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吳爾芙《戴洛維夫人》與愛特伍《可吃的女人》中的吃與性別政治

Eating and Gender Politics in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* and Margaret Atwood's *The Edible Woman*

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本論文係蔡宛倩君（R01122020）在國立臺灣大學外國語文學系完成之碩士學位論文，於民國 105 年 1 月 6 日承下列考試委員審查通過及口試及格，特此證明

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（指導教授）

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Abstract

Food and eating are essential elements in works of Virginia Woolf and Margaret Atwood, two significant female writers of the twentieth century. Both utilize eating disorders to intervene in the discursive construction of a healthy gendered body and to problematize the mainstream values of body proportions and body management. By delving into eating politics in Woolf's and Atwood's novels, this thesis addresses the problematics of gender and sees if eating or not eating serves as effective bodily resistance to sexist oppression. Adopting an interdisciplinary approach including psychoanalytic, sociologist, and feminist accounts of orality, eating and body, and their relation to self-formation and social order, this thesis investigates how one's eating politics reflects social normalization of a gendered body and explores the potential and pitfalls of eating disorders as a means of self-empowerment in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* and Margaret Atwood's *The Edible Woman*. In addition to an Irigarayian reading of the political meaning in bodily textuality, the thesis addresses the double bind between self-assertion and self-destruction seen on disorderly eaters. Through comparing diverse eating politics and the respective critiques of social hierarchy and patriarchal commodification in postwar London and in Canadian consumer society in the 1960s, the thesis further attempts to envision a survival agenda in *Mrs. Dalloway* and *The Edible Woman*.

Key Words: *Mrs. Dalloway*, *The Edible Woman*, Food and Eating, Compulsive Eating, Anorexia Nervosa, Oral Aggression, Gender

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摘要

飲食在維吉尼亞・吳爾芙與瑪格麗特・愛特伍的作品中佔有舉足輕重的地位。兩位二十世紀重要的女作家皆將飲食隱喻成社會與個人的中介，並藉由書寫飲食疾患(eating disorders)來批判當代社會所建構所謂健康、符合性別觀感的身體印象，進而審問均衡體態以及健身等主流價值如何規訓當代人對於身體的感知。藉由檢視吳爾芙及愛特伍小說裡的飲食政治，本篇論文旨在揭露當代性別權力關係以及審視飲食疾患者能否成功透過飲食抵制性別壓迫。本篇論文採跨領域研究手法，融精神分析、社會學、女性主義論述為一家，透過前述各家對於口腔期、飲食與身體體態，以及飲食、體態如何影響人格養成和反映社會秩序等論述為理論框架，進而探究吳爾芙《戴洛維夫人》與愛特伍《可吃的女人》中的飲食與性別政治。論文探討飲食政治如何反映性別身體社會化、常規化的過程；另一方面也討論飲食疾患(eating disorders)能否視為一種的顛覆父權的有效手段，同時揭露飲食疾患者在此一過程中可能面對的潛在危險。除了採伊蕊格萊式觀點將病態的身體看作富政治性、具抗議正面意義的文本閱讀，本篇論文進一步檢視飲食疾患者在抗議的同時將自己陷於自我毀滅、進退維谷的窘境。透過比較兩本小說中不同的飲食策略以及兩位作者對於社會階級及父權剝削的批判，本篇論文試圖進一步提出一套飲食之道，以利書中角色於一次大戰後的倫敦及六〇年代的加拿大消費社會中得以生存。

關鍵字：《戴洛維夫人》、《可吃的女人》、飲食、狂食症、厭食症、口慾攻擊、性別

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Introduction

Woolf's and Atwood's Eating and Gender Politics

Food and eating are recurrent themes in Virginia Woolf's and Margaret Atwood's works. With a view to representing socio-political forces on the body, Woolf and Atwood thematize food and eating as the intermediary between society and individuals and use eating and eating disorders as tropes to problematize gender and social relations. While in *A Room of One's Own* (1929) the difference between meals served at men's and women's colleges indicates gender inequalities, in *Mrs. Dalloway*, the elite's proportional regimen and lower-class characters' eating anxieties are juxtaposed to address problems of class and gender difference. According to Allie Glenny, Woolf's use of food and eating imagery reveals "the process both of seeing the world through our own, female, lenses and, more actively, of righting a skewed world which had purged the sensual and elevated the rational" (xii). Whereas Woolf's attention to food and eating manifests "an act of female liberation" (Glenny xii), Atwood's examination of eating disorders and bodily forms furthers the feminist agenda to uncover all forms of victimhood. In *The Edible Woman*, eating becomes a metaphor of power denoting the relation between the eater and the eaten. As no one is set free from the power nexus, women as well as men take turns playing hunters and preys, turning to anorexia nervosa and oral aggression in the marriage market. The focus on food and eating and their effects on the body not only declares defiance to intellectual indifference to materiality but draws a thread of kinship between the two: while Woolf is one of the pioneers that address the

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indispensable role of food and eating in literature, Atwood takes up the subject matter to examine eating passions and aberrations of Canadians.[1] Exploring the works of Woolf and Atwood with an eye on eating metaphors, one is able to discern the feminist resonance and determine the feasibility of representing social and gender relations in eating and food imagery.

While both Woolf and Atwood confront eating disorders in their novels, they relate the subject matter to the problematics of gender differently. For Woolf, eating disorders reveal outcasts' struggle with the prescriptive gender roles that assign to men combativeness and to women slenderness in the 1920s Britain. Whereas in most of her novels men are privileged to enjoy eating and women are alienated from their bodily needs, *Mrs. Dalloway* reverses the principle to deal with male anorexia and female compulsive eating. Born in Canada and exposed to the great body of British literature, Atwood, however, shifts from Woolf's focus on war-induced eating disorders onto female anorexia nervosa and deals with women's difficulties in gaining autonomy of their bodies under the pressures of male gaze and mass media in the 1960s. According to Sarah Sceats, in Atwood's novels "food and eating are especially used in relation to the politics of oppression and individual freedom and responsibility" (4). As Atwood draws on Woolf to compare writing to "walking through a dark room,

[1] Woolf expresses her discontent with novelists' lack of attention to food. As she writes in *A Room of One's Own* (1929): "It is a curious fact that novelists have a way of making us believe that luncheon parties are invariably memorable for something very witty that was said, or for something very wise that was done. But they seldom spare a word for what was eaten. It is part of the novelist's convention not to mention soup and salmon and ducklings, as if soup and salmon and ducklings were of no importance whatsoever, as if nobody ever smoked a cigar or drank a glass of wine. Here however, I shall take the liberty to defy that convention […]" (12-13). Decades later, Atwood declares that she will "investigate the eating aberrations of the eating aberrations of Canadians through their literature, and […] examine the literature itself with an eye to the consuming passions, or lack of them" in *The CanLit Foodbook* (qtd. in Bevan 51). While *The CanLit Foodbook* (1987) testifies to Atwood's interests in food consumption in Canadian literature, her novels like *The Edible Woman* (1969), *Lady Oracle* (1976), and *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985) are replete with food, eating, and body issues.

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holding a lantern which lights up what is already in the room," her novels about eating disorders not only illuminate victimization by patriarchal forces but suggest that eating disorders serve as a means of power reversal (*Negotiating with the Dead* xxiii). Inspecting eating politics in Woolf's and Atwood's works gives one insight into disparate concerns and feminist agendas.

This thesis attempts to investigate how one's ways of eating reflect social valorization of a useful body and see if one's eating politics enables one to either survive, adapt to, or subvert the gender relations and social norms by reading Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) and Margaret Atwood's *The Edible Woman* (1965). Despite different temporal and spatial elements, *Mrs. Dalloway* and *The Edible Woman* depict the characters' eating disorders and their attempt to empower themselves by transforming food and eating from the machinery of normalization to means of self-definition within a patriarchal framework. In *Mrs. Dalloway*, as the imperial regime exerts control over the unfit and lowly and enforces a proportional regimen on the elite, schisms arise between upper and lower classes as shown in different forms of eating practices. In 1920s London, the upper class throws parties to sustain imperial male control on gender roles and to standardize bodily proportion while individuals falling outside gender norms and social ranks turn to addictive eating or loss of appetite. *The Edible Woman* takes place in 1950s and 1960s Canadian consumer society, where women endowed with economic freedom still suffer from commodification in the visual-oriented culture and role-engulfment in marital life. In the portrayal of women's sexual role crisis, Atwood suggests anorexia nervosa and oral aggression as possible ways for women to get out of the predicament

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of being consumed in the social and economic realm. To put it simply, *Mrs. Dalloway* and *The Edible Woman* explore the potential of eating disorders to resist the dominant, "normal" ways of consumption in the patriarchal culture.

Both Woolf and Atwood see eating and body as sites of normalization and self-expression; however, their central foci and interventionist agendas differ. In *Mrs. Dalloway,* eating and gender politics are closely related to social hierarchy. As the upper-middle class upholds the proportional regimen and uses it to convert people, eating and body disorders become tropes to interrogate and deconstruct the consensus on notions of sanity, morality, and normality. Whereas in *Mrs. Dalloway* the governing class holds meal parties to relate eating to its fundamental sense as a sharing activity, in *The Edible Woman* the relationship between eating and gender is complicated by the rise of individual choices in the society pivoting on consumption and commodification. Although Atwood's central critique is patriarchal exploitation of woman's body, she denounces stereotypical gender dichotomy and deals with both sexes' objectification of the other sex during dining occasions. Three female characters' eating politics shed light on three disparate attitudes toward the traditional female roles in marital life: whether they are submissive, hesitant, or resistant to it, no one seems to withdraw from the marriage game without harm. Unlike Woolf, who represents the disorderly eaters as the "anomalous" that incarnates a critique of the brutalizing gender and eating politics of British Empire, Atwood attends to women's proneness to eating disorders by portraying the heroine's suffering and recovery from anorexia and delineating the potential inside the disorderly body to resist patriarchal values. In short, whereas Woolf examines eating and body image disorders derived

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from the stigmatizing stare of the dominant sexist culture, Atwood explores the disorderly bodies from within to represent the psychopathology of the society.

Putting the two novels with disparate periods and foci together, this thesis seeks to compare Woolf's and Atwood's representations of consumption habits, gender norms, and social order and to explore how eating disorders are delineated as adaptation or resistance to sexist oppressions on body. Based on these objectives, the thesis aims to answer the following questions:

- How can one's eating politics and body image be related to, complicit with, or challenge gender politics and social appropriation of the body in the patriarchal culture in Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* and Atwood's *The Edible Woman*?
- In what way are food and eating central to the two novels in structuring the fictional worlds, delineating the socio-political forces on bodies, and reflecting gender politics?
- How does the gender role prescribe one's ways of eating and appearance, and how does one adjust or empower oneself via food and eating in the two novels? Despite socio-political changes and increasing tolerance for individual choices from 1923 postwar London to 1960s Toronto consumer society, why do eating disorders still exist and how do they help the eater express what s/he fails to say?

Through the questions listed above, this thesis claims that an examination of gender politics would not be completed without a scrutiny of themes of food and eating in the novels at issue. The thesis will demystify eating metaphors and explore

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how eating disorders play a role in the two novels. Finally, by delving into eating and gender politics in *Mrs. Dalloway* and *The Edible Woman*, the thesis also examines whether the differences between the two novels imply a progression, regression, or stagnation in gender relations.

Literature Review

Before addressing the methodology of the thesis, this section briefly reviews criticisms related to the topic. Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* (1923) and Margaret Atwood's *The Edible Woman* (1969) have been fervently discussed by critics from angles of new-criticism, psychoanalysis, feminism and so on. In light of sociological approach that highlights eating and food as the intermediary between the society and the individuals, I will review relevant criticisms on social system, the traumatized body, and food consumption in *Mrs. Dalloway*, and criticisms on these three aspects as well as on eating disorders in *The Edible Woman*.

One strand of literary criticism probes into social system and the traumatized victims in *Mrs. Dalloway*. Alex Zwerdling's "*Mrs. Dalloway* and the Social System," one of the leading readings of social control on the individuals, suggests that *Mrs. Dalloway* is a critique of the anesthesia and class conflicts after WWI. Kathy J. Phillips's study of sex, money, and war in *Mrs. Dalloway* is even more critical of British Empire as it refutes Zwerdling's argument that Clarissa is an exception to the callous governing class but sees every individual as the product moulded by the patriarchal society. Likewise, Deborah Guth, in her analysis of Clarissa's final moment of vision of Septimus's suicide, perceives Clarissa's onlooker's stance as

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self-evasive and self-deceptive. While some critics examine the social system mainly from the side of the ruling class, others probe into the outcasts beset and traumatized by the social system. In "Trauma and Recovery in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*," Karen DeMeester examines Woolf's characterization of the shell-shocked Septimus and the community's resistance to communication and concludes that modernist narrative style succeeds in depicting disorders and traumatization but fails to bring about recovery. Shifting the focus from the shell-shocked onto female victims in the novel, Masami Usui cites Woolf's take on gendered perspectives of war and analyzes women's deprivation of history, education, financial support, and means of expression in the wartime.

Another strand of literary criticism deals with eating and food imagery in *Mrs. Dalloway*. Many associate themes of eating and eating distresses with Woolf's attachment for and repulsion of food in life. Scrutinizing Woolf's presumable madness, Stephen Trombley examines Woolf's psychic history, *The Waves*, and *Mrs. Dalloway* to ascribe characters' eating problems to male aggression and medical oppression in her real life. Patricia Moran associates fictional eating distress and disembodiment with Woolf's discomfort with female body. According to her, as hunger encodes problematic relation with maternal power and female creativity in *Mrs. Dalloway*, the voracious bodies of Doris Kilman and goddesses of Proportion and Conversion not only denote female engulfment but become sites of abjection. Allie Glenny examines Woolf's eating problems in life and attributes characters' disorderly eating, disembodiment, and alienation from their body to Woolf's anorexic use in *Mrs. Dalloway*.

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Some relate food themes to Woolf's biographical history, whereas others examine symbolic aspects of diet and body in relation to social shaping. Harriet Blodgett traces food themes in Woolf's novels and contends that in *Mrs. Dalloway* food imagery becomes more functional in terms of characterization, social critique, and presentation of female social skill. While Blodgett affirms Clarissa's party as a manifestation of female social skill, Christopher Ames interprets the party as a successful revelation of Clarissa's true self as an artist combining the separateness of selves. Diane McGee sees the lack of attention to the party meals as an emphasis on Clarissa's role as a hostess rather than the food provider, and praises the dinner party as Clarissa's success in social realm. Molly Hoff's "A Feast of Words in *Mrs. Dalloway*" interprets Lady Bruton's luncheon as an allusion to Horace's and Plato's satires on pretentious rhetoric and suggests a similar falsehood and deception in the luncheon party. Teresa Fulker's "Virginia Woolf's Daily Drama of the Body" turns from food and eating to the individual body and explores the class dynamics through the embodiment of Clarissa's and Kilman's body.

While studies on food and eating in *Mrs. Dalloway* are comparatively few, critics have dealt with themes of eating and not eating in Margaret Atwood's *The Edible Woman* from various aspects. Sharon Wilson discusses Marian's fear of eating, being eaten, and ways of empowerment in light of Grimm's "The Robber Bridegroom." Emma Parker, in her analysis of eating politics in Atwood's novels, points out the cannibalistic nature of relationship between two sexes in relation to the anthropological studies of cannibalism. Gloria Onley, in the same vein, illuminates role-engulfment and lovers' oscillation between love, aggression, and domination in

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The Edible Woman.

While some probe into the cannibal symbolization in the heterosexual relationship, others put more emphasis on Marian's anorexia nervosa. Elspeth Cameron reads the novel as an anorexic's memoir by thoroughly examining textual evidence that characterizes anorexic submissiveness, dependence, and body/mind separation, while Barbara Hill Rigney deems Marian's anorexia as an expression of aversion of female roles and desire for autonomy. Likewise, Susanne Skubal demonstrates Marian's anorexia as a narrative of negation not only of the edibles, but of marriage, and maternity. Touching on both cannibalism and anorexia, Sarah Sceats points out the predatory nature of appetite, cites foodstuffs associated with Marian's gradual self-starvation, and maintains that the peculiarly symbolic anorexia should cause Marian no harm. On the other hand, regarding anorexia as a strategy to show acquiescence to and rebellion against culturally constructed femininity, Tracy Brain attends to the pains and dangers the anorexic body experiences to suggest risks Marian might meet. Exploring the powerlessness and empowerment of women in *The Edible Woman*, Theodore Sheckels adopts Michel Foucault's ideas of power and resistance and Kenneth Boulding's model of power relations to point out women's predicaments in economic and social realms.

Although there are studies centering on the social system, food consumption, and the traumatized, abject body in *Mrs. Dalloway*, an integrated inquiry into the interrelationship among social power, food and eating, and the individual body has yet to surface. In criticisms of *The Edible Woman*, while scholars address problems of eating disorders and bodily (de)formation in relation to gender politics, there is scant

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attention to the double bind of anorexia between self-destruction and self-definition and the bipolarity of love and hatred in the cannibalistic heterosexual relationship in the novel. Moreover, questions remain unsolved as to why attempts of cannibalization should exist in love relationship, and why gender aggression should be characterized as oral in *The Edible Woman*. While there is room to be desired in studies of eating (disorders) in *Mrs. Dalloway* and intricacies to be solved in *The Edible Woman*, in general, the signification and significance of food consumption have been obscured or inadequately dealt with in studies of both novels.

Methodology and Contribution

To deepen the discussions on the functions of food and eating in relation to the tension between society and individuals, this thesis seeks to examine how disorderly eating—compulsive eating, self-starvation, or symbolic cannibalism—reflects the incorporation of or resistance to social normalization of the gendered body in *Mrs. Dalloway* and *The Edible Woman*. Drawing on sociologists' interpretations of food consumption, this section explicates how the thesis's analytical framework is formed. Next, it introduces feminist and medical discourses as well as psychoanalytic theory on oral stage to address disparate eating disorders found in the two novels.

To begin with, sociological perspectives of food and eating as an interpretative scheme linking the individuals and culture frame the analytical basis for the thesis. Briefly speaking, sociologists address the functional meanings of consumption in association with social order and individual's actions, values, and identities. While Roland Barthes points out the signifying value of food and notes that food is "*a*

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system of communication, a body of images, a protocol of usages, situations, and behavior" (29), Mary Douglas regards food as a social component encoding "degrees of hierarchy, inclusion and exclusion, and boundaries and transactions" ("Deciphering a Meal" 61). Later, Pasi Falk furthers Douglas's notion of food and the interrelationship between the social and the physical body[2] to maintain that consumption is a mediator linking the self and the society. As mouth is the in-between site of the outside and the inside, he sees eating as a representation-related behavior moulded by the social orders (11). As eating disorders denote individuals' problematic relationship with food and the society, sociological approaches to the consumption-individual-society nexus shed light on the three aspects indispensable in the discussion of eating disorders. Accordingly, in light of sociological approaches, the thesis deals with *Mrs. Dalloway* and *The Edible Woman* from three angles: the devouring social system, individual eating/culinary practices, and the signification and functions of food and eating.

With the sociological aspects framing the textual analysis, the central theme—eating disorders—requires other theoretical support. As the two novels address disparate eating disorders in relation to different social concerns, I take an interdisciplinary approach integrating accounts of orality, eating and body, and their relation to self-formation and social order to deal with different eating disorders. To be specific, the following introduces my application of Susie Orbach's, Luce Irigaray's, and Susan Bordo's approach to female eating disorders and medical

[2] In the famous essay "The Two Bodies," Mary Douglas deals with the interrelationship between the social and the physical body, arguing that "[t]he social body constrains the way the physical body is perceived. The physical experience of body, always modified by the social categories through which it is known, sustains a particular view of society. There is a continual exchange of meanings between the two kinds of bodily experience so that each reinforces the categories of the other" (64).

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descriptions of male anorexia. Finally, it lays out Sigmund Freud's theorization of oral stage and aggressive instincts to explicate cannibalism. The purpose of an interdisciplinary research is to address the particularity and multifaceted dimensions of each eating disorder and to examine and compare the similarities and differences in disorderly eaters' predicaments.

In *Fat is a Feminist Issue* (1978), Susie Orbach scrutinizes the forces and problems behind women's corpulence and compulsive eating. Departing from public reception of fat as a deviance or defect, Orbach perceives fat as a "social disease" rooted in the "social inequality of women" (22). Although Orbach contends that underlying compulsive eating are problematic mother-daughter relationship and the unsatisfying gender role in family,[3] she maintains that "[b]ody size means different things to different women" (58). Overall, she regards fat as an expression of rebellion against powerlessness of women and suggests that certain interests be found in being fat, including the desires to desexualize oneself, to be recognized in job field, to express anger, or to make up for emotional lack. As Orbach argues that compulsive eating and corpulence provide the eaters with an insulated world and a less threatening issue to worry about than other possible problems, she nevertheless points out the self-destructive danger and the conflicting cycle of compulsive eating/dieting. By applying Orbach's points of female obesity to my reading of *Mrs. Dalloway*, I can examine Doris Kilman's troubled relationship to eating and body and see if Miss Kilman's cycle of compulsive eating/dieting implies a scheme similar to Marian's

[3] According to Orbach, the relegation to the social roles of wife and mother requires that a woman distance her body from her own self. At early age of a woman, food and nurturance is usually withheld by the mother to ensure a proper feminization of the daughter; turning to a nurturer herself, a woman tends to receive contradictory messages about food and eating that it is good for others and bad for themselves. For detailed illustration, please refer to note 19 on page 40-41.

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anorexic obsession with slenderness and culturally constructed femininity in *The Edible Woman*.

While Orbach illuminates the potential and dangers of female compulsive eating, Luce Irigaray's interpretation of hysteria as well as Susan Bordo's rethinking of the anorexic physicality offers insight into the paradox of anorexic protest. Noting women's victimized state as commodities for exchange in patriarchal culture, Irigaray perceives anorexic attempts and the symptomatic body as women's expressions of protest. According to her, anorexia nervosa is far from being a diet gone out of control but is instead a feminist assertion of defiance to the patriarchal ideals of femininity. In "Women-Mothers, the Silent Substratum of the Social Order," Irigaray compares women to the edibles served to satisfy others' needs yet suggests women's potential to rewrite their passive role as nurturers by voicing their desire for food.[4] Observing both positive and negative effects of anorexia, Bordo, like Irigaray, argues that anorexics embody resistance to cultural norms yet puts more emphasis on the risks and downsides embedded in the bodily protest. In "The Body and the Reproduction of Femininity," she asserts that the anorexic pathologies paradoxically collude with the patriarchal ideal of slenderness, "reproducing rather than transforming precisely that which is being protested" (99). Irigaray's explanation of anorexia nervosa serves as an entry point to interpret the political meaning in bodily textuality; however, Susan Bordo's readings of the slender body shed light on the double bind between self-assertion and self-destruction seen on the anorexic body. Drawing on both

[4] As Irigaray attends to women's passive state in patriarchy, her food imagery is used to describe the deprivation of women's desire in patriarchal culture. Please refer to page 87 to see my elaboration of Irigaray's ideas in "Women-Mothers, the Silent Substratum of the Social Order."

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feminists' insights into female anorexia, I argue that Marian's anorexia in *The Edible Woman* is an act both complicit in and resistant to culturally constructed femininity.

While scholars illuminate feminist connotations in female eating disorders, Septimus's anorexic inclination in *Mrs. Dalloway* poses an inquiry to the issue of gender. In *Males with Eating Disorders*, scientific data suggest that the etiology of male anorexia is similar to that of women in terms of eating habits, weight loss, and sexual functioning, just in different degrees. Yet, medical literature shows higher proportion of men with homosexual conflicts or sexual aversion either preceding the onset (Herzog 44) or occurring in the aftermath of eating disorders (Burns 176).[5] In terms of literary approach, in "Anorexia and Modernism, or How I learned to Diet in All Directions," Mark Anderson scrutinizes male anorexics in modernist texts and contends that both anorexia and modernism are strategies of "self-denial and self-negation that seek to establish a primal unity uncontaminated by the 'filth' of the other: sexual differentiation, social hierarchy and power relations, temporality and 'history'" (37). Leslie Heywood echoes with Anderson's observation of male anorexic's rejection of world and further argues that the modernist artist is the paradigm for the anorexic "to stand apart from the common crowd" in pursuit of "individualism" (61). Applying medical descriptions as well as modernist readings of male anorexia, I am able to analyze the motives and causes underlying Septimus's anorexia and moreover compare the two authors' feminist agendas behind Septimus's and Marian's anorexic protest in different patriarchal societies.

[5] There is a consensus on the role of sexuality in the etiology of eating disorders in men. A. H. Crisp finds that conflicting gender identity or sexual orientation precipitates an eating disorder in many males (qtd. in Herzog 43). Similarly, M. K. Hasan and R. W. Tibbetts notes a "notable lack of assertive masculinity or identification" and a "fear of manhood" exhibited in male anorexic (qtd. in Herzog 43).

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Distinct from the fat/slender body and compulsive/anorexic eating, symbolic cannibalism in *The Edible Woman* marks an absolutely different disorderly structure, whose manifestation is less of physical symptoms than of the aggressiveness toward the outer world. In *Civilization and Its Discontent* (1930) Sigmund Freud's notion of the inclination to aggression as an instinctual disposition in human indirectly hints at oral aggression as a possible defense against attacks (81). In *Three Essays of Sexuality* (1905), Freud points out that the oral is the earliest pregenital organization of the libido in which "the sexual *aim* consists in the incorporation of the object—the prototype of a process […] in the form of identification" (198). Later he refers to the bipolar essence of oral satisfaction: "As the first of these [sexual] aims we recognize the phase of incorporating or devouring—a type of love which is consistent with abolishing the object's separate existence and which may therefore be described as ambivalent" ("Instincts and Vicissitudes" 138). As love derives from ego's pursuit for pleasure and hate from ego's reaction to unpleasure caused by objects, one might regress to the preliminary stage when love can "hardly […] be distinguished from hate in its attitude towards the object" (ibid. 139). Drawing on Freud's linking of oral and sexual desire and the ambivalent attitudes toward the sexual objects at oral stage, I explore the regression of love to hatred and the cannibalistic nature of the hetero-sexual relationship in *The Edible Woman* and discuss if Marian effectively claims the ownership of her body through eating the cake woman made of her own image.

Based on sociological framework, this thesis examines the interrelationship between society and individuals' eating practices in *Mrs. Dalloway* and *The Edible*

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Woman and sees if food and eating are successfully transformed from the means of discipline into an expression of rebellion. By applying Orbach's, Irigaray's, and Bordo's reading of female disorders, I compare the causes as well as the symptomology of Miss Kilman's compulsive eating and Marian's anorexia. In light of modernist and medical descriptions of male anorexia, I explore the gender politics behind the male anorexia in *Mrs. Dalloway*. Drawing on Freudian interpretation of a mixture of feelings of love and hate reinforced by the regression of the love to the preliminary cannibalistic stage, I am able to uncover the oral aggression inherent in human or romantic relationships. In conclusion, through interdisciplinary approaches to compare and contrast various eating disorders, I seek to uncover the fundamental problem behind every eating disorder and to envision a possible survival agenda in *Mrs. Dalloway* and *The Edible Woman*.

Chapter Division

Introduction: Woolf's and Atwood's Eating and Gender Politics

The introduction elaborates on the intertwined relationship between eating and gender politics and clarifies my choice of comparing *Mrs. Dalloway* and *The Edible Woman*. Besides providing a brief literature review and methodological and theoretical frameworks, it outlines how Woolf and Atwood use eating disorders to problematize social and gender relations and how the two authors' foci and interventionist agendas are similar to or different from each other in the two novels.

Ch. 1 Bodies Beyond Gender Dichotomy: Female Corpulence and Male Anorexia

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in *Mrs. Dalloway*

In the first chapter, I deal with female compulsive eating and male anorexia in *Mrs. Dalloway*. This chapter begins with an overview of the eating culture dominated by upper-middle class and turns to examine lower-class characters' eating practices. In section one, I focus on Clarissa's evening party and Lady Bruton's luncheon with a view to interrogating imperial regimen, which consolidates social hierarchy and gender dichotomy. In contrast to the jovial parties and conservative regimen held by the upper class, in section two, I deal with Doris Kilman's obsession with food and flesh as well as her gains and losses due to compulsive eating in light of Susie Orbach's theory of fatness. By juxtaposing the corpulent Kilman vis-à-vis the slender Clarissa, the fat female body becomes the site of examination of class and gender difference. Whereas the afternoon tea enables Miss Kilman to empower herself and to instil feminist thinking in her pupil, Elizabeth, the self-empowerment is undermined by harsher self-discipline and religious asceticism afterwards. In section three, I argue that Septimus is a hunger artist in pursuit of unworldly food and truth. In addition to examining signs of Septimus's anorexic inclination, I also look into his doctors'—Sir Bradshaw's and Doctor Holms's—regimens to explain how the dominant sense of proportion negates Septimus's pleasure in eating. As Septimus's eating habits and homosexual crisis fit in the medical descriptions of male anorexia, his negation of body justifies the modernist interpretation of anorexia as a refusal to be assimilated into the community contaminated by the sordidity of human nature. As Miss Kilman's compulsive eating and Septimus's anorexic inclination are conceived to be anomalous to the prescriptive notions of what is deemed moral and sane, this chapter will discuss

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if such eating politics enable them to survive the postwar London, in which the dominant eating society worships Proportion and Conversion.

Ch. 2: To Eat or Not to Eat: Oral Aggression and Anorexia Nervosa in *The Edible Woman*

In chapter two, I examine the consuming and cannibalistic nature of heterosexual relationship in 1950s and 1960s Canada and see if Marian empowers herself through anorexia nervosa and/or symbolic cannibalism in *The Edible Woman*. The chapter is divided into three sections. In section one, I examine problems of gender roles in marriage market by applying Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* and Luce Irigaray's "Women on the Market." Taking the feminist critique of patriarchy as a point of departure, this section looks into how Atwood uses eating metaphors to represent the marriage game and how men and women's eating politics sustain or subvert the rigid gender roles in the novel. In section two, I probe into the double bind featured in Marian's anorexia nervosa. I first adopt Luce Irigaray's explanation of hysteria and anorexia nervosa to suggest the political meaning in bodily textuality. Next, drawing on Susan Bordo's reading of the slender body, I unravel bodies as sites susceptible to normalization. Seeing food as something symbolizing woman's state, I point out how foodstuff as need becomes the machinery of normalization, and how the abnormal intake of food indicates body's desire. In section three, I examine how the aggression towards and tyranny over the other sex is presented through symbolic cannibalism. Adopting Sigmund Freud's interpretations of economy of libido and instincts and how they relate to the cannibalistic stage, I explore the ambivalence of

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heterosexual relationship in which lovers oscillates between love and aggression, demonstrating an object-relation similar to that of oral stage in *The Edible Woman*. Finally, I scrutinize the transformation in Marian's relation to food and see if Marian's making and eating of the cake can be read as a power reversal in the patriarchal culture.

Conclusion: Food, Eating Order, and Gender Norms Reconsidered

By comparing diverse eating politics and the respective critiques of social and gender hierarchy in *Mrs. Dalloway* and *The Edible Woman*, the conclusion problematizes the prescriptive notions of order and gender norms underlying the issue of eating disorders. If Woolf's representations of the patriarchal culture's stigmatization of female corpulence and male anorexia attest to her manifesto of a writer's duty as looking within the "luminous halo," representing "whatever aberration or complexity it may display" ("Modern Fiction" 2089), Atwood's examination of anorexia nervosa and oral aggression shows her challenge to the "perversions of the notion of equality"[6] long taken for granted in the existing gender relations (*Second Words* 396). In their works, although eating disorders help characters challenge the dominant discourses on the gendered body, both Woolf and Atwood seem unable to naïvely advocate eating disorders but suggest that the key to

[6] In "Amnesty International: An Address" (1981) in *Second Words*, Atwood writes about a writer's responsibility to the society and deals with concepts of equality. To Atwood, a writer is an observer who speaks politically to uncover inequalities and problematize the undersides of a seemingly equal system. She cites Procrustes in Greek myth to elaborate her so-called "perversions of the notion of equality" (396). In the myth, Procrustes was an equalizer, who aims to make all human beings the same size. According to Atwood, "if they [human beings] were too small he stretched them, if they were too tall he cut off their feet or their heads" (396). As she keeps on, the "Procrustes today are international operators, not confined to any one ideology or religion" (396). As the world is full of perversions of the notion of equality, Atwood thinks that it is writers' duties to utter the unspeakable sufferings and to imagine a better world that bring about hope to real life.

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final empowerment lies in eaters' reconsideration of their relationship with their bodies and the society. Moreover, as eating disorders epitomize the psychopathology of the society, the remedy for individual pain lies in collective reflection over the regimen that people feed on and take for granted. With different interventionist agendas, both Woolf and Atwood elevate food and eating—the trivialities of everyday life—to a means of critique to interrogate the mainstream values from the margin, presenting a feast of words that nurtures respect and invites readers to ruminate over the prescriptive notions of "sanity," "morality," and "normality."

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Chapter One

Bodies Beyond Gender Dichotomy:

Female Corpulence and Male Anorexia in *Mrs. Dalloway*

> There is no "natural" norm; there are only cultural forms of body, which do or do not conform to social norms.
>
> Elizabeth Grosz, *The Volatile Bodies*[7]

Mrs. Dalloway portrays the power relations between the upper class and lower-middle class in postwar London through discrepant eating practices and gender behaviors. With dining occasions—Lady Bruton's luncheon, Miss Kilman's afternoon tea, and Clarissa Dalloway's dinner party—framing the novel, Virginia Woolf represents characters' day-long experiences as a "daily drama of the body,"[8] in which a variety of eating habits and bodily forms are accentuated. Whereas the governing class's parties uphold the proportional regimen that restricts gender roles and bodily shape, the "anomalous" others overturn such gender politics by means of different eating styles and body presentations. Woolf indicates her intention to write *Mrs. Dalloway*: "I want to give life and death, sanity and insanity; I want to criticize the social system, and to show it at work at its most intense" (*A Writer's Diary* 248). A

[7] Elizabeth Grosz, "The Body as Inscriptive Surface," *The Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1994) 143.

[8] The phrase "the daily drama of the body" is directly quoted from Woolf's essay of "On Being Ill." According to her, the mind cannot function independently of the body, "[b]ut of all this daily drama of the body there is no record. People write always of the doings of the mind; the thoughts that come to it; its noble plans; how the mind has civilized the universe. They show it ignoring the body in the philosopher's turret; or kicking the body, like an old leather football, across leagues of snow and desert in the pursuit of conquest or discovery. Those great wars which the body wages with the mind a slave to it, in the solitude of the bedroom against the assault of fever or the oncome of melancholia, are neglected" (10).

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scrutiny into food, eating, and body brings to light the underside of the proportional regimen Woolf wants to criticize. Perceiving eating and body as the entry point to investigate and problematize the mainstream values, this chapter examines how the governing class's and the lower-class's politics/practices and body appearance consolidate, contrast, or conflict with gender norms and social mores in *Mrs. Dalloway*.

The Proportional Regimen and the Elite Parties in Postwar London

Featuring British social life on one particular day in the middle of June, 1923 London, *Mrs. Dalloway* pivots on the charming parties held by the upper-middle class. Whereas the progression of the day proceeds with Mrs. Dalloway's preparation for the evening party, the life of a Briton is affected by a political decision made during Lady Bruton's luncheon. Although the First World War consumes the combatants and inflicts pain on their families, there seems to be not much change in the life of the governing class. While the upper class notices differences before and after the War in terms of population, commodity culture, and people's mindset for the future, they still maintain the party ritual to connect people and sustain domestic order. Whereas high society throws parties to glorify Britain, all walks of life are encouraged to show their patriotic passion for the nation. By scrutinizing the British regime and the upper-middle class parties with an eye for eating metaphors, this section probes into the social hierarchy and gender politics in postwar Britain.

In 1923, when the country is in the power of an irresistible return of militaristic patriarchy, citizens abide by the proportional regimen along the class line,

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consolidating the social hierarchy and gender demarcation. On London streets five years after the war, upon hearing the backfiring explosion of the motor car presumably carrying the Royalty, ladies stop their purchases, men of robust physique stand straight in salute, and the poor gather at the gates of Buckingham Palace thrilled to see the Royalty passing (*MD* 21, 22). As the greatness casts "the pale light of the immortal presence," such immortality can be only achieved with the sacrifice of those who are "ready to attend their Sovereign, if need be, to the cannon's *mouth*, as their ancestors had done before them" (*MD* 21emphasis added). The oral imagery of the artillery symbolizes the destructive power of war and hints at the inevitable sacrifice in the name of defeating the Empire's enemies. Despite the fact that the First World War has claimed countless lives and left people like Mrs. Foxcroft eating her heart out on learning her boy killed, going to war has been praised as an act of heroism to date. Like the shell-shocked Septimus, who was "one of the first to volunteer" to go to war, many inexperienced men follow in his footsteps without second thoughts (*MD* 95). From wartime to postwar, Great Britain has recruited common men and imposed on them masculine ideals to be combative and uncomplaining in the battle while privileging those on the upper echelon to prosper and indulge in the glories of Empire by throwing parties. The patriarchal power of the state is incarnated in a proportional regimen, which dictates how citizens should act and assigns to them different duties to sustain the order of the Empire hierarchically. It exploits the commoners as the country's warriors; meanwhile, it enables the high class to cultivate their taste. Whereas military service aggravates gender role separation, the proportional regimen widens the chasm between classes.

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In complicity with the imperial regime are those who restore rigid class and gender differences in the name of proportion in their eating communities.[9] From the aristocrats such as Lady Bruton to upper-middle class like Clarissa and Hugh, Mayfair, regardless of those afflicted by the late age's War experience, basks in the joviality of throwing parties. The two prominent parties—Clarissa's dinner party and Lady Bruton's luncheon—manifest female achievements in the social realm as women not only turn themselves from commanders/food providers of the household to hostesses to the public but also fulfill their desire for socializing or wielding influence on politics. Yet, from the look of the two parties' settings, objectives, and the composition of members, we can say that they remain patriarchal products that discriminate against the inferior and oppress the anomalous-looking individuals.

Clarissa Dalloway's party demonstrates female creativity; however, it reveals her snobbish character at the same time. Born and bred to be a hostess, Clarissa plays her role as a politician's wife by throwing parties. Having lived in Westminister for over twenty years, she feels herself "being part of it" as one of the "courtiers once in the time of the Georges [and is] going "that very night to kindle and illuminate; to give her party" (*MD* 7). Resonant with religious connotation as an "offering for the sake of offering" (*MD* 135), Clarissa's party is claimed to be altruistic as it provides an

[9] The term "eating community" derives from Pasi Falk's contention that "[t]he primitive society is in a fundamental sense an 'eating community'" (20). In *The Consuming Body*, Falk traces the ontogenic and cultural development of the modern individual self in relation to orality. According to him, the primitive society "can hardly be reduced to a 'communion' or a common shared ritual meal, yet the rituals involving not only (eating) meal but also other activities concerning food, function as the integrative mechanism of the society" (20). While civilization marginalizes the ritual meal and transforms the pre-modern eating community (communion) into a communicative modern society, Falk finds the function of the mouth reduced to the individual level and boundaries in primitive parties dissolve as modern exchange and consumption come into play. Even though *Mrs. Dalloway* is contextualized in the consumption society in postwar London, I still apply the term "eating community" to emphasize citizens' advocacy of the proportional regimen and the high class's restoration of communion parties.

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opportunity for people to socialize with one another. Many critics acknowledge her party as a "means to human synthesis," and a "self-fulfilling creation" (Glenny 121,122) to "outran[k] men's ratiocinations" (Blodgett 49). To some extent, Clarissa fulfills her role as a nurturer in the social realm by elevating domestic triviality to public festivity, ensuring the preparation, process, and the aftermath of the party. However, in the eyes of Clarissa's friends, she becomes the representative of English snobbery. Seeing Clarissa repeating "how delightful to see you" when receiving guests, Peter is critical of her effusive and insincere manner (*MD* 184). Likewise, Sally suspects that Clarissa has turned into a snob as she cannot see Clarissa around but finds Clarissa attending to those of importance all the time (*MD* 209).

Although Clarissa's aim as a party-giver is to combine and to expand, her party appeals mostly to the dignitaries, or, the governing class that advocates Darwinian male control.[10] While Clarissa exclaims: "why should I ask all the dull women in London to my parties" (*MD* 131), her attitude toward the influential is starkly different. Clarissa seems unwilling to invite Ellie Henderson, a commonplace cousin, to the party (*MD* 186), whereas she repeatedly reminds Hugh Whitbread of her party and feels that the Prime Minister has been good to come (*MD* 191). Like what Peter has scorned her in the youth, Clarissa becomes a "perfect hostess" to the Prime Minister, the upper-class Bradshaw couple, and dignitaries like Lady Bruton (*MD* 9). While Makiko Minow-Pinkney argues that "Clarissa accepts the role prescribed by the paternal law" for the maternal is often repressed in the text (100), I maintain that

[10] I coin the phrase "Darwinian male control" for the use to illustrate the patriarchal rule based on social Darwinism in *Mrs. Dalloway*. And the ideas of Social Darwinism will be explicated in note 12.

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Clarissa accepts her female roles as she remains subordinate to her husband and assists him in his political career by attending to figures of authority.

Not only does the hostess submit to the paternal law but many of her guests are assigned to imperial duty or endorse imperial values. For example, Lady Bruton, who has "the thought of Empire always at hand," exchanges news and imperial agenda with Peter Walsh and the Prime Minister (*MD* 198). Peter Walsh, despite being a socialist in his youth, becomes a colonial administrator in India. Even Aunt Helena Parry, who is unwilling to see British intrusion, seems to appreciate her experience in India and Burma as a botanist due to the tie between Britain and the colonized[11] (*MD* 196). Although Aunt Parry seems very much on the side of the colonized, she can "not resist recalling what Charles Darwin ha[s] said about her little book on the orchids of Burma" upon chatting with Peter (*MD* 196-97). Whereas Diane McGee perceives Clarissa's party "political" as it reflects the values of the British Empire (131), I find that the party gathers those who dedicate themselves to the perpetuation of imperial stability in a way implying the ideology of Social Darwinism.[12] The most

[11] The passage in *Mrs. Dalloway* are as follows: "For at the mention of India, or even Ceylon, her [Aunt Helena Parry's] eyes (only one was glass) slowly deepened, became blue, beheld, not human beings—she had no tender memories, *no proud illusions about Viceroys, Generals, Mutinies*—it was orchids she saw, and mountain passes, and herself carried on the backs of coolies in the 'sixties over solitary peaks; or descending to uproot orchids (starting blossoms, never beheld before) which she painted in watercolor; an indomitable Englishwoman, fretful if disturbed by the war, say, which dropped a bomb at her very door, from her deep meditation over orchids and her own figure journeying in the 'sixties in India …" (*MD* 196 emphasis added).

[12] Social Darwinism is the application of Charles Darwin's biological ideas of natural selection to society. While there are various subcategories within Social Darwinism, ideas of External Social Darwinism best illuminates the notion of "proper" proportion in this thesis. Differing form Herbert Spencer's idea of internal competition between individuals within the *laissez-faire* England, External Social Darwinists like Karl Pearson thought the existence of struggle was not between individuals but between tribes and nations. He asserted that Britain could not succeed in that struggle unless the class differences were eliminated. To achieve a homogenous country, Pearson endorsed Francis Galton's ideas of "eugenics" and meanwhile discouraged the reproduction of the "unfit." According to him in *Grammar of Science*, "[n]o degenerate and feeble stock will ever be converted into healthy and sound stock by the accumulated effects of education, good laws, and sanitary surrounds"(qtd. in Semmel 48). Besides, Pearson positively perceived wars as a kind of selection and that "mankind will no longer progress" if wars cease (qtd. in Semmel 41). Seemingly, the claim for human solidarity and national

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prominent example is Sir William Bradshaw, who worships proportion and believes that his regimen and rest cure not only "prosper[] himself but ma[ke] England prosper" (*MD* 110).

> Sir William … secluded her [Britain's] lunatics, forbade childbirth, penalized despair, made it impossible for the unfit to propagate their view until they, too, shared his sense of proportion—his, if they were men, Lady Bradshaw's if they were women (she embroidered, knitted, spent four nights out of seven at home with her son). (*MD* 110)

In the party, it is unnecessary for Sir Bradshaw to propagandize a sense of proportion as the attendees have already internalized it and even held a share in sustaining the present proportionality. In his clinic, however, he practices Darwinian therapies,[13] shutting people up. As Woolf writes, "[Sir Bradshaw] swooped; he devoured" (*MD* 113). The violence involved in the oral imagery signifies not only Sir William's iron will to convert people but his aggression towards those who do not or cannot be assimilated into his sense of proportion. Moreover, the "proper" proportion also has to do with gender demarcation. Men should look up to Sir William Bradshaw as model, whereas women should follow Lady Bradshaw to share "a common femininity, a common pride in the illustrious qualities of husbands" (*MD* 201). Not knowing it is the devouring nature of Bradshaw's proportional regimen that precipitates Septimus'

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survival are only masks for the imperial enterprise. In the same vein, the notion of proportion in *Mrs. Dalloway* denotes the tyranny of the upper class, which is privileged to define what "proper" proportion should be. In the novel, the brutality of "proportion" is demonstrated in Sir William Bradshaw's psychiatric treatment as well as in Lady Bruton's Emigration Plan whose real aim is to shift the "unfit" to Canada and to prosper the upper class she herself belongs to.

[13] In Elaine Showalter's study of *The Female Malady*, she traces the psychiatric history in England and briefly categorizes three historical phases: psychiatric Victorianism (1830-1870), psychiatric Darwinism (1870-1920), and psychiatric modernism (1920-1980). After 1870, Showalter notes an emerging psychiatric Darwinism follow "Darwin's theories of inheritance, evolution, and degeneration" to view "insanity as the product of organic defect, poor heredity, and an evil environment" (18).

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ruin, Clarissa feels something wrong about Sir Bradshaw; despite that she, like Richard, "didn't like his taste, didn't like his smell," she convinces herself that Sir Bradshaw is "extraordinarily able" (*MD* 201). From being unable to question to acquiescing in the dominant discourse on proportion, Clarissa as well as many others is gradually incorporated into Sir Bradshaw's circle and colludes in the conspiracy against the inferior. Unknowingly, by receiving those who endorse imperial values and impose oppression on the weak, the party fortifies Darwinian male control and indirectly rules out the "unfit."

Proportion as the imperial credo not only permeates through the party in terms of political ideology but is instilled in people in the form of decent bodily shape. According to Jeremy Tambling, "[t]he obsession with order, or Proportion, includes Mrs. Dalloway's strong class and probably sexual dislike of Miss Kilman" (63). While Clarissa might have no chance to know Septimus, her treatment of Doris Kilman, one of the very few she knows from the "degradingly poor" (*MD* 136), reveals her ambivalence and hostility towards the poor and the "anomalous" others. All day long, Clarissa remains beset with Miss Kilman, the corpulent history governess whom her daughter has an attachment for. Although Clarissa recognizes that it is "the idea of [Miss Kilman]" that one hates, she nevertheless scorns Kilman for her unfeminine appearance in the mackintosh, perspiring, swelling (*MD* 14). Presumably, due to Miss Kilman's corpulent physicality, scarcely any decent cloth fits her. However, people tend to associate her unattractive appearance with the lack of bourgeois cultivation. In addition to the slovenly dressing, Clarissa taunts Miss Kilman for her uncultivated taste (*MD* 14). While Clarissa loves roses, "Miss Kilman

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squashe[s] the flowers all in a bunch, and ha[s]n't any small talk" (*MD* 144). To this extent, the issue of proportion seems to conflate factors of physicality and social hierarchy. As Fulker notes, Miss Kilman's rough appearance symbolizes her social inferiority (21-22). While Miss Kilman's "disproportionate" shape denotes physically unfitness, her working-class status is perceived unsuitable for attending the party.

Deliberately ruling out the lowly and "odious" Miss Kilman from her party, Clarissa colludes in the sustenance of "proportion." With reiterated cry to Elizabeth: "Remember the party! Remember *our party* to-night" in the presence of Miss Kilman (*MD* 139 emphasis added), Clarissa uses her party to stress class difference and to reclaim her domination of her daughter, Elizabeth, who, in spite of Miss Kilman's exhortation that "she must not let parties absorb her," still attends the party due to social etiquette (*MD* 145). As Alex Zwerdling asserts, "Clarissa's integration is horizontal, not vertical" (151). By stressing a sense of proportion embedded in class and gender differences, the party marks Clarissa's triumph over Kilman and delimits Kilman's access to the Dalloways.

Whereas Clarissa's dinner party excludes the unsophisticated, "anomalous" individuals whose tastes differ from that of the upper class, Lady Bruton's luncheon is an exclusive masculine meeting grounded in gender dichotomy. According to Allie Glenny, "Lady Bruton's principles as a hostess are ones of selection and partiality" (*MD* 124). As Lady Bruton's real intention behind the luncheon is to request a decent letter that proposes the Emigration Plan to the *Times*, her guests are those who can put thoughts into logical wording, namely, men.

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Resonant with the hostess's misogynist mindset, Lady Bruton's luncheon party reveals gender polarization and male supremacy. As it turns out, the more masculine and ambitious Lady Bruton appears, the more submissive she is to the superiority of men over women. Descended from a military family, Lady Bruton is "a strong martial woman," who "could have worn the helmet and shot the arrow" (*MD* 120, 198). Having "the reputation of being more interested in politics than people; of talking like a man" (*MD* 117), Lady Bruton, as Minow-Pinkney notes, is "a physically powerful, emphatically phallic woman," who has an ambitious proposal for emigration policy (103). Yet, however ambitious and confident Lady Bruton appears, she is frustrated by words and associates her difficulties with inborn limitation: "no woman stood to the laws of the universe; knew how to put things; knew what was said; so that if Richard advised her, and Hugh wrote for her, she was sure of being somehow right" (*MD* 121). "Debarred by her sex" (*MD* 198), Lady Bruton internalizes patriarchal values and holds misogynist attitude towards women who become obstacles to their husbands. Lady Bruton's view of husbands and wives displays an essentialist dichotomy between men and women as the dominant and the subordinate, assigned to public and private spheres respectively. In her opinion, women should assist their husbands in the pursuit of career and therefore she believes "[i]t might have been better if Richard had married a woman with less charm, who would have helped him more in his work" (*MD* 197). For the same reason, Lady Bruton would never ask Clarissa to lunch for a woman will never come in handy to her imperial agenda (*MD* 34). Instead, Lady Bruton sets up the luncheon as "grand deception" and "profound illusion" to ask Richard Dalloway and Hugh Whitbread to come "on false pretense, to

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help her out of a difficulty" (*MD* 115). Having "the passions which one could not call simply greed," Lady Bruton does not mind her guests being ravenous on the table as long as they are useful to her (*MD* 121). To illustrate, although Hugh Whitbread is "very slow" (*MD* 120) and is noted by Milly Brush as "one of the greediest men," who thinks "only of his chicken" during the meal (*MD* 118), Lady Bruton "wouldn't let them run down her poor dear Hugh" as long as he "produces his fountain pen" on behalf of her (*MD* 115, 121).

Seemingly, the matter under the luncheon table is more important than anything else in the hostess's eye; similarly, the guests may already get used to the deceptive nature of Lady Bruton's parties and choose to come for the benefits for their careers. As Fernández-Armesto notes, food sharing is "a fundamental form of gift exchange," which creates "relationships of dependence" (102, 103). The luncheon forms a bond, drawing Lady Bruton and her guests together "in a thin thread" hierarchically and interdependently (*MD* 124). To some extent, Lady Bruton transforms the signification of food from nurturance to an equivalent of bait for her "toadies" (*MD* 191). In return, she gets the letter of "a masterpiece," calling Hugh "My Prime Minister," doubting if "her own meaning [could] sound like that" (*MD* 122). To sum up, although Lady Bruton's party enables her to rewrite the female roles from a political hostess to a chairwoman, the key to success still absurdly lies in outright capitulation to patriarchy. As Tambling succinctly puts it, "'[m]astery' in the novel is male-based, or reveals itself in matriarchs whose behavior borrows from male codes" (Tambling 67). Seen in this light, the luncheon turns out to be a masculine product, endorsing male hegemony and supremacy.

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In addition, the central issue in Lady Bruton's political party pivots on proportion as well: the proposal of Emigration Plan—shifting the superfluous youth to Canada—has to do with the proportion of domestic population. Although Lady Bruton reassures that the emigrants must be "born of respectable parents" and promised with "a fair prospect of doing well in Canada" (*MD* 120), Kathy J. Phillips notes that "obviously [the emigrants] count less than she and her illustrious dead ancestors do" (8). As emigration is not to anyone else ("not to Hugh, or Richard, or even to [the] devoted Miss Brush") the obvious solution to overpopulation (*MD* 120), the plan indicates a slanting sense of proportion out of self-interest. As Phillips infers, "[t]he expanding population might cut into her hefty share of the national wealth, so she tries to get rid of them" (8). Lady Bruton's plan is reminiscent of Social Darwinian ideology. In light of Karl Pearson, a Social Darwinist, "the nation's leaders […] ought to recognize that unless class differences were substantially eliminated, unless the working classes were strong, healthy, and well trained, Britain could not succeed in th[e] struggle for existence" (Semmel 43). In the same vein, Lady Bruton's key to establish a homogenous empire lies in eliminating those dissimilar from the upper-middle class instead of compensating them for the lack of opportunities in life. Yet, in regard to such unreasonable attempt, nobody takes the opposite stance to it during the party: Richard thinks all "stuffing and bunkum," but is convinced that there is "no harm in it, of course" (*MD* 122); without second thoughts, "Hugh [goes] on drafting sentiments in alphabetical order of the highest nobility" (*MD* 122). The meal party functions as an exchange of food for a letter; however, the published letter may effect a change of the proportion of population in England and even in the colonies.

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As products exhibiting values of Darwinian proportion, both Clarissa's dinner party and Lady Bruton's luncheon party consolidate gender dichotomy and social hierarchy of the status quo. According to Alex Zwerdling, the governing class "worships Proportion, by which it really means atrophy of the heart, repression of instinct and emotion" (149). While the instincts and emotions are repressed and cannot be put into words in this society, they are portrayed in eating imagery, which shows the disparity between classes. Whereas "the most dejected of miseries sitting on doorsteps [to] drink their downfall" (*MD* 6), those "afloat on the cream of English society" like Hugh Whitbread would go to all sorts of parties, "eat cake with a Duchess any day of his life," and would "spend a good deal of time enjoying that "agreeable occupation" (*MD* 114, 190). Eating manners mark social status; likewise, different positions in a feast denote class and gender difference. As Zwerdling puts it, within the parties the "relationship between master and servant in *Mrs. Dalloway* is typical of the gulf between all classes in the novel" (151). While the cook, Mrs. Walker, plays the central role in Clarissa Dalloway's feast, she remains invisible to guests as she stays in the kitchen around the cooking utensils, anxious about the pudding and the underdone salmon. On Lady Bruton's side, the service provided by the grey-haired Perkins and his team is illustrated as "a ripple in the grey tide" that washes round Lady Bruton day in and day out like "a fine net" where things lodged will be picked out accurately in an instant (*MD* 119). Although servants are not treated on an equal footing with attendees in the parties, they also endorse imperial values of proportion by being relegated to a subordinate status to the upper class. According to Pasi Falk, "[s]haring and incorporating food in a ritual meal implies the

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incorporation of the partaker into the community simultaneously defining his/her 'place' within it" (20). In both parties, hostesses, guests and servants are subservient to the patriarchal power of the Empire, sustaining the existing social relations.

In *Mrs. Dalloway*, gender politics is closely related to social hierarchy and militaristic values, and both secure the Darwinian male control. Even though *Mrs. Dalloway* takes place in the consumer society in 1923 London, the party ritual performed by the upper-middle class works in a way similar to Falk's notion of the communion ritual in the primitive society. According to Falk, "the primitive society is in a fundamental sense an 'eating-community'" that distinguishes a group from others (20). In the postwar, through the restoration of festive ritual the upper-middle-class parties hark back to a time when human's relation to each other relies on consensus by silencing the dissidents. Clarissa's and Lady Bruton's parties reflect a collective characteristic and set a boundary between the members and the outsiders. As the parties emblematic of British society only receive strong, influential men, and slender, rich women that accord with patriarchal gender roles, those who fall outside gender norms and social ranks turn to addictive eating or anorexia nervosa in secret. The following sections analyze Doris Kilman's compulsive eating and Septimus's anorexic inclination and explore how different eating styles reflect and problematize the existing gender politics.

The Corpulent Body of the Low-Class Doris Kilman

This section examines the forces and pitfalls in Doris Kilman's compulsive eating. Juxtaposing Doris Kilman vis-à-vis Clarissa Dalloway, I explore how body

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and eating are used as tropes to examine the cultural representation of the poor, corpulent woman. Next, Drawing on Susie Orbach's *Fat Is a Feminist Issue*, I scrutinize how Kilman's life problems are translated into food and body problems and see if there lies an unconscious desire for Miss Kilman to eat and become fat. As the psychologist Marcia Germaine Hutchinson notes, "[t]here can be no true healing of an eating disorder without attention to the disordered relationship between self and body—the negative body image" (152). Whereas various factors constitute eating disorders, a negative profile or low self-esteem is fundamental to all causes. This section examines how people stigmatizes the female body of the lower class and how Miss Kilman perceives her corpulent body to see if she succeeds in self-empowerment via eating.

Woolf's portrayal of Doris Kilman as a corpulent woman anticipates the character's problematic relationship to food and hints at her difficulty in socialization as a "normal" woman. Whereas fatness does not necessarily have to do with binge eating, many scholars pinpoint Miss Kilman's troubled relationship to food (Moran 78-79, Glenny 129). According to Susie Orbach, what fatness means to the eater plays a deciding role in her eating style (35). As Miss Kilman's largeness is highlighted throughout the novel, it is important for us to decode the messages behind fatness so as to untangle the intricacies of her problematic eating.

In people's eyes, Miss Kilman's largeness is associated with abnormality and unwomanliness. In the department store, Miss Kilman appears like "a great child, an unwieldy battleship" (*MD* 143). It is her "unlovable body" that "people could not bear to see" (*MD* 142). Whereas the girl serving Miss Kilman at the petticoat department

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thinks her mad, one churchgoer cannot help "being a little distressed by the poor lady's *disorder*; her hair down; her parcel on the floor" (*MD* 143, 148 emphasis added). To aggravate the plight of a corpulent woman, Woolf juxtaposes Doris Kilman with her body double[14], Clarissa Dalloway, and complicates such comparison by class and gender role distinction. Clarissa has "a narrow pea-stick figure" (*MD* 13), "light" as a bird, "with her body unseen, unknown" slicing like a knife through everything (*MD* 13), whereas Miss Kilman's body is substantial and bulky. In fact, Miss Kilman's fatness brings her to a stark conflict with Victorian doctrine of femininity, which orders women to "constantly cultivate her personal appearance" as well as to secure and beautify the household like the Angel in the House (Steele 102). While the society demands that woman's body should "be thin, free of 'unwanted hair,' deodorized, perfumed and clothed [and requires that it should] conform to an ideal physical type" (Orbach 24), Doris Kilman's body is anything but this ideal. She looks plain; her body swells and perspires; besides, she wears a mackintosh, which is used to cover up the unwanted fat. While Clarissa performs proper female roles as a nurturer in both domestic and social realm by being Richard's wife, Elizabeth's mother, and the party hostess, Miss Kilman remains celibate when the feminine ideal is to become a mother. Whereas Clarissa's slenderness denotes upper-class fragility, Miss Kilman embodies scientific "expert's" view of poor women as robust,[15] fleshy,

[14] Both Patricia Moran and Ellie Glenny note that Miss Kilman is Clarissa's body double. As Moran contends, like Septimus, the spiritual double that sacrifices to redeem Clarissa, "Miss Kilman is Clarissa's body double, and for that reason, she is also the novel's scapegoat" (82).

[15] In "A History of Women's Bodies," Rose Weitz describes that "throughout Western history th[e] general ideas about women's bodies have been applied in very different ways to women of different social class and ethnic, racial, or religious groups" (3). Whereas "the scientific 'experts' emphasized the frailty of middle-class white women, they emphasized the robustness of poorer women, both white and non-white" (8). Besides, in "A 'Horror of Corpulence: Interrogating Bantingism and Mid-Nineteen-Century Fat-Phobia," Joyce L. Huff argues that Victorians "were so obsessed with

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and alien.

With her body appearance dissimilar to gender norms, Miss Kilman is desexualized and even dehumanized by her contemporaries. While Miss Kilman's poverty prevents her from dressing properly ("She could not help being ugly; she could not afford to buy pretty clothes") (*MD* 142), her corpulent body implies the lack of sexual appeal: "Do her hair as she might, her forehead remained like an egg, bald, white. No clothes suited her. [...] And for a woman, of course, that meant never meeting the opposite sex" (*MD* 142). Miss Kilman names her reasons for wearing the mackintosh: first, it is cheap; second, she is over forty and does not dress to please (*MD* 136). The reasons appear practical; they nevertheless indicate her failure in feminization. In light of an anonymous male writer for *The Quarterly Review*, who states that '[w]e should doubt … whether the woman who is indifferent to her appearance be a woman at all" (qtd. in Steele 102),[16] Miss Kilman not only appears slovenly but unfeminine.

Whereas in the sexist culture Miss Kilman is perceived as an "abnormal" woman, in the religious world "divested of social rank, almost of sex" (*MD* 147), she is still sorted out as a deviant, an eyesore. In the church, worshippers discriminate Miss Kilman from themselves, deeming her "being still on the threshold of their underworld, th[inking] of her sympathetically as a soul haunting the same territory; a soul cut out of immaterial substance; *not a woman, a soul*" (*MD* 148 emphasis added). Such desexualized illustration may have to do with the religious context. Besides, it

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physical self-management that they developed a highly articulated set of physical strictures regarding the arrangement of fat on the body, standards that were class, age, and gender specific" (44).

[16] The sentence is extracted from "The Art of Dress" from *The Quarterly Review* 79, which was published in March 1847.

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reveals worshippers' inclination to differentiate Kilman from the normal sex so as to maintain distance from her. Another instance showcases a church goer's stigmatization of the corpulent body: Mr. Fletcher, "being himself neat as a new pin," feels annoyed as he passes Miss Kilman for "her largeness, robustness, and power as she s[its] there shifting her knees from time to time impresse[s] him, as they ha[ve] impressed Mrs. Dalloway, […], the Rev. Edward Whittaker, and Elizabeth, too" (*MD* 148). In light of Mary Douglas in *Purity and Danger*, the bulky Miss Kilman is perceived as the "matter out of place" that threatens the order and symbolizes both danger and power (94). However, if there is the so-called power of corpulence, it is due to people's discriminating gaze against obesity that strangely gives the corpulent the power to threaten order.

In association with the adipose tissue are characteristics of odiousness (*MD* 140), ugliness (*MD* 142), clumsiness (*MD* 136), cheap taste (*MD* 136), poverty, and the power to overcome others, which altogether reflect the social construction of the corpulent female body as the grotesque subjected to stigmatization. Seeing Miss Kilman "[h]eavy, ugly, commonplace, without kindness or grace," Clarissa even demonizes Miss Kilman as she finds in Miss Kilman's body a certain "power and taciturnity of some prehistoric monster armoured for primeval warfare" (*MD* 138, 139). The discrediting effect of Miss Kilman's robustness is so extensive in Clarissa's mind that the idea of Miss Kilman "gather[s] in to itself a great deal that [i]s not Miss Kilman" (*MD* 14), becoming "one of the spectres" sucking up the life-blood (ibid.), "the dominators and tyrants," and the "brutal monster" whose "hooves planted down in the depths of that leaf-encumbered forest" (*MD* 15). Drawing on Erving Goffman's

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observation on the relation between the "normal" and the "stigmatized," I perceive that Clarissa constructs "a stigma theory,[17] an ideology to explain [Kilman's] inferiority and account for the danger [s]he represents, sometimes rationalizing an animosity based on other differences […]" (15). While Miss Kilman's German[18] origin is associated with invasion and tyranny in the backdrop of WWI (Glenny 130), in Clarissa's eyes, Kilman is a converter with a firm belief in Christianity. Upon thinking of Kilman in her party, Clarissa names Kilman as her enemy, who seduces Elizabeth and has "crept in to steal and defile" (*MD* 192). To this extent, Miss Kilman's robustness does not only violate the gender norms but bears the mark of disgrace and immorality.

As people's fantasies and misunderstandings of the corpulent body reinforce the negative profile of Miss Kilman, she seems to internalize their opinions on her no matter how hard she tries to resist. Considering Clarissa as a "fool, simpleton," who comes from "the most worthless of all classes—the rich, with a smattering of culture"(*MD* 138, 136), Miss Kilman, however, feels herself physically inferior to Clarissa. Gradually, Miss Kilman has been "overcome" by the tyranny of slenderness as she wishes to resemble Clarissa and mutters "[i]t is the flesh, it is the flesh" that she needs to control (*MD* 142). Aware of Clarissa and others' insults to her

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[17] In *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity* Erving Goffman writes, "the Greeks originated the term stigma to refer to bodily signs designed to expose something unusual and bad about the moral status of the signifier" (11). "Today the term is widely used in something like the original literal sense, but is applied more to the disgrace itself than to the bodily evidence of it" (ibid.)

[18] Both Stephen Trombley and Allie Glenny point out how the distasteful corporeality of Doris Kilman is possibly related to her German connections. Both find Miss Kilman's connections to German make her either "in an ambivalent position within *Mrs. Dalloway*" (Glenny 65) or appears "unique" among Woolf's characters in that she is one of the few for whom [Woolf] ha[s] no sympathy whatsoever" (Trombley 65). Both refer to Woolf's dislike of German chauvinism. As Glenny notes, in Bayeruth in 1909, Woolf describes the German as "hideous" and as "monster men and women" (qtd. in Glenny 241). She describes Germans in association with excessive corporeality: "great joints covered with fat," and she sees the women's faces as "puddings of red dough" (qtd. in Glenny 241, *L*1 403, 407).

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"disorderly" appearance, Miss Kilman cannot but accept the stigmatization: "Why should they ask me [to the parties]? […] I'm plain, I'm unhappy" (*MD* 146). Prompted by people's denial, Miss Kilman tries to correct her physical failing by curbing her appetite. Seemingly, she capitulates and adjusts to the patriarchal ideal; secretly and ambivalently, she curses the world and the unfairness she experiences and finds her outlet for anger in eating. Caught between a deprivation of food and excessive desire for it, Kilman eventually develops a compulsive cycle of eating and dieting.

Miss Kilman's obsession with food and anxiety about the flesh indicates that she might be a compulsive eater. According to Susie Orbach, a compulsive eater eats when she is not physically hungry and spends a good deal of time thinking and worrying about food and fatness, feeling awful about her body out of control (*FIFI* 10). As Elizabeth wonders whether Miss Kilman can be hungry, it is Miss Kilman's way of eating, "eating with intensity, then looking again and again, at a plate of sugared cakes on the table next them" (*MD* 143) that makes us think that she is less hungry for food than for mental satisfaction. In Orbach's words, Miss Kilman turns to eating in search of love, warmth, and support—for the "indefinable something that seems never to be there" (*FIFI* 32). Eating is Miss Kilman's means of self-nurturance; however, the way she eats is like what Orbach notes about people with eating disorders, who "deal with indigestible facts and feelings by eating them" (*FIFI* 17). Orbach attributes compulsive eating to women's unsatisfying role experience and the problematic mother-daughter relationship;[19] Miss Kilman's eating disorder, however,

[19] According to Susie Orbach in *Fat Is a Feminist Issue*, the central issues of compulsive eating are rooted in the social inequality of women. To be precise, she names two unsatisfying experiences in a

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has to do with patriarchal oppression in the backdrop of WWI. As a victim of war, her agony stems from the "dismissal from school during the war" (*MD* 14), and is worsened by her stoutness associative of poverty and abnormality. As Miss Kilman is deprived of economic and sexual capital, eating becomes the only resort left to her: "except for Elizabeth, her food [i]s all that she live[s] for; her comforts; her dinner, her tea; her hot-water bottle at night" (*MD* 142). However, as food intake is closely related to body size, Miss Kilman is dogged by the inescapable fatness and is nonetheless anxious about being overweight.

Miss Kilman's indulgence in eating and the contingent fear of getting fat imply the ambivalent nature of compulsive eating as a means of self-empowerment. Claiming that "[f]at is a social disease, and fat is a feminist issue," Orbach regards eating and becoming fat as an expression of "rebellion against the powerlessness of the woman, against the pressure to look and act in a certain way and against being evaluated on her ability to create an image of herself" (*FIFI* 22, 25). As Orbach maintains that every compulsive eater "has an interest in being fat" even though such interest remains "largely unconscious" (*FIFI* 38), a close look into Kilman's gains and losses during and after eating brings to light potential and pitfalls of compulsive eating as a means of self-empowerment.

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patriarchal family: one is a woman's gender role as a mother, nurturing others without ever noting/satisfying her own desire, the other is the problematic mother-daughter relationship. For the latter, Orbach points out the tension and ambivalence between mothers and daughters. Whereas daughters have to identity with the powerlessness of their mothers, "the mother must withhold a certain degree of support and sustenance from her daughter, in order to teach her the ways of womanhood" (31). For this reason, a mother must make sure her daughter is "not overfed in case she becomes greedy and overweight" (31). Such feeding and nurturing gives rise to the daughter's feeding of herself later in her life as a "symbolic response to both the physical and emotional deprivation she suffered as a child" (32). Throughout the adult daughter's life, she has been seeking emotional sustenance from other social relationships and finally she turns to eating "in the search for love, comfort, warmth and support—for that indefinable something that seems never to be there" (32).

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To begin with, in respect to the implication of food, the eating manner, and the intent to have tea, Miss Kilman's afternoon tea with Elizabeth at the Army and Navy Department Store is teeming with self-empowering connotations. According to Sidney W. Mintz, sugar and sweet imply transgression as they have been associated with "luxury and excess" and even with "feminine dominance" (75). Seen in this light, the afternoon tea has a particular resonance for Miss Kilman, echoing with her will to gain control of others and food. In terms of manners, she adopts a domineering attitude during the afternoon tea. As "[t]he pleasure of eating [i]s almost the only pure pleasure left her," Miss Kilman requires that everything cater to her demands when it comes to eating (*MD* 143). She minds a child taking her desired cake and stops Elizabeth from leaving early by stating: "I've not quite finished yet" (*MD* 145). In an unhurried manner, Miss Kilman "open[s] her mouth, slightly project[s] her chin, and swallow[s] down the last inches of the chocolate éclair, then wipe[s] her fingers and washe[s] the tea round in her cup" (*MD* 145). Her concentration on eating the chocolate éclair for fear that anything should escape from her mouth signifies her possessive appetite for every bit she lacks in life. Finally, in terms of the intent to have tea, Miss Kilman's real objective is to instil feminist thoughts in her beloved Elizabeth and to ensure her importance outweighing that of Elizabeth's mother, Clarissa. If Miss Kilman should have any influence on the highbred Elizabeth, it would most likely be her feminist vision of women's self-actualization. Secretly, her conversation with Elizabeth demonstrates a wrestle between the traditional Victorian cultivation and new women's enlightenment. To Elizabeth, who is bred in the well-to-do family and sees "her mother ha[ving] breakfast in bed every day" with

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Lucy carrying it up (*MD* 144), Miss Kilman's personal experience and her promise that "every profession is open to the women of [Elizabeth's] generation" (*MD* 144) suggest alternatives to women's conventional role. Miss Kilman's insistence that Elizabeth should not be absorbed in parties not only reflects her criticism of vanity and idleness represented in Clarissa's middle-and-upper class but implies other forms of socialization and satisfaction for women. As long as Elizabeth stays with Miss Kilman, listening to her advice, echoing with Miss Kilman's dislike for parties, Miss Kilman gains not only satisfaction from food but identification from her companion. To this extent, the afternoon tea is less a self-feeding experience than an occasion for Miss Kilman to intellectually feed Elizabeth and incorporate her into her circle.

On the one hand, eating relieves Miss Kilman's distress, enabling her to defy the restrictions on women's diet; on the other hand, she suffers a sense of loss and turns to harsher self-discipline in conformity with social norms. Firstly, Miss Kilman is frustrated by Elizabeth's early leave. Secondly, the influence of the proportional regimen is so profound that Miss Kilman voluntarily turns to religious abstinence, which destroys her control of her body regained while eating. Although Miss Kilman gains the upper hand over Clarissa in influencing Elizabeth during the tea, her scheme has gone askew as Elizabeth takes an early leave. Feeling the atmosphere "flat" and "rather stuffy" (*MD* 145), Elizabeth finds scarcely anything in Miss Kilman's conversation but Kiman's suffering and her contempt for the upper class. Miss Kilman despises those who have better materiality and consuming capacity, yet, the similar craving for commodity, as Elizabeth observes, reveals in Kilman's gluttonous appetite for the cake at the next table. According to Eva Yin-I Chen, at this point

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Elizabeth has learned that Miss Kilman's claim to stick to religion and knowledge is only a mask of her fetishist attachment to worldliness and sensuality (80). Although it seems that Elizabeth has been "brought up to a gate for an unknown purpose, and stands there longing to gallop away" (*MD* 146), presumably, she gradually realizes Kilman's will to dominate her. In fact, Miss Kilman's greed for sweets and food is even transferred onto her desire to metaphorically consume Elizabeth: "If she could grasp her [Elizabeth], if she could clasp her, if she could make her hers absolutely and for ever and then die; that was all she wanted" (*MD* 145). Perceiving that Elizabeth's leave is inevitable, Miss Kilman exerts her last-ditch attempt to have "the very entrails in her body, stretch[ing] as [Elizabeth] crosse[s] the room," only to find the efforts in vain (*MD* 146). Elizabeth's early leave frustrates Miss Kilman whose initial aim is to control. However positive and open-minded Miss Kilman is about women's profession and future, her desire to make Elizabeth wholly hers suggests that she is no better than one-track minded authoritarians. Despite temporary satisfaction, the afternoon tea ends up as a disaster. Seeing Elizabeth paying at the desk, Miss Kilman is reminded of her poverty. What is worse, without Elizabeth being her guide in the department store, Kilman stumbles along the aisles and is brought to see her bulky body "lurching with her hat askew, very red in the face, full length in a looking-glass" (*MD* 147). From having everything under her control to being baffled in her pursuit for the nice food and homoerotic love, Kilman suffers a sense of loss. Finally, she escapes from the department store she does not belong to.

In addition, Miss Kilman is overcome by a feeling of guiltiness derived from eating and decides to go to the church for purification of the soul. Miss Kilman's

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afternoon tea and her visit to the church afterwards displays a condensed compulsive cycle of indulgence in and abstinence from food, which reveals her ambivalent perception of eating as both a source of joy and corruption and further shows her mind and body at war. Whereas eating becomes Miss Kilman's means of empowerment, it is succeeded by self-discipline bolstered by her faith in Christianity that demands the body be subordinated to the soul. As the religious serenity is compared to the "sweet savor filled her veins" (*MD* 137), the final resolution to Miss Kilman's difficulties seems to lie in Christianity: "whenever the hot and painful feelings boiled within her, this hatred of Mrs. Dalloway, this grudge against the world, she th[inks] of God" (*MD* 137). However, quite different from a mind-body equilibrium one might obtain during eating, religion is appropriated by Miss Kilman to slough off the body and "to aspire above the vanities, the desires, the commodities, to rid herself both of hatred and of love" (*MD* 147). If rage is succeeded by religious calm (*MD* 137), such calm stems from the suppression of emotions and the separation of the flesh from the soul. As Trombley puts it, for Miss Kilman, "religion is not a philosophy of love, but rather a means of harnessing hatred so that it is easier to endure" (253). Religion can hardly solace Miss Kilman as it is less an outlet for her unsatisfying experiences than an ascetic technology of the body. In reminiscence of the holy fast in the Middle Ages, Christianity sublimates the mind and soul and sloughs off the body. The visit to the church after the tea reveals Miss Kilman's determination to master the flesh. Referring to the mind/body duality, both Teresa Fulker and Allie Glenny note that Miss Kilman is at war with herself as she sees her mind (soul) and body separate from each other (Fulker 22; Glenny 129). At one time,

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Miss Kilman perceives her body alien to herself; at another, she scorns her soul, believing "it [i]s the soul and its mockery that she wishe[s] to subdue"(*MD* 138). Seen in this light, Miss Kilman's sense of self is torn apart into flesh and soul and no matter which is to blame for giving in to fleshly desire, she seems to negate both.

As the inner equilibrium of the mind and the body is undermined, Miss Kilman is out of touch with her body while she is not eating and even becomes unsure of what she is really hungry for when eating. According to Hilde Bruch, the alienation from one's hungers, "of not owning the body and its sensations" is a typical symptom of all eating disorders (50). In fact, Miss Kilman internalizes values of proportional regimen without knowing that she herself has become her own disciplinarian. Due to her insatiable appetite and the society's pressures on women's bodies, she develops a problematic eating cycle of compulsive eating/dieting. Christianity does not resolve her plight but imposes a stricter restriction on her body. Paradoxically, the more she tries to purify her soul, the more frustrated she becomes because of her inescapable stoutness. Although Christianity emphasizes "the ideal of spiritual beauty," the beauty or the reflection of the soul, to be specific, still lies in features (Steele 104). As many believe that a "'perfect body' reflects a 'noble soul'" (Steele 105), Miss Kilman remains the target of stigmatization. Repeating the cycle of compulsive eating and religious abstinence, Kilman is constantly caught in a double-bind between challenging the prescribed gender norms and self-disciplining to adapt to the culturally constructed femininity.

To sum up, eating and being fat serves for Miss Kilman as an expression of rebellion against the tyranny of slenderness and the dominant discourses on gender

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roles; nevertheless, compulsive eating is a self-deprecating and painful experience which hardly eases the patriarchal pressures but aggravates her miserable state. Even though Orbach emphasizes that "something positive [is] to be gained from being fat," she admits that "getting fat remains an unhappy and unsatisfactory attempt" to resolve conflicts (*FIFI* 39, 33). Compulsive eating empowers Miss Kilman to reclaim her desires; however, self-loathing and shame ensue. On the first level, unable to figure out the meanings and pressures behind compulsive eating, Miss Kilman fails to transfer what is gained from compulsive eating onto herself to fend off stigmatization. On the second level, due to society's intolerance of the corpulent and unattractive women, Miss Kilman can hardly relieve her suffering whatever diet she has. In conclusion, compulsive eating remains a timely outlet for discomforts and dissatisfaction instead of an everlasting solution to Miss Kilman's misery.

The Anorexic Inclination of the Shell-Shocked Septimus Warren Smith

In literature as well as in reality, food and body disorders are mostly associated with women; men with eating disorders therefore appear anomalous as they manifest what are commonly considered as "feminine" disorders (Herzog 40). This section argues that the shell-shocked veteran Septimus Warren Smith is a representative of such an "anomalous" case. Although he eats irregularly before the war, it is military discipline, paternalistic therapies, and the post-combat experience that ruin his appetite. Taking as the point of departure scholars' consensus that Septimus is a war neurotic, this section specifies Septimus's anorexic symptoms by comparing his eating habits, appearance, and sexual attitudes with medical descriptions of male

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anorexia. Drawing on Michel Foucault's notion of docile body and literary interpretation of male anorexia in modernist texts, I explore how Septimus's body changes from the useful body to the anorexic body. This section analyzes Septimus's development of anorexia nervosa and discusses how anorexia nervosa is used by Woolf to problematize gender dichotomy.

Before the war, Septimus Warren Smith endorses the age's spirit of idealism and Darwinian male control; however, his irregular eating habits and emaciated build at odds with the masculine ideal put him in an awkward position. Septimus is one of the poor but ambitious young men shaped by his surroundings: "London has *swallowed* up many millions of young men called Smith" (*MD* 94). As the eating metaphor implies, in this age when imperial values permeate the country, Septimus is incorporated into the state machine and is made anxious to improve shyness and stammering, and to transform "in two years from a pink innocent oval to a face lean, contracted, hostile" (*MD* 94). As a man of passion and idealism, he devours Darwin and *The History of Civilization* as well as Shakespeare and Bernard Shaw[20] and "[goes] to France to save an England which consisted almost entirely of Shakespeare's plays" (*MD* 95). Septimus's romantic temperament is also reflected in his diet: the gardener finds him "finishing a masterpiece at three o'clock in the morning and running out to pace the streets, and visiting churches, and *fasting one day*, *drinking another*" (emphasis added *MD* 95). In the eyes of his superior, Mr. Brewer, Septimus looks "weakly" and unhealthy, and therefore he advises football

[20] It is noteworthy that George Bernard Shaw is also an advocate of Social Darwinists' ideas. According to Karl Pearson in *The Life, Letters, and Labors of Francis Galton*, Shaw believes that "nothing but a eugenic religion can save our civilization from the fate that has overtaken all previous civilizations" (qtd. in Semmel 51). In fact, according to Bernard Semmel, Shaw was at one time a lecturer of the Eugenics Education Society.

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and invites Septimus to supper (*MD* 95). With his temperament and appearance at odds with what is to be deemed masculine, Septimus is in a predicament when the world is polarized into female and male opposition. In fact, unlike what Mr. Brewer worries about, Septimus's health does not collapse due to frailty, but it is the patriarchal acculturation that damages his health and ruins his appetite.

Whereas Septimus used to dine for pleasure on an impulse, the War teaches him to be callous and deprives him of appetite for food. During the military service, Septimus is trained to take up the gender role prescribed by militarism, and thereupon his appetite starts to worsen. The First World War, according to Elaine Showalter, is "a trial of the Victorian masculine ideal," in which Septimus's body is made useful to adjust to values of military aggression and masculine virtues (171). Tender and artistic as Septimus is, he is forced to transform from a romantic poet into a macho soldier. In light of Michel Foucault, in the army, Septimus's body enters a machinery of power that imposes on it constraints, prohibitions, and obligation ("Docile Bodies" 138, 136). As Septimus internalizes the British masculine ideals to become combatant and emotionally repressed,[21] he hardly expresses his fear in the face of military confrontations. Moreover, probably for maintaining the "fitness" for service, he even "congratulate[s] himself upon feeling very little and very reasonably" on learning about his beloved officer Evan's death (*MD* 96). With his body in the grip of powers, his anorexic symptoms speak for him. While Showalter maintains that male hysteria, or shell shock, is the "body language of masculine complaint, a disguised male protest

[21] Regarding shell shock of the WWI as male hysteria in *The Female Malady: Woman, Madness, and English Culture*, Showalter analyzes the causes underlying soldiers' mental breakdown and contends that "emotional repression [i]s an essential aspect of the British masculine ideal" (169).

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not only against the war but against the concept of 'manliness' itself" (172), I perceive that a more straightforward demonstration lies in Septimus's anorexic symptoms. After the War, "he could not taste [;] he could not feel" (*MD* 97), and suddenly his body is unable to be assimilated into the society that once constrains and transforms him. In recollection of their first encounter, Lucrezia recounts that Septimus appears dissimilar to "the large Englishmen her sister admire[s], for he [i]s always thin" (*MD* 161). The war experience disables Septimus from feeling anything, and later eating becomes a burden for him so that in the teashop "among the tables and the chattering waiters the appalling fear [comes] over him": he cannot feel and even "taste ha[s] no relish to him" (*MD* 97-98, 97). Previously, despite the irregular eating habits, Septimus stays healthy as he dines for pleasure at his will. In the army, Septimus cannot but is forced to comply with military discipline. As a result, anorexia nervosa arises as eating is no longer a pleasurable experience.

Besides Septimus's poor appetite and skinny appearance, homosexual crisis—one of the most manifest clinical features associated with male anorexia nervosa—arises during his military service. If, according to David B. Herzog and many others, sexuality is the crux of the etiology of men with eating disorders,[22] Septimus's effeminate temperament and homoerotic sentiments are worth discussing in relation to his loss of appetite. Whereas Septimus's love for Miss Isabel Pole before WWI is characterized as puppy love "without heat, flickering a red-gold flame infinitely ethereal and insubstantial" (*MD* 94), his affection for Evans, his officer,

[22] There is a consensus on the role of sexuality in the etiology of eating disorders in men. A. H. Crisp finds that conflicting gender identity or sexual orientation precipitates an eating disorder in many males (qtd. in Herzog 43). Similarly, M. K. Hasan and R. W. Tibbetts notes a "notable lack of assertive masculinity or identification" and a "fear of manhood" exhibited in male anorexic (qtd. in Herzog 43).

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implies eroticism and sensuality:

> It was a case of two dogs playing on a hearth-rug; one worrying a paper screw, snarling, snapping, giving a pinch, now and then, at the old dog's ear; the other lying somnolent, blinking at the fire, raising a paw, turning and growling good-temperedly. *They had to be together*, share with each other, fight with each other, quarrel with each other. (*MD* 96)

Illustrated as a flirtation between two dogs, the relation between Septimus and Evans seems to exceed brotherly comradeship based on mutual respect.[23] Later, back in postwar British civilian society, Septimus feels it the worst that he has been indifferent to Evan's death and is guilty of "marr[ying] his wife without loving her; ha[ving] lied to her; seduc[ing] her" (*MD* 101). Reopening *Antony and Cleopatra*, Septimus realizes that "[l]ove between man and woman [i]s repulsive to Shakespeare" (*MD* 99). "The business of copulation [i]s filth to him before the end" (*MD* 99). Avoiding a brutal adaptation of medical discourse to male anorexics, I perceive homoeroticism—be it temporary or sexually oriented—as more a literary trope to problematize masculinization than a psychiatric indication of anorexia.[24] While Septimus's emaciated physicality, loss of appetite, and sexual conflict attest to the

[23] In *Shell Shock: Traumatic Neurosis and the British Soldiers of the First World War*, Peter Leese contends that a good relationship between soldier and officer is an important contributory factor to keep up the stimulus of psychic self-defense and maintain the morale. According to him, the "relationship between the two was ideally one of mutual respect and paternal authority. […] The bond between officer and man was usually good and often intense and comparable to the relationship between husband and wife, or brother and brother" (28).

[24] Many regard homosexuality as the most prominent feature in male anorexia. While A. H. Crisp suggests that "conflict over homosexual feelings in male eating-disordered patients plays a role comparable to that of heterosexual conflict in female patients" (qtd. in Herzog 45), G. F. M. Russell also compares the decreased potency in the male to amenorrhea in the female when in anorexia nervosa cases. Or, in light of Herzog, as Septimus's emaciation constitutes the outward signs of anorexia, his homosexuality might put him at "increased risk for developing eating disorders, at least in part due to sociocultural pressures and internalized negative body image" (51).

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diagnostic triad for male anorexia nervosa,[25] what lies behind these signs is the inner discontent with military conversion and the proportional regimen.

On the first level, Septimus's anorexia nervosa serves to problematize military masculinization. In *Mrs. Dalloway*, patriarchy not only oppresses women but puts the "unmanly" men in the similar circumstance to women. Whereas chauvinism subordinates the submissive soldiers to an anesthetic state of fighting, it aims at converting the dissentients by imposing "normative" values of gender roles. In the army, effeminacy is construed as the synonym for non-action, passivity, and above all, cowardice, which is not supposed to be found in a man. In order to survive as well as to justify his patriotism, Septimus comes to identify with gender dichotomy and to develop manliness. In light of Erving Goffman, even though the military enforces on Septimus values of masculinity, the lack of autonomy and powerlessness he experiences in war paradoxically puts him in an analogous position to a woman (qtd. in Showalter 173). While Susan M. Squier regards Septimus's painful experience in army as a clash of sexual polarities that "links sexual oppression to militarism, male privilege to war" (94), I see Septimus's anorexia sheds light on a feminist debate on masculine identity. As the world is segregated by gender in *Mrs. Dalloway*, anorexia nervosa becomes Septimus's means of protest against the prescriptive gender identity. It accuses the military of its brutal discipline on the body and indicts the war-sprit that emasculates soldiers by making them at the mercy of the oppressive power of the war.

[25] In "Diagnosis and Treatment of Males with Eating Disorders," Arnold E. Anderson draws on Russell to name the threefold diagnostic criteria of anorexia nervosa: "the behavior of self-induced starvation; the psychopathological fear of becoming fat that is out of all proportion to reality; and a biologic abnormality in reproductive hormone functioning which could apply to both men and women" (133). To put it simply, the three criteria are disorderly eating habits, an emaciated physicality or weight loss, and sexual functioning.

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On the second level, Septimus's anorexia reflects Darwinian psychiatrists' mishandling.[26] Crying to kill himself, Septimus is sent to the doctors, who are fervent believers in proportion and conversion. Dr. Holmes, a man who is "[l]arge, fresh-colored, handsome," emphasizes that "health is largely a matter in our own control" (*MD* 101). Believing that the "real things" would sustain health,[27] Dr. Holms values the proportion rather than the pleasure in dining. Therefore, he would ask his wife for "another plate of porridge at breakfast" if he finds himself just half a pound below his average weight (*MD* 101). Sir William Bradshaw is likewise a worshipper of proportion. Sticking to his credo, "health is proportion" (*MD* 110), Sir William diagnoses Septimus's case as madness and prescribes a rest cure for Septimus of which the ultimate goal is to meet the "proportional" weight:

> … when a man comes into your room and says he is Christ (a common delusion), and has a message, as they mostly have, and threatens, as they often do, to kill himself, you invoke *proportion*; order rest in bed; rest in solitude; silence and rest; rest without friends, without books, without messages; six month's rest; until a man who *went in weighing seven stone six comes out weighing twelve*. (*MD* 110 emphasis added)

Sir William Bradshaw's rest cure harks back to earlier hospitalization for anorexics, which aims at weight gain even when such goal is achieved through force-feeding.[28]

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[26] Please refer to note 13.

[27] Believing that there is nothing wrong with Septimus, Dr. Holms prescribes Septimus a little bromide and tells him to "throw [him]self into outside interests [and] to take some hobby" (*MD* 101). Following Dr. Holms' prescriptions, Lucrezia therefore repeatedly points out things to attract Septimus and to make him withdraw his attention from himself onto the real things of the outer world.

[28] As one female anorexic patient who undergoes hospitalization treatment describes: "Loss of privileges, e.g. no clothes, no baths, no visitors unless I ate. Force feeding by the nursing staff—very forcefully and aggressively. Insulin injections. The worst treatment of all was ECT [electroconvulsive therapy]. My psychiatrist knew how much I hated this and so if I did not eat, and continued to lose

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While alienating patients is said to be an attempt to leave them in a more suitable environment for cure, it may be an excuse for segregation. As Sir William believes that the "unsocial impulses, bred more than anything by the lack of good blood, [should be] held in control," he must seclude Septimus for fear the disorder might "propagate" (*MD* 113). In light of Elaine Showalter, Sir William is a typical "Darwinian therapist," who not only implements asylum care and paternalistic therapy but redefines his role as "psychiatric police, patrolling the boundaries between sanity and madness and protecting society from dangerous infiltration by those of tainted stock" (18). Simply put, both doctors interpret health as a matter of control that one must learn to maintain not only for showing machismo but for the sake of the Empire: Dr. Holms warns Septimus not to talk nonsense to frighten his wife, while Bradshaw tells Septimus that "[n]obody lives for himself alone" (*MD* 104, 108). According to Jeremy Tambling, the novel involuntarily assents to the sense that "health is something relative and social" and that health is "an objective towards which the individual strives, the attainment, in fact, of complete 'proportion'" (63). Failing to recognize that health is a concept subjected to every person, both doctors impose dominant descriptions of health on the anorexic rather than adjust to his needs. Consequently, food and regimen prescribed by the psychiatrists become a machinery of normalization that torments Septimus.

On the third level, Septimus's anorexia indicts the brutality and the anesthesia of the social system. In fact, even though Septimus suffers from anorexia, he still thinks food as something reminiscent of happiness: "food [i]s pleasant; the sun hot" (*MD*

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weight I was threatened with further ECT" (MacSween 245).

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103). However, his zeal for life is destroyed by the horror of English civilization and shrunk by "the sordidity of the mouth and belly" (*MD* 98). In addition to military discipline and Darwinian therapies, the contemporary eating community is guilty of complicity in a crime against humanity. As Septimus cries: "[o]nce you fall […] human nature is on you. Holmes and Bradshaw are on you. They scour the desert. They fly screaming into the wilderness. The rack and the thumbscrew are applied. Human nature is remorseless" (*MD* 108). Whereas Holmes and Bradshaw are the executors of the proportional regimen, the public is the collaborators that conspire to sustain such a regimen. According to Trombley, human nature is "a concept which, for Septimus, means an uncompromising view of what constitutes 'normality,' and a firm commitment to the repression of 'otherness'" (98). Whereas Miss Kilman is despised for her corpulent body, Septimus bears the stigma of "unmanliness," "weak will," and "madness." As the society refuses to understand Septimus's trauma but judges his madness as a sign of cowardice, Septimus, as Showalter notes about male hysterics, is "silenced and immobilized and forced, like women, to express conflicts through the body" (171). Similar to the female anorexic, Septimus tries to gain control of his body, and not eating can be interpreted as his discipline over the body for a higher ideal—truth and beauty which human turns its back on.[29] However, unlike the female anorexic who renounces her appetite as an adaption to patriarchal oppression,

[29] In *Anorexic Bodies: A Feminist and Sociological Perspective on Anorexia Nervosa*, Morag MacSween lays out a variety of feminist explanation of anorexia. She cites Marilyn Lawrence, a feminist writer on anorexia, to explicate anorexia as a strategy of control. In light of Lawrence, as women are deprived of the power to control their life, eating and not-eating becomes a way for them to can gain a sense of mastery of their bodies. Whereas appearance, and to specific, a slim body, is central in women's acceptability, weight control becomes commonplace in women's live. As Lawrence notes, anorexia is a kind of "asceticism" through which women discipline their bodies and manage their diet in order to adjust to the patriarchal ideal of slenderness (qtd. in MacSween 66).

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Septimus negates his body in defiance of the loathsome human nature. In other words, whereas the female anorexic adjusts her body to the demands of the social body, Septimus disciplines his body, turning away from the social body. In reaction to English society's mishandlings, Septimus denies the food the society provides and stays aloof from the social body.

As Mark Anderson notes about the male anorexics in modernist texts, both anorexia and modernism can be seen as "strategies of self-denial and self-negation that seek to establish a primal unity uncontaminated by the 'filth' of the other: sexual differentiation, social hierarchy and power relations, temporality and 'history'" (37). In the same vein, Septimus's negation of body symbolizes cutting off the part that associates with and has been assimilated into the social body. He is like a hunger artist in pursuit of the food that is nowhere to be found in this world. Pointing out that a gender switch of anorexia has taken place in the modernist texts, both Mark Anderson and Leslie Heywood perceive that the male artist is characteristic of modern anorexic.[30] Drawing on Heywood, I argue that Septimus "stands apart from the common crowd" (61) in pursuit of idealism in defiance of the dominant discourse on gender and health. The prevalent sense of proportion to him is never the equivalent of health; however, he does not at one moment give up telling others his principle of health, which lies in understanding and communication. For him, "[c]ommunication is health; communication is happiness" (*MD* 103-04). Even when he commits suicide, he still tries to bring to light messages to the world— the act is defiance to the

[30] Mark Anderson contends that "it is not true that the anorexic is not an artist" (35). Leslie Heywood also indicates that "individualism of the modernist artist or artist figure set a paradigm for the anorexic, who wants beyond all things to be different, to stand out as superior" (61).

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Darwinian male control embodied in the proportional regimen, gender dichotomy, and even social hierarchy. As Glenny contends that "Septimus's distress bears obvious comparison to the anorexic woman's," I argue that Septimus's anorexia not only challenges the blatant sexism but criticizes the social system in the center of which lies myths of "normality," "sanity," and "morality."

Unable to be assimilated into mainstream society, Septimus finally commits suicide to reclaim his ownership of body against doctors' rectification and patriarchal confinement. Whereas the military and psychiatric institutions enforce ideal gender roles and proportional regimen on Septimus, his anorexia nervosa is an act of rebellion against the prevailing values. In his suicidal attempt, as Clarissa presumes, he "plunge[s] holding his treasure," preventing his body from being contaminated by a society that worships proportion (*MD* 202). The treasure refers to a variety of things Septimus holds dear, among which are his beliefs in health, life, and a fluid self that refuses to be dichotomized along gender border. As Karen DeMeester notes, "Septimus's psychological pain does not cause his suicide. It is caused by society's refusal to let him give meaning to that pain" (653). Seen from the society's stigmatizing stare, Septimus's anorexia remains a failure indicating his cowardice and inability to accommodate to the present sense of proportion. Yet, from the anorexic's point of view, it is through such bodily resistance that he is able to survive and maintain his principle of health. It is this attempt to remain intact from the poison of proportional regimen and of moral values that shows that Septimus's suicide is not an act of capitulation but resistance to patriarchal pressures. As Shelia MacLeod notes about some anorexics who "would rather die than stop saying" (xi), through his

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anorexic or dead body Septimus seeks to speak to the society which turns a deaf ear to him.

Proportion and Conversion—The Power Nexus in the Postwar London

In *Mrs. Dalloway*, while individuals adopt different eating politics reflecting disparate attitudes towards social order and gender norms, each of them is at the mercy of the proportional regimen underlying the power nexus of the postwar Britain. The Empire exploits the unfit bodies, nibbles away the conscience of the elite, and forcibly assimilates its citizens into patriarchal society by principles of proportion and conversion. Whereas "the fingers of European War [] smash[] a plaster cast of Ceres," who figures as the Greek goddess that provides food and nurture, Ceres' usurpers, goddess of Proportion and Conversion, curb people's diet and torment the unfit bodies (*MD* 95). To be specific, Proportion orders the unfit to regress to an infantile state of drinking milk in bed, while Proportion's sister, Conversion, "fastidious Goddess, loves blood better than brick, and feasts most subtly on the human will" (*MD* 111). Whereas Miss Kilman and Septimus are distressed by principles of proportion and conversion, the upper class learns to profit by conforming to them. "Sweet [i]s her smile, swift her submission" *(MD* 111), Mrs. Bradshaw has become the paradigmatic feminine ideal moulded by Proportion and Conversion. Mrs. Bradshaw used to catch salmon freely; now that she becomes the wife of a psychiatrist she feeds the professional classes in Harley Street eight or nine courses every Thursday (*MD* 111-12). "[Q]uick to minister to the craving which li[ghts] her husband's eyes so oilily for dominion, for power, she [is] cramped, squeezed, pared, pruned, dr[awn]

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back, [and] peeped through" (*MD* 112). As she internalizes the gender stereotypes, Lady Bradshaw, "with scarcely anything left to wish for," regrets nothing but her stoutness (*MD* 105). Consequently, the Bradshaw couple prospers themselves—the portrait of Lady Bradshaw in ostrich feathers is hung over the mantelpiece; Sir William Bradshaw's income is as much as twelve thousand a year (*MD* 112). However, the social impacts brought about by this fervent dedication to proportion are the deadlock between different social classes, the crystallization of unequal gender relations, and the regression to a time of despotism. As the model of proportion is designed to cater to the taste of the majority, it sacrifices the opinions of the minority and even forcefully eliminates dissenters by converting them. Hinting that health and order are subjected to alteration, *Mrs. Dalloway* represents the tyranny of the majority that imposes on the minority values of proportion in the name of justice. As the majority rejects to incorporate the "others" into its eating communities nor leaves the latter the freedom to be themselves, tragedies and eating distress are the inevitable outcomes of the worship in Proportion and Conversion.

While Allie Glenny contends that Woolf explores how "food may be used as a medium for self-definition within a patriarchal cultural framework" in *Mrs. Dalloway* (117), I maintain that the success in self-expression via food and eating belongs mostly to the upper class. In fact, the lowly "anomalous" others can only empower themselves on a metaphorical level as their eating disorders help them defy rather than subvert the prevalent system. Victimized by the tyranny in the name of "morality" and "righteousness", both Septimus Smith and Doris Kilman simply do not want to right people's wrongs in a similar manner. Eating disorders turn out to be milder

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rebellion and pseudo-solutions to their life problems. According to Patricia Moran, both of them "have troubled relationship to food; for both, food functions as a symbolic expression of distress about living within the confines of the body" (78-79). At times when their eating disorders are manifest, both fail to have their bodies and spirits fluidly united: Miss Kilman experiences a body/mind separation in her alternate attempts of compulsive eating and dieting, whereas Septimus negates his body for a state of being which is not possible in this world. As both seek to be released from the bodily confinement, the proportional regimen restricts gendered embodiments and constrains the transgressing souls. Drawing on Grosz's dictum that "[t]here is no "natural" norm; there are only cultural forms of body, which do or do not conform to social norms" (*Volatile Bodies* 143), I assert that through their eating disorders and bodies beyond the gender dichotomy, both Miss Kilman and Septimus question and, to some extent, intervene in the dominant discourse on genders, proportion, and disordered bodies from the margin.

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Chapter Two

To Eat or Not to Eat:

Oral Aggression and Anorexia Nervosa in *The Edible Woman*

> Who is entitled to do what to whom, who profits by it, and who therefore *eats* what.
>
> Margaret Atwood, *Second Words*[31]

The Edible Woman, the first published novel of Margaret Atwood, delineates the power politics between the sexes in the consumer society of the fifties and the sixties Canada. While the title foregrounds the edibility of women, the fictional world pivots on the eating-or-being-eaten dynamics, in which nobody is immune from being consumed by one another. While food consumption—in occasions of breakfast, office tea breaks, dinner, and parties—structures the plot, metaphorical eating—in which one becomes another's food—occurs as a leitmotif in the cannibalistic love relationship. With the title suggestive of symbolic cannibalism,[32] Atwood's definition of power is reminiscent of the aggressiveness of orality—"who is entitled to do what to whom, who profits by it, and who therefore eats what" (*SW* 394). Intriguingly, in *The Edible Woman*, consuming politics manifests not only one's predatory appetite but one's defense against aggression. As the authoritative power of patriarchy structures a food chain of which women are usually at the bottom to be consumed,

[31] Margaret Atwood, "Amnesty International: An Address," *Second Words* (Boston: Beacon P, 1984) 394.

[32] As Atwood describes in the reprint, the title derived from her interests in the edible anthropomorphic objects—sugar brides and grooms—on the wedding cakes. At a confectioner's display window, she had been "speculating for some time about symbolic cannibalism" (*EW* Introduction).

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The Edible Woman portrays women's predicaments in the 1950s and 1960s and explores their empowerment through issues of anorexia nervosa and symbolic cannibalism. This chapter looks into how women's eating and not eating convey and challenge the contemporary concepts of gender roles, bodily forms, and heterosexual love relationship.

Eating Metaphors in the Marriage Game

The latest cover of *The Edible Woman* presents a bride squatting, holding one hand beside her face, glancing at something or somewhere uncertain. "Marriage à-la-mode," as the rear cover reads, alludes to a series of paintings satirizing the disastrous results of an ill-considered marriage for money by the 18th century artist William Hogarth, hinting at the consumer-oriented marriage game in the novel. *The Edible Woman* portrays the role-engulfment in the heterosexual relationship and the commodification in the marriage market in which women are usually more vulnerable than men during the fifties and sixties. As Betty Friedan remarks, "If a woman had a problem in the 1950s and 1960s, she knew that something must be wrong with her marriage or herself" (19). While the main plot features Marian's engagement followed by her eating disorders, the marriage theme reflects wider issues of social confinement to gender roles and the economy of desire. Characters' anxiety, acquiescence to, and defiance against marriage reflect a deep-seated fear of engulfment in gender relations. While some tie the knot and submit to the role requirements, others mock at the idea of marriage and go to extremes, still others remain uncertain whether there is an alternative to marriage so as to secure one's

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economic and social status. Yet, more still treat it at face value and eagerly participate in the marriage game. This section probes into gender and eating politics by analyzing three couples—the married Joe and Clara Bates, the celibatarian Ainsley Twece and the gamophobic Leonard Shank, and the bride-and-groom-to-be, Marian MacAlpin and Peter Wollander. Drawing on Betty Friedan's notion of feminine mystique and Luce Irigaray's critique of exchange of women, this section deals with both sexes' predatory appetite in the marriage market.

The Edible Woman uncovers women's predicament in the fifties and sixties when their social status is still defined by their relation to men. While Atwood asserts that the novel is never a product of the movement of the North American postwar feminism (Introduction), many of her delineations parallel that of *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) by the second wave predecessor, Betty Friedan. In *The Edible Woman*, whether women appear as "men's wife, sex object, mother, [or] housewife," they, like what Friedan notes, are "never as persons defining themselves by their own actions in society" (xv). As I observe, the indescribable eating upsets and inertia Clara suffers during her pregnancy seem to be a pathological manifestation hinting at Friedan's argument on "the problem that has no name," which refers to an unnamable mixed sense of emptiness, unhappiness, and incompleteness housewives feel in their marital life.[33] At the dinner in a domestic mess with three-year-old Arthur shitting around and baby Elaine peeing on Ainsley's dress, Marian perceives how marital life consumes her high school friend Clara, who used to be "everyone's ideal of

[33] As the "problem that has no name" burst in 1960 and the unhappiness of the American housewife was suddenly being reported pervasively, Friedan finds a growing body of evidence that has not been reported publicly. According to her, it is the evidence that throws into question "the standards of feminine normality, feminine adjustment, feminine fulfillment, and feminine maturity by which most women are still trying to live" (31).

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translucent perfume-advertisement femininity" (*EW* 36). To begin with, Clara drops out of college in order to get married. Without being prepared to become a mother, Clara greets her first pregnancy with "astonishment," her second with "dismay," and now during her third, she has "subsided into a grim but inert fatalism" (*EW* 36). Her children to her are like "barnacles encrusting a ship," "limpets clinging to a rock," (*EW* 36) and even "the little bugger" (*EW* 128) that drowns her in the dirt of domestic life.[34] The pregnant Clara seems unable to play her role as a hostess as she lies languidly like "a strange vegetable growth" with her bulging abdomen like "a boa-constrictor that has swallowed a watermelon" (*EW* 32, 31). According to Friedan, while the housework does not tax housewives' capacity, the real problem lying behind "the problem that has no name" is "boredom," or a lack of self-actualization in life other than playing the role of a housewife (30). Showing signs of what Friedan calls "house fatigue" (30), Clara is gradually isolated. Even though Marian used to be a rescuer of Clara, later she declines the Bates' dinner invitations while imagining Clara's belly dragged down into "the gigantic pumpkin-like growth" (*EW* 114). [35]

Whereas scholars such as Sarah Sceats, Tracy Brain, and Susanne Skubal note Marian's aversion to Clara's maternal body,[36] I maintain that it is the role-engulfment and the patriarchal imposition on women that cast warnings to Marian. As Skubal

[34] Interestingly, Atwood's barnacle imagery in fact coincides with the phrase William Banting, the famous nineteenth-century proponents of diet, used to describe fatness in *Letter on Corpulence* (1863): fat is "like the parasite of *barnacles on a ship* if it did not destroy the structure, it obstructed its far comfortable progress in the path of life" (9).

[35] Recognizing that Clara might call for rescue, Marian cannot but act as "only a witness, or perhaps a kind of blotter [as her] mere physical presence absorbing a little of the boredom" (*EW* 31). As Atwood contends that she had read Betty Friedan behind locked door around the time of composition (Introduction *EW*), the word "boredom" coincides with Friedan's findings about what most housewives confront with in their domestic life.

[36] It is not until Clara's delivery with her belly deflated to her normal size that Marian is able to talk with her freely (*EW* 115).

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contends, the dinner to the Bates launches Marian into her anorexic trajectory (84). To be specific, it is the housewife's split self seen in Clara's life—"something cut off from her, set apart, something she could only gaze at through a window" (*EW* 129)—that underlies Marian's negation of marriage and the edibles. In fact, Joe's description of Clara's plight testifies to Friedan's observation of women's identity crisis and a lack of private self: "[Clara's] feminine role and her core are really in opposition, her feminine role demands passivity from her …" (*EW* 235). However, unlike Friedan, who suggests feminine fulfillments other than being wives and mothers, Joe, as a professor in philosophy, concludes that "[m]aybe women shouldn't be allowed to go to university at all" (*EW* 236). Although Joe is an exception to machismo as he takes over cooking, washing, and caretaking of children when necessary, his thought about "all unmarried girls as easily victimized and needing protection" implies his disapproval of feminine autonomy (*EW* 35). Under the command of Joe, Clara seems to have internalized the gender stereotypes as she allows herself to lie there and to be "treated as a thing" (*EW* 38). Although Ainsley indignantly criticizes Clara for "draining all Joe's energy" (*EW* 38), Clara seems to have no alternative but to accept Joe's arrangement and dissuasion from what she wants to do with her own life. Apparently, at the core of the marriage is gender-role engulfment, in which women seem to be the victims *par excellence*.

In stark contrast to Clara is Ainsley, whose predatory appetite and pretentious femininity trump the girl seducer, Len. Claiming that every "woman should have at least one baby" as it "fulfills [her] deepest femininity," Ainsley embarks on her strategic sperm hunt at Marian's bar reunion with her friend (*EW* 40-41). As a

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decidedly anti-marriage woman, Ainsley targets at Leonard, Marian's college classmate, who is a "self-consciously-lecherous-skirt-chaser" talking as though everyone is out for nothing "but sex and money" (*EW* 87). Keeping her "little-girls-should-be-seen-and-not-heard act" the whole night at Len and Marian's bar reunion (*EW* 75), Ainsley schemes her plot in a matter-of-fact manner. The relationship between Ainsley and Len is based on a utilitarian exchange: unknowingly, Len serves as Ainsley's counterpart in baby making, and Ainsley becomes Len's ideal sexual companion. Both treat the other as prey to be hunted: Ainsley's sperm hunt is, according to Marian, like "bird-liming" and "spearing fish by lantern" (*EW* 70); on the other hand, Len has been "angling" the innocent Ainsley like a "giant squid" (*EW* 84).[37] The pursuit of love is not only compared to a genetic hunt but a battle between the sexes. While Ainsley schemes a two-month-long siege in reserved patience, Len takes the initiative to ask her to lunch and dinner, foreign films, and finally even to his apartment once (*EW* 119).[38] When Ainsley notes that the time is ripe, she arranges her baby-making to be right after dinner on the excuse to invite Len to her lodging for coffee (*EW* 120). Lying that she cannot drink, she tricks Len down with a bottle of scotch. Coincidentally, eating/drinking occasions are manipulated by both women and men to consume the other sex. Taunting Marian as a "prude" following traditional

[37] Ainsley confides in Marian how she manipulates and plots the trap at the end of the bar reunion: "I made him call a taxi. I got home just before the storm broke and had a cigarette and a double scotch and went straight to bed; god, I was absolutely exhausted. Just sitting still like that takes a lot out of you, and then after you'd gone I didn't know how I was going to get away. It was like escaping from a *giant squid*, but I did it, mostly by acting dumb and scared. That's very necessary at this stage, you know" (*EW* 83-84 italics mine).

[38] Lexicons of battle are used by Atwood to depict Ainsley and Len's romance: "Things hadn't gone according to schedule. It appeared that Ainsley had *overshot* the mark. At the first encounter she had made herself into an image of such pink-gingham purity that Len had decided, after her *strategic* repulse of him that evening, that she would require an extra-long and careful *siege*. Anything too abrupt, too muscular, would frighten her away; she would have to be trapped with gentleness and caution" (*EW* 119 emphasis added).

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path of marriage (*EW* 42), Ainsley successfully makes use of her pretentious femininity to play as "a pitcher-plant in a swamp with its hollow bulbous leaves half-filled with water, waiting for some insect to be attracted, drowned, and digested" (*EW* 75). Not until Len learns that he has been "used" does he realize it is silly to think Ainsley sweet and innocent (*EW* 159). The confrontation between Len and Ainsley ends up with Len retreating along the stairwell in front of other female tenants at Ainsley and Marian's apartment, implying a power reversal in the patriarchal society. Cursing the "predatory" appetite of women, Len wrenches his sleeve out of Ainsley's clutch and escapes with screams: "You'll never get me" (*EW* 215). [39] From her plot of baby-making to her request of a father-image for her expected baby, Ainsley reverses the stereotype of women as victims under the oppression of men, gaining the upper hand in her pseudo love relationship with Len.

While the pursuit of love is compared to a battle between the sexes, the dining table becomes the battlefield for one to outwit the other. The predation between the sexes is more blatant in the restaurant where eating and drinking men and women take turns baring their teeth to bite. It is best illustrated in Marian's observation of one of her blonde colleagues from the "three office virgins":

> Lucy's long-lashed gaze was brushing over the other lunchers – stolid *breadfaced* businessmen most of them, gobbling their food and swilling a few drinks to get the interruption of lunch over …. Lucy had

[39] This scene takes place some time after Len learns Ainsley's pregnancy. Negating the father's role in family in the first place, Ainsley nevertheless changes her mind and requests Len to marry her for fear that her future kid would become a pervert without a father image. Being a misogynist, Len accuses the predatory women as a whole as he bursts out in front of all female tenants, who come out to witness his fight with Ainsley: "All you clawed scaly bloody predatory whoring fucking bitches can do straight to hell! All of you" (*EW* 215)! The final scene of the confrontation ends with Len wrenching his sleeve out of Ainsley's clutch, charging down the stairs and screaming "You'll never get me" (*EW* 215)!

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> mauve-eye-shadow to match her dress, and lipstick with a pale mauve tinge. She was, as always, elegant. She had been lunching out expensively more and more in the last two months, (though Marian wondered how she could afford it), trailing herself like a *many-plumed fish-lure* with glass beads and three *spinners* and seventeen *hooks* through the likely-looking places, good restaurant and cocktail bars with their lush weed-beds of potted philodendrons, where the right kind of men might be expected to be lurking, *ravenous as pike*, though more martially inclined. But those men, the right kind, weren't *biting*, or had left for other depths, or were *snapping* at a different sort of *bait* – some inconspicuous brown-plastic minnow or tarnished simple brass spoon, or something with even more feathers and hooks than Lucy could manage. And in this restaurant, and similar ones, it was in vain that Lucy displayed her *delicious dress* and *confectionery eyes* to the tubfulls of pudgy guppies who had no time for mauve. (*EW* 111-12)

As men and women are depicted as food with bread face and confectionary eyes, their ultimate fate is to be consumed by the other sex. In the restaurant, single women dress up for possible pursuers at the next table, camouflaging as bait in order to hook. Although men usually play the active role to bite, they are likely to get trapped as Len ends up with. However, the oral aggression from the male side seems rather fatal. Although women consciously sugarcoat and objectify themselves to raise men's appetite, they are nevertheless passive and likely to be played down by the male gaze.

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Moreover, as men are like ravenous pike that swills and snaps, the ferocity and acuteness would be what spinners and hooks can scarcely compete with.

The dynamics within gender relationship signifies the power relations between the predator and the prey, the consumer and the consumed. As Sheckels notes that "the negative influence of consumer-oriented society extends beyond the economic realm to the social one" (17). The marriage game is like a purchase with all men and women on the market. Unlike Sheckels and many others who put emphasis on female victims, I would like to probe into both sexes' victimhood by appropriating Luce Irigaray's "Women on the Market."

Similar to Friedan's notion of feminine mystique that women are always defined in sexual relation to men (xv), Irigaray posits that the female body is abstracted by the proper name—the name of father—as a commodity between male exchangers:

> It remains the case that the establishment of relationships cannot be accomplished by the commodities themselves, but depends upon the operation of two *exchangers*. The exchange value of two signs, two *commodities*, *two women*, is a representation of the *needs/desires of consumer-exchanger subjects*: in no way is it the 'property' of the signs/articles/women themselves. (*This Sex* 180 emphasis added)

In Irigarays' view, woman as a commodity is defined by a relative or exchangeable value external to her. This makes her comparable to another woman; in other words, another commodity. Obviously, woman, as a property produced and exchanged by men, is a projection of men's need and desires. She does not and cannot assert herself.

Irigaray's critique of exchange of women as the "exclusive valorization of men's

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needs/desires" (*This Sex* 171) provides us with a lens to examine and problematize eating and gender politics in *The Edible Woman*. Her critical view on the mode of semblance functioning in patriarchal society illuminates Marian's garish dressing catering to Peter's demands and social myths about femininity. For Peter's bachelor's party, Marian duly buys a red dress unlike her and goes to the hairdresser's for the caked-like, callgirl-typed hairstyle (*EW* 208-210). According to Laura Mulvey in "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," a woman as a signifier for the male other is only the image on which man's fantasies and obsessions are imposed. Upon seeing Marian's overdone face decorated with the "egyptian-lidden" eyes and accompanied by the dramatic earrings (*EW* 222), Peter not only likes it but seems to suggest that "it would be most pleasant if she could arrange to look like that all the time" (*EW* 228). As a woman submits her body to such specularization, whether to or not to wear a girdle is elevated to a moral issue (*EW* 221), and it becomes a criterion of success whether a woman can develop her bust as the magazine cover suggests (*EW* 210).[40] Already the erotic object for the male speculator, a woman's body abstracted in the form of commodity is taken away her coarse materiality of substance and becomes "a mirror of value of and for men" (Irigaray, *This Sex* 177). Another time, in Peter's probing gaze like that of "a doctor's examination" (*EW* 149), Marian recognizes Peter is "sizing her up as he would a new camera, trying to find the central complex of wheels and tiny mechanisms" (*EW* 150). In Peter's eyes, Marian's object-like status in exchange needs to be verified and evaluated. Therefore, he measures Marian

[40] Mulvey regards cinema as a representation system posing questions about how the unconscious structures ways of seeing and pleasure in looking (433). In the same vein, images shown in the ad reflect and reinforce the way individual body should look like. In *Fasting Girls: The History of Anorexia Nervosa*, Joan Jacobs Brumberg regards advertising as a particular means among the modern visual media (television, films, video, magazines) to fuel the preoccupation with female thinness (35).

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against a third term, treating her body as that of a camera, trying to find "the possible weak points, the kind of future performance to be expected" (*EW* 150). All in all, he wants to know "what ma[kes] her tick" (*EW* 150). As Ainsley repeatedly warns Marian that Peter is "monopolizing" her (*EW* 77), Marian gradually finds Peter treating her as a "stage-prop," showing her off in front of his superiors and lawyer friends at cocktail parties, dinners, lunches (*EW* 71, 176). Possibly, for Peter, Marian is less a lover than a collection, which he is eager to exhibit among his cameras and guns.

Whereas Irigaray contends that the phallic economy requires that "women lend themselves to alienation in consumption, and to exchange in which they do not participate" (*This Sex* 172), it seems to me that *The Edible Woman* demonstrates both sexes' exchangeability. Many have noted women's self-objectification to adjust to the male gaze; however, men as well as women are likely to be commercialized, falling prey to the exploitation in the marriage market and consumerism. While Peter treats Marian like a possession, Marian, on the other hand, feels a "sense of proud ownership […] [when] being with him" for Ainsley once comments that he is "nicely packaged" (*EW* 146). After Peter's proposal, Marian even perceives Peter as the "object" belonging to her, feeling "the stirring of the proprietary instinct" (*EW* 90). While Len hunts for girls, he gets trapped in Ainsley's sperm hunt and is treated as a "specimen" (*EW* 85). In the visual-oriented culture, men are also objectified by values of the symbolic and imaginary that are imposed upon women. Without really knowing how Peter is, Clara comments: "Well he *looks* awfully nice" (*EW* 131 original italics). Sharing the office telephone line with Marian, Lucy, who seems to think highly of

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Peter, suggests the connection between a good man and outward attractiveness as she compliments on Peter's appearance: "You're even handsomer than you sound on the phone" (*EW* 238). Moreover, to appropriate Irigaray's notion of woman's body as a commodity abstracted in the natural form and a value form, I argue that when a man is divided into a natural body and a socially valued, exchangeable body, his ability to accumulate wealth is valorized. Seen in this light, Peter seems to be "a good deal to smart-shopping Marian" as "he has the ambition that will lead him to a lucrative career as a lawyer" (Sheckels 18). In the same vein, Len is a fair bargain for Ainsley after she surveys his family history. Moreover, since Len works at television, she believes that some artistic heredity would benefit her baby (*EW* 85). Seemingly, in the fictional world, women are not following Irigaray's expectation with their hands free from this exchange manipulation but reproducing and colluding with the phallocratic models.[41]

On the other hand, although women are now equally playing the role of subjects of exchange in the marriage market, they seem unable to free themselves from their object-like status as they accept the law of father and ceaselessly give in to demands of the gaze in the patriarchal culture. So long as a woman remains the object of exchange, "[i]t is only her measurement against a third term that remains external to her, and that makes it possible to compare her with another woman, that permits her

[41] Irigaray, at the end of "Women on the Market," presumes the situation when women become exchangers and hopes that under such circumstances women are able to establish a subject-subject-relationship with men and women. As she writes: "For, without the exploitation of women, what would become of the social order? What modifications would it undergo if women left behind their condition as commodities—subject to be produced, consumer, valorized, circulate, and so on, by men alone—and took part in elaborating and carrying out exchanges? *Not by reproducing, by copying, the 'phallocratic' models that have the force of law today, but by socializing in a different way the relation to nature, matter, the body, language, and desire*" (191 emphasis added).

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to have a relation to another commodity in terms of an equivalence that remains foreign to both" (Irigaray *This Sex* 176). Under such rule of exchange, when a woman is perceived by men as well as herself as a commodity to be compared with another woman to affirm her value, she is likely to develop antagonistic relationships with other women. The three office virgins' jealousy toward one another at Peter's party attests to this commodity rivalry. As each expects a "version" of Peter to walk through and drop to one knee and propose, the three virgins are annoyed to see one another on the spot (*EW* 233). Another time, Marian feels jealous of the silver-lidded Lucy, who exerts the last-ditch effort to flirt with Peter before he is officially "off the [marriage] market" (*EW* 238). Waiting to be picked by the exchangers, women hardly give up egocentric thoughts, not to mention forming a harmonious relation with one another. Learning Marian's engagement to Peter, Lucy drops her fork and gasps "No!" and hypocritically adds "how wonderful" (*EW* 113). Likewise, noting Ainsley's immoral and cold-blooded plot, Marian gives up stopping Ainsley or warning Len for fear that Ainsley might carry out counterattacks. At some moments, women start to look at one another as commodities as well. In Marian's eyes, Ainsley's "latest version" is like the pink and white "doll" in the stores at Christmas-time, with washable "rubber-smooth skin" and "glassy eyes" and "gleaming artificial hair" (*EW* 68).[42] With her hair settled for Peter's party, Marian finds several women with

[42] Another time Ainsley seems to be objectified as a mermaid to be viewed and admired through Marian's somewhat masculinized gaze: "Clear sunshine and fresh air were shimmering in through the open kitchen window. Ainsley was up before me. She was leaning forward, concentrating on something that was spread out in front of her, her leg drawn up and tucked under her on the chair, her hair cascading over her shoulders. From the back she looked like a mermaid perched on a rock: a mermaid in a grubby green terry-cloth robe. Around her on a table-top pebble with crumbs lay the remnants of her—a limp starfish of a banana peel, some bits of shell, and brown crusts of toast beached here and there, random as driftwood" (*EW* 83).

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shopping-bags turning and "glanc[ing] at her in an appraising way, summing her up" (*EW* 211). Consequently, as most women internalize and collude with patriarchal valorization of semblance to judge one another, they can hardly demonstrate solidarity against the prevalent sexual economy that confines one's body and appearance to the desire of others.

Women cannot stop seeing herself as well as other women as commodities in the rivalry for men; on the other hand, men have established masculine hom(m)o-sexuality.[43] The comradeship is revealed in bachelors' hostility towards marriage and in their collective will to consolidate the patriarchal law. Before Peter's proposal, he and his friend Trigger used to be the sole reflection for each other on their bachelor drinking sessions, "clutch[ing] each other like drowning men" (*EW* 27). It is noteworthy that at the outset it is Peter that is uncertain and hostile to marriage. Not until he knows that Marian is not like "the designing siren who has carried off Trigger" does Peter proceed with his relationship with her (*EW* 27). Whereas most critics believe that Peter's proposal to Marian is prompted by social forces, I speculate that it is Trigger's marriage and the contingent collapse of mirror image of Trigger that force Peter to face his need to secure a wife. According to Irigaray, "heterosexuality has been up to now just an alibi for the smooth workings of man's relations with himself, of relations among men" (*This Sex* 172). In this light, a "sociocultural endogamy" underlies the heterosexual relationship, which, on the one hand, secures men's subject-to-subject relationship with other men, and on the other,

[43] According to Irigaray, the traffic of women consolidates the masculine hom(m)o-sexuality and precludes women from subjective relationship with men and even with women. Irigaray asserts: "The use of and traffic in women subtend and uphold the reign of masculine hom(m)o-sexuality, even while they maintain that hom(m)o-sexuality in speculations, mirror games, identifications, and more or less rivalrous appropriations, which defer its real practice" (*This Sex* 172).

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enables men to sustain a superior position to women as exchangers vis-à-vis commodities (ibid.). As Peter seems unable to name a convincing reason for the proposal, it is likely that he takes up his social responsibility to get married so to strengthen the prevalent sexual economy. Other examples of men's comradeship are found in Peter and Len's friendship based on shared interests and in their cooperation in catching Marian, who suddenly takes flight from the sidewalk. Even though Peter has never met Len before, their similar hobbies of hunting and photo-taking enable the two to discuss over hunting a female hare and to exchange information about cameras and lenses during Len and Marian's reunion. Excluded from the bond between Peter and Len and feeling Peter's voice becoming abnormally louder, faster, and remote from her, Marian runs away yet ends up with Peter chasing her in a car and Len galloping behind her. On the other hand, being the only female companion to Marian, Ainsley not only remains detached from Marian but bounces off in the direction Peter has taken. Later, she even criticizes Marian for "behaving like a real idiot" (*EW* 84). To sum up, in this novel, although women might rewrite their permanent state as commodities, they can hardly overcome the deep-seated patriarchal values to disrupt men's hom(m)o-sexuality. Even though some women stop playing the passive role and become exchangers in the marriage market, most of them are easily coopted by patriarchal values. Now, as men as well as women are equally on the marriage market, men still gain the upper hand in the game as they preserve the tradition of hom(m)o-sexual relations in the name of heterosexual marriage.

In the patriarchal society, the economy of marriage exchange is still

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male-dominant. As Irigaray maintains, "[t]he circulation of women among men is what establishes the operations of society, at least of patriarchal society" (*This Sex* 184). In the marriage market where the dominant value is still phallocentric, even though power reversal is possible, the unequal footing on which the sexes stand undermines women's agency. Moreover, although women might become exchangers in the marriage market, they seem unable to avoid patriarchal exploitation. While Sheckels contends that in *The Edible Woman* what "replaces love power in the social realm […] is exchange power" (17),[44] I argue that the social relationships are concealed in commodity fetishism. While love is only the packaging, the exchange value of the lover is what really counts. In a consumer-oriented marriage market, we should ask, can anyone refuse consuming and being consumed? Elaborating Irigaray's postulate of replacing the phallocentric economics with systems of sexual difference, Elizabeth Grosz not only suspects its practicability but questions: "In what ways can sexually different beings share and produce, give and take? Is giving/taking without loss possible" (*Sexual Subversions* 149)? In other words, can women and men reach a compromise without condemning one another to the position of inferiority? More basically, as everyone is involved if not willingly in the game, how can one become aware of the engulfing nature of love and marriage market and react to it?

According to Foucault: "one is always 'inside' power, there is no 'escaping' it" (*The History of Sexuality* 95). Yet, from another angle, "[w]here there is power, there

[44] Sheckels adopts the economist Kenneth Boulding's way to categorize power. According to Boulding's collocation of the triad models (threat power, exchange power, and love power in a triad; and destructive power, productive power, and integrative power in another triad) with the three realms (the political, the economic, and the social realms), originally in the social realm, "love power dominates over threat and exchange, and therefore, integrative behavior outweighs destructive and productive" (Sheckels 4).

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is resistance" (ibid.). Inside this machinery of power, Marian's eating politics—to eat, or not to eat—reveals her resistance to the marriage game in different manners. Yet, does her act change the market at all? And, as she is made a globular pastry ready to be consumed, does her eating politics enable her to avoid being commercialized and cannibalized after all?

Reconsidering Marian's Eating Disorder: Anorexia Nervosa as Complicity and Resistance

Unconsciously, Marian shows her anxiety about getting married through not eating. Failing to listen to her own voice, Marian suffers from eating disorder, which in many aspects parallels the symptoms of anorexia nervosa. In light of Luce Irigaray's interpretation of anorexia, the starving body as a discourse empowers Marian to assert her repressed desire through mimicry of patriarchal ideals of femininity. However, noting Marian's struggle between incorporating or rejecting socially constructed femininity and her split between bodily desire and discipline, I argue that such double bind reveals her compliance with and resistance to cultural norms. While many have noted that intake—to eat or not to eat—becomes a means of expression, I further examine how the meaning of food transforms—from substantial need to the language of desire—and how this transformation challenges our understanding of order, normality, and normalization in the patriarchal society. Drawing on Susan Bordo's as well as Mary Douglas' and Michel Foucault's notions of a "useful" body, I contend the anorectic body epitomizes the psychopathological social body.

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Marian's anorexia nervosa is far from being an inscrutably haphazard fit; instead, her socially adapted body, like that of a hysteric, "*speaks* in the mode of a paralyzed gestural faculty, of an impossible and also a forbidden speech" (Irigaray, *This Sex* 136). Len's joke of Marian as "a hysterical type" (*EW* 74) implies what Irigaray understands about anorexia nervosa. As a modern expression of hysteria, anorexia nervosa "is not the result of a diet that has gone out of control […]. Rather, "it is a defiant taking-to-extremes of these ideals" (Grosz, *Sexual Subversions* 136). Prior to her inability to eat, Marian is unable to control her body as she unconsciously sheds tears in the bar and unintentionally runs away from Peter's escort.[45] As Marian's body gradually refuses meat, eggs, vegetables, and finally the processed food, her development of anorexia has undergone a period of latency and becomes manifest as her body can no longer endure the discipline imposed upon her. Through the anorexic bodily textuality, Marian demonstrates *l'ecriture feminine* or "writing of the body." As Hélène Cixous points out, "[b]y writing her self, woman will return to the body which has been more than confiscated from her" (419). Appropriating Cixous's contention, I argue that in an act of displacement Marian's anorexic body has become a medium that speaks up for what her speech fails to express. In light of Irigaray, Marian's symptoms become a means of expression that even "in her paralysis, the

[45] It is important to note that Marian seems unconscious and afraid of her own body, which cannot act under her mind's control. As Marian recounts: "After a while I noticed with mild curiosity that a drop of something wet had materialized on the table near my hand. […] I realized with horror that it was a tear. I must be crying then! Something inside me started to dash about in dithering mazes of panic, as though I had swallowed a tadpole. I was going to break down and make a scene, and I couldn't" (*EW* 70). Deciding to move to Len's place for another drink, Marian conversely runs away from Peter and Len without intention. As she recollects: "After the first minute I was surprised to find my feet moving, wondering how they had begun" (*EW* 72). However, in reminiscence of these involuntary actions, Marian says to herself: "I see that my actions were really more sensible than I thought at the time. It was my subconscious getting ahead of my conscious self, and the subconscious has its own logic" (*EW* 101).

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hysteric exhibits a potential for gestures and desires…. [It is a] movement of revolt and refusal" ("Women-Mothers" 47). As Marian leads a smooth life, fulfilling her university education, seizing a lucrative husband, there seems no one to blame and no reasons for her body to lose control. However, to say that disciplinary power comes from nowhere is another way to imply that it is indeed everywhere. Drawing on Foucault's notion of power nexus, I argue that Marian's anorexia nervosa addresses threefold discontent with role-engulfment, culturally constructed femininity, and overall the cultural norms and values that dominate the production-consumption cycle.

On the first level, the trigger of anorexia nervosa is the approaching wedding and the dominant groom-to-be. As the rear cover of the novel reads: marriage à-la-mode is what Marian literally cannot stomach. It seems naïve of Marian to perceive her marriage as a *deus ex machina* to save herself from the devouring economic realm where women are not allowed to have well-paid jobs. As Atwood points out, "the person who embodies the restrictive forces of society is in fact the person Marian gets engaged to" (*Conversation* 12). Prior to their engagement, Peter requests housewifery skills by complaining petulantly to Marian: "Why can't you ever *cook* anything" (*EW* 63)? Believing that "[w]omen are so much better at arranging things on plates," Peter demands that Marian help him get things done before his party begins (*EW* 227). When it comes to parenting, Peter disapproves of Marian's liberal treatment by saying: "Darling, you don't understand these things" (*EW* 147). Uttering "yum yum" as an expression of appreciation, Peter attempts to influence Marian's taste as he comments "I love you especially in that red dress," indicating that it would be better if she could

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dress like that all the time (*EW* 227, 231). As Irigaray warns women that men "decide our desire, our pathology, our needs, our rights, our duties ("Women-Mothers" 48), Marian chooses not to admit Peter's aggressiveness and superiority over her but becomes enmeshed in his dictation.[46] Finding the quality of Peter's voice changing, Marian warns herself of temperance, believing that it is the effects of alcohol (*EW* 69). Resenting Peter for telling her that she has led a sheltered life, Marian decides to think that Peter is not himself on that day (*EW* 149). In a nutshell, Marian's false image of Peter as "a rescuer from chaos, a provider of stability" (*EW* 89) bespeaks her dependence on him and her ignorance of her own voice.

From the beginning, Marian has been a "good girl" typical of an anorectic (Chernin 66, Brumberg 31).[47] Finding the bathtub like a coffin, she does not object to making love with Peter in it even though her preference is in bed (*EW* 60). Feeling homeless and dispossessed as Ainsley indicates that she and Len might end up having sex in Marian's room, Marian fails to decline it but leaves for a night movie (*EW* 121). In Seymour Surveys, Marian takes additional work and gives way to the company in signing the Pension Plan right after four months of employment (*EW* 20). According to Kim Chernin, Marian is alienated from her emotional life as well as from her body (67). Unable to assert herself, Marian cannot but direct her anger onto her own body:

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[46] According to Brumberg, in the 1980s, people started to attend to values and patterns of interaction within anorexic families. Mental professionals have come to describe the anorexic as "enmeshed," which means "the normal process of individuation [being] blocked by the complex psychological needs of the girl, her parents, even her siblings" (Brumberg 31). Even though Marian's family is relegated to an non-existent role in the novel, Atwood sees Peter as "the person who embodies the restrictive forces of society"(*Conversation* 12) Drawing on Atwood, Elspeth Cameron argues that Peter represents the restrictive parental forces, and therefore he argues that "enmeshment does occur in the relationship between Marian and Peter" (48).

[47] While Kim Chernin contends that Marian "is the typical 'good' girl of our time" (66), Brumberg writes: "The anorexic is then, a 'good girl' who alternates between compliance and rebellion. In the beginning, at least her refusal to eat is a form of overcontrol that is subtly hostile and rebellious in its nature" (31).

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through not eating, her anorectic body poses protest.[48]

On the second level, Marian's anorexia shows her discontent with patriarchal confinement to female roles. During Marian's anorexic period, she is greatly beset by patriarchal projection of the female body, which further hints at her gender-role crisis. To be specific, Marian's anorexic repulsion of female, aging, and the pregnant body is a displacement of her failure in gender-role development.[49] The intertext about the graduate Fish's research on *Alice in Wonderland* mirrors Marian's predicament. As Alice is unable to accept any of the sexual roles presented before her—neither the maternal nor the dominating role of Queen, Fish notes that the book features sexual-identity crisis.[50] Whereas many compare Marian to Alice based on their similar encounters and the likewise metamorphoses of the body, what is at stake is the two's shared difficulties in finding a role model. As both are in search of their identity as a woman, Alice ends up reaching nowhere while Marian turns the outward pressure

[48] "As Garfinkel and Garner explains of some anorexics, anger and aggression become 'displaced' onto food" (qtd. Cameron 58).

[49] Since anorexia is a multifaceted disease, it would be simplistic to ascribe Marian's distortion of female body to either cause or effect of anorexia. However, her unease about the female body seems associated with her difficulties in role development and the social burden on the feminine body. Psychoanalysts regard maldevelopment of sexuality as the cause of anorexia nervosa. According to Freud, "[t]he famous anorexia nervosa of young girls seems to me (on careful observation) to be a melancholia where sexuality is undeveloped" (*SE I* 200). As Freud's follower, Bruch Hilde also sees the contemporary anorexic unprepared to cope with psychological and social expectation of adulthood and sexuality.

[50] In the novel, Fish shares his opinions on *Alice in Wonderland*: "Of course everyone knows *Alice* is a *sexual-identity-crisis* book. […] What we have here, if you only look at it closely, this is the little girl descending into the very suggestive rabbit-burrow, becoming as it were pre-natal, trying to find her role […] as a *Woman*. […] One sexual role after another is presented to her but she seems unable to accept any of them, I mean she's really blocked. She rejects *Maternity* when the baby she's been nursing turns into a pig, nor does she respond positively to the *dominating-female role of the Queen* and her castration cries of 'Off with his head!' And when the Duchess makes a cleverly concealed lesbian pass at her […], anyway she's neither aware nor interested; and right after that you'll recall she goes to talk with the *Mock-Turtle*, enclosed in his shell and his self-pity, a definitely pre-adolescent character; then there are those most suggestive scenes, most suggestive, the one where her neck becomes elongated and she is accused of being a serpent, hostile to eggs, you'll remember, a rather destructively-phallic identity she indignantly rejects; and her negative reaction to the dictatorial Caterpillar, just six inches high, importantly perched on the all-too-female mushroom […]. And of course there's the obsession with time clearly a cyclical rather than a linear obsession. *So anyway she makes a lot of attempts but she refuses to commit herself, you can't say that by the end of the book she has reached anything that can be definitely called maturity*." (*EW* 193-94 emphasis added).

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inward and develops anorexia nervosa. Associating anorexia with the development of womanhood, Barbara Hill Rigney regards Marian's anorexia as "an attempt to avoid womanhood, to remain a little girl, in essence to escape one's very humanity" (24). Anorexia is for Marian an escape from her own role requirement; nevertheless, Marian's predicament is less a personal problem than a social pathology. In fact, underlying Marian's identity crisis is her dilemma of complying with or liberating herself from the traditional female roles. To be precise, maternity and pliable femininity represented by Clara are "female" attributes that Marian is disgusted with; however, she does not want to take Ainsley's model of rebellion for the latter's contempt for marriage and sperm hunt just go from one extreme to the other. If the compliant Clara cannot resolve Marian's dilemma of obeying the norms or choosing her own way, neither can the decapitating Queen Ainsley offer a solution to the existing gender relations. Not buying Clara's explanation of eating disorders as bridal nerves nor accepting Ainsley's unethical defiance to norms and marriage, Marian ensures herself that through anorexia she has taken an "ethical" stance (*EW* 178). However, Marian fails to note that her anorexic syndrome is signaling her discontent with role confinement. Moreover, as her anorexia nervosa epitomizes the psychopathology of the social body, such problem is what she personally cannot resolve.

According to Susan Bordo, anorexia nervosa sheds light on the crystallization of cultural values—of fear of loss of control over our future, of disdain for the body (139). In the same vein, Marian's failure to find a female model and her repulsion of female body epitomize the psychopathology of the society that confines women's

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bodies and casts the misogynist glance at those who fall out of the "standard." On the one hand, what Marian resists is the culturally constructed femininity; on the other hand, she is forced to comply with and internalize it. For illustration, although Marian doubts the prevalent valorization of superficiality and can only "shrug[] mentally" at her hairstyle, she decides not to ask the stylist to comb out some of the effects not only because she is intimidated by the stylist's "official surroundings [,] specialist implements, and dentist-like certainty" but because she is convinced that the stylist "must know what was right" (*EW* 210). Feeling discontented and threatened, Marian is like a patient "leaning back against the operating-table" to be "etherized" by the doctor-like stylist, believing that it is his business to decide how she should look (*EW* 209, 211). So compliant is she that it seems impossible for her not to be affected by "the Age of Girdles." Even though Marian's anorexia is not a direct result of bourgeois "tyranny of slenderness,"[51] she seems to have internalized the male gaze and the misogynist fear of the suffocating fat and the overripe body of a housewife. At the Christmas party, the bodies of office ladies under Marian's examination become "objects," and the fatness of Mrs. Gundridge is illustrated in food imagery: "the ham-like bulge of thigh," "the creases round the neck," and the "jellied" jowls (*EW* 167). As Mrs. Gundridge's sweater is "a woolly teacosy over those rounded shoulders" (*EW* 167), her body is imaged as a teapot. Moreover, in Marian's eyes, the bodies and their fluidity blur the inside/outside, becoming sites of Kristevan abjection:

[51] "The tyranny of slenderness" is the book title of Kim Chernin, and it becomes a frequent usage referring to the middle-class vogue at the end of nineteenth century to pursue a slender body.

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> [Besides Mrs. Gundridge] and the others too, similar in structure but with varying proportions and textures of bumpy permanents and dune-like contours of breast and waist and hip; their fluidity sustained somewhere within by bones, without by a carapace of clothing and makeup. What peculiar creatures they were; and the continual flux between the outside and the inside, taking things in, giving them out, chewing, words, potatochips, burps, grease, hair, babies, milk, excrement, cookies, vomit, coffee, tomato-juice, blood, tea, sweat, liquor, tears, and garbage…. (*EW* 167)

The thick sargasso-sea of femininity overwhelms Marian. The feeling of being one of them—"her body the same, identical, merged with that other flesh that choked the air"—scares her (*EW* 167). Similar to the anorexic's association of self-mastery with a male, thin body, at this point, Marian wants "something solid, clear: a man; she want[s] Peter in the room so that she c[an] put her hand out and hold on to him to keep from being sucked down" (*EW* 167). Paradoxically, as Marian is struggling in the search of female identity, she ends up identifying with the virile male body.

We are never sure whether Marian's distortion of body and her preference for a male body[52] results in or from anorexia nervosa; her repulsion of the female body, nevertheless, denotes the internalization of the patriarchal gaze. According to Sandra Lee Bartky, the meaning of internalization is twofold: the sense of oneself is tied not only to how one is perceived, "but also to what one knows, especially to what one

[52] As many note the body/spirit duality and its gender implications, Leslie Heywood, following Hilde Bruch, contends that the anorexic logic is "a fight between two bodies, male and female, where one remains as the common standard for the body and the other should disappear altogether" (67).

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knows how to do" (91). Marian's examination of woman's bodies during the office party shows that the patriarchal gaze is no longer something external to her but is immanent in her gaze at women. Whereas she involuntarily gazes in a way that objectifies women at the Christmas party, at the hairdresser's she yields to the stylist's hair setting for she knows "Peter will probably like it" (*EW* 211). In this light, we need to question: Would a woman never become a gazer herself without objectifying her own body and complying with men's tastes? Moreover, as Marian detests feminine softness and the uncontrollability incarnated in the mature female body, is it possible that she not only internalizes the male gaze that favors slimness and virility but becomes her own disciplinarian against her body? Many note that Marian's anorexia is not slimness-driven (Sceats 98, Rigney 24), but I argue that her anorexic body is likewise a product embodying the cultural fetishism of a slim body. According to Mary Douglas, "[t]he social body constrains the way the physical body is perceived" (65). In other words, in a society obsessed with body management, there is no natural body without being influenced by the social body. Moreover, as Bartky contends in "Foucault, Femininity, and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power," under the supervision of disciplinarians ranging from ads, male gaze, and women themselves, women's bodies are even more docile than those of men in Foucault's original context (79). Through acculturation, patriarchal discipline are inscribed on her anorexic body, and gradually Marian becomes her own disciplinarian.

The anorexic, who simultaneously deconstructs and reproduces the culturally constructed femininity, gets stuck in the double bind. Through her passive, starving body in defiance against patriarchal projection of femininity, Marian in a way

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colludes with the patriarchal society to reproduce the "ideal" figure. Acknowledging the political statement embedded in anorexia, Bordo nevertheless sees anorexia as a gesture of retreat as well as protest: "The pathologies of female protest function, paradoxically, as if in collusion with the cultural conditions that produce them, reproducing rather than transforming precisely that which is being protested" ("The Reproduction" 99). Although Marian is dissatisfied with female roles and patriarchal confinement, she ends up protesting against them through anorexic symptomatology, which disempowers and turns herself exactly into the fragile, submissive feminine ideal long rooted in the patriarchal culture. From exploring female identity to being overwhelmed by the process of becoming a mature woman, Marian directs the cultural pressure on women onto her body. Whereas anorexia becomes an outlet for her discontents, it is also a cul-de-sac that continuously keeps her in the same disempowering state.

On the third level, the renunciation of food indicates the anorexic's inability and unwillingness to incorporate cultural norms. In the novel, the proportion of food one has to take becomes the fundamental machinery of normalization. The "standard" regimen moulds Marian's perception of health, normality and abnormality, prompting her to question: "But if she was so normal, why had this thing [anorexia] chosen to attack her" (EW 206)? As Skubal remarks: "Underwriting the entire category of disordered eating is the assumption that eating, like other culturally controlled acts, ought to be 'ordered'" (68). Not until the anorexic starts to take heed of her desires and deems food as something pleasing rather than compulsory is she able to regain appetite. From the beginning, regular food intake is associated with being healthy and

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normal in the novel: As Marian is having her breakfast, she suggests Ainsley eat before work since it is better to have something in the stomach (*EW* 12). Marian has been self-disciplined that she "can never take a second drink without a mental image of a warning sign printed in colored crayons" (*EW* 17). Even during her anorexic period, she takes vitamin pills and prays for the recovery of appetite. Although she seems unable to eat anything, Marian tells herself: "I really should have eaten something, it's bad to drink on an empty stomach" (*EW* 224). Continuously beset by the belief that not eating means abnormality, Marian confirms respectively with Clara, Ainsley, and Peter about whether she is normal and is confused why she cannot eat certain things if she is "marvelously" or "abnormally" normal in their eyes (*EW* 207, 206). Finally, convinced that "[t]here [i]s no sense in getting malnutrition," Marian believes that all she has to do "is to keep calm" (*EW* 178). Brian asserts "while one may expect the anorectic to struggle constantly against her desire to eat, Marian struggles continuously against her desire not to eat" (301). As Marian's body is out of her mind's control, such involuntary food refusal denotes a split between mind and body. Since the pleasure in eating is something sensual rather than intellectual,[53] the anorexic certainly cannot order her body to eat for need, but she has to wait for the body's awakening to its desire.

Generally, women have long been associated with food due to their social roles as food providers. The interchangeability of food and women is revealed in Irigaray's illustration of mothers:

[53] However, according to Brumberg, "[i]n full-blown cases of anorexia nervosa, the patient cannot eat even when she wants to" (Brumberg 37). As Marian is eventually unable to eat anything even when she desires to, I take her as a full-blown case.

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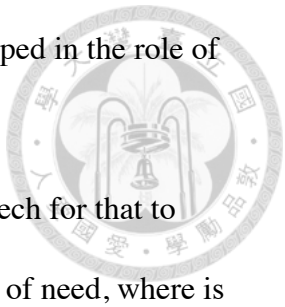

> Mothers, and the woman within them, have been trapped in the role of she who satisfies need but has no access to desire.
>
> Food is a need. It can become desire, but it needs speech for that to happen. So long as women are imprisoned in the reality of need, where is desire? ("Women-Mothers" 51-52)

As a woman is a mother and/or a wife who nurtures and satisfies her husband and children's demands, she is food for others. To her, food is always for others. As long as she is the desired object characteristic of food, she only sees demands, requirements, and needs in food practices without sensing food as something desirable. Since a woman is related to food practically and symbolically in the patriarchal family, it would not be a coincidence that the anorexic woman reverses food's connotations from need to desire to gain access to her own desire. According to Skubal, "anorexic is consciously doing what she wants to do—even though that desire is cast in the negative. Her refusal to eat is on some level at least pleasurable—fulfilling a desire" (71). Even though the anorexic seems to comply with cultural norms in the first place, her body gets out of control sooner or later as it starts to express her desire. If food is a symbol of discipline, one's intake of food is an indicator of body's normality/abnormality. As long as the anorexic notices and refuses to take the prevalent notion of food as something compulsory, food becomes the medium enabling her desire to be articulated. Such symbolic transformation of food from need to desire starts from the anorexic attempt and ends when the complex is resolved.

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As both Susan Bordo and Susie Orbach point out, anorexia nervosa is a metaphor of our age that overstates the correct body management (Orbach, *Hunger Strike* 4, Bordo, "Slender Body" 101). The anorexic body can be seen as an embodiment of the normalization imposed on the social body. As a gesture of resistance, anorexia empowers the eater but at the same time puts her at risk. Complying with cultural norms, the anorexic body only appears normal at face value. At its "abnormal" stage, the anorexic body in a way questions values of normality and abnormality. There are many paradoxes embedded in the presumably self-mastering anorexia, and even Irigaray refuses to naively advocate hysteria or anorexia for women in general (Grosz 136). However, it is rather positive to deem anorexia nervosa less a disease than a turning point for one to problematize the incorporation of norms and to attend to one's own desire.

Anorexia nervosa gradually raises Marian's self-awareness about her plight and discontents, but it does not change the patriarchal devaluation of femininity at all, nor does it help Marian effectively demonstrate her anger at Peter's domineering attitude and gradual domination over her. Since Peter has been "terribly nice" about Marian's anorexia and insists that she have the stomach-flu (*EW* 178), Marian can no longer remain passive but deal with their imbalanced relationship by directly confronting Peter.

Oral Aggression between the Sexes

Suffering from patriarchal commodification and role-engulfment, women, at the bottom of the food chain, can no longer remain silent but give vent to their anger at

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the other sex through implications of oral aggression. In order to get out of the predicament of being consumed by the aggressive fiancé, Marian faces the truth of the cannibalistic love relationship and subversively offers Peter the cake-woman made of her own image as a counterattack. Drawing on Atwood's intent to conceive a novel featuring symbolic cannibalism, this section delves into women's oral aggression in slips of the tongue and in Marian's offering and eating of her self image incarnated in the cake-woman. In light of psychoanalytic linking of the ambivalence of love and the regression of sexual instincts to preliminary oral stage, this section examines how one oscillates between love and aggression in a heterosexual relationship through expressions or acts concerned with the oral. Further, it explores the potential of women's oral aggression to bring about power reversal in the patriarchal society.

In *The Edible Woman*, one's will to dominate the other sex is compared to cannibalizing the other. While eating imagery underlies the consumer-or-victim marriage game, only those who remain detached from the game are able to recognize the cannibalistic nature of love. Duncan, one of Marian's interviewees that plays a pivotal role in Marian's transformation from passivity to activeness, alludes to the cannibal stories in responses to Marian's survey on the telephone commercial of the "Moose Beer":

> What about "Healthy hearty taste?"
>
> He [Duncan] mediated for several minutes. "It's heartburn," he said. "Or no, that can't be right." His forehead wrinkled. "Now I see. It's one of those cannibal stories." […] "I know the pattern, there's one of them in the Decameron and a couple in Grimm's; the husband kills the wife's

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lover, or vice versa, and cuts out the heart and makes it into a stew or a pie and serves it up in a silver dish, and the other one eats it. Though that doesn't account for the Healthy very well, does it?" (*EW* 53)

Duncan's answer is idiosyncratic and elusive; however, his identification with the cannibalistic pattern in romance is more than accurate. As Duncan mentions, many of Grimms' tales depict the horror of the cannibal-like groom and the bride's pre-emption by performing the aggressive act in advance of the husband's. While Sharon Rose Wilson emphasizes the importance of fairly-tale cannibalism and finds Grimms' "The Robber Bridegroom" and "Fitcher's Bird" underpinning *The Edible Woman*, the questions at the core of cannibalism in love relationship have not been delved into. That is, why love is so ambivalent that it might be accompanied by hatred and aggression against the same beloved object at times. More intriguingly, why is gender aggression particularly characterized as oral?

The cannibalistic love relationship in *The Edible Woman* attests to the ambivalence of love in psychoanalytic interpretation. To be precise, psychoanalytic linking of sexual and oral desires at oral stage and the regression of love to hate analogous to the sexual instincts' regression to oral stage illuminate the oral aggression between couples in *The Edible Woman*. According to Sigmund Freud, the earliest pregenital organization is the sadist-oral, which is also called the cannibalistic stage. As the oral is the earliest site for the development of the libido, at oral stage "the sexual *aim* consists in the incorporation of the object—the prototype of a process […] in the form of identification" (*Three Essays* 198). In "Instincts and Their Vicissitudes," Freud further illuminates the implication of love at the preliminary

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stage: in the phase of incorporating, loving someone "is consistent with abolishing the object's separate existence […] which may therefore be described as ambivalent" (138). As the sexual instincts undergo complicated development from being in an intimate relation with the ego-instincts (and thus demonstrate a type of love inseparable from hate) to forming an antithetic relation to the ego-instincts (and thus demonstrate a type of love opposite to hate) at higher stage of genital organization, the frequent conflicts between the interests of ego and those of love in the heterosexual relationship repeat the transformation of love into hate, and vice versa. While love is originally narcissistic and passes onto the love object at the genital stage, hate emerges as a response to the unpleasure caused by the love object and is reinforced by a regression to the sadistic preliminary stage when love is inseparable from hate in the act of devouring ("Instincts and Vicissitudes" 139).

In *The Edible Woman*, couples' interactions—be it the joviality of sexual intercourse or the domination over the other sex— are characterized as oral.[54] For example, after having sex at the bathtub, Peter bites Marian's shoulder. Deeming the act as a sign of gaiety, Marian bites Peter's shoulder in return (*EW* 63). As the sexual excitement involves actions of the mouth, the voluptuous flesh is associated with the delicacy to be devoured. Before his party starts, Peter kisses on the nape of Marian's neck, saying "[y]um yum" (*EW* 227), which not only points to the fragrance of her new perfume but to the delectability and sensuality of Marian. In addition to one's love and identification with the other, the desire for incorporation also implies one's

[54] In addition, the aggression between the couple is situated at the oral as well. Whereas devouring and eating connote violence, the oral and the mouth may become the locus susceptible to harm and attack. In Ainsley's coffee-break-sharing of the office gossip about a woman's murder of her husband by causing his electric toothbrush to short-circuit (*EW* 23), the mouth becomes the site where aggression takes place.

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will to dominate or eliminate the other. In the novel, oral aggression is mostly metaphorical. For instance, Marian associates Peter's date arrangement by phone with the "prehensile" snake-like telephone lines "coiling back on [her] and getting [her] all wrapped up" (*EW* 134); on the other hand, Peter feels Marian biting his head off when she puts his invitation off. At another point, although Peter shows no malice towards Marian, in his eating of the heart-shaped, pink icing cake, Atwood seems to suggest that Marian associates Peter with the cannibal, who brutally dissects the verisimilar heart with a good appetite. Finding the inside of cake structured as the inside of human body like the "bursting of thousands of tiny lungs," Marian dares not to swallow the cake but appropriates it as a test for Peter to see if he is able to eat it up[55] (*EW* 207). Whereas many foodstuffs disgust Marian during the anorexic period, never is anything more unbearable than watching Peter eat the heart-shaped cake. To her fear, Peter does not "seem to notice anything odd about the cake [that] he ha[s]'t even winced" (*EW* 208).

Marian and Peter's love for each other in *The Edible Woman* is in an ambivalent state similar to that of oral stage in which hate "derived from the preliminary stages of loving [has] not been wholly surmounted" (Freud, "Instincts and Vicissitudes" 139). According to Marian, she and Peter "ha[ve] been taking each other at [their] face values" (*EW* 61). As long as Marian adjusts to Peter's moods and Peter ensures Marian a promising future, they have got on well for the past four months. Nevertheless, unpleasure arises as soon as one recognizes the other dissimilar to what

[55] As the narrator recounts, the cake is more like a test for Marian herself than that for Peter for "[i]f he couldn't eat his either then she was normal" (*EW* 207). However, the test can be interpreted as the other way around. Through knowing whether Peter will eat, Marian would know whether she and Peter are the same kind of persons.

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s/he used to expect. In fact, tensions rise at times. Before Peter's proposal, on the way to Len's place after the reunion, Marian senses Peter's fury in his voice yelling at her, demanding that she stop running away. Later, when Peter pulls out Marian from the underneath of the bed at Len's place, she recognizes a sense of superiority in Peter's comment that he thinks Marian should have asked for his help. As Peter's lack of understanding and condescending tone enrage Marian at the moment, his speeding driving contingent on their fight scares Marian, making her tremble in a combination of fright, cold, and fury. Another time when the couple disagrees with each other on the proper education of children, Peter tries to convince Marian that children ought to be punished by referring professionally to his experience as a lawyer seeing kids go awry due to lack of discipline. He refuses Marian's idea of being in children's shoes by simply saying "[d]aring, you don't understand these things" (*EW* 147). Whereas the first tension ends up with an unprepared proposal, the second is relieved by Marian's silence. Although the couple becomes reconciled with each other after every conflict, disagreement and discontent give rise to hate, which eventually outweighs love and inevitably leads to aggression.

Before sensing that Peter has gradually devoured her life in the way he gulps down the heart-shaped cake, Marian chooses not to acknowledge her fear and anger but expresses her repressed aggression in a slip of the tongue. When Ainsley wants to know if Marian is going to the laundromat, Marian does not confirm it but jokes that she has chopped Peter up into little bits and is going to camouflage him as laundry and take him down to bury him (*EW* 92). At another time, Marian extends her hatred for Peter to that for every man. Whereas the aggressiveness toward the opposite sex is

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illustrated in the mutual predations between the sexes in the restaurant, the will to kill the other sex is uttered by Marian in a slip of the tongue. As Ainsley asks her roommate Marian to cooperate in her baby-making scheme, Marian's reply is reminiscent of "Bluebeard":

> "Tell you what," said Ainsley, "if we [Len and Ainsley] do happen to end up [having sex] in your room I'll hang a tie on the doorknob, okay?"
>
> …
>
> Marian had a disturbing vision of a trophy room with stuffed and antlered heads nailed to the walls. "Why not just use his scalp?" she asked. Leonard, after all, was supposed to be her friend. (*EW* 121-22)

In light of Atwood's coinage "symbolic cannibalism," here, the oral aggression is delineated at a sublimated level in the form of head-hunting. As Susanne Skubal contends, head-hunting is a sublimation of aggressive cannibalism, which serves similar "aggressive ends through the killing of the hated victim. But the practice of head-hunting, in literal sense, preserve[s] the beneficial sign and worth of the deed" (105). Based on Eli Sagan's definition of aggression as "the desire to dominate or tyrannize another person or other people" (5), I argue that in the novel, aggressive impulses commonly existing between the sexes imply the repressed desires to dominate the other sex. In a joking tone, Marian utters something deep-rooted in her unconscious. Even though on second thoughts Marian recognizes Len as her friend, in the first place, her joke indicates what has been repressed for so long: It is a will to wreak the vengeance on women's major oppressors—men.

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In Marian's slips of the tongue, we learn about her rage and how the patriarchal society has refused to acknowledge women's anger. It is not until Marian decides to face her true feelings for Peter instead of taking his domineering attitude for granted that she is able to empower herself and reclaim her ownership of her body, her will, and her appetite. During the party held at Peter's place, Marian wanders along and in her imagination she sees in one of the rooms the forty-five-year-old Peter wearing a white chef's apron and standing beside a barbecue with a long fork in his hands. However, as Marian looks carefully for herself in that picture, she finds that "she [i]sn't there and the discovery chill[s] her" (*EW* 243). While what would become of Marian in her future as Peter's wife remains unknown, she is gripped by the growing fear that Peter might be a hunter aiming at her. It is not until Peter aims his camera at Marian with "his mouth open[] in a snarl of teeth" that Marian suddenly associates him with a hunter, the cannibal-like husband in the fairytale: "Once he pulled the trigger she would be stopped, fixed indissolubly in that gesture, that single stance, unable to move or change" (*EW* 245). Not choosing to take what happens before her eyes as mere a hallucination as she used to do, Marian knows that she must get out [of Peter's place] before it is too late" (*EW* 244). Although Marian is certain that as far as she gets to Duncan she would be saved, she is forced to face her problem herself as Duncan insists: "Don't ask me, that's your problem […] you'll have to think of your own way out" (*EW* 264). Now that the path before Marian is a cul-de-sac, she must take the initiative in the face of Peter's interrogation of her whereabouts. After all the failed attempts of protests, she decides to articulate her feelings through "something that avoid[s] words" (*EW* 267).

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Marian turns to food making—one of the skills fundamental in the collective memory of female experience —and creates new meanings to it. To be specific, Marian transforms a woman's relationship to food from a submissive nurturer to an innovative creator who prepares and defines the dishes meant for herself. Deftly manipulating the feminine art, Marian quickly decides to bake a cake-woman as her prop. While waiting for the cake to get cool from the oven, "she grin[s] into the mirror, showing her teeth" (*EW* 268). Her facial expression seems to indicate that her way of self-assertion would be intimidating and aggressive. Indeed, contrary to the heart-shaped cake served as a gift in return for Valentine's Day, the woman-cake denotes aggression rather than love.

Through moulding, presenting, and eating the woman-shaped cake, Marian brings about the final power reversal in the unequal heterosexual relationship. To represent the plasticity of women, Marian decides on a spongy rather than an angel cake. Before presenting the cake to Peter, the softness and pliability of the cake-woman are emphasized during the process of moulding and decoration. From the blank white body, the smiling lush-lipped pink mouth, the eyelashes, a pair of long legs with demarcating lines, to the long baroque scrolls piling high on the head (*EW* 269), the cake-woman resembles the patriarchal projection of femininity; moreover, as we later confirm in the novel, it takes after Marian.[56] Looking at the delicious woman, Marian seems to say to herself as well as the cake: "Very appetizing. And that's what will happen to you; that's what you get for being food" (*EW* 270). As

[56] When the cake is presented to Peter, his reaction reveals the similarity between the cake-woman and Marian: "Peter stared from the cake to her face and back again. […] His eyes widened in alarm" (*EW* 271).

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a result, Peter flees at the sight of the cake, and Ainsley exclaims with horror and says to Marian: "You're rejecting your femininity" upon seeing Marian eating the cake (*EW* 272). Marian's eating of her self image incarnated in the cake is both horrible and self-destructive; however, it is at this moment that she regains her appetite and overcomes passivity.

As Marian's choice means of communication, the cake, from its initial purpose to demonstrate aggression to the real effects it brings about, is replete with feminist connotations. The cake serves twofold effects. To Peter, it is a manifestation of anger as Marian emphasizes: "You've been trying to assimilate me. But I've made you a substitute, something you'll like much better. This is what you really want[] all along, isn't it? I'll get you a fork" (*EW* 271). Even though the narrator indicates that as a symbol of aggression the cake has definitely failed as Peter has not devoured it after all (*EW* 271). Yet, to Marian, the cake, with its function as women's artistic expression and its resonance with women's consumable status, is an inspiration to her own awakening. More importantly, the moment of cake eating marks the moment of Marian's recovery from anorexia nervosa: After Peter has gone, "[s]uddenly she [i]s hungry. Extremely hungry. […] She consider[s] the first mouthful. It seem[s] odd but most pleasant to be actually tasting and chewing and swallowing again" (*EW* 271-72). From now on, food becomes an access to desire as Marian not only plays the role of a provider but also a diner. As Marian creates and destroys her self-image, we must bear in mind that the image of the cake-woman is a past-self that remains submissive, silent, soft and slim. As long as Marian determines to eat cake, she no longer perceives herself as the cake-woman; as the narrator implies, "[t]he cake after all [i]s

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only a cake" (*EW* 271-72). The cannibalization of a woman-shaped cake made of her own image therefore denotes Marian's desire to destroy her past self that submits to the patriarchal projection of feminine ideal. To be explicit, Marian's eating of her self image incarnated in the cake is a reassertion of her desire, her body, and her choice of food materially and symbolically. Thus we may say that, if anorexia is a protest against patriarchy, its pathological nature nevertheless leaves Marian inarticulate; she risks being misunderstood by men. Only by taking the initiative in the marriage game—creating and eating the cake—can we say that Marian empowers herself via food.

Even though Marian intends to demonstrate her aggressiveness towards Peter, such message is conveyed in a sublimated way in the presentation of a cake-woman (*EW* 267). While Gloria Onley contends that "the love-aggression-complex is a historical-personal fact" in Atwood's works (71), I argue that a woman-shaped cake sheds light on the possibility of sublimating the instinctual aggressiveness into an artistic invention, which not only serves as a weapon against Peter but contains positive meanings for the creator, Marian herself. In Freud's exposition in *Civilization and Its Discontent*, aggressiveness is an inclination by nature as it gives human a sense of satisfaction (72).[57] In opposition to the self-subsisting instinctual disposition, Freud posits that the sublimation is a sign of civilization, which, by deflecting the instincts into higher cultural values, sets limit to the aggressive instincts (*Civilization*

[57] Freud notes human's struggle between the instinct of life and the instinct of destruction, arguing that the repression of instinctual aggressiveness leads to the evolution of civilization. In response to the Christian doctrine "thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," Freud accounts: "men are not gentle creatures who want to be loved, and who at the most can defend themselves if they are attacked; they are, on the contrary creatures among whose instinctual endowments is to be reckoned a powerful share of aggressiveness. As a result their neighbor is for them not only a potential helper or sexual object, but also someone who tempts them to satisfy their aggressiveness on him […]"(*Civilization* 68-69).

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51, 69-70). According to him, whereas women represent the interests of the family and sexual life, the work of civilization has become increasingly the business of men, who are compelled to "carry out instinctual sublimation of which women are little capable [of]" (ibid. 59). In the theorization of sexual development, Freud also notes that women are comparatively unlikely to have their libido go through final development, and thus they are "weaker in social interests and having less capacity for sublimating their instincts than men ("Femininity" 134-35). Marian's cake attests to the transformation of instinctual aim into higher social one as the activities concerning the cake challenges and, to some extent, symbolically and skillfully overturns the gender relations: Marian shows her awareness of the patriarchal imposition on women's bodies in her way of moulding the cake, protests against such projection in front of Peter, and destroys that image herself by eating the cake. To sum up, without literally hurting anyone, Marian saves herself from the entrapment of marriage by manifesting her rage as well as her awareness of Peter's domination over her. However, in contrast to Freud's postulate that it is mostly men that are able to sublimate the instincts for higher social values in life, it is women that activate a change in the static gender relations in the novel. Whereas men aggressively express their aim to dominate women, women cannot but pre-empt cannibalism by performing the similar aggressive act toward men in a sublimated way. While Atwood questions if it is "possible for men and women to stop mythologizing, manipulating, and attacking on one another" (*Power Politics*), I perceive that the activities concerning the cake-woman shed light on an alternative to the existing gender politics. Initially, the cake is not made for the purpose to scare away Peter; neither is it a sign

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of rejection of marriage. Instead, the cake, as a medium, helps Marian voice her opinions and further implies her hope to speak and desire on an equal footing with men. Through such a cake, Marian expresses her vision for a balanced gender relation. In this light, the cake is not a symbol of violence. Neither is the eating of the cake-woman a self-negation, but it is a feminist manifestation as it enables women to articulate their desire and release themselves from patriarchal confinement.

The Edible Woman in fact demonstrates human's basic concerns in line with the psychoanalytic antithesis between ego-instincts and sexual-instincts, which, according to Freud, is best represented in the distinction between hunger and love. As he maintains, "[h]unger could be taken to represent the instincts which aim at preserving the individual; while love strives after objects, and its chief function, favored in every way by nature, is the preservation of the species" (*Civilization* 76). *The Edible Woman* explores men and women's struggle between interests of self-preservation and the demands of the libido on the eve of the second-wave feminist movement when the struggle is as desperate as a life-and-death one. As the transformation of love into hate is reinforced by the regression of love to the oral stage, it sheds light on the nature of consumer-oriented love as more egoistic than altruistic. In light of this consumer-oriented rule, Duncan's remark of the cannibal woman becomes plausible:

> … he [Duncan] said in a soft dry voice, "I can tell you [Marian] admire my febrility. I know it's appealing, I practice at it; every woman loves an invalid. I bring out the Florence Nightingale in them. But be careful." He was looking at me now, cunningly, sideways. "You might do something

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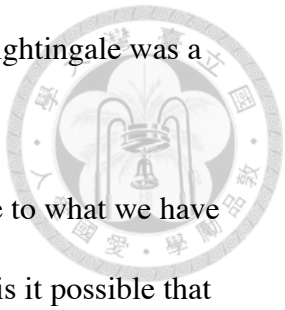

destructive; hunger is more basic than love. Florence Nightingale was a cannibal, you know." (*EW* 100)

Duncan's knowledge about the caring nurse is subversively opposite to what we have known her as a historical personage. However, on second thoughts, is it possible that Nightingale's good deed is less an act of altruism than a basic fulfillment to satisfy her instinctual hunger? As we recollect Freud's account of love as "originally narcissistic" which only passes over onto objects as long as they give the subject pleasure, it seems the ultimate objective of loving someone is for benefits of the self rather than for the lover's ("Instincts and Vicissitudes" 138). In light of Duncan's definition of hunger and the Nightingale-cannibal association, I assume Marian's final confrontation with Peter echoes with what Duncan indicates: "hunger is more basic than love" (*EW* 100). In order to survive the consumer-oriented marriage game, Marian cannot but eat (address her aggression) in order to live on (to recover from anorexia and escape from role-engulfment in marriage). As Duncan says to Marian on learning her regaining of appetite: "you're back to so-called reality, you're a consumer" (*EW* 280-81), he seems to suggest that it is unlikely for anyone to withdraw from the present system and to live without making some other things/people his/her food. In fact, *The Edible Woman* problematizes the power relations between the consumer and the consumed; however, it does not suggest how humans can live away from the prevalent consuming system and politics. Moreover, if the oral aggressiveness is something inherent in human beings, to what extent can we say that couples rewrite the consumer-or-victim marriage rule without risking or sacrificing one another's rights and interests?

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The Edible Woman is a work that probes into the intricate interrelationships among eating and being eaten, love and violence, and humans' instinctual desire to eat and their utmost fear of being eaten. In *The Edible Woman*, the mouth and teeth become sites of danger and voracity, and food serves as both symbols of victimization and empowerment like the two-sided coin. While the novel centers on Marian's resistance to patriarchal commodification indirectly through eating and not eating, the novel examines people's victimhood and survival in a consumer society where people may stare at each other, not at their face, but at their abdomen (*EW* 193). Peter's belief that "[a] good meal always makes you feel a little more human" shows that human life is closely associated with the intake of food (*EW* 152). Heterosexual love relationship is also compared to packaging, purchasing, consuming, and being consumed. As Wilson puts it: "everyone and everything, including nature, is product and consumer" in *The Edible Woman* (79). Apparently, as Atwood asserts and as many acknowledge, the author's concerns with consumerism are far beyond the commodities on the market or the commodification of women.[58] Instead, in the fictional world, victims range from the edible animals, women and men on the marriage market. To some extent, victims may include consumers as well as the consumable as the former may also harm themselves once they bite something they

[58] In response to Margaret Kaminsky's question in the interview of 1975 that whether *The Edible Woman* is a feminist novel, Atwood states: "I don't consider it feminism; I just consider it social realism. That part of it is simply social reporting. It was written in 1965 and that's what things were like in 1965" (*Margaret Atwood: Conversations* 27). Moreover, in her own introduction to *The Edible Woman* in 1979, Atwood dismisses readers' presumption to associate her work with the second-wave feminist movement, which took place approximately around 1969 when the book first appeared. To her, it is just a coincidence due to the publisher's delay as she sees the book "as protofeminist rather than feminist" (Introduction *EW*). In the same light, scholars like Keith recognizes Atwood's target is "broader than feminism" (22); Sceats indicates Peter's fear of being consumed by marriage; and Sheckels likewise points out men's irresistible desire for the commodities and commercials in the novel.

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are unable to manage. Seemingly, it is the weaker that gets eaten in the food chain, yet from an omniscient point, nobody/nothing seems free from the victimhood in this society pivoting on consumption, commodification, and objectification.

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Conclusion

Food, Eating Order, and Gender Norms Reconsidered

Eating and Gender Politics in Patriarchal Societies

Concepts of health and eating order are products of individuals' gradual internalization of mainstream values of proportion and body management, and therefore are subjected to alteration. Likewise, the "appropriate" proportion and the "proper" gendered behaviors concerning eating are also culturally constructed. Eating disorders—manifested in aberrant eating styles and bodily shapes—serve as interventions in the discursive construction of a healthy gendered body; moreover, they interrogate the tyranny of majority and social normalization. Set in the aftermath of WWI and the consumer-oriented society of the sixties respectively, Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) and Margaret Atwood's *The Edible Woman* (1965) present critiques of the prescriptive gender norms and social order by addressing disorderly eaters' suffering, resistance, and—if there is any— self-empowerment in the patriarchal culture.

In the two novels, eating is multifaceted as it is not only related to the foodstuffs sustaining life, health, and body shape but associated with the incorporation of individuals into different communities or one's assimilation of others' ideas. In *Mrs. Dalloway*, whereas parties are said to combine and to expand, they in fact set a boundary between the rich and the poor. As the party members of high society predominate over the poor, they impose on the latter a proportional regimen, which dictates how one should eat and how one should look like. In *The Edible Woman*, as

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love relationship is illustrated as a power struggle between consumers and the consumed, one's eating politics indicates his/her stance in the cannibalistic marriage game. However, while everyone has the freedom to choose his/her eating policy, nobody is free from being involved in a systematic food chain in which one's will and belief are likely to be conquered by others. As the adage goes, "you are what you eat." Eating politics is revealed in different culinary practices and eating habits, behind which lies the politics of gender that influences the economy of desire and appetite.

In *Mrs. Dalloway* and *The Edible Woman*, characters are under the pressure of body discipline and restrictions on gender roles. In *Mrs. Dalloway* Miss Kilman and Septimus Warren Smith are tormented by the cultural myth of a thin woman and a strong man and are assigned to different gender roles; in *The Edible Woman* Marian MacAlpin is expected to renounce her career, to be equipped with culinary skills, and to dress up and play her feminine role catering to her fiancé's taste. As the postwar and consumer-oriented patriarchal societies impose on characters values of "appropriate" bodily proportion and "proper" gender roles in the name of the Empire or via media and socio-cultural brainwash, eating disorders arise when one is made but unable to adjust to these norms any more.

Eating Order and Eating Disorders Reconsidered

As taking something in denotes a sense of identification with the thing and eating is initially a social act that binds individuals together in a community, not eating in the "normal" way as everyone else does can be read as rebellion against social order. Rather than a simple self-denial or a loss of control in food, eating disorders have to

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do with resistance to a particular regimen in accordance with values sugarcoated in the name of "normalcy." The disorderly eaters at issue—Doris Kilman and Septimus Warren Smith in *Mrs. Dalloway*, and Marian MacAlpin in *The Edible Woman*—are seen not only as victims but also combatants in the face of war and life pressure. Although their eating disorders seem to be involuntary, the "symptoms," however, reveal or are associated with their life problems. All of them appear socially "inferior" and are in a state of deadlock: Miss Kilman is beset by fleshly desire and an inescapable body; Septimus has an insatiable hunger for life and communication but is traumatized by the force-feeding of pseudo truth and virtues of masculinity; Marian is torn between asserting her desire and submitting to her gender role. As a consequence, eating/not eating becomes an outlet for their suppressed feelings and repressed appetite, and their bodies—appearance as well as appetite—become their media to respond to the social confinement.

The development of eating disorders marks a process of negation, awakening, and, if at all, re-orientation into life. The nature of eating disorders is ambivalent as they normally bring about double-sided effects: on the one hand, disorders become a means of self-assertion or awaken eaters to their life problems; on the other hand, they put eaters' health and life in danger. In *Mrs. Dalloway*, whereas the afternoon tea empowers Kilman to instil feminist vision in Elizabeth and to satisfy her hunger for food and friendship, her compulsive eating makes her guilty of fatness and leads to people's stigmatization of her "disorderly" body. While Septimus refuses the proportional regimen to protest against militaristic and psychiatric male control, anorexia worsens his profile and his psychological pain is perceived as an indication

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of insanity. In *The Edible Woman*, with her diet becoming irregular, Marian gradually notices her fiancé's attempt to assimilate her and finally ruminates over the relation between her lack of appetite and her fear of getting married. However, she might risk her life as she cannot take anything in eventually at this stage. As Lilian R. Furst once comments, "Disorderly eating can thus represent the last protest left to the socially disempowered" (6). In this light, although the primary three eaters intervene in the patriarchal discourses on the body disparately, the symptoms and irreversible effects on bodies torment them and weaken their strength to bring about the reversal of the existing order.

The Feminist Vision in the Writings concerning Food and Eating

From Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) to Atwood's *The Edible Woman* (1965), the forty-year span saw the feminist awakening as well as economic and sociopolitical changes after the two World Wars, and an outright confrontation with patriarchy arises in literature specifically realized in themes of eating and eating disorders.[59] Although it may be reductive to delineate a trajectory of writings about food and eating through the lens of two works of disparate loci and foci, the differences between the two authors' interventionist agendas and their exploitations of food and eating seem to mark a transformation pertinent to temporal and spatial development. In the two novels, eating disorders are used to intervene in the mainstream values and empower those on the margin at different degrees. In *Mrs. Dalloway*, eaters' life

[59] As Atwood insists that *The Edible Woman* is a product preceding the second-wave feminism, the work thematizes women's predicaments and rebellions in eating disorders, whose prevalence is said to have to do with the "'liberating' impact of 'second wave feminism" (Malson 95).

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problems have been transferred onto eating problems; however, compulsive eating and anorexia serve allegorically as metaphors of self-empowerment without practically resolving characters' predicaments. In the end, Miss Kilman repeats the compulsive eating/dieting cycle and Septimus commits suicide without bringing his traumatic experience to light. On the other hand, in *The Edible Woman*, Marian, also as an anorexic victim, awakens herself to her dormant desire and confronts with her problematic relationship with Peter, giving vent to her anger through oral aggression and finally bringing about power reversal in the patriarchal society. Despite its violent connotations, the last eating disorder discussed in this thesis—symbolic cannibalism, or oral aggression—appears to be the only kind that enables the eater to reach a state of mind-body fluidity by turning the patriarchal pressure outward instead of inward. Through making, presenting, and eating the cake-woman, Marian demonstrates her anger toward Peter, asserting her ownership of the body, sublimating the instinctual aggression into a work of art presented in the form of a cake. The activities concerning the cake-woman are performances of creativity and feminist awakening, which revive Marian's appetite and save her from patriarchal commodification.

In addition to different interventionist agendas, from *Mrs. Dalloway* to *The Edible Woman*, the increasing proportion of foodstuffs and dining occasions indicates a more deliberate use of food and eating as a display of the power relation between the eater and the eaten rather than merely a means of representation of reality. In *The Edible Woman*, as the marriage is compared to a game and a market, abundant hunter/prey and food imagery mirrors the aggressive gender relation in which one takes the initiatives in the predation for fear that s/he should become the food on the

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table of her/his lover. Besides, the meal table is depicted as a battlefield between the sexes as well as a test for the anorexic to see what is to be crossed out from the list of the edible. Whereas food products and meals are functional and plentiful in *The Edible Woman*, in *Mrs. Dalloway* meals and foodstuffs are often mentioned in passing. Delicacies are not the central theme in Mrs. Dalloway's party. Even though various courses are named in Lady Bruton's luncheon, they remain unimportant other than a trope for the hostess to request a political letter (*MD* 115). Woolf's emphasis on the "anomalous" bodies instead of foodstuffs in *Mrs. Dalloway* indicates that it is the plight of the eaters rather than the reasons or the remedy for disorders that the contemporary society cares about. Besides, as there is no equivalent of a thematic symbol of empowerment in *Mrs. Dalloway* to the woman-cake in *The Edible Woman*, such lack suggests that disorderly eaters can hardly reach a state of mind-body fluidity with sparse food choices or eating practices they are allowed to have. Lastly, as substantial meals only appear on the table of the dignitaries for the purpose of socializing with other upper-class people, the real nourishment seems nowhere to be found, not even in the two prominent feasts.

With disparate concerns and utilization of food and eating scenes, Woolf implies a critique of the Darwinian proportional regimen in 1920s Britain by addressing the sufferings of disorderly eaters, whereas Atwood depicts women's power reversal by exploring the sexes' confrontation on the meal table as well as in the marriage game. In the two novels, eating paradoxically functions as both the machinery of normalization and an access to one's desire; however, as long as humans have to eat to survive, no one can live without getting involved in the socially constructed food

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chain. As Foucault notes, whereas the body is "poisoned by food or values, through eating habits or moral laws [,] it constructs resistances" ("Nietzsche, Genealogy, History" 153). In the two novels, disorderly eaters appear to be those who are unconsciously resistant to the prescriptive regimen and gender norms yet are caught in a double bind between challenging and colluding with them. The primary eating disorders remain pseudo-solutions for eaters hardly achieve a fluid state of mind-body equilibrium through eating/not eating. Comparatively, Marian in *The Edible Woman* is in a more advantageous position than Kilman and Septimus in *Mrs. Dalloway* as she reaches a state of mind-body fluidity via eating in the end. However, her future is unknown to readers as to whether she would restart a love relationship and whether she would be fairly treated in her future job. Moreover, even though Marian recovers from anorexia nervosa by facing her life problem, her emerging oral aggression can be interpreted as an adaptation to the cannibalistic society, hinting at her inability to get rid of the principle of an-eye-for-an-eye in the consumer-oriented society. The comparison between the two novels reveals that even though greater tolerance of eating and gender politics is in sight, eating disorders arise in ways mirroring the psychopathology of the contemporary society. In the end, a harmonious human and gender relation seem to be outside the realm of the two texts.

In conclusion, eating disorders in *Mrs. Dalloway* and *The Edible Woman* are symptomatic of a society that privileges certain eaters' food choice at the cost of sacrificing others'. Although eating disorders seem to be individual plight, the symptoms are actually rooted in the society in its fetishistic gaze at the "fit" body and its obsession with gender-role dichotomy. Eating disorders and bodily textuality speak

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volumes; however, if people refuse to acknowledge the messages behind symptoms, disorderly eaters can hardly restore physical and mental health. By representing individual bodily resistance to social constraints, Woolf and Atwood problematize the tyranny of the majority and interrogate the prescriptive notions of "sanity," "morality," and "normality" underlying eating and gender politics. With different foci and feminist agendas, Woolf critiques the postwar social system with metaphors of eating disorders, whereas Atwood turns the force of the eating disorder outward and comes up with a solution in combat against patriarchal commodification in the sixties. Seeing food and eating as fundamental to men as well as to women, both Woolf and Atwood elevate the trivialities of everyday life to launch a critique of social hierarchy and gender relations, feeding their readers a feast of words to ruminate over.

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