

Gardens of Delight or, What's Cookin'?

Leonora Carrington in the Kitchen

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A young woman sets out on a walk. Chances are she will take a road winding through a forest, or a narrow lane in a dark and deserted neighborhood. Whichever the way, she will most probably come to a garden, "a garden overrun by climbing plants and weeds with strange blooms" (*Cast Down by Sadness*, SH 50), where flowers of every kind mingle in untidy profusion. . . . There will be an invitation to a meal (dinner, tea, a party or feast), but when our heroine sits down at the table—a table lavishly laid in a great hall, preferably a marble hall, perhaps furnished with fruit trees—we, the readers, will no doubt recoil in horror and disgust at the food offered her.

Thus are laid out most of the short stories written by Leonora Carrington between the years 1937 and 1941. There are some variations, but it is notorious that the meal, usually sickeningly abundant, is seldom eaten and always interrupted.¹ When Carrington met the Surrealists in 1937, she was a 20-year-old painter, "busy rebelling against [her] family and learning to be an artist," as she confided to Whitney Chadwick in an interview (66). She proceeded to paint her first and most striking canvases, fantasy landscapes filled with birds and mythical animals who are about to undergo a magical transformation; the setting is dream-like and the line between human and animal is blurred. Powerful images of animals, a preference for the magical time/space, and a whimsical but disturbing sense of humor also characterize the stories Carrington wrote during the time of her association with the Surrealist group.

In *Le Surréalisme et le roman*, Chénieux-Gendron observed that, structurally, the stories are based on the (mis)functioning of exchanges that are forbidden or go awry (256). I contend that the exchange is mainly in the nature of food. In a fictional world dominated by magic, perversion and anarchic excess, food elaboration and

food consumption are posited as the central act of the narrative. No matter what the plot and the cast of characters might be, there is always the question of some "sacrée cuisine." The feasting party might consist of humans, proto-humans or beasts—but they must be at least three, the fateful oedipal trinity. Tension mounts quickly, steering the plot towards a central scene, which is both "une scène" and "une cène," and then, everything having been settled, or rather unsettled, the story abruptly ends. Food has been prepared, described and offered—though not often eaten, for it is of an "unholy" kind.

To approach Carrington's narrative obsession with cooking, I will first turn to Lévi-Strauss' classic study *Le Cru et le cuit*. Lévi-Strauss contends that one of the simplest and most basic acts of culture consists in changing "the raw" to "the cooked" by a passage through fire. "Cooking marks the passage between nature and culture," he observed (172). Cooking mediates between the simple but non-human "natural" world of the raw, and the complex and human "cultural" world of the cooked.

Is such a passage made in Leonora's kitchen? The following quotations will throw a decisively perverse light on the meaning of "human" and "cultural":

[I]n the kitchen, [Virginia Fur] gave birth to seven little boars. Out of sentiment she kept the one most like Igame, and boiled the others for herself and the cats, as a funeral feast. (*As They Rode Along the Edge*, SH 10)

This chicken, which had been marinated—plucked but alive—for three days, had in the end been suffocated in vapours of boiling patchouli: its flesh was as creamy and tender as a fresh mushroom. (*Monsieur Cyril de Guindre*, SH 39)

Engadine came out of the kitchen. She was carrying a suckling pig stuffed with nightingales. (*The Sisters*, SH 48)

The comic sophistication and decadent connotations of such descriptions rule out the temptation to interpret them as undertaking a reverse passage, from "culture" back to "nature." In fact, both *what* is eaten and *how* it is cooked evince a twisted interpretation of culture, a mockery of rituals and ceremonies. Thus the chicken, suffocating in patchouli, becomes fresh again "as a mushroom" after three days, having changed from the animal to the vegetable kingdom. The abundance of this outrageous food reveals the true source of such excesses;

for in the suspicious volubility that accompanies the narrators' voracity we find the center of Carrington's obsession. The feast of food has been laid out for the sake of the feast of words:

Dinner was served, as usual, on the terrace of the weeping willows . . . delicate dishes, a plump fat chicken with stuffing made of brains and the livers of thrushes, truffles, crushed sweet almonds, rose conserve with a few drops of a divine liqueur. . . . (*Monsieur Cyril de Guindre, SH 39*)

Pomegranates and melons stuffed with larks filled the kitchen: whole oxen were turning slowly on spits, pheasants, peacocks and turkeys awaited their turn to be cooked. Chests full of fantastic fruit cluttered up the corridors. Drusille walked about slowly in this forest of food. . . . (*The Sisters, SH 43*).

These and other menus we are presented with might have been written in the nursery by children who are attempting some control over the fascinating but cruel world of cooking through their recently acquired linguistic skills, and for whom the "four and twenty black-birds baked in a pie" are a distinct possibility.

In this rhetoric of copiousness and verbal invention, we recognize the verbosity associated with phobias, the nimble speech of the phobic "traveling at top speed over an untouched and untouchable abyss," as described by Julia Kristeva (41). Carrington's characters speak and cook too much, too fast, delight in hunting and tearing, but fill their mouths with words more often than with food, trying to cover up or quench a want through their dizzying skill.² "We just had dinner"—says the tall, blonde, imperious and fast-talking Elizabeth, who enjoys drawing blood and dipping her fingers in it—"I always cook too much. . . . You see, I don't like meals, I only eat banquets" (*Waiting, SH 64*).

Thus oral activity as speech production coincides with the theme of devouring in Carrington's fiction. If indeed her short stories undertake a return to "nature," nature symbolized by the garden overrun with weeds, it is nature as "the repressed": just as the narrator, at the end of her wanderings, is invited to sit down at a table, we, the readers, are invited to witness the return of/to the repressed. For all those suspicious mixtures and stuffings (dead meat with live flesh, flowers with birds and fruit, sea, air and land creatures tumbled together) signal the presence of the object.³

In *Powers of Horror*, the "abject" is defined as situated at the collapse of the boundaries between inside and outside; that which disturbs identity, system, order; that which does not respect borders, positions, rules, which erases differences, is abjection (4). Food is one such boundary between nature and culture, between the human and the non-human. So has it been the object of countless prohibitions and taboos, certain substances being privileged and others excluded, while the various means of purifying the abject element make up the history of religion (91). But food is also "the oral object that sets up archaic relationships between the human being and the other, its mother, who wields a power that is as vital as it is fierce" (75). Kristeva underlines the ancient and widespread assimilation of food to the feminine, the association between food and the woman's body as nourishing as well as impure. Desirable and terrifying, nourishing and murderous, fascinating and abject is the inside of the maternal body, the feminine body in its most un-signifiable and un-symbolizable aspect (54). That is why food and sex prohibitions go hand in hand; anthropologists have studied their complicated interplay in the most diverse cultures, and Freud associated them both with incest dread (57).⁴

What is served at Carrington's table is in fact mostly, at least in Biblical terms, "abomination": carnivorous animals, sometimes even humans; intermixtures that confuse the borders between species and threaten identity; blood. The blood that both Elizabeth, the well-named, and Juniper, the bird-like, vampire creature of *The Sisters*, crave so passionately, is (as Kristeva sees it) that "fascinating semantic crossroads, the propitious place for abjection where death and femininity, murder and procreation, cessation of life and vitality all come together" (96).⁵ The three brothers in whose house there is nothing but sausages: "Sausages in aquariums, sausages in cages, sausages hanging on the walls, sausages in sumptuous glass boxes" (*The Three Hunters*, SH 32), are respectively called Mcflanagan the Terror of the Forest, Mcbologan the Curse of the Forest and Mchooligan the Abomination of the Forest—Mchooligan being of course the cook. The oxen and peacocks in Drusille's kitchen, the thrushes and truffles served to Cyril de Guindre, Virginia Fur's diet of "lost sheepdog, and occasionally mutton or child" (*As They Rode Along the Edge*, SH 4) as well as Elizabeth's insatiable hunger—"Je ne me nourris que de festins," that is of feasts, or the flesh of

carnivals—are a recognition of the ineradicable death drive, seen here under its most primordial or archaic aspect, devouring.

The profusion of food is disquieting because it refers back to the world of the mother and of guilty sexuality. Indeed the characters' voracity is vehemently sexual, as the following "orgy scenes" clearly show:

[S]he spat into the stewpot and put her lips into the boiling liquid and swallowed a big mouthful. With a savage cry, she brought her head back out of the pot; she jumped around Ignose, tearing her hair out by the roots; . . . the cats . . . stuck their claws into one another's necks, then threw themselves in a mass on Ignose and Virginia, who disappeared under a mountain of cats. Where they made love (*As They Rode Along the Edge, SH 8*).

Drusille, naked to her breasts, had her arms around Jumart's neck. The heat of the wine warmed her skin like a flame, she gleamed with sweat. Her hair moved like black vipers, the juice of a pomegranate dripped from her half-open mouth. Meat, wine, cakes, all half eaten, were heaped around them in extravagant abundance. Huge pots of jam spilled on the floor made a sticky lake around their feet. The carcass of a peacock decorated Jumart's head. His beard was full of sauces, fish heads, crushed fruit. His gown was torn and stained with all sorts of food. (*The Sisters, SH 49*).

The name "Drusille" is not a haphazard choice; it belongs to the Roman decadence, for Drusilla was Caligula's incestuous sister. Here she is, turned into an Erinny, her head wreathed with serpents, officiating at a banquet reminiscent of Petronius, whose anarchic profusion signals sexual excess as well.

A fascination with the abject, and a willingness to provoke her readers' disgust in a language that is marked by the extreme nimbleness of phobic speech, seem therefore to provide a clue to Carrington's fiction. That her "oral" center, the appetite as/and voice, should be the place of writing, reveals the pervasive femininity of her inspiration. For as Joan J. Brumberg stresses in her history of anorexia nervosa, many historical, anthropological and psychological studies have suggested that women use appetite as a form of

expression more often than men, a tendency confirmed by scholars as well as clinicians (2). Perhaps because culturally women are perceived as food preparers and food givers, and the female body tends to be associated with food, women have been historically more prone to eating disorders, more inclined to use food as a non-rhetorical and symbolic mode of communication, and both more sensitive to disgust and more willing to verbalize it.

Brumberg demonstrates that food is the "daughter's" language. The basic connection between love and food that bewildered physicians discovered at the end of the nineteenth century, is a female connection.⁶ It is mothers and daughters who square off around issues of separation, identity and sexual maturation and choose food as their battle ground and symbolic language (29). The "matter of marriage" is displaced into a "matter of meals." So Leonora Carrington, unruly, rebellious and panicked daughter of upper-class parents still under the sway of Victorian values, conceived a fictional world in a language not her own—that is, not her mother's—in which the main affair is what is, or is not, eaten.⁸

Her female characters are divided into the flesh-eaters, who eat ravenously, outrageously, and the cookies-and-greens eaters, the delicate eaters, who may offer food, may not eat at all, or may well *become* food. They play out, in food terms, as Carrington must have fantasized them, the two optional role-models presented to the young girl at the threshold of the adult world: on the one hand, the unlady-like, powerful and lustful ogress, on the other, the subdued, observant, passive and hostile anorexic.

We will first have a look at the unlady-like "leo-noras": they are superb, filthy, more beast no doubt than beauty; in fact, we smell them before we can even see them:

"[O]ne couldn't really be altogether sure that she was a human being. Her smell alone threw doubt on it—a mixture of spices and game, the stables, fur and grasses" (*As They Rode Along the Edge*, SH 3).

She is "Virginia Fur," the huntress, giving off a masculine scent, amply deserving her name; she has "a mane of hair yards long," always full of nocturnal animals, "and enormous hands with dirty nails." She hunts for herself and her fifty cats, and survives on a strict, live animal diet.

There is Juniper,⁹ a nightmarish, winged creature straight out of a Max Ernst painting:

"Her body was white and naked; feathers grew from her shoulders and round her breasts. Her white arms were neither wings nor arms. A mass of white hair fell around her face, whose flesh was like marble" (*The Sisters*, SH 44).

She "needs red," begs for a drink—and will suck the blood and life out of the poor Engadine, the maid, until her body becomes "enormous, luminous, magnificent" (48), like that of the decadent, orgiastic peacock that decorates Jumart's head at the end of the story. Thus is performed a Dionysiac and blasphemous Christian rite, in which wine and blood stand metaphorically for each other. Blood: a manifestation of feminine sexuality is/or wine: it's (masculine) transformation and sublimation in the eucharist.¹⁰

Meanwhile, sister Drusille turns green in the night garden light: "Your face is a leaf of such a pale green it must have grown under the light of the new moon" (47). As one sister wanes, the other waxes, for green is red's complementary color in Carrington's fiction. If red is blood and life, then green is, not vigor and freshness, but putrefaction and decomposition—not grass, but fungi. So the sisters stand at the two poles of the "axis of nature," which links the "raw" to the "rotten."¹¹

This very "feathery vegetation," or "fluffy growth of fungi" (64) has invaded Elizabeth's, the feast-eater's, kitchen. She is tall, she has "two big blonde dogs on a leash," and her hair, the same color as her dogs, is "itself like a separate animal sitting on her head" (*Waiting*, SH 62). Her elegant home is "littered with beautifully coloured and rather soiled clothes," and she dislikes washing, as not befitting "a person of quality" (63). Carrington's "big eaters" are invariably dirty, filth being a sign of gastronomical as well as sexual excess.

Red and green is also the couple living at 40 Pest Street in *White Rabbits*. The witch-like woman has "very long black hair" which she uses to wipe out dishes (SH 57). She wears "an ancient, beautiful dress of green silk" and her skin is dead white and glitters (58). Her husband, "dressed in a red gown," has identical glittering skin and sits very rigidly. They eat "white carnivorous rabbits," which they feed rotting meat, and they have "the holy disease of the Bible, leprosy" (60).

And finally, the Young Hyena, improbable accomplice of a bored debutante, who, unlike her young friend, loves balls, could make small talk—but smells rather strong. She graciously accepts taking her friend's place at the ball, but in order to have a "suitable" face, she

must tear off the maid's to wear instead of hers. Then, at the dinner table, she will get up and shout: "So I smell a bit strong, what? Well, I don't eat cakes!" Whereupon she tears off her face and eats it (*The Debutante*, HF 48).

Thus the delicate world of bourgeois home and garden is wrecked in Carrington's stories; gardens are untidy and profuse, kitchens dirty and cluttered, ladies unlady-like beasts of prey, while men's virility is unambiguously in question. Indeed for her male characters, Carrington chose some showy birds of paradise, clad in the bright attire of the males of the animal kingdom, but smelling feminine scents and with a weakness for "feminine" colours (pink, violet and purple: colours of the flesh, of the inside of the body).¹² Delicate and androgynous, they give us the uneasy feeling that they could well end up in the stewpot, making a trifling "bouché" for their devouring females. . . .

As for them, the dirty, smelly, arrogant, loud and ravenous flesh-eaters, utterly "raw" and still becoming more so through their diet, they were of course a provocation, a raucous display of defiance which Carrington flung at the face of upper-class notions of decorum and proper feminine behaviour. They also made a mockery of turn-of-the-century medical ideas about the digestive delicacy of the female stomach, as Brumberg details them (177). Her study abundantly proves that female discomfort with food, as well as with the act of eating, was a pervasive subtext of Victorian popular culture (178). Women, particularly in the middle-classes, pretended to be, or were genuinely, uncomfortable with food, its preparation, its appearance and worse still, its implications. They frowned at its appeal to the lower senses, taste and smell. Carnality at the table, an active appetite, were in fact used as a trope for dangerous sexuality, and no food caused Victorian women and girls greater anxiety than meat. The flesh of animals was considered a heat-producing food that stimulated production of blood and fat as well as passion. Linked to sexual development and activity, meat was therefore seen as a "boys' food" (175-76).

Most young ladies would show a proper and maidenly disgust for meat while claiming they ate only delicate things: a teaspoon of jam, a handful of cookies, a lettuce leaf. Such are the "non-eaters" of Carrington's Surrealist tales which we now come to examine; those for whom, to repeat an amusing remark which Brumberg quotes from a turn-of-the-century American newspaper article (177), "nothing

can overcome . . . (the) revolt at the bare idea of putting that fat piece of a dead animal between (their) lips."

The Oval Lady is our first example: she is sixteen, very tall and thin, very pale and sad, oval, and nothing in her house—not the windows, not the furniture, not even the plates—has anything to do with roundness (*The Oval Lady*, HF 37–38). Her father has forbidden her to do what she loves the most, that is riding her wooden horse Tartar, because horses are for "little boys" and it is time she grows up. So, as "a protest against my father, the bastard" (38), she refuses to eat—though she will have cakes when there is no one around to see her.

The Oval Lady, who has been interpreted as the Celtic mythological white horse goddess, Epona, is more simply, in my view, just that: oval, *not* round.¹³ She lives in the fear that Simone de Beauvoir attributed to most female adolescents: fear of becoming flesh and showing her flesh. She is the very type of the anorexic girl, whose refusal of food is a desperate, awkward and non-rhetorical, but still discreet expression of her struggle over autonomy, individuation and sexual development. Brumberg argues that the anorexic girl fears above all adult womanhood, and because of her paralyzing sense of ineffectiveness, opts, furiously, for control over her body (28). So the "Oval Lady" proclaims herself still oval, "an egg" inside her mother's body.

The determined young lady of *Uncle Sam Carrington* sets out to deliver her family from the disgrace of an uncle who cannot stop laughing at the full moon (HF 61). Armed with a "pot of jam and a fishing hook," she comes to a house "discreetly surrounded by wild plants and underclothes," home to the Misses Cunningham-Jones, two respectable ladies who specialize in "the extermination of family shame" (63). Her friend the horse warns her "never to mention anything as vulgar as food," while the ladies lend her a book called *The Secrets of the Flowers of Refinement, or The Vulgarity of Food* (65). In the end, whipped vegetables will be prescribed, to undo the unsocial, sex-marked behaviour of the poor Uncle Sam. The ferocity of the "whipping" (a culinary term as well as a punishment), with its screeching and jarring noises, stresses the fact that the matter at hand goes beyond a simple play on words: laughing, punishment and food go together, and a ritual of absolution must perforce involve a form of food.

The mad Queen of *The Royal Summons* treats the girl to a

"mock beef tea," in which there is nothing but potatoes (HF 52). She bathes in goat's milk, feeds all her horses on jam, cures all kinds of ills with her own curious recipes, but her fate is to be taken along an avenue "lined with fruit trees" and then thrown to the lions, thus turning to food herself (54).

The heroine of our last selection, *The House of Fear*—the only one of the stories that, interestingly, breaks off in mid-sentence—is invited to a party by a horse who stops her in the street. She describes herself as "a very boring person, despite my enormous intelligence and distinguished appearance" (HF 30). She has a frugal meal of lettuce and boiled potatoes while she awaits the time to set out for the party. Together with a whole herd of horses, she arrives at the Castle of Fear, "built of stones," whose mistress is Fear and where it is intensely cold. They will enter "a great hall decorated with mushrooms and other fruits of the night" (31) and the Lady Fear will promise supper, but only after a complicated game, which consists in counting backwards while beating the floor with fore and back legs, has been played.

Lévi-Strauss quotes a number of proverbs from different regions to illustrate a widespread cultural belief in the incompatibility between cooking and noise.¹⁴ In the Castle of Fear, the noise is deafening and there is no food in sight. The place is built of stones, which, according again to Lévi-Strauss, are the symmetrical opposite of human flesh (161). It is fearfully cold and the walls are covered with "fruits of the night"—What is this house, but an exact negative, as in a dream, of the uterus, of the "desirable and terrifying" inside of the maternal body? In this, perhaps the most Surrealistic of Carrington's stories and left unfinished, the young heroine who eats nothing but a vegetarian meal—a fitting preparation for her meeting with the sacred—walks backwards into her mother's womb. And is left there, closed in by suspension points.

Leonora Carrington's "persona" is that of the witch stirring some powerful brew in her cauldron. Many of her paintings show a predilection for esoteric scenes in kitchen interiors. André Breton called her "la jeune sorcière" in his Introduction to *The Debutante* (the one story of hers he chose for his *Anthologie de l'Humour Noir*), and then went on to retell two anecdotes about her which both deal with a suspicious kind of food. In the first, Leonora spreads mustard on her feet while taking part in an animated conversation at a fine restaurant; in the second, she serves her guests "a hare stuffed with oysters"

which Breton reluctantly eats (425–26). Though of course there is defiance and provocation in her gestures, they are also acts of offering: she offers food, whether it be her own body as food or food of an improper, “abominable” kind. Underneath the mock offering, there is the recognition of a guilt which has to be “paid for.” MacFrolick’s facetious query in *The Neutral Man*, “how could one commit a murder without being guilty?” (SH 150), leads to two parallel, unstated questions: how could one eat/have sex without being guilty? The casuistical answer is simple: by having someone else murder/eat/have sex in one’s place.

In the spring of 1940, Leonora Carrington suffered a mental breakdown and was interned in a Spanish asylum. Three years later, she wrote *Down Below*, an exceptionally clear, tense and pitiless account of her experience.¹⁵ It is illuminating to discover that at the time of illness, the relationship between female body, food and society, so humorously but insistently spelled out in the stories she had been writing during the preceding years, was exacerbated and actually lived “in the flesh.”

Carrington describes how the first symptom of her illness was an obsessive desire to control her appetite. She indulged in voluntary vomitings and limited her diet, like so many of her “passive” heroines, to salad and potatoes. She was convinced that her stomach was “the mirror of the earth” and therefore needed to be thoroughly “cleansed” in order to properly reflect the world. She believed that the devastated Madrid was “the world’s stomach” and that she had been chosen to restore that organ to health. Obsessed with purification, she constantly bathed in cold water. Her menstruation ceased and during the entire length of her illness, she could not take in food without a very special ritual.¹⁶

The main theme of Leonora’s dereliction, notwithstanding her own interpretations, was anxiety over power, possessing it and/or lacking it—and overriding guilt. Just like a heroine in one of her stories, she could not conceive of any contribution to world affairs, of any effective action, but as strictly self and body centered, as ultimately a matter of food exchange. The question was to change/control “the inside” in order for a change to take place “outside.” Bynum has brilliantly demonstrated how such a response to wordly issues is typically a female response, clearly exemplified in medieval religious practices.¹⁷

Thus Carrington’s female narrators are in search of a recipe, that

by working on the inside of the body, would change the world outside. The profuse gardens of delight in which they wander, coloured in the purplish hues of a vaguely disquieting feminine rainbow, are the drama's anterooms or often merely its back-kitchens. For the main affair is what is cooked, served and, perhaps, eaten. Lévi-Strauss contends that in most myths, cooking was conceived as a mediating activity between heaven and earth, life and death, nature and society (72). In Carrington's own mythology, the woman's body is itself the cooking pot; the improper "corps propre" is the place of transformation. Is the mother of *The Happy Corpse Story*, who eats and eats and eats and then shuts herself up in the refrigerator (*SH* 179) too "warm," too "cooked," and therefore in need to cool off—or is she too "raw," having then to be preserved before she turns to "rotten"? The wife in *A Man in Love* has not spoken nor eaten in forty years, but eggs hatch under her (*HF* 57): is she the "oven" of Central European folklore?

No matter: oven or refrigerator, they are principal actors in the food chain, preparing food, devouring, being devoured. The "axis of culture," from "raw" to "cooked," tips dangerously toward the "axis of nature," from "raw" to "rotten." Carrington's disturbing, prolific and acidly comic prose both conjures up and quenches the desire for a disturbing, excessive and forbidden kind of food. A powerfully ambivalent food, it is so abundant that it is life-affirming—but so dubious, that it must be rejected.

Notes

1. These interrupted meals cannot fail to call to mind Luis Buñuel's humorous look at family dinners, "cuisine bourgeoise," and other such delights in *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie*.
2. In her article "Leonora Carrington et la tunique de Nessus," Jacqueline Chénieux comments on Carrington's own speech patterns, her unusual velocity and virtuosity in speaking "un sabir franco-anglais de haute couleur." Chénieux associates these "déchirures," these tearings operated on the surface of language, with the theme of devouring and Carrington's obsession with cooking (83–84).
3. We find interesting "mixtures" too in the writing of the stories, with a rich web of allusions to the very diverse texts which make up Leonora Carrington's library: Irish fairy lore, English nursery rhymes, lives of the saints, alchemical writings, Lewis Carroll and of course Surrealist pieces. More remarkable yet is her choice of language:

most of her stories were originally written in French (not in English, her mother tongue), but a somewhat fanciful, "mixed-up" French.

4. "The anthropological literature demonstrates that food taboos are not uncommon in adolescence, and (particularly affect girls). . . girls in a number of different cultures apparently abstain from flesh foods, which are believed to heighten the dangers associated with the critical period of sexual maturation." (*Fasting Girls*, 292, note 11). In Lévi-Strauss' terms, they are "too raw," and therefore must abstain from the "rawness" of meat.

5. "My name is Elizabeth . . . a beautiful name which suits me admirably" (*Waiting*, SH 62). Why should it suit her so admirably if not because it is the name of the famous and infamous Elzjettja, the "Bloody Countess" of Hungary, who loved to tear the flesh of infants and drink their blood?

6. Laségue was the first 19th century physician to suggest that food refusal constituted a form of intrafamilial conflict between the maturing girl and her parents. Brumberg observes humorously that "it took a Frenchman, convinced of the manifold delights of the palate, to suggest a basic connection between love and food in the making of anorexia nervosa" (*Fasting Girls*, 128).

7. The anthropologist Célestin Bouglé uses these terms to characterize the cast system in his *Essai sur l'origine des castes*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1969 (as quoted by Kristéva, 81).

8. An upper-class English daughter indeed, Leonora was brought up in a Lancashire mansion called Crookhey Hall, with gardeners, huntsmen and maids, had a French governess and an Irish nanny, was sent away to boarding school and presented at court in the last year of George V's reign (Introduction to *The House of Fear*, 3-5).

9. Chénieux-Gendron remarks how, here again, the name suits the character, the "juniper" berry being used to make a "liqueur," an intoxicating beverage. (*Le Surréalisme et le roman*, 261).

10. In her perceptive study on the religious significance of food for medieval women, Caroline W. Bynum argues that the religiosity of women saints, unlike that of men, manifested itself primarily in their relationship to food, and particularly in a passionate devotion to the eucharist. A parallel connection exists in Carrington's fiction, linking food, sex and guilt.

11. "The axis which links the raw and the cooked is characteristic of culture, the one which links the raw and the rotten, of nature, since cooking accomplishes the cultural transformation of the raw, just as putrefaction is its natural transformation" (*Le Cru et le cuit*, 152).

12. The following are typical descriptions of male characters:

"The person on the horse was dressed in a pretty untidy manner that reminded me of the coat of a mountain sheep. . . . I thought it was a woman for its long, straight hair, fell down upon its horse's mane. . . . The voice was a man's voice, and I found myself

completely at a loss in making out the person's sex. . . . a scent of heliotrope and vanilla mixed with sweat, rose to my nostrils" (*Pigeon, Fly!* SH 19-20).

"Monsieur Cyril de Guindre was resting elegantly on his ice blue couch. . . . Despite his age he was very beautiful. He really had beautiful ears, delicate as geranium leaves. . . . 'His face is that of an albino orchid. . . . His greedy violet mouth is a poisonous bee-orchid like a lunar insect, and where can you find a rare animal with a coat comparable to his hair?'" (*Monsieur Cyril de Guindre*, SH 34-39).

"On his superb head, (ex-king Jumart) wore an enormous gold wig with rose-coloured shadows, like a cascade of honey. A variety of flowers, growing here and there in his wig, moved in the wind" (*The Sisters*, SH 45-46).

13. By Chadwick (79) and by Gloria F. Orenstein in her Foreword to *The Oval Lady and Other Stories* (Santa Barbara, 1975) and in her article: "Reclaiming the Great Mother" (64).

14. Among the proverbs, Lévi-Strauss quotes this one from Normandie "Taciturnité entre viandes est nécessaire" (*Le Cru et le cuit*, 298).

15. For a thorough account of *Down Below's* complicated history, see Marina Warner's Introduction to *The House of Fear*, 15-19.

16. "[F]or twenty-four hours, I indulged in voluntary vomitings induced by drinking orange blossom water and interrupted by a short nap. I hoped that my sorrow would be diminished by these spasms, which tore at my stomach like earthquakes. I know now that this was but one of the aspects of those vomitings: I had realized the injustice of society, I wanted first of all to cleanse myself, then go beyond its brutal ineptitude. My stomach was the seat of that society, but also the place in which I was united with all the elements of the earth. It was the mirror of the earth. . . . That mirror—my stomach—had to be rid of the thick layers of filth . . . in order . . . to reflect the earth. . . . For three weeks I ate very sparingly, carefully eschewing meat, and drank wine and alcohol, feeding on potatoes and salad . . ." (*Down Below*, HF 164-65). "In the political confusion and the torrid heat, I convinced myself that Madrid was the world's stomach and that I had been chosen for the task of restoring this digestive organ to health" (170). "I ceased menstruating at that time. . . . I was transforming my blood into comprehensive energy—masculine and feminine . . ." (177). "I took in this food according to a special ritual: First, I would drink the milk at one draught, sitting bolt upright in my bed. Second, I would eat the biscuits, half reclining. Third, I would swallow all the fruit, lying down" (194).

17. When we look at women's various food practices together, we find that . . . (they) were all means by which women controlled their social and religious circumstances quite directly and effectively . . . women's food practices frequently enabled them to determine the shape of their lives . . ." (*Holy Feast and Holy Fast*, 220).

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