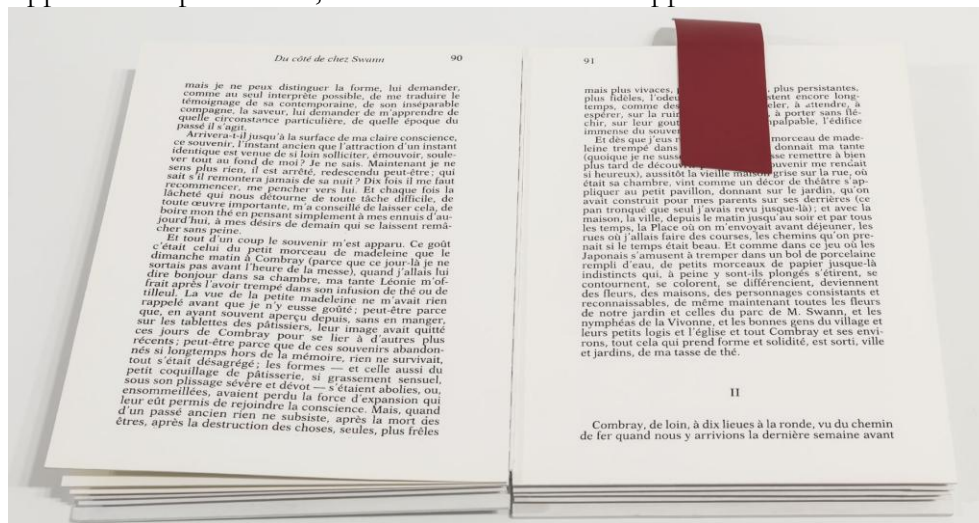


FrameWork 4/15

Daniella Sanader on Ian Carr-Harris

An (incomplete) appendix of moments when reading becomes eating, when creating involves ingesting, when words and ideas are equated with food:

1. Of course, there is Marcel Proust's madeleine. The crumbs of a small scallop-shaped cookie dunked in tea bring forth enough involuntary memories to fill the volumes of *In Search of Lost Time*. Some experts claim that Proust's madeleine is an impossibility: the cookie is simply not dry enough to produce the crumbs Proust describes in his lime-blossom tea. An earlier manuscript for *Swann's Way* may even suggest that the madeleine's precursor was a piece of dry toast.¹ Debates aside, Proust's words are found through food, his remembering happens in the mouth. Would his vision of Combray have been different if sipped in a cup of coffee, crunched in a slice of an apple?



2. "Apple. Apple plum, carpet steak, seed clam, colored wine, calm seen, cold cream, best shake, potato, potato and no no gold work with pet, a green seen is called bake and change sweet is bready, a little piece a little piece please. A little piece please. Cane again to the presupposed and ready eucalyptus tree, count out sherry and ripe plates and little corners of a kind of ham. This is use."²

3. Anxieties can gnaw at your mind's edges; digesting a problem is a slowness of thought. Eating your words is the very desire to consume an unruly idea, to silence it within the depths of your stomach.
4. Ian Carr-Harris's *Combray* (2008) materializes Proust's remembering. The oversized copy of *Swann's Way* includes a madeleine nestled within a secret compartment filled with tea-leaves. However, Carr-Harris's madeleine has been transfigured into a metal locket and his tea-leaves are dry – no soaking, no crumbs. If this cookie can't be eaten, are Proust's stories preserved or restricted? *Combray* spreads this dilemma out on its pages: it's an (in)edible archive.



5. Martha Rosler's culinary alphabet in *Semiotics of the Kitchen* (1975) is equal parts deadpan and violent as she enacts the gestures of cooking without the results. F is for a stabbing fork, H is for a hamburger press that gnashes like sharp teeth. If Rosler is trapped within the (gendered) obligations of her kitchen and the (sequential) structures of her alphabet, she lashes out with an alternative lexicon of frustrated stabs, thrusts, and shrugs. She makes a language for her kitchen that refuses to cook.
6. Ariana Reines likens translating Tiqqun's *Preliminary Materials for a Theory of The Young-Girl* to food poisoning. Allowing the difficult (sexist) text to pass through her means withstanding its negative effects, learning to find nourishment while expelling what her body refuses to support. Rhetoric difficulties become gastrointestinal ones. While she eventually achieves a shaky and cautious affection for the finished text, the labour of translation leaves her "shitting rivers."³

7. “Celery.
Celery tastes tastes where in curled lashes and little bits and mostly in remains.
A green acre is so selfish and so pure and so enlivened.”⁴
8. Albrecht Durer’s woodcut *Saint John Devouring the Book* (c. 1498) features a literal interpretation of Saint John receiving knowledge from a fiery angel. “And I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter.”⁵
9. In 1786, Immanuel Kant begins hosting dinner parties at his home in Königsberg, Prussia. His popular dinners are expertly curated around conversation as much as flavour: “It should begin with narration (of news), continue with reasoning [...], and end in jest (as laughing aids digestion).”⁶ In *The Critique of Judgment*, written four years later, Kant would eventually divorce “taste” from its lowly material and subjective associations with eating, in order to denote superior forms of aesthetic judgment. Is there a boundary between having good taste and wanting what tastes good?
10. In a 2007 interview, Keith Richards is asked about the strangest thing he ever snorted up his nose. His answer: his father’s ashes. Christine Negus references this interview in her video *wild horses couldn’t drag me away*: a meditation on celebrity death and a recipe for ghost-shaped cookies. They each bear little frosted names across their chests: Perry Como, Elvis, Heath Ledger, Tupac, Kurt Cobain, Aaliyah. As each little ghostly body disappears, ingestion is imagined as an (imperfect) strategy for dealing with loss: taking into ourselves those we don’t want to forget.⁷
11. “Chicken.
Stick stick call then, stick stick sticking, sticking with a chicken. Sticking in a extra succession, sticking in.”⁸
12. Some things I have eaten while writing this appendix: a steak and potato pie; a bottle of white wine; several cups of tea; a spoonful of peanut butter; a bag of nacho cheese rice chips; a leftover couscous thing from the week before; a Gala apple; baby carrots and roasted garlic hummus; a chicken pot pie; toast with tuna and mustard; Triscuits.
13. In 1979, Les Blank directs a documentary titled *Werner Herzog Eats His Shoe*. Herzog had allegedly lost a bet to his friend and fellow filmmaker Errol Morris (“if you ever manage to actually make a film, I’ll eat my shoe.”) and the documentary is filmed at Chez Panisse, a restaurant in Berkeley, California.

Herzog does the cooking; the recipe is not saved. Eat my shoe, eat my words, eat humble pie, eat crow: eating inedible ideas is a public performance of humbling, a self-inflicted punishment, acknowledgement of a false claim to truth.⁹

14. An addition: “humble pie” derives from the medieval recipe for umble pie, made from less-valued meats: intestines, heart, liver, lungs. Some sources claim this dish was reserved for the lower classes, hence the idiomatic association with shame. However, this is not known for certain, according to Wikipedia.¹⁰
15. Eating one’s words is also the locus for punishment in the ornate and visceral film *The Cook, The Thief, His Wife, and Her Lover* (1989, dir. Peter Greenaway). Helen Mirren’s character Georgina begins an affair with a bookseller at her husband’s restaurant in order to escape his abuse. When her husband discovers the tryst, he and his thugs murder the lover by force-feeding him the pages from his favourite books. (Would eating his least-favourite books have been a crueller form of torture?)
16. There is definitely a violence in eating. Can the mouth do the work of the colonizer? A quote from Mikhail Bakhtin’s *Rabelais and His World*: “The encounter of man with the world, which takes place inside the open, biting, rending, chewing mouth, is one of the most ancient, and most important objects of human thought and imagery. Here man tastes the world, introduces it to his own body, makes it part of himself [...]. Man’s encounter with the world in the act of eating is joyful, triumphant; he triumphs over the world, devours it without being devoured himself.”¹¹
17. “The over-riding fear is that cultural, ethnic, and racial differences will be continually commodified and offered up as new dishes to enhance the white palate – that the Other will be eaten, consumed, and forgotten.”¹² bell hooks sees the white mouth as a destructive frontier: eating the Other means consuming difference, eradicating blackness for the pleasure of something exotic and new.
18. In *Memory for Forgetfulness* (1982), Mahmoud Darwish laments for his coffee, for the routine intimacy of the drink in the face of an occupied Palestine: “Conquerors can do anything. They can aim sky, sea, and earth at me, but they cannot root the aroma of coffee out of me.”¹³ Coffee brings the energy for resistance, the inspiration for poetry, the rootedness in place. In short, “Coffee is geography.”¹⁴

19. “Orange.
A type oh oh new new not no not knealer knealer of old show beefsteak,
neither neither.”¹⁵
20. I suppose language and food are so often conflated because they both use the mouth as an interface. “Imagine running your tongue along that,” Heather Phillipson repeats throughout *A is to D What E is to H* (2011), understanding the mouth as a gateway for thinking, feeling, communicating, creating. The artist travels to France for a project generated by a slip of the tongue, a confusion of language for food and sex. “It was going to be a film about French cuisine/French kissing,” she repeats. The resulting assortment of thoughts on voice, self-doubt, creative labour, and sensory/sensual experience spiral outwards through a dizzying collection of almost-homonyms. Language folding over on itself in an awkward mouth: awful/offal; tongue/tongs; resources/the sauces; gut/heart.¹⁶
21. In his particularly synesthetic children’s book *The Phantom Tollbooth*, Norton Juster writes of the young hero Milo visiting a market where words are harvested, bought, and sold. “Milo nibbled carefully at the letter and discovered that it was quite sweet and delicious – just the way you’d expect an A to taste.”¹⁷ For the harvested letters, good flavour anticipates common usage, yet not without a slight Anglo-centric bias. As the letter-seller explains, “Take the Z, for instance – very dry and sawdusty. And the X? Why, it tastes like a trunkful of stale air. That’s why people hardly ever use them.”¹⁸
22. “Custard.
Custard is this. It has aches, aches when. Not to be. Not to be narrowly. This makes a whole little hill.
It is better than a thing that has mellow real mellow. It is better than lakes whole lakes, it is better than seeding.”¹⁹

¹http://www.slate.com/articles/life/food/2005/05/the_way_the_cookie_crumbles.html

² Gertrude Stein, *Tender Buttons*. Mineola, Dover Editions: 1997 (first published by Claire Marie, New York, 1914): 30.

³http://canopycanopy.com/contents/preliminary_materials_for_a_theory_of_the_young_girl

⁴ Gertrude Stein, 34.

⁵ <http://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org/Revelation-10-10/>

⁶ <http://cabinetmagazine.org/issues/33/turner.php>

⁷ <http://www.christinenegus.com/>

⁸ Gertrude Stein, 35

⁹ <http://www.cabinetmagazine.org/issues/28/kastner.php>

¹⁰ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Humble_pie

¹¹ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*. Translated by Helene Iswolosky, Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1968: 281

¹² bell hooks, "Eating the Other: Desire and Resistance." In *Black Looks: Race and Representation*. Boston: South End Press, 1992: 39.

¹³ Mahmoud Darwish, *Memory for Forgetfulness*, excerpt in *Revolution: A Reader*. Edited by Lisa Robertson and Matthew Stadler. Paraguay Press & Publication Studio, 2012: 128.

¹⁴ Mahmoud Darwish, 131.

¹⁵ Gertrude Stein, 38.

¹⁶ <http://www.heatherphillipson.co.uk/videos>

¹⁷ Norton Juster, *The Phantom Tollbooth*. New York: Random House, 1961: 49.

¹⁸ Norton Juster, 50.

¹⁹ Gertrude Stein, 32.