Evoking Disgust in the Eighteenth Century

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Abstract

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The eighteenth century is primarily known for the development of codes of etiquette, the refinement of manners and the artistic cultivation of the beautiful and the sublime, but there is at the same time a strand of highly visceral, often stomach-turning texts and images that coexist alongside the push for a much more polite and urbane culture. My dissertation, "Evoking Disgust in the Eighteenth Century," looks at a wide range of scientific, literary and ephemeral texts to excavate the ways that disgust both persisted and transformed across the century. These range from the poems of Jonathan Swift, the novels of Tobias Smollett, *Evelina* by Frances Burney, and George Psalmanazar's *An Historical and Geographical Description of Formosa*. I argue that disgust served as both a boundary line that can tell us the kinds of behaviors, objects and bodies that should not be tolerated in society, and as an emotion that could be trained and cultivated to guide the disgust reactions of readers.

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Dedication

Dedicated to my Dad, Dani, Rocco, Oli and Charlie

Introduction

In this dissertation, I argue that disgust functioned as a means through which eighteenth-century England measured its entrance into a new age of developments in science, decorum, and colonial rule. More than just a negative emotion one feels when seeing or smelling something distasteful, disgust serves as an automatic evaluation of what is not just unacceptable, but actively offensive. Despite this seemingly unconscious quality, it is also an emotion that is uniquely subject to conditioning and can vary widely across both cultures and history, and because of this it becomes possible to see how disgust in the eighteenth century functioned as an absolute cut-off point for acceptability. As such, it can be used to gauge the shifting borders of acceptability within the culture. What the English found disgusting reveals a negative definition of self, a collection of traits, objects and sensorial impressions that co-existed with the more positive sense of England as a polite and sophisticated growing empire. Despite the widespread circulation of texts and images designed to evoke disgust in the period, mainstream seventeenth and eighteenth-century aesthetic philosophy persistently returns to the idea that disgust is the one emotion that has no place in any representational project. My dissertation, "Evoking Disgust in the Eighteenth Century," examines the dynamic relationship between disgust and social inclusion, asking: How do we address the persistent return to encounters with the disgusting throughout the century? If it is so unpleasant to experience representations of disgusting scenes or objects, why did British writers and artists continue to reproduce them? Who and what was included within these representational modes and what did it mean to invoke disgust?

While most studies locate the start of serious theoretical interest in disgust in the eighteenth-century, there has not yet been a study dedicated to unpacking why this might be. By

focusing on the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, one of my goals is to locate an important point of origin for more contemporary ways of imagining disgust, emerging as they did from Enlightenment theories of ethics and the early development or codification of a strict system of hygiene and sanitation. In this way, I am in dialogue with other researchers, like legal scholar and philosopher Martha Nussbaum, who takes the view that the emotion is used as a sort of cudgel of enforcement. Nussbaum, for example, has described disgust as a way of fixing the status of contaminate on impoverished or other marginalized people.[1]

Perhaps because of the perception of disgust as a uniquely embodied form of feeling, most critical studies on the topic attempt to align their analysis with current scientific consensus on the emotion, and many theorists have leaned particularly hard on the pioneering work done by University of Pennsylvania psychologist Paul Rozin, whose experiments test subject's reactions to eating simulated feces or drinking water stirred by a clean comb. His findings helped him establish claims about both inherited and learned feelings of disgust. But while this recourse to an interdisciplinary view of disgust might be motivated by a desire to ground literary or philosophical thinking in the stable ground of 'hard science', scholars in the humanities working on disgust often find themselves wading through the strange and unfamiliar waters of a live scientific controversy. Whether they draw from anthropology, cognitive science, or evolutionary psychology, theorists of disgust are compelled either to pick sides or to attempt a synthesis of competing ideas: Is disgust a largely universal human constant? Is culture more important than physiology in determining what exactly we find disgusting? Are emotions, like disgust, a form of thinking, or are they 'pre-cognitive' and instinctual? Is disgust an important and useful feature of

[1] Martha Nussbaum, *From Disgust to Humanity: Sexual Orientation and Constitutional Law* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010). Notably, Sianne Ngai, in the afterword to *Ugly Feelings*, suggests that while disgust is certainly mobilized by right-wing elements, this does not mean it cannot be a useful line of attack against these same forces.

human evolution, or is it simply an accidental by-product or 'spandrel', a largely functionless, appendix-like growth?

Going back to the mid-1990s, a small but vocal group of scholars has been agitating for reform of English departments which would take precisely this shape. Brian Boyd, Joseph Carroll, and Jonathan Gottschall were, and still are, some of the best-known names in what is sometimes called Darwinian criticism, sometimes 'Evo-Crit'. Many literary critics are perhaps justifiably wary of these attempts to synthesize evolutionary science and literary criticism. In 2011, Jonathan Kramnick wrote what many think of as the definitive re-buff to the often-inflammatory rhetoric of these critics, pointing to the ways in which their supposedly radically objective forms of literary criticism is often founded on precisely the kinds of scientific uncertainty that I have outlined above.[2]

Despite these problems, an approach to disgust that combines the historical-literary-philosophical with the psychological-physiological remains, at least to me, attractive. In my dissertation, I approach an answer to these questions in conversation with the recent work of Sean Silver, whose methodology serves as a useful guide to speaking both languages at once when considering the eighteenth century. Responding to Bruno Latour's call for a "second empiricism," Silver uses John Locke's discussion of the idea of *taste* as an entry point into questions of how both scientists and cultural critics might fill in the gaps of their expertise.[3] Taste, for Silver, is simultaneously an "aesthetic faculty" and "the effect of a chemical process," and so attracts analysis from disciplines that remain fundamentally isolated from one another.[4] As Silver puts it: "Cultural critics, in the pursuit of theories of taste, have assumed that flavor is a

[2] Jonathan Kramnick, "Against Evolutionary Criticism," *Critical Inquiry* 37, no. 2 (2011).
[3] Bruno Latour, "Why Has Critique Run Out of Steam? From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern," *Critical Inquiry* 30: 151-73.
[4] Brian Silver, "Locke's Pineapple and the History of Taste," *The Eighteenth Century* 49, no. 1 (2008): 44.

problem for the chemists; chemists have had difficulty explaining taste because whatever it is that causes people to develop tastes or distastes for flavours seems principally cultural".[5] The challenge for contemporary interdisciplinary studies of the eighteenth century is to reconstruct the perspective in which the borders between science and the humanities was much more porous.

Like taste, disgust also straddles the border between the aesthetic and physiological. In *Distinction* (1979), Pierre Bourdieu has already observed that "tastes are perhaps first and foremost distastes, disgust provoked by horror or visceral intolerance ('sick-making') of the tastes of others."[6] This underscores the deep but often invisible connection between the consumption of culture and the biological imperative to retch. In this regard, Silver's suggestion that early empiricists were probably closer to a *second empiricism* than scholars today is a useful one. Seventeenth- and eighteenth-century physicians and natural philosophers frequently occupied spaces of expertise at the intersection of contemporary science and literary criticism, like Scottish physician John Gregory, and English poet and surgeon Erasmus Darwin. I deal specifically with these figures and their role in theorizing the relationship between disgust and the literary imagination in my first chapter.

Evocations of disgust are not static; they functioned differently in the eighteenth century than they did in the sixteenth and seventeenth century. That is, disgust in the eighteenth century is not precisely the Rabelaisian model described by Mikhail Bakhtin, in which the order of authority is inverted by a carnival celebration of the lower material bodily stratum.[7] More often than not, it is instead a means of *preserving* those orders, or at least a symptom of anxiety about

[5] Silver, *Locke's Pineapple*, 44.
[6] Pierre Bourdieu. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste.* Trans. Richard Nice (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1984).
[7] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, trans. Hélène Iswolsky (Bloomington, Indiana: Indianan University Press, 1984).

their stability. My dissertation shows that in the eighteenth century, evoking disgust, discovering it in some object or some person, becomes a way of positioning the author as clear-sighted and as not drawn in by what are interpreted as increasingly sophisticated and deceptive surfaces. I show that disgust also demarcates the cut off point for what will be tolerated within the culture and provides a means for guiding and instituting the disgust reactions of readers in order to enforce social distinction.

In her excellent study on waste matter in the eighteenth century, Sophie Gee calls our attention to an anecdote from Charles II's abandonment of his temporary house in Oxford after the end of the Great Plague, where explorers of the then abandoned apartments found the corners of stairwells and hallways filled with human feces. In Gee's reading, this story lays bare the way that "at the beginning of the eighteenth century, prosperity and affluence still appeared to be inseparable from their opposites, waste and desolation." [8] But it also gives us insight into a culture that was in transition. With the great mass of the city laid to waste by both the plague and the fire of 1666, London would be rebuilt from the ground up, and it is in this context that the royal turds are discovered. By the end of the eighteenth century, this kind of behaviour by a member of the royal family would be highly unusual, as another kind of rebuilding would be taking place – a reconstruction of a more sophisticated, more sublimated, and more strictly censored self.

As important to understanding disgust is understanding the English imagination and how writers and philosophers understood its role in generating both aesthetic experience and new forms of knowledge. Disgust, as mediated through the texts that I look at in this dissertation project, is always filtered through an imaginative rendering, and I argue that disgust both

[8] Sophie Gee, *Making Waste: Leftovers and the Eighteenth-Century Imagination* (Princeton University Press, 2009), 6-7.

conditioned and was conditioned by models of the imagination. In this way, my project deviates from earlier scholarship, such as John Brewer's *The Pleasures of the Imagination* (1997), which remains a valuable study on the development of what he calls "high culture" in eighteenth-century England, and which very usefully describes the economic and material contexts that allowed for the growth of a culturally literate English consumer. However, Brewer often seems less interested in treating the imagination as an historically contingent faculty and focuses more on tracing the shift away from royal patronage towards the creation of a public marketplace of artistic consumption. Brad Pasanek's encyclopedic *Metaphors of Mind* (2015) takes much more seriously the idea that ways of thinking about the self were changing throughout the century, and makes use of massive digital archives to come to terms with the myriad ways in which Enlightenment thinkers described and imagined the mind, revealing many strange and surprising ways in which metaphorical constructions of the self were entangled with a variety of material and biological categories.[9] I am also in conversation with Tita Chico's *The Experimental Imagination* (2018), which shows how the toolbox of the literary imagination and developing techniques of experimental natural philosophy leaned on and supported one another.[10]

In the last ten or fifteen years, scholarship on disgust has been attracting an increasing amount of attention. One of the challenges posed by disgust is the difficulty of transcribing materials related to it (bodily fluids and waste, rotten food, dismembered bodies, stinking toilets, itchy rashes) into the language of academic discourse. The onset of serious scholarship on the emotion in the modern era goes back at least to Hungarian psychoanalyst Aurel Kolnai's *On Disgust* (1929), in which he makes sharp distinctions between disgust, fear and contempt. Kolnai

[9] Brad Pasanek, *Metaphors of Mind: An Eighteenth-Century Dictionary* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2015).
[10] Tita Chico, *The Experimental Imagination: Literary Knowledge and Science in the British Enlightenment* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2018).

states that, in contrast with these other emotions, "the intention of disgust is much more markedly oriented outwards," and is distinguished as well "by the way in which it adheres to the object which is its cause."[11] William Ian Miller's *The Anatomy of Disgust* (1998) remains probably the best overview of the emotion from the perspective of cultural studies, and most of the work to come out afterwards has had to reckon with Miller's Burton-esque dissection of the emotion at the intersection of psychology and politics, with Miller arguing that disgust "generates culture as well as being generated by it."[12] More recently, Carolyn Korsmeyer's *Savoring Disgust* (2011) has very usefully dealt with what Korsmeyer calls 'aesthetic disgust', a "response that no matter how unpleasant, can rivet attention to the point where one actually may be said to *savor* the feeling."[13] Paying particular attention to both food and modern art, Korsmeyer argues that despite the apparently unpleasant physiological and psychological feelings that encounters with disgusting objects can arouse, the emotion has a unique and important place in our experience of aesthetic objects.

One of the few areas in which eighteenth-century writers seriously engaged with disgust is within literary criticism and aesthetic theory. In Immanuel Kant's *The Critique of Judgement* (1790), he distinguishes disgust as unique among the ugly things that can be portrayed artistically:

> There is only one kind of ugliness which cannot be represented in accordance with nature, without destroying all aesthetical satisfaction and consequently artificial beauty; viz. that which excites disgust. For in this peculiar sensation, which rests on mere imagination, the object is represented as it were obtruding itself for our enjoyment while we strive against it with all our might. And the artistic representation of the object is no longer distinguished from the nature of the object itself in our sensation, and thus it is impossible that it can be regarded as beautiful.[14]

[11] Aurel Kolnai, *On Disgust.* Ed. Barry Smith and Carolyn Korsmeyer (Chicago: Open Court, 2004), 39.
[12] William Ian Miller, *The Anatomy of Disgust* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), viii.
[13] Carolyn Korsmeyer, *Savoring Disgust: The Foul and the Fair in Aesthetics* (Oxford University Press, 2011), 4.
[14] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgement* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1914).

While Kant is speaking about artistic representations of disgust, he implies that the goal of representation is not the exact duplication of the object, but a striving towards 'aesthetic liking'. When something disgusting is represented well, it becomes real for the spectator, who suddenly finds her nose being rubbed in excrement or vomit. For Kant, a disgusting object can never be anything other than itself – a photorealistic oil painting of vomit produces the same feelings of revulsion as an encounter with the real thing – and portraying something disgusting then represents a declaration of accuracy or verisimilitude.

My dissertation examines a variety of texts and is composed of three chapters that consider different and changing conceptions of disgust in the seventeenth and eighteenth century. I consider multiple spaces in which important conceptions of disgust played out: the laboratory, the physician's office, the kitchens of London, and the bog-house. In my first chapter, titled "Troublesome Objects: Medicine, Natural Philosophy and Disgust," I look to developments in science and medicine and explore how direct evocations of disgust and discussions of disgust's operations informed the reciprocal relationship between the new empiricisms and literature. I argue that disgust posed problems for both empiricism and literature – a thorough and accurate depiction of people and the world around them would require using imagery that might make readers uncomfortable. As new modes of description were developed to expand and distribute new methods of knowledge-making, physicians and natural philosophers were frequently faced with needing to depict less-than savoury images and ideas. This required them to transition into a mode of description that would veer off significantly from the laws of literary decorum that governed other genres of textual production. One of the texts I discuss here is *The Loves of Plants* (1789) by Erasmus Darwin, which includes two interludes in which he discusses the

distinction between the *tragic* and the *horrid* in art and literature. Darwin states that while portraying a spot of blood on the shirt of a wounded soldier can be tragic and therefore beautiful, showing too much of it would be excessive. Darwin writes, "if the artist should chuse to represent his thigh as shot away by a cannon ball and should exhibit the bleeding flesh and shattered bone of the stump, the picture would introduce into our minds ideas from a butcher's shop, or a surgeon's operation room, and we should turn from it with disgust".[15] Darwin, like other writers in my dissertation, sat on the fence between medicine and literature, and in this chapter I consider how and why the operation room is placed firmly outside the borders of proper artistic subject. Some science, it seems, was not suitable for crossing the line into literary or pictorial representation, and part of what I explore with Darwin and other scientist-literati is excavating precisely where this line is drawn, and why.

Much earlier in the century, in his *Practical Dissertation on Venereal Disease* (1717), moreover, physician and surgeon Daniel Turner assembled a range of anecdotes drawn from his medical practice, designed to illustrate the proper management of what we now refer to as sexually transmitted infections. There is something shocking about the way the material swerves between learned discussion of classical and contemporary medicine and detailed narratives like the examination of an aristocratic woman's anus or observations of "purulent matter" dripping from the penis of a dog, details that might have made even the smuttiest novelist or pamphleteer blush. My chapter shows that the eighteenth-century medical case study is, after all, itself literary genre, one in which the normally strict laws of narrative decorum appear to be suspended or overridden in the name of a more perfect empiricism.

[15] Erasmus Darwin, *The Loves of Plants*, 1789.

Despite this apparent licence, Turner's *Dissertation* is peppered with cryptic attacks on fellow surgeon John Marten's *Treatise of All the Degrees and Symptoms of the Venereal Disease* (1709), the content of which is described by Turner as "fit only for a detestable Gonologium or Collection of Smutt and Obscenity" and filled with "obscene Flights and smutty Romances". Given the content of the *Dissertation*, it is difficult to imagine what in Marten's collection of case studies could fly so far afield of Turner's sense of decency. The answer, I suggest, lies in an appendix on sexual relations printed with (but detachable from) the end of the book, a section which drew printed attacks from both doctors and lay-people. The controversy over Marten's case studies raises questions about the status of medical texts as literature, and I argue that the licence of physicians took in their medical-descriptive practices helped to shore up new disciplinary borders between scientific and literary prose.

My second chapter, "London's Cannibals: Anthropophagy, Disgust and Identity in the Eighteenth Century," explores how London's growth as a metropole, the development of colonies across the Atlantic, and the elaboration of new codes of politeness came up against concomitant anxieties involving civic hygiene and questions of national identity. I argue that these anxieties often played out through how English authors imagined food and, more specifically, the often low-quality, unrecognizable food available in the metropolis. At its most extreme, fear of adulterated food stuffs could manifest as paranoia about cannibalism, the human consumption of human bodies. England's dominance over its overseas colonies developed and as more and more exotic foodstuffs were being imported into the city, citizens were increasingly being confronted with cultural difference in the course of their everyday lives. At precisely the time when national identity seemed to be the most fragile, and the most open to influence, and when it seemed most necessary to distinguish English cultural practices, infrastructure and eating

habits from the people being enslaved and exploited in the colonies, Londoners feared that they were becoming more similar than not to the cannibals they imagined populating Asia and the Caribbean.

While I look to recipe books, newspaper reports and the novels of Tobias Smollett, one major focus of the chapter is the story of George Psalmanazar, a French protestant who came to London early in the eighteenth century under the guise of a cannibal from Formosa. Psalmanazar, in an effort to intrigue the wealthy and the gullible elite of London, invented his own language and created elaborate tales of human sacrifice and ritual consumption, which seemed to be readily believed for several years. I argue that, in excess of the textual evidence for his identity, Psalmanazar *performed* his forgery through the signifiers of a non-English diet, an invented hodgepodge of elements based on nothing but the swirling cloud of associations he had picked up throughout his education – the combination of exotic spices and fruits that he may have seen imported into Europe with an unusual preparation method, meat served raw. The effect was that the flavors of sophistication and commerce, the delightful commodities that came through international markets, were superimposed on the so-called "primitive" diet of the people that the English colonial machine worked to subjugate. The result of this juxtaposition is an uncomfortable tightening of the two poles of politeness and so-called savagery – a drawing together of Englishness and its cultural and commercial imports.

In my third and final chapter, "Cleanly Meditations: Politeness, Cleanliness and the Bog-House," I look at the ways in which private women's spaces of the toilette and the privy were brought under scrutiny, and how the shape and direction of that scrutiny shifted over the course of the century. I show that along with the rise of a culture of politeness, the growth in etiquette guides, and increased pressure on women to embody newly forming ideals of comportment,

hygiene and graciousness, there is a simultaneous rise in scatological texts that voyeuristically describe women relieving themselves, either in the privacy of their bedrooms or spontaneously in public. As the century progressed and scatological humour became less common and the attention of these same kinds of texts increasingly narrowed to a focus on the long-standing complaint of women's use of cosmetics at the expense of more general questions about bodily disgust. I argue that these texts exacted a new form of discipline that saw women as a scapegoat for ambivalent feelings about the nature of politeness. Depictions of encounters with women's bodies seen as shorn of their polite armor helped to shore up, maintain, or even resist movements towards cleanliness in civic and social organizations.

In this chapter, I pay particular attention to the work of Jonathan Swift, especially his 1730s series of dressing-room poems, where encounters with disgust are framed very explicitly as problems of the imagination. I also look at various anonymously published poems and newspaper articles, mock odes to the bog-house or striking paper and anecdotes about dangerous cosmetic practices in order to excavate how often the sexualizing voyeuristic gaze of male poets was turned towards the stinking spaces where human waste is shed. I argue that male visions of disgust were, and still are, often filtered through the lens of women's bodies, as is the case with much of Swift's work. The dressing-room poems and the other texts that I discuss served as a means of conditioning readers disgust reactions and teaching them to distrust the polite presentations of women's bodies.

In the second part of the chapter, I look to Frances Burney's *Evelina* (1778) as a means of bridging the gap between the often extremely visceral evocations of disgust made in the time of Swift and the decoupling of disgust from the body and senses that appears in the latter half of the century. When we read about people's stomachs being turned during this period, it is most often

in response to failures to navigate the increasingly rigid rules of polite behaviour: disgust at someone's boorish behaviour or ignorance or their poverty, or their unwanted sexual advances. Burney's Evelina is torn between the approach of a Rabelaisian prankster figure, and the perfect exemplar of a sophisticated urban lady. She is *almost* compelled to laugh at her grandmother's farcical and occasionally disgusting injuries, or at Congreve's *Love for Love* (1695), but withholds her laughter. More importantly, though, she consistently demonstrates her mastery of the urban social codes by way of her disgust, which is directed variously at her cousins, her grandmother, and her sexually aggressive suitors. I argue that Evelina's introduction to the sophisticated rituals of London's polite society serves as a kind of fictionalized etiquette manual, where readers are taught how to direct their disgust, and how to recognize precisely how to identify and produce a *natural* polite body that elides or evades the kind of criticism lodged by figures like Swift in his dressing-room poems.

Chapter 1: Troublesome Objects: Medicine, Natural Philosophy and Disgust

In 1788, William Falconer published his *Dissertation on the Influence of the Passions*, a serious attempt to "describe the passions of the mind in health, and their influence in inducing disease" that was awarded the inaugural Fothergrill Prize.[16] For Falconer, human emotions were bound up inextricably with human physiology, and he argues that manipulating the passions can have both beneficial and harmful effects on the health of the patient. Several times through the course of the book, Falconer puzzles over what he calls a tradition of using "Odious and Disgustful remedies" as a means of shocking the system of a patient into quietude or distraction. In one particular instance, Falconer brings up the use of toads as a kind of fearful amulet:

> A live toad, hung about the neck, is a noted remedy among the lower kind of people for a bleeding at the nose, and it is not improbable that the sentiments of aversion, dread, and horror, impressed by such an odious contact, may act as a powerful sedative, and of course be serviceable in the disease, by diminishing the force of circulation.[17]

While Falconer scoffs at the misguided feelings of disgust that the toad arouses in the lower classes, claiming that all but the most ignorant poor are aware of "the late discoveries that a toad is a creature perfectly innocent," his *Dissertation* makes clear that he is not above exploiting the emotion for medical purposes, and he cites a long list of other "strange and hideous" cures that might either shock the system into functioning through their "odious contact," or distract the imagination enough for healing to take place.

[16] William Falconer, *Dissertation on the influence of the Passions* (London: C. Dilly; and J. Phillips, 1788), 22.
[17] Falconer, *Dissertation*, 51.

But while certain medical mobilizations of disgust seem to be desirable, or at least potentially efficacious, this is not the case in late eighteenth century aesthetic theory. Oliver Goldsmith, famous mostly for his novel *The Vicar of Wakefield* and his laughing comedy revival *She Stoops to Conquer*, was contracted in 1769 to write an eight-volume natural history, eventually published in 1774 as *An History of the Earth and Animated Nature*. Although large portions of the text are directly lifted from more established natural philosophers (especially Pliny, Buffon, Abraham Trembley, and John Ellis), Goldsmith at times inserts elements of personal narrative or opinion into his assemblage in what Melissa Bailes calls "the collective, collaborative mode of natural history".[18] Here, Goldsmith, like Falconer, reflects on the toad's power to disgust and recent discoveries about its benignity, but in a way that puts himself as author at the centre of a story of the "biased imagination".[19] Goldsmith, coming from Ireland, "a country where there are no Toads," finds himself in a position where he picks up a toad after mistaking it for an apparently harmless frog. While Goldsmith, too, thinks that the disgust that the toad elicits is entirely irrational, claiming that imagination is primed to see the creature with "more than natural deformity," he remains far less confident than Falconer that disgust can be conquered by reason. The horror that he felt after realizing he had handled a toad is described as leaving a permanent wound in his perception: "My first imaginations were too strong not only for my reason, but for the conviction of my senses".[20]

Perhaps Goldsmith's work as a novelist and dramatist makes him especially sensitive to the idea that reason can govern and surpass the emotions. Disgust (what Paul Rozin calls the "body and soul emotion") seems to represent for him a point where bodily response and the

[18] Melissa Bailes, "Literary Plagiarism and Scientific Originality in the 'Trans-Atlantic Wilderness' of Goldsmith, Aikin and Barbauld," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 49, no. 2 (2016): 266.
[19] Oliver Goldsmith, *A History of Earth and Animated Nature* (Dublin: James William, 1776), 7.83.
[20] Ibid., 7.84.

imagination intersect.[21] Earlier in his career, while writing for the British Magazine, Goldsmith wrote about disgust and the aesthetics. Even in 1763, Goldsmith was framing his aesthetic meditations on a language of natural philosophy, a stance that demonstrates the same unease about an area of knowledge that could seem sometimes to edge perilously close to a kind of distasteful seeing and describing:

> It is the business of art to imitate nature, but not with a servile pencil: and to choose those attitudes and dispositions only, which are beautiful and engaging. With this view, we must avoid all disagreeable prospects of nature which excite the ideas of abhorrence and disgust. For example, a painter would not find his account in exhibiting the resemblance of a dead carcasse half consumed by vermin, or of a swine wallowing in ordure, or of a beggar lousing himself on a dunghill, although these scenes should be painted never so naturally, and all the world must allow that the scenes were taken from nature, because the merit of the imitation would be greatly overbalanced by the vile choice of the artist.[22]

What emerges from these moments in Falconer and Goldsmith is an image of disgust as an important point of intersection between the new empiricisms, medicine and natural philosophy, and the literary imagination. Falconer, a physician and recipient of a prize that rewards exceptional medical writing, concerns himself with the role of disgust and the imagination as a part of medical practice: Goldsmith, primarily a literary writer, uses disgust to grapple with the often-porous borders art and natural philosophy. Both writers were emerging from a century long process, beginning with the Scientific Revolution of the middle of the seventeenth century, which saw new modes of description rising up to meet the needs of new modes of knowledge. The toad that both Falconer and Goldsmith describe serves as an emblem for the role that disgust played in the relationship between the new empiricisms and the literature of the eighteenth century. Disgust was elicited by the sights and smells of the natural world and

[21] P. Rozin, J. Haidt, & C.R. McCauley, "Disgust," *Handbook of Emotions, 2nd Edition*, Ed. M Lewis and J.M Haviland-Jones (New York: Guilford Press, 2000).
[22] Oliver Goldsmith, "On The Study of the Belles Lettres," *The Works of Oliver Goldsmith*, Ed. J.W.M Gibbs (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1886), 338.

therefore a necessary part of that world's representation in language, and sometimes a useful physiological mechanism to be studied as an object of medicine and natural philosophy in and of itself. I argue here that disgust played an important role in shaping both literary and scientific textual genres, as physicians and natural philosophers attempted to develop new modes of description distinct from other prose and poetry that led to clearer boundaries between scientific and imaginative writing.

Falconer and Goldsmith's imbrication of the fields of natural philosophy and medicine are not novel. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the disciplinary borders between those who studied the works of nature and those who practiced as physicians, surgeons or apothecaries were often indistinct. Physicians, in their theorizing and their prescriptions, would draw on the latest discoveries in the plant or animal kingdoms as often as natural philosophers considered the pharmaceutical or anatomical potential of their research and specimens. Near the end of the century, Georges Louis Leclerc (who would later become Comte de Buffon), in his massively influential multi-volume *Histoire naturelle, générale et particulière* (1749-88), saw the study of animal bodies as constitutive of a more precise knowledge of human bodies, writing at the conclusion of his book on human anatomy and the stages of life and gestation*:* "Having considered man in himself, ought we not to derive every assistance, by comparing him with the other parts of animal creation?" [23] Erasmus Darwin, a practicing physician for most of his life, pushed this connection between medicine and natural philosophy further in the preface to his *Zoonomia* (1794), claiming the ambitious goal of reducing "the facts belonging to ANIMAL LIFE into classes, orders, genera, and species; and, by comparing them with each other, to unravel the theory of diseases" and working towards a single theory that "should bind together

[23] Georges Louis Leclerc, comte de. Buffon. *Buffon's Natural History*, trans. J.S. Barr (London: J. S. Barr, 1792), v.1.

the scattered facts of medical knowledge, and converge into one point of view the laws of organic life".[24] Darwin (known now for his proto-Romantic poetry as much as for his radical scientific thinking) compares the work of the natural philosopher with that of literature: while there is endless knowledge to be had from studying the similitudes stamped on "the features of nature," the *rational analogies* that produce this knowledge must be concerned only with "comparing the essential properties of bodies," not with comparing "objects, otherwise discordant, by some fanciful similitude; it may indeed collect ornaments for wit and poetry, but philosophy and truth recoil from its combination".[25]

But Buffon and Darwin, writing as they were out of a time of radical change and revolution, at a time when the methodological, empirical and experimental bases of the sciences were coalescing into the specialized disciplines more familiar to us today, they were both echoing and revising ideas from the infancy of the scientific revolution in the seventeenth century. The extremely successful and well-regarded anatomist, Samuel Collins, in his *Systeme of Anatomy, treating of the body of man, beasts, birds, fish, insects and plants* in 1685, and takes this connection largely for granted. Collins compares, among other things, the skin of humans to those "of the Skin of Fish and Shells, and Skin of Insects, and of the Cuticle and Bark of Plants," but also to rocks and minerals. In his dedication to James II, Collins represents his book as a collection of "Essays of Experimental Philosophy, relating to the Curious Frame of the Body of Man, and other Animals, which are as full of Wonder and Excellency, in reference to their Variety of Parts," and describes how his dissections of animals works towards "rendering the Parts of Man's Body more clear and intelligible".[26]

[24] Darwin, *Zoonomia*, 1.2.
[25] Darwin, *Zoonomia*., 1.3.
[26] Samuel Collins, *A systeme of anatomy, treating of the body of man, beasts, birds, fish, insects and plants* (London: Thomas Newcomb, 1685), 2.49.

Taken in isolation, these writers' paeans to the beauties of nature can make it sound as if the study of human and animal bodies was something closer to wondering at an oil painting than it was to opening up rib cages, digging through buckets of feces to find worms and administering enemas. For our purposes, it is also notable that both disciplines, engaged as they both were with often gruesome investigations into the systems of the human and animal sensoria, placed disgust at the center of their inquiries. While describing the parts and mechanisms of the digestive system, Collins addresses the fact that the 'Gulet' not only swallows but is also "acted with…Vomiting and Belching too, which are Preternatural, as derived from some disaffection of the Stomach or Gulet, produced by a troublesome Object, offending the Ventricle".[27] This *preternatural* response to the 'troublesome Object' is the feeling of disgust:

> When the disgust beginneth in the Gulet, causing a ketching motion: it is caused by some ill tasted Meat, Drink, or Medicinal Potion, Pill, or Bole, whereby the Gulet is strongly Contracted by Muscular Fibres below the noisome objects, and throweth it up into the Mouth, before it arriveth in the stomach, which is drawn into Vomitting by consent.[28]

Disgust, for Collins, is something that inheres to the "troublesome object," and which produces in its turn the disgusting bodily discharge of vomit, a body response at the heart of eighteenth-century medical practice. Collins makes use of the descriptive project of natural philosophy, grafted onto the disciplinary practice of medicine, observing the digestive tract almost as if it were one of the insects or shell-fish that he studies elsewhere: *If the human being swallows rotten meat, or a bad tasting medicine, disgust will cause the contraction of his muscular fibres and will result in vomiting*.

But Collins is not only describing the mechanism of disgust, he is also evoking disgust through his text. A description of the throat forcing out vomit is surely one of the "disagreeable

[27] Collins, *Systeme*., 3.258-259.
[28] Ibid.

prospects of nature" that Goldsmith describes, and it would seem from the example of Collins' text that the language of natural philosophy might have a different set of responsibilities to its representations of nature than the artists. This distinction was a complicated one. Not all scientific texts could easily escape criticism for depicting "disagreeable prospects," and the poetry and prose of the period often had a much wider range of permission to depict disgust than Goldsmith suggests.

I. Natural Philosophy

In the last thirty years, the relationship between the literature and natural philosophy of the eighteenth century has developed into a major field of study. The publication of Shapin and Schaffer's *Leviathan and the Air-Pump* (1985) inaugurated, in the history of science, the serious consideration of the mutual development of new experimental modes of knowledge and the literary techniques that made it possible to transmit them, introducing a useful vocabulary for talking about how the new knowledges arriving through the experimental method were being transmitted and reproduced. New experiments, and the equally new kinds of knowledge that were produced by them, needed validation and assent that would reach far beyond dark rooms and anatomy halls where they took place, and so the "technology of virtual witnessing," Shapin and Schaffer's term for the way in which these experiments were transmitted through narrative, became a necessity. Boyle and his acolytes deliberately cultivated what they believed to be a new, anti-ornamental prose style, since, for Shapin and Schaffer "the validation of experiments, and the crediting of their outcomes as matters of fact, necessarily entailed their realization in the laboratory of the mind and the mind's eye".[29]

[29] Steven Shapin and Simon Schaffer, *Leviation and the Air-Pump: Hobbes, Boyle, and the Experimental Life* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 60.

But while Shapin and Schaffer helped to open up questions about the way natural philosophers made use of literature, they do not address how the development of these new 'literary technologies" play-out within the concurrent development of the novel, itself a new format, groping for new modes of representation. John Bender's *Ends of Enlightenment* (2012), building off Shapin and Schaffer's work, as well as Ian Watt's concept of the importance of the "realism of assessment", offers a version of the novel that depends fundamentally on a rhetoric "that allows, even demands, that readers add to their stock of knowledge through assent to the truth of absent experience".[30] Bender describes a fairly straightforward narrative in which early novels and science, which shared an "integrated fictionality" in their infancy, gradually shifted over the course of the century into the "manifest fictionality of the novel, and the tacit, methodologically submerged fictionality that supported a new factuality in science". [31] Writers like Defoe at the beginning of the century tended to disclaim their work's status as fiction, while latter writers tended equally to make the fictionality of their works manifest, and in Bender's view, this contrasting fictionality served to guarantee the factuality of sciences. In their mature division into distinct disciplines, with their respective allegiances to fiction and fact, both the novel and natural philosophy settled into their own versions of observational statements, describing "empirical, sense-based facts by arraying them in probable explanatory networks – be these experimental cases and reports or manifest fictional narratives".[32]

More recently, though, readings connecting natural philosophy to the growth of realism have come under pressure, and critics have pointed to sites of ambiguity in the apparent legibility of empirical observation. Helen Thompson, in her study of the role of invisible corpuscles in the

[30] Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel; studies in Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1962), 288., John Bender, *Ends of Enlightenment* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), 30.
[31] Bender, *Ends*, 6.
[32] Ibid., 55.

experiments and literature of the eighteenth century, takes specific issue with Bender's narrative which she critiques for its uncritical assumption of both Watt and Shapin and Schaffer, and its assumption of "the total scientific adequacy of what is seen".[33] Thompson's account of the similarities between the two disciplines tries to preserve the way that, even with the perceived need to describe things as they were, literature and science both "elaborate modes of figural, formal, and experimental access to imperceptible things".[34] Tita Chico, building off of Thompson, also challenges the perfect equivalence between the objective gaze of the natural philosophers and the literary technologies of the novel, focusing instead on making visible the mutual ambivalence between the disciplines by arguing that "what we now think of as literature and science were not settled as distinct epistemologies, but were understood as deeply, if sometimes awkwardly, implicated in one another".[35] Despite the natural philosophers' attempts to fashion a language of their own, the way they narrated their findings found "conceptual footing in the metaphoric thinking available through literary knowledge," and literary writers, in turn, found ways to wield the figures and rhetoric of the natural philosophers in their own narratives. Like Shapin and Schaffer, Chico calls attention to Hooke and Boyle's advocacy for a 'non-literary' style while recognizing the difficulty of enacting this rhetoric.[36] For Chico, there is a "persistent tension…between the need to be spare and the need to draw on the reader's imagination in order to make findings imaginable and thus not incredible but credible".[37]

Chico very usefully defines some striking similarities between the Boyle's concept of the experimenter as a 'modest witness' and the eighteenth-century ideal of *aesthetic*

[33] Helen Thompson, *Fictional Matter: Empiricism, Corpuscles, and the Novel* (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017), 18.
[34] Ibid., 3.
[35] Chico, *The Experimental Imagination*, 2.
[36] Ibid., 10.
[37] Ibid., 27.

disinterestedness, a posture of aesthetic spectatorship that "imagines a stable, unbiased observer with an enlightened and exclusive ability for sensory perception". [38] Like the ideal stances defined by Boyle and Hooke for experimentation, the reader of prose or poetry, or the spectator at the theatre or opera must position themselves at an appropriate aesthetic distance: receptive to pleasure, while neither over-looking or excessively buying-into the performance or object that generates that pleasure. But these ideals were not without their critics. Samuel Butler authored a number of poetic satires on Hooke and Boyle, which look askance at their claims to an experimental neutrality of vision. In *The Elephant in the Moon* (1670), Butler portrays a group of eager astronomers who believe they are seeing elephants on the moon, when in actuality they are only seeing a mouse that has crawled into the apparatus. Rather than ideal observers, the philosophers are portrayed primarily in their capacity as writers, men who "make discoveries strange news, / And nat'ral hist'try a Gazette / Of tales stupendous and far-fet".[39] Similarly, in *An Occasional Reflection on Dr. Charlton's feeling a Dog's Pulse at Gresham-College, by R. B Esq.*, Butler explicitly pokes fun at the gap between Boyles prose style and the lowness of the experimental study. The narrator wonders at Charlton's double function as both a physician to noble women and an observer of the minutiae of animal life: "to behold this exquisite solert[sic]Doctor whose province lies in the cabinet of fair ladies, and whose daily employments are to solicit the tender arteries of their ivory wristes; that he, I say, should nevertheless condescend to animadivert the languishing diastole of an expiring mongrel".[40] What's clear here is Butler's implied disgust at the hands feeling both the 'ivory wristes' and the dying dog's leg,

[38] Ibid., 136.
[39] Samuel Butler, *The Elephant in the Moon and Miscellaneous Thoughts* (London, 1670), 21.
[40] Samuel Butler, 'An Occasional Reflection on Dr. Charlton's feeling a Dog's Pulse at Gresham-College, by R. B Esq.,', *The genuine remains in verse and prose of Mr. Samuel Butler*, Ed. R. Thyer, 2 vols. (London, 1759), 404-10, 405.

and the contaminating quality of experimental natural philosophy and its suspicious objects is as much at issue as the discipline's claims to privileged acts of seeing.

At the end of the century, Kant's *Critique of Judgement* (1790) offered a direct attempt to think through the problem of disgust and representation. Building on earlier accounts by Lessing, Kant describes disgust as posing a unique problem for art, which can normally describe "as beautiful things which may be in nature ugly or displeasing" without troubling the gaze of the spectator. Representations of disgust, though, seem to break through the quietude required for the appreciation of beauty:

> There is only one kind of ugliness which cannot be represented in accordance with nature, without destroying all aesthetical satisfaction and consequently artificial beauty; viz. that which excites *disgust*. For in this peculiar sensation, which rests on mere imagination, the object is represented as it were obtruding itself for our enjoyment while we strive against it with all our might. And the artistic representation of the object is no longer distinguished from the nature of the object itself in our sensation, and thus it is impossible that it can be regarded as beautiful.[41]

While Kant is very clearly talking about spectator of a work of art and not a reader of a scientific treatise, the sometimes tenuous border between natural philosophy and aesthetics and the shared sense of *distance* that was required from both kinds of observer makes this relevant to natural philosophy *as well* as art. Might not the insistent 'object-in-itselfness' quality of disgusting objects trouble the experimental observer, as well as the pleasure of the aesthetic one? Writers of natural philosophy obviously *need* the disgusting in a way that literature does not. In the pursuit of projects of total description, the empirics must inevitably turn to accounts of subjects that are not only low, but sometimes actively repellant: the fluids, the dissections, the strange or stomach-turning animals. But the moral or aesthetic responsibility that literary and scientific writers had to decorum in these cases could be contested. These contestations are particularly

[41] Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Judgment*, trans. J.H. Bernard (London, 1892), 195.

clear when we look at some of the many writers from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries who wrote across literature and natural philosophy, where the distinction of the border between them is at its most stressed.

II. Rank(ing) Nature: Cavendish, Goldsmith and Aikin

To trace the ways in which eighteenth-century natural philosophy has dealt with its occasionally disgusting objects of study, it is necessary to go back to the flowering of the Scientific Revolution in the seventeenth century. In particular, Margaret Cavendish, a figure who for a long time existed at the margins of both the history of science and literature, provides an excellent entry point for reading, since Cavendish's stance towards the kinds of philosophy that would involve looking at nasty interiors, like Butler's, leans strongly towards skepticism.

Much has been written about Cavendish's reputation as an anti-experimentalist, an image based on her many attacks on both Hooke and Boyle. Eve Keller points out that readings of Cavendish's hostility that derive solely from biographical facts flatten out the context and the force of her critiques. Not only was Cavendish "not alone in her opposition to mechanism and the experimental method" (as we've seen with Butler), but her work also questioned early modern science's claims to a "context-free knowledge".[42] Lisa Sarasohn, similarly, has read Cavendish's posture towards the experimentalists as a gendered one. Cavendish had "already problematized her honor by displaying her works in public," and by attacking the honor of the experimentalists' slights not just on her own intellect but also on the intelligence of women more generally, Cavendish was "defending her reputation as an honest woman," as well as

[42] Eve Keller, "Producing Petty Gods: Margaret Cavendish's Critique of Experimental Science," *ELH* 64, no. 2 (1997): 451.

disputing the means through which men like Hooke and Boyle gained their knowledge.[43] Sarasohn's readings are enormously helpful for trying to think through Cavendish's outsider position in natural philosophy. Emma Wilkins, though, takes a more moderate view of Cavendish's stance on experiment, pointing to some instances in her writing where she recommends the kind of experimental knowledge that she elsewhere attacks.[44] Cavendish, in both her scientific and literary writing, sometimes makes use of disgusting objects or descriptions as a way of challenging the experimentalist's methodology by raising her own version of imaginative speculation above the contingent and easily deceived vision of her competitors.

In one of the several epistles to the reader in *The Philosophical and Physical Opinions* (1655), written eleven years before the publication of her *Observations on Experimental Philosophy* (1666), Cavendish addresses her relationship to the more graphic aspects of experimental observation in a manner fraught with ambivalence. Apologizing for her lack of experience in first-hand anatomical study, Cavendish seems at once to be ironically attacking the gendered disparity of access to experimental anatomy and actually undermining the value of such study. She writes that if she has made it mistakes, it is because "I never read of Anatomie, nor never saw any man opened, much less dissected, which for my better understanding I would have done; but I have found that neither the courage of nature, nor the modesty of my sex would permit me".[45] But while formally kept from these observations, Cavendish makes clear that she has seen her share of blood and guts in her everyday life as a woman, a move that

[43] Lisa T. Sarasohn, *The Natural Philosophy of Margaret Cavendish: Reason and Fancy During the Scientific Revolution* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 151.
[44] Emma Wilkins, "Margaret Cavendish and the Royal Society," *Notes and Records of the Royal Society of London* 69, no. 3 (2014): 245-260, 251.
[45] Margaret Cavendish, *The Philosophical and Physical Opinions* (London: J. Martin and J. Allestrye, 1665), 100.

simultaneously elevates Cavendish's authority and lowers the institutionally privileged vision of the Royal Society experimentalists, in their association with objects that appear simultaneously mundane and disgusting:

> … I have seen the intrals of beasts but never as they are placed in their bodies, but as they are cut out to be drest, and in the shambles, and perchance I have seen passing by the shambles, a cruel Butcher cut the throat of a beast, or rip up the body, where the guts and garbidge would burst out, but that gave me not much more knowledge, not seeing how they lay in their bodies: and though it is a usual custome, for Ladies and women of quality, after the hunting a Deer, to stand by until they are ript up, that they might wash their hands in the blood, supposing it will make them white, yet I never did; but as I have said before, I have seen the intrals of beasts out their bodies, which intrals I have heard are much like a mans, especially a hogs, so that I know man hath a brain, a heart, a stomack, liver, lights, spleen and the like; yet these I never viewed with curious and searching eye…

Beneath the apologies for her lack of knowledge, Cavendish seems to be posing an incredulous question to the experimentalists: These torn up bits of animal body are your objects of study? Cavendish's narrative, in its repeated restatements and reconfigurations of what she *has seen*, and what she *has never seen*, performs both attraction and aversion: she has seen the entrails, but never as they appeared in the body; she has seen the butcher cut the throat of the animal, but not seen anything about which would give her new knowledge; she has seen the organs of hogs, but never viewed them with a "curious and searching eye". While women as well as men are implicated in the "guts and garbidge" of nature, what's most remarkable about this passage is the way that Cavendish comes through as a particular individual. As much as this apology is a piece of rhetoric, it possesses as well a strong narrative, even novelistic drive, which takes up the disgusting materials of the shambles as a literary tool, even as it subtly discounts them as proper objects of natural philosophy.

Cavendish's performance of experimental modesty, whatever its ratio of sincerity to sarcasm, does not seem to be absent from works of imaginative fiction, particularly in *The*

Blazing World, in which she deals frankly with a great number of imagined objects, sometimes opened or dissected, which she in the *Philosophical Opinions* claims to lack the courage to witness. As Sarasohn suggests, Cavendish seems at times to define the distinction between her version of natural philosophy and the Royal Society's as a conflict between imagination and experiment.[46] In *Nature's Pictures, drawn by fancies pencil to the life* (1656), Cavendish again makes use of the potentially offensive imagery of the shambles and the butcher as an emblem for the low and unseemly work of those that dissect animals. The narrative opens in what reads like a satirical inversion of romantic or pastoral tropes: we start "in *Shamble-Row*, a Butcher walking in his Shop, where Meat was lying upon his Shop-board, and (being in the heat of Summer) a number of *Flies* were busily working thereupon".[47]

It's in the *Blazing World*, though, that Cavendish gives us her most sustained imaginative treatment of natural philosophy's proximity to disgust. A large part of Cavendish's challenge to the experimentalist's gaze rests on a critique of the objects of their study. When the Lady, kidnapped by a merchant is left stranded on the boat with the bodies of her captors, drifting towards the North Pole, we see what is partly an analogue of Cavendish herself forced into exactly the proximity with cadavers that the author rejects in the *Philosophical Opinions*.

> …she seeing all the Men dead, found small comfort in life; their bodies which were preserved all that while from putrefaction and stench, by the extremity of cold, began now to thaw, and corrupt; whereupon she having not the strength enough to fling them over-board, was forced to remove out of her small Cabine, upon the deck, to avoid that nauseous smell.[48]

[46] Sarasohn, *Cavendish*, 153.
[47] Margaret Cavendish, *Nature's Pictures, drawn by fancies pencil to the life* (London: J. Martin and J. Allestrye, 1656), 294.
[48] Margaret Cavendish, *The Description of a New World, called the Blazing World* (London: A. Maxwell, 1666), 4.

After dismissing the Bird-men's telescopes as "false Informers", the Empress (Cavendish's other analogue), is presented with the Bear-men's microscopic investigations of fleas and lice, a sight which offers not the false perspectives provided by the telescopes, but instead an appearance "so terrible to her sight, that they had almost put her into a swoon."[49] As in the *Philosophical Opinions,* it's difficult to tell how much of Cavendish's swooning in the face of disgusting objects is an ironic performance, but it's interesting to note that the only scientific presentation to which the Empress does not react negatively, (the "Chymical Preparations" of the Ape-men), is perhaps the most potentially disgusting in the text. The Ape-men tell her about a particular hollow rock that produces a special gum that gives the blessing of youth. They describe the stone's action not as a kind of instant and magical transmutation, but in a language that draws on the descriptive language of both medicine and natural philosophy:

> It being given every day for some certain time to an old decayed man, in the bigness of a little Pea, will first make him spit for a week, or more; after this, it will cause Vomits of Flegm, and after that it will bring forth by vomits, humors of several colours; first of a pale yellow, then of a deep yellow, then of a green, and lastly of a black colour; and each of these humors have a several taste, some are fresh, some salt, some sower, some bitter, and so forth; neither do all these Vomits make them sick, but they come out on a sudden and unawares, without any pain or trouble to the patient: And after it hath done all these mentioned effects, and clear'd both the stomack and several other parts of the body, then it works upon the brain, and brings forth of the nose such kind of humors as it did out of the mouth, and such after the same manner; then it will purge by stool, then by urine, then by sweat, and lastly by bleeding at the nose, and Emerodes…Lastly, when it has done all this, it will make the body break out into a thick scab, and cause both Hair, Teeth and Nails to come off; which scab being arrived to its full maturity, opens first along the back, and comes off all in a piece like an armour, and all this is done within the space of four months.[50]

The man-insect that Cavendish describes here, acts in many ways like an imaginative version of anatomy, a version that is both like and unlike the studies that Cavendish has excluded herself from. It is in this fictional experience of the effects of the Philosopher's Stone that Cavendish

[49] Cavendish, *Blazing World*, 27, 31.
[50] Ibid., 49-50.

sets her own investigations apart from her male peers, while retaining the 'immodest' fluids and bodily motions that she elsewhere puts outside of her philosophical practice, even amplifying her interactions with them. Not only the colour, but the taste of the vomited humors are included. The Empress, impressed with the description, explains that she would not have believed it existed "had it been a Medicine produced by Art", since only completely natural objects are capable of the kind of power ascribed to the stone.[51] By imaginatively reaching towards these natural effects, which are "so various and wonderful, that no particular Creature is able to trace her ways," Cavendish offers a corrective to the experimentalists that would crudely pry apart animals, or magnify their disgusting bodies.

While Cavendish's ambivalence is centered on the disgusting aspects of the experimental method, it was not necessary to be an anti-experimentalist to be uneasy about the materials and objects of natural philosophy. As the experimental model became increasingly dominant as the eighteenth century progressed attacks on the value of experiment as a concept became less common and the disagreements tended to focus on the interpretation and methodology of particular experiments or experimenters. Nevertheless, there remained for some a certain queasiness. While the first English translation of Buffon's *Histoire naturelle* would not be published until 1797, his ideas were circulating in London and beyond well before then. Oliver Goldsmith's *History of the Earth and Animated Nature,* a work he was commissioned to write by William Griffin, in some ways represents an even earlier translation of Buffon, although Goldsmith made use of the work of a variety of natural philosophers in what Bailes calls his "tendency towards plagiarism in his scientific writing".[52] But both Bailes and Susannah Gibson emphasize that Goldsmith intended these volumes to be something closer to a popular work of

[51] Cavendish, *Blazing World*, 51.
[52] Bailes, *Literary Plagiarism*, 266.

literature than a technical document, one that would "appeal to a wide audience," and that "contributed to the flourishing of natural history through various literary genres."[53]

Much more so than Cavendish, Goldsmith repeatedly makes clear his discomfort with certain aspects of the 'animated nature' that he describes. Referring to John Ray's system of animal classification, Goldsmith describes vermin (the smallest of the "claw-footed carnivorous animals") as having a slender bodies that "fits them for creeping into holes, in pursuit of their prey like worms."[54] Goldsmith uses the imagery of the feasting vermin as an opportunity to consider the less glamorous side of natural philosophy, writing that "we see, from this sketch of division and subdivision, how a subject, extremely delightful and amusing in itself, may be darkened, and rendered disgusting."[55] How exactly should we read Goldsmith's *History of the Earth,* with both its pretensions towards a popular readership and its gestures towards literary narrative, next to the same author's aesthetic pronouncements that "we must avoid all disagreeable prospects of nature which excite the ideas of abhorrence and disgust?" Where precisely is the line at which it becomes not only possible, but necessary to describe things like "a dead carcasse half consumed by vermin, or of a swine wallowing in ordure?"

There are certainly many disgusting animals in Goldsmith's version of nature. While the word or its analogues hardly make an appearance in his several source texts, it appears over twenty times through the course of the eight volumes, always in reference to animals. The macaque is described as being "so dirty, so ugly, and even so hideous when they grimace, that we cannot but look at them with horror and disgust"[56]; the hog is "possessed of an appetite

[53]Susannah Gibson, *Animal, Vegetable, Mineral?: How Eighteenth-Century Science Disrupted the Natural Order* (Oxford; Oxford University Press, 2015), 72; Bailes, *Literary Plagiarism*, 267.
[54] In a later volume, Goldsmith refers to worms as "Disgusting reptiles".
[55] Goldsmith. *A history*, II.296.
[56] Buffon, *Natural History*, IX.206.

eternally craving, it may be compelled to feed disgustingly, from wanting sufficient food"[57]; the louse "if examined through a microscope, its external deformity is in itself sufficient to produce disgust"[58]; and the raven, with the "whole of its appearance…calculated to disgust".[59] Goldsmith seems to have reserved a particular distaste for the dodo, which he describes in terms that are both farcical and offensive:

> The neck is large, thick, and pursy, and attached to a head of most uncouth make; the opening of the jaws extends beyond the eyes, so that when the creature gapes, it seems going to swallow all within its reach: the bill resembles two pointed spoons, that are laid together by the back; it is extremely long, and bordered with feathers, which gives it the appearance of a hood or cowl: in short, the whole figure presents a picture of deformity, at once displeasing and disgusting to the sight.

With the dodo, as with all the other animals that Goldsmith finds disgusting, disgust acts as a short-circuit to the gaze of the natural philosopher, seeming to ask the observer to turn away. But at the same time, the disgusting animal seems to demand a more thorough examination, which in the case of the dodo, takes on the descriptive density of poetic language. To make the abhorrent quality of the animal come through, Goldsmith needs to present it to us through something more than the 'literary technology' of Boyle's air-pump – he needs the "pursy" neck, the gape that threatens to swallow everything before it, the bill like "two pointed spoons," and the feathers that make the "hood or cowl".

We have already seen the strange way that Goldsmith inserted his own life history into a natural description of the toad, and the disgust which his knowledge was unable to overcome. Goldsmith covers similar ground when he writes about the salamander:

> Not only this, but many others of the lizard tribe are said to have venom; but it were to be wished that mankind, for their own happiness, would examine into the foundation of this reproach. By that means many of them, that are now shunned and detested, might be

[57] Goldsmith, *Animated Nature* II.56.
[58] Ibid., III.376.
[59] Ibid., II.222.

> found inoffensive; their figure, instead of exciting either horror or disgust, would then only tend to animate the general scene of Nature; and speculation might examine their manners in confidence and security.[60]

As with the toad or the worm, Goldsmith's wish that mankind could avoid the disgusting impressions given off by the salamander seems tainted with a fundamental doubt about whether this is possible in practice. Goldsmith seems to occasionally to be paralyzed by the "horror or disgust" that his reading has uncovered, calling attention where others are silent to the constant resistance that natural philosophers are faced with through their insistence on cataloguing the entire book of nature.

The poet and physician John Aikin, writing around the same time as Goldsmith, gives us a more direct version of how literature and natural philosophy should represent disgusting objects. In his *Essay on the Application of Natural History to Poetry* (1777), he diagnoses contemporary poetic imagination with a kind of malaise, claiming that the average reader is "wearied and disgusted with a perpetual repetition of the same images, clad in almost the same language."[61] Disgust, for Aikin, usually represents a similar aesthetical *turning away*, as it does when he complains about the popular but inaccurate references to chemistry in the poetry of the seventeenth century, and suggests that it "would give disgust rather than pleasure to one acquainted with it in its present state of improvement."[62] Rather than an offensive object that disturbs the placid eye of the viewer/reader, disgust in Aikin's *Essay* functions as a kind of preternatural detector of falsehood. Aikin's concern hinges less on the representation of disgusting objects than on the reader's disgust with stale or inaccurate imagery, a kind of

[60] Ibid., VII.128.
[61] John Aikin. *An Essay on the application of natural history to poetry* (London: W. Eyres, for J. Johnson, 1777), 9.
[62] Aikin, *Essay*, 31.

readerly malaise that he suggests can be cured by the re-introduction of true observation to poetry and prose.

Aikin accuses the poets not only of an over reliance on stale imitation, but also of a failure to properly observe and represent the details of natural objects, "owing to a too cursory and general survey of objects."[63] While the importance of the study of "anatomical precision" in the visual arts is commonly accepted, what Aikin calls the descriptive poets often make use of imagery drawn from nature without holding themselves to the same standard of accuracy. "The descriptive poet, who does not habituate himself to view the several objects of nature minutely, and in comparison with each other," writes Aikin, "must ever fail in giving his pictures the congruity and animation of real life."[64] Aikin's version of a revitalized poetic language provides an interesting foil for the scientific language developed at the end of the previous century. Rather than the anti-literary rhetoric that Hooke and Boyle wanted to inaugurate in their treatises, Aikin imagines a literature that has been mined from the pages of the same treatises. Like Hooke and Boyle, Aikin derides all "false representations of natural things," but with the modification that true depictions of nature are "equally capable of poetical use."[65]

But even for Aikin, there are limits to what natural figures the poets should make use of, and the outer edge seems to be drawn at something functionally similar to Goldsmith's disgust. Homer frequently comes up as a poet who, while very careful to draw on the actual behaviours and traits of the animals he describes, often uses comparisons that are "imperfectly adapted to the circumstance which gives occasion to them."[66] What Aikin means by this is a critique of the occasionally deflating quality of the low vehicles selected for his similes. When discussing

[63] Aiken, *Essay*, 10.
[64] Ibid., 11.
[65] Ibid., 13.
[66] Ibid., 94.

Pope's sometimes inaccurate substitutions of animals in his translation of Homer, Aikin stakes out a position somewhere between the over-correction of Pope, and the mis-selection of Homer, writing that "the comparison of Menelaus, not to be repulsed from the dead body of Patroclus, to a teizing fly, may, perhaps, justly be regarded as inconsistent with the majesty of epic poetry; but it is little improved in the translation by the substitution of a hornet."[67] If the image of the fly attracted to the rotting corpse proved too low for Aikin, the same might also be true of Goldsmith, who referred to flies as deserving "the last and lowest rank in animated nature."[68] Like the fly buzzing around the meat in Cavendish's imagined butcher shop, or like the leg of the dog and the lily white maiden in Butler, Homer's portrayal of grief is troubled by the pestering and contaminating presence of unsuitable nature. As Aikin and his sister, Anna Barbauld, would write in their co-authored children's fable 'The Rat With a Bell" (part of their collection, *Evening at Home* [1792]), "dread and affection cannot subsist together."[69]

III. Medicine

Even more than natural philosophy, eighteenth-century medicine was seemingly specialized, cloistered field, that nonetheless made up a large volume of English print output. In his study of professionalization in Augustan England, Geoffrey Holmes has pointed out that "medicine was beyond comparison the most pamphlet ridden of the late seventeenth and eighteenth-century professions"[70]. A great number of these published texts described (or enacted) rivalries between medical professionals, texts that looked less like proto-textbooks than

[67] Aiken, *Essay*, 91.
[68] Goldsmith, *Animated Nature*,VII.214.
[69] Anna Barbauld and John Aikin, "The Rat with a Bell, a Fable," *Evenings at Home; or, the Juvenile Budget Opened* (London: J. Connor, 1794), 189.
[70] Holmes, Geoffrey, *Augustan England: Professions, State and Society, 1680-1730* (London: G. Allen & Unwin, 1982), 167.

narratives that made up the social texture of middle to high-society life. Some of these, like Samuel Garth's mock-epic *The Dispensary* (1699), which satirized fellow physician-poet Richard Blackmore's hardline stance against offering free medication to the poor, joined the strands of Royal Academy infighting and literature, and demonstrate the often uneasy tension between inward-looking professionalism, and outward-looking public mindedness. Newspapers and magazines often reviewed medical texts as well as theatre, poetry and novels, implying the existence of a large lay-readership of medical texts. As Helen Deutsch puts it, "the correspondence between authorship and disease, and this mutual identification of authors and doctors, were in fact so overdetermined in eighteenth-century Britain that it is difficult to think of a single canonical male British author during this period of author-formation who was not remarkably ill and/or a student of illness."[71]

Since medical texts made up such a large slice of the eighteenth-century book market, the question of to what extent these texts participated in the development of narrative techniques more generally, how fiction and poetry might be read through medicine, or vice versa, has often been raised. Katherine Hunter, writing mostly on contemporary medical practice, has argued forcefully that "medicine is fundamentally narrative,"[72] in the way that it both diagnoses and treats illnesses through the stories that their patients tell them, and the stories that they tell each other. But what is a medical narrative in the eighteenth century? Because the case studies which were often included in medical treatises, with their descriptions of people's habits, circumstances, and bodies, seem intuitively to be nearer to what we see as more conventional narratives, there has been an increasing scholarly attention to questions of how exactly we might

[71] Helen Deutsch, "Symptomatic Correspondences: The Author's Case in Eighteenth-Century Britain," *Cultural Critique* 42, no.3 (1999): 37.
[72] Katherine Hunter, *Doctor's Stories: The Narrative Structure of Medical Knowledge* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 6.

slot them into concepts of genre. Gianna Pomata has described the case study as one of the *epistemic genres*, "those kinds of texts that develop in tandem with scientific practices…the treatise, the commentary, the textbook, the encyclopedia,"[73] emphasizing both the importance of the literary concept of genre to the history of science, as well as the often "very blurry" distinction between the literary and the scientific.

Nicolas Pethes, who focuses on the German eighteenth century, takes up Pomata's discussion by arguing for a similar generic criss-crossing, a "cross disciplinary communication" that saw "textual strategies developed in literature" active within medicine, as well as the language of medical observation active in literature. [74] In opposition to Pomata, though, Pethes argues that, because the 'case history' always has one foot in both literature and medicine, "writing case histories always means writing against genre," and resisting cultural standards of narration. In the realm of medicine, the case history was a means of guaranteeing the empirical necessity of representing the particular and individual subject rather than the general precept, while "the same empirical particularism and the same plurality of textual forms becomes relevant for Enlightenment literature in its rejection of normative laws both at the level of epistemology and that of aesthetic theory." [75]

Medical narratives from the eighteenth century often dealt very frankly with disgusting subject matter, giving their readers anecdotes and descriptions of objects that might make the most hardened scatological satirist wince. In some ways, this is not at all surprising. Even today, it is in the nature of the profession to deal with what are often perceived as disgusting materials,

[73] Gianna Pomata, "The Medical Case Narrative: Distant Reading of an Epistemic Genre," *Literature and Medicine* 32, no. 1 (2014): 2.
[74] Nicolas Pethes, "Telling Cases: Writing against Genre in Medicine and Literature," *Literature and Medicine* 32, no. 1 (2014): 26.
[75] Pethes, "Telling Cases," 27, 41.

and the road towards a medical degree is one that everyone vaguely understands as involving dissecting fetal pigs and human cadavers. The eighteenth-century medical profession was even more closely associated with the handling and manipulation of bodily fluids: vomit, urine, feces, mucus and viscera were not only the signs through which a case or an illness could be read, they were the levers through which the body could be restored to health. The interventions of surgeons, physicians and apothecaries frequently took the form of initiating purges or fluxes, issuing powerful and often dangerous emetics or laxatives. When Adam Smith, in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759), reasons that it is the immediate and not the remote effects of objects that render them "disagreeable to the imagination", it is revealing that he turns to surgical implements as an illustration[76]:

> Trophies of the instruments of music or of agriculture, imitated in painting or in stucco, make a common and an agreeable ornament in our halls and dining-rooms. A trophy of the same kind, composed of the instruments of surgery, of dissecting and amputation-knives, of saws for cutting the bones, of trepanning instruments, etc. would be absurd and shocking. Instruments of surgery, however, are always more finely polished, and generally more nicely adapted to the purposes for which they are intended, than instruments of agriculture. The remote effect of them is pain and suffering, and the sight of them always displeases us.[77]

For Smith, and for many others, the increasingly fine-tuned precision of medical practice, however "finely polished" or "nicely adapted," could not shake the *disagreeable* connotations of brutality and violence. For Paul Rozin, what he calls "envelope violation" forms a large part of the mode of disgust that proceeds from reminders of our animal natures, and his research points to frequent mentions of surgery and surgical wounds as producing a disgust reaction.[78]

[76] Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (London, 1759), 71.
[77] Smith, *Moral Sentiments*, 72.
[78] Haidt, Rozin, McCauley, and Imada, "Body," 8.

Erasmus Darwin, a practicing physician, poet and botanist, included two prose interludes in the *Loves of the Plants,* which take the form of an imagined interview between Darwin and a bookseller. Their purpose is to establish Darwin's aesthetic theories and the nature of the "compleat reverie" that can be produced in the aesthetic observer when all "the irritations of common external objects" fall away.[79] In the second of these interludes, the bookseller asks Darwin if this reverie might not be disturbed by the introduction of "disagreeable images;" a problem that Darwin suggests is located at "the boundary between the tragic and the horrid"[80]:

> …If an artist should represent the death of an officer in battle, by shewing a little blood on the bosom of his shirt, as if a bullet had there penetrated, the dying figure would affect the beholder with pity; and if fortitude was at the same time expressed in his countenance, admiration would be added to our pity. On the contrary, if the artist should chuse to represent his thigh as shot away by a cannon ball, and should exhibit the bleeding flesh and shattered bone of the stump, the picture would introduce into our minds ideas from a butcher's shop, or a surgeon's operation room, and we should turn from it with disgust. So if characters were brought upon the stage with their limbs disjointed by torturing instruments, and the floor covered with clotted blood and scattered brains, our theatric reverie would be destroyed by disgust, and we should leave the play-house with detestation.

For Darwin, the disinterested aesthetic gaze has a threshold that is marked off by disgust, and in particular, disgust caused by a too near approach to medical reality. Like Goldsmith's claim about the "disagreeable prospects of nature" that I examined earlier in this chapter, Darwin's view is that its possible for there to be too much realism in art. Where true, unvarnished description belongs is the butcher shop or the operating room, and the moment that the blood and gore produced by actual bodies is introduced to the spectator, then the imaginative reverie is destroyed. Both the tools and the practices of medicine are seen as absolutely incompatible with the type of looking necessary for aesthetic appreciation.

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[79] Erasmus Darwin, *The botanic garden, part II: Containing the Loves of the Plants, a Poem. With philosophical notes* (London: J. Jackson, 1789), 51.
[80] Darwin, *Plants*, 90.

But medicine was more than just a profession associated with disgusting matter; disgust was also an important mechanism within medicine. As we have already seen with Collins description of the bodily action of vomits, triggering a disgust reaction was one of the foundational techniques of a practice that often hinged on bringing up what were perceived as noxious or unbalanced fluids. When Falconer, at the end of the century, attempted to capitalize on the disgust reactions of his patients, he was building on and modulating a long tradition of medical thought on the role of disgust in medical practice.

Literary accounts of physicians in English have a similarly long history of playing upon the profession's adjacency to disgusting objects. Henry Clarke's *The London Bully* (1683) is billed as a book "displaying the principle Cheats of our modern Debauchees, with the Secret Practices and Cabals of the Lewd Apprentices of this Town," and as a first-hand account of the follies of the son of a prominent citizen, published so that it "might divert the headstrong Youth from blindly hunting after what grows Nauseous in a moment and which is punished with inevitable Mischiefs here, as it will undoubtedly with Eternal Pains hereafter"[81]. The lofty morality of the frontispiece and preface are undercut by the content, which more closely resembles a kind of collection of pranks and practical jokes played by the narrator as he moves through his various trades and employments.

After being expelled from school for a prank that involved dressing up as a ghost and severely beating the schoolmaster as he slept in his bed, the narrator follows the advice of his father and beings to serve as an apprentice to an apothecary. Although we hear that many pranks were played over the course of a year, only one "pleasant Adventure" is reported in detail, in

[81] Henry Clarke, *The London Bully; or, the Prodigal Son* (London: Hen. Clark, 1683).

which the apothecary is called on to give a clyster to a painter "who by an Accident was become melancholy".[82]

> …we made ready the implements, & turn'd the mans Bum uppermost; this being done, my Master put on his Spectacles, and put in the Instrument for the giving him the Clyster, while I was preparing a little Cotton to stop the hole when the Clyster was taken; but there was no need of that, for as soon as he felt the heat of the Medicaments, he fell a roaring as if he had been to have lost his Life; I prepared the stuff to stop the hole, but at the same moment my Master withdrew the Instrument, the other let fly with some much impetuosity, that all my Masters Face was overflowed with it, insomuch that he could not see at all.[83]

In the satirical dispute between apothecaries and physicians in Ned Ward's *A Journey To Hell* (1704), the doctors are abused with terms that ridicule both their suspicious medical learning, and their close association with anality: "Quack, Emp'rick, Clyster-giver, Fool, and Knave / Closer-stool-Promoter, Buttock-peeping slave". [84] As part of a sequence in which the two professions argue their case before the gates of hell, the physicians accuse the apothecaries of ignorance and presumption to treat patients without theoretical knowledge, and the apothecaries of useless theoretical knowledge that at its base is reliant on the recipes of the apothecaries. The judge, after having listened to their complaints, sentences them both to be locked up in a container of the foul medicines they have prescribed during life:

> Such pois'nous Drenches shall you always swill,
> As more and more torment, but never kill:
> Each odious Draught shall still increase your Hate,
> And gripe you worse than Arsnick does a Rat.
> As close barrel'd Figs you shall be cram'd,
> Without the hopes of being e'er undamn'd:
> There Purse, Spue, Piss, Sweat, to the worst degree,
> And stink together to Eternity.[85]

[82] Ibid., 22.
[83] Ibid.
[84] Edward Ward, *A Journey to Hell or, A visit paid to the devil: a poem* (London: 1700), 34.
[85] Ward, *Hell*, 40.

In Ward's estimation, the calculus of poetic justice centres not on only on the pain and suffering caused by medicines, but also their disgust: the *drenches* taste disgusting, and they cause disgusting things to leave the body. In response to their sentencing, the doctors 'hawk'd and spit," while the apothecaries "puk'd with meer conceit," confirming in their defeat their image as a profession that seemed sometimes to swim in the fluids that they attempted to balance.

IV. Venereal Disease and Sexual Disgust: The Case of John Marten

The idea of medical professionals using what would otherwise be bawdy or abhorrent language was not always uncontroversial, and even physicians found it necessary to walk the line between rigorous scientific description and the potential for distaste in their descriptions of bodies and treatments. Nowhere was this line more indistinct than in pamphlets on venereal disease.

Darren Wagner has argued that, as the eighteenth century progressed, "the connection between reading and pathological seed loss became a driving concern in the condemnation of bawdy literature and in the development of purposefully non-erotic, unprovocative medical rhetoric".[86] Sexual disgust and its unique composition. Both William Miller and Sianne Ngai have called attention to the way that disgust, although in some ways desire's perfect contrary, is also "dialectically conjoined" with its opposite. [87] Like Ngai, Paul Rozin's research has shown that perceptions of sexual deviance rank as some of the most common elicitors of disgust in contemporary populations. [88] In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, just as now, the

[86] Wagner, Darren N. "Leaky Bodies, Bawdy Books: Gonorrhea and Reading in Eighteenth-Century Britain," *Literature and Medicine,* Vol. 34, No. 2 (2016): 330.
[87] Sianne Ngai, *Ugly Feelings* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 333.
[88] Rozin categorizes sexual disgust as a form of 'animal reminder disgust', which "guards against any undignified use or modification of the temple". See Haidt, Rozin, McCauley, and Imada, "Body," 112.

language of disgust or abhorrence was often called upon in criticisms of sexual practices or depictions.

Not much is known about the early life of John Marten, but he seems to have been enrolled in the Company of Barber-Surgeons by 1692. It's possible that the physician Benjamin Marten, who made the first known reference to the possibility of microorganisms having a role in contagious disease, was his brother. In 1706, Marten published a translation from the Latin of Joannes Groenevelt's *Treatise of the Safe, Internal Use of Cantharides.* Ten years earlier, Groenevelt had been briefly imprisoned in Newgate after a patient had alleged that his prescription of cantharides (the powdered shells of beetles, most commonly used in this period as an aphrodisiac), and Marten addresses the "unaccountable treatment of some of the *College of Physitians* in London towards the most *Ingenious Learned Author*" in his preface, starting off his career as a physician/author in a confrontational stance towards the Royal Academy of Medicine and the College of Physicians that would continue to haunt him. [89]

Not content with simply translating Groenevelt, Marten's version is filled with additions, mostly anecdotes drawn from his own practice, often including material that tends to amplify the potential for bawdiness. In one instance, Marten discusses an impotent gentleman that he had treated, in which "all the provocative ways imaginable, could not procure or stir up any Desire or Erection".[90] In another, Marten includes a narrative of himself as a young man, as part of a scheme among friends to spike the drink of a "pretty young Lass" of Marten's acquaintance, to make her fall in love with him[91]:

> We went to the *Mitre Tavern* hard by, where after each of us had drank a Glass or two, my Comrade drinks again to the young Woman, and whilst I (we having laid the Plot before hand) was holding her in Discourse, and busie in shewing her something that I had

[89] John Marten, *A Treatise on the Safe Internal use of Cantharides* (London, 1706), xii.
[90] Ibid., 220.
[91] Ibid., 205.

> lately bought, he conveys the powder'd Cantharides into the Glass, and pours the Wine, which was Claret, upon it, and presents it to her, telling her he drank to her, she takes the Glass into her hand, and drinks to me, only touching it with her Lips, and would not be prevail'd upon to drink any more; I jealous that she suspected or saw something of the Wine, to remove such suspicion, drank it all off my self, not knowing (as before observ'd) what the effects would be.[92]

The concrete details of the narrative, in which the friends meet at "Mitre Tavern" and drink claret, the way Marten inserts himself into the treatise, and the farcical unfolding of the events (Marten makes himself ill in his aborted attempt at the sexual assault) all work together to give it the feeling of a Fielding novel, rather than a scientific investigation into the benefits of a drug. These kinds of narratives look ahead to the much more controversial text, Marten's *True and Succinct Account of Venereal Disease,* published initially in 1704. But it was the sixth edition of 1709, which featured a detachable appendix called *The Gonosologium Novum*, "done with the same Letter, on the same Paper, that those who please may bind it up with that," which would briefly ensnare Marten in a legal battle over the distastefulness of his texts. [93] Critics have speculated that the separate publication of the appendix was a device for potentially embarrassed readers, who could remove or attach it at their discretion. Whether or not this is true is unclear, but it is easy to see why the text might be scandalous. Marten introduces his appendix as itself a kind of uncovering, addressed to those who "through Modesty or Bashfulness" could not seek help for their "Secret Maladies," but much of the text is taken up with what sounds more like a meditation on the pleasures of sexual intercourse, rather than the drips and stinging sensations more common to treatises on venereal disease.[94] Marten describes, among other things, the way that the "finishing stroak of…perfection" renders the semen "sparkling and active"; how if

[92] Marten, *Treatise,* 206-7.
[93] John Marten, *Gonosologium Novum* (London: Printed for and sold by N. Crouch [etc.], 1709).
[94] Ibid., ii.

women by "any accident they see it [the penis], it instantly inflames in their Hearts with a Passion not presently asswag'd"; how the pubic hair is placed on a man so that "it does not annoy the other Parts in time of Enjoyment;" and, going into great detail on the role of penis size in copulation, including cases he had himself observed[95]:

> As for the bigness of a Man's *Yard*, it is very rarely happens that any Woman complains of it, or is any ways incommoded by it, for her *Privy Parts* being Memrabnous and Fleshy, widen and extend easily at Pleasure, especially if the Woman be before-hand dally'd with, and her Inclination and Desire to have the Act rais'd by the Husband's Wantonness; tho' I have known some so very strait, as scarecely to admit their Husbands, at least with very little Pleasure, unless just before the *Courses*, when the *Vagina* by that means, is more than ordinary relax'd.[96]

In the same year as the appendix was published, Marten was indicted by the Queen's bench under the charges of being "Being evil disposed and wickedly intending to corrupt the subjects of the Lady the Queene and seduced by cupidity," as advertised by the short-lived newspaper, *The Tatling Harlot.*[97] The charges seem to have been dismissed after a month, but the case against Marten's *Gonosologium* makes clear that there existed somewhere a line that should not be crossed in medical discussions of sexuality. J. Spinke, sometime before Marten was indicted, published a detailed attack on Marten's appendix called *Quackery Unmask'd*, and seems to have spearheaded the movement to charge Marten with obscenity. From the text the attack, it seems clear that Spinke was also a physician, and possibly one of those who felt insulted by Marten's criticisms of the Royal Academy for their treatment of Groenevelt. More than just the obscenity of the appendix is at issue for Spinke, who focuses much of his bile against Marten's treatment plans and theories of disease, but also on his prose stylings, which seem for Spinke to be implicated in Marten's immodest content:

[95] Marten, *Gonosologium*., 6, 10, 11.
[96] Ibid., 16.
[97] *The Tatling Harlot*, no. 2, 26 August, 1709.

> For it seems to me to be, in a very extraordinary manner, adorn'd with the most exquisite *Rhetorical Flourishes,* that *pure Nonsense, false English, Ribaldry, ill language, Smut, Obscenity,* and *Q---k Impertinence* are capable of; by which means you have indeed, as you there truly say, fitted it to the meanest Capacities, *viz*. of *Oyster-Wenches, Billingsgate Rhetoricians,* &c.[98]

As Sophie Vasset has pointed out that medical texts of this period were inextricably bound up with ideas of fiction and poetics, that they "used both scientific and literary rhetoric" in their explorations of case histories and experimentation. [99] One of Turner's mistakes seems to have been, at least in Spinke's view, his miscalculation of the ratio of literary to medical rhetoric.

Soon after Spinke's attack was published, an anonymous *Apology for a Latin Verse in Commendation of Mr. Martens Gonoslogium Novum* was released, possibly written by Marten himself, but published anonymously. The author here takes particular issue with charges of obscenity, with the open descriptions of the body in medicine should not be lumped in with descriptions that might be inappropriate elsewhere:

> In the Appendix that I speak of, the *Partes Genitales*, of both Sexes, are very plainly laid open; and that speaking of their Functions, the Author seems not fond of Circumlocution; but why that is Bawdy in a Surgeon I do not understand: Can not an Anatomist dissect a Human Body without being guilty of Obscenity?[100]

It is curious here how Marten (or his anonymous defender) makes an equivalency between a literal dissection of a corpse, and Marten's textual unveilings of the *Partes Genitales.* Marten wants his accusers to see his appendix less as an accumulation of "Rhetorical Flourishes," and more as a collection of evidence, what Steven Shapin and Simon Schaffer would call a "literary

[98] John Spinke, *Quackery Unmask'd* (London: printed, and sold by D. Brown, G. Strahan, J. Woodward, B. Barker; and the author, 1709) 70.
[99] Sophie Vasset. "Introduction: Questions of Narration in Eighteenth-Century Medicine and Literature," *Medicine and Narration in the Eighteenth Century. SVEC* 4 (2013): 3.
[100] Anonymous, *An Apology for a Latin Verse in Commendation of Mr. Marten's Gonoslogium Novum* (London: J. Morphew, 1709), 5.

technology".[101] The implication in the *Apology* is that the objects of study for a specialist in venereal disease, or even a physician more generally, necessitate a potentially lewd *laying open*, on both the literal level of dissection, and in the "speaking" of the text. But even Marten himself expresses disgust at some of the anecdotes that he records. When he describes, with typical frankness, the possibility of being infected with venereal disease through oral sex in his *True and Succinct Account*, Marten seems to be of two minds: His narration relishes in the details, while at the same time disclaiming them as *loathsome, detestable* and *abhorrent*:

> …and which is still worse, this Distemper is also gotten after another manner of Conversation, viz. by a Man's putting his erected Yard, into a another persons (Man or Woman's) Mouth, using Friction, &c. between the Lips; a way so very Beastly, and so much to be abhorr'd, as to cause at the mentioning, or but thinking of it, the utmost detestation and loathing; but by that means also has it been gotten, and a Man so infected (one that I know not, nor where to find) have I in Cure at this present writing, who assur'd me (tho' with seeming concern for the committing so foul a Crime) that he contracted it no other way, and that the Person from whom he got it (being a Man) had at the same time (as he has since been assur'd) several Pocky Ulcerations, &c. in his Mouth.[102]

The spectre of Marten's *Gonologium* and his arrest would continue to haunt medical texts on venereal disease throughout the early eighteenth century. Daniel Turner, a well-respected surgeon and physician and authority on both diseases of the skin, refers to Marten's text multiple times in his *Practical Dissertation on Venereal Disease* (1717), sometimes incredibly cryptically and sometimes directly, but always seeming anxious to define his own depictions against Marten's. Turner refers briefly and cryptically to other treatises, "or Pamphlets rather," on venereal disease that "have carried such a manifest Air of Lewdness".[103] Probably referring to

[101] See Shapin and Schaffer, *Air-Pump.*
[102] John Marten, *A True and Succinct Account of Venereal Disease* (London: 1706), 26
[103] Daniel Turner, *Syphilis: A practical dissertation on the venereal disease. ... In two parts* (London: 1717), 9

Marten's consideration of the contagious possibilities of oral sex, Turner seems convinced that the 'detestable' material is drawn from the writer's life:

> There are several other more uncommon Ways of giving as well as receiving the *Venereal* Venom; some of which I have already imparted to the World in short Remarks upon a Quack Libel, Printed several Years past: but the Thought of such vile Monsters and their execrable Practices, is too shocking (unless to the Dregs of humane Nature) to bear even a Repetition of Circumstances and fit only for a detestable *Gonologium* or Collection of Smutt and Obscenity, in which I am told, they have been inserted as some of the Author's own Observations.[104]

It's unclear if Turner here is objecting to Marten's theory of the transmission of the 'Venereal venom," or if his outrage centers exclusively on the 'execrable' content of Marten's narrative. While Turner makes frequent use of the word 'quack', it seems to have less an association with invalid medical practice, and more to do with the way in which Marten narrated that practice.

The content of Turner's *Treatise,* though, is not so far removed from Marten's. Turner speculates, for example, on whether or not the clap arose from "the natural Conjunction of a leprous Man with a monstrous Woman; or from the unnatural or Sodomitical, of an other with a diseased Beast," and tells us about his personal observations of a dog "dripping of purulent Matter from the *Penis*".[105] In one particularly striking case study, Turner tells us about his treatment of a poor woman suffering from "*Excrescences of all Sorts about the Anus and Pudend*," making use of a narrative impetus very similar to those used by Marten:

> A poor, but honest Woman sent for me, and begg'd that I would do somewhat that might ease her of her Pain, which was grown intolerable, both Night and Day; nor could she either sit or lye along by Reason of her Disease: I found her leaning over a Pillow on the back of a Chair, where she slumber'd sometimes a few Minutes; and being tired was forced to lie a-cross the Bed, upon her Face, with her Feet upon the Ground. Ordering her Cloaths to be lifted up, as she was in this Posture, I perceived all around the *Anus*, and thence up towards the *Nates*, the Skin thick set with Excrescences of several Shapes; and turning forwards, the *Labia Pudend* cover'd over with *chancrous* Ulcers, as well the Thighs.

[104] Turner, *Syphilis*, 11.
[105] Ibid., 1, 4.

While the narrative style and inclusion of graphic detail is very similar to Marten's, what is perhaps most notably absent in all of Turner's descriptions, is the pleasure that so saturates Marten's *Gonosologium*. Where Marten found an opportunity in venereal disease to write through the illicit sexual acts, found elsewhere only in pornography, Turner constrains his descriptions to the disgusting, even vaguely farcical details of the infections.

Elsewhere, while Turner takes more direct issue with Marten's scholarship, and seems oddly less concerned about the content:

> Among some other wonderful Ways of receiving this Infection I might have told you that a certain Chymico-Mathematical Quack has acquainted us, with a Clap gotten by a Jilt's putting her Finger into her *Vagina,* and fetching thence some Matter, which she spitefully laid down upon the Man's *Virga*; and which, for my own part, I believe as likely to have injur'd him, as if by way of recompence, having first polluted himself, he had taken some of his *Semen,* and put up her Body, in order to her Impregnation.[106]

Turner's counter-argument, that the gonorrheal poison needs to be heated and roused by motion to take effect, is strategically cut short, as it seems to be approaching too closely to "one of the obscene Flights and smutty Romances of the *Seventh Edition* Man's, with whom we shall leave it". Turner's comparison of Marten's narrative to a romance is both a jab that plays on romance's cultural baggage of barely concealed eroticism and low style and is at the same time suggestive of the porousness between literary and medical texts. Like Spinke, Turner treats Marten's medical and literary sins concurrently: the stories of the *Gonosologium* are abhorrent medically, as well as abhorrent to the imagination.

Tita Chico has written recently about the entanglements of literature and empiricism in the eighteenth century, calling our attention to the tension that writers in the new sciences felt in

[106] Turner, *Syphilis,* 19.

trying to balance "the need to be spare and the need to draw on the reader's imagination in order to make findings imaginable and thus not incredible but credible". The narratives of Marten and Turner's case studies give us, I think, some examples of how these tensions could play out. I think, also, that the criticisms of Marten show us that, despite Spinke and Turner's eagerness to separate their own work from Marten's smutty romances, that the case study in the 18th century was almost always already a romance. The defense of Marten, whether his own or from a friend, asks that we read Marten's text not as you would a scandalous, or titillating novel, but as a textual version of a dissection. Turner and Spinke's refusal to accept this categorisation, is also an admission that not all is permitted: that the case study *could become* a Romance, fit to be read by the oyster wenches.

Both physicians and natural philosophers were having to grapple with the disgusting problems evoked by their subject matter. If their experiments and observations were going to be disseminated and reproduced they would need to be described accurately, and doing so would necessarily run afoul of the decorum thought to be proper for non-scientific texts. The toleration of disgusting objects became a sign-post for what marked off a scientific text from a literary one, and the division between these disciplines was constructed partially around where disgust was allowed to be evoked. For figures like Aiken and Darwin, literary texts were meant to distinguish themselves from the technical texts through a softening of the reality that is described in them, and both the empiricist's and the poets and novelists negotiated a space for their own work that was built around the extent to which disgust was an available mode of description.

Chapter 2: London's Cannibals: Anthropophagy, Disgust and Identity in Eighteenth-Century London

At the turn of the eighteenth century, London's population and housing market were rapidly expanding. After the Great Fire of 1666, and the seeming failure of John Evelyn and Christopher Wren's ambitious plans to rebuild the city upon a more magnificent foundation, it seemed as if Londoners had collectively decided to remain in the city with which they were already familiar. What could not be stopped, however, was London's fitful expansion into what would become, by the start of the nineteenth century, the largest city in the world. Already by 1700, the city had an estimated population of 600,000, representing what Emily Cockayne argues to be a "threefold population increase in one century."[107] Roy Porter estimates that, by 1750, one tenth of the population of England and Wales was a resident of London, "whereas only one Frenchman in forty lived in Paris."[108] The rise of the upscale residential quarters in the city's West End attracted thousands of wealthy families to the area, a place where they "could entertain or just bask in being," bringing with them a large population of workers, whose jobs were to make that basking as enjoyable as possible.[109]

Every walk or carriage ride through the city must have seemed at times to be a passage through a gauntlet of organic waste. One was constantly confronted with sights, sounds and smells that must have blurred the boundary somewhat between the food being eaten and the people who were eating it. In *Due Preparations for the Plague* (1722), Defoe describes the tide-

[107] Emily Cockayne, *Hubbub: Filth, Noise and Stench in England 1600-1770* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 9.
[108] Roy Porter, *London: A Social History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 98.
[109] Ibid., 93.

ditches, which received the drainage from "Dye-houses, Wash-houses, Fell Mongers, Slaughter-houses, and all kinds of Offensive Trades; and they are continually full of Carrion, and the most odious of all offensive Stench proceeds from them."[110] The hogs in Whitechapel were even worse to him, and he bemoaned these places "where Swine, which are fed with Carrion, and the Offal of Dead Beasts are kept, whose Smell is so unsufferably Naueseous that People are not able to go that way."[111] Similarly, in 1748, a writer for the periodical *Old England* expressed his frustration with the promiscuous mixtures of the classes, and at the same time, voiced his disgust for the proximity of food production to the spaces of luxury consumption, writing, "Here lives a Personage of high Distinction; next Door, a Butcher with his stinking Shambles."[112]

Whether it is the hogs eating their own dead, or the people of distinction sharing a wall with the butcher block, Londoners of the eighteenth century were constantly exposed to what we might call *cannibalistic juxtapositions*, where the city's endless current of humans and their waste seemed to merge with a parallel current of meat, bones and offal. In this chapter, I will address this strange slurry of human beings and their food, and the very urgent and often stomach-turning questions that it raises about the distinction between the two. London is supposed to be precisely the place where cannibalism does not happen – the exact opposite of the terrifying but enticing wildernesses of the New World – and yet descriptions of the city in this period often lean reflexively on tropes of cannibalism, images that had been developed in service of England's self-described civilizing missions in the New World, Africa and Asia. While incidents of anthropophagy were known to occur in Europe, they were almost always at its fringes: the Scottish Highlands, Ireland, a remote city under siege, a shipwreck off the coast. In

[110] Daniel Defoe, *Due Preparations for the Plague, as well for Soul as Body* (London: 1722), 29.
[111] Ibid., 30.
[112] Cited in Roy Porter, *London: A Social History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 106.

other ways, though, even before Montaigne enshrined his meeting with the Brazilian chieftains in Rouen, the cannibal had made its home in the cities of Europe. Cannibalism was always already a fiction of the cities that sent out their ships across the oceans, and where the stories of eating human flesh were both published and consumed. In this chapter I show that the texts which fictionalized or guided readers through London in the eighteenth century in some ways worked towards making the city into a foreign country – one which was primed to consume itself.

At exactly the time when it seemed most urgent to distinguish between the now largely urban life and citizens of England and the 'savages' whose labor and culture were being consumed, Londoners were being confronted like never before with the unseemly and disgusting side of city living – a repulsiveness that seemed at times disturbingly similar to what they were told were features of the life of barbarians abroad. London was crowded in a way that it never had been before, and so was necessarily filled with that many more opportunities to be repulsed by proximity to people and their waste. To make matters worse, developing codes of politeness and hygiene were becoming increasingly byzantine and rigorous. In other words, London was more disgusting than ever, and at the same time, less tolerant than ever of disgust.

In bringing the cannibal to London, the writers discussed in this chapter seize upon the worst imaginable acts of savagery. The stories that circulated about the consumption of human flesh both troubled the division between colonizer and colonized, and also threatened the stable sense of civilized life supposedly embodied in the metropole. This was not especially the threat of being eaten (since why would anyone ever put themselves in the situation of Robinson Crusoe on his island?), but even more so the threat of becoming the cannibal. As the century progressed, the figure of the London cannibal became both more explicit, and more directly repulsive; as

Britain and London became more and more dependent on the colonies and their products, it also became more and more anxious about its own status.

I. A Brief History of Cannibalism

Cătălin Avramescu has called the cannibal one of the great forgotten figures of philosophy," a figure that brought to the European imagination images of "a harsh and profound nature."[113] While accounts of peoples that lived on human flesh (anthropophagi), stretch back to ancient codices and the beginning of written language, the word *cannibal* has a relatively recent history, beginning with Columbus' travels in the Caribbean and the reports he had received from the Arawak about their rivals in the Lesser Antilles, who supposedly fed on the flesh of their enemies. Historians and philosophers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, in responding to these accounts and the many sensational stories that followed, puzzled over the motives and causes of cannibalism. Frank Lestringant has pointed to the way that the very first descriptions of New World cannibalism tended to explain it as proceeding from a simple lust for flesh and imagined that human meat constituted these tribes' sole source of protein. Later, after the publication of Vespucci's greatly sensationalized letters, the cannibal became exponentially more wild, moving away from "the serene imagery of the Golden Age" primitive that had previously dominated.[114] The New World cannibal became saturated with images of absolute lawlessness, a culture that "ignored all frontiers and taboos," keeping rooms stored with salted human flesh, sipping blood from the broken bodies of their own infants, and engaging in frequent sex with their close family members.[115] For Lestringant, these cannibal orgies of sex

[113] Cătălin Avramescu, *An Intellectual History of Cannibalism*, trans. Alistair Ian Blyth (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 2, 3.
[114] Frank Lestringant, *Cannibals: The Discovery and Representation of the Cannibal from Columbus to Jules Verne*, Trans. Rosemary Morris (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 28.
[115] Ibid., 29.

and violence were originally seen as a function of the apparently limitless abundance of the American continent, and all the corresponding luxury and decadence that was thought to go with it. The consumption of human flesh was seen "against a background of "primitive abundance and natural fertility," and as long as it had these connotations, it carried with it the dangerous potential for assimilation into European models of luxury.[116]

The publication of Montaigne's *Des cannibales* (1580) represents what Claude Rawson calls "the inaugural declaration of the idea of the noble savage,"[117] a text in which a conversation with a group of supposedly cannibalistic Tupinamba tribal leaders who had been transported to the recently sieged city of Rouen is used to attack the cruelty of European warfare and capital punishment, making the claim that "there is more barbarity in eating a man alive than in eating him dead; and in tearing by tortures and the rack a body still full of feeling…than in roasting and eating him after he is dead."[118] Montaigne's essay, while an important moment in the intellectual history of cannibalism in the West, is less interested in the cannibals of the title, and more in the *almost* morally equivalent actions of France and the Holy Roman Empire.[119] Despite the apparent comparative thrust of his essay, Rawson has pointed out that Montaigne very curiously withdraws from making the most essential comparison between the French and the Tupinamba, by neglecting to mention the incidents of cannibalism during the civil wars that we know Montaigne was aware of. The only cannibalism that Montaigne is willing to admit exists in France is entirely metaphorical, and a metaphorical cannibalism is infinitely more tolerable than a literal one. But even if Montaigne's text only half-way approaches the modern anthropological

[116] Lestringant, *Cannibals*, 27
[117] Claude Rawson, "Unspeakable Rites: Cultural Reticence and the Cannibal Question," *Social Research* 66, no. 1 (1999): 174.
[118] Michel de Montaigne, *Complete Essays* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1965), 155.
[119] Montaigne's essay seems to have taken inspiration from the Huguenot ethnographer Jean de Léry's Histoire d'un voyage fait en la terre de Brésil [1578], which used the Caribbean natives as a way to speak against oppression by Catholic colonial France, and compared their cannibalism favorably against the Catholic Eucharist.

imperative for cultural relativism, it made very real claims for the existence of a common strand of human cruelty that threads together the alien rituals of the unknown continents, and the much more familiar domestic evils. As Lestringant points out, "by playing cunningly with the taboo, by setting it at the heart of his reflections on Otherness, Montaigne seeks to attract the attention of readers to this strange half-desire, half-repulsion which underlies, in the most fundamental way, the mythic thinking of the West."[120]

As I will show in this chapter, anxiety about this "half-desire" and semblance are a major impetus for the considerable amount of thought that went into locating where this desire came from during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The early models for the development and practice of cannibalism, with their depictions of the casual slaughter of thousands for no other reason than a strong appetite for human flesh, gradually became supplanted by more thoughtful (though incorrect) models. First developed by Gerolamo Cardano in the sixteenth century, what Lestringant calls the "determinist hypothesis" on the origins and continuance of cannibalism, one that uses the lack of herd animals and the growing population of an island nation as necessary causes of cannibalism, was again argued forcefully by Diderot in 1772, in his *Supplément au voyage de Bougainville*.[121] Framed as a dialogue between A and B, the *Supplément* is a meditation on Bougainville's circumnavigation of the globe. At one point the interlocutors become interested in how tiny Lancer's Island seems, and both of them agree that the inhabitants "no doubt…slaughter and devour one another," concluding that "such insularity explains the origins of a very ancient and quite natural form of cannibalism."[122] Like the besieged town, the

[120] Lestringant, *Cannibals*, 97.
[121] Ibid., 110.
[122] Denis Diderot, "Supplément au voyage de Bougainville," Political Writings, translated and edited by John Hope Mason and Robert Wokler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 38.

materialist necessity of surviving on an island implies that any human society there must eventually consume itself in order to survive.

If by the end of the century, the idea of the cannibal was imaginatively exiled to the island, and the idea of the island was relocated too. In 1800, Thomas Malthus took specific issue with Diderot's ideas about the island. For Malthus, any sufficiently isolated population can be an island. The world itself is an island, with a fixed number of people it can reasonably sustain before the population collapses under the weight of its hungry mouths and sick flesh. If a cannibal society could only exist on the fringes of the world, the result of people being hemmed in together in a small area, why should the city not be an island? London must have seemed to be in a precarious position, increasingly dependent on both the countryside and its colonial holdings for support, as well as more and more cut off from the land that fed it. Even Diderot, in his *Histoire philosophique et politique des deux Indes*, compares the early history of England with that of the Antilles. In some senses, England's relative remoteness from the Continent made it more susceptible than other European nations to this strange double vision, where it could hold signs of both the Old and New World.

Rawson has convincingly demonstrated that European writers since Montaigne have reflexively turned to images of cannibalism in order to serve the dual purpose of demonstrating local hypocrisy and shoring up European identity against the colonial other. For Rawson, European engagements with anthropophagy have always been ambivalent, in the sense that "we can't face the idea of cannibalism straight but can't leave it alone."[123] If the surface of a text is explicitly comparing European cruelties unfavorably with the apparent cannibalism of the outside cultures, this is simply a sleight of hand, in which the purported inferiority of Western

[123] Rawson, "Unspeakable Rites," 179.

modes of barbarism is, at the very least, definitively *not* the barbarism of those whom the West is enslaving, murdering, or exiling:

> Cannibalism cannot be contemplated among 'us,' even in our supposedly most clear-sighted and ruthless exposures of ourselves, except in a metaphorical form. The possibilities of a literal application to 'ourselves' as distinct from others are a matter of endlessly fascinating speculative self-implication and tease, but usually blocked, in the last analysis, by strategies that range from soft-pedaling evasion or circumventions, as in Montaigne, to barefaced denial.[124]

Strangely, for Rawson at least, even the suggestion of cannibalism can turn the most detail oriented realist novelist into an evasive allegorist. While it is certainly true that writers in the eighteenth century tended to lapse into any number of Rawson's catalogue of cannibal avoidance mechanisms, I think that Rawson underestimates the extent to which cannibalism could make itself at home in the capitals of Europe, and the extent to which even a teasing and metaphorical familiarity with cannibalism might elide a very real anxiety about what exactly Europeans, and Londoners specifically, found both so repulsive and so fascinating about the taboo of human flesh.[125]

In the eighteenth century, it was common to speak about London as a collection of smaller nations rather than a single city. In 1712, Joseph Addison famously remarked that the city was not so much a single entity as "an Aggregate of various Nations distinguished from each other by their respective Manners and Interests."[126] Inside this loose aggregate was the potential for any number of enclaves of uncanny foreignness, or even so-called New World savagery to exist. Anxieties about this form of metropolitan primitivism could be exceedingly explicit, and continued to be evoked until well into the nineteenth century. In Walter Besant's *East London*

[124] Ibid., 183.
[125] "circumvention, ambiguity, hinted denials, melodramatic horror, or the nervous joke".
[126] Joseph Addison, "Thursday, June 12th," *The Spectator* 403 (London: 1712).

(1901), Besant recalls a speech made by T.H. Huxley sometime in the middle of the nineteenth century, where he states Huxley claimed "I have seen the Polynesian savage…in his primitive condition, before the missionary or the blackbirder or the beach-comber got at him. With all his savagery, he was not half so savage, so unclean, so irreclaimable, as the tenant of a tenement in an East London slum."[127] In 1741, Lord Tyrconnel had said something similar while giving a speech in the House of Commons, in which he told the House that:

> The Filth, Sir, of some Parts of the Town, and the Inequality and Ruggedness of others, cannot but in the Eyes of Foreigners disgrace our Nation, and incline them to imagine us a People, not only without Decency, but without Government, a Herd of Barbarians, or a Colony of *Hottentots*. The most disgusting Part of the Character given by Travellers, of the most savage Nations, is their Neglect of Cleanliness, of which, perhaps, no part of the World affords more Proofs than the Streets of *London*.

While most sources report this speech uncritically as coming straight from Tyrconnel's mouth, it seems to have first appeared in Samuel Johnson's stylized reportage to *The Gentleman's Magazine*. Since it was illegal to record exact details of the minutes in the House of Commons, Johnson would rely on short-hand notes to dramatize the speaker's point of view through his own language, publishing it under the title of *Proceedings and Debates in the Senate of Lilliput,* where he changed the names of the major actors. What emerges through this twice-filtered fantasy of the colonial subject and the city of London is, first of all, an admission of the problem of the imagination. It is not so much the filth in London that is the problem, but that a foreign visitor might *imagine* the residents of the city to be barbarians, enacting a humiliating reversal that turns the highly developed and central metropole into the repulsive fringe of the empire: a place to gawk at rather than marvel at.

[127] Walter Besant, *East London* (New York: Century Co., 1901), 145.

Clearly, Tyrconnel/Johnson's statement elides some of what might be called the most repulsive acts described in the descriptions of the 'savage Nations.' While it is true that many traveller's accounts depicted places like the Caribbean as teeming with filth, emphasizing what was imagined to be a distinct lack of a structure of politeness and hygiene that elite Londoners were increasingly fascinated with, they also often sensationally described (or invented) tales of the consumption of human flesh. There is no more potent symbol of the remote colonial wilderness and the people who live there than the fearful mythology of the cannibal, since maybe more than any other taboo, cannibalism marks the absolute antipode of society. You cannot live together with people who want to kill and eat you.

However, our gut reaction to the idea of humans eating other humans goes deeper than the utilitarian calculus. José Gutiérrez refers to it as "the prime symbol and signifier of the idea of 'barbarism' or the savage for many centuries," an act that incites "both fascination and disgust."[128] Susan Miller suspects that the disgust we feel for cannibalism is "ultimately about the cannibal's ability to strip the Other of human identity and make him or her meat."[129] In a similar vein, Peter Hulme says "even to *imagine* cannibalizing another person calls attention to the realm outside existing social boundaries that structure our identities."[130] Fears of cannibalism unknowingly infecting daily life have continued to operate on the modern imagination. For instance, Upton Sinclair's 1906 novel/expose *The Jungle*, with its graphic descriptions of the lack of sanitation and safe working conditions in Chicago's meat industry, shocked and disgusted an entire country. He would later state that he "aimed at the public's heart, and by accident I hit

[128] José María Hernández Gutiérrez, "Travelling Anthropophagy: The Depiction of Cannibalism in Modern Travel Writing, Sixteenth to Nineteenth Centuries," *Journal of World History* 3, Vol. 30 (2019): 319.
[129] Susan Miller, *Disgust: The Gatekeeper Emotion* (Hillsdale: Analytic Press, 2004), 174.
[130] Kristen Guest, in the introduction to *Eating Their Words: Cannibalism and the Boundaries of Cultural Identity*, ed. Kristen Guest (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001), 5.

it in the stomach."[131] Lawrence Friedman, in his *History of American Law*, wrote that "the reading public nearly retched at the thought that their meat products were moldy, that pieces of rat were in their sausage, that acid and spices hid putrefaction in canned goods, and, worst of all that their lard might make cannibals of them all."[132]

As marvelous as London's growth might have seemed, a larger and more crowded city also meant a dirtier city. As Cockayne has exhaustively documented, seventeenth and eighteenth-century London was noisome, uneven, stinking, and a generally overwhelmingly disgusting sensory experience. The fictionalizations of London from this period, as well as the guide books, histories, and tourists' accounts, all display some ratio of repulsion and fascination with the city. Much has been written about London's uneven streets, its unsightly smog, and its terrible smells, but much less about one of the most fundamental mediums through which both locals and visitors would have perceived the city: its food. Cockayne has described how the city's food, even if we account for differing standards of freshness and quality, was often less than appetizing, and "was not neatly divisible into rotten and fresh."[133] As the city expanded, and farm and grazing land disappeared, meat and produce was coming into London from further and further away, with eggs coming from Scotland or Ireland, and beef coming from as far away as Wales and Yorkshire.[134]

In theory, Officers in the London Butcher's Company inspected and confiscated spoiled or tampered meat, but many citizens complained that their duties were not performed systematically, or that they often took bribes to look the other way. In the cases where cuts of

[131] See William Bloodworth, "From *The Jungle* to *The Fasting Cure:* Upton Sinclair on American Food," *Journal of American Culture* 2 (1979), especially 445-447.
[132] Lawrence M. Friedman, *A History of American Law* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1985), 681.
[133] Cockayne, *Hubbub*, 80.
[134] Ibid., 88.

meat hadn't been shipped from afar, animals that were brought into the city alive, and were often slaughtered and butchered within city limits. Both the killing and dressing of these animals created unseemly sights and smells, as the piles of waste would co-mingle with the by-products of other less-than-attractive industries. Jerry White has described the way that London's waste disposal systems, especially at the beginning of the century, left much to be desired. While it was technically illegal to use the public sewers to drain human waste, or the blood from slaughter-houses, there was not much to do to stop the tide of a combination of human and animal waste, or to control whether where people urinated and defecated in alleys, or where "chamber pots were emptied into the kennels, which in any event collected the scourings of the streets, the horse and cattle dung, the dog shit and animal carcasses, and shot them into the sewers."[135]

Like twentieth-century Chicago, eighteenth-century London was suffering from disturbing issues in its food supply chain, and contemplation of this had a tendency to raise nauseating questions about provenance. 'Is there a person in my ragout?' is, in some ways, only the logical conclusion to any skeptical glances at an unidentifiable dish in a strange tavern. Lestringant has pointed to the ways that the European conception of New World cannibalism has always been filtered through familiar domestic images of food preparation and eating, focused into a "scandalous familiarity."[136]

[135] Jerry White, *London in the Eighteenth Century: A Great and Monstrous Thing* (London: The Bodley Head, 2012), 8.
[136] Lestringant, *Cannibals*, 24.

Figure 1. Cannibals at the butcher block from Münster's *Cosmographia* (1544)

What is notable about these kinds of representations is that, however much they work toward making the potential colonial subject into people entirely unfamiliar or entirely hostile to European civilization, they also domesticate the cannibal – bringing the cannibal home at the same time as exiling them to their islands. While nude, and therefore savage, the man and the woman in the woodcut from Münster's *Cosmographia* (Figure 1) also seem engaged in what looks strangely like familiar butchery: the wooden table, the cleaver, and the neatly folded skin being prepared for refinement into leather goods all gesture towards images that could come from a suburban shambles or tannery. Cannibals, however much they want to eat us, also eat *like* us, and this uncomfortable similarity had the potential to both humanize the cannibal, and to make cannibals out of Europeans.

The British Empire, as it expanded and embedded itself deeper in the culture, brought with it an increasingly disrupted sense of self. British emigrants to the Americas and Asia found their status as European under strange and constant pressures. Jack P. Greene has pointed to their "great physical distance from the metropolises" and their "situation on the outermost edges of

European civilization, in the midst of populations who appeared to them to be pagan, barbarous, and savage," as contributing factors to this pressure.[137] Greene suggests that, by the 1760s, the opinion of Londoners and other mainland British citizens was increasingly confident in the fact that the British colonist was its own racial category.

While the identity of British nationals living in the colonies seemed to be coming apart, the subjecthoods of those living in the metropole were also fraying. If the English person transplanted to the Caribbean or Virginia could be made degenerate and foreign, why not the Londoner who, after all, was consuming much of the same foreign food, draping themselves in the same foreign linen, colored with the same foreign dyes? English importation of sugar increased dramatically as the century progressed and, as Jacob Price points out, the vast majority of it was consumed in the country, rather than re-exported to the Continent.[138] In fact, food was the highest volume import from Britain's colonies during the eighteenth century, as well as the commodity that would have played the largest role in the daily life of the average Londoner, becoming "the empire's most ubiquitous symbols." [139] As Bickham explains, imports like tobacco, sugar, and tea were gradually being harnessed as markers of "politeness, taste and luxury," and they were, moreover, regularly associated with their connections to chattel slavery through pictorial grocer's advertisements.[140] in what Stephen Mennell has called the 'civilizing of appetite,' a process proceeding from increased food security of the eighteenth century that resulted in a relative levelling off of the eating habits of upper and lower classes, and therefore

[137] Jack P. Greene, "Empire and Identity from the Glorious Revolution to the American Revolution," *The Oxford History of the British Empire: The Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 221.
[138] Jacob M. Price, "The Imperial Economy, 1700-1776," *The Oxford History of the British Empire: The Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 81.
[139] Troy Bickham, "Eating the Empire: Intersections of Food, Cookery, and Imperialism in Eighteenth-Century Britain," *Past & Present* 198 (2008): 72.
[140] Bickham, "Empire," 79.

put a premium on the quality and inventiveness of food, rather than its gargantuan quantities.[141] Troy Bickham describes the important role of food and the British empire, explaining that spices, coffee, tea and sugar were becoming ever more ubiquitous, and were regularly associated with their connections to chattel slavery through pictorial grocer's advertisements. Not only were the foreign staples of the English diet firmly connected to their origins, but food and eating habits were one of the important details expected in written accounts of foreign nations. As Mennell notes, travellers regularly assumed the food they encountered to be "a reflection of the host culture."[142]

II. A Tour of London's Cannibals: Ned Ward, Thomas Brown, and George Psalmanazar

The London of the beginning of the eighteenth century had begun to attract an increasing number of Continental visitors, many of whom left behind their pleasant impressions of what they had seen, marvelling at the city's well-lit streets, the uniformity of the architecture in its newly restored city center, or the impressive stature of the still-to-be-completed reconstruction of St. Paul's Cathedral. It was starting to seem that London had moved up into the ranks of Europe's great cities, and if you were to base your image of the city on only these accounts, it would be very easy to get the impression of an incredibly polished and orderly space, perhaps, as in seventeenth-century physician Thomas Moffett's vision of the odorless city, "neither smelling

[141] Stephen Mennell, *All Manners of Food: Eating and Taste in England and France from the Middle Ages to the Present* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985), 26.
[142] Bickham, "Empire," 95.

of nothing, as in barren Countries, nor smelling of bad things, as in the Fens; but fragrant, without a discerning of Smell."[143]

We get a very different picture, however, from the descriptions of the city by some of its residents. The first few years of the eighteenth century saw the birth of a minor genre of satirical guides to the city, the most famous of which is Ned Ward's *The London-spy*, published in installments between 1698 and 1700. More of a loose assemblage of anecdotes and set-pieces than a true guidebook, the *London-spy* imagines the city through a narrator experiencing the city for the first time, guided through notable and symbolically loaded locations by an old friend. Ward himself was a fairly recent transplant to the city, having moved to London from the Midlands only six or seven years before publishing the first installment, and so was well aware of how overwhelming the city would seem to someone who had only ever lived in small villages or towns. However, as much as Ward may have understood the awe of the newcomer, *The London-spy* is not written as a helpful guide to the inexperienced but is aimed rather at making the experienced London wanderer feel a sense of unfamiliarity.

Peter Briggs has called attention to what he calls the strategy of estrangement in Ward's framing device, a technique that works "to borrow the perspective of seeing the urban scene for the first time, in order to sharpen attention and extend awareness to new people and places."[144] The figure of the outsider in the metropolis was not a new one. Giovani Marana's *L'espion turc* (1684), serially published in Paris over the course of several years, was enormously popular, and first appeared in English in 1687 as *Letters Writ by a Turkish Spy*. Ward's visitor from the countryside, though an Englishman, is not far removed from the Turkish visitor. Some estimates

[143] Thomas Moffett, *Health's Improvement or, Rules Comprizing and Discovering the Nature, Maethod and Manner of Preparing all sorts of Foods Used in this Nation* (London: 1746), 87.
[144] Peter M. Briggs, "Satiric Strategy in Ned Ward' London Writings," *Eighteenth-Century Life* 35, no. 2 (2011): 80.

figure that by 1700, almost a sixth of all people born in England lived at least part of their lives in London, and the concentration of publishing and cultural production in London meant that even those who would never visit would likely be somewhat acquainted with the broad strokes of the city.

While these texts seem at first to present us with an image of the foreigner intruding upon the familiar, even more striking is the way that Ward's depiction works to make the domestic into something foreign, transposing London into an exotic register. Details of the city which would be commonplace to the people living there – the coffeehouses, tobacco smoke, cheese and meat vendors, the uneven streets, the cries of beggars or of merchants – take on the quality of curiosities. And while in a text like the *Turkish Spy* the focus might be on the customs of the French more generally, Ward's collection, by virtue of its rural narrator, places emphasis on the metropolis as the locus of foreignness. The title, too, tells us that there is a difference in how the circulation of information is meant to flow: While the Turkish spy is from a foreign land, reporting back the details to his home country, the London spy is a native of the 'host' country, spying *on* the titular city.

The narrator here, despite what might be assumed by his rural upbringing, is not a laboring farmer or tradesman, but an academic. After a life of scholarly isolation in the countryside, the unnamed narrator finds his "brains loaded to no purpose with as many *trignum trangums* as are lodged in the whimsical noodle of an old astrologer," and opts to shed philosophical abstraction and sober country living for the "vanities and vices" of London.[145] That Ward's narrator gives up a life of empty theoretical nostrums for the endlessly stimulating sensory impressions of London is important. In Briggs' re-evaluation of Ward as something

[145] Ned Ward, *The London-spy; the vanities and vices of the town exposed to view*, ed. Arthur L. Hayward (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1927), 1.

more than a Grubstreet hack, he describes him as "a vivid stylist with a knack for earthy metaphors and a reporter's eye for telling details who took it upon himself to expose many unlovely aspects of urban life."[146] The proliferation of detail in the *London-spy* - a technique closely associated with both travel literature and the 'realism' of the proto-novel – is one that aims at maximizing the disgust of the reader. For Aurel Kolnai, the attention to detail is an essential feature of any experience of disgust. Distinct from fear, which always results in an attempt to preserve the self through escape from the fearful object, disgust "adheres to the object which is its cause," dwelling on whatever is repulsive, "becoming immersed in its motions or in its persistence, in spite of essential hesitations and reluctance."[147] The aesthetic gambit of disgust is both contradictory and simple: where there is repulsion, there is also close attention. Ward's tendency to serve up nasty images of mundane life, like a modern advertisement animating the bacteria on the surfaces in our homes, confronts his readers with a London that is compellingly filthy.

Ward is repulsed by London, but he's also fascinated by it, and the endless accumulation of nauseating details in *The London-spy* testifies to both of these opposing forces. Ward's city is full of sex work, cheating innkeepers and city officials, stinking alleys and coffee shops, hypocritical politicians, monstrous buildings, and, perhaps more than anything else, endless amounts of pungent and strongly smelling food. The way that Ward reaches for culinary analogies when he is describing the citizens of London is practically automatic. He and his friend eat more Cheshire cheese in three minutes "than a million of maggots could have done in three weeks," the collection of men in the coffee-house are "a parcel of muddling muck-worms as busy as so many rats in an old-cheese-loft," and the bawdy-house in the morning smells "as

[146] Briggs, "Strategy," 76.
[147] Kolnai, *Disgust*, 39.

odoriferously grateful as a Suffolk cheese toasted over a flaming pitch barrel." [148] In each case, there is the same admixture of the strange variety of metropolitan people that the narrator is just now discovering, and rancid cow's milk. Ward is so insistent on these analogies that it can seem like one could easily be substituted for the other, with the bodies of Londoners lulling around like so many suspect wheels of cheese.

For Kolnai, in the case of most foods, there is "an inherent possibility for disgust on the strength of its very claim to be consumed; its sticky, moist somehow spoiled condition, its associations with past events of the most varied kind, or finally, the real or apparent reference to a putrefaction which is often present."[149] Similarly, Ward charts a path wherein readers are as much as we are disgusted by putrefying food, or feel a mild nausea at the sight of the crumbs of food and mostly-sopped-up sauce on the plates in the sink, we also feel repulsion at being crowded together too tightly with other people, at the feeling of taking "a seat which is still warm from its previous occupant."[150] In cases like these, Wards states, the bodies of others make themselves "felt too much *as a body*," and there is a sense in which both of these modes of disgust are active and overlapping in Ward's depiction of the cramped and stinking city – so many bodies, so much food intruding upon us and rudely asking to be eaten.

The people that Ward's narrator meets are always inevitably alien, foreign in their manners, barbaric in their dedication to luxury or debauchery, and practicing a variety of strange urban rituals that surprise and unnerve him. Early in the narrator's trip, he goes on a brief tour of a virtuoso's apartment. Among the remarkable magnets, unicorn horns, and preserved tropical birds is an exhibit of "the skeletons of men, women, and monkeys, birds, beast and fishes;

[148] Ward, *London-spy*, 4, 10, 40.
[149] Kolnai, *Disgust*, 60.
[150] Ward, *London-spy*, 61.

abortives put up in pickle, and abundance of other memorandums of mortality."[151] While the narrator compares the scene to Michelangelo's *Resurrection*, as if these bodies had "collected their scattered bones into their original order, and were about to march in search after the rest of their appurtenances," it is also a kind of infernal shambles or storehouse, where the pickled remains and de-fleshed bones straddle the world of anatomy and cookery, acting as an emblem of the city in miniature.

Even more surprising to the narrator than the curiosities of the virtuoso's apartment are the things he discovers about the way the city eats. Entering into Smithfield Rounds, one of London's largest meat-markets, the narrator is astounded by both the number of people and the amount of food on display. The "savoury scent of roast meat" and the jingling bells of the market sellers, while they could sound like details of a rural entertainment, actually have the effect of reminding the narrator of his status as a stranger, making him stare about him "like a country bumpkin."[152] But while the smell of the roasting meat and the gaggle of customers and vendors is introduced as pleasant (or at the very least, *savoury*), this impression of a stimulated appetite slides casually and unexpectedly into one of disgust and surfeit:

> Seeing such a busy number of cooks at work, I thought myself in the kitchen of the universe, and wondered where the gluttons could live who were to devour such vast quantities of sundry sorts of food, which run so merrily round before large fires, in every greasy mansion. We soon delivered our squeamish stomachs from the surfeiting fumes that arose from their rotten roasted pork, which made the rounds stink like a Hampshire farmer's yard, when singeing bacon.[153]

To a rural emigre like the narrator, the frenzied activity of the scene smothers the potential for a pastoral leisure that might be found in this kind of eating. This is not the feast of the fields, but

[151] Ibid., 50.
[152] Ibid., 87.
[153] Ibid.

the "kitchen of the universe" where Rabelaisian quantities of greasy meat are served up to an unquantifiable mass of hungry people. The turn from the entertained nostrils and savoury scents, to the squeamish stomachs and the anxious retreat from the food and the people eating it is a reaction to a Bacchanalian overabundance. The narrator depicts shock and curiosity about the customs, seeing people circling joyously around the large fires, as if he had just happened upon a mysterious ritual. The scene evokes the perpetually horrified stance of the New World explorer, stumbling on a sacrificial gathering in a clearing.

Everywhere in the market, we come upon details of repulsive eating and drinking which, like the exhibits in the virtuoso's apartment, preserve malformed bodies in a spectacle that is both nauseating and interesting, and which tends to blur the lines between humans and the animal bodies meant for their consumption. At the same market, the narrator watches a "parcel of long-legged loobies…stuffing their lean carcases with rice milk and furmity, till it ran down the corners of their mouths back into their porringers."[154] As with the smell of the roasting meat, the disgust that comes from this back-washed porridge is one of excessive consumption. For William Miller, food that has entered the mouth immediately takes on the potential to be disgusting if it is ever seen again, with chewed food having "the capacity to be even more disgusting than feces."[155] Part of the way disgust is generated in these images is through the way that food seems to change categories the second it enters someone's mouth, transforming from something waiting to be consumed, to something in the process of being digested, and therefore almost a part of the consumer's body. The feasters, whose "lean carcases" evoke underfed livestock, seem locked in a cycle of eating and regurgitation, like the pigs in Defoe who gorge

[154] Ibid., 89.
[155] William Miller, *The Anatomy of Disgust* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 96.

themselves on their own familial carrion, displaying a totally uninhibited and animalistic consumption that will eat whatever is set before it.

The cannibalism in Ward's London is more than just in the markets and coffeehouses, it is woven into the fabric of its oldest institutions. After insulting a constable during a night of drinking, the narrator is thrown in the Poultry Compter, one of London's most notoriously filthy and dangerous prison yards. While the companions are locked up, they hear through a closed door "the laughing of many voices, mixed with the confused wranglings of a different society," and immediately request to be let into the "Common Side" in order to ease their boredom and low spirits.[156] The shift through the door does indeed represent the movement from one society into another, as if dropping through the ground into one of London's smaller nations:

> When we entered this apartment, under the title of the King's Ward, the mixtures of scents that arose from tobacco, dirty sheets, stinking breaths, and uncleanly carcases, poisoned our nostrils worse than a Southwark ditch, a tanner's yard or a tallow chandler's melting room. The ill-looking vermin, with long rusty beards, were swaddled up in rags, some with their heads covered with thrum-caps and others with them thrust into the tops of old stockings. Some quitted the play they were before engaged in, and came hovering round us, like so many cannibals, with such devouring countenances as if a man had been but a morsel with 'em, crying out, 'Garnish, Garnish,' like a rabble in an insurrection, crying 'Liberty, Liberty.' We were forced to submit to the doctrine of non-resistance and comply with their demands.[157]

Swaddled in a strange, patch-work clothing and surrounded by the concentrated odors of dirty flesh and melting fat, the prisoner's status is signalled by much more than Ward's simile. But as much as the men in the apartment are made to seem like Antillean or Brazilian man-eaters, Ward just as strongly identifies them with an insurrectionary rabble. What emerges in the strange world of the Poultry Compter is a collapse of London's pre-industrial odors and filth, the

[156] Ward, *London-spy*, 66.
[157] Ibid., 67.

borrowed imagery of the New World Native, and the looming potential for urban unrest and violence. The resulting combination, with the literal cannibalism substituted for demands of payment, speaks to the perception of a thin-line between the metropolis and the apparently unimaginably foreign lands, where passing through a locked door could suddenly bring you face to face with the anthropophagi, tobacco smoke swirling around their heads and staining their teeth.

These nations within the city make Ward's London seem both like an endless expanse and a tightly packed enclosure. All the sights and points of interest, the details of which could fill a book showcasing the marvels of the known world, almost never takes us beyond the city and its developed suburbs. The one time we see the outside of the city is when the narrator and his companion notice an advertisement for a public feast of veal and bacon and decide to walk the several miles to an inn in Essex. Ward, conscious of this being a "deviation from the title," reassures his readers of an essential continuity in subject-matter, claiming that "the guests were Londoners, and therefore what we shall observe among 'em may reasonably be admitted."[158] The journey to Essex is portrayed as more of a mass exodus than a quiet retreat, appearing as if "the whole town had been going to encamp," with a cross-section of the London population suddenly transplanted into the country: "from beau to booby, and the merchant's lady to the thumb-ringed alewife."[159]

What happens at the inn is something between a re-wilding of Londoners and an invasion of the idyllic countryside by the barbarian metropole, making it difficult to tell how much we are to see the citizens of the city transformed by their arrival in the country, and how much the country is transformed by the influx of Londoners. The inn and the surrounding land are packed

[158] Ibid., 111.
[159] Ibid., 113, 114.

tightly with the hungry crowd, some of them sitting in trees, "hooping and hallowing, like so many owls."[160] As much as the urbanites are made to seem out of place in the rural inn, the sheer number of Londoners makes what were wide-open spaces into something that uncomfortably straddles the urban and the pastoral:

> …we jostled down two narrow pair of stairs, and increased the numberless troop of grazing animals, who were differently disposed in divers exercises, some cramming down veal and bacon, to allay the fury of their cormorant appetites, have no table-cloth but grass, or seats but the ground; others projecting better for their ease had made a table of a horse block, and blew their noses in the same napkins with which they wiped their fingers.[161]

As in the London markets, there is the disgusting mixture of fluids while eating, the revellers are in such a hurry to get the meat in their mouths that they end up hungrily swallowing their own mucus. The objects of polite eating are replaced with grass and horse blocks as wilderness stand-ins, suggesting that the Londoner, even when eating in a field, is at their table, but also that the accoutrements of urban eating also contain a primitive essence. Ward juxtaposes the tableaus of the eaters with an image of their similarly wild food, as the narrator finds himself in the kitchen before the half-carved up beast. While people eating the veal become animals themselves, the roasting calf takes on human qualities:

> Having lost two or three great slices off his buttocks, his ribs pared to the very bone, with holes in his shoulders, each large enough to bury a Seville orange, he looked as if a kennel of hounds had every one had a snap at him. Upon him lay the flitch of bacon of such an Ethiopian complexion, that I should rather have guessed it the side of a Blackamoor. It looked more like a cannibal's feast, than a Christian entertainment.[162]

[160] Ibid., 113.
[161] Ibid., 114.
[162] Ibid., 115.

The calf not only becomes human, but "Ethiopian," so that the country feast becomes, in the moment that the carcass is discovered, a scene in which a gaggle of Londoners devours a "Blackamoor" in an inn. In Ward's imagining, the inn is a site of inversions and reversals: the countryside into the city, the familiar into the foreign, the cannibal into the cannibalized, and the Londoner into the cannibal. Like the Spanish oranges that fill the cavities in the shoulders, the calf itself is imagined as an imported black body, prefiguring some of the rhetoric of abolitionists later in the century, which I will discuss later in this chapter. The narrator is simultaneously repulsed and satisfied by the sight, "glutted with the view of this unusual piece of cookery," as if this chance sight of the ugly source of the feasting has cured him of all desire to eat. That it took a trip outside London for a revelation about the disgusting matter at the bottom of the city's eating habits is fitting. The mad rush to the inn, and the animalistic mutilation of the calf acts as re-wilding of London, both a return to the wilderness and a glimpse into the wilderness already in the city and its inhabitants.

In 1700, while Ward was still releasing fresh additions to *The London-spy*, Thomas Brown, a close friend of Aphra Behn, published another entry into the minor genre of the satirical London guide, *Amusements Serious and Comical, Calculated for the Meridian of London*. Like Joseph Addison a decade later, the city that Brown describes is a "World by itself," a place where they are "daily discovering in it more new Countries, and surprizing Singularities, than in all the Universe besides."[163] In the *Amusements,* though, the London newcomer is figured much more literally as an outsider, in the vein of *The Turkish Spy*:

> There are among the *Londoners* so many Nations differing in Manners, Customs, and Religions, that the Inhabitants themselves don't know a quarter of them. Imagine then what an *Indian* wou'd think of such a Motly Herd of people, and

[163] Thomas Brown, *Amusements Serious and Comical Calculated for the Meridian of London*, 2nd Edition, (London: 1702), 22.

> what a Diverting Amusement it would be to him, to examine with a Traveller's Eye, all the Remarkable Things of this Mighty City.[164]

This "Traveller's Eye," as in Ward, is the perspective of confused and perpetually astounded visitor, an optic that allows the reader to dwell on their amazement at familiar objects and events "which the Prejudice of Custom makes to seem Reasonable and Natural to Us." Brown makes no issue of precisely how or why the Indian is in London, he is simply "dropt perpendicularly from the Clouds, and finds himself on the sudden in the midst of this Prodigious and Noisy city."[165] Like the European explorers, the Indian stumbles into a radically unfamiliar place. The joke, of course, is that the metropolitan is made to swap places with the supposedly lawless savage of the wilderness, a gesture that is closer to an amusing absurdity than an exercise in cultural relativism. Yet, this reversal of spectatorship reveals a genuine a problem for the imagination of an eighteenth-century Londoner – that the absurdity of their particular urban situation, which would be apparent to any outsider looking in on the city, would undercut the sense of London as the stable gravitational centre of the nation.

The Indian that Brown imagines for *Amusements* seems to be from the East Indies rather than the West, as he very early on meets someone "of his own Complexion" at a coffee house, and inquires "what Province or Kingdom of *India* he belong'd to."[166] However, the question of any particularly active cultural signifiers seems less relevant than knowing that he is meant to point to a general idea of foreignness and racial otherness, since the denomination of 'Indian' seems calculated for its various modes of exoticism. The British East India Company had a strong presence in Bengal by 1700, importing large amounts of spices and textiles into London,

[164] Ibid.
[165] Ibid., 23.
[166] Ibid., 27.

and the images of savagery and cannibalism that were strongly associated with the "Indian" of North and South America, were not attached to the East Indian. The Native American, as much as they could be constructed as having access to a pristine and natural nobility, were deeply suspicious figures. In *The English Empire in America* (1711), Nathaniel Crouch's describes the First Nations people as "prone to injurious violence and slaughter… all of them Canibals or eaters of human Flesh, and so were formerly the Heathen Irish, who used to feed upon the Buttocks of Boys, and the Paps of Women."[167]

In Crouch's version, the Native is a figure both extremely foreign and yet bordering on domestic, evoking a cannibalism that is chronologically distant but spatially nearby. As alien as the Native is made to seem in their universal cannibalism, Crouch depicts a reflexive need to make sense of this supposed cultural feature by reaching back into the history of the British Isles. Crouch's quick association between what are perceived to be geographically distinct and yet fundamentally similar savageries demonstrates the ease with which cultural barriers and differences were conflated.

The Indian of the *Amusements* is similarly faced with a London that frequently reminds him of his own home, sometimes in deeply uncomfortable ways. Guided by Brown himself, the strange sights that greet the traveller, the "several indigested Ideas he received from the diversity of Objects he met with," combined with the shock he receives at "the sight of the Chimny-Sweepers in the Conduit, that look'd so much like this own Country-men," cause him to become physically ill.[168] Like Ward's narrator at the feast, a glut of sensory information turns quickly from marvel to disgust, just as the 'indigested Ideas' of the raw first impressions shifts into a

[167] Nathaniel Crouch, *The English Empire in America: or, A View of the Dominions of the Crown of England in the West Indies* (London: 1711) 83.
[168] Brown, *Amusements*, 36.

literal indigestion. That the sight of Londoners looking so much like him is the detail that sets off his nausea is in some ways a reaction to a disturbing incongruity. As Mary Douglas has argued, "it is only by exaggerating the difference between within and without…that a semblance of order is created" in the natural messiness of life, and any violation of the categories we have imposed on it can result in discomfort or repulsion.[169] The implied obverse of the Indian's violent discomfort at seeing something familiar in a deeply unfamiliar place is the Londoner's feeling of recognizing something foreign in their familiar city.

Despite the conceit of the text, the discomfort with the city's messy categories is not limited to the Indian's experience and is in fact largely centered on Brown's own amazement as filtered through the imagined "Traveller's Eyes". This is a necessary feature of the kind of thought experiment that Brown engages, since he himself must tune his perspective to that of the imagined Indian. Unlike Ward, Brown's text involves a transformation, however speculative and humorous in intent, of the Londoner into the Indian. As such, his description of London is curated with the intent of displaying not only the sites and events that might stir in the Indian that same sense of nauseous familiarity, but also towards barbarisms that are meant to exceed whatever a traveller might experience in a foreign country. Brown, who was briefly imprisoned in the Wood Street Compter for a Jacobite poem satirizing Louis XIV's recognition of William, notices that his guided tour is coming uncomfortably close to the site of his imprisonment: "We were now almost come to *Woodstreet Corner*, when I bethought my self it was more adviseable to go on the other side of the street, than to endanger my Corps by coming within reach of the *Men-Eaters*, that stood not far off *seeking whom they might devour*, and desir'd the *Indian* to

[169] Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 5.

cross over the way."[170] In his safeguarding of the Indian from the prison staff, Brown demonstrates the other side of the cannibalism of the criminal justice system than we get in Ward. Taken together, both prisoners and guards are out for flesh, and in both cases, one wrong turn down a street, or one door mistakenly passed through can lead one into a dangerous zone within the city.

Thomas Brown's Indian wasn't the only fictional foreigner to arrive in London at the beginning of the eighteenth century. In 1704, George Psalmanazar, a man claiming to be a Japanese convert to Anglicanism, published *An Historical and Geographical Description of Formosa*, a three-hundred-page guide to the culture, religion, language and diet of the city (now called Taiwan), the strange and remarkable claims of which electrified the talk of London for the next two years. Psalmanazar, who had arrived in London that same year in response to an invitation from the Royal Society, was, as many already suspected, a fraud. Likely born somewhere in Southern France, Psalmanazar had assumed the identity of the wandering convert of a fabulous religion as a way to help him collect alms to fund his tour of Germany and the Netherlands, constructing his own elaborate language based on Greek and Hebrew, and inventing equally elaborate stories of the strange social customs of Formosa, an island he falsely believed to be controlled by Japan. While Ward and Brown gave an insider's description of the city, pointing out some of the cannibalistic elements already active there, Psalmanazar introduced the city and its residents to what was supposed to be the genuine article – a flesh and blood anthropophagi, who could not only speak and write, but who presented himself in the familiar appearance of a European.

[170] Brown, *Amusements,* 40.

The *Description* is filled with stories of the strange customs and rituals of the island, and certainly Psalmanazar's most shocking claim was the celebration of a yearly festival in which 18,000 boys under the age of nine would be sacrificed at an altar to the local deity. The Formosa of the *Description* has an elaborate priestly class, including the Chief Sacrificator, who, like some infernal version of a church or city bureaucrat, takes down in his ledger "an accompt how many Boys each Family can furnish, and to admonish them in time to send in their number."[171] The horrifying eating habits of Psalmanazar and his fellow Formosans seems to have been the most controversial and interesting element of the *Description*. Benjamin Breen has pointed out that in 1711, long after the ruse had been discovered, a satirical advertisement ran in *The Spectator,* claiming that Psalmanazar would be performing in a scene "wherein *Thyestes* eats his own Children."[172] Psalmanazar seems to have understood that London's fascination with cannibalism was a major factor in his popularity, and when he made additions for the second edition of the *Description* in 1705, he greatly emphasized and enlarged the moments that depicted human sacrifice and anthropophagy, working, as John Shufelt writes, to "amplify passages he knew to be exceptionally sensational or titillating."[173] The more he spoke, and the more his stories started to become questioned, the more he amplified the strange and repulsive diet of the Formosans, a performance of the metropolitan expectations of foreignness that he learned early on in his career as a fraud could be successful in allaying suspicions. In his posthumous memoirs, Psalmanazar claims that, when some "shrewd questions" put to him by several gentleman made him suspect that his story was not being given complete credit, he

[171] George Psalmanazar, *Memoirs of xxxx: The Memoirs of the "Formosa Fraud" George Psalmanazar; a Reputed Native of Formosa* (London: 1764), 187.
[172] *The Spectator*, March 13, 1711, quoted in Benjamin Breen "No Man Is an Island: Early Modern Globalization, Knowledge Networks, and George Psalmanazar's Formosa," *Journal of Early Modern History* 17, no. 4 (2013): 405.
[173] John Shufelt, "The Trickster as an Instrument of Enlightenment: George Psalmanazar and the Writings of Jonathan Swift," *History of European Ideas* 31, (2005): 159.

turned to "one of the most whimsical expedients that could come into a crazed brain, viz. that of living upon raw flesh, roots and herbs."[174]

These relatively moderate eccentricities of diet that Psalmanazar performed in his daily life on the road and in London were only the signifiers of the much more disturbing cannibalistic practices that he claimed to have left behind. In the *Description*, Psalmanazar gives a very matter-of-fact description (with an equally casual repudiation) of Formosan cannibalism:

> We also eat humane Flesh, which I am now convinced is a very barbarous custom, tho' we feed only upon our open Enemies, slain or made captive in the Field, or else upon Malefactors legally executed; the Flesh of the latter is our greatest dainty, and is four times dearer than other rare and delicious meat; we buy it of the Executioner, for the Bodies of all publick capital Offenders are his Fees; as soon as the Criminal is dead, he cuts the Body in pieces, squeezeth out the Blood, and makes his House a shambles for the Flesh of Men and Women, where all People that can afford it come buy.[175]

Compared to the annual slaughter of the young boys, the consumption of the executed convicts seems mild, but it also taps into much more familiar distastes about the handling of bodies after execution. It is impossible to know if the London audience or readership would have been more or less horrified by this practice because of its similarity to the soon to be legally enshrined practice of using the bodies of hanged men and women as cadavers in anatomical research. It seems certain, however, that the similarity would not be lost, any more than the recognizably European shambles, images which combine to suggest something disturbingly close to slaughtering a calf and carving up a roast. In describing a Formosan woman who was crucified and tortured to death over a period of several days, Psalmanazar makes this comparison even more explicit, noting that "her Long sufferings, Youth and good Constitution, made her Flesh so tender, delicious and valuable, that the Executioner sold it for above eight *Taillos*, for there was

[174] Psalmanazar, *Memoirs*, 194.
[175] Psalmanazar, *Description*, 112.

such thronging to this inhuman Market, that Men of great fashion thought themselves fortunate if they could purchase a pound or two of it."[176]

But if feasting on the bodies of criminals is part of normal life on Formosa, cannibalism is also made to form the basis of their religious rituals. The slaughter of the young boys is concluded with an act of communal eating of small portions of the sacrificed victims, a ritual that echoes and parodies the Catholic communion:

> When Prayers are made for the sanctifications of the Sacrifices, then every one bends the left Knee, and Stretches out his Arms wide open. But when the *Victims* are a slaying, every one may sit upon the ground (for they have no Seats or Pews, such as you use here in *England*,) only the richer sort have a Cushion to sit on; while the Flesh is a boiling, every one stands with his Hands join'd together, looking towards the upper part of the Tabernacle. After the Flesh is boil'd, every one of the People takes a piece of the Flesh from the Priest and eats it, and what remains, the Priests keep for themselves.[177]

There was already a tradition of criticism of Catholic belief that attached cannibalistic desire to the concept of transubstantiation, something which Maggie Kilgour, in *From Communion to Cannibalism*, has described in detail. In *On Christian Doctrine*, Milton said of the Catholic communion that it brought Christ's already tortured body back to Earth "to be broken once more and crushed and ground, by the fangs of brutes," and to face the ultimate degradation of being "driven through all the stomach's filthy channels" and shot out into the latrine.[178] For Kilgour, Milton's problem with the Catholic eucharist is that it falls "into a disgusting literalism that degrades the spirit."[179] This criticism is certainly active in Psalmanazar's account, but I think what is even more important in the *Description* is the way that the Formosan brand of exotic

[176] Ibid., 113.
[177] Ibid., 47.
[178] John Milton, "On Christian Doctrine," *The Riverside Milton*, ed. Roy Flannagan (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998).
[179] Maggie Kilgour, *From Communion to Cannibalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 84.

cannibalism comes back to the strange familiarity that the cannibal stories always carry with them: the closer the rituals and the dietary practices of the Formosan's come to those of the people in London, the more shockingly comprehensible they are. In his *Memoirs,* Psalmanazar described his process for selecting Formosa as a suitably exotic locale and inventing its customs, writing that he "supposed they were so little known by the generality of Europeans, that they were only looked upon, in the lump to be Antipodes to them in almost every respect."[180] What is antipodal, in the sense that Psalmanazar seems to have meant, is not at all to be unrecognizable or without point of comparison, but precisely the opposite of this. The Formosa that Psalmanazar created is meant to be always half-recognizable, so if you squint you might see the bureaucracy of London's guilds and politics, or the outlines of its religious rituals or those of its familiar enemies.

Psalmanazar's stories, while they immediately provoked skepticism from some of London's more learned citizens, also tapped into some hungry space in London's imagination.[181] These were distinct from the often-dry accounts of the Americas or Asia which were frequently designed to entice investment, or to propagandize a military intervention: these were narratives calculated to attract the largest possible share of curiosity. The disgust elicited by the tales of cannibalism and human sacrifice were a large factor in the queasy attraction that the text must have had on its readership. For that brief two-year period where Psalmanazar had a large credulous audience, it was as if there was a reformed cannibal living in London – one who could discuss and understand theology, and who seemed to move comfortably within the matrix of

[180] Psalmanazar, *Memoirs,* 135-6.
[181] Edward Haley challenged Psalmanazar on his claims about the length of twilight in Formosa, and John Locke expressed skepticism in his correspondence. Many were also extremely skeptical about the Description's claims that 20,000 young boys were sacrificed one day a year to please the patron god of the island, arguing that the island would be rapidly depopulated.

English customs of politeness and decorum. What were London's citizens to make of it? Did they scrutinize his lips and teeth, trying to understand how this mouth, housed in such a familiar looking face, could have casually munched on human-flesh? Where the Londons of Ward and Brown show us spaces where versions of the cannibal could make their homes, Psalmanazar showed London a flesh-and-blood reflection of these accusations.

III. Luxury Cannibalism

By the middle of the eighteenth century, London was becoming a city at the centre of an increasingly messy knot of colonial entanglements. Victories in the Seven Years War had led to large gains in Britain's economic and territorial expansion, gaining control of Quebec, Senegal, Guadeloupe and Martinique, while also shoring up their power in Bengal. At the same time, with the rising tensions in North America pointing towards what would become the American Revolution, with the sudden existence a large Francophone population in British North America, and with the constantly replenishing population of enslaved people in the Caribbean that could at any moment shake off the yoke of British violence and repression, it may have started to seem as if the empire had gotten too unwieldly to handle, even as its existence became more essential. As Charlotte Sussman argues, the increasing need for the imports provided by the colonies and the resulting sense of dependency on people believed to be below them "undermined England's claim to sufficiency".[182]

For Sussman, the importation of both food and eating habits marked both a major change in the culture, as well as a focal point for some of the anxieties that came with empire, to the extent that extensive trade with "supposedly inferior peoples," meant that English people had

[182] Charlotte Sussman, *Consuming Anxieties: Consumer Protest, Gender, and British Slavery, 1713-1833* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 84.

"adopted the eating rituals of 'savages'."[183] However, while Sussman discusses Tobias Smollett's solution in *Humphrey Clinker* of a "fantasy of harmless ingestion" – a reactionary stance that advocates avoidance of New World luxuries – it can appear that this return to the wholesome familiarity of good English cooking was not seen as an option, since for many writers, there seems to have been no wholesomeness to return to.[184]

By the middle of the eighteenth century, the transformation of the national psyche was to some irreversible – not necessarily a set of discrete qualities thought to be taken on from the "inferior" subjects half a world away, but a permanent change in how the domestic, metropolitan culture would be perceived. As Maxine Berg and Elizabeth Eger point out, the consumables imported from Asia and the New World, which were in the process of becoming "indigenous consumer goods," were feeding into the rise of a "new civility" that was demonstrated through socializing and eating.[185] In Roxann Wheeler's words, these luxury consumables "were the basis of exchange that underwrote civil society and polite sociability," which "yanked whole groups of people out of the savage realm…[but] also polarized the consumer and the slave producer."[186] The concept of luxury— displays of vast wealth (or of the appearance of it) that often took the form of consuming expensive imported goods— was finding sympathetic expression in economic theory, as well as vociferous condemnation by those who associated it with the groans of a collapsing empire.

Cătălin Avramescu has described in detail a strand of philosophical thought centering on the figure of the anthropophagi that stretches back to the ancients, which influenced early

[183] Ibid., 101.
[184] Ibid., 100.
[185] Maxine Berg and Elizabeth Eger, "Introduction," *Luxury in the Eighteenth Century: Debates, Desires and Delectable Goods* (New York: Palgrave, 2003), 7.
[186] Roxann Wheeler, *The Complexion of Race: Categories of Difference in Eighteenth-Century British Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), 191.

modern and Enlightenment thought. For Plato, "the democratic city-state is a society in which the appetites that originate in the lower strata of the soul rise to the surface unhindered."[187] The magnetic pull of the "forbidden pleasures" of the city brings with it a massive influx of a population willing to dabble in an "irrational passion for forbidden food and extreme pleasures." For Plato, the city is primed for the consequent rise of the cannibal tyrant, a ruler whose insatiable appetite mirrors that of the populace, and who will stop at nothing to satisfy his cruel desires. Avramescu argues that Plato's theory of the metropolitan tendency towards cannibalism and tyrants remained relevant up until the eighteenth century, and that there is everywhere an ongoing anxiety of this prophecy of the flesh-eating monsters that live on the other side of luxury. One writer for the *Monthly Miscellany* makes the claim in 1774 that "in every great state, where the people by prosperity and opulence are sunk into voluptuousness, we hear daily of Depopulation," adding that "cookery depopulates like a pestilence; because when it becomes an art, it brings within the compass of one stomach what is sufficient for ten days of temperance."[188] Similarly, in Oliver Goldsmith's dedication to "The Deserted Village" (1770) he writes that "in regretting the depopulation of the country, I inveigh against the increase of our luxuries," putting forward a balanced equation in which the fullness of the luxurious city equals a countryside that has been emptied out, as if consumed entirely.[189]

The shifting and expanding shape of the empire was being mirrored by changes in London. By the 1770s, thanks in large part to the City Commissioners of Sewers and Pavements, and the London Paving and Lighting Act, the city had made vast improvements to the evenness of the pavement and lighting. However, the rapidly increasing population meant that London's

[187] Avramescu, *Intellectual History*, 201.
[188] "Causes of Depopulation," *The Monthly Miscellany*, June 1774, 286.
[189] Oliver Goldsmith, *The Deserted Village, a Poem* (London: 1770), vi.

already problematic sewage and waste disposal situation was becoming even less tolerable than it was at the beginning of the century. White has described how "the growing numbers of animals killed for food, countless illegal connections to the common sewers intended only for rainwater, and apparently an increasing tendency of the night-men to empty their carts into the sewers" had made the Thames into a stinking nuisance.[190] The continuing expansion of construction projects meant that London's burial grounds had started to literally overflow into the surface, to the point that hogs were apparently seen chewing on human bones. In 1790, the collapse of a retaining wall in a Quaker burial ground caused dozens of corpses to flood into neighbouring bricklayers' yards. If in Ward's London the city seemed to be flooded with the heterogeneous effluvia of human and animal waste, this would have been even more noticeable in the latter part of the century. Less and less open spaces around the city meant that food was brought in from even further away, whether that meant from elsewhere in Britain, or as far away as the Caribbean. Writers describing London in this period would often use disgusting or suspicious food, both foreign and domestic, as a way of speaking to the city's cannibalistic appetite in its tendency to chew its population into an unrecognizable mash.

Problems of this sort were reflected in the literary production of the time. Anonymously published in 1759, *Low-life: or One Half of the World, Knows not How the Other Half Live* is a book somewhat within the tradition of *London Spy* and *Amusements Serious and Comical*. Told in the continuous present tense, the author positions their work as a textual imitation of Hogarth's eye for detail, an attempt "to deliver the Actions of every Hour, as they really pass; omitting nothing, however trifling it may seem, which is the Subject of that Hour's Employment or Abuse."[191] As in Ward's *London-spy*, this aspiration to exhaustive detail is more accurately

[190] White, *London*, 80.
[191] Anonymous, *Low-life: or, One Half of the World, Knows not how the Other Half Live* (London: 1764), v.

part of a project of piling up instances of the city at its worst, and the radical inclusivity of *Low-life* means that we see the city in terms of an absolute surplus, of activity, material and sin. While *Low-life* is, on balance, more interested in moral inequity than Brown or Ward, London's food serves as a convenient symbol for the rottenness that the author wants to reveal to be at the base of the city's opulence. At six in the morning, for instance, we see "Pork-Men busy in their Shops and Cellars, in salting and putting into Brine what Meat was left the Night before, to prevent its stinking."[192] At noon, servants prepare dinner service in their "dark dirty Kitchens," for their "noisy, voracious and dainty Masters."[193] At the same time, on the outskirts of town, "measly Pork, rusty Bacon, stinking Lamb, rotten Mutton, slinked Veal, and coddled Cow, with yellow Greens, sooty Pottage, and greasy Pudding" are sold by the cook's shops. Below each appetizing surface, in the hidden filthiness of the kitchens of the wealthy, or spoiled meat disguised by brine, or the voracious appetites concealed by a dainty exterior, there is a revelation of something disgusting.

From two until three o'clock in the morning on Sunday is a time when the debaucheries of the previous night are coming to their conclusion, and the various collectors of trinkets and forgotten things start their work: turnkeys collect their bribes from prisoners wanting to escape, constables are visiting the emptying bawdy-houses to collect money and have a drink, young men are stealing the lanterns of sleeping watchmen, coachmen are searching their coaches for whatever valuables their drunk customers may have left behind. Two different kinds of more professional scavengers also make an appearance at this hour:

> The whole Company of Fingers, (a sort of People who get their Bread by the Hurry and Negligence of sleepy Tradesmen) are marching towards all the Markets in *London*, *Westminster*, and *Southwark*, to make a Seizure of all the Butchers, Poulterers, Green-Grocers, and other Market-People left behind them

[192] Ibid., 31.
[193] Ibid., 58.

> at all their Stalls and Shambles when they went away. Sextons of Parish-Churches, privately digging up, and sending to the Houses of Surgeons, the Bodies of such People who were buried the preceding Night, that died Young, and after a short Illness, to be anatomized; at which Time they take the Opportunity of ripping the Velvet and Cloth off large Coffins, pulling out the Brass Nails, and tearing away the Plates and Handles, to sell for Geneva, Snuff and Tobacco.[194]

There is a kind of association through proximity here – those that come to steal the off cuts of meat are juxtaposed with those that steal the bodies of the recently deceased to be shipped off and jointed like the stolen pork or beef. That the sextons sell the coffins for tobacco is a detail calculated to be particularly distasteful, evoking a base alchemy in which the flesh of the dead is converted into luxury consumables. Like the cannibalistic executions that Psalmanazar described, the bodies here are profaned by commerce, swept up in the network of Atlantic trade and made to undergo a transformation into objects exchangeable for tobacco.

It was more than just tobacco was coming into the city during the middle of the century. Fruits, vegetables, preserved fish and flesh, spices, textiles, dyes, minerals, and people were being brought into the city from across the Atlantic almost every day. Previously rare and expensive items like sugar and tea were becoming increasingly available, and cookbooks were featuring recipes for dishes like 'mango pickle', some featuring the genuine fruit, some substituting cucumber.[195] One writer, calling himself "An Admirer of the last Age" in *The Westminster Magazine,* complained of changing eating habits as symptom of a general societal degeneracy:

> Luxury is not idle in her province, but shares with her sister Vanity in the labours of the day. High soups and sauces, every mode of foreign cookery that can quicken taste, and spur the lagging appetite, are assiduously employed. The end of eating is not the allaying of natural hunger, but the gratification of sordid and debasing appetite. Hence the most inflaming foods, not those which nourish, but

[194] Ibid., 16.
[195] Bickham, "Empire," 97.

> those which irritate, are adopted; while the cool and temperate diets that purify the blood, are banished to inferior tables.[196]

The admirer was far from the only critic of what was being served on the city's tables in the 1770s. Bickham quotes another anonymous author ('An Old Fellow') in the *London Magazine* expressing his frustration that the days of the "large, plump juicy buttocks of English roast beef" on London platters were gone, and that now the "tables groan with the luxuries of France and India."[197] In some senses, the brass nails and scraps of fabric scavenged from coffins, and the foreign meals torturing London's tabletops are part of the same set of grievances. As the appetites of London's multitudes clamoured from increasingly unusual dishes, and as the buried coffins below the surface of the city threatened to rise up and spill their rotten contents into the streets, the city may have seemed as if it was full to the point of bursting and yet continued to gorge itself.

Scholars have frequently called attention to Tobias Smollett's enduring fascination with food's potential for disgust – what James P. Carson calls a "peculiar interest in dietary abomination."[198] And while we will be focusing here on cannibalism as it relates to London, particularly in *Humphry Clinker*, it is possible to trace an abiding interest in cannibalism and other fringe eating practices through Smollett's earlier texts. In *The Adventures of Peregrine Pickle* (1751), Smollett's second novel, the titular character and a group of men that have gathered around him over the course of his adventures, travel through the French countryside on their way back to England. In Senlis, a town around fifty kilometres north of Paris, the group dines at an inn on a fricassee of rabbit, and Pickle decides to "perpetrate a joke upon the

[196] An Admirer of the last Age, *The Westminster Magazine*, June 1773, 363.
[197] Bickham, "Empire," 94.
[198] James P. Carson, "Britons, "Hottentots," Plantation Slavery and Tobias Smollett," *Philological Quarterly* 75, no. 4 (1996): 474.

stomach" of the painter, Pallet, by insinuating that the rabbit in the dish is more likely to be cat-meat, the skin of which he had seen hanging in the kitchen, "new flea'd." [199] In portraying Pallet's overwhelming disgust at the thought of swallowing cat, Smollett uses a language that is deeply rooted in anatomy and medicine, describing the way his "belly seemed to move in contact with his back-bone, his colour changed," and how he heaved in agony, but was unable to vomit "notwithstanding all the energy of his abhorrence."[200] William Gibson has very helpfully pointed out some of the ways this episode is bound up with material from popular English jestbooks and Spanish picaresque narratives, and how the swapping the cat and the hare feeds into anxieties about homosexuality and cunnilingus, as well as English suspicions of the contents of heavily-sauced (and therefore easy to disguise) meats of French cookery.[201]

The young doctor of the party, whose radical materialism and persistent advocacy for democracy makes him the constant punching bag of the group, does not react with disgust at the idea of eating cat, and is instead eager to "demonstrate, that the flesh of a cat was as nourishing and delicious as veal or mutton," claiming that it is "a vulgar mistake to think that all flesh-devouring creatures were unfit to be eaten."[202] The farce of the doctor, in this case, is his insistence on trying to reason his way out of what should be an immediate and physically obvious disgust. As Miller puts it, "the avowal of disgust expects concurrence," and failure to notice the clearly repulsive status of an object could mean that your own status will be called into

[199] Tobias Smollett, *The Adventures of Peregrine Pickle*, vol. 2 (London: 1751), 14.
[200] Ibid., 15.
[201] William Gibson, "Tobias Smollett and Cat-For-Hare: The Anatomy of a Picaresque Joke," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 40, no. 4 (2007), 574. Keith Thomas has also described how English cookery, up until the very end of the eighteenth century, tended to serve up roasted or boiled animals with the head still attached, this practice disappearing with the nineteenth-century tendency "to conceal the slaughtered creature's more recognisable features." Thomas Keith, *Man and the Natural World: A History of the Modern Sensibility* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983), 300.
[202] Smollett, *Pickle*, 17.

question.[203] Even more than the disturbing suggestion of enjoying cat meat, the doctor demonstrates an absolute refusal to abide by any limit to his appetite:

> He then observed, that the Negroes on the coast of Guinea, who are a healthy and vigorous people, prefer cats and dogs to all other fare; and mentioned from history several sieges, during which the inhabitants, who were blocked up, lived upon these animals, and had recourse even to human flesh, which, to his certain knowledge, was in all respects preferable to pork; for, in the course of his studies, he had, for the experiment's sake, eaten a steak cut from the buttock of a person who had been hanged.

Mirroring Psalmanazar's description of the Formosan executions, the doctor's experiment makes anatomy and capital punishment into something profane and disgusting. That he cuts a "steak," not simply a strip of flesh, demonstrates a total transformation of human flesh into the register of fine dining, and betrays a repulsive appetite hiding beneath the language of experimental knowledge.

There is an almost equal horror meant to be evoked in the equivocation between the Guinean and the British diet, and Carson argues that the "target here is not primarily the dietary habits of 'the Negroes on the coast of Guinea'; rather, it is the cultural relativism of a British man of science, who, disregarding European customs, common, sense, and natural morality, contends that barbarous Africans can provide a model for civilized nations."[204] However, the way in which the doctor's rationalizations and histories, shifting between the diet of the people of Guinea and into the very general "several sieges," makes it difficult to locate precisely where we are meant to pin the origin of his cannibalistic experiment. While the Guineans eat cats and dogs, it does not seem as if they are involved in these sieges in which human flesh has been consumed, which seem more likely to be European. In the former case, the appetite is founded

[203] Miller, *Disgust*, 194.
[204] Carson, "Hottentots," 475.

on desire, while in the case of the sieged city, the consumption of humans comes from desperation. The doctor, splitting the difference, eats the flesh out of an unrestrained curiosity, and his companions,

> …hearing the last illustration, turned their eyes upon the orator, at the same instant, with looks of horror and disgust; and the one muttering the term *Cannibal*, and the other pronouncing the word *abomination*, they rose from the table in a great hurry, and running towards another apartment, justled with such violence in the passage, that both were overturned by the shock, which also contributed to the effect of their nausea, that mutually defiled them as they lay.[205]

In the sudden fictional substitution of the cat for the hare Peregrine and his compatriots are taking advantage of the extremely charged line between proper and improper sources of food. Not all meats are alike, and scholars have made much of the fact that human beings in general eat very little of the variety of nourishing food available to us, with the majority of it being forbidden by their status as taboo, or as revolting. In 1966, Mary Douglas asked, regarding the dietary prohibitions of Leviticus: "Why should the camel, the hare and the rock badger be unclean? Why should some locusts, but not all, be unclean? Why should the frog be clean and the mouse and the hippopotamus unclean?"[206] For Douglas, the answer has everything to do with the demands of holiness, or speaking more secularly, the need to "impose system on an inherently untidy experience," and the holiness which these clean meats provide suggest ideas of "unity, integrity, perfection of the individual and of the kind."[207] For Paul Rozin, our omnivore status means that we are always already in the anxiety producing position of choosing precisely what we should eat. Rozin calls the omnivore's strategy a "kind of fearful interest,"[208]

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[205] Smollett, *Pickle*, 18.
[206] Douglas, *Purity*, 51.
[207] Ibid., 67.
[208] Jonathan Haidt, Paul Rozin, Clark McCauley and Sumio Imada, "Body, Psyche, and Culture: The Relationship Between Disgust and Morality," *Psychology and Developing Societies* 9, no. 1 (1997): 109.

characterized by a willingness to explore, tempered by an active scrutiny of what is going in our mouths. This split direction between hesitancy and excitation, between our tendency to "seek out novel forms of physical experience," and our equally prevalent tendency to fear new foods, can leave us in a position halfway between the doctor and his companions, both wanting to consume the taboo object and to recoil and vomit at the thought of it.[209] While neither Rozin, Gibson nor Douglas raise the problem of cannibalism, there is a very potent sense that the fear or disgust that comes with eating the 'wrong' sort of meat is often a product of what William Miller calls "a weaker version of cannibalism," the troubling thought that you might be accidently consuming a fellow human, but also, much more disturbingly, that you might actually enjoy it.[210]

While not cannibalism itself, the suggestion that the meat might be cat raises the specter of the same spectrum of impure consumption. Smollett is, as always, particularly alive to this *fearful interest*, and the anxiety that comes with an overwhelmed sensorium – a problem especially common in the metropolis. Sussman, writing on the London scenes of *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker* (1771), has said that "there is no way of knowing, in London, whether the food one consumes is human waste or other organic matter."[211] Smollett himself arrived in London from Glasgow when he was eighteen years old, and spent several years in the Caribbean working as a surgeon's mate, returning home with a Jamaican wife to start a medical practice and a writing career. Matthew Bramble's London, like Brown and Ward's, is the city as it appears to new arrivals. "London," he says, "is literally new to me."[212] And, like Defoe, Bramble is fascinated by the extent of the new growth of the city, remarking that he supposes "the whole

[209] Ibid.
[210] Miller, *Disgust*, 46.
[211] Sussman, *Consuming*, 102.
[212] Tobias Smollett, *The Expedition of Humphrey Clinker*, ed. Shaun Regan (London: Penguin Books, 2008), 98.

county of Middlesex will be covered with brick" if construction continues at the same rate.[213] Unlike Defoe, who seems to marvel at the speed of London's growth, Bramble's fascination is one of horror, as if he were noticing the sudden spread of a rash or an inflammation:

> What I left open fields, producing hay and corn, I now found covered with streets and squares, and palaces, and churches. I am credibly informed, that in the space of seven years, eleven thousand new houses have been built in one quarter of Westminster, exclusive of what is daily added to other parts of this unwieldy metropolis.

The 'unwieldy metropolis' has indeed taken on too much, and although its streets are wider, better lit and better paved than he remembers them, the capital is "an overgrown monster; which, like a dropsical head, will in time leave the body and extremities without nourishment and support."[214] Smollett's use of the body as a stand-in for the city here, while in some ways a standard trope, is at the same time very particularly Smolletian. London is both an over-eating monster and the swollen head to England's body, a thing which consumes and endlessly accumulates mass, threatening to eat so much that everything else must starve.

Charles Jenner in his *Town Eclogues* (1772), displays a similar repulsion to the seemingly unstoppable destruction of the fields surrounding London. In the fourth eclogue, which centers on the city poet's struggle to find the inspiration that is available only in the rural environment, seeing only "fat droves of sheep, consign'd from *Lincoln* fens, / That swearing drovers beat to *Smithfield* penns," livestock coming into the city from over one-hundred and thirty miles away

> Alas for me! what prospects can I find
> To raise poetic ardour in my mind?
> Where'er around I cast my wand'ring eyes,
> Long burning rows of fetid bricks arise,
> And nauseous dunghills swell in mould'ring heaps,
> Whilst the fat sow beneath the covert sleeps.
> I spy no verdant glade, no gushing hill,

[213] Ibid., 99.
[214] Smollett, *Humphrey Clinker*, 98

> But stagnant pools adorn our dusty plains,
> Where half-starv'd cows wash down their meal of grain.[215]

What emerges in Jenner is an infernal pastoralism, a rural fringe being poisoned by the city center – that abundance that comes from wealth creating as a by-product disgusting heaps of waste. Something in the disturbance of the line between the metropolitan interior and the rural exterior has made both categories fuzzy and liable to bleed into one another. Where there should be trees or grass, there are "fetid bricks". Similarly, what should be fertile fields are piles of ambiguously sourced dung, unclear if they are human or animal. The cows are starved, and so the people must starve as well. London, as it loses more and more of its green and open spaces, ironically takes on more qualities of the barbarian wilds. In Bramble's description, the "London being an immense wilderness, in which there is neither watch nor ward of any signification, or any order or police, affords them lurking-places as well as prey."[216]

But it is the increase in population more than the accumulation of structures and the covering up of grassland that disturbs Bramble. The mass of people living in the city (Bramble estimates it at one-sixth of the whole country) is simply disproportionate to the needs of the kingdom, with nobles and the middle class all coming into the fashionable parts of London, each one carrying with them a huge number of domestics, as well as an even larger swathe of people who are hopeful to be in domestic service. With the influx of people, comes a descent into the horrors of luxury, and Bramble describes how "the plough-boys, cow-herds, and lower hinds are debauched and seduced by the appearance and discourse of those coxcombs in livery," and "desert their dirt and drudgery and swarm up to London."[217]

[215] Charles Jenner, *Town Eclogues* (London: 1772), 26.
[216] Smollett, *Clinker*, 100.
[217] Ibid., 98.

Bramble's final dismissal of Londoner's, saying that "they may, for aught I care, wallow in the mire of their own pollution,"[218] summarizes the very particular offensive odors and substances into a much more general sense of humanity soaking in a tub of its own filth. Bramble's London is a kind of enclosed ecosystem, where waste is discarded only to be again consumed, where the food, instead of nourishing, induces vomiting or disease. Even the beer is "vapid and nauseous; much fitter to facilitate the operation of a vomit, than to quench thirst and promote digestion." Bramble offers a long and detailed comparison of the wholesome food raised in the clean air of the countryside, with produce harvested and animals slaughtered nearby to where they will be eaten, with the rotten meat and vegetables contaminated with dirt and feces available in London. Even, or more accurately especially the food that looks appetizing in the city, should be viewed with a deep sense of loathing and disgust:

> It must be owned, the Convent-garden affords some good fruit; which, however, is always engrossed by a few individuals of overgrown fortune, at an exorbitant price; so that little else than the refuse of the market falls to the share of the community; and that is distributed by such filthy hands, as I cannot look at without loathing. It was but yesterday that I saw a dirty barrow-hunter in the street, cleaning her dusty fruit with her own spittle; and, who knows but some fine lady of St James's parish might admit into her delicate mouth those very cherries, which had been rolled and moistened between the filthy, and, perhaps, ulcerated chops of a St Giles huckster.[219]

There are several levels to the disgusting impressions of this particular moment. Although the apples and cherries are some of the only good produce that can be found in London, their spotless exterior is radically undercut by their invisible filthiness, polished by the spittle of the "dirty barrow-hunter". Not only is the apple contaminated by the waste of another body, Smollett focuses in on precisely who it is doing the contaminating and the eating here. The "delicate

[218] Ibid., 138.
[219] Smollett, *Clinker*, 137.

mouth" of the fine lady unknowingly consuming fluids leaking from the "filthy, and, perhaps, ulcerated chops" of the woman is a disturbing kiss as much as it is weak cannibalism, but it is also an emblem of the ends of luxury. While Smollett's disgust is certainly pointed towards the laboring poor who seem to leave trails of their unseemly fluids throughout the city, it is almost equally a reaction to the luxury food economy of London. That the poor eat only "the refuse of the market" is the direct result of the appetites of those "few individuals of overgrown fortune," who sweep up the stalls of their choicest fruits. These massively wealthy individuals, large in household and in desire, in eating their slobbery apples and cherries are in some ways literally consuming the poor.

When Bramble wonders to his correspondent why any one might live in such a place as London, where "every corner teems with fresh objects of detestation and disgust," he frames it as a problem of taste: "What kind of taste and organs must those people have, who really prefer the adulterate enjoyments of the town to the genuine pleasures of a country retreat?" [220] The question simultaneously strips away the metropole's claims to refinement, and scrutinizes the city's population for marks of a kind of racial difference. Someone who can enjoy the sensations of the city must have a strange set of organs, and Bramble's incredulousness also implies questions about whether this taste is something inherent in the person, or if the organs of taste can be 'adulterated' in the same way that the enjoyments are. The possibility of desire being transmuted through the influence of habitat was an incredibly live issue in the frequent discussions about European settlers. In November of 1771, *London Magazine* published an account of the captivity of M. Belle-Isle among the supposedly cannibalistic Attakapas in Louisiana, a remarkable story of survival in an alien culture that had already become extremely well-known in France. After

[220] Smollett, *Clinker*, 133.

being separated from his hunting party, Belle-Isle wanders the woods with his dog, until he his forced to eat him. He is almost starving when he is approached by a group of Attakapas, who "offered him some human flesh," which they were busy hanging to dry by the river's edge.[221] Though he refuses, joking that he prefers fish, Belle-Isle is taken to the village, and made a servant to one of the tribe's high-status women.

After living with the Attakapas for some time, Belle-Isle starts to become welcome as an equal, and one particular day he "shewed them his dexterity" and killed one of their enemies, earning him the status of a warrior. This change in status is accompanied by a deceptive cannibal ritual, that is meant to mark his entrance into the culture:

> Another Indian having killed a roebuck, they dried the flesh of the man and the roe, to make use of it as provisions on their expeditions. One day as they were walking, M. de Belle-Isle being hungry, asked for something to eat. An Indian gave him some human flesh, saying it was of the roe-buck. M. de Belle-isle eat of it without knowing the cheat; and the Indian afterwards said to him: *Formerly thou didst make difficulty, 'but now thou canst eat man's flesh as well as ourselves*: at these words M. de Belle-Isle threw up all he had eaten.

The switch between the human and the deer meat, like the one in *Peregrine Pickle*, is a substitution between an appetizing flesh for a repulsive one. Unlike the farce of Smollett, though, the trick put upon Belle-Isle is meant to be a horrifying demonstration of the European turned cannibal, first by gradual degrees of acculturation, and then by a kind of force-feeding though the exploitation of an inscrutable food. The *Account* plays into London's conceptions about the Natives of North America, a nobility of spirit that is nonetheless profaned by a casual desire for human flesh, as well as anxieties that their culture might be something desirable for Europeans who came into contact with it. This mythology of the settler "going native," while usually

[221] "A Moving Account of the Captivity of M. Belle-Isle among the Attakapas, a Nation of American Cannibals" *London Magazine, or, Gentleman's Monthly Intelligencer* (London: November 1771), 556.

imagined in cases similar to Belle-Isle's, is also at the base of Smollett's condemnation of London's descent into luxury. London seems to pull towards its center both filthiness and its corresponding impure desires, promising satisfaction, but offering only contamination through its profane food.

An anonymous etching, titled "The Allies" and distributed in February of 1780, goes a long way in helping us visualize the London luxury cannibal. In it, George III is shown sitting near the sea, gnawing on a human bone, while a Native American man chews on the other end. Surrounded by the limbs of a dismembered infant, George inhales tobacco smoke from an upturned skull, while two other Native men drain the blood from a child into another skull. The subtitle below the image, "*Que facit per alium, facit per se",* roughly translates to "He who acts through another, acts himself." Clearly a reference to British cooperation with certain Native Tribes during the American Revolutionary War, the main thrust of the joke here is the appearance of George's fine clothes and pale white skin, laying on the shore amid all the most horrible trappings of cannibalism, a perfect emblem of Plato's tyrant. The imported crucifixes, tomahawks and scalping knives accuse the British under George of an tangled sense of identity, where the commodities of polite and technological sophistication are bundled together with what were perceived to be the crude tools of cannibalistic violence. For the artist, political cooperation with what are assumed to be cannibals is imagined as morally equal to eating human flesh, and the luxury of the English Crown, with its fine clothes, periwigs, seals and banners, is revealed to be a covering for bloodlust. Like a royal Psalmanazar, George eats the flesh of infants while at the same time demonstrating all the outward signs and symbols of polite society.

Figure 2. The Allies: par nobile fratum! / Indagnatio fecit (London, 1780)

There was no shortage of possibly repulsive experiences in eighteenth-century London, with all those mouths to feed, all of those piles of food, much of it on the edge of spoiled, or spoiled already – all those mouths spitting and spewing, all those entrails digesting and expelling waste to pile up in pits and gutters and in reservoirs in the Thames, or else sliding down around your feet, or being poured on your head from someone's window above. An incalculable number of orifices, all either consuming or expelling in their turn, with no real way to keep things clean, or to seal off what was being eaten from what must not be eaten at any cost, to mark the boundary between consumables and what we might properly call here the biomass explosion of London.

Chapter 3: Cleanly Meditations: Politeness, Hygiene and the Bog-House

In 1782, Erasmus Darwin wrote to Josiah Wedgewood to discuss the installation of a water closet in his house in Derby. Darwin wanted to know Wedgewood's opinion on water closets, a question he frames in terms of a mock encomium on the alchemical powers of the machine:

> Pray if you have any decided opinions about {water}-closets (as we have a great convenience of spontaneous water at our new house {in} Derby) pray communicate them. I am told some patents are taken on this subject, so that one can not sh—as one pleases I hear without a license. I suppose Cloacina will be tax'd if the american war continues. Pray say if the goddess delights most in porcelain, in lead, or in marble. Goddess august! Whose provident care collects the refuse of animation, again to reanimate it! Whose transmuting wand changes the heads of philosophers into cabages, and cabages into philosophers! And more valuable than the chemic stone, turns with thy matchless cookery exrecrement again to nourishment! t---- to food! Goddess, to thee the tremulous knees of age shall daily bow, to the[e] the white-bosomed maid shall daily offer at thy shrine incense unborrow'd from the Cedar or the Civet – enough – enough.[222]

Darwin's winking scatological humour, by the time he was writing to Wedgewood, was harkening back to a time that was more comfortable speaking about what went on in the privacy of the outhouse. The familiar story of the eighteenth century as seeing the emergence of strict codes of etiquette and politeness is also a story about the growing pains of acceptance of these codes, which played out as resurgences of non-decorous modes of humour and conversation. As Philip Carter describes it, "politeness was a code ever on the defensive, hindered by an internal weakness born of its ongoing identification and criticism of inferior forms, like the court, which

[222] Erasmus Darwin, *The Collected Letters of Erasmus Darwin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 210.

none the less endured as rival, and sometimes easier and more useful systems."[223] As the boundaries of acceptable behaviour and expression tightened in the first half of the century, scatological and sexual humour was deployed as a kind of anchor into these older, rival forms, depicting what Susan Fitzmaurice calls a "popular radical and antisocial reaction to the increasingly socially constrained applications of politeness."[224] While it is certainly true that the eighteenth-century focus on the close-stool, the outhouse and the water-closet are a reaction against the tightening strictures of politeness, it is also only part of the story. In Darwin's letter, and more generally, the exploration of fecal matters tends to focus on women and their most private spaces. Darwin's toilet humour is underpinned by the use of distinctly feminine aspects and imagery, such as through Cloacina, the Roman goddess of the sewer, the perfumes of the civet, the "matchless cookery" that transforms cabbages to shit, and the "white-bosomed maid" that makes her offerings in the water closet. In this chapter we will see that this is a common theme in eighteenth-century scatology. I will argue that over the course of the century, as the borders of the polite body were slowly being adjudicated, women's private spaces in the lavatory or the toilette were frequently brought under scrutiny as a way of framing them as both almost irredeemably corporeally disgusting, and at the same time hypocritically invested in the regime of polite behaviour. In other words, women's behaviour in the bathroom is used to express both a need for these formal refinements of public behaviour, and to critique this same behaviour as artificial.

In the eighteenth century, women were envisioned in some ways as ideal polite subjects. They were, more than men, expected to embody the courtly ideals of pleasantness in all

[223] Philip Carter, "Polite 'Persons': Character, Biography and the Gentleman," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 12 (2002), 340.
[224] Susan Fitzmaurice, "Changes in the Meaning of Politeness in Eighteenth-Century England," in *Historical (Im)Politeness*, ed. Jonathan Culpeper & Dániel Z. Kádár (New York: Peter Lang, 2010), 88.

situations: in their conversation, in their habits, and most of all, in their bodies. As Soile Ylivuori has pointed out, women's bodies were placed under a strict form of observation and pressured into a position of contradictory signifiers, wherein "the body was conceptualised simultaneously as an opaque mask that needed to be actively fashioned according to discursive ideals of polite femininity, while it was also envisioned as a transparent entity that passively reflected the innate reality of an already possessed femininity."[225] This consistent observation meant that the composure of women's bodies and manners required a constant practice of self-discipline and willful cultivation, and yet it was essential that this composure appeared not as the result of a studied behavioural modulation but rather as a completely natural emanation of femininity. As Ylivuori puts it, "polite femininity could not be reached on an individual level without concealment and dissimulation."[226] This position created what we might call a "forced hypocrisy" that has been described by Jenny Davidson as an important question at the heart of the project of the refinement of manners. While all early adopters and proponents of polite behaviour had to reckon with how to deal with the problem of hypocrisy – how to solve the moral question of squaring internal virtue with the requirement of pleasant exteriors – women were placed in a unique situation in that they were examined from both ends of this formulation: constructed as feminine from the start and instilled with a specific set of assumptions, and then reassessed to see and judge them as such. While this meant the kinds of pressures that Ylivuori observes— specifically the contradictory ideal of an "already possessed femininity" *and* its refinement and cultivation of such— it would also lead to what Davidson describes as women

[225] Soile Ylivuori, *Women and Politeness in Eighteenth-Century England: Bodies, Identities, and Power* (New York: Routledge, 2019), 17.
[226] Ibid., 18.

leveraging their position into "the right to be hypocritical."[227] For Davidson, the development of codes of politeness in the eighteenth century would lead to a situation in the nineteenth century wherein "women were not merely allowed, but actively encouraged, to cultivate an unreadable quality in their relations with men and with society at large."[228]

This unreadable quality is one that I will argue comes with a necessary reliance on private space in which the secret workings of women were imagined to be deposited and constructed. The unique position of women in relation to politeness in the eighteenth century also led to distinctive associations between women and the privy. An intense fascination with what it was that women did behind closed doors was intensified by the increasingly paradoxical cultural pressures for women to be at once natural and transparent, while completely concealing any bodily unpleasantness. As critics have noted, the way eighteenth-century writers explored, satirized, and endorsed these structures and strictures reveals the gray areas between the borders of acceptability and deniability, and social inclusion. As I will show in this chapter, in the first half of the century, a common border was drawn along the lines of disgust. Relatedly, the 'line of exclusion' this performative repulsion enacted seems to have run along similar lines to sexual desire, depicted most often as the urge to penetrate the veil that separates the public space of polite discourse from the private spaces where women go to disrobe, to apply cosmetics, to share secrets, and to relieve themselves.

In his ground-breaking study, *The Civilizing Process*, Norbert Elias describes a process ongoing through the early modern period into the eighteenth century in which there occurred a "shift of the frontier of embarrassment."[229] As Elias describes it, the precise border of this

[227] Jenny Davidson, *Hypocrisy and the Politics of Politeness: Manners and Morals from Locke to Austen* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 11.
[228] Ibid.
[229] Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982), 130.

frontier was often determined by attitudes towards bodily excretions, especially those emitting from what Bakhtin would call the *lower stratum* but which we might less euphemistically call shit and piss. Elias assembles a litany of texts, from Erasmus to lesser-known authors of etiquette manuals, to trace the outlines of "a new standard of shame and repugnance" ushered in partly by the conduct books themselves, designed and pointed towards "cultivating feelings of shame."[230] Elias quotes from Erasmus' *De civilitate morum puerilium* as a way of illustrating the strange and unfamiliar way that flatulence and defecation were discussed with deadpan seriousness and, even more importantly, openness, in the early days of the push towards new constructions of hygiene and comportment:

> To contract an illness: Listen to the old maxim about the sound of wind. If it can be purged without a noise that is best. But it is better that it be emitted with a noise than that it be held back…At this point, however, it would have been useful to suppress the feeling of embarrassment so as to either calm your body or, following the advice of all doctors, to press your buttocks together and to act according to the suggestions to Aethon's epigrams: Even though he had to be careful not to fart explosively in the holy place, he nevertheless prayed to Zeus, though with compressed buttocks. The sound of farting, especially of those who stand on elevated ground, is horrible. One should make sacrifices with the buttocks firmly pressed together.[231]

Even as the rules of etiquette continued to become more elaborate and stringent over the next two hundred years, the shifts in the thresholds of disgust that Elias examines in sixteenth and seventeenth century instructional materials continued to have relevance into the eighteenth century. This continued relevance and redefinition of norms was propelled most often through the English translation and reprint of these materials. For instance, Robert Peterson's 1606 translation of Della Casa's *Galateo* continued to be printed well into the end of the eighteenth century, a fact that demonstrates that the apparently basic rules of handling bodily excretions

[230] Ibid., 135.
[231] Erasmus, *De civilitate morum puerilium* [1540], cited in Elias, 130.

were still thought to be useful and that they had a curious and ongoing readership. More so than Erasmus, Della Casa is concerned about the roles of language and the imagination in mitigating the tendency of our unruly bodies to cross the threshold of good manners into disgust. For Della Casa, "it is not enough to forbear *doing* things before people, that are Vile and Unpleasant, and apt to turn their Stomaches; but the bare hinting, or mentioning such things, is trespass upon good Manners; in regard, Words and Gestures express things to our Imaginations, with the same Life almost that Actions themselves do, and consequently are little less offensive to us."[232] For Della Casa, the border between decency and disgust is stark. The mere mention of bodily acts, whether in "hinting" or in "Words and Gestures," signals a transgression that he regards as offensive as the act itself.

Keeping with his own rules of decorum, the "Vile and Unpleasant" things that should be kept strictly out of thought and conversation are never mentioned in concrete detail. Instead, they are only suggested as being the objects and actions related to expelling waste. The advice that Della Casa gives in relation to avoiding troubling the imagination relates specifically to the protocols of relieving oneself in company. This lays out a logic that is symbolic of how simple gestures might call to mind the profane acts of the necessary house:

> To instance in particulars; it is no decent Custom to handle any part of our Body before Company: Neither is it any ways becoming, to fit our selves for the Necessary-house in the presence of others; or, when we return from thence, to button up our Breeches before them: And if my Advice might be taken, a Man that comes from such a place, should not so much as wash his Hands amongst Gentlemen, lest the calling for Water, should put them in mind of the Unclean Action that occasioned it. For the same reason it is very unseemly, when a Man spies something filthy Thing in the Street, to turn to his Companion, and bid him *mark what lies there*; much more is it so, to put such a thing to his Nose, as some will do, and cry, *Prythee do but smell how wretchedly this Stinks!* When, if it Stinks at that rate, he ought rather to advise his Friend not to come near it.[233]

[232] Giovanni Della Casa, *Galateo of Manners: Or, Instructions to a Young Gentleman How to Behave Himself, &c. Written Originally in Italian, and Done Into English*, trans. Robert Peterson (London: Printed for Bernard Lintott, 1703), 8.
[233] Della Casa, *Galateo*, 9.

It is unclear exactly what it might mean to "fit our selves for the Necessary-house," but it is obvious that, for Della Casa, every act even tangentially related to the space should be kept from view: hands should be washed and breeches should be buttoned up *before* returning to company, or else risk calling up the "Unclean Action" associated with it. That is, the "before" that demarcates the place one visited and the acts one committed should, according to Della Casa, be separate from the "the presence of others". It is, moreover, not only that one should not mention the "Unclean Action" one has enacted but that one should not point to the unclean action of others, such as pointing out "*what lies there*" or, just as bad, "*how wretchedly this Stinks*". The through line, or the dominant logic of Della Casa's etiquette, is the establishment of a wall of silence around the space of the necessary house (or out-house, or chamber pot, or commode), and the objects (like the "filthy Thing" in the street) left there. This material separation depicts the more symbolic separation of the world of polite society and entertainment from the base necessities of the lower body. The aim for Della Casa and other early influential writers of conduct books, who tended to focus more on the "lower order" niceties of not farting loudly or unbuttoning your pants in the presence of company, was to cultivate a code of manners that kept all disagreeable ideas out of sight. The cumulative effect of these kinds of arguments was the creation of an ideal of two hermetically sealed off spaces in polite society – the space of genial public interaction and consumption, and the space of uncleanliness and expulsion.

As is often the case, however, the louder the argument against certain behaviours, the more popular the portrayal of those behaviours may have been. For many people in the eighteenth century, the old behaviours and conceptions of space must have gone on relatively unchanged, even in the face of the increased concern with etiquette and politeness. Mark

Girouard has noted that by the 1730s, although it was theoretically possible for any sufficiently wealthy household to have a water closet installed, not much use was made of the technology, and that "water-closets became, if anything, less common."[234] That is, though the chamber pot and the cesspit remained the most typical ways to dispose of bodily waste, bathroom habits still varied widely depending on social class, something both Daniella Bobker and Carole Fabricant draw attention to in their work. As Bobker explains, while the average person would empty their own waste out the window or at the back of the building, the "elite used more elaborately decorated commodes and close stools and constantly offloaded the labor of disposal onto their servants, drafting them into an endless, stinking exchange."[235] The war on bad bathroom manners was not won in a day, and the pressure applied to make urination and defecation more private led to some unintended consequences that affected how the spaces enclosing these actions were perceived.

The space of the privy sometimes took on additional charges as the stress on its privacy continued to grow. As Bobker has argued, "the antisocial quality of the house of office gives it a kind of edgy glamor."[236] Further, as much as they functioned as sequestered zones of disgust, houses of office also sometimes served as "makeshift sites of privacy or secrecy."[237] The word *privy*, Bobker notes, could refer to the small building used for defecation but also to "a favorite or close companion, including a sexual intimate; or any person, thing, or action kept hidden or secret."[238] In this way, what was private also elicited a desire to uncover: by pushing the

[234] Mark Girouard, *Life in the English Country House: A Social and Architectural History* (New York: Penguin Books, 1978), 255-6.
[235] Danielle Bobker, *The Closet: The Eighteenth-Century Architecture of Intimacy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020), 88.
[236] Ibid., 77.
[237] Ibid.
[238] Ibid., 79.

bathroom further into secrecy, politeness also created a space infused with the electric charge of the hidden body.

Thus, what was called the *necessary-house* was a space already primed for friction between two apparently distinct niches of privacy – the sexualized privacy of the dressing room, and the impolite or disgusting privacy of bodily evacuation. As noted by several critics, the scatological or disgusting turn of several writers during this period is a reaction against the growing importance of polite exteriors, which often strained against the perceived hypocrisy of the social imperative to be constantly pleasant. That is, it appears that the prominence of disgusting bodies— the revelation of the truth of their filth and the ugliness hidden beneath the material and moral cloaks of etiquette— works towards policing the same standards of behaviour and hygiene that they are supposedly struggling against. In some ways, the older Rabelaisian traditions of joyous insistence on the body are continued, but with a more anxious modulation that attempts to silence, not the body directly, but at least the joyous and humour evocation of the existence of impolite bodily acts. This modulation was enacted along social lines that included some people as much as it excluded others. As Paul Langford puts it, "deciding who to exclude from a polite circle was as important as ensuring that it included the right people."[239] Further, as much as politeness was a tool for empowering the middle classes, it was also a tool for silencing the aspects of bodily function that dismantled class differences altogether.

As Vic Gatrell observes, the early years of the eighteenth century saw an explosion of scatological texts. While scatological humour in texts and prints was common during the first half of the eighteenth century, Gatrell pinpoints the rejuvenation of early modern Rabelaisian scatology somewhat precisely between 1720 and 1753, and attributes the genre's decline in part

[239] Paul Langford, "The Uses of Eighteenth-Century Politeness," *Transactions of the Royal Society* 12 (2002): 314.

to "the growth of a female readership" in the latter half of the century.[240] What Gatrell does not comment on is the close connection between the scatological turn of the middle years of the century and the fixation on women's bodies. It was not only a kind of raucous homosocial bonding that could be discussed across texts and privately enjoyed in male-only spaces, it was also a form of strict discipline on women's bodies and the disturbingly natural ways they challenged male-dominated notions of them as pillars of politeness.

That women's bodies, like all others, aroused disgust posed a problem to male readers. As Gatrell notes, "decorum depended increasingly on arousing disgust, embarrassment and shame when taboos organized around such things were violated."[241] For Gatrell, while the eighteenth century moved increasingly towards a social and aesthetic decorum that would eventually lead to almost complete invisibility of scatological material in the nineteenth-century print record, it also held on to an early modern sense of the 'carnivalesque'. Early modern humour and satire depended on "projecting the shame associated with the lower bodily parts and functions on to the person or group selected for shaming," and "it achieved, in the collective laughter of the people's carnival or festival, dizzy heights of parodic bawdry and obscenity".[242] For Gatrell and other scholars like Labrousse, Braudel and Klein, politeness in the eighteenth century was not the default, but rather the reactionary position – "*im*politeness…becomes the baseline subject, and social disciplining that is the chronically challenged reaction."[243] The various forms of laughter extant in eighteenth-century texts were adapted and shaped by the heightening contradictions between the constraints of polite bodies and the visibility of what

[240] Vic Gatrell, *City of Laughter: Sex and Satire in Eighteenth-Century London* (New York: Walker & Co., 2007), 189.
[241] Ibid., 189.
[242] Ibid., 190.
[243] Gatrell, *City of Laughter*, *17.*

these polite bodies were trying not to disclose. Yet, as Alun Withey argues, "while contemporaries never referred directly to bodies being polite, they acknowledged the role and importance of the body in articulating politeness."[244]

While the first half of the eighteenth century is littered with often anonymously published scatological farces, mock odes and tongue-in-cheek discourses, Jonathan Swift is undoubtedly the name that first comes to mind when considering the relationship between women and their bathroom routines. Swift's reputation for exploring both women's beauty and scatology was such that the author of "Ode to a Little-House" (which I look at later in this chapter) invokes him at the close of the poem as the "unrivall'd Genius" who "ow'd / His immortality to T—." Most (though not all) of that reputation centres on the two short poems, "The Lady's Dressing Room" and "A Beautiful Young Nymph Going to Bed," published in 1732 and 1734, which I will in this chapter.

Readings of the precise target of Swift's dressing-room poems, the degree of his misogyny and the scope and direction of his satire tend to vary depending on whether he is seen as diagnosing a sickness in the male viewpoint or instituting this viewpoint himself. As Tita Chico points out, both eighteenth-century and contemporary critics have been fighting over the character of Swift and his poems. Chico argues that in the twentieth century "the conflation of Swift with his satirist has often served an effort to condemn or to recuperate Swift's reputation".[245] For Wendy Weise, Strephon's observations constitute an inversion of the erotic expectations of private access to a woman's space, and Swift gives us an "explicitly masculinized, voyeuristic eye invades and constructs female space, linking man to the public

[244] Alun Withey, *Technology, Self-Fashioning and Politeness in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (New York: Palgrave Pivot, 2016), 8.
[245] Tita Chico, *Designing Women: The Dressing Room in Eighteenth-Century English Literature and Culture* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2005), 133.

realm of production…and depicting woman as object of visual consumption".[246] Similarly, Carol Houlihan Flynn sees Swift as constructing an image of women and their spaces, producing a knowledge that is "always external and judgemental" and that ties women to a disgusting physicality that saw them as threatening to "scatter reason, waste energy, and destroy the possibility of civilization".[247] For Gatrell, Swift's larger satirical project is about the revelation of the fragile and artificial nature of polite behaviour, a version of urbane society where civilized behaviour is "a fiction" in that "only the body's lower enactments conveyed humanity's grimmest truth".[248] Similarly, for Katherine Aske, Swift's poems "mock a society in which men are deceived into believing that women no longer shit," and "incriminates a world where beautiful women have become nothing more than a fantasy of the patriarchal imagination."[249]

While it is true that Swift's satire often has multiple targets and does indeed poke fun at the male gaze that naively or willfully imagines women as somehow free from the stinks and excretions of the human body, it would be a tremendous stretch to read the poems as not specifically describing women and their beauty routines as deceitful practices deeply harmful to English culture and society. In general, modern etiquette is hypocritical and artificial, the polite barriers erected around the real and true humanity can be ridiculous and farcical, and yet the specifics of Swift's ire are drawn on what he sees as women's uniquely disgusting bodies, and the equally disgusting means through which they disguise themselves in private.

For instance, in "The Lady's Dressing Room," Stephon's "strict survey" of Celia's empty dressing room is a quasi-natural philosophical investigation into the deepest recesses of what are

[246] Wendy Weise, "Seeing and the Difference it Makes: Ocularity, Gender, and Space in Swift's and Montagu's 'Dressing Room' Satires," *Women's Studies* 35, no.8 (2006): 726.
[247]Carol Houlihan Flynn, *The Body in Swift and Defoe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 88.
[248] Gatrell, *City of* Laughter, 187.
[249] Katherine Aske, "'Such Gaudy Tulips Raised From Dung': Cosmetics, Disease and Morality in Jonathan Swift's Dressing-Room Poetry," *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 40, no. 4 (2017): 514.

meant to be the absolutely invisible laboratories in which the polite woman is created, torn down, and created again each day. The inventory that he lays out, "The scrapings of her teeth and gums, / A nasty compound of all hues," stockings "stained with the marks of stinking toes,", and a magnifying glass that could reveal "the smallest worm in Celia's nose," all work to disclose the mechanisms through which Celia hides the natural emanations of her body. All these artefacts are a preamble to Strephon's discovery of Celia's chamber pot, which had been designed to appear like a more mundane piece of furniture:

> In vain the workman showed his wit
> With rings and hinges counterfeit
> To make it seem in this disguise
> A cabinet to vulgar eyes.

The deception at the centre of Swift's criticism is that the woman's privy is here built into the object itself, a mechanism that mirrors the polite body to the extent that its pleasant or unremarkable exterior intentionally works to disguise a nasty interior. Strephon's decision to open the box, his "vulgar eyes" unable to see past the veil of the counterfeit ornamentation, is framed as a repetition of Pandora opening the box unleashing evils on humanity:

> But Strephon cautious never meant
> The bottom of the pan to grope,
> And foul his hands in search of Hope.
> O never may such vile machine
> Be once in Celia's chamber seen!
> O may she better learn to keep
> Those "secrets of the hoary deep!"

Again, while Strephon's naivete is also targeted here, Celia, like Pandora, is at fault for her carelessness in letting what is meant to be secret be discovered. The "excremental smell" that rises from the chest, combined with the different but still stinking smells of the "petticoats and gown perfume," an admixture of the disgust fixed on hypocrisy and the bodily disgust related to

human waste, causes Strephon to run from the room, uttering again and again: “Oh! Celia, Celia, Celia shits!”

The close of the poem gives a theory of the imagination and the association of ideas, and how the secrets of the privy, once unleashed, could forever break the illusions created by the polite body:

> But Vengeance, goddess never sleeping
> Soon punished Strephon for his peeping;
> His foul imagination links
> Each dame he sees with all her stinks:
> And, if unsavory odors fly,
> Conceives a lady standing by:
> All women his description fits,
> And both ideas jump like wits:
> But vicious fancy coupled fast,
> And still appearing in contrast.

Strephon’s imagination has been contaminated by ways of a Lockean stream of ideas, connecting all women with the fecal matter he found in the chamber-pot rather than with their beautiful appearances, with their private stink rather than their public perfume. However, the last lines throw this totality into some amount of unbalance. The narrator wonders if he too should refuse to interact with women romantically “because she rose from stinking ooze,” and muses that though “to him that looks behind the scene” into the hidden, disgusting truth of the female body, there must be some kind of puncturing of sexual desire, that stopping up your eyes and forgetting about these secret spaces can lead the male observer into someone who is able to see instead “such order from confusion sprung/ Such gaudy tulips raised from dung.” Is it Strephon’s error of being unable to look past the inner stink, or Celia’s fault for stinking in the first place? As

Kelly Anspaugh describes it, Swift "could not help but be profoundly ambivalent toward excrement, that most ambivalent of substances."[250]

On the other hand, Swift's "A Beautiful Young Nymph Going to Bed" is less interested in scatology than it is with cosmetics and beautification. Unlike in "The Lady's Dressing Room," Corinna is seen occupying the private space of her boudoir. Rather than as an absent figure that is built up through an ekphrastic description of her hygienic objects, Corrina is described in the process of the private rituals of stripping down the accrued materials that have gone into fashioning the polite body for its appearance during the day. What Swift is portraying is the transition between public to private, and the revelation of what supposed hideousness is revealed in the process of this transition. The opening of the poem marks her entrance into the privacy of her home from a night on the town to immediately begin the process of disassembling the machinery of her body:

> Returning at the midnight hour;
> Four stories climbing to her bow'r;
> Then, seated on a three-legged chair,
> Takes off her artificial hair:
> Now, picking out a crystal eye,
> She wipes it clean, and lays it by.

As Swift moves through the inventory of what Corinna removes, the plumpers that fill her "hollow jaws," her false teeth, her "flabby dugs" held up by her "steel-ribbed bodice," we are left with something like an accumulation by subtraction. Every artificial beautifier that is removed reveals more of the rotten body beneath it, plagued not only by aging but by "shankers, issues, running sores, / Effects of many sad disaster."

[250] Kelly Anspaugh, "Reading the Intertext in Jonathan Swift's 'A Pangyrick on the Dean'," *Essays in Literature* 22, no.1 (1995): 27.

Both Corinna and Celia are certainly portrayed as grotesque cosmetic assemblages, but they are also shitting animals. The "scattered matter" that Flynn describes, the loose and contaminated apparatus of the toilette that prop up the tattered female bodies, is grounded in an undercurrent of sewage. Corinna dreams of transportation or imprisonment, but also "Fleet-Ditch's oozy brinks / Surrounded with a hundred stinks," and like the waste that flows through the streets in "Description of a City Shower," Corrina and her plumpers and mouse-hide eyebrows seem to float along in the ditch.

While Swift was and remains the most famous author of scatology in the eighteenth century, he was far from the first to make use of it to comment on politeness and women's bodies. The *Serious and Cleanly Meditations Upon a House of Office*, published in 1723, attributed to Cato and dedicated to "the Goldfinders of Great Britain" is, primarily, a satire on the kinds of Grub-Street hacks that writers like Pope and Swift so frequently attacked. The dedication hinges on an analogy between the author and the goldfinders (those tasked with cleaning out privies or similar devices): whereas the "mercenary Scribblers…make Lucre the chief End of their Writings," the virtuous writer and the goldfinders alike have professions which "both consist in carrying away the inward Corruptions of Mankind," raising a great stink and not shying away from the nasty parts of the human condition or giving "publick Offence in order to do publick Good."[251] But while the pamphleteer uses the house of office as a vehicle for more general satire of popular morals, its focus on this particular space on the outskirts of politeness is revealing in its puncturing of the line between the polished sheen of civilized urban life and the disgusting waste and decay that politeness tries to make secret. Perhaps the most outrageous of these discoveries is that "the Drawing-room, the Play-house, or any other Publick Assemblies"

[251] Cato, *Serious and Cleanly Meditations Upon a House of Office: Dedicated to the Goldfinders of Great Britain* (London: Printed for A. Moore, 1723), xx.

have the power to dismantle polite society's perception of itself as a separate and uncontaminated space. The author of the *Cleanly Meditations* writes,

> I could not forbear reflecting on the Vanity of human Pride, which puts us to such immense Cost and Trouble, in tricking out a tawdry Outside with Velvet, Brocade, fine Laces, and flaxen Wigs; whilst if we look into our selves, and consider well the Furniture of our hidden Apartments, we should have little Reason to boast of the Beauty or Comeliness of our Persons. I never enter into the Drawing-room, the Play-house, or any other Publick Assemblies of the *Beau Monde*, without Laughing in my Sleeve, at the various Fopperies of both Sexes, which I look upon as so many Artifices and Coversluts, to hide their inward Deformities; for methinks it is enough to mortify the Proudest of us all, to remember, that although we may adorn our outward Parts with fine Cloaths, and sweeten them with costly Essences, yet our in-sides are no better than common Bogs, and are composed of Materials too foul to name…For the same Reason, I was mightly pleased with the Reply which a Philosopher made, upon hearing a certain Lady very much extoll'd for her Beauty; *Ay*, said he, *she's a very fine Creature, but for all that, she stinks when she goes to Stool.*[252]

In a sense, the criticism articulated here is the standard ancient Christian rebuke of the flesh – the language of mortification, the way of all flesh, the knowledge of the king who is future food for worms. To note it as a part of an old genre, however, is not to reduce its unique importance in shaping eighteenth-century attitudes, which takes on fresh valences and signification. That is, while the complaint is a commonplace, it is also an important source of the ambivalence surrounding the new politeness. The language in the *Meditations*, for example, is invested in evoking the scatological as a bathetic stand-in for the decomposing body. The emphasis is on decay *in the present* rather than as a certain fate in some undetermined future – *you stink now*. And while the author claims to be targeting the "fopperies of both Sexes" and the "Vanity of human Pride" to force readers to "look into our selves," the figures that appear, including "a certain Lady very much extoll'd for her Beauty," are all women.[253] The closing thought on the stink of the beautiful woman when she is at stool serves to remind the reader that, for all her

[252] Cato, *Serious and Cleanly Meditations*, 1.
[253] Ibid., 6.

beauty, her "in-sides are no better than common Bogs, and are composed of Materials too foul to name."[254]

While *Cleanly Meditations* is framed with the mock pomposity of a sermon, not all scatologies of the period are concerned with setting up the bathos involved in the inflated tone. One especially interesting piece, *The Merry-Thought: or, the Glass-Window and Bog-House Miscellany* published in 1731, presents itself as a collection of graffiti recorded from various windows, walls and outhouses throughout England and Ireland. That is, the text lays its claim to *verité* in its proximity to the private spaces that elide the artificial surfaces of politeness. It also amplifies this claim via its dedication to the posture of proto-anthropological study, a secret intrusion whose truth-value is guaranteed by its willful elision of the artificial surfaces of politeness, by its investigations into what can be deemed the public reservoirs of impoliteness. Most of the poems presented in the text are very short humorous pieces, exactly the kind of verse you would expect to find scrawled or carved into the walls of an outhouse while passing the time, and a many involve imagery of eating shit. One piece entitled, *From a Pancras Bog-House*, reads, in its entirety: "The smell of T—d makes wit to flow, / Laud! What would eating of it do?"[255] Another, titled *In Trinity College Boghouse, Dublin*, reads*:* "You who instead of Fodder, Fingers use, / Pray lick 'em clean, and don't this Wall abuse."[256] The humour of these short verses come from the shock value of violating the absolute lowest rungs of the codes of politeness in the most extreme possible way. There is, moreover, a reveling in the grotesque sights and smells that hide everywhere and that point, however imperceptibly, to the people who

[254] Ibid.
[255] *The Merry-Thought: or, the Glass-Window and the Bog-House Miscellany*, ed. George R. Guffey (Los Angeles: William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, 1982), 32.
[256] Ibid., 46.

squatted there before. The bog-house thus becomes a miscellany but also a *glass window*, a chance to see inside of typically opaque private spaces.

Like in the *Cleanly Meditations* discussed earlier in this chapter, the moments where these glances involve women are particularly revealing. One poem, *From a Bog-House at Hampton-Court, supposed to be written by a violent Lover*, combines the scatology of the other verses with a ribald eroticism that imagines an extremely close encounter with a woman relieving herself in the outhouse:

> Oh! that I were a T---d, a T---d,
> Hid in this secret Place,
> That I might see my *Betsy*'s A——,
> Though she sh--t me in my Face.[257]

It is precisely this intrusion of titillation into the literal depths of the privy that interest me here. The "secret Place" that we are allowed to glance into, even to imagine ourselves plunged into, becomes a voyeuristic intrusion and not just a space of anthropological survey. Even in the most disgusting possible space, the possibility of male sexual leering still exists, because of and not despite the deeply offensive setting. Despite its uniquely offensive nature, however, poems of this sort were not unique in the eighteenth century.

"Bum-Fodder for the Ladies," a poem published in 1753, brings the connection between women relieving themselves and male imposition into greater focus. Marketed on the title page as "printed on soft paper," the poem nods towards the practice of using cheaply printed materials as toilet paper, and more importantly, on the polite nadir of feminine delicacy and cleanliness. The narrator of the poem is the paper itself, a voice that prides itself on its discretion – like *Merry Thought* or the *Cleanly Meditations*, the poem speaks to women's private spaces, seen as

[257] *The Merry-Thought*, 61

equally tantalizing and repulsive repositories of 'private' nude bodies. Additionally, the proto-toilet paper as artifact stands in as a reminder that even women of the upper classes need to shit, and also of the wall of secrecy that is erected around that fact:

> For though I can no pompous Title boast,
> I've privacy with ev'ry famous Toast:
> My Lady --- But I will not say too much,
> She may prove a Patroness, --- and if such,
> Silent I will prove as the Grave itself,
> When even tempted by the miser's pelf.
> Thus you see, I am honest, soft and clean,
> And that would recommend me to a queen.[258]

The satire, like that of *Cleanly Meditations*, is of course directed towards the disposable texts that are destined for the excrement heap. At the same time, however, the poem imagines a position similar to that of the narrator in the *Bog-House at Hampton Court,* a kind of scenic prop able to observe in extremely close detail precisely that which is meant to be unobservable. It makes this seemingly impossible proximity known in the following lines:

> my utility no one dare deny
> For cleanliness on me does much rely:
> What though, they may despise my use or name,
> I still officiate for the proudest dame"[259]

The joke relies on what is imagined as a puncturing of the veil hung between the world of fussy rules of decorum and the moments when this decorum is discarded in the most emphatic possible way. Again, it is not just *anyone* who is being imagined here – rather than shitting people, it is specifically shitting women who are evoked. The 'proudest dame" is once again pulled down to the basest level from which she is imagined as having tried to deceive her way out from.

[258] Anon., *Bum-Fodder for the Ladies. A Poem, (Upon Soft Paper)* (London: Printed and Sold by J. Lewis, 1753), 2.
[259] Ibid., 2.

In another poem, "Ode to a Little House," published anonymously in *The Gentleman's Magazine* in October of 1764, the connection between eroticism and the privy are heightened to an extreme degree. A satirical ode to all the myriad spaces of defecation and urination, the "calmy, snug, sequester'd seat," the poet gives a sweeping summary of the kinds of utilities and spaces in which the tiny dramas of bodily relief would take place, "whether *Palladio*'s model gave thee birth, / *Vitruvius*, *Wren*'s, or *Jone*'s fair design, / Or rustic, with huge clods of earth, / Unskillful form'd thee without rule or line."[260] The mock glory of these at times pastoral, at times palatial spaces are populated solely with women, and while the poet pokes fun at the "cook-maids heavy haunch" as she sits on the kitchen chamber-pot, most of the attention is given to a voyeuristic glance into the outhouse while a beautiful woman relieves herself, that is, to the "Blest View! Where, squeezing, squats the nymph in peace." The poet dwells on the secret view:

> The nymph in beauty's rosate bloom,
> Whose charms the gazing world engage,
> Inspire the stripling, and resume
> The long extinguish'd fires of age,
> To thee, well pleas'd, with wary footstep steals,
> Alarm'd if ought her prudent tread decry,
> To thee, unblushing, ev'ry grace reveals,
> So closely kept from man's enquiring eye;
> There, to thy shrine, a tribute drops a-down,
> Rich as the gem that beams on *Bourbon*'s crown.[261]

What stands out here, yet again, is the erotic voyeurism that is built up around the nominally disgusting scene of a bowel movement. The outhouse takes on occult qualities of a gothic romance, with wary footsteps intruding on a secret space. The sexual excitement comes from the privileged view unguarded, and the "unblushing" beauty of the woman as she reveals everything in a space that is "so closely kept from man's enquiring eye." The *little house* acts as an excuse

[260] "Ode to a Little House," *The Gentleman's Magazine: An Historical Chronicle,* Jan. 1736, 491.
[261] Ibid., 491.

to see past the veil of the polite body in a moment that simultaneously initiates and punctures the erotic charge of the disrobed woman, whose beauty is as remarkable as her tribute is foul. It is precisely by means of this building up and tearing down of the polite bodies of women that these scatologies enact what I want to call a discipline of disgust. The polite and beautiful exterior is shown to dissolve into a crude physicality when men's eyes are not surveilling them, and the privy is the space where this dropping of all pretenses to politeness is heightened to its furthest degree.

As the century progressed and the rules of politeness became increasingly refined, the voyeuristic pressures on the body exerted by these texts would gradually become more and more focused on minute gestures and the surface of the skin and hair in place of the earlier focus on what we might call the more fundamental issues of the niceties surrounding relieving your bladder or your bowels. As Aske points out, "cleanliness…became the most important feminine virtue," and being clean would come to mean much more than simply free of stink, or dirt, or stains.[262] It became a ritualized, scented, cosmeticized, and polished version of beauty that was meant to ascend to a level where the unpleasant excretions of the privy could no longer possibly be imagined.

Peter Ward has pointed to a renewed concern with miasmas and their relationship with illness in the second part of the eighteenth century as a factor that led to "heighted sensitivities to unpleasant odours, particularly those of the human body and particularly in bourgeois circles," and a strengthened emphasis on both hygiene and the aid of cosmetics and perfume.[263] As Withey observes, "the eighteenth-century body was a site of dispute over what represented the perfect human form," and this debate would begin to slant towards one in which a *polite body,*

[262] Aske, *Such Gaudy Tulips,* 506.
[263] Peter Ward, *The Clean Body: A Modern History* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2019), 21.

and women's bodies in particular, were expected to become a work of art that was "simultaneously governed by the immutable rules of nature". [264] This same paradoxical position, to be both artificial and natural at the same time, created a situation in which women were criticized for both using cosmetics, and for being insufficiently cosmeticized. Writers of conduct books, poets, novelists, and journalists all prodded at the polite exterior that they helped to usher in, and consistently diagnosed female beauty as a kind of sham. As Kristina Straub puts it, "analysis of the overdressed, inflated female seems to end, for many writers, in the discovery of a small-scale heart of darkness, the animal lurking within the artifact."[265]

In the period of transition between this *higher* material bodily stratum and the lower, the double-use of the private space of urination and defecation as a space of beautification was often remarked upon. In the *privy* (in the broadest possible sense of secret space) that Swift imagines, the distance between the toilette and the chamber-pot is collapsed. The connection between female beauty and scatology was commonly evoked throughout the eighteenth century. In August of 1733, the *Grub-street Journal* published a piece taking down the vogue for consuming mercury. In it, a woman who has taken to consuming mercury, then in vogue for some of its apparent beauty-restoring powers, is described as embarrassing herself while attempting to display herself in public:

> A certain quicksilver lady dancing at a public assembly, the quicksilver she had taken that morning, flew out at her but-end, and all bespangled the floor: Which, by the glaring light of the many candles, the gentlemen took to be brilliants and stooped down to take them up accordingly; but finding it was only quicksilver, and judging from whence it came, they cry'd out that some lady had scatter'd her diamonds; which moved much laughter amongst the gentlemen, and blushing amongst the ladies."[266]

[264] Withey, *Self-Fashioning*, 11, 8.
[265] Kristina Straub, *Divided Fictions: Fanny Burney and Feminine Strategy* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1987), 100.
[266] "Bellum Medicorum," *The Gentleman's Magazine: or, Monthly Intellegencer,* Aug. 1733, 417.

Like Swift's Corrina and Celia, the *Bellum Medicorum* is about the intrusion into the private female space rather than the male surveillance of the female privy. We see the dams of the polite body overflowing. Further, mirroring Strephon's turn from tantalized to repulsed by the shit at the base of Celia's chamber pot, the gentlemen run to collect what they think are jewels but quickly discover they are only silvery turds. The quicksilver, taken to reverse the appearance of aging and beautify the skin, is converted into an emblem of the woman's pretenses towards beauty.

The advertisements for cosmetics and beautifying liquors and salves strike the same double note they do today: highlighting at once beauty *and* ugliness, they amplify desirability in order to highlight the dangers of repulsiveness. Both pairs need to be evoked simultaneously. A striking example of this is found in a mock cosmetic advertisement published in the *Drury Lane Journal* in 1752, under the name of Elizabeth Phyzzpatch. "I have the brightest red salves for foul lips, and the sweetest perfumes for stinking breaths," the advertisement states.[267] It continues: "I have imported a great grand-daughter of Professor Taliacotius, who pares, scrapes, grinds and new models overgrown noses, cuts off crooked or flat ones to the stumps, and ingrafts new ones on the roots of them from an Italian's snow-white posteriors, who has been fed with nothing but white bread and milk, purely for this purpose."[268] The grotesque violence of the procedures described in the advertisement illicit a different kind of disgust directed towards the often extreme lines of action that women were prodded towards in the pursuit of that impossible standard of both perfect beauty and perfect naturalness. In order to present an acceptable body, the natural form of the body needs to be hacked to pieces and reassembled, in a stomach

[267] Thornton Bonnell, *Have At You All: or, The Drury-Lane Journal* (London: Printed and Sold at the Publick Register Office, 1752), 130.
[268] Ibid., 132.

churning, more permanent version of Corrina's bed-time routine that we saw described in first-person narration by Swift:

> I apply a particular sticking plaister to the face, which takes off the whole skin, and then I rub it over with a beautifying liquor, which adds a new gloss to it, and afterwards I paint it as natural as the life to any pattern of complexion. I peel off the finger-nails, and flay the whole hand in the same manner, which, in a month's time, makes them as white as hanging them in a sling, or the wearing of dogs-skin gloves can render them in a twelvemonth.[269]

What emerges here is a commixture of the discourses of medicine, beauty, and the polite body, which adds up to a vision of women's comportment as being multiply determined and inextricably bound with the mechanisms through which their appearance is constructed. As Katherine Aske observes, "the satirical presentation of cosmetics works to expose a paradox – that fashion, health and disease had become indistinguishable from one another".[270]

Starting around the middle of the century, the attention on women's cosmetic skills and sacrifices became more common than scatological attacks, as the borders of the kind of disgusting material that could be published were shifting to be more conservative. By the time Frances Burney's *Evelina* was published in 1778, 'disgust' had come to be most frequently used as a reaction to behaviour rather than objects. A shift from the sensory to the moral. As noted in letters to her publisher, Burney's *Evelina* is a kind of thought experiment in social functions. Evelina functions as a kind of neutral anthropologist – experiencing the unfamiliar rituals of urbane etiquette, trying to extract herself from the various traps of manners. Like the Indian in Thomas Brown's *Amusements Serious and Comical*, which I discussed in the second chapter of this dissertation, Evelina moves through London as a stranger in a strange land, recording the often bizarre and confounding aspects of daily life as she collides with them, her finely tuned

[269] Ibid.
[270] Aske, *Such Gaudy Tulips,* 503.

moral sense recoiling towards bad manners, using her natural politeness to cut through the *unnatural* veil of etiquette. Evelina writes back during her early confusion that "there ought to be a book, of the laws and customs *à-la-mode*, presented to all young people, upon their first introduction into public company."[271]But while there was no single book, young people (and young women especially) were increasingly made to navigate a vast and growing corpus of texts offering to clarify precisely the kinds of sticky questions that Evelina is forced to solve in her own introduction to "public company". Of course, these books were published in great volumes. While we can't be sure precisely how much they affected day-to-day behaviour of people like Evelina, Chesterfield's letters to his son, among many other texts, were certainly being talked about as if they were affecting a kind of seismic shift. In *Evelina*, Burney offers up what is in some ways a fictionalized version of just such a text.

The disgusting objects that Evelina inevitably encounters during her own civilizing process are a far cry from the scenarios described by Erasmus or Della Casa. There are no privies, there is no explosive diarrhea, or puddles of urine, or eruptions of gas. All these windows into the secret hygienic spaces have been, for Burney at least, sealed off. And yet, the advice that Evelina receives from Mr. Villars, that "the more forcibly you are struck with improprieties and misconduct in another, the greater should be your observance and diligence to avoid even the shadow of similar errors" echoes Della Casa's warnings about avoiding physical unpleasantness and transposes into a register more concomitant with a culture in which the strictures of politeness have been more crystallized.[272] From the toilet to the *toilette* – the remains of the older, more scatological forms of voyeuristic discipline are reoriented in Burney towards a more

[271] Frances Burney, *Evelina: Or the History of a Young Lady's Entrance into the World*, ed. Edward A. Bloom (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 84.
[272] Burney, *Evelina, 56.*

surface-level probing of the skin and physiognomy, demonstrating a preoccupation with ugliness and the rituals of women's beautification. Evelina's introduction to the endlessly complex social world of London is also a kind of selection test, a series of encounters with different shades of ugliness and detestable behaviour, including the "low-bred and vulgar" Branghtons, or the rude and cavalier Willoughby ("whose conversation and boldness are extremely disgustful to me") and Lovel, or the brash and vulgar Captain Mirvan, or the haughtiness of Madame Duval, of whom Evelina writes that "nothing can be more strangely absurd, than to hear politeness recommended in language so repugnant to it as that of Madame Duval."[273]

The women that Burney introduces us to give us another viewpoint into the same problems of the presentation of the body that we have seen thus far in the chapter. And while Burney's depiction is certainly far more subtle and complex than Swift's, there are ways in which her criticisms of a particular kind of woman can have more in common with Celia and Corrina than might be assumed. As Kristina Straub describes it, *Evelina* can be seen at some points as "a Swiftian dismantling of the bits and pieces of artificial feminine splendor," adding that "Burney, through Evelina – seems to be seeing double, looking at the unreflecting satirist from the point of view of the satirized, while granting some justice to the criticisms made by the attack."[274]

In a 1779 letter to her cousin Susannah, Burney relates an anecdote about the death of woman named Sophy Pitches, and expresses concern that her death might have been the result of her experimenting with the same kind of procedures that we saw in the Bellum Medicorum:

> A new light is, of late, thrown upon the Death of poor Sophy Pitches, —Dr. Hervey of Tooting, who attended her the Day before she expired, is of opinion that she killed herself by Quackery,—that is, by cosmetics, & preparations of lead or mercury, taken for her Complection, which, indeed, was almost unnaturally white:—he thinks,

[273] Ibid., 65, 56, 98.
[274] Straub, *Divided Fictions*, 103-4.

> therefore, that this pernicious stuff got into her veins, & poisoned her! — Peggy Pitches, nearly as white as her sister, is suspected strongly of using the same beautifying methods of destroying herself;—however, as Mrs. Thrale has hinted this suspicion to her, & charged her to take care of herself, we hope she will be frightened & warned to her safety. Poor foolish Girls!—how dearly do they pay for the for the ambition of being fairer than their neighbours! I say *they*, for poor Peggy looks upon the point of Death already.[275]

The "poor foolish girls" that Burney muses on, and the sometimes-deadly price they pay for their attempts to beautify their bodies, while no doubt expressing genuine concern, is also wrapped up in familiar criticisms of women's reliance on cosmetics and their prioritization of beauty over more substantial matters.

Women's ability to blush was a primary signifier of both health and beauty, as well as an expression of morality. As Roy Porter argues, "the test of a modest woman lay in her capacity to blush. She who couldn't blush was a woman without shame. But a woman who wore rouge…wore an artificial blush."[276] Evelina's capacity to blush, and in tandem, her ability to display the correct ratios of composure and discomposure, comes under scrutiny early on in her residency in London, after she attends a performance of *Love for Love* with the Mirvans and the Captain. Evelina's natural modesty and good taste means she passes the first test of good feminine breeding, finding the play (with its now outdated ribaldry and humour) to be "extremely indelicate – to use the softest word I can."[277] Evelina's distaste for Congreve's restoration manners signals a healthy rejection of old forms of impolite laughter. Evelina and Ms. Mirvan are so disordered by the perceived rudeness of the play that they are put "perpetually out of countenance" and are unable to participate in the commentary of the other guests, including

[275] Frances Burney to Susanna Elisabeth Burney, 05 July 1779, *The Early Journals and Letters of Fanny Burney, Vol. 3: The Streathem Years, Part 1: 1738-1739* (Charlottesville: Intelex Corporation, 2002)
[276] Roy Porter, "Making Faces: Physiognomy and Fashion in Eighteenth Century England," *Études Anglaises* 38 (1985): 389
[277] Burney, *Evelina,* 79.

Lord Orville. But it is not enough that she finds the play indelicate – the signs of her discomposure must be visible in her skin. When the play is over, Evelina is accosted by Mr. Lovel and his incredibly backhanded species of upper-class impoliteness, where he guesses that "our customs, our manners, and *les etiquettes de nous autres*" must be extremely foreign to her and asks her if the air of London has not been damaging to her health. Orville's defensive reply, that Lovel's "*eye"* could have spared him asking that question leads to a debate on the role of cosmetics in reading a woman's face, with Lovel explaining that men cannot assume that health is *only* cause of blushing – it might be *rouge*, or "flushing, anger, *mauvaise honte,* - and so forth". Lovel's skepticism positions him as someone who, in distinction to the naïve Strephon, is fully initiated into the supposed mysteries that go into the creation of the pleasing feminine exterior, and his jabs at the genuinely bashful and genuinely polite Evelina demonstrate that the criticism of women's artificial appearances could be misguided. However, Orville's rebuttal, that "the difference of natural and of artificial colour, seems to me very easily discerned; that of Nature, is mottled, and varying; that of art, *set*, and *too* smooth," even as it underscores and reasserts Evelina's honesty, it also argues along the lines of the existence of these kinds of artificial colours and asserts the possibility of a kind of cosmetic veiled bashfulness existing, however easily it is pierced by the proper set of eyes. [278]

While the passive aggressive sparring between Evelina, Lovel and Orville exhibits the new lines along which the polite female body was policed, the rivalry between the aging captain and Madame Duval serves as a way of displaying antique remnants of a less sophisticated era. Though they are framed as opposites— one brash and English the other fussy, French and constrained— the two figures both represent a glimpse at the supposedly unpolished manners of

[278] Ibid., 81.

the beginning of the century, stubbornly carrying their bad habits, lack of comportment, and prickly attitudes into what is supposed to be a new era of easy, pleasant sociability. Where Evelina can intuitively understand and adapt to the rules of polite society, the captain and Duval act as bookends to the bodily horror of Duval – at one point, they come to the point of spitting in each other's faces:

> The rage of poor Madame Duval was unspeakable; she dashed the candle out of his hand, stamped upon the floor, and, at last, spat in his face….he put his hands upon her shoulders, and gave her so violent a shake, that she screamed out for help; assuring her, at the same time, that if she had been one ounce less old, or less ugly, she should have had it all returned on her own face.[279]

Here, the bodily fluids of the previous era come bubbling up out of the intense intersexual violence that flares up constantly as a means of farcical comic relief, an old-fashioned form of behaviour which, like *Love for Love*, is meant to demonstrate the world out of which the current moment is emerging. Where in the modern day of the 1770s it is the veracity of a moment of embarrassment as emblematized in the body is where the battleground of women's ability to embody both virtue and beauty is fought, the spitting and throttling between Madame Duval and the Captain is a re-emergence of a far less sophisticated, less developed and more chaotic form of the settling of the borders of the polite body.

Notably, the fever pitch of Duval and the Captain's feuds takes place during the fake robbery that the Captain initiates late at night as a prank, an event that leaves Madame Duval reeling as the pieces of her beautification are scattered around the woods and in the ditch, leaving her natural form covered in filth and dirt. As Evelina describes it:

> The ditch, happily, was almost quite dry, or she must have suffered still more seriously; yet, so forlorn, so miserable a figure, I never before saw. Her head-dress had fallen off; her linen was torn; her negligee had not a pin left in it; her petticoats she was obliged to hold on; and her shoes were perpetually slipping off. She was

[279] Ibid., 67.

> covered with dirt, weeds, and filth, and her face was really horrible, for the pomatum and powder from her head, and the dust from the road, were quite *pasted* on her skin by her tears, which, with her *rouge*, made so frightful a mixture, that she hardly looked human… "'My God! what is becomed of my hair? – why the villain has stole all my curls!' She then ordered the man to run and see if she could find any of them in the ditch. He went, and presently returning, produced a great quantity of hair, in such a nasty condition, that I was amazed she would take it; and the man, as he delivered it to her, found it impossible to keep his countenance.[280]

Madame Duval's condition here, though horrible, is certainly played for laughs, and she is left very much like Corrina in "A Beautiful Young Nymph Going to Bed." The line between Swift and Burney is one of iteration and development on a theme. The private spaces that women could retreat to in order to shed the rigid armor of politeness and settle into a version of unmediated humanity were constantly intruded upon during the eighteenth century in the form of imagined voyeuristic scenarios that not only peered into their bodies but demarcated their position in society. It was imperative not only to *not* be disgusting, but to somehow also not be artificial, and Madame Duval's position as barely human, shorn of even her patchwork assembly of beautifying artifacts, forced to drag the private body out into the public space, is a situation created by the strict conditions laid on women in the eighteenth century.

[280] Burney, *Evelina,* 150-1.

Coda

Over the course of these chapters I have tried to uncover something about the way disgust functioned in the eighteenth century by way of focusing on some of the spaces in which the feeling tended to be associated. The sciences, food, and the lavatory all held the potential to delight, or to enlighten, but also the potential to disgust, and evoking this disgust proved to be a useful lens through which to imagine the limits of toleration, meditations on who and what we should like to see in public.

For a number of reasons, it is difficult to write about disgust in a systematic way while preserving the authentically repellant nature of the emotion. For starters, genuine disgust is something that asks us to avert our attention. It is structured around, or perhaps has even evolved into a powerful mechanism of enforced avoidance. The objects that arouse disgust – the rotting meat, the bodily fluids, the wriggling mases of insects – are objects that prompt us to look away, to recoil, and any sustained attention to them can seem unnatural or excessive. When Immanuel Kant argued that we respond to aesthetic representations of disgust by striving "against it with all our might," he may as well have been writing about studies of disgust.[281] The register of academic language can seem ill-suited for approaching the subject, and certainly significantly limited when compared to the writers discussed in this dissertation. The sharp edges of the nauseating material, its capacity to shock and to unnerve, can become dulled by their transposition from *in situ* to specimens of study, like bacteria framed under the glass of a microscope slide. And just as the disgusting can be dulled by staid academic language, the material can seem to contaminate the scholarship. As William Miller puts it, discussions of

[281] Kant, *Critique*

disgust "invites discussions of unmentionables that tend to undercut certain pretensions and pieties we like to maintain about sex, presentability, and human dignity in general."[282]

In trying to avoid these pitfalls, I have tried to preserve as much as possible the repellant charge of the original material. I have tried to evoke the sheer kaleidoscopic variety of how disgust appears in the eighteenth-century archive. To curate a sense of the overall texture of how eighteenth-century audiences may have experienced disgust in the texts they read, rather than focusing on a particular text or small cluster of texts, I have assembled a wide variety of materials, some well-known and others obscure. From newspaper advertisements to medical tracts, to anonymous doggerel verses or political speeches, disgust can crop up anywhere and often in the places you would least expect, while consistently being mobilized towards various forms of emotional control.

Despite this built-in repellence, there is no doubt that disgust contains within it some seed of desire. In the centuries since Kant's *Critique of Judgement*, all forms of representation have built the shock of disgusting encounters into their modes. Film studios can spend millions of dollars on creating gory spectacles or gross-out humour set-pieces and bank on making a profit. And, as shown in this dissertation, even in Kant's time, evocations of disgust were, if not as common or as self-conscious as today, quite common. Prior to the eighteenth-century, the breadth of allowable portrayals of disgusting subject matter was even wider, and the history of literature in Europe shows a long glut of texts depicting bodily fluids, or waste, or other purulent matter.

In pursuing this project further, I would look to expand upon the relationship between desire and disgust as it played out in the eighteenth century. It is true, as I argue, that portrayals

[282] Miller, *Anatomy*, vii

of disgust were (and continue to be) used as a means of enforcing social distinction and the limits of cultural toleration, and in that sense, what is revealed to be disgusting is meant to be cast out. However, there is another very important sense in which what is disgusting is somewhat guiltily lingered on. It's not a coincidence, for example, that in Cleland's *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* (1748), that eroticism and titillation exist in close proximity to descriptions meant to evoke what are portrayed as the repellant bodies of older women or the shocking depiction of gay sex. As much as the disgust repels and conditions the reader to turn away, they are pulled equally towards consumption. I have already raised the inherent contradiction between the strenuous cultural resistance to the possibility of depicting disgust and the actual proliferation of these materials in the eighteenth century, but I would like to explore this contradiction further by looking at pornographic texts like Cleland's alongside proto-psychological investigations of the emotions, such as William Falconer's *Dissertation on the Influence of the Passions* (1792). By juxtaposing these two modes, I hope to unpack some of the inherent contradictions, ambivalences, and anxieties at the heart of the ways that sex, desire, and repugnance were intertwined in the eighteenth century.

While I have tried as well to explore the international and colonial aspects to disgust, I would like to explore further how disgust travels through both tourism and empire. In my second chapter I have shown that anxieties about the cohesiveness of English national identity could be provoked by the presence (real or imagined) of foreign foods and the association with cannibalism, but this is limited to what the English imagined as disgusting materials and practices coming *into* their country. There were also important moments in which the English travelled outside their own country, whether to continental Europe, Asia, or the New World, and encountered things which disgusted them. In a monograph version of this dissertation, I would

look to texts like Ned Wards *A Trip to Jamaica* (1698), Smollett's *Travels Through France and Italy* (1766), Sterne's *A Sentimental Journey Through France and Italy* (1768) and Matthew Lewis' *Journal of a West Indian Proprietor* (1833) as a way of seeing how travel literature detailed responses to foreign disgust stimuli, and how these may have differed from encounters with disgusting materials at home.

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