we generally think of as being expelled from the mouth, are replaced by bullets; they have become ammunition. This is crucial to Césaire's project: words are given physical form. The entry of bullets into the mouth is itself a violent rupture, of course, a violent transgression of the traditional role of consumption as an act that nourishes the body. But Césaire cultivates this violence to his benefit. In the mouth, this outrageous "food" becomes a weapon, "loaded" to be expelled, to exit the mouth as the voice does. These bullet-words exceed the bounds of pure rhetoric, as they are called to act. And this is why the retrieval of the voice is so important to the poet; without words, he has no ammunition with which to fight.

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. . . and Being Eaten

The above instances of consumption illustrating the impossibility of "positive" eating in Césaire contain scenes in which the people are forced to "eat" something. But in the majority of scenes of violent consumption we witness in the *Cahier*, the people are not eating, but are instead being eaten.

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habits of consumption, noting the complications of "le désir d'intégration au 'modèle blanc,'" and the consequential preoccupation with "l'impression produite sur le voisin" (790).

One such example can be found immediately following the Christmas celebration. The Christmas feast is the central example of the failure of food to nourish in the *Cahier*; for if food and drink served as nourishment anywhere in the text, it would have to be there, in the only scene of the poem in which food is so fully present. But the feast is swallowed up in a dream, as it turns out, and – as I have explained – there is no real fulfillment in this.

When the Christmas scene concludes, the poet shifts directly to his depiction of the misery of the poor. The three paragraphs immediately following the conclusion of the Christmas passage begin as follows: "Au bout du petit matin, cette ville plate — étalée. . . / Elle rampe sur les mains […]" (17); "Au bout du petit matin, la vie prostrée, on ne sait où dépêcher ses rêves avortés […]" (Ibid.); "Au bout du petit matin, une autre petite maison qui sent très mauvais dans une rue très étroite […]" (17-18). The abject misery depicted in these lines through the expression of physical repression and limitation ("elle rampe sur les mains"; "la vie prostrée"; "petite maison […] très étroite") marks a notable departure from the flurry of movement that immediately precedes it. We emerge from this succession of images with the certainty, not only that these people have not been fed by the "feast," but that they are themselves still being *consumed.*

In the aforementioned "very narrow," "miniscule" house that stinks, the speaking subject's mother and father – his own sources of existence – are being consumed: "et mon père fantasque grignoté d'une seule misère, je n'ai jamais su laquelle" (18). That the misery eating his father cannot be identified intensifies the hopelessness of his suffering. Meanwhile, the mother, trapped in the same putrescent house, fights tirelessly to keep hunger at bay: "et ma mère dont les jambes pour notre faim inlassable pédalent, pédalent

de jour, de nuit, […] pedal[ent] pour notre faim et de jour et de nuit" (18). The mother's ability to conjure this motion might at first seem to represent a break from the restricted movement that characterizes their oppression. However, her movement is circular and repetitive; it requires her to remain continually in place, seated at her sewing machine through the night, while her family sleeps, so that even in her movement, she is confined. As she works to feed the wolf at the door, the night slips away, and the hours that should be consecrated to sleep are instead consumed by work. And indeed, Césaire writes that the night is "bitten": "je suis même réveillé la nuit par ces jambes inlassables qui pédalent la nuit et *la morsure âpre* dans la chair molle de la nuit d'une Singer que ma mère pédale […]" (18, emphasis mine). She cannot escape; like her husband, she is *consumed* by this miserable house—a prisoner of its "entrailles de bois pourri" (18).

The poet's use of consumption as a figure of power and control in the text emerges all the more clearly when we note the discrepancy between the people's despondent inability to sustain themselves, and the colonizers' corresponding tendency to beleaguer them with what not only is "inedible," but harmful to them. Significantly, Césaire describes this power imbalance using vocabulary which leaves no doubt as to the role he accords to consumption in the poem: "Et la voix prononce que l'Europe nous a pendant des siècles *gavés* de / mensonges et *gonflés* de pestilences" (57, emphasis mine). "Stuffing," of course, is a form of consumption that usually takes place by force, and furthermore, is usually reserved for animals. "Swollen," when applied to ingestion as it is here, is cruel and forced, and certainly applies more readily to a sick or rotting body, than a healthy one.

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Cannibalism and Transgression

Why, in a text he devotes to the restitution of sustenance ("la succulence des fruits") and voice to Martinique, does Césaire use consumption as a means of visiting violence upon Martinicans, rather than as a means of nourishing them (50)? Why, one might ask, does he give voice to violence through consumption, making room in the *Cahier* for such a harsh phrase as, "battre-un-nègre, c'est le nourrir," repeating the sentiments of the colonizers rather than silencing them (35)?[98] Why not feed the celebrants at the Christmas feast, and direct this violence toward those responsible for the misery that is too much a part of their daily lives? Because, I would argue, the gesture he *does* use – this excessive violence carried out through the use of sharp bamboo, spiny sea urchins, and metal bullets, all of which are placed with force where food should instead be – is, paradoxically, more powerful.

We hear echoes of Césaire's renunciation of reason in the words of his student, Fanon: "A charge au Blanc d'être plus irrationnel que moi. J'avais, pour les besoins de la cause, adopté le processus régressif, mais il restait que c'était une arme étrangère; ici je suis chez moi; je suis bâti d'irrationnel; je patauge dans l'irrationnel. Irrationnel jusqu'au cou. Et maintenant, vibre ma voix!" (101) Hegel would be most helpful in explaining this move on the part of Césaire and Fanon; in an article on the *Cahier*, Brent Hayes Edwards cites a particularly enlightening passage from Kojève, directly influenced by Hegel: "As

[98] Here, Césaire has incorporated the words of monk and missionary Jean-Baptiste Du Tertre's seventeenth-century *Histoire générale des isles*, in which he voices disapproval of slavery: "C'est un proverbe dans le pays, battre un nègre, c'est le nourrir" (481).

Kojève puts it, 'The freedom which is realized and manifested as dialectical or negating action is thereby essentially a creation. […] What is involved is not replacing one given by another given, but overcoming the given in favor of what does not (yet) exist, thus realizing what was never given" (7). For Césaire, then, to take on the role of the cannibal is a gesture of defiance that can neither be mapped neatly onto what Europeans who make those designations intend by them, nor – certainly – does it resemble the passive gesture that one's assumption of a pejorative label normally would. It may be even more helpful to consider, in a more immediate context, Abiola Irele's description of Césaire's poetry as "an affect; a drama of consciousness, a sloughing off of processes by which the complex of negative associations through which the black subject has been forced to perceive himself is overturned and transformed into a mode of mental liberation and ultimately of self-acceptance" (137). And this, precisely, is why the poet's revindication of cannibalism is a powerful gesture: it rejects readymade categories, opting instead for a paradoxical embrace of consumption in its most savage form, returning agency to Martinicans through an identity that will allow them to bite, to *re-mordre*, where they have too often been bitten.

Césaire's embrace of cannibalism defines itself in opposition to French ideology, as represented through Enlightenment reason. Speaking for Martinique and assuming the collective "nous," he addresses himself to the French: "Parce que nous vous haïssons vous et votre raison, / nous nous réclamons de la démence précoce de la / folie flambante du cannibalisme tenace" (27). Cannibalism is, accordingly, a form of consumption

beyond reason—a taboo, as Freud famously contends.[99] If the controlling force operates within the bounds of reason the poet so hates, then it is not difficult to understand why he seeks a way to break with it. This embrace of cannibalism (the poet proudly repeats his claim of "mes cruautés cannibales") is an example of the utility of excess, the thing Césaire so admires – as I have noted – in the work of Lautréamont: the rupture of accepted boundaries makes room for a new order of things—in this case, the overturn of an unsustainable economy of consumption, a cruel imbalance of power (42, 43).

The injustice of colonialism inherently troubles notions of identity, and one's relationship to the other. Structures of power are unavoidable, certainly, and it is not surprising, then, to find that cannibalism is a chief means of illustrating them. But, as Derrida urges in an interview with Jean-Luc Nancy published in *Points de suspension* entitled "Il faut bien manger," one should always attempt to navigate these dynamics as ethically as possible. He writes, "La question n'est plus de savoir s'il est "bon" ou "bien" de "manger" l'autre, et quel autre. On le mange de toute façon et on se laisse manger par lui. Les cultures dites non anthropophagiques pratiquent l'anthropophagie symbolique et construisent même leur socius […] sur cette anthropophagie" (296). We are all, in essence, either eating or being eaten. But in the *Cahier*, the cycle Derrida describes is no longer in movement, but static, trapped in a colonial structure in which there is no respite, for Martinicans, from being eaten.

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[99] As Freud explains in *Totem and Taboo*, "The animal taboo, which consists essentially of the taboo against killing and eating, forms the nucleus of Totemism" (37). He goes on to describe how he relates the taboo of the totem meal to cannibalism: "Psychoanalysis has revealed to us that the totem animal is really a substitute for the father" (209). For Montaigne, on the other hand, cannibalism is a codified social practice, an "Invention qui ne sent aucunement la barbarie" (212).

This explains why cannibalism, which represents a complete rupture of social order, is particularly useful here: it allows the poet to leave reason behind, to espouse the excessive, the violent, enacting outwardly what usually happens inwardly, and without commentary, in the act of ingestion. As I have noted, there are numerous instances throughout the *Cahier* in which individuals are aggressed through unusually violent acts of consumption, either by being forced to eat or by being eaten. The suggestion of an act of cannibalism, even one suspended in a metaphor as in the following lines, also demands our attention.

In an especially important passage, Césaire writes, "mais est-ce qu'on tue le Remords, beau comme la face de stupeur d'une dame anglaise qui trouverait dans sa soupière un crâne de Hottentot?" (20). At first glance, it is clear that the poet is playing with the categories of civilized and uncivilized: in a short phrase, he takes us back to those same questions raised centuries before by Montaigne, whose seminal "Des Cannibales" encourages his audience to question their prejudices: what does it mean to be civilized? As he observes sensibly, "chacun appelle barbarie ce qui n'est pas de son usage" (205). We must be careful, he urges, to avoid following these well-worn patterns without first reflecting; he warns his readers, "il se faut garder de s'attacher aux opinions vulgaires, et les faut juger par la voye de la raison, non par la voix commune" (202).[100]

[100] In conjunction with Montaigne's interest in Cannibals (pertinent here, of course, due to the question of literary cannibalism inherent in Césaire's appropriation of French texts of the nineteenth century and in conjunction with Montaigne's own copious borrowings from other writers and thinkers), it is interesting to note that in his time, the marked resurgence of interest in classical texts responsible for the name of the period (the re-naissance) rendered these same questions of textual appropriation particularly valid.

Césaire, meanwhile, determines to leave this very European concept of "raison" behind him by embracing the label of "cannibal," all the better to upset the "reasonable" establishment that expects him to reject it.[101]

The figures used by Césaire in this scene are slightly modulated versions of the Antilleans and Europeans whose interaction is at the heart of the text. Still, the tensions represented are the same: a representative of "uncivilized" Africa, where the roots of the Martinican slaves are to be found, is faced with a hyperbolized representative of "civilized" Europe.[102] The Englishwoman finds herself in possession of the head of a "cannibal" – the presumed barbarian – and in doing so, aligns herself with the *un*civilized, inadvertently elevating the moral status of her victim. Who – after all – is the barbarian, the "cannibal" or the "lady"? If he is uncivilized, then she is even more so, by virtue of this heinous act. Furthermore, if she believes – as Freud's assessment of the

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[101] Brazilian Oswald de Andrade's *Manifesto Antropofágo* also embraces an abandonment of "reason" in favor of cannibalism: "But we never permitted the birth of logic among us" (39). In the future, I would like to look more closely at the resonance between Césaire's paradoxical revindication of cannibalism, and de claim that Brazil's history of consuming other cultures is not a cultural weakness, but rather a strength. In Césaire's insistence on cannibalism over reason in the *Cahier*, we hear echoes of de Andrade's work, which also involves – as Luís Madureira notes in *Cannibal Modernities* – "[an] aphoristic reversal of (western) axiologies" and the "reclamation of a primitive "Dionysian" past" (36).

[102] "Hottentot" is a term used by Dutch colonizers of South Africa to describe the Khoikhoi people. Sara Baartman is the name of a Khoikhoi woman who became known as the "Hottentot Venus." The particular nature of the public's consumption of her, both in life (she would pose for shows in Paris for five years) and in death (the scientist responsible for her display "eagerly dissected her body for his investigations, and remade her in a plaster cast as the Hottentot Venus"), reflects a desire not only to conquer but to possess, in order to fully consume, the other (Crais and Scully, 2).

transfer of spiritual characteristics in totemic cannibalism argues that cannibals understand this act – that a child, for example, assimilates the characteristics of his father in the act of eating him – then by eating a cannibal, hasn't she become one in more ways than one?[103]

Let us consider, too, the position the poet is taking, for his gesture is a remarkable one: after all, he is showing the severed head of a "cannibal" to a "lady." We rely on our heads to perceive the world around us: we see, smell, hear, eat, and speak through the orifices of this single appendage. But in the *Cahier*, the poet's people are divested of both food and speech: and these, it may help to remember, are the primary problems he resolves to confront there. The poet's "dame anglaise" is literally *faced* with proof of the loss to which these victims of oppression are subject (20). "Look what you have done," he seems to be saying to her, meanwhile displaying this severed head for all to see.

In this brief scene, we get a taste, I would suggest, of what is happening with consumption in the *Cahier* more generally: the poet uses the figure of consumption as a way of giving *form* to the violence that occurs in colonization. It is not enough simply to say the words, but consumption helps to render them physical, not unlike the way in which – as I have argued in the previous chapter – Baudelaire does, by endowing the modern subject with an organic (edible) body, all the better to illustrate his plight. The poet's people are consumed and forced to consume over the course of the text in the ways I have discussed above, but they are also inhabited by a terrible form of spiritual consumption, a loss of morale—a "stupeur," in fact, which is precisely the reaction of the

[103] "By absorbing parts of the body of a person through the act of eating," Freud asserts based on his study of "primitive tribes," "we also come to possess the properties that belonged to that person" (106).

"dame anglaise" at the sight of this head. It is interesting to note that "stupeur" (from the Latin *stupor*), is defined in part as follows: "État d'intertie et d'insensibilité profondes lié à un engourdissement général," and in psychiatry as: "Cet état, traduit par l'immobilité du visage et le mutisme" (*Le Petit Robert*, 2152). And this is why Césaire's "lady" responds with stupor (this, rather than "horreur," or any number of other such words he could have chosen): his people suffer from this very ailment, as defined above. By serving this head to her on a plate (or in a soup tureen, to be exact), he terrorizes her, and by extension the European, eliciting in them the same suffering that plagues the people of Martinique.

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No discussion of cannibalism in Césaire would be complete without considering once again Césaire's literary heritage, specifically the incorporation into his own text ofpassages from French literature. The most apparent such passage in the *Cahier* can befound in the oft-cited scene in which the narrator describes a "nègre hideux" seated across from him in a tramway, which involves a direct quotation, repeated three times, of Baudelaire's "L'Albatros": "Il était COMIQUE ET LAID, / COMIQUE ET LAID pour sûr" (41). I will not linger inordinately on this particular scene, because Mireille Rosello, most notably, has analyzed it at length in "One More Sea to Cross: Exile and Intertextuality in Aimé Césaire's *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal*." Rosello considers the ways in which Césaire risks compromising himself in his relation to the French text (which she labels "the object of appropriation"), treading the line between – as she notes Senghor would have said – "to assimilate" and "to be assimilated" (177, 185). She

concludes that his use of this line from "L'Albatros," far from subjecting Césaire to his literary predecessor, in fact reflects the "power" he finds in "alternating between his language and that of the other" (194). It empowers him, by allowing him to reflect in writing the complexity of his identity.[104] While I agree with Rosello's conclusion, I also believe – for the purposes of the present study – that it helps to think *beyond* what this gesture means about Césaire's poetic agency and his relationship to the French tradition, which dominates her analysis, and more about how this power serves him in accomplishing the goal of his remarkably engaged text: that of quelling the hunger, and restoring the voice, of a people. As Peter Hulme notes, it is possible to make something entirely new through the "consumption" of these foreign texts: "What through the colonial optic might appear as mimicry or derivation comes to be celebrated as the triumph of the cannibal's digestive juices, making its materials new: a regenerative cannibalism" (28). Such is the case here, for this is something much more complex than the mere swallowing of another's words. This poem is about much more than the world of words, seeking to engage as it does with the world beyond it, in an attempt to transform suffering. Such engagement requires not only the poet's recognition of the violence being done to his people (they are being *consumed*, after all), but demands a solution. Césaire renders this in kind, as I have argued, through the many scenes of violent consumption appropriated by him and reenacted upon his own people in order to illustrate, and to decry, the destruction of colonial rule.

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[104] We might also speak of a plural identity, because of Césaire's own complex feelings about leaving Martinique for France and then returning, and also because of Glissant's statement in the *Discours Antillais*, that the Antilles (and by extension, the people themselves) represent "Une multi-relation" (249).

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I would now like to return for a moment to the aforementioned "Hottentot" scene, because, beyond the cannibalism it obviously suggests, it also contains two notable instances of literary appropriation (or, better here, literary *cannibalism*), which serve to intensify the shocking scene unfolding on the surface, within the space of representation. The passage in question follows: "mais est-ce qu'on tue le Remords, beau comme la face de stupeur d'une dame anglaise qui trouverait dans sa soupière un crâne de Hottentot?" (20) The word "Remords" immediately announces its presence, with a capital *R*, and – I would suggest – also references Baudelaire's "L'Irréparable," the first stanza of which contains not only the same capital *R* Césaire uses, but also the same reference to "killing" remorse: "Pouvons-nous étouffer le vieux, le long Remords, / Qui vit, s'agite et se tortille, / Et se nourrit de nous comme le ver des morts, / Comme du chêne la chenille? / Pouvons-nous étouffer l'implacable Remords?" (54). Neither poet seems certain that "Remords" can be killed. And rightfully so, for remorse is a terrible thing involving not simply a biting, but a biting *back* (*re-mordre*); it is a gnawing feeling, which, Freud argues in *Civilization and its Discontents*, connotes more than mere guilt: "When one has a sense of guilt after having committed a misdeed, and because of it, the feeling should more properly be called *remorse*. It relates only to a deed that has been done," whereas guilt involves only the thought of a transgression, without a corresponding act (94).

There is more to this, though, than a shared awareness of the weight of remorse. In fact, I would like to suggest that the poets' texts are in dialogue with one another, or at least that Césaire is responding to his literary predecessor with something more than a simple echo of the original question. Baudelaire, we must remember, seeks to rid himself

and his audience, collectively, of this feeling ("Pouvons-*nous* étouffer […] le Remords"; "[le Remords] se nourrit de *nous*") (54, emphasis mine). If we read Césaire's version closely, however, something quite different emerges, for his remorse is allied with the look of stupor on the woman's face. And the stupor he is inflicting on her and the other Europeans she symbolizes through cannibalism, far from accidental, is thoroughly intentional. It allows him to return, on behalf of his people, a taste of the violence that for so long has plagued them.

Painful though it is (or, more aptly stated, *because* it is painful), Césaire – unlike Baudelaire – does not seek to banish this particular violence, but rather uses it to his advantage. Baudelaire, desperate, considers suffocating and drowning (but in what liquid, he wonders: "Dans quel filtre? — dans quel vin?") as possible means of killing remorse, but ultimately abandons what he apparently discovers is a futile effort (54). "L'Irréparable ronge avec sa dent maudite!," he writes near the end of the poem. The brevity of Césaire's "mais est-ce qu'on tue le Remords," seems to respond to Baudelaire's more verbose question, at once referencing the earlier poet in similar words, but saying, I would argue, something altogether different. The desperate effort to find a means of eliminating remorse is glaringly absent here, and for good reason: as I have suggested, this sentiment, accompanied by stupor, is in this context a desirable one, worth cultivating in the enemy. Furthermore, Césaire – in the critical scene I will soon analyze – will answer Baudelaire's question about drowning.

The second instance of literary appropriation in this brief but significant passage serves as the hinge joining two incongruous images: "mais est-ce qu'on tue le Remords, *beau comme* la face de stupeur d'une dame anglaise qui trouverait dans sa soupière un

crâne de Hottentot?" (20, emphasis mine) "Beau comme" is a common refrain in Lautréamont's *Chants de Maldoror*, in which it is used as a means of joining two jarringly discrepant things, just as Césaire does: specifically, beauty and the un-beautiful. Lautréamont writes, "Il est beau comme la rétractilité des serres des oiseaux rapaces; ou encore, comme l'incertitude des mouvements musculaires dans les plaies des parties molles de la région cervicale postérieure" (289). It is appropriate, then, that in the title of an essay on Lautréamont published in the second volume of *Tropiques*, Césaire uses the same formula: "Isidore Ducasse Comte de Lautréamont: La poésie de Lautréamont belle comme un décret d'expropriation" (10).

Both poets use dismemberment (if, considering Lautréamont's known propensity for physical torture as expressed in *Maldoror*, I may have the liberty of suggesting that this "close-up" of the muscles, used to stress the body's vulnerability – its "incertitude," its tender "parties molles" – could be considered at a stretch a kind of visual and textual "dismemberment" of the body, the whole being ignored in favor of a small and trembling part) to great effect, joining incongruous fragments (for Césaire, the severed head; for Lautréamont, vulnerable body parts) to the whole and sublime thing that is beauty. The effect is shocking, which is of course the point: the joining of such unlike parts creates something like a monster in the text, a monster in this case being understood as a hybrid creature, an assemblage of unlike parts. The Surrealists, who inspire Césaire, also find power in the fragment, a prime example of which would be their *cadavre exquis*, consisting of the joining-together of otherwise unrelated parts. But Césaire's use of his own "monster," because of his political engagement, will surpass the aesthetic bounds to which the "monsters" of Lautréamont (and of course the *cadavre exquis*) are limited, in

order to reverse the colonial economy of consumption, acting – in effect – beyond the bounds of the text itself.[105]

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Shipwrecked

Dismemberment will serve Césaire best of all in the culminating moment of consumption of the *Cahier*—that of the notorious slave ship, as it comes apart on the open sea: "le négrier craque de toute part… Son ventre se convulse et résonne… L'affreux ténia de sa cargaison ronge les boyaux fétides de l'étrange nourrisson des mers!" (61). And we can truly consider this dismemberment, since in the visceral style so typical of Césaire, the breaking ship itself takes on human proportions, first resembling a stomach, then an unweaned child. All the better, I would argue, to make *real*, indeed to render in the most physical terms possible, the overturning of the imbalanced economy of consumption, which is – I would like to suggest – precisely what the poet finally accomplishes in this scene.

If, in the "Hottentot" scene I have analyzed, the Cannibal's head serves as a warning sign to induce terror, not unlike the impaled heads of headhunters (accounts of which can be found from the *Bible* and later accounts of cannibalism in the New World, to – horrifyingly – Nazi Germany), the slave ship seems to function similarly. But, while

[105] Césaire explains in the introduction (entitled "La poésie…") to his collected poetic works published simply as *La poésie*, how he understands the profusion of words springing from his source of poetic inspiration, in which the monster figures prominently: "c'est un monde enchanté, un monde de *monstres*, que je fais surgir sur la grisaille mal différenciée du monde" (5).

Césaire used that earlier scene primarily as a means of displaying the violence done by the other, in this scene he turns it inside-out. The wooden structure built by the slave traders breaks here, its once-complacent cargo now revolting, consuming the very thing that bore it thus far—eating and thereby transforming the hungry, voiceless, supine version of itself into something, as I will soon show, capable of standing on its own.

That same stomach which earlier was "gonflé de pestilences" by Europe, is now able to release the putrescence that filled it, to reject the unassimilable. But there is much more going on with consumption in this passage, and on many levels, which critics have not failed to note.[106] The slave ship, transformed into a stomach complete with bowels, bears less resemblance to the womb, a common function of the *négrier* in Glissant, than to a rotting body that must be abandoned. But there is more hope in the "new life" into which Césaire's rebellious crew will be released, than in that of the codified "birth" Glissant envisions.

This dismembered slave ship-become-body, no longer able to sustain life, is consumed by worms ("L'affreux ténia de sa cargaison ronge les boyaux fétides de l'étrange nourrisson des mers!"), which are gnawing at it from the inside out, as they would a rotting carcass (61). These simultaneous acts of consumption (a ship "consuming" its human cargo; its cargo, eaten by worms; its cargo revolting, eating the ship itself; the fragmented morsels of the ship in turn feeding the sea), may resonate for

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[106] In *La case du commandeur*, Glissant describes the slave ship as a "poisson-chambre," a miserable prison functioning as womb and intestine (63). This "poisson-chambre" expels its human contents into a plantation system that will never free them, but only serves as another kind of imprisonment, as Loichot notes in *Orphan Narratives*: "The gut of origin […] does not expurgate its contents into open air but to yet another compartment of the room-fish, the plantation" (44).

some with the excessively carnal quality of Baudelaire's "vers," which gnaw persistently at the modern subject throughout *Les Fleurs du mal.* The carcass of "Une charogne," for example, is swollen with "de noirs bataillons / De larves," and even worse, Baudelaire writes, "le corps, enflé d'un souffle vague, / Vivait en se multipliant" (31). The movement with which these parasites animate the body as they consume it heightens the grotesque, while the narrator's famous reminder to his companion that she will soon be eaten in the same way ("ô ma beauté! Dites à la vermine / Qui vous mangera de baisers") assures that while we, the narrator and his companion are "feasting" on this revolting sight, she is aware of her own impending death and consumption as she watches the putrid body (her future self) being eaten (32). Césaire, too, emphasizes the movement accompanying the devouring of the slave ship: "son ventre convulse et résonne"—not surprisingly, of course, since its cargo is eating it alive (61).

There is a final act of violence on the part of the captain of the slave ship, as he struggles in vain against the revolt, by covering their violent devouring with a version of his own in order to drown out the sound of the ship's menacing "grondements intestins": "En vain pour s'en distraire le capitaine pend à sa grand'vergue le nègre le plus braillard ou le jette à la mer, ou le livre à l'appétit de ses molosses" (61). Significantly, this violent struggle contains the last attempt on the part of the colonial force to maintain control of the economy of consumption, and hence of the voice. Here, Césaire stages the struggle for institutional power, rendered in a flurry of activity, putting what is at stake in the most physical terms possible.

It is ultimately through the stomach – through consumption, which is so crucial here – that the power structure of the text is reversed. The dismemberment of the putrid

belly bearing them across the sea is a sacrifice they are willing to make, and is made all the more real by the viscerality with which the poet endows it. The slaves, marked by the odor of onion, perhaps a reference to their poverty, finally get a taste of freedom, though they've been made to suffer for it: "La négraille aux senteurs d'oignon frit retrouve dans son sang répandu le goût amer de la liberté" (61).[107] It is important to note that their liberty here is recovered and articulated by the poet through the sense of taste, a fact that at once suggests a certain agency (they smell of onions passively; tasting, on the other hand, is not a passive act) and anticipates the centrality of the tongue at the text's closing.[108]

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[107] Onions are a universally cheap food, so the strong odors emanating from their cooking are most often associated with the humblest of people and places. In Zola's novels, the smell of onions permeates the living spaces of the working class, memorably so in *L'Assommoir* and *Germinal*, in which it is so pervasive that it becomes permanently incrusted in walls and ceilings. The same is true in Flaubert; and though Charles and Emma Bovary are not as poor as Zola's mining families, Emma's return home from the ball is punctuated by a simple supper of onion soup, a cruel contrast indeed to the rich offerings at the ball of *La Vaubyessard*.

[108] Interestingly, another retrieval of the tongue takes place before the ultimate passage. Indeed, reading closely, we discover that, near the end of the *Cahier*, Césaire brings the subterranean voice/tongue up from the depths to which it was confined in a scene which lacks nothing of the grandeur of that triumphant act on the water: "Et voici soudain que force et vie m'assaillent comme un taureau et l'onde de vie circonvient la papille du morne, et voilà toutes les veines et veinules qui s'affairent au sang neuf et l'énorme poumon des cyclones qui respire […]" (57). Anthropomorphism in Césaire is not uncommon, as we are by now aware. But this particular transformation seems especially significant to the restitution of a more balanced economy of consumption, which necessitates the return of a voice, and, consequently, of the *tongue*, to the people of Martinique. Surrounded by "the wave of life," this *morne* becomes a tastebud ("papille"), suggesting that this is a tongue capable of discerning, of *tasting* (56-57). It is significant in this

The return of the voice, made possible only when the economy of consumption has been righted, is suggested in the final lines of the text: "et le grand trou noir où je voulais me noyer l'autre / lune / c'est là que je veux pêcher maintenant la langue / maléfique de la nuit en son immobile verrition!" (65) The symbolic control of speech, implicit in the poet's desire to recover the tongue, stands in contrast to the narrator's lack of control over his voice earlier in the text ("Mais qui tourne ma voix? qui écorche ma voix? Me fourrant dans la gorge mille crocs de bambou. Mille pieux d'oursin," etc., 31). These final lines show a resolution, not only to triumph generally, but to do so *precisely* over what was troubling in the past, to master it ("le grand trou où je voulais me noyer […] c'est *là* que je veux pêcher maintenant la langue") (65, emphasis mine). A certain vision the narrator has of himself earlier in the text anticipates this final gesture: "C'est moi rien que moi / qui *prends langue* avec la dernière angoisse" (34). And this, finally, is what the poet intends to do: to "take" the tongue back, following this crowning sacrifice on the water, after the last moments of anguish inflicted by the other—to literally "prendre langue," retrieving a tongue restored now to a people who had been deprived of

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context, I would argue, that the job of tastebuds is to taste, to *savor*. *Savourer* contains the same Latin root (*sapere*) as *savoir*, a verb also linked in an important way, in the *Cahier*, to the *morne*. For the *morne* harbors a deep "savoir" of the voice and the Martinicans linked to it, as we can observe, for example, in this striking scene: "le morne famélique et *nul ne sait mieux que ce morne bâtard pourquoi* le suicidé s'est étouffé avec complicité de son hypoglosse en retournant sa langue pour l'avaler" (11, emphasis mine). With this transformation of the *morne* into a tastebud, the land, earlier "rognée, réduite, en rupture de faune et flore," is given a visible sign of agency, a tool with which to discern and to *know* (9). Furthermore, the emergence of a tongue as a feature of the landscape anticipates the ultimate scene in which the narrator wishes to fish a tongue from the water.

speech to such an extent that they lacked collectively not only a tongue, but a mouth capable of voicing their discontent.

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In the final passage, it is important to note, there is a substitution of the desire to drown with the desire to fish: an unlikely opposition, at first glance. Not so, however, when we consider that implicit in the act of fishing is the desire to nourish, and therefore, to *live*. What kind of nourishment can be had from this sort of fishing? These are the lines in question: "monte lécheur de ciel / et le grand trou noir où je voulais me noyer l'autre / lune / c'est là que je veux pêcher maintenant la langue / maléfique de la nuit en son immobile verrition!" (65). We have established that this act represents a victory for Martinicans, including the writing subject, who has effectively "[pris] langue avec la dernière angoisse" (34). But the retrieval of an "evil" tongue would seem problematic; after all, hasn't the work of the text been precisely one of decrying, rather than retaining, the evils of colonialism?

Beyond the obvious advantage of a return of the tongue (bringing with it voice and therefore agency) – kept quiet until now – what do we make of "maléfique"? I would suggest that such a tongue is the only kind capable of saying the words that need to be said, of articulating the evils that the colonial system has visited upon Martinique. It will evoke none of the anodyne images typical of the "tourisme littéraire" Suzanne Césaire reviles, and which she avers, in "Misère d'une poésie," too often passes for real literature. No "alizés," or "perroquets," "Et zut à l'hibiscus, à la frangipane, aux bougainvilliers,"

she continues (50). It will instead state the ugly truth, serving as a testament to the cruelty and injustice of colonialism.

And let us not forget that it is also a tongue that must share willingly in the "cannibal" appetite which was necessary for the successful rupture of the once colonially-dominated economy of consumption, realized through the destruction of the slave ship, and resulting ultimately in a "taste" of liberty for those who revolted. There can be no permanent release of tension following that last act on the water, for the effect of the poet's words must last. Indeed, I would like to suggest that we approach, paradoxically, through this retention of "evil" in the text, the possibility of maintaining the sort of balance, the sort of ethical consumption, which we have seen that Derrida advocates for. This tongue must continue to tell those truths, to recount the "malheurs" the narrator earlier noted had no means of articulation ("ma bouche sera la bouche des malheurs qui n'ont point de bouche") (22). It must also continue to "consume," not passively, as we have noted Glissant and Césaire lament that Martinicans have done, but actively, and with cannibal force, feeding on the poetry of "ailleurs"—something the *Cahier* does masterfully, without becoming subject to it. In the words of Suzanne Césaire, "la poésie Martiniquaise sera cannibale ou ne sera pas" ("Misère d'une poésie," 50).

Certainly, we should not forget that "maléfique" is an anagram of "famélique"; this tongue, therefore, represents a tongue especially well suited to the task of expressing the anguish of the colonized, as I have argued. But it also suggests a reversal of hunger, a change in the order of letters to form a word that in turn suggests a changing of the colonial order, and most importantly, of the suffering through hunger that the colonial order imposed on Martinique. Hayes-Edwards argues that the opposition inherent in the

adjectives qualifying the tongue ("la langue maléfique de la nuit en son *immobile verrition*") make for a conclusion that – through the opposition of immobility and movement – results in an "antithesis without sublation, forc[ing] us to ask to what degree the *Cahier*, beyond its recourse to determinate negation, adheres in the end to a Hegelian dialectics" (65; 13).[109] He goes on to suggest that through this opposition, Césaire "thereby forecloses the possibility of *any* ultimate term, any dialectical synthesis" (14). This resistance to the rule, the lack of adherence to any specific philosophical system, is – I would add – at the very heart of the *Cahier*. This is a carnal text, a text meant to affect its reader viscerally, and to produce an effect beyond words. The effectiveness of the *Cahier* resides in an opening-out into the world that its engagement requires. It is important, ultimately, to note that the final act is not one in which the tongue has already been retrieved from the water; it is instead an affirmation of the poet's desire to do so

[109] Many critics ascribe to the notion that "verrition" is a neologism coined by Césaire. J. Michael Dash and Hayes-Edwards, for example, cite Clayton Eshleman and Annette Smith's translation notes to the *Cahier*, explaining the Latin components of the word without any mention of the word's actual creator, nineteenth-century gastronome Brillat-Savarin. In a chapter on the sense of taste from his *Physiologie du goût*, Brillat-Savarin explains, "J'ai, en outre, découvert au moins trois mouvements de *spication*, de *rotation* et de *verrition* (verro, lat., je balaye). […] Le troisième [a lieu] quand la langue, se recourbant en dessus ou en dessous, ramasse les portions qui peuvent rester dans le canal demi-circulaire formé par les lèvres et les gencives" (54-55, emphasis in the original). How might this fact change prior readings of that final scene? Since this action involving the sweeping of the mouth by the tongue no longer reposes on an originary term, what does it mean that this word – still a strange one, still foreign to the French language – was nevertheless coined by a French philosopher of the nineteenth century, whose literary motives were altogether different from those of Césaire? Though it is not something I will have the time to develop in the present study, this is perhaps deserving of further attention.

("c'est là que je *veux* pêcher maintenant […]"). To have the tongue in hand, just as to have a fish in hand, is to cease fishing, to complete a cycle and consequently to quell desire. Having already overturned the colonial economy of consumption by rupturing the colonial stomach on the open water, the poet concludes not with an ending-point of consumption, but a prolongation of it. For the act of fishing involves a maintenance of desire, and *this* is how Césaire chooses to end the poem: not just with a puzzling opposition to keep his reader wondering, but with an act still in progress—a desire on the verge of being fulfilled, but not yet extinguished.

*

Coda

We have discovered that, while violent consumption is a highly aestheticized force in the works of Flaubert and Baudelaire, Césaire in turn takes the effect of such consumption beyond the bounds of literature, in an attempt to address social and political issues. In my introduction, I situated the modern works at the heart of this study within a larger framework, by showing examples of the tensions between food and language established in ancient works of the Western tradition. In concluding, I would like to once again look to the past, this time focusing on the relationship between consumption and language in Chrétien de Troye's medieval tale of the fisher king, or "Le Riche Roi Pêcheur," as it appears in *Le conte du graal ou le roman de Perceval*. I would propose that Césaire's *Cahier* can be read as an answer to Chrétien's tale. Similar problems are encountered in each work, but in overcoming them at the end of the *Cahier* in ways that Chrétien's protagonists do not, Césaire's work at once resonates with a poetic tradition stretching far back, before those familiar modern influences (Baudelaire, Lautréamont, Rimbaud), and progresses beyond it. For in the *Cahier*, he resolves two central issues raised by the medieval writer: loss of voice and physical suffering, both elaborated in relation to the figure of consumption.

While the suffering bodies of the *Cahier* include both the land and the people of Martinique, the suffering body in Chrétien's tale is that of the fisher king himself: "il est roi, je peux bien vous le dire, / mais il a été, au cours d'une bataille, blessé et vraiment mutilé" (257). Chrétien's protagonist, Perceval, makes a grave mistake upon meeting the fisher king, as he subsequently learns: he asks nothing of the holy grail and the bleeding

lance he sees in the possession of the fisher king, whose responsibility it is to guard those objects—relics of a people's founding myths, just as the voice, that precious originary *noyau* I have described, is for Césaire. Perceval learns that those questions, had he asked them, would have healed the fisher king, as a young woman explains to him: "Ah, malheureux Perceval, / quelle triste aventure est la tienne / de n'en avoir rien demandé, / car tu aurais si bien pu guérir / le bon roi qui est infirme / qu'il eût recouvré l'entier usage de ses membres et de ses terres" (263). Subsequently, a hermit confirms for Perceval, "tu n'as rien demandé / de la Lance ni du Graal. / De là sont venus nombre de tes malheurs" (451). What is at stake in both tales, then, is the healing of bodies and of the lands they inhabit.

There is, from Perceval's perspective, the lingering air of what might have been: the fisher king's physical suffering, as well as his inability to feed himself from his own land, endure because of Perceval's silence. Similarly, in the *Cahier*, the righting of an upside-down economy of consumption, and the restored voice of a people, depend upon the speaking of the right words. Césaire depicts Martinicans early in the *Cahier* as being divided from their voices; even a crowd is muted, "à côté de son vrai cri, […] à côté de son cri de faim" (9). Likewise, Perceval is divested of his voice—as the hermit describes his silence, "Le péché te trancha la langue, / quand tu as vu devant toi le fer / dont le sang jamais n'a été étanché / et que tu n'en as pas demandé la raison" (451). Although Perceval does penitence, he will never again have the chance to ask the questions he failed to ask, or to see them transform the plight of the fisher king. And the fisher king (who subsists on holy wafers rather than on the spoils of the wasteland in which he lives) will not regain the use of his body or of his lands through the help of Perceval.

In light of this story, the final image of Césaire's poem is all the more powerful, for, not only has the hero's tongue been separated from him – if only figuratively – but the suffering king's only pleasure, in this interminable wasteland, is to be rowed in a boat, *fishing* ("Quand il cherche à se distraire / [...] il se met à pêcher à l'hameçon. […] il n'y a pas d'autre plaisir / qu'il soit en rien capable d'endurer ni de souffir") (259). But where this activity at the end of the *Cahier* promises to fill the interrelated lacks of nourishment and voice, it yields nothing for the fisher king, as the hermit later assures Perceval: "Ne va pas t'imaginer qu'il ait / brochet, lamproie ou saumon! / Le saint homme, d'une simple hostie / qu'on lui apporte dans ce graal, / soutient et fortifie sa vie" (451). It is the act preceding consumption, and which results – when done for pleasure – in a prolonged sustainment of desire, rather than the fulfillment of it. It is similar to "le verve" Jean-Pierre Richard describes, "un jeu préalable à la satisfaction" (120). And indeed, in this sense, Chrétien's legend reveals much about the first two writers in the present study as well: for the sustained consumption in the works of Flaubert and Baudelaire, like Chrétien's, participates in an economy of expression that, despite its beauty, can never lead beyond itself. They are suspended, like Chrétien's characters, in a cycle that only perpetuates the repetition of desire.

For Flaubert, acts of consumption create a stage upon which tensions between the multiplicity of sensory experience and a competing desire for textual purity and order – desires that manifest themselves both in his work and in his life – collide. These collisions result, of course, in the death of Emma Bovary, and in homicide and cannibalism in *Salammbô*, works in which Flaubert uses acts of eating to arrive at an ending-point of consumption in which the desiring bodies ultimately destroy themselves,

while the work is left intact. The viscerality of Baudelaire's work makes the body central to it, yet there is also that warring tension between the desire to manifest the body, to make it as real as possible, and so to *create* it, all the while reviling and destroying it, largely – as I have argued – through violent acts of consumption. As if under a spell, like the fisher king, Emma Bovary will never be fulfilled, and Baudelaire's suffering poet finds consolation only in the perfection of his art.

In the *Cahier*, however, such redemption – realized through the engagement of this violent economy of consumption with the world beyond it – is not only possible, but necessary. It is the reason why the poet sets out to write the text, and the note upon which the text ends—or, more precisely, upon which it is built to endure. In *La Fanfarlo*, Baudelaire writes of his protagonist, Samuel Cramer, "Il était à la fois tous les artistes qu'il avait étudiés et tous les livres qu'il avait lus, et cependant, en dépit de cette faculté comédienne, restait profondément original" (555). Likewise, the abundance of intertextual resonances we have identified in Césaire, the evidence of which is tightly woven into the fabric of the *Cahier*, do not impede Césaire's voice from emerging as something utterly singular. Like Baudelaire, Césaire paradoxically turns acts of violent consumption upon himself and the people of Martinique. However, the object of this is not a purely aesthetic one seeking only to feed the text itself, a point upon which Césaire insists. As Césaire explains to Leiner, "J'essaie d'exprimer, de dire, de proférer, de porter à la lumière, d'exhumer" (xxiv). The extreme violence we encounter through the representations of violent consumption in the *Cahier* are constructive of something, then: they deal in reality, forcing others to face the ugliest of truths. And the poet makes this important distinction: "je ne me profère pas *en tant que moi; je profère les autres*" (xxiv,

emphasis in original). Unlike Perceval, Césaire's narrator succeeds in finding a tongue capable of speaking the right words—a tongue that in turn creates a rupture from the colonially-dominated economy of consumption, returning to Martinicans the control of their bodies and their land, and providing at once a means of self-expression and self-nourishment.

As I hope to have demonstrated in the previous study, food is often much more than what it appears to be in literature, and consumption is an act as capable of destroying as it is capable of nourishing. As I have noted, the ancients were just as aware as our writers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries of the potential disorder introduced by the act of consumption into the ordered, often architectural space of the *written* banquet. Reason is only sheltered from the violent disorder of the drunken revelers who invade Plato's *Symposium*, because the author has kept this intrusion from interrupting the privileged domain of discourse until end of the text. Significantly, Plato concludes by assuring us that Socrates – the arbiter of Reason – is still able to argue a point, even after having enjoyed his wine.

Words and food do not sit easily together in the works of Flaubert, Baudelaire, and Césaire, however, writers who – rather than confining acts of consumption to the fringes of their texts – invite the violence and disorder it brings *in*. Each uses consumption as a means of confronting the problems of modernity, as they experience it: for Flaubert, the death of Emma Bovary ultimately quiets a prodigiously bourgeois appetite (both of which are problematic to Flaubert, both personally and professionally, as we have seen that his correspondence reveals). For Baudelaire, consumption is a way of illustrating the plight of the modern, urban subject, eaten by forces within and without.

For Césaire, food, though still highly abstract, is nevertheless used, as I have argued, to engage with a world beyond that of the text itself, in an attempt to address and overturn the colonially dominated economy of consumption. Such use of consumption in the fictional and poetic works at the heart of my study does not preclude the expression of joy or positive consumption at the literary table. From the excess of the Rabelaisian banquet to Proust's madeleine, food in literature can be a source of pleasure and *jouissance*, or a receptacle of memory. But it is never, as I hope to have shown, to be ignored.

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