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“Ham or Trichinosis?”: Conceptual Metaphors of Food in Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s Writings

Victorian foodscapes represented a revolution in comparison with previous periods. They included a struggle to meet the growing demand, a transition from self-reliance in food supply to a globalised food economy based on imports and mass-production, an ongoing fight against adulterated food, and advances in science and technology. These major trends contributed to creating the most prevalent “middling cuisines”¹ of the 19th century, based on the use of beef, bread, sugar, and fat. The consequences of the transformation allowed the rapidly growing urban masses to find reliable methods of satisfying their hunger and to a large extent released people from the dependence on weather and seasonality. On the one hand, when foreign imports, influence of international cuisine, and newly developed commodities are considered, it is possible to claim that Victorian foodscapes were very diverse. On the other hand, when factors such as the rise of global food manufacturers and commercial brands, industrial food processing, and the growing reliance on traders are taken into account, the foodscapes seem homogenous and standardised. What is more, the fact that many stages of food preparation were in the 19th century taken over by commercial enterprises and factories freed up time for other activities, especially for women. However, the same changes

¹Rachel Laudan, *Cuisine and Empire: Cooking in World History* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press), p. 249.

made people distrustful towards the mechanically-produced commodities and ingredients, often originating in faraway lands and prepared by unfamiliar hands. Widespread adulteration and unhygienic conditions of industrial food production only exacerbated the experience.

The increased suspicion towards food and alienation from its sources, in turn, brought about variations in the era's metaphorical production. This is analysed here within the critical framework of cognitive food studies. This methodology fuses the interdisciplinary field of food studies with insights coming from developments in cognitive science, with particular focus on the conceptual metaphor theory (CMT for short). The cognitive approach to metaphor, introduced by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson,² allows for viewing it as more than merely a linguistic ornament. Seen from this perspective, metaphor is a framework for thinking which allows for representing one conceptual domain, the usually more abstract target, in terms of another, known as source, which is grounded in physical and cultural experience. CMT posits that metaphors can be analysed with regard to their mappings (systematic correspondences between elements of the two domains), entailments (consequences of the knowledge people have about the well-delineated source domains that may be transferred to the target), and image-schemas (basic structures which can be filled in with details). As such, conceptual metaphor results from embodied cognition³ and responds to cultural variation.⁴ This perspective aims to raise questions about food-related metaphors and their functioning in a specific cultural environment, which can only be answered by looking at the socio-historical realities of food production and consumption in a particular period, in this case late 19th century.

Many Victorians on both sides of the Atlantic⁵ spoke harshly against the practice of commercial contamination of food, which was motivated by the desire to decrease the costs of production and maximise earnings. As early as in 1820, in Frederick Accum's *A Treatise on Adulteration of Food, and Culinary Poisons*, a skilfully drawn skull in a cup with snakes

² George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago, London: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

³ William Croft and D. Alan Cruse, *Cognitive Linguistics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 3–4.

⁴ Zoltán Kövecses, *Metaphor in Culture. Universality and Variation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

⁵ The term Victorian is here used to refer to both the British and American contexts in consideration of the shared features of industrialisation, urbanisation, and population growth which united the transatlantic community under the influence of Queen Victoria's reign. This approach is based on the claims put forward in Daniel Walker Howe, "American Victorianism as a Culture," *American Quarterly*, Vol. 27, No. 5 Special Issue: Victorian Culture in America (1975).

coiling around it warned the public against the dangers coming from unscrupulous traders. Accum indicated that adulterating food may lead to various health problems; for instance, mixing flour with alum can cause diseases in children.⁶ He also devoted a whole chapter to the discussion of unacceptable methods used by butchers which result in rendering meat and fish unwholesome.⁷ His eye-opening publication was followed by innovative research carried out by a medical professional, Arthur Hill Hassall, who employed microscope analyses and chemical tests to detect fraudulent additions and harmful practices.⁸ Thanks to their pioneering work, a document called the Sale of Food and Drugs Act came into force in 1875 in Britain and allowed for stricter control against food fraud. It became forbidden by law to add any possibly injurious substances to foodstuffs or alter the quality of drugs; what is more, precise labelling of products became obligatory. Analogously, but several decades later, in 1906, the Pure Food and Drug Act was introduced in the USA to protect the interests and health of customers. This was the culmination of experiments conducted by the so-called "Poison Squad," an organisation spearheaded by Harvey Washington Wiley and set on proving the harmfulness of chemical additives in food. This enterprise is now associated with the beginning of the Food and Drug Administration.⁹ Overall, the crusades against food adulteration resulted from professional concern about public health. They continued throughout the 19th century and brought about regulations necessary under the new circumstances of the growing mechanisation and commercialisation of food production. Some manufacturers actually took advantage of the heightened attention consumers started to pay to quality among widespread adulteration, hence the iconic Cadbury catchphrase: "Absolutely Pure, Therefore Best."¹⁰ The emphasis on purity as the only true guarantee of value, as exemplified in the advertising slogan here, was actually a much larger issue in the 19th century. A similar observation can be made about the general preference for white bread, which makes it more difficult to conceal the use of harmful additives but also connotes association with purity. The use of a reference to the uncontaminated

⁶ Frederick Accum, *A Treatise on Adulterations of Food, and Culinary Poisons, Exhibiting the Fraudulent Sophistications of Bread...* (London: J. Mallett, 1820), digital copy, p. 135.

⁷ Accum, *A Treatise on Adulterations of Food*, pp. 36–41.

⁸ Arthur Hill Hassall, *Food and its Adulterations; Comprising the Reports of the Analytical Sanitary Commission...* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1855), digital copy.

⁹ James Harvey Young, "Food and Drug Regulation under the USDA, 1906-1940," *Agricultural History*, vol. 64, no. 2, The United States Department of Agriculture in Historical Perspective (Spring, 1990), pp. 135–136.

¹⁰ Laudan, *Cuisine and Empire*, p. 261.

state as a marketing strategy may suggest an established position of this preoccupation in the minds of Victorians.

The new theme of the reinforced suspicion towards nourishment is approached by Charlotte Perkins Gilman in several of her works, including both non-fiction and poetry. The latter, her poems, are perhaps a less publicised account of the outraged attitudes accompanying consumers faced with dangerous food than Upton Sinclair's novel *The Jungle*, but their shortness and relative obscurity allow for a brief analysis exemplifying these claims working in practice. According to Jason Pickavance, "because of its association with pure food legislation, Sinclair's novel has become for many historians and students of literary history the exemplary instance of literature as a means of reform."¹¹ A few of Gilman's poems published at least a year later than Sinclair's famous denunciation of the nauseating practices in the meat packing industry acknowledge his major contribution to the case of fighting for the increased safety of food consumption. In fact, when Pickavance describes Sinclair's role in the quest for food safety, he states that his novel was crucial in introducing the aforementioned legislative reform and that it "engaged a critical mass of Americans in the problems associated with manufactured foods."¹² Gilman defines Sinclair's input in terms of revealing the true colours of food production:

We have seen the picture of Packingtown
Painted in blood-red, black and brown
As only Sinclair can.¹³

Even though Pickavance also suggests that the commonly accepted purpose of Sinclair's novel—introducing legislation to protect the consumer—wrongly removes emphasis from the issue of working conditions in the business,¹⁴ Gilman seems to be focusing precisely on the receiver end of this revolting chain of supply. For this tireless exposé of all social ills, food, along with dress, home economy, and, obviously, gender inequality, was thus one of the areas that called for immediate reform.

Yet food figured prominently not only for Gilman as an activist but also in her personal life. Already as a teenager, she expressed keen interest

¹¹ Jason Pickavance, "Gastronomic Realism: Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*, the Fight for Pure Food, and the Magic of Mastication," *Food and Foodways: Explorations in the History and Culture of Human Nourishment*, vol. 11, no. 2–3 (2003), p. 88.

¹² Pickavance, "Gastronomic Realism," p. 88.

¹³ Charlotte Perkins Gilman, "How about the Man?" in: *The Later Poetry of Charlotte Perkins Gilman*, ed. Denise D. Knight (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1996), 1–3.

¹⁴ For an overview of the debate, see Pickavance, "Gastronomic Realism," pp. 87–90.

in the new trends recommending healthy living, which, in her case, took the form of following a strict exercise regime.¹⁵ Far from being simply a passing fad, the pursuit of the era's physiological remedies, including diet advice, is said to have influenced her profoundly.¹⁶ In 1885, at the age of 25, she was prescribed the rest cure to treat post-partum depression; this therapy, decreed by Silas Weir Mitchell, a leading physician in the period, placed a great deal of importance on prolonged periods of non-activity and involved eating at regular intervals. Mitchell's *Wear and Tear; Or, Hints for the Overworked* expounded the role of the right diet in recovering from nervous exhaustion, or neurasthenia, a mystifying set of symptoms that many suffered from in the later part of the 19th century, caused presumably by the increased pace of life and stressful pursuit of career. According to Athena Vrettos, the victims of neurasthenia "experienced the immediate physical effects of illness without corresponding physical causes,"¹⁷ and, as a result, many medical professionals denied the reality of this ailment. Mitchell used this ambiguity and devised a theory of blood circulation that made cessation of intellectual effort, especially after a meal, necessary due to the intricacies of directing blood flow in the body.¹⁸ On the one hand, this vision, by acknowledging the dependence of thought and mental capacities on the overall condition of the body, is in some limited sense an idea situated within the broadly understood scope of embodied cognition. On the other hand, and more plausibly, it bears an uncanny and disturbing resemblance to conceptions that would justify restrictions on education suitable for women as exemplified by the theories offered by G. Stanley Hall and Henry Maudsley, which identified schooling as an impediment to the proper development of female reproductive organs.¹⁹ As Gilman herself was subjected to a treatment based on similar assumptions, and because it resulted in her sliding into madness, of which an artistic rendition is the semi-autobiographical "The Yellow Wall-Paper," she was probably well aware of the ramifications of theorising food.²⁰ What

¹⁵ Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz, *Wild Unrest. Charlotte Perkins Gilman and the Making of "The Yellow Wall-Paper"* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 21–23.

¹⁶ Lefkowitz Horowitz, *Wild Unrest*, p. 23.

¹⁷ Athena Vrettos, *Somatic Fictions: Imagining Illness in Victorian Culture* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995), p. 48.

¹⁸ Silas Weir Mitchell, *Wear and Tear, or Hints for the Overworked* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1887), pp. 70–71.

¹⁹ For a detailed discussion of the motivations and scientific bases behind these theories as well as of their social consequences, see Cynthia Eagle Russett, *Sexual Science. The Victorian Construction of Womanhood* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), pp. 104–129.

²⁰ The experience is described in stark, straightforward terms that leave no doubt about the destructive effects of Mitchell's treatment: "I went home, followed those directions rigidly for months, and came perilously near losing

is more, the episode of strained mental health in her life had to do with the pressures of motherhood and marriage, which finally led to a highly publicised divorce.²¹ The responsibilities of being a housekeeper took their toll on Gilman, who later in an essay explicitly identified the female housekeeper as the mediator between two ends of the food system: the external production and delivery on one end and the health of consumers, family in this case, on the other. This crucial position imposed particular weight on her methods of dealing with food, and, consequently, led her to put forward a reform of home cooking.²² Nevertheless, she duly recognised the impact of proper nourishment, as later in her autobiography we can find the following five-piece recipe for a healthy life: “Good air and plenty of it, good exercise and plenty of it, good food and plenty of it, good sleep and plenty of it, good clothing and as little as possible.”²³ While the initial prescription of rest is replaced by exercise, the importance of diet remains unchanged.

Interested in food in its many aspects, Gilman expressed her concerns by means of the aforementioned contamination metaphor. Several of her later poems contain images based on infecting the body with harmful influences that enter it through the mouth, with food that, rather than nourishing, poisons the organism. In some of them, the actions of eating and filling become almost synonymous, as it is visible in a line from “The Packer’s Hand”:

Filling the poor blind public maw
With tuberculosis and lumpy jaw.²⁴

This choice of words suggests using the image-schema of a container for conceptualising the body, rendering the following EATING IS FILLING A CONTAINER²⁵ submetaphor. This is, however, probably not an isolated instance, taking into account the ubiquity of the container generic schema

my mind”; Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *The Living of Charlotte Perkins Gilman. An Autobiography*, introduction by Ann J. Lane, foreword by Zona Gale (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1990), p. 96.

²¹ Lawrence J. Oliver and Gary Scharnhorst, “Charlotte Perkins Gilman versus Ambrose Bierce: The Literary Politics of Gender in Fin-de-Siècle California,” in *Charlotte Perkins Gilman and Her Contemporaries. Literary and Intellectual Contexts*, ed. Cynthia J. Davies and Denise D. Knight (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2004), p. 38.

²² Charlotte Perkins Gilman, “The Housekeeper and the Food Problem,” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. 74 (1917), pp. 123–130.

²³ Gilman, *The Living*, p. 67.

²⁴ Charlotte Perkins Gilman, “The Packer’s Hand,” in: *The Later Poetry of Charlotte Perkins Gilman*, ed. Denise D. Knight (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1996), 19–20.

²⁵ Conceptual metaphors statements are typically given in small capitals.

that may be furnished with elements specific to a given culture, as postulated by Zoltán Kövecses in his argument on congruent metaphor.²⁶ Moreover, it could seem more than obvious to claim that, as the sensation of being full after a meal is undoubtedly a universally experienced bodily reality, the above noted correspondence is self-evident and not worth further study. My answer here is that the first part of the statement is true, while the inference not necessarily so. Once again following Kövecses's argument, I propose that what matters here is the interpretation of sensorimotor experiences that a given culture agrees on, since it, contrary to the sensation itself, is likely to vary. As a result, that fact that THE BODY IS A CONTAINER metaphor, despite its widespread character, is utilised in a given context requires researching its potential mappings and entailments, for they may reveal the presence of slight differences, such as was exemplified by the ANGER IS FIRE across cultures.²⁷ The rich knowledge we have about containers may be used to conceptualise the body and the mind in various degrees. One aspect of this knowledge—that putting substances or objects into a container takes space—is manifested here. This already shows the metaphor's specialisation in the context of Victorian concerns about public health.

An objection could be raised here as to the figurative nature of the above cited line; perhaps the filling occurring in the poem is a literal instance of inserting substances into the mouth. There are two ways of approaching this doubt: one concerns the nature of the container, the other deals with what is used to occupy its space. "The poor blind public maw" does not refer to any one particular mouth but rather to the entirety of individuals forced to consume contaminated meat. Similarly, the eponymous "packer's hand" is also not a single limb of a specific meat industry worker but a personification of the unscrupulous business. Both conceptualisations are based on metaphors belonging to a hierarchical structure called the Great Chain,²⁸ that is SOCIETY IS A BODY and A COMPANY IS A PERSON. Already at this point we can say that, as what is being filled is not a literal mouth, the expression is metaphorical, yet there is further evidence. In another of Gilman's poems, "Hyenas," the reader is confronted with the image of "Freud-poisoned, sated minds."²⁹ Even though the text

²⁶ Kövecses, *Metaphor in Culture*, p. 68.

²⁷ Kövecses, *Metaphor in Culture*, p. 127.

²⁸ George Lakoff and Mark Turner, *More than Cool Reason: A Field Guide to Poetic Metaphor* (Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 1989), p. 166.

²⁹ Charlotte Gilman Perkins, "Hyenas," in: *The Later Poetry of Charlotte Perkins Gilman*, ed. Denise D. Knight (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1996), 6.

touches upon another of the author's concerns, namely journalism, it does so through reference to the food domain, which helps to advance the argument about the sphere of nourishment as a central source for metaphorical correspondences in Gilman's writing. Here, she makes use of the DANGEROUS BELIEFS ARE CONTAGIOUS DISEASES metaphor, which often co-appears with SOCIETY IS A BODY,³⁰ but the illness is specifically an orally-infectious, foodborne one, as evinced by the epithet "sated." These mind-containers are, therefore, not only satiated with the harmful influence of ideas but also filled to the brim with substances or objects. Not only does this prove that the "packing" Gilman mentions in her poems is by all means figurative, but it also suggests we may be dealing with the IDEAS ARE FOOD metaphor. Nonetheless, while minds' gorging on Freud, obviously in metonymic relation with Freud's psychoanalytic theories, conforms easily with the above mentioned form of conceptualising, the former example does not, for "tuberculosis and lumpy jaw" are not, strictly speaking, ideas. Nor are they graspable physical objects. Hence it is at this point unclear what metaphorical link it is that underlies the expressions.

In Gilman's poems, filling is also paired with killing in a rather clumsy rhyme that repeats in two poems: "I Would Fain Die a Dry Death" and "To the Packer." In the first of them, we read:

It is not so much that it kills us—
We are used to being killed;
But we like to know what fills us
When we pay for being filled.³¹

These lines are a further elaboration of the container schema, which can be demonstrated by means of the following mappings:

body → container

eating → occupying space in the container

food → substance/objects occupying space in the container.

Nevertheless, this does not explain the harmful consequences of the ingested food: in other words, it does not explain where the element of killing comes from, as it is not a possible potential correspondence resulting from putting together the target domain of the body and the source domain of containers. The only possibility would be to apply our

³⁰ George Lakoff, Jane Espenson, and Alan Schwartz, eds., *Master Metaphor List*, second edition (Berkeley: University of California, 1991), accessed April 9, 2018, <http://araw.mede.uic.edu/~alansz/metaphor/METAPHORLIST.pdf>, p. 111.

³¹ Charlotte Perkins Gilman, "I Would Fain Die a Dry Death," in: *The Later Poetry of Charlotte Perkins Gilman*, ed. Denise D. Knight (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1996), 13–16.

extended experiential knowledge of containers bursting from within as a consequence of being filled with too much, yet this entailment suggests metaphorical damage coming from overeating and not death directly arising from the sole fact of consumption. Moreover, being used to something implies repeated encounters with it, which is impossible in the case of death, thus understanding killing literally is also out of the question. Would it, then, refer to a gradual process of poisoning, as in EFFECT FOR CAUSE metonymy? None of the proposed concepts seem to explain the noted novel correspondences in full, and so, to elucidate the workings of these elaborations, we thus may need to employ the theory of blending, and in particular the concept of double- and multiple scope networks, in which both the target and the source shape the frame structure of the resulting fusion.³² Several input spaces, emerging both from the target and the source, contribute elements to the final blend whose structure is to a certain extent new to both domains, such as being poisoned and dying are novel to the network of containers being filled. Although creative multiple blends are possible and worth pursuing here as an explanation for the innovative elaborations found in Gilman's poems, there are other elements that need to be scrutinised before a final verdict can be passed.

In the analysed works, eating is also represented in terms of allowing entry, which underlines the voluntary relinquishment of defence mechanisms that needs to occur for the process to take place, as food needs to cross the vital threshold of body boundaries. Let us quote the lines in question:

And besides, admitting the poison,
Admitting we all must die
Accepting the second-hand-sickness
From a cholera-smitten sty.³³

This constitutes another creative elaboration on instantiating the container schema, in which "admitting" and "accepting" suggest that the body-container's orifices are protected and that entry is granted only to selected items. In the second of the cited lines of the poem the verb "to admit" is, however, used in another sense: as acknowledging or conceding. This not only immediately recalls one of the constitutive elements of CMT—simultaneous coactivation of various domains and meanings of a given word, but also advances the analysis of the complex

³² Kövecses, *Metaphor in Culture*, p. 278; Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner, *The Way We Think. Conceptual Blending and the Mind's Hidden Complexities* (New York: Basic Books, 2002), pp. 279–293.

³³ Gilman, "I Would Fain Die a Dry Death," 35–38.

interplay of various metaphorical and possibly metonymic structures that permeate Gilman's poetry and—as the article aims to prove—constitutes one of dominant intertextual conceptualisations in the Victorian period. Rather than simple wordplay (if there can still be any), the juxtaposition of the multiple understandings of admitting places emphasis on the significance of crossing the body boundaries. “Admitting we all must die” refers, therefore, both to recognising the ultimate demise of each human being and, much more importantly here, to stressing that any instance of allowing entry into the body inevitably leads to death.

In other words, if we let down our guard and give permission for the external influence—be it food or Freud's ideas—to seep inside, we are doomed to die. Such an openly pessimistic and purely one-sided view of the omnivore's paradox, which does include both neophobia and neophilia, is here postulated to result from the basically universal and fundamentally re-established relations with food—adulterated, no longer locally sourced, produced mechanically, and standardised beyond recognition. When Michael Kimmel looks at the penetration schema in *Heart of Darkness*, he follows a train of thinking similar to what has been said above, claiming that “in the Victorian age it was a prime imperative to contain oneself.”³⁴ He bases this insight on “historically motivated preoccupation with boundaries in Victorian England,”³⁵ and then uses it to expound on the popularity of Conrad's novel as resulting from its containing Werthian megametaphors, that is such conceptualisations which are widespread in a given culture in general. This grounding in history is supposed to, referencing Bill Harrell, signify issues “of race, nation, class, community, family, church and gender”³⁶ in which, at the time, the question of inside and outside, or the self and the other, became essential. And rightly so; nevertheless, this approach stops short of making the connection with the realities of dealing with food that were to a certain degree common to all Victorians and, as a result, were either the root of or at least a major factor in amplifying the boundary-protecting behaviours and attitudes that spread to other spheres of activity, such as politics and economy. Although it may seem striking at first, there is a link between fearing suspicious scraps of meat or tea brewed with sawdust and British or American imperialistic ambitions.

³⁴ Michael Kimmel, “Penetrating into the *Heart of Darkness*: An Image-Schematic Plot-Gene and its Relation to the Victorian Self-Schema,” *Vienna English Working Papers*, vol. 10, no. 1 (2001), p. 23.

³⁵ Kimmel, “Penetrating,” p. 27. In claiming so, Kimmel constructs his argument with the support of Bill Harrell's 1982 article “The Social Basis of Root Metaphor: An Application to *Apocalypse Now* and *The Heart of Darkness*,” *The Journal of Mind and Behavior*, vol. 3, no. 3 (1982), pp. 221–240.

³⁶ Kimmel, “Penetrating,” p. 25.

That is not to say, on the other hand, that Gilman's poetry is solely a covered expression of anxieties over other areas, such as race or class concerns; it is, first and foremost, a collection of texts about food and the very tangible significance of the availability of safe nutrition, in which the apprehension whether "[it is] ham or trichinosis?"³⁷ has direct consequences in people's lives. This distrust, underlined several times in Gilman's poems and expressed also overtly as the "horrid doubt," the threat of poisoning, and the insecurity about whether the meat actually carries life or death, place nourishment in a peculiar two-fold position: it is both a source domain used to structure abstract targets and a literal concern. To complicate the matter further, as evinced by the earlier introduced metaphor EATING IS FILLING A CONTAINER, in the framework in which historical and socio-cultural factors led to revolutionary changes in foodscapes that brought about a good deal of confusion, food became also a common target domain conceptualised in terms of less abstract sources. This process is most discernible with reference to scientific and religious discourses, which served as disciplines that have the authority to bestow new meaning on the newly destabilised relations with food and eating.

Gilman was not only an enthusiastic proponent of Darwinism but also an avid reader of anything exploring the advances in Victorian science, with *Popular Science Monthly* as her primary source of knowledge.³⁸ Familiarity with this influential "organ of scientifically respectable popularization,"³⁹ as Cynthia Russett called it with just a little irony, must have led Gilman to be quite up-to-date with the newest developments in medicine, nutritional science, and public health. She may have read John Tyndall's article on how tuberculosis is transmitted from diseased to healthy animals,⁴⁰ which possibly prompted her to later wonder whether "[it is] tuberculosis or beef?"⁴¹ in her poetry. Likewise, another article by the same author could have provided the rationale behind Gilman's admonitions against the meat-packer's soiled hand in a poem not surprisingly titled "The Packer's Hand." There is close similarity between her

poisoning us [...]

With chemicals, dirt and diseases⁴²

³⁷ Gilman, "I Would Fain Die a Dry Death," 21.

³⁸ Lefkowitz Horowitz, *Wild Unrest*, p. 24.

³⁹ Russett, *Sexual Science*, p. 99.

⁴⁰ John Tyndall, "Letter from Professor Tyndall to the London Times," *The Popular Science Monthly*, vol. 21 (May to October 1882), p. 257.

⁴¹ Gilman, "I Would Fain Die a Dry Death," 24.

⁴² Gilman, "The Packer's Hand."

and Tyndall's pronouncement that "[d]irt was fatal, not as dirt, but because it contained living germs which [...] are the cause of putrefaction."⁴³ What is stressed in her poetry is the state of being susceptible to outside danger of contagion, which reveals a blend between aspects of germ theory and the idea about the permeability of body boundaries.

Gilman also mentions the concept of ptomaines, which evinces her awareness of current debates in the emerging nutritional science. "Named by Italian scientist Francesco Selmi after *ptoma*, the Greek word for 'corpse,' these 'cadaveric alkaloids' attracted a tremendous amount of interest among laboratory investigators in the 1880s,"⁴⁴ and were identified as primary culprits responsible for food poisoning. Even though the notion resulted from scientific misconceptions, it was instrumental in championing food safety.⁴⁵ That Gilman was involved in establishing and reinforcing the best possible patterns of food preparation and serving was made explicit in her essay "The Housekeeper and the Food Problem," where she attempted to present cold calculations about how to liberate women from the undesired and incompetently performed function of housewives, instead replacing their travails with the work of specialised, professional food laboratories.⁴⁶ This was a late essay, whose motivations were undoubtedly influenced by the dire needs—lack of labour force and food scarcity—of the war period. The same idea had, however, been expressed seven years earlier in her poem "We Eat at Home," which similarly speaks against the force of habit in representing the home as the best place to eat; instead, Gilman comments, the uneconomical and dangerous nature of home cooking needs to be recognised as soon as possible to break with the "content we live, content we die"⁴⁷ type of mindless tradition. What both these texts do is stand witness to her unwavering belief in the enormous social benefits brought by scientific study of nutrition. Similarly, by using the idea of ptomaines in her poetry, she achieved a complex motion. She transferred the (pseudo) scientific notion to the realm of literature and turned it into a powerful device to shake the reader out of the state of complacency about the quality of what is eaten. At the same time, she proved the possibility of exchange between different types of writing—scientific and creative. Moreover,

⁴³ Tyndall, "Letter," p. 463.

⁴⁴ Edward Geist, "When Ice Cream Was Poisonous: Adulteration, Ptomaines, and Bacteriology in the United States, 1850-1910," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, vol. 86, no 3 (Fall 2012), p. 335.

⁴⁵ Geist, "When Ice Cream Was Poisonous," 359.

⁴⁶ Gilman, "The Housekeeper," pp. 123-130.

⁴⁷ Charlotte Perkins Gilman, "We Eat at Home," in: *The Later Poetry of Charlotte Perkins Gilman*, ed. Denise D. Knight (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1996), 4.

the idea of ptomaines, supposedly “chemical compounds of an alkaloidal nature formed in protein substances during the process of putrefaction,”⁴⁸ was itself a many-layered construct, drawing from the limited knowledge of nutritional chemistry that yielded to complementing the experimental data with make-believe and from seeking analogies between the state of the digestive tract and morality. This in turn was also based on the idea of impurity and decay from auto-intoxication resulting from the remains of undigested waste and toxins in the alimentary canal. This way of understanding ptomaines, which led to viewing the colon as a cesspool,⁴⁹ furthers the investigation of the metaphor of eating as filling a container by drawing attention to the damage done to it through the prolonged presence of substances or items inside. Obviously this introduces the frame of temporal progression into the picture, which again complicates the concept. Nevertheless, the analysis of this one otherwise negligible concept, likely missed without thorough historicising, demonstrates both the need for grounding the discussion of conceptual metaphors in socio-historical context and, on another level, the presence of contamination metaphors in the period.

Already at this point it is becoming visible that Victorian foodscapes were to a large degree enshrouded in multiple contexts that modified their meanings. Moreover, not only were issues such as adulteration and food poisoning structured along the lines of container and possibly also penetration image-schemas, but the resulting conceptualisation was subsequently used to aid in visualising other abstract ideas. In the case of Gilman, the same metaphorical correspondences became transported to her other spheres of interest, such as the social responsibility of journalists, where experiences with food in the new reality were in turn treated as a source domain to talk about bad tendencies in the contemporary press. Wrote Gilman:

[A newspaper] may properly add advice, information, instruction, entertainment, and legitimate advertising, but when in any department it perverts its own real purposes in order to “sell goods” it is the same position with the grocer who adulterates his food supplies and displays painted candy to attract children.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Edwin Le Fevre, “Ptomaines and Ptomaine Poisoning,” *The Popular Science Monthly*, vol. 80 (January to July 1912), p. 400.

⁴⁹ James C. Whorton, *Crusaders for Fitness. The History of American Health Reformers* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), p. 218.

⁵⁰ Charlotte Perkins Gilman, “Interviewing,” *The Forerunner*, vol. 5, no. 1 (1914), p. 35.

In this way, another layer of metaphorical correspondences is formed, yielding the UNETHICAL JOURNALISM IS FOOD ADULTERATION, which seems to be a complex concept drawing from IDEAS ARE FOOD, MORALITY IS PURITY, and possibly others as well, based to a large extent on extremely cultural-specific experiences. This metaphor was added to other food-related concepts that reappear in Gilman's writing, such as abundance bringing happiness, meat and drink as the stuff of life, or being able to independently procure meals as a sign of self-reliance and autonomy. This last one is especially interesting in the context of her indefatigable feminist agenda. In *Women and Economics* she lamented the historically motivated subjugation of women: "So he instituted the custom of enslaving the female; and she, losing freedom, could no longer get her own food or that of her young [...]." ⁵¹ Women's shameful dependence on men for food, a theme central to the famous book, ⁵² is later developed to include also the reliance on children's labour, as exemplified by the following lines coming from her poem "Child Labour":

The only animal alive
That feeds upon its young.⁵³

Such is Gilman's view of the human being, and it clearly demonstrates a PROCURING ONE'S OWN FOOD IS FREEDOM metaphor, with the entailment that feeding on something is exploiting it. What it shows is another instance of several unfolding layers of correspondences binding together the areas of nourishment and liberation, testifying to the plenitude of potential meanings food and eating can be imbued with. Additionally, she repeatedly made use of the "meat and drink" metaphor at several stages in her life, which could be a sign of the continuing importance of this sphere of life to her case. In this perspective, the anxieties of dealing with omnipresent adulteration and uncertainty about the quality of food delivered to the plate, which was especially weighty in the case of women in charge of a household, became retooled into food-based metaphors that helped to conceptualise the fear and later travelled into other domains of Gilman's preoccupations, such as the social responsibility of journalism.

⁵¹ Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *Women and Economics. A Study of the Economic Relation Between Men and Women as a Factor in Social Evolution* (Boston: Small, Maynard, 1898), p. 75.

⁵² Commented on in Lefkowitz Horowitz, *Wild Unrest*, p. 193. This vision was probably a consequence of Gilman's strong Darwinian orientation.

⁵³ Charlotte Perkins Gilman, "Child Labour," in: *The Later Poetry of Charlotte Perkins Gilman*, ed. Denise D. Knight (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1996), 7–8.

Nina Augustynowicz

"Ham or Trichinosis?": Conceptual Metaphors of Food in Charlotte Perkins Gilman's Writings

The aim of this article is to discuss conceptual food metaphors found in the works of Charlotte Perkins Gilman. Using the multidisciplinary framework of cognitive food studies, the writer's poetry and journalism are shown to contain conceptualisations resulting from the changes in Victorian foodscapes. Gilman was aware of the commercial contamination of food, which involved its adulteration with harmful additives and unhygienic methods of industrial food production. These practices led to a gradual loss of trust towards the alimentary sphere. In this perspective, the anxieties of dealing with omnipresent adulteration and uncertainty about the quality of food delivered to the plate, which had weight in particular in the case of women in charge of a household, became recreated into food-based metaphors that helped to conceptualise the fear and later travelled into other domains of Gilman's preoccupations, such as the social responsibility of journalism. In a curious mix of socially, historically and individually guided experiences, Gilman's metaphors serve as a testimony to the concerns of the late Victorian period.

Keywords: Victorian period, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, conceptual metaphors, food studies, food adulteration

Słowa kluczowe: epoka wiktoriańska, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, metafory pojęciowe, studia nad jedzeniem, skażenie żywności

