

“He Drinks the Knowledge in Greedy Haste”: Tasting History Through James Gillray’s Political Prints¹

SAVI MUNJAL, PhD
University of Leeds (UK)

This chapter examines the multiple ways in which Georgian satirist James Gillray used the metaphor of eating and drinking to intervene in political debates of the late-eighteenth century Britain. It adopts an inter-disciplinary perspective to explore the images of eating and drinking and their numerous permutations and combinations, including starvation, hunger, indulgence, fasting, excretion, and cannibalism, in order to investigate the ways in which Gillray’s prints engage closely with political events of the day and distil those events into ostensibly accessible graphic images. It argues that Gillray’s visual satires need to be seen as complex constructions characterized by a dialogic play of multiple ideologies. To corroborate this argument, it situates Gillray’s satires alongside historical and literary texts of the age including a series of late eighteenth-century literary pamphlets, religious pamphlets, ballads, broadsheets, historical treatises, and “polite” literature. This helps the author conclude that the body politic forged by Gillray’s use of exaggerated metaphors of food, eating and hunger, provides a lynchpin for understanding both socio-political events and the psychology of the common man in a remarkably nuanced fashion.

Keywords: *eighteenth-century studies; food riots; bread; British caricature; James Gillray; cannibalism; French Revolution.*

“They receive him in a half-circle; twelve speakers behind cannons with lighted torches in hand [...] he asks, in temperate but courageous language: What they, by their journey to Versailles, do specially want? The twelve speakers reply, in few words inclusive of much: ‘Bread’” (Carlyle, 1857: 210).

Carlyle’s iconic account of the French Revolution foregrounds the centrality of bread in one of the most tumultuous events in European history. It comes as no surprise, then, that the metaphor of food remained imperative in a revolution that started over bread. Whilst England had seen a number of food riots in the eighteenth century, they started to acquire a distinct political dimension only towards the end of the eighteenth century. This was primarily because the dissatisfaction arising from the shortage of food, especially wheat and corn, in England in 1794-95, provided a perfect

¹The phrase comes from Jane Taylor’s sentimental celebration of the diffusion of knowledge amongst the lower classes at the tail end of the eighteenth century in England. The metaphor of hunger dominates her portrait of the self-improving underdog:

“From needful sleep the precious hour he saves,
To give his thirsty mind the stream it craves:
There, with his slender rush beside him plac’d
He drinks the knowledge in with greedy haste” (1816: 137).

opportunity for the Jacobin lobby to promote their cause¹. The resultant “disorder” is evident in the ways in which French revolutionary language percolated into the threats of the English plebeian classes. Adrian Randall insists that the “rhetoric of radicalism was routinely added to threats over food prices” in late eighteenth-century England (2006: 226). This linking of chronic food shortage to political revolutionary vocabulary can be witnessed in handbills, ballads, notices and political prints. “Peace and Large Bread, or a King without a head” begins one notice put up in Bath. In Banbury, “Cheap Bread or No King” was written on a church door. At Windsor, a notice proclaimed: “Notice is hereby Given to George III and all his Tiranical Crew that Unless we the starving Poor have Bread at 6d Quarter loaf Meat 4d pound and no Taxes He May Expect No less than Be Shot – all Farmers upholders of Corn their Farms Burnt and Take the Hint – So shall it Be – for We Value not our own Lives to rid the Earth of Tirants.”²

In 1795, there were a number of reports of men and women near starvation attacking mills and granaries, not to steal food, but to punish the owners. Corn and flour was thrown along the roads and discarded in the rivers, and machines were damaged. In an attempt to stop food riots, anti-Jacobin satires such as Jack Cade’s *The Quartern Loaf for Eight-pence* (1795) tried to prove to the populace that they were mere pawns being exploited by the Opposition lobby: “a scarcity here [...] has rendered the present moment the fittest time to push forward our Jacobin plans here, by propagating our levelling principles of reform, in riots” (4) whilst agronomists like Arthur Young delivered lectures to the poor, insisting that attacking mills would not increase the supply of bread (1793). A plethora of anonymous verses berated the lower classes in engaging ways:

*When with your country Friends your hours you pass,
And take, as oft you're wont, the copious glass,
When all grow mellow, if perchance you hear
That 'tis th' Engrossers make the corn so dear;
They must and will have bread; they've had enough
Of rice and Soup, and all such squasby stuff:
They'll help themselves: and strive by might and main
To be reveng'd on all such rogues in grain:
John swears he'll fight as long as he has breath,
'Twere better to be hang'd than starv'd to death:
He'll burn Squire Hoardum's garner, so he will,
Tuck up old Filchbag, and pull down his mill'.
Now when the Prong and Pitchfork they prepare
And all the elements of rustick war
[...]
Tell them what ills unlawful deeds attend,
Deeds, which in wrath begun, and sorrow end,
That burning barns, and pulling down a mill,
Will neither corn produce, nor bellies fill” (Thompson, 1991: 232)³*

¹Disastrous harvests and the war led to food prices soaring in the 1790s. The price of wheat went up from sixty shillings and six pence a quarter in 1794 to ninety-one shillings and eight pence in 1795 and to one hundred and forty two shillings and ten pence in 1800. See Frank McLynn, *Crime and Punishment in Eighteenth-century England*, London: Routledge, 1989: 337.

²Home Office Papers 42/50, George to Master of the Rolls, 13 and 16 March 1800; Home Office Papers 42/49, Walford to Morice, 27 April 1800; Home Office Papers 42/55, Notice Undated December 1800, quoted in Randall, 2006: 227.

³For more contemporary responses to the scarcity of bread, see Author of *An Appeal to the Good Sense of the Higher and Wealthy Orders of the People, Striking Facts Addressed to Those Who Still Disbelieve in a Real Scarcity, and a Solemn Appeal to all who think Otherwise*, London: J. Hatchard, 1800; Anonymous, *Proceedings of the House of Commons, on the Eleventh day of December 1795, Respecting the High Price of Corn*, London: n. p., 1795, and Anonymous, *Facts for the Consideration of the Public at Large on the High Price of Meat, Shewing the Real Cause of the Same*, London: F. and C. Rivington, 1795. In the latter ‘the extreme dryness of the last summer – the uncommon floods that succeeded in the autumn – followed by the severest winter in the memory of man’ are pinned as the real causes for the scarcity of meat. *Facts for the Consideration of the Public at Large on the High Price of Meat*, p. 3.

The rhyme draws attention to the miserable conditions of the working classes. It marks a departure from writings that mythologized, and subsequently romanticized, poverty to diffuse resistance. A commendable example of the latter is a sermon by William Paley, which promotes Christian resignation by interpreting hunger as a blessing: “The rich [...] addict themselves to indulgence lose their relish. Their desires are dead. Their sensibilities are worn and tired” (Paley, 1793: 11-14). The verse in question moves away from this representation of frugality as “a pleasure” to highlight the sheer deprivation of the lower classes. The reference to “rice and Soup, and all such squashy stuff” immediately brings to mind numerous pamphlets such as *Useful Suggestions Favourable to the Comfort of the Labouring People, and of Decent Housekeepers* (1795), which seek to highlight the existence of staple foods other than bread (Colquhoun, 1795; Davies, 1795: 13; Farley, 1783; Carter, 1795: 130)¹. But the overarching didacticism “Tell them what ills unlawful deeds attend” only feeds into the dominant idea that the poor lack discernment. The verse ultimately dismisses resistance of any kind as “unlawful deeds”.

In a similar vein, Hannah More’s cheap repository tract of 1796, *The Riot; Or, Half a Loaf is Better Than No Bread*, counsels the masses to wait ‘patiently for the prices to fall’ and dismisses rioting as an effective measure (1796). The doggerel verse comprises a dialogue between Tom Hod and Jack Anvil; the latter effectively classifies initiative as “passion” and resistance as “sin”, which results in capital punishment:

*“So I’ll e’en wait a little till cheaper the bread,
For a mittimus hangs o’er each Rioter’s head;
And when of the two evils I’m asked which is best,
I’d rather be hungry than hang’d, I protest.*

Derry Down

*Quoth Tom, thou art right; If I rise I’m a Turk,
So he threw down the pitchfork, and went to his work”*

Her tract insists on inaction because the Church will “bear all wants of the weak”, “The Gentlefolk too will afford us supplies” and “the King and the Parliament manage the rest”. More’s insistent use of the collective pronoun “us” is effective; her pamphlet gains credibility by implicating her in the misery faced by the lower classes.

Her association of improvement with traditional charity continues in *The Cottage Cook* (1797) where she demonstrates how to reduce the consumption of white bread. The text depicts a widow, Mrs. Jones, instructing a lower-class woman to bake her own loaves of brown bread instead of buying small loaves of white bread from the market. The woman’s agreement, like Tom’s cheerful acceptance in *The Riot*, seems to validate the argument from below. Mrs. Jones’s *faux* maternalism actually provides an alternative based on accommodating the lack of bread, rather than resisting it. The verisimilitude of the pamphlet is dangerous because the domestic veneer is used to depoliticize the scarcity of bread. Mrs. Jones’s benign discourse, like Jack’s well-meant suggestions in *The Riot*, goes back to a traditional model of paternalistic benevolence that “typifies right-wing propaganda” (Sherman, 2001: 67).

Gillray engages with similar concerns in his print titled *The British Butcher Supplying John Bull with a Substitute for Bread* (1795), produced in the wake of the riots in June-July 1795, in response to the increasing scarcity of corn and bread in England. Unlike More, who never once mentions

¹In the late eighteenth century wheat’s association with food value was very strong. David Davies, an eighteenth-century pamphleteer, asserts that “wheaten bread” contains much more nourishment than barley bread and “is the only good thing of which they (poor people) can have a sufficiency”. Cookbooks by John Farley and Susannah Carter offered dozens of recipes for breads, cakes and pastries which could be made only with “the finest flour”. Following the shortage of wheat and corn, a number of pamphlets tried to dismantle this perception. In keeping with this, Colquhoun’s pamphlet highlights soup as a great source of nutrition and provides recipes of numerous soups which could be consumed without bread.

escalating prices as the reason for Jack's hunger in *The Riot*, Gillray immediately grounds his print within this particular socio-political crisis by virtue of two notices on the butcher's stall. These compare the rates of provisions against a common man's wages, demonstrating that the rate of meat and bread often surpassed an average journeyman's weekly wage. Billy the Butcher is offering a piece of meat to John Bull, who looks malnourished and starved, which is unusual with him (Hunt, 2003)¹. Here Gillray echoes pamphlets like *An Address to the Plain Sense of the People, on the Present High Price of Bread* which dwell on "the high price of wheaten bread, the ordinary food of a great part of the people" and insist there was "never was there a time when the poor man called more loudly for assistance" (Anonymous, 1800: 14). The lines at the bottom of Gillray's print explicate the butcher's advice to John Bull:

*"Since Bread is so dear (and you say you must eat)
For to save the expense you must live upon meat;
And as twelvecence the quartern can't pay for bread
Get a crown's worth of meat, – it will serve in its stead"*

Not only does the butcher sport a *bonnet rouge*, the piece of meat that he is offering to John Bull, the ubiquitous Everyman, also bears an uncanny resemblance to the most popular symbol of the Revolution: the cap of liberty. Following the Revolution, the Phrygian cap or *bonnet rouge* had become the most common symbol of popular radicalism in France. The prominence of the cap of liberty in Gillray's prints immediately politicizes the issue of hunger and links it inextricably to lower-class radicalism. Increasingly, the cap comes to bear an exclusive attachment to Jacobinism, as the symbol of French anarchy endangering the ordered liberty of Britain (Epstein, 1989: 75-118).²

Ostensibly, then, this print suggests that the rise in food prices is a direct consequence of French revolutionary principles being promulgated in England. But a clever pun on "crown" in the Butcher's ultimatum "A Crown, take it or leave it" drives the viewer to believe that a baffled John Bull needs to accept the *bonnet rouge* to satiate his hunger; the acceptance of Republican principles holds the promise of prosperity. It is this complexity that animates Gillray's graphic satires and differentiates them from the array of other texts that address the lack of food either by censuring increased food prices and straightforwardly demanding reform or by depicting a passive, repentant Everyman figure, dependent on charity for sustenance.

In this way, Gillray's prints can be described as hybrid constructions characterized by a dialogic play of multiple, even conflicting ideologies. The dialogic interaction ensures that these images are layered, and subsequently endowed with multiple connotations. This chapter argues that the "Loyalism" depicted by Gillray's visual rhetoric provides a marked departure from the expository prose of authors and pamphleteers such as Hannah More, Arthur Young, and William Paley. The layered nature of his prints betrays the co-existence of varied ideological planes, which are important because they result in diffusing the intention of the caricaturist. As a result, the print is characterized by a complex ideological vacillation, which betrays the temperament of the age.

This dynamic is evident in Gillray's print titled *The Tree of Liberty* (1798) where Charles James Fox is conjured as the biblical serpent trying to tempt John Bull to taste the "nice napple" of re-

¹The figure of John Bull gained prominence in the early eighteenth century through John Arbuthnot's *The History of John Bull* (1712). Tamara L. Hunt argues that the allegorical figure of Britannia was replaced by John Bull as a national symbol during the revolutionary decade. John Bull emerged as the spokesman for the British public and was used widely to depict Loyalist allegories. In Gillray's prints the John Bull figure is mostly rotund, often monstrously fat.

²In the century before the French Revolution, the cap of liberty was often used to represent British patriotic sentiment. But during the French Revolution, it frequently accompanied the tri-colour cockade and became part of the uniform for *sans-culottes*. Transformed into the *bonnet rouge*, it became inextricably linked to the cause of the French Revolution in the British imagination.

form. The Tree of Opposition is rooted in “envy”, “ambition” and “disappointment” with a *bonnet rouge* adorning its branches, which are inscribed with “The Rights of Man” and “profligacy”. The fruits, in Gillray’s prints, are labelled “murder”, “revolution”, “conspiracy”, “democracy”, “treason”, “slavery”, “plunder”, and “atheism”; a web of references linking Republicanism to a series of evils. The Tree of Justice in the background boasts of roots and branches inscribed with the words “king”, “lord”, and “religion” and its fruits include “happiness”, “security”, and “freedom”. Prints such as these seek to clarify complex political issues so as to simplify choices and decisions. The satire is effective because it draws upon an available body of symbols. Here Gillray derives his imagery from J. A. Russell’s sermon of 1795, where France is described as ‘a tree whose branches spread far and wide, and appear blooming and flourishing to the eye, but the whole trunk is decayed and rotten, and is fast approaching to its Fall’ (11). In addition to religious discourses, Gillray also draws upon popular depictions of the contrast between France and Britain such as the 1793 song *The Contrast. English Liberty, French liberty – Which is Best?*:

*“True Britons [...] are free,
And know Liberty’s not to be found on a tree.*

Derry down, & c.

*[...]
We know of no Despots, we’ve nothing to fear,
For this new-fangled nonsense will never do here.*

Derry down, & c.

*Then stand by the Church, and the King, and the Laws,
The Old Lion still has his teeth and his claws;
Let Britain still rule in the midst of her waves,
And chastise all those foes who dare call her sons slaves.*

Derry down, & c.” (Songster, 1793: 6)

Gillray’s symbolism replicates Russell’s image of an ostensibly healthy tree that is decaying from within. His John Bull figure is fat, ugly and naive, but is also smart enough to resist the rotten fruit hanging from the Tree of Opposition. But, unlike the simple dichotomy created between France and Britain by the song, John Bull’s speech here does not dismiss Republican ideals as “new-fangled nonsense”; instead, it testifies to the allure of the views of the Opposition “Very nice Napple indeed! – but my pokes are full of Pippins from off t’other Tree: and besides, I hates Medlars, they’r so damn’d rotten they’ll gee me the Guts-ach for all their vine looks!”

Clearly, Gillray’s caricatural form allows for a multiplicity of ideas to co-exist within one striking image¹. The incipient counter-discourses ensure that Gillray’s caricatures foreground the cultural attributes of counter-revolutionary propaganda, but they also testify to the changing social fabric, governmental oppression, and carry a tacit admission that a society is in the making. These prints come to epitomise the interaction between a number of ideologies and multiple schools of thought. This does not mean that Gillray’s depictions of political events are neutral. They are always entangled in an intricate web of tensions and need to be understood in the context of their publication and circulation. Each image is embedded in a particular political, social and historical context, which must be unpacked in order to render it comprehensible. They exist in a dialogue with both revolutionary and counter-revolutionary prose of the period. For most critics they achieve cognitive authority because of their capability to refer to a certain political or social event, but I intend to offer an interpretative framework, which highlights the polyphonic narra-

¹This reading pertains to Gillray’s deployment of the caricatural form and cannot be broadened to include the genre of Loyalist graphic satire in its entirety. For an unequivocal denunciation of Republican ideals, see Rowlandson’s print *The Contrast* (1792).

tivity of his prints (Jameson, 2002: 60-61)¹. This chapter will adopt an inter-disciplinary perspective to explore the myriad ways in which the metaphor of food is deployed by Gillray to examine the complex nature of counter-revolutionary graphic satire by looking closely at the images of eating and drinking and their numerous permutations and combinations, including starvation, hunger, indulgence, fasting, excretion, and cannibalism, in order to investigate the ways in which Gillray's plates engage closely with political events of the day and distil those events into ostensibly accessible graphic images.

It is important to note that the inclusion of food in Gillray's oeuvre is not restricted to the depiction of riots. In a number of his prints he deploys the metaphor of hunger to articulate political concerns; politics and the imagery of food intersect to produce his wittiest and most complex prints. In his *Sans-Culottes, Feeding Europe with the Bread of Liberty* (1793), Gillray responds, in an ostensibly Loyalist fashion, to the French revolutionary regime's publicly stated intention of inciting revolution throughout Europe. Grotesque and ragged *sans-culottes* are shown dethroning the Pope in Italy, driving citizens out of their country in Germany and Prussia, and forcing bread, representative of liberty, on people in Holland and Savoy while they rob their victims at the same time. But the central space of the plate is reserved for England, for it is Britain's plight that concerns Gillray the most. In this central scene, Fox and Sheridan imitate their French compatriots, using bayonets to force John Bull to eat bread while picking his pockets. Their transformation into *sans-culottes* is near perfect except for a small detail, one which is often overlooked in popular readings of this print; whilst the other *sans-culottes* are thin, even emaciated, Charles Fox, the English *sans-culotte*, is still plump. Is the reader to believe that Gillray is hinting at an incipient hierarchy within the *sans-culottes* and pointing to the fact that even English radicals, who usually occupy the lowest rung(s) in Gillray's iconography, are better off than French *sans-culottes*?

Even as one speculates about the possibility of Fox's health being a covert marker of English superiority despite the fact that he has joined the ranks of the bestial French, Gillray ironises this very corpulence in his famous print titled *French Liberty, British Slavery* (1792). In this print, Gillray, like his contemporaries, seems to rely on a simple juxtaposition of a Frenchman and an Englishman. He points out the frenzied madness of French revolutionaries as compared with the prosperity of John Bull, who at the time of the Revolution represented the characteristics of the ordinary British citizen. On the left, a ragged, emaciated *sans-culotte* eats his dinner of green onions, to be followed by snails, exclaiming, "*O Sacre Dieu! - vat sing be de Liberte vive le Assemble Nationale! - no more Tax! No more Slavery! - all Free Citizen! Ha hah! By Gar how ve live! - ve Svim in de Milk & Honey!*". In contrast, a grossly fat Englishman sits carving his roast beef, with a tankard of ale on the table. However, he claims, "*Ah! This cursed Ministry! They'll ruin us with their damn'd Taxes! Why, Zounds! - they're making Slaves of us all, and Starving us to Death!*".

Gillray's juxtaposition of the scrawny, disgusting Frenchman and the well-fed Englishman relies on a British myth reproduced by prints such as Hogarth's *O The Roast Beef of Old England* (1748). Whilst Gillray inherits the dualist paradigm from earlier caricaturists like Hogarth, the iconography is reconfigured in the face of the French Revolution and Republican threats to the status quo. He introduces symbols such as the bright cockade on the Frenchman's hat, which identify the starving figure as a proponent of the Revolution. The print also underlines the event's linguistic significance by pointing to the semantic changes in political terms such as "liberty", "slavery" and "freedom".

Another change is visible in the Englishman's room, which includes a statue of Britannia, who has a sack of money instead of a shield. The rest of the furnishings in the room are in striking contrast to the bare walls, floor, and broken windows of the Frenchman's room. A sword lies

¹This theoretical idea has its basis in Fredric Jameson's assertion that the literary text comprises of 'three concentric frameworks' which function as "distinct semantic horizons" and his belief in the narrativity of the historical process itself. This is closely related to the central premise of my thesis; studying the caricaturist as a historian who uses the visual discourse to transpose history onto prints.

atop a violin, suggesting Liberty's abnegation of aesthetic skills for militaristic pursuits. The royal blue of the Briton's clothes seems to symbolise masculinity which can be contrasted with the pink of the Frenchman's attire: the effeminate pink articulates anxieties of the seductive allure of French models of masculinity including the fop and the libertine, both reviled in the literature of the time. Gillray's unmistakable xenophobia is comparable to the lurid Loyalist propaganda produced by contemporaries like Cruikshank (Hobsbawm, 1990: 91)¹. But unlike the proliferating Loyalist depictions, Gillray's satire does not stop at the Frenchman. He goes on to ironise British identity by depicting the repulsive corpulence of the meat-eating Englishman who is blotched with drink. The plump John Bull figure has often been seen as a representative of English prosperity, but Gillray's Englishman is obese. His greed is evident in the way he has tucked the tablecloth as a napkin and pulled what seems to be the armchair towards the table. Interestingly, his eyes belie this gluttonous instinct. His gaze seems satiated for he is looking not at the table but at something beyond the space in which he is situated. So is the Frenchman. Despite the apparent line that separates the prints, the fact that both the Englishman and the Frenchman are looking into smoke, seems to coalesce the two sides of the print and unifies what appears to be a diptych. This introduces a disruptive sub-stratum to this propagandist print. It seems to suggest that there are more similarities than dissimilarities between avowedly "anarchic" Frenchmen and "orderly" Englishmen.

This multivalence continues in *John Bull Taking a Luncheon; – or – British Cooks, Cramming Old Grumble Gizzard, with Bonne-Cherie* (1798). The print celebrates several British naval victories, the most famous being Nelson's defeat of the French navy at Aboukir Bay at the mouth of the Nile on 1 August 1798. Here a plump John Bull gorges on French warships, served up to him by Nelson on the right. Other naval heroes include Lord Howe (to Nelson's right) and Admiral Duncan (on the far right), who defeated a Franco-Dutch expedition to Ireland. But in Gillray's characteristic style this celebration of British victories is not unambiguous; as the title informs the reader, John Bull, the "Old Grumble Gizzard" actually complains gracelessly as he is forced on numerous naval victories: "What! more Frigasees? Why you sons o' bitches, you, where do 'ye think I shall find room to stow all you bring in?". The overflowing pot of British stout kept on the floor reiterates the idea of excess. Outside the window, Fox and Sheridan retreat hastily, hinting at John Bull's insatiable greed: "O Curse his Guts, he'll take a chop at Us, next". His protruding belly in these two prints emphasises that the Englishman's condition was immeasurably better than the Frenchman's, and yet this very prosperity is reconfigured as monstrous obesity by Gillray and eventually comes to bear the brunt of his satire. John Bull's corporeality is used to depict, and subsequently ironise, Britain's political status. The polyphonic caricatural form and Gillray's allusive ideological affiliations both lend ambivalence to his prints which prevent them from propounding absolute belief in "the virtues of tradition and continuity" and a love for the English constitution (Hobsbawm, 1990: 292). The proliferation of meaning in his caricatures seems to be circumscribed only by decisive coordinates such as his Francophobia.

This ambiguity gives rise to complex prints like *Pig's Meat; - Or - the Swine Flogged Out of the Farm Yard* (1798), which depicts Pitt and Dundas driving the Opposition Pigs, representatives of the "swinish multitude", out of John Bull's farmyard. The text under the image provides a moral lesson on the ramifications of greed. Gillray's depiction of the pigs is based on Burke's famous description of the lower classes as a "swinish multitude" in *Reflections on the Revolution in France*.

¹See *French Happiness, English Misery* (1793). Cruikshank's *French Happiness, English Misery* contrasts four prosperous and content Englishmen with a group of emaciated Frenchmen fighting over a single frog. Francophobia was bound to be an increasingly potent factor in eighteenth century Britain for 'there is no more effective way of bonding together the disparate sections of restless peoples than to unite them again outsiders'.

“Nothing is more certain, than that our manners, our civilization, and all the good things which are connected with manners and with civilization, have, in this European world of ours, depended for ages upon two principles; and were indeed the result of both combined; I mean the spirit of a gentleman, and the spirit of religion. The nobility and the clergy, the one by profession, the other by patronage, kept learning in existence, even in the midst of arms and confusions, and whilst governments were rather in their causes than formed. Learning paid back what it received to nobility and to priesthood, and paid it with usury, by enlarging their ideas, and by furnishing their minds. Happy if they had all continued to know their indissoluble union, and their proper place! Happy if learning, not debauched by ambition, had been satisfied to continue the instructor, and not aspired to be the master! Along with its natural protectors and guardians, learning will be cast into the mire, and trodden down under the boofs of a swinish multitude” (1790: 117).

Burke’s rhetorical delineation is based on a series of prior references to swine. They are used to represent ingratitude as early as the Bible: ‘Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you’ (Matthew 7:6). Later literary works endow the word with additional connotations of over-indulgence. Milton’s *Comus* (1634), a masque written in honour of chastity, uses the word ‘swinish’ to suggest Comus’ sexual pleasure and intemperance:

“for swinish gluttony
Ne’er looks to heav’n amidst his gorgeous feast,
But with besotted base ingratitude
Crams, and blasphemes his feeder” (1637: 27).

The word continued to have negative connotations well into the eighteenth century. “Swinish” is defined as “slovenly, boorish in manner” by Nathan Bailey’s *Universal Etymological English Dictionary* (1759) and “gluttonous, greedy, selfish” by Thomas Dyche’s *A New General English Dictionary* (1777). But it is a 1789 tract, *Glimpses of the Dark Ages*, published in London by the Religious Tract society, which first uses the term “swinish multitude”. In this tract the phrase evokes the hordes of pigs infesting Parisian streets. Burke’s picture of a “debauched” mob, determined to trample “natural” hierarchies borrows heavily from such material. But he markedly politicizes his representation. He uses the term as a basis for creating a continuum on the one hand between the aristocracy, religion and order; and on the other, democracy, atheism and anarchy. This is done with a specific hegemonic purpose of defending the hierarchies propagated by the Establishment.

The radical democratization of the Public Sphere in the revolutionary decade ensured that Burke’s response was immediately denounced by a number of pamphlets and tracts that were circulated in response to his politically pointed categorization of the populace as “swinish”. A number of them like the anonymously printed *Rights of Swine. An Address to the Poor* drew attention to the misery of the lower classes: “Thousands of honest and industrious people in Great Britain are literally starving for want of Bread” (1794: 1). Others, like ballad writer R. Thompson’s *To the Public, Alias the “Swinish Multitude”*, adopted a caustic tone to mock what they saw as Burke’s disregard of the needs of the masses: “[W]ill you never believe you are happy [...]. Can you not believe that your hunger, and thrift, are gratified, unless you eat and drink? [...] O! What political unbelief is this? [...] What! will you not believe the King himself, and all the royal family?” (1794: 1).

Thompson’s mock-horror turns each one of Burke’s assumptions on its head. This attack is amplified by two of the most important responses to Burke’s *Reflections*: Thomas Spence’s *Pig’s Meat* (1793) and Daniel Isaac Eaton’s *Politics for the People: or, a Salmagundy for Swine* (1794-95). A verse on the title page of the second volume of Eaton’s pamphlet uses the mock-epic style to great effect:

*“The praise of him, who talk’d so big
For training up one learned Pig,
Is far below, friend Daniel, thine!
The Feast of Words, which you supply
To your illuminating Sty, e,
Makes herds of literary Swine”*

This short verse, recited by a “spare rib”, mocks the widespread Loyalist dissatisfaction at the unprecedented circulation at this period of cheap printed material, which led to an unparalleled social penetration and diffusion of knowledge (Thompson, 1963: 621)¹. The Attorney General Archibald Macdonald’s response, recorded by numerous pamphlets documenting the trial of Thomas Paine’s *Rights of Man*, typifies the conservative backlash against this phenomenon:

“But when I found that another publication was ushered into the world, that in all shapes was, with an industry inconceivable, circulated, either personally or locally, and was thrust into the hands of parties of all descriptions, that even children’s sweetmeats were wrapped with portions of it, and all the industry, such as I described, to obtrude and force it on that part of the public who cannot correct as they go along; I thought it behoved me, on the earliest occasion, to put a charge on record against the author of that book.”

The accusation that “even children’s sweetmeats” were being wrapped in the pages of Paine’s book underlines the extent of his anxiety. This explains his use of the word “thrust”, which is deployed to suggest the forced indoctrination of the “ignorant” and “credulous” lower classes (Browne, 1810: 298-315). His disapproval is in direct contrast with Eaton’s and Spence’s endorsement of such dissemination of knowledge. This is evident in their professed motive of making “herds of literary swine” by providing the masses with a “feast of words”. Spence’s *Pig’s Meat* is an anthology that combines biblical passages, radical tracts demanding the freedom of the press, *The Analytical’s* review of *Rights of Man*, satirical songs written to the patriotic tunes of *Hearts of Oak*, *Rule Britannia*, and *God Save the King*, a collection of passages from the chapbook tradition and excerpts of works by authors such as Shakespeare, Goldsmith, Barlow, Cromwell, Harrington, Milton, Hume, Locke, Berkeley, Swift, Tacitus, D’Alembert, Paine, Richard Price, Priestley, Johnson’s *Dictionary* and segments of the new French Constitution. All of this has been collected, the magazine announces, “by Poor Man’s Advocate, in the course of reading for more than twenty years”. It is intended “to promote among the Labouring Part of Mankind Ideas of their Station, of their Importance, and of their Rights”, and to convince them “that their forlorn condition has not been entirely overlooked and forgotten, nor their just Cause unpleaded, neither by their Maker nor by the most enlightened of Men in all Ages” (Spence, 1793: 1). It also includes a question-and-answer version of the *Rights of Man* and a serialized account of Erskine’s defence speech in the trial of the book, all substantiating what Spence pins down as the central point of the defence: “Every man, not intending to mislead and to confound, but seeking to enlighten others with what his own reason and conscience, however erroneously, dictate to him as truth, may address himself to the universal reason of a whole nation either upon the subject of governments in general, or upon that of his own particular country.” (168)

Spence’s *Pig’s Meat* questions the exclusionary logic of the public sphere and dismisses Loyalist dissatisfaction at the growing plebeian counter-culture. Instead it stresses the need to educate the lower classes. Nothing is exempt from Spence’s satirical eye. He exposes the greed and hypocrisy involved in ostensibly sacred customs, and dismantles political and social hierarchies through *carnivalesque* literary strategies. By offering a polyphonic product, Spence succeeds in adding a political

¹E. P. Thompson estimates that 200,000 cheap six penny editions of Paine’s *Right of Man* were in circulation within a few months. The phenomenon was by no means limited to radical texts. Hannah More’s Loyalist Cheap Repository Tracts are estimated to have sold more than double the number of copies of Paine’s book.

dimension to the subversive undertones of chapbook literature, which tended to remain sceptical about religion and social order without politicizing this anarchic spirit. This plurality of voices which foregrounds a more inclusive social vision gains importance when compared to the conservative undertones of a number of anti-Loyalist accounts of the period. John Gale Jones's *Address to the Nation* at the London Corresponding Society meeting on 29 June 1795 epitomises the radical reluctance to embrace plebeians. Jones advocates peaceful action and condemns violent resistance of any kind:

"Are we BRITONS, and is not LIBERTY our BIRTH-RIGHT! There is no Power on Earth (that) shall silence the Voice of an Injured Nation, or prevent the Progress of Free Enquiry! – Bring forth your Whips and Racks, ye Ministers of Vengeance! – Produce your Scaffolds and your Executioners! – Erect Barracks in every Street, and Bastilles in every Corner! – Persecute and punish every innocent Individual! but you will not succeed! [...] The Holy Blood of Patriotism, streaming from the fevering Axe, shall carry with it infant seeds of Liberty, and Men may perish! – but Truth shall be eternal [...] famine stalks the streets, and haggard Wretchedness assails you in every shape; mark, Citizens, the shameful negligence and unfeeling conduct of those who hold that power which ought to be intrusted to none but your real Representatives" (emphasis and italics – author's own); (Anonymous, 1795d: 6).

Jones is dismissive of the government and his speech stresses on the need for "real" representatives, but his demonization of the enlightened multitude mirrors Loyalist propaganda of the time. The influence of popular counter-revolutionary propaganda on a "radical" luminary like Jones goes a long way in suggesting that "Jacobin", "anti-Jacobin", "Loyalist", "radical" and "reactionary" ceased to be water-tight categories during these politically tumultuous decades.

Unease with the concept of a plebeian public sphere can frequently be detected in the speeches and writings of luminaries who were in favour of reform. A young Coleridge echoes this in his description of the English crowd:

"Sufficiently possessed of natural Sense to despise the Priest, and of natural Feeling to hate the Oppressor, they listen only to the inflammatory harangues of some mad headed Enthusiast, and imbibe from them poison, not food; rage, not liberty. Unilluminated by philosophy and stimulated to a lust of revenge by aggravated wrongs, they would make the altar of freedom stream with blood, while the grass grew in the desolated halls of justice" (1795: 9).

Coleridge's professedly anti-Burkean agenda is undercut by his detrimental characterization of the lower classes as irrational creatures wholly governed by their senses. He might not validate the aristocracy or clergy as custodians of the populace, but he echoes the conservative lobby in his stark dismissal of radical nationalism. Ultimately, his pleading for the masses, and not to them, disenfranchises the lower classes and veers dangerously close to More's model of paternalistic benevolence.

Eaton's *Politics for the People* offers a strong criticism of this tendency. The author adopts a satirical voice with the same radical effect as *Pig's Meat* in the pamphlet *The Pernicious Effects of the Art of Printing Upon Society Exposed* (1793). In an entertaining passage, Eaton expresses mock horror at the impossibility of governing with unquestioned authority following the overwhelming expansion of print culture: "The lower orders begin to have ideas of rights, as men – to think that one man is as good as another – that society at present is founded upon false principles [...] the scum of the earth, the swinish multitude, talking of their rights! And insolently claiming, nay almost demanding, that political liberty shall be the same to all [...] what audacity" (1794-1795: 9).

Eaton's compilation of "high" and "low" literary sources mock-ventriloquises in order to parody and ridicule establishment cant. This intention can be traced even within the titular

“Salmagundi for Swine”, a witty riposte to Burke “swinish multitude”.¹

Spence’s and Eaton’s influence is evident in Gillray’s choice of a title for the print under consideration. The print seems Loyalist in intent. But the dismay on the faces of the “pigs”, coupled with the whips in the hands of the ministers, underlines the coercion exercised by the representatives of the state in a bid to check a burgeoning plebeian counter-culture. It would not be an overestimation to propose Gillray’s print as a visual accompaniment to Spence’s and Eaton’s literary works². The presence of this contentious sub-stratum ensures that this caricature cannot be read unambiguously as a potent polemical weapon, produced to reiterate hegemonic beliefs at a key historical moment. Rather, the image amalgamates multifarious materials into striking images and the resultant ideological hybridity challenges established hegemonic discourses.³

This newness is illustrated in Gillray’s derision of the gentry in *Substitutes for Bread* (1795), which alludes to the debate regarding the Corn Laws. Disastrous harvests forced the government to urge the populace to eat things other than bread. Here the heads of state substitute bread with fish, wine, champagne, venison and roast beef amongst other delicacies (Sherman, 2001: 48).⁴ Everyone at the table is busy gorging on gold guineas whilst the mob milling outside is dressed in tatters. On the right, William Pitt sits atop a locked chest labelled “treasury” and in the foreground a huge sack, which claims to be the “Product of New Taxes upon John Bull’s property”, is displayed with a small basket full of potato bread, to be given away in charity.⁵ A notice stating: “Proclamation of a General Fast to avert the impending Famine” is the final nail in the proverbial coffin; the *mise-en-scene* visualises the stark disparity between the promises made by the leaders of the state and their actions. Gillray uses the metaphor of gluttony cleverly to suggest the immense, insatiable greed of the politicians. Gillray’s representation here echoes Paine’s *Rights of Man*, for both construe the populace as “a vast mass of mankind [...] degradedly thrown into the background of the human picture, to bring forward, with greater glare, the puppet-show of the state and aristocracy” (1791: 35). In fact, the immediacy of Gillray’s image, the brevity of the caricatural form, and its deployment of easily recognizable symbols make it more convincing than Paine’s literary pamphlet.

¹Salmagundi is a salad dish, which originated in early seventeenth-century England. It consists of cooked meats, seafood, vegetables, fruit, leaves, nuts and flowers, oil, vinegar and spices. These disparate ingredients can be mixed together, arranged in layers or geometrical designs on a plate. The lack of a definite recipe allows the cook to experiment. The titular ‘Salmagundi for Swine’ uses the metaphor of food for the assortment of literary tracts by authors such as Bolingbroke, Swift and radicals like Godwin and Thelwall which are included in the collection.

²Even within a broader context, Gillray’s profession itself reiterates this idea. Loyalist propaganda maligned cheap texts primarily for dismantling the idea of a traditional, exclusive public sphere. But unlike earlier artists who sold their work to patrons, caricaturists were associated with publishers who aimed at reaching the maximum number of customers for maximum profit. For those who could not afford the two-shilling price tag on a coloured print, print-sellers created colourful window displays, allowing passers-by to share the joke free of cost. Thus these visual images, irrespective of their ideological intent, epitomise the growth of a vast, all-inclusive public sphere. For a lengthy engagement with the growth of the Public Sphere see *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*.

³It is interesting to note that Gillray uses revolutionary colours (red and blue) to dress the statesmen in this print. This highlights the way in which the visual vocabulary of the Revolution percolates in Loyalist caricature and ends up lending additional meanings, perhaps unintended by the caricaturist, to a print. In any case, Gillray’s choice of a covert representation seems to be a conscious survival strategy; Spence was charged with treason and imprisoned in Newgate without trial from 17 May 1794 to 22 December 1794 but Gillray continued to draw throughout his life.

⁴Gillray uses the caricatural form but his representation is rooted in fact. Sandra Sherman points out that in popular cookery manuals such as R. House’s *Family Cookery, Combining Elegance and Economy* (1800) bread is peripheral to the up-scale diets they describe, used only as a side dish with duck, beef, lamb, venison etc.

⁵William Pitt, a favourite of George III ever since his appointment as the youngest Prime Minister at the age of twenty-four. This led to his influential position, which Gillray depicts in the print. But Pitt’s government borrowed more than £156 million in loans between 1793 and 1796 to fund the war with France, which destroyed his earlier public popularity. When going to open parliament in October 1795, George III was greeted with cries of ‘Bread’, ‘Peace’ and ‘no Pitt’. On 27 April 1797, Pitt submitted a record budget of £42 million, attributing over three-quarters of it to the war effort. Following this he increased taxes, which led to a public backlash. For a detailed study of Pitt’s political life, see William Hague, *William Pitt the Younger*, London: Harper Perennial, 2005.

The effectiveness of graphic satire as a popular cultural form is further demonstrated by witty prints such as *John Bull and His Dog Faithful* (1796) where Gillray exposes the predatory nature of the ministers. Here John Bull has lost a hand and a leg and is weighed down by a huge bag of debts into which William Pitt has led him. The size of John Bull's bag is suggestive of the monumental national debt England was under at the end of the eighteenth century. Pitt is chewing on a bone even as he leads John Bull into further debt. But Gillray does not stop at satirizing Pitt's greed. Fox, on John Bull's right, is seen barking at Pitt whilst Sheridan, to his left, bites the wrong leg. Charles Grey, the greyhound, is eyeing his clothes.¹ John Bull himself is wearing ragged clothes, is limp and blind, very close to a ditch.²

Such complaints proliferated in the wake of the growing scarcity of food in England. But a number of statesmen continued to gloss over the acute shortage of food. In his *Thoughts and Details on Scarcity, Originally Presented to the Right Hon. William Pitt* (1795), Burke argues that starvation is God's will and nothing, be it charity from the upper classes or governmental regulations, can alleviate it completely. By exempting the rich and the government, Burke obliges nobody to provide food to the lower classes. In fact, he markedly omits the acknowledged scarcity when he insists that the poor are happy because they have better food, which is proven from "the known difficulty of contenting them with anything but bread made of the finest flour and meat of the first quality" (1800: 5). In this print Gillray rejects these claims completely in his depiction of a malnourished John Bull and a canine William Pitt. Instead, he echoes the opinions expressed by populist pamphlets such as Alexander Dalrymple's *The Poor Man's Friend* (1795), which berates William Pitt's strategy of mixing maize and barley with wheat to reduce costs, and insists that the poorest of Englishmen have a "right to eat good wheaten bread" (4). Moreover, Gillray's deployment of the comic form allows him to go a step further by depicting the ministers of state and the leaders of the Opposition as animals, not even human anymore. The range of techniques available to the caricaturist allows for witty exaggeration and a degree of impudence absent from the literary pamphlet.

In print after print, Gillray resorts to the metaphor of food to suggest the greed of the heads of state. In an early print *Monstrous Craws, at a New Coalition Feast* (1787), he refers to the partial reconciliation between the royal couple and the Prince of Wales following the suspension of his massive debts by William Pitt. Queen Charlotte (1744-1818) is depicted as an ugly hag and King George III (1738-1820) is dressed like a woman.³ All three have craws resembling giant breasts attached to their necks. They can be seen devouring a huge pot full of gold coins, which is inscribed with the words "John Bull's blood". Despite their acquisitiveness, the Prince of Wales' goitre is remarkably empty, underscoring his boundless appetite.

The Prince of Wales continues to be satirized for his dissipation in *A Voluptuary under the Horrors of Digestion* (1792). Here, a satiated Prince picks at his teeth with a fork. His protruding belly and undone waistcoat foreground his over-indulgence. A number of signifiers encoded in the print suggest his gluttony and debauchery; his trousers (three of the five buttons have come undone), gnawed bones, empty bottles of wine, the tanker of port on the table, pills for venereal disease behind him, and the crossed fork and knife in the background which parody his Coat of Arms. Unpaid bills under a pot and more unpaid bills in the foreground provide proof of mount-

¹Charles Grey (1764-1845), MP for Northumberland, Fox's follower and Pitt's critic. In 1792, Grey joined a group of pro-reform Whigs.

²Gillray's emphasis on dogs as the animal of choice could be influenced by the government's imposition of a controversial tax on dogs in 1796. The supporters of the bill insisted that dogs could be considered at par with other taxable luxuries whilst the opponents of the tax protested against this objectification and focussed on the mutual affection that brings humans and animals together. The print-maker could be hinting at the fact that the government was leaving no stoned unturned to glean money from the masses. For detailed information on the contemporary reactions to the tax see Lynn Festa, 'Person, Animal, Thing: The 1796 Dog Tax and the Right to Superfluous Things', in *Eighteenth-Century Life*, 33, 2009: 1-44.

³The Queen's representation is particularly cruel as she ravenously stuffing her mouth with gold using two ladles and thrusting her body forward in sexual abandon. For a detailed discussion of Gillray's representations of Queen Charlotte, see Chapter 3 of this thesis – 'Body/Bawdy Inscriptions: Gillray's Representations of Women'.

ing debts whilst the presence of the dice confirms his gambling habits.

On the other end of the spectrum is its complementary print, *Temperance Enjoying a Frugal Meal* (1792), which, like a number of Gillray's plates, highlights the miserliness of the royal family. Here the king is eating a semi-boiled egg while the Queen crams salad into her mouth. They are drinking plain water, the king's trousers are patched, the fireplace is empty, and so is the frame in the background. Ironically, the border of the frame reads: "The Triumph of Benevolence".

This depiction of the frugality of the royal family is similar in intent to *Anti-Saccharites, – or – John Bull and His Family Leaving Off the Use of Sugar* (1792). In this telling visual, the King and Queen boycott sugar from the West Indies in a bid to oppose slavery and the Queen tries to convince their daughters of the same. Ostensibly, both these prints seem to replicate a Paleyesque understanding of hunger as a blessing and frugality as "a pleasure" (Paley, 1793: 11). This mythologizing of hunger in order to diffuse threats of the impending famine is repeated in a series of religious sermons preached on the days of national fasts in England between 1793 and 1795. These fasts were promoted by the King as a way to cleanse the body, but this period of ritualistic abstinence essentially served to propagate reactionary dictums. For instance, Ebenzer Verax, in his sermon delivered on the day of the nationwide general fast on 25 February 1795, requests the populace to:

"[K]eep your bodies unpolluted with food this day; humble yourselves before the King, and pray as he has commanded you [...]. Pray for the utter destruction, extirpation, and damnation, of that impious, and sacrilegious nation, who have shed royal blood. That their children may be delivered upto famine, and their blood be poured out by force of the sword. Let their wives be bereaved of their children, and be widows; and their men be put to death" (8).

These sermons need to be read as key moments of national expression because they endow the idea of starvation with patriotic overtones. Ritual starvation is not only recommended, it is necessary to foreground the solidarity of English citizens and overcome Britain's problems. Essentially, the religious rhetoric of these sermons helps to dilute resistance in a fashion similar to Loyalist pamphlets of the period. This is evident in Noah Hill's characterization of ministers as "sent of God, faithful to their trust, whom nothing can withdraw from their allegiance to the son of God" in his sermon on the day of the general fast. He goes on to express his disgust at the Opposition:

"What an idle, senseless boat is Love of Country, and attachment to the British Constitution, in those who are devoted to pleasure, or live in a state of open, or secret rebellion against the great Lord of Heaven and Earth! They are the enemies from whom Britain has most to fear. Their sins are pregnant with every national evil. They distract our Councils [...] cut short the staff of bread, undermine the Constitution, shake the pillars of the state and put everytbing to dreadful hazard [...] Amen" (*italics author's own*); (1795: 27, 51-52).

Sermon after sermon relies on creating a simplistic dichotomy between the Establishment and the Opposition in order to instil 'patriotism' in the minds of the ordinary British citizen. John Aikin's *Discourse Intended for the Approaching Fast Day* (1793) exalts the government so much that it becomes synonymous with Britain itself. He summons the people "on this day for the express purpose of humbling ourselves before the Maker for the sins of the nation" (4). Clearly, the focus is not on individual, but national faults. All these discourse endow the ordinary citizen with agency; he too can play a part in transforming England back into a prosperous and bountiful country again. Ironically, this agency manifests itself in the form of conscious abstinence.

Even when the sermons are not suggesting starvation or promoting hunger, they emphasise the importance of being niggardly. Anna Barbauld's admonitory *Civic Sermons* are addressed only to "you who have a love of order [...] who, are accustomed to say to yourselves, I will not

buy strong drink today, because my children will have no bread tomorrow” (1792: 8).

Gillray almost replicates Barbauld’s disciplinary discourse, but his ostensibly Loyalist celebration of stinginess is undercut by the fact that he chooses not to highlight the altruism of the royal couple. Instead, he pokes fun at their greed; the Queen’s primary reason for boycotting sugar is to add money to their personal coffers: “O my dear Creatures, do but Taste it: you can’t think how nice it is without Sugar: – and then consider how much work you’ll save the Poor Blackeemoors? by leaving off the use of it! – and above all remember how much expence it will save your Poor Papa! – O it’s a charming, cooling Drink”.

The corpulence of the King further highlights his avaricious nature and provides a basis for gauging the intent of the print-maker. A far cry from mainstream religious sermons, Gillray comes close to depicting what William Richards articulates in a radical pamphlet of 1795 intended to question the very premise of a general fast. Dismissing the royal proclamation of the fast as “blowing a trumpet to call the witness and admire how very pious and devout” one is, Richards insists: “Religion has been too often sadly degraded, and rendered subservient to the unworthiest and vilest of purposes [...] it is seldom anything else but a piece of political machinery to promote their own perverse and crooked designs” (4, 16).

Gillray’s brazen critique of the royal family reverberates with this understanding of self-interest being the motivating factor behind royal family’s penny-pinching habits.

These conflicting “heteroglot waves from all sides” underline the fact that there is no single overarching ideological conception in Gillray’s Loyalist prints (Bakhtin, 1981: 307). This play of ideologies ensures a layered and complex depiction of the nature of popular sentiment in Britain during the 1790s, very different from the monolithic politics of traditional historiographies. “There is a lot going on here that the conventional histories of those years seldom accommodate” (Gatrell, 2007: 14). The power of Gillray’s iconography to undermine the legitimacy of the monarchy as a social, moral, and political system is proven when he extends the metaphor of eating to its utmost and uses scatological imagery as an artistic trope. *The French Invasion; – or – John Bull, Bombarding the Bum Boats* (1793) provides a scatological embodiment of nationalism with George III shitting a number of tiny gunboats on France. The King here embodies John Bull, so the image is ultimately patriotic, but the patriotism is reduced to a capacity for directing excrement at the enemies. The British Declaration, which is part of the matter that the king excretes, refers to the port of Toulon then occupied by the British, which would be given back to France on the restitution of its monarchy.

This is especially interesting because a strikingly anti-British image in Jacques Louis David’s oeuvre, *Le Gouvernement anglais sous la forme d’une figure horrible et chimérique* (“The English Government in the Form of a Wild and Horrible Figure”, 1794), borrows heavily from Gillray’s representation of George III. The king forms the anus of David’s titular “horrible figure” shitting, quite literally, from his mouth.

In an equally gross print titled *Midas, Transmuting All to Gold / Paper* (1797) Gillray portrays Pitt as Midas, straddling the Bank of England, shitting and spewing forth paper money, thereby transforming the gold coins stuffed in his huge belly. The allusion is to Pitt’s mercenary motives behind the substitution of gold with paper money in the face of a shortage of bullion in the Bank of England, owing to the French invasion of Ireland and mounting war costs. Pitt’s stature, compared to the relatively miniscule figures of the Opposition on the left, underlines his increasingly influential position in England.

Gillray’s imagery here is starkly reminiscent of pamphlets being written by members of the radical lobby, especially Thomas Beddoes, who, in his tract, titled *A Letter to the Right Hon. William Pitt: on the Means of Relieving the Present Scarcity, and Preventing the Diseases that Arise from Meagre Food*, criticises Pitt for lacking foresight: “Did it never, Sir, occur to you, that unproductive years were to be guarded against? [...] The French, with ready money chinking in their purses, bought up American crops as they were growing, in the winter of 1794 and 1795 [...]. What did you

do? – Nothing that is apparent, certainly nothing that was effectual” (1796: 5-7).

Jacobin newspapers also leapt to the occasion and maligned Pitt. The *Morning Post* of December 29, 1797 claims that “for a person to fill Mr. Pitt’s station, it is necessary to be qualified to defraud the Nation” (Gifford, 1803: 322). Gillray sticks to a similarly accusatory tone in his print, but his scatological rendition of Pitt’s greed furthers the critique; it is savage and betrays blatant disrespect of an influential minister.

The focus on what Bakhtin calls the “lower bodily functions” in *The French Invasion and Midas, Transmuting All to Gold / Paper* violates bourgeois norms of bodily shame, degrades the aristocracy, and opens the aristocratic body to *carnavalesque* humour (1984: 10, 28, 192).¹ In doing so, his prints border on being malicious, sardonic, and indecorous. They undermine the exaltation for the members of the royal family, and representatives of the Government, promoted by a number of Loyalist pamphlets. Each one of Gillray’s dirty jokes, scatological puns, and explicit jibes at the overindulgence or frugality of the royal family can be considered as historical micro-subjects, conditioned by political events and literary writing of the period. The resultant strain of parody and non-conformism helps Gillray encode resistance within his prints.

His prints are influenced by anti-Loyalist tracts and, in turn, influenced revolutionary images. This triadic dialogue that exists between pro-revolutionary texts and images and a “conservative” caricaturist like Gillray alerts readers to the number of meanings that inhere in each of his images. His prints exist at the cross-roads between Loyalist historiographies, Republican historiographies, revolutionary and anti-revolutionary historiographies. This continuing dialogue between varied historiographies manifests itself in Gillray’s anti-revolutionary caricatures in recurrent images of the decapitated head of the King. The macabre tableaux depicted in his prints featuring cannibalism echo the most grotesque permutation of eating, drinking and feasting possible. It is only fitting that a dinner party, a concept revolving around the communal consumption of food, is the chosen location for the earliest of these prints.

In *A Birmingham Toast, as Given on the Fourteenth, by The --- Revolution Society (1791)*, Gillray visualises the 14 July 1791 meeting of the Birmingham Constitutional Society as a gross parody of the Last Supper. The meeting welcomed “any friend of freedom” to join in its dinner celebrating the second anniversary of the fall of the Bastille, but the event is said to have instigated riots in Birmingham, including an attack on Joseph Priestley’s house. In his anti-Jacobin portrayal of popular Whigs and radicals, Priestley (in a visual pun on his name) can be seen holding the Eucharistic chalice and calling for the King’s head upon a tray. In the centre, Opposition leader Charles James Fox proclaims “My Soul & my Body both upon the Toast”, and on his left another prominent member of the Opposition Horne Tooke lends his support to “so glorious a toast”.² On the right, members of the society implore God to “preserve us from Kings & Whores of Babylon!”, and to “Put enmity between us & the ungodly and bring down the heads of all tyrants & usurpers”. On the far left Sheridan, surrounded by empty bottles of sherry and broken glasses, says: “Damn my eyes! But I’ll pledge you that toast tho Hell gapes for me”. None of the Whigs in Gillray’s representation – playwright and politician Richard Brinsley Sheridan, Charles James Fox or Horne Tooke – attended the dinner, but Gillray’s configuration visualises the anxieties of the conservative faction in England during the 1790s. Not only is a toast raised to the future beheading of the King, the religious vocabulary deployed here “Amen! Amen!” seems to consecrate that beheading as a glorious ritual, according it a

¹In *Rabelais and His World*, Bakhtin asserts that the official feast is defined by stability and existing religious, political, and moral hierarchies. It is monolithically serious and the element of laughter is alien to it. On the other hand, the carnival temporarily marks ‘the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms and prohibitions’. *Carnavalesque humour* is blasphemous and is tantamount to ‘the profanation of everything sacred’. Gillray’s scatological prints, I believe, foreground a *carnavalesque* conception of the world by focussing on the ‘lower bodily stratum’ which could not express itself in official cult and ideology.

²John Horne Tooke (1736-1812), radical English politician and agitator for parliamentary reform.

sacrificial significance.

A later print is a perfect corollary to Gillray's rendition of Priestley's intentions in *A Birmingham Toast*. In *The Blood of the Murdered Crying for Vengeance* (1793) he deploys the decapitated head of Louis XVI in order to underscore the gruesome excesses of the Revolution. Decapitation, traditionally symbolic of the lack of authority, is reconfigured, because in the textual accompaniment of the print the dead king still speaks:

"[M]y Throne is seized on by my murderers; my Brothers are driven into exile; my unhappy Wife and innocent infants are shut up in the horrors of a Dungeon; while Robbers and Assassins are sheathing their Daggers in the bowels of my Country [...] O! Britons vice-gerents of eternal justice, arbiters of the world [...] revenge the blood of a Monarchy most undeservedly butchered, and rescue the Kingdom of France, from being the prey of Violence, Usurpation and Cruelty."

Ventriloquizing for the king, the satirist glorifies Britain as the stronghold of rationality in this print. This speech single-handedly reinforces his belief in monarchy and dismisses the fraternal ideal propounded by the revolutionaries in France by representing French citizens as 'Robbers and Assassins' interested in unleashing anarchy in the whole country.

Interestingly, Gillray's anti-revolutionary print is heavily influenced by a popular revolutionary print by Villeneuve entitled *Matière à réflexion pour les jongleurs couronnés* ("Matter for Thought for Crowned Twisters", 1793). But Villeneuve's 1793 engraving highlights the "impurity" of the King's blood. The severed head of the king is followed by these words from the Marseillaise: "Let impure blood water our furrows". The text, an excerpt from the third letter of Maximilien Robespierre to his constituents, reads:

"Monday 21 January 1793 at 10.15 a.m. on the place de la Revolution formerly called place Louis XVI. The tyrant fell beneath the sword of the laws. This great act of justice appalled the aristocracy, destroyed the superstition of royalty, and created the Republic. It stamps a great character on the National Convention and renders it worthy of the confidence of the French [...]. In vain did an audacious faction and some insidious orators exhaust all the resources of calumny, charlatanism and chicane; the courage of the Republicans triumphed: the majority of the Convention remained unshakable in its principles, and the genius of intrigue yielded to the genius of Liberty and the ascendancy of virtue".

As in Gillray's 1791 print (*A Birmingham Toast, as Given on the Fourteenth, by The Revolution Society*), the slaughtering of the King takes on the air of a sacrifice that has a rationale behind it. The understanding promoted here is that the blood that is shed, especially the blood of a monarch, is sacred and serves a healing function; it is meant to restore order to a disorderly world. This conception is reiterated by revolutionary propaganda repeatedly: "The blood of Louis Capet, shed by the blade on 21 January 1793, cleanses us of a stigma of 1300 years" proclaims a radical newspaper of the time (Sagan, 2007: 346). Another dated 22 January, presents an eye-witness account: "A number of people hurried to get hold of his hair, others drenched the paper and even their handkerchiefs in his blood" (DeBaecque, 2001: 106). This imagery is replicated by overtly anti-revolutionary accounts as well. A pamphlet titled *A Review of the Proceedings at Paris during the Last Summer* describes the horror of such a spectacle:

"Two female furies, quarrelling for a handkerchief that had been dipped in the blood of a wife, and neither of them getting the advantage the other, each put an end in her mouth, and sucked the blood, contending who should have the greater share" (Fennell, 1792: 390).

These savage images of the common man craving the blood of the monarch, almost as if it were sacramental blood, go to the very core of the visual and verbal imagery surrounding

the Revolution. Louis XVI could be seen as the inviolable embodiment of an older ideological system, and his regicide, coupled with the ultimate violation of his body, heralds a symbolic new world order. This acceleration of violence and the celebration of the *buveur de sang* (drinker of blood) is starkly reminiscent of primordial cannibalism.

Cannibalism figures as an important trope in the political writing of the period. In his *First Letter on a Regicide Peace* of 1796, Burke defined the French mob as cannibal: “By cannibalism, I mean their devouring, as a nutriment of their ferocity, some part of the bodies of those they have murdered; their drinking the blood of their victims, and forcing the victims themselves to drink the blood of their kindred slaughtered before their faces” (44).

The French government is thus represented as a cannibal Republic. Thomas Paine too deploys this hyperbolic language of bestiality. In *The Rights of Man*, he describes primogeniture as a system of cannibalism by constraint: “Aristocracy has never but *one* child. The rest are begotten to be devoured. They are thrown to the cannibal for prey, and the natural parent prepares the unnatural repast” (italics – author’s own); (1791: 69). Given these overlaps between revolutionary and counter-revolutionary accounts, it is not surprising that Gillray goes back to Villeneuve’s iconic image for one of his most grotesque representations of cannibalism: *Un Petit souper à la parisienne* (1792). A caricatural rendition of Villeneuve’s *Matter for Thought* in the background testifies to Gillray’s familiarity with revolutionary art. The sketch adorns the walls of the room represented in this print alongside an ironic representation of French Liberty with a *sans-culotte*, complete with a cockade on his head, holding an axe in one hand and a decapitated head in another. Underneath the slogans *Vive la Liberté and Vive l’Egalité* are clearly visible. These sketches set the tone of the macabre print. In the foreground a group feasts on various body parts of dismembered individuals: one gnaws on an arm, the other enjoys a heart whilst a third spoons an eye from a dismembered head into his mouth, and the fourth uses a fork to devour testicles. His Frenchmen can be seen carrying crude weapons of murder including bloodied daggers and an axe, and the text below highlights their cannibalistic tendency:

*“Here as you see, and ’tis known
Frenchmen mere Cannibals are grown
On Maigre Days each had his Dish
Of Soup, or Sallad, Eggs or Fish
But now ’tis human flesh they gnaw
And everyday is Mardi Gras”*

Gillray is clearly drawing upon some of the proliferating eyewitness accounts of the anarchy unleashed in France during the September Massacres in his representation of Frenchmen as cannibals who relish human flesh. Fennel’s exaggerated eyewitness account titled is markedly similar to Gillray’s graphic rendition: “Many of the bodies were cut limb from limb, and flesh from bone; and, according to the different inclinations of the murderers each took a hand, a heart, a head, or a piece of flesh [...]. Some of the females went so far, as to cut off pieces of flesh, chew them, and suck the blood, praising its delicious taste [...]. The floors were covered with mangled bodies, most of them naked” (1792: 388-390).¹

In Fennel’s account the nudity of the corpses seems to heighten the sense of morbidity. In Gillray’s print too, the *sans-culotte* on the left is sitting atop a sack containing treasures and gold,

¹Donald Greer gives a figure of 35,000- 40,000 actually executed. Of these only 16,394 were pronounced guilty. This helps one understand the extent of the violence and barbarity unleashed in France during the Terror. Donald Greer, *The Incidence of Terror during the French Revolution: A Statistical Interpretation*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1935: 135-44.

including the Pope's crown, without his trousers, a visual rendition of his metaphorical identity.¹ The buttocks of the man on the right squash the breasts of a dead and bloodied woman. Suggestions of necrophilia are evident in the way a leg of the table pushes into the groin of the dead man whose foot has been cut off and head is under the dress of the woman in yellow. These semi-nude, dismembered bodies, in addition to the dead bodies stashed overhead, seem to betray the print maker's discomfort with the materiality of the human body. The distaste with which Gillray represents these bodies is very similar to Gulliver's descriptions of the irrational and carnal Yahoos in Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*. Gillray struggles with the corporeality of the human body and manifests a Swiftian revulsion in his representation of French cannibals relishing their victims. Interestingly Swift also used the metaphor of cannibalism in his Juvenalian satirical essay *A Modest Proposal* where the proposer advocates cannibalism as a way of easing the economic troubles of impoverished Irishmen (1729; 1998). But Gillray visualizes Swift's mock-ironic pamphlet as a 'real' event. In Gillray's vision, the room represented in the print is a microcosm of the city of Paris itself, where: "The mangled bodies of others are piled against the houses in the streets; and in the quarters of Paris near to which the prisons are, the carcasses lie scattered in hundreds, diffusing pestilence all around. The streets of Paris, strewn with the carcasses of the mangled victims, are become so familiar to the sight, that they are passed by and trod on without any particular notice" (Urban, 1792: 855).²

The degeneration of Republicanism is further highlighted by a number of heads and a pair of legs that are visible outside the door of the room. These multiple images of dismemberment are reminiscent of Burke's unsavoury, albeit imaginary, description of the murder of the King's bodyguards in *Reflections on the Revolution in France*:

"[T]wo gentleman [...] were cruelly and publickly dragged to the block, and beheaded in the great court of the palace. Their heads were stuck upon spears, and led the procession; whilst the royal captives who followed in the train were slowly moved along, amidst the horrid yells, and shrilling screams, and frantic dances, and infamous contumelies, and all the unutterable abominations of the furies of hell, in the abused shape of the vilest of women" (1790: 106).

Burke resorts to hyperbole to attack a political regime, which is vociferous in its anti-clericalism and its denunciation of tradition. Unsurprisingly he classifies cannibalism as an archetypal French tendency: "In England we have not yet been completely embowelled of our natural entrails [...]. We have real hearts of flesh and blood beating in our bosoms. We fear God; we look up with awe to kings; with affection to parliaments; with duty to magistrates; with reverence to priests; and with respect to nobility" (128).

Burke's delineation of national character relies on a simple dichotomy. England is conjured as a cohesive society and France as one that is dismembered by the forces of revolutionary nationalism. This expression of organicism evokes nostalgia for the English state even as the author casts levellers as usurpers and validates prescriptive restraints on the masses. Burke's early account anticipates a number of eyewitness accounts of the murders of the royal family's select coterie during the September Massacres in 1792.

The phantasmagoric murder of Princess Lamballe, the Queen's lady-in-waiting is recounted by a municipal officer in a similar fashion. The description of her mutilated body, carried in a

¹The consistent use of the colour yellow and motifs such as the sack of treasures and a bag to collect money are used by Gillray to highlight the greed of the *sans-culottes*. He is reiterating the insinuations of conservatives like Mauric Morgann. In *Considerations on the Present Internal and External Condition of France*, Morgann takes recourse to the metaphor of food to argue that: 'The *sans-culotte* of today, enriched with the spoils of the tumult, becomes the Aristocrat of tomorrow [...] Revolution grows out of Revolution, and the fire-eyed monster of Anarchy [...] makes the delicious food it so voraciously feeds on' (1794: 27).

²This is an excerpt from the description of the city by *The Times* of Monday, 10 September 1792.

joyous procession to the Toulouse's house, the Parisian residence of the Lamballes and then the Tower of the Temple, where the royal family was imprisoned, is worth quoting in its entirety: "Two individuals dragged a naked body by its legs, headless, its back on the ground and its abdomen laid open upto the chest [...]. On a shaky platform, the corpse is ceremoniously spread out, and the limbs arranged with a kind of art [...]. To my left, another one (bearer), more horrible, held in one hand the intestines of the victim against his chest, and in the other a large knife" (DeBaecque, 2001: 62).

The element of exaggeration involved in these ostensibly objective accounts ensures that Gillray's graphic satires can be treated on par with these versions of history. The element of ideological mediation is imperative in each of these examples. Gillray's layered caricatures can thus be treated as historiographical accounts, which secrete the history of an age. Their narratives, once unravelled, carry them beyond the exaggeration central to caricature, into a realm of historical validity. As Antoine DeBaecque aptly claims, "The execution and then, above all, the mutilation, dismembering, tearing apart, and exhibition of the body are like a projection onto the screen of history of a collective mentality that animated the different protagonists of the Revolution" (64). The scattered corpses, which are at the very centre of Gillray's representation, become symbolic of the increasing savagery in France and betray the print-maker's immense anxiety about British stability. Multiple depictions of dismemberment, severed hands, torn tongues and mutilated organs, ensure that the corpses become "the measure of everything, to the point of obsession, to the point of madness of a universe wholly ruled by the [...] the visions, the thoughts to which it (the corpse) gives birth" (9).¹

Gillray's all-encompassing vision spares no one-man, woman, or child. In the left corner of the print, a group of three children are feasting on the entrails of dead aristocrats. The girl on the left is wearing blue, and carrying a bag, perhaps to stash the loot away and the child on the right is wearing red, with the tricolour cockade visible on his head. He also has a dagger tucked into his belt, suggesting the ludicrous extent of violence unleashed by the September Massacres. This visual image of disembowelment, in addition to the multiple images of killing and annihilation, shows how "in the regimes of ideological terror [...] terror becomes an end in itself. It cannot control its cannibal appetite" (Sagan, 2007: 15).

Newspaper reports about mobs roasting men, women and children alive are mirrored in Gillray's depiction of an old crone roasting a child over a fire in the background. According to *The Evening Mail* such cannibalistic imagery continued well after the September massacres: "Several pastry cooks, particularly one by the *Palais Royal*, have *Pies de la viande des Suisses – des Emigrants – des Pêtres – made of the Flesh of the Swiss – the Emigrants and the Priests*. I was present when four *Marseillous* at the *Restauranteur Bouvilliers*, in the *Palais Royal* sent for two of these pies and ate them, crying out – *Vive la Nation*" (Pressly, 1999: 151).

Clearly, by September 1792 the Revolution had deteriorated to a chaotic bloodbath. Gillray's anarchic representation highlights the presence of cannibalism as a real threat in the vein of a number of anti-revolutionary dailies of the time. The 10 September 1792 edition of *The Times* questions its readers: "Are these 'the Rights of Man'? Is this the LIBERTY of Human Nature? The most savage four footed tyrants that range the unexplored deserts of Africa, in point of tenderness, rise superior to these two legged Parisian animals – Common Brutes do not prey upon each other" (Anonymous, 10).

Gillray is responding to similar stimuli. However, despite the ostensible immediacy and spur-of-the-moment feel of *Un Petit souper à la parisienne*, his depiction is a pre-meditated one. Gillray's inspiration comes from an early Flemish engraving by Peter Brueghel's entitled *The Poor Kitchen*

¹For a detailed response to the deployment of disembowelment as a literary trope during the French Revolution, see David Punter, 'Parts of Body/Parts of Speech: Some instances of Dismemberment and Healing', in Alison Yarrington, Kevin Everest (eds.), *Reflections of Revolution: Images of Romanticism*, London: Routledge, 1993: 10-25.

(1563). This print and its companion, *The Rich Kitchen* (1563), were engraved after designs by Peter Brueghel the Elder. Everyone is skinny in the poor kitchen. At the round table five men can be seen trying to eat oysters and mussels from a single bowl. An emaciated dog below them licks the empty shells. At the lower centre of the print, one can see a woman feeding her baby from a horn. On the left, a man attempts to soften a piece of bread by pounding it. At the door, near the top right corner of the print, a well-fed man is invited in but he seems to have rejected the invitation. The inscription at the bottom translates: “Where thinman’s cook there’s meager fare and lots of diet trouble. Rich kitchen is the place for me, I’m going there on the double”.

This setting is almost replicated by Gillray in the way he represents his skinny *sans-culottes* huddled around the table, the fireplace in the background and the lone woman with a baby. These parallels testify to Gillray’s familiarity with high art and add another sub-text to this rich print. Hungry people on the look out for food characterize Brueghel’s engraving. In the wake of the scarcity of bread, which instigated the Revolution, the lower classes continued to starve in France. This was common knowledge in Britain; J. A. Russell, in his 1795 sermon, asserts that “Thousands are probably at this moment dying of hunger” in France (11). The sheer greed reflected in the eyes of Gillray’s *sans-culottes*, coupled with the relish with which they can be seen devouring their “food” hints at the presence of another sub-text – non-ritualistic, sustenance cannibalism, a gross but inevitable repercussion of scarcity.

Hunger was such a powerful, even dominant sentiment in revolutionary France that countless pamphlets, tracts and reports had recourse to the metaphor of food to articulate the political climate of France. Thomas Carlyle, in the first volume of his iconic *French Revolution*, introduces the French Revolution as a devouring force, characterized by literal hunger. A 1792 newspaper report insists on instances of actual cannibalism: “It is a certain, though disgusting truth that they absolutely chewed the flesh of the mangled victims and that it was a common practice to dip pieces of bread in human blood and eat them with a ravenous delight” (Pressly, 1999: 189). Yet another justifies the multiple killings during the September massacres by means of the metaphor of hunger “The guillotine is hungry, its ages since she had something to eat” (Soboul, 1980: 160). Such hunger was at the core of a cannibalism that arose out of necessity. Unlike the ritual variety, survival cannibalism has no explanation other than of necessity, an idea corroborated by numerous philosophers. During the Enlightenment, Voltaire and Diderot argued that social cannibalism resulted from food shortage, especially protein deficiency. In his *Essay on the Principle of Population*, Thomas Malthus identifies cannibalism as one of the necessary checks on population expansion, similar in function to war and dearth. Malthus insists that cannibalism “undoubtedly prevailed in many parts of the new world” and originated in “extreme want” (1803: 35). Gillray’s print heightens this sense of extreme hunger and draws attention to the looming threats of famine, which continued to haunt England and France alike. Clearly, the impetus behind Gillray’s horrific representation of cannibalism is not mere Francophobia. Cannibalism was threatening to become a literal reality in England following the shortage of staple grains like wheat and corn, and Gillray’s gory representation is a result of an amplification of the same anxiety that led him to conjure a skinny John Bull in the first place. The representation is used: “[T]o shore up a white Christian subjectivity against the anxieties that haunted the Romantic self, during a period when extreme hunger and starvation made the prospect of white cannibalism a very real possibility or, at least, a very palpable fear” (Kitson, 2000: 3).

Within Gillray’s vision, the eating of human flesh is all the more loathsome because of the very real possibility that one might, in certain conditions, face extreme hunger.

But this does not detract from the fact that Gillray, like Burke, classifies cannibalism as an exclusively French malaise and uses it as a trope of othering. Gillray condones this bloodbath, yet his prints revel in anarchic images. This serves the same purpose as the pretence of verisimilitude adopted by anti-revolutionary newspapers, which “dress up a reality” so as to render it “natural”, and thereby cast the French as diabolical creatures naturally inclined towards cannibalism (Barthes, 1972: 11). Jan Nederveen Pieterse aptly distinguishes cannibalism as an “allegory which establishes

a centre and a periphery within a moral geography” (1992: 116). This allegorical cultural construction creates an image that easily lends itself to the idea of the Other and can be circulated easily.

Gillray’s image, then, is based on the amalgamation of two discourses: that of survival cannibalism and mainstream political Loyalism. In embodying the dominant discourse and displaying it insistently by means of immediately intelligible symbols, Gillray attempts to inculcate patriotic ideals within the populace. But his ostensibly Loyalist caricatures actually offer the twenty-first century reader/viewer a complex picture of the socio-political intrigues that England witnessed in the years following 1789. Gillray gleans his symbolic repertoire from widely different, even rival schools of historiography. These multiple histories interact in a way that endows each of his images with significance beyond what is immediately visible. This accounts for multi-layered visual images, which deploy the metaphor of eating and drinking at each level. The omnipresence of “food” and the multiplicity of its registers suggest it was indeed an imperative word in late eighteenth-century England. Gillray uses it to deal with the political, social and cultural organization of England in the 1790s. It is used to suggest prosperity, excess, indulgence, disease, degeneracy and total collapse. In fact, the body politic forged by Gillray’s use of exaggerated metaphors of food, eating and hunger, paradoxically provides a lynchpin for understanding both socio-political events and the psychology of the common man in a remarkably nuanced fashion.

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