

Eating/Cannibalism as a Metaphor for Interarts Relationships:

*Thyestes*, Carroll's *Alice* Stories, and  
*The Cook, The Thief, His Wife and Her Lover*

By

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The Cook, The Thief, His Wife and Her Lover**

**BY**

**SHONA ANNE HUGHES**

**A Thesis/Practicum submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of The University  
of Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree**

**of**

**MASTER OF ARTS**

**Shona Anne Hughes 1997 (c)**

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## INTRODUCTION

In "The Contribution of Sign Theory," Wendy Steiner notes that even in this century, the study of various analogies between poetry/text and painting/image continues both to confuse and illuminate the nature and relationship of these two arts (32). My purpose in this thesis is deliberately to trouble interarts scholarship by examining what has tended to be relatively subliminal: namely the cannibalistic nature of image/text relationships. Specifically, this thesis will explore how the theme of cannibalism/eating inserts itself into interarts theory and practice and how it functions as a metaphor for relationships between the arts. While the depiction of food and drink has long been and remains a "collective obsession" for artists, and while this century has seen a significant number of studies concerned with the way food is depicted in a single medium (i.e., paintings of food, or poems about food), my study differs from those of the past in several ways: 1) my concern is less with food *per se* and more with eating and in turn with the way that the eater/eaten relationship is analogous to the way that the various arts are ranked; 2) the texts I will be examining have a multimedia character, and my focus is on how both the verbal and the visual

media are enlisted to deal with the eating issue; and 3) I place both interarts collaboration and interarts rivalry in the context of the eater/eaten relationship.

Horace's influential *ut pictura poesis* has long been the touchstone and major theme of debate among scholars, theorists and critics of interarts; equally compelling, however, is Simonides's earlier analogy: "paintings are mute poems, and poems are speaking pictures." As Ernest B. Gilman has recently noted, this ancient formulation serves to rank the two arts by reason of the way that it "prejudices the case in favour of the literary art; it endows language with visual power while it imposes on painting the affliction of the 'mute' " (6). I would argue further that not only does Simonides's analogy serve to place the mouth at the centre of relationships between the visual and verbal arts, but it also establishes an alignment between the verbal arts and the speaking/open mouth, on the one hand, and the visual arts and the mute/closed mouth, on the other. This alignment was in turn given gender coding by Edmund Burke in his association of the sublime with poetry and masculinity and beauty with painting and femininity, although it is primarily with Gotthold Ephraim Lessing that the mouth comes into clear focus in this kind of binarism. In his classic *Laocoön*, Lessing attempted to divide and rank the arts, and basic to his thinking was the argument that whereas the poet can and should encourage his reader/listener to imagine a mouth opened in pain or anguish, the painter should refrain from doing so. In this way, Lessing extends both Simonides and Burke and aligns the mute/closed mouth/pictorial art with the feminine, and the speaking/open mouth/verbal art with the masculine. Lessing, moreover, also brings eating into focus when he discusses the banquet scene as a possible exception to the rule against the "open mouth" in painting, and he further

draws attention to the eating issue by aligning the various art forms with their respective--and for him "appropriate"--senses.

My main concern, then, is to explore the alignment of open mouth/eater/verbal medium/power/male and the alliance of closed mouth/eaten/visual art/powerless/female. Although in the course of this thesis I will question such binaries, generally, when I talk about the closed mouth I am implicitly referring to visual art and invoking the traditional notion that such art is "mute" and that power is associated with the ability to speak.

The struggle to polarize and align these two "sister arts" has played host to a series of binaries that operate as cultural power structures. The painting/poetry (or image/text) binary implies other opposites such as: space/time, silent/speaking, profane/sacred, natural/cultural, and female/male. What is most dangerous about such alignments is the way that they are so often invoked for political rather than esthetic reasons, whereby W. J. T. Mitchell has argued that the current objective of interarts studies must be "not to heal the split between words and images, but to see what interests and powers it serves" (*Iconology* 44). While modern day interarts critics would likely disagree with Lessing's limits on painting and poetry, the political ramifications of his alignments--particularly those regarding gender, religion, and nationality--have a long history whose presence can be felt in art and interarts discourse both past and present. The cannibalistic motif is central to this purpose for cannibalism literally dismantles the boundaries between individuals and metaphorically dissolves the boundaries between the arts; as Maggie Kilgour claims: "cannibalism has emerged as a topic of interest as part of contemporary criticism's desire to redefine

differences, sexual, textual, racial—to deconstruct the boundaries that in the Western tradition have too often been formed along the line of binary oppositions”

(“Cannibalism” 20).

In his study of cannibalism, anthropologist Eli Sagan has drawn attention to differences between two types: “affectionate” and “aggressive.” Invoking these divisions we can see further the way that the relationship between “eater” and “eaten” emerges as a likely metaphor for the relationship between the arts. Affectionate cannibalism implies a relationship similar to that expressed by the phrase “sister arts,” suggesting that the arts are alike or of the same family and that they interact, ingest and collaborate for their mutual benefit. Aggressive cannibalism, in contrast, suggests a more predatory, hostile and competitive relationship, implying that the arts are inherently different, view one another as the enemy, and that it is through consumption that one art can conquer and gain the qualities of the “other.” Ultimately, cannibalism, whether affectionate or aggressive, can be defined as the eating of one’s own kind, and thus if the eater/eaten metaphor functions well to suggest the rivalry between the arts, then cannibalism suggests that they may ultimately be similar and symbiotic and that it is (unacknowledged) sameness rather than difference that occasions their hostility.

In this thesis I examine three texts from different time periods, each of which conjoins the verbal and visual arts differently (theatre, illustrated narrative, film). Although in discussing each of these works I will demonstrate how the interarts/food/cannibalism nexus relates to political issues and the culture of the time, I do this less by attempting any extensive contextualization and more by reading the power structures that are configured and played out in the work itself. I have adopted

this approach partly because of the space limits of a thesis and partly because one would need to be an expert in each period in order adequately to discuss the historic contexts. In addition, and perhaps most importantly, the great value of interarts projects is that as much as they might reflect the cultural climate so much do they also tend to be transgressive of prevailing taboos and operate to provide what is silenced in the "official" histories.

In the first chapter I examine Seneca's *Thyestes*; the prototypic "banquet" drama in which cannibalism is associated with the competition and revenge between "siblings"--providing an interesting spin on the "sister arts" motif. This chapter explores the role of food as a major means of expressing the power dynamic between Atreus and his brother Thyestes and also the position of humans themselves in a larger hierarchy. Important here is the dual nature of eating, which expresses human weakness in relation to the gods and human strength in relation to animals, just as the state of food (raw, cooked, rotten) separates man/culture from animals/nature. By examining *Thyestes* in the context of classical myths that Seneca invokes and the rules governing ritual sacrifice, I will explore the ways in which the play relates to and questions the place of the human being in the cosmic hierarchy, with particular focus on the way that Atreus's orchestration of the cannibal banquet gives him an unnatural god-like status. Aside from the Prometheus myth, the legend of Philomela will also be explored in terms of the way that it clearly foregrounds how eating/cannibalism lends itself to gender distinctions between the arts. Noting that in *Thyestes* the violent acts of murder, dismemberment, preparation/cooking and cannibalism are not enacted on stage but rather described in detail by a messenger, I will also discuss how

Seneca's practice accords with Aristotle's theories about drama, as well as Lessing's ban on the open mouth in pictorial art. Looking briefly at the ascetic implications of Stoicism, I will speculate on why Seneca--who was himself involved in a "rivalry" with the dominant philosophy of his time--might have been so sensitive to the connection between eating, rivalry, and modes of representation.

In the second chapter I examine Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass*. The mouth is central to these texts; the open mouth operates as a site for both eating and speaking while conversely and equally as compelling is the closed mouth which connotes the opposite motifs of not eating and silence. Within the *Alice* stories, a variety of inanimate objects and animals are personified--given the power to speak and/or eat--and in fact all of the characters are voracious and often cannibalistic carnivores. Alice herself is the character with the most predatory nature and insatiable appetite in the texts, at the same time that she is the one most often silenced; just as she is chastised for both her appetite and what she eats, she is criticized for what she says. Thus, in Alice the merging of the eater/open mouth and the eaten/closed mouth finds its expression in a single cannibalistic body. Hinting at the connection between cannibalism and anorexia, these texts are also significant for the way in which they foreground the woman/eating/silence issue and the power inherent in deliberate self-starvation tactics. Drawing attention to the collaboration between the verbal art of Lewis Carroll and the visual art of John Tenniel in the *Alice* stories, I will explore the metaphor of cannibalism/eating to uncover the blurred nature of these supposedly distinct and opposite art forms. I am also concerned with whether or not cannibalism/eating can effectively be aligned with

either visual or verbal art in these texts, with the significance of the ways in which eating/cannibalism is depicted in each art form, and with the ways in which these arts absorb one another and collaborate to transform the *Alice* stories into something more than merely illustrated narrative.

In the third chapter I examine Peter Greenaway's film *The Cook, The Thief, His Wife and Her Lover*. My choice of this example, aside from its contemporaneity, lies in the way that it reverses Lessing's procedure, as it were. That is, if the *Laocoön* encodes cannibalism in a discussion of interarts theorizing, in the Greenaway film interarts issues are encoded in a culinary revenge melodrama. To begin, I will lead up to my discussion of the film by discussing several classic paintings of eating and how they confirm or refute Lessing's rules regarding visual art/space and verbal art/time. From there I will begin to explore how, in *The Cook*, the competition between the arts is played out in terms of the conflicts between the characters, each of whom is an artist or is associated with an art; the dynamics of these relationships parallel Lessing's likening of the arts to national rivals or neighbors. The compassion and power dynamics among the film's characters spill into the erotic domain, whereby eating also conjoins with gender issues. The term "intercourse" and the concept that "loving is devouring" is dramatized in the way that most of the love-making takes place in a restaurant kitchen between "courses." As in the legend of Philomela, the sexual side of gender relations is accompanied by violence in this film--a violence that is avenged via the cannibal banquet. Insofar as the film has a pornographic and gross element it also provides a means of testing Lessing's contention that the "disgusting" is perceived

through taste, smell and touch, and that the disgusting (such as corpses and acts of cannibalism) is not an appropriate subject for the visual arts and is best expressed in a verbal medium. More than simply dramatizing interarts/cannibalism issues, furthermore, *The Cook* also features a famous seventeenth-century painting concerned with eating: namely, Franz Hals's *Banquet Of The Officers Of The Saint George Guard Company*. On the one hand, this incorporation of one art form (painting) into another (film) constitutes an interesting case of ekphrasis, while on the other hand, the way that the painting speaks back and comments on the film constitutes a form of pictorial self-reflexiveness or metatheorizing. In both ways, the film thus raises key interarts issues about power, consumption and silence.

Through the examination of the interplay between the verbal and visual in these three texts, my objective--rather than further categorizing--is to broaden the understanding of the relationships between the arts and the underlying agendas contained within their divisions and ranking. If the dynamic of interarts relationships recommends an "eat or be eaten" approach, then possibly the underlying message of this metaphor is hopeful in that it points to the immense design of things: the food chain always comes full circle--the eater will one day be the eaten.

## CHAPTER ONE

### THE CANNIBAL BANQUET:

#### MUTE MEAT AND THE SISTER ARTS IN SENECA'S *THYESTES*

Many of the “founding myths” of ancient Greek civilization revolve around food and/or eating, and if polytheism is one thing that distinguishes the Greek from the Judaeo-Christian tradition, another is that their gods eat. That social order rests on the foundation of the dividing up and sharing of food is, of course, the premise that informs the Prometheus myth, the classical version of the fall and the genesis of the human race. In Hesiod’s version of the myth, Prometheus tricks Zeus into choosing for the gods the less desirable parts of a sacrificial bull; angered, Zeus then decides that mortals should be left to eat their share raw (Graves 1:144). This legend serves to explain why humans’ share of a sacrificial animal is the meat, and the gods’ share the bones and fat, and it foregrounds the perhaps better known myth of Prometheus’s painful punishment--the continual devouring of his liver by vultures--for giving humankind the gift of fire. This divine allotment of food demonstrates “that to eat is to be subordinate to divine authority and to accept one’s place in a hierarchy established by supernatural power. Hence eating marks a relationship between the mortal and the immortal degrees of power” (Nicholson “Food” 38).

The myth of Prometheus also emphasizes that equally as important as the dividing up of food is the state in which that food is consumed. Cooking is what separates human beings from other animals and from the gods, who live on sacrificial smoke, odours and scents. As Marta Dvorak observes, it is via the communal banquet that the human race is placed firmly within the animal realm because of mutual carnivorous tendencies, while conversely this same banquet serves to separate humans from the beasts, who of course do not cook but devour their meat raw (17). The significance of this difference was the focus of Claude Lévi-Strauss in both *The Raw and the Cooked* and *The Origin of Table Manners*, in which he advances his famous culinary triangle--raw, cooked and rotten. Simply stated, Lévi-Strauss's main premise is that rotten food is a natural transformation of the raw, whereas cooked food is a cultural transformation (*Origin* 490). Similarly, as David Stymiest notes, "blood rituals are simply 'murder' without their social context" (38), and what the ritual process of sacrifice does to the act of murder, so too does cooking for the act of eating; just as sacrifice sanctifies murder, so "cooking transforms the bestial diet into that of the civilized society;" and in both cases nature becomes culture (King 38). Eating, in whatever form, however, is one thing; eating one's own kind is quite another, and it is here that cannibalism becomes a crucial issue.

Throughout the history of Western culture, and certainly in ancient Greece, cannibalism has been considered an act of barbarism. Both the ancient Greeks and Romans assumed that *other* peoples ate one another, and throughout history cannibalism has been and remains "a useful way of summarizing uncivilized behaviour, of erecting a clear dietary boundary between 'us' and 'them' " (King 38).

When cannibalism is introduced into the power dynamic that governs the relationships between humans, animals and the divine, it implies a relationship between eater and eaten marked by the fact that the weaker is edible. Cannibalism has historically operated as a boundary separating the “civilized”/culture from the “savage”/nature but recently cannibalism has been seen by anthropologists and anthropophagists in terms of an imperialistic “devouring” of one culture by another. As Maggie Kilgour explains, cannibalism threatens the boundaries that mark and maintain individual autonomy; leaving in its wake a loss of not only personal but cultural identity (“Cannibalism” 22).

In this context, what also needs to be borne in mind is that not all cannibalism is the same. In *Cannibalism: Human Aggression and Cultural Form*, Eli Sagan distinguishes between two institutionalized types: “affectionate” and “aggressive.” While affectionate cannibalism refers to the consumption of a family or tribe member for the purpose of keeping the memory of that individual, or that person’s spirit, “alive” within the community, aggressive cannibalism is an act of violence and domination over one’s defeated enemy, intent on incorporating into oneself the qualities, such as the courage and strength, of the enemy warrior by consuming his flesh (8-9, 29). Sagan’s division points to two important elements prevalent in the cannibalism of ancient Greek myth: first, that it is an act that occurs within families where children are often sacrificed like animals and sometimes consumed, and second, that it is a violent act related to power and achieving domination over one’s rivals. For example, another “founding myth” of Greek culture involves “family” cannibalism;

namely, the legend of Kronos who devours his infant children in an attempt to prevent his own inevitable downfall. Like his father before him, Zeus also resorts to cannibalism—he devours his wife, Metis—to prevent the birth of a son who was prophesied to depose him. In these cases, the devouring fathers takes on the “usurping powers” contained in the child; they eat and thus themselves become the future king. Other myths, such as those surrounding Dionysos, the god of wine and feasting, speak of the power dynamics between humans, animals and gods embodied in the rituals of sparagmos (dismemberment) and omophagy (devouring). Euripides’s *The Bacchae* is a touchstone in dramatic literature for both its depiction of Dionysos and the connection of Dionysiac ritual with the birth of theatre. In contrast to Lévi-Strauss’s cooked/culture code, the “intoxicated” female followers of Dionysos were reputed to eat raw animal flesh, and at one point in *The Bacchae* not only do they violently dismember a human being but perhaps also devour his flesh (1139-62). Dionysos himself is of interest here because of his perceived rivalry with Apollo, which has been interpreted by critics like Nietzsche as the rivalry between the pure/still “plastic arts” and the mixed modes.

Like most classical drama, *Thyestes* is a “family” tragedy featuring rivalry and revenge, but in this case each of these also has a distinctive character. First, the competition takes the form of one brother attempting to outdo the other through the commission of a crime that most transgresses the established rules. Thyestes, Atreus claims, “debauched my wife and then he stole my kingdom” (227); and what compounds his hatred is his sense that he cannot even be sure that his sons are his

own and not Thyestes's. The law broken here is twofold: if in fact Thyestes did commit adultery, then by "debauching" his sister-in-law, Thyestes has, in the Attic sense of the word, committed the crime of incest. The second distinguishing feature of Seneca's play is the nature of Atreus's revenge, which takes the form of the only act equal to Thyestes's crime--that of cannibalism. Often cannibalism and sexual desire, especially incest, are linked: in *Totem and Taboo*, Freud introduces cannibalism to embellish his theory of primordial incest in his version of the Oedipus myth (129-156) and Lévi-Strauss relates the two when he calls cannibalism "an alimentary form of incest" (*Naked* 141)--echoed in Sagan's notion of "affectionate" cannibalism. Part of the similarity between the tabooed acts of cannibalism and incest lies in the fact that they are the most serious transgressions of established rules that human beings can commit and they both are a result of humankind's most basic drives and "hungers." The sexual hunger of both Thyestes and Atreus's wife, Aerope, gave Thyestes a political advantage over Atreus (apart from the fact that she likely bore children by Thyestes, Aerope also stole the golden fleece--the family's emblem of power--from Atreus and gave it to Thyestes); Atreus, accordingly, utilizes Thyestes's hunger for and enjoyment of food to dismantle that advantage. It speaks to the degree of competitiveness between the brothers that Atreus desires to distinguish himself by committing the worst possible cannibalistic crime, and while Atreus is not the first in his family to prepare a cannibal banquet, his form of revenge is unique to his house.

Appropriately, therefore, Seneca's play opens with the ghost of Tantalus who was grandfather to Atreus and Thyestes and whose presence and words serve as a

reminder of the consumption-related “original sin” of this family. Tantalus was a favourite of Zeus’s and was often invited to attend Olympian banquets at which he shared nectar and ambrosia with the gods. Tantalus’s first crime was to betray Zeus’s trust by stealing the divine food to share with his mortal friends. Before this crime was discovered, however, Tantalus had already committed another; having invited the gods to a banquet and upon deciding that he had nothing suitable to serve them, Tantalus sacrificed his son, Pelops, cut him into pieces and cooked him in a stew. When the Olympians received the meal, they, in their omniscient fashion, recognized what was being served and recoiled in horror. Tantalus was punished with the destruction of his kingdom and was forced to endure unending hunger and thirst in the underworld for both this and his earlier crime (Graves 2: 25). Pelops, dismembered by his father, is re-membered by the gods and lives not to end but to renew the cycle of cannibalism that haunts his family. This legend not only points to the importance of food in the hierarchy of power between man and god, but also the way that to step outside of that power structure is a transgression of enormous magnitude. Like Adam and Eve in the Judaeo-Christian version of the family tragedy, Tantalus begins his and his family’s descent into disobedience and depravity by transgressing the codes surrounding the consumption of food; he gives to other mortals the food specifically denied them, the nectar and ambrosia reserved for the gods alone, and then serves the gods the part of a sacrificial victim allotted to humans--the cooked meat--of a highly inappropriate/tabooed “animal.” King asks “can a mere mortal adopt an ‘immortal’ diet, and become a god?” (38); in response it would seem that perhaps Tantalus has achieved a certain degree of “immortality” or at least divine acceptance

through his consumption of divine food. Only mortals sacrifice their children to the gods; by doing the same and then serving his child as dinner the semi-divine Tantalus is asking the gods to commit the crime of cannibalism, and that is the mistake that sends him, like a mortal, to the Underworld.

At the beginning of the play, in his opening dialogue with the Fury, Tantalus speaks of various Underworld punishments, including his own, that serve to emphasize the eating motif and the notion of Hades as a place of “gaping maws” (77). R. J. Tarrant notes in his discussion of this dialogue in Seneca’s untranslated *Thyestes* that “*patulis ardor hiatibus*” (157) is “a grotesque phrase, which makes Tantalus appear for a moment as nothing but a pair of straining jaws” and Tarrant goes on to note that the use of the plural in this phrase adds to the distorted effect by indicating that Tantalus’s mouth gapes repeatedly (113). The grotesque nature of Tantalus’s insatiable hunger is further emphasized when the Fury responds to Tantalus’s complaints about his Underworld existence with: “You say you are hungry? Feast / on the gory banquet we have prepared, and drink / deep of the bloodied wine till your belly is full!” (65-67), inviting Tantalus to take part once again in a cannibalistic family meal, but this time as the “fallen” cannibal and not the orchestrating “god.” Throughout this whole opening speech, there is an emphasis on punishment for having too loquacious a tongue—that is, the devouring mouth becomes the punishment for the speaking mouth. Later in the dialogue, Tantalus is perhaps referring to the giant Tityus and his punishment when he mentions he “Who lies beneath an unstable cairn of boulders” (75); Tityus’s punishment, like Prometheus’s, also included being helpless to prevent

vultures from devouring his liver (Graves 1: 77). In addition, according to alternative versions of the myth, Tantalus himself was also punished with a rock suspended over his head (Tarrant 38-39), thus linking Prometheus and Tantalus through the figure of Tityus and thereby emphasizing the former's role in the downfall of their "families" and pointing to the story of Tantalus as the dark "founding myth" of his family.

Shortly after this and just before the entrance of Atreus, the chorus makes reference to Minos, whose role in the Underworld was to judge the newly dead (170), and who is also centrally associated with human sacrifice. Every nine years, Minos fed the monstrous Minotaur seven youths and seven maidens (Ovid n. 171). An alternate or perhaps more historically based version of this myth tells of how, in ancient Crete, every year a boy child was sacrificed as a surrogate for Minos the Bull-king. This child reigned for one day and was then eaten raw (Graves 1: 119). The Minotaur was the result of a sexual union between Minos's wife, Pasiphaë, and a prize bull originally intended as a sacrifice for Poseidon. This white bull, which Minos withheld from sacrifice, points to the golden lamb withheld from sacrifice by Atreus (Graves 2: 49); extending the comparison further implies that through their lust, Thyestes and Aerope have also conceived a "monster"--the monster being Atreus himself who, as the fury predicts: "will hatch sooner or later monstrous evil" (30).

Ensuring the hatching of that evil is in fact the goal of the Fury, who in the play's opening scene has forced Tantalus back to earth from the underworld to inspire his house to further sins. "Let there be competition / among your issue to exceed one another in guilt" (24-25) the Fury commands Tantalus, immediately bringing to the forefront the theme of sibling rivalry. Atreus invites the outcast Thyestes--whom he

had exiled for stealing the golden fleece in an attempt to win the throne--back to Mycenae on the premise of sharing with him the rule of the kingdom. Although Thyestes resists his brother's offer, recognizing that "a throne seats only one" (444)--Atreus is not unaware of the threat that Thyestes's sons pose to him as avenging rivals for the kingdom. Thyestes is instinctively wary of Atreus, and interestingly much of his debate and hesitancy over whether or not to accept Atreus's offer centres on food or eating-related issues. He knows that to live the humble life of an exile means "not to have to eat one's bread / in fear of thieves" (452-53) and he makes reference to food, cooks and friends who cannot be trusted when he remembers that "In golden goblets, there's often poisoned wine, / and you look to your taster, and he looks to your friends, / and on his face is the fear you try not to show" (454-56), hinting at the life and death role that food plays as an expression of political power.

Despite Thyestes's near prophetic voicing of his nagging fears and suspicions regarding Atreus--he envisions his sons "impaled on spikes" (489) and acknowledges that "some gift horses bite" (473)--what he says aloud of his apprehensions goes unheeded because he admits: "I am, indeed, afraid but cannot say / what it is I fear" (434-35). His inability to name the impending crime--essentially his inability to speak--is his eventual undoing. It also undermines his role as the "eater" in this play, which in his case is certainly not a role of power. Just as he does not know how to name the means of Atreus's revenge, he also does not know what he eats. In eating his children he essentially eats a part of himself--his own flesh and blood--and thus becomes both eater and eaten.

A major difference between men and gods is that the former do not have omniscience—an issue played out in terms of Thyestes not knowing what he is eating, and Atreus's sense that his revenge would have been better if he did:

I'd have rather  
 poured the hot blood fresh from their wounds  
 down your retching throat that you could have drunk  
 the gore of your still living sons. (1054-57)

Atreus's desire that Thyestes know what he eats recalls the fact that in one version of the legend of Tantalus's cannibal banquet, he was motivated to serve the gods his son in order to test their omniscience. What perhaps motivates Atreus in this case is that had Thyestes knowingly eaten his children, the crime would have been that much worse as Thyestes would have been in some way responsible for his actions. This also serves to underscore Thyestes's lack of omniscience—hinted at earlier in the play when he comes close to but cannot actually name his fear.

The "open/closed mouth" in relation to both eating and speaking informs this play in a variety of other ways. There is an obvious connection between Thyestes's powerless sons and the silent/closed mouth. In the *dramatis personae*, Plisthenes and Thyestes's nameless "third son" are given "mute parts" and later, when Atreus has killed, cooked and served the three to Thyestes he refers to their corpses as "mute meat" (917). Thyestes's sons are powerless, however, not only because they do not speak but also because they have proven to be weaker than Atreus via their "edibility." The only son who does speak is Tantalus, the eldest son. When

Thyestes cannot name what he fears but can only confide that "something feels wrong" (436), Tantalus replies: "It's nothing that you can name? Why, then, it's nothing. / Think of the prize that waits within these gates. / Father, you can be king!" (440-42). Unlike the stoical Thyestes, Tantalus is very interested in what Atreus has to offer; he urges his father to "think of the wealth and power!" (443) he could have in Mycenae and reminds him "your sons will succeed you!" (444). Thus, through his words, the young Tantalus speeds himself and his brothers to their doom.

Paralleling the play's association of the silent mouth with powerlessness is the play's alignment of power with the ability to speak. Of all the characters in the play, Atreus has the most lines and he is undoubtedly the most powerful figure in the drama; as R. J. Tarrant points out, the "distinction in the brothers' use of language forms an essential part of Seneca's character-portrayal. Atreus is consistently the master of language, Thyestes its victim; words are for one a weapon, for the other a trap" (45). If power is aligned with the ability to speak then it is also possible to align speech with the most powerful beings--the gods. This idea is contained in the Judaeo-Christian theory of genesis which states: "In the beginning was the Word" (John 1.1) and before that the connection was very clearly implied by Plato whose magnet metaphor suggests that it is the muse/god who inspires the poet; as the second link in the magnetic chain linking god to the poet to the interpreter to the audience, the poet is the vessel through which the gods "speak" (32-33). Implicitly, G. E. Lessing also aligns speech with the gods when he suggests that they cannot really be "pictured" because "invisibility is [their] natural condition" (70).

Along with language, food is a major means of expressing the power dynamic between Atreus and Thyestes, and one that extends to the position of humans in general in the larger hierarchy. Atreus, by feeding Thyestes his sons, is attempting to overthrow both natural succession and the established order of the power/food relationship. In fact, by violating the power dynamic between god, man and animal via his orchestration of the cannibal banquet, Atreus has given himself an unnatural god-like status. He claims: "I know now how the gods must feel. Their power / sings along my nerves" (885-86); similarly the reverse process is suggested when he recalls the sensation of murdering Thyestes's sons: "the beautiful change as, when an animal, quick / and alive, becomes, amazingly mute meat" (916-17).

Atreus's destruction of the established power relationship is intensified by the observance of ritual process in the play. When the messenger describes Atreus's murder of Thyestes's sons he claims that it happened at the altar, "with incense, wine, a knife" (690) and was "all correct, an observance of ritual" (692). Atreus serves as the priest and chants the dirge, as one would when sacrificing an animal. The horror of Atreus's act is emphasized by these facts. Instead of "justifying" murder, as the ritual process does, the invoking of the sacred rites for a depraved and profane purpose makes the crime that much more heinous and dramatic. When Thyestes appears on stage after the cannibal banquet, still ignorant of what he has ingested, he is seated at a table with a goblet of bloodied wine in his hand. When Atreus refills his cup, Thyestes requests "Let wine / be poured to the household gods and then be drunk" (984-85), a gesture that emphasizes both the importance and the futility for Thyestes

of attempting to maintain either a ritual process that has already been distorted or a power structure that has already been violated.

Equally as significant as the observance of ritual is Seneca's inclusion of the cooking process. Seneca gives this explicit description of the preparation and cooking of the three brothers:

Atreus sliced them open,  
 tore out their quivering vitals, the little hearts  
 twitching with life's last spark. Then, like a butcher,  
 he hacked the limbs from the trunks, cracked their bones,  
 and stripped off the flesh he fixed on cooking spits  
 and set on the fire to turn and drip. Their organs  
 he tossed into kettles to stew over fires that gagged  
 at what they were made to do. The livers sizzled. (760-67)

Just as the observance of ritual in performing murder highlights the diabolical nature of Atreus's crime, so too does the conventional preparation of such unconventional "food" highlight the grisliness of the cannibal banquet. To the Greeks, equally as bestial as cannibalism was the eating of raw meat. Thus, the cannibal banquet is doubly grisly because cooking, which transforms the bestial/raw diet into that of the civilized society, has taken cannibalism out of the realm of nature into the domain of culture, where it reflects a latent aggression, is viewed with horror, and points to the precarious nature of the animal/man/god power structure. In the end though, it is the act of eating more than anything else that establishes a person's position in society; "eating what has been classified as unfit for consumption contaminates the one who

eats, makes him/her impure" (Dvorak 17). Therein lies an integral element of Atreus's revenge on Thyestes; if the mark of the "civilized" is that they do not eat human flesh, then the ultimate revenge on the civilized is to make them cannibals, thereby rendering him/her both inferior to and an outcast of the human race.

Further suggesting the powerful god-like nature of Atreus in this play is the way in which he is able to manipulate and orchestrate events according to his desires. Thyestes's moans of grief and shame are "sweet music" (1096) to Atreus; at the end of the play, Atreus tells Thyestes "my labors are not in vain, / as they might have been without these complaints of yours / I delight to hear" (1097-99), thus suggesting that what Thyestes both ingests and says have been according to Atreus's diabolical plan; the opening of Thyestes's mouth, first to consume and then to bemoan that consumption, is not an act of free will on Thyestes's part, but an act of power on Atreus's part. At first this would seem to work in contradiction to the previously established alliance in which the open mouth, the ability to speak and the "eater" are aligned with power. A further apparent contradiction involves, ironically, the play's most vivid open mouth which attempts to but cannot scream, speak, or protest. This occurs when Atreus slaughters Plisthenes; according to the messenger, Atreus dragged the helpless boy to the altar and "cut the head off clean. / It rolled away, its mouth agape in a scream / that made not even the shadow of any sound" (728-30). Further examination reveals that in fact the alliance has not been contradicted; essentially what Atreus has done is to circumvent the power of the open mouth for himself. Realizing that "seeing is believing," Atreus says to himself "I still have the heads to display, to

prove the truth / of words he won't believe from my mouth. Theirs, / mute now, will incontrovertibly speak" (905-07). He has made Thyestes's sons into his own mouthpieces; they "speak" the truth that Atreus dictates but in another medium, that is they "speak" visually, not verbally of their death and the true nature of Atreus. Thus they are, like paintings in Simonides's analogy, afflicted with the quality of muteness and so with Seneca, as with Simonides, paintings are mute poems, or in this case, mute meat.

Although the origins of the banquet in which kindred flesh is the main course lies within his own family history, Atreus also cites the legend of Philomela and her sister, Procne, as the inspiration for his revenge on Thyestes. In Ovid's rendering of the myth, Philomela and Procne slaughter , cook and feed Procne's son Itys, to his father, Tereus, in revenge for his rape, mutilation and imprisonment of Philomela. This version of the myth clearly foregrounds the way that eating/cannibalism lends itself to gender distinctions between the arts and related issues of hierarchy and power. Pointing to this issue, Maggie Kilgour claims:

The means of verbal intercourse, which is also the organ of taste, is destroyed by the violence of the unmediated contact between victor and victim in the act of rape, the aggressive penetration and possession of the female body by the male. The familiar or 'proper' method of communication is replaced by a poetry that can only represent its own origin in incest and cannibalism." (*From* 33)

If we further bear in mind Langer's claim that "there are no happy marriages in art--only successful rape" (86), we can now see how both the nature of art and the relationship between different media is rooted in the violent relations between man and woman in which the female is overpowered and silenced by the male.

Leonard Barkan cites the "stifling of communication" as one of main motifs of the Philomela story (245). In Ovid's telling, after Philomela is kidnapped and raped in a remote cabin in the woods, she verbally attacks her abuser, Tereus, for what he has done, threatening to "fill the woods / And move the rocks to pity" (6: 549-50) with her voice. Tereus, "in anger at her words and fear no less" (6: 552) responds by cutting out her tongue. Ovid's graphic and violent account of Tereus severing Philomela's tongue, which twitches and mutters as though still alive like a snake on the floor (6: 552-58), draws attention to what will become Philomela's struggle to communicate that she is still alive. Like many of the figures in Ovid's poems, Philomela defines herself through her struggle to invent a new language (Barkan 247). Her mutilation metamorphoses her into a silent being and forces her to turn to an alternate medium in order to communicate; she tells her story visually in a tapestry--a composite of words and pictures constituting a new medium.

Essentially this tale traces the replacement of speech by writing (Kilgour *From* n. 56), a change that perhaps suggests a "happy marriage" between the verbal and the visual via the genesis of written language, the latter of which is essentially spoken words represented visually/in a visual frame. In speaking of Philomela, Barkan goes so far as to claim that "in that respect she becomes a metonym for the whole history

of the book" (247). If we note furthermore that in Sophocles's version of the myth, Philomela weaves a *picture* of her fate, strongly aligning her with the pictorial (Ovid n. 582), then perhaps this story can be seen to trace the metamorphosis of woman from "speaker"/aligned with poetry, to woman as silenced/aligned with the visual. Underlining this, when Procne, believing her sister dead, eventually receives and reads the tapestry,

(It seemed a miracle, but anguish locked  
Her lips). Her tongue could find no speech to match  
Her outraged anger; no room here for tears;  
She stormed ahead, confusing right and wrong,  
Her whole soul filled with visions of revenge. (6:480-84 )

Thus, like her sister, Procne's orientation or focus becomes visual rather than verbal-- she too has been silenced by Tereus's violence.

This passage is also reminiscent of how Atreus "psyches" himself up by creating a mental "picture" of what he will do to avenge himself on Thyestes. Procne and Atreus both indulge in a kind of "creative visualization," suggesting that the nature of revenge, or at least its inception, is visual. Regarding the struggle and mutual distrust between image and text, Mitchell suggests that "one version of this relation has haunted the philosophy of language since the rise of empiricism, the suspicion that beneath words, beneath ideas, the ultimate reference in the mind is the image, the impression of outward experience printed, painted, or reflected in the surface of consciousness" ( *Iconology* 43). Certainly it is the image of Tereus imprinted on his

son Itys and Procne's sudden "vision" of revenge that overrides the child's verbal pleas for mercy, just as Atreus refuses to listen to his servants, the gods or his conscience when executing what he sees as the perfect revenge--motivated by the fact that he suspects he sees in his children not the stamp of his own features but those of Thyestes.

Philomela's metamorphoses do not end with the severing of her tongue; at the end of the Roman version of this tale she turns into a nightingale and in that form tells her woeful story in the medium of music or song. Having struggled to tell her story verbally, visually and finally musically, Philomela's story "is not only a myth about communication; it is also a myth about the competition amongst media of communication as Philomela becomes a walking representative of them" (Barkan 245).

In her struggle to communicate, Philomela also represents the ironies involved in the gendering of the arts. On the one hand, the mutilated Philomela is both beautiful and silent--the qualities Lessing attaches to both painting and women which he sees as inferior to poetry and men. On the other hand, Tereus is seduced--or overpowered--by Philomela's physical beauty, which he uses to justify his lust, aggression and abuse of her. This complication recalls Plato's view that it was poetry that was the weaker and the more dangerous of the two arts; he aligned it with the female because poetry, like woman, possessed the dangerous ability to "seduce" (*Republic*, Book X 29). In suggesting that poetry is a charming, wanton female, Plato had also given poetry a "body" through which it seduces and through which disease is transferred--poetry is an infection in Plato's mind (28). Plato also spoke of the natural

enmity between poets and philosophers (Seneca is both) and in doing so turned that rivalry into a battle of the sexes—poetry aligned with the female and philosophy the male. Thus while women have been aligned with both the visual and the verbal, in either case it becomes apparent that the gender alignment of the arts is a political issue—whichever art is aligned with the female is assigned the inferior position, and is viewed as inherently “bad”.

The “sister arts”/sibling rivalry motif also finds further expression in Ovid’s tale. Philomela tells Tereus after he has raped her: “All is confused! I’m made a concubine, / My sister’s rival; you’re a husband twice, / And Procne ought to be my enemy!” (537-39). More importantly though, what is highlighted here is the confusion of human relations and identities that is also central to the interarts/cannibalism motif. In *Laocoön*, Lessing likens the relationships between the arts to the borders between nations—poetry and painting should each stay within their own “extreme frontiers” and avoid “those slight aggressions which, in haste and from force of circumstance, the one finds himself compelled to make on the other’s privilege” (91). Via this personification of the arts and his tendency to turn rules about the arts into taboos, Lessing inadvertently points to the connection between eating and encroachments. As an expression of a relationship between people(s), cannibalism represents just such an encroachment; it breaks down the borders/boundaries between individuals and acts as a metaphor for the breaking down of separate identities within the arts. This points to the reason why the family tragedy is such a good site for exploring interarts relationships. The breakdown of the “happy marriage” between two people or between

two arts often rests on the violation of established limits. The poem's once happy sisters become rivals and the play's brothers become bitter enemies via the crimes of adultery and incest.

Ovid inadvertently enhances the theme of confused identities through what E. J. Kenney claims is a deliberate vagueness regarding the sisters' metamorphosis into birds at end (xxviii). In Greek versions of the myth, Procne becomes a nightingale and Philomela a swallow; as previously mentioned, the Romans generally reverse this. The nightingale has a song/voice and thus can reasonably be aligned with Procne, who, of the two sisters can speak. Philomela is justly represented by the swallow, which "having no tongue, screams and flies around in circles" (Graves 1: 166). Even the bird's name, "swallow" is suggestive. Philomela's revenge on Tereus for rape and lingual "castration" was to make him swallow/consume his own "seed," and in effect "castrate" him. In this way, the Philomela myth serves to bring together both the classical myth of cannibalism and the motivating incidents of the play--the real issues actually--of marital infidelity and incest.

At this point, and to clarify further how the arts are involved in this eating-incest complex, it is instructive to return again to the Kronos myth--one of the oldest myths relating a father's consumption of his children. Unlike the unwitting Thyestes and Tereus, Kronos knowingly eats his children--by his sister, Rhea--to maintain his power. An attempt to stop change or time marked by natural succession, however, is suicidal insofar as time is allied with history and Kronos's own name means "time." In this myth then, we have the seeds of the age old alliance between stasis and the

spatial or visual arts and the alliance of time with narrative or verbal art, just as we have the genesis of the association of the “fall” with the beginning of time. Time, death, life, and eating/cannibalism are metaphorically enfolded into the myth of Kronos in ways that demonstrate the problematic nature of conventional divisions between the arts. Time is often *visualized* as a devouring monster, however, in essence, visualizing time is a way of stopping it (Nicholson “Eat” 199). Furthermore, the devouring monster/“open mouth” is a site of both life (for the eater) and death (for the eaten), suggesting a stasis--the “open mouth” as a site and a symbol of both life/eater/time/verbal and death/eaten/stopped time/visual. Another twist in the relationship is that time, as the medium of “fallen” existence, also offers redemption from the fallen state, that just as Kronos offers death to his children, he also offers life in that the child returns to its father for re-generation in the belly of its maker.

Sue-Ellen Case sees the Kronos myth as one essentially about the dangers of the womb (the site of re-generation), which are finally overcome by Zeus (320-21). Having been warned, as Kronos was, that his future son by his wife Metis was fated to depose him, Zeus swallowed Metis to gain her power of reproduction and later gave birth to Athena. Case asserts that “Athena represents the end of the dangers of the womb, for she has no mother (breaking with matriarchal and female-identification), has no sexuality (she remains a virgin)” (321) and furthermore is born from a crack in Zeus's skull, aligning her with the mind/reason/male as opposed to the body/instinct/female. Essentially Athena restored patriarchal “order” to Athens and she became “Zeus's obedient mouthpiece” (Graves 1: 47). Hence, in Roman society, the

child was owned by and made in the image of its father (Kilgour *From* 34). Both Procne and Atreus see the son(s) of their enemy as his possession(s) and his parallel self. Noticing the physical resemblance between Itys and Tereus, Procne declares “You’re like, so like your father!” (Ovid 6: 621) and realizes that by killing Itys she can “strike her husband in the heart of his sexual identity” (Barkan 62), a fitting revenge upon the man who raped her sister. Taking part in the crime, Philomela slits Itys’s throat--the organ of sound--to silence his cries for help, just as Tereus had silenced hers. Through revenge, Atreus and Procne turn “similitude into absolute identity” (Kilgour *From* 34), in effect destroying the enemy by destroying his image/flesh/son(s).

Upon realizing what he has done, Tereus calls himself his son’s “disastrous tomb” (6: 667); in a culture that places all authority of regeneration in the father, the masculine womb becomes the son’s tomb and Itys’s life comes full circle, returning to the body that produced and still owns it (Kilgour *From* 34). Likewise, Atreus reminds Thyestes when he asks to see his already consumed children: “your sons are with you always” (976). The belly is a likely tomb, for as Marta Dvorak notes, “[people’s] need to feed on dead flesh links them to the corruptible, to aging, disease and death” (23). The womb/tomb binary expressed here works in relation to the open/closed mouth. The tomb represents silence, whereas the womb represents speech not only because it is the site of generation/time but also through the fact that the vagina is conventionally referred to as a “mouth.” The “vagina dentata”, or toothed vagina, is the phrase used to describe the “sexually devouring” woman. In *Thyestes*,

the sexually devouring woman is Aerope whose infidelity puts into question Atreus's "ownership" of his children by her. She has effectively "devoured" his future with her lust, and in revenge upon Thyestes, Aerope's partner in sexual transgression, Atreus will, through the cannibal banquet, make him eat his future (his children) also. Unlike the immortal gods, mortals must depend upon their heirs to secure their ongoing family line. Thus as Tereus and Thyestes consume their children, the cycle of death, decay, and refertilization that promises rebirth disintegrates within their bellies--they eat their futures, their property, their dynasties and their selves--they devour their "immortality." While revenge is allied with the visual, immortality is arguably aligned with the verbal arts through its connection to time.

Central to the issue of rivalry between both family members and the arts is the question of "who came first" or who is "older"; this question of priority functions in Seneca's play on several different levels. The fact that it is Thyestes's eldest son, Tantalus, who urges him to take the throne is not surprising, since he would be first in line to inherit his father's power. Although it is never made explicit, of the two brothers, Atreus is likely the eldest; his family is known under his name as the House of Atreus and whenever the two brothers are mentioned together, Atreus's name is always first. Regarding the brothers' right to power or the issue of "who came first" in a political sense there are at least two versions of the story. In one version, Atreus was the first ruler of Mycenae before Thyestes ever set foot there (Graves 2: 43-44), and another version claims that the people of Mycenae were instructed by an oracle to choose a king from the House of Pelops; thus Atreus and Thyestes were summoned

and placed at odds to compete for the throne which Atreus eventually secured (Graves 2: 44). Just as the question of which brother came first is virtually impossible to answer with any accuracy, it seems impossible to determine whether in the arts, it was image or text which came first. Indeed, while Lessing does initially invoke the issue of priority, he goes on to argue that it does not provide a sound basis for distinguishing between the arts. That the issue is so frequently raised, in turn, once again suggests how esthetic issues serve as metaphors for political arguments. Similarly, what should be noted is that the authority of the established power is passed on from one generation to the next through what is thought to be a process of "natural" succession. Thus in the Western world, once poetry/verbal art was set up on the throne, its supremacy over its sister arts was maintained through a proliferation of discourse, and the argument that pictorial art was more "natural" was quickly turned into an argument that it was more "primitive" or less civilized.

Here, of course, the gendering of the arts comes into play again, and with it another way that cannibalism is enlisted in the power struggle. One reason Thyestes is not conscious of his cannibalism is that he is drunk, just as Ovid intensifies the monstrous act of revenge in this legend by bringing in the influence of the Bacchic festival. Procne, "frenzied" and "screaming Bacchic cries" (6: 590, 597), rescues Philomela from her prison during the festival of Bacchus, disguises her as a maenad and takes her to the palace where she proceeds to describe how she will "dismember" Tereus: "That scheming fiend. I'll gouge his wicked eyes / I'll pluck his tongue out, cut away those parts / That stole your honour" (613-15). Instead this violence is committed by the sisters against Itys, who though "...Alive / And breathing still, they

carved and jointed him" (648-49), an act suggesting that the frantic influence of Dionysos is still coursing through them; in a twisted act of communion with that god Procne engages in both sparagmos and omophagy by dismembering her son and feeding his flesh to Tereus. The sisters' decision to attack Itys instead of Tereus himself is perhaps based on the same thinking that Atreus employs; killing and serving Itys forces Tereus to commit the alimentary equivalent to incest and adultery and to consume the fruits of his own sexual passions. One mouth is force-fed in revenge for the brutal violation of another one.

The roots of Western theatre lie in the consumption related rituals (sparagmos and omophagy) of the Dionysian festival. As the elements of the Dionysian festival metamorphosed into theatre, the satyrs or male celebrants became the first choruses (verbal) and the maenads danced (visual) into "oblivion." Thus the powers of speech and representation were bestowed upon men through the birth of theatre; in contrast the female became silent and invisible (Case 321). Yet if drama begins with a "battle of the sexes," it is equally important to stress how this composite art form dramatizes both the collaboration and the competition between the visual and verbal arts.

In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche argues that Greek tragedy arose from the struggle between rationalism represented by Apollo and the irrational mysticism represented by Dionysos. He sees a tremendous opposition "between the Apollonian art of sculpture and the nonimagistic, Dionysian art of music" (33). Significantly, he also speaks of the antagonism that existed between these two arts until their coupling which did "ultimately generate an equally Dionysian and Apollonian form of art--Attic Tragedy" (33), suggesting that drama marks the marriage of not only verbal and visual

art, but of culture/reason and nature/emotion and more importantly that it is in this “dramatic” marriage that the rivalry between the verbal and visual is finally subdued.

In the *Poetics*, indeed Aristotle speaks to the nature of tragedy as both a verbal and visual art form, in which words and actions play relatively equal roles in ensuring the success of the dramatic art. Although he defines tragedy as an art that imitates noble actions through performance, suggesting perhaps that drama is a visually centred rather than a verbally centred art form (46), he equally emphasizes that tragedy is an art of words, and that it is both acceptable and necessary for certain events to take place off stage and to be relayed verbally (60-61). Perhaps the most well known element of Aristotle’s definition of tragedy is that its ultimate purpose is catharsis, and here we should note how this concept itself is rooted in a metaphor of consumption: tragedy is the process of taking in (digesting) and letting go (purging).

Seneca’s play accords well with Aristotle’s theory of tragedy, and especially because it dramatizes the collaboration and competition of the arts not only through the rivalries between the characters but by the way in which Seneca uses the verbal and visual media to express the theme of cannibalism. Most notable is Atreus’s remark that the murder and cannibalistic consumption of kindred flesh is “an unspeakable sacrifice and a feast / of infamy beyond man’s imagination” (274-75). It is provocative that the killing and consuming of kindred flesh is an “unspeakable” crime which is nevertheless presented only verbally, whereas the crime is never visually represented, leaving the reader/viewer to imagine this crime supposedly “beyond man’s imagination.” Seneca’s practice thus seems to provide support for

Lessing's contention that it is the verbal medium alone which is most appropriate for expressing such violent and disgusting actions, just as Lessing would argue that Seneca was right in merely invoking the myth of Philomela and leaving for Ovid the description of the gory details about the severing of her tongue and the murder of Itys.

There is, however, one element common to both the Philomela myth and *Thyestes*: namely, the presentation of the severed head(s). Atreus makes a point of keeping his victims' heads to "display" both as a trophy and as proof of his deeds. He also utilizes them for the same purposes as Philomela--who throws Itys's bloodied head into Tereus's face after the meal--as a final act of aggression, defiance and revenge. Atreus and Philomela and Procne are in essence "headhunters," "civilized" primitives who may decapitate but who traditionally do not cannibalize their victims (Sagan 36). Philomela and Atreus use the heads/trophies as symbols of power and warnings to those who might oppose them. Thus, unlike the ingested corpse, the head becomes a visual symbol of power presented on stage in *Thyestes* as a gory but somewhat visually "purified" silent testament to the victor's power. Also, unlike cannibalism, there can be no sort of "affectionate" decapitation; headhunting is purely violent and aggressive, and in that way almost more frightening than cannibalism.

In *Thyestes* one also finds a context for another issue that Lessing introduces to suggest both the limits and a point of contact between the arts, and significantly the focal point is another infamous and wronged female in classical mythology: Medea. According to the standard legends, she and her husband Jason have seven sons and seven daughters all of whom she sacrificed to Hera, who promised to make them immortal (Graves 2: 254). In Seneca's own treatment of the theme in his *Medea*, she

kills only two of her children, and not surprisingly in the light of *Thyestes* and the myth of Philomela, Medea was moved to kill them when Jason broke faith with her and married another. For Lessing, the question is how and whether this story can be visually dramatized, and he begins by praising the ancient painter Timomachus, who in his depiction of Medea made it clear that "he thoroughly understood and was able to combine two things: that point or moment which the beholder not so much sees as adds in his imagination, and that appearance which does not seem so transitory as to become displeasing through its perpetuation in art" (20). Timomachus, according to Lessing, made the right decision: he represented Medea at the "pregnant moment" immediately before she murdered her children, when she is torn between maternal love and vengefulness, whereas another unknown painter made the mistake of depicting Medea in the act of murder. For Lessing, Medea's perpetual indecision in Timomachus's painting is more desirable/better than the depiction of the actual act, which endows "her brief instant of madness with a permanence that is an affront to all nature" (21). Lessing's point is not only that prolonged rage is unnatural but also that painting can suggest time and tell a story; the moment of hesitation enables the viewer to envision alternate outcomes, something which otherwise painting cannot do.

Although Seneca does indeed dramatize the ultimate choice, he equally presents the moment before Atreus murders his brother's sons as particularly suspenseful: "He [Atreus] hesitates, or perhaps just savors the moment, / delightfully pregnant, knowing it will bring forth / savage revenge" (714-16). Since this hesitation is something we must visualize through the messenger's words, Seneca has in effect depicted a

“pregnant moment,” just as the description itself provides two possible interpretations for Atreus’s pause: 1) reservations about the crime he intends to commit; 2) enhancing his pleasure in the revenge by anticipating it.

With respect to Seneca himself, finally, a number of provocative questions might be raised. R. J. Tarrant notes that “Seneca’s prose works contain not the slightest hint that he was also a tragedian. The reverse, however, is not true: the tragedies are unmistakably the work of a writer imbued with Seneca’s particular philosophical outlook” (23-24). Why, as a philosopher, did Seneca turn to drama as a medium for expressing his philosophy? Is it a matter of “seeing is believing” and if so what did he want his audience to see? Seneca’s sensitivity to the connection between eating, rivalry, and modes of representation expressed in *Thyestes* might have emerged because Seneca was himself involved in a “rivalry” with the dominant philosophy of his time. While the average Roman valued competition and its rewards, Seneca’s Stoic doctrine was based on the virtues of self-possession. Achieving the “good life” to a Stoic involved controlling the passions and finding inner peace through conformity with nature (Tarrant 23); thus “the Stoic is one who withdraws from the distractions and vices of everyday life which tempt the unwary and render them dependent on external things” (Stewart 8). Seneca’s “nothing in excess” philosophy also applied to food and the other pleasures of the body—including holding the mind and its development in greater esteem than the indulgence of the body and its desires. *Thyestes* is full of this brand of Stoic doctrine—especially Thyestes’s speeches, whereas Atreus’s speeches tend to adhere to the more traditional philosophy which encouraged

the seeking of fame, glory, wealth and power. Thyestes, despite his Stoic words, however, proves susceptible to family ties, and in giving up his self-possession he becomes trapped in Atreus's nets; similarly, it is literally the act of eating that becomes his undoing. Thus, in the rivalry between the two brothers, Seneca found a perfect vehicle for dramatizing his own position vis-à-vis the popular philosophy of his time, just as conversely we can see how greatly intellectual and esthetic issues are grounded in practical politics and conjoined through metaphors of cannibalism. Nor, finally, should we forget that in Lessing's debate with Winckelmann about the closed mouth of the Laocoön sculpture a key issue was the extent to which a refusal to cry out was demanded by Greek stoicism—the mind over matter philosophy advocated by Seneca.

## CHAPTER TWO

“WHAT DID THEY LIVE ON?”:

### ILLUSTRATION, TEXT AND CANNIBALISM IN CARROLL'S *ALICE* STORIES

Just as art has a transformational effect on reality, so the power of food and drink to transform the individual has long been a compelling issue for artists. For those artists concerned with the power dynamics of the eater/eaten relationship, the issues reach far beyond mere ingestion; in particular, eating habits are treated as the semiotic coding of the values and power hierarchies of a culture. Given the way that the act of eating serves as mediator between opposites--such as life and death--expressed in a single body or action, and the way that in the course of the food cycle those on the top of the chain (humans) become sustenance for those on the bottom (worms), this dynamic has a special relevance for works which contain visual and verbal media. For here the issue becomes a question of how one art might not merely consume but also nourish another art and in the process give rise to new art forms. Just as the arts have been fascinated with the motif of eating and food, so too they have been interested in their own eating and with how their example can not merely reflect but also comment on social practices.

Few works better explore this nexus of cultural, esthetic and biological issues than Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass*, both of which are centrally concerned with the transformation of the body. While in *Thyestes* the element of the power dynamic marked by food mainly focuses on the relationship between humans and gods, in the *Alice* books the focus is on the relationship between the human order and the natural world; as Nina Auerbach observes, Alice repeatedly attempts "to twist the animal kingdom to the absurd rules of civilization, which seem to revolve largely around eating and being eaten" (38). In keeping with the traditional alignment, in the *Alice* texts the open mouth frequently operates as a site for both eating and speaking while the closed mouth connotes not eating and silence. Often, however, this binary--upon which the eater/eaten relationship hinges--is dismantled by the complicity between the eaters and the eaten and by the collaboration of text and illustration. Moreover, the merging of the eater/open mouth and the eaten/closed mouth finds its expression in a single cannibalistic body--that of Alice; she is the most voracious of the characters yet at the same time she is the one most often silenced. In this way, the *Alice* books provide a very complex investigation of the eating dynamic and ultimately suggest the way that cannibalism can also be a form of symbiosis.

Food is present from the beginning of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, and from its first appearance it is associated with danger and death. As Alice falls down the hole after the white rabbit, she picks up a jar labeled "ORANGE MARMALADE" (16). Notable here is the fact that Alice "did not like to drop the jar, for fear of killing somebody underneath." Mervyn Nicholson suggests that via this incident

“Carroll attributes a lethal quality to the marmalade jar: it may *kill*—not just harm--somebody” (“Food” 46). This theme is emphasized shortly afterwards when Alice immediately suspects that the “DRINK ME” bottle contains poison.

The relationship between predator and prey (eater and eaten) is also established early in the narrative. As she falls, Alice thinks about her cat, Dinah, especially about Dinah getting her milk at tea time. On several occasions she also extols the virtues of Dinah’s prowess in catching mice and birds and in doing so she deeply offends and even terrorizes the mouse she meets in the pool of tears and the birds she meets afterwards. Thus Alice, via what she says, becomes a threatening figure to the other creatures of Wonderland. Auerbach takes this a step further by proposing that Alice’s obsessive and admiring chatter about the carnivorous habits of Dinah suggest that the cat “seems finally to function as personification of Alice’s own subtly cannibalistic hunger” (36). While Dinah (and Alice) are always hungry or in predatory modes, many of the other inhabitants of Wonderland morosely adopt the role of “eaten.” Two cases in point are the “DRINK ME” bottle and the “EAT ME” cake whose complicity is further enhanced by the fact that they literally ask to be consumed; and their weak/eaten status is heightened by their labels which suggest that they cannot speak. Auerbach suggests that these creatures/objects too represent another side of Alice who, immediately upon entering Wonderland, “senses the complicity between eater and eaten, looking-glass versions of each other” (37). Thus as she is falling down the rabbit hole, Alice muses:

“Dinah, my dear! I wish you were down here with me! There are no mice in the air, I’m afraid, but you might catch a bat, and that’s very like a mouse, you know. But do cats eat bats, I wonder?” And here Alice began to get rather sleepy, and went on saying to herself, in a dreamy sort of way, “Do cats eat bats? Do cats eat bats?” and sometimes “Do bats eat cats?” for, you see, as she couldn’t answer either question, it didn’t matter which way she put it. (17-18)

As the lines differentiating bats from cats dissolve, so too does the role of eater and eaten. Alice is both eater and eaten; though she pursues food, her attempts at eating are often thwarted, and though she is viewed by others as a “fabulous monster” (*Looking-Glass* 210), the status of “other” equally renders her vulnerable to the appetites of the creatures she encounters.

Alice’s predatory nature is further emphasized by her relationship with the Cheshire-Cat who is the only creature in Wonderland that she calls friend (84). Both the Cheshire-Cat and Alice are creatures that metamorphose, but unlike Alice, the Cat has total control over his physical appearance and disappearance. His is perhaps the most memorable mouth in the story; at one point he dissolves into his own mouth to become a “grin without a cat” (67). The strong connection that Alice has with cats aligns her with animals in general, thereby suggesting a descent rather than ascent in the evolutionary ladder.

During her fall, Alice also has time to wonder where exactly she might land and Carroll has her envision that it will be the “antipathies” (17), or rather, the

antipodes. Alice's imagining on this "descent" draws upon the whole tradition of civilized British explorers encountering the "natives," which in New Zealand and Australia--where Alice imagines she will land--were practicing cannibals. Cannibalism has often been used as a metaphor for the colonist/colonized role--in which one nation/culture devours/assimilates an "other"--and the image of the cannibal also functions as the savage/nature that dissolves both individual and cultural boundaries and resists the advances of civilization. In her article on cannibalism and critics, Maggie Kilgour observes that "supporters of imperialism feared that, by bringing together the civilized and the savage, imperialism could be seen as leading to the erosion of stable cultural differences" (22). Lessing too was concerned with the notion of "stable cultural differences,"--and we should note in turn how Alice's reference to the "antipathies" could be extended to the oppositions that he felt characterized the various arts.

One of the darkest aspects of the "eat or be eaten" dogma of the *Alice* stories is the fact that so many of its creatures engage not only in cannibalism but in eating their victims alive: for example, a crocodile swallows the fish that swim into its mouth (26), and the Walrus dines on oysters as they beg for their lives (171). Lévi-Strauss's culinary triangle suggests that what separates humans from animals is the fact that humans cook their food whereas animals consume theirs raw (*Origin* 490). That these creatures, endowed with human characteristics, are engaged in such acts of consumption highlights the way that cannibalism conjoins with personification to question the animal-human-god hierarchy: whereas personification elevates the

creatures to the status of humans, cannibalism reduces them and us to the level of animals.

Often for Alice, opening her mouth to speak has negative and sometimes disastrous consequences. Apart from terrorizing the other creatures with her tales of Dinah, Alice often finds herself unable to recite songs and poems properly, or is unable to complete them. In fact, most of the poems she recites are twisted versions of their popular Victorian original that betray a semi-cannibalistic appetite on her part. After consuming the contents of the DRINK ME bottle and the EAT ME cake, Alice is reduced to tears by her shrinking and growing; to remind herself of her identity, Alice recites a poem:

How doth the little crocodile  
 Improve his shining tail,  
 And pour the waters of the Nile  
 On every golden scale!

How cheerfully he seems to grin  
 How neatly spreads his claws,  
 And welcomes little fishes in,  
 With gently smiling jaws! (26)

Alice is quite right to be upset that the poem is nothing like what it is intended to be--Watt's "Against Idleness and Mischief"--for the identity it serves to establish for her is that of "eater"; her fondness for that role is, of course, the reason for her predicament in the first place.

The next poem Alice recites, this time in order to prove to the caterpillar that she is not herself, is "Father William":

"You are old," said the youth, "and your jaws are too weak  
 For anything tougher than suet;  
 Yet you finish the goose, with the bones and the beak—  
 Pray, how did you manage to do it?"

"In my youth," said his father, "I took to the law,  
 And argued each case with my wife;  
 And the muscular strength, which it gave to my jaw  
 Has lasted the rest of my life." (51)

This third set of stanzas highlights the way that arguing is a form of exercising one's jaws--pointing to the connection between speaking and eating--along with the implicit analogy of lawyers to sharks.

Later, Alice is requested by the Mock Turtle and the Gryphon to recite a poem, after which they belittle her because "the words came very queer" (101):

I passed by his garden, and marked, with one eye,  
 How the Owl and the Panther were sharing a pie:  
 The Panther took pie-crust, and gravy, and meat,  
 While the Owl had the dish as its share of the treat.  
 When the pie was all finished, the Owl, as a boon,  
 Was kindly permitted to pocket the spoon:  
 While the Panther received knife and fork with a growl,

And concluded the banquet by--. (102)

Margaret Boe Birns suggests that apart from allowing the reader the "fun" of completing the poem, Carroll simultaneously makes the reader aware that he or she is caught up in the cannibalistic spirit of the story, for undoubtedly the concluding words we will provide are: "eating the Owl" (458). All three poems highlight the way in which Alice must constantly establish her identity through the verbal medium, and her subsequent anxiety as the "right words" evade her. Thus her cannibal/animal nature is established both by her appetites and by her shifting self definition on the verbal/visual-culture/nature scale.

Alice perhaps most strongly aligns herself with the "eater" in "The Lobster Quadrille" chapter. This chapter is infused with elements of polite society that serve to enhance the notion that the animals of Wonderland are indeed civilized "human beings," and therefore that Alice's eating habits are, in this context, quite cannibalistic. The quadrille--which the Gryphon, Mock Turtle and Alice dance and which the lobsters, seals, salmon, snails and whittings are reported to enjoy--is in itself a very formalized and civilized activity. Later, when asked if she has ever been "introduced" to a lobster, Alice almost confesses that she once tasted one (96) and when asked if she's seen a whiting, almost lets it slip that she has seen one at dinner (98). Between people, introductions are, of course, usually verbal and are the polite way that one meets others/strangers; however, people are usually "introduced" to animals at the dining table where they get to know them by eating/tasting them. By the standards of Wonderland, Alice is undoubtedly a cannibal (though certainly not the only one) and

though she attempts to hide this fact in gentility, she inevitably establishes herself as the more powerful in relation to many of the animals she encounters by making it clear that she views them as edible.

In *Looking-Glass*, the way that polite behaviour masks cannibalistic intent is illustrated in one of the longest poems in the narrative, that of *The Walrus and the Carpenter*. The events leading up to the recitation of this poem in the "Tweedledum and Tweedledee" chapter revolve around manners; in fact Tweedledum tells Alice specifically "The first thing in a visit is to say 'How d'ye do?' and shake hands!" The etiquette lesson turns into dancing in a circle when Alice decides to shake both their hands at once, and from there they move on to poetry. In the poem--recited by Tweedledee--the crafty Walrus and Carpenter convince the young Oysters to leave their sand-beds for "A pleasant walk, a pleasant talk"(169), but it soon becomes apparent what their real intentions are:

"Now, if you're ready, Oysters dear,  
We can begin to feed."

"But not on us!" the Oysters cried,  
Turning a little blue.

"After such kindness, that would be  
A dismal thing to do!" (171)

At first, Alice likes the Walrus because "he was a little sorry for the poor oysters" but she too has been fooled by him. Feigning sympathy for the Oysters that he consumes-

-by "holding his pocket-handkerchief / Before his streaming eyes"--the Walrus hides from the Carpenter how much he is eating, and Tweedledee confirms that he did in fact eat more than the Carpenter. Deciding that this is a mean trick, Alice declares "then I like the Carpenter best--if he didn't eat so many as the Walrus" but is quickly puzzled into silence when Tweedledee replies "but he ate as many as he could get" (172). Alice eventually realizes during her journey through the Looking-Glass world that eating what you can get is far more important than being polite or indulging in feelings of guilt about what one is eating.

Immediately after this conversation, Alice hears a puffing noise coming from the woods and, afraid that it may be a wild beast, asks: "are there any lions or tigers about here?" (173). She realizes her vulnerability: that creatures are not what they appear to be, that they are merciless carnivores, and that she is as edible to a tiger or lion as the oysters were to the Walrus and the Carpenter. Conversely, that Alice--the cat-like predator--should assume that her major threat is one of her own kind--i.e., another feline creature--speaks to the ubiquitous nature of cannibalism and to Alice's own unconscious cannibalistic appetites.

Just as Alice is often disappointed with what comes out of her mouth (words), she is equally dismayed by what fails to go into her mouth (food). Alice, we are told, "always took great interest in questions of eating and drinking" (73) and indeed when she isn't concerning herself with what others live on, she admits to being either hungry or thirsty herself. As much as this is suggestive of her predatory nature, however, so much does it point to another aspect: if her hunger/appetite is established at the very

outset of *Alice's Adventures* by the orange marmalade jar, what we should also notice is her "great disappointment" upon finding the jar to be empty (16). Similarly, although she consumes the "DRINK ME" and "EAT ME" food as commanded, she never does get to eat at the narrative's major scene of eating--the tea party. Not only is she discouraged from joining the party, but when she does so she is offered wine when there is none to be had. Alice eventually manages to help herself to tea, bread, and butter but presumably before she can eat it, she, the Mad-Hatter, the March Hare and the Dormouse all change places and she finds herself seated in front of a plate of spilled milk--linking her once again to her cat Dinah, which in this case reduces her to the level of a domestic pet. Just before this, the Dormouse begins his story of three sisters living at the bottom of a well. Predictably enough, Alice's first question is: "What did they live on?" and the Dormouse replies "They lived on treacle" (73). Alice immediately notes that living on treacle alone will make them sick; but we should also note that the origins/meanings of the word treacle have greater significance than molasses: in Latin, *theriaca* was an antidote for poison, and the Greek *theriake* a remedy for the bites of venomous beasts. Though Alice disdains the thought of living on treacle, she--who worries about poison in bottles and wild beasts in the woods--would likely be happy to have some. The question "what did they live on?" also has other implications for Alice herself, for indeed one may ask "what does Alice live on?" Alice's concern with what three girls eat while living at the bottom of a well echoes her own unspoken concerns about dietary constraints imposed on women, and

more immediately about how she, living at the bottom of a rabbit hole, will survive-- particularly as she is thwarted from consuming anything at the tea-party.

At the tea-party, moreover, not only is Alice discouraged from eating but also from speaking. The verbally aggressive Mad-Hatter often intimidates her into silence, at one point calls her stupid, and finally tells her that she should not talk at all. She is also discouraged from asking questions of the Dormouse. Appropriately, then, in John Tenniel's illustration of the tea party (see Fig. 1), Alice does not appear to be either eating or speaking, for what is highlighted in this way is the fact that she is a silent outsider who acts as a spectator rather than a participant in the verbal discourse and activities of ingestion. If we note in turn the way that Tenniel's illustration clearly presents the March Hare and the Mad-Hatter as males and Alice as female, then we begin to see how the issue of eating/cannibalism is related to matters of gender and the alliance of speech and power.

Not only Alice but those she meets in Wonderland and Looking-Glass world are obsessed with what goes in to and comes out of her mouth; both what she eats and what she says are often controlled or at least criticized by others. In *Alice's Adventures* she is told by a Caterpillar that her poems are "wrong from beginning to end" (52), and in *Looking-Glass* the Red Queen tells her: "open your mouth a *little* wider when you speak, and always say 'your Majesty' "(149). In *Looking-Glass*, Alice frequently faces the dilemma of choosing between eating or speaking. Thus, when she confesses to being hot and thirsty, the Red Queen responds by saying "I know what *you'd* like!....Have a biscuit?" In response, "Alice thought it would not be civil to say 'no,' though it wasn't at all what she wanted. She took it and ate it as well as she

could: it was very dry: and she thought she had never been so nearly choked in all her life" (152). Repeatedly, what and when Alice eats is controlled by others or at least by a sense of social politeness that insists she put others' desires before her own.

Later in the "Wool and Water" chapter, Alice buys an egg from a sheep--only one egg because the sheep informs her that if she buys two she *must* eat them both. Alice never does get to eat this egg; her quest for sustenance is thwarted yet again as the food becomes "human" by metamorphosing into Humpty Dumpty. When Alice engages in a verbal battle with this nursery rhyme character, he proves to be verbally more powerful than she, declaring that words mean what he decides they do, and when Alice questions whether or not one *can* do this, Humpty Dumpty replies that "the question is...which is to be master--that's all" (196). That he who has verbal control/control over the meaning of words has power, also means that Alice is powerless against the non-sense inherent in Wonderland and Looking-Glass language. In fact, Humpty is able so greatly to confuse Alice that on three occasions she is either shamed or perplexed into silence. In the case of Humpty Dumpty, the food has "revolted" and effectively sealed the mouth that would overpower and devour it. The irony is that the pompous Humpty Dumpty is oblivious of his own fate; although he may be the "master" of the verbal and is able to silence/shut Alice's mouth, she is the eater of eggs and he/his kind are destined to become "food" for those he silences.

In *Looking-Glass*, Alice establishes her cannibalistic tendencies in the "real world" when she suggests to her nurse: "Do let's pretend that I'm a hungry hyaena, and you're a bone!" (133). That Alice directs this request at her nurse in particular is

significant, given that in the essential or true sense of nursing, women are food for infants (Nicholson "Food" 47). In terms of the power dynamic between eater and eaten whereby that which is eaten is rendered weak simply by virtue of its edibility, women as life-givers/food providers are subordinate to those they feed. This is also true of Alice who becomes food for others in the "Pool of Tears" chapter of *Alice's Adventures*, insofar as she gives out her own comfits to the caucus race participants until there are none left for her. Instead what she gets is a thimble--an empty cup--that seems to foreshadow her perpetually futile attempts at acquiring wine, tea or refreshments.

In the "Pig and Pepper" chapter of *Alice's Adventures*, furthermore, Alice is entrusted with "nursing" a baby (pig)--although in his illustrations Tenniel interprets the verb "nurse" in the most general sense by depicting Alice holding but not actually breast-feeding the creature (see Fig. 2). As such, initially the point might seem to be a difference between humans and animals: that it is the pig, not Alice, who is food. Yet the size of the pig in the illustration is such that the Alice/pig power ratio is somewhat questioned, just as the analogy between child-raising and pig-breeding begins to darken considerably when one considers the resonances of the "pig motif" in Irish politics and the connection between babies and food in Jonathan Swift's "A Modest Proposal." Both Carroll and Swift liken pigs and children, and although Carroll turns a baby into pig while Swift replaces pigs with babies, the success of their comparison lies in the "nursing" aspect. In the "Proposal," Swift suggests that mothers allow their infants "to suck plentifully in the last month, so as to render them plump

and fat" (2176). Like Carroll, whose pig-baby is "nursed" by both the Duchess and Alice, Swift plays off the notion that a "suckling pig" (and a suckling child) is a choice delicacy. In addition, Swift's satire involves the notion that England is devouring Ireland—highlighting the cannibalistic undertones of international relationships.

In turn, the association of women themselves and pigs comes into focus when Alice first meets the Duchess and her bawling pig-baby, and upon asking a question is given an answer by the Duchess which ends with the exclamation "Pig!": "She said the last word with such violence that Alice quite jumped; but she saw in another moment that it was addressed to the baby, and not to her" (60). Before Alice realizes that what she is holding is in fact a pig and not a baby, she tells it: "Don't grunt," and explains "that's not at all a proper way of expressing yourself" (63) but soon afterwards she thinks that perhaps the baby is actually sobbing rather than grunting. In fact, the sounds—squealing, grunting—made by babies and pigs have much in common, a similarity that ends only when the child learns to "speak."

The power of speech is in fact the main element of "personification" that Carroll uses to establish that the creatures of Wonderland and Looking-Glass world are "human." To be "one of us," it would seem, one must "talk like us." Moreover, in enlisting personification as a strategy, Carroll is not only able to encode a theme of cannibalism, but also provides a provocative interarts touch in the sense that the primary ingredient for human status seems less to be human form than the power to "speak." The upward spiral marked by the animals' facility for language is paralleled

by Alice's downward spiral --marked by her inability to remember how to recite poems or talk "sense." Thus implicitly, the *Alice* texts align the verbal medium with culture and the visual with nature/the animals.

Along with possessing language, humans differ from animals by wearing clothing, and what most amazes and attracts Alice to the White Rabbit is the fact that he is wearing a waistcoat and has a pocket watch--both markers of "civilization." Especially important here is the rabbit's pocket watch, which implicitly suggests his humanness in the way that being human is related to the "verbal" arts/speaking insofar as they are able to reflect temporality in contrast to the "stasis" that Lessing attributes to the pictorial arts. Similarly, by personifying inanimate objects, Carroll seems to be engaging in an exercise that makes "mute" pictures speak--particularly highlighted by the bringing to life of the Wonderland "royalty" whom Alice angrily asserts at the end of *Alice's Adventures* are "nothing but a pack of cards!" (117).

Alice's alarm at being considered a "pig" in the "Pig and Pepper" chapter also requires to be understood in the context of Victorian social etiquette. Throughout history, and certainly in the Victorian era, women's hunger inspired uneasiness, and in general, eating, especially public eating, was deemed "unbecoming" to a woman. Thus the tea party and the dinner party, both in Victorian society and in those events which Alice attends, constituted occasions where typically men talk and women starve, highlighting the alliance of the open mouth with the eater, with the verbal medium and the male gender.

In addition, women with an appetite, or who in public did eat anything resembling a substantial meal, were considered to be more sensual, erotic and promiscuous than their bird-like counterparts (Michie 16-18). In *A Natural History of The Senses*, Diane Ackerman notes that "sexual hunger and physical hunger have always been allies" (130). This alliance is made particularly apparent by the Victorians' oppressive obsession with food and sex--an obsession which extended to Lewis Carroll himself. From the accounts of his first biographer, Stuart Dodgson Collingwood, Carroll likely suffered from anorexia or at the very least had an unhealthy obsession with eating as little as possible. Furthermore, Carroll was known to surround himself with petite young girls, whose appetite for food was a source of constant wonder and anxiety to him (Collingwood 390). According to Teresa de Lauretis, Carroll's erotic interest in the seven-year-old girl for whom the Alice stories were written is "a well-known biographical fact" (2). In her essay, "Alice and Wonderland," Auerbach asks:

Does it go too far to connect the mouth that presides over Alice's story to a looking-glass vagina? Carroll's focus on the organ of the mouth seems to have been consistent throughout his life: it is allied to both his interest in eating and the prodigious number of kisses that run through his letters to his child-friends. Kissing and cats seem often to have been linked together in his mind. (39 n. 17)

At the root of the association of eating, sexuality, and the female in the *Alice* stories lies the notion of the "vagina dentata"--the toothed vagina--and this motif is in

turn grounded in the connection of women, sin, and death. The "Paradise Lost" motif, which is literally dramatized when Alice falls through the rabbit hole and begins eating and drinking in order to achieve access to a garden, has been explored extensively by Carroll scholars, but we should note especially how this theme is furthered by Carroll's loaded comparison of Alice to a predatory serpent. After consuming a piece of mushroom, Alice's neck grows to such a height that she can see above the tree tops where she meets a frantic mother pigeon:

"You're a serpent; and there's no use denying it. I suppose you'll be telling me next that you never tasted an egg!"

"I *have* tasted eggs, certainly," said Alice, who was a very truthful child; "but little girls eat eggs quite as much as serpents do, you know."

"I don't believe it," said the Pigeon; "but if they do, why, then they're a kind of serpent: that's all I can say." (56)

Here, Alice is simultaneously a "truthful child," a satanic animal, and Eve who in eating forbidden food gains forbidden knowledge and precipitates humankind's exile from Paradise. Even more significant is Carroll's introduction of the egg, which, as a symbol of womanhood associated here with the serpent, implies a kind of self-cannibalism. Michie suggests that more than unconscious self-cannibalism, the association of the three--egg, woman, serpent--"harkens back to the first destruction of life by eating in the Garden of Eden" (28), underscoring the fatal and dangerous nature of food and eating, particularly female eating, established by Carroll at the outset of

*Alice's Adventures*. Nicholson's outline of the dual nature of food calls attention to the fact that while food is deadly, it is also the means of power, life and transformation ("Food" 48). Thus, the egg suggests the "charmed circle of childhood" (Auerbach 41) while at the same time evoking the notion of the womb as tomb and hence the circle of a woman's life (Michie 28). In this way, as much as food is fatal, so is it linked to sexuality and in turn to regeneration of the kind represented by the mythological Ouroboros--the serpent devouring its own tail.

A further connection between villainy and food is dramatized in the last two chapters of *Alice's Adventures*, where the Knave of Hearts is under trial for stealing--in accordance with the nursery rhyme--the Queen's tarts. By mistaking the evidence at the trial (i.e., the tarts), for refreshments, the hungry Alice links herself to the felonious Knave (Nicholson "Food" 40). Stealing food is an act of rebellion against power; in her connection to the Knave, Alice is once again connected to Eve who's fall revolved around a willful act of "stealing" and eating forbidden food, just as she is related to Prometheus who essentially stole meat and fire for humankind and was punished for his crimes.

The food that Eve steals leads to knowledge--"food for thought," one might say--an issue that haunts Alice and the Mad-Hatter at the tea party. When Alice and the Hatter have an argument over language and meaning, Alice argues that "I say what I mean" is the same as "I mean what I say," and the example the Hatter uses to counter her suggestion revolves around food. Says the Hatter to Alice, "Why you might as well say that 'I see what I eat' is the same as 'I eat what I see' " (69).

"Seeing" implies "knowing," but eating implies a greater knowledge of that which is consumed or digested than that which is merely viewed because the eaten is something that becomes a part of the eater. In the Garden of Eden, Eve "sees"/gains knowledge when she eats the apple; in her case to see what she eats is the result of eating what she sees. Thus the old adage "you are what you eat" or "seeing is believing" takes on a new clarity as the "eye" becomes the "mouth."

The notion of the devouring gaze at the heart of the Mad-Hatter's paradox--the idea that looking is a form of eating/ingesting--has been extensively explored in contemporary feminist criticism. Feminist critics have further introduced the issue of gender, arguing that the female body is the object of the male gaze, just as earlier theorists such as Lessing and Burke have aligned women with pictorial art on the grounds that both share the qualities of silence and beauty, making them ideal for the gratification of the eye. In this context, we can accordingly recognize not only how eating/cannibalism is aligned with seeing, but also how the female, constructed in the visual medium, is edible and therefore weaker.

If power is allied with the eater, however, then in some ways deliberate not eating can also be a paradoxical survival mechanism, and here the anorexic serves to shed a different light on the woman/closed mouth/visual arts complex. As Susie Orbach explains, power is at the heart of anorexia; the anorexic attempts to remain "supremely in charge and active in relation to the suppression of her bodily needs. In denying her needs--as women are so often reminded to do--she excels as the 'good girl' who refuses to make demands on others" (30). Through her refusal to eat, she

becomes a visual message of rebellion, or as Orbach further suggests "she has agreed to take up only a little *space* in the world, but at the same time, her body evokes immense interest on the part of others and she becomes the object of their attention. Her *invisibility screams*. We cannot avert our *eyes* from her" (emphasis mine). Thus the anorexic is a paradox--she speaks by not eating/speaking, and like the Ouroboros, consumes herself.

Alice, with her great appetite and her use of food to rebel against a power structure that would keep her both silent and hungry, would seem to be the opposite of the anorexic. Where this motif enters however is in the extent to which anorexia finds expression in the *Alice* stories through the theme of "not eating." Although Alice differs from the anorexic in that she *wants* to eat, the reasons for both Alice's and the anorexic's not eating is the result of debilitating social restraints. Alice is present at the stories' main scenes of eating (the caucus-race, tea-party and banquet), and though she seems to have the opportunity to eat "regular" food in these public/social situations, she in fact eats at none of them. The only food that she actually does consume includes the DRINK ME drink, the EAT ME cakes and the magic mushroom, all of which she eats when she is alone. Like the anorexic, Alice desires to be a "good girl" and that is what ultimately leads her to allowing her alimentary needs to be repeatedly compromised in public.

A further connection between Alice and the anorexic lies in the fact that, at its root, anorexia is about controlling the size and desires of the body. When Alice first consumes the "EAT ME" and "DRINK ME" food of Wonderland, she is transformed

in ways over which she has no control, leaving her powerless in terms of her body and its size. As with many anorexics and binge eaters, the decisions Alice makes about what and how much to eat have life and death ramifications; she nearly drowns in her own tears after shrinking to the size of a mouse, and later is nearly burned to death when her huge form traps her inside the White Rabbit's house. Alice finally does assert authority over her body when she learns what to eat from the Caterpillar, a symbol of metamorphosis, and through trial and error she discovers for herself how much to eat and learns that her power lies in her own ability to control and decide for herself what food she will eat and how much.

Alice's control over her alimentary goals is hampered for the last time in the penultimate chapter of *Looking-Glass*. Despite the warm welcome Alice receives to the dinner party held in her honour, she is once again prevented from eating because of the social niceties that the inhabitants of the Looking-Glass world insist she live by. It is here, during the narrative's final banquet scene that Alice's appetite finally gets the better of her. After being introduced to the leg of mutton, which politely bows, Alice tries to carve it up and serve it, but is quickly told by the Red Queen: "it isn't etiquette to cut anyone you've been introduced to" (240). Dining etiquette rarely comes into play for the other creatures of the *Alice* books. The Walrus and the Carpenter eat the Oysters they have befriended, the Panther eats the Owl with whom it has just shared a meal, and the Hatter and March Hare proceed to make tea from their friend the Dormouse by shoving him head first into a tea-pot during the tea party. Though the Oysters complain that it is "dismal" to eat one's friends, the books' carnivores, other than Alice, are not daunted. Perhaps this double standard of "table

manners" exists because Alice, for all her time in Wonderland and Looking-Glass world, remains alien. Unlike the personified animals and foods that she encounters, Alice is truly human; the codes of civilization surrounding dining etiquette, which ultimately serve to separate humans from the beasts and which dictate that we do not eat our friends or neighbours, appear to have the final say about what Alice can and cannot eat. Not to be overlooked is the fact that the "eaters" in these situations are male, (with the exception of the Panther, whose gender is not specified) suggesting that Alice's eating habits are constrained not only because she is human, but also because she is female.

It is here, in turn, that the nature of the banquet plays a key role, for the essence of such meals is the extent to which speaking is substituted for eating. As Michel Jeanneret observes in his study of "table talk" in the Renaissance:

conversation is the real food: it changes the language of the body into anodyne formulae and, by sublimating appetites, culture systematically neutralizes nature. Words make the feast disappear: the guests satisfy their hunger complaisantly through the spectacle of the art of living and the art of conversation. (47-48)

Carroll's texts dramatize this notion delightfully: story telling is what distracts Alice from eating her bread and butter at the tea party, and when Alice is unable to eat what she wants at her dinner party she is told by the Red Queen to "make a remark" because "it's ridiculous to leave all the conversation to the pudding!" (241).

What the *Alice* texts also make clear, however, is the way that, in neutralizing nature, banquet customs often retain cannibalistic undertones. In a toast to Alice

during the *Looking Glass* banquet, the guests “drink her health”--a phrase that easily suggests that they are lapping up her well-being rather than merely hoping for her continued fitness. This drinking, combined with the fact that Alice is “introduced to” the leg of mutton--symbolic of Christ who is referred to as the “Lamb of God” or the “Sacrificial Lamb”--and earlier fed biscuits and bread to quench her thirst, makes this final scene of eating evocative of the Eucharistic banquet. Communion is the sacrament that aligns Christians with God, but it also points to the dual nature of cannibalism: on the one hand, the ingestion of Christ’s body and blood serves to elevate humans to a spiritual plane, while on the other it involves the transformation of the divine into “lower” matter. In the case of the toast to Alice, it is particularly the reduction almost that is emphasized:

all the guests began drinking [the wine] directly, and very queerly they managed it: some of them put their glasses upon their heads like extinguishers, and drank all that trickled down their faces--others upset the decanters, and drank the wine as it ran off the edges of the table--and three of them (who looked like kangaroos) scrambled into the dish of roast mutton, and began eagerly lapping up the gravy, “just like pigs in a trough!” thought Alice. (242)

Thus the drinking of Alice’s health becomes both a bestial parody of a Platonic “symposium” and a sacrilegious enactment of the Eucharistic banquet.

Significantly, in opening her mouth at this banquet, Alice sparks a revolution. She tries but fails to avoid an introduction to the pudding; as it is carried away from

her, the hungry Alice decides to speak out. “Waiter! Bring back the pudding!” (240), she commands, whereupon the pudding speaks out against a cannibalistic Alice who slices it up and attempts to serve it. In a final act of metamorphosis implied by the act of cannibalism itself, food becomes human and humans become food: the leg of mutton seats itself in the White Queen’s chair, the White Queen disappears into the soup and “the guests” end up “lying down on the dishes” (244). The eater/eaten relationship thus comes full-circle as Alice’s open mouth/display of hunger disrupts established power dynamics; food speaks and bites back.

It is in turn within the context of the power dynamics operating in the eater/eaten relationship--and the alliance of the closed mouth with the visual arts and the open mouth the verbal medium--that I now wish to examine the collaboration between text/writer and illustration/visual artist in *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass*. Here, the first thing to note is that the Alice books are more than just illustrated novels; as Richard Kelly observes: “Tenniel’s drawings for *Alice’s Adventures* are fundamental to the reader’s total perception of the characters; it is Tenniel’s illustrations and not Carroll’s descriptions that provide the definitive portraits of the characters with whom we are now all familiar” (62). In the original unpublished version of the Alice story--*Alice’s Adventures Under Ground*--Carroll himself felt the need to provide the visual details of his characters (see Fig. 3). Carroll made thirty-seven “rather crude” sketches in pen and ink for *Under Ground* that included many but not all of the main characters in each chapter (Kelly 62). Predictably, most of Carroll’s sketches include Alice--her features modeled after Alice

Liddell, the real little girl for whom the story was written. Thus, both in terms of the genesis and ultimate publication of the *Alice* stories the relationship of pictorial art to text is more than ornamental and was apparently essential to the message that Carroll wished to communicate.

Regarding Tenniel's illustrations, Carroll was said to have "exercised an exceedingly close, not to say tyrannical, supervision over them" (Sewell 111) and this continued to the point of "getting on Tenniel's nerves" (Kelly 63). On occasion Carroll made Tenniel change some of his illustrations; for example he insisted that in *Looking-Glass*, Tenniel had given Alice's dress too much crinoline and it was duly removed (Collingwood 130). Tenniel, however, was not wholly without power in this relationship; a number of the suggestions that he made to Carroll resulted in changes, sometimes major changes, to the texts. Perhaps the best known example of this intervention involves the "Wasp in the Wig," a chapter of *Looking Glass* that Carroll suppressed after Tenniel asserted that a wasp in a wig was "beyond the appliances of art" (Collingwood 146)--this excised chapter remained lost until 1974 (Lull 102 n. 6). That Carroll complied with Tenniel's suggestion is not actually as remarkable as it first appears; apparently during the Victorian era "it was not unusual for an author to be advised by his illustrator" (Dupree 113). Thus while it seems that Carroll may have been guilty of treating Tenniel like a drawing machine to suit his purposes, undoubtedly the two were capable of a genuine interchange of ideas. Accordingly, as much as cannibalism and predatory relationships are the subject matter of the *Alice*

stories, so much does the technique of telling/showing seem to argue for mutual nourishing and symbioses.

In her study of the Carroll-Tenniel collaboration, Janis Lull uses the example of the White Knight to explore how text and illustration work together in *Looking-Glass* to reinforce the artistic unity of the work. She notes that the White Knight is generally perceived as Carroll's alter ego (102)—although in fact he looks nothing like Carroll. In any case, for my purposes, the important issue is that Carroll gives a more detailed description of this character than any other. He is a “strange-looking soldier...dressed in tin armour, which seemed to fit him very badly” (217), and he continually falls off his horse, leading Alice to conclude that he “certainly was *not* a good rider” (219). His mode of dress, what he carries with him on his horse, and in fact even his horse's mode of dress which includes anklets around its feet “to guard against the bites of sharks” (218) are described in great detail, as are the mannerisms and expressions of this character. Carroll, moreover, specifically emphasizes his concern with visualizing this character when he describes what Alice later remembers of the time the White Knight sang for her before he rode out of sight:

Years afterwards she could bring the *whole scene* back again, as if it had been only yesterday--the mild blue eyes and kindly smile of the Knight--the setting sun gleaming through his hair, and shining on his armour in a blaze of light that quite dazzled her--the horse quietly about, with the reins hanging loose on his neck, cropping the grass at her feet--and the black shadows of the forest behind--all this she took in *like a picture*, as, with one hand shading her eyes, she leant against a

tree, watching the strange pair, and listening, in a half-dream, to the melancholy music of the song. (224; emphasis mine)

Lull suggests that although this highly detailed passage was intended as the subject of an illustration, none of Tenniel's *White Knight* pictures use all the details (see Figs. 4 and 5), and several of the objects that the Knight carries with him in the illustrations (such as the bottle of wine, turnips and the wooden sword) are additions made by Tenniel. Her conclusion is that the "correspondence between pictures and text is not one-to-one, as might be expected if Tenniel had really functioned as a workman to carry out Carroll's design. Instead, it is a correspondence in spirit, one that reproduces a sense of the intent of the *White Knight* episodes and of the book as a whole" (105).

The idea that being true to the details of the story was less important to Tenniel than his inclination to create a "good" picture would be greatly applauded by Lessing who makes a similar case for the painter who takes his subject matter from poetry. Lessing argues that the ultimate aim of painting/pictorial art is the expression of beauty and that to attain this objective the painter must not make the mistake of being "foolish enough to follow the poet too closely," an error with "disgusting results" (37). Thus, in "translating" the verbal image into his own visual medium, Tenniel remained true to his art and in this way also he remained true to Carroll's vision of a text born of the symbiotic existence of two distinct art forms in one work.

Tenniel's contribution, however, went far beyond the judicious selection of details. More often, he had to work without the benefit (or hindrance) of visual guidelines. Thus, he often added details regarding clothes, hair, and facial expression

that are not specified in the texts; the result, as Kelly has noted, is that while “it is problematic whether Carroll or Tenniel was the inspiration behind the original renderings, the fact remains that Tenniel’s illustrations provide almost all of the visualization of Carroll’s characters” (63). Perhaps one of the strongest examples of the contribution made by Tenniel is his rendering of the Mad-Hatter, an image which has entered popular culture and become universally recognized. According to Kelly, Tenniel’s “powerful and influential creation” of the Mad-Hatter “owes little to Carroll’s description of him” (67); this contention is indeed borne out when one considers that Carroll establishes merely that the Hatter is “mad” and that the only detail about his appearance in the chapter in which he is introduced (chapter 7) is a mention at one point in the tea-party that “he had taken his watch out of his pocket”(70). It is not until the penultimate chapter in *Alice’s Adventures* that Carroll even suggests that he is wearing a hat, and this is done indirectly when the King commands that the Hatter take it off when he appears as a witness at the trial of the Knave of Hearts (107). Thus all that we associate with the Hatter--his big polk-a-dot bow tie, his oversized hat with the label “In this style 10/6,” his Gladstone collar and checkered pants and vest--are Tenniel’s invention (see Fig. 6).

Simultaneously, the Duchess--like so many other characters--is virtually invisible in the text. Carroll tells us merely that she is “*very ugly*” (88) and mentions three times that she has a sharp, pointy chin (88, 89). Although Tenniel does only two illustrations of her, she, like the Mad-Hatter, is one of the most visually powerful figures in the book. Carroll never did a sketch of the Duchess--the “Pig and Pepper”

chapter in which she first appears was not part of his original *Under Ground*—thus, her masculine features and exaggerated head are purely the invention of Tenniel (see Fig. 7).

Most instructive, of course, is the handling of Alice herself. Of the forty-two illustrations that Tenniel did for *Alice's Adventures*, twenty-three are of Alice. While this is not surprising, given that she is the main character, it should be noted that actually Carroll himself gives very little detail in terms of Alice's physical appearance. By the end of *Alice's Adventures* all we know about Alice is that she has straight hair (chapter 2), that her hair is long (chapter 7), that she wears shiny black shoes (chapter 10), and a skirt (chapter 12). Finally, via Alice's sister's dream, we learn that Alice has "tiny hands and bright eager eyes" (119). Kelly suggests that "given such paltry details, she becomes a nondescript Everygirl" (65). Whatever image we have of Alice, therefore, is generally owing to Tenniel's illustrations.

What becomes intriguing in turn is the extent to which Tenniel manages to maintain her "anonymous" aspect. Of the twenty-three illustrations of Alice, in nearly half of them, including the very first one, her face is obscured, or in profile or completely turned away from the viewer (see Figs. 8 and 9). By keeping her "faceless," Tenniel is visually true to Carroll's characterization, at the same time that it is thanks to Tenniel that Alice is a character who, today, like the Mad-Hatter, is an easily recognized image. Of interest here, therefore, is the way that in Walt Disney's animated *Alice in Wonderland*, Alice is portrayed as blonde. Although Alice Liddell was dark-haired, Tenniel's model for his drawings, Mary Hilton Badcock, was "blonde

and pudgy" (Auerbach 35). While the whole American puritan ethos undoubtedly played a role in the choice of hair colour, it is also apparent that the animators drew heavily on Tenniel's illustrations--as they would necessarily have to, since Carroll himself provided so little detail in the text (Kelly 73).

There is, however, one instance in the Alice stories in which an illustration "speaks back" to the narrative. Tenniel's portrayal of Alice holding the pig in "Pig and Pepper" is the only time that she is portrayed full frontal/facing the reader. Like a character in a play or movie who breaks out of character to align him/herself with the audience in recognition of a farcical situation, so in this illustration Alice looks directly at the reader with an expression that suggests "this is madness!" Thus, she effectively comments on the twist the narrative has taken, and Tenniel has enabled his illustration to relay her thoughts and feelings, otherwise the sole realm of Carroll.

Yet one must be very careful about saying that Alice "speaks" in this illustration, for it is of utmost importance that, despite the centrality of the mouth to Carroll's work, in the many illustrations Tenniel does of Alice, she is never portrayed with a truly open mouth, nor is she ever portrayed eating. While this is in keeping with the fact that Alice is constantly prevented from eating, the point would also seem to be the way that as a female she is so often silenced. Thus the illustrations do portray the open mouth of other characters--the Queen, the Mad-Hatter, and Humpty Dumpty, for example--all figures who generally have more power than Alice (see Figs. 10-12), whereas Tenniel acknowledges Alice's lack of power by making her mouth relatively small and unopened. At one point in *Looking-Glass*, the White King,

feeling faint, demands a ham-sandwich from his Messenger. The antics of these two characters—the Messenger producing ham-sandwiches and hay for the King from a bag around his neck—is a source of amusement to Alice who puts her hand over her mouth in a gesture that highlights the influence of polite Victorian society in which women were encouraged to hide their open mouths when laughing (see Fig. 13). More importantly, though, this same gesture during a scene of eating highlights the fact that Alice does not eat. Thus a closer look at the illustration reveals that, along with or instead of stifling her laughter, Alice almost looks as though she might be ill from the mere sight of a ham-sandwich—another socially correct response to food for a Victorian female who least of all wants to appear hungry.

As it happens, however, in *Alice's Adventures* not one of Tenniel's illustrations depict characters actually eating. The first and only mouths opened for such a purpose do not appear until *Looking-Glass* with the Walrus and Carpenter and here they are portrayed not only in the act of eating but also eating their own kind (see Fig. 14). Lessing, who made the banquet scene his one exception to his rule against the open mouth in the visual arts, nevertheless maintained that cannibalism was a topic too disgusting for the painter and that its expression in art should be left to the poet. With the exception of the Walrus and the Carpenter, Tenniel too leaves the theme of cannibalism to Carroll.

Lessing also maintains in *Laocoön* that poetry is the superior of the two arts, and although his overt reason is that words can evoke everything that painting does, given that he also gives poetry the ability to depict the "open mouth," this also means that words are more powerful because they can "consume" everything that the painter

might depict. A cursory look would suggest that this principle is in operation within the *Alice* texts. Eating and speaking and the connections between them are prominent in the narrative, and relatively absent from the illustrations. Accordingly, if power is aligned with the ability to speak--with the verbal art--then Carroll would appear to be the more powerful of the two artists. Consider, though, that what Tenniel provided are things that texts cannot present--the bodies and physical presence of the characters. Without these illustrations, Carroll's characters would be, like the Cheshire's "grin without a cat," mouths without bodies. It would seem, therefore, that in the case of the *Alice* books, rather than one art swallowing another whole, the art forms of Tenniel and Carroll rely on one another for nourishment. Like Alice herself, pictorial and verbal art can and do play the dual roles of eater and eaten, and thus the mouth's place in the *Alice* texts also "speaks" to the relationship between the arts.

This sense of collaboration is further evidenced when one considers the placement of these illustrations within the text. As Kelly notes, "the illustrations appear to be in exactly the right places in the text so that the reader could see his way along the story. Several of the chapters, for example, have illustrations placed ahead of the text, thereby fixing in the reader's mind what certain characters look like before they appear in the text" (71-72). Moreover, as in the case of the Gryphon, Carroll frequently gives direct instructions: "If you don't know what a Gryphon is, look at the picture" (91). Directly below, on the same page, is Tenniel's picture of a Gryphon. Carroll employs this directive again during the trial for the Knave of Hearts: "The judge, by the way, was the King; and, as he wore his crown over the wig (look at the

frontispiece if you want to see how he did it), he did not look at all comfortable, and it was certainly not becoming" (104). Carroll's direct reference to both the picture of the Gryphon and the frontispiece "clearly acknowledges the important interdependence of illustrations and text" (Kelly 71).

Why did Carroll give such power to the pictorial instead of relying on his own descriptive language? One answer might be found at the outset of *Alice's Adventures* when Alice turns away from the book her older sister is reading and says: "what is the use of a book...without pictures or conversations?" (15). Although the point here might seem to be that the Alice books were written for children, one should also consider the extent to which Carroll might be arguing that books should be regarded not only as a verbal/textual art form but also as a multi-media construct. Certainly, the *Alice* stories go far beyond a merely "illustrated" narrative; they represent a composite art form in which the linguistic and the graphic work together, in harmony. Ironically, this is probably one reason why in Carroll's day, the *Alice* stories likely would have come under the Darwinian heading of "sports,"--i.e., oddities or a hybrids--and as such would have been treated as literary diversions rather than serious literature (Henkle 89).

With their unique blend of graphic and linguistic art, the *Alice* stories resist categorization, suggesting that the concept of uncrossable lines between the arts has prevailed to this day or that the way we categorize the arts has not expanded enough to accept all the many different forms art takes. Another reason, however, was that "serious literature" was a term reserved for the socially realistic novel whereby Sterne's

*Tristram Shandy* and Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* equally were regarded as misfits. Significantly, however, whereas today the notion of the novel or valuable fiction has expanded to include both *Tristram Shandy* and *Wuthering Heights*, the *Alice* stories still hover between sub-genres such as fantasy or children's literature. Moreover, even here they do not fit perfectly, since while they do not provide enough in-depth examination of human motivation or psychology to fit the criteria of the novel, they also contain too much open criticism of Victorian morality and social manners, of Darwinism, and of traditional views of time, language and logic (Henkle 89).

One might argue, furthermore, that it is an acute awareness of how language operates that leads both Alice and Carroll to claim that a book needs both pictures and conversation to be worthwhile. Carroll's prose is decidedly abstract, and many of the characters, most notably the Mad-Hatter, the Caterpillar, Humpty Dumpty and the Cheshire Cat, define themselves through their conversations; they are presented as "witty masters of the language who seem eager to engage in verbal jousts with their curious visitor" (Kelly 73). In this very way, however, Carroll's texts would seem to adhere to Lessing's notions about the respective abilities and limits of the arts. Or as Mitchell more recently observes: "painting sees itself as uniquely fitted for the representation of the visible world, whereas poetry is primarily concerned with the invisible realm of ideas and feelings" (*Iconology* 48). Thus one might argue that it is such esthetic decorum that prompts Carroll to leave to pictorial art the defining of the

physical presence of his characters while he himself communicates the intellectual component through conversation/language.

Given that so many of these conversations sound absurd, however, what arises in turn is the question of what it is that Carroll is trying to communicate through the "nonsense" of his texts. Here Elizabeth Sewell's observations on *Alice's Adventures* in her work *The Field of Nonsense* are particularly instructive:

The aim of Nonsense is to inhibit one half of the mind, and nothing more hinders the dream or imagination than to have its pictures provided. It is common experience to read a narrative which has been illustrated and find oneself completely unable to visualize the people and happenings in any other way, even though one may not care for the illustrations given, and would prefer one's own imaginings. The providing of pictures is a regular part of the Nonsense game. They sterilize the mind's powers of invention and combination of images while seeming to nourish it, and by precision and detail they contribute towards detachment and definition of the elements of the Nonsense universe. (111-12)

In essence, then, the presence of the illustrations is what enables Carroll to achieve the level of nonsense that he does in his prose. Thus when the author both writes and illustrates, as Carroll did with *Under Ground*, he would seem to be exercising a kind of dual control over his audience. Just as the text points to and relies on the visual, so the visual "points" to the text by freeing the mind from its tendency/desire to create its own images--Carroll's design then is to feed the hungry mind an image so that it can

more freely grapple/play with language. In the manner outlined by Sewell, Carroll's *Alice* stories, by suspending "sense," illuminate our understanding of traditional relationships among people and art forms.

Ironically, a related purpose served by the incorporating of illustrations is the canceling out of the human element. As Kelly observes of Carroll's characters: by separating their language (the text) from their bodies (the illustrations), Carroll reinforces the essence of nonsense, namely, that it is a game and the playthings are words. Instead of human characters with complex emotions, the illustrations render the characters as fixed objects" (73). As I see it however, this game has a very serious intent: because we see these characters as distant objects with whom we are not involved, it is easier to accept and believe their cruelty to one another and their remorseless cannibalism. Rather than overturning the verbal, the illustrations in the *Alice* stories serve to sterilize the verbal art's element of "feeling" and thus strengthens the text's motif of remorseless and voracious consumption. A variation on the notion of the "sugar coated pill," this strategy may ultimately have the therapeutic effect of reminding us of the way that people are turned into commodities in our own worlds.

At the end of his chapter in *Iconology* in which he addresses the question "What is an image?," Mitchell speaks of the pictures in language and the language of pictures and suggests: "perhaps the redemption of the imagination lies in accepting the fact that we create much of our world out of the dialogue between verbal and pictorial representations, and that our task is not to renounce this dialogue in favor of a direct assault on nature but to see that nature already informs both sides of the

conversation" (46). In the *Alice* stories, the "nature" would seem to be the centrality of eating and the redemption takes the form of a dialogue between the verbal/cultural and pictorial/natural, and of the merging of both cultural and natural codes in one text and one body.

Unique in their marriage of two seemingly opposite art forms, the *Alice* stories offer a rare opportunity to study both the perceived limits and the limitless possibilities of collaboration between the arts. With the mouth at the heart of a text that knows that the medium is the message, the relationship between the eater and eaten becomes one of sisterly symbiosis. In this respect, what turns out to be "nonsense" is the sole alignment of power with the eater, the verbal medium, and the male.

## CHAPTER THREE

### "BON APPETIT":

#### CANNIBALISM IN PAINTING, INTERARTS CRITICISM AND FILM

Even a cursory survey of clichéd esthetic metaphors reveals an underlying motif of cannibalism: "the starving artist," "the self-consuming artifact," "the devouring gaze." While we might like to regard such expressions as purely figurative, in today's consumer society they have a particular resonance and relevance. Similarly, while we might like to think that we have long put cannibalism behind us, the theme appears with increasing regularity in literature and film, and recently newspapers headline stories of actual acts of cannibalism. Insofar as the vampire is a key trope in many of these manifestations, the explanation might seem to lie in the human desire for immortality and the belief that one can become immortal, or gain "more life," by eating the flesh or drinking the blood of another. Whatever the reason for the current trend, always living on the periphery of our cultural identity is the cannibal, a memory that continually questions our understanding of ourselves in relation to god/ a higher spirit and our belief in our superiority to animals. As a figure of our "other" more savage selves, and whether literal or figurative, the cannibal serves to show us our own fears about our all too consuming appetites.

Unfortunately, just as civilization considers the cannibal to be a part of its past and not its present, so too have interarts critics tended to put G. E. Lessing's *Laocoön*, with its compartmentalizing approach to the arts, in the past. Actually, however, Lessing's great value is that he reminds us that our connection to cannibalism is more than just a thing of the "past." Lessing made the open mouth the centrepiece of his discussion of the arts and their relationships, and his specific concerns with the portrayal of eating and even cannibalism in art are particularly relevant to today's consumer society. Aware of the ways in which the arts, in their relationships, behave like predatory human beings, he imposed limits or taboos on the arts to keep them from "consuming" one another.

Specifically, Lessing structured his arguments for the "limits of painting and poetry" around the *Laocoön* group, a sculpture that embodies Simonides's notion of "painting [as] mute poetry" by depicting a non-speaking, closed-mouthed image. According to the legend, *Laocoön*, a Trojan priest of Apollo, met his death in struggling to save himself and his sons from two monstrous serpents sent by an angry Apollo, and he died from the serpents' bites "amidst screams of agony" (McCormick x). These serpents were sent as an act of vengeance upon *Laocoön* for trying to thwart the gods' interests in the Trojan War, and having dragged *Laocoön* and his sons into the sea, they devoured them. Thus in choosing to focus on the *Laocoön* figure, Lessing is not only dealing with the issue of the "open mouth" in pictorial art, but the "open mouth" as the means for expressing both pain and ingestion, and the theme of devouring as revenge.

Lessing notes that according to the ancient Greeks, “crying aloud when in physical pain is compatible with nobility of soul” but “such nobility could not have prevented the artist from representing the scream in his marble. There must be another reason why he differs on this point from his rival the poet, who expresses this scream with deliberate intention” (11). For the remainder of *Laocoön*, Lessing argues this other reason: that the “natural” qualities of painting and poetry (related respectively to space and time) define the subject matter that each may portray in relation to the expression of beauty, the ultimate aim of all art. It is on these grounds that Lessing bans the “open mouth” from representation in the visual arts: “simply imagine Laocoön’s mouth forced wide open, and then judge! Imagine him screaming and then look! From a form which inspired pity because it possessed beauty and pain at the same time, it has now become an ugly, repulsive figure from which we gladly turn away”(17). Thus at the very same time that Lessing eradicates the open mouth from painting and sculpture, he makes it a central issue in the differences and struggle between the arts.

In *Pictures of Romance*, Wendy Steiner acknowledges that “after two hundred years, the critical orthodoxy of *ut pictura poesis* had been exploded by Lessing, whose *Laokoön* had so sensitized critics and artists to the differences between artistic media that the analogy of spatial painting to temporal literature now seemed counterintuitive” (56). “Sensitizing” as Lessing may have been, however, he did not employ a “different but equal” method of dividing the arts. Instead he claimed that the temporal art of poetry was superior to the spatial art of painting, arguing that “the poet can incorporate

the ugly and disgusting into his art, which the painter cannot" (132), and that painting, as an imitative skill *can* express ugliness, but should refuse to do so (126).

In *Laocoön*, however, Lessing recurrently stresses that the great artist can successfully break the rules that restrain his/her art form, and his ban on the "open mouth" in the visual arts has indeed been breached in the case of many famous paintings. Consider for example Antonio Del Pollaiuolo's bronze sculpture *Hercules and Antaeus* (see Fig. 15), which iconographically depicts the factors leading to Antaeus's death. Antaeus was the son of an earth-goddess, invincible as long as he was directly in touch with her. Hercules broke this direct contact by lifting Antaeus off the ground and then crushing him to death. Lessing notes that in visual art in general, the depiction of an open mouth screaming in agony leaves little to the imagination of the viewer and hence--strictly speaking--the open mouth is visually less interesting than a closed mouth. Lessing further observes that "when a man of firmness and endurance cries out he does not do so unceasingly," but his cry will seem unceasing in a static art form like sculpture or painting, and is thus "detrimental to beauty" (28). In this way, what is natural and what is esthetically pleasing come together, although for Lessing when a choice needs to be made, the visual artist should sacrifice truth for the sake of beauty. For Lessing, depiction of a screaming figure "distorts [his] features in a disgusting manner" and stirs feelings of distress in the viewer, whereas with the *Laocoön* sculpture, the distress is transformed, through beauty, "into the tender feeling of pity" (17). What Lessing would say about Antaeus's open-mouth scream is hard to say, but certainly there seems to be little tenderness in

Pollaiuolo's sculpture. Ironically, too, perhaps Lessing would not object on the grounds that the screaming figure here is not the manly Hercules but the earth-bound "feminine" Antaeus.

A more recent example of the "open mouth" in painting (which probably would have Lessing turning over in his grave) is Edvard Munch's *The Scream* (see Fig. 16). Indeed, art historian Frederick Hartt echoes Lessing's notion of the open-mouthed subject as "an ugly and repulsive figure" (17) when he observes: "*The Scream*, painted in 1893, is a work one can hardly contemplate without horror. A person walking along a seashore promenade puts his hands to his head, bursting with anguish, while the very landscape about him heaves in waves as if vibrating along with his intolerable inner conflict" (878). Just as Wendy Steiner sees a correspondence between the violence that Roy Lichtenstein's paintings narrate and "the violence the pictorial medium suffers in the act of narrating" (*Pictures* 164), so the violent anguish and aspect of horror in Munch's *The Scream* could be attributed to the fact that one art is trying to perform/be the other.

This painting is of particular interest here not just for its depiction of an open mouth but for the way in which it depicts sound, or the "hearing" of sound, as it were. The heaving sound waves that serve to intensify the scream contradict the static quality of painting, for they show the sound of the scream in an undulating action/movement: one could compare the open mouth of the screamer to a stone thrown in a lake and the sound waves the ripples that widen over time and space. This temporal aspect is furthered in the painting via the *walking* couple and the boats

which seem caught up in the waves of sound. Here perhaps the ear--rather than the mouth--is the organ that needs closing. Yet as much as this painting, via the scream, incorporates the verbal medium's quality of temporality, so too does it virtually silence the scream by the fact that this painting puts "sound" into a visual frame, which--by way of stasis--effectively silences it. Furthermore, the visual representation of noise is always silent to the ear but not necessarily silent to the eye; through the presence of an open mouth in pictorial art, the eye and the ear change roles and thus so do the respective visual and verbal qualities--leading to the ear that closes/refuses to/cannot ingest sound and the eye that takes in the visual representation of that sound.

Insofar as the open mouth is allied with eating, another kind of painting that provides a good site for testing Lessing's theories is the banquet scene. Actually, the banquet scene is one that Lessing approves of for the painter, but mainly on the grounds that the restricted spatial setting enables the depiction of multiple activity and without violating the rule of co-existent activities. Significantly, it is also a banquet scene that Wendy Steiner uses to discuss the way that quattrocento painters were able to tell stories or depict sequential actions in their works, one of her specific examples being Filippo Lippi's *Banquet of Herod*. Whereas Lessing and Steiner are concerned mainly to comment on the purely formal issues of co-existence and story telling, however, my concern is to emphasize the actual subject matter of this painting and the cannibalistic issues that are encoded within it. According to Steiner, this painting tells the story of Salome, who, out of obedience to her mother, prostitutes herself to King Herod and thus indirectly promotes the execution of John the Baptist. In the right

third of this painting (see Fig. 17), Salome is shown presenting/serving up John the Baptist's head on a platter to her mother during a banquet.

While it is true that there is no actual reference to or depiction of cannibalism, it is clearly implied through the presence of John the Baptist's corpse (head) at the banquet (scene of eating) and the connection that those present at the banquet (specifically King Herod and Salome's mother) have to John the Baptist's death. The head is significant here, especially as it is served up on a platter--suggesting that Salome's mother has not only arranged for his death but is perhaps also going to eat him. In addition, apart from offering proof of John the Baptist's demise, the head, when displayed in public at the banquet, becomes the trophy of Salome's mother--the headhunter. Although Lessing would disagree with the narrative aspect of this painting--expressed through the repeated figure of Salome--he would agree that the banquet scene in itself is suitable for painting; such a topic, he argues in delightfully gustatory diction, holds a "charm for the eye" and is a subject upon which to "feast [one's] eyes" (72).

To the extent that banquets are typically occasions for conversation, the banquet scene is also the means whereby the verbal can legitimately be incorporated in the visual. Discussing the way that eating and speaking come together, Maggie Kilgour observes: "food is the matter that goes in the mouth, words the more refined substance that afterward comes out: the two are differentiated and yet somehow analogous, media exchanged among men, whose mediating presence may prevent more hostile and predatory relations" (*From 8*). As much as the banquet, as a site of

conviviality and sharing, suggests the collaboration of the arts, however, so much as a site of devouring does it suggest the ekphrastic rivalry and silencing of the other. A further paradox is the way that the banquet scene depicts “eating/discourse” at the same time that it stops it, and another paradox is the way that the banquet scene is at once an acknowledgment of the physicality/mortality of the human condition—we eat to live and live to eat—at the same time that it serves to sublimate this grossness into something esthetic and enduring. Agreeing, then, with Lessing, about how the pictorial arts function, I would also go on to argue that the banquet scene is actually one which can effectively “turn the tables” on his notion of poetry as the superior art, for here it is the pictorial art that serves to incorporate and “consume” the other.

Unlike Lippi’s *Banquet of Herod*, Dirc Bouts’s *Last Supper* depicts a banquet without formal narrative devices (see Fig. 18), and foregrounds the alliance of eating and words. The subject of the painting was dictated by two professors of theology who instructed Bouts to use as his focus the moment when Christ says “This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me” (Luke 22:19). Featuring Christ and his Apostles at the last supper, Christ holds up not an ordinary piece of bread but the circular wafer of the Eucharist, and instead of a wine glass there is the chalice or container of the sacred blood (Hartt 588). More than merely illustrating a story, such as the *Banquet of Herod* does, Bouts’s *Last Supper* is iconic, representing in one image the act and the story of transformation. Here, “words” literally become “food,” and both of these as well as time--“remembrance”--are captured in a visual art. What we also have, of course, is a doubly coded example of Lessing’s “pregnant

moment" and of his argument that the visual arts should turn natural things into the beautiful.

For an instructive companion piece to Bouffé's *Last Supper*, we might turn next to Francisco Goya's *Saturn Devouring One of His Sons*, in which the cannibalistic undertones of this Christian painting--the leader (father) eaten by his followers (sons), is both reversed and desublimated. As an allegory of the futile attempt to stop change, and as a horrific parody of Lessing's "pregnant moment," Goya's *Saturn* (see Fig. 19) functions as a rare example of how a spatial and static art form (painting) and the taboo (cannibalism/the "open mouth") come together to illustrate a temporal theme: "how time engulfs us all" (Hartt 803). Goya's *Saturn* has also been interpreted as depicting a redemption myth: "one returns to the father by being eaten by him; one reenters the garden by becoming a vegetable" (Kilgour *From* 11), although with respect to divine ingestion a better analogy might be the sculpture of Laocoön and his sons--the devouring serpents of Apollo coil like intestines around the three figures and through ingestion by Apollo in his symbolic animal form, they are delivered into the belly of their god--the god of the plastic arts. In any case, Goya's *Saturn* suggests that if "eating," "digesting," and "returning/decaying" are all actions allied with time then the visual arts can incorporate the temporal and possibly comment on the alliance of time and narration.

Goya's *Saturn* also provides an instructive springboard for discussing Lessing's notions of the ugly, the terrible and the ridiculous. If we take Lessing literally, then Goya's *Saturn* is ugly first and foremost on account of its portrayal of an "open

mouth,” and as Lessing reiterates time and again in *Laocoön*, “physical ugliness cannot in itself be a subject for painting” because it arouses displeasing and unpleasant sensations (130). More importantly, in his discussion of the various senses, Lessing does in fact identify the mouth as an organ for eating, and in differentiating between the ugly and disgusting he also makes direct reference to cannibalism. The ugly, for Lessing, may be divided into two kinds: harmless ugliness (the ridiculous) which refers mainly to physical deformity, drawing laughter or pity from the viewer; and harmful ugliness (the terrible) which is associated with the genuine fear aroused by depictions of such things as ferocious beasts and corpses. Although he grants the extent to which our awareness that the painted beast or corpse is merely an imitation takes the “keenness” out of the “fatal recollection,” he still feels that in pictorial art “ugliness exerts all its force at one time and hence has an effect almost as strong as in nature itself” (128).

While ugliness is an element perceived by the eye, disgust is, for Lessing, an element perceived through taste, smell, and touch, and these senses he regards as “lower” and “duller” than vision and hearing, suggesting a hierarchy of the senses that underlies his hierarchy of the arts. Even so, seeing visual representations of hunger, starvation and cannibalism can inspire disgust “through the association of ideas in that we recall the repugnance which they cause to our sense of taste or smell or touch” (Klotz qtd. in Lessing 131). Thus Lessing maintains that hunger and the extremes to which the starving will go to alleviate it—such as Ovid’s ravenous Eresichthon who in desperation “finally set[s] his teeth into his own limbs in order to nourish his body

with his own flesh" (136)--are subjects from which the painter should refrain; that "the awful aspect of hunger" is one to which "the poet has access almost solely through the element of disgust" (135).

In emphasizing the differences and maintaining the division between the temporal and spatial arts, what Lessing is really revealing is his fear that the borders separating them will blur: that poetry, if left unrestrained will turn itself into a "speaking picture," and that painting will become like writing. In an attempt to prevent this, and by way of disguising his fear, Lessing bases his prescriptions about what the respective arts should and should not do in the form of an argument from natural necessity. Yet as W.J.T. Mitchell points out, "there would be no need to say that the genres *should not* be mixed if they *could not* be mixed" (*Iconology* 104). Thus in accordance with the principle that by making something taboo, one inadvertently proves the prevalence of the practice, Lessing's attempt to purify the arts highlights the fact that no art is pure, just as he exposes the centrality of the "open mouth" in interarts debate by arguing strenuously against its presence in pictorial art.

The language that Lessing uses in his discussion of the arts and their metaphoric borders is the language of territorialization and fear. In Chapter XVIII of *Laocoön*, he remarks at length on one genre's "encroachment" on another--the culprit usually being painting--and emphasizes the importance of patrolling the borders between them. Likening the relationship between the arts to the diplomacy between nations, he argues that painting and poetry should be like two "equitable and friendly neighbors," neither of which should take "unseemly liberties in the heart of the other's

domain”(91). In addition, as first E. M. Gombrich and then Mitchell have noted, Lessing provides “a cultural map of Europe”; he enlists the support of the Englishman Joseph Spence against a “dangerous” French pictorial poetic which he fears may have infected his own countryman, the German Herr Winckelmann (*Iconology* 105).

In Mitchell's view, it is by seeing the arts as “members of the same family,” as “related by sister- and brother-hood, maternity and paternity, marriage, incest and adultery” that Lessing is able to argue that the arts are “subject to versions of the laws, taboos, and rituals that regulate social forms of life” (*Iconology* 112). I would argue further that food too has a powerful social component--there are special foods for and rituals/etiquette surrounding the eating of food related to business, weddings, birthdays, and religious celebrations that mark social relations. Eating is thus symbolic of these relations, and in turn cannibalism equally functions as a metaphor for these relations as expressed in the arts and in the dialogue between them.

Commenting specifically on the political implications of cannibalism, Maggie Kilgour observes:

eating is the most material need yet is invested with a great deal of significance, an act that involves both desire and aggression, as it creates a total identity between eater and eaten while insisting on the total control--the literal consumption--of the latter by the former. Like all acts of incorporation, it assumes an absolute distinction between inside and outside, eater and eaten, which however, breaks down as the law “you are what you eat” obscures identity and makes it impossible to

say for certain who's who. Paradoxically, the roles are completely unreciprocal and yet ultimately indistinguishable. (*From 7*)

This dynamic could apply not only to the process of eating/cannibalism but to the relationship/struggle between the arts that Lessing deals with, and his attempt to rank them. Assimilation and accommodation, when contextualized against cannibalism, take on a different level of meaning. Translated into the long-held belief since Columbus's time that cannibals eat the flesh of their captive enemies to absorb their strengths and fighting abilities (Arens 53), Lessing's claim that poetry is the superior art because it can incorporate all the qualities of painting, means in effect that its devouring of the pictorial is the reason for its power.

An intriguing opportunity to examine this dynamic further presents itself in Peter Greenaway's 1989 film, *The Cook, The Thief, His Wife and Her Lover*. A "Jacobean-style, black comic fable" ending in "gourmet cannibalism" (Quart 45), *The Cook* in effect reverses Lessing's procedures in *Laocoön*. That is, if the *Laocoön* encodes cannibalism in a discussion of interarts theorizing, in the Greenaway film interarts issues are encoded in a culinary revenge melodrama. In addition to the traditional arts of painting, music and literature, *The Cook* features the "fine arts" of deception, thievery, revenge and murder as well as cooking and other marginalized art forms. The primary setting in the film is a gourmet restaurant run by Richard (The Cook) and regularly visited by its owner, the cruel, pretentious, and vulgar Albert Spica (The Thief). Albert's main target of verbal and physical abuse is Georgina (His Wife) who becomes attracted to one of the restaurant's customers, Michael (Her

Lover). A clandestine passion develops between Michael and Georgina which is silently observed and aided by The Cook until the affair is discovered by the outraged Albert.

In a manner reminiscent of Lessing's personification of the arts as neighbours, in the Greenaway film the competition between the arts is played out in terms of the conflicts between the characters, each of whom is an artist or directly associated with an art. Associated with the textual/literary is Michael, who owns a book shop and spends his spare time cataloguing historical texts. At various points in the film, Albert notices and becomes quite irritated by the fact that the solitary Michael reads books while eating his meals at the restaurant. Eventually Albert tells him that there is "no reading at the table" and twice reminds him "this isn't a library, it's a restaurant!" Albert, like a diabolical Lessing, attempts to impose an order in his restaurant that will keep the "arts" separate and pure. He himself considers books meaningless and on two different occasions tosses Michael's books on the floor in the symbolic offer of a challenge.

Behind Michael's penchant for reading while he eats is the strong historical connection between food and text/words:

From Plato's *Symposium* on, feasting and speaking have gone together, and there is a long tradition of seeing literature as food which [Ben] Jonson refers to in *Neptune's Triumph*: "you must begin at the kitchen. There the art of poetry was learned and found out, or nowhere, and the

same day with the art of cookery." Reading is therefore eating, and an act of consumption. (Kilgour *From* 8-9)

Even the dense Albert makes the connection when, with one of Michael's books in hand he commands: "Richard, this needs cooking! Grill it with some mashed peas." Greenaway himself drew attention to the antiquity of the eating/knowledge connection in his 1991 interview with *Cineaste* in which he explains that when Georgina and Michael flee the restaurant kitchen to escape Albert they are leaving the "Garden of Eden" to "go to the book depository, the Tree of Knowledge" (8). At the very least, Greenaway brings new meaning to the phrase "food for thought."

The kitchen of the restaurant is the site of "creative" activity in terms of both cooking and sex; Michael and Georgina engage in erotic trysts in various areas of the kitchen between "courses." The kitchen, full of fruit, vegetables, birds, and fish and always lit in green makes it a likely and almost idyllic garden. Richard, always dressed in white, takes on a god-like role as he aids, abets and stirs the passions of the two lovers: apart from safely sequestering the naked couple away in his kitchen-paradise, he also prepares and serves them the same complimentary dish from his kitchen--a dish that looks suspiciously like raw oysters (Janzen 41, 46-47). Richard's role as an artist/creator/god is enhanced by his menus which serve to introduce each scene in the film and constitute a kind of composite art form (food items and graphics) as well as highlighting his "creations" for the seven days of the week.

Upon Albert's discovery of their secret affair and his subsequent wild rampage through the restaurant to find them, Michael and Georgina evade him by hiding in a

freezer full of hanging meat and then escape in the back of a butcher's truck filled with rotting meat and fish. The truck, stolen by Albert, was abandoned in the restaurant's parking lot with its contents left to rot when Richard refused to serve the meat to his clientele. Thus the lovers, in their escape from the lush fertility of the kitchen/garden must face death, decay and horror to arrive at the book depository/tree of knowledge.

Michael and Georgina spend two days at the book depository in hiding from Albert, mistakenly assuming that they are safe there because Albert doesn't read. Significantly, what becomes their undoing is both the need to eat and the love of books/knowledge. Richard prepares gourmet "picnics" for Georgina and Michael, which are delivered to them at the book depository by Pup, the dishwasher. Michael gives Pup books in return for delivering the food, and it is via Pup's love of books that Michael and Georgina are discovered. The name and address of the depository stamped inside Pup's volume is what leads Albert and his henchmen to Michael; they force him to eat the pages of his books--ramming them down his throat with a large wooden spoon--until he suffocates and chokes to death.

Michael's death and corpse thus constitute Albert's final work of art: he leaves Michael's dead body--the mouth and nose stuffed with pages--carefully laid out on the floor of the book depository for his wife to find. Albert, who wants to be admired for the style of his revenge in this killing/crime of passion, is confident that his handiwork will be recognized: that is, he is well known for enjoying good food and Michael's corpse is nicely "stuffed." Obviously, Albert fancies himself an artist of the culinary

persuasion, and in fact it is with the tools of the cook that Albert practices his brutal art. Indeed, while we might associate him with the “fine art” of thievery, he himself compares his “work” to that of a chef: “What you’ve got to realize is that a clever cook puts unlikely things together—duck and oranges, for example, or pineapple and ham—it’s called ‘artistry.’ I’m an artist the way I combine my business and my pleasure. Money’s my business, eating’s my pleasure.” A brutal criminal, an aspiring gourmet, and a “philistine who mispronounces the entrées on the menu,” Albert regularly belches and spits out food while holding court at the restaurant (Quart 46). He silences his opponents in business and love with cooking tools: a wooden spoon down Michael’s throat, a fork stabbed into the cheek of the woman who tells him of Georgina’s adultery, and soup violently spooned into the mouth and then poured over the head of an uncomplying customer. On another occasion, Albert attempts to make the hapless young Pup betray the whereabouts of Michael and Georgina by forcing him to swallow the buttons on his kitchen uniform, and when that does not work he cuts out the boy’s own “belly button” and makes him eat it.

In the film, Pup represents music; while washing dishes he sings in soprano “the 51st Psalm--which is about being an unworthy sinner--which the Thief certainly is” (Greenaway 8). Thus music, which by way of singing is another sight for the “open mouth,” offers a kind of running commentary on Albert’s character throughout the film. Furthermore, many of the Psalms, including the 51st, are Psalms of David, who as child faced the giant Goliath--with whom a correlation can easily be made with Albert. Furthermore, Pup’s relationship with Albert in some ways parallels

David's relationship with Saul; Albert shares several personality traits with Saul, who is portrayed in the Bible as a man who loses control, and is moved to commit murder in a fit of rage and jealousy (1 Sam. 18-22). As a child, David also calmed Saul with his music, and Pup too makes a fruitless attempt to calm Albert during one of his abusive attacks on Georgina: "Shall I sing for you?" Pup asks Albert, and though he does, there is no soothing the monstrous Thief who continues to heap verbal, physical and sexual abuse on them both. The 51st Psalm also makes direct references to the open mouth and the tongue as instruments of song/praise:

Deliver me from bloodshed, O God,  
 O God of my salvation,  
 and my tongue will sing aloud of your deliverance. (14)

O Lord, open my lips,  
 and my mouth will declare you praise. (15)

The singer of these words, Pup, is attacked through his mouth--Albert wants to force it open, first to make it speak, then to make it eat--after which the boy neither sings nor speaks again in the film and thus music is successfully silenced. Albert, who is perhaps an even more unworthy sinner than the penitent offender of the Psalm, never does repent but instead has his own lips forced open to perform the profane act of cannibalism.

Unlike Albert, Georgina understands and appreciates the arts; she reads, is familiar with fine food and wine, has excellent table manners, and unlike Albert she can correctly pronounce the items on the menu. Georgina is very much allied with the

“visual” arts in terms of her concern with cosmetics and haute couture: Albert makes Georgina tell Michael that she “spends 400 pounds a week on clothes, and goes to a good hairdresser” and her “visuality” is further emphasized by the way that Albert regards her as a “mute” ornament. Albert often puts Georgina on display--drawing attention to her in the restaurant by loudly praising or criticizing how she looks and what she wears--and at one point he tells his cohorts to “watch Georgina” so they can follow her lead in table manners. Thus she is very much a living art object or speaking picture/sculpture. Albert’s vulgar dinner-table diatribes dominate the film; in comparison to him, none of the characters have a particularly large speaking part, and this is especially true of Georgina for whom Albert often speaks instead--as when he insists that she make conversation with Michael and then tells her exactly what to say, thus putting words in her mouth.

It could be argued that Lessing’s hierarchy of the senses/arts--in which taste, smell, and touch are regarded as the lowest and the dullest and granted the least respect--still holds true today. This is especially true for the art most closely related to taste and smell--the art of cooking or cuisine--which few would include in their pantheon of “the arts.” Drawing attention to this situation, Greenaway speaks of the “false arts” or “the ‘small-c’ arts; couture, coiffure, and cuisine” and attempts to correct this imbalance by making the Cook the movie’s true artist figure, and, says Greenaway, “he is also me”(6). Greenaway portrays Richard as the one trying to provide or achieve some sense of coherence and to the extent that coherence is the province of the visual arts, Greenaway would seem to agree with Lessing who believes

that “the beauty of an object arises from the harmonious effect of its various parts” (104). Coherence/harmony constitutes the element of beauty, just as cooking is certainly an art that involves pleasure and in this way, Greenaway is using cooking as the art which conjoins the visual and the verbal (time) element. Gourmet cooking in particular is a visual art in which the presentation of the food is equally as important as the taste, and also an art of time in the sense that food is an art that is appreciated by the mouth, and a dish cannot be consumed and digested in an instant, but must be savoured over time--through eating. Moreover, revenge is a form of balance and “esthetic” pleasure, suggesting in the case of Greenaway’s film that cooking and consuming the other is an attempt at coherence or at least a sense of order which one gains from knowing justice has been served, which is what cannibalism as revenge is all about.

That the “arts” of fashion and cuisine are not considered to be “true” arts is also symptomatic of the much broader issue of gendering within the arts. The “false” arts are generally aligned with the female or have feminine associations. Thus it would appear that these arts--couture and coiffure--concerned most often with the appearance of the female body fail to be legitimized because of the fact that the feminine falls on the same side of the binary as the powerless, the silent, and the eaten. In the Greenaway film, this problem seems to be redressed in the way that the arts are presented as lovers: Georgina/painting/ image and Michael/literature/text struggle to maintain a relationship, and their separation in death takes the form of a transposition into each other: Michael (verbal art) becomes static and pictorial, while Georgina (visual art) becomes verbal and active, as well as the one who remembers.

After Michael's murder, the distraught Georgina convinces Richard to prepare and cook Michael's body. Thus Michael, or his body, becomes art twice, in two different mediums--as esthetic corpse, and as served-up dish--but for the same purpose: first Albert's and then Georgina's revenge. In essence Michael is also a composite art form; his final form is the result of the combined efforts of two artists--the Cook and the Thief--and in view of the way that he is stuffed with the pages of his depository volumes, he is also the "cooked book." Furthermore, as Albert earlier requested, Richard has grilled the book/Michael with some peas/vegetables.

Albert, like Michael before him, is attacked through his art: he is forced--at gunpoint, the gun held by Georgina--to consume the body that he had so artistically murdered. Figuratively speaking, Albert, who is both the silencer and opener/stuffer of mouths, has his lips pried apart to receive a taste of his own medicine. The silenced mouth, Michael, takes its revenge in a new art form by engaging Albert's mouth in the act of eating, the act of cannibalism. Once Albert has managed to eat a piece of Michael, Georgina shoots him and, as if to justify doing so, calls him "cannibal." Thus, just as the son of Saturn was redeemed by his father's consumption of him, so too does Michael, as gourmet cuisine, live on/find redemption in the belly of his maker (Albert). Turning to the Judaeo-Christian site of consumption, the final cannibalistic meal in this film is a grotesque parody of the Eucharist communion; here the "bread" that symbolizes the body of Christ is literally flesh and is consumed with wine in a "commemorative" ritual--complete with Albert's expletive "Jesus!" when he sees the body, and Georgina's rejoinder "He's not God!" Ultimately, the conviviality

of the banquet is turned into the carnage of torture, death and revenge. Albert, who lacks the refinement and character truly to understand or appreciate the arts, attempts, as their "patron" to control them, separate them, and undermine them, becoming in the end the destroyer, devourer, and cannibal of both life and art.

The link between sexual intercourse and eating is also compounded in this film through the act of cannibalism. After presenting Albert with the cooked Michael, Georgina suggests to her horrified husband that he try the cock first because he at least knows where it's been. In this way, Greenaway links the twin themes of sexual and alimentary devouring hinted at earlier by Albert who, upon learning of Michael and Georgina's affair, claims: "I'll kill that bloody book-reading jerk! I'll kill him and I'll bloody eat him." This threat foreshadows both Michael's and Albert's eventual ends, and, in yet another horrible parody, brings together Sagan's affectionate and aggressive cannibalisms. That is, through the sex/eating nexus the dynamics of cannibalism in terms of interarts relationships is also revealed: sexual intercourse suggests a form of affectionate "cannibalism" that in turn implies a productive/fertile/harmonious relationship between the arts that contrasts with the aspect of aggressive rivalry, which involves an eat or be eaten mandate in which one art consumes the other.

As I noted in the case of Atreus's revenge on Thyestes, if the mark of the "civilized" is that they do not eat human flesh, then the ultimate revenge on the civilized is to make them a cannibal. This would be more true of what Georgina does to Albert if he were in anyway an enlightened, refined, or cultured human being. Given that he is so animalistic, then when viewed from the perspective of Lévi-

Strauss's culinary triangle, we might say that what Georgina has essentially done in feeding the cooked Michael to Albert is to civilize him. Albert is associated with animals/nature/rotting meat via the stolen butcher's truck and the dogs in the parking lot; just as his inhumanity is suggested at the beginning of the film when he forces Roy, who owes him money, to eat dog shit and then urinates on him. Georgina, with Richard's help, turns the bestial act of cannibalism--one associated with animals, who eat their food raw and remorselessly kill and devour their own kind--into a cultural act by cooking and serving the corpse in a restaurant. Also distinguishing Georgina's revenge from Atreus's revenge on Thyestes is the fact that Albert knows what he eats, and Georgina has the added pleasure of telling him not only to eat, but what part of Michael to start with. Because Albert knows what he is eating, he is thus more culpable than Thyestes and for this reason alone, Georgina is justified in killing him: insofar as he is a beastly human cannibal and a degraded specimen of humanity she murders him in the name of civilization.

A final and central way that the Greenaway film relates cannibalism to interarts issues is the way that *The Cook* also features a famous seventeenth-century Dutch painting concerned with eating: namely, Franz Hals's *Banquet of the Officers of the Saint George Guard Company* (see Fig. 20). In keeping with Kilgour's argument that in cannibalism the outside becomes inside and vice versa, a giant reproduction of *The Banquet* covers almost an entire wall of the restaurant, subtly and subliminally commenting on and presiding over the action. This painting depicts actual historical figures, Dutch citizen-soldiers, in the midst of one of many stupendous banquets that were reported to have lasted as long as a week. Apparently, civic authorities of the

time pleaded with the soldiers to reduce their gluttonous revelries from a weeks duration to three or four days, with little success (Hartt 739). Insofar as each of the painting's corpulent, middle-aged men had in fact paid to have himself portrayed and expected to be recognizable in the painting we have a further instance of inside and outside in the context of consumption. In turn, if the purpose of the painting was to "preserve" the scene of eating in visual art, then in essence what Greenaway has done is to bring these corpses, this painting, to life, and to restore the temporal element.

In a still shot from the film (see Fig. 21) which shows the dining area of the restaurant, Albert is standing and addressing Georgina while the cook, Richard, looks on; a portion of *The Banquet* can be seen to the left. Here we can see how the positions of characters in certain scenes resembles those of the soldiers in the painting, and how the restaurant decor matches that of the painting--right down to the potted palm. Like the soldiers of the Hals's painting, the pot-bellied Albert and his men enjoy an enormous banquet every night at the restaurant; Greenaway also imitates the clothing of the painted soldiers by costuming Albert and his henchmen in black and red pseudo-uniforms, and the physical resemblance some actors bear to individuals in the painting is particularly remarkable. An especially provocative element of the soldiers' dress in the painting is the way that the large ruffs around their necks serve to make it appear that their heads are on platters; not only does this subtly foreshadow and later mirror the presentation of Michael's body on a platter at the end of the film, but the modern replacement of the ruff with the necktie and business suit serves to suggest how this current piece of neckwear equally functions to sever the head and the

body. Through this continuity, then, Greenaway nicely addresses the issue of how repetition is an essential and yet paradoxical means of depicting identity over time.

One important difference between the painting and *Figure 21*/the film is the presence of Georgina. She is essentially the film's "centre piece," foregrounding the consumption of woman and the presence of a devouring gaze of which she is the object. Of course there are no women in Hals's painting, partly because it portrays a civic guard company, and partly because his art reflected the culture of the time in which women were essentially non-entities. In seventeenth-century Holland, women lived "behind the scenes" in places such as the kitchen, which in the film has become the domain of the chef, Richard, suggesting that in contemporary society, woman has come out of the kitchen merely to fulfill the equally thankless task of "silent ornament."

Hals's painting also offers a unique illustration of the dynamics of the banquet scene. As in Bouts's and Lippi's banquet scenes, Hals's has captured several of his subjects in mid-speech and several others on the verge of eating and drinking--i.e., they have glasses, knives and food in their hands. What is particular to the Hals painting is the way in which the painting itself seems to interrupt these actions. This could be accounted for by the fact that this banquet scene is also a portrait painting--the subjects are aware of the painter and one may say that they appear to be looking briefly at the painter in order to indulge him before going back to their revelries. Thus we get a sense of these soldiers being "trapped in time," while simultaneously the presence of the banquet implies that the painting intrudes only momentarily upon their time. In this way, instead of emphasizing stasis in the painting, this situation

communicates a sense of action by suggesting four simultaneous occurrences: explicitly eating/drinking and talking, and implicitly modeling/posing and painting. Arguably, few are made more aware of time than a model who poses for a painter and that is the impression the viewer gets of these subjects: that they are very aware of time and are waiting to spend it in eating and drinking. In addition, this particular aspect of Hals's painting makes it an ideal one for Greenaway to choose to "bring to life," in view of the fact that the subjects seem to be impatient to return to their revelries—thus Greenaway dramatizes the "life" that waits to continue after the painting is complete.

*The Banquet* takes on an "intrusive" quality in a different sense in terms of how it operates within the film itself. Most noticeable is the way that the painting's subjects act as audience to the film's action; the men in the painting appear to be watching the people in the restaurant; particularly they watch the progress of Georgina and Michael's relationship, as well as watching Albert and the others at his table. Cementing the connection between Albert and the gluttonous soldiers depicted in the painting, near the end of the film, when Richard bans Albert from the restaurant for his rude and violent behaviour, the painting too is placed outside in the parking lot—covered in the food that Albert and his lackeys have strewn over it during an argument cum food-fight regarding the wisdom of leaving Michael's corpse at the scene of the crime. When Albert returns for his "last supper," the painting is back inside on the wall and the men in the painting/at the banquet appear to watch and whisper about Albert as he eats Michael. Thus the painting and its history comment not only on

Albert and his attitudes toward art but also on the nature of art itself. That Albert "attacks" the painting with food is significant in the sense that it implicitly resembles the food/eating related way in which he stuffed/murdered Michael in an indirect attack on Georgina. The painting, by way of and along with Georgina, flings back its own "food" (Michael) in a counterattack on Albert, while bearing witness to and condemning his cannibalism.

The presence of Hals's painting serves to make Greenaway's film a metapicture, what Mitchell describes as "a self-referential image...that is 'about itself'" (*Picture* 41) and which involves one visual artifact regressively incorporating an earlier one, with each of them commenting on the other. Hence, just as the film illustrates/speaks to the character, lives and habits of the soldiers of the Saint George Guard Company, so too does the painting "speak" back to the characters in the film and indeed to the viewer of the film. The painting represents the spectator position, and at the end of the film the viewer is startled to see his/her mirror image join with *The Banquet's* soldiers in condemning the cannibal Albert. Important to an understanding of the Greenaway film as both a metapicture and a site of interarts tensions is Mitchell's recognition that "metapictures elicit, not just a double vision, but a double voice, and a double relation between language and visual experience...they interrogate the authority of the speaking subject over the seen image" (*Picture* 68). The questioning of the authority of the speaking subject over the visual operates on a large scale in the sense that the commentary that is usually given over to the verbal interpreter, critic or chorus is here performed by the visual arts themselves. On a

smaller scale, within the film itself, the power dynamic and struggle between visual and verbal arts is played out between the film's main characters. The final positioning of Georgina/visual in a place of power at the end of the film, along with the silence of Michael/the verbal, suggests a questioning and a breakdown of the authority of the verbal art. Just as the painting speaks back at the film, so Georgina, who is aligned with the visual, literally speaks back at Albert. In addition, just as the metapictorial phenomenon "dissolves the boundary between inside and outside, first- and second-order representation" (*Picture* 42), so too does cannibalism dissolve the boundaries between individuals and individual art forms.

Although, like most film, *The Cook* is a composite art form by way of its use of music and visual and verbal art, the medium with the strongest presence is the visual--predictably for a director whose first vocation was painting. Greenaway's portrayal of violence, of the disgusting and the ugly, is powerfully graphic; and here Lessing would probably object, especially since Greenaway specializes in what Lessing classifies as harmful ugliness (the terrible), which is associated with the genuine fear aroused by depictions of such things as ferocious beasts and corpses. Lessing, however, never had to consider the cinematic art form and so his claim that in painting "ugliness exerts all its force at one time" and permanently is not necessarily true (128). As both a spatial and temporal art form, film allows ugliness to be displayed both in space and over time. In the case of Greenaway's film, moreover, instead of lessening the effect of the ugly, the temporal prolongation itself becomes a "duration that outrages nature" which almost makes the viewer wish for a static and permanent end.

While both Lessing and Greenaway are similar in the way in which they place interarts relationships in the context of human relationships, they differ over notions of “purity.” Greenaway notes how “most mainstream cinema tends to glamorize, deodorize, romanticize, and sentimentalize” human relationships, and he claims to be “very keen to not do those things” (8). Lessing, in contrast, very much believes in “sanitizing” or purifying relationships between the arts, and in this light one might say that Lessing is to interarts criticism what Hollywood is to alternative cinema. One point that Lessing and Greenaway actually do agree on is that pictorial art must avoid the excessive or inappropriate use of realism. There, however, the agreement ends for Lessing believes that art must sacrifice realism in the name of beauty, whereas Greenaway, who feels that “the most satisfactory movies are those which acknowledge their artificiality” (8), sacrifices realism to produce both beauty *and* more often the powerful violence, gore and ugliness exemplified in *The Cook*.

Predictably, the art that Lessing objects to in particular is the portrait painting of the Dutch realists. Greenaway, however, appears to have been greatly influenced by Dutch painting of the seventeenth century; one film critic suggests that certain scenes in *The Cook* are “almost surreal variation[s] on Dutch genre paintings” (Quart 47), and certainly this influence can be felt in the scenes that take place in the restaurant, the name of which--Le Hollandais--itself constitutes a direct reference to the Dutch. Dutch painting of the golden age centres on two things that are in fact also the two that Albert focuses on--food and money. Dutch table paintings of this time reflected the burgeoning bourgeoisie's concern with the appearance of things; they wanted to

show off their crystal and cutlery, and be portrayed in the pursuit of leisure activities such as eating, drinking and talking (Janzen 18)—a central motif expressed in the film by the entrepreneurial Albert and his nouveau-riche associates.

At the same time, Greenaway does seem to accord with Lessing in terms of the rivalry between nations that Lessing sets up in *Laocoön* as a metaphor for the struggle between the arts. Albert, compelled by his dislike for Michael's intellectual/literary pursuits, decides that Michael is Jewish, adding an anti-Semitic tension to *The Cook* that foregrounds the film's national rivalry/alliance motif by combining the British, French, and Jewish cultures prominent in World War II. Thus both Greenaway and Lessing draw distinct "cultural maps of Europe" in exploring the nature of interarts relationships.

The two main rival nations in *The Cook*, however, are England and France and here Greenaway seems almost to invert Lessing's alignment. Whereas Lessing feared the French because he felt that they blur the borders between painting and poetry by trying to impose on poetry the rigid structures of painting, in the Greenaway film, this very blurring is presented positively. The French Richard, acting as liaison between Georgina and Michael, blurs the "border" or wall between them through food—thus blurring the distinctions between image/Georgina and text/Michael. What is clear is that all of the main characters, with the exception of Albert, are connected to the French culture in some way, and that whereas for Lessing the French are the villains, in the film the "French connection" is the saving grace. Richard, the creator of exquisite cuisine, is of course, French. Michael is studying and cataloguing French texts on the French Revolution; he speaks and reads French and enjoys French food.

Georgina also speaks French and is connected with French fashion and chic. French, in turn, is precisely what Albert is lacking. One of the first examples we have of Albert's particularly English/British nature, apart from his obvious cockney accent, is the fact that he asks Richard to cook Michael's French book with some peas--demonstrating his typically British lack of gourmet savvy. Though he owns *Le Hollandais*, Albert in fact has no "taste," no esthetic sensibilities; the French language of food and love is one that Albert does not speak. Despite this, or perhaps because of this, Albert is ultimately the tyrannical and violent "ruler" against whom the others revolt in a parody of the French Revolution--a metaphor for the revolt of the arts within the film. Poetry, cooking, music, coiffure, couture and the visual arts exact their gory vengeance on the divisive force represented by Albert. Their revenge is an act which, like the French Revolution's "reign of terror," both promises and leads to liberty and freedom--the clincher lying in Georgina's final words to Albert--"Bon appetit. It's French."

In many ways, film has emerged as the ideal art form in a consumption-obsessed society; it is the "fast food" of the art world. This is reflected on the video cover for *The Cook* itself; designed to be eye catching and a "quick" read, it sums up the film in five words: "Lust...Murder...Dessert. Bon Appetit!" (see Fig. 22). These words outline not only the course of a meal--lust (appetizer or perhaps a "cocktail" to whet one's appetite), murder (main course, the "meat" of the matter) and dessert (as in one's "just desserts")--but also the course of human appetite, which is, ultimately, a matter of life and death. The placement of Georgina between the fork and knife held

at the ready in the hands of a man (likely Albert's) gruesomely implies that she/Georgina/the female body is edible. Importantly, at the same time that Georgina is "trussed" up, her arrogant/confident pose challenges the notion that she is a tasty "piece," hinting at the reversal of sexual politics that occurs at the end of the play. Furthermore, even the cover, in its utilitarian role, has something to say about the arts: the "viewer discretion" advised for *The Cook* reflects the censorshipping/silencing of the visual arts issue played out in the film--the same film that the advisory is warning us to be careful about watching.

The sophistication of the cover's depiction of cannibalism relates to Lévi-Strauss's notion of how the nature of food preparation--raw and cooked--separates the animal/primitive from the civilized. Cooking essentially serves to make food "mute," where as "raw" flesh is still "fresh" or "alive" and in this sense "vocal." Thus the "raw" Georgina, though she seems about to be consumed, suggests the visual containment of a "speaking" body. "Raw" also has both sexual and alimentary connotations, both of which are implied by the cover design--in both senses of the term, the female is "dinner." While the predator in possession of the fork and knife preparing to cannibalize Georgina raw is placed in the position of "animal" according to Lévi-Strauss's triangle, the more dangerous implication for her is that in her "raw" state she is aligned with nature and thus the dangerous reification of the alignment of women with the visual, powerless and the eaten is implied. Finally, though, the cover, like the film, serves to alert us to our own savage and supposedly long ago abandoned appetites. In speaking of both *The Cook*, *The Thief, His Wife and Her Lover*, and of

human nature in general, Peter Greenaway states: "I wanted to use cannibalism not only as a literal event but in the metaphorical sense, that in the consumer society, once we've stuffed the whole world into our mouths, ultimately we'll end up eating ourselves" (qtd. in Janzen 107).

## CONCLUSION

In *Iconology*, one of the pioneering studies in the new directions that interarts scholarship has taken, W.J.T. Mitchell writes that “the history of culture is in part the story of a protracted struggle for dominance between pictorial and linguistic signs, each claiming for itself certain proprietary rights on a ‘nature’ to which only it has access” (43). Essentially, what my own study has uncovered is that perhaps there is no real difference between cannibalism, interarts relationships and interarts criticism. Just as William Arens suggests that European colonizers created “the man-eating myth” to establish and define a savage “other,” so too does the interarts critic rewrite the myth of the “other” art by dismantling and rearranging the constructed borders between them. In his discussion of cannibalism as a cultural practice, Sagan notes that “in the relation of warfare and cannibalism, we can begin to see that cannibalism is closely connected with the expression and satisfaction of human aggression. I define aggression as the desire to dominate or tyrannize another person or other people” (5). From here, cannibalism becomes not only a metaphor for the relationships between the arts but also for interarts discourse in itself. Interarts theorists from Plato to Lessing

have forwarded their own misogynist, racist, and religious agendas under the guise of “interarts” discussion, and in perhaps more sophisticated ways, contemporary critics equally use interarts discourse to attack, consume and subsume the work of past artists and theorists.

The three texts examined in this thesis both dramatize and illustrate this struggle which, like cannibalism, contains moments of aggression and affection. Thus, all three invoke the alignment of open mouth/eater/verbal medium/power/male and the alliance of closed mouth/eaten/visual art/powerless/female but at the same time each operates as a hybrid art form and thereby questions the polarization of the arts into either/or categories. In so doing, these texts not only problematize their own natures but what is “natural” in the greater implied relationships within a culture.

Just as there was and still is a fear of the cannibal, so there is a fear of the possibility of the destruction of all boundaries between cultures, genders and art forms. *Thyestes*, the *Alice* stories and *The Cook, The Thief, His Wife and Her Lover* were each in their own day perceived as unconventional, extreme, or non-classifiable--as were and are their creators. Thus these works that blend “opposite” art forms in significantly unique ways were labeled “other.” The manner in which these texts express the erosion of boundaries and relationships between people via eating/cannibalism highlights the rivalry and collaboration between the visual and verbal arts and significantly, also the reverse--not only the violent competition but also the affectionate mutual nourishing that exists between the arts.

Eating in general and, more recently, the metaphor of cannibalism in particular has begun to establish itself as a topic of interest within a number of disciplines

including history, psychology, sociology, anthropology, feminist studies, and film and literature studies. What would also be interesting in turn is to consider the way that the relationships between disciplines might be illuminated by an interarts approach.. The relationships among different disciplines are very much defined and confined by an "us" versus "them" mentality that until recently has not allowed for smooth border crossings. Clearly, just as the arts are ranked, different disciplines are ranked (often with the male-dominated sciences coming out ahead of the "feminine" liberal arts or humanities) and via the cannibalism/art nexus the possibility exists for further understanding the ways in which certain disciplines threaten, oppose, devour and/or nourish one another.

In this way, a further connection might also be forged between academic concerns and popular culture and ecological concerns today. Diane Ackerman, for example, suggests that our fascination for horror movies in which people become fodder for other/other worldly creatures are a result of the fact that we aren't comfortable with being at the top of the food chain (170-71). Similarly, according to Maggie Kilgour our uneasiness and obsession with consumption is illustrated by "a veritable boom of cannibal literature, films, and criticism" ("Cannibalism" 19). Cannibal films such as *Eating Raoul*, *Parents*, and *Delicatessen*; film adaptations of the novels *Fried Green Tomatoes* and *Silence of the Lambs*; and the huge popularity of the vampire on both page and screen suggests that a fascination with the darker side of human appetite has seeped into mainstream culture: "the image of the cannibal thus serves the satiric function of revealing the heart of darkness within contemporary society, reminding us that civilization conceals its own forms of savagery" (Kilgour

"Cannibalism" 19). Thus if cannibalism, when applied to the relationship between the arts, suggests that painting and poetry find lurking in their own souls the words or the image of the other, then interarts scholarship has wide ranging possibilities that extend far beyond esthetic matters.

A self-defining act with powerful social components, eating and its depiction in art is a political issue, for the scene of eating, like the arts themselves, is influenced by notions of power and cultural forces surrounding food and its consumption. The thousands of starving and undernourished in third world countries, the prevalence of eating disorders such as anorexia nervosa that cause the body to cannibalize itself, the consuming of cultures through melting-pot assimilation tactics, the economics of food production, and the health horrors of "fast" food--all these are issues that have been and already are part of the underlying message/hidden agenda in the arts. Thus, the more that critics are beginning to re-examine the ramifications of *ut pictura poesis*, the more that "you are what you eat" begins to be a good site for focusing interarts debate and emphasizing its contemporary relevance.

**APPENDIX**

Illustrations



Fig. 1. (*Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, Chap. 7)



Fig. 2. (*Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, Chap. 6)

# Chapter I



Alice was beginning to get very tired of sitting by her sister on the bank, and of having nothing to do: once or twice she had peeped into the book her sister was reading, but it had no pictures or conversations in it, and where is the use of a book, thought Alice, without pictures or conversations? So she was considering in her own mind, (as well as she could, for the hot day made her feel very sleepy and stupid,) whether the pleasure of making a daisy-chain was worth the trouble of getting up and picking the daisies, when a white rabbit with pink eyes ran close by her.

There was nothing very remarkable in that, nor did Alice think it so very much out of the way to hear the rabbit say to itself "dear, dear! I shall be too late!" (when she thought it over afterwards, it occurred to her that she ought to have wondered at this, but at the time it all seemed quite natural); but when the rabbit actually took a watch out of its waistcoat-pocket, looked at it, and then hurried on, Alice started to her feet, for

"The Queen of Hearts she made some tarts  
All on a summer day;  
The Knave of Hearts he stole these tarts,  
And took them quite away!"

"Now for the evidence," said the King, "and then the sentence."

"No," said the Queen, "first the sentence, and then the evidence!"

"Nonsense!" cried Alice, so loudly that everybody jumped, "the idea of having the sentence first!"

"Hold your tongue!" said the Queen.

"I won't!" said Alice, "you're nothing but a pack of cards! Who cares for you?"

At this the whole pack rose up into the air, and came flying down upon her: she gave a little scream of fright, and tried to beat them off, and found herself lying on the bank, with her head in the lap of her sister, who was gently brushing away some leaves that had fluttered down from the trees on to her face.



quite dull and stupid for things to go on in the common way.

So she set to work, and very soon finished off the cake.

"Curiouser and curiouser!" cried Alice, (she was so surprised that she quite forgot how to speak good English) "now I'm opening out like the largest telescope that ever was! Goodbye, feet!" (for when she looked down at her feet, they seemed almost out of sight, they were getting so far off!) "oh, my poor little feet, I wonder who will put on your shoes and stockings for you now, dears? I'm sure I can't! I shall be a great deal too far off to bother myself about you: you must manage the best way you can — but I must be kind to them," thought Alice, "or perhaps they won't walk the way I want to go! Let me see: I'll give them a new pair of boots every Christmas."

And she went on planning to herself how she would manage it.

"Everybody says 'come on!' here," thought Alice, as she walked slowly after the Gryphon; "I never was ordered about so before in all my life — never!"

They had not gone far before they saw the Mock Turtle in the distance, sitting sad and lonely on a little ledge of rock, and, as they came nearer, Alice could hear it sighing as if its heart would break. "She pitied it deeply: what is its sorrow?" she asked the Gryphon, and the Gryphon answered, very nearly in the same words as before, "it's all its fancy, that: it hasn't got no sorrow, you know: come on!"



So they went up to the Mock Turtle, who looked at them with large eyes full of tears, but said nothing.

"This here young lady" said the Gryphon,

Fig. 3. Pages from "Alice's Adventures Under Ground" in Carroll's handwriting and with his own illustrations.



Fig. 4. (*Through the Looking-Glass*, frontispiece)



Fig. 5. (*Through the Looking-Glass*, Chap. 8)



Fig. 6. (*Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, Chap. 7)



Fig. 7. (*Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, Chap. 6)



Fig. 8. (*Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, Chap. 1)



Fig. 9. (*Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, Chap. 6)



Fig. 10. (*Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, Chap. 8)



Fig. 11. (*Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, Chap. 7)



Fig. 12. (*Through the Looking-Glass*, Chap. 6)



Fig. 13. (*Through the Looking-Glass*, Chap. 7)



Fig. 14. (*Through the Looking-Glass*, Chap. 4)



Fig. 15. Antonio Del Pollaiuolo. *Hercules and Antaeus*. 1470. Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence. *Art: A History of Painting, Sculpture, Architecture*. 3rd ed. By Frederick Hart. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1989. Fig. 722.

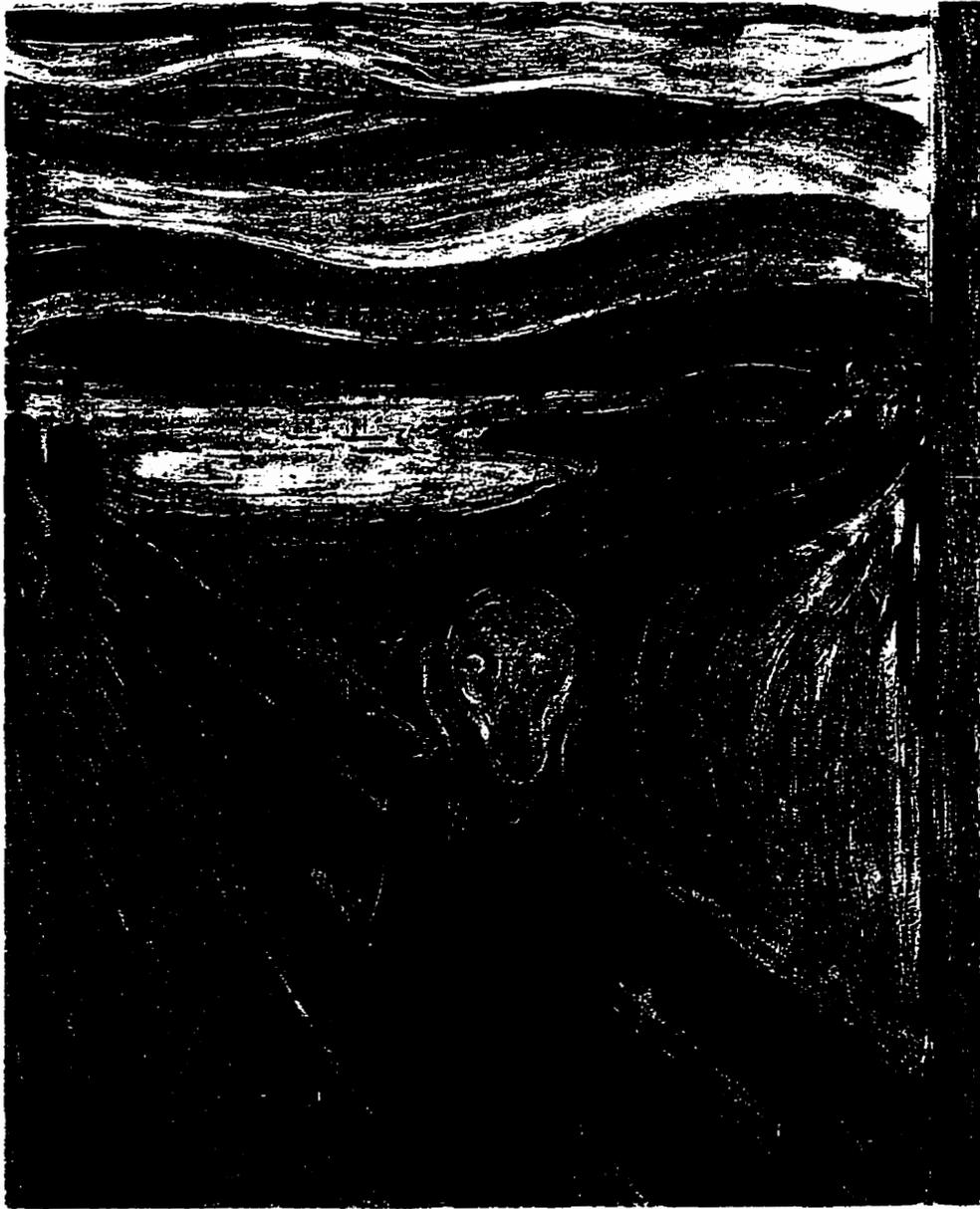


Fig. 16. Edvard Munch. *The Scream*. 1893. Nasjonalgalleriet, Oslo. *Art: A History of Painting, Sculpture, Architecture*. 3rd ed. By Frederick Hartt. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1989. Fig. 1160.

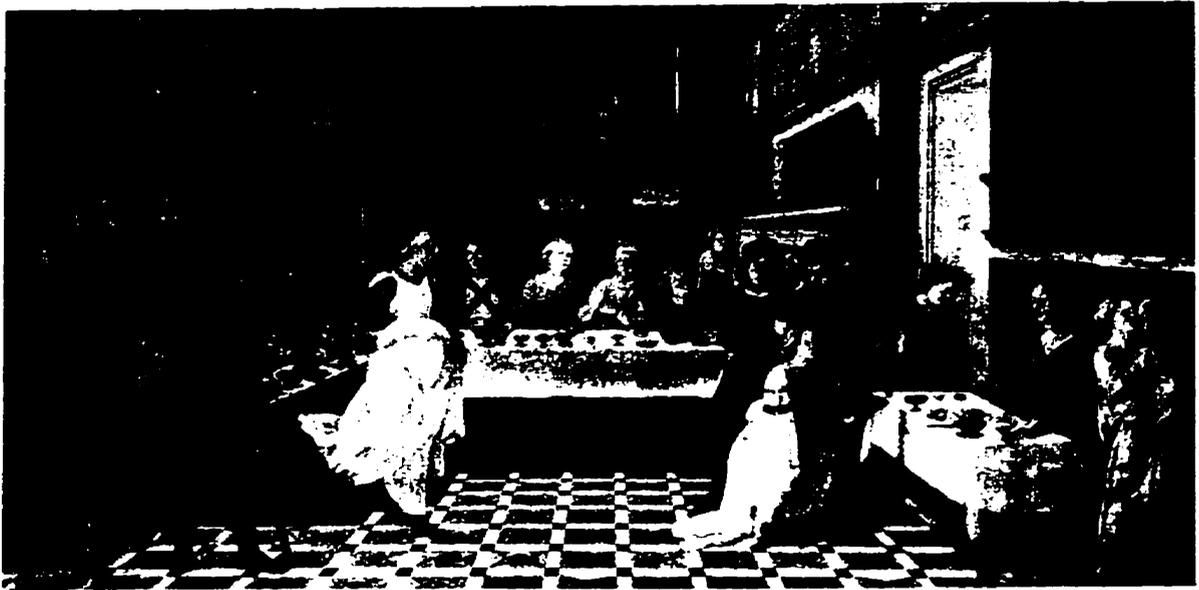


Fig. 17. Filippo Lippi. *Banquet of Herod*. Fresco, Prato Cathedral. *Pictures of Romance*. By Wendy Steiner. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1988. 31



Fig. 18. Dirck Bouts. *Last Supper*. 1464-1468. Church of Saint Peter, Louvain. *Art: A History of Painting, Sculpture, Architecture*. 3rd ed. By Frederick Hartt. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1989. Fig. 761.



Fig. 19. Francisco Goya. *Saturn Devouring One of His Sons*. 1820-1822. Museo del Prado, Madrid. *Art: A History of Painting, Sculpture, Architecture*. 3rd ed. By Frederick Hart. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1989. Fig. 1075.



Fig. 20. Frans Hals. *Banquet of the Officers of the Saint George Guard Company*. 1616. Frans Hals Museum, Haarlem. *Art: A History of Painting, Sculpture, Architecture*. 3rd ed. By Frederick Hart. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1989. Fig. 984.



Fig. 21. Peter Greenaway. Still from film *The Cook, The Thief, His Wife and Her Lover*. 1989.



Fig. 22. Videocassette cover of Peter Greenaway's film *The Cook, The Thief, His Wife and Her Lover*. Vidmark, 1990.

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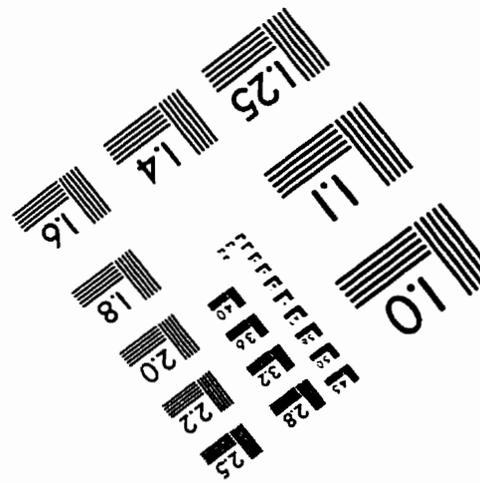
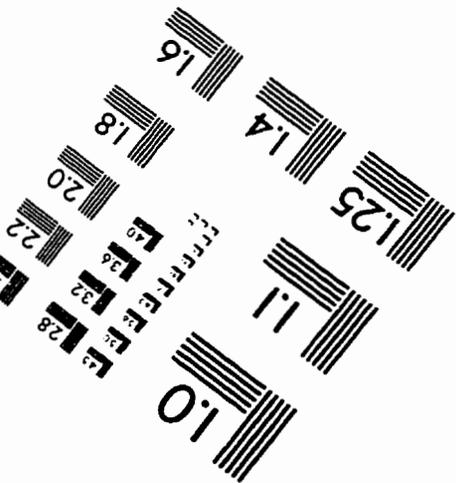
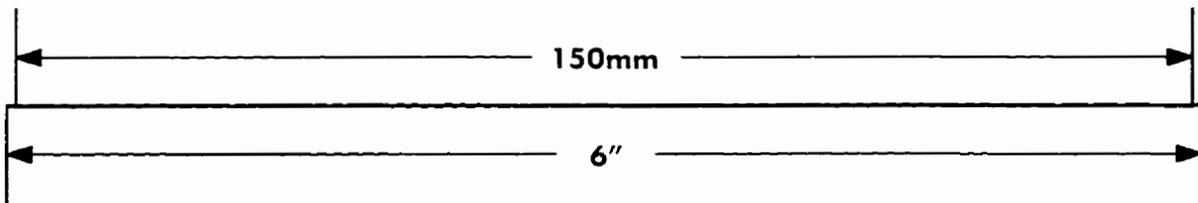
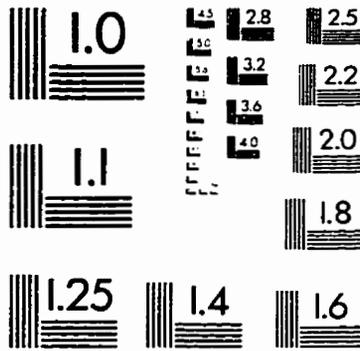
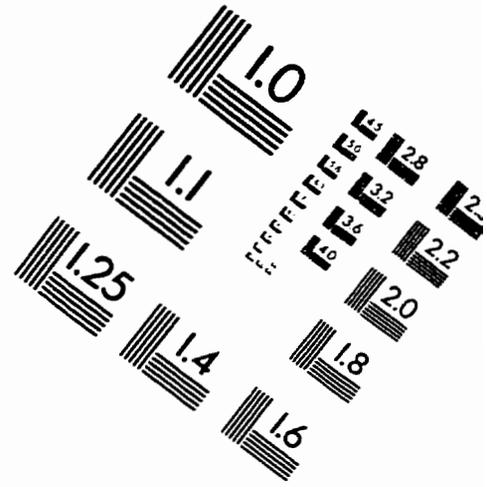
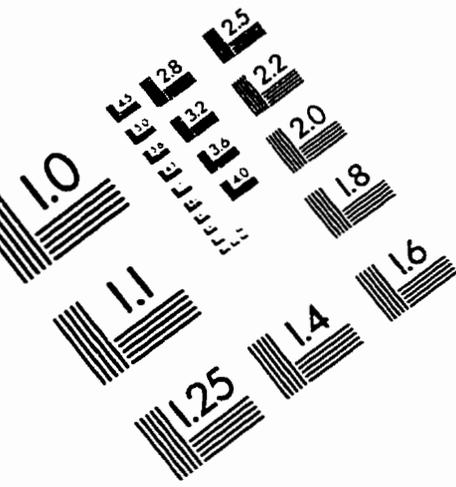
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