Food, Rationing, and National Identity in Midcentury British Fiction

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Abstract

This dissertation charts the construction of national identity in mid-twentieth-century British literature and culture through a focus on food. While official food cultures emerged out of scientific findings, they were predicated on ethical conceptions of good citizenship. Emphasizing stoicism and self-sacrifice, the wartime Ministry of Food linked the purchase, preparation, and consumption of food to heroism and treachery. After the Second World War, controlled distribution and "fair shares" became pillars of welfare state reforms, which sought to ensure that those who had fought and worked for the national good never went hungry. Though rationing and food controls led to discontent in the postwar period, the ideal of shared sacrifice remained a potent symbol of national identity. Midcentury British novelists registered their responses to shifting food and nutrition policies by adapting, distorting, and challenging patriotic models of consumption.

Chapter One draws upon theories of hospitality to explore depictions of invasion—by foreign cuisines, cultures, and armies—in wartime fiction. As the Second World War disrupted host-guest relations, anxieties about selecting, cooking, and consuming traditional foods reflected larger threats to British identity. Novels by Elizabeth Taylor, Patrick Hamilton, P.G. Wodehouse, and Evelyn Waugh process fears of cultural and national invasion through portrayals of shared meals and domestic space. Chapter Two reads thriller novels against civilian and military health guidelines to delineate a midcentury ideal of patriotic, masculine eating defined by self-discipline. In Ian Fleming's James Bond novels and Geoffrey Household's *Rogue Male* (1939), food

fortifies spies' bodies and minds. Such fortification occurs within a larger generic history that extends from Robert Baden-Powell's *Scouting for Boys* (1908) and John Buchan's *The 39 Steps* (1915) to Alan Sillitoe's *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1958). Chapter Three analyzes culinary encounters among Britain, France, and the Mediterranean to illustrate the paradoxical treatment of foreign foodways in wartime and postwar literature and culture. Barbara Pym's novelistic depictions of food and eating intersect with food writing by Elizabeth David, Fanny Cradock, and others. Their engagement with gendered food roles and models of communal consumption reflects larger patterns of public and private dining in the welfare state. Chapter Four explores the restriction of consumption in novels by Muriel Spark and Nancy Mitford in relation to postwar fashion and slimming culture. Portraying slenderness as a marker of sophistication, their novels prioritize the competitive cultivation of beauty over collectivity and patriotism. Both authors scrutinize femininity, morality, and citizenship to depict slimming as simultaneously empowering and oppressive.

Reading fictional meals against literary and historical contexts, this project calls attention to conceptions of nationalism, gender, class, and cultural distinction embedded in the preparation and consumption of food. Just as heroes of midcentury thrillers feed themselves to prepare for battle, eating both fortifies citizens for sociopolitical engagement and concretely performs that engagement. In midcentury novels, discourses around diet, nutrition, and healthy eating shape national identity symbolically, narratively, and ideologically.

Résumé

Cette thèse examine la construction d'une identité nationale dans la culture et la littérature britannique du vingtième siècle en concentrant sur le rôle de la nourriture. Bien que les cultures officielles de la nourriture fussent dérivés de découvertes scientifiques, elles fussent fondées sur des conceptions éthiques de la bonne citoyenneté. Avec un accent sur le stoïcisme et le sacrifice-de-soi, le Ministère de la Nourriture, en temps de guerre, associât l'achat, la préparation et la consomption de la nourriture avec des idées d'héroïsme ou de trahison. Après la guerre, la distribution contrôlée et « le partage équitable pour tous » sont devenus des piliers des réformes de l'état-providence, au but d'assurer que tous ceux qui avait battu et travaillé pour le bien-être national n'iraient jamais faim. Bien que le rationnement et les contrôles sur la nourriture conduit à du mécontentement dans la période d'après-guerre, l'idée du sacrifice partagé fut toujours un symbole puissant de l'identité nationale. Les romanciers britanniques du milieu du siècle ont notés leurs réponses aux changements dans les politiques de la nourriture et la nutrition en adaptant, faussant et défiant les modèles patriotiques de la consomption.

Chapitre Un fait recours aux théories d'hospitalité afin d'explorer les représentations d'invasion—par des cuisines, cultures et armés étrangères—dans la fiction du temps de guerre. Pendant que la Seconde Guerre mondiale eut perturbé les relations entre les hôtes et leurs invités, des angoisses sur la sélection, cuisson et consommation de la cuisine traditionnelle réfléchissait de grandes menaces envers l'identité britannique. Des romans par Elizabeth Taylor, Patrick Hamilton, P.G. Wodehouse, et Evelyn Waugh incorpores les peurs d'invasion culturelle et national à

travers des représentations des repas et de l'espace domestique partagés. Chapitre Deux lit des romans thriller contre les recommandations de santé civils et militaires pour tracé un idéal, un milieu du siècle, de consommation patriotique et masculin définit par l'autodiscipline. Dans les romans de James Bond par Ian Fleming et *Rogue Male* par Geoffrey Household (1939), la nourriture fortifiât l'esprit et the corps des espions. Cette fortification prend place dans un historique générique qui étends de *Scouting for Boys* par Robert Baden-Powell (1908) et *The 39 Steps* par John Buchan à *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* par Alan Sillitoe (1958). Chapitre Trois analyse des rencontres culinaires entre la Grande-Bretagne, la France et le Méditerranéen pour illustré le traitement paradoxal de pratiques étrangères de la nourriture dans la littérature et culture de guerre et d'après-guerre. Les représentations romanesques de la nourriture et la de consommation de Barbara Pym interagit avec l'écriture de la nourriture par Elizabeth David, Fanny Cradock et d'autres. Leurs engagements avec les rôles sexués de la nourriture et les modèles de consomption commune réfléchit de grands motifs de consommation publique et privé dans l'état-providence. Chapitre Quatre explore la restriction sur la consomption dans les romans de Muriel Spark et Nancy Mitford en relation avec la mode d'après-guerre et la culture de minceur. Dépeignant la minceur comme marque de sophistication, leurs romans priorise la cultivation compétitive de la beauté par-dessus la collectivité et le patriotisme. Tous deux écrivaines scrutent la féminité, la moralité et la citoyenneté afin de dépeigner la minceur comme simultanément habilitant et oppressive.

Lisant des repas fictifs contre les contextes littéraires et historiques, ce projet fait appel aux conceptions de nationalisme, sexe, classe et distinctions culturelles intégrées

dans la préparation et la consomption de la nourriture. Juste comme les héros des romans du milieu du siècle se nourrissent pour se préparer pour la bataille, l'acte de manger fortifie les citoyens pour l'engagement sociopolitique et performe concrètement cet engagement. Dans les romans du milieu du siècle, les discours de la diète, la nutrition et l'alimentation saine forment l'identité nationale symboliquement, narrativement et idéologiquement.

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Eating British: Food and National Identity at Midcentury

In midcentury Britain, food built citizens and sustained national identity. Several weeks before Neville Chamberlain's declaration of war was broadcast to the nation on 3 September 1939, 50 million ration books had been quietly printed and moved to warehouses across Britain to await distribution to civilians (Zweiniger, *Austerity* 16). For the next 15 years, the Ministry of Food (MOF) sought to combat shortages and transform food from a private concern to a public and political issue. Its approach hinged not only on the development of national nutrition guidelines and the strict regulation of food distribution, but also on the implementation of targeted marketing campaigns designed to increase knowledge and influence food attitudes. Faced with the crucial problem of maintaining morale on "the kitchen front," Lord Woolton's Ministry leaned heavily on print, radio, and film as a means of shaping national foodways.

Emphasizing stoicism and self-sacrifice, government publications linked the purchase, preparation, and consumption of food to heroism and treachery. Ministry of Food campaigns not only encouraged consumers to think about their daily battles on the kitchen front as contributing directly to the war effort, but also delineated specific social roles governing participation in those battles. Contingent on a gendered division of labour, these roles were linked to an idealized image of the family as the fundamental unit of the nation: the housewife's ability to stretch rations and the communal sense of shared sacrifice exemplified national allegiance. As rationing continued into the 1950s— it persisted until 1954—the democratic rhetoric of "fair shares" (Woolton 250) influenced

the ideological construction of the welfare state as well as postwar humanitarian aid. During "the 1940s and early 1950s… the regulation of consumption became a major element of the relationship between the state and British society" (Zweiniger, *Austerity* 1). Both during and after the war, eating was a crucial component of British citizenship.

Midcentury novels bear out this preoccupation with food. Literary food imagery reflects an immediate concern with shortages and restrictions while pointing to wider domestic and international issues. New purchasing and dietary guidelines promoted by the wartime and postwar governments filtered into the creative imaginations of British intellectuals: in their work, writers registered responses to the martialization and socialization of consumption. Fiction by Ian Fleming, Patrick Hamilton, Geoffrey Household, Nancy Mitford, Barbara Pym, Alan Sillitoe, Muriel Spark, Elizabeth Taylor, Evelyn Waugh, and P.G. Wodehouse points to the profound importance of food and foodways in wartime and postwar Britain. Analyzing novelistic portrayals of food rationing, shortages, production, and consumption, this project aims not to argue that writing about food is a specifically midcentury phenomenon, but to investigate ways in which midcentury food writing expresses specific historical and literary contexts. The impact of military and civilian rationing affects food as both theme and narrative device.

Background: Military and Civilian Rationing in War and Peace

While official food cultures in midcentury Britain emerged out of valid scientific findings, they were nonetheless shaped by ethical conceptions of good citizenship. Following the outbreak of the Second World War, Ministry of Food policies initially prioritized maximum productivity in service of the nation. By the time the war ended, the

government had adapted its policies to reflect the widespread sense that the sacrifices of

soldiers and civilians ought to be rewarded in material terms. Controlled distribution and

egalitarian rationing became pillars of postwar welfare state reforms, which sought to

ensure those who had fought and worked for the national good never went hungry.[1] Just

as the contingencies of total warfare sharpened moral and cultural grey areas into stark

black and white for the purposes of mobilization, official food culture approached public

engagement by targeting particular groups according to gender, age, and occupation: like

members of the military, "soldiers" on the home front each had a particular role to play.

Women were taught to cook as if the outcome of the war depended on their ability to

economize, while men were encouraged to fortify their bodies and take dull food in

stride.

Midcentury foodways were simultaneously influenced by industrial models of

production that treated human bodies as cogs in the war machine. The martialization of

daily life and eating habits was aimed at male and female labourers engaged directly in

war work as well as those responsible for maximizing the nutritional value of scarce

foodstuffs for families and communities. As Chin Jou points out, the emergence of the

calorie as the central unit for measuring nutritional requirements coincided with the larger

industrialization of labour across western Europe and the United States. Wilbur Atwater's

calorimeter experiments were happening at roughly the same time as Frederick Winslow

Taylor's development of time and motion efficiency principles for factory labour:

"Physiologists and nutritionists argued that better nutrition and healthier bodies would

result in more efficient workers, greater industrial output, and better work discipline"

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[1] As Ian Mosby observes, the ways in which governments translate scientific findings into practical advice about what and how to eat are rooted in deeper beliefs about government intervention and social relief.

(Jou). In the early twentieth century, the calorie "provided the new thermodynamic model that was to inform the military's approach to feeding: food as fuel for the human motor" (Duffett 29), an approach extended to the civilian population through wartime initiatives such as school milk and factory canteens.

British nutritional guidelines have historically developed in tandem with international conflicts: public and military food policies were directly shaped by experiences in the Crimean, Boer, and First and Second World Wars. In each of these conflicts, wartime exigencies brought nation-wide nutritional inadequacies to the fore through military intake examinations and ongoing medical care. Until the Crimean War, military rations were selected for maximum cheapness and consisted primarily of meat and bread or hard biscuits; soldiers paid for their own food through wage deductions, although bread and biscuits were supplied free after 1873. Hardtack biscuits were more portable and longer-lasting than fresh bread, and could be crumbled into water to make a porridge, but on their own they posed problems for soldiers with decaying or damaged teeth. The standard meat ration usually took the form of "bully beef," an anglicization of the French *boeuf bouillé*. This tinned boiled beef "was light and could be carried for long periods without serious deterioration, [and] being without fat it was healthy and nourishing and easy to eat warmed up or cold if soldiers were very tired; it could also form the basis of stews." Yet it was monotonous, thirst-inducing, variable in quality, and susceptible to melting into a gooey mess at high temperatures (Clayton Ch. 1). Standard rations were supplemented with local produce and meat when available, but soldiers were often reduced to basic rations while on active operations, with consequences ranging from indigestion to jaundice.

If the prevalence of scurvy among Crimean War troops highlighted the inadequacy of beef-and-biscuit rations as a long-term diet for soldiers (Duffett 28), the Second Anglo-Boer War offered the most shocking indictment of the wider state of public health in Britain. Riddled with deficiency diseases, underdeveloped bodies, bad eyesight, and decaying teeth (Dwork 15), "between forty and sixty percent of men were turned down as physically unfit for service" between 1899 and 1902 (Winter 211). Such diseases were most prevalent among the unemployed and working classes, whose diets tended to consist primarily of white bread, meat, and sugary tea. Malnourished soldiers recruited from the unemployed and urban poor were sent overseas without the standard three-month period of training and fattening up, with disastrous results: in spite of outnumbering the Boers 450,000 to 40,000, the British Army took a stunning three years to achieve a Pyrrhic victory against South African forces (Boehmer xii). This needlessly protracted war not only laid the groundwork for the eventual overhaul of the economically designed subsistence rations, inefficient food transport, and basic cooking facilities in the military, but also highlighted the ubiquity of poor health and malnutrition among working class British civilians.

Rapid nutritional developments and increased resources led early twentieth-century policymakers to acknowledge the central importance of food to soldiers' health and performance. Nutrition studies began to be marketed in terms of large-scale population rather than focus group findings, to emphasize the national importance of scientific research. Food had always been rhetorically crucial in attracting volunteers for military service; recruiters in the pre-conscription days of the First World War emphasized the fine rations of the British Army as an antidote to civilian hunger and

malnutrition. One WWI recruitment poster promised "meat every day!" (Roberts 189).[2]

As scientist-physicians like Sir John Boyd Orr—whose landmark study *Food, Health and Income* (1937) recommended dietary standards based on optimum health rather than minimum subsistence levels—contended that the best way to improve national health and productivity was to provide relief to low-income households, the government extended the rhetoric and resources of military strength and efficiency to the home front. The individual body, whether civilian or military, became a cipher for national strength. Orr represented a group of interwar reformers who wanted to revolutionize how the British government fed its citizens, but were generally dismissed until the war prioritized improved nutrition as a pillar of national strength. The war allowed nutrition scientists to increase their public profiles and leverage immediate military need for long-term social reform (Mosby 26-30).[3]

This paternalist approach to nutrition and health marked a clear ideological shift in the British treatment of hunger. In *Hunger*, James Vernon describes historical conceptions of hunger as oscillating between divine, moral, and social approaches. Moving away from a Malthusian view of hunger as a necessary corollary of population control and free market economics, "Imperial Britain… played a formative role in changing the meaning of hunger and the systems for redressing it in the modern era" (3).

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[2] First World War field rations did provide high energy and protein requirements, although the ongoing reliance on bully beef and hardtack biscuit in emergency or front-line conditions (also known as "iron rations") provided little variety (Duffett 33-6).

[3] In *Hidden Hunger*, Aya H. Kimura calls attention to the dark side of this focus on optimizing imperial health. She argues that the twentieth-century importance of "charismatic nutrients"—that is, nutrients granted a disproportionate amount of cultural authority at a given historical juncture, such as protein in the 1950s—suggests a utopian vision of the potential for scientific advancement, one that is rooted in a western, colonialist vision of global salvation and means of justification for terming foreign diets "inferior." Kimura traces the history of the "[s]cientization of food insecurity through nutritionism" by identifying a series of different charismatic nutrients, all of which "come to comand center stage in international food and nutrition politics when their suboptimal intake defnes the nature of the food problem in developing countries" (19).

Late nineteenth-century British theorists "discovered" hunger "as a humanitarian issue and a social problem that measured the failure of the market to generate the wealth of nations, and of the state to protect its citizens from economic downturns over which they had no control" (Vernon 4). Military need, ethics, and affluence combined to encourage the top-down management of health and hunger from the early twentieth century.

During the Second World War, Ministry of Food propaganda adapted nutritional science to improve national health: encouraging the consumption of readily available and nutrient-dense domestic foods, criminalizing waste and celebrating hard work and self-sacrifice, the Ministry constructed a new kind of ethical eating centered on patriotic foodways—what this thesis terms the "official food culture" of midcentury Britain. The Ministry of Food's use of the word "passport" to refer to ration books in the Second World War renders the link between food and citizenship explicit (see fig. 1). Wartime propaganda insists that both citizens and state have specific rights and responsibilities governing the purchasing, preparation, and consumption of food.

Figure 1: Your passport to food. "Reasons for Rationing," Ministry of Food, *Times*, 8 January 1940.

Prior to the war, Britain imported most of its food supply, with roughly two-thirds of all foods coming from outside of the country (Fenelon 55). As fighting intensified, dangerous waterways and the diversion of boats, fuel, and manpower to the war effort meant that fewer vessels were devoted to food supply. Britain therefore planned to move

to a homegrown system that would free up as much as possible the complex infrastructure of ships, sailors, and cargo space. Rationing of hard-to-get goods officially began on 8 January 1940, when bacon, butter, and sugar were rationed in response to a cut-off shipment from Denmark. Over the course of the war, the list of foods rationed by weight, price, or the points system would expand to include items such as tea, cheese, jam, cereals, canned fruit, eggs, milk, and all meats but fish and offal.

Decreasing imports and increasing home agriculture had the interesting side effect of undoing years of imperial expansion in terms of imported foods. Woolton's 1940s "Eat British" campaign reflects a protectionist nationalism in the face of global uncertainty, and offers an agricultural and economic reflection of the inward turn postulated by Jed Esty as England's response to the shrinking British Empire (2). The famous "Dig for Victory" and "Lend a Hand on the Land" campaigns broke down barriers between producers and consumers (see fig. 2). Along with top-down legislation changes for farmers, these do-it-yourself campaigns exponentially increased home production of staple foods.

Figure 2: "Dig for Victory," Ministry of Food, National Archives.
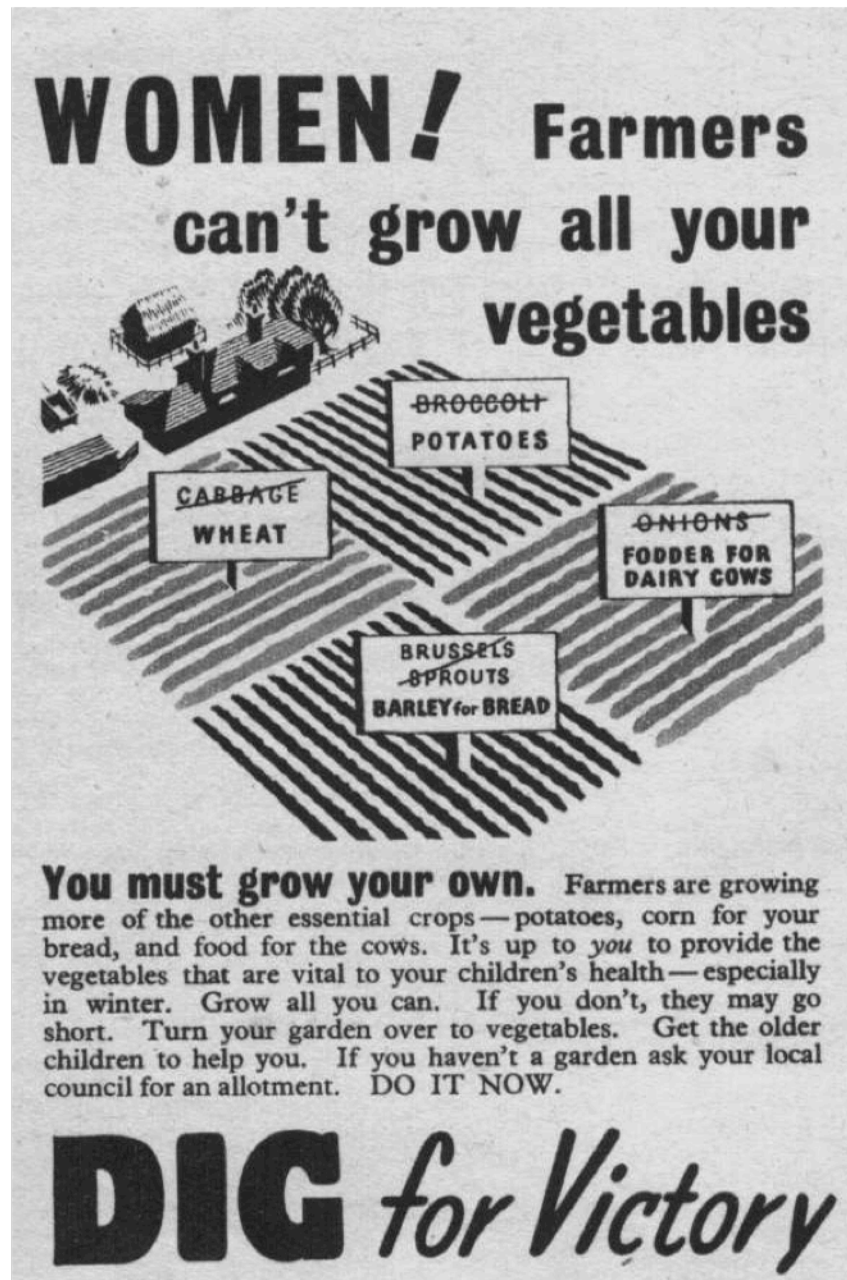
For the British government, it was also "held to be imperative for the morale of the nation that its *will* to work for victory was not undermined by having too little to eat, whether through the shortage of food supplies or their high cost" (Mackay 196). The official wartime "policy of the Ministry of Food was to explain to the consumer, as fully

as security permitted, what was happening to the food supplies and why" (HMSO 50). As Lord Woolton put it in a 1940 speech, "If it [is] more important at any particular time that we should have aeroplanes rather than bacon, then [I will] explain to the public why we cannot have bacon, and [I think] they [will] be satisfied that that is the right decision" ("Wartime Feeding" 2). Further, "the psychological importance of traditional foods to which the public was accustomed was given considerable weight in the planning of supplies" (HMSO 46). Ministry officials acknowledged the wider emotional ramifications of dietary choices, underscoring the social and cultural importance of food in the framing of official policy and using this awareness as a means of shaping food attitudes and behaviours through propaganda.

With over 50,000 civil servants at its peak in 1943, the MOF expanded from its initial focus only on "essentials" to control the purchasing and distribution of most domestic and imported foods. In addition to regulating distribution and cost, the Ministry ultimately concerned itself with the provision of communal and emergency feeding, the improvement of the nutritional value of the general diet, the protection of the consumer, and the education of the public (HMSO 42). Public food education was a two-fold objective. First, the Ministry of Food circulated basic nutritional and health guidelines; these offered practical information about the amounts and types of foods necessary to maintain or improve physical and mental health. Second, the Ministry determined to educate the public about the specific shipping and security issues affecting its ability to regulate food supply, cost, and distribution. Slogans like "Food is a munition of war" reminded consumers that wheat and weapons drew upon the same set of resources. Frugality was linked to victory, while its counterpart, waste, was not only vilified but

criminalized, with a number of people brought up on charges to demonstrate the hard line of the Ministry of Food. One campaign noted that "if everyone in Great Britain wasted ½ oz. of bread daily we should be wasting 250,000 tons of wheat a year, and 30 wheat ships would be required to carry that amount" (MOF, "Food Facts No. 2"). By quantifying the equivalent relationship between daily waste in the domestic space and the wasting of public resources in the militarized spaces of cargo ships, the MOF illustrated the interconnectedness of the civilian and military spheres.

Tailored nutritional guidelines for babies, children, youths, adults, expectant mothers, and labourers split the home front into colour-coded regiments. This process of food-based categorization contributed to the individual's understanding of where she or he fit into larger familial, social, and national groups, and informed the specific way in which each was expected to make his or her contribution. It also allowed the Ministry to enact special programs for "vulnerable" groups, such as the School Milk Program for children or allowances of cod liver oil for expectant mothers. Moreover, the registration system put in place for rationing tied consumers to particular shops and shopkeepers; it established a chain of personal loyalty and private responsibility linking from the consumer-producer relationship back to the state, which allocated public supply accordingly. The MOF slogan, "We not only cope, we care" (Longmate 154), underscored the public mission of the Ministry to serve each British citizen as an individual.

The attempt to provide sufficient quantities of the foods that people needed at the expense of what they wanted led the government drastically to reduce the amount of land given over to livestock in favour of high yield vegetable crops. As a result, several

bumper crops of potato and carrot were harvested during the war. When the Ministry started the still-famous rumour that eating large quantities of carrots will help you see in the dark (see fig. 3), attributing the success of Battle of Britain fighters to Vitamin A intake, it was primarily an attempt to cover up the development of radar technology (Longmate 154). By crediting the carrot, however, the Ministry established a direct causal link between the private act of "eating British" and the more tangibly heroic public action of shooting down enemy planes. Child-friendly cartoon characters "Doctor Carrot" and "Potato Pete" targeted the mothers of finicky children tired of limited sweets coupons; Ministry propaganda emphasized the high sugar content in carrots and tried to popularize the "toffee carrot." Potatoes were encouraged as a substitute starch to help save on bread, which was becoming increasingly scarce. Ads exclaimed:

> Think of the potato! Think of it as a weapon of war. It is not a new one. Napoleon once planned to starve-out England. Till then potatoes had been only a 'fancy' line. Suddenly they became a front line of our defence. Now history repeats itself. (MOF, "Food Facts No. 14")

Calling upon Britain's history of military victory, such advertisements emphasized the practical importance of eating home-grown foods as a means of converting Great Britain into a self-sustaining island—the hub of imperial power—while simultaneously underscoring their symbolic value as links to the glorious history of the people and the land. The massive increase in domestic agriculture buttressed the nation's actual and rhetorical strength and self-sufficiency.
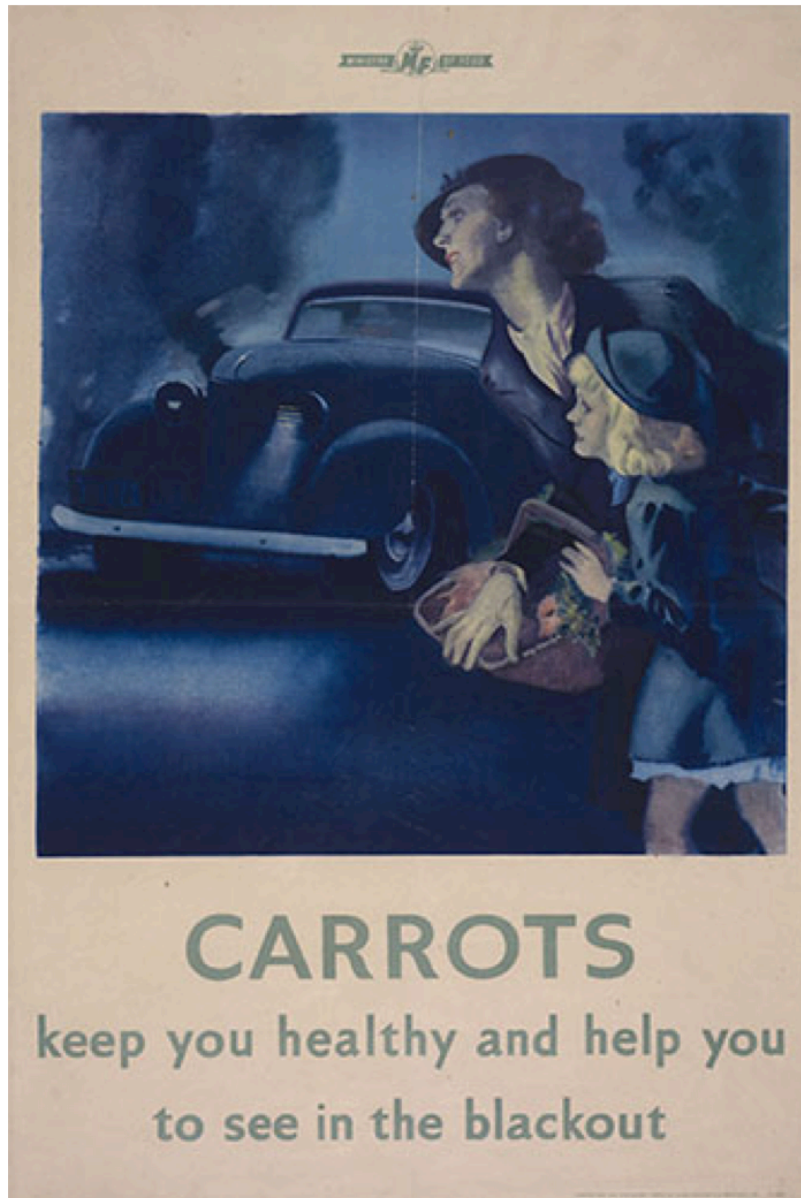
Figure 3: Ministry of Food, Imperial War Museum.

Increasingly, women's domestic work was linked to the same rhetoric of heroism and labour that the government applied to the rest of the nation. At the height of the Blitz, Lord Woolton celebrated England's having

> gained the interest of the women of this country in a war job. Never before had they been called upon to help in quite the same way—by doing their

own job, and in the knowledge that by doing it they were really helping in

the war… for unless we could get our men fed they could not make

munitions and they could not fight. ("Wartime Feeding" 2)

Woolton's description of housework and food preparation activities as the woman's "*own*

job" predicates female citizenship and participation in the war on feeding the nation,

regardless of the conflicting demands placed on women who were attempting to balance

the domestic duties of shopping, preparing, and serving food with other "nondomestic"

war work—as factory workers, civil servants, "Land Girls" (Women's Land Army),

"Wrens" (Women's Royal Naval Service), or Women's Voluntary Service workers.

Commanding "ladies" to "shoot straight," one MOF ad symbolically links the rolling pins

of the kitchen front with the guns of the battlefront (see fig. 4). Such propaganda applies

public language to her private function in the home, asserting, "*You've* got a fighting job

on hand, too" (Minns 115).

..Shoot straight, Lady
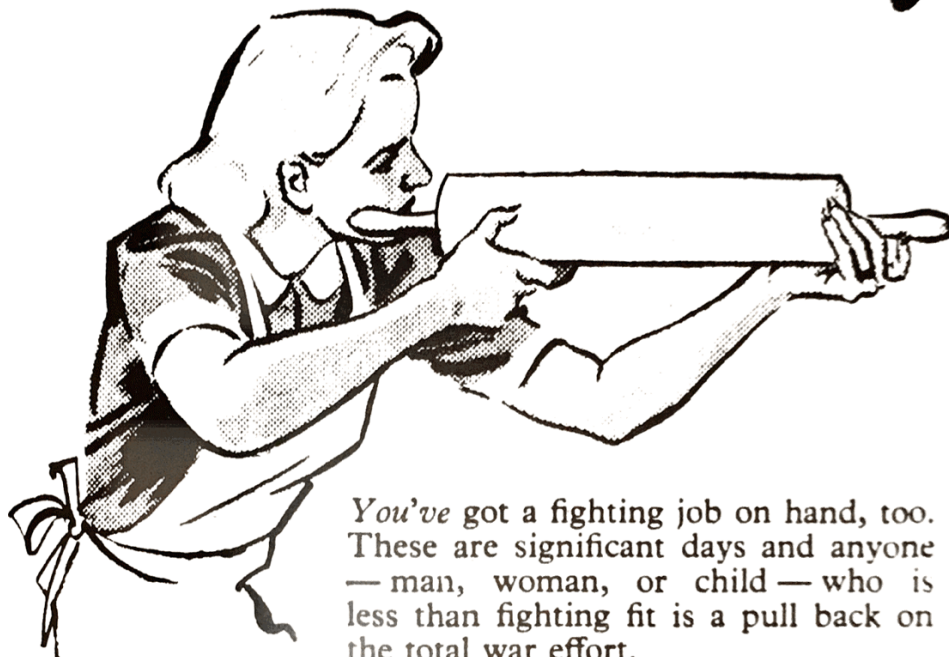
You've got a fighting job on hand, too. These are significant days and anyone — man, woman, or child — who is less than fighting fit is a pull back on the total war effort.

FOOD is your munition of war. The Government sees that you get the right stuff and it's vital that you should know how to use it to full advantage . . .

There's cheese : it makes muscle and bone.

There are potatoes : they give energy and warmth.

Carrots, that give vitality and help you to see in the dark.

Green vegetables, with their valuable salts and vitamins, which are so very important for clear complexions and sound teeth.

Did you know that 5 quarts of summer milk — milk at its richest and when it is most plentiful — go to the making of 1 lb. cheese ?

Or that swedes, the juice of which you used to give to babies because of its valuable Vitamin C, are now to be had at most greengrocers cheap enough and in big enough quantities for you to serve as a second or third vegetable to the entire family?

All good live stuff. And you need them all : *every day.* Serve everything appetisingly as you so well can do. Then you can be proud of your vital, active part in the drive to Victory.

Figure 4: "Shoot straight, lady." Ministry of Food, reprinted in Minns, *Bombers and Mash*, 115.

The Ministry of Food used different media for targeting specific demographics. Important government decisions would always be released in official newspaper statements; Woolton would then make personal radio appearances to "reason and explain" the rationale behind specific decisions, as well as how they would affect individual citizens. Weekly "Food Facts" newspaper bulletins offered practical tips, recipes, and updates for housewives. The weekday radio program *The Kitchen Front* was popular for its blend of recipes, expert diet and cooking advice, and entertainment. "Music-hall" comedians Elsie and Doris Waters—known as Gert and Daisy—had been recruited by Lord Woolton to "help the public to realize that food economy was not all gloom" (Woolton 252); Mabel Constanduros appeared as comic housewife Grandma Buggins. Other recurring characters included the popular "Radio Doctor" as well as cookery expert Ambrose Heath. While much of the BBC's daytime programming was criticized as "contrived, patronizing and out of touch," *The Kitchen Front* reached an audience four times higher than other programs in similar timeslots (Nicholas 63).[4] With its "practical treatment" of rationing and other wartime inconveniences, as well as its inclusion of working class accents, it was "the first 'women's' programme on the BBC to find general approval among working-class housewives" (Nicholas 77). As Siân Nicholas points out, while newspaper ads, short films, and cooking demonstrations appealed to middle and upperclass audiences, the radio was the most effective in reaching working class listeners.

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[4] This patronizing tone was consistent with early propaganda. In her introduction to *Long Shadows: The Second World War in British Fiction and Film*, Petra Rau points out that at the beginning of the war, the Ministry of Information was unsure how to direct public sentiment: "The People's War … was underpinned by a tremendous propaganda effort whose upper-middle-class civil servants and slogan writers initially got 'the people' entirely wrong and produced posters and phrases that many citizens considered offensive and patronizing" (6).

Whereas *The Kitchen Front* was aimed exclusively at housewives (broadcast at 8:15 every morning, it was timed to come after the news and before women headed out to do their shopping), the "Food Flashes" that appeared in newsreels alternated between male and female target audiences. Those directed at women are similar in tone to other instructional pamphlets and programming: they offer practical advice on maximizing both rations and time. In the MOF short film "Fats Reduced" (1945), the announcer is an older, authoritative male figure: the grocer in this segment echoes the practical advice-givers who appeared in the 1940s "The Butcher" or "The Greengrocer Says…" newspaper ads. In the Food Flashes aimed at men, the Ministry takes a different approach. The younger and more jovial announcer in "Small Potatoes" jokes that both potatoes and women are "equally good, jackets on or off." Like another Food Flash that puns on the wide availability of "dates" in the postwar period (MOF, "Dried Fruit"), such spots incorporate lightly misogynistic humour, and repeatedly equate femininity with food. Pithy and memorable, they offset the enforcement of economy with self-conscious irony, while appealing to a particular British character defined by virility, stoicism, a sense of humour, and a stiff upper lip.

Though propaganda targeted individual segments of the population, the overall structure of the British rationing system was egalitarian to a fault. The leading scholar of austerity and nutrition from a historical and economic perspective, Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska describes the structure of the British rationing system:

> The principle of a flat-rate ration for all, which ignored the diverse needs of heavy workers at one extreme and small children at the other, was justifiable since only a fraction of all foodstuffs were to be rationed. These

were sugar, butter, bacon, and ham as well as meat, all of which were

predominantly imported and had been rationed during the First World

War. A so-called buffer of bread, potatoes, and restaurant or canteen meals

was to be freely available to satisfy differential energy requirements. Pre-

war planners anticipated the possibility of differential rationing and

supplementary ration books were prepared for adolescent boys and heavy

workers who were to receive additional bacon and meat. These were never

introduced and widespread doubts about the fairness of flat-rate rations

became a major source of discontent during and after the war. (15)

Though flat-rate rationing tended to redistribute on the domestic level—particularly in

families with small children that pooled their rations—this strictly egalitarian distribution

of goods among a diverse population often resulted in unequal nutrition.

  As Britain transitioned from war to peace, the democratic ideals underlying the

flat-rate ration system informed the approach of planners aiming to reconstruct British

society through welfare policies. Postwar consensus built on wartime national projects to

construct a new world. As the Labour Party argued in their 1945 election manifesto, *Let

Us Face the Future*, "The nation wants food, work and homes. It wants more than that—

it wants good food in plenty, useful work for all, and comfortable, labour-saving homes

that take full advantage of the resources of modern science and productive industry. It

wants a high and rising standard of living" (qtd in Brooke 36); Attlee's government even

considered making food controls permanent. Winston Churchill's Conservatives, taking

the opposite tack with regard to communal consumption, accused Attlee's party of

"hunger[ing] for controls of every kind, as if those were delectable foods instead of

wartime inflictions and monstrosities. There is to be one State to which all are to be obedient in every act of their lives" (qtd in Brooke 38). Churchill identifies the same democratic distribution of food, so crucial to the war effort, as authoritarian in peacetime. The centralized model of food rationing led to discontent in the postwar period, and contributed to Conservative victories in the 1950s. Yet the wartime ideal of shared sacrifice remained a potent symbol of British national identity. Throughout the middle decades of the twentieth century, British novelists registered their responses to shifting food and nutrition policies. Fictional portrayals of food drive plot, construct character, and convey setting. Yet they also pose a larger question: what does it mean to be—and eat—British at midcentury?

Methodology and Critical Approach

Novels are the primary focus of this dissertation. In addition to addressing specific authors, I read literature against contemporary cultural texts—including films, cookbooks, restaurant reviews, essays, guidebooks, and Ministry of Food pamphlets—to illuminate the thematic concerns of each chapter and situate works in relation to historical moments. Readings of representative novels draw on various interpretive frameworks, from history and food studies to middlebrow studies and feminist criticism.

This project contributes to critical discussions at the intersection of narratology and the history of the novel. Though food figures centrally in poems, short stories, and other literary forms, it operates differently in novels, which permit the sustained development of plot and character through patterns of consumption. Novelistic eating contributes to the imaginative construction of interiority and social connections. Meals

both punctuate and generate narrative. In *The Food Plot in the Nineteenth-Century Novel*, Michael Lee contends that "what is generally understood to be [the nineteenth-century British] novel's predominant narrative structure, the marriage plot, works in tandem and in tension with another structure that [he] call[s] 'the food plot'" (2); this secondary plot haunts and destabilizes the steady movement towards wedlock that critics such as Nancy Armstrong and Ian Watt have identified as the primary narrative drive in nineteenth-century novels. Lee persuasively argues that eating is a destabilizing force in works that register the development of psychological depth through the suppression of material appetite.

Like Paula Derdiger's work on "reconstruction realism," my thesis brings investigations of plot and character to bear on twentieth-century fiction. Invoking Alex Woloch's premise that in the nineteenth-century novel, "the minor character is always drowned out within the totality of the narrative" (38), Derdiger argues that 1940s reworkings of the realist novel register the effects of war and the legacy of modernism by "challeng[ing] conventional realist expectations of linear plot progression and individual character development": "all characters, arguably, are made minor by the Second World War" ("We Shall Never" 132). A central aim of this project is to demonstrate that in midcentury writing, minor details of food and consumption take on major significance. The political importance of food before, during, and after the war imbued individual eating habits with social and literary meaning. In twentieth-century fiction, the "food plot" evolves beyond its secondary status in the nineteenth-century novel to play a primary role.

Alimentary aspects of national identity are particularly central in midcentury

novels, which reflect on questions of citizenship. Extending Rachel Potter and Lyndsey

Stonebridge's contention that "of all writing, the novel genre has been the best suited for

imagining what it means to be a modern person … in ways that are socially and

politically visible" (5), Marina MacKay argues that

> notions of citizenship and the state find some of their most distinctive
>
> articulations in the novel. Of course in the British context, that is true from
>
> at least Sir Walter Scott onwards. What makes it especially true and
>
> characteristic of the British novel in the middle of the twentieth century is
>
> the novel's renewed engagement with social issues and forms at this time.
>
> In what was once typically misread as a relatively straightforward political
>
> and aesthetic repudiation of modernism and its signature concern with the
>
> inner life, the mid-century British novel is concerned with institutions,
>
> groups, and collective identities. As a result of residual structures of
>
> wartime feeling, the mid-century novel is interested not only in horizontal
>
> relationships among the members of a community, but also in vertical
>
> relationships between these people and authority. ("Citizenship" 31)

If the novel permits midcentury writers to "imagin[e] alternative forms of citizenship"

(Hepburn, *Around* 6), it does so in part through the same processes of socialization and

individuation that find expression in foodways. This project picks up on Allan Hepburn's

contention in *Around 1945* that "[t]hrough the instantiation of individuals in specific

plots, literature traces the dynamic process by which individuals identify the limits and

freedoms inherent in citizenship within a community" (4). More specifically, midcentury

eating contributes to the dynamic construction of citizenship.

In moving from genre fiction to highbrow literature and other cultural texts, this

project recuperates authors whose works have been habitually overlooked by critics.

Questions of cultural distinction, in Pierre Bourdieu's sense of the term, converge in

midcentury food writing.[5] Readings of P.G. Wodehouse and Nancy Mitford reposition

novels historically dismissed as "light" or "popular," thus not worth critical attention.

This study therefore adds to the current discourse emerging out of the Middlebrow

Network, an interdisciplinary research initiative dedicated to reclaiming the middlebrow

from its disparaging 1920s origins. Faye Hammill, Nicola Humble, and Mary Grover

redefine the "middlebrow" as a generically mixed cultural form that borrows from both

"highbrow" modernist experimentation and "lowbrow" mass culture. Emphasizing the

gendered implications of the term, Humble describes "feminine middlebrow literature" as

typically "calibrating precise degrees of middle-class status, showing an intense interest

in domestic details, and combining a fascination with the life of the bohemian artist with

a faint suspicion of intellectuality" (*Feminine* 8). By mixing cultural registers,

middlebrow writers challenge and expand restrictive definitions of art and intellectual

work (Hammill, *Celebrity* 11). Middlebrow fiction is perceived as a guilty pleasure: it

combines "an enjoyable feminine 'trivia' of clothes, food, family, manners, romance, and

so on, with an element of wry self-consciousness that allow[s] the reader to drift between

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[5] In *Distinction*, Pierre Bourdieu notes that the same classifications apply to cultural and culinary taste: "The antithesis between quantity and quality, substance and form, corresponds to the opposition—linked to different distances from necessity—between the taste of necessity, which favours the most 'filling' and most economical foods, and the taste of liberty—or luxury—which shifts the emphasis to the manner (of presenting, serving, eating etc.) and tends to use stylized forms to deny function" (1669). Bourdieu further identifies the opposition between the higher "taste of reflection" and the "taste of sense" as "the basis of high aesthetics since Kant," and argues that "pleasure purified of pleasure" is both a symbol of moral excellence and a marker of true humanity (1669).

ironic and complicit readings" (Humble, *Feminine* 5).[6]

Adapting forms and themes traditionally associated with popular fiction,

middlebrow writers knowingly address an audience comprised of both knowing and

unknowing readers. Though their authors and readers are predominantly middleclass,

middlebrow novels are "as likely to subvert as to reinforce values which are taken to be

constitutive of interwar middleclass ideology" (Hammill, *Sophistication* 122). As Faye

Hammill notes in *Sophistication*, "detachment does not necessarily imply cynicism" in

middlebrow texts: "Indeed middlebrow literature, music, art and cinema often achieve a

delicate blending of such apparently incompatible ingredients as sentiment and

sophistication, optimism and disillusionment, frivolity and engagement, conservatism and

subversion" (120). Gender and genre affect the framing and reception of novels, a

framing exacerbated by a critical tendency to view attention to food as a signifier of

lowbrow literature.

While there has been a considerable amount of sociohistorical research on food

and rationing,[7] existing studies of midcentury fiction dwell on other facets of wartime and

postwar experience, such as urban geography (Kalliney, Derdiger), fascism and

antifascism (Lassner, Suh), and imperial culture (Deer, Esty).[8] Gill Plain, Phyllis Lassner,

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[6] Although most work on the middlebrow focuses on the production and reception of works by female authors, there is also a growing interest in male middlebrow authorship and readership. See for example *The Masculine Middlebrow, 1880-1950*, ed. Kate Macdonald. A section of the present project appears in Ann Rea's *Middlebrow Wodehouse*, the first collection of in-depth critical work on the author.

[7] Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska's *Austerity in Britain* offers the most thorough and comprehensive history of British rationing and food controls. See also *How Britain Was Fed in Wartime* (HMSO), Angus Calder's *The People's War*, Norman Longmate's *How We Lived Then*, Raynes Minns' *Bombers and Mash*, Nicola Humble's *Culinary Pleasures*, Christopher Driver's *Britain at Table*, and Peter Hennessy's *Having it So Good*.

[8] Andrea Adolph's *Food and Femininity in Twentieth-Century British Women's Fiction* contains a chapter on the war years that discusses Pym's *Jane and Prudence*, but her study is primarily preoccupied with an interest in mind/body duality and its implications for feminist criticism; Allison Carruth's *Global Appetites* situates twentieth-century American literature in the context of national food culture in the US. The centrality of food in the history of modern warfare is also reflected in numerous historical and

Jenny Hartley, Victoria Stewart and others examine female perspectives on the war

through studies of women's wartime fiction, touching on notions of domesticity that

overlap with this project's focus on food.[9] Such works guide its approach to food and

eating as a useful barometer of the cultural climate. Lassner suggests in *British Women*

Writers of World War Two that "domestic fictions" by women writers on the home front

stage the interplay between public and private; they "not only address women's unequal

status in their own homes; they also challenge the patriarchal state which made

conflicting demands on them" (128). Discussing wartime motherhood and illicit

relationships, Stewart further explains how contemporary authors illustrate the conflicting

domestic demands of war and peace:

> for women in particular, the apparent freedoms of wartime are not
>
> sustained with the return of peace. While acknowledging that,
>
> paradoxically, the crisis of war could offer new opportunities for women,
>
> many [wartime] authors weigh this against the extent to which women's
>
> actions were still hemmed in by cultural expectations and, indeed,
>
> biological factors. (128)

Just as wartime and postwar novelists respond to political realities, midcentury fiction

probes actual policies around eating and citizenship. At the same time, literary depictions

of food are not mimetic reflections of reality, but texts with symbolic and narrative value

that transcends historicity. Following Anita Mannur, this project treats "food as a

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anthropological accounts of European and North American foodways, including Amy Bentley's *Eating for Victory* (USA) and Ian Mosby's *Food Will Win the War* (Canada). In blending literary and cultural analysis of British food and rationing, my approach most closely parallels Richard Farmer's in *The Food Companions*, which studies cinema and consumption in wartime Britain.

[9] See for instance Gill Plain, *Women's Fiction of the Second World War*; Phyllis Lassner, *British Women Writers of World War Two*; Jenny Hartley, *Millions Like Us*; and Victoria Stewart, *The Second World War in Contemporary British Fiction*.

discursive space able to critically interrogate the nostalgic and affective rendering of

food" in relation to nation, class, gender, and ethnicity (12), and resists reading food

writing as "an ethnographic project adhering to the principles of mimetic realism" (16).

The topic of food is uniquely suited to an interdisciplinary approach. Food writing

crosses generic boundaries: it may be literary, documentary, legislative, or culinary.[10]

Just as a recipe is an "embedded discourse" with "a variety of relationships to its frame or

bed" (Leonardi 127), midcentury literature about food is embedded in various cultural

discourses. This project's analysis of official and unofficial food cultures makes an

original contribution to midcentury scholarship. Though works such as Lassner's and

Stewart's call attention to the importance of the domestic in wartime narratives, no

scholar has published a full-length work of criticism focused specifically on food

selection and consumption in midcentury British fiction.

The Second World War is the fulcrum of this study. Food rationing provides a

particularly evocative symbol for the experience of total war, both because every citizen

was affected and because individual food choices in turn affected the collective projects

of war and postwar reconstruction. In hinging on wartime Britain, this thesis takes for

granted Patrick Deer's assertion of an "official culture of war" in England, one offering

"a modern cultural tradition that claimed to cure and unite the diverse, fragmented

spheres of everyday life" (6). In *Culture in Camouflage*, Deer argues that government-

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[10] Food studies itself has roots in numerous disciplines. In *Culinary Fictions*, Anita Mannur distinguishes food studies theories "that consider how taste for certain foods can be seen as to reflect social and cultural patterns and how culture, in turn, shapes food preferences (Claude Levi-Strauss, Pierre Bourdieu, and Mary Douglas)" from those focusing on such elements as "the relationship between food, colonialism, and power (Sidney Mintz); the ceremonial uses of food in religion (Claude Levi-Strauss); the development of table manners (Norbert Elias); [and] the symbolic meaning of food (Herbert Gans and Roland Barthes)." Mannur further emphasizes the reliance of early food studies work on structuralism, which through "attention to semiotics, thematics, and the formalist dimensions of culture provided a logical script through which to navigate the alimentary symbols and motifs in literature" (11).

subsidized artistic and cultural productions were crucial intermediaries between the

British state and citizens during the Second World War (7). Partly through the

"coloniz[ation of] everyday life for the purposes of the war effort" (Deer 8), state culture

demanded engagement with national ideals and events and inspired a resurgence of

popular imperialism. As Angus Calder notes, English civilians "'made sense' of the

frightening and chaotic actualities of wartime life in terms of heroic mythology … War

created conditions in which people could invest [their unrealized potential] in an

everyday life now suffused with history" (*Myth* 14). Like other facets of everyday life,

eating was imbued with a greater sense of meaning and necessity in wartime (*Myth* 23).

Actively encouraging the martialization of British foodways, the massive propaganda

machine at the Ministry of Food was a key component of British war culture.

While the Second World War is necessarily central to any discussion of

midcentury foodways, however, this thesis moves beyond an exclusive focus on the war

to explore British food culture from the 1930s to the 1960s. Just as food rationing

outlasted the war by almost a decade, official food culture emerged before the war and

lasted into the postwar period. "From the moment the government began to piece together

a serious siege economy in early 1940 to the summer of 1954 when the last commodities

were derationed, food brought real life and public administration together in a continuous

symbiosis" (Hennessy 8-9). Both the state of emergency and the opportunity for

reimagining the future of Britain afforded by postwar reconstruction accelerated the

articulation of British culinary identity. Food was an equally important campaign issue

for the postwar Labour and Conservative parties; Clement Attlee's commitment to

peacetime food controls contributed to both his 1945 electoral victory and his 1955 defeat.

Shifting attitudes to the top-down regulation of consumption highlight the dynamic associations between food and citizenship in midcentury Britain. Reading across multiple decades permits analysis of the ways in which conceptions of ethical eating evolved and shifted for Britons in peace and war, austerity and affluence. Though itself flexible rather than fixed, the "official food culture" of wartime and postwar Britain was further translated, distorted, and resisted in midcentury fiction.

In tracing official and unofficial food cultures over several decades, this thesis follows scholars such as Lyndsey Stonebridge, Marina MacKay, Kristin Bluemel, and Tyrus Miller by reading continuity rather than rupture in midcentury literature and culture. Like Stonebridge and MacKay, it sets its historical parameters "around the Second World War rather than to one side of it" to demonstrate "the extent to which midcentury fiction is a literature of continuities and transitions between the earlier and later parts of the century" (2). This approach is informed by notions of intermodernism and late modernism, both of which reject readings of the Second World War as an artistic break or gap.[11] Far from "a conservative literature of retreat … mid-century fiction has a complex and under-thought relation to its own history" in terms of both a particular historical moment and an awareness of historical and literary legacies (Stonebridge and

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[11] In the aptly titled *Late Modernism*, Tyrus Miller defines "late modernism" as a transitional literary period between modernism and postmodernism, comprising texts written "both preceding and following the years between the wars." In Miller's terms, late modernist works demonstrate "a distinctly self-conscious manifestation of the aging and decline of modernism, in both its institutional and ideological dimensions" that "anticipates future developments" and "fit[s] into a narrative of emergent postmodernism" (7). Kristin Bluemel similarly uses "intermodernism" to refer to "the novels, memoirs and essays of writers like George Orwell, Storm Jameson, William Empson, Harold Heslop, and Stella Gibbons that emerged from, anticipated and influenced perceptions of two world wars and their aftermaths" (1). Emphasizing the notion of "intermodern responsibility," Bluemel defines intermodernism as "a category that alludes to both period and style" and encompasses ideological, aesthetic, institutional, and materialist orientations (5).

MacKay 2). Theories of the middlebrow overlap with late and intermodernism in their

resistance to cultural categorization and canon construction. Like the middlebrow,

intermodernism offers a useful vector for exploring ways in which food operates

artistically and ideologically in both critical and unreflexive texts.[12] This project builds

on readings of late modernist literature as exhibiting ideological and aesthetic

orientations particular to the middle decades of the century. The first chapter accordingly

traces the origins of invasion fiction to highlight ways in which authors exploit this

concept in their wartime writing; the last chapter shows novelists engaging with

discourses of slimming and self-control dating back centuries, but inflect those discourses

with a specific postwar vernacular.

      Patriotic ideals of consumption reflect larger midcentury discussions about British

citizenship. Sonya O. Rose's study of citizenship in wartime Britain analyzes the

complex interactions between official and unofficial cultural discourses. As Rose points

out, even in wartime—when passionate national identification is heightened—"the

process of national identity formation is not automatic," but rather

> produced by ideological work. And the particular symbols, themes, and
>
> rhetorical strategies—the ideological discourses current in a particular
>
> war—are shaped by the specific cultural and social contexts in which they
>
> are generated.
>
>   While certainly the propaganda arms of the Government are
>
> significant in generating the national meanings that circulate, they do not

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[12] Bluemel uses the notion of "intermodern responsibility" to describe shared features of midcentury fiction: "cultural features (intermodernists typically represent working-class and working middle-class cultures); political features (intermodernists are often politically radical, 'radically eccentric'); and literary features (intermodernists are committed to non-canonical, even 'middlebrow' or 'mass' genres)" (*Intermodernism* 1).

operate in a cultural vacuum, nor is the process of national identity

formation simply dictated by those with formal political power. Rather,

ideas about the nation and the symbols by which it is represented are in

dialogue with a range of cultural meanings. And these symbols and

meanings are reworked in various ways by people differently located in

society who join in the national conversation. (13-14)

Rose's argument draws on Benedict Anderson's definitions of nations as "imagined

communities," constructed through shared ideas and experiences. Étienne Balibar argues

in "The Nation Form: History and Ideology" that the "external frontiers [of a nation] have

to be imagined constantly as a projection and protection of an internal collective

personality, which each of us carries within ourselves and enables us to inhabit the space

of the state as a place where we have always been—and always will be—'at home'"

(348). That is, "the nation is imagined as an essentially unchanging place of like-minded

people where we experience the emotional security of being perpetually at home" (Rose

95).

National Cuisine and Citizenship

 If nations are homes, then it matters how you set the table. Through its

prescriptive and persuasive approach to civilian eating and exercise, the Ministry of Food

underscored the ideological dimensions of dietary guidelines. Though deriving from

empirical data, nutritional recommendations are fluid, rooted as much in subjective

judgment as objective fact. Gyorgy Scrinis' theory of nutrition emphasizes this

ideological component: in spite of its ostensible neutrality, the language of nutrition

"privileges certain modes of assessing food values and occludes others" (Biltekoff 18).

The calorie, for instance, has emotional and moral resonances far beyond its seemingly

neutral function as a unit of scientific measurement. Nutrition "provides rules about what

to eat that also function as a system through which people construct themselves as certain

kinds of subjects" (Biltekoff 18).

Dietary advice, such as the Ministry of Food's enjoinders to fill up on local

potatoes and greens rather than meat and white bread, expresses social ideals and

addresses social problems. The application of scientific language to food and

consumption rhetorically encourages individuals to view their own food choices as part

of a specific public goal (Mudry 20). This simultaneously empirical and ethical discourse

around "healthy eating" dates back to antiquity. As John Coveney demonstrates in *Food,*

Morals and Meaning, even ancient Greek and early Christian authorities on healthful

eating encouraged the moderation of bodily appetites as a means of ensuring spiritual and

moral health. Insistence on moderation is as relevant for contemporary detox dieters as it

was for ancient monks fasting for spiritual purification; notions of "goodness" and

"badness" shape food attitudes and demonstrate the social and moral dimensions of

consumption. As a measurement of overall quality of life, the way in which a given

society defines "health" reaffirms cultural values (Crawford 62).

The national focus of this study reflects both the enforced insularity of wartime

food practices and the association of food with cultural belonging. As Richard Farmer

asserts in *The Food Companions*, rationing "helped to establish Britain as a 'food-based

community,' a national group defined in part by its shared consumption patterns and

rituals." Through propaganda and legislation, the Ministry of Food "established a

communalist gastronomic paradigm, which used food's association with mutuality, collectivity and consensus to integrate the private individual into the public body-corporate" (Farmer 3). As Lizzie Collingham explains in *A Taste of War*, the entrenched food attitudes of individual nations were so comprehensive and rigorously enforced that even as national cuisines were distorted and suspended by war, they were more than ever aligned with national character. While there are numerous points of overlap between the food policies of Allied and Commonwealth nations, for instance, the food situations in Germany and occupied France were hugely different from those of Britain and America.[13]

Collingham specifically contrasts British and German approaches to feeding by way of example. Though Germany had already shifted its consumptions habits prewar, the British government resisted restrictions until absolutely necessary. Further, British democratic food policy operated on the basis of equality of sacrifice, whereas Nazi Germany strategically prioritized the allocation of food to heighten military efficiency; the systematic starvation of "undesirables" such as homosexuals and Jews was a horrific extension of this philosophy. As the requisitioning of food from occupied France indicates, both "Germany and Japan intended to export wartime hunger"; during the Second World War, both nations treated food as a weapon, viewed other nations as food sources, and prioritized themselves in terms of resource allocation rather than borrowing and negotiating (Collingham 86).[14] Like national cuisine, national food policy is always

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[13] For other comparative studies of European food distribution and nutrition in wartime, see Zweiniger-Bargielowska, Duffett, and Drouard, eds, *Food and War in Twentieth Century Europe* and Trentmann and Just, eds, *Food and Conflict in Europe in the Age of the Two World Wars*.
[14] Asserting that the Second World War "intensified the exploitative nature of colonialism" (140), Collingham makes an important qualification about the ostensible egalitarianism of Allied food policy. Though Britain did a good job *within* Britain despite limited resources, "the British government was also responsible for the food security of its colonial subjects, and it was here that it often failed, most

shaped by agricultural, economic, and ideological considerations. Communal rhetoric also shaped the emergent welfare state. As food controls extended into postwar reconstruction, government food policy was inseparable from economic and social aims.

Thematically organized around thick descriptions of literary and cultural texts, the four sections of this thesis approach the question of British citizenship through novelistic portrayals of food and eating. Chapter One mobilizes the theory of hospitality to explore notions of invasion in midcentury fiction. As the Second World War disrupted host-guest relations, anxieties about selecting and cooking traditional foods reflected larger threats to national and imperial identity. Midcentury food imagery reflects paranoia about invasion by foreign cuisines, cultures, and armies. Elizabeth Taylor's *At Mrs. Lippincote's* (1945) and Patrick Hamilton's *The Slaves of Solitude* (1947) depict uncertain culinary relations in shared housing; both P.G. Wodehouse's Jeeves and Wooster series and Evelyn Waugh's *Put Out More Flags* (1942) and *Brideshead Revisited* (1945) process cultural invasions through depictions of shared food and domestic space. In wartime portrayals of invasion and hospitality, table manners and culinary tastes reveal individual and national character.

Chapter Two traces the evolution of heroic eating habits from the 1910s to the 1950s by focusing on generically representative thriller novels. In Ian Fleming's early James Bond stories and Geoffrey Household's *Rogue Male* (1939), food fortifies the bodies and minds of midcentury spies. Such fortifications occur within a larger generic history that extends from Robert Baden-Powell's *Scouting for Boys* (1908) and John

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spectacularly in Bengal, where 3 million Indians died of a preventable man-made famine. Thus the Allied powers made their own substantial contribution to wartime hunger, malnutrition and starvation" (28). See Paul R. Greenough, *Prosperity and Misery in Modern Bengal*.

Buchan's *The 39 Steps* (1915) to Alan Sillitoe's *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1958). In conversation with civilian and military health guidelines, these novels delineate a midcentury ideal of patriotic, masculine eating defined by self-discipline and discrimination.

Chapter Three analyzes culinary encounters between Britain, France, and the Mediterranean to illustrate the paradoxical treatment of foreign foodways in wartime and postwar culture. Literary depictions of food and eating take place within a larger context of food writing; novels by Barbara Pym intersect with the cookbooks of Elizabeth David and the restaurant reviews of Fanny Cradock as well as other contemporary food critics. By integrating international ingredients and dishes into their food writing, Pym, David, and Cradock aimed to redefine and expand British foodways in the postwar period. Their engagement with gendered food roles and models of communal consumption reflect larger patterns of public and private dining in the emergent welfare state.

The fourth chapter of this study is about *not* eating. As Britain emerged from the shadow of food rationing, the consequences of affluence became legible in concerns about overconsumption. Chapter Four explores the restriction of consumption in the novels of Muriel Spark and Nancy Mitford in relation to postwar slimming culture. Mitford's *The Pursuit of Love* (1945) and *Love in a Cold Climate* (1949) portray slenderness as a marker of sophistication; they prioritize the cultivation of beauty as a major narrative impetus. Spark's fiction provides the chronological endpoint of this study: in *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (1961) and *The Girls of Slender Means* (1963), controlled consumption is a form of competition among women. In *A Far Cry from Kensington* (1988), which looks back on the 1950s, Spark reflects on the end of the era of

austerity and depicts slimming as potentially transformative. Mitford's and Spark's novels speak to the history of fashion and evolving ideals of feminine beauty: morality and citizenship converge in their treatment of slimming as at once empowering and oppressive.

The thesis closes with a discussion of how postwar immigration further challenged definitions of Britishness and British cuisine. Works by Samuel Selvon, Buchi Emecheta, and Beryl Gilroy illuminate the racialized hierarchies of citizenship at play in notions of "ethnic" and "traditional" cuisine, and lay the groundwork for future work on eating and national identity in the late twentieth century.

Just as heroes of midcentury thrillers feed themselves to prepare for battle, eating both fortifies citizens for sociopolitical engagement and concretely performs that engagement. In midcentury novels, discourses around diet and nutrition shape identity symbolically, narratively, and ideologically. Bringing together a range of texts and thematic foci, the following chapters demonstrate that literary depictions of food express national belonging.

CHAPTER 1

Hospitality and Invasion in Wartime Fiction

The Second World War shifted the terms of English hospitality. By the 1930s, the social-climbing cosmopolitan hosts of the roaring twenties were giving way to concerns about the impending conflict, with its inevitable privations and invasions of privacy. With the outbreak of war, the twin spectres of occupation and destruction heightened British anxieties about the host-guest relationship, while intensifying the symbolic importance of hospitality to national and imperial identities. World War Two confounded the basic requirement of traditional hospitality: that hosts willingly take in guests. Linking the sharing of food and domestic space with other forms of cultural encounter, hospitality provided British artists with a nationalist ethics of benevolent mastery.

In film and literature of the twentieth century, invasion figures metaphorically through food. Novels by P.G. Wodehouse, Evelyn Waugh, Patrick Hamilton, and Elizabeth Taylor as well as William Wyler's Academy Award-winning film *Mrs. Miniver* illustrate the intersections between food, hospitality, and invasion in midcentury narratives. The theory of hospitality—with its contradictory blurring of host and guest, generosity and hostility—provides a means of analyzing breaches of physical, domestic, and national borders in film and literature. The notion that opening one's home and sharing bread and salt, even with an enemy, constitutes an ancient contract of charity and protection places food at the centre of this complex relationship.

In wartime and the postwar period, the depiction of food-based hospitality is charged with apprehensions about the potential for that hospitality to be abused or

violated. Conflicts and displacements impeded hosts' capacities to take in and cater to guests, complications reflected in contemporary literary and cinematic works. Midcentury narratives associate foodways with multifarious invasions—by foreign cultures, enemy forces, evacuee families, untrustworthy servants, or other unwelcome guests. Characters' abilities to share food courteously, generously, moderately, and with discrimination illustrate social, cultural, and national distinctions. Further, meals serve both to express love and to evade romantic entanglement; characters negotiate complex interpersonal relationships by using food as temptation or distraction.

In *Mrs Miniver* (1942), a wounded German soldier enacts international hostilities on an individual scale by demanding English hospitality and resources; in P.G. Wodehouse's Jeeves and Bertie stories, table manners and hospitality are of central importance to narrative development, while transgressions of dining conventions are crucial to the comic structure of the works. Evelyn Waugh's *Put Out More Flags* (1942) shows the hospitality of country house owners being challenged by the violently bad behaviour of evacuee children from Birmingham, while the requisitioning of Brideshead Castle in *Brideshead Revisited* (1945), like the home in Elizabeth Taylor's *At Mrs. Lippincote's* (1945), signals the end of an era and genealogical line. In *The Slaves of Solitude* (1947), Patrick Hamilton depicts a space much like the eponymous house in Taylor's novel, in which traditional hospitality is impossible. In all these cases, displacement precedes culinary adaptation and interrupted hospitality. Distinctive foodways reinforce a sense of otherness, as each text links food with invasion through the portrayal of acts and abuses of hospitability. In midcentury British culture, invasion at the national level has culinary parallels.

Domestic Invasion: The Host-Guest Relationship

The concept of hospitality is fundamental to western civilization. An underlying principle in most major religions, hospitality—"the right of a stranger not to be treated as an enemy when he arrives in the land of another" (Kant)—is identified by Immanuel Kant as the necessary condition for global peace, while Plato makes it a basic duty of the Republic (McNulty vii). Initially denoting an ethics of universal benevolence, in the secular tradition the term hospitality has come to refer to an implicit set of laws between host and guest, in which the host must welcome a stranger into her home and provide for him and the guest must respect the host's right to mastery.

In *Of Hospitality* as well as "Hostipitality," however, Jacques Derrida identifies a disjunction between these two interpretations of the term. He asserts that, in the latter sense, hospitality is inherently hostile in its predication on power dynamics and the negotiation of contingent identities. Tracy McNulty explains this conflict:

> the act of hospitality both embodies, and promises to resolve, a particular tension. On the one hand it is an act that constitutes identity: the identity of the host, but also that of the group, culture, or nation in whose name he acts. It is the act through which the home—and the homeland—constitutes itself in the gesture of turning to address its outside. But as an accidental encounter with what can be neither foreseen nor named, hospitality also insists on the primacy of immanent relations over identity. Hence it both allows for the constitution of identity and challenges it, by suggesting that the home can also become unhomely, *unheimlich*, estranged by the

introduction of something foreign that threatens to contaminate or dissolve its identity. (viii)

By entering the home of the host, the guest is at once rendering himself vulnerable and intruding on personal space, potentially rendering the home unpleasant or uncanny. Like Mrs. Miniver's feeding of the German soldier who breaks into her house, an act of hospitality is a prescribed response to an invasion, an interaction that seems benign but in fact challenges the privacy and identity of both host and guest. During and after the Second World War, this relationship was further complicated by the contingent living conditions resulting from the destruction of residences, the displacement of homeowners, tenants, and refugee populations, and the necessity of opening doors and borders to displaced people.

In British literature and culture, concerns about hostile occupation on a larger scale exploded as early as the late nineteenth century, when fears of military attack trickled into the national consciousness in part through the "invasion scare" narratives popularized by Sir George Chesney's *The Battle of Dorking* (1871). Written by a military commander, Chesney's work expressed British anxieties about the recent German occupation of France by depicting the defeat of England by German forces. Similar narratives enjoyed massive popularity well into the Edwardian period. They often depict foreign invasion "as the consequence of, and sometimes the punishment for, decadence" (Kemp s.v. "invasion scare stories"). Even P.G. Wodehouse's early works include a parodic scare story, *The Swoop!* (1909), in which England, preoccupied with teatime and sporting events, is simultaneously swarmed by no fewer than nine foreign armies (who then hash out land claims over an awkwardly multicultural dinner).

Throughout the twentieth century, discourses of invasion circulated through literature, film, and culture. Turn-of-the-century science fiction such as H.G. Wells' *War of the Worlds* (1897) widened the scope of invasion to encompass not just international but interplanetary relations, initiating the alien invasion trope. The emergence of English spy fiction in the early twentieth century, a response to the defeatist nature of many scare narratives, proposed a new saviour for an otherwise doomed culture: the spy as a determined individual working secretly to combat the insidious encroachment of enemy forces (Kemp s.v. "spy fiction"). Works such as John Buchan's *The Thirty-Nine Steps* (1915) portray patriotic, isolated hero-figures willing to risk their lives in service of their country. As the intelligence officer known only as R. tells the protagonist in Somerset Maugham's first *Ashenden* (1928) story, "If you do well, you'll get no thanks and if you get into trouble you'll get no help" (4). Like invasion narratives, spy stories portray nations as rendered vulnerable through naïve complacency, hedonistic indulgence, and a failure to protect against external threats.

Even midcentury science fiction texts that translate fears of foreign invasion into cosmic terms allude to distinctions in food selection and consumption. In BBC Television's *Quatermass* trilogy, alien invasions threaten Britain in part because of the distinct dietary needs of the aliens, literalizing anxieties about the vulnerability of national borders, identities, and lifestyles. *Quatermass II* (1955) in particular depicts beings from one of the moons of Saturn who are reliant on protective shells and a synthetic recreation of their native atmosphere—a toxic combination of ammonia, hydrogen, nitrogen, and methane—to survive on earth. Having infiltrated upper levels of government, the invaders conceal their activities by disguising their pressure dome home

as a synthetic food plant. Instead, the dome houses tanks of the toxic black slime that

nourishes the aliens while poisoning any human being it touches.

The foodways of such intruders are literally fatal to the people of Britain,

figuratively suggesting the threat posed by incoming cultures to traditional ways of life in

England and elsewhere. Ian Q. Hunter notes the irony of midcentury British science

fiction expressing worries about alien invasions in its own rural towns rather than major

American cities: "to set up bridgeheads on isolated Scottish islands and in sleepy villages

suggests that the aliens enjoyed a curiously nostalgic idea of the centres of earthly power"

(8-9). A key scene in *Quatermass II*, for instance, shows a typical rural pub scene being

disrupted by an explosion from the factory and a subsequent raid by alien-controlled

guards, identified as contaminated by their facial markings. Postwar invaders do not

strike at the seat of Empire—much diminished in global influence by the 1950s—but at

the heart of national identity in Little England.[15]

Food both symbolizes and enacts hospitality. In midcentury texts, the sharing of

food synecdochically links interpersonal with international host-guest relations, whether

they take place by invitation or invasion. This link is explicit in William Wyler's *Mrs.*

Miniver, winner of the Best Picture Oscar in 1942. Midway through the film, the

eponymous English housewife (Greer Garson) plays hostess to a wounded enemy pilot

while her husband helps to evacuate soldiers from the beaches at Dunkirk. Like many

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[15] As Nadine Attewell demonstrates in *Better Britons*, fears of invasion did not end with the Second World War, but continue to shape narratives into the twenty-first century:

> Apocalyptic scenarios in which Britain is overrun by a variety of spectacularly fertile foreign bodies (including, but not limited to, immigrants) proliferate in post-war British political discourse and cultural production. The narratives of engulfment that organize John Wyndham's 1951 novel *The Day of the Triffids*, Enoch Powell's 1968 speech "Rivers of Blood," and Danny Boyle's 2002 film *28 Days Later* do not merely reflect either demographic trends or territorial givens. Rather, they work to confine Britishness within sharply defined borders, anchoring the nation in the certainty of distinguishing between (menaced) insides and (menacing) outsides. (28)

guests, the fanatical German soldier (Helmut Dantine) is uninvited; having crash-landed

in the village several days earlier, he invades the Minivers' kitchen at gunpoint, and

asserts his demands in a curt imperative punctuated by gestures with his gun: "Food.

Drink." Forced to serve him, Kay Miniver provides milk, bread, and—for ration-era

England—a shockingly large hunk of ham (see fig. 5).

Figure 5: Robbing the breadbox. Greer Garson and Helmut Dantine in *Mrs. Miniver* (1942).

This tense central scene was rewritten several times following the initial draft in

1940, with each revision becoming more confrontational as international hostilities

progressed: following America's entry into the war, it was even refilmed to include

Garson slapping Dantine in the face (Glancy 147-8). In the original script, Miniver's

reaction to the German was conceived as a maternal invitation to dine; "you must be

hungry, my boy," she says. "Come and let me feed you" (Glancy 147). Even in the

shooting script, in which the soldier is more assertive than frightened and food is

demanded rather than offered, Mrs. Miniver's willingness to cater to her visitor's needs is

reflected in her capable nursing and ready supply of wholesome food. Assuring the pilot that he will be well cared for at the hospital, Kay gently helps him into a chair, places a damp cloth on his neck, and cautiously tends to him after he has fainted and been disarmed. Unlike the uncouth Nazi, the English housewife responds to enmity with courage, courtesy, and common sense.

In both versions, Miniver's seemingly automatic hospitality illustrates a paradox of twentieth-century Britishness. In *Mrs. Miniver*, the German soldier literalizes British fears of national invasion through his intrusion into the Miniver home. After forcibly entering the kitchen, he devours all the food that a frightened but composed Greer Garson serves him, animalistically tearing at a hunk of bread. His theft of the massive hunk of ham—roughly a week's ration for the entire family—is another symbol of the dangerous greed of the German nation, which was angrily devouring Europe in an attempt to expand its doomed empire. The uninvited guest, himself an unwilling visitor in that he never meant to set foot on English soil, exploits the maternal, naturalized hospitality of the English housewife.

Ultimately, the German invader is overcome by his own physical weakness, passing out from his injuries and only reviving in time to be removed by the authorities. Almost immediately following this moment in the film, there is a comic scene in which the domestic authority of Mr. Miniver is reasserted and the absurdity of Mrs. Miniver's stoicism is underscored. Mr. Miniver, recently returned from Dunkirk, paternalistically teases his wife for having missed the adventure: "But that's what men are for, isn't it," he observes, "to go out and do things while you womenfolk look after the house." Her sassily understated description of her own activities—"Oh, nothing dear, I just had a

German pilot in for tea"—reflects Mrs. Miniver's attempt to neutralize the threat of foreign invasion through straightforward English hospitality, and results in a firm smack on the bottom from her husband. The bum-slap, a playful echo of the face slap she gives the German pilot, comically resolves narrative tension and reinstates patriarchal power by shifting the arena of war out of the kitchen and back to the men on the battlefield.

The tensions and pleasures of midcentury eating are bound up with setting and character. How individual diners end up together in a specific place, whether by choice or necessity, contributes to the form and experience of the meal itself while shedding light on the wider conditions in which it takes place. Along with the physical encroachments on privacy resulting from the war—shared housing as a result of shortages, the lack of privacy in air raid shelters, the billeting of evacuated urban children in rural homes—the difficulties and opportunities of constant mealtime interactions were pressing issues at midcentury, complicating the traditional host-guest relationship.

During the Second World War, communal dining outside of the home was a key part of the government plan to minimize shortages, a plan that saw the proliferation of state-subsidized factory canteens, emergency feeding services, and the affordable, off-ration "British Restaurant." Such establishments placed the paternalistic wartime state in the position of host. Many midcentury texts by middle and upperclass writers depict unappetizing restaurant scenes as a measure of the widespread availability of low-quality food in the era of austerity. Even private dining rooms were subject to invasion as the Second World War forced the dissolution of personal boundaries. Official policy acknowledged that the legislation of foodways through rationing and controlled distribution represented a major intrusion into citizens' private lives.

Over the course of the war, national and military borders seemed, like the breached Maginot line, increasingly penetrable. Bombings of British cities shattered the boundaries between public and private. Under martial law, however, private ownership had been suspended even prior to direct attacks on England. With the British government's imposition of the Emergency Powers (Defence) Act in 1940, personal property was officially rendered public.[16] C.R. Attlee's assertion that "Each must make his maximum contribution" was in effect a legally binding contract, enacted not only through the seizure of waterfront properties and the evacuation of homeowners for defence purposes, but through the regulation and control of the country's food and resources (1036).

Both civilians and military personnel were relocated in huge numbers. "From the outbreak of war to the end of 1945," notes Angus Calder, "some sixty million changes of address took place among a civilian population of about thirty-eight million… it is clear that this was a 'war of movement' in other senses besides the military one" (*PW* 315). Many moved repeatedly. Citizens displaced due to war work, evacuation, or requisitioning might be forced to welcome uninvited military or civil servant "guests" into their newly vacated homes and either rent or billet housing elsewhere—often, because of shortages, in lodgings unsuited to their needs or lifestyles. Like those individuals who, with varying degrees of willingness, opened their homes to outsiders, England opened its borders to refugees from countries that had fallen to Axis forces—

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[16] The Emergency Powers (Defence) Act was passed in limited form before the war began in August 1939 (Calder, *People's War* 32); in September 1940, the House of Commons voted to extend the Act, granting the government "complete control over persons and property, not just some persons of some particular class of the community, but of all persons, rich and poor, employer and workman, man or woman, and all property" (Attlee qtd. in Calder, *People's War* 107). The Act, which remained in effect for the duration of the war, underwent numerous subsequent renewals and refinements prior to its termination in 1945.

Poland, France, Norway, the Channel Islands, and others. Refugees brought their own foodways and expectations, often at odds with those of their hosts, and placed an additional strain on England's already tight resources. In addition to the dietary adjustments necessitated by rationing and the new food practices encouraged by the wartime government, these widespread displacements disrupted normal eating habits within Britain. For those living in shared housing, whether barracks, billets, or boardinghouses, communal meals were both an opportunity for social interaction and a site of considerable anxiety. The events of the 1930s and 1940s ultimately justified cultural and literary alarm about foreign ideologies and armies. As the Second World War was officially declared and the threat of military occupation grew, British writers and filmmakers adapted discourses of national and domestic invasion to portray life on the home front.

Shared Space and Bad Hospitality in Hamilton's *The Slaves of Solitude* (1947)

In Patrick Hamilton's novel *The Slaves of Solitude* (1947), each meal in the claustrophobic boardinghouse advances the war of attrition between the prim Miss Enid Roach, the tyrannical Mr. Thwaites, and the brazen Vicki Kugelmann. Although this conflict is aggravated by the interventions of the doltish and "inconsequent" American Lieutenant Pike (36), it springs primarily from the ambiguity surrounding the rights and responsibilities of boarders in the uncannily semipublic space of the Rosamund Tea Rooms; characters watch each other constantly, monitoring eating habits and lifestyles, and feel incapable of making independent decisions about food and socialization in this strictly controlled boardinghouse.

The tenants of the "Tea Rooms" are acutely aware of their position as interlopers. Just as the building itself refuses to adapt to the presence of the lodgers (its atavistic name signalling its hasty transformation from summer teahouse to haven for bombed-out refugees), the residents define themselves with reference to their prewar lifestyles rather than identifying as boarders. They are preoccupied with the distinction between "what they conside[r] their real background" and

> the illusory and temporary background of their present abode… nearly all
> who lived in the boarding-houses of Thames Lockdon were conscious of
> having descended in the world, of having arrived where they were by a
> pure freak of fate, and of courteously but condescendingly acting a part in
> front of their fellow-boarders. (73-4)

Isolated from their "real" homes and possessions, characters perform assumed identities for the presumed benefit of other boarders. Each conceives of her or himself as graciously condescending towards social inferiors—behaving, in other words, as benevolent hosts or leaders. Yet without grounds in real power over the household, such condescension is meaningless. A good deal of the discomfort experienced by the Tea Rooms residents derives from a shared sense that by living and eating in a place determined by necessity rather than preference, they are misrepresenting themselves. Although communal meals and living spaces necessitate interaction, the inhospitable Rosamund disallows authentic self-expression and connection.[17] Lacking the resources to

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[17] Paula Derdiger reads Miss Roach's inability to adapt to her surroundings as an illustration of how both boardinghouses and boardinghouse narratives delimit the individual (22): "Aspiring protagonists in wartime billeting novels like Patrick Hamilton's *The Slaves of Solitude* (1947) and Elizabeth Taylor's *At Mrs. Lippincote's* (1945) cannot find enough—or the right kind of—household and literary space to emerge as wholly developed individuals. As characters resist communal responsibilities of wartime living, they become occasions for narrators to mock literary fantasies of individual identity, marriage, and single-family home occupation achieved through vertical mobility" (*How Shall We Build* 38).

behave hospitably threatens the individual's capacity to assert personal power and identity.

The Slaves of Solitude also registers a larger historical split in the meaning of hospitality. McNulty describes this modern shift in understanding as a movement "away from religion and philosophy into two very different areas: the so-called hospitality industry (tourism) and a social and political discourse of parasitism, in which the stranger is construed as a hostile invader of the host nation or group" (vii-viii). This increasingly secular understanding of the concept fundamentally transforms relations between "host" and "guest" by negating the ethical dimension of hospitality altogether:

> In this shift, the theological importance of hospitality appears to have been supplanted by something that is mutually exclusive with it: in religious myth, the hospitality act was forbidden to have any economic dimension, and the stranger was held to be divine and to merit the absolute respect of the host. And yet as these increasingly impersonal and formalized means of relating to the stranger displace the ethical importance of a more intimate encounter, the irrational side of our relation to the stranger—fear, anxiety, and hatred—seems to grow ever more virulent. (viii)

This disconnection of acts of hospitality from ethical and theological motivations affects both international relations (immigration policies, for instance) and interpersonal dynamics. The development of the hospitality industry, by formalizing and monetizing host-guest relations, precludes genuine hospitality.

At the Rosamund, Miss Roach and Mrs. Payne enact this dual perversion of hospitality through xenophobia and monetization. As a professional landlady, Mrs.

Payne's "love of gain over-r[ides] all other considerations" (156). Miss Roach, herself

subject to Mrs. Payne's bad hospitality, attempts to treat Vicki as her personal guest, but

becomes increasingly resentful and frustrated by her marginalization within a home and

nation over which she has no real authority. She reacts to the perceived threat of the

outsider with fear and hatred.

Mrs. Payne's understanding of hospitality as an industry rather than a sacred law

is apparent in her refusal to adapt to the needs or habits of her tenants. She frequently

leaves notes around the house to regulate lodgers' behaviour in "a nasty, admonitory

paper-chase" (5). This passive-aggressive enforcement of the status quo constitutes a

deliberate erosion of tenant independence: "Experienced guests were aware that to take

the smallest step in an original or unusual direction would be to provoke a sharp note

within twenty-four hours at the outside, and they had therefore, for the most part,

abandoned originality" (5).[18] The "peculiarly and gratuitously hellish" quality of the

dining room derives from its uncomfortable arrangement. Separate tables both negate the

possibility of general conversation and make private dialogue impossible (8).

Hamilton contrasts the landlady's thoughtlessness in this regard with the historic

ideal of the cordial host, who not only makes guests feel welcome but also encourages

social integration:

> Mrs. Payne would, of course, have done better to have reverted to the
>
> practice of her boarding-house forebears, and have put back—in place of

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[18] The adjective "experienced" contains a sinister suggestion of repeated punishment and underscores the cumulative psychological impact of state controls. Mrs. Payne's constant note-writing not only suggests fascist dictatorships, but also mirrors the ubiquitous British government campaigns of the Second World War, which subjected citizens to constant if well-meaning harassment by various admonitory ministries. Miss Roach is bombarded by such suggestions and prohibitions every time she leaves the boardinghouse; she resents "the endless snubbing and nagging of war, its lecturing and admonitions" (100).

this uncanny segregation in the midst of propinquity—the long table with

herself at the top dominating a free, frank intercourse in which all would

be obliged to join as at a party. But no such step backwards had entered

her mind, and, in the existing state of affairs, she made no attempt to assist

her guests in their predicament, for she was careful never to appear at

meals. (10)

Instead of treating her boarders as guests, Mrs. Payne seems (at least to Miss Roach) to

treat them as hostages. The landlady's bad hospitality has an etymological precedent,

however: the term "hospitality" historically connotes both reciprocal obligation (*hostis*)

and mastery (*potis*), suggesting the complex negotiation of power dynamics inherent in

all acts of hospitality (McNulty viii-x).[19] Mrs. Payne errs on the side of mastery. If not

actually omnipotent—like the inhospitable narrator of the novel[20]—she nonetheless

exercises a little too much *potis* in her control of domestic space. Although absent until

the end of the narrative, when Miss Roach's world widens and she is able to "see in their

correct proportions all the things which had occurred to her in the last few months" (238),

the warden-like landlady is everywhere in the novel, both a cipher for the inconveniences

and admonitions of wartime England and an abstract representation of tyranny. The

Rosamund is a Panopticon in which tenants have become self-regulating; the punishment

for transgressions, as Vicki discovers, is expulsion.[21]

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[19] In tracing the etymology of the term "hospitality," McNulty summarizes Émile Benveniste's
"L'hospitalité," *Le vocabulaire des institutions indo-européennes*, vol. 1 (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1969),
87-101.

[20] The novel is narratively inhospitable in that it subjects the reader to the same suffocating isolation from
real connection imposed on the residents of the Rosamund. Characters in both *At Mrs. Lippincote's* and *The
Slaves of Solitude* "are perpetually victimized by narrators who know more than their characters do"
(Derdiger, *How Shall We Build* 42).

[21] Having been absent from the novel for so long, Mrs. Payne's sudden entrance at the opening of chapter
24 feels like a narrative invasion or an instance—like Miss Roach's surprise inheritance—of *deus ex*

Mealtimes exaggerate this prison-like atmosphere by punctuating a rigid routine that has no grounds in personal preference or comfort. Pathologically anxious about lateness, Miss Roach compulsively obeys the summons of "the tinny Oriental [dinner] gong being hit pettishly by Mrs. Payne" (8); mealtime attempts at "conversational jailbreak" by the landlady's "prisoners" are abortive (10). The dining room also epitomizes the narrator's assertion that "In the war everywhere was crowded all the time" (26). Hamilton captures this congestion and coextensive lack of privacy even at the level of table settings, where individual food choices catalyze conflict:

> Even here the war had risen to the occasion and achieved its characteristic crowding effect, each guest having been supplied with a separate dish for butter and a separate bowl for sugar. This, in addition to its inconvenience, created a disagreeable atmosphere of niggardliness and caution, and caused Miss Roach further self-consciousness and difficulty. For Mr. Thwaites, she was fully aware, had his eye upon every cut she made at her butter and every spoonful she took of her sugar, mutely accusing her, if she took too much early in the week, of greed or prodigality, or of parsimoniousness and tenacity if she saved either up for the end of the

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machina. Far from the tyrannical overlord she appears to be throughout most of the novel, Payne more closely resembles a benevolent leader returning from a long absence to set her kingdom to rights. Miss Roach is astonished by the degree of awareness her landlady reveals about the battle that has been raging within her walls: Payne acknowledges that Roach was "'very much provoked'" and alludes to "'certain things that took place on Boxing Day'" (208). Mrs. Payne's revelation as a relatively reasonable, sympathetic figure highlights the narrowness and unreliability of the narration up to this point, and deflates much of the tension deriving from the previous narrative focalization through Miss Roach's obsessive, defensive, and self-absorbed perspective. The novel narratively reconstructs the claustrophobic experience of the boarders.

week and perpetrated the atrocious impropriety of having some left when

all his had gone and consuming it in front of him.[22]

Boarders lack the freedom comfortably to make their own choices about consumption, even with regard to their private rations. An atmosphere of constant surveillance pervades the narrative: Mrs. Payne watches clients in their rooms, catching "glimpses through open doors" (208); diners eavesdrop on adjacent tables; Miss Roach strains to hear the opening and closing of doors, and peeks inside Mr. Thwaites' room; Albert Brent surveys the dining room drama with anthropological detachment, referring to the tenants as "specimens" (156-8); characters gossip. Regardless of personal preference, all are subject to the corrective scrutiny of other guests.

Such regulatory observation mirrors and extends the government's wartime food legislation, which not only encouraged citizens to follow official policy to the letter but also prompted self-regulation through mutual surveillance. Ministry of Food ads explicitly advised readers to identify and admonish acts of culinary treachery—such as "grey market" transactions or waste—among their friends and neighbours.[23] Mr. Thwaites' comments about the Dragon, "a well-known country-inn-cum-restaurant… which still served steaks and to which the well-to-do resorted in cars" (111), constitute one of the few moments of justified admonishment in the novel. As Thwaites suggests, both steaks and petrol are almost certainly obtained illegally, with the restaurant evading official price caps on meals by overcharging on alcohol or cover: "Is that the place …

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[22] The boardinghouse is sonically crowded as well. Characters can hear the sounds coming from their fellow boarders' rooms; sounds carry across hallways, through walls, and between tables. Trying to escape surveillance, diners are forced to whisper self-consciously or "tremble in hushed reverence" at meals, the painful silence "broken only by the scraping of soup-spoons on plates" or Mr. Thwaites' booming voice (16). Sound signals the discomfort of cohabitation as much by its absence as its presence.
[23] See the discussion of MOF ads in Buckley, "Writing the Kitchen Front," pages 20-22.

Where you get black-market steaks and are charged five shillings for a small cocktail?"
Thwaites asks, "And where the cars are lined up ten deep outside on black-market
petrol… While the country's wanting every ounce of petrol it can get to prosecute the
war?" (112). Much to Miss Roach's chagrin, the night devolves into a hazy, hedonistic
junket—from the River Sun pub to a roadside inn to the Dragon, back to the inn, and
finally to the waterfront—before Roach and the long-suffering taxi driver are allowed to
go home.

Lieutenant Pike's insistence on going to the Dragon reflects his wider tendency to
push the limits of English hospitality, both in terms of national regulations and in terms
of individual relationships—something that is also true of Vicki Kugelmann. As an
unwitting good-time girl, Miss Roach overextends herself in welcoming the American
officer to Thames Lockdon; she belatedly recognizes her interchangeability with the
shopgirls who are presumably even more generous hosts to "her" Lieutenant. The
"inconsequent" Pike imposes himself on the people and spaces around him, entering Miss
Roach's room as thoughtlessly as he barges into the roadside inn, where "the few local
beer-drinkers" are "batter[ed] into dumbness" by the obnoxious "loquacity" of the group
(119). He interferes with Miss Roach's regular consumption patterns by delaying meals,
leaving her hungry, drunk, or just worried about the time; he shatters Miss Roach's
fantasy of private space when he brings Vicki to their usual kissing bench on the
waterfront. As an American officer, Lieutenant Pike is a doubly inconsiderate guest in
that he disregards both the rigid schedule of the boardinghouse and national restrictions
on consumption: he encourages Miss Roach and others to overdrink, demands to be
served after hours, and wastes petrol and other resources. Although other American

officers appear thankful for English hospitality (at least in conversation with Miss

Roach), Pike signifies careless abundance and excess in contrast with English restraint.

If Lieutenant Pike is a bad guest and Mrs. Payne a bad hostess, Miss Roach is an

ineffectual, marginalized mixture of the two—a Londoner forced to relocate to the

suburbs and attempt to carve out a space for herself. Roach's pretensions to hosting are

undercut by her lack of real domestic authority or generosity. Inviting Vicki to move into

the Tea Rooms is an empty courtesy; Vicki exposes Enid's lack of mastery over this

space by arranging the move without her permission or assistance and eating her first Tea

Rooms meal without her. The source of Miss Roach's resentment, like Eleanor's in *At*

Mrs Lippincote's, lies in her frustrated desire to control her own domestic space.

Attempts to integrate Vicki into the social world of the Rosamund are self-serving and

unnecessary.

Miss Roach—"an ardent lover and pursuer of privacy" (91)—dreads Vicki's

incursions into her bedroom, yet feels as powerless to stop them as she is to stop her

moving into the Tea Rooms in the first place. In the liminal space of the boardinghouse,

the room is not wholly her own, but remains vulnerable to the sonic invasions of other

guests as well as to uninvited visitors, who help themselves to Vicki's personal

belongings—such as the agonizing scene in which Vicki uses her comb (91)—and even

to her body, when Lieutenant Pike invites himself in for a drink and a kiss. Neither the

semipublic dining room nor the ostensibly private bedrooms offer real privacy or

hospitality.

Vicki is potentially threatening because as a German, she represents international

as well as domestic invasion. Like Lieutenant Pike, Vicki flouts standards of propriety by

perverting English slang and behaviours—actions Miss Roach likens to "venomously inject[ing]" poison into the minds of the people around her (178). When Roach stews over Kugelmann, she articulates her rage in terms of a breach of hospitality, and asserts that Vicki has no right either to prey on American soldiers or to disparage British national character by calling Roach an "English Miss":

> at such a stage of international proceedings, in the fourth year of bitter warfare between the two nations—to allude, in such a way, to an English woman—an English woman on her own soil?... What about the hospitality being extended to her? What about the little matter of the courtesy or modesty such hospitality demanded in return? (131)

Vicki's foreignness, for Miss Roach, necessitates deference to all of England, and to herself in particular: as a guest, she ought to be subject to the pleasure of her English hosts. Yet this authoritarian model of hospitality, although upheld by Vicki's expulsion from the Rosamund, is marked as unsatisfactory in the narrative. Miss Roach's final retreat to a private hotel in London, and the emphasis on her ignorance in the last pages of the novel, illustrates her homelessness and isolation, as well as her ultimate failure as both host and guest.

Opening Up the House: Taylor's *At Mrs Lippincote's* (1945)

In contrast to those crowded into group living spaces, some families occupied houses exceeding their needs, a situation depicted by Elizabeth Taylor in *At Mrs Lippincote's*. In Taylor's novel, Julia Davenant and her husband Roddy temporarily occupy an oversized, requisitioned house near Roddy's air force regiment—a situation

based on Taylor's own wartime experience. Like Taylor and the Davenants, many displaced homeowners lived in rented houses for the duration of the war, whether for financial reasons or because their homes had been occupied or destroyed.

In her postwar essays, Elizabeth Bowen emphasizes the often-ambivalent relationship between landlord and tenant in such provisional housing situations. Bowen's "Opening Up the House" (1945) describes the sensations experienced by owners returning to their homes after the end of the war, whether to "the houses that have been left behind—boarded up, standing still, waiting—[or to] the houses that have gone on, occupied by strangers, put to uses one could not have foreseen" (*People* 118). For the owners of properties occupied by billeted soldiers or other residents, the "now departed dwellers in one's house cannot fail to be seen as either enigmas or enemies," whose daily habits and idiosyncrasies may be read in distinctive cigarette burns, sofa impressions, and other marks of wear and tear (Bowen, *People* 119). Just as Phyllis Lippincote hastens to hang family photographs as a means of reasserting ownership following the Davenants' departure (Taylor 210), owners must reestablish mastery over loaned spaces or risk feeling alien in their own homes.

Bowen's essay underscores both the uncanny sensation of invading one's own space and the wartime estrangement between hosts and guests. As in *At Mrs Lippincote's* and *Brideshead Revisited*, in the hypothetical house described by Bowen, contact between owner and billet is limited or nonexistent. Tenants become enemies because wartime space is contested: hosts lose the opportunity to offer hospitality while making it uncomfortable if not impossible for tenants to become hosts in their own right. Wartime renters, such as Stella in Bowen's *The Heat of the Day* (1949), are simultaneously hosts

and guests, because while unable to assert ownership of their domestic spaces they lack the authority fully to welcome others into those spaces.

In *At Mrs Lippincote's*, Taylor equates the uncanny sensation of living in borrowed space with a gothic sense of haunting. Like the boardinghouse in *The Slaves of Solitude*, the Lippincote house will not adapt to its new tenants' needs. It recalls the labyrinthine castles of gothic fiction in its disorientingly large scale: everything about it—its kitchen, dishes, cutlery, even the lavish meals preserved in the old-fashioned wedding photographs on its walls—is enormous, and requires proportionate amounts of upkeep and oversight. Both mother and daughter haunt the house physically and photographically.

Cognizant of her invasive role as interim mistress of the house, Julia feels "burdened by Mrs Lippincote's possessions" rather than grateful for their solidity (13); she is "frightened by a soup tureen the size of a baby's bath" (9) and serves the family's first meal, "a pound of burnt sausages," "on the smallest dish" she can find (11). The house's history and real owners, dependent on an extensive and longterm domestic service system, remain uncomfortably present both in Julia's imagination and in reality. The kitchen in particular appears already occupied. Julia imagines "Mrs Beeton servants, with high caps and flying bows to their aprons": oppressive exemplars of domesticity, "the ghosts haunted; they did not help or encourage" (9). With no live servants to help her, Julia must negotiate the archaic architecture of the house and attempt to bridge the problematic gap between upstairs and downstairs. Her first meal is a failure because she is incapable of navigating this culinary space: "The smell of burnt sausages could not reach beyond the doorway" (10).

As in *The Slaves of Solitude*, wartime displacements render ownership unclear. The young Phyllis Lippincote refuses to relinquish her right to access; she drops by to gather roses in the garden (77) and boldly infiltrates the attic while the Davenants are hosting a dinner party (156-8). Although Roddy is comfortable asserting his right to privacy in the leased home, Julia sympathizes with Phyllis' "understandable" inability to "rid herself of the feeling that it's her house" (77). Julia describes the locked attic room as "a foreign embassy, a little patch of territory over which we have no authority" (159), and feels like an interloper who is guiltily contributing to the slow destruction of the house. She also suspects that she is subject to espionage by the charwoman (who comes with the house, and remains loyal to its rightful owners) and the elder Mrs. Lippincote's clergyman nephew, but identifies with the urge to spy, having gone through all the drawers herself. The house maps out neutral and occupied terrain. Aware of her liminal position in the Lippincote household, Julia is uncomfortable when forced to host her host:

> Accompanying Mrs Lippincote across her own hall, she heard (but could discover no means of stopping) her own insincerities, one after another: pleasure at meeting, gratitude for benefits conferred, humility at living in Mrs Lippincote's house. Recklessly she admired and condoled, apologised for the war and felt able to promise better things for the future. (161)

Forced to switch positions with the rightful owner, Julia awkwardly attempts to fulfill her social obligations. She acknowledges Mrs. Lippincote's superior breeding and the self-control that suggests her suitability for the role of hostess (162). (The instant Julia leaves the room, however, Mrs. Lippincote attempts to "analyse—and dislike" every detail of the Davenants' alterations [164]). Julia's offer of freshly brewed tea—of which there is

none—is a bluff to cover her incapacity to entertain without notice. Her self-consciousness reflects her ambiguous domestic position.

Because they are *not* the house's rightful owners, the Davenants fail to fulfill the hospitable role expected of its landlords. On the one hand, Roddy lacks even basic generosity, and must be ordered to host a housewarming party by his commanding officer (61). His attempt to keep up the appearance of benevolence, evidenced by an obsessive attention to refilling people's glasses, is undermined by the low quality of the provisions. At the party, Roddy brings in "a concoction which was mainly poor Burgundy and bits of cucumber and which the women were expected to drink" (79); Julia later tastes a wine he has chosen "with a wry mouth … wondering what it was she was sipping and if it were turning her teeth black" (154). The formal wedding feast featured in the Lippincotes' photographs is a culinary counterpoint to the Davenants' more modest meals, contrasting the historical luxury and stability in the house with the uncertainty and austerity experienced by its present inhabitants.

Julia, on the other hand, is a naturally adept hostess, capable of making her guests feel comfortable and creatively skillful in the kitchen. She has "enough breeding" to offer tea to unexpected guests (163) and is careful not to let expected ones know they are the first to arrive (79). She also creates a welcoming space in the unwelcoming house by scattering pillows and flower petals and giving the carefully arranged furniture a look of carelessness (79). Yet she resents the social system that renders hosting an obligation rather than a pleasure. While cooking dinner for the Mallorys, for instance, Julia wishes "that she might go to bed, instead of preparing food for other people" (153). Julia's pleasure in crafting delicate *vol-au-vents* for the housewarming (42) is set against her

grudging, "reckless" omelette-making (153) and sausage-stabbing (9) when she is not in the mood to play hostess. She is subject not only to her husband's complaints about such cooking, but also to the culinary interventions of his military commander, who repeatedly sends over gifts of food. While such gifts—like the cauliflower, dead hare (32), and "darling little boiling fowl" (19)—are generous and welcome, they underscore Julia's lack of control over her own kitchen, and the social pressure to cook with grace and skill. Like the restaurant manager Mr. Taylor, who resents the pretentious demands of undiscerning military diners, Julia prefers to serve only those who truly appreciate her cooking, and always wishes to dictate the terms of service.

One of the reasons Julia provokes so much resentment in her cousin-in-law Eleanor is that the latter longs to perform the domestic and emotional labour rejected by the former. In her relationship with the allegedly terminally ill Chris Aldridge, for instance, Eleanor embraces the role of lady of the house: she "like[s] pouring tea and hand[s] cups as gracefully as an Edwardian hostess" (52). In the context of Mr. Aldridge's modest lodgings and his painfully loud macaroon chewing, however, Eleanor's regal manner and aspirations to hospitality seem incongruous. She is self-aware enough to recognize that her desire to be the one to "understand" Roddy—to "make his career her life's work, and to be an inspiration and incentive to him"—indicates a naivety about the difficulties inherent in long-term relationships rather than a profound emotional compatibility, and identifies this impulse as merely "what spinsters in books are always thinking about other women's husbands" (20). Yet in spite of this self-awareness she is still portrayed as a somewhat pathetic figure, not quite capable of avoiding the "less obvious traps" associated with spinsterhood (20). Even Julia, who rejects the traditional

marriage plot as unsatisfactory, views Eleanor as ignorant and selfish due to her

unwilling exclusion from marriage and motherhood. Julia makes several cutting

comments about her cousin-in-law, and like the narrator, she often dismisses Eleanor's

emotions as insignificant because her romantic experience is limited.

Because Eleanor's love is unrequited, that is, she remains narratively peripheral.

Julia and Roddy treat her as a private joke who "betray[s] herself" (that is, fails to

conceal her spinsterhood) "by what Roddy call[s] her 'little ways'": "the trivial comforts,

consolations, cups of tea and patent medicines, small precautions against draughts and a

gentle fussing which grows insidiously upon and characterises those who have neither

husband nor children to cherish and only themselves to put first" (20). Although Eleanor

is given a great deal of narrative space, Julia remains the central protagonist of the novel,

because without a husband, family, or household to manage, Eleanor can never become a

fully rounded character.[24] Her attempts at hospitality are pretentious because she has no

space to master, and no guests to host.

The narrative is bitingly critical of Eleanor's self-conscious sense of dignity; it

skewers the pretensions resulting from her loneliness and pride even as it acknowledges

the real potential for individual discomfort within domestic models that resist

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[24] The tensions between this vision of a lonely and pathetic spinster and the intertexts of *Jane Eyre*, *Madame Bovary*, and *Villette* is central to the narrative. Each of these works wrestles in a different way with the role of the passionate, intelligent woman in love and society, both within and outside the institution of marriage. Eleanor is perhaps most like Brontë's Lucy Snowe in her occupation and in her romantic connection with a fellow teacher; Mr. Taylor's address of Julia as "Madame" also underscores the latter's connection with the inquisitive, impulsive Mme Héger, as does Julia's constant snooping through drawers and photographs, reading of secret notes, and unobserved forays into Eleanor's bedroom (Julia also recreates a baked apple recipe from *Villette*, and the imaginative and hyperliterate Oliver introduces a dressmaking dummy as Mme Héger). Although she claims not to have read the incriminating note from Muriel to Roddy, Julia's awareness of the affair suggests a heightened alertness to textual "evidence" as well as a high sensitivity to the emotions and behaviours of others. In a final echo of *Villette*, just as Brontë's novel ends by refusing to make any decisive narrative claims about the probable death by shipwreck of Lucy's fiancé, the last line of Taylor's novel shows Julia laughing at the stubbornly alive Mr. Aldridge as he walks past the house, months past his expiry date.

conventional host-guest dynamics. Despite her attempts to adapt to the acute absence of hospitality among her Communist Party (CP) friends, for instance, Eleanor is ultimately unsuccessful in reconciling her outmoded desire to perform hosting duties with the midcentury needs and desires of her self-sufficient "comrades."

This is partly because in the communal flat above the grocers' shop in Vasco Street, there is no real host or master. Among communists, political orientation theoretically negates the need for hospitality, although in practice the conflict between capitalist society and communist principles renders the sharing of space and food awkward. CP members Sarge, Vere, Kirsty, and Leo are all tenants, coming and going at various times, but other members frequently make themselves welcome, blurring the boundaries of personal property and propriety. Even the grocer-landlord denies ownership, boasting, "We are not landlord and tenants. We are Communists and trust one another" (87). When Eleanor and Chris enter the apartment without knocking and wake Sarge from his post-night-shift sleep, the CP secretary offers tea not to welcome his guests, but because he was already planning to make some for his wife. Unlike Julia, who courteously insists on concealing unpreparedness from her guests, Sarge makes no attempt to gloss over the work underpinning the meal; Eleanor and Chris can "hear him moving round the kitchen, clumsily collecting together crockery, filling the kettle and lighting the gas" (63). Vera only vaguely acknowledges their presence and makes no effort to welcome them, prompting Eleanor's internal observation that she is "fine and beautiful" but extremely rude (64). Personal comfort and impersonal politics are antithetical.

Formal civilities have no place in the ethics of the group. Vera disregards any potential for awkwardness when she unperturbedly explains to the landlord that they plan to buy groceries from the coop rather than from his store (88). When Eleanor announces that she must leave the flat, she notes that there are "no polite protests," although Sarge invites her to return (66). Morality trumps courtesy. Nevertheless, high-minded vagueness about certain domestic details underscores larger tensions between the theory and praxis of communal living and dining. Kirsty grumbles that their fellow communists "keep coming down from the Committee … and they never bring any rations. It's always *our* marge, even *our* butter, Vera's so goddam vague. Now, of course, there's not a scraping of anything to put on the bread" (124). Just as Mr. Thwaites tyrannically polices rations in *The Slaves of Solitude*, in *At Mrs Lippincote's* tensions arise when other diners interfere with the ability of the individual to regulate her or his consumption within the theoretically egalitarian distribution of foodstuffs.[25] Eleanor ultimately feels at home neither in the private hospitality of the Davenant household nor in the cooperatively run socialist flat.

While both Taylor's communists and Hamilton's boardinghouse suggest the inauthenticity of for-profit hospitality, in *At Mrs Lippincote's*, Taylor depicts Mr. Taylor's treatment of Julia as genuinely hospitable. The novel describes the former restaurant manager's sense of ownership of La Belle Charlotte in London, where his bows conveyed "regality, not servility" (61); he loves Julia most of all, "for she had eaten

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[25] Although those living in shared spaces generally surrendered their ration books to the people in charge of meals (it was also normal for many families, particularly those with small children, to pool rations in private homes), particularly limited resources were often portioned out to individuals—hence the ubiquitous crowding of butter dishes in austerity-era works such as *The Heat of the Day*. Treating private rations as "public" property—or subjecting them to public scrutiny, as in *The Slaves of Solitude*—both interferes with the "fair shares for all" policy implemented by the government, and transforms the collective pronouns associated with socialist and nationalist solidarity into a source of resentment.

in his restaurant as if she were a guest" (98). Mr. Taylor's desire to delight and welcome "Madame" Davenant, evident in his careful preparation of her "special" birthday meal and in his gifts of kümmel and brandy (98, 132), moves beyond a financial transaction to become a gracious act of true hospitality. He primarily identifies as a host, even if his private domain is actually a public eating place. Consequently, when he loses his restaurant and precious stock of wine to the blitz, he completely loses his sense of self. His conviction that life without the Charlotte is meaningless further isolates him from the people around him, as he feels that his loss can "never be grieved over in public, because human beings had been lost" (98). "[W]hether I was killed or not," he thinks, "my life ended just the same": "This that I have now means nothing to me and has no value" (97). Mr. Taylor's death, ostensibly the result of a nervous illness, suggests his inability to define himself beyond his capacity to welcome guests with courtesy, expertise, and carefully prepared food.

Displaced people, like unwilling hosts, are subject to culinary scrutiny and invasion, as they can no longer govern their own spaces. In film and literature as well as first-person accounts, clashes between people from different regions or class backgrounds often emerge at shared meals, when distinctive foodways—encompassing food selection, preparation, and consumption habits—give rise to tension and discomfort. The Davenants are forced out of the Lippincote house when Roddy is transferred to another post; like Miss Roach at the end of *The Slaves of Solitude*, they plan to return to London. In Hamilton's final scene, Miss Roach retreats to the almost overwhelming privacy of a bathtub in a high-end hotel. For Julia, the end of the novel is marked by a culinary repetition—egg sandwiches made for the train, as on the day they arrive at Mrs.

Lippincote's (205). Both women find relief in the prospect of reclaiming their own living

quarters, even as both novels acknowledge the danger of bombardment in London

(Taylor 195; Hamilton 241-2). Threatened with domestic invasion, both choose to risk

death rather than submit.

Infiltrating Home and Homeland in Wartime Wodehouse

For P.G. Wodehouse, the sharing of space was an even more acute issue than for

writers living in England, as the occupation of France constituted a forced sharing of

space on a national level. Wodehouse's nostalgic portrayal of enclosed domestic spaces

such as the country house, the private apartment, and the members-only gentlemen's club

hints at contemporary anxieties about the social dynamics of collective mealtimes, just as

Evelyn Waugh depicts the "occupation"—a resonant term in wartime Europe—of

Brideshead Castle as a tragedy. The impossibility of maintaining hospitable relationships

in these situations renders such displacements traumatic.

Bertram Wooster's love of food continually lands him in the soup. In *The Code of

the Woosters* (1937), for instance, Bertie's Aunt Dahlia blackmails her nephew into

stealing a silver cow-creamer by threatening to bar him from her table, where Anatole—

Dahlia's volatile but brilliant French chef—reigns supreme. Bertie's horror at missing out

on Anatole's superb meals ensnares him in a series of the uncomfortable and hilarious

misunderstandings that are the hallmark of P.G. Wodehouse's fiction. As in each of the

Jeeves works, random, often food-centered events drive this comic plot: a collector's

irrational desire for a mundane dish, the persuasive power of gourmet dinners, a two-way

abuse of country house hospitality. In the world of Jeeves and Wooster, portrayed in

dozens of short stories and novels between 1917 and 1974, food-based hospitality is a crucial narrative catalyst.

Set in what appears to be a perpetually Edwardian England, the Jeeves and Wooster tales of a bumbling aristocrat and his wise and loyal butler remain generally consistent in spite of the profound social, cultural, and political changes taking place over the course of the twentieth century. Yet they also reveal the passage of time through small details of popular culture, including the ways in which food is depicted or omitted from the narrative. Bertie Wooster's network of country houses and gentlemen's clubs relies on an inside knowledge of taste and etiquette as a means of identifying potentially disruptive forces; table manners and hospitality are therefore key to the development of cultural and national distinctions. Characters negotiate romantic, social, and political relationships using food, which remains plentiful and harmless in the stories in spite of the food security issues plaguing midcentury Europe. Appetites for lavish meals or wholesome English fare register varying degrees of readerly sympathy based on characters' abilities to assimilate proper table manners. In Wodehouse's farcical world, the greatest potential sin is to break the laws of hospitality, disrupting the comic resolution of novels that are as dependent on dining and drinking as on courtship. Overindulgence is contrasted with upperclass refinement and restraint, while at the same time a sensual appreciation of *haute cuisine*—with all its continental implications—is a mark of cosmopolitan sophistication at odds with a midcentury food culture emphasizing nationalism and shared sacrifice.

In Wodehouse, the disjunction between table manners and true courtesy—the letter and the spirit of the law of hospitality—is not only a source of the comic but also a

site of philosophical engagement with social and political questions. If food imagery at the midcentury tends to reflect paranoia about invasion—by foreign foods, continental attitudes and suspiciously epicurean cuisine—P.G. Wodehouse's farcical depictions of Bertie Wooster's appetites are at odds with those works that, like the spy novels of Graham Greene or Ian Fleming, depict foreign and excessive appetites as threatening. Wodehouse's wartime works neutralize the threat of international warfare by centering interpersonal conflicts on shared meals. *The Code of the Woosters*, for example, acknowledges the encroachment of world politics onto Bertie's rural country stage but repudiates existential angst in favour of resolvable problems. As in the food fights at the Drones Club, food and drink and dishware move smoothly from person to person, circulating as harmless weapons. The silver cow-creamer, Gussie Fink-Nottle's vodka-laced orange juice (*Right Ho*), the anachronistic banana[26] Edmond Haddock pretends to use as a horsewhip (*Mating* 240)—each is a catalyst for contained conflict. Food indicates Wodehouse's deliberate rejection of discourses of invasion and national threats.

Although Wodehouse is often accused of ignoring history altogether, his mostly anachronistic comedies do acknowledge contemporary social realities even as they insist on depicting English society as perpetually in spats. During and after the Second World War, the Jeeves works evolve to reflect subtle changes in contemporary culture. Robert Hall argues that the chronology of Wodehouse's postwar oeuvre is "perpetually out of whack, as the plainly pre-1939 scene of Wodehouse's characters is commonly jarred by anachronistic reference to post-1945 culture, including tape-recorders, atom bombs,

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[26] Tropical fruits were extremely scarce in wartime England, as evidenced by stories such as Auberon Waugh's famous tale of his father cruelly gorging on bananas meant for his children (A. Waugh 67).

population explosions, and overnight transatlantic airplane service" (paraphrased in

Mooneyham 133). References to the state of the world are seldom direct.

Shortly before the outbreak of the Second World War, Wodehouse settled with

his wife at a villa called Low Wood in the French resort town of Le Touquet. After being

arrested as an enemy national following the German occupation of France in 1940, the

famous writer was moved through a series of internment camps in France, Belgium, and

Germany (Loos, Liège, Huy, and finally Tost in Upper Silesia) before being released to

Nazi Berlin to make his infamous broadcasts from the Hotel Adlon in 1941.[27]

Characteristically pithy and humorous, the broadcasts described camp housing, meals,

and activities in detail; they made light of the privations to which Wodehouse was subject

and critiqued the highly routinized quality of camp life, often by focusing on the varying

degrees of hospitality and regimentation to which the author was subject during his

internment ("Berlin Broadcasts"). Following the broadcasts, Wodehouse was moved to

Degenershausen near the Harz mountains, and divided his time between there and Berlin

until he was finally permitted to return to France in 1943 (McCrum 68-340). He was

therefore attuned to themes of displacement and occupation despite the insular

Englishness of his fictional communities.

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[27] These five comic broadcasts about the daily life of an internee were perceived by the American audience as pro-Nazi propaganda and led to a huge public backlash and postwar treason trial (Wodehouse was ultimately acquitted of deliberate wrongdoing). Unbeknownst to Wodehouse, propaganda was precisely what his captors wanted; they hoped to humanize Nazi Germany and dissuade the United States from entering the war by playing up the civil German treatment of prisoners. For his part, Wodehouse wished to demonstrate his intact sense of humour and stiff upper lip, and failed to see a problem with using German radio to thank his American audience for its ongoing support. That Wodehouse's internment isolated him from the outside world during the crucial transitional period between the Bore War and the blitz makes his mistake slightly more understandable; as George Orwell writes in his postwar defence of Wodehouse, 'the events of 1941 do not convict Wodehouse of anything worse than stupidity' ("In Defence" 289).

In spite of his time in internment camps and Vichy France, where rationing was much more severe and poorly managed than in Britain,[28] Wodehouse remained more isolated from the effects of shortages than most French citizens, in part due to his unwilling association with the Third Reich even after his return to France. Biographer Robert McCrum notes that Wodehouse and his wife spent their time in occupied Paris at the Hôtel Bristol, an establishment associated with Nazis and collaborators:

> The hotel ran two dining rooms, a 'diplomatic' one for Germans and their friends, and a second, inferior one for regular guests. Through its dubious connections, informers and black-market racketeers, the Bristol managed to be nearly as well supplied with food and fuel as in peacetime. (340)

This two-tiered hosting policy constitutes a violation of basic hospitality in its inferior treatment of non-elite guests. It served Wodehouse well, however; while Paris in the 1940s was "lawless and starving," Wodehouse himself was not (McCrum 341). The economic distinctions embedded in the upperclass narratives of Jeeves and Wooster similarly exclude discussions of food as basic sustenance. Bertie's ready access to lavish meals reflects the ongoing availability of food to those with money. Wodehouse's novels focus not on quantity or necessity but on the quality, sophistication, and diegetic function of the daily meal.

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[28] Within England, though rationing contributed to a theoretical "leveling down," essential foodstuffs were generally available and reasonably priced for the duration of the war. By contrast, the food situation in France was dismal due to a number of factors related to Nazi occupation. Germany requisitioned a large portion of French food for its own uses, and imposed punitive ration levels on the French population. Even for food that was redistributed to the French population, official prices paid to farmers were harmfully low. Because many farmers resented both Nazi rule and the almost impossibly small profit margin on official sales, they often under-reported production numbers and kept back private stocks—either for sale on the highly profitable and poorly policed black market, or for distribution to friends, family, or the Free French movement—leading to further national shortages. See Kenneth Mouré, "Food Rationing and the Black Market in France (1940-44)."

Even *Money in the Bank* (1942), the novel Wodehouse wrote while imprisoned in Nazi Germany, is "strikingly free of wartime references, and looks back, not forward": "Although entirely composed in the worst possible circumstances, it carries very few traces of its author's gruelling experiences" (McCrum 287). The book reflects its author's willful avoidance of war and general lack of interest in politics, as well as his sense that great literature—like the copy of the complete works of Shakespeare he took with him to Tost—should have the capacity to "tak[e] you away from it all" ("Berlin Broadcast 3").

In addition to the stronger-than-usual language McCrum identifies as the only clue to the conditions in which it was written (287), however, *Money in the Bank* registers the difficulties of internment through its preoccupation with food and hunger. Characters daydream about food and have clandestine meals in potting sheds. In one makeshift internment camp where Wodehouse was held at Huy, rations were frequently short, and the men often went hungry or subsisted on only the lowest quality and quantity of sustenance. "It's extraordinary how one's soul becomes obsessed with food" (qtd in McCrum 282), he observes in a letter from that time. *Money in the Bank* translates Wodehouse's camp experiences into a story about a farcical health colony where deprived clients long for steak-and-kidney pies and other solid English fare. Like Wodehouse himself, the novel is insulated from the horrors of battlefields and concentration camps (in spite of the proximity of Tost to Auschwitz). Notwithstanding its light tone and subject matter, *Money in the Bank* reveals a preoccupation with austerity that is anomalous in Wodehouse's oeuvre.

The Jeeves works written during and immediately after the Second World War similarly register midcentury sensitivities about foreign and luxurious foods. The

celebration of French menus so central to the prewar *The Code of the Woosters* is

abandoned in *The Mating Season* (1949), which—published at the height of austerity—

favours traditional English breakfasts and tea with crumpets. Beyond the standard

reliance on food metaphors, the discussion of food in *The Mating Season* is relatively

limited. There are repeated if oblique references to shortages: Wooster awakens to his

"ration of tea" (231), and "bolt[s] his rations" after arriving late for dinner (209). Bertie

and Jeeves additionally discuss the link between food and morale (*Mating* 233), a

connection of paramount importance for the Ministry of Food during the Second World

War. Food fortifies, as Bertie observes: "a good, spirited kipper first thing in the morning

seems to put heart into you" (*Mating* 233). The depiction of food in *The Mating Season* is

strikingly aligned with the official food culture promoted by the wartime government, a

vision of British foodways firmly rooted in romantic conceptions of shared national

heritage and the capacity for food to soothe and strengthen.

After *The Code of the Woosters*, delight in Anatole's elaborate menus does not

return again until *Jeeves and the Feudal Spirit* (1954), published the year British food

rationing finally came to an end. While solid English fare makes frequent appearances in

this novel, with characters taking bites of crumpets in between snatches of dialogue,

exotic, foreign foods (often Anglicized) are longed for and nostalgically recalled in a way

the wartime works avoid. This turn to traditional British foods reflects a wider national

trend. In spite of the familiarity of French and other international cuisines,[29] a nadir of

exotic cookery throughout Britain occurred at the midcentury, when practical and

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[29] By the midcentury, French cuisine was fairly standard fare for English diners (Humble, *Culinary* 24).
Although many dishes of Indian origin had also been naturalized in Britain by the early twentieth century,
such as the colonialist kedgeree eaten by Charles Ryder in *Brideshead Revisited* (233), in Wodehouse such
cooking is still portrayed as relatively dangerous: Tom's digestion has been ruined by colonial service
(*Code* 7).

ideological forces combined to counteract foreign infiltrations of English kitchens. Even

Anatole's artistry transcends national borders to incorporate local dishes: as Tuppy

Glossop observes, Anatole "does not, like so many of these *chefs*, confine himself

exclusively to French dishes, but is always willing and ready to weigh in with some good

old simple English fare such as this steak-and-kidney pie" (*Right Ho* 69).

Anatole's Frenchness is portrayed overall as a professional advantage, though he

is marked as an anachronism through his association with the servant-dependent *à la*

russe French menus favoured in Victorian and Edwardian England (not to mention the

impossibility of obtaining enough butter in ration-era England to do justice to many

French recipes) (Humble, *Culinary* 47-73). At the same time, the French chef's volatility

and willingness to change employers are at odds with Jeeves's decidedly English stability

and amused loyalty. Anatole is mocked as a stereotypically mercurial Frenchman; Bertie

refers to his "impulsive Provençal temperament" (*Right Ho* 109), and after

overenthusiastically advising his fellow diners to pretend they have lost their appetites in

Right Ho, Jeeves (1934), observes,

> These Gauls, I should have remembered, can't take it. Their tendency to
>
> fly off the handle at the slightest provocation is well known. No doubt the
>
> man had put his whole soul into those *nonnettes de poulet*, and to see them
>
> come homing back to him must have gashed him like a knife. (109)

This phrasing distinguishes Anatole from the stalwart Woosters and from the British

national character as perceived by Bertie and his former schoolmates: unlike "these

Gauls," as Humphrey Jennings reminded the world in 1940, Britons can always "take it."

Yet the chef is also depicted as an eccentric culinary genius whose irrationality and

instability are attributable to his expertise as well as his nationality. Anatole's cultural

differences therefore seem endearing, and Bertie quotes his malapropisms affectionately

in several places. (In *The Code of the Woosters*, for example: "As cool as some

cucumbers, as Anatole would say" [7].) Whether this paternalistic depiction of Anatole

marks Wodehouse's naivety about international politics or was merely engendered by his

everyday life in France, the author's decision to exclude the chef from his wartime novels

suggests a deliberate evasion of complicated international attitudes toward the French

under the collaborationist Vichy government.

Food circulates across personal as well as national borders. Appetite is often a

catalyst for plot in the Jeeves and Wooster works, whether it advances or threatens the

progress of love, friendship or family ties. Mealtimes provide opportunities for romantic

encounters by allowing relationships to develop in predictable intervals in a controlled

atmosphere. Discussing Gussie's inability to speak to his beloved Madeline in *Right Ho,*

Jeeves, Bertie tells Jeeves that the "propinquity" offered by shared meals will be crucial

in forwarding Gussie's cause:

> 'At the moment, as you are aware, Gussie is a mere jelly when in the
>
> presence. But ask yourself how he will feel in a week or so, after he and
>
> she have been helping themselves to sausages out of the same dish day
>
> after day at the breakfast sideboard.' (47)

Food can also smooth over awkward moments, as Bertie discovers when he is forced to

talk to Madeline Bassett without food as a mediator:

> Our previous chat, as you may or possibly may not recall, had taken place
>
> in the Brinkley dining-room in the presence of a cold collation, and it had

helped a lot being in a position to bound forward at intervals with a curried

egg or a cheese straw. In the absence of these food stuffs, we were thrown

back a good deal on straight staring, and this always tends to embarrass.

(*Code* 165)

Bertie's gallant willingness to "bound forward" facilitates this romantic interaction by

establishing clear behavioural guidelines for both parties; his actions recall chivalric

traditions of protecting and providing for a passive woman, while parodying these

traditions through the daintiness of the foodstuffs in question. When he later escapes

becoming re-engaged to Madeline, Bertie plays the piano: "It was the only mode of self-

expression that seemed to present itself. I would have preferred to get outside a curried

egg or two, for the strain had left me weak, but, as I have said, there were no curried eggs

present" (*Code* 169). Having narrowly escaped matrimony once again, Bertie's instinct is

to celebrate by eating.

Although the forced proximity of communal meals encourages lovers, it also

illuminates their less appetizing qualities: watching someone eat a steak-and-kidney pie

may be antithetical to romance; thinking about a steak-and-kidney pie may be equally

distracting. In *Right Ho, Jeeves*, Angela Travers' relationship with Tuppy Glossop is

threatened because he doesn't believe her story about nearly being eaten by a shark, a

dismissal Bertie compares with telling Othello that his encounter with a cannibal chief

was actually with "a prominent local vegetarian" (58). Angela retaliates by calling Tuppy

fat. When Tuppy is later caught sneaking down to the pantry for a midnight feast after

stoically refusing dinner, she accuses him of gluttony and implies that his inability to

suppress his alimentary appetites renders him incapable of fulfilling his erotic ones.

Eating habits can be divisive as well as inclusive when the sharing of meals illuminates the differences between characters, bringing conflicts to light.

The arrival of food also forestalls romantic narratives. Food delivery permits Bertie to escape potential entanglements on several occasions by disallowing the revelation or consummation of love. In *Thank You, Jeeves* (1934), for example, he fails to kiss Pauline Stoker at the moment of their engagement because "A waiter came into the room with a tray of beef sandwiches and the moment passed" (64); prosaic sandwiches preempt romantic climax. The presence of domestic servants that accompanies most meals serves as a further buffer between lovers as well as enemies, even though interruptions to normal consumption may mark romantic developments—an idea that Bertie takes to absurd extremes in *Right Ho, Jeeves*. Bertie's misguided advice to the other guests at Brinkley to refrain from eating so their respective partners will take pity on their misery suggests his imperfect internalization of eighteenth and nineteenth-century fiction in which heroines faint, fast, or fall ill as a successful means of resolving conflicts. In Wodehouse, the scheme is patently unsuccessful. Anatole is horrified by what he perceives as a professional failure, while the guests who *are* eating are so distracted by the quality of the food that they do not notice the others' restraint. Eating truly excellent food, Wodehouse implies, is essentially a solitary enjoyment.

Describing a potential threat posed to Augustus Fink-Nottle's relationship with Madeline Bassett in *The Mating Season* (1949), Bertie reveals his own sense that solitary dining is a temptation that detracts from investment in a love relationship:

> I mean, you know how it is when you've had one of these lovers' tiffs and then go off to a solitary dinner. You start brooding over the girl with the

soup and wonder if it wasn't a mug's game hitching up with her. With the

fish this feeling deepens, and by the time you're through with the *poulet*

rôti au cresson and are ordering the coffee you've probably come

definitely to the conclusion that she's a rag and a bone and a hank of hair

and that it would be madness to sign her on as a life partner. (188)

Dining alone allows contemplation, with the sequence of courses scripting the thought

progression in which marital commitment inevitably devolves into a form of 'madness'.

In this case, an elaborate meal eaten alone constitutes a real threat to romance in that it

permits the lover time to think about his beloved—for Bertie, a process that tends

inevitably towards a desire for extrication.

This desire for extrication is fundamental to Bertram Wooster's character. If the

Jeeves stories are highly conventional social comedies, predicated on the inevitable

resolution of all crises, Bertie himself is an unconventional protagonist in that he never

marries, and so never attains the apex of comic resolution. As Nicola Humble observes,

the majority of Wodehouse's Jeeves and Wooster works hinge on Bertie's attempts to

preserve his bachelor status: "Almost without exception, the plots of the Jeeves stories

revolve around two intertwined impulses: the desire of one or more of Bertie's hapless

friends to marry a particular girl, and Bertie's equally powerful desire to prevent some

girl from marrying him" ("From Holmes" 100). In *Epistemology of the Closet*, Eve

Sedgwick suggests that in the late nineteenth century bachelordom evolved from a

lifestage to a character type: sexless, narratively minor, and outside of the

heteronormative marriage plot. Katherine V. Snyder expands on this argument in

Bachelors, Manhood, and the Novel, asserting that rather than merely acting as figures of

"male homosexual panic" (Sedgwick 189), bachelors "often served in cultural and literary discourse more generally as threshold figures who marked the permeable boundaries that separate domesticity, normative manhood, and high-cultural status, from what was defined as extrinsic to these realms" (Snyder 7).

In his discussion of food, marriage, and narrative in *The Food Plot in the Nineteenth-Century Novel*, Michael Lee builds on this notion of the bachelor by aligning unmarried male characters with excessive consumption in nineteenth-century novels. He postulates that alimentary hungers must be subjugated to intellectual and romantic cravings in order for the realist protagonist to develop into a fully formed, psychologically developed individual. According to Lee,

> The food plot is at once the narrative structure against which the marriage plot and psychological depth take shape and the thing that threatens to undo them. Sometimes fragmentary and elusive, sometimes sustained and overt, the food plot constitutes those moments and sequences where the materiality of food, eating, and appetite garner narrative attention. Such moments … challenge the cohesion of marriage plots and the psychological structures they generate. The more material novelistic eating becomes, the more it disrupts the movement of narrative towards wedlock and the depiction of personhood as centrally composed of a deep interior, an inside to be filled with yearnings and sympathies instead of with bread and cheese. (2)

In relation to both bourgeois individualism and the marriage plot, Bertie Wooster resists development. He is always a minor character, a narrator who bears witness to a series of

events while trying desperately not to get involved.

Bertie's lack of psychological and romantic development is reflected in his preoccupation with domestic routines. As Humble observes of bachelor narratives in general, Wodehouse's works demonstrate an inherent investment in the maintenance of the status quo, right down to characters' desire for consistency in the daily meal ("From Holmes"). In each installment of the Jeeves and Wooster series, Bertie must protect the integrity of his domestic life, which involves the frequent indulgence of his appetites for alcohol and various foods—from the classic English breakfast, in which "Bacon and eggs may be taken as read" (*Code* 21-2), to elaborate multicourse feasts. Likening Wooster to other literary bachelors of the period, Humble describes his world as a fantasy of "independent masculine domestic space" that plays out in certain key locations:

> the gentleman's flat, the home-from-home that is the club (a place of such luxuriant domestic comfort that in its later form the members think of each other as food stuffs—eggs, beans and crumpets), the country house weekends where the bachelor earns his bread and butter as a useful 'spare man'. ("From Holmes" 100)

Within such spaces, bound up as they are with the language of food and consumption, shared meals represent a fundamental social and economic currency. In his own flat, a place of comfort and stasis, Bertie is catered to while recovering from the physical effects of his life of leisure, whether an overly boisterous night at his club or an exhausting visit to a friend's or relative's estate. His forays into other people's country houses are considered the duty of the well-mannered bachelor, whose primary social function is to be a sort of professional dinner guest. Bertie is indeed "a useful 'spare man,'" perpetually

ready, however reluctantly, to sing for his supper. Gastronomy is a key aspect of his

bachelordom.

For this otherwise hedonistic bachelor, moreover, sex is conspicuously absent.

Bertie identifies with sexual love only through eating metaphors. His reaction to the

Angela-Tuppy tiff emphasizes the close correlation between romantic plots and food in

the novel. If Tuppy's relationship with his fiancée is threatened until he proves that he is

willing to privilege their relationship over his love of food, Bertie remains unwilling to

give up the creature comforts signified in the schoolboyish midnight feast attempted by

his friend. In the marriage plot, the bachelor must regulate his appetites in order to

become a suitable mate. For Bertram Wooster, however, food mediates and even replaces

romantic encounters. Although he is physically attracted to several female characters, he

would never choose a fine woman over a fine meal. This is made clear by his reaction to

finding the attractive Pauline in his bed in *Thank You, Jeeves*: "The attitude of fellows

towards finding girls in their bedrooms shortly after midnight varies. Some like it. Some

don't. I didn't. I suppose it's some old Puritan strain in the Wooster blood" (78). Bertie's

story invariably ends not in marriage, but in a quiet meal with Jeeves. Like the Victorian

bachelor, Bertie's divergence from love plots is focused on consumption: "while his

sexual object choice tends ostensibly towards women, it is interrupted and eclipsed by his

love of food. His sensual fixation with eating rather than any ostensible form of sexual

desire … competes most fiercely with his socially normative attempts at heterosexual

union" (Lee, *Eating* 87). With his access to seemingly unlimited monetary and alimentary

resources in an era of austerity, Bertie's insistence on remaining a bachelor identifies him

as a hoarder.

Likewise Wooster's immaturity, in terms of his incapacity to care for himself and his unwillingness to care for others, is underscored by his mediated relationship with food. Like the aristocrats around him, he is incapable of cooking, but other aristocrats can at least employ cooks of their own. Not a breadwinner like his Uncle Percy, Bertie lives off the remains of the Wooster fortunes. His many close brushes with matrimony suggest that his income would allow him to marry comfortably, yet he seems satisfied with the drifting domesticity of the bachelor, and treats the luxurious country houses of his various aunts as auxiliary ancestral residences to supplement his town flats in London and America.

Bertie's central domestic relationship in fact depends on his status as a permanent bachelor, as Jeeves is by choice a "gentleman's personal gentleman" rather than butler of a full household; he informs Wooster several times that he is unwilling to act as valet to a married man. Like Wooster, Jeeves finds wives and children distasteful. Fortunately for this homosocial partnership, Bertie's identity—like Gussie's, Tuppy's, and Chuffy's—is static, virtually unchanged since his days at Eton and Oxford. Unlike these characters, Bertie remains resistant to the forms of development available in the bildungsroman or the marriage plot. Harold "Stinker" Pinker, for instance, is trying to get a vicarage so he can marry Stephanie Byng (*Code* 73). If the nineteenth-century bachelor consumes in order to create visibility and viability for himself, as Lee argues, in the twentieth century the bachelor is more concerned with being the end of a genealogical line: Bertie eats in order to maintain continuity, to anchor himself in Britishness and familial tradition even when that tradition is no longer operative.

For the most part, moments of indulgence and excess tend to occur outside of the narrative despite this preoccupation with consumption. Amidst all the rhapsodizing about Anatole's expertise, the text almost never partakes of the actual meal; characters may recall particular dishes longingly, or look forward to "a dinner that will live in legend and song" (*Code* 221), but the meals eaten within the narrative tend to be unobtrusive. Menus are hyperbolically described but carefully consumed. Similarly, Bertie rarely gets drunk within the narrative representation. His boozy jaunts are instead delivered in brief synopses by way of explanation for his hangovers.

When Wodehouse does write about alcohol, it is portrayed as both dangerous and useful: it may advance the plot more rapidly or pose barriers to its progression. While the moderate consumption of cocktails is crucial to social interaction in the stories, getting "tight" lowers inhibitions in an almost carnivalesque way, allowing rigid social barriers to become temporarily flexible and characters to take on uncharacteristic traits or alter egos. In this sense, it has a magically transformative capacity, like potions in Wonderland. Timorous introvert Gussie Fink-Nottle gets extremely drunk and gives a shockingly boisterous performance as emcee of a schoolboys' award ceremony, having agreed to fill in for Bertie (*Right Ho* 167-83); on one of the rare occasions where Bertie actually goes into detail about his drinking, he is completing this carnivalesque swap by posing as Gussie (*Mating* 215-21). Apart from moments when Bertie fondly and hazily recalls drunken nights on the town, however, the specific pleasures of overindulgence are generally omitted from the narrative. Bertie's benders, like Anatole's menus, are the stuff of legend.

Bertie's carousing further marks him both as an undeveloped boy figure and as a member of an anachronistic landed class that no longer has a clear role in an increasingly democratic society. Heavy drinking is a specifically young, male, upperclass activity in Wodehouse, as only young men of leisure can afford to be debilitatingly hung over. In an exchange that emphasizes the connection between *beau monde* bachelors and binge drinking, Dahlia chastises her nephew for his overindulgence:

> 'It's an extraordinary thing—every time I see you, you appear to be recovering from some debauch. Don't you ever stop drinking? How about when you are asleep?'
>
> I rebutted the slur. 'You wrong me, relative. Except at times of special revelry, I am exceedingly moderate in my potations. A brace of cocktails, a glass of wine at dinner and possibly a liqueur with the coffee—that is Bertram Wooster. But last night I gave a small bachelor binge for Gussie Fink-Nottle.' (*Code* 6)

Hangovers signal fraternal solidarity against female authority figures, as "even the best women cannot refrain from saying their say the morning after" (*Mating* 197). Bertie insists that he only drinks heavily on special occasions, yet his hangovers are so frequent that in the inaugural Jeeves and Wooster story, "Jeeves Takes Charge" (1916), he refers to one simply as "morning head" (*World* 2). They are the reason he first engages Jeeves; having been sent over by the valet agency in the aftermath of one of Bertie's big nights out, Jeeves wordlessly brings his future employer a drink that turns out to be his signature hangover cure (containing Worcester sauce, raw egg, and red pepper, among other things). To the queasy Bertie, Jeeves seems to have "a grave, sympathetic face, as if he,

too, knew what it was to sup with the lads" (*World* 2); Wooster hires him the instant he finishes the tonic. Bertie's frequent incapacity underscores his emotional and alimentary dependence on his servant, as well as his exclusion from the abstemious adult world. Intoxication offers a means of operating outside of normal characterization and plotlines in a bacchanalian green world. Bertie's ability to drunkenly escape reality, even temporarily, attests to the utopian quality of Wodehouse's worlds.

Unlike writers preoccupied with experimentation, fragmentation, instability and breakdowns in communication, Wodehouse operates in a distinctly comic register tending inevitably toward closure and stability (Mooneyham 115-16). Bertie's strictly coded behavior and lack of development are crucial to this comic structure. The Jeeves and Wooster works are comedies of manners whose effects depend, like Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895), on wit, wordplay, and a precise understanding of social convention, as well as the equation of gustatory and sexual appetites (through the innuendo-laden conversations about cucumber sandwiches in Wilde's first scene, for instance). Also like Wilde, Wodehouse descends into farce in his depiction of ludicrous situations, exaggerated characters, and physical comedy. Wodehouse's thematic focus on food further underscores the inevitable resolution of conflict. Food is inherently comic, both in its connection to humour—whether through slapstick, sexual innuendo, or sheer incongruity—and in the relation between feasting and the carnivalesque.

In her discussion of Wodehouse's "comic world," Barbara C. Bowen identifies feasting as a Rabelaisian quality. "Rabelais's characters love enormous banquets and gallons of drink—but so do Wodehouse's," she argues, noting that "Bertie's loving descriptions of Anatole's cooking" and "Gussie's passion for cold steak-and-kidney pie"

contribute to the overall atmosphere of the works (67). Like carnivalesque narratives, Wodehouse's novels always restore the status quo; transgressions reveal the failure of the transgressor to adapt to a closed world. More than just drawing attention to the body, the diegesis of food—both the digestive process itself, and the narratives that circulate around its consumption—is inherently comic in Wodehouse's works, because it is simultaneously a catalyst for comic misunderstandings and for their inevitable resolution. In plentiful supply in spite of wartime shortages and supplying motivation for many of Bertie's actions, food drives conflict that is always illusory. Wodehouse's deliberately formulaic novels delight through variation rather than innovation, following a pattern as much like the daily meal as a musical score. Comic resolution comes in like an eagerly anticipated dessert course.

In spite of this structural consistency, by the 1930s the economic situation of P.G. Wodehouse's England had changed, and with it, his characters' awareness of their shrinking range of economic and social influence. In *Thank You, Jeeves*, rich, self-made Americans are contrasted with the hollowed-out legatees of ancient English families who can no longer afford to run the estates that signify their status. Lord "Chuffy" Chuffnell is subject to the whims of American millionaire J. Washburn Stoker, who plans to buy the failing Chuffnell estate and lease it to a nerve specialist. As Bertie tells it, Chuffy is "dashed hard up, poor bloke, like most fellows who own land, and only lives at Chuffnell Hall because he's stuck with it and can't afford to live anywhere else" (21). Along with the increasing difficulty of financially supporting large estates in midcentury Britain came the physical encroachments on privacy resulting from the war—shared housing as a result of shortages, the total lack of privacy in air raid shelters, the 'invasions' of

evacuated children into rural homes. Many landlords were forced to transfer ownership of their estates and country houses to the public trust, in part due to increased taxation in the postwar period. The importance of communal dining to social connections was also at issue in ration-era Britain, as citizens were asked to view individual food choices as contributing to the war effort and postwar reconstruction.

The Code of the Woosters, written while Wodehouse was living in Le Touquet and published just prior to the outbreak of war, also makes reference to the encroaching threat of fascism, but renders it absurd in part through its association with the gauche eating habits of Roderick Spode. The Oswald Mosley-like Spode is a ridiculous character not only because his "Black Shorts" authoritarianism goes against the English spirit as portrayed in the novel, but also because his dining habits are as ludicrous in Bertie's world as his secret propensity for designing female lingerie. Spode's inability to conform to social rules belies his nominal association with gentility and fine English china. A true gentleman, Wooster facetiously schools Spode in etiquette: on eating asparagus, Bertie tells him, "What you want to do, Spode, in future is lower the vegetable gently into the abyss. Take it easy. Don't snap at it. Try to remember that you are a human being and not a shark" (*Code* 189). Spode's discomfort within the confines of the English country house renders him subhuman—a laughably ineffectual predator—while his eating habits call "one's whole conception of Man as Nature's last word" into question (*Code* 58).

Judy Suh argues that Wodehouse's "anti-fascist strategy" in *The Code of the Woosters* is ultimately unsatisfying in spite of the combination of comedy and country house novel that identifies Roderick Spode's dictatorship as absurd. Agreeing with George Orwell that Wodehouse's works are essentially apolitical and outdated, Suh

asserts that, "In the context of [the generic code of country house literature], Spode is a classic parvenu, an urban sissy and a newly rich and rootless capitalist who insinuates himself into the life of the country house" (148). In such a reading, the newly rich are perpetual "guests" incapable of adapting to the whims and conventions of their aristocratic hosts. While Bertie does make "antidemocratic declarations" about the emancipation of women and servants (Suh 148), such statements are identified as ironic by their application to characters who are ultimately able to master and adapt to the country house genre; although Bertie finds his young female cousin abrupt, for instance, she capably navigates the treacherous world of aristocratic hospitality.

Wooster's discussions of political questions evince a humorously resigned adaptability to modernization that belies Suh's suggestion that Spode is unlikeable merely because he is *nouveau riche* rather than because he is fascist, although they do reflect a deep-seated snobbery about cosmopolitan tastes that recalls Charles Ryder's attitude to Rex and his father in *Brideshead Revisited*. The hungry communist Comrade Butt in the prewar "Comrade Bingo" (1922), who represents another violent political faction, is similarly satirized by way of his gluttony: Bertie orders a massive tea in order to cater to Bingo's voracious communist guests, who complain that upperclass luxury is "wrung from the bleeding lips of the starving poor" while stuffing themselves at Bertie's table (*World* 179). Conventions of polite behaviour form the moral compass of the Jeeves works. By successfully defeating fascist dictator Roderick Spode on the grounds of incivility, *The Code of the Woosters* enters into a discussion of international politics even as it reflects Wodehouse's naive rejection of the possibility of warfare.

The presence of domestic help throughout Wodehouse's oeuvre also renders the intimate space of the home less private. Information circulates between servants, even among the discreet butlers who dine at the Junior Ganymede, where each new member must reveal intimate details about his employer for the protection and entertainment of his colleagues (*Code* 92). The pervasiveness of bumptious servants in Wodehouse reflects the "servant problem" in twentieth-century England. Particularly after the First World War, it was increasingly difficult for upper and middleclass households to retain long-term domestic workers, who were no longer forced to work in service or remain loyal to a single employer as a result of new opportunities and rising education rates. Hiring servants, chefs, and butlers thus renders Wodehouse's homeowners vulnerable to invasion. Although he often celebrates Jeeves for his "feudal spirit," even the oblivious Wooster acknowledges the democratization of society through joking references to insurrection and disloyalty among the lower classes. Forced to hire a temporary replacement for Jeeves, for example, Bertie observes that "Outwardly he was all respectfulness, but inwardly you could see that he was a man who was musing on the coming Social Revolution and looked on Bertram as a tyrant and an oppressor" (*Thank You* 76). Jeeves moves fluidly through other households, as Bertie's acquaintances are always willing to employ him. He infiltrates homes, sometimes in good faith (having temporarily left Bertie's employ) and sometimes as a secret agent.

Given the instability of domestic boundaries, rules of conduct are crucial. The laws of hospitality are therefore of primary importance in Wodehouse's novels, forming a key part of the social conventions guiding relationships. With no greater threat to Bertie's wellbeing than inhospitality, considerable anxiety is created when he is subjected to

discourteous behaviour. In *The Code of the Woosters*, Sir Watkyn Bassett commits a grievous sin against the laws of hospitality by betraying his Brinkley hosts, Dahlia and Tom Travers. As Aunt Dahlia complains of Bassett's dishonourable conduct, "would you care to hear how he repaid me for all the loving care I lavished on him while he was my guest? Sneaked round behind my back and tried to steal Anatole!" (9). Bertie knowingly manipulates the rules of hospitality by cadging an invitation to Totleigh Towers through Bassett's daughter Madeline, fully aware that the unwilling Sir Watkyn will have no choice but to admit Bertie as his daughter's guest. Yet Bertie is playing by the rules; Bassett, on the other hand, barely upholds his duties as a host, subjecting Bertie to various indignities, including a room search for a stolen police helmet. Having previously observed that Sir Watkyn lacks the standard "respect for the laws of hospitality" (*Code* 204) that ought to preclude his subjecting his guest to accusations of theft, Wooster mocks his host when the search is fruitless. "I can only say that you appear to have extraordinarily rummy views on making your guests comfortable over the weekend," he tells Bassett. "Don't count on my coming here again" (*Code* 210).

Inhospitality culminates at the dining table. Food can become a weapon wielded by host over guest; the guest may be harmed, sometimes physically, by his participation in the meal. But as Derrida and J. Hillis Miller point out, the host can also become a victim by being forced to provide for an unwelcome guest, such as when Bertie reluctantly hosts the communist tea in "Comrade Bingo." Food facilitates manipulation through bribery, baiting, and blackmail. Sir Watkyn Bassett craftily invites Bertie's Uncle Tom to dine at his club, where "this Macchiavelli," as Aunt Dahlia calls Bassett, convinces Tom to eat cold lobster that besieges "the intensely delicate and finely poised

mechanism of his tummy" (*Code* 23). While Sir Watkyn is taking advantage of Tom's post-feast incapacitation to snatch the coveted silver cow-creamer from the antique shop, Tom has to have his stomach pumped.

Food frequently serves as the promise or threat that allows a character to bend another to her will. Dahlia uses Anatole as leverage against her unwilling nephew, who describes the chef as an "all-powerful weapon which she holds constantly over my head … and by the means of which she can always bend me to her will—viz. the threat that if I don't kick in she will bar me from her board and wipe Anatole's cooking from my lips" (*Code* 26). Bertie is lured onto a houseboat by the promise of a well-catered party in *Thank You, Jeeves*, only to be unceremoniously imprisoned by his host. Hosts may threaten their guests either by withholding hospitality, like Dahlia, or by subjecting a guest to unwelcome customs or bad meals, like Sir Watkyn. Bassett's lack of hospitality is poisonous in itself, as Bertie observes: 'I think you are attributing to the old poison germ a niceness of feeling and a respect for the laws of hospitality which nothing in his record suggests that he possesses' (*Code* 204). Like the lavish lobster display, other people's clubs and collations can be threatening. Guests may overeat or demand food at inopportune times. Food may be unsavoury, indigestible, toxic or insufficient in quantity. Every meal is an opportunity for treachery.

In Wodehouse as elsewhere, conventional heroism is always strictly coded, whether the code is chivalric or merely thieves' honour. Barbara C. Bowen observes that "Wodehouse's young men adhere to a feudal code of behavior, learned no doubt at their public schools … There are done things and not-done things" (65). Bertie defers to "the code of the Woosters" not just in the eponymous novel but in every situation calling for

gallantry in uncomfortable circumstances. Interaction and alienation between characters depends on a precise understanding of stable conventions: characters generally respect specific codes of loyalty, whether to family, school or nation. Even mock heroes adhere to strict principles, while villains fail to live up to such standards.

In *The Mating Season*, Bertie is thus completely thrown off when he arrives at Deverill Hall without time to dress for dinner (209). When he wonders aloud whether the specific length of his trousers even matters, Jeeves replies unswervingly: "The mood will pass, sir" (*Code* 84). Dining habits make up part of the veneer of civilization that allows life to make sense and events to progress; for this reason Jeeves' insistence on the durability of such distinctions is disarmingly profound. Faith not only in the daily bread but also in the correct way to eat a piece of asparagus or make a guest feel welcome is crucial for the happiness of these characters. Sir Watkyn Bassett and Roderick Spode are rendered harmless through their transgressions, as Bertie and his cronies can effectively blackmail them for violating convention—Bassett because he treacherously breaks the laws of hospitality, Spode because he fails to adhere to the normative ideal of what a dictator should be. Manners matter because they keep people civil; a breach in manners is thus a breach in British civilization, a crack through which invasion can happen.

In this world where treachery is always a possibility, Bertie is a generous and likeable protagonist precisely because of his good manners. He is firmly aware of his rights as a guest, and relies on the courtesy of his host to protect him from aggression. When his conviction proves misguided, it is portrayed as a breach of conduct on the host's part rather than a weakness in his own judgment. This confidence in the importance of courtesy closely reflects Wodehouse's own conduct following the German

occupation of France and his eventual internment. In Le Touquet, Wodehouse was forced to remain polite while inwardly seething at the German "blighters" who helped themselves to his bathroom facilities daily (McCrum 274-5); this evidence of his "hospitality" was later used against him when he was accused of treason. The literal invasion of the author's adoptive country by the Nazis is suggested in the encroachments on characters' estates portrayed throughout the Jeeves series. While the seeming insignificance of the social mores surrounding these invasions renders them safe for the reader of Wodehouse, transgressions of the laws of hospitality nevertheless point to wider anxieties about international relations.

Brideshead Requisitioned: Living and Dining in Waugh's Forties Fiction

Like Wodehouse, Evelyn Waugh satirizes anxieties about opening luxurious private spaces up for public usage, both for military purposes and for housing evacuee families. Both *Brideshead Revisited* (1945) and *Put Out More Flags* (1942) investigate the occupation and adaptation of private estates in wartime. Such anxieties clearly assume a minimum of wealth and class, as many wartime controls in fact led to a measurable improvement in living conditions for poorer populations. In urban areas in particular, price controls on staple foods tended to benefit low-income families while negatively impacting the diets of the middle and upper classes. Yet even those living below the poverty line in crowded tenements often resisted moving to more affluent quarters if it meant separation from family and dependence on strangers. In many cases of evacuation and cohabitation, distinctions between the dining habits of host and guest rendered living and eating together uncomfortable for both parties.

Foodways distinctions were often a function of class background; as Angus Calder observes of early evacuation efforts in Britain, although efforts were made to pair "like … with like" in moving children and vulnerable groups from city to country, "Social mismatching was inherent in the scheme" (*People's War* 40). Evacuees tended to be from poor families living in the most densely populated urban areas, as wealthier families either lived in less crowded suburban areas (designated as "neutral," that is, not marked for evacuation as likely bombing targets) or "made their own arrangements" for temporary housing (40). Housing shortages everywhere meant that rural homeowners "with room to spare would be found disproportionately among the well-to-do" (40).

When lowerclass evacuee children moved to middleclass homes, their personal hygiene and diets may have shocked their hosts, yet often resulted from being brought up with limited access to running water or lavatory facilities (*People's War* 43). In the same way, many children whose parents could not afford other food were used to meals consisting exclusively of chips or bread and "scrape":

> Billetors were often appalled by the incomprehension with which evacuees confronted knives, forks, hot meals and green vegetables. They learnt to their horror that in the slums mothers would hand their children a slab of bread and margarine for supper, which they would eat standing up, or would send them out for a bag of chips. … ('The country is a funny place,' one child remarked. 'They never tell you you can't have more to eat, and under the bed is wasted.') In the worst quarters of the cities, the absence of tap water often made it impossible to cook vegetables; overcrowding meant that children shared beds with their parents and

siblings, or did without; bread and margarine was often all that families

could afford. (*People's War* 43-4)

Inequities in socioeconomic status are evident in divergent lifestyles and foodways.

In *Put Out More Flags*, the Connolly children from the slums of Birmingham

exemplify billetors' fears about evacuees: Doris is lusty and pig-like; Micky is violent;

Marlene consumes dog food, vomits, and excretes indiscriminately. Their uncontrolled

appetites and almost inhuman hygiene burlesque contemporary anxieties surrounding the

accommodation and feeding of strangers. The reactions of citizens to the forcible sharing

of space in wartime are hyperbolically apparent in the wariness and hostility with which

these normally unassuming invaders are treated in this darkly funny farce.

Set during the "Bore" or "Phoney War" of 1940-41, *Put Out More Flags* satirizes

the reluctance of individual citizens to welcome insiders into their homes. The novel

depicts the sharing of space as both a private and a public problem; the evacuation of

children from city to country, as well as the necessity of adapting private spaces for

military use, affects characters' consumption patterns and abilities to behave hospitably

towards unanticipated guests. Waugh comically portrays the discomfort associated with

the billeting of evacuees through Basil Seal's extortion of wealthy country house dwellers

faced with the threat of the infamous Connolly children. As billeting officer in her

district, Barbara Seal must contend with evacuated mothers who recognize the

discrepancy between their own lifestyles and those of their hosts. These lower class

"fugitives" refuse to adhere to the same schedules as the genteel residents around

Malfrey, and crowd around the pub hours before opening time (7). Insisting, "We won't

stay where we're not wanted" (7), they are "flocking home to their evacuated streets"

within a month (57). Such returns were consistent with the experience of many urban families, and (along with the need to relocate unwanted or misplaced evacuees to more suitable billets) partly account for the multiple changes of address noted above. Although many families followed government advice in terms of the initial evacuations, the majority opted to return to the familiarity of their urban homes in spite of the increased danger. Relocations disorient both those who are moved and those who are forced to accommodate the movers.

In the case of the Connollies, the resistance to unwelcome guests is exploited both by the children themselves, who amuse themselves by torturing their hosts, and by Basil, who takes advantage of their capacity to inspire terror by convincing unsuspecting homeowners to pay for their removal. Poised to extort all the country house owners in Barbara's mother-in-law's address book, Basil contemplates its pages "as a marauder might look down from the hills into fat pastures below; as Hannibal's infantry had looked down from the snowline as the first elephants tried the etched footholds which led to the Lombardy plains below" (143). This image—of an enemy coiled to attack—underscores the invasive quality of the seemingly innocuous action of housing a displaced and endangered child. The "fat pastures" suggest the role of agricultural resources in motivating such invasions.

Basil is able to manipulate the situation and gain Doris' loyalty by taking her to the cinema and by feeding her "liberally on fried fish and chipped potatoes" (143)—in line with a typical working class diet. Generally, living in the country meant more access to off-ration livestock and agricultural production. While having little real concern about the lower classes, Basil calls attention to such iniquities in access to food and housing as

a means of convincing upper and middleclass homeowners to pay handsomely for their privacy. For poor families, as Basil points out, the government allowance for billets barely covers the cost of their food (124); given the Connollies' repellent consumption and excretion habits, it is well worth the added cost to avoid billeting them. Basil's scheme is only spoiled when he overextends himself, infringing on the territory of the billeting officer in a neighbouring district.

With his own convenience and enjoyment in mind, Basil's brother-in-law Freddy volunteers the grounds of Malfrey as a camp for the yeomanry, bridging the gap between official and unofficial takeovers of private space. He explains the situation in a telephone call to his wife, Barbara:

> 'We'll be bringing servants, so we'll be self-supporting as far as that goes. There'll be a couple of sergeants. Benson can look after them. And I say, Barbara, what do you say to having them camp in the park? … We could open up the saloon and have the mess there. I could live in. You'd have to have old Colonel Sproggin and probably Cathcart, too, but you wouldn't mind that, would you?' (173)

Clearly unenthusiastic at the prospect of housing them (and of having to kick her brother out of the house), Barbara "[hangs] up sadly and [goes] to make arrangements for [their] reception" (173). Beyond economic discomforts, the introduction of strangers into the home is at best an inconvenience and at worst a Connolly-style torment.

The requisitioning of Brideshead Castle in *Brideshead Revisited* represents another form of officially sanctioned invasion. In the prologue, Charles Ryder describes the appropriation of a nearby farmhouse as a kind of property salvation, since the house

"had been marked for destruction before the army came to it" (1); the takeover of the Marchmain estate is more destructive, as the house is still in private use. "Wonderful old place in its way," the Quartering Commandant observes to Charles, "pity to knock it about too much" (321). The de facto mistress of the house, Lady Beryl Marchmain, is displaced repeatedly by the war, having been requisitioned or bombed out of several houses beginning with Brideshead; at the novel's close she is living in a seaside hotel, which, as Nannie observes, "isn't the same as your own home, is it? It doesn't seem right" (323-4). When Charles returns as an army officer, he is no longer waited on as a guest or prospective landlord, but significantly assumes service duties himself by volunteering to bring Nannie's tea up to the nursery (323).

Waugh's nostalgic portrayal of the besieged country house is underscored by the closure and adaptation of rooms designed for formal entertainment, a transition from private into public space presaged by Lord Marchmain's elaborate orchestration of an awkward formal dinner by his death bed. Charles describes the scene:

> the room had a Hogarthian aspect, with the dinner-table set for the four of us by the grotesque, *chinoiserie* chimney-piece, and the old man propped among his pillows, sipping champagne, tasting, praising, and failing to eat, the succession of dishes which had been prepared for his homecoming. Wilcox had brought out for the occasion the gold plate, which I had not before seen in use; that, the gilt mirrors, and the lacquer and drapery of the great bed and Julia's mandarin coat gave the scene an air of pantomime, of Aladdin's cave. (299)

Like a sacred rite, his family is forced to go through an elaborate performance in rooms

that, in a still-living house, have already been set aside for preservation. Wasting away

along with his financially insecure estate, Lord Marchmain's hospitality is all show: he

presides over the table, tasting and praising the food to fulfill his obligations as a host, but

cannot actually consume the meal.

Waugh describes certain homes as particularly vulnerable to infiltration by

freeloading dinner guests, sometimes because of the generosity or naiveté of their

owners, sometimes because of pure circumstance. While advising Charles about Oxford

in *Brideshead Revisited*, Ryder's cousin Jasper warns him that men have been "ruined" as

a result of having ground-floor rooms: "People start dropping in. They leave their gowns

here and come and collect them before hall; you start giving them sherry. Before you

know where you are, you've opened a free bar for all the undesirables of the college"

(22). Through sheer proximity, Jasper implies, Charles is rendered vulnerable to the

unwelcome advances of various "undesirables," identifiable by their tendency to

overconsumption and willingness to infringe on the privacy of others. The indiscriminate

sharing of food and drink is figured as naïve and socially dangerous rather than generous.

At the same time, the bountiful tea consumed by Jasper lends him an ironic gravitas; his

"very heavy meal of honey-buns, anchovy toast, and Fuller's walnut cake" (21) combines

with his pipe-smoking, "his London-made plus-fours and his Leander tie" (22) to

emphasize his respectability and intimate knowledge of Oxford social life, even as

Charles dismisses the importance of such restrictive guidelines.

Jasper's warning is prophetic in that Charles does find himself sucked into the

less-than-respectable world of Sebastian Flyte through location and excessive

consumption: drunkenly leaving a party, Sebastian vomits into Charles' open ground-floor window. Having effectively ended Charles' own mulled claret gathering, Sebastian apologetically invites his unwitting "host" to a lavish luncheon the next day. Sebastian's invasion is forgivable in that it is not wholly unexpected. As Charles observes, "It was not unusual for dinner parties to end in that way; there was in fact a recognized tariff for the scout on such occasions" (25). Throwing up is a rite of passage for young men who are "learning, by trial and error, to carry [their] wine" (25).

This education in moderation as opposed to abstinence is important to individual growth. As a social lubricant, alcohol facilitates the development of personal and professional relationships; Brideshead is particularly cognizant of this teleological understanding of alcohol consumption. "I wish I were [fond of wine]," he tells Charles. "It is such a bond with other men" (82): "I like and think good the end to which wine is sometimes the means—the promotion of sympathy between man and man. But in my own case it does not achieve that end, so I neither like it nor think it good for me" (84-5). In a reversal of this developmental approach to drinking, Sebastian's capacity for moderation is diminished rather than increased by his mother's misguided efforts to limit his consumption, which leads to his withdrawal from society.

Although Sebastian—financially cut off from his family and increasingly dependent on alcohol—later becomes a drain on others' resources, in the above instance his lunch invitation cancels out his offence: he immediately takes his turn as host. By contrast, characters that act as perpetual guests, like the freeloading Mr. Samgrass, are parasitic in their abuse of hospitality. Anthony Blanche becomes knowingly entangled in a series of relationships with younger men who use him for his money; Sebastian

supports Kurt, a man everyone recognizes as a manipulator, but whom Sebastian enjoys "looking after" (202). Similarly, in *Put Out More Flags*, Basil Seal moves from house to house, imposing on his family, friends, and lovers and taking what he can from each. He takes train fare from Angela Lyne and spends it on dinner with another woman; he later convinces another lover to break into her new husband's wine cellar so they can drink together. Alastair and Sonia Trumpington "chang[e] house, on an average, once a year, ostensibly for motives of economy" (38), but primarily to avoid the anchorless Basil.

When Charles returns home for the holidays in *Brideshead Revisited*, he becomes locked in a cold war with his manipulative and slightly sadistic father; the two spend their days apart but are forced into proximity at meals. As Charles observes, "The dinner table was our battlefield" (58). Household meals are rigidly structured according to "middleclass" standards: based on ten unvarying menus, the Ryder dinners invariably include soup followed by meat, fish, and savoury courses, yet are prepared with little skill or care (59). Charles' father alienates his son by treating him as a guest rather than a family member; he chooses dinner guests and menus deliberately for Charles' discomfort, while joking that "the obligations of hospitality must be observed" (63). Originating in tyranny rather than benevolence, Edward Ryder's willful misinterpretation and performance of hospitality incites interpersonal conflict. As Thomas Churchill notes, Mr. Ryder "eats prodigious but terribly bland meals" (214) off tableware as tasteless as the wine he serves (*Brideshead* 63). Just as in the Rosamund Tea Rooms, such ongoing manipulation and psychological torture is only possible through a situation of financial dependence and the polite avoidance of dining-room conflict.

Dining habits indicate cultural distinction and class allegiances. Mr. Ryder's attitude toward hospitality is as distinctively bourgeois as his "middle-class precepts about dining" (Hepburn, "Good Graces" 243). Charles' "will to debt," on the other hand, like his appreciation of fine cuisine and *objets d'art*, aligns him more closely with the aristocratic Flytes than his pragmatic father, who recognizes that capital is finite (Hepburn, "Good Graces" 244) and has no interest in luxury or benevolence for its own sake.

In *Brideshead Revisited*, refined taste in food, clothing, and art is associated with sophistication and cultural capital, but ultimately proves insufficient for success in life and love. Rex Mottram is wholly concerned with surfaces, and incapable of subtlety; Julia describes him as an incomplete human being, "something absolutely modern and up-to-date that only this ghastly age could produce" (187). This concern with appearances and reputation extends to his tastes in food: as Charles contemptuously acknowledges, Rex is more concerned with flaunting his wealth and privilege in well-known restaurants than with actual meals. When Rex offers to buy him dinner in Paris, Charles carefully chooses a place he knows that Rex won't have heard of and insists on ordering the whole dinner himself. Each instance of Rex failing to appreciate the exquisitely simple food and wine selected by Charles feeds the latter's contempt. "The sole [is] so simple and unobtrusive that Rex fail[s] to notice it," and the older man threatens to ruin the delicate flavour of the *caviar aux blinis*—ordered specifically to assuage his need for something recognizably upscale—with chopped onions, because, he insists, "Chap-who-knew told me it brought out the flavour" (161). The final outrage is Rex's insistence at the end of the meal on replacing the clear, pale cognac enjoyed by his

companion with a "treacly concoction" in a "vast and mouldy bottle they kept for people

of Rex's sort," and which the wait staff must "shamefacedly… whee[l] out of its hiding

place" (165). Both Rex and Charles are snobbish in their own way, acutely aware of

vastly divergent markers of economic or aesthetic distinction.

This long and sensuously detailed dinner scene—one of the gluttonously

rhetorical passages for which Waugh later apologized[30]—offers a sustained comparison

of Charles and Rex by way of their attitudes toward fine dining. Savouring a particularly

fine Clos de Bèze, Charles recalls, "I rejoiced in the Burgundy. It seemed a reminder that

the world was an older and better place than Rex knew, that mankind in its long passion

had learned another wisdom than his" (163). In spite of Mottram's financial and

professional success, Ryder considers himself vastly superior in terms of refinement,

intelligence, and taste. Rex's incapacity to recognize fine food and wine mark him as part

of the same modern world responsible for the type of art Charles dismisses as "[g]reat

bosh" (142); he is emblematic of "Waugh's rejection of modern man as corrupt, limited,

aesthetically and spiritually crippled" (Breeze 137). Yet Ryder's contemptuous

willingness to accept Mottram's generosity—epitomized by statements such as "I let him

give me a bottle of 1906 Montrachet" (160)—makes him appear as pragmatically self-

serving as Rex.

This disposition to impose on others, to take all that he can get from his wealthy,

aristocratic hosts, marks Charles as a parasitic guest. Invading Brideshead first with

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[30] In his preface to the 1959 reissue of *Brideshead Revisited*, Waugh attributes both the linguistic style of
the novel and its "gluttonous" descriptions of food and wine to the austerity of the war years in which it
was written: "It was a period of present privation and threatening disaster—the period of soya beans and
Basic English—and in consequence the book is infused with a kind of gluttony, for food and wine, for the
splendours of the recent past, and for rhetorical and ornamental language, which now with a full stomach I
find distasteful" (ix).

Sebastian then with Julia, almost inheriting the estate legally and finally squatting on it professionally, Charles moves from hanger-on to grasping invader. The complete transformation of his Oxford rooms from first to second term prefigure his social-climbing attempts to imitate and infiltrate the lifestyles of the wealthy. Like Basil Seal and Mr. Samgrass, Charles is a sponger with expensive tastes.

Waugh's 1940s fiction fits with larger patterns in the depiction of hospitality over the course of the twentieth century. In the works of Evelyn Waugh, Elizabeth Taylor, Patrick Hamilton, and P.G. Wodehouse, eating is a central theme. Wartime food imagery reflects paranoia about cultural invasion that directly mirrors the rhetoric of national invasion and espionage circulating during the war. The identity crisis linked with the ability to select, cook, and consume traditional foods was coextensive with midcentury threats to national and imperial identity. Invasions and dislocations occurred both between and within nations: evacuee children moved from cities to rural areas; homeowners were forced to move out of coastal houses or large estates; Londoners seeking respite from bombs moved into shared spaces, whether overnight shelters or indefinite boardinghouse stays.

Through food and hospitality, dynamic discourses of treachery and invasion infiltrate seemingly stable worlds. Both Wodehouse in the Jeeves and Wooster stories and Waugh in *Put Out More Flags* construct farcical models of upperclass English life that deliberately resist evolution in spite of profound degrees of historical change; in *Brideshead Revisited*, Waugh works through some of those changes by depicting nostalgic attitudes to foodways and private property. *At Mrs Lippincote's* and *The Slaves of Solitude* both reflect anxieties about moving into other people's spaces, anxieties

which often culminate at mealtimes. At the same time, the depiction of foodways permits a means of comically addressing global tensions: Wodehouse ingenuously neutralizes real-world conflicts by rendering them gastronomically, while other works seem less comfortable with the influence of foreign cultures on British foodways. If schoolboyish food fights replace manly battles in Wodehouse and Waugh, the violence of international relations is inscribed in the complex relationships built around shared meals. The theory of hospitality provides a means of analyzing breaches of physical, domestic and national borders in midcentury novels.

Like texts written during the turn-of-the-century craze for invasion fiction, midcentury iterations of the invasion theme express contemporary anxieties about the vulnerability of the British Empire to external attack. Literary depictions of acts and abuses of hospitality likewise reveal a fundamental shift in the host-guest dynamic in Britain as a result of the war: characters respond to their historical contexts and perform social and national identities in the ways they serve, share, and consume food. Eating both facilitates and interrupts romantic narratives; as Lee makes clear, the food plot provides an alternative narrative model to the marriage plot in realist fiction. Yet eating also generates interiority, revealing psychological depth and character. Both as an aspect of the decadence indicative of cultural vulnerability and as a site of intersection between benevolence and hostility, eating emblematizes cultural values and concerns.

CHAPTER 2

National Bodies: Fueling Heroism in the Midcentury Thriller

Over the course of the twentieth century, military strategists and private citizens came to view individual health and nutrition as integral to national and imperial strength. By midcentury, scientific developments originating in the late nineteenth century had enacted a major shift in public discourses around food and eating.[31] Global researchers and reformers developed dietary guidelines based on emerging insights into the importance of protein, vitamins, and minerals; they identified widespread micronutrient deficiencies and underscored links between health, diet, and income.[32] At the same time, physical fitness movements linking eating and exercise with strength, discipline, and good citizenship flourished across Britain. The immense popularity of the Boy Scout movement, which placed responsibility for cultivating physical and moral health firmly on the individual, reinvigorated imperial narratives by applying colonialist language to daily life in England. Individual health was conceived as a component of patriotic duty— one that even the lowest-income individuals might control through resourcefulness, economy, and adaptability.

This understanding of individual eating habits as a crucial aspect of national

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[31] Wilbur Atwater's late-1890s invention of the respiration calorimeter, which measured the amount of energy consumed and expended by humans in calories, was a groundbreaking advancement in the field of nutritional science. The ensuing focus among nutritionists on the importance of caloric energy— particularly from protein, which Atwater prioritized as having the highest energy value—promoted a quantified view of dietary health guidelines, sometimes at the expense of lower-energy but high-nutrient foods such as green vegetables. See Kenneth J. Carpenter, "A Short History of Nutritional Science," 975-85.

[32] Interwar studies expanded the depth and breadth of what came to be known as the "new nutrition," using emerging scientific insights into vitamins and minerals to identify micronutrient deficiencies, or "hidden hunger," as the cause of medical conditions such as rickets. See for example Elmer V. McCollum's *The Newer Knowledge of Nutrition* and Sir John Boyd Orr's *Food, Health, and Income*.

identity pervades midcentury British literature and culture. From the gentleman hunter to the resilient soldier, from the resourceful scout to the chameleonic secret agent, national heroes build strong bodies through careful attention to diet and exercise. Whereas midcentury women are typically portrayed as contributing to nation-building through the feeding of their families and loved ones—to the extent of prioritizing the nutritional needs of their children and husbands over their own, even after joining the workforce themselves[33]—acts of consumption as preparation for civic duty are primarily a masculine phenomenon. Such patriotic eating is pervasive in adventure stories and thrillers detailing the preparation for and execution of heroic acts, sometimes by otherwise ordinary individuals. National foodways, evolving over the course of the century, took on various meanings as the global position of Britain shifted in relation to countries such as France, Germany, and the United States. This chapter traces this evolution from the 1910s to the 1950s by focusing on generically representative thriller novels. Three central questions arise from this concentration on food and thriller fiction: What do national heroes eat? How do spies and other heroic figures prepare their bodies for victory? And how do patriotic British foodways adapt to shifting international dynamics throughout the twentieth century?

To answer these questions, this chapter reads Ian Fleming's postwar James Bond stories against Geoffrey Household's *Rogue Male* (1939) to illustrate ways in which food fortifies midcentury conflicts. It situates these novels—and their hyper-conscientious citizen heroes—within a larger generic history encompassing Robert Baden-Powell's

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[33] For an overview of the nutritional sacrifices common among wives and mothers from the nineteenth century on, see Ellen Ross, "'There is Meat Ye Know Not Of': Feeding a Family" in *Love and Toil: Motherhood in Outcast London*. Raynes Minns discusses the same phenomenon in the context of Second World War rationing and war work in *Bombers and Mash*.

Scouting for Boys: A Handbook for Instruction in Good Citizenship (1908), John

Buchan's *The 39 Steps* (1915), and Eric Ambler's *Background to Danger* (1937), and

extends this discussion to factory labour through a reading of consumption in Alan

Sillitoe's *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1958). Placing these works in

conversation with contemporary health advice and civilian and military health guidelines

reveals a midcentury ideal of patriotic, manly eating defined by discipline, efficiency, and

discrimination.

Midcentury thrillers reflect wider political realities. Lee Horsley argues that late

1930s thrillers differ from their more formulaic predecessors in their characteristic

preoccupations with violence and power; whereas earlier thrillers incorporate violent

action as a matter of course, interwar works by authors such as Graham Greene and Eric

Ambler struggle to determine the sources of and relations between violence, power, and

restraint as a means of "mirror[ing] national misgivings about transforming Britain into a

country capable of meeting continental violence" (165). Unlike the "sensational" thriller,

as Horsley puts it, the "serious" thriller is primarily concerned with the contemplation of

violence, so that the "main substance of the novel becomes an act of extended analysis,

the long process of introspection which the hero must undergo before he can choose his

path of action" (165-6). In both cases, spy thrillers link the personal and the political

through a focus on the role of the individual in the larger theatre of international relations.

Often overlapping with invasion stories, thriller novels portray the individual British

citizen as capable of decisive action even if British culture as a whole seems sunk in

inaction and decadence.

Just as the British government underwent a long process of analysis before

moving from appeasement to confrontation, thirties and forties thrillers tend to be

"narratives of reluctant aggression, constructed around the deferral or avoidance of

violent action: an ordinarily human, non-heroic protagonist, a representative of normal,

civilised decencies, is initiated into a violent world and confronted with the alternatives

of engagement or retreat" (Horsley 156). In the midcentury thriller, food catalyzes this

initiation process and launches characters from the ordinary to the heroic. Individuals use

their powers of observation and resourcefulness—the same qualities that make a good

spy—to feed themselves according to social, moral, and nutritional guidelines for good

citizenship.

Between 1914 and 1945, British politicians increasingly drew public attention to

parallels between imperial strength and individual fitness—a connection crystallized in

David Lloyd George's post-WWI declaration that "You cannot maintain an A1 Empire

with a C3 population."[34] This distinction between "A1" soldiers, considered fully fit and

ready for dispatch overseas, and "C3" civilians, unfit for combat and suitable only for

"sedentary work" at home, places physical health and mobility at the heart of imperial

citizenship. In the years following the First World War, the military designations

mentioned in the Prime Minister's speech "became a recurrent metaphor in debates about

national fitness" (Zweiniger, *Managing* 151). Although post-First World War reform

promises mostly fell by the wayside during Lloyd George's term, the improvement of

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[34] The British Prime Minister first articulated this maxim in a speech given in Manchester on 12 September 1918. Among Lloyd George's various recommendations for transitioning from war to peace—avoiding extremism and punitive approaches in peace negotiations, improving housing and working conditions, and promoting national production—was a clear focus on national health. According to the Prime Minister, "The state must take a more constant and intelligent interest in the health of the people. It was estimated by the National Service Department that through neglect of public health we had lost a million men who might have been fit for the fighting line" during the Great War ("The War and After" 7). Like the Boer Wars before it, the First World War shed light on the huge percentage of the British population for whom malnutrition contributed to poor health and fitness.

individual fitness and nutrition was a key tenet in national and imperial health discussions

well into the century, with special importance added during the Second World War. The

necessity of mobilizing civilians for the purposes of total war meant that the performance

of individuals working in agriculture, industry, or the civil service was granted a degree

of national importance on par with that of men in active military service. Along with the

extension of rationing to civilians came advice about patriotic eating habits—dietary

guidelines designed to maximize energy, productivity, and morale without consuming

excess resources. Just as "the virtuous habits of the healthy and fit A1 citizen were

juxtaposed with those of the C3 anti-citizen whose undisciplined lifestyle was attributed

to ignorance and lack of self-control" (Zweiniger, *Managing* Ch. 4 abstract), attention to

personal eating habits as an extension of good citizenship shaped Ministry of Food

propaganda until the 1950s. The Ministries of Food and Information encouraged citizens

to treat their bodies and the bodies of their family members as extensions of the war

effort.

The inclusion of dietary and nutritional guidelines in conversations about

citizenship coincided with the emergence of physical fitness as a cultural phenomenon. In

Dismembering the Male, Joanna Bourke dates the rise of various "muscular Christianity"

groups, including the Anglican Boys' Brigade and the YMCA, as well as related secular

initiatives, such as the Boy Scouts Association and the Health and Strength League (180-

92), to the late nineteenth century. In *Managing the Body*, Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska

similarly traces the global proliferation of physical culture and lifestyle reform

movements over the course of the twentieth century, and relates them to the "rise of

social Darwinist and eugenic thought in public health and social policy debates since the

late Victorian period" (2); ideals of health, strength, beauty, and fitness emerged in response to modern, urban, industrial society, and out of the "holistic conception of the close relationship between health, civilization, and citizenship [that] was common among elite physicians and central to the government's health education campaigns in the interwar years" (3). In such conceptions, normative masculinity is defined according to the same standards used to describe ideal Britishness, citizenship, and personhood in general, as well as by an absence of femininity (Rose 152). Following the First World War, however, the virility of national ideals was toned down out of embarrassment and a general distaste for romantic hypernationalism (Light 8); heroic interwar narratives were tempered by a new celebration of domestic, peace-loving (but still fight-ready) men (Rose 152).

Physical culturists provided an alternative model of masculinity to Light's domesticated interwar man by depicting such domestication as "suffocating, symbolized by middle-age spread which left men vulnerable to ridicule" (Zweiniger, *Managing* 215). As James Bond's discomfort with deskwork suggests, midcentury narratives express anxiety about overcorrection with regard to postwar masculinities, particularly among the expanding middleclass. The image of the fat or obese man became a counterpoint to the "emaciated unfit men in representations of the male body during the interwar years" (Zweiniger, *Managing* 215). Such fatness suggests emasculation through its association with feminine coddling and overfeeding: "The businessman suffering from middle-age spread was a stock character in interwar reducing manuals which urged obese men to lose weight in order to reclaim hegemonic masculinity" (215).[35] "Reducing was not only a

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[35] Fitness was allegedly most problematic for middleclass men who had not yet adapted to their own prosperity and thus suffered from an "evolutionary" need to store fat; aristocrats, by contrast, had evolved

personal imperative but also a duty of citizenship because the fit male body symbolized the well-managed life of the good citizen" (222-3). For midcentury writers, obesity connotes poor health and bad citizenship—gluttony, emasculation, and disqualification for military service.

Hardbodied Heroes and Imperial Training in *Scouting for Boys* (1908)

A central text in the rise of physical culturism narrated by Joanna Bourke and Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska, Sir Robert Baden-Powell's *Scouting for Boys* explicitly links patriotism and citizenship with masculine self-reliance. Practical skills reinforce a deeper ethics of chivalry and discipline. This foundational text of the Boy Scouts movement is informed by its author's love of hunting, the outdoors, and public school games, as well as by his experience serving in the British army. Baden-Powell's "somewhat inadvertent command of the small South African town of Mafeking" during an extended siege in the Anglo-Boer War "elevated [him] to the status of imperial symbol, lone hero of an empire under threat" (Boehmer xvii). Passionately imperialist, this *Handbook for Instruction in Good Citizenship* lays out clear guidelines for cultivating physical and mental fortitude while teaching boys how to hunt, gather, cook, and fend for themselves.

Baden-Powell's treatise articulates a colonialist and Christian ideal of English masculinity, crystallizing values and skills that inflect the thriller genre from Buchan to Bond. Both Buchan's and Baden-Powell's works were written during the same "period of wavering imperial self-confidence in Britain following the Pyrrhic victory of the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902), a war marked by setbacks, stalemates, and stasis" (Boehmer xii).

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over time and tended to live active, outdoor lifestyles, while working men's bodies stayed fit through manual labour (Zweiniger, *Managing* 216).

Both accordingly present models of English manhood for emulation, whether leading by

example or offering explicit guidelines for belief and behaviour. The overwhelming

success of *Scouting for Boys* derives at least in part from its pragmatic response to

"British national anxieties": "Where the failing strength of the nation was mirrored in the

alleged deterioration of the male physique at the time, a practical handbook that proposed

physical training as well as lessons in strategy could not but be a winner" (Boehmer

xii).[36] Baden-Powell's handbook combines literary and historical examples of "good

scouting" with explicit practical commentary on the knowledge to be gleaned from each

story, play, or poem, and emphasizes the interplay of games, make-believe, and practical

instruction in shaping "manly" men.

    Scouting for Boys offers detailed advice about when and how to eat, sleep, and

exercise (see fig. 6). Linking everyday behaviours with imperial strength and health, it

provides models for the scout in training through portraits of colonial officers, explorers,

and military men. A section on "How to Be Strong" advises young men to take part in

team sports and strength contests, and to sharpen the senses by avoiding smoking and

breathing as much fresh air as possible. Baden-Powell's dismissal of the "great deal of

nonsense in fashion in the way of bodily exercise" illustrates his pragmatic approach to

getting out and exploring rather than working out with the sole object of "mak[ing] huge

muscle [*sic*]" (187). Advice on strengthening heart and lungs, cleansing the blood, and

perspiring is supplemented with specific exercises—including "Kneading the Abdomen"

to encourage digestion and the "Regular daily 'rear,'" "to remove the remains of food and

dirt from the body" (188). The manual is rife with deliciously sweeping statements such

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[36] The cultural importance of both *Scouting for Boys* and the Boy Scout movement can hardly be
overstated; until after the Second World War, publishing numbers for the bestselling book "were exceeded
only by those of the Bible in the English-speaking world" (Boehmer xi n.1).

as the assertion that all "Scouts breathe through the nose, not through the mouth" (25).[37]

Baden-Powell's advice for keeping strong and fit reads like a modern cleanse diet, with

its insistence on removing vaguely conceived toxins through vigorous exercise.
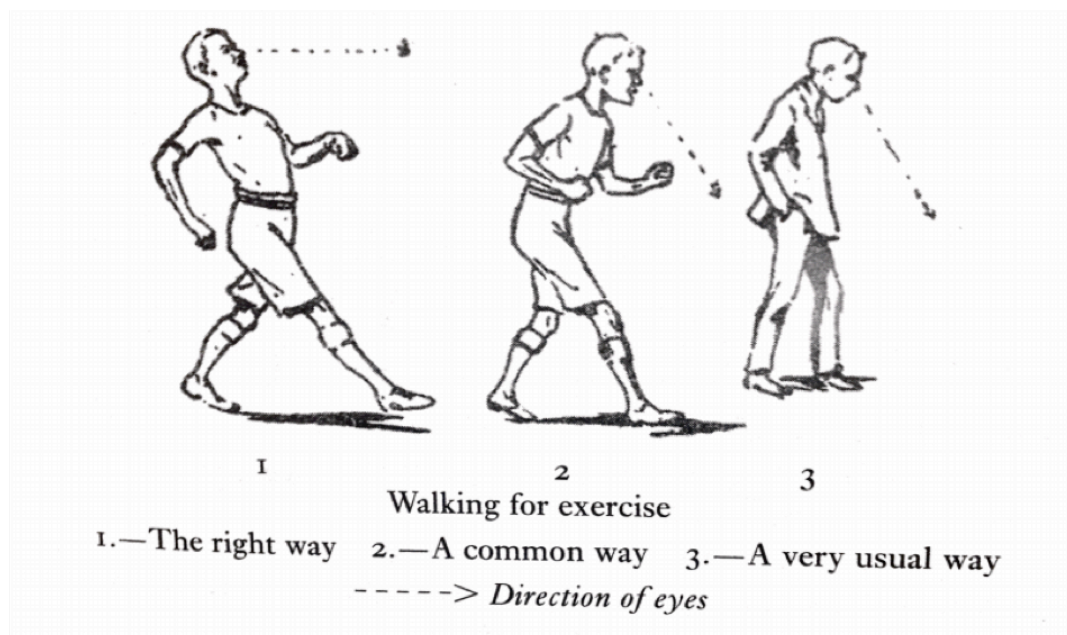
Figure 6: Walk like a man. "Walking for exercise," Robert Baden-Powell, *Scouting for Boys*.

Central to this vision of virile, hearty citizenship is the capacity to hunt and gather

food and facts. Scouts are taught to read their surroundings in tracking animals and

surveilling other men. Like Hannay in *The Thirty-Nine Steps*, Baden-Powell views

careful observation as essential to deciphering plot and character, whether through tracks

leading away from a crime scene or the foppish angle of a stranger's hat (68-9). Among

the many skills a young scout must therefore cultivate is a capacity for espionage: the

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[37] Baden-Powell further suggests that mouth breathers are not only uncouth and vulnerable to attack and infection, but also less skilled in olfactory navigation and tracking than their nose-breathing brothers; he therefore offers explicit guidelines for nose breathing as a means of minimizing germs, remaining hydrated, and evading enemy detection.

ability both to defend his territory from infiltration and to gather intelligence by infiltrating the territory of his enemies and prey. Guidelines for identifying and hunting men and animals are fleshed out with specific instructions and illustrations.
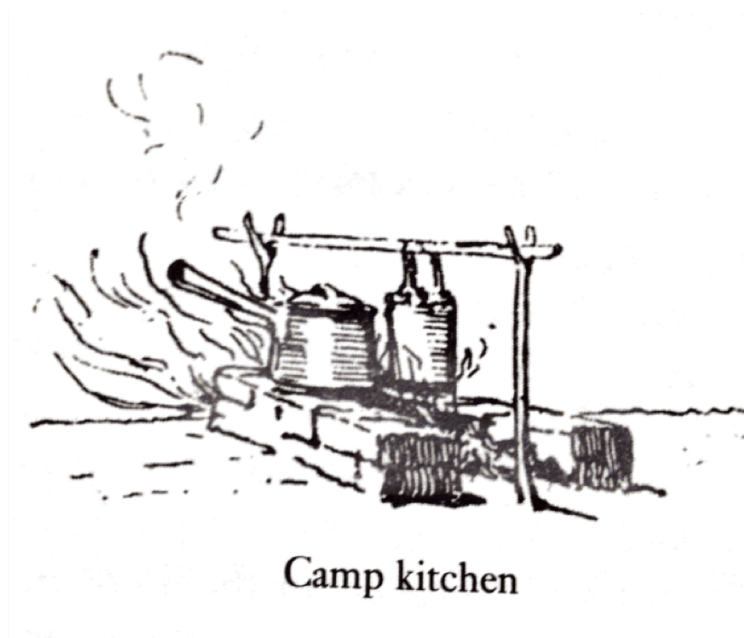
Camp kitchen

Figure 7: Camp kitchen diagram. Robert Baden-Powell, *Scouting for Boys*.

Noting that "Every scout must, of course, know how to cook his own meat and vegetables and to make bread for himself without regular cooking utensils" (145), Baden-Powell also includes a section on "Camp Cooking" in which he describes the inability to cook properly as a laughable offence (see fig. 7). This mini-cookbook includes diagrams and recipes for hunting, slaughtering, and preparing various beasts. He counters his assertion that "One of the best things in scouting is the hunting of big game" with an acknowledgement that no animal should be killed without good reason, whether the need for food or a threat to personal safety (104). Similarly, though *Scouting for Boys* contends that violence should never be employed for its own sake, its descriptions of bravery in warfare romanticize combat and bloodshed in service of one's country. The Boy Scout

motto, "BE PREPARED" (20), lends weight to children's games by suggesting ubiquitous danger. The book is both a military training manual and a lesson in delayed gratification for boys who wish to prove their mettle in active combat.

While a true Scout must know how to feed himself, Baden-Powell preaches discipline and restraint with regard to all appetites, not just alimentary ones. *Scouting for Boys* is obsessed with bodily control. Sir Robert's superstitious insistence on sleeping outdoors or near open windows parallels concerns about the degeneration of British manhood; the assertion that sleeping in a "soft bed and too many blankets make a boy dream bad dreams, which weaken him" (25) both implies a warning against the perils of masturbation, as Boehmer has observed (358 n.25), and suggests a larger concern with the coddling effects of modern comfort. An excised section on "Continence" counsels young men to avoid masturbation even more explicitly:

> The practice is called 'self-abuse.' And the result of self-abuse is always— mind you, *always*—that a boy after a time becomes weak and nervous and shy, he gets headaches and probably palpitation of the heart, and if he still carries it on too far he very often goes out of his mind and becomes an idiot. A very good number of the lunatics in our asylums have made themselves ill by indulging in this vice although at one time they were sensible cheery boys like any one of you. (351)

In Baden-Powell's formulation, indulgence in such pleasures triggers physical, mental, and social degeneration: weakness and nerves make for bad citizens and worse soldiers. To encourage self-regulation, he suggests avoiding triggers such as eating too much meat, sleeping on your back or under a warm blanket, or "listening to stories or reading or

thinking about dirty subjects"; he also counsels aspiring scouts to bathe their privates in cold water.[38] While the idea that fresh air will stop boys from masturbating seems questionable at best, its inclusion reflects Baden-Powell's larger obsession with physical fortitude as a prophylactic against moral weakness. *Scouting for Boys* evinces a eugenic fear of racial deterioration. If daily exercise prepares the individual for national service, indulgence in the pleasures of the flesh weakens the boys and men at the heart of the empire.

Regulating their behaviours in service of individual and national strength, scouts are encouraged to follow orders and be courteous while trusting their own commonsense. As Boehmer notes, "The disciplined, resourceful boy of *Scouting for Boys*, the linchpin of imperial success, the stay against imperial decline, is an idealized figure, a projection of adult needs. Although dutiful, he is at the same time self-contained and self-directed. He is fit and disciplined, yet playful, a free agent" (xxxi). The literary and historical heroes who flesh out Baden-Powell's strictures provide narrative examples of conduct and principle to counteract fears of imperial vulnerability.

Denouncing both the decadent, fastidious gentleman and the "working-class 'loafer,' weak-chested, slack-bodied, given to the excesses of smoking, drinking, and self-abuse" as "serious breach[es] in the nation's defence system" (Boehmer xxii), *Scouting for Boys* contends that citizens must defend the integrity of their borders through disciplined conduct and consumption. Baden-Powell's *Handbook for Good Citizenship* inculcates boys into patriotism, physical and mental health, and a sense of duty in preparation not only for "peaceful citizenship" (300), but also for imperial service

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[38] Baden-Powell blames what he views as a pervasive lack of sexual self-restraint among young British people for a range of social problems, including overpopulation, unemployment, and poverty (352).

and military defence. "With our rising generation brought up as good citizens," writes

Baden-Powell, "sensible of their responsibilities and duties in return for the benefits

which they enjoy in a good country, there would be no danger for the State; but without

manliness and good citizenship we are bound to fall" (301). With its recounting of

adventure stories from both literature and Baden-Powell's own Boer War experience,

Scouting for Boys encourages British children to write themselves into thriller narratives

of their own. One such thriller is *Rogue Male*.

Camp Cooking and Civilized Food Selection in Household's *Rogue Male* (1939)

Written in the late 1930s, *Rogue Male* is the second novel by Geoffrey

Household, an English banker and banana salesman-turned-intelligence officer and

novelist. Now a cult classic, the bestselling book was published just prior to the Second

World War, and was quickly included in a Services and Forces edition "as buck-up

reading for British troops in the early months of the [conflict]" (Macfarlane). Marketed as

a successor to the works of Childers and Buchan (Household wrote the foreword to the

1978 Penguin edition of Childers' *The Riddle of the Sands,* and cited both Robert Louis

Stevenson and Joseph Conrad among his influences), it inspired later writers from

Fleming to Frederick Forsyth, and was adapted for radio, television, and film.[39]

The novel tells the story of a sport-hunting landowner who sets out to track a

powerful European dictator. Having succeeded in sighting his quarry near the beginning

of the novel, the landowner is discovered by a guard, tortured, thrown off a cliff, and left

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[39] Though Household wrote several other novels and short story collections, *Rogue Male* is his best-known and most influential work. Adaptations include Fritz Lang's *Man Hunt* (1941), starring Walter Pidgeon, Joan Bennett, and George Sanders; *Rogue Male* (1977), a TV movie directed by Clive Donner and starring Peter O'Toole and Alastair Sim; and a 1951 episode of *Suspense*, an American radio program.

for dead. Once his captors realize he has survived the fall, the hunter becomes the hunted; the rest of the first-person chase narrative details his flight across what seem to be the Polish and English countrysides. *Rogue Male* names neither the dictator nor the narrator. In *Rogue Justice* (1982), however, a sequel published over 40 years later, Household identifies the narrator as Raymond Ingelram, and reveals Adolf Hitler as the target of his foiled assassination attempt.[40] Household's initial omission of names and nationalities may have been legally and politically pragmatic. Nonetheless, this refusal to name names has important implications for readers: the story as written is at once universal and allegorical, simultaneously rooted in an obvious historical and geographical context and deliberately distanced from that context. This lack of specificity emphasizes the deliberate blurring of fascism and communism in the text—the narrator notes, for instance, that the speech of one political fanatic "would have gone equally well in the mouth of his boss's opposite number" (165)[41]—and adds to its intrigue, laying a code for the savvy reader to decipher.

Before narrative conflict can be resolved, Ingelram must undergo a physical and mental transformation in order finally to "tak[e] on the mentality of war" (180); the novel is structured as a three-part journal that records this shift away from psychological passivity. Ingelram initially describes himself as simply "a sportsman who couldn't resist the temptation to stalk the impossible" (7). This attitude toward attempted murder is associated with a particularly English detachment; he claims to be dispassionate and

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[40] While the narrator of *Rogue Male* is nameless, I use the retroactively bestowed name for the sake of clarity and concision.

[41] This blurring of left and rightwing authoritarian politics offers a double endorsement of British democracy. Though Ingelram reveals his impatience with English politicians, he ultimately concludes that the British political system, in spite of its flaws, is more hospitable to individual freedom than the alternative, and thus worth defending against those who threaten its survival.

motivated by little besides curiosity and a desire to test his abilities. "Like most

Englishmen," he asserts, "I am not accustomed to enquire very deeply into motives" (15).

For a large part of the novel, Ingelram insists that he had never planned to take the fatal

shot, but only wished to see whether he could get into position. His denial of any

association between his actions as a private citizen and larger national and state interests

is belied by his behaviour throughout the novel. Only when he is forced to go to ground

does he begin to question his deeper philosophy and endgame. This line of inquiry

constitutes the central crisis of the novel.

Rogue Male builds on the tradition of aristocratic fitness exemplified by thrillers

such as Erskine Childer's The Riddle of the Sands (1903) and John Buchan's The Thirty-

Nine Steps (1915), in which the body of the upperclass imperial servant is treated as

naturally fitted to governance. Although less jingoistic than his literary predecessors,

Ingelram shares the inbred resourcefulness and self-assurance of Hannay and Davies.

Defending British democracy, the hero of Rogue Male rejects his enemy's assertion that

the British Empire is made up of "a corrupt bunch of moralizing luxury-lovers who could

only hold their frontiers by exploiting—and that inefficiently—the enormous wealth and

the suffering millions" in the colonies (165). Like Hannay, Ingelram is skilled in hunting,

foraging, and "woodcraft"; bored by modern urban life, he exemplifies the type of

masculinity identified by Baden-Powell and Buchan as essential to being a "true

Scout."[42] In Rogue Male, the extended period of captivity and contemplation in the novel

moves the protagonist from a symbiotic but complacent relationship with the land

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[42] Richard Hannay's invocation of the term *veldtcraft* to describe his activities as a fugitive in *The Thirty-Nine Steps*, for instance, yokes individual skill, resourcefulness, and heroism with the imperial project through its reference to the uncultivated grasslands of southern Africa. Hannay's plucky colonial soldier, more comfortable in the wilderness than in the city, embodies the same imperialist anxiety that shapes Baden-Powell's text.

towards a rootless and ruthless vision of international engagement. Ingelram's capacity to

live off the land, including the self-regulation of consumption that marks him as a good

citizen, identifies him as both civilized and capable of decisive action in uncivil

circumstances.

Ingelram's boredom reveals the inborn virility of the imperial officer as unsuited

to the ease of modern life.[43] Even his captors seem capable of imagining "that a bored

and wealthy Englishman who had hunted all commoner game might well find a perverse

pleasure in hunting the biggest game on earth" (7-8). Like other amateur heroes, Ingelram

looses his pent-up hunting instincts in service of king and country, and reveals a hearty

sporting instinct seemingly characteristic of the English gentry in peacetime. Nancy

Mitford's *The Pursuit of Love* (1949) echoes this same fighting spirit in Uncle Matthew's

"child hunts." Both Mitford and Household hint that English sportsmen have become so

superfluous by midcentury that hunting human beings—whether for comic purposes, as

in Mitford, or without planning to pull the trigger, as in Household—becomes a viable

option. The hunting of children and dictators reflects a seemingly redundant imperial

spirit that is rehabilitated by the approach of war. The necessity of defending democracy

against the encroachment of fascism reinvigorates British military imperialism, rejected

after the First World War, by reorienting it in service of a greater global good.

Ingelram's ostensibly personal quest is motivated by a similar sense of public

injustice. Roger Bromley compares *Rogue Male*'s literary reflection of the political crises

of the 1930s to a wider tendency in popular fiction. Like Daphne Du Maurier's *Rebecca*

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[43] Urban boredom is a key opening trope in twentieth-century thrillers. Just as Ingelram feels trapped in his London flat following a stint in the colonies, Bond's anxiety about the softness of modern British life flares up when—like Childers' Carruthers and Buchan's Hannay—he is forced to remain in London awaiting his next assignment. In this context, a life-threatening embroilment in international intrigue is a welcome distraction from the cushy boredom of the modern city.

(1938), *Rogue Male* "seem[s] to raise and explore, at [its] deep structural level, the nature

of crisis in the period":

> as is the nature of popular fiction, the crisis is articulated exclusively in
>
> personalized terms: the central male figure is a member of the landed
>
> gentry; the basic determinant of [his] social class being signalled … by a
>
> set of signs which denote a whole style of life, and a set of cultural
>
> practices and attitudes by means of which, in terms of deference and
>
> recognition, wealth is very much secondary to birth and breeding.
>
> (Bromley 152)

This focus on the personal as metonymic of larger social, economic, political, and

cultural concerns plays out in narrative details. Ingelram's dialogues with "Major Quive-

Smith" (the pseudonymous persona of the enemy agent in charge of neutralizing

Ingelram), conducted through the air vent as he lies trapped in his underground burrow,

articulate international conflicts as a man-to-man debate. Ingelram finally acknowledges

that his motive is partly political: he wants to avenge the execution of his former lover for

"Reasons of State," and by extension punish a government that is willing to "crush"

individuals in order to preserve its power (146). His love for a woman neatly extends into

a larger love of freedom—from violence and from ideological control. The novel

concludes that the personal sacrifices required to sustain and defend democracy are far

preferable to those required under totalitarianism. The central metaphor of the rogue

male—the cunning and ferocious solitary beast, which becomes vicious when threatened

(3)—suggests a larger sense that strong individuals determine history.[44] Through this

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[44] According to Michael Barber, "Household was a passionate believer in European civilization, and
blamed Hitler personally for perverting it. 'The man had to be dealt with, and I began to think how much I

single heroic action, the narrator feels himself capable of shifting the course of global events.

Building on this focus on the personal and concrete, *Rogue Male* abounds with the accumulation of detail that typifies genre fiction in general and the spy narrative in particular. Ingelram itemizes his resources and minutely records the process of stocking and restocking. The novel chronicles fugitive life with close textual attention to facts and menus: "After breakfast of blackberries, [Ingelram strikes] north along the watershed" (98); he later eats "a tremendous breakfast of beef and oatmeal" before setting "aside [his] town suit to be made into bags and lashings" (103). Such processes add both realism and pleasurable detail. The reader is invited to partake in the simple but well-earned meal of the forager, and taught to read food as preparation for action: first breakfast, then business.

Similarly, the narrator suggests delight in his own expertise through detailed descriptions of evasive maneuvers. He builds a false nest to draw suspicion away from his actual den, and disguises the rotting remains of other animals' meals as his own leftovers:

> I distributed widely and messily the corpse of a rabbit that was polluting the atmosphere a little way up the valley. I fouled and trampled the interior of the cottage, stripped the apple-tree, and strewed apple-cores and nutshells over the ground. A pile of feathers from a wood pigeon provided further evidence of my diet. Plucking the ancient remains of a hawk's dinner was the nastiest job of all. (100)

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would like to kill him' (*The Times*, 7 Oct. 1988)." Throughout the novel, Household seems to hold with Thomas Carlyle's theory, laid out in *On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History* (1840), that "The History of the World" is "the Biography of Great Men."

Ingelram views culinary literacy as a key aspect of intelligence: his friend at Scotland Yard is the only detective insightful enough to distinguish between a hawk's dinner and a man's. The narrator similarly outsmarts the authorities by using literal red herrings to throw police dogs off his trail.

Ingelram's food selection relies on a hunter-gatherer-consumer model indicative of both versatility and refinement. His access to processed foods from the markets of the neighbouring town is supplemented by the bounty of nuts and fruits gleaned from the surrounding country:

> My dry and tinned food is sufficient, for I have been living largely on the country. There are cob-nuts, sloes, and blackberries at my door, and from time to time I extract a bowl of milk from a red cow; she has a great liking for salt, and can be tempted to stand quietly among the domes and ramps of blackberry bush that flank the eastern hedge. My catapult keeps me supplied with the rabbits I want. … But I have a distaste for the whole business. I have to compel myself to shoot a rabbit in these days. After all, it is perfectly justifiable to kill for food. (87)

Like the trout voluntarily leaping from stream to plate in Ben Jonson's "To Penshurst," even the salt-loving cow seems to offer up her bounty to the rightful milkman.[45] This sense of entitlement to the bounty of nature extends to hunting small game for food, though in the aftermath of his capture, the narrator shies away even from the "perfectly

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[45] The narrator's comfort with drawing on the land around him for sustenance extends from agricultural rights to his interactions with other people. Throughout the novel, Ingelram uses his financial and cultural capital to extract resources from his social inferiors. The helpfulness of those around him is attributed not merely to his discernment in selecting people to approach, but to his position as a member of "Class X." Mr. Vaner, the First Officer who shows him where to hide on board the ship, is impressed by his passport and willing to join in the adventure: he provides Ingelram with not only a safe place to stay, but also whiskey, crackers, a pork chop, and dark glasses. Hannay similarly leverages his social and financial capital to trade outfits with a road worker in *The Thirty-Nine Steps*.

justifiable" violence necessary for sustenance hunting and focuses instead on fruits, legumes, and bully beef, reminiscent of the subsistence rations eaten by active soldiers. There is nonetheless a sense of shame inherent in his acknowledgement of his own "distaste" for killing; he associates his reluctance to kill with a fastidiousness that the narrative implies must ultimately be overcome, whether through self-discipline—the pragmatic compulsion to shoot mentioned above—or through the more complete philosophical transformation undergone as a result of debates with his adversary.

Only later does Ingelram become capable of the type of premeditated violence necessary to fashion the bone-and-tendon remains of his cat companion, Asmodeus, into a lethal crossbow-like weapon suitable for killing his captor. To Ingelram, Quive-Smith's murder of Asmodeus constitutes a war crime. The narrator accepts the farmer Patachon's theoretical right to attempt to kill "the old poacher," and acknowledges that even his own near-death at Quive-Smith's hands adheres to the terms of engagement. Nevertheless, he insists, "by shooting Asmodeus, Quive-Smith condemned himself to death… It released me" (161). This act of unprovoked, unjustifiable violence suggests a pleasure in killing for its own sake, and moves beyond the scope of honourable combat. Quive-Smith fails to live up to Baden-Powell's stricture, in *Scouting for Boys*, that a true warrior must not kill except for food or protection.

Ingelram's self-discipline encompasses both alimentary and amorous appetites. Just as he is able to control his consumption of food, purchasing or harvesting only what he needs to sustain himself, Ingelram boasts of his capacity to regulate his sexual appetites: "For me," he writes, "sex has never been a problem. Like most normal people, I have been able to suppress my desires without difficulty. When there was no need to

suppress them, my appreciation has been keen, but my emotions have not been too deeply involved" (88). While he attributes the same restraint to "most normal people," this passage reflects the moralistic and didactic tone that runs through the narrative as a whole. When giving chase to the police, for instance, Ingelram marvels at his own fitness, in a passage that might have been drawn straight from *Scouting for Boys*: "I was magnificently fit as a result of my life in the open and the brisk autumn air. I remember how easily my muscles answered the call I made on them. By God, in all this immobility and carrion thought it does me good to think of the man I was!" (94). This self-congratulatory masculinity echoes Baden-Powell's descriptions of his own development. Through repeated insistence on his own adherence to "normal" codes of morality and conduct, Household generates a memoir that, like *Scouting for Boys*, is at once a conduct guide for normative English masculinity and citizenship and an assertion of his own inherent superiority. Unlike the narrator, who savours his meals and eats heartily but reasonably, the six children of Patachon and his wife "have expensive tastes," with implications of greed and excess: he "judge[s] the kids by the fact that they suck sweets at the same time as eating blackberries" (120). In spite of has vast financial resources, Ingelram is practical and takes only what he needs. This restraint extends to his giving up his own land—from which he does not derive a profit—and instituting a farmers' cooperative.

A similar gentlemanly restraint guides the prose. The narrative, omitting details of Ingelram's torture at the hands of his captors, refers only to "the really obscene method of dragging the truth out of me" proposed by one of his interrogators (13). "Obscene" suggests not cowardice or pain, but rather a sense that to engage in torture is indecent and

morally repugnant in its attention to detail. In Fleming's *Casino Royale*, by contrast, the narrator dwells with relish on Le Chiffre's extended beating of Bond. This deliberate omission in Household's work signals the larger thematizing of self-discipline and delayed gratification in the novel. Like Bond and Hannay, Ingelram is not inherently ascetic, but he is willing to sacrifice his physical comfort in order to achieve a higher aim—in service of the state.

The process of food selection and consumption is fundamentally tied up with questions of personal agency and freedom. Trapped in his "den," Ingelram reflects on the "unbearable" lives of "those men and women—cases faintly parallel to mine—who live in one room and eat poorly and lie in bed, since their incomes are too small for any marked activity" (127-8). In spite of relative food security, the narrator of *Rogue Male* is forced to endure alimentary monotony and repetition: he has "plenty of food," but cannot risk cooking, so relies instead on "a large store of nuts and most of the tinned meat and groceries that I brought back from my last trips to Beaminster" (127). His unglamorous collection of preserved foods recalls Davies' stores on board the Dulcibella in *The Riddle of the Sands* as well as Hannay's stash of ginger biscuits in *The Thirty-Nine Steps*: all three stalwart heroes adapt their tastes to the humble yet adequate sustenance available.

While access to sufficient food is a basic human right,[46] the capacity to control its selection, preparation, and consumption is also fundamental to personal and national identities. Food is one means by which individuals mediate their relationship to the state:

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[46] Adequate food is cited among other essential needs in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948): "Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control" (United Nations, Article 25.1). Like most legislation, however, the *UDHR* is an aspirational text; as Hannah Arendt argues in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, human rights are not, in fact, inalienable from civil rights. The provision of adequate living standards is therefore both the responsibility of the state and contingent on legal citizenship.

foodways are central to citizenship. While locked in the burrow in which "Even time has stopped, for I have no space" (128), Raymond loses his sense of self. He describes his experience in disjointed, symbolic terms:

> At present I exist only in my own time, as one does in a nightmare, forcing myself to a fanaticism of endurance. Without a God, without a love, without a hate—yet a fanatic! An embodiment of that myth of foreigners, the English gentleman, the gentle Englishman. I will not kill; to hide I am ashamed. So I endure without object. (128-9)

Cut off from life, Ingelram begins to question not merely his loyalties, but his existence. Without access to the outside world, life is meaningless; individual moments are undifferentiated. Perfunctory meals serve to mark time, but his expenditure of calories is so small that the narrator lacks even the pleasure of satiating real hunger. This burrow sequence parallels the opening of the novel, in which the narrator is introduced in a reduced state; following his capture, torture, and near-murder, his body is so broken and traumatized that his only thoughts are of survival. When he finally wakes "feeling clear-headed and ravenously hungry" for the first time in days, consumption marks his return from pure animal instinct to humanity. His transformation into a self-aware citizen-patriot is inseparable from his re-cultivation of civilized appetites.

In his acknowledgement of the importance of maintaining control over one's food choices, Household's narrator echoes the Ministry of Food's assertion that wartime access to traditional and preferred foods was crucial to national morale. When Ingelram considers that most low-income lives "would be unbearable were it not for their hopes of good luck and fear of bad" (127), he underscores the same psychological need for variety

and control at work in the food selection process—the removal of which Elizabeth Bowen calls a key frustration of life in wartime.[47] The dearth of options is portrayed as a social evil.

Ministry of Food policy was predicated on the recognition that delight in food selection is a key element of identity. One of the reasons for the popularity of points rationing—introduced as American Lend-Lease foods started trickling into Britain—was that it allowed for a degree of discrimination and control that had been lacking with straight rations. Lord Woolton even condescendingly suggested that it would give women pleasure to return to "shopping" rather than simply "collecting the rations" (Collingham 366). While the Ministry of Food sought to minimize reliance on imports—and cut out "luxury" items such as nuts and fresh fruit while encouraging the consumption of domestically grown foods—they nonetheless vied for shipping space for the red meat and wheat considered essential to the traditional British diet, even if that meat now came in the form of tinned sausage instead of fresh beef.[48]

Just as the importation of foreign foods constituted a danger to British shipping networks, wartime writers portray public meals and food shopping as potentially threatening. Restaurant meals contain the possibility of encounter. In *Rogue Male*, the

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[47] Describing the link between material goods and identity in the preface to her short story collection *The Demon Lover* (1945), Bowen observes of wartime shortages: "You used to know what you were like from the things you liked, and chose. Now there was not what you liked, and you did not choose" (*Mulberry* 97).

[48] Negotiations for Allied shipping space were determined in large part by the Combined Shipping Adjustments Board, a joint initiative between the USA and Britain that divvied up shipping allotments for everything from meat to munitions. In Washington meetings, British officials worried about the effect of food shortages on morale (particularly for items such as meat and sugar) jockeyed for hull space with American officials, who were often suspicious about the seemingly astronomical amounts of food being demanded by the British government. Given the vulnerability of all shipments to U-boat attacks (particularly before the cracking of the Enigma code allowed Allied forces to locate and target German watercraft), such negotiations constituted a real strain on Anglo-American relations: "in the committee rooms of the Shipping Board […] the war […] was mirrored by British and American officials who battled for access to shipping space. In this struggle, the competing claims of American and British civilians for food jostled with those of Allied troops and Britain's colonial subjects" (Collingham 85).

narrator's comfort within the rural landscape that feeds him contrasts with his discomfort in places like the "obscure roadside tavern" where he stops for dinner (37). His shopping trips to Beaminster turn out to be his undoing because they allow the local police to triangulate his approximate location. While Ingelram does not need to go to Beaminster for supplies, as he can conceivably provide for himself through hunting and gathering, he wants to maintain a certain degree of civilization and tradition by eating the foods he enjoys and to which he is accustomed. Like the import-reliant Britain during the Second World War,[49] Ingelram is rendered vulnerable by his taste for prepared goods. This drive to partake in specific patterns of commercial consumption—to shop for food—is hazardous in the context of international conflict.

Midcentury works proliferate with dangerous mealtimes. Like Ingelram, characters in thrillers are often swept into conflicts through their acceptance of shared meals. In Graham Greene's *The Ministry of Fear*, Arthur Rowe accidentally wins a cake containing blueprints intended for an espionage plot; his desire for the cake is based on its incorporation of authentic eggs and butter at a moment when ersatz ingredients were standard. In Eric Ambler's *Background to Danger*, Arthur Kenton is embroiled in a communist resistance after sharing a meal with a fellow traveller. Left destitute after a losing game of dice, Kenton is too hungry not to accept his compartment-mate's offer of bread and sausage; the mysterious traveller thus lures Kenton into a conversation that results in his unwitting stewardship of top-secret documents. In both cases, alimentary cravings cause otherwise isolated individuals to engage with people around them—

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[49] And also like Asmodeus, who is lured into "friendship" with Ingelram through the promise of readily available meat; Household hints at this parallel with Ingelram's situation when he notes that cats do not rely on people for food—which they can hunt themselves—but for entertainment, and for the pleasures of high-protein rations such as tinned beef.

people who turn out to have ulterior motives. Similarly, characters already on the run

must venture into public in order to eat, as when the narrator of *Rogue Male* risks

exposure to enjoy a hot meal in a waterfront inn. Even professional secret agents like

James Bond must carefully monitor their behaviour in public dining rooms, to ensure

they blend in seamlessly while maintaining alertness. Crises often occur at mealtimes: in

Casino Royale, Vesper Lynd disappears from the dining room of the Hotel Splendide; in

Live and Let Die, a table at Mr. Big's nightclub sinks into the ground and traps Bond and

Felix Leiter in an underground lair. Eating in public renders people vulnerable. But

ultimately, Household suggests, some risks—and shots—are worth taking.

James Bond, Insatiable Patriot

While the prewar narrator of *Rogue Male* depends upon his own resources to eat

hyperlocally, many postwar works often reject the wartime emphasis on plain English

food in abundance by reveling in luxurious foreign foods. In Ian Fleming's James Bond

series, the iconic spy represents a specifically post-austerity vision of cosmopolitanism

and hard-earned decadence. Bond's immense and varied appetite indicates his physical

strength and virility as well as the ongoing importance of Britain as a world power.

Bond's heroism is rooted in his access to and appetite for abundant, epicurean meals.

Like Raymond Ingelram, he feeds himself in order to prepare for battle.

James Bond is mythically voracious; his eating habits generate strength and

signify sophistication. Though the film adaptations rarely offer more than alcoholic

sustenance, Bond eats substantially, frequently, and fastidiously. Like his sexual appetites,

Bond's appetites for food and drink seem boundless. Yet just as he *usually* relegates sex

to leisure time, Bond regulates his consumption. As an agent of the state, his success is contingent on this balancing act between feast and famine. Sensual pleasures are tempered with the grueling physical and emotional labour of combat and espionage, a kind of fantasy-fulfillment for civilians subject to rationing both during and after the war. Eating also demonstrates expertise: Bond's knowledge of the symbolic resonances and nutritional values of specific dishes help him to serve and defend his nation; his skillfulness also implies sexual prowess. As Special Agent 007, Bond fuels himself physically—eating to prepare himself for battle—and is socially and politically strategic in his meal selection. Although he dines and collaborates with American and French agents, Bond is marked as superior by his taste and instincts as well as his insatiability. While in later Bond works the superiority of MI6 is called into question (Biddulph 132), early novels such as *Casino Royale*, *Live and Let Die*, and *Moonraker* insist on the continued validity of the fighting British body. In the context of postwar austerity and rising Cold War tensions, Bond's access to luxury and abundance marks the ongoing importance of the British government as a key player on the world stage.

    Live and Let Die (1954), the second instalment in the James Bond series, opens with Bond's arrival at New York's Idlewild Airport (rededicated as John F. Kennedy International in December 1963). Before describing the specifics of Bond's royal treatment by American agents—he is fast-tracked through the "notorious purgatory" of US Customs queues (1)—the narrator offers a general meditation on the perquisites of being a spy:

        There are moments of great luxury in the life of a secret agent. There are

        assignments on which he is required to act the part of a very rich man;

occasions when he takes refuge in good living to efface the memory of

danger and the shadow of death; and times when, as is now the case, he is

a guest in the territory of an allied Secret Service. (1)

This passage identifies several key aspects of James Bond's lifestyle. First, he frequently

"acts the part" of a man with access to luxurious foods, and as such must appear well-

educated and discerning with regard to gastronomy and oenology; second, he uses food

as a means of escaping from or rewarding himself for dangerous work in service of his

nation; and third, he not only draws on expert knowledge of local foods and cultures in

order to avoid detection, but also relies on the resources of other agents and nations in

order to sustain the illusion of gourmet abundance. Even the identification of New York

customs as "notorious" assumes a degree of cultural knowledge indicative of

sophistication and adeptness at navigating a variety of international contexts.

In his capacity as a secret agent, Bond has access to national resources in a way

that hyperbolically mirrors the welfare state. In spite of his expertise, James Bond is "an

impostor in the world of fine living" (Chancellor 87). The secret agent's "connoisseurship

of fine food and fine wines is entirely courtesy of the secret service, whose deep pockets

have provided him with tastes far beyond the reach of his own salary": as "an expense

account gourmet," Bond dines as a representative of the British Empire (Chancellor 86).

Unlike the independently wealthy amateur sleuths in Buchan, Childers, and Household,

Bond is a professional spy whose ability to feed himself well is dependent on the

generosity of the state. While other Britons have access to a safety net predicated on

subsistence models for living, Bond wallows in fine foods and luxurious

accommodations. As the British Empire was levelling down in the 1950s, redistributing

the borrowed wealth of colonies and Lend-Lease in service of a more democratic vision,

Bond retains a uniquely privileged position in service of protecting that empire and its

more modestly fed inhabitants.

Bond's consumption habits are shaped in part by this ambassadorial role. Like the

strategic dinner parties held by foreign diplomats, Bond's public meals allow him to

gather information and foster relationships; they also facilitate the nationalistic

performance of taste and prosperity.[50] Edward Biddulph calls Fleming's generous

depiction of British resources a "patriotic duty" in the era of Soviet expansion and

America's ascension to superpower status: far from taunting the deprived diners of ration-

era Britain, 007's indulgent eating habits enact a fantasy of British power and abundance

in the postwar period (Biddulph 132). Fleming aligns with foreign diplomats as well as

Winston Churchill, who relied on dinner parties to develop relationships and advance

domestic and foreign policy throughout his career.[51]

In addition to his unfettered access to the British Treasury, Bond is provided with

financial and personnel resources through the American Central Intelligence Agency

(CIA) and the French Deuxième Bureau. These international cooperation and relief

efforts are predicated on British leadership; as Felix Leiter tells the Anglo-Scottish Bond,

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[50] Molly M. Wood explains how dinner parties and entertainment played a crucial role in the lives of US Foreign Service diplomats and their wives in the first half of the 20th century. See Wood, "Diplomatic Wives" and "A Diplomat's Wife in Mexico."

[51] Winston Churchill's massive appetites for food, alcohol, and cigars are well documented by biographers. Yet he also frequently conducted political business over sumptuous dinners, believing that more could be accomplished over a meal than in a meeting. Though some critical accounts note that, unlike the royal family, Churchill himself was exempt from rationing (Minns 86), Cita Stelzer avers that Churchill adhered to rationing regulations during the war. Archival records show that he scrupulously requested extra food coupons for diplomatic dinners, a process generating so much extra work for the Ministry of Food that a special dispensation was granted: a weekly allowance of supplementary coupons was forwarded to the prime minister's cook based on estimates from the preceding weeks (a model similar to that used for restaurants). Unused ration coupons were returned to the Ministry. Churchill was nevertheless happy to accept gifts of food from friends and world leaders. As a result, he rarely went without gourmet foods or scarce luxuries, including the fine alcohols and cigars that were unavailable to the majority of the population. See Stelzer, *Dinner with Churchill*, Ch. 13.

"I'm under your orders and I'm to give you any help you ask for" (*Casino* 45).[52] When

James is "beaten and cleaned out" during his baccarat game with Le Chiffre, Leiter steps

in with additional funds from the US treasury. The note pinned to the fat cashier's

envelope reads "Marshall Aid. Thirty-two million francs. With the compliments of the

USA" (77). In spite of the global imbalance of power and wealth following the Second

World War, Bond is consistently portrayed as the strongest and best spy. This gap

between means and capability is highlighted in the relationship between Bond and Leiter,

who team up in both *Casino Royale* and *Live and Let Die*. While the American offers

material support, he does so in the knowledge that only Bond knows how to put it to use:

Leiter may have the money, but Bond is the one sitting across the baccarat table from Le

Chiffre. Kingsley Amis summarizes the significance of this personal and professional

dynamic:

> The point of Felix Leiter, such a nonentity as a piece of characterization, is
>
> that he, the American, takes orders from Bond, the Britisher, and that
>
> Bond is constantly doing better than he, showing himself, not braver or
>
> more devoted, but smarter, wittier, tougher, more resourceful, the
>
> incarnation of little old England with her quiet ways and shoestring budget
>
> wiping the eye of great big global-tentacled multi-billion-dollar-
>
> appropriating America. (90)

Chapman notes that the Anglo-American dynamic—smoothed into an equal partnership

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[52] Although as James Chapman points out in "Bond and Britishness," Bond is "not strictly English"—*You Only Live Twice* (1964) reveals his parentage as Scottish and Swiss—Bond's Scottishness is only mentioned in books written *after* Sean Connery's appearance as Bond in *Dr. No* (1962), though book Bond acknowledges as early as *Moonraker* that "that there [is] something alien and un-English about himself" (32). Fleming initially pictured Bond as a "young David Niven" (Lycett 393), which is to say an Englishman (Chapman, "Bond" 142 n.4). This fluidity of national identity, along with Bond's assertion that he never feels fully at home within England, suggests a pan-imperial patriotic identity that makes him even more useful as a representative of Britain.

in the films—represents a "quaint reversal" of the real balance of power during the Cold War. While the early Bond novels depict Britain as "on equal terms economically and politically with the United States," Bond's confidence in British superiority decreases over the series (Biddulph 132). Yet as the primary representative of US interests in the early Bond novels, Leiter is vastly superior to the kind of naively idealistic American officer depicted in other British works, such as Alden Pyle in Graham Greene's *The Quiet American* (1956); the confidence, generosity, and good humour that he exhibits in his relationship with Bond paints an unrealistically rosy picture of postwar Anglo-American cooperation in light of the special relation between the countries in the postwar and Cold War periods. Even after being discharged as a full-time CIA agent, Leiter continues to be a useful ally to Bond in several subsequent novels, both as a private detective and as an occasional CIA operative.[53] Bond's fluid movement across borders, coupled with his knowledge of regional cuisines and customs, grants him access to gourmet delicacies from around the world. His eating habits signal a move away from the enforced locavorism of the Second World War and toward the increasingly globalized model of food and industry. In his tastes and discernment, Bond represents a new global consumer.

Bond's pragmatic patriotism is crucial to Fleming's oeuvre. In *Casino Royale*, Bond questions the importance of nationalism at length, but seemingly only in order to dismiss those questions and move onto the business of killing on behalf of queen and country. Bond acknowledges and overcomes skepticism about the possibility of distinguishing between good and evil in the first novel. His sense that "[h]istory is moving pretty quickly these days and the heroes and villains keep on changing parts"

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[53] Leiter appears in *Diamonds are Forever* (1956), *Goldfinger* (1959), *Thunderball* (1961), and *The Man with the Golden Gun* (1965).

(132) gives way to a more practical approach; as Mathis puts it, the secret of "knowing

good men from bad men and villains from heroes, and so forth… lies in personal

experience" (134): Bond swiftly moves from abstract philosophical questions about the

nature of evil to the concrete summation of Vesper's demise in the final line of the book:

"The bitch is dead now" (178).

In a scathing contemporary review of *Dr. No*, Paul Johnson rails against what he

calls the "three basic ingredients" of the Bond stories, "all unhealthy, all thoroughly

English: the sadism of a school boy bully, the mechanical two-dimensional sex-longings

of a frustrated adolescent, and the crude, snob-cravings of a suburban adult." Attributing

the success of the Bond books to their aspirational appeal in the grim postwar period,

Johnson reads their serialization in the *Daily Express* as indicative of that newspaper's

"task of bringing glamour and sophistication to the masses." "Our curious post-war

society," he writes, "with its obsessive interest in debutantes, its cult of U and non-U,[54]

its working-class graduates educated into snobbery by the welfare state, is a soft market

for Mr. Fleming's poison" (*New Statesman*, 5 April 1958). Johnson's disgust signals a

rejection both of Fleming's "sex, snobbery and sadism" and of the apparent crudity with

which these elements are expressed; he views the novels as potentially harmful to readers

who fail to discern their tongue-in-cheek quality. Johnson's critique acknowledges a

postwar moment in which the wealth and properties of the upper classes seemed tenuous

in light of postwar taxation, while increased employment and wealth among the middle

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[54] In the 1956 collection *Noblesse Oblige,* English linguist Alan S. C. Ross's essay "U and Non-U"
introduces a distinction between the languages of Upper and Non-Upper class members of English society.
The same volume includes Nancy Mitford's tongue-in-cheek list of several comparative examples. For
instance: "*Cycle* is non-U against U *bike*. *Dinner*: U-speakers eat *luncheon* in the middle of the day and
dinner in the evening. Non-U speakers (also U-children and U-dogs) have their *dinner* in the middle of the
day" (27).

classes gave rise to upward mobility and aspirational fascinations with the trappings of upperclass society. In Johnson's reading, Bond is not merely snobbish, but pretentious.

While James Bond's varied menus were not immediately possible for 1950s Britons, his access to gastronomical delights from around the world would certainly have been desirable for many readers. They fall in line with a postwar culinary imagination thinking beyond the domestic, local ingredients and recipes necessitated by wartime shortages and controls. Drawing on Ann Fleming's letters asserting that her husband enjoyed "a high standard of cooking" and "a variety of menu" while travelling through Europe and Jamaica in the early 1950s (Amory 137), Biddulph argues that "Rationing was an ugly reality that Fleming chose to ignore, which in any case made no impact on his lifestyle" (though it is hard to imagine how one would be wholly immune to food shortages while travelling through Europe in the 1950s). Reflecting the kind of culinary escapism exemplified by Elizabeth David's *A Book of Mediterranean Food*, many of Bond's meals "prefigure subsequent gastronomic trends" in their incorporation of foreign and hard-to-get ingredients (Biddulph 133). While food rationing was still partly in place when *Casino Royale* was published, postwar cookbooks began to move away from "patriotic" and practical wartime cookery (Humble, *Culinary*). From the 1950s on, status rather than nationalism was coming into play at the dinner table. As late as 1957, Fleming acknowledged that "the sophistication of the background and detail" in the Bond novels "would be outside [many readers'] experience and in part incomprehensible" (qtd in Pearson 299). "If Bond's exotic destinations turned Fleming's readers into armchair tourists," as Biddulph puts it, "then descriptions of the food and wine gave them the language of the worldly gastronome" (133). Fleming's careful attention to specific foods,

wines, dishes, and brand names fits with the rise of aspirational dining and consumer culture in the postwar period.

Even as they invite readers to partake in luxurious and exotic upperclass worlds, Fleming's 007 novels reinforce class distinctions by positioning Bond and other characters as outsiders. In *Moonraker*, the dinner-jacketed members of M's gentlemen's club, Blades, are all "at ease with themselves and their surroundings, all stimulated by the peerless food and drink… the elegance of the room invested each one with a kind of aristocracy" (50). Hugo Drax, on the other hand, wears very expensive and tasteful clothes but still appears in Bond's expert estimation to be a "bullying, boorish, loud-mouthed vulgarian" (37). If Bond is "a conservative hero, a defender of the realm, a staunch patriot and […] an upholder of monarchy," he is nevertheless "emphatically not part of the comfortable clubland world of the upper classes" (Chapman, "Bond" 134). His professional status and caddish behaviour distinguish him from the amateur gentleman heroes of Buchan or Household. As Fleming makes clear in *Moonraker*, Bond is not the sort of man normally seen at Blades; he gets in as M's guest. Bond's tenuous class position recalls his own description of Drax's public persona. "The public have taken to him… They consider he's one of them, but a glorified version. A sort of superman… but more in their class" (15). Bond's seemingly "effortless gentility obscures his true status at the club," as Brian Patton argues—he is a secret agent serving the interests of a group of which he will never be a part.

Fleming thus strikes a contradictory balance of inclusivity and protectiveness. The novels may be read as reacting against welfare state reforms and the increased social and international mobility of the postwar period by indulging in conservative imperial

nostalgia similar to that expressed by Waugh in *Brideshead Revisited*. The narrator

lingers lovingly over descriptions of the Regency-era décor at Blades and carefully

distinguishes between its aristocratic members and the brash Drax (who of course turns

out to be an unreformed Nazi working for the Soviet Union). Fleming's novels invite the

reader to sympathize with social conservatism through the "deceptive normalization of…

supposedly gentlemanly values" (Patton 152) even as they grant the reader access to a

kind of imaginative classlessness. At the same time, Bond's access to the culinary

delights of this closed world implies a newly democratic consumer culture.

Bond adeptly assumes the role of the wealthy, patriotic English gentleman, and

navigates the complex world of class and culture in order to ensure the ongoing

supremacy and security of the British nation. At Blades, he matches M's capacity to order

off-menu and impresses the sommelier with his taste in champagne. His success is rooted

in this attention to detail—the extensive knowledge of local ingredients and cuisines, fine

wines, luxury vehicles, and brand names—which also forms part of the popular appeal of

the books.

Not a connoisseur of wine or gourmet foods himself, Fleming apparently left

blanks in his manuscripts, to be filled in with the appropriate dish or brand in consultation

with his editor, William Plomer (Chancellor 89); such precision was meant to be both

evocative and impressive, to "delight the reader's senses" ("How to Write a Thriller").

Bond's indulgence in rare delights allows readers to identify with out-of-reach but still

imaginable pleasures. Further, his highly specific cravings—he calls his love of

Taittinger "a fad of mine" and prefers smoked Highland salmon to the "desiccated"

Scandinavian version (*Moonraker* 45, 46)—constitute a form of class passing,

conspicuous consumption that demonstrates his qualifications for inclusion. Though

Bond claims that he's "not a gourmet" (*On Her Majesty's* 2), Elizabeth Hale identifies

the secret agent as:

> a superior consumer, one who is better placed than most to be discerning
>
> and discriminating in his judgment… a large part of Bond's appeal is his
>
> knowledge of quality brands coupled with an unostentatious lifestyle, both
>
> of which show him in control of his life and of his identity. His choice of
>
> [the] perfect breakfast egg [in *From Russia with Love*] reinforces his self-
>
> assurance and control (he has no need of more elaborate fare, but he won't
>
> brook second-best). With each novel, Bond's identity is reinforced through
>
> consumption (of food and other things). (87)

By demonstrating his command of cultural and culinary codes, Bond not only does what

every good spy must do—blend in—but also enacts a kind of controlled consumerism

typical of the 1950s. A highly mobile and adaptable character, James Bond is at once a

discerning individual and an exemplar of postwar abundance and conspicuous

consumption. Fleming's attention to specific dishes, wines, and brands captures the rise

of aspirational dining and midcentury consumer culture.

To read Fleming's novels more generously than Johnson's charge of snobbery

permits is to acknowledge the kinds of vicarious enjoyment permitted by what Umberto

Eco calls Fleming's "aimless glances" at seeming trivialities (173). Eco argues that the

pleasure inherent in formulaic genre fiction such as Fleming's derives precisely from this

enumeration of the details surrounding the unfolding of expected events. The Bond books

are dominated by game-like situations such as meals and journeys, the outcomes of which

are always pre-determined but which nevertheless permit infinite variations. In ordering dinner, "Bond decides the choice of foods as though they formed the pieces of a puzzle, prepares for the meal with the same scrupulous attention as that with which he prepares for a game of bridge… and he intends the meal as a play" (160). Fleming's tendency to expand on "inessential" descriptions of things like menus and cars while compressing important and improbable events into short passages of "feverish brevity" is a deliberate narrative strategy "designed to solicit our capacity for identification," writes Eco:

> Our credulity is solicited, blandished, directed to the region of possible
> and desirable things. Here the narration is realistic, the attention to detail
> intense; for the rest, so far as the unlikely is concerned, a few pages and an
> implicit wink of the eye suffice. No one has to believe them. (174-5).

Specificity generates interest. In the spy novel, however, narrative detail is more than a means of intriguing the upwardly mobile reader. Observation in espionage fiction constitutes both form and content. Bond's attunement to trivialities places him in a long line of literary spies: Davies in *The Riddle of the Sands*, Hannay in *The Thirty-Nine Steps*, and Ingelram in *Rogue Male* all decipher details of appearance and setting in order to survive and make sense of the world around them. As Baden-Powell suggests, good citizenship depends on close observation. Bond's dining preferences indicate aptitude and heroism. His exacting tastes parallel the painstaking security precautions that protect him—and the British Empire—from external threats. Upon re-entering his room at the Hotel Splendide, for instance, Bond meticulously checks a series of "minute burglar alarms" without feeling "foolish or self-conscious": "He was a secret agent, and still alive thanks to his exact attention to the detail of his profession. Routine precautions were to

him no more unreasonable than they would be to a deep-sea diver or test pilot, or to any man earning danger money" (*Casino* 6-7). In the face of danger, ritualistic behaviour and preparatory consumption suggest intelligence rather than fear or fastidiousness.

Bond's adaptability to conditions in the field reveals his attention to detail as heroic rather than hedonistic. Moments of epicurean luxury offer release from long bouts of restriction and danger. Bond eats pragmatically and tactically; like the cocktail of champagne and benzedrine that fuels reckless but alert gambling in *Casino Royale*, Bond's food and drink selection expedites the successful accomplishment of each mission (B. Baker 44). Brian Baker suggests that when the secret agent places an elaborate meal order in front of Vesper, his "connoisseurship is shaded by a troubling sense of emasculation and even of embarrassment" (39). If Bond smiles at his own "pretension," he nevertheless positions himself as a connoisseur of both food and drink, and justifies his fussiness:

> 'You must forgive me,' he [tells Vesper]. 'I take a ridiculous pleasure in
> what I eat and drink. It comes partly from being a bachelor, but mostly
> from a habit of taking a lot of trouble over details. It's very pernickety and
> old-maidish really, but then when I'm working I generally have to eat my
> meal alone and it makes them more interesting when one takes the
> trouble.' (*Casino* 53)

This preoccupation with details is crucial to his survival. Far from an emasculating moral weakness (though he jokes about being an "old maid") like the indulgences of characters in early invasion narratives, which render them unfit to defend against external threats, Bond's preferences suggest a heroic degree of discernment and precision.

As Mathis and other characters observe, Bond is a finely tuned machine—MI6's greatest weapon. His caloric intake is precisely calculated to fuel the physical and psychological demands of his position. Through an almost pathological examination of the seventy meals eaten by 007 over the course of the series, Edward Biddulph finds that "Bond's diet is nutritionally unbalanced when compared with recommended healthy-eating diets of the 1950s and modern times" and derives in great part from Fleming's own consumption habits (132). Yet his high-protein diet is in line with popular understandings of meat as an essential building block of working class masculinity, even as it departs from contemporary science.[55] Bond's consumption is efficient. Like a well-oiled machine, Bond consumes exactly what he needs in order to perform his patriotic duty.

The fortifying quality of food is emphasized by Bond's insistence on the importance of breakfast as the most essential meal of the day: "Breakfast is the fuel that prevents Bond from dying, but it is also the fuel that allows him to defeat death in the form of England's enemies. Breakfast gives the power to the weapon that England's masters dispatch to fight their battles" (Biddulph 138). Bond's obsession with scrambled eggs, though attributable to Fleming's ovophilia (Hale 84), reflects the status of eggs as a nutritional "superfood" in midcentury Britain (Biddulph 142). Elizabeth Hale notes that

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[55] The association of meat with masculinity made its allotment one of the most controversial elements of food distribution during and after the Second World War. Meat provision was one of the few areas of rationing about which people consistently complained, particularly those engaged in factory work and other manual labour; "dissatisfaction was greatest among men in heavy industry, 72 per cent of whom thought that their diet was generally inadequate, largely as a consequence of flat-rate rations [… which] made no allowance for differential energy requirements" (Zweiniger, *Austerity* 76). Even men consuming adequate diets in caloric terms felt that their nutritional needs were not being met due to a lack of animal protein in their diets. In spite of supplementary cheese rations and the institution of factory canteens as a means of providing access to off-ration meals, as well as numerous campaigns educating workers about alternative protein sources and dismantling gendered thinking about food, meat rations remained a sticking point both during and after the war.

Bond "eats eggs in every one of Ian Fleming's twelve Bond novels" (84).[56] In the short

story "007 in New York," Fleming provides a recipe for "Scrambled Eggs à la James

Bond," designed to feed "Four Individualists" (*Octopussy* 91). The author even had to go

back and "obligingly chang[e] all the menus" in the proofs of one of the Bond novels

when "a perceptive proofreader" at Jonathan Cape identified Bond's devotion to

scrambled eggs as a potential "security risk" for the secret agent (Chancellor 90).

Breakfast is usually the most balanced of Bond's meals, incorporating carbohydrates,

dairy, meat, and sometimes fruit; dinner, on the other hand, is a reward, an "affirmation

that Bond has survived to the end of another day" (Biddulph 138). At the same time,

Bond "like[s] to make a good breakfast" (*Casino* 22), and eats large quantities of specific

foods in order to prepare himself for the inevitable privations and dangers of his work.

Given that he lives under a perpetual death sentence, Bond's dishes are all potentially

"the final meals of a condemned man" (Biddulph 147). Bond is therefore careful to find

emotional fortification in private mealtimes. Gazing out over a Jamaican beach while

enjoying a breakfast of "red bananas, purple star-apples and tangerines, scrambled eggs

and bacon, [and] Blue Mountain coffee—the most delicious in the world," Bond thinks

"how lucky he was and what wonderful moments of consolation there were for the

darkness and danger of his profession" (*Live* 168). Such extensive, detailed descriptions

provide sustenance and pleasure for the reader as well.

       Food consumption reflects power dynamics, sometimes literally; the food chain

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[56] In "James Bond and the Art of Eating Eggs," Elizabeth Hale reads Bond's private eating habits as distinct from his public consumption to suggest that the secret agent's "food choices have a seeming simplicity and ordinariness that make him a sympathetic figure, allowing him to function almost as an everyman, albeit an Everyman with heroic abilities" (86). At the same time, she links Bond's fastidiousness about the preparation of the humble egg with what she terms a "quotidian elitism": the "bespoke egg" described in *From Russia with Love* is "part of an elegant, elite breakfast" that, when the novel was published, represented "a fantasy of recently unattainable pleasures" (86); in the wake of wartime shortages and powdered eggs, such an abundance of fresh eggs was indeed a fantasy.

metaphor that operates throughout the series is particularly cogent in *Live and Let Die*.

Mr. Big sprays blood and flesh onto the surface of the ocean around his Jamaican

headquarters: the resulting feeding frenzy is a remarkably efficient security system for his

bullion-smuggling operation. In his Florida warehouse, enemies are dropped into a shark

tank beneath the floor. The mangled Leiter is fished out of the water and delivered to

Bond with a note reading: "HE DISAGREED WITH SOMETHING THAT ATE HIM" (139). Before

heading out to avenge Leiter's near-death, Bond prepares for battle by eating "the biggest

steak, rare, with French fries, that he had ever seen… [drinking] a quarter of a pint of Old

Grandad [bourbon and having] two cups of very strong coffee. With all this under his belt

he felt more sanguine" (*Live* 143). By the end of the chapter, having consumed this

enormous American meal, Bond has secured his place in the food chain: he sends the

Robber to a bloody death in the shark tank, and later watches the enormously fat Mr. Big

die in a long, drawn-out scene in which he is reduced to a bobbing head screaming in

agony as sharks and barracudas tear him to pieces. Bond's consumption habits indicate

his aggressive masculinity and role within power hierarchies (Matheson). His acts of

devouring—of both women and food—align him with his villainous counterparts.

While Bond enjoys eating, however, his enjoyment is tempered by self-control: he

never overindulges. His adaptability allows him to compartmentalize work and pleasure

in a way that distinguishes him from the acquisitive villains out to serve their own private

interests, even as they act on behalf of SMERSH or some other nefarious organization.

Bond's initial dislike of Vesper Lynd derives from his sense that work and play should be

separate, with women falling firmly into the play category: "Women were for recreation,"

Bond reflects. "On a job, they got in the way and fogged things up with sex and hurt

feelings and all the emotional baggage they carried around" (*Casino* 27). Women, like

meals, are both extraneous and essential to the masculine spy novel. Unlike Bond, Le

Chiffre is rendered vulnerable by way of "his gross physical habits and predilections,"

identified in his MI6 file as "an Achilles heel of which we have been able to take

advantage from time to time" (9). His mistresses tell tales, while his unwise investment in

a brothel is motivated by his inability to resist the prospect of "unlimited women for his

personal use" (*Casino* 9). Whereas Bond enjoys beautiful women and luxurious meals at

appropriate intervals, Le Chiffre cannot control his appetites for prostitutes, benzedrine,

or gambling. His overconsumption makes him a liability to his employees.

The necessity of physical and psychological control reflects wider concerns about

postwar British masculinities. James Bond's finely tuned body and desire for action align

Fleming's works with the contemporary discourse around physical fitness as a crucial

element of modern citizenship. Bond's guilt over sitting at his desk while his colleagues

risk their lives, described at the beginning of *Moonraker*, signals midcentury anxieties

"about the manliness of the administrative, managerial, and professional activities of

middle-class and elite men" (Rose 166). In this context, Bond—suave and tasteful—is an

idealization of the man who enjoys luxurious meals and hedonistic affairs when he can,

but itches for action when bound to his desk too long.

Factory Food, Fishing, and the Angry Young Eater

In both Fleming and Household, appetite moderation ensures good citizenship, an

act of patriotic self-discipline rejected by Arthur Seaton in *Saturday Night and Sunday*

Morning. Embodying an alternative form of postwar masculinity, the Angry Young Man,

Alan Sillitoe's antiheroic protagonist rejects both the masculine restraint of aristocratic amateur spies and the feast-and-famine approach of professional ones. Seaton is neither a spy nor a gentleman.

Rather than facing the ups and downs of danger and luxury, Arthur is slowly ground down by an unceasing stream of monotony; his conspicuous overconsumption initially challenges postwar national ideals, but is neutralized by the end of the novel. In the first section, "Saturday Night," Arthur refuses to take part in the kinds of communal dining exemplified by the factory canteen and the British Restaurant, and by eating at another man's table (literally and figuratively), he also rejects the collective project of peacetime nation-building. His alcohol-fueled pugilism counters heroic models of masculinity by highlighting the outmodedness of the battle-ready man after the war. Yet in the second section, "Sunday Morning," Arthur begins conforming to domestic models of good citizenship. His breakdown following a traumatic fistfight leads him to seek security and authority through marriage. The novel foreshadows this transformation in its final pages by positioning Arthur as a scout-figure who seeks solace not in a bar or bed, but at a fishing hole in rural England. Sillitoe depicts a model of working-class citizenship in which the factory worker, while alienated from his own labour and resentful of high taxation, finds security and pleasure as a subject of the welfare state.

While the novel demonstrates the advantages of life in postwar England, with its near-universal employment and social services, Arthur understands his position within that state as subservient. Both Arthur and his cousins reject the paternalist model of government. Dave resents being conscripted into military service after serving prewar prison time for stealing food to feed his family: "Three years in Borstal. And then when I

came out the war'd started and I got called up. Do yer think I'm going to fight for them bastards, do yer?" (127). Evading imprisonment for desertion, Dave and his brothers operate outside of the wartime economy of ration-books and employment-cards by breaking into shops and pubs (126).

Though Arthur reluctantly fulfills his own military service, his daily battle is not for but against his country: he resents both the "Tory bastards" and the "Labour bleeders" who "rob [his] wage packets every week with insurance and income tax and try to tell [him] it's all for [his] own good" (34). His working day is an extended attempt to outwit a series of authority figures, increase his income, and scrape what leisure he can from a labour system that is stacked against him. Nor is he aligned with his fellow workers: his friendliness toward Jack is as much an act of reconnaissance and bravado as a show of brotherhood. Seaton's extraction of maximal food, drink, and entertainment value from a stingy world distorts the resourcefulness of thriller heroes. His prioritization of physical pleasure challenges the delayed-gratification model necessary to the smooth functioning of a capitalist society. Levelled against the state, Arthur's generalized anger threatens rather than protects British national identity.

Whereas James Bond's efficient processing of calories makes him the ideal national servant, Seaton deliberately consumes inefficiently by binge drinking beer. His excessive consumption undermines the regulatory power of the state; it is both an act of rebellion and an assertion of masculinity. Arthur's insatiability encompasses clothing, alcohol, and women. As a Teddy Boy, his expensive clothes subvert egalitarianism; ornate Edwardian garb aesthetically opposes the drab Utility garments that came to symbolize austerity-era style. Weekend drinking offers an escape from factory work. As

"the best and bingiest glad-time of the week" (7), Saturday night is the antithesis of the

"monotonous graft in the factory" (7) and a repudiation of capitalist principles of

efficiency and productivity. Far from the scrutiny of the rate-checker, who monitors

production and lowers Arthur's piece-rate if he works too quickly—effectively punishing

him for efficiency—Arthur overdrinks to free himself from the drudgery of self-

regulation. Losing count of the number of drinks he has consumed, he gleefully engages

in winner-drinks-free chugging contests and sponges off others. His actions are

temporarily disconnected from consequences by the haze of forgetfulness that allows him

to edit his recollections of the previous night's events. Leisure is viewed as stolen,

enjoyed "in spite of" Arthur's employers, the government, or other authority figures (30).

Like his own nephew Bill, who gleefully snatches his five-pound note and tries to run off

to the sweet shop (61-2), Arthur takes what he can get for as long as he can get away with

it.

In the aftermath of the war, Arthur and other Angry Young Men resist the system

by flaunting their spending power. They reject normative class models by investing in

fleeting pleasure rather than the markers of upward mobility. The cyclical structure of the

novel's first section privileges escape over progression: Arthur envisions his life as a long

series of grey weekdays punctuated by the temporary splashes of excitement and

relaxation on Saturday nights and Sunday mornings. Though he buys clothing as an

extension of his working class masculine identity, Seaton rejects the consumerism

symbolized by the proliferation of television sets in his neighbourhood. Arthur's mother,

whose prewar life was shadowed by financial worries and domestic violence, now has

"access to week after week of solid wages that stopped worry at the source and gave her a

good enough life, and put real brightness into her blue-grey eyes as she asked, whenever she felt like it at the Co-op, for a pound of this and a pound of that"; his father enjoys "endless packets of Woodbines and a TV panel" symbolizing affluence and steady employment (45). Viewing this late-life comfort as their due after a lifetime of poverty, and acknowledging postwar improvements in living conditions, Arthur nonetheless disdains the complacency engendered by unprecedented access to consumer goods: "it is his father's generation whose quiescence has been bought by television" (Spicer 153). Though he accumulates consumer goods in the form of a flashy wardrobe, his spending aims at short-term gratification. He unrestrainedly dons expensive suits and jackets for excursions to fair and pub, well aware that this exposes them to damage via carnival foods and boozy brawls. Arthur's clothes mark his rebellious subcultural position rather than facilitating social mobility.

Arthur similarly rejects Boy Scout models of good citizenship and self-improvement by drinking, smoking, fighting, indulging his sexual appetites, and rarely helping others. The scene of total intoxication that opens the novel sets the tone for his binges throughout the text: he tumbles down stairs, vomits on bystanders, drinks competitively, brawls with fellow drunks, and sleeps with married women. His sheer physicality connects him with models of working-class masculinity that offer alternative ideals for midcentury citizenship. Craig Heron emphasizes "the centrality of the body in almost all aspects of the male working-class experience," from "applying muscular strength on the job" to "eating for nourishment (often on limited income), drinking for pleasure (and to get drunk), playing demanding sports, performing sexually, fighting with and violently assaulting others, and swaggering, shouting, whistling, singing, swearing,

belching, and farting in deliberately performative ways" (8). Physical violence is ubiquitous and domestic abuse normalized within this patriarchal model; both Arthur's father (until his sons grew up) and his brother-in-law abuse their wives without consequence. With the exception of sports, Heron's list describes the majority of Arthur Seaton's activities in the "Saturday Night" section.

Alcohol and adultery overlap, both signaling excessive appetites. Consorting with married women allows Arthur to escape the intake-output model of pleasure and responsibility. Just as he happily drinks "the share of Brenda's absent husband—as far as it would go" (7), Arthur also helps himself to Brenda in her husband Jack's absence. Though he pays rent to his parents and buys gifts for his siblings' children, Arthur's adulterous liaisons disrupt the family unit perceived as so crucial to national and imperial strength. Fed and cared for by his mother, Arthur also craves the sustenance offered by Brenda and her sister, Winnie. He eats breakfast with Brenda, and jealously eyes the sandwiches she has prepared for Jack while the two men eat lunch at the factory. After Arthur impregnates Brenda, the gin-fueled abortion scene literalizes the connection between excessive consumption and Seaton's refusal to replicate his parents' family model. The scene is deliberately discomfiting. Sillitoe details each painful sip of warm alcohol as Brenda sinks into a stupor in the unbearably hot tub. Drunkenness interrupts causality: it eliminates consequences through the deliberate erasure of both memory and potential life. Only when he is caught and beaten by Winnie's husband and her friend does Seaton begin to take responsibility for his actions. Alcohol is ubiquitous in Arthur's extramarital adventures. His relationship with the unmarried Doreen—conducted in relative sobriety—accordingly signals his resignation to the nuclear family structure.

Having resolved to marry her and become "the man of the house" that she shares with her mother, Arthur redirects the money normally spent on binge drinking into savings for their future life.

Recalling the centrality of hunting and woodcraft to national identities, *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* signals Arthur's transformation to good citizenship through a final fishing scene that might have been drawn from *Rogue Male*. After a long week in the factory, Arthur escapes to the country:

> Another solitary man was fishing further along the canal, but Arthur knew that they would leave each other in peace, would not even call out greetings. No one bothered you: you were a hunter, a dreamer, your own boss, away from it all for a few hours on any day that the weather did not throw down its rain… it was marvellous the things that came to you in the tranquillity of fishing. (210)

The English countryside offers an antidote to modern life, and contains everything Arthur needs for sustenance, peace, and comfort. Fishing restores him to proper British manhood, and places him on par with any spy or gentleman.

As British protagonists, Ian Fleming's James Bond, Geoffrey Household's Raymond Ingelram, and Alan Sillitoe's Arthur Seaton embody complementary masculine ideals. While the narrator of *Rogue Male* eats efficiently, selecting nutrient-dense foods that align him with the British military, postwar heroes tend to reject the wartime emphasis on plain English foods by reveling in luxurious foreign goods. Fleming's Bond thus represents a new national cuisine predicated on post-austerity cosmopolitanism and hard-earned decadence. Bond's appetites indicate his individual strength, as well as

Britain's ongoing national and imperial strength in a globalized world. Like Household's protagonist, moreover, his relationship to food and fitness is shaped by patriotic ideals dating back to the invasion narratives and conduct guidelines of the Edwardian era—the same ideals articulated in Baden-Powell's hugely influential *Scouting for Boys*. If Hannay, Bond, and Ingelram all eat to ensure their ongoing relevance as individual embodiments of imperial ideals, Seaton overconsumes alcohol and food to reject prewar models of good citizenship. Throughout novels of the twentieth century, characters' preoccupations with health and wellness signal larger concerns with national and imperial strength. From Boy Scouts to Bond, the heroes of midcentury narratives feed their bodies as a means of fortifying themselves for figurative and literal battle. Literary food plays a transformative role in shaping the unassuming everyman into a physically and mentally adept defender of his realm.

CHAPTER 3

Postwar Food Writing and the Expansion of British Cuisine

As waves of modernization, warfare, and cultural exchange threatened to alter the

face and form of twentieth-century Britain, local histories, narratives, and cuisines were

elevated as a means of counteracting the erasure of cultural traditions. A corollary to the

fears of occupation and annihilation expressed in invasion narratives, concerns about the

effects of imperial contraction and shifting conceptions of British national identity gave

rise to a widespread interest in generating and preserving records of Britishness more

democratic and far-reaching than those in official histories.

In addition to the midcentury explosion of memoirs and documentaries,

government bodies and organizations sought to archive Britishness. BBC programs like

These Things Are English (1938) set out to capture the essence of Englishness by

collecting seemingly trivial aural details; the latter includes audio snippets from George

V's funeral, singers on the underground, and the sounds of beer drinking and cricket

playing (H. Lee 73). Such initiatives were common enough to be satirized by writers like

Penelope Fitzgerald, whose novel about the wartime BBC, *Human Voices* (1980),

includes a parodic version of *These Things Are English*. In Fitzgerald's novel, the

fictional radio program "Lest We Forget Our Englishry"—created in response to a

Munich Agreement-era memo that called, "as a matter of some urgency, for a record of

our country's heritage"—consists entirely of hours of audio footage of a creaking, rural

church door (Fitzgerald 24-5). After the Second World War broke out, propaganda films

such as Humphrey Jennings' *London Can Take It!* (1940) and *Listen to Britain* (1942)

focalized English cultural particularity both to bolster morale and to perform national strength. Jennings' films celebrate resilience and courage as national characteristics by showing Britons carrying on with their daily lives—commuting to work and shopping for rations during the Blitz, or singing and attending dances in uniform—in spite of the war. The documentation of Englishness in wartime was both a military tactic and a commemorative back-up plan, should defences fail.

Written in the context of this urge to document and preserve, midcentury literature reveals a preoccupation with everyday life in Britain that is also legible in culinary, sociological, and artistic texts. For midcentury writers such as Barbara Pym, food constitutes an important marker of cultural identity, yet its capacity to connect individuals and groups is in part dependent on its adaptability: new traditions and techniques continually shape culinary history. The works of food writers Elizabeth David and Fanny Cradock similarly build on earlier traditions of cookery writing in which the cuisines of other nations were introduced into mainstream British culture—an expansion and invigoration of national cuisine that was fundamental to the cultural definition of midcentury Britain. Postwar immigration and the proliferation of "foreign" restaurants challenged received understandings of British culture and cuisine. Read against texts championing Italian, Greek, and Provincial French cookery, literary analysis of the meanings of solitary and communal dining—of the ways in which preparing and consuming food shapes individual and collective experience—poses larger questions about national and imperial identity. By integrating ingredients and dishes from across continental Europe and the Mediterranean, the works of Pym, David, Cradock, and others contributed to a redefinition and expansion of British foodways in the wake of the Second

World War. Gendered food roles and utopian models of consumption helped shape the portrayal of public and private dining in the emergent welfare state.

Midcentury Cuisine and the Anthropological Turn

The documentary impulse in midcentury Britain is perhaps most evident in the rise of the Mass Observation social research movement. Beginning in 1937, Mass Observation (MO)—founded by Tom Harrisson, Humphrey Jennings, and Charles Madge—enlisted civilians to create "an anthropology of ourselves" by observing the people around them and recording those observations for posterity. MO studies like *The Pub and the People* (1943) explored working-class life in Britain through the documentation of everyday conversations, routines, and rituals, such as the standing of rounds in public houses.[57] Nick Hubble explains that the development of Mass Observation was coextensive with the emergence of the international subdiscipline of "Everyday Life Studies": theorists such as Henri Lefebvre, Georg Simmel, Walter Benjamin, and Michel de Certeau argued for the critical examination of individual lives and quotidian behaviours. Hubble reads MO's writing of everyday life as an assertion of individual agency and a means of enacting "social therapy" in response to national traumas, such as aerial bombardment or the fall-out of the Munich Agreement in 1938. Conversely, MO researchers also collaborated with official bodies to provide the government with public opinion research, data that sometimes exerted a direct impact on

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[57] See Justin Pfefferle, "Mass Observation, the English Pub, and Patrick Hamilton's *Slaves of Solitude*" for a reading of interactions between midcentury literature and MO accounts of the role of pub life in British culture.

federal policies and legislation.[58]

This interest in parsing English culture is observable throughout midcentury fiction. Describing late modernist literature in relation to what he terms the "anthropological turn" in midcentury culture, Jed Esty argues that English writers "translated the end of empire into a resurgent concept of national culture—one whose insular integrity seemed to mitigate some of modernism's characteristic social anxieties" (2). For late modernists, Esty suggests, anthropology offered "a new way to represent social difference within a dynamic, but knowable and bounded, social field,"

> that is, within a totality corresponding to the idea of national culture… By transferring the holistic ethos (writing about 'an entire way of life') from small-scale colonized societies to their own shrinking nation, English intellectuals found a distinctive way to respond to the imminent collapse of British hegemony. (10)

Thomas S. Davis postulates a similar late modernist focus on the rhythms and textures of daily life, with both formal and political consequences (2). Davis' argument in *Extinct Scene* hinges on the assertion that midcentury novelists examined "the particulars of everyday life" in the hopes that such details would "acquire specificity and coherence within an articulated network of political, economic, and social life" and "yield some tangible knowledge about a crumbling world-system" (5, 15). Whereas Esty reads this anthropological impulse as an *inward* turn, however, Davis reads the same attention to cultural particularity as a turn *outward* (2).

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[58] Hubble notes, for instance, that MO texts and researchers helped shape the federal budget of 1941, which delineated the plan to use income tax increases as the primary means of recuperating national debt, "fundamentally altering the structural relations of prewar British society and laying the necessary foundations for the postwar Welfare State" (14).

Esty's notion of Britain as a "shrinking island," closing its borders and creating an insular record of traditional ways of life, accurately describes wartime food policies; during the war, the Ministry of Food worked to make Britain self-sustaining, while official food narratives preached the importance of eating locally as a key element of citizenship. Further, Esty's theorization of an Anglocentric anthropological turn bears out in interwar cookbooks. The 1930s saw a resurgence of interest in traditional English recipes, a revival epitomized by Florence White's *Good Things in England* (1932) (Humble, *Culinary* 72). A founding member of the English Folk Cookery Association— "a learned society formed originally for purposes of research, with the firm intention of restoring and maintaining England's former high standard of cookery" (White 12)— Florence White introduces her selection of regional recipes as "an attempt to capture the charm of English cooking before it is completely crushed out of existence" (9).[59] Echoing the preservationist rhetoric of Mass Observation, *Good Things in England* contends that, although English cooks are "adventurers" who willingly "naturalize" recipes from other lands, "No nation's cookery is so peculiarly its own; and one of our aims should be to preserve our individuality and not allow our proximity to the Continent to destroy its traditional distinction and difference" (11). While she includes some recipes from Wales and Scotland, White insists on the gastronomical distinctiveness of England, not just from continental Europe but also from the rest of the United Kingdom. Instead, she notes a culinary kinship between England and the United States: *Good Things in England*, she writes, "is a book for the Empire and America" (12). In its attempt to celebrate forgotten recipes and ingredients, *Good Things in England* actively intervenes into prewar English

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[59] In *French Provincial Cooking*, Elizabeth David describes a similar impulse to preserve and record recipes for local dishes in post-WWII France (12).

foodways.[60]

The Second World War intensified this culinary insularity. Wartime food supply issues meant that the stereotype of bad English cooking was in effect legislated into reality.[61] Although rationing necessarily encouraged inventiveness in the kitchen, "war tended to reinforce the Englishness of English cooking—more cakes and puddings, more oatmeal, more dumplings, more leftover dishes," as well as "old staples of the poor" (Mennell 249). Restricted imports meant foreign ingredients were unavailable, and exotic and flavourful dishes unlikely. The most common complaint from British civilians was that the wartime diet was monotonous. This was partly addressed by Ministry of Food campaigns for cookery reform, which sought to cut down on waste and correct the English habit of overcooking. As one MOF pamphlet notes, "No country in the world grows vegetables better than we do, and probably no country in the world cooks them worse" (MOF, *Eating* 141). Yet on the whole monotony had to be borne. As a result, food providers and legislators picked up on nationalist rhetoric and emphasized what might be termed microheroism, or the application of heroic ideals to even the most mundane and insignificant acts. In restaurants, "certain 'patriotic' dishes, like lentil cutlets, were labelled with a V for Victory" to make them more appealing (Longmate 151); wholemeal bread was sold as "National Loaf," and many other name-brand

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[60] The mantle of traditional English cookery was taken up in the latter half of the twentieth century by Jane Grigson, whose *English Food* (1976) aimed to recuperate the postwar reputation of English cookery by elevating staples like roasts, veg, and pudding (Humble 122).

[61] The emergence of this stereotype may be traced back to the nineteenth century, when increased social mobility encouraged conformity and imitation among class groups. In *British Food*, Colin Spencer notes that restrictive social mores in the Victorian age were largely responsible for "a mass movement towards the bland and the nondescript" in both cuisine and comportment; in the former, flavour was often subjugated to impressive appearance in the preparation of dishes (288). Mock recipes such as Mock Turtle Soup were popular for their ability to visually mimic more expensive, higher-class dishes, usually at the expense of taste, while ingredients that might lead to social missteps—such as bad breath or messy eating—were avoided (288-9). Raw foods were generally regarded with suspicion, and vegetables overcooked out of a belief that raw or undercooked produce was germ-filled and hard on the digestive system (288-9). Pre-nineteenth-century British cooking was much more interesting by comparison.

products were replaced by inferior generic versions packaged and distributed by the state. Such products resurface in literature through consumables such as the Victory Gin in George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949), which tastes "not less but more horrible with every mouthful" (307). Across culture and literature, "[p]atriotic discourse in World War II centrally featured the idea that the members of the national community were self-sacrificing citizens" (Rose 14). This celebration of austerity differentiated English rationing propaganda from that of the United States (where rationing was also effected, but to a lesser extent and mainly to enable Americans to send food over to beleaguered Britain) (Carruth). The self-perpetuating image of the stoic Briton—stiff upper lip and all—was crucial to public understandings of the importance of rationing for the duration of the war. Although the government officially prioritized the availability of traditional foods, the necessity of recommending substitute ingredients (margarine for butter, saccharine for sugar, potatoes for pastry) in official recipes epitomized the entrenchment of culinary traditions, often with unpalatable results. Like much of British culture, English cuisine became necessarily Anglocentric during the early years of the Second World War.

By the end of the Second World War, however, British cooks and diners were sick of shoddy ingredients and bland meals. Tightened controls in the aftermath of victory drew resentment from citizens who had sacrificed for the war effort but were now feeling rebellious, particularly since the most stringent period of rationing came after the war:

> Any hopes of a rapid return to pre-war plenty were quickly dispelled by a
>
> world food crisis and the ending of American Lend-Lease supplies.

Moreover, the new Labour government elected in 1945 concentrated

resources on its priorities of reviving output, nationalising basic industries

and constructing the promised Welfare State, policies in which private

consumption had to take second place to public good. (Burnett 256)

As Lend-Lease resources were diverted to newly liberated European countries, even

bread, which had never been rationed during the war (in spite of being transformed from

fluffy white loaves into the unpopular but nutritious National Loaf through the gradual

adjustment of extraction rates), was rationed from 1946 to 1947 following poor wheat

harvests (Zweiniger, *Austerity* 24). Complaints about shortages and rising prices

crystallized in protest campaigns, including one led by the newly formed British

Housewives League in the months following the end of the war (Burnett 256). England in

1950 was craving an infusion of fresh flavours and ingredients. In this context, Elizabeth

David published her first cookbook.

Having lived in France, Greece, and Egypt for the duration of the war, Elizabeth

David returned to austerity-era Britain with a taste for rich, aromatic dishes and a sense of

shock at the state of postwar English food. With *A Book of Mediterranean Food* (1950),

David awakened an entire generation of Britons to the pleasures of continental cuisine. A

series of influential cookbooks followed over the next decade: *French Country Cooking*

(1951), *Italian Food* (1954), *Summer Cooking* (1955), and *French Provincial Cooking*

(1960). David's creative cookbooks initially offered what to most spiritually hungry

diners could only be enjoyed as escapist food fantasies. Her preface to the 1955 reissue of

Mediterranean Food explains:

This book first appeared in 1950, when almost every essential ingredient

of good cooking was either rationed or unobtainable. To produce the

simplest meal consisting of even two or three genuine dishes required the

utmost ingenuity and devotion. But even if people could not very often

make the dishes here described, it was stimulating to think about them; to

escape from the deadly boredom of queuing and the frustration of buying

the weekly rations; to read about real food cooked with wine and olive oil,

eggs and butter and cream, and dishes richly flavoured with onions, garlic,

herbs, and brightly coloured Southern vegetables. (12)

Mediterranean Food offered the promise of abundance and variety before it became a

reality. Yet as travel and import restrictions loosened in subsequent years, England saw

an influx of immigration and imported ingredients that made the enjoyment of such

dishes possible; "ethnic" restaurants and ingredients began to spring up in urban centres,

especially London, over the course of the 1950s.[62] Reissues of David's cookbooks record

this gradual shift in the availability of imported ingredients in England; in the 1955

edition, David notes that many ingredients that had been nearly unobtainable five years

prior—olive oil, parmesan, salami—had since become widely available in Soho and

Tottenham Court Road, both neighbourhoods with large populations of recent

immigrants.

Blending history, literary allusion, sensual description, and storytelling, David's

works demystify foreign cultures through their cuisines. Central to her project is the

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[62] David's influence on postwar English cuisine was by no means universal or as extreme as some accounts suggest. As John Burnett notes, "Apart from holidays abroad, most people's experience of foreign food in the 1950s would have been a French or Italian restaurant, rare outside London" (272). Yet the rapid growth of "foreign restaurants," especially those specializing in the adaptation of Indian and Chinese cuisine for British tastes, would gradually shift English tastes in the decades following the war (281-4).

translation of Mediterranean and continental foodways for an English audience wary of the supposed artificiality of heavily spiced and sauced foods, as well as a systematic dismantling of food "myths" (*Italian* 19). In the preface to the Penguin edition of *Italian Food* (1963), for instance, David notes the English tendency to dismiss Italian cuisine as a tedious parade of stodgy pasta dishes, while "[t]he French, we believe, have been forced to perfect the art of cooking owing to what we like to think is a necessity to disguise poor materials" (19). In arguing for the inclusion of French, Italian, and Mediterranean dishes and ingredients in the lexicon of English cuisine, David cites the authenticity of regional cooking in contrast to resort-style tourism, processed and artificial ingredients, and the rise of the global fast food industry. She disdains fussy service, prefers local, seasonal foods, and identifies the spirit of French cuisine as simplicity. *French Provincial Cooking* focuses on "sober, well-balanced, middle-class French cookery, carried out with care and skill, with due regard to the quality of the materials, but without extravagance or pretension" (11).

David's phrasing proposes a postwar shift in English conceptions of culinary authenticity. "It is honest cooking," she writes in the introduction to *A Book of Mediterranean Food*: "none of the sham Grande Cuisine of the International Palace Hotel" (9). Unlike the "devious means" and ersatz ingredients required to produce a meal in ration-era England, David identifies the rich flavours and unpretentious presentation of Mediterranean and continental peasant cooking as inherently "genuine." In so doing, she writes against an English gastronomic tradition that viewed garlic and other pungent ingredients with suspicion. David is particularly careful to reassure readers that French cooking is "honest": "there is little in the French system which need inspire us with awe

of the unknown," she writes; "no basis for talk of mysterious 'secrets,' nor for easy jibes about poor materials masked with complicated sauces" (*Provincial* 19). David further associates authentic cuisine with the use of "genuine local products," served seasonally (*Provincial* 13). Applying the rhetoric of simplicity and honesty traditionally associated with English cuisine to French, Italian, and Mediterranean recipes, David's cookbooks move beyond culinary tourism to argue for the inclusion of foreign dishes in a postwar redefinition of British foodways.

As both Nicola Humble and David herself note, one of the key factors in David's success was her timing. The concept of "genuine" French food seemed much more plausible after a decade of "mock" recipes, saccharine, and snoek masquerading as anchovies.[63] Her cookbooks rebuke austerity cooking and reject ersatz foods in favour of fresh, fragrant ingredients. Rich flavours are imbued with restorative powers. Watching an Italian chef prepare a Bolognese without scrimping or saving is said to offer a spiritual lift: "We are all weary of cheese-paring," David explains, so that cooking with a generous hand is "a beneficial experience after years of making do" (*Italian* 29). In this regard, she echoes Constance Spry's *Come into the Garden, Cook* (1942), which attempted to restore pleasure to wartime dining by urging Britons to save up rationed luxuries for one delicious blowout meal rather than eking them out (Humble, *Culinary* 99).

In addition to food scenes so evocative they inspired Evelyn Waugh to name

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[63] The large-scale importation of snoek, a barracuda-like fish from South Africa, is often cited as the epitome of misguided Ministry of Food moves during World War Two. During a 1948 anchovy shortage, the Ministry reportedly "spent £857,000 on eleven million half-pound tins of snoek" (Minns 192). Even Ministry of Food researchers reported "general agreement that the appearance of the fish was not very attractive" and that its too-salty flavour was best "masked with strong flavour such as cheese, tomato or curry" ("Report on the Use of Snoek"). "Snoek sandwich spread, snoek pasties, snoek with salad, and 'snoek piquante' were some of the recipes launched by the Ministry," but its "dubious taste" was widely maligned by cartoonists and songwriters (Minns 192). After almost universal rejection by the British public, it eventually resurfaced as cat food.

Italian Food one of his two favourite books of 1954 in the *Sunday Times* (*Italian* 24-5),

David offers extensive advice about eating well as a traveller. She notes that in Provence,

for instance, the main meal is eaten at midday rather than in the evening; visitors are

advised to plan accordingly (*Provincial* 14-15). She also explains how to eat well at

roadside inns (ask the right questions and befriend the owner). David's foreign recipes

are distinct from wartime cookbooks in their lack of adaptation for English palates or

vocabularies: though the author explains key terms, she uses the actual names of dishes

rather than renaming them to sound more British, as many austerity-era chefs did.[64] The

author records the history of particular regions and dishes and begins each section with an

extensive quotation from a literary or cookery writer; her descriptions of the sensual

pleasures of unfamiliar dishes provide a means of recuperating the reputations of the

national and regional cuisines of France, Italy, Greece, and other Mediterranean countries

in British minds while at the same time reinvigorating British food.

Though she has long been identified as the most important figure in the postwar

food "revolution," Elizabeth David's gastronomical evangelism is part of a much wider

interest in food and travel literature dating back to the nineteenth century. Early examples

of gastronomical writing, such as Thomas Walker's *Aristology; or the Art of Dining*

(1835), continued insular eighteenth-century debates about aesthetic standards of taste

(Broomfield 46). Yet the late nineteenth-century proliferation of different types of dining

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[64] Nicola Humble cites Ambrose Heath as one such cookbook writer. A popularizer of Continental European cuisine in the interwar period, Heath was hired as an expert by the Ministry of Food and appeared regularly on the BBC's *Kitchen Front*, where he offered advice and recipes for eking out the ration; Humble notes that his "sense of teeth-gritted discomfort with his role as Ministry stooge is clear in the marked adjustments to his pre-war culinary style, in particular his scrupulous avoidance of foreign names for dishes" (*Culinary* 90). Clafoutis, for instance—a classic French dessert of fruit baked into a sweet batter—goes from being "a sophisticated piece of exotica" in the prewar *Good Food; Month by Month Recipes* (1932) to being "a hint for eking out the sugar ration by serving a pudding of bits of fruit in Yorkshire pudding batter" in *Kitchen Front Recipes and Hints: Extracts from the First Seven Months' Early Morning Broadcasts by Ambrose Heath* (1941) (Humble 90).

establishments meant that more meals were eaten outside of the home, particularly by the expanding middle classes, and as a result food writing gradually evolved to address a new audience of non-expert diners. John Burnett notes that by 1880, eating-places distinct from traditional taverns and men-only dining rooms "were appearing, providing a different, more elegant environment attractive to both sexes and, above all, offering a different cuisine, strongly influenced by Continental styles" (87). Though Victorians tended to dine in and favoured elaborate dinner parties as a means of demonstrating wealth and class, by the turn of the century restaurant dining was increasingly popular— in part due to the increasing difficulty of serving elaborate meals in households with fewer domestic servants, and in part due to the rise of fashionable new restaurants serving "exotic dishes and fine wines" (Burnett 86-94). For many English diners, the French-style restaurant was "different from the homegrown fried-fish shops, ordinaries, cook-shops, taverns, and chophouses, all of which offered limited choices and predictable flavors" (49), and thus caused anxiety for those without experience in navigating foreign menus.

In response to this proliferation of unfamiliar menus, a growing number of food writers aimed to arm would-be gastronomes with knowledge of dining conventions. Foremost among them was Nathaniel Newnham-Davis. A former army captain who had earned the nickname "The Epicure" while serving in South Africa, Newnham-Davis parlayed his reputation as a gourmet into a regular food column in the *Pall Mall Gazette* following his retirement in 1894. In the ensuing decades, he published a series of popular restaurant guides for England and Europe (Broomfield 46). *Dinners and Diners: Where and How to Dine in London* (1899) offers detailed descriptions of restaurants, including elements such as décor, price, and recommended dishes, with the aim of helping

inexperienced diners navigate establishments around the city. Crediting Newnham-Davis with the democratization of British dining, Andrea Broomfield argues that he

> systematically demystified the protocol of restaurant dining for hundreds of middle-class people who had been too intimidated to step inside one of them or to visit locales where less-expensive restaurant meals were available… Understanding their inhibitions, Newnham-Davis created a guidebook genre that offered a great deal more than the bare facts and lists that characterized typical guidebooks of the era, such as Baedeker's *London and Its Environs*. (46)

For nineteenth-century restaurant-goers exploring the brave new world of dining for pleasure, Newnham-Davis' restaurant reviews provided not just permission, but a plan for maximizing that pleasure.

In his approach to areas such as Soho, with its high population of immigrants and inexpensive "ethnic" restaurants, Newnham-Davis offers the equivalent of a travel guide for Londoners venturing into unfamiliar neighbourhoods. His *Gourmet's Guide to London* (1914) includes a chapter on "The Italian Invasion," in which he describes his favourites among the "little foreign restaurants" dotted around Soho (365-70). Just as *The Gourmet's Guide to Europe* (1903) teaches Britons where to dine abroad if they "take an interest in the cookery and the food of the countries they travel to" (Introduction), *The Gourmet's Guide to London* tells Londoners how to dine economically and well in their own city. Organized by area, Newnham-Davis' accessible guides laid the groundwork for much later food and travel writing.

Both the First and Second World Wars saw overall reductions in gourmet dining

and travel literature. With the exception of the roaring twenties, which gave rise to an explosion of fine dining theory and practice, the first half of the century saw a deluge of pragmatic, patriotic, and often state-sponsored guides to cooking economically and healthfully. Most wartime food columns were about stretching the ration, maximizing nutritional value, and coming up with ingenious ways to disguise poor quality foodstuffs or make up for a lack of fat, meat, and other ingredients. Once food rationing and price caps finally ended in the mid-1950s, restaurant reviews proliferated once again. "Already in 1945," food writers and journalists such as T.A. Layton at *Time and Tide* "were beginning to return to the prewar practice of recommending good places to eat, especially for the benefit of unexpected tourists and visitors" (Burnett 261). Such surveys often included a selection of Chinese, Greek, and other foreign restaurants alongside upscale French restaurants and prewar favourites like Simpson's in the Strand (Burnett 261).

Much like David's early works, which were closer to travel memoirs than her didactic later texts (Humble, *Culinary* 133), midcentury food writing often overlapped with travel writing and general advice on fine living. The celebration of foreign cuisine was coextensive with the rise of the "gourmet" in the late 1950s: "The word, much in vogue at the time, denotes an informed appreciation of 'the finer things in life,' those being expensive French or French-style restaurant food and 'fine wines,' the knowledge of which the gourmet is immensely proud" (Humble, *Culinary* 151). Popularized by the likes of "chief gourmet" André Simon, who founded the Wine and Food Society in 1933, the polished sophistication of the epicure was an ideal for social-climbers of the 1950s (Humble, *Culinary* 152).[65]

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[65] Humble cites an example of Simon's "unrepentantly epicurean" approach to food and wine from *The Gourmet's Weekend Book* (1952): "There are people who never grow up: they drink milk or water like

Gourmets such as Joseph Wechsberg, a cosmopolitan food writer whose early

essays are collected in *Blue Trout and Black Truffles* (1954), presented themselves as

exemplars of gourmet sophistication. Wechsberg's nostalgic accounts of the splendours

of prewar dining in eastern and continental Europe are set against accounts of modern

restaurants in essays that display his erudition and discernment. In "Provence without

Garlic," he describes a visit to L'Oustau de Baumanière, a restaurant in Les-Baux-en-

Provence, France. Throughout, the writer mocks inexperienced diners taken in by trendy

restaurants, which too often "tur[n] out to be sensational only because of the overdose of

garlic the chef has put into something whimsically called *Provençal*, or because the lights

are turned off, or on—I don't remember which—while *crêpes Suzette* are being served"

(193). Like Elizabeth David, Wechsberg views simplicity as essential to excellent

cooking: he mocks pretentious diners who "talk about spices and dressings and sauces

and soufflés and forget the basic things—the size of the red mullet, for instance," or the

quality of individual ingredients (203). Many of his essays show the author delighting

chefs with his fine palate and willingness to trust their judgment (198). Wechsberg's

appeal derives more from exclusivity than inclusivity: he boasts, for instance, that though

every cookbook contains a recipe for *sauce crevettes*, "no book could possibly explain

how [the chef at L'Oustau] made his" (201). Truly excellent dining for Wechsberg is

non-reproducible. The Cradocks, by contrast, with their elaborate recipes and wine

pairings, presented gourmet culture for mass consumption.

From the early 1950s, Phyllis "Fanny" Cradock wrote a regular column for the

Daily Telegraph under the pseudonym "Bon Viveur," a name chosen because it was

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babes all their life. Gourmets, however, drink wine. It is not mere affectation but the recognition that the
best food can never be so good as with the best wine for partner" (15 qtd in Humble, *Culinary* 152).

"sexless and covered food, wine and vitally, travel" (Ellis). Having published novels, children's fiction, and a recipe book called *The Practical Cook* (1949), Cradock was hired as a fashion writer before being commissioned to write about English inns—the first *Bon Viveur* columns. Co-written with her husband, Johnnie, *Bon Viveur* ran for decades. It offered a wide range of shopping, eating, cooking, and travel advice for both England and "abroad": even prior to the end of food rationing, Cradock wrote articles on topics such as where to eat while out shopping in London ("Food for Hungry Shoppers"); how to cook chicken in a jug using a "Portuguese method" ("Chicken Cooked in a Jug"); where to eat and stay in Ibiza ("Ibiza—An Unsophisticated Island"); and how properly to enjoy and cut Stilton cheese ("Leicestershire Claims Stilton As Its Own"). With a focus on the best of the hospitality industry—combining service, food, and value—the *Bon Viveur* oeuvre was lauded by the Queen Mother as being "largely responsible" for improving catering standards in postwar Britain (Levy).

Cradock exemplified the new school of postwar food celebrities striving to make stylish cooking the standard, a model that would eventually spill over from radio and newspaper into the new mass medium of television.[66] After years of regular radio appearances on Woman's Hour (and cosmetic surgery on Fanny's nose), the Cradocks made their BBC television debut in 1955. On the show, Johnnie played a "subservient sidekick, good only for handing Cradock her frying pan and knowing which wine to serve," while Fanny crafted "food so over-decorated it was baroque" and developed a

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[66] The first television chef was Marcel Boulestin, who made his small-screen debut on a program called *Cook's Night Out* on 21 January 1937. David's interwar predecessor in introducing the British public to the French *cuisine bourgeoise*, Boulestin wrote several cookbooks, beginning with *Simple French Cooking for English Homes* (1923), in addition to opening a successful restaurant and cooking school popular among "fashionable ladies" (Humble, *Culinary* 62).

reputation for "rudeness and churlishness" (Levy).[67] Clive Ellis describes her television

persona: "On television, the tiaras, the furs and the gowns by Hartnell, Dior and

Balenciaga were as much part of the package as the frugal dishes she prepared. Her

apronless cry, both on screen and on stage, was that 'cooking is a cleanly art, not a

grubby chore.'" With Constance Spry and others, she was a member of the Food and

Cookery Brains Trust and participated in live cooking demonstrations and stage shows.

Also like Constance Spry, she prefigured the organic food movement; she "campaigned

against artificial flavours and fertilisers" and fed her tomatoes "on a diet of tea and pee

dubbed 'Madam's Tonic'" (Ellis).

In addition to her snobbish excesses—champagne, truffles, and name-dropping

(Humble, *Culinary* 150)—a key feature of Cradock's cookery is her dual embrace of

traditional English dishes and foods from other countries. Though in her infamous final

television appearance (see fig. 8), Fanny snapped, "The English never had a cuisine.

There's nothing English. Yorkshire pudding came from Burgundy" ("Fanny Cradock

Meeting Gwen Troake"),[68] *Bon Viveur* columns celebrate both traditionally English and

foreign recipes. They alternately aim to recuperate "Old English Dishes" by blaming

inept cooks and "search for saffron in London's by-ways" to cook rice pilafs from around

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[67] Like many biographical articles on Cradock, Paul Levy's *DNB* entry oozes delight and disdain: he writes, for instance, that "Fanny appealed to an audience that disappeared with the food revolution of the 1980s, one that forgave her pretensions and snobbery, and even the abuse she heaped upon Johnny or anyone who dared to call her Fanny, rather than Mrs Cradock." His verb choices in describing her early writing career ("Fanny *called herself* Frances Dale on the spine of the nine romantic novels she wrote, and in the by-line *she enjoyed* as fashion editor of the *Sunday Graphic*. On Fleet Street *she offered herself* 'as an expert on beauty, hair care, spiritualism and even the lost city of Atlantis'" [*DNB*, emphasis added]) minimizes her accomplishments by calling attention to her persona rather than her work. Clearly, she is still capable of eliciting strong emotions in her audience.

[68] In 1976 Cradock returned from tax exile in Ireland to appear as an expert guest on a special episode of the BBC's *The Big Time* about an amateur cooking competition. As the winner of the contest, a kindly-looking Devon housewife named Mrs. Gwen Troake, went through her proposed banquet menu, Fanny dismissed her ideas, critiqued her menu as too rich and too English, and at one point even pretended to retch ("Fanny Cradock Meeting Gwen Troake"). Cradock's rudeness throughout the episode caused outrage among BBC viewers, and ultimately led to the termination of her contract.

the world ("We Search for Saffron").[69] In their wholehearted embrace of global dishes

and ingredients, the Cradocks exemplify an increasingly flexible model of British

cookery—one that translates ingredients and techniques from around the world using the

idiom of the chef rather than the nation.

Figure 8: Cradock reacts to Gwen Troake's menu.
"Fanny Cradock Meets Gwen Troake," *The Big One*, BBC4, *YouTube*.

Barbara Pym and the Refiguring of National Cuisine

Like Elizabeth David, Barbara Pym attends to minor details of English dining not

from an impulse to guard Britain's cultural supremacy, but as an attempt to recuperate its

culture and cuisine through extension and adaptation. The thirteen novels that Pym wrote

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[69] There were holdouts against the postwar "food revolution." Dorothy Hartley's popular *Food in England* (1954) begins with the declaration that "English cooking is old-fashioned, because we like it that way. We do enjoy foreign dishes and admire Continental cooks, but when we cook the foreign dishes, the dishes, like the foreigners, become 'naturalised English'" (v). A historian by trade, Hartley generated a hefty manual that is as much a history of English cuisine as a cookbook. It is thoroughly researched, and intersperses recipes for English dishes with detailed histories of the provenance and evolution of various ingredients, historical quotations and illustrations, and detailed diagrams of traditional cooking methods.

between the 1930s and 1970s are all laced with "sly insights into culinary anthropology"

(Visser 19).[70] In the context of shortages and rationing, Pym's literary attention to food

takes on additional meanings: *Excellent Women* (1952), *Less Than Angels* (1955), and *A

Glass of Blessings* (1958) challenge official food cultures by probing expectations about

gender, sexuality, and religion as they relate to individual and national foodways. In

Excellent Women, written between 1939 and 1951, "the lean years have come" (Liddell

33); Pym captures the startling austerity of life in postwar London through unappetizing

meals and anxieties about food. In contrast, *A Glass of Blessings*—published at a

comfortable distance from the end of rationing—is set in a less austere world. Yet the war

is still felt in the culinary legacy of the cafeteria and the collective memories of the cooks

and hostesses in its pages. These works bookend the era of austerity and suggest a less

insular culinary model for England's transition into the welfare state.

In a 1977 issue of *The Times Literary Supplement*, Philip Larkin praised Barbara

Pym for her "unique eye and ear for the small poignancies and comedies of everyday

life"; her novels, he enthused, "give an unrivalled picture of a small section of middle-

class post-war England" ("Reputations" 77).[71] John Francis' introduction to *À La Pym:

The Barbara Pym Cookery Book* (1995) similarly observes that students interested in the

history of the twentieth century "will find in [Pym's] pages a truthfulness wholly missing

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[70] In addition to the nine novels published during her lifetime, Pym's bibliography includes *Civil to Strangers* (1987), a novella with four short stories; the extensive journals and correspondence collected in *A Very Private Eye: An Autobiography in Diaries and Letters* (1984); and four posthumously published novels, *A Few Green Leaves* (1980), *An Unsuitable Attachment* (1982), *Crampton Hodnet* (1985), and *An Academic Question* (1986), all of which were revised for publication by Pym's friend and literary executor, Hazel Holt.

[71] The *TLS* article of 21 January 1977 asked a series of famous writers to name the most underrated author of the twentieth century. Having been ditched by her long-time publisher in the 1960s (Pym speculated that Jonathan Cape, publisher of her first six novels, rejected *An Unsuitable Attachment* (1963) because "their whole policy is obviously to publish only best-sellers like Ian Fleming" [qtd in Salwak 10]), Pym's stalled career was relaunched when both Larkin and Lord David Cecil chose Pym—the only author selected for that dubious honour by two different writers ("Reputations").

from lesser writers… There are tables and sociological statistics available galore if you have a taste for that sort of thing, but it is to novels that those interested in the scent and flavour of the past must go" (15). Such observations reflect a commonplace tendency to read Pym's years editing the International Africa Institute's anthropological journal, *Africa*, as a formative influence on the style and substance of her writing. Populated by countless professional anthropologists, her novels are anthropological in both form and content.

If Barbara Pym's literary meals are historically "truthful," however, they are also fictional: eating generates plot, character, and narrative. Young men show up unannounced and demand dinner; frugal spinsters take tea alongside handsome clergymen, while each jealously eyes the cake. Blending an ethnographic attention to detail with social commentary and romantic plotting, Pym's novels enact what Joe B. Fulton calls a "mediation between detachment and community" (92): her "anthropological aesthetic conjoins detached observation with intimate participation, crafting empathy from detachment" (95). Though the anthropologists in her novels record data in a purportedly "objective" manner, characters participate in plot-making by observing and interpreting others' eating habits.

Pym's narrative approach to quotidian details aligns her work both with other late modernist novels and with the novel of manners, in which "the domestic reflects the values of the society in which the individual lives" (Brothers 159). In making individual and collective foodways her subject, Pym addresses not merely the intricacies of private life, but the interactions between the public and private spheres. In *Excellent Women*, *Less Than Angels*, and *A Glass of Blessings*, characters negotiate acceptable food

behaviours with an eye to the conflicting mythologies surrounding class, gender, and labour in the 1940s and 1950s.

Pym's nuanced depictions of food purchasing, preparation, and consumption underscore the importance of auto-ethnography in the context of imperial contraction. As Hope Hodgkins notes, following Michael Cotsell, "Pym's fiction typifies midcentury self-perception: the 'minor events in minor lives' … belong to the postwar context in which 'something major—Britain—became minor'" (526).[72] Pym's novels scrutinize middleclass English cuisine in contrast to foodways in Italy, France, Portugal, and various unnamed African countries as a means of exploring the significance of the ways in which individuals and communities eat; they probe expectations about male and female appetites and confront gaps between imagination and reality through the portrayal of shared and solitary meals. Indulgence and abstention reveal characters' awareness of their positions within a larger social and historical landscape, as well as their abilities to evolve in response to changes in that landscape—especially those wrought by wartime and postwar food policy. Tom's death "in the field" in *Less Than Angels* suggests that travelling to a distant country to examine cultural conventions is both ludicrous and unnecessary; in-depth anthropological research can be conducted just as fruitfully in London as in obscure African villages. Pym's novels, like her notebooks and diaries, perform the kind of "detective work" and "research into the lives of ordinary people" that became "what the keeping of field notes is to an anthropologist" (Holt xv) or a Mass

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[72] Hodgkins reads both Pym and Muriel Spark as unacknowledged Movement writers who, along with Kingsley Amis and Alan Sillitoe, rejected modernist experimentation in favour of deflated minimalism of style and subject matter; their celebration of "feminine trivia," she argues, challenged masculine expectations about women and fiction at midcentury. While Pym's works do evoke a similar blend of skepticism and nostalgia for parochial England to that evinced by writers such as Amis and Philip Larkin, her fiction is more critical of that nostalgia, and ultimately rejects the kind of elegiac pathos that characterizes poems like "Church-Going."

Observationist: an archive of life in a small corner of England. Throughout Pym's works, the ways in which individuals adapt their cooking and eating to the people around them generate new models of kinship and citizenship in postwar Britain.

Domestic Labour in Pym's *Excellent Women* (1952)

Pym's fiction records quotidian meals partly as a means of rendering women's domestic work visible. Her acknowledgement of the invisible labour involved in food preparation—and refusal to omit the arduous details of shopping, cooking, and cleaning—suggest the increased importance of domestic tasks during and after the war. Governmental recognition of housework *as* work constituted an important acknowledgement for women labouring on the home front. Just as Lord Woolton encouraged the housewives of England to contribute "by doing their own job" throughout and after the war even though "[h]ousekeeping might be dull," the single and married women in Pym's novels are aware of their primary responsibility towards others: to "get our men fed" ("Wartime Feeding"). As Robert Liddell acknowledges, "changes in post-war life put heavier burdens upon the 'excellent women' of the Pym world than on anyone else—indeed a man whose 'womenfolk' were particularly excellent must have felt them comparatively little" (*Mind* 32-3). Historically, women have tended to absorb relative changes in the availability and quality of food by sacrificing their own interests and appetites, a trend exacerbated in the era of austerity. Laura Oren traces the origins of this tendency to the nineteenth-century English economy, in which many unskilled labourers received wages inadequate for supporting moderately sized families:

In order to reduce the pressures, both physical and mental, on the

husband's standard of living, the rest of the family had to take second place. Through the medium of the family's economy the wife served as a buffer for her husband. She absorbed the blows of an insecure existence and provided the necessary margin for continuation of family life out of her own, and the children's standard of living. … The wife's elastic standard of living served as a buffer for the larger economic system as well. (121)

Prioritizing the feeding of male breadwinners initially ensured their continued productivity as workers and abilities to provide for their families, a justification for female self-sacrifice that would become less compelling over the course of the twentieth century.[73]

In both the private and public spheres, Pym's "[m]en and women are still divided into two classes—those served and those who serve" (Brothers 159). Barbara Brothers identifies the crux of the conflict in Pym's novels as the ostensible "class" distinctions between men and women: "her women struggle not with society and its political and economic discriminations but with the expectations and stereotyping of desire that are inherent in the designations of masculine and feminine" (161). The same gendered expectations governing romantic and professional relationships shaped wartime and postwar food policy. Ministry of Food propaganda characterized the perfect housewife as exhibiting patience, perseverance, resourcefulness, and self-sacrifice; government guidelines identified the performance of culinary and domestic labour as the official war work of British women. Even women who moved beyond traditionally feminine spheres

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[73] For discussions of female self-sacrifice in domestic food distribution and consumption, see also Ellen Ross, *Love and Toil*, Raynes Minns, *Bombers and Mash*, and Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska, *Austerity in Britain*.

in order to do war work—especially those registered for factory or agricultural work due to labour shortages—were criticized for leaving their homes and communities, for impinging on traditionally male territory, and for being "unfeminine" or even immoral (Rose 110-11). Women working outside of the home were still expected to perform housework and domestic tasks in their time off. Female citizenship remained predicated on domesticity. Throughout her oeuvre, Pym renders such gendered divisions of labour absurd: male characters are either hapless dependents on the skills and patience of the women around them, or help to construct new models of domesticity by participating in the planning and preparation of meals.

In *Excellent Women*, 1950s shortages of food and housing make it impossible to maintain a façade of easy and graceful hostessing. The apartment-sharing necessitated by postwar conditions collapses boundaries between food presentation and its physical function. Just as bombs exposed internal spaces to the public eye or forced strangers together in crowded shelters, Helena and Rockingham Napier's domestic disputes are clearly audible to Mildred Lathbury from an apartment that is "not properly self-contained" (*Excellent* 12) in any sense of the word. Cohabitation is a source of discomfort and tension for the Napiers; for Mildred and her former roommate, Dora; and for Julian and Winifred Malory and their temporary tenant, Allegra Gray. Characters interrupt one another's routines and demand accommodation and feeding. Recalling the irritations of life with Dora, Mildred thinks "how pleasant it [is] to be living alone" in her flat rather than subject to culinary quirks such as Dora's beaded milk-jug cover (20). Solitude allows for self-care even as it contains the threat of loneliness.

While Pym's protagonists are primarily middleclass women who retain a strong

sense of their social positions, austerity interferes with the execution of domestic duties; the typical Pym heroine is "unmistakably a gentlewoman, but living at the shabby lower end of gentility" (Cooley 4). When Mildred first meets Helena Napier in *Excellent Women*, the former is "bent low over the bin and scrabbl[ing] a few tea leaves and potato peelings out of the bottom of [her] bucket" (8). Mildred, having meant to ask her over for coffee, is embarrassed that she and her neighbour should have met in this way. "It was to have been a gracious, civilized occasion," she fantasizes, "with my best coffee cups and biscuits on little silver dishes" (8). She is likewise embarrassed when Helena publicly addresses the private issue of toilet paper in the shared bathroom: Lathbury "come[s] from a circle that does not shout aloud about such things" (12). Signalling excretion and waste as the end of consumption, trashcans and bathrooms are the antithesis of the genteel social encounters imagined by Mildred. The dirty underbelly of fine dining is apparent in the proliferation of filthy dishes and food scraps throughout the novel.

Mutual surveillance is a consequence of communal living. *Excellent Women* captures a parochial lifestyle underscored by the gossipy reportage of even the tiniest menu details: Dora Caldicote gloats over her fellow teacher's mistaking whale meat for Lenten fare (97-8); Julian and Winifred Malory "hardly noticed what they ate or drank, so a meal with them was a doubtful pleasure" (16). Just as Mildred keeps a close eye and ear on the Napiers, in *Less Than Angels*, Deirdre's aunt Mabel takes advantage of suburban proximity to spy on Alaric Lydgate from an upstairs window: "What was the point of living in a suburb," she wonders, "if one couldn't show a healthy curiosity about one's neighbours?" (33). Both women observe and pass judgment on their neighbours' behaviour. Mildred disapproves of Helena's slovenly housekeeping, but realizes she

ought not to intrude. "I don't know whether spinsters are really more inquisitive than married women," she observes, "though I believe they are thought to be because of the emptiness of their lives" (*Excellent* 9). Continuing her wartime work in the Censorship Office, where she peered into other people's letters (*Excellent* 13), Mildred observes and gathers data on the people around her with as much interest as the anthropologists in the novel.

As a result of this observation, Mildred is overly attentive to others, and complicit in the subjugation of her desires to those of the men around her. Even before Rocky arrives home from Italy, she anticipates his alimentary needs. Foreseeing the necessity of letting him into the flat in his wife's absence, she quickly scarfs down her own dinner— half a tin of baked beans. When he acknowledges his inconveniently timed arrival, she brushes aside his apologies:

> I explained that I had just finished supper and added that I found it rather a
> bother cooking just for myself. 'I like food,' I said, 'but I suppose on the
> whole women don't make such a business of living as men do.' I thought
> of my half-used tin of baked beans; no doubt I should be seeing that again
> tomorrow. (32)

For Mildred, taking the time to prepare a delicious meal only to consume it in solitude seems neither worthwhile nor appropriate. Replying that "women don't really appreciate wine either" (32), Rocky perceives feminine self-denial as arising from a lack of taste and discernment. For many of Pym's female characters, fine foods are meant to be shared; solitude is undeserving of *haute cuisine*. Mildred's prim agreement that she "wouldn't dream of drinking a bottle of wine by [her]self" suggests not that she does not enjoy

wine, but that she would not consider her own enjoyment reason enough to open a bottle (32).

Further, she feels compelled to share her precious camembert and hoarded olive oil with Rocky following his separation from Helena. Mildred's actions reflect women's traditional role in feeding the nation, both as mothers and as providers of emergency feeding through organizations like the Women's Voluntary Service. Rocky's statement, "'[t]o think that you should have come in just at this moment, this awful crisis, and given me a delicious lunch'" (*Excellent* 146), both emphasizes and devalues Mildred's heroic self-sacrifice. His freely bestowed charm makes her realize that as a woman, she is fully replaceable, because "even a less attractive man than Rocky would have a devoted woman to prepare a meal for him on the day his wife left him" (145); Julian's arrival in time for tea exacerbates Mildred's sense of being on call for hungry single men (146). Washing dishes provides a temporary escape from entertaining the men—Mildred knows no man will follow her to the sink. Rather than thanking her for cleaning his apartment, Rocky invites Mildred to join the men when she has finished with the saucepans. The narrative dwells on the physical pain in Mildred's back—from leaning over the sink— and the sheer labour involved in scrubbing out pans left to harden for days. Although she fulfills the wifely role of purchasing, preparing, and serving food for both Rocky and Julian, Mildred resents the expectation that she is responsible for such tasks.

The gendered division of domestic labour extends beyond the home into public spaces. In *Excellent Women*, church functions are filled with shiftless male parishioners who help themselves to the best teacakes. At meetings of the Learned Society of anthropologists, Esther Clovis' tea-making skills are critiqued, but no help is offered;

Esther also serves sandwiches to the young male students in *Less Than Angels*. In *A Glass of Blessings*, Pym parodies the harried lives of working women, specifically the civil servants at Rodney's Ministry. Poking fun at the difficulty of balancing domestic and professional duties, Wilmet Forsyth and her mother-in-law Sybil laugh over the prospect of women "who carry baskets as well as briefcases and look both formidable and worried, as if they hoped to slip into the butcher's before going to their desks" (*Glass* 11), including a newspaper story about "a woman civil servant who was discovered preparing Brussels sprouts behind a filing cabinet—poor thing" (11). By rendering invisible labour ludicrously visible, this image encapsulates contemporary anxiety about women's abilities to balance work and domestic duties, both during the war and in the postwar period. While many women were expected to give up jobs outside the home as men returned from fighting, even women entering the workforce in Pym's novels find that "offices … replicate the rituals of the family, including the making of tea and the expectation that women will make the tea" (Brothers 159).

It is fitting in *Excellent Women* that Mildred ultimately grows to care not for Rocky or Julian but for Everard Bone, because he neither helps himself to her rations nor forces her to cook for him. Although she initially refuses Everard's dinner invitation—assuming that he expects her to do the cooking—when she finally agrees, he hires someone else to prepare the meat: a joint is roasting in the oven when she arrives. He is also the only person attentive to Mildred's taste in food and drink. Noticing that she is not enjoying her beer, he asks what she really likes to drink, an underwhelming gesture that nonetheless sets him apart from other male characters (142). In the final scene of the novel, after a shared meal and bottle of wine, Mildred looks forward with resignation and

amusement to the prospect of a lifetime of proofreading, peeling potatoes, and washing up for Everard.

Characters are acutely aware of gaps between public expectations and private desires. Pym's works trouble distinctions between public and private, fantasy and reality by showing characters imagining themselves *as* characters and selecting meals appropriate to specific roles and situations. In *Excellent Women*, Mildred amusedly contemplates her meal of cod, which after the perceived "rejection" of her affections by the newly betrothed Father Malory "seemed a suitable dish for a rejected one and I ate it humbly without any kind of sauce or relish" (*Excellent* 134). Having never actually been in love with Julian, Mildred contemplates her humble meal playfully rather than pathetically. She later eats "a melancholy lunch" in the form of "[a] dried-up scrap of cheese, a few lettuce leaves for which I could not be bothered to make any dressing, a tomato and a piece of bread-and-butter, followed by a cup of coffee made with coffee essence. A real *woman's* meal, I thought" (176). Such self-reflexive detachment is a common feature in Pym's works. Protagonists study their own emotional reactions, and reflect on ways in which their experiences conform to or depart from stereotypical feminine behaviours.

Andrea Adolph highlights the performative dimension of food consumption in Pym's novels: protagonists "adhere to or eschew social constructs of femininity and of female sexuality, depending upon who might be watching her eat and what their interpretation of her consumption might be" (94). Characters test the limits of acceptable feminine behaviour by alternately indulging in and abstaining from rich and expensive food. Further, as Joanna Finkelstein argues, dining out always constitutes a performance

of some kind; this performative quality is brought home to Mildred at her annual luncheon with Dora's brother, William Caldicote. While she appreciates William's discerning restaurant and wine selections, Mildred is embarrassed by his adherence to fine dining conventions. She watches him "apprehensively" as he tastes the wine, "for he was one of those men to whom the formality meant something and he was quite likely to send the bottle back and demand another" (*Excellent* 67). William's "preoccupation with his health and his food," like his "spiteful old-maidish delight in gossip" (*Excellent* 64), both hints at his status as a "confirmed bachelor" and distances him from the self-sacrificing Mildred, who conforms to the conventions of restaurant dining without adapting them to her own needs. William's actions acknowledge the true purpose of the wine-tasting ritual—as a means of determining quality and ruling out corkage—and express his comfort in demanding the best service and ingredients.

Whereas Mildred frets over unromantic meals, in *Less Than Angels* Catherine Oliphant and Deirdre Swan feel guilty about their healthy appetites at moments of crisis. Their anxieties reinforce the notion that for women, comfort is antithetical to meaningful relationships and achievement. Catherine cooks well and treats herself to appetizing, solitary meals, belying Mark Penfold's guess that "It's so depressing cooking for one person, or so one hears" (25). Yet even she refuses to disappoint Mark and Digby Fox when they show up at teatime, "for they came like trusting animals, expecting to be fed" (*Less* 28).[74] The ironic detachment with which the independent Catherine treats her

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[74] Mark and Digby have comically voracious appetites. Their hunger is due in part to their limited student budgets, as a stressful pub lunch with Esther Clovis and Gertrude Lydgate reveals. Humour and anxiety derive from their expectation of treating the much older women; worrying over the seemingly enormous appetites of their companions, Mark and Digby strategically order a strange assortment of the cheapest menu items, yet Esther pays the entire bill herself (98-102). They are much more comfortable drawing on the resources of others, including the free meals offered at anthropological functions, than in supplying food themselves.

complicit endorsement of such culinary extortion is typical of female cooks in the novels. They self-consciously enact feminine self-sacrifice. Acknowledging the ridiculousness of catering to men, Pym's protagonists tend wryly to prop up the type of "reciprocal relationship" described by Mark: "the woman giving the food and shelter and doing some typing for him and the man giving the priceless gift of himself" (76). Mark's suggestion that women should be grateful to men for their mere existence reflects postwar shortages of eligible bachelors, echoed in Mrs. Beddoes' anxiety about finding enough young male guests for her daughter's coming-out party.

Pym's novels poke fun at the idea that lone women do not require or desire elaborate meals. Female characters repeatedly contemplate the appropriateness of dishes for specific occasions; their solitary meal choices indicate their roles either as "excellent women" such as Mildred Lathbury or slightly "less fine" (*Glass* 103) women like Wilmet Forsyth. A sense of fitness about the specific type of meal suited to sad, happy, or neutral occasions offers pleasure both in the adherence to what is "done"—or what might be done in romantic fiction—and in the subversion of those expectations. By depicting women experiencing not glamorous feasts or tragic famines but "common meals of cafeteria food and baked beans on toast," Pym uses food to "subvert romantic discourse" (Tsagaris 11).

High Church and *Haute Cuisine*: Pym's *A Glass of Blessings* (1958)

Cuisine builds community through shared taste and experience; cooking, serving, and eating brings people together. Laying bare the occasionally pointless rituals that make up her characters' lives, Pym nonetheless acknowledges that the rituals themselves

are often the point. In church as in society, rules and rituals provide a means of mediating and offsetting the distance between the individual and the group. Dietary restrictions and shared cuisines unify imagined communities, to use Benedict Anderson's term, in part through their reiteration in cookbooks and other texts. Predicated on intimacy and shared experience, Pym's parishes suggest nationhood through inclusivity and cultural particularity. Food and religion are linked throughout Pym's works.

In *A Glass of Blessings*, religion provides community rather than spiritual enlightenment, with shared meals at church functions, jumble sales, and social evenings proving as important to parishioners as the services themselves. Clergymen are susceptible to aestheticism and gourmandizing. Father Thames' insistence that the breakfast provided for incoming curate Father Ransome may be "'light'—even 'continental'—he would not require more than that" appears to Wilmet Forsyth "rather presumptuous, for the new curate might well have a hearty appetite and would surely deserve more than a light breakfast after saying early mass" (26). The appetites of the clergy provide a constant source of humour, particularly when physical appetite takes precedence over spiritual needs. Although the appropriateness of an austere meal promises deeper rewards than the hedonistic enjoyment of a lavish one, in Pym's world, indulgence often wins out, even during Lent. Housekeeper Wilfred Bason serves octopus and sole *véronique* to the clergymen, his choice of menu complying with the letter if not the spirit of Lenten law. When Wilmet learns that the surprisingly irreverent Father Ransome has given up drinking for Lent, she questions him about such religious minutiae:

> 'All these abstinences and fastings are rather difficult for lay people to

remember,' I said. 'I always find them very muddling. I suppose one could

always ask the clergy when in doubt.' 'Of course,' he agreed, 'or write to

our favourite church newspaper. "Is there any liturgical objection to eating

hot cross buns on Maundy Thursday?" you might ask.' 'And whatever

would the answer to that be?' He looked at me solemnly, then said in a

prim tone, 'We *know* of none, though we should *not* care to do so

ourselves.' (*Glass* 147)

Ransome is facetiously scrupulous. This passage comically deflates religious strictures on consumption by suggesting that they result from primness rather than ethics.

Contrasts between High and Low Church customs parallel distinctions between continental Europe and England—the former associated with sensuality and epicurean decadence, the latter with pragmatism, dependability, and drabness. In *Excellent Women*, Italy is the country in which Rockingham Napier spent the war "in a luxurious villa overlooking the Mediterranean," with very little to do "but be charming to a lot of dreary Wren officers in ill-fitting white uniforms" (9). Rocky's cooking skills and fastidious tidiness further associate him with the antiheroic aestheticism of upper-class intellectuals. Rocky, who appears in both *Excellent Women* and *A Glass of Blessings* (though only in memory in the latter), is a romantic and charming figure who lacks the honour and vigour of a chivalric British hero.

Exoticism is often subjugated to national pride and the insularity of English cookery. As Wilmet observes of her friend in *A Glass of Blessings*, "Rowena was a good cook and would have liked to make exotic dishes, but the tyranny of Harry and the children made it necessary for her to keep to plain wholesome English food" (37).

Despite the allure of rich, continental flavours, "plain wholesome English food" wins out with conservative Englishmen. Characters must balance selflessness with tastefulness: totally self-sacrificing characters are perceived as uncomfortably ascetic and naively unsuited to modern life, while characters too attentive to earthly pleasures appear unpleasantly sybaritic. For Wilmet and Catherine, excessive and insufficient interests in are equally analogous to foolishness. Continental cuisine signifies a rich fantasy life of romance and possibility that is wholly separate from everyday life in Britain, yet most characters are content occasionally to taste rich, oily, spicy foods, then go home to their drab bedsits.

Similarly, Wilmet's husband Rodney suggests that his mother's romantic rival fails because of the sheer Englishness of her relationship. After ten years of hiking vacations in Exmoor, it is not surprising to Rodney that Professor Arthur Root decides instead to accompany Sybil Forsyth on the continental excursion that becomes their honeymoon: "'[s]itting on mackintoshes, eating packed lunches over the years, and then tramping home again through the rain—one can see how he would yearn after Portugal'" (*Glass* 186). English lunches are less conducive to love and marriage than the romantic luncheons associated with continental travel.

Alimentary and sexual hunger overlap in Pym's novels, occasionally to the point of becoming comically indistinguishable. Pym delves into the capacity for food to act as an instrument of seduction. As *Excellent Women* demonstrates, the preparation of a meal is a particularly meaningful gesture in the context of rationing, because it constitutes a real sacrifice regardless of the wealth of the provider. Moreover, the intimacy of shared meals operates as a catalyst for socialization. In *A Glass of Blessings*, a novel less

preoccupied with shortages (both because it was written post-rationing and because its heroine is insulated by wealth and marriage), the scenarios in which meals are prepared and consumed nonetheless challenge Wilmet's preconceived notions about appropriate pairings. When Wilmet meets Piers Longridge for lunch, for example, he takes her to a city workers' restaurant on Fleet Street that is "not the kind of place [she is] used to being taken to." But her "first feeling of disappointment [gives] way to one of pleasure that he should consider [her] the kind of person who could fit into his ordinary routine in this way" (*Glass* 159). Like the sense of community deriving from shared sacrifice in the era of austerity, sharing unimpressive meals allows for intimacy in a way that a gourmet meal does not.

Meals are endowed with romantic and sexual potential beyond their importance as a precursor to amorous encounters. In *A Glass of Blessings*, when Mary tells Wilmet that Father Marius Lovejoy will lodge with her and her mother and "cook his own breakfast on a gas ring" (51), Wilmet is both annoyed that the "[t]all, dark and handsome" (62) new curate will be living with her kind but plain friend and "amused at the picture of him cooking his own breakfast on a gas ring. The whole thing seemed most unsuitable" (51). She later responds defensively to Sybil's suggestion that either Mrs. or Miss Beamish will get any enjoyment out of the arrangement by emphasizing that they will not be sharing meals: "'I don't imagine they'll see much of him,' [she says] quickly. 'He is having his main meals at the clergy house and just making his breakfast on a gas ring at the Beamishes'" (62). Wilmet salves her touchiness at the missed opportunity to socialize with Marius with the knowledge that while providing meals for a man constitutes an appropriate and effective means of courtship, it is a recourse denied to Mary Beamish.

In *Less Than Angels*, Catherine's cooking tends towards the bohemian and continental. Like other middlebrow heroines, she is incisive, literary, and attractively unconventional; "domesticated in a casual way," she is a "good cook" whose hands are "often rough with housework and sometimes smel[l] of garlic" (26). Her gastronomical approach reflects the same creativity she demonstrates in her job as a writer of romantic fiction. A warm and relaxed hostess, she "slop[s] about in espadrilles like an old Frenchwoman" (69) and fuels her culinary efforts with generous amounts of alcohol ("'I need some inspiration in the kitchen,' she explain[s to Tom], 'and cooks in literature are always drunken, aren't they?'" [68]). She regularly shops in Soho, returning with a "string bag laden with exotic foods" (107). Tom and Catherine's favourite Cypriot restaurant—with its inconsistent chef, small dining room, and cheap takeout wine— reflects the stylish bohemianism characteristic of both Catherine herself and postwar domesticity more generally (Humble, *Culinary* 119).

Though Catherine's domestic style is the outcome of limited funds as much as midcentury fashions, it conveys the culinary excitement craved by postwar British diners. Catherine's appeal is evident in Deirdre's unwitting imitation of her lifestyle. Rejecting the bland foods of her suburban home, Deirdre aspires to the bohemian independence enjoyed by Catherine and exemplified in the aspirational cookbooks of Elizabeth David. She rejects her mother's offer of an egg because, when she begins falling in love with Tom, she craves something exotically Mediterranean—"something *different*," she explains to her astonished mother and aunt—"'Some rice, all oily and saffron yellow, with aubergines and red peppers and lots of garlic,' went on Deirdre extravagantly" (38). Their love affair is further linked to rich flavours and an impolite amount of garlic when

Catherine discovers them holding hands over a cooling moussaka.

In her creative execution of household tasks, Catherine represents a new ideal of British domesticity. Her improvisational approach to cooking reflects a larger adaptability and resilience. She whips up a risotto from ingredients in her pantry to feed Mark and Digby (29); upon discovering Tom and Deirdre eating dinner in "their" restaurant, she marvels at her own "sardonic detachment," and salves her feelings not by self-flagellating over a plain boiled egg, but by entering the nearest restaurant. Catherine's pragmatic attitude to heartbreak—as well as her hearty appetite—punctures performative fasting such as Allegra Gray's in *Excellent Women*.[75] Such competitive self-denial is a form of lateral aggression. Though Catherine takes temporary solace in the suburban blandness of the Swans' home after Tom's death, she is relieved to return to her one-person bedsit, where she is once again free to enjoy oily, garlicky food and tooth-blackening red wine. Mediterranean cuisine suggests both romance and rebellion.

Food choices define social tone and character: characters are classed according to whether they prefer smoked or tinned salmon, tea or martinis (*Glass* 7, 52). Food settings are equally important. Restaurant selection, as well as whether the meal shared is lunch, tea, or dinner, has important ramifications for would-be lovers; Rodney is unfazed to hear that Wilmet has shared *lunch* with Harry, which he views as less threatening than his own *dinners* with a woman from the Ministry. When Wilmet and Harry dine together, he takes

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[75] At lunch with Mildred, Allegra pushes her food around her plate in a show of delicacy, which makes Mildred feel "brutish" for eating everything on hers (125). Allegra alludes to the performative aspect of such behaviour by comparing herself to the Lapith sisters in Aldous Huxley's *Crome Yellow* (1921). The story of George and the Lapiths, a nested narrative in Huxley's odd novel, describes George's attraction to three sisters who refuse to eat because it is "so coarse" and "so unspiritual." He is enamoured of their ethereal beauty and purity, until one evening he stumbles upon a feast laid in their boudoir: "The carcase of a cold chicken, a bowl of fruit, a great ham, deeply gashed to its heart of tenderest white and pink, the brown cannon ball of a cold plum-pudding, a slender Hock bottle, and a decanter of claret jostled one another for a place on this festive board. And round the table sat the three sisters, the three lovely Lapiths— eating!" George promptly blackmails the eldest into marrying him in exchange for keeping her secret.

her to Simpson's in the Strand, a "rather masculine sort of restaurant, famed for its meat, where great joints were wheeled up to the table for [their] choice and approval" (88).[76] Perhaps as a nod to the black-market meats of austerity Britain, the massive roast seems sinful to Wilmet. She associates it with adultery and lust, and finds herself "turning aside with a sort of womanly delicacy, hardly able to look it in the face, for there was something almost indecent about the sight of meat in such abundance" (89).

As Mrs. Morris observes in *Excellent Women*, meat is traditionally associated with "[s]trong passions, isn't it… Eating meat, you know, it says that in the Bible" (22). Pym plays on the heightened association of beef and virility in the context of meat rationing, when extreme shortages forced the majority of British citizens drastically to reduce their intake—a fact acknowledged in Mrs. Morris' double entendre, "Not that we get much of it now." Roast beef is also stereotypically English, a symbol of British manhood, military strength, and anti-Gallic sentiment since at least the eighteenth century.[77] The link between meat and manliness, brought to the forefront during the war, renders episodes in which clergymen and old women crave meat doubly comic in their departure from expectations about the dietary preferences of curates and grandmothers.

Despite the association of meat and virility, Wilmet translates Harry's desire that the two of them have extramarital "fun together" into the safer prospect of "[e]ndless

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[76] Like Lyons Corner Houses—teashops offering respite to tired shoppers in downtown London and elsewhere—Simpson's in the Strand appears frequently in twentieth-century literature. Unlike Lyons, Simpson's is still in operation, though it is now under the management of the Fairmont group. In addition to embarrassing Wilmet with the sheer manliness of its roasts, Simpson's appears in two Sherlock Holmes stories as well as E.M. Forster's *Howards End* (1910), where the restaurant serves huge haunches of mutton and beef in what Mr. Wilcox describes as a "thoroughly Old English" fashion (158-60); it also features in P.G. Wodehouse's *Something New* (1915), which describes it as "a pleasant, soothing, hearty place—a restful temple of food" in which "white-robed priests, wheeling their smoking trucks, move to and fro, ever ready with fresh supplies."

[77] See Ben Rogers, *Beef and Liberty: Roast Beef, John Bull and the English Nation* for an extended analysis of the role of beef in English national identity.

good lunches with lots of lovely meat," an interpretation that at once encourages Harry to

become "more obviously flirtatious" (*Glass* 89) and defuses the situation. Rowena laughs

that Harry never takes *her* out for "All that wonderful meat" (137). Food is not a means

to an end but an end in itself. Because these hypothetical encounters centre on "endless"

food and flirtation rather than a series of perfunctory meals ending in sex, they appear

harmless; Pym also negates the potential for the narrative to end in romantic climax in

other ways. Both Harry and Piers are revealed as sexual dead ends for Wilmet: Piers

because he is gay; Harry because Rowena and Wilmet openly acknowledge and

neutralize his adulterous crush.

Marriage is most notable in Pym's works by its minorness. Though preoccupied

with romantic love, female characters are almost always unmarried and self-conscious in

their spinsterhood.[78] Voracious readers, single female characters like Mildred and

Catherine describe themselves with reference to literary traditions, particularly the

marriage plots governing eighteenth and nineteenth-century novels. They ironically

comment on their own failings as romantic heroines, implicitly acknowledging the realist

tradition of marriage as "*the* ultimate signifier of personal and social well-being" (Boone

66).[79] Pym challenges the supremacy of such love plots by satirizing Victorian ideals of

love: she "makes the ideal absurd by mocking romantic love and depicting the many

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[78] Wilmet is a notable exception. In "Barbara Pym's Women," Margaret C. Bradham offers a detailed overview of the female protagonists in Pym's first eleven published novels: three are "excellent women," unmarried women who are sensible, good, and involved in church life; five are spinsters who work in offices or from home; one is an independently wealthy spinster; one is an unmarried companion to an old woman; two are unmarried career women; and only three are married, two to vicars and one to a civil servant (63). The last, of course, is Wilmet.

[79] In *Tradition Counter Tradition*, Joseph A. Boone argues that the nineteenth-century novel treats romanticized marriage as the most reliable indicator of psychological depth and development. In novels of development about women, moreover, he suggests that it operates as the *only* indicator: "in female variations of the [bildungsroman] the climactic event of marriage confers on the heroine her entire personal identity (as wife) as well as her social "vocation" (as mother)" (74).

forms that loving takes—platonic, love between men, friendship between women"
(Brothers 158). Alluding to social and literary expectations about single women, the
spinsters, widows, and unmarried young women in Pym's novels may hunger for love,
but self-consciously deconstruct stereotypes of the loneliness, boredom, and selflessness
of independent women.

Marriages and proposals tend to happen outside of the texts. Mildred remains
contentedly independent at the end of *Excellent Women*; only in *Less Than Angels*,
published three years later, does Pym reveal that Everard has indeed married a "rather
dull" but supportive clergyman's daughter who helps with his typing (64). Such
parenthetical treatment of marriage undercuts the consummation of romantic love by
refusing to make it the central narrative event. As Barbara Brothers points out, the
pleasures of courtship and marriage are no more crucial to individual or social happiness
than the sharing of a meal: "In Pym's novels, romantic love provides no more personal
gratification than the comfort of a cup of tea or the solace of a good book" (158). In light
of new economic freedoms for women in the postwar period, the novels resist marriage
as a means of illustrating individual fulfilment; other models of happiness are offered in
addition or instead. Food is prized as a source of pleasure and community, and as a means
of caring for others and exploring domestic and foreign food cultures.

By contrast, *A Glass of Blessings* illustrates the plight of the postwar housewife,
formerly engaged in active war work and now returned to a domestic life of idleness. The
novel deflates several ideals of womanhood. Wilmet, an unemployed wife sharing her
mother-in-law's home, occasionally feels purposeless, and fills her days with tasks to
give her life a sense of purpose. Yet though she envies the "comfortable busyness" of her

friends with children (17), she does not envy their parenthood, preferring the quiet leisure

of her life and meals. Staying with Rowena and Harry for the weekend, Wilmet is

grateful not to join them for breakfast, "glad to lie in bed the next morning, listening to

the sound of the children getting up and Harry shouting at them to be quiet, until a tray of

orange juice, coffee and toast was brought to me" (40). The contrast between the

luxurious breakfast in bed and the screaming family downstairs undermines the

idealization of motherhood so crucial to MOF propaganda, just as the unmarried Piers

Longridge discourages Wilmet's attempt to fill her days with Portuguese lessons.

"Haven't you enough occupation?" Piers chides. "That's what I like about you—your air

of leisure and elegance… You can always do church work if you want a worthy

occupation" (*Glass* 161). Discounting Wilmet's potential to do meaningful work in any

unconventional capacity, the novel underscores the domestication of female labour.

By contrast, Sybil's "pie-dishes full of pottery fragments" (*Glass* 10) suggest a

misdirection of energy in the kitchen: she chooses archaeology over baking. Yet Sybil is

thoughtful in her meal selection; she plans a birthday meal for Wilmet comprised of all

her favourite dishes. In fact, neither Wilmet nor Sybil has to cook or clean, thanks to the

reliable Rhoda of the excellent cheese soufflé. That Wilmet and Rodney still live with his

mother points to the shortages just outside the narrative, which are also hinted at by Piers'

shoddy flat and neighbourhood. After Sybil's marriage to Arnold forces them out of the

house, Wilmet will presumably have to learn to cook, although the novel closes with the

younger couple on their way to Sybil and Arnold's for dinner. Mary Ann Schofield

suggests that the novelistic use of "food as feminine dialogue is just one example of the

encoding language that women have adopted in order to be able to talk to one another"

(62). Food offers a covert means of communication for savvy diners, in much the same way that extensive knowledge of food and wine signifies minute social distinctions. Sybil's culinary freedom is perhaps attributable to widowhood, as she has already paid her dues by marrying and raising a son. In the end, she remarries for love; she is one of the few Pym women who find both romance—evidenced by Arnold's extravagant roses and thoughtful card—and reciprocity.

Pym further undercuts heteronormative domesticity by offering alternative models of happy home life. Siblings happily cohabitate in several of her novels, including Julian and Winifred Malory in *Excellent Women*. In *A Glass of Blessings*, queer characters Wilfred Bason and Keith both cook and clean: Mr. Bason because it is his job as housekeeper, and Keith because he wishes to care for his partner. Although a penchant for cookery may signal homosexuality in Pym, it can also be a class designation, indicating a leisurely lifestyle seen as undesirable and inappropriate in the context of international conflict. Andrea Adolph argues that "both Mr. Bason and Piers Longridge are constructed as domestic and as feminized, but their epicurean tastes exceed their gendered selves… Keith, for instance, has made a pristine 'home' for Piers, who has otherwise lived in alcoholic squalor, while Bason brought civilized cooking to the parish priests used to living on British basics such as 'baked beans and chips'" (57). Whereas Keith, a handsome young catalogue model, exemplifies lower middleclass domesticity and is not particularly knowledgeable about food, Wilf is a gourmet who takes pleasure in preparing and serving excellent food to the discerning Father Ransome.

Queer cooking in Pym's works deviates from stodgy, traditionally British fare in favour of spicy, rich Mediterranean flavours. Keith comes closest to fulfilling the

idealized vision of the housewife put forward by the MOF: he cooks, cleans, and fusses over Piers with enthusiasm. When Wilmet and Rodney visit the coffee shop where Keith works, they are amused by the crowded café, filled "with the young people one saw and read about but seldom met," and by Keith's boundless energy: as Piers observes, "He loves fussing round after people" (234-5). The antique store-cum-teashop where Mr. Bason works is similarly eye-opening for the married couple. It is packed with both tacky objects—ships in bottles, horse brasses, and other self-consciously old-fashioned kitsch—and patrons "giggling in a rather unseemly way," "as if ashamed of their conversation" (244). The beard and bohemian costume worn by "Wilf" are as overwrought as the selection of teas listed for the overwhelmed Wilmet and Rodney. Yet the men are in their elements catering to others in establishments that, though unfamiliar to Wilmet, are appealing in the happiness they bring to their proprietors.

Communal Dining and the Expansion of British Culinary Culture

Pym's novels negotiate the transition to a postwar world in which women were attempting to maintain their positions in the workforce—jobs the government wished to coerce them into freeing up for returning male veterans—while continuing unpaid labour at home. Even single women in Pym's works are conscripted into caring for their male friends and colleagues. Scenes in which women eat plain or humble meals on their own, saving their best ingredients and cookery skills for male guests, indicate socialized inferiority; like Eleanor and Julia in *At Mrs. Lippincote's*, who "manage with some cheese" for dinner when the man of the house is out (58), Pym's female protagonists cook delicious meals for company, and blandly sustaining ones for themselves. The

contrast between depictions of solitary and communal meals calls attention to flaws in the

utopian project of setting up large, impersonal canteens as national ideals. As Richard

Farmer suggests in *The Food Companions*, solitary dining was portrayed as an

unpatriotic act at midcentury. Eating alone signals outsider status, especially in collective

social spaces like pubs and canteens. But the pleasures of solitary consumption challenge

readings of lone diners and drinkers as antisocial in conceptions of wartime and postwar

national character. Pym's female characters often express ambivalence about the

emotional and social benefits of preparing and serving food to others. While the novels

ultimately suggest that communal meals are necessary and mostly pleasurable, they reject

models in which women are expected willingly to cater to men.

In contrast to the romantic intimacy of Italian and Greek restaurants, large

utilitarian cafeterias recur throughout Pym's works as metaphors for the welfare state.

Drab, mediocre, and stressful but open to all, such "eating-places" feel dehumanizing, yet

paradoxically offer an optimistic postwar vision of community and peaceful cohabitation.

Just as she does following their breakup, after Tom's departure to Africa in *Less Than

Angels*, Catherine wanders into a large restaurant upon which she projects her angst and

contemplates the desolation of modern life:

> She got off the bus and entered a large restaurant with a noble foyer
>
> thronged with people, none of them seeming to know which direction they
>
> were going in. They wandered, bewildered, rudderless, in need not only of
>
> someone to tell them which of the many separate cafes would supply their
>
> immediate material wants, but of a guide to the deeper and higher things
>
> of life. While a glance at the menus displayed or a word with the attendant

would supply the former, who was to fulfill the latter? The anthropologist,

laying bare the structure of society, or the writer of romantic fiction,

covering it up? (*Less* 194-5)

Such rooms inspire meditations on humanity and the potential for such undiscriminating

communal feeding zones to offer sites of potential community. Patrons of these

establishments appear "rudderless," disconnected from the intimacy of smaller

restaurants. They are overwhelmed by choice and lack guidance. The dining experience is

inhumane: self-service necessitates stress and rushing, while crowded tables lead to odd

encounters.

Mirroring the austerity of these solitary meals, communal feeding in Pym's work

hints at the grin-and-bear-it stoicism of the lean years; characters dine in dismal food

factories serving meals that constitute a test of fortitude rather than an enjoyable

experience. When Wilmet wonders whether her husband would be capable of flirting

with another woman over a meal in *A Glass of Blessings*, she is unable to picture him

anywhere but in the Ministry canteen—sufficient for seducing a typist, she imagines, but

hardly worthy of a briefcase-bearing civil servant. By ridiculing the practical reality of

state-subsidized canteens and cafeterias, Pym undercuts the connection between

communal feeding and heroic national unity. With its resonances of the factory canteen

and the British Restaurant—a patriotic term coined by Churchill (Calder, *People's War*

445) and replaced by "Civic Restaurant" in the postwar years—the cafeteria is a repellent

legacy of communal wartime eateries.

State-subsidized canteens and cafeterias have a history dating from the 1800s.

James Vernon traces the history of communal feeding in Britain back to Victorian soup

kitchens and workhouses; he relates their emergence to the larger British transition to viewing hunger as a social problem and humanitarian issue (rather than a divine punishment or reflection of character) over the course of the nineteenth century. Following the nutritional advances of the 1930s, the Ministries of both Food and Labour prioritized feeding through the expansion of school meals programs and the introduction of the Factory (Canteens) Order of 1940, which "required all firms employing more than 250 workers engaged in government or munitions work to establish canteens" (Vernon 166). Given the flat-rate rationing that was central to the British wartime plan, canteens allowed the government to supplement the diets of factory workers and miners. British Restaurants were similarly designed to allow people of all income levels to eat nutritious, off-ration meals. While canteens had a welfare component, they were also "intended to provide what the Inter-Departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration had called social education":

> that is, training, or one could say disciplining, in the efficiency, civility, and solidarity of society. The canteen was never simply the product of a new social ethic for governing of hunger; it actively assembled the model of the good society in whose name it acted. Champions of canteens saw them as a social laboratory, a tool of social engineering. (166)

Conceived as centrally positioned, with big windows, good lighting, and lots of modern, hygienic chrome and glass, midcentury cafeterias were designed along the same aspirational lines as much midcentury architecture. Moreover, cafeteria design was intended to shape diner behaviour. By bringing people together for shared meals, cafeterias theoretically allowed employers and schoolteachers to model good health,

productivity, social adaptability, civility, and sanitary habits; canteens were imagined as utopian spaces encouraging social engagement and national unity (Vernon 167-8).

In practice, both school meals and factory canteens "continued to be plagued by a litany of complaints," from bad service to inedible meals (Vernon 177). As Conservative MP Sir William Darling joked, "one needs to be British to 'take it' in a British restaurant" (qtd in Ziegler 251). The negative legacy of institutional dining is evident in memoirs of boarding school life and throughout midcentury literature. In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Winston and his coworker Syme move through a dystopian cafeteria: "In the low-ceilinged canteen, deep under ground, the lunch queue jerked slowly forward. The room was already very full and deafeningly noisy. From the grille at the counter the steam of stew came pouring forth, with a sour metallic smell which did not quite overcome the fumes of Victory Gin" (51). Both men hold "greasy metal tray[s]," onto which are "dumped swiftly the regulation lunch—a metal pannikin of pinkish-grey stew, a hunk of bread, a cube of cheese, a mug of milkless Victory Coffee, and one saccharine tablet" (52-3). The stew, "a filthy liquid mess that had the appearance of vomit," contains "cubes of spongy pinkish stuff that was probably a preparation of meat" mixed "in among its general sloppiness" (53). Such hyperbolically revolting scenes hint at contemporary attitudes towards institutional dining. Cafeterias represent a uniquely British attitude to food based on utility and democracy rather than enjoyment.

Communal dining spaces purport to contribute to cultural unity even as they represent a departure from more appealing dining traditions. When Wilmet follows Sybil into one such cafeteria in *A Glass of Blessings*, she observes that "[a]lthough [Sybil] knew about good food, she had a rather splendid indifference to it where it concerned

herself and I had often been with her to places which my own fastidiousness or squeamishness would have stopped me from entering alone" (22). Sybil's hearty attitude, and the "detached efficiency" (22) with which she treats her food as fuel, parody the asceticism encouraged by the MOF during the war. This scene also recalls the first "vast eating-place" in which Catherine finds herself in *Less Than Angels*, which serves up a selection of "oddments" in both food and clientele: Catherine is surprised at both the "curious array" of foods and at "how many souls" are eating there at the "unusual time" between tea and supper (108). Mildred's cafeteria experience in *Excellent Women* is even more horrific: she is left with a tray full of food that she has no desire to eat and no memory of choosing. Cafeterias are distinctly unromantic. Yet in the crowded canteen, Mildred is forced into contact with her fellow citizens, and inspired to contemplate a new and heterogeneous vision of a unified nation. "These are our neighbours," she thinks, "and we must love them all" (*Excellent* 75). Her revelation about the cafeteria as a microcosm of cultural unity touches on the rapid demographic transformations taking place in postwar Britain. Immigration and cultural exchange from the late 1940s, especially the influx of British citizens from Caribbean colonies, led to a sea change in the British food landscape. As Esty asserts, "the immediate postwar period saw invocations of cultural wholeness challenged by the dawning recognition that the post-imperial nation would be a multicultural and heterogeneous place" (165). The importance of restaurant and cafeteria dining in Pym's works underscores the national alternative to at-home dining that was built into aspects of postwar planning.

Portraying the domestic lives of queer characters, bohemians, spinsters, and foreigners, Pym expands both the parameters of British cookery and the concept of

Britishness itself. Her novels depict a range of communal and solitary dining spaces,

from traditional English chop-houses to bohemian cafés to intimate, immigrant-run

restaurants. Pym acknowledges the potential for communal dining to forge social and

cultural connections. Her novels suggest an inclusive vision for the future of British

foodways that allows people of all backgrounds and orientations to live and eat together

in somewhat awkward harmony. Characters sample and recombine elements from

various cuisines and navigate upscale and modest meals with varying degrees of

discomfort. Different dining experiences coexist even for the white, middleclass,

heterosexual protagonists inhabiting Pym's insular parishes and modest flats. The

charming but inconsistent Cypriot restaurant, the queer café populated by Mr. Bason and

his friends, the suburban tea table of Deirdre's mother and aunt, and the overwhelming

mediocrity of the cafeteria—all propose inclusive frameworks for British culinary

citizenship.

Whereas Barbara Pym depicts cafeterias and "ethnic" restaurants as possible

models of British national identity, like Elizabeth David and Fanny Cradock she also

carves out space in postwar Britain for a national cuisine incorporating the cuisines of

other nations. All three perspectives have roots in a sense of ownership: in their writing

about food, Cradock, Pym, and David adopt personas who take the capacity to describe

and delimit English culinary identity for granted. By positioning themselves as

representative, experienced authorities, Cradock and David convey a sense of feeling at

home in foreign culinary landscapes even in their food tourism. Texts by both authors

offer a collection of culinary souvenirs for integration into English cuisine. The narrative

perspective of Pym's fiction likewise focalizes cultural insiders whose discomfort with

unfamiliar foodways largely operates in the mode of host rather than guest. In their travels abroad, characters oscillate between demanding English-style teas and indulging in local cuisines. All suggest a shifting landscape in which various culinary cultures coexist, commingle, and cross-pollinate.

If cookbook writers like Elizabeth David wholeheartedly embraced the allure of regional continental cuisines, most English citizens remained suspicious about the new "invasion" of foreign foodways—suspicions intimately bound up with racist and xenophobic attitudes towards migrating citizens from Commonwealth countries, and captured in the use of the term "ethnic" to refer to any ethnicity other than Anglo-Saxon whiteness. Visions of national unity shaped the development of civic restaurants, factory canteens, and cafeterias, all designed to extend the project of the welfare state through the modeling of good foodways and citizenship. Only with the adaptation and extension of British cooking to include the cuisines of its neighbours did Britain revitalize its national cuisine in the second half of the twentieth century. The country recovered from the privations of war and austerity of the postwar by eating differently—expanding the very definition of "British" cuisine.

CHAPTER 4

Modern Sophistication and Postwar Slimming Culture

In the fiction of Nancy Mitford and Muriel Spark, slimming subverts national dietary guidelines. Female characters exert agency by cultivating slenderness, their diets revealing complex relations to midcentury expectations of beauty, modernity, and mobility. From the emergence of the flapper silhouette in the 1920s, the portrayal of slim bodies in literature and culture sets up an opposition between the erotic and the maternal that complicates the position of women in relation to the state. Slenderness is relative: calorie counting and body measurement quantify morality and beauty in a way that invites competition rather than collectivism, especially among women. Excessive thinness undermines the collective impulse underlying wartime coalition and the welfare state. The influence of French and Italian design on British conceptions of style and sophistication is evident in the works of both Spark and Mitford; their literary portrayals of female bodies and beauty speak to a history of fashion influenced by designers such as Elsa Schiaparelli and Christian Dior as well as fitness advocates from Annette Kellerman to Helena Rubinstein. Drawing on contemporary dietary advice, fashion history, and food policy, this chapter illuminates the use of food to delineate new models of citizenship and femininity in postwar Britain.

Spark's and Mitford's fiction operates in the context of midcentury diet culture and the emergence of a newer, more slender ideal of feminine beauty. In their novels, eating habits determine narrative importance as well as social standing. In Mitford's *The Pursuit of Love* (1945) and *Love in a Cold Climate* (1949), Davey Warbeck and Lady

Montdore throw themselves into fad diets evoking modernity and continental

aestheticism, making dietary choices that are ultimately unpatriotic. Written in the 1940s,

both novels reflect on 1920s preoccupations with slenderness. Both register shifts in

fashion and ideals of feminine beauty. In *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (1961), *The

Girls of Slender Means* (1963), and *A Far Cry from Kensington* (1988), slimming hints at

larger developments in women's sexual and political freedoms. Jean Brodie, Selina

Redwood, and Nancy Hawkins all manage their consumption as a means of attracting and

controlling the people around them; they reject the solidarity of rationing to insist on the

primacy of individual eating habits. Characters control others by policing their

consumption. In literature from the latter half of the twentieth century, slimming reflects

shifting social and national allegiances. Exemplifying secular morality and forward-

thinking design, thin female bodies also signify modernity.

Fitness, Fashion, and the War on Fat: 1920s to 1960s

Though it has historical antecedents, widespread weight consciousness and

hostility to obesity is a distinctly modern phenomenon; Peter Stearns locates its genesis in

the years between 1900 and 1920, when medicine, fashion, physical fitness, advertising,

and lifestyle changes converged, giving rise to a rapid and violent shift in public attitudes

towards fat (52).[80] Stearns argues that secularization and the rise of consumerism, along

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[80] In addition to Stearns' *Fat History*, this chapter draws on a number of studies tracing the emergence of the "slimming craze" and shifting ideals of feminine beauty in the early twentieth century. On British women, physical fitness, and racial health in the post-WWI years, see Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska, "The Modern Female Body as a Mass Phenomomen," in *Managing the Body*; as Zweiniger-Bargielowska points out, the cult of fitness took hold not only in Britain and North America but also in Nazi Germany, where its associations with eugenics were devastatingly pronounced. On dieting, anti-fat campaigners, and the fashion industry, see Joan Jacobs Brumberg, "Modern Dieting," in *Fasting Girls.* Marianne Thesander's *The Feminine Ideal* provides a useful overview of the relationship between clothing fashions and the "ideal" female body.

with the relaxation of rigid strictures on sexuality, "set the stage for expressing a new, compensatory need to maintain moral anxiety and the potential for virtue" (57). The "war on fat" was a "painful but rewarding" moral crusade that replaced the struggle against sin in modern western society: "Constraint, including the new constraints urged on eating and body shape, was reinvented to match—indeed, to compensate for—new areas of greater freedom" (Stearns 54).

Stearns' argument builds on the work of earlier cultural scholars, notably anthropologist Mary Douglas. Douglas' foundational *Purity and Danger* draws a link between rigid restrictions—on hygiene and food purity, for instance—and the wider human need for order: rituals of purification create unity of experience, order social systems, and confer status. Douglas' conception of pollution rhymes with twentieth-century portrayals of fat as threatening and immoral. In her study of the history of anorexia nervosa, Joan Jacobs Brumberg similarly explains that the "slimming craze" provided a "scientific" method for ordering the body, as well as a visible measure of character: "with the popularization of calorie counting, physical features once regarded as natural… were designated as objects of conscious control. The mention of weight control through restriction of calories implied that overweight resulted solely from lack of control; to be a fat woman constituted a failure of personal morality" (243).[81] By 1918, *Vogue* insisted that "there is one crime against the modern ethics of beauty which is unpardonable; far better is it to commit any number of petty crimes than to be guilty of

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[81] In *Literary Fat Ladies*, Pat Parker links fatness with uncontrolled femininity in both textual and corporeal terms. Parker uses the metaphor of dilation to connect the "opening of closed texts" through narrative digression with the forms of dilation implicit in the pregnant female body—a sexual, obstetrical, and generational "opening" that delays death through reproduction (15)—as well as with the erotic feminine act of delaying coitus. Parker suggests that texts written in a masculinist tradition aim to delimit feminine "fatness"; writers portray then contain "a copiousness figured as female" through the metaphorical and narrative closure of "orifices" signifying female sexuality, fertility, and talkativeness (27).

the sin of growing fat" (Brumberg 243). As social, political, and religious developments triggered a desire for modern ethical guidelines, the obsession with weight control and calorie counting provided a new moral metric.

Slimness signifies self-control and offers social rewards. Citing research on body weight and overall well-being, economic historian Avner Offer expands on the notion that "low weight is not desirable in itself, but is rather a credible signal of self-control and virtue" with social, professional, and romantic value, especially for women. He links the late twentieth-century correlation between body weight and professional and romantic success with the parallel emergence of the "cult of thinness" in the 1920s: "There is a reasonably good fit between a norm of thin body shapes and the expansion of working opportunities for women in the 1920s and after the 1960s. And the signal of self-control may be as valuable in the labour market as in the mating market" (Offer 155-6).[82] By this metric, body weight relates directly to interpersonal regard, social and marital status, professional achievement, and psychological health. Reducing consumption and body size is a form of individual development with concrete economic and social benefits. Conversely, failing to conform to restrictive ideals of slenderness has negative consequences unrelated to potential health issues associated with overweight or obesity.

[82] In his study of well-being and affluence in Britain and America, Avner Offer theorizes that the reasons for the proliferation of the "cult of thinness" in midcentury Britain are primarily related to "marital and occupational mobility" for heterosexual women (156). Because women tend to marry men who are older, richer, and more educated than they are, the baby boom meant that a larger pool of young women was competing for a smaller cohort of older men, giving rise to a "tightening mating market" and higher competition among women (155). Offer invokes sociological and anthropological studies to assert that the relative rarity of slenderness in affluent societies makes it more attractive for potential mates, and that women of "normal" weight are statistically more likely to marry than overweight or obese women. Further, for women entering the labour market, "attractiveness" continues to have financial and professional advantages, with slenderness increasing perceptions of female attractiveness and self-control in affluent western societies (156). If we accept Offer's premise that occupational mobility and heterosexual love and marriage are reliable indicators of well-being in late twentieth-century Britain, slenderness becomes a high-stakes proposition for twentieth-century women competing for men and jobs. See Chapter 7, "Epidemics of Abundance: Body-Weight and Self-Control" in Offer, *The Challenge of Affluence*.

As with other facets of dietary health, midcentury perceptions of fatness and thinness reflect cultural and scientific developments. Following the First World War, political emancipation, greater access to public spaces, increased employment opportunities, developments in birth control, and divorce laws meant that women were more in control of their own bodies than ever before. The British cultural obsession with physical fitness as a component of citizenship and racial health extended to women: encouraged by the medical industry and physical reformers, middle and working class women began taking part in sports such as swimming, hiking, dancing, and tennis. They flocked to "keep-fit" classes put on by organizations such as the Women's League of Health and Beauty, the female counterpart to the League of Health and Strength. Whereas the masculine ideal for health had always been strength, feminine health was explicitly linked to beauty—a notion increasingly bound up with slenderness.

Twentieth-century health reformers encouraged women to stay fit, youthful-looking, and beautiful as a means of catching and keeping husbands and raising robust, attractive families. With medical advances in reproductive and sexual health, "[p]hysical culture and life reform campaigners advocated birth control and greater sexual knowledge as essential for modern women. These practices fostered responsible citizenship because sex reform would result in healthier mothers and babies as well as more stable and happy marriages" (Zweiniger, *Managing* 256). The availability of condoms and diaphragms made it theoretically possible to separate sexuality from reproduction (though condoms were initially used to prevent venereal disease rather than pregnancy, and diaphragms not widely available until at least the 1930s), while reformers such as Marie Stopes encouraged men and women to think of marriage as a potentially

satisfying union of sexual partners.

Ettie Rout's *Sex and Exercise* (1925), later republished as *Stand Up and Slim Down* (1934), urged women to seize control of their own physical health—Rout cautions women against becoming "impregnated and infected against their will" and recommends exercise as a means of strengthening the body for childbirth. As the revised title suggests, Rout's book was not just about sexual health, but about the importance of "slimming down." Rout cites a nutritionally balanced, high-fibre diet and exercise as the keys to maintaining a thin, attractive body both before and after marriage, when women tend to "spread out and sag" with age (qtd in Zweiniger, *Managing* 244). Florence Courtenay's *Physical Beauty: How to Develop and Preserve It* (1922) offers a similar warning: "Physical beauty is a definite part of the feminine sex appeal. And a happy marriage *depends largely* on a normal and happy sex appeal on the part of the woman and a corresponding sex interest on the part of the man" (qtd in Seid 93). Facilitating sexual satisfaction and healthy childbirth, a strong and slender female body would ensure marital happiness and racial purity.

Like Rout, beauty advocate Annette Kellerman viewed fitness as essential to sexual allure. An Australian celebrity swimmer and silent film star, Kellerman was an early promoter of the new, slimmer body. Campaigning against fat in books and newspaper columns, she promoted swimming as the ultimate women's sport and held up her own figure as a feminine ideal in both her writing and her work as a model and actress. Even Harvard's Director of Physical Training declared her a specimen of feminine perfection—"nearer the correct proportions than any he had ever seen" (Brumberg 246). Kellerman's willingness to display her own body onscreen and in

photographs, as well as her championing of the one-piece bathing suit, helped shift conventions around the visual representation of women and contribute to more relaxed attitudes towards female modesty.

Kellerman articulated her beauty creed most forcefully in her anti-fat manifesto, *Physical Beauty, How to Keep It* (1918), a handbook of fitness and beauty tips. In it, she decries the clumsiness, awkwardness, and unhealthiness of fat, as well as the importance of daily exercise and the constant vigilance necessary to maintaining health and beauty. The campaign for "genuine physical beauty" was a war on several fronts: women should avoid constipation and encourage digestion by eating whole wheat bread; apply cold creams to aid the complexion, and bathe in bath salts; and employ vigorous movement and massage to build muscle and melt away fat. In its rejection of fat as inherently harmful, Kellerman's work shifted conceptions of beauty away from the full-figured classical ideal and the Victorian notion of *embonpoint*, centered on a soft, fleshy bosom. *Physical Beauty* portrays fat as disgusting, unhealthy, and immoral; it argues for the superiority of a sleek and athletic female form. Typifying the new obsession with weight control, Kellerman sparked a beauty revolution by declaring the figure as "even more essential" to feminine beauty than the face.

In addition to this obsession with thinness, the 1920s saw the formalization of the "basic institutions of [western] beauty culture": "the fashion and cosmetics industries; beauty contests; the modeling profession; and the movies" (Brumberg 231). Just as the home economics movement brought new scientific developments to bear on domestic work and the running of the household, health and beauty campaigners such as Helena Rubinstein treated the cultivation of beauty as a science, and established the "duty-to-

beauty" mantra that dominated the era. Advertisements for beauty and slimming products "make modern beauty seem like a moral imperative, not a female frivolity" (Stearns 88). A Polish-born American cosmetics magnate, Rubinstein was a savvy businesswoman who developed a successful range of cosmetics designed to make beauty universally accessible. Her *Art of Feminine Beauty* (1930) encourages women to cultivate beauty from inside and out through diet, hygiene, exercise, and the careful application of makeup. Rubinstein's famous claim, "There are no ugly women, only lazy ones" (*My Life for Beauty* [1966]), suggests the perfectibility of the feminine form through food, exercise, and commercial beauty products—and by extension, the moral failure of women who remain visibly imperfect.[83]

Two important threads linking physical and national health run through twentieth-century texts about slimming. First, slenderness marks women as capable of delivering and raising strong, healthy babies; it counters fears of racial degeneration by implying morality, athleticism, and reproductive health. Second, slenderness signals independence and sex appeal. In its association with attractiveness, this second thread interweaves with the first: thin women are statistically more likely to have sex and babies. Yet by signaling sexual *desire* as well as appeal, slenderness is potentially subversive. As an act of control, dieting is an assertion of agency; extreme or excessive dieting implies a loss of control. While it may operate in service of community—as with the English women who viewed beauty as their wartime duty[84]—slimming may also be self-serving, self-destructive, or

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[83] That the onus of slenderness falls primarily on women recalls Naomi Wolf's suggestion in *The Beauty Myth* that dieting can be a means of distracting women from being politically destructive in other ways; it also provides a means of monitoring women's behaviour, as their conformity to standards of beauty and behaviour is ostensibly written into their size and shape.
[84] See Chapter 4, "Be Truly Feminine: Contradictory Obligations and Ambivalent Representations" in Sonya O. Rose, *Which People's War?*

treacherous when it privileges the desires of the individual over the needs of the state.

Slimming alters the relationship between consumption and health. Weight loss aids such as amphetamines, which provide energy and diminish appetite without nourishing the body, or cigarettes, which suppress appetite but increase the risk of disease, prioritize thinness over other health concerns. Like eating, *not* eating may be a political act. Hunger is leveraged by both oppressor and oppressed to effect changes on political systems and social groups. Starvation is a weapon of genocide and colonial warfare, used by both Nazi Germany and imperial Britain; hunger strikers refuse food as a form of protest.[85] Overly thin bodies are as threatening to the body politic as overly fat ones.

While a slim body symbolizes condonable self-control, it may also mark a selfish departure from physical standards of good citizenship. Twentieth-century commentators from F.A. Hornibrook to J.B. Priestley labeled too-thin women as unattractive, unnatural, and immoral (Zweiniger, *Managing*). When it emphasizes individual rather than collective benefits, midcentury diet culture operates in opposition to national guidelines—such as those laid out in Ministry of Food publications or *Scouting for Boys*—aiming to shape public health through private foodways. Style icons Wallis Simpson and Freda Dudley Ward were criticized for their extreme thinness, yet they helped to redefine the chic silhouette for midcentury women. Simpson's celebrity persona as both the slender American divorcée for whom Edward VIII abdicated the throne and the fashion plate credited with originating the phrase, "A woman can never be too rich or

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[85] In *The Hunger Artists*, Maud Ellmann identifies the self-starvation of hunger strikers and anorexics as a means of asserting control that operates beyond the limits of language. As both Ellmann and Richard Gordon note, anorexics also deny themselves food as a means of controlling their bodies and lives; anorectic logic often distorts and denies "normal" standards of health and beauty. See Gordon, *Eating Disorders*.

too thin," marries the self-serving undertones of slimming culture with the undermining of national unity through the dismantling of the royal family. Thin women are seen as forsaking their national duties, while overly aestheticized foodways threaten to subvert gendered ideals of consumption. In addition to the historical association of fine dining with aestheticism and male homosexuality—apparent in British literature from Oscar Wilde to Evelyn Waugh—the management of consumption for the purposes of slimming is associated with "the spectre of sexual deviance" (Zweiniger, "Slimming" 185). In his treatise on *Obesity* (1926), for instance, Leonard Williams insisted that "the new female fashion of extreme slimness was not dictated by a desire to attract normal manly men, but rather 'a ruse to find favour in the eyes of the degenerates and homosexuals'" (Zweiniger, "Slimming" 185). Fastidiousness is sexually subversive.

Slimming is both ethical and aesthetic. Modern innovations in design, fashion, and technology influenced the celebration of slenderness as a physical ideal through the thin body's association with modernism and efficiency. Clothing trends reflected women's increasing participation in the public sphere; campaigns such as the "rational dress" movement at the turn of the century argued for the adoption of fashions that would allow women to perform physical tasks—riding a bicycle, for instance—with greater ease. The shift away from corseted waists was partly a result of women's increased interest and participation in athletics. Further, the modernist language of motion entered the fashion world. Echoing the fascination with speed, technology, and movement that defined surrealism and futurism, "Line, energy, and action also explicitly entered the language of fashion" through notions such as the "kinetic silhouette" (Seid 83).

Midcentury fashion tied sophistication to slenderness. French designers in

particular launched thin silhouettes into cultural prominence. In 1908, Paul Poiret introduced a long, narrow sheath dress designed for a slim, straight body: "Poiret's style, dubbed '*le vague*' because of its looseness, eliminated the wasp waist, the hips, and the derriere in favour of a high-waisted, small-breasted Empire line" (Brumberg 239). The interwar period also introduced a new generation of pioneering *couturières*. As Rosemary Hill notes, "French couture between the wars was dominated, as never before or since, by female designers: Jeanne Lanvin, Madeleine Vionnet, Coco Chanel and [Elsa] Schiaparelli" ("Hard-Edged Chic"). Following the First World War, Gabrielle "Coco" Chanel created the basis for the flapper uniform. Building on Jeanne Lanvin's straight, boat-necked chemise of 1922, Chanel dropped the waist, raised the hem to mid-calf, and flattened the bust. The move away from the hourglass silhouette kicked off by designers like Poiret and Chanel shifted focus away from the tiny waist as "the acme of erotic beauty," instead calling attention to the leg by revealing its line and curves from hip to ankle (Seid 81). The flapper silhouette announced greater gender equality. A slim body with smaller hips and breasts "symbolized increased rather than decreased sexuality" through its association with new sexual freedoms: "A woman with a slender body distinguished herself from the plump Victorian matron and her old-fashioned ideals of nurturance, service, and self-sacrifice. The body of the 'new woman' was a sign of modernity that marked her for more than traditional motherhood and domesticity" (Zweiniger, *Managing* 245).[86] With their shorter hairstyles, boyish silhouettes, and painted faces, chic young women of the early twentieth century broke with Victorian

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[86] The slim silhouette also had class implications. Chanel's tomboyish dresses were particularly suitable for copying by the growing ready-to-wear industry, as they were easy to reproduce and did not require the precise tailoring of closer-fitting garments. As a result, the craze for straight chemises expanded beyond the elite to the middle classes. See Thesander, *The Feminine Ideal* and Brumberg, *Fasting Girls*.

ideals of beauty and modesty.

Following the economic crisis of 1929, the tomboy ideal was replaced by a slightly curvier silhouette, still slender and narrow-hipped but with an accentuated waist and bust. Elasticized "bras" and corsets—closer to Spanx than to whalebone—were designed as invisible supports to this "natural" look. By 1939, bras were designed to lift and point the breasts for a "youthful" look. As women entered the workforce during the Second World War, the soft, feminine curves of the 1930s were hardened into the padded shoulders, wider lapels, and narrow-hipped skirts of utility garments. "Wartime style, distinguished by short skirts and a severe, square silhouette—in contrast with the glamour of the 1930s—was influenced by a military look and economical in design" (Zweiniger, *Austerity* 91). The British government's "utility clothing scheme" aimed to produce high quality garments as efficiently as possible, yet though "the Board of Trade chose top London fashion designers to create the first prototypes of utility clothes" (Zweiniger, *Austerity* 51), the utility mark soon came to signify drab functionality.

Though English citizens accepted clothing rations with even less fuss than food controls, the postwar embrace of lavish French fashions reflected a larger rejection of austerity measures. In 1947, Christian Dior introduced the "New Look," a longer, fuller skirt cut on the bias, accentuated by a tightly cinched waist and a high, firm bust. (see fig. 9) The line was received with enthusiasm not just in post-occupation Paris, but throughout Europe: "The New Look was in such demand that it represented 75 percent of the total export sales from France's fashion industry for 1947" (Beever and Cooper 286). Dior's line caused a scandal through its disregard for utility measures and fabric shortages. Even the fashionable Nancy Mitford worried about wearing Dior in the

postwar years. "People shout *ordures* at you from vans," she wrote to Eddy Sackville-

West in 1947, "because for some reason it creates class feeling in a way no sables could"

(qtd in Beevor and Cooper 285). Antony Beever and Artemis Cooper describe a telling

incident in which angry stallholders disrupted a Dior photo shoot in a Parisian market:

> when, proud and graceful, the first [model] walked out into the rue Lepic
>
> market, the effect was electric. The street sank into an uneasy silence; and
>
> then, with a shriek of outrage, a woman stallholder hurled herself onto the
>
> nearest model, shouting insults. Another woman joined her, and together
>
> they beat the girl, tore her hair and tried to pull the clothes off her. (285)

Zweiniger-Bargielowska attributes the New Look's popularity among British women, in

spite of "official condemnation," to the "depth of female disaffection" with clothing

rationing in the late 1940s (*Austerity* 92). The "rapid adoption" of sophisticated,

formfitting styles by even the most patriotic women evinced a hunger for beauty and

glamour in the wake of austerity (Zweiniger, *Austerity* 92). The conflation of slenderness,

sophistication, and morality exerted a profound impact on citizens and writers of the

twentieth century. Midcentury literature stages the collision of French fashions and

physical ideals with British nationalism to generate narratives of feminine agency and

individualism. The works of Nancy Mitford and Muriel Spark attest to larger cultural

discussions about food and citizenship. Both novelists show women managing their own

and others' consumption as a means of exerting control; eating and weight management

become morally fraught propositions. Yet the transformative potential of reducing runs

through all of their works, and hints at the renovation of British culture in the postwar

period.

Figure 9: Christian Dior's "New Look." *Bar Suit* (1947), National Gallery of Victoria.

English Beauty and French Sophistication in Mitford

In Nancy Mitford's *The Pursuit of Love* (1945) and *Love in a Cold Climate*

(1949), Davey Warbeck and Lady Sonia Montdore throw themselves into crank diets

with enthusiastic pleasure. Their faddishness reflects gendered distinctions in approaches

to physical culture: women diet and exercise in the pursuit of beauty, while men do so in

pursuit of health. Lady Montdore's transformation at the hands of her nephew—a

colonial Nova Scotian who has lived most of his adult life in Paris—also suggests the

complex position of Britain in relation to European tastes and North American abundance

in the 1940s. Like Linda Radlett's initiation into Parisian fashion, Sonia's education in

the art of smartness illustrates a modern shift in attitudes towards fat, modesty, and

female beauty even as it heralds the end of the country house lifestyle. French elegance

displaces English dignity as the arbiter of midcentury taste. Whereas Linda balances

modern French sophistication with English patriotism, Davey and Sonia eat in order to

transition from an outmoded prewar lifestyle into modernity, though their dietary choices

offer ephemeral distractions rather than meaningful models for the future of national

foodways. Both works favour aesthetic appreciation—of food, art, and beauty—as a

benchmark of narrative and cultural importance. Slimming and feminine tailoring reflect

shifting social and national allegiances in the wake of wartime disruptions to aristocratic

life.

Eating creates interiority in Mitford's fiction. Characters construct themselves

through their appetites, while consumption patterns mirror economic and political

positions. Pleasure in food also confers narrative relevance, particularly in relation to the

central romance and historical plots. *The Pursuit of Love* depicts not one relationship, but

several: Linda tries on various husbands before finding happiness in her extramarital

relationship with a roguish French duke, Fabrice de Sauveterre.[87] Throughout the novel,

narrative interest is linked with romantic love and sensual pleasure. The economic

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[87] Allan Hepburn argues that "Mitford's comic representation of mistresses belongs to the French novelistic tradition, insofar as the role of the mistress is not morally censured and insofar as the role combines intellect, humour, autonomy and pleasure": "Both novels represent marriage as a convenient means of uniting business interests or consolidating bloodlines but not as a suitable means of accommodating desire" ("Fate of the Modern Mistress" 340).

detachment with which both Anthony Kroesig and Christian Talbot regard food and eating relegates them to minor status, and simultaneously insinuates that both communism and capitalism promote an inhumane inattention to the needs and desires of others. That Kroesig's and Talbot's eating habits are inseparable from their politics contributes to their secondary status in the novel. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari define literary minorness as based in part on explicit politicization. Whereas in major literatures, they argue, "the individual concern (familial, marital, and so on) joins with other no less individual concerns, the social milieu serving as a mere environment or a background," the "cramped space" of a minor literature "forces each individual intrigue to connect immediately to politics" (17). For both Christian and Tony, socialism and capitalism shape foodways so rigidly as to occlude psychological and romantic development. Through portrayals of Fabrice and of Linda's father, Lord Matthew Alconleigh, the novel ultimately proposes that emotional models of consumption, whether French or English, are preferable to those arising from the pragmatic accumulation or redistribution of wealth. The privileging of pleasure and loyalty in food selection is further predicated on disinterested detachment, in an Arnoldian sense, from financial need; though grounded in divergent culinary traditions, the diets of both Lord Alconleigh and the Duke de Sauveterre convey aristocratic wealth, leisure, and breeding.

In privileging taste and pleasure, Mitford's novels imbue British food and fashion with French sophistication. Both *The Pursuit of Love* and *Love in a Cold Climate* exhibit the coalition of modernism, cultural distinction, and romance that Faye Hammill associates with literary sophistication at midcentury. Describing "sophisticated" literary texts as enabling a dynamic tension between sentiment and detachment, Hammill calls

novelistic sophistication "a fundamental attitude to life rather than simply a style of self-presentation," though it may "take visible form through clothing or manners":

> It may range from a harmless—indeed, healthy—determination to enjoy life and refuse stifling convention to a dangerous inversion of moral codes and a total self-absorption. In its relation to morality, sophistication is often associated with a degree of hedonism, an unshockable attitude in sexual matters, a distrust of bourgeois values, open-handedness shading into extravagance, and a focus on the pleasure of the moment. It is usually opposed to sexual continence, thrift, productiveness and the work ethic. Its politics are thus potentially subversive, but on the other hand, its association with social aspiration has more conservative connotations, and the characteristic detachment of the sophisticate often appears to empty his or her actions of political content. (*Sophistication* 4)

By Hammill's definition, Linda Radlett is an exemplar of modern sophistication. Refined under Fabrice's tutelage, Linda's natural taste operates in contrast to middleclass morality and stinginess; it is predicated on pleasure and discernment. Further, her enactment of sophistication encompasses class, gender, and national politics. Linda's travel to Spain and France, as well as her choice of lovers, offers an alternative model to British austerity and bourgeois complacency.

Tony Kroesig's consumption habits conversely exemplify "the bourgeois attitude of mind" (87): like his father, Sir Leicester Kroesig, he is a banker who is concerned only with the accumulation of wealth, never the pleasures derived from its spending. Sir Leicester's middleclass love of money and work is antithetical to the Radletts. "He

despised the landed gentry, whom he regarded as feckless, finished and done with in the

modern world," in part because they tie up their capital in land and entail it onto eldest

sons rather than investing it properly (76). Tony is similarly acquisitive. As a young

student, he is "on the heavy side, but with a well-proportioned figure" and entertains "on

a lavish scale" in his "large, luxurious rooms" (60). By the time he reaches middle age,

he has left "youth, drink, and good health" behind and expanded into a fat, boring, and

pompous man (87). After his marriage, he spends all of "his days in the bank house and

his evenings at Westminster, never having any fun or breathing fresh air" (87). Tony's

growing bulk mirrors his hoarding of wealth. Like Rex Mottram in *Brideshead Revisited*,

Tony is more concerned with dining as a display of affluence than as a source of

epicurean delight. His family fails to enjoy their massive holdings in property and jewels;

understanding goods solely in terms of cash value, the Kroesigs are shocked when Linda

spends her birthday gift of a "capital sum" on a thousand-pound pearl and ruby necklace,

which will not generate interest or appreciate in value (89). Neither Tony nor his family

is capable of aesthetic appreciation.[88] Preferring to host *soirées* for socialite gastronomes,

Linda consistently disappoints the Kroesigs' expectations that she devote her time and

resources to entertaining "important people" who will advance Tony's career (89). While

her expenditures depart from aristocratic models of responsible spending, Linda's

allegiance to concrete holdings of land and property—as well as the expensive clothing

and jewellery signifying her taste and class—align her with crown and nation. In contrast

to Matthew, whose wealth is bound up with his estate and with the local and national

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[88] The same is true of Moira, Tony and Linda's child. Realizing her daughter would not truly appreciate the beautiful diamond arrow she had intended to give her before the Kroesigs' departure to America, Linda instead presents Moira with "a sports wristwatch, one of her wedding presents when she had married Tony and which she had never worn": the little girl "seemed quite pleased by it, and left the house as politely and unenthusiastically as she had arrived" (180).

economy, the Kroesigs favour liquid assets.

Though the political opposite of her first, Linda's second husband is equally uninterested in aesthetics and sentiment. Christian's impersonal politics fail to extend beyond the material conditions necessary to survival. In spite of his preoccupation with human suffering, he is incapable of intimate connection, and only vaguely aware of the people around him: "He was really only interested in mass wretchedness, and never much cared for individual cases, however genuine their misery, while the idea that it is possible to have three square meals a day and a roof and yet be unhappy or unwell, seemed to him intolerable nonsense" (129). Talbot's asceticism fits with Linda's general impression of communists as admirable but unpleasantly "sad and earnest and down on everybody" (125). Communist life seems deliberately devoid of pleasure: following Christian and Linda's marriage, there is no wedding breakfast, a lack that results in people milling about awkwardly and then going home (121); when Linda travels to meet her husband in Perpignan, instead of asking about her journey or considering her need for a bath or a meal, Christian escorts his bewildered wife right to work (129).

This detached attitude towards others strips Christian of his capacity for hospitality. He views basic food and shelter as the only true necessities, and effects their provision—in both his own life and the running of the refugee camp—along utilitarian rather than humanitarian lines, without an eye to comfort or pleasure. His book about famine is similarly theoretical, and written in collaboration with a fat "Chinese comrade who comes and tells [Christian] what famine is like" in ironic contrast with his own demonstrable satiety. Talbot's utilitarian approach both mirrors the leveling down of British foodways in the era of austerity and prefigures the depersonalizing effects of the

bureaucratic welfare state, which fails to accommodate the needs of the individual.

By contrast, Linda's understanding of others is individualistic to a fault. In the refugee camp for people fleeing the Spanish Civil War, Linda is barred from managing large groups of children and families, though she happily runs inessential but highly appreciated errands for individual refugees, such as bringing books and mailing letters. Unlike the "unromantic" Lavender Davis, Linda's former neighbour and Christian's future lover, Linda knows nothing "about calories and babies' nappies, and expectant mothers and so on" (130). Lavender's principled pragmatism, derived from years as a Girl Guide and athlete, makes her the perfect partner to the idealistic Christian.[89] Her training in welfare work extends the project of military nursing care and crisis relief to international humanitarian action.

Neither Tony nor Christian is a suitable partner for Linda, whose political detachment and keen appetite for sensual pleasure contribute to her sophistication. Her horror at camp conditions reveals her ethics as predicated on visceral empathy for individual suffering rather than political philosophy. The dismal routine of camp life is "a recurring torture to Linda," who bears reluctant witness to the "rows of orderly, though depressing huts, and … regular meals, which, if not very appetizing, did at least keep body and soul together" (132). This unappetizing model fits with Christian's disinterested approach to alleviating human misery. Linda's reaction conversely signals her allegiance to traditional models of private charity, predicated on individual and parish-based relief

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[89] Developed as an extension of the Boy Scouts program by Robert Baden-Powell's sister, Agnes Baden-Powell, the Girl Guides movement combined imperial values and pragmatic survival skills with more traditional domestic training in hostessing, needlework, nursing, and household management. *How Girls Can Help Build Up the Empire* (1912) amends the original *Scouting for Boys* by "tread[ing] a middle path with just enough of domestic skills to reassure worried parents that their girls would not be turned into wild tomboys who would neglect the home duties expected of girls in that era in order to go running off into the countryside causing trouble, and enough of the adventurous Scout activities to enthuse the kind of girl who had been so keen to join Scouting to go hiking and exploring in the outdoors in the first place" (Smith).

by those in positions of privilege. Without idealizing the notion of *noblesse oblige*—

Linda's empathy is more frequently reserved for animals than humans, and her

depression fails to inspire meaningful action beyond agreeing with her father that "abroad

is unutterably bloody and foreigners are fiends" (127)—Mitford's work pillories ethical

orientations that fail to account for personal tastes. Like Lavender, Christian is an empty

embodiment of ideals rather than a fully formed character. His hyper-political foodways

render him narratively and romantically minor.

   Matthew's politics are opposed to both Tony's and Christian's. His ethics are

inseparable from his land and title, while his deep-seated patriotism is somatically

evident: his body is riddled with shrapnel and scars sustained in service of king and

country. His only complaint about the Boer War is that "one got rather tired of the taste

of mutton after a bit, no beef in that campaign, you know" (301); Davey comments that

it's a miracle he's alive at all, having survived a week in a truck with a maggoty hole in

his stomach and a piece of shrapnel lodged in his groin. A true patriot and British

beefeater,[90] Lord Alconleigh views the nation as inseparable from his own land and local

resources. He refuses to dine out when there is "[p]erfectly good food at home" (43), and

derives his sustenance exclusively from the internal economy of the landed estate and

neighbouring village. Matthew's love of offal naturalizes his adherence to official

guidelines for patriotic, frugal consumption. Cheerfully offering Davey "Pigs' thinkers"

for breakfast, he exhibits the same ethical and efficient distribution of local resources

evident in the annual "chubb fuddling," when his tenants gather to collect the stunned

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[90] Ben Rogers explains the historic association of British soldiers with roast beef in *Beef and Liberty*. Though as early as the fifteenth century English yeoman were known as "Beef-eaters" for their consumption of generous meat rations (17-18), "[i]t was during the eighteenth century, in particular, that 'Beef and Liberty' became a rallying cry for Britons worried about the military threat from France abroad, and from the spread of Gallic luxury and corruption at home" (2).

excess fish from the stream (37, 331). In his embodiment of the "lordly virtues" of independence and "good stewardship" encompassing "simplicity, right use, frugality" (Kenny 5-6), Lord Alconleigh exemplifies the "country house ethos" identified by Virginia Kenny as the antidote to the commercialization of agrarian land under capitalism (2). Adhering to strict hierarchies of class and gender, he follows sporting codes of conduct in hunting and fishing, and he views himself as rightful inheritor of his social position.

Daily life at Alconleigh makes few concessions to the modern world. The heating and electricity are erratic, and the Radlett girls barely educated. The food at Alconleigh is "always good and plentiful, but of the homely schoolroom description"; it incorporates hearty standards such as shepherds pie, kippers, and lots of offal. In *Love in a Cold Climate*, the food at Hampton is described in similar terms: "mountains of the very most delicious imaginable nursery food, plain and wholesome, made of the best materials, each thing tasting strongly of itself," though exaggerated like everything else at Hampton, "so the very peaches there were too peach-like" (251-2). In contrast to the stable Englishness of interwar country house life, Mitford portrays French culture as enticingly sensual. Though Alconleigh is mostly immune to continental influences, even Aunt Sadie feels "a longing to look once more upon young women with well brushed hair, London complexions, and Paris clothes" at Linda's debutante ball—an exciting change from the "unrelieved dowdiness" of an average party in the country (45). Linda's first encounter with the world of "smart bohemianism" (97) for which she longs is through Lord Merlin, whose hospitable house is packed with fashionable aesthetes and intellectuals. Merlin introduces Linda to the pleasures of art and literature, and he encourages her to balance

her "intensely romantic personality" through intellectual development (59). For Linda's part, "She perceived that the world she wanted to be in, the witty, sparkling world of Lord Merlin and his friends, was interested in things of the mind, and that she would only be able to shine in it if she became in some sort educated" (59). She is instinctively drawn to the glittering warmth of "care-free, pleasure-seeking" fashionable society (97). Merlin's sophistication derives from his wit, extravagance, epicureanism, avant-garde taste, and association with urban and continental life; like Cedric's, his aestheticism also signals homosexuality. As her marriage to Tony disintegrates, Linda's career as a socialite begins in earnest, as "There is no more popular unit in London society than a young, beautiful, but perfectly respectable woman who can be asked to dinner without her husband" (97). Life at Merlinford and in London society initiates her into metropolitan sophistication.

It is not until she arrives in Paris following her defection from Christian and communism that Linda's aesthetic and gastronomical tastes are fully developed. Her return to the French capital offers a reprieve from the dismal conditions of life among the comrades. She is greeted by the "cheerful, bustling aspect [of the city], a promise of delicious things to come, a positive smell of coffee and croissants, quite peculiar to itself" (140). This sensory delight recalls her first impression of France, on the train en route to Perpignan, when "the steamy, garlic-smelling heat" and "delicious food, to which she was summoned by a little hurried bell" felt as if they were "all from another world, like a dream" (128). Immediately drawn to the scents and tastes of France, Linda rejects the "plain and wholesome" food of her youth to align herself with continental sophistication.

Linda's love of Fabrice is born from the same instinctive sensuality as her love of

French cuisine. Finding her broke and crying in the Gare du Nord, De Sauveterre woos

Linda through careful attention to her material needs and desires. He installs her in a

luxurious hotel room and sends up a *café complet* before taking her to luncheon at a fancy

restaurant; he takes pleasure in her enjoyment of coffee, breakfast, and the "penny-

novelettish" flowers delivered to her hotel room (147). Overwhelmed by her love of

Parisian food, fashion, and Fabrice, Linda laughs with delight during sex—a far cry from

the duke's self-flagellating former lovers. Her privileging of pleasure over propriety is a

further marker of sophistication, signaling her rejection of middleclass strictures on

feminine behaviour. Agreeing with Linda that politicians are poor companions, the duke

asserts that "society people" always make the best friends, regardless of politics,

precisely because "they have made a fine art of personal relationships and all that pertains

to them—manners, clothes, beautiful houses, good food, everything that makes life

agreeable" (151). In their shared appreciation of dining, fashion, art, and culture, Fabrice

and Linda suggest the importance of such pleasures in contributing to true happiness, and

invert the pragmatic approaches to consumption embodied by Tony and Christian.

Paris also awakens Linda to the superiority of *haute couture*. Having grown up

with Uncle Matthew, "who liked to see female complexions in a state of nature, and often

pronounced that paint was for whores and not for his daughters" (67), Linda is excited by

Parisian beauty and glamour. Even as a young woman having her clothes made by the

housekeeper at Alconleigh, she exhibits natural taste; her designs achieve "a sort of

originality and prettiness" that her cousin Fanny's expensive, store-bought gowns never

captured. Further distinguishing herself from mainstream English beauties, she causes a

sensation in a floor-length tulle gown in a late 1920s season when "[m]ost of the dresses

were still short" (74). Under the guidance of Parisian *couturiers*—the arbiters of midcentury fashion—she learns to epitomize interwar style and glamour. Though in London "she had been considered exceptionally well dressed," her arrival in Paris makes her old clothes seem "so appallingly dowdy, so skimpy and miserable and without line, that she [goes] to the Galeries Lafayette and [buys] herself a ready-made dress there before [daring] to venture into the big houses" (159). Her transformation recalls the style-savvy Davey's assertion that even ready-to-wear Parisian clothing is preferable to custom-tailored English tweeds: "either you get your clothes in Paris or it is a toss-up" (74). Dipping into Fabrice de Sauveterre's seemingly bottomless ducal funds, Linda accumulates a flattering, fashion-forward wardrobe confected by the finest designers.

Just as Linda's Parisian wardrobe strikes her as unsuitable for life outside of France, however, Fabrice and Linda's love story is distinguished from her everyday lived experience as an English citizen. Beginning in late May of 1939, the ephemeral, fantastical quality of their relationship is inseparable from the dreamy holiday feeling of the early Second World War—a mood also attributed to Blitz-era London by Elizabeth Bowen and others. "[P]ossessed by a calm and happy fatalism," Linda experiences 1940 as a "fin de siècle" in which everyone is "living out the last few days of their lives" (173). The war itself seems fictional, "like something out of the *Boys' Own*" (176). Linda is shocked at the seeming lack of causality in her meeting with Fabrice; he exists in a Paris of expensive flats and hotels, high fashion and *haute cuisine*. Against the historical backdrop of the Spanish Civil War, the occupation of France, the retreat from Dunkirk, and the Blitz, Linda's joyful interlude feels like melodrama, yet is the only part of her life that really matters. The intrusion of history threatens separation, both when Linda feels

out of her depth among the trappings of Fabrice's ancient family, and when he leaves to fight for the Free French. Linda's relationship with Fabrice is a major event for her, but a minor event in history.

The nature of Linda and Fabrice's relationship is conveyed through food metaphors. Though she is happily married, Fanny—who narrates both novels—contrasts her own day-to-day life as a wife and mother with Linda's affair:

> Alfred and I are happy, as happy as married people can be. … And yet, when I consider my life, day by day, hour by hour, it seems to be composed of a series of pinpricks. Nannies, cooks, the endless drudgery of housekeeping, the nerve-racking noise and boring repetitive conversation of small children (boring in the sense that it bores into one's very brain), their absolute incapacity to amuse themselves, their sudden and terrifying illnesses, Alfred's not infrequent bouts of moodiness, his invariable complaints at meals about the pudding, the way he will always use my tooth-paste and will always squeeze the tube in the middle. These are the components of marriage, the wholemeal bread of life, rough, ordinary, but sustaining; Linda had been feeding upon honey-dew, and that is an incomparable diet. (178)

Like her larger-than-life father, Linda exists in the wholly romantic register signaled by the honeydew allusion to Coleridge's "Kubla Khan." When France is occupied, Linda worries that the laughter and lovemaking she shared with Fabrice might not be enough to bind him to her. "Now that life had become so serious," she worries, "would he not have forgotten that meal of whipped cream as something so utterly unimportant that it might

never have existed?" (181). Both Linda and Fabrice undermine narratives of self-sacrifice

and austerity through their peacetime allegiance to high fashion and haute cuisine.

Yet both willingly adopt patriotic foodways in wartime: Fabrice abandons the

pleasures of Parisian dining to fight for the Free French; Linda returns to England and

submits to Matthew's military regulation of consumption at Alconleigh. If Fanny is a

model citizen in the restrained stoic mode, Linda is an individualistic heroine, willing to

fight alongside others and motivated by emotion and loyalty rather than philosophy. She

is therefore disgusted with her daughter Moira's cowardly fear of air raids, and scolds her

for not longing for the excitement of aerial bombardment and civil defence. Like her Free

French lover, who sends her home so he can fight for his country, Linda feels duty-bound

to remain in England, and volunteers to help sabotage the German army should England

be invaded. Rather than pure honeydew or whipped cream, Linda and Fabrice's love

affair provides the "currants in the cake" of life (182). Both characters ultimately adjust

their consumption to serve national security, whether French of English.

Though initially aligned with traditional British cuisine, the dining room at

Alconleigh is transformed by wartime shortages and displacements. The household cook,

Mrs. Beecher, is "quite good at a cut off the joint and two veg," standard English fare

since time immemorial, but lacks the culinary resourcefulness required to stretch the

rations with appetizing wartime meals. Claiming that her sausage mince concoctions are

"poison" (191),[91] Davey refuses food and resorts to an ever-growing collection of

vitamins, cod liver oil, and Benzedrine—"what the panzer troops have before going into

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[91] Though agreeing that Mrs. Beecher is "an awful cook," Sadie acknowledges the proliferation of austerity-era sausage products with low meat-to-filler ratios: "The meat ration only lasts about two meals, and there are fourteen meals in a week, you must remember. If she minces it up with a little sausage meat— poison meat (I do so agree with you really)—it goes much further, you see" (191).

action" (193). But with the return of Fanny's mother—known as the Bolter for her

tendency to run off with various men—continental foodways invade Alconleigh in the

person of Juan, her guitar-playing lover. Davey discovers, to his and the family's delight,

that Juan had been employed as the chef of a cardinal prior to the outbreak of war. A

skilled cook, he runs the kitchen exceedingly well. His skill with a slingshot adds

pheasant and hare to the menu, and he supplements the rations with black market goods:

"There was no nonsense about foreign dishes made out of little bits of nothing at all;

succulent birds, beasts, and crustaceans appeared at every meal, the vegetables ran with

extravagant sauces, the puddings were obviously based on real ice-cream" (195). Juan

stockpiles preserved foods in the store cupboard,

> which he had found bare except for a few tins of soup, [until it begins] to
>
> look like a pre-war grocer's shop. Davey called it Aladdin's Cave … and
>
> spent a lot of his time in there, gloating. Months of tasty vitamins stood
>
> there in neat rows, a barrier between him and that starvation which had
>
> seemed, under Mrs. Beecher's regime, only just round the corner. (195)

The food stores are explicitly martialized. Davey gloats over the preserves as over a

munitions cupboard, armed with nutrients as a defence against starvation. The cupboard

has real tactical value as well; because of its vulnerability to exploitation as military

rations, Matthew insists it be destroyed in the event of German occupation. Arguing that

the most useful form of resistance for the women and children of the family would be to

make themselves a drain on enemy resources, Linda and Matthew plot to dynamite the

cupboard should the need arise.

The overflowing Alconleigh pantry suggests an ambivalent attitude towards

government restrictions. The Radletts adhere to the spirit if not the letter of official food guidelines; Juan's navigation of the black market is a moral grey area, as Matthew's allegiance is to his land, country, and king—not to socialist government institutions like the Ministry of Food. A patriotic Conservative, Matthew implicitly condones the hunting, purchasing, preservation, and hoarding of "off-ration" foods, yet also prohibits shooting to preserve ammunition. As an experienced officer, he trains the Home Guard and devises an elaborate plan for barricading the streets, defending the house, safeguarding local resources, and killing as many Germans as possible.

Just as Matthew delights in the rustic nutritional value of offal, both Davey and Sonia derive pleasure from the management of their health. In *The Pursuit of Love*, Davey describes his diet as medically necessary. "I am a wretched invalid," he explains: "I must be careful, or I pay" (32). Some of his dietary restrictions are rooted in solid nutritional fact, such as his praise of the wholemeal bread at Alconleigh: made from "stone-ground flour, containing a high proportion of the germ," the homely bread has health-giving properties which, as Davey observes, are extracted from commercially baked white loaves (33) (that is, until wartime restrictions on wheat processing forced Britons to make the switch to whole grains). His obsession with vitamin and protein pills reflects twentieth-century nutritional guidelines prescribing precise quantities of calories, proteins, carbohydrates, and vitamins. Davey's preoccupation with balancing such elements with supplements and medication sets him apart from the standard country-house diet at Alconleigh. He anticipates alimentary deficits and calculates the specific nutritional values of each item, such as the anti-scorbutic properties of raw lettuce (32).

Though Davey is immersed in his work and writing, his health constitutes a

pleasurable and rewarding occupation. As Fanny explains,

> his health was his hobby, and, as such, more in evidence during his spare time, the time when I saw most of him. How he enjoyed it! He seemed to regard his body with the affectionate preoccupation of a farmer towards a pig—not a good doer, the small one of the litter, which must somehow be made to be a credit to the farm. He weighed it, sunned it, aired it, exercised it, and gave it special diets, new kinds of patent food and medicine, but all in vain. It never put on so much of a single ounce of weight, it never became a credit to the farm, but somehow it lived, enjoying good things, enjoying its life, though falling victim to the ills that flesh is heir to, and other imaginary ills as well, through which it was nursed with unfailing care, with concentrated attention, by the good farmer and his wife. (94)

Davey takes pleasure in experimenting with new techniques of fasting and self-care. He enjoys reading medicine bottles with an enthusiasm that recalls Pym's love of cookbooks as texts rather than instructionals. His dietary interventions are hypermodern, shifting constantly to reflect new trends. Warbeck's modern gadgetry is out of place at Alconleigh. His use of a modern sun lamp to make his "glands begin to work" and allow his food to do him "good again" blows all the fuses in the ancient house (80). He carefully balances his diet through both science and superstition.

Against the bland utilitarian backdrop of rationing and austerity, Davey's valetudinarianism suggests the pleasures of variety and contrast. In Paris, he tucks into rich, fatty desserts that he knows will cause him pain—a knowledge that only heightens

his enjoyment. Thinking, "I shall pay for this… but never mind, one's not in Paris every day," he indulges in a feast of éclairs and mille-feuilles "with all the abandon of a schoolboy" (165). As it turns out, both he and Lord Merlin are dyspeptic, hungover, and unpleasant at lunch with Linda the following day. His red-and-white diet is based solely on visual contrast; he does the same orange juice fast as Lady Montdore, but for the opposite purpose—she wishes to lose weight, while he wishes to bulk up. Davey anticipates pain and pleasure, feasting and fasting with equal interest. He alternates between "overeating" and "starvation" days "to give his metabolism a proper shock" (251).[92] Davey's comparison of his and others' diets also reveals an element of *schadenfreude*. Just as Lady Montdore delights in watching rain-soaked walkers through the car window, he enjoys reading about the restricted diets of explorers, and imagining the awful physiological effects. Extreme diets, fasting, and supplements provide pleasure through the adherence to and the gleeful breaking of rules. Departure from official guidelines reveals identity through the idiosyncratic adaptation of ingredients and recipes. Moving beyond pure survival, eating becomes a pleasurable puzzle, as Davey explains to the Bolter: "it's the efforts [to stay alive] that one enjoys so much" (329).

Though only published four years after *The Pursuit of Love*, *Love in a Cold Climate* treats the disappearance of country house living as a foregone conclusion. The novel, teeming with undernourished exiled royalty, centres on the end of the Hampton

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[92] Davey claims that his overeating days require refined, richly varied multicourse meals to be truly effective, and prefers the effects of French cuisine:

> I've got to be giddy, exhausted from overeating, if it's to do me any good. That feeling you have after a meal in a Paris restaurant is what we've got to aim at, when you're too full to do anything but lie on your bed like a cobra, for hours and hours, too full even to sleep. Now there must be a great many different courses to coax my appetite—second helpings don't count; I must have them anyway, a great many different courses of really rich food. (251)

More than just hedonistic, Davey's "feasts" are sophisticated and continental. As his wife, Emily, points out, however, even his starvation days consist of four square meals (251).

legacy. Polly defects from the family. Cedric displaces Lord Montdore and Boy as

Sonia's social escort, then inherits Hampton Court. These changes curtail the family line:

Polly's baby promptly dies, while gay Cedric will presumably remain childless. Though

Boy returns to his place by Sonia's side by the end of the novel, the aristocratic line is

irreparably broken. The Montdores must give way to the Kroesigs and the Chaddesley

Corbetts.[93]

The influence of French fashion on British high society calls attention to

divergent ideals of citizenship. The fashionable slenderness typical of the late 1920s is

exemplified in *Love in a Cold Climate* by Mrs. Veronica Chaddesley Corbett, the

charming socialite described as "small and thin and sparkling" (253). Next to the

Edwardian Lady Montdore, Mrs. Chaddesley Corbett recalls the sophisticated slimness of

Wallis Simpson. Mitford draws a stark comparison between the "immovable and solid" if

"not actually fat" Lady Montdore and the "bony little silken legs" of Veronica:

"Smartness, even if she had sought after it, would hardly be attainable by her in a world

where it was personified by the other and had become almost as much a question of

build, of quick and nervous movement as of actual clothes" (268). In spite of the younger

woman's stylishness, Lady Montdore retains an attractive "healthiness and liveliness"

that she loses somewhat under Cedric's tutelage.

Her daughter Polly's attractiveness, while captivating, does not adhere to modern

standards of beauty and sex appeal. Though Polly is admired by the older generation at

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[93] The exiled royals and fallen aristocrats populating the Montdores' ballroom associate food insecurity with a larger decline of upperclass European luxury. Lady Montdore's "hungry-looking" royal guests are pathetic in their appetites and shabby clothing. At Montdore House in London, the modern British royals depart "serene in the knowledge that they would find the traditional cold roast chicken by their beds," unlike "the pathetic Ma'ams and sinister Sirs who were stuffing away in the supper room as if they were far from sure they would ever see so much food again" (303-4).

her debutante ball, she fails to impress her contemporaries, who perceive her as "too dull, too large" compared with "the little skinny goggling copies of Mrs. Chaddesley Corbett which abounded that season" (293). As Lady Montdore's confusion of "S.A." and "B.O." suggests, the notion of "sex appeal" was indeed a recent development and signalled shifting conceptions of female sexuality; the term came into use as a means of describing women's sexual attractiveness in the early 1920s, and was primarily discussed using the oblique "S.A." (*OED*, s.v. "S.A.") The phrase "body odour," as well as the more commonly used "B.O.," first appeared in writing in an advertisement for deodorant in Dorothy Sayers' *Murder Must Advertise* (1933) (*OED*, s.v. "B.O.").

Nancy Mitford's upperclass peers do not take part in the bourgeois modern domesticity predicated on scientific approaches to household management. Lady Montdore appears ludicrous in her mimicry of ephemeral fashions and in her adherence to modern beauty standards. Her abandonment of her husband (who retires quite happily from society) in order to host events alongside her young nephew positions her outside of heteronormative domesticity and the building of the nuclear family at the heart of the English nation. Cedric's mantra to "starve the body and feed the face" inverts patriotic foodways by privileging surface appearance over inner strength (408). Lady Montdore's aspirational eating is an extension of the "rampant vulgarity" and "worldly greed and snobbishness" that cause some peers "to suppose that her origins must have been low or transatlantic"; in reality, she is "perfectly well born and had been decently brought up … so that there were no mitigating circumstances" (225). With few exceptions—Linda and Mitford herself among them—English women who attempt to imitate French elegance are unsuccessful. They sacrifice their own version of elegance, refinement and gravitas,

in favour of an artificial sprightliness.

If the transplantation of French beauty standards onto English bodies disrupts British foodways, it also positions English national identity in relation to an emergent ideal of European democracy. In both Britain and France, women's appearances were carefully monitored as evidence of allegiance to various models of citizenship. As Hope Hodgkins explains,

> the Second World War created a negative apotheosis of British style in the categories of dress and of literature. First, during the war, fashion, and especially women's dress styles, were recognized as overt political markers, simultaneously applauded and critiqued for their statements about the depths or limits of the wearers' political commitments. In 1941, British *Vogue* told women, 'Now, if ever, beauty is your duty' to encourage the troops; at the liberation of Paris in 1944, war correspondent Lee Miller was shocked to see the extravagant and colourful dresses flaunted by the supposedly oppressed Parisiennes. (525)

Like beautiful gowns, dietary control contributes to the cultivation of beauty in midcentury culture. Dress and dietary habits indicate individual and communal character, both reflecting and generating morale and national community.

In France, looking and dressing well constituted an explicit provocation to invaders, particularly the grey-clad German servicewomen known as "*les souris grises*." During the war, slender feminine beauty was seen as patriotic for Parisian women. In *Les Lettres Françaises*, surrealist Lise Deharme links sophistication and slenderness with nationalism by asserting that "true Parisiennes were supremely elegant during the four

years" of German occupation:

> With a tear in the eye but a smile on the lips, beautiful, perfectly made up,
> discreet and insolent, they exasperated the Germans. The beauty of their
> hair, of their complexion… their slimness as opposed to the fat ugliness of
> those overgrown trouts packaged in gray, yes, that provoked them. These
> Parisiennes were part of the Resistance. (21 October 1944, qtd in Beever
> and Cooper 275-6)

Embodying heroism and self-sacrifice, slimness in this context conveys perseverance and poise in the face of near-starvation; elegance is an open challenge to the occupiers siphoning off France's resources. Under occupation, slenderness and self-care become valuable components of good citizenship and political resistance. Further, the careful control of physical size and appearance among women in occupied Paris reenacts the seizure of control by French food producers who evaded German requisitioning through the illicit redistribution and sale of food on the black market (Mouré).

Portrayals of self-care as an act of resistance echo Elizabeth Bowen's conception of wartime fiction-making as "resistance writing" in its refusal of the overbearing drabness and institutionalization of daily life under martial law. Just as Mitford's Linda adopts close-fitting French tailoring to accentuate her figure, in Spark's *The Girls of Slender Means*, the slender Selina wears "a high hoop-brimmed hat and shoes with high block wedges; these fashions from France, it was said, were symbols of the Resistance" (70). By contrast, hoarding and fatness signal "imperialism, exploitation, surplus value" (Ellmann 3). Deharme's disgust with the "fat ugliness" of the "overgrown" German "trouts" recalls anti-German propaganda from the First World War: Allied portrayals of

German women as "fat and frumpy" contributed to the vilification of fat bodies in both America and England (Foxcroft 113). The positioning of slimness as inherently desirable transforms the emaciated bodies of French citizens, underfed due to punitive Nazi ration policies, into patriotic symbols of national resilience. Slenderness and sophistication signal ethical and aesthetic superiority.

Calories and Competition in Spark's Postwar Fiction

In Muriel Spark's postwar fiction, the scientific measurement of food and the female body quantifies social and erotic capital. In both *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (1961) and *A Far Cry from Kensington* (1988), weight loss tends inevitably towards romantic relationships: as Jean Brodie and Nancy Hawkins shed their bulk, they become erotically visible to the men and women around them. Whereas characters remain unaware of both their biases about fatness and the nature of the transformation rendering Brodie and Hawkins more attractive, Spark's narrators precisely equate slenderness and sex appeal. In *The Girls of Slender Means* (1963), women measure themselves against one another, quite literally, and competitively count calories to determine their positions in a hierarchy of sex appeal. This erotic calculus undermines the association of food preparation with feminine caring work.[94] Countering cultural conceptions of beauty in wartime England and France, Spark's novels position postwar slenderness as inversely proportionate to morality. Characters regulate others' diets as a means of manipulation. Spark's self-interested economy of dining challenges midcentury ideals of national unity

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[94] Marjorie DeVault defines "caring work" as the unpaid, "invisible work" of purchasing, preparing, and serving food to the family, as well as cleaning and other "housework," traditionally assigned to women. In *Feeding the Family*, DeVault notes that while many women also engage in paid labour, unpaid domestic work constitutes an additional set of gendered responsibilities (1-18).

and democracy. Dieting also interacts with narrative form: hunger operates in the background of *The Girls of Slender Means* and *A Far Cry from Kensington*, while food behaviours shape the perceptions and plots of both Jane and Nancy. With its twin resonances of self-care and selfishness, the slender female body is both emancipatory and threatening in Spark's fiction.

Jean Brodie's charisma is predicated on her snobbishness, culinary and otherwise. Abusing the potential of food to signify emotional connection, the schoolteacher selectively prepares and distributes food as a means of manipulating both students and lovers. Like her artistic and musical preferences, Brodie's opinions on food and eating appear arbitrary, yet they facilitate control and loyalty through elitism and exclusion. Cooking is one of many means through which she shapes the lives of the people around her. Selective, covert feeding elevates and segregates the Brodie set: "Miss Brodie's special girls [are] taken home to tea and bidden not to tell the others" (26); "four pounds of rosy apples" are provided on the condition that they be eaten discreetly—"while the coast is clear" (47). Like "the unfamiliar pineapple" served at Sandy Stranger's birthday lunch, such meals confer pleasure through their rarity: the pineapple is "special" and "different," which gives it "the authentic taste and appearance of happiness" (16). Brodie's flattering preferential treatment encourages the young women to imagine futures beyond suburban middleclass domesticity. "The Brodie girls' self-regard as an elite, or as Miss Brodie puts it, 'the crème de la crème,' gives them secure identities and life narratives that accord with Miss Brodie's own unusual conceptions" (Suh 174). Yet as Judy Suh points out, such identities are only made possible through "elitist scapegoating and exclusion" (174). Her hermeneutics of value is idiosyncratic yet emphatic, and

touches on everything from Mussolini to sweetbreads. Viewing the people around her as malleable and moulding her girls according to her tastes, she employs a method of "making patterns with facts" that Sandy Stranger finds fascinating (72). Food is a key facet of Miss Brodie's exclusionary pedagogy.

Brodie's excessive feeding of Gordon Lowther is an act of control rather than caring. Having selected the singing master as her lover, she resents the domestic competition of fellow teachers Ellen and Alison Kerr for Lowther's attentions. She claims that they are "skimpy" and "starving him": "When it became certain that the Kerr sisters had taken over permanently the housekeeping for this bashful, smiling bachelor, Miss Brodie fancied he was getting thin" (86). Making "short work" of the meek sisters (88), Brodie feeds Lowther to claim her territory. Having renounced the married Teddy Lloyd, Jean redirects her romantic energies into cooking for and sleeping with Gordon, yet her actions are divorced from emotion; she "refuse[s] him all but her bed-fellowship and her catering" (104). Brodie's "food-supplying mania" gives rise to gossip (91), yet her apparent domesticity only adds to her fascistic power. Viewed from the narrative perspective of her students, her "new ventures into cookery in no way diminished her previous grandeur, for everything she prepared for Gordon Lowther seemed to be large, whether it was family-sized puddings to last him out the week, or joints of beef or lamb, or great angry-eyed whole salmon" (93). She aims to fatten him up by two stone in only a few months:

> One day… she gave Mr Lowther, for tea alone, an admirable lobster salad, some sandwiches of liver paste, cake and tea, followed by a bowl of porridge and cream. These were served to him on a tray for himself alone,

> you could see he was on a special diet … he worked his way through
>
> everything with impassive obedience. (90-1)

The sheer scale of her domestic labour renders Miss Brodie heroic in the girls' eyes, especially since it is untempered by servility. Sandy perceives no degree of "surrender" in Brodie's actions that might suggest her subjugation to traditional gender roles. Though "she look[s] at him severely and possessively," Gordon looks at Jean both "with love" and "for approval," as if asking her permission to open his own cupboards (89-90). Brodie's assertion that Lowther "needs looking after" quickly transitions into an authoritarian management of his consumption (87). In displacing Lowther "from a position as the chief beneficiary of this labor," Brodie's domestic "'service' paradoxically weakens him" (Suh 176): the gluttonous regime renders him "fat and weary and put[s] him out of voice" (Spark, *Prime* 104). Her imposition of foodways is predatory. Miss Brodie's management of others' consumption reflects her association with charismatic dictators, and rhymes with one of her mantras: "Give me a girl at an impressionable age, and she is mine for life" (9). Viewing bodies and personalities as malleable, she shapes both through food.

Though she feeds Mr. Lowther to excess, Miss Brodie is never seen eating; as he expands and fattens, she slims and contracts. This physical transformation calls narrative attention to her sexuality, and recalls earlier scenes in which her bust seemed to grow and shink under the girls' watchful gaze. After the teacher is spotted kissing Mr. Lloyd, Sandy and Jenny—having previously considered her "hardly flesh and blood"—wonder "whether Miss Brodie was actually capable of kissing or being kissed" (53). The metamorphosis they imagine while "recasting her in their minds…. [a]s someone called

'Jean'" is most evident in contrast with the other, sexless junior school teachers, and manifest in Brodie's "newer clothes" and "glowing amber necklace" (53). Physical reduction is accentuated by modern, glamorous clothing. The girls closely monitor their teacher's body for signs of sexual activity, keeping "an eye on [her] stomach to see if it showed signs of swelling" (53). Instead, Jenny and Sandy notice "a slimmer appearance in Miss Brodie and [begin] to wonder … if she might be physically beautiful or desirable to men" (86). Brodie's thinness heightens her erotic appeal in the minds of her students, seeming to make her shape "pleasanter" (89). Moreover, the girls read their teacher's thinness as a somatic reflection of spiritual suffering: "through her sad passion for Mr. Lloyd," they imagine, she gains "a certain deep romantic beauty" and nobility evoking the ascetic purification of religious fasting (86). The inverse relationship between Gordon's and Jean's weights ironically exaggerates midcentury ideals of feminine self-sacrifice. Though the true source of Miss Brodie's slenderness is never revealed, her slimming conveys agency rather than subjugation.

In *Curriculum Vitae: A Volume of Autobiography*, Muriel Spark describes her experience of postwar austerity in England, along with the malnourishment and addiction to diet pills that contributed to her breakdown in the early 1950s:

> I was getting tired of [being poor]. I also had very little to eat. Those were days of rationing, tighter even than during the war. If one didn't eat the whole of the allotted rations one was in trouble. In 1952 to 1953 a single person was allowed one and a half ounces of cheese, four ounces of bacon, two eggs and eight ounces of butter per week (there was a special coronation issue of four ounces of butter in May 1953). Butcher's meat

was rationed by price, limited to one shilling and ninepence per week in

1953. This was, in fact, the basis of a fairly balanced minimum diet. But

living alone, as I did, I neglected to take those basics. I didn't care enough.

… the fact remains that I was thoroughly undernourished. (199)

In addition to worrying about money, Spark was actively preoccupied with controlling

her weight; her calorie chart from that period sets her recommended maximum intake at a

punishing 1000 calories per day.[95] To suppress her appetite and help reduce food costs,

Spark began taking Dexedrine, the drug later known as "speed," prescribed as a slimming

aid (Stannard). Her dependence on these diet pills led to dextro-amphetamine poisoning.

Spark suffered paranoid hallucinations in which she detected coded, threatening

messages in T.S. Eliot's plays; these delusions were followed by depression and other

withdrawal symptoms as she stopped taking the pills. Her first novel, *The Comforters*

(1957), translates those hallucinations into proto-postmodern metafiction in which a

character hears the voice of a novelist writing the novel that she is in.[96]

The Girls of Slender Means (1963) takes place in precisely this context, its

fairytale opening positing austerity as central to the story: "Long ago in 1945, all the nice

people in England were poor, allowing for exceptions" (7). The quantification of nutrition

governs characters' attitudes to diet and body weight. Calorie counting undermines the

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[95] Spark's "Food Guidance Chart" includes a "table of food values" similar to that consulted in *The Girls of Slender Means*. The chart recommends reducing overall calories while avoiding "sugars, starches, and fats" in favour of lean proteins, which "can be chosen freely since they do not tend to form fatty tissue" ("Food Guidance Chart").

[96] Spark's preoccupation with weight control and physical appearance continued throughout her lifetime. After the success of *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, she moved to New York, where "she quickly transformed her public image with the help of Elizabeth Arden, diets, designer clothes, and jewellery. She bought a racehorse. Photographs of her over the next decade appear to reveal her steadily increasing youth" (Stannard). Like other influences on her fiction—the Book of Job, topical news stories, astrological signs and charts—Spark's discussions of fashion and the mechanics of weight loss are thoroughly researched and worked into her literary projects.

collective spirit of the rationing system—mirrored in the communal menus at the May of Teck Club—by setting up a private economy in service of the individual. Women compete in self-denial and slenderness; working to reduce intake rather than feeding themselves for victory, they exploit the resources of the people around them.

Like the debutante cousins in *The Pursuit of Love*, Spark's *Girls of Slender Means* are ranked according to their physical measurements. In Mitford's novel, Linda and Fanny wile away the uncomfortably long years between schoolroom and first London season in too-small tweed suits, playing "endless games of patience" and "measuring": "We had a tape-measure and competed as to the largeness of our eyes, the smallness of wrists, ankles, waist and neck, length of legs and fingers, and so on. Linda always won. When we had finished 'measuring' we talked of romance" (40). The link between quantitative physical proportions and love is explicit; the "lounging adolescents waiting for love" compare their figures as a means of determining their relative appeal to potential suitors (Mitford, *Pursuit* 38). In Spark's novel, the "question of weight and management" is equally important. For the young women of the May of Teck Club, tape measures determine social status. "The ability or otherwise to wriggle sideways through the lavatory window would be one of those tests that only went to prove the club's food policy to be unnecessarily fattening" (Spark, *Girls* 32). The daily menu is mathematically analyzed using a caloric chart; Jane, Selina, and Anne calculate the club's Sunday menu as exceeding 1000 calories even before supper, which consists of cheese pie ("roughly 350 calories") and stewed cherries ("94 calories normal helping, unless sweetened by saccharine, in which case 64 calories") (34). Selina Redwood and Anne Baberton are both the most successful on the dating market and the most slender, their social mobility

mirrored in their easy movement through the window. In addition, both carefully monitor their intake of food.

Such reductive quantification fits with Spark's tendency to distill characterization. Norman Page observes that Spark seems "to be following writers of the French *nouveau roman* such as Alain Robbe-Grillet, who conceived of the role of fiction as the dispassionate description of the external world as a substitute for the traditional novel's concern with character" (73). In Spark's works, this preoccupation with the external often replaces the extended psychological development that marks traditional realist novels. Even major characters are reduced to single details, a slimming technique most evident in the treatment of "the Brodie set" in *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*. Reflecting the influence of ballad form on Spark's writing, the repetition of descriptors reduces subjectivity to isolated physical or behavioural characteristics—Sandy Stranger's pig-like eyes, for instance, thematize surveillance, scrutiny, and treachery.[97] Rose Stanley is "famous for sex," a nebulous designation that identifies sex appeal as a concrete characteristic, comparable to the athletic skill or clear elocution for which Eunice Gardiner and Jenny Gray are respectively "famous" (7). Ruth Whittaker identifies such quiddity as a key feature of *nouveaux romans*, but notes that in Spark's novels, postmodern "neutrality" is subjugated to an overarching religious faith that confers value and significance (9). Details of dress and dining habits, as well as the ways in which characters label, measure, and monitor one another and share or hoard their food and clothing generate ethical judgements.

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[97] Spark's use of *leitmotifs* renders citation almost superfluous; the first of countless references to Sandy's "small" and "pig-like" eyes appears on page 7. For a discussion of how Spark's repetition of words, phrases, and passages encourages non-spontaneous association and emphasis see Andrew Caink, "The Art of Repetition in Muriel Spark's Telling."

The novel reverses the equation of slenderness with morality. "The moral polarities of the novel are symbolized by Selina Redwood, who is beautiful and evil, and Joanna Childe, who is 'healthy looking' and good" (Whittaker 65). As professional women, Jane Wright and Joanna Childe do not restrict their consumption as rigidly as their housemates. Jane, who is "fat but intellectually glamorous" (30), monitors her caloric intake without reducing it, and self-consciously justifies her consumption as necessary fuel for her "brain-work." Her preoccupation with her weight and diet is oppressive as well as ineffective: she is "miserable about her fatness," and spends "much of her time in eager dread of the next meal, and in making resolutions what to eat of it and what to leave, and in making counter-resolutions in view of the fact that her work at the publishers' was essentially mental, which meant that her brain had to be fed more than most people's" (32-3). The psychological energy devoted to worrying about what and how much to consume takes up as much mental space for Jane as the actual "brain work" by which she justifies her increased consumption—publishing, poetry, and drafting fake fan letters to famous authors.

Jane's guilt at finishing meals and consuming her own sweets rations—rather than trading or giving them away, as Selina and others do—suggests the stress of failing to live up to the feminine beauty ideals that she has internalized. At one point she eats "a square of chocolate to keep her brain going till supper-time" then regrets "having eaten it, and put[s] the rest of the bar at the back of a shelf in her cupboard where it was difficult to reach, as if hiding it from a child. The rightness of this action and the wrongness of her having eaten any at all were confirmed by Selina's voice from Anne's room" (49). Comparison with other women exacerbates Jane's sense of moral failure, even if Selina's

embodiment of ideal beauty signals not moral fortitude but amorality. The necessity of denying herself the small pleasures of dining, "of picking crumbs of meat out of the shepherd's pie … to get the little bits of meat separated from the little bits of potato" (67), briefly overwhelms Jane in conversation with Nicholas Farringdon. Her diatribe against her shoddy life, with its bland food and careful measurement of present pleasure against future pain, causes Nicholas to imagine a "secret sweetness" underlying her misery. Kissing her, he offers to share his rations:

> She said she would take his egg. The egg-ration was one a week at this time, it was the beginning of the hardest period of food-rationing, since the liberated countries had to be supplied. Nicholas had a gas-ring in his bed-sitting room on which he cooked his supper when he was at home and remembered about supper. He said, 'You can have all my tea, I drink coffee. I get it from the Americans.' She said she would be glad of his tea. The tea-ration was two ounces one week and three ounces the next, alternately. Tea was useful for bartering purposes. (67-8)

Courtship is calculated according to the current availability of goods and their value as fuel or currency.

In addition to registering discomfort, this outburst divulges a deeper frustration with the drabness of life for unmarried, unrich women in postwar England; watching Jarvie (one of three middleaged spinsters permitted to live at the club past the age limit of thirty) complacently fussing with her utility gloves makes Jane want to "tear off her clothes and run naked into the street, screaming" (78). Her stress over the need to consume sufficient nutrients while avoiding carbohydrates conveys the exhaustion of

adhering to rigid dietary guidelines. Like Spark's own food guidance chart, Jane's diet

reflects the midcentury popularity of low-carbohydrate reduction plans: John Yudkin's

popular *This Slimming Business* (1958), for instance, prohibits high-carbohydrate foods

in favour of proteins, fats, and vegetables rich in vitamins and minerals in addition to an

overall reduction in calories. By implying a hidden romanticism and desire for pleasure,

Jane's misery draws Nicholas to her. Yet she rejects Nicholas' "poetic image" of life at

the May of Teck Club and refuses to romanticize the poverty, self-denial, and communal

living emblematic of austerity-era England: "She did not see the May of Teck Club as a

microcosmic ideal society; far from it. The beautiful heedless poverty of a Golden Age

did not come into the shilling meter life which any sane girl would regard only as a

temporary one until better opportunities occurred" (65). Calorie-counting and pressures

to lose weight operate in opposition to rationing and food controls, generating a system in

which even the limited pleasures of austerity-era dining are unavailable to women

wishing to experience the potential pleasures of sex and marriage. Facing death following

the detonation of the unexploded bomb, Jane's first instinct is to run to her room to

"snatch" and "gobble" a block of chocolate: the sugar diminishes her sense of shock

(118). Jane's ultimate success as a gossip columnist confirms her role as a narrator rather

than a protagonist of romantic plots; her fatness is a barrier to sex and marriage.

By contrast, Joanna's consumption habits derive both from her profession and

from her self-exclusion from romantic competition. A "large" and attractive rector's

daughter (12), Joanna takes no part "in the argument between [May of Teck] members

and staff about the food, whether it contained too many fattening properties, even

allowing for the necessities of wartime rationing" (25). She is determined not to marry,

having been disappointed in her first love of a local curate. Her elocution lessons generate income in the form of funds and goods, including a special arrangement with the cook, Miss Harper, "for at that time all who kept keys of food-cupboards made special arrangements with all others" (21). Her large size ultimately leads to her death, as she is trapped in the bathroom when the building collapses.

Each member of the May of Teck Club leverages her body as a means of attracting particular men. Dorothy Markham is unfazed by her hipless and breastless figure, as she "intend[s] to marry one of three young men of her extensive acquaintance who happened to find themselves drawn to boyish figures" (43-4). Jane mistakenly considers her intelligence and literary leanings as compensation for her fatness in relations with men, though the narrator suggests that such qualities are insufficient replacements for physical beauty. Selina's erotic value is inversely proportional to her size. Her long slender legs are "unsurpassable," while her queenly, languid "lolling" grants her power over multiple men (42). She deliberately seeks out men with vulnerabilities because they are less possessive, yet reserves a possessive businessman for the purposes of future marriage. Selina boasts to her roommates about her hunger: "I only eat a little bit of everything. I feel starved all the time, actually" (34). Though slenderness signals self-denial and moral superiority, Selina performs an act of evil in service of her physical appearance. Her theft of Anne Baberton's Schiaparelli dress betrays a total failure of empathy.

In *The Girls of Slender Means*, slimness is a matter of life and death. As the May of Teck boardinghouse goes up in flames, only its thinnest inhabitants are able to escape through the window: the athletically built Joanna dies because her hips exceed thirty-six

and one-quarter inches. After the detonation of the unexploded bomb, the women who remain trapped are those with the least desirable proportions: "Some were plump. Jane was fat. Dorothy Markham, who had previously been able to slither in and out of the window to sunbathe, was now two months pregnant; her stomach was taut with an immovable extra inch" (123). Tilly manages to force herself through the window, but only by breaking one of her hips (125). Nancy Riddle's hips look "dangerously wide" as she climbs the ladder out of the collapsing house (129). But fat is life-threatening not only in literal terms: excess weight threatens women's prospects to the extent that bread-and-butter pudding becomes "suicidal" (34). Implying deficits of self-control, morality, and sex appeal, fat is inherently dangerous for midcentury women.

The resonances of slenderness—modernity, self-care, maternalism—belie Naomi Wolf's assertion in *The Beauty Myth* that "A beautiful heroine is a contradiction in terms, since heroism is about individuality, interesting and ever changing, while 'beauty' is generic, boring, and inert. While culture works out moral dilemmas, 'beauty' is amoral: if a woman is born resembling an art object, it is an accident of nature … but it is not a moral act" (59). Though Elaine Scarry argues in *On Beauty and Being Just* that beauty inspires and symbolizes justice, the moralistic conception of fatness and thinness in the twentieth century distracts from real moral and political dilemmas. In Muriel Spark's fiction, however, slimming is a political act, prioritizing the needs of the individual over those of the state. Characters refrain from consuming their fair share, bartering fat coupons for clothing and tea; they compete to see who can consume less rather than consuming less out of a desire not to waste food. Counting calories and trading away ration coupons undermines the national economy.

A Far Cry from Kensington is set in London in the last year of food rationing. The novel retrospectively traces the physical and psychological transformation of its narrator and protagonist, Nancy Hawkins, alongside England's late-fifties movement from austerity to abundance. Nancy's body registers this economic shift in reverse. As she sheds pounds and inches, she also sheds her identity as a war widow, and moves from an ethics of self-sacrifice to focus on her own needs and desires.

Nancy Hawkins' social capital is historically contingent. Her importance in relation to her fellow citizens derives from her embodiment of abundance in the context of postwar austerity. Rather than implying a lack of self-control, her girth conveys a comforting stability and generosity. "[A]dmired for my largeness and that all-motherly look," she recalls, "in the year 1954 I was comfortable in my fatness, known as a 'wonderful woman' although I had never done anything wonderful at all" (7). At odds with modern conceptions of feminine beauty, her figure nostalgically recalls Victorian ideals of patriotic motherhood. She is even mistaken for a pregnant woman on the train, and feels compelled graciously to accept the offered seat, as befits her maternal persona (8). Though only in her twenties, Nancy is "large enough in a post-war time of rationing and utilitarian discomfort to suggest a comforting abundance to everyone who simply looks at her" (Smith vi): her ample weight "invite[s] confidences" (7).

Mrs. Hawkins is treated as a collective resource and stabilizing force by the people around her. Throughout the novel, she distributes that resource in the form of advice. As an editor, Hawkins advises her employers which books to publish; as a flatmate, she helps Wanda Podolak and Isobel Lederer manage their personal and professional lives. Her advisory capacity extends to the narratee: through a series of

second-person metaleptic interjections, Nancy offers concrete tips for such diverse tasks as losing weight (eat half of everything), looking for a job (tell everyone you know), treating rheumatism (eat a banana per day), or increasing concentration (acquire a cat) (7, 63-4, 89, 94). Just as Wanda's immigrant friends share tips on exploiting the cultural and material resources of the welfare state, Mrs. Hawkins helps citizens and refugees navigate the complexities of postwar life.

The corollary of this respect is erotic invisibility: Mrs. Hawkins enjoys "universal affection" but is overlooked as a potential romantic partner. During her interview with Ian Tooley, she notices him observing her "very closely, very carefully, not at all as a man looks at a woman but as if he were considering me as a specimen for some purpose quite beyond my understanding. I felt dreadfully physical" (72-3). Nancy's weight renders her asexual, even subhuman—more "specimen" than woman—in the eyes of her employer. She only perceives the extent of her fatness when she meets her new colleagues, all of whom are "grotesques" of some kind.

> I was immensely too fat. I was overweight, I thought, to the point that anyone employing me must be kinky… I was one of the Mackintosh and Tooley alibis. From that night I decided to eat and drink half. Only half of everything I normally ate, in any circumstances. And I decided to tell nobody about my plan. Just to say, if pressed, that I'd had enough. And just to consume half, or perhaps even a quarter, until I reached a reasonable weight and size. And I started next morning eating less, drinking less. (85-6)

Fatness tends towards physical and psychological discomfort. Nancy shifts her weight

while on the telephone with Martin York, unable to get comfortable (52); her awareness of her unattractiveness to Hugh Lederer renders her incapable of enjoying the luxurious meal at the Savoy, where the chefs are celebrating the imminent end of food rationing with "an anticipatory splash" of exotic and trendy foods (56). Like Jane Wright in *The Girls of Slender Means*, Hawkins devotes her mental energies to regulating her own consumption. To that end, she masochistically monitors herself and others.

Nancy's physical and social significance are also bound up with nomenclature. The widespread use of her married name early in the novel evokes respect while subordinating her identity to her husband's (8). For "Mrs. Hawkins," fatness breeds recognition and importance; while losing her "great weight," she "invite[s] everyone to call [her] Nancy, instead" (40). In her transition to slenderness, Nancy sheds her elevated status along with the weight, confirming her "impression that a great large girl is definitely a somebody, whatever she loses by way of romantic encounters" (15). William encourages this shift in his future wife; when she slips back into old habits by taking on others' responsibilities, he chides her by calling her Mrs. Hawkins, the name associated with her acquiescence to the needs of others at the cost of her own desires. Her previous fat identity haunts her newly slender frame.

Dieting shapes narrative. In *A Far Cry from Kensington*, hunger operates as a textual refrain; Nancy repeatedly interrupts the narrative to acknowledge the ongoing discomfort, disorientation, and depression that intersect with her metamorphosis into a more "reasonable" shape. Lightheadedness, pressing in at the edges of consciousness, distorts Nancy's perceptions. The act of dieting fits with her larger "sadness in those early days of December 1954" (86). Hawkins' sense of her own marginalization is

heightened by the drug-like effect of hunger on her perceptions of the postwar city; she imagines herself as Lucy Snowe in Charlotte Brontë's *Villette* (1853), walking through festival crowds in Brussels in a laudanum-induced hallucination (115). Consumption influences perception, so that the ongoing shift in Nancy Hawkins' diet alters both her commitment to becoming the main character in her own life and her treatment by the other characters in the novel.

Nancy's hallucinatory consciousness hints at other slippages between reality and fantasy in the novel. Her commonsense approach to weight loss—a mathematical reduction of intake—runs counter to the superstitious conceptions of diet and health attributed to other characters. As she observes of postwar Britain, "There was an upsurge in interest in the supernatural in those years, probably as a result of the uncontemplatable events which had blackened the previous decade" (105). Ian Tooley's mysticism is inseparable from his vegetarianism. He believes that "[a]ll ailments were caused by meat-eating, and these he held could be cured by a combination of vegetable diet and radionics" (76). Even Nancy's prescription of a daily banana for arthritis pain is a kind of folk remedy. Hector Bartlett blackmails Catholic Wanda Podolak into entering the world of "radionics," and while his belief in "The Box" is never confirmed, he convinces her that she is responsible for inflicting a wasting sickness on her friend through its operation. Wracked with guilt and fearing excommunication and prosecution, Wanda commits suicide by jumping into the canal. As in other Spark novels, it is impossible wholly to discount this supernatural explanation: in the reality of the novel radionics may, in fact, be responsible for Nancy's rapid weight loss. Even Wanda's paranoia about state surveillance appears reasonable in relation to her flight from Second World War-era

Poland, which Nancy imagines as a "world of bureaucratic tyranny far worse than ours" (28). Like astrology, numerology, and Nancy's ritualistic recitation of the Angelus (48), quack remedies form part of a larger tapestry of faith and superstition.

Mrs. Hawkins is socially, romantically, and professionally peripheral until she centralizes herself through a combination of self-denial and self-care. Through an editorial revision of her daily life, Nancy transitions away from minorness. "[S]he diet[s] to reject the image of herself that she ha[s] suddenly been compelled to confront" (Sproxton 56). Her metamorphosis is charted through the reactions of other characters: Mr. Tooley worries that she might become too thin for his purposes (105); Mr. Wells observes that she looks "ten years younger" (120); Hugh Lederer tells her that she is "looking very pretty" (121). Deciding "that she has had enough not only of being too fat, but of giving advice," she stops taking on others' problems and even prioritizes her own needs over her boyfriend's in selecting a flat (Sproxton 57). Though Nancy "seems initially to have settled willingly and comfortably into her role of adviser, confidante and gentle friend to all around her," she finally rejects the elements of her personality that seemed permanent but are not fundamental (Sproxton 48). Over the course of the novel she stops playing into expectations based on her physical appearance. She transforms her body in order to reposition herself—to emerge from the "kinky" fringes and become more desirable in a mainstream sense—while at the same time prioritizing her own happiness.

Nancy's newfound sex appeal is contingent on a deeper emotional conversion. Mrs. Hawkins' tendency to care for others is more reactive than deliberate; she acknowledges the gap between her self-image and how she is viewed by society, yet

actively complies with expectations. Only when she sheds her maternal figure and persona does she elicit erotic notice from her housemate, William Todd, the medical student whom she later marries. When she tells him she is "getting a bit tired of being capable," he turns the tables by giving *her* advice: "Don't take on unnecessary responsibilities, and simply abandon everything you've taken on, except me. That's my advice. You're looking lovely" (134). William's closing compliment underscores the simultaneity of Nancy's alimentary and psychological schemes for self-improvement.

Nancy's social transformation is inseparable from the moralistic act of self-denial that shifts her relationship to food. Early in the novel, she acknowledges her "puritanical and moralistic nature; it is my happy element to judge between right and wrong, regardless of what I might actually do" (51). This moralistic nature is evident in her dietary advice:

> As an aside, I can tell you that if there's nothing wrong with you except fat it is easy to get thin. You eat and drink the same as always, only half. If you are handed a plate of food, leave half; if you have to help yourself, take half. After a while, if you are a perfectionist, you can consume half of that again. On the question of will-power, if that is a factor, you should think of will-power as something that never exists in the present tense, only in the future and the past. At one moment you have decided to do or refrain from an action and the next moment you have already done or refrained; it is the only way to deal with will-power. (7)

Though not imposed as fascistically as Miss Brodie's, Mrs. Hawkins' guidelines for slimming reflect a similarly authoritative worldview. Happily puritanical, Nancy is in her

element when judging others' production and consumption habits—whether writing a

novel or eating a meal. This high-mindedness is only exacerbated by her diet, which

triggers "a kind of puritanical dismay at the idea of other people's eating and drinking,

especially the quantity" (108). Part of Nancy's anger at Hector Bartlett, the hack writer

who gets her fired for not printing his books, derives from his indiscriminate expulsion of

words. From her perspective of editor, advisor, and moralist, Nancy condemns his output

as an immoral waste of resources: "*Pisseur de copie*! Hector Bartlett, it seemed to me,

vomited literary matter, he urinated and sweated, he excreted it" (43). Her repetition of

the French epithet imbues it with almost religious authority: it "feels like preaching the

gospel" (112). Like Nancy's management of her own and others' behaviour, her polemic

against Bartlett positions her as an arbiter of taste and judgment.

Nancy's physical transformation is the somatic manifestation of her inborn moral

righteousness. Rather than distributing her energies widely, Mrs. Hawkins determines to

focus on her own happiness. In reshaping her body for the post-austerity years, she resists

the shared sacrifice rhetoric of the 1940s and embraces the possibility of glamour and

sophistication. Nancy precisely dates her desire for "a more attractive life" to March of

1955, after a period of depression and unemployment (121). The reconstruction of her

life coincides with the emergence of England from the shadow of food rationing and

wartime destruction. Having lost her job, she rides around London on the upper decks of

buses, viewing the postwar city:

> There were few streets intact although the war had been over ten years.
>
> Victorian houses, shops, churches, were separated by large areas of bomb-
>
> gap. The rubble had been cleared away, but strange grasses and wild herbs

had sprung up where the war-demolished houses had been. … London was
still sooty from coal-fires in those days … And sometimes I walked round
the City, soon to be reconstructed with eloquent, rich high-rises. (114)

Nancy's desire to reconstruct her life—physically, socially, professionally, and romantically—is coextensive with the reconstruction of the city. Her weight loss erases the somatic evidence of former consumption habits and permits a recalibration of her entire lifestyle. Just as postwar planners viewed wartime destruction as an opportunity for national reinvention, Nancy reimagines her future in utopian terms.

Coda: Schiaparelli, Slenderness, Modernity

The physical and psychological labour required to slim and tone the female body, whether in service of national strength or personal happiness, renders morality legible in postwar Britain. From the early twentieth century, both beauty scientists and physical culturists drew on chemistry, dermatology, and physiology to offer ways and means by which all women might become attractive and stylish. In theory, mainstream western beauty was available to all women through dietary control, regular exercise, and the use of cosmetics. The midcentury focus on shedding unwanted fat and the craze for "slimming" was the primary concern for women striving to conform to modern standards of beauty. More than anything else, the creation and maintenance of the thin body was predicated on self-control and self-denial. Midcentury intersections between slenderness and sophistication are exemplified by Italian fashion designer Elsa Schiaparelli.

Figure 10: Elsa Schiaparelli's *Skeleton Dress* (1938), Victoria and Albert Museum.

Schiaparelli's clothing unites Wallis Simpson, Nancy Mitford, and Muriel Spark.

A frequent collaborator with Salvador Dalí, Schiaparelli designed wearable art imbued

with a surrealist sensibility; her witty and erotically charged rethinkings of classic

garments, from the self-explanatory *Shoe Hat* to *Skeleton Dress* (1938), an angular black

exoskeleton in skintight silk crepe, exemplify the modernist commitment to making it

new (see fig. 10). A 1932 *Harper's Bazaar* profile observes that "[s]he gives her clothes

the essence of modern architecture, modern thought and modern movement" (qtd in Hill);

Rosemary Hill describes her aesthetic as "hard-edged chic." Prior to her marriage to the

former Edward VIII, Wallis Simpson posed for *Vogue* in a Schiaparelli-Dalí dress from her trousseau "in an attempt to soften her public image":

> [Photographer Cecil] Beaton put her in a woodland setting, against the sun, wearing the translucent cream silk evening gown, a romantic, sugary composition, whose effect is bizarrely but completely vitiated by a giant lobster printed on the skirt so that it hangs between her legs. It turns the idyll into an image of predatory, androgynous sexuality that says everything the photograph was intended to deny. (Hill)

In *Love in a Cold Climate*, Fanny wears a "little crimson jacket from Schiaparelli," purchased by her luxury-loving mother. Cedric immediately recognizes it as Schiaparelli, whereas Fanny remains oblivious to its value: "It seemed to me quite uninteresting," she observes, "except for the label in its lining, and I longed to put this on the outside so that people would know where it came from" (413). Cedric horrifies Fanny by telling her it cost £25 in spite of only using a yard of fabric. When she insists she could have made it herself, he challenges her irreverence: "But could you? And if you had, would I have come into the room and said Schiaparelli? … Art is more than yards, just as *one* is more than flesh and bones" (414). In *The Girls of Slender Means*, Anne Baberton's taffeta Schiaparelli dress similarly confers cultural and sexual power: it is shared among the slenderest girls, causes a stir in the most fashionable clubs, and its heartless theft by Selina—who slips past the doomed Joanna and her trembling, wide-hipped housemates to steal it from Anne's bedroom—is the act of evil that inspires Nicholas' conversion.

Schiaparelli's designs are a perfect metaphor for postwar slimming culture. Radically modern, playfully sexual, and rigidly tailored, they are both subversive and

constrictive. As Hill explains, Schiaparelli's designs reflect the modernist privileging of

newness and experimentation over comfort:

> Despite the talk of theoretical functionalism and machines for living in,
> Modernist flat-roofed houses were built to be run by servants whose duties
> involved hefty manual labour. The streamlined interiors of the fashionable
> liner were cosmetic, the engine-room still looked much as it would have
> done in the 19th century, and beneath Schiaparelli's multi-faceted evening
> gowns most of her customers still wore corsets. ("Hard-Edged Chic")

Schiaparelli's autobiography, *Shocking Life* (1954), concludes with her "Twelve

Commandments for Women," including the maxim: "Never fit a dress to the body but

train the body to fit the dress" (255). Avant-garde designs depend on corsets and form-

fitting undergarments to maintain the integrity of soft lines and sharp angles. Just as

Schiaparelli's designs both bind female bodies and expand the possibilities of women's

art and fashion, slenderness offers opportunities for resistance and rigidity.

In midcentury fiction, slimming is emancipatory and oppressive, a form of self-

expression that simultaneously rejects and enforces gendered social narratives. The

novels of Nancy Mitford and Muriel Spark show how slenderness empowers and

endangers women. For those who define themselves against gendered ideals of health,

beauty, and citizenship, restricted consumption functions as an assertion of agency.

Slimming offers a means of food regulation that operates outside of official guidelines for

postwar British consumption.

CONCLUSION

British Cuisine and the New Commonwealth

During the Second World War, the expansion of the site of conflict from battlefront to home front troubled traditional ethics of hospitality; domestic space was no longer a neutral zone in which to welcome guests regardless of national allegiances. In the postwar years, decolonization and imperial reconstruction further collapsed distinctions between host and guest. Postwar debates about citizenship orbited around a central question: who is really at home in Britain?

Midcentury writers engage this question in part through literary depictions of food. Novelists portray the dining table as a hotly contested setting: invading eaters challenge individual and national identity by threatening to usurp the host or change the menu. On the one hand, British hospitality and cuisine is defined in contrast to the violence and authoritarianism of fascism. In P.G. Wodehouse's *The Code of the Woosters*, Bertie's unveiling of Roderick Spode as an uncouth upstart neuters his threat to the country house lifestyle. In Spark's *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, Miss Brodie's fascist regulation of Gordon Lowther's diet grants her temporary power over him, but she is ultimately displaced by Miss Lockhart, who helps him shake off Brodie's fattening emasculation through rigorous physical activity—on the golf course, at least. On the other hand, the rigidity of British cuisine is itself authoritarian: writers like Evelyn Waugh and Ian Fleming reject the state-imposed strictures of austerity cuisine by serving rich, escapist novelistic meals.

In midcentury fiction, food is one means by which the individual mediates her relationship to the state. Eating both prepares citizens for sociopolitical engagement and effects that engagement: in its relation to national identity, food consumption may be heroic or disloyal, benevolent or selfish. Wartime advertisements put a Hitlerish face on greed to emphasize that hoarding or consuming contraband goods constituted a betrayal of the nation, akin to selling state secrets. Characters like Arthur Seaton in *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* and Sebastian Flyte in *Brideshead Revisited* overconsume to rebel against alimentary oversight, whether by state or family. In works such as *The Girls of Slender Means* and *Love in a Cold Climate*, under-consumption conveys individualism rather than collectivism. Both good and bad taste can be treacherous; in the film adaptation of *From Russia with Love* (1963), Sean Connery's James Bond identifies a foreign assassin based on his lack of gustatory discernment. "Red wine with fish," quips Bond, "well that should have told me something." Wartime restaurants that continued to serve upscale meals to those who could afford them were policed by the state, but not always effectively. In Nigel Balchin's *Darkness Falls From the Air* (1942) and Pamela Hansford Johnson's *An Avenue of Stone* (1948), opulent feasts belie the national myth of self-sacrifice. For those not willing to endure the irritation of shortages, the black market offered treacherous relief; operating outside official networks of food production and distribution, black market meals squander public resources for private pleasure. From Boy Scouts to James Bond, from "excellent women" to hedonistic curates, individuals consume to express or deny allegiance to British foodways. Midcentury writers link eating to civic and national identities.

In additional to national belonging, midcentury fiction also addresses evolving

notions of imperial citizenship. As Linda Colley argues in *Britons: Forging the Nation*,

Britishness has always constituted itself through disaffirmation.[98] The same national

anxieties about breakdowns of hospitality and civility that shape invasion fictions drove

anti-immigration sentiment. In postwar Britain, the threat of intrusion was leveraged

against Commonwealth subjects—many of whom fought or worked for Britain during the

war—who theoretically held full citizenship, but were treated as unwelcome guests of the

welfare state. Just as interwar, wartime, and postwar governments set up hierarchies of

class and gender within an ostensibly democratic food culture, constructions of British

cuisine are racially privileged. Writers immigrating to Britain from colonial nations

wrestle with questions of citizenship and belonging through fictional portrayals of food.

Imperial Citizenship and British Foodways

Like the wartime coalition government, the postwar Labour government

conceived of the empire in positive terms; it saw the paternalist management of colonies

as a means of demonstrating its global position as a force for good. Though Clement

Attlee's government attempted to address manpower shortages through the recruitment of

European migrant workers in the years following the 1945 election, insufficient European

response and a lack of immigration restrictions opened the door to a massive influx of

migrants from other Commonwealth nations. The passage of the British Nationality Act

in 1948 formalized a single category of British citizenship: Citizen of the United

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[98] In *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837*, Colley explains that Britain historically defined itself against other nations through its Protestantism (in contrast with primarily Catholic Europe), its military rivalry with France, its metropolitan empire, and its status as an island nation with a strong navy.

Kingdom and Commonwealth (CUKC).[99] This designation effectively granted full

citizenship to people from colonies including Jamaica, Guyana, and Nigeria, along with

the theoretical ability to live and work anywhere in the UK. Slim employment

opportunities in the West Indies and West Africa inspired many to emigrate to Great

Britain in search of work, encouraged by the widespread shortage of unskilled labour in

postwar Britain. "Starting in the late 1940s, black and Asian immigration from the

colonies and 'New Commonwealth' transformed Britain into a multiracial society. In

1948 there were just a few thousand non-white people living in the country, mostly

concentrated in sea ports, but by 1968 there were over a million" (Hampshire 10). The

arrival of the *SS Empire Windrush* to Kent in June 1948, carrying 492 Jamaican

immigrants, marked the symbolic beginning of mass postwar immigration (Anwar). The

ostensible equality inherent in CUKC status was undermined by the historical

naturalization of the "superiority" of white Britons and Europeans over British colonial

subjects of colour.

  As James Hampshire points out in *Citizenship and Belonging*, immigration

policies in the postwar years were developed along lines meant to limit the immigration

of black and Asian imperial citizens without undermining Britain's capacity to transition

from Empire to Commonwealth or alienating allies critical of imperialism, notably the

United States. Conservative immigration policies set up a distinction, "not fully

articulated until 1968," between "citizenship" and patrial "belonging," defined as having

been born or having a parent born within the United Kingdom (Hampshire 12). These

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[99] "Britain, unlike other Commonwealth countries, did not create a citizenship of its own. Instead, Commonwealth citizenship was categorized into four different subgroups: Citizens of the United Kingdom and Colonies (CUKC), Citizens of independent Commonwealth countries, British subjects without citizenship (BSWC), and British protected persons (BPP)" (Karatani, *Defining British Citizenship* 116).

previously implicit categories offered a legal means of excluding would-be emigrants

from the "New Commonwealth" (including the West Indies and African countries) while

permitting "Old Commonwealth" immigrants from Canada, New Zealand, Australia, and

South Africa to establish themselves on English soil. Clearly, "citizenship did not equate

to community membership in post-war Britain" (Hampshire 12). As Nadine Attewell

explains in *Better Britons*, the formal establishment of "patriality" in the 1971

Immigration Act "rearticulated British citizenship as a function of whiteness … by

retracting the borders of Britishness": withholding "the right of abode from all British

subjects save those with British-born parents" effectively legalized the exclusion of

colonial subjects (29).

Even before the legal definition of patriality, immigration policies were

predicated on an uneven application of the rights of citizenship. In *Whitewashing Britain*,

Kathleen Paul proves that the Labour government actively contributed to public racism

through postwar legislation. Through a series of "practical infringements of theoretical

equality" such as "immigrant poll taxes, literacy and English-language tests, and

administrative checks on migrating subjects of colour" (13), British Parliament privileged

white and European immigrants over Asian and African British subjects:

> despite the existence of an imperial nationality, working-class subjects,
>
> subjects of colour, female subjects, and other 'outsiders' all found their
>
> access to material wealth, education, and privilege severely limited by
>
> economic, gender, and 'racial' status. These practical divisions within a
>
> theoretically universal subjecthood suggest competing definitions and
>
> communities of Britishness which reflect separate spheres of nationality:

an inclusive formal nationality policy and an exclusive informal national

identity. The formal policy instituted as one means of maintaining and

justifying imperial control over time developed sufficient symbolic and

nonrational resonance to become naturalized as an imagined community

of imperial 'Britishness.' The informal national identity imagined a

different community of 'Britishness' which included only white residents

of the United Kingdom and privileged middle- and upper-class men within

that. (Paul 13-14)

Faced with declining birth rates and labour shortages within Britain, policymakers

worried about rebuilding the empire by producing and attracting the "right kind" of

imperial subject (Paul 4). Altering previously expansive policies governing citizenship

and immigration, the postwar Labour government encouraged migration between Britain

and primarily white nations—Australia, Canada, and Ireland—while discouraging the

emigration of British subjects of colour. Discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, or

national origins was only outlawed in Britain in 1965, with the Labour government's

Race Relations Act, and then only in public spaces such as pubs. The 1968 expansion of

the bill, which made it illegal to refuse housing, employment, insurance, or public

services to a person on the grounds of colour, race, ethnicity, or nationality ("Race

Relations Act"), sparked a wave of xenophobic outrage epitomized by Enoch Powell's

infamous "Rivers of Blood" speech.[100]

The cultural tensions exacerbated by postwar immigration also contributed to

cultural renovation. From the 1940s, West Indian and West African settlement

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[100] In his April 1968 speech to West Midlands Conservatives, Powell likened allegedly lax immigration laws to German appeasement, and forecast doom for the nation should they continue.

contributed to the demographic and culinary diversification of Britain already set in motion by Chinese, Italian, Jewish, Middle Eastern, and Greek communities; it further coincided with the postwar boom in South Asian immigration:

> While Indians were present in Britain before the end of empire, their numbers were small and their visibility and impact uneven when compared with their increase after India['s] and Pakistan's independence in 1947. Substantial immigration from former South Asian colonies, alongside that from the Caribbean and elsewhere, remade Britain in cultural and demographic terms after the Second World War. (Buettner 144)

Expatriates opened restaurants to serve migrant workers the familiar foods of their own countries, but adapted to accommodate local availability and British tastes.

Though postwar British foodways expanded to include a range of international and multiethnic influences, the increased consumption of non-traditional foods in Britain did not reflect a larger embrace of ethnic and racial diversity. If "ethnic" cuisines—South Asian "curry" in particular—were enthusiastically embraced by white consumers, the people making and serving ethnic foods were consistently met with hostility and aggression. As both Paul and Hampshire have argued, New Commonwealth immigration was viewed in overwhelmingly negative terms by both policymakers and the British public. Even the term "ethnic" as a culinary designation suggests a hierarchy of cultural value by subjugating the ethnic other to a monolithic British cuisine (Ramanathan): "Domination is one of the things that the idea of ethnicity naturalizes" (Roy 14). This two-tiered model of British food culture manifests in sites of food sales and consumption.

David Parker describes Chinese restaurants in Britain as fraught "contact zones" in which the ostensible "welcome of the food migrants bring can sit alongside the disavowal of their distinctive social and political claims" as well as racist harassment and micro-aggressions: "while seeming to exemplify peaceful multicultural coexistence," the orientalist construction of Chinese restaurants and workers as simultaneously British and foreign enacts a form of "celebratory multiculturalism" that betrays "deep structures of racialized domination" (74).

Lucy M. Long's notion of "culinary tourism" is also useful for describing the secondary status of Commonwealth cuisines in relation to the cuisines of Great Britain. If the touristic gaze seeks new and distinct experiences predicated on otherness (Urry 45), the tourist-host relationship "is marked by an inequality of power and represent[s] a form of imperialism" (Long 6). Similarly, Stanley Fish uses the term "boutique multiculturalism" to describe the "the multiculturalism of ethnic restaurants, weekend festivals, and high profile flirtations with the other"; rather than indicating acceptance and integration, such orientations are "characterized by [a] superficial or cosmetic relationship to the objects of [their] affection" (378). As signifiers of cultural background and personal taste, shared recipes and ingredients contribute to the imaginative formation of individual and collective identities: "[t]he history of any nation's diet is the history of the nation itself, with food fashion, fads and fancies mapping episodes of colonialism and migration, trade and exploration, cultural exchange and boundary making" (Bell and Valentine 168-9). Cafeterias, ethnic restaurants, and international food markets offer competing metaphors for the meaning of "British cuisine" in the postwar period. Adaptations of Chinese and Indian food for British tastes—and even the flattening of

national and regional variations on South Asian cuisine inherent in the umbrella of "Indian food"—suggest the distortion and subjugation of colonial culture to the "traditional" cuisine of Great Britain.

Post-Windrush Writers and the Welfare State

Postwar literary portrayals of food and eating register the tensions inherent in the assimilation of Commonwealth cuisines in Britain. West Indian and African writers in postwar London exploit this symbolic potential of food to convey both alienation and connection. In *The Lonely Londoners* (1956), Trinidadian writer Samuel Selvon depicts a constellation of West Indian immigrants as they build lives and homes in the city. Read alongside Beryl Gilroy's *In Praise of Love and Children* (1996),[101] written by and about a Guyanese schoolteacher in postwar England, Selvon's novel emphasizes the exclusivity of English culture and cuisine. Nigerian-born Buchi Emecheta's *In the Ditch* (1972) follows a single mother from Lagos as she attempts to navigate the British welfare state in the early 1960s. In all three works, food insecurity and racial exclusion affect characters' interactions with one another and with the white inhabitants of the city, both English and otherwise.

In *The Lonely Londoners* (1956), established Trinidadian settler Moses Aloetta becomes the locus of a group of West Indian immigrants in postwar London. Throughout the novel, characters negotiate their liminal roles as citizen-outsiders and members of an expatriate community in part through their selection, consumption, and sharing of food. Hunger and hospitality shape narratives of isolation and connection amidst poverty,

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[101] Though not published until the late 1990s, *In Praise of Love and Children* was written in the 1960s and takes place in the late 1950s.

housing shortages, and the resentment and racism of other Londoners. At the same time,

Moses, Galahad, and their acquaintances express agency and cultural identity through

food. They adapt the ingredients and domestic spaces of London as a means of resisting

assimilation and eradication. Beryl Gilroy's *In Praise of Love and Children* (1996)

similarly depicts midcentury London as a cultural minefield, but carves out a space for

rural Guyanese cuisine in postwar urban England. Just as Selvon's novel employs a

creolized vernacular as a rejection of mandatory Englishness, the characters in both *The*

Lonely Londoners and *In Praise of Love and Children* extend the scope of what it means

to eat British by articulating a new culinary vernacular incorporating both West Indian

and British foodways.

     The Lonely Londoners highlights the gaps in the welfare state, which provides

resources but no sense of agency. Employment assistance strips job-seekers of their

independence by denying them the assurance of "place to sleep, food to eat, cigarette to

smoke"; those who have "touch[ed] bottom" and must collect national assistance are

better off than those looking for work on the dole (27). Emecheta portrays social

assistance as similarly disempowering. In *In the Ditch*, Adah Obi must give up her work

as a civil servant in order to conform to social expectations that she stay at home with her

children; she applies for social assistance in spite of having "come to think of those on

the dole as lazy, parasitic people who live off Society" (33). The closing of her "middle-

class chapter" enters her into a world with its own culinary and behavioural guidelines,

enforced by the welfare agents who evaluate need and dispense clothing and housing.

The need to perform dependence for the officials of the state reduces the women "in the

ditch" to a "state of apathy, inadequacy and incompetence" (125). Paternalistic

management of food and resources infantilizes the consumers of such resources.

Emecheta, Gilroy, and Selvon depict a paradoxical combination of abundance and

austerity in their novels. The narrators of *In the Ditch*, *In Praise of Love and Children*,

and *The Lonely Londoners* all comment on the volume and variety of British food relative

to their own homelands. On first venturing out of her brother's London flat in *In Praise

of Love and Children*, Melda is overwhelmed by a local market offering "a challenging

array of goods":

> To buy was to choose, and I had never learned to choose. … Compared
>
> with our shops at home the market-stalls contained an astonishing variety
>
> of things. I had heard of wartime rationing, but evidently that was long
>
> over. I felt happy that I had come to a place that had everything—even if I
>
> had to work hard and wait for my share of it. (Gilroy 12)

Galahad is likewise struck by the magnetic excess of Piccadilly Circus, which assaults his

senses with brand names and sensations:

> Every time he go there, he have the same feeling like when he see it the
>
> first night, drink coca-cola, any time is guinness time, bovril and the
>
> fireworks, a million flashing lights, gay laughter, the wide doors of
>
> theatres, the huge posters, everready batteries, rich people going into tall
>
> hotels, people going to the theatre, people sitting and standing and walking
>
> and talking and laughing and buses and cars and Galahad Esquire, in all
>
> this, standing there in the big city, in London. Oh Lord. (Selvon 79)

In spite of this sense of abundance, however, the characters in both texts have access to limited resources. As Thomas S. Davis notes, "[m]any texts of the West Indian renaissance… oscillate between the glittering dreams of metropolitan life and the cruel realities of everyday life, often reproducing formally the disorientation of migrant experience" (206). Denied jobs and housing by landlords and employers unwilling to hire "spades," characters must navigate social boundaries even as they access state resources.

In contrast with British affluence, the protagonists of all three works have limited financial and social resources. In Selvon's novel, both Henry "Sir Galahad" Oliver and Cap reassert control over their own lives by taking advantage of food sources beyond the realm of official food production—the pigeons and seagulls that fly freely throughout London. Yet the urban hunting of the West Indian expatriates is legally and socially prohibited, and therefore unsustainable. Famished after losing his job, Galahad eyes pigeons in a local park—fattened by the bread thrown to them by locals—and recalls watching his father kill and roast pigeons in Port of Spain. While in the process of hunting one himself, Galahad is denounced as a "cruel beast" and a "monster" by a passing woman with a pet dog. "In this country," the narrator notes, "people prefer to see man starve than a cat or dog want something to eat" (117). In spite of his admonishment by both the woman and Moses, who worries for Galahad's welfare,[102] the two men successfully roast and eat the bird. Their shared meal is a moment of ease that evokes life in Trinidad (120-21): "The pigeon and rice have Moses feeling good and he in the mood for a oldtalk" about life back home (122). In a similar episode, the near-starving Cap starts trapping and eating seagulls from the roof of his apartment building, a regimen that

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[102] "Boy, you take a big chance," Moses tells Galahad. "You think this is Trinidad? Those pigeons there to beautify the park, not to eat. The people over here will kill you if you touch a fly" (120).

allows him to recover his strength: "The menu had him looking well, he eat seagull in all manner and fashion" (133). But just as Galahad attempts to conceal his pigeon-hunting for fear of being fined or arrested, Cap must smuggle the seagull feathers out of the house and dispose of them in public bins.

The narration of immigrant eating highlights the disparity between the theory and practice of open borders. Though they have been granted nominal citizenship and allowed to enter the country, Selvon's colonial Britons have yet to be invited into the homes of longer-term residents: "Nobody in London does really accept you. They tolerate you, yes, but you can't go in their house and eat or sit down and talk" (126). Acceptance and full participation in English life is measured in terms of individual rather than national hospitality. Because immigration legislation preceded anti-discrimination laws by decades, even those workers of colour who were granted entry into Britain in the years following the Second World War were often denied work or lodgings. Just as Moses acknowledges the irony that Polish immigrants resent the presence of those from Jamaica, Guyana, and elsewhere, Galahad is upset with white resistance to immigrants of colour having access to basic work, food, sleeping quarters—even from white immigrants (77). Similar tensions pervade *In the Ditch*; when a woman at the laundry house tells Adah to "go back to [her] own bleeding country," Adah correctly guesses that the woman is an immigrant—from Greece, as it turns out. "It was a wild guess. But her long stay in England had taught [Adah] that the really happy balanced English natives were the least obstructive to immigrants. The old woman's hair, though liberally sprinkled with white, was too black for her to be real Anglo-Saxon, or whoever the original people were"

(110). Such encounters reinforce the racist application of citizenship and immigration policy in midcentury Britain.

Rather than adopting traditional English foodways, characters in Selvon's and Emecheta's novels retain their own culinary practices by adapting traditional recipes to local ingredients. In *In the Ditch*, Obi serves a combination of traditionally English dishes, such as baked beans and chips, and adapted Nigerian dishes. Unable to purchase *fufu*, a starchy dish of ground cassava, she rounds out their meals with ground rice; subject to the condescension and judgment of her welfare worker, she counters by dismissing English potatoes as "tasteless" (30). Adah further resents the assumption of affluence in official dietary guidelines: "Blast balanced meals!" she observes, after serving her children leftover custard for breakfast. "You can think of balancing meals when you have enough food" (51). The influx of West Indian and African settlers in both works shifts the demographics of neighbourhoods and exerts a powerful influence on the stock in local shops. The narrator of *The Lonely Londoners* describes the transformation of market supplies in response to demand:

> Before Jamaicans started to invade Brit'n, it was a hell of a thing to pick
> up a piece of saltfish anywhere, or to get a thing like pepper sauce or
> dasheen or even garlic. It had a continental shop in one of the back streets
> in Soho, and that was the only place in the whole of London that you
> could have pick up a piece of fish. But now, papa! Shop all about start to
> take in stock of foodstuffs what West Indians like, and today is no trouble
> at all to get saltfish and rice. The test who had the grocery, from the time
> spades start to settle in the district, he find out what sort of things they like

to eat, and he stock up with a lot of things like blackeye peas and red beans and pepper sauce, and tinned breadfruit and ochro and smoke herring, and as long as the spades spending money he don't care, in fact is big encouragement, 'Good morning sir,' and 'What can I do for you today, sir' and 'Do come again.' All over London have places like that now. (63-4)

The formidable Tanty treats the local grocery as a "jam-session" and hub for gossip, and even convinces a shopkeeper to permit shopping on credit (65-6). This transformation of the British food landscape suggests the extent to which the growth of culinary traditions in England and elsewhere is a two-way cultural exchange. As Panikos Panayi argues in *Spicing Up Britain*, "Immigration has profoundly changed the diet of the majority population in Britain, but years of living in a foreign land has influenced the types of foods which migrant communities eat, so that a fusion, or exchange, takes place, most clearly indicated by the ways in which Jews and South Asians consumed food which had traditional elements combined with locally available ingredients" (128). Even when they transform both host and expatriate guest, such culinary encounters offer only superficial connection. National foodways both unite through shared experience and distance individuals from one another.

Sam Selvon's careful attention to the idioms of West Indian cookery mirrors his use of linguistic vernacular. Yet as Davis argues, Selvon's use of a made-up vernacular does not equate to social realism or anthropology. Rather, it "aim[s] to draw attention to the way vernaculars shape and portray daily experience" (190). The use of vernacular in *The Lonely Londoners* signals not just a way of speaking but a way of seeing the world:

differences between "standard" British English—itself highly variable based on location

and class—and the artificial vernacular used by Selvon highlights the gap between

"locals" and "foreigners," even after years in the city. Similarly, the ways in which West

Indian and West African characters cook, eat, and entertain in the inhospitable city

articulate a culinary vernacular that expands the scope of English cuisine. Like *The*

Lonely Londoners, *In the Ditch* portrays shopkeepers adapting to newcomers. Emecheta

describes the inexpensive Crescent Market as a bustling "aviary," crowded with people

from different class and ethnic backgrounds:

> Saturday was always busy at the Crescent. There were many Indian shops
>
> selling African food, and this drew large numbers of Africans into the
>
> Crescent Market. The market was once in the centre of a poor working-
>
> class area. But modern housing estates had sprung up round it like
>
> mushrooms; people got mixed, the rich and the poor, and there was no
>
> knowing which was which. … Children with chocolatey mouths and
>
> fingers followed the trails of mums with shopping trolleys loaded to
>
> overflowing with 'bargain' foodstuffs. Africans, Pakistanis and West
>
> Indians shopped side by side with the successful Jews, Americans and
>
> English from Highgate, Hampstead, Swiss Cottage and other equally
>
> expensive places. (131-2)

As the novel demonstrates, however, coexistence does not signal integration. The

emotional and social distance between English and non-English characters is captured in

the omission of shared meals in *The Lonely Londoners*. Though Moses notes that the

privacy possible in a large city like London seems positive at first, it is "a lonely

miserable city… after a while you want to get in company, you want to go to somebody house and eat a meal" (126). Sharing meals offers a respite from the exhaustion of dealing with what Galahad identifies as the tolerance without acceptance that is extended to West Indians.

Predicated on cultural distinction, conceptions of British national cuisine contribute to a discourse of self and other that takes on different resonances in the years preceding and following the Second World War. If wartime food writing reflects an inward turn to traditional English foods, the implications of xenophobia and nationalism are tempered by the exuberance with which postwar food writing embraces French and Italian cuisine as a relief from the monotony of food controls and rationing. Yet even cultural celebrations of international foodways do not suggest an inclusive vision of postwar British culture. Just as Dorothy Hartley's repatriation of English foodways in *Food in England* (1954) was predicated on an assumption of cultural dominance—"when we cook the foreign dishes, the dishes, like the foreigners, become 'naturalised English'" (v)—the flexibility of postwar British foodways is figured in terms of assimilation and absorption rather than expansion.

Conclusion

As this thesis demonstrates, twentieth-century British national cuisine was forged in part through the crucible of war, which forced citizens to reconsider foodways in relation to nationalism, gender, class, and race. Both the war and postwar reconstruction recuperated a form of romantic imperialism that had been rejected in the interwar years. Though not associated with the blind patriotism of the First World War, the Second

World War was broadly conceived of as a "good war," or at least a justified one; like Household's rogue male, most British citizens determined that even flawed democracy was preferable to perfect totalitarianism. In its totalizing effect on economic, military, and national health considerations, the Second World War figures centrally in this study. But as the preceding chapters illustrate, the intersections between British diet and identity predated and outlasted the war itself. Notions of imperial citizenship shaped eating habits across the twentieth century.

By tracing themes of invasion, masculinity, femininity, domesticity, and sophistication from the interwar period to the emergence of the welfare state, this project tells the story of British national identity through novelistic portrayals of food and eating. The transformation of individual and communal eating habits contributed to a larger refiguring of Britishness in the middle decades of the twentieth century.

Whereas the British government delineated specific models of citizenship via nutritional guidelines, propaganda, and legislation, literary responses to official food culture expand and nuance culinary identities. Writers from Baden-Powell to Fleming portray patterns of consumption that adhere to and depart from ideals of imperial masculinity; economic, efficient eating is figured as heroic. In fortifying the body for conflict, patriotic eating ensures the integrity of the body by strengthening its defenses and serves national security by building moral, self-sacrificing citizens. Novels by Elizabeth Taylor, Barbara Pym, and Muriel Spark undermine gendered narratives of domesticity and self-sacrifice to portray alternate modes of cooking and eating for midcentury women. Personal relations butt up against politics. The portrayal of communists as theoretically noble but practically brusque, joyless, and inhospitable in

both *At Mrs Lippincote's* and *The Pursuit of Love* illustrates the antithetical relation between impersonal political systems and the pleasures of daily life. France and America are important counterpoints for British writers: rich flavours and affluent abundance are understood in opposition to traditional Anglo-Saxon menus, while the treatment of continental cooking as alternately enticing and threatening reflects shifting international dynamics. This project reinvigorates discussions of national identity in Britain by linking it to official and unofficial food cultures. In midcentury Britain, as at other times in other places, eating is always a political act.

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