





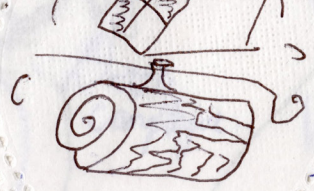




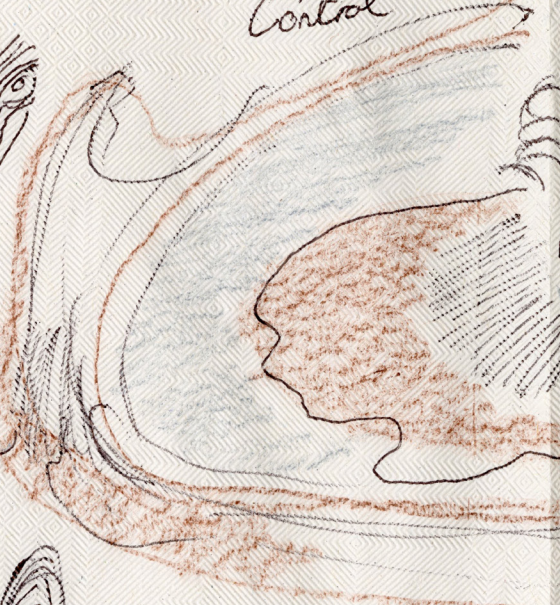
# Confectionary and Myths

David Henry Donald

laughing



Handwriting &  
Order Fork 20<sup>th</sup>  
R Entery  
etiquette &  
Control



Croissant  
Corkscrew  
in pastry



Window/  
Neptune  
design

Spencer  
fork



Laura  
Parrish



Refers but also contradict \*

Alphabet and  
assumption of  
youth  
Sea aesthetic  
+ ship interior  
1930s



teaching aids



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Figure 1. Still from Laurel and Hardy, Oliver Hardy in ‘Twice Two’ {1933}

Figure 2. Viennetta mind-map {pencil and pen on damast table cloth} 2021

## Introduction

The main premise for this analysis was to use a few specific food products that would be dissected culturally, linguistically and historically, to expand and influence a body of writing that would be generous as well as seemingly prolific in its very specific revelations. These things are meant to unveil shrouded meanings within the most prosaic food items, that are largely taken for granted, especially since eating and sustenance usually surpasses hidden but obvious truths. I am largely interested in everything that surrounds these degradable objects, through their: display, etiquette, and relationships with inanimate objects as well as the broad study of gastrophysics.

Furthermore, I am also interested in social stereotypes and the notions of taste: who would consume this?, display, or accumulate it? And where does its provenance lie? And what histories does it refer to?

I also feel consistency is important in defining taste - and I think there are opposing patterns in such objects because they are always changing depending on context that are emotionally opposing throughout the mode of marketing myths whilst they progress through history.

Even though the objects in question do assume a target audience or feeling they also are understood to evolve from origin, logic or even the intent of their makers whilst still harbouring latent emotional energies of the past unto the present.

In my own work methods, I consciously use non-traditional sculptural materials like food and disposable ephemera like packaging, that are aligned nearer to craft processes that provide economical material value and evidence of novel effort within my own medium. The techniques are not overly laboured but come from discerned personal knowledge of the material and its use. Using the handmade allows me to accept a lessening of control, taking on a life of their own and usurping expectations. The food object and everything that surrounds them come from my own frame of references and in some ways it is an example of a autobiographical encyclopaedia of things.

The following text is a prelude to a more thorough analysis, but still includes evidence of thematic frameworks that will be elaborated on throughout. As an introduction, I will use the confectionary product: Viennetta ice-cream and provide a piece of written prose that takes on the emotional voice of a stereotypical analysis of food but never really refers to the flavours or sensations that would be expected in such settings like restaurants, but rather everything that surrounds it. It is a precursor to stimulate analysis by using a specific kind of register and voice, expected in such contexts, without the need to analyse specific tastes or flavours.



Figure 3. Viennetta printed advertisement: Fenland Citizen 11th Nov 1992  
Cambridgeshire, England

### Viennetta Ice-Cream

*Heavenly curls of cream cement, entombed between layers of Edwardian decency, all surmounted by a plateau of glacial cacao.*

*The Viennetta ice-cream is a dessert of harmonious structural qualities, alluding to the modular dimensions of a brick as well as suspensions of lace that echo Elizabethan neck garments. The dessert is dualistic: with 'pleasant ruffles' that speak of cute, cushioned environments, chintzy soft interior furnishings, tasselled lamp shades, curtain ropes and sofa trims.*

*And on the other, it recalls an opposing seductiveness that pushes against an age of decency and decorum: a lewd dessert made in the image of 'burlesque' plumed cushions and leg garters.*

*Dvořák's score 'Humoresque' plays in one's head as they hesitate to cut the first portion. And through this hesitancy, the decorative motifs uncurl and melt into a painterly mess of 'orthopaedic brown' and 'hearing-aid beige' a colour field that suggests clumsiness and incompetency. This paint palette of ice-cream is the end point for most temperature challenged desserts but for the soft contemplative timbre of the musical score that repeats much like the musical pattern of those ice-cream clefs and swirls, allows it to 'peak' and 'trough' into an eternal composition and preservation.*

*And whilst upholding this decoration, the swirls recall an endless military chain track, solidifying both form and function together in an exaggerated fashion. The repeated tractions of the ice-cream swirls propagate the image of speed and endurance of a 'saccharine centipede' that trails the smell of burnt tyres and oil infused dirt, staining a ladies' chemise as it melts.*

*Dvořák's physical presence in the cream, mirrors the 'up and down' motion of an Edwardian ladies' balanced glide, who struts the promenade, so-that her top-heavy millinery on her poised, stiff head should not fall. Much like the Viennetta on a plate, the initial firmness of the dessert alongside its impending softness and eventual collapse requires it to be transported gracefully and carefully from the freezer to the serving tray and onwards to the table whilst still keeping its ornamental cream motif structure. The layered striations of the chocolate, compacted in between the cream curls act as a cursive scrawl of handwriting composes the dessert into an image of scholarly control and Edwardian discipline.*

*Whilst at the table, the cream woven structure that recalls an ornamental iceberg, of a well-balanced nature, starts to sink at a glacial speed only to remind us of the precariousness of the Titanic as it is engulfed bow side diagonally into the sea. The firm compacted architectural chocolate shards, holding everything together is the wooden promenade of the ship as it breaks*

*in two into the ocean, throwing it into multiple orientations whilst engulfing its ice furnishings slowly into the bone china plate.*

*The white disposable napkin, a delicate accessory to the ice-cream, is saturated from the melting dessert, emanating the titanium white paint from the pier. Caked in layers, it produces a feeling of metal, one that became harder over its repeated application, much like the starched drapery of those Edwardian pinafores. With embossed patterns of dotted white braille, the napkin echoes the successive industrial rivets found along the pier promenade and the painterly ice-cream. Metallic and rusty to taste, it is much like biting into a stainless-steel fork. The wafers from those ice-creams, industrially pressed from their confectionary moulding like the white rivets, resemble the patina of a steamship hull or boiler engine and conversely the lightness of a lady's shell powder compact or of a stucco moulding from a Neptune-inspired hotel ceiling at the seaside.*

So what is Viennetta?

Viennetta is a word like many which is engineered through the channels of marketing, serving to create a feeling of iconicity and identity for its consumer. It assumes to encapsulate something very specific in its very choice of word, to become '...an image that is coherent and stable over time, a personality that supposedly reflects some kind of authentic character for the product.'<sup>1</sup> Conversely, most branded products seem to exist as signs or signifiers without much conversation towards why they affect our nearness towards them. Many just are, and are digested on a very subconscious level, however, you can make perfect sense of them if you start to draw connections between use of language and the product that is imagined for us, the viewer and consumer.

If we look at food as a separate entity away from the obvious informative processes of cooking, preparation, and its final consumption we could find a whole element of its use that is overlooked: it's symbolic nature. This literary type of reading is not always informative, as it does not offer practicalities, but

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<sup>1</sup> Marianne Lien, *Marketing and Modernity* {Oxford and New York: Berg, 1997} pg.254

it does stimulate senses that are not always obvious, in an indirect and humorous way. I feel most food products are consumed subconsciously with little or no understanding of the complexity of branding and inferred origins and provenances for us.

Roland Barthes's *Mythologies* offered a semiotic analysis on certain French products and the way myths are constructed through them. What Barthes presents is how the operation of myths only allow viewers to receive the product subconsciously rather than develop and understand their meaning. For Barthes, the operation of 'Myth hides nothing and flaunts nothing: it distorts; myth is neither a lie nor a confession: it is an inflexion.'<sup>2</sup> thus functioning in a way that is an empty vessel to provide meanings. The myth is also a metalanguage that actively talks about itself, shrouded in codes that cater for a small audience who understand these insider knowledges, but for many its a '...causal process: the signifier and the signified have, in his eyes, a natural relationship.' For Barthes, 'myth encounters nothing but a betrayal in language', and by an 'elaboration of a second-order semiological system will enable myth to escape this dilemma : driven to having either to unveil or to liquidate the concept, it will naturalize it'.<sup>3</sup> Thus language obliterates the myth but the Barthes' second-order semiological system will help the myth to covertly signify something else.

Irrespective of obvious meaning, brands can be 'cultural artifacts...to represent the cultures they are sold'<sup>4</sup> From this, we could see that brands are components that say more about us than of themselves, recalling all the finite associations, our own frames of reference, imaginations and first encounters with them. By relating to inanimate objects, specific places, times and their cultures they find a way into the complex collage of external associations, serving as a vessel to stimulate a certain memory lived or not or a history mis-represented, albeit idealistically.

<sup>2</sup> Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* trans. Annette Lavers {New York, NY : Farrar, Straus and Giroux : 1972} page 128

<sup>3</sup> Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* [1972: 128 128,130,128 ]

<sup>4</sup> Dawn Lerman, Robert J Morais, David Luna, *The Language of Branding: Theory, Strategies and Tactics*, {New York, NY : Routledge : 2018} pg.6

## The Grammar

For a start, Viennetta is a blended word of Vien- and -netta or maybe Vienn or etta depending on how you look at it. As a total, it is a neologism consisting of two separate parts, one which obviously derives from an actual word : Vienna and the affixation -etta. Curiously, it's physical and phonetic make-up don't relate much to a larger lexical field on first glance, apart from Vienna, vain, Venetian or humorously vein as in the blood circulatory system. -etta, however, used as a suffix in the word blend offers a very peculiar shift in meaning from its understanding as a singular proper noun as it takes on sentiments of place and persons combined to create both a human and non-human entity. -etta' is a prefixed form used in names of people, specifically those of females. Even though its usage is quite outdated in the example of Violetta or Henrietta within a Northern European example, the affix is still commonly used in name variations such as Antionetta - in the Italian language.

From the second blended form we also see a cross-cultural overlay within the use of -etta in relation to the Italian word form and the Austrian capital, two locations, both important. What could these two have in relation towards each other and what is achieved? A synthesis is achieved by merging two cultural signs and solidifying them into the name that takes one ideal alongside another in one digestible image, as if one was making a perfect balance of ingredients. In this case, it is the most desired points of a culture. -etta is also a diminutive form which means little of anything added to it and is strictly female in its usage. Is Viennetta a little slice of something bigger, or is it a little slice of Vienna? The grammatical form suggests a syndecoché, a part of a whole, but also its physical make-up issues the idea that it was cut from a larger piece of a decorative object. The repeated traction of motif swirls suggests an infinity, with the cake becoming a section from a gilded frame, an architrave moulding, or a sample of something larger or grander than itself.

## Miss Viennetta

Because Viennetta is feminine in its grammatical construction we could argue that it leans towards an objectification, that Viennetta is an embodiment of a woman: to be eaten and digested in a pejorative sense. Caitlin Hines provides much research on the use of dessert terms, how they are used to describe women who ‘are not just objects but sweet {that is, compliant, smiling}, and not just desserts but pieces or slices’.<sup>5</sup> However, a frozen dessert such as Viennetta somehow stops the sexual implication that is outlined in a question in Hines’ text : ‘...why fruit and baked goods? And why not frozen desserts?’<sup>6</sup>, to describe females. The pre-packaged Viennetta does not fall into the preparation of ‘women as dessert or women as prostitute...sold in speciality shops...prepared by “professionals”<sup>7</sup> either, because of the nature of its becoming: factory produced and made without any of physical contact that happens within the baking process, and thus relating more to how ‘heated desserts can be seen as an object of lust’<sup>8</sup> mainly due to the physical procurement by another human {male} agent.

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<sup>5</sup> Caitlin Hines, *Rebaking the Pie: The WOMAN AS DESSERT Metaphor*, in : *Reinventing Identities: The Gendered Self in Discourse*, Edited by Edited by Mary Bucholtz, A. C. Liang, and Laurel A. Sutton {Oxford University Press, 1999} page 146.

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.* {1999 :146}

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.* {1999 :153}

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.* {1999 :153}



The fact that the cake has been properly named ‘Viennetta’ is of importance because it is not, as Hines writes, ‘selectional...a slice or piece of the mass nouns pie or cake implies a remainder...’<sup>9</sup> accounting for ‘...women being depersonalised, robbed of their uniqueness.’<sup>10</sup> In its own independence, Viennetta is to become an entity that is separate from all other cakes, baked or not because she is not just a common noun, to be sliced in a generic way. The coldness of the dessert has a material and a linguistically semantic relation to a supposed real-life women, named: Viennetta. If we start to look at the temperature alongside the name we can see social and historical overlays. Because of the use of the -etta diminutive {as described before} brings us into the connotations of an era that is archaic, aligning with a type of lady which is of a colder {like the dessert} emotion and practising a certain sense of control and etiquette. Viennetta is a woman of high-standing, prestige and order: one that is allowed to be frigid and emotionally cold.

One final point that Hines provides in relation to metaphors used to describe women as desserts is the idea that some words ‘can be blocked at a semantic level {\*hot fudge sundae, \*pudding, and \*souffle},’<sup>11</sup> because ‘they are not usually subject to slicing into discreet pieces’<sup>12</sup> or the ‘non-appearance of the semantically ideal but phonetically bad \*Brown Betty, \*Charlotte, \*Crepes Suzette and \*Madeleine, desserts named after women’.<sup>13</sup> Like Viennetta, named after an assumed woman with the use of the ‘-etta’ affixiation, seems to fail at a semantic level because it is too specific to offer figurative meaning as a derogatory slur against women {in terms of the physical} and only links with other words in a random phonetic field of other Italian nouns such as beretta {a small hand-held gun} or porchetta {the rolled ham dish}. It is therefore its own entity and is a cultural, linguistic blend of something pertaining to an emotion rather than having any grounded etymology or semantic locus.

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<sup>9</sup> *ibid.* {1999 :154}

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.* {1999 :154}

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.* {1999 :155}

<sup>12</sup> *ibid.* {1999 :156}

<sup>13</sup> *ibid.* {1999 :156}

Viennetta's form does not provide segments or divisions usually seen in circular cakes, but rather rectangular sections from a cuboid form. A circular cake, once cut, denotes a triangle and a remaining negative space that alludes to both male and female symbols of sexuality: the penetrating triangle and the opposing negative space. Whereas, the Viennetta provides a feeling of inequality for both sexes because it has a more cold frigid form that is suggestive of rational slabs of cake, that can vary in size more easily regardless of symbolising gender. The circular cake is more suggestive of a biological form and the rectangular form is more of a technical one that denotes sensuality from the object rather than an explicit sexuality.

### Semantics

Also reinforced is Viennetta's meaning, by evoking other iconic and recognisable words associated within the field of confectionary such as Viennese whirls, fingers or cappuccinos. The dessert is an impostor because it uses the blended morpheme of 'Vienn' to co-exist on the same level as a well-established Viennese confectionary history. This is where its appeal lies and the signs it point towards, and whether you have been to Vienna or not, or understand the geography, it encapsulates all things European and luxurious for us. It also evokes specific industries and niche markets that have existed through inherited lineages, informing styles and characteristics of certain European centres, golden-ages and renaissances. The cake tells us specifically of the Viennese Baroque, its architecture and ornamentation, and the cafes that attracted the post-nineteenth century avant-garde, where those types of gilded creme cakes were eaten. Unfortunately, the cake's decorative nature alludes to a complex method of production that assumes only to be procured by hand, specific and artisanal, when it is in fact, a pre-prepared dessert from cardboard packaging and industrially made, in a factory, with zero viewers.

In a similar geographic context, the Viennese rationalist Adolf Loos who denounced ornament as ‘something that must be overcome’<sup>14</sup> and furthered that ‘As culture advances, it excludes object after object from being decorated with ornaments.’<sup>15</sup> Although speaking mostly about architecture, Loos would have seen the paradoxes in the Viennetta dessert, namely because of its method of production against its ‘assumed’ handcrafted decoration which short-circuits his idea that ‘...it is a crime that human labour, money and material are thus wrecked in economic terms.’<sup>16</sup> In other words, the labour involved to make a decorative object that is not deserving of the maker seems a paramount question because ‘we want to save on work, spare our fellow man and above all economize on material.’<sup>17</sup> Viennetta does save on work and spares our fellow man the intricacies of learning the confectionary trade, however in Viennetta we see a deception of the object, replicating the aura of the ‘handcrafted’, as well as benefitting from the mass-produced, aligning quite neatly with Walter Benjamin’s essay: *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Mechanical Reproduction*, which accounted for the dilution of aura within an acceleration of mechanical reproduction which changed the desires of people who were just as satisfied with a packaged reproduction than a pure unadulterated ‘original’. However, the difference from the time of Benjamin’s writing in the 1930s until now is that ‘authenticity’ is no longer paramount to an object’s value, with the replication channelling a sense of place and feeling just as effective, because, ‘...the unique value of the authentic work of art has its basis in ritual, the location of its original use value.’<sup>18</sup> We now know this to be replicated and transposed in multiple surrounds, just like the Viennetta, preforming assumptions of hand-procured authenticity and of certain locations.

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<sup>14</sup> Adolf Loos *Ornament and Crime*, Translated by Shaun Whiteside, {Penguin Classics, London, England, 2017} page 94

<sup>15</sup> *ibid.* {2017: 94}

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.* {2017: 182}

<sup>17</sup> *ibid.* {2017: 236}

<sup>18</sup> Walter Benjamin in *Illuminations* ed. Hannah Arendt trans. Harry Zohn from 1935 essay *The Work of Art In the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* {New York, NY, Schocken Books, 1969} page 6

The method of production for Viennetta brings into question a kind of deception in the dessert because the technique {Figures 4./5.} replicates an assumed decorative original. However, this deception should not be seen as a negative thing because, ‘...the original and its representation belong to the same class of object...’<sup>19</sup> and the ‘...replication is achieved by a technical procedure very much like that was produced in the original’<sup>20</sup>, like the effort for reproducing things. However, there is no significant material original of the Viennetta and what is reproduced is an ‘image’ of it. The assumed origin of production: Vienna and everything associated with it is replicated, the material has been modified as a typified form of selected pastiches associated with the confectionary field, combining more than one element of things to produce an almost 'Frankenstein-like' object, typifying similar forms. What is modified and selected as attributes to create and new absolute form is its marketing goal but departing from a type of labour that real Viennese handcrafted forms had to endure by replacing it with automated and more efficient ones. You could say that the mode of production for Viennetta has two different methods that are at odds with one another: the presumed handcrafted nature through its ornamentation alongside its industrial production. The industrial plant {Figures 4./5.} also does not mirror the decorative emotion of the product it produces, and its machinery is specifically designed and calibrated to make forms dedicated to only one specific product that almost defies a versatile productivity. A perfect example for this would be the scene in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* {1971} where the ‘Everlasting Gobstopper’, which is small and cute in its end production, is manufactured with the most overt and exaggerated machinery production and noise: {Figures 6./7.}.

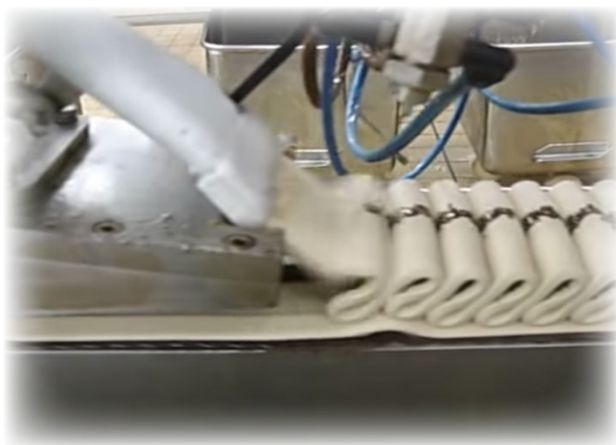
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<sup>19</sup> Richard Schiff, “*Representation, Copying, and the Technique of Originality.*”, in *New Literary History* 15, no. 2, Interrelation of Interpretation and Creation {Winter :1984} page 335

<sup>20</sup> *ibid* {1984: 335}

Like the Viennetta, we see an imbalance of production and outcome. Instead of scale, the outcome of Viennetta is an overly decorative and ornamental object that does not relate to the heavy-duty, generic factory machinery that is used to make it. The factory setting {Figure 8.} is humorous, hyperbolic, and unnecessary to the production of something so alien to the machineries that 'births' it. The technology has specifically been made and calibrated for the replication of a form that recalls a cultural history at odds with its own technical aesthetic which allows Viennetta to become an anachronistic product and an image of a Marie Antoinette layered mattress cake, a section of a gilded rococo frame or the pleasant ruffles seen on Edwardian sea-side attire, spanning a long history outside which is outside its present-day production methods.

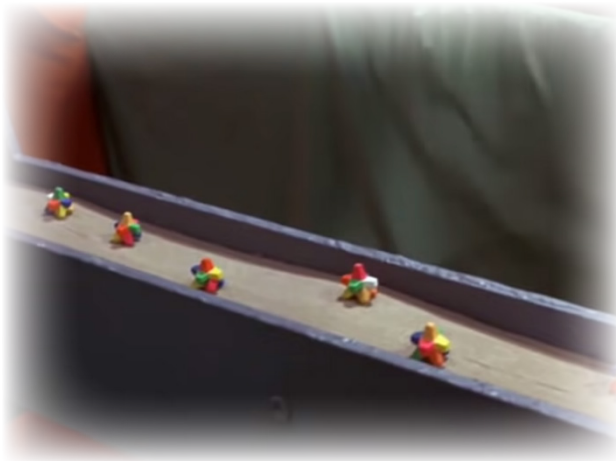




Figures 4 & 5: The factory mechanics of the *'Viennetta'* that mass-produce the idea of fine hand-crafted details.







Figures 6 & 7: The machinery and the product: 'The Everlasting Gobstopper' from Charlie and the Chocolate Factory 1971.



Figure 8. The industrial production of Viennetta ice-cream

### The Advert

One specific Viennetta advert {Figure.9} offers an interesting relationship around the notion of ‘women as dessert’ from Hines’ text and alongside how desserts are either taken in a pejorative sense or provided in a neutrally positive way. In short, the advert starts with a dinner party where four players are present : three guests and a hostess. Also, the two female/two male demographic denotes a type of civility within the dinner party setting: two respectable couples enjoying each other’s familiar company. The players’ hands are the only things visible and the their actions and emotions are expressed through a type of sign-language game of charades.

The appearance of a hostess alongside the Viennetta is important in the power relationship of where the dessert is situated, used and what Hine's explores in relation to how desserts like 'women can be bought and sold, eaten, elaborately decorated ...'<sup>21</sup> or like 'a tart or a cookie... with few or no dishes and utensil to clean up'.<sup>22</sup> The hostess comfortably eradicates this notion and takes control of how the object is produced, where it should go and its conclusive after-effects. The cake is not something that should be snatched or ate in haste but rather provided and cut according the hostess' own understanding of appropriate quantities, because the 'Lady of the house who sends your plate...is the best judge of precedence at her own table.'<sup>23</sup> as George Routledge expresses in the manner of Victorian etiquette guides. The hostess seems to be an animistic embodiment of the Viennetta cake because she and the cake are both respected and this all ties together a sense of etiquette, especially when the Viennetta slogan : '*One slice is never enough*' is vocalised and the dinner guests hands' politely hesitate to take the last slice of cake. Playing on the 'last piece' which is refused or voluntarily rejected despite the guests' yearning for it, markets Viennetta as a temptation within a specific social arena where inner control and decorum pushes against eachother in the most uncomfortable but relatable ways.

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<sup>21</sup> Caitlin Hines, *Rebaking the Pie: The WOMAN AS DESSERT Metaphor*, {Oxford University Press, 1999} page 148

<sup>22</sup> *ibid* {1999: 153}

<sup>23</sup> George Routledge, *Routledge's Manual of Etiquette*, {George Routledge & Sons Ltd. Glasgow, Manchester, & New York, 1860} page 22



Figures 9 & 10 Walls *Viennetta* - One Slice Is Never Enough {U.K circa.1980s}

## Dessert and Class

There is a class bias within the dessert also, which assumes that the dessert operates only within the upper arenas of society where manners are present and usual dinner etiquette is preformed because the last piece can be, ‘the etiquette piece which is there to be refused’<sup>24</sup> or through ‘mutual passivity: no one takes it ...’<sup>25</sup> which ‘...symbolically allows all assembled to quietly assure themselves they are not, in fact, gluttonous barbarians.’<sup>26</sup> However, in the case of women, ‘...the one that takes it will be an ‘old maid’ remaining as single as that last piece on the plate.’<sup>27</sup> which is evident when the female refuses the last piece when offered by the hostess {Figure 10.}. Alexander Dumas in the Dictionary of Cuisine provides a similar kind of trajectory of ones’ appetite that links with the situation of the polite Viennetta dinner party, whereby ‘...a delicious dish holds him to the table with a final tempting of his sensuality...’<sup>28</sup> So rather Viennetta as a sexual object in relation to Hines’ analysis Viennetta is therefore not talking about sexuality explicitly but a type of sensuality that is about ‘control’ in the case of Dumas. Conversely, Dumas could not be called “an old Batchelor” for taking the last piece<sup>29</sup> as Margaret Visser points out further, marking a distinct cultural history for roles of women and men within the advert and their concurrent implications. In general, the use of non-verbal communication in the advert, such as hand gestures/postures offers an opposition to linguistic analysis as well as reinforcing the unspoken rules of etiquette and decorum around the dinner table that pushes the socially specific arena and the class bias within the product and that rules are innate and not learnt.

<sup>24</sup> Margaret Visser, *The Rituals of Dinner : The Origins, Evolution, Eccentricities, and Meaning*, {1991 repr., New York: Open Road Media, 2015} page 651

<sup>25</sup> Rico Gagliano, Brendan Francis Newnam : *Brunch Is Hell: How to Save the World by Throwing a Dinner Party* {Boston, Massachusetts, Little, Brown and Company, 2017} page 226

<sup>26</sup> *ibid* {2017:226}

<sup>27</sup> Margaret Visser, *The Rituals of Dinner : The Origins, Evolution, Eccentricities, and Meaning*, {1991 repr., New York: Open Road Media, 2015} page 651

<sup>28</sup> Alexandre Dumas, *Le Grand Dictionnaire de Cuisine* 1873, Louis Colman {London, Taylor and Francis Ltd, 2015} page 7

<sup>29</sup> Margaret Visser, *The Rituals of Dinner : The Origins, Evolution, Eccentricities, and Meaning*, {1991 repr., New York: Open Road Media, 2015} page 651

From this class bias, the frozen, ready-made dessert is heightened through the use of post-modern ornamentation: hexagonal plates, Victorian silver cutlery, all revealed on a black reflective table that echoes an age of ‘nouvelle-cuisine’ of humorously antithetical components. The Viennetta dessert is also stuck between an old-order gluttony of over-indulgent portions, placed alongside slick reflective surfaces of the 1980s which allow it to become an imposter of everything modern and forward whilst still retaining a presumed heritage through this stylisation. In our own understanding, the dessert is transferred from cardboard packaging to another serving tray which reveals its provenance and kills the assumption that it is exclusively made by the hostess in a painstaking tradition of preparation and labour. First marketed as exclusive, it is now generally considered a sign of canned-laziness only to be appreciated ironically as a retro dessert, and is not to be taken seriously. The evolution of the dessert, in terms of a social signifier of class within the aspect of the U.K, being first the epitome of classiness and sophistication has mostly lost this original image because its production is at odds with presentation because convenience is hard to market as exclusive anymore.

### Gastrophysics and Etiquette

The term ‘camp’ can be appropriately seen within the dessert due to its deception in its presentation but also its stylisation of no particular original example, rather a breadth of points and examples ‘...emphasizing texture, sensuous surface, and style at the expense of content.’<sup>30</sup> or an authentic pastiche. By not taking things seriously and appreciating things for their novel construct ‘... is one way of seeing the world as an aesthetic phenomenon.’<sup>31</sup> {Sontag} and ‘That way, the way of Camp, is not in terms of beauty, but in terms of the degree of artifice, of stylization.’<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Susan Sontag, *Notes on “Camp”* 1964 {London, United Kingdom, Penguin Books, 2018} page 3

<sup>31</sup> *ibid* {2018:2}

<sup>32</sup> *ibid* {2018:2}

Through its marketing, Viennetta could be seen as a shameless example because it does not adhere to a type of seriousness or criticality other food items have, such as preparation, measuring and timing. It therefore provides the most overt examples of aesthetic and sensual taste, not to be taken seriously, and therefore is open for any type of reconstructed image through the channels of marketing that essentially push its novel factor. The idea of novelty is very important in my analysis for certain dessert items because novelty does not usually have to explain itself, and I feel that there is a lot of hidden content behind these dessert examples that inform connections not usually imagined when the performance of eating takes over your attention.

However, there is content in the ‘Viennetta’, especially within the arena of the apartment in the advert, which situates us in a high-end enclave of town, bursting with all the tricky undercurrents of the urbane psychoses associated with Patrick Bateman and his dysfunctional rendezvous. Enshrined in the middle is Viennetta, a talking point that asserts table protocols whilst affirming an old order affluence in the midst of change within the nouveau-riche circles aligning towards the idea from Sontag that, ‘Nothing in nature can be campy’<sup>33</sup> and that ‘...most campy objects are urban.’<sup>34</sup> But regardless of hand procured authenticity, food items can be perfected by an ‘Originality and harmony in the table setting {crystal, china, décor}...’ as described by the Italian futurist Marinetti in the 1930s, and were crucial components in, ‘...extending to the flavours and colours of the foods.’

Regardless of mere sustenance, was Marinetti’s concept of ‘aerofood’, dishes which he ‘would not recommend for the hungry...’ For him, ‘Eating futuristically, one uses all the five senses’, and many of these were ‘...preceded by a perfume attuned to it...’, that would ‘...accentuate with their sensual intensity the flavours of a given dish.’ Like the Viennetta, we can see a saviour in its re-representation from the box, a performative aspect of deception that almost reutilises all the past emotions of etiquette, grandeur and ornamentation to inform a positive nostalgia for a viewer, even for a time not lived.

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<sup>33</sup> *ibid* {2018 : 3}

<sup>34</sup> *ibid* {2018 : 3}

For Marinetti, other things were at play within these Futurist modifications of the eating experience which extended from performance to a political critique of the Italian establishment that were seen to be polluted by ‘...international grand hotel cuisine...’ of ‘...official banquets with a clear soup, on which float four or five limp balls of dough...’ providing the most ‘...depressing, saddening and monotonizing foods.’<sup>35</sup>, a condition coined by him as ‘Xenomania’.

A more contemporaneous view would be: Gastrophysics something that Charles Spence commented, that ‘...wherever food and drink is served, sold or consumed there is always a multisensory atmosphere.’<sup>36</sup> Spence also reiterated that this ‘...growing body of gastrophysics evidence demonstrating that the environment, not to mention the plateware, dish-naming, cutlery.’, {like Marinetti}, ‘...all exert an influence over the tasting experience.’<sup>37</sup> It could be used to allow, whatever served on, the chance to redeem itself through novel contexts and emotions despite its dubious origins. The ‘sophisticated’ Viennetta almost refers to the type of environment that the Futurists’ distasted : uncritical political spheres and stiffness, however as a position it allows us to think how the latent energy of stifling etiquette is interesting in its own right, used in a sense of irony and playfulness. With Gastrophysics in mind and how our ‘...perception of, and our behavior around, food is influenced by the way in which it is plated and what it comes served on.’<sup>38</sup> could hold true to the Viennetta because it is a transporting vessel that stimulates all the previous motifs of grandeur into a single digestible image.

Spence further claimed that presentation could, ‘...hold the promise of enhancing the food service offering in, for instance, a hospital setting.’<sup>39</sup>, which upturns the precariousness of such environments concerned with mortality and vulnerability through the mere presentation of food, allowing us

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<sup>35</sup> Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, *The Futurist Cookbook* trans. Suzanne Brill, ed. Lesley Chamberlain {London, United Kingdom, Penguin Classics, 2014} pages {29,58,59,82,93}

<sup>36</sup> Charles Spence, *Gastrophysics, The New Science of Eating* {New York, NY, Viking publishers, 2017} page 38

<sup>37</sup> *ibid* {2017 : 39}

<sup>38</sup> *ibid* {2017 : 39}

<sup>39</sup> *ibid* {2017 : 29}



to understand that accoutrements can be just as important than the actual sustenance itself. This notion can also be found in the interesting and thorough encyclopaedia of all matters domestic: the Cassell's Household Guide {1869} which outlines in detail: the preparation of food to the codified ways or plating within the context of dinner parties as, 'So much of the general comfort of a dinner depends upon the neatness and taste with which it is served.'<sup>40</sup> These guides seem to pre-empt all the things that could go wrong or be seen as improper before mistakes could be made, such as '...not to have lights upon the table...which may interrupt the freest communication between the guests.'<sup>41</sup> The support systems for food could bring a '...disturbance caused by the removal of the cloth.'<sup>42</sup> {table linen} because again, 'Conversation was interrupted; and the thread of pleasant discourse, once broken, is hard to be mended smoothly and neatly.'<sup>43</sup> which provides how presentation itself can short-circuit the general flow of an evening. These types of household guides seem to concern themselves with dogmatic codes of etiquette but they are still sympathetic to nuances of location, time and the evolution of other cultures: what is acceptable in 1860s England maybe seen as different in other continents, is expressed sensitively, such as the 'Russian way' or 'French way' which places it as an example of anthropological analysis as well as a general guide for living. The register and use of language towards the reader has a less didactic approach because it doesn't have the voice of a singular expert, which is evident by the guide's lack of named authorship.

With our own pre-conceived stereotypes of the past, such as the numerous types of eating utensils or vessels for beverages or perpendicularly placed instruments on the table some rules almost seem out-of place, surprising and seemingly inconsistent to what we would expect. 'However neatly a person may eat, sugary sweets... will leave a trace on the fingertip if handled when eaten, which is perfectly orthodox.'<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Author unknown, *Cassell's Household Guide*, 1869 ed. {London, New York : Cassell, Petter & Galpin, 1869 vol.II} page 114

<sup>41</sup> *ibid* {1869 : 124}

<sup>42</sup> *ibid* {1869 : 383}

<sup>43</sup> *ibid* {1869 : 371}

<sup>44</sup> *ibid* {1869 : 372}

Cassells also outlines that, ‘Shrimps and other crustaceans, which also are allowed to come in contact with the finger and thumb, betray the presence of saline elements.’<sup>45</sup> In other words, the lack of salt does not dissolve the overly saturated oils from these foods and eating with fingers is approved, upturning the idea of rigid Victorian sensibilities that usually abstained from drawing attention to bodily orifices and primal eating habits. We can see similarities between the performative operations of Marinetti where ‘...a piece of velvet, a piece of silk and a piece of sandpaper...’<sup>46</sup> is used to ‘...finger with the right hand and provide prelabial sensations which make the food much more tasty as contemporaneously the left hand tries to bring it to the mouth.’<sup>47</sup> and the use of ‘...a coloured finger-glass to each guest.’<sup>48</sup>{Cassells} where, ‘The hand may be dipped, the napkin slightly wetted and applied to the lips’.<sup>49</sup> Even though the finger bowl {Cassells} and the sandpaper {Marinetti} operate in different intent, their placement is similar and both operate as external stimuli that both heighten the experience and performance of eating. Maybe the tepid finger bowl could preform these prelabial sensations of eating crustaceans and make it more sensual for the Victorian dinner guest, even if it is not admitted fully.

### The After-Eight Dinner Mint

On a similar trajectory as the Viennetta there is another saccharine food item that follows the same marketing strategy in terms of its allure for all things grand and indulgent. Although not a substantial food item but rather an end parenthesis to a meal is the ‘After-Eight’ dinner mint that lays between a sweet and a digestif, concluding as a palate cleanser of peppermint and dark chocolate. As a way to dissolve the previous tastes in one’s mouth, the mint has a certain type of ritual attached to it, echoing the need for cleanliness, like a conclusive version of washing before a meal or in preparation for something after.

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<sup>45</sup> *ibid* {1869 : 372}

<sup>46</sup> Marinetti, *The Futurist Cookbook* {2014 :93}

<sup>47</sup> Marinetti, *The Futurist Cookbook* {2014 :94}

<sup>48</sup> Unknown Author, *Cassell’s Household Guide*, 1869 ed. {1869 : 372}

<sup>49</sup> Unknown Author, *Cassell’s Household Guide*, 1869 ed. {1869 : 372}

There is a time quality of the After-Eight which is enshrined in its name but also its use: only to be consumed after eight o'clock, further reconnecting an element of control and anticipation for dinner company, but also a slightly out-moded assumption that every dinner ends at eight. The strategy of the sweet and its allure allows us all to become part of the rote performance despite not knowing the reason for the etiquette involved. Most people will still abide by it, just for the sake of the sweet and the amusing tradition, however what happens after eight is left hanging in the poisonous green mist of the parlor, brought about by the Scheele's green wallpaper that emits an invisible arsenic vapor.

The modular square dimensions of the mint are reminiscent of the holy communion bread, which further exemplifies a religious stand-in for the etiquette rituals of the dinner table throughout. However, a fresher breath and a kick of dark, aphrodisiac chocolate mixed within a time limit, all point toward a deeply sexual undercurrent that diverges from its more dignified counterpart, Viennetta. After-Eight verges on the more burlesque and seductive elements of the Victorian music hall, parlour and bordello, with deep metallic racing green and graveyard black as its colour field. In the middle of the packaging, the Louis XV clock which strikes at five minutes after eight points to some kind of monarchic over-indulgence of an ancient regime which also formally doubles as a silhouette of a female form, depending on your optical awareness.

The After-Eight packaging is part of its presentation, instead of being discarded like the Viennetta. The rectangular cuboid opens up to a black interior of neatly aligned sweets in black tracing paper casings that fit the dimensions of a Kodachrome slide. The sweet is lifted by the consumer to the light, in the same manner of inspection for those small photographic images. A more crude aspect of the After-Eight dimensions would be the similarities it has to a contraceptive product alongside the suggestion of time: after eight o'clock, the time for 'thrashing' and 'crashing' around.

A manufacturing process specific to After-Eight: invertase {a yeast} to ensure a constant soft sugar center without the ‘...gooey mint fondant from mingling with the chocolate...’<sup>50</sup> uses the conversion of crystallized sucrose {crystal sugar} to fructose, that had ‘...some of the most advanced engineering and manufacturing ever seen.’<sup>51</sup> Through this, ‘...the squares are coated in chocolate, with the excess being blown off by a jet of air; this gives the surface the distinctive ripple.’<sup>52</sup> And that ripple or ribbed effect of sand-dune chocolate, which is explicitly revealed on the front, half inside half outside the packaging or shield is the physical manifestation of the sexual devices of contraception. The sweet also garners a stressful anticipation in the same way that one would find opening a condom, but hopefully not to find it mint flavoured...after eight o’clock.

### The Advert

One part of the sweet that runs parallel with Viennetta is the good old fashioned advert from the 1990s which uses the dinner party as it’s stage for all the stuffy decorum and etiquettes. This time it borrows elements of the Viennetta advert but just in different forms. The whole advert centers around the idea of the last piece or rather, ‘the last one’, as the dinner-mint is shared around the periphery of the table by a butler whose presence pin-points the high social order of the group and setting indefinitely. The butler narrates that he is led to believe, in his years of service : ‘The last delicacy must always be reserved for the ghost of Henry, the fourth Earl’, and the one who eats it faces dire consequences of no specific detail, but just dire ones. Enshrined in the advert is a type of Victorian morbidity for the dead which circles around a then popular practice of the occult, a way to communicate with the distant past. The use of ‘invented tradition’ {Hobsbawm} and heritage, an easily procured topic at the dinner table, speaks about a set of quasi-paranormal rules and superstitions that are still relevant beyond the grave, informing the present, or used to ‘...inculcate certain values and norms of behavior by repetition, which

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<sup>50</sup> Andrew Webb, “*Food Britannia*” {London, United Kingdom, Random House Books, 2011} Page 451

<sup>51</sup> *ibid* {2011 : 451}

<sup>52</sup> *ibid* {2011 : 451/452}

automatically implies continuity with the past...or suitable past.<sup>53</sup>

The dinner mint sits on this type of superstition and unpredictability as a tool for the evolution of the night, in a sexually charged game of Cluedo or Poirot-like murder-mystery which easily helps the imagination through the grainy 90's film quality.

Further into the advert, the younger playboy of the household whilst in conversation with a girl nearly breaks this continuity with the past when he nearly devours the last mint, only to be saved by the matriarch of the family who swiftly guides him away from disgracing the tradition. Again the hierarchical structures of the elders, remind the younger generation of their wandering promiscuity in the setting of such control. Maybe the dinner mint can change that, to break away from that inherited trauma and guilt etched by their predecessors? The dinner mint however is something that would be shunned as a laughable fancy from distant ancestors as it does not fit the carnivorous image of the painted barbarian king/lord who sits above the fireplace in the After-Eight advert. It does however relate to more of a modern capitalistic image of excess such as Mr Creosote in the Monty Python sketch. A 1930s fat-cat who couldn't manage the last wafer thin dinner-mint after his food rampage, consisting of many convulsions, finally explodes across the restaurant in a grotesque slapstick propulsion. The interesting aspect of the sketch is that it almost refers to these performative arenas of the Viennetta and the After-Eight dinner mint adverts but in a satirical way, to almost exemplify the notion of unacceptability, grotesqueness and pure embarrassment that can happen in environments where everything is judged, seen and noted.

### The Ideal

What links these food adverts {Viennetta & After-Eight} is a recurrence of the ideal. Both made in the 1990s with elements akin to the 1890s we see a marketable interest of an old order through the notion of revivalism. Even though revivalism, by its most common definition refers to a religious usage: where religious endeavour would be used to persuade new members

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<sup>53</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, Terence Ranger, *Invention of Tradition* {Cambridge, UK, Cambridge University Press, 1983} page 1

to a cause {mostly within Protestantism} we could also see the same affects within the marketing of these food items based on an idea of revived culture or revived conscription to the ideal. These cultures are inherited and quintessentially English and this is important to consider as the locus of these products, and the place of their manufacturing which are both from the U.K {1982 and 1962 respectively}. Apart from food we can understand that the decades bring a whole range of inherited culture through the notion of revivalism. One particular U.K brand: Laura Ashley which epitomised a revivalist-type fashion for all things associated with a generic Mormon prairie style, oscillating between dignified garment cuts whilst providing a sense of innocence and freedom, due to its relationship with nature, and their trademark floral frolicking prints that operated in the same way as Viennetta but more obvious and performative way through the guise of fashion. Laura Ashley did not survive because its whole image was built on a fleeting moment of a revivalist fad that could only start big and end only into a niche market.

These products both talk about a confectionary history and an inbuilt marketing that is surrounded by a specific class for them, as well as a similar type of stage for these food items: the dinner table and other conservative gatherings that provide a sense of appropriateness for food. What I find interesting is that these adverts don't provide a typical evolution of an evening, whereby the display and presentation degrades through a loosening of control due to inebriation. The dinner table, from preparation to finale offers an interesting way to look at the lament for order but also a break-down of etiquette, especially when drinks are spilt and napkins soiled from the recurring detritus. A perfect encapsulation of this idea are the works of Daniel Spoerri, specifically his Tableaux-Pièges which freeze the concrete aftereffects of actual dinner parties and point to the evidencing of the actual social gatherings, that simulate an experience rather than merely represent one {Figure 11.}.



Figure 11. Daniel Spoerri Tableau Piège, 1972 {40 × 71 × 71 cm, Technique mixte, sous plexiglas} Image courtesy of Collection d'art de la Mobilière, Bern, Switzerland

### The Bases of Things

The table is a base for control and separates everything from the ground as well as shield the indecency of the leg where those long Laura Ashley dresses would operate but for Spoerri he physically upturns the notions of orientation and presents the dinner table as a subject of inquiry, playing with the vertical and horizontal of acceptability by placing them on the wall. These works come in different evolutions: from complete settings of dinner tables to demised versions which refer to a certain time quality of use. This allows them to be easily read as props for the domestic interior, in a sense of scenography or theatre: to be moved quickly and efficiently between scenes and acts. The works by Spoerri assume to be made without any intervention of fixing the objects to the table surface, so they don't fall in their re-situation as wall based works, they just assume to exist like this. They also relate to props and handling of objects within such early films of Buster Keaton where objects are

glued to surfaces to give the impression of magical control over a slapstick situation, where gravity is controlled and magical physics exists {Figure. 12}. Objects fixed or glued to the surface assume to have control over the composition of the table, which look unadulterated from their use and are almost too good to disturb. Other technical operations that control the precarious nature of the table from destruction is the use of table fiddles on ships that prevent objects from sliding to the ground when in stormy weather, this is a small lip situated around the perimeter of the table. Also tables and chairs maybe bolted into the ground which not only restricts the way the body can recline but relates to how it ergonomically forces good posture, up-rightness and attention relating back to some notions of etiquette and proper bodily presentation. The operations by Spoerri assumes that the table should withstand violence or force but also talks about how things are easily lost and forgotten or could have been missed if they were not preserved. I think the works talk about the mortality and memory within food and are confronting to our own experiences of social gatherings that are mostly fleeting.



Figure 12. Vertical dinner in the Buster Keaton short: *“The Scarecrow”* {1921}



A common myth {but still credible} that surrounded the era of decency is how certain inanimate objects: furniture legs and curved supports were understood to, or could stimulate sexual comparisons between the female form, legs or limbs and compromise everything associated with good moral thoughts. *The Diary in America* {1839} by Captain Frederik Marryat who documented his ‘...astonishment at beholding a square piano-forte with four limbs...’<sup>54</sup> and ‘...these four limbs in modest little trousers, with frills at the bottom of them!’<sup>55</sup> seems to be the first example of how objects were personified as human stand-ins, informed by notions of decency which produced a recurring myth that enforced the need to ‘cover-up’. In this example, we could see that there is a conscious separation between two vertical points: foot and head as well as the need to conceal the support system of the leg so it didn’t disrupt the top. It simultaneously refers to and denies its physical importance in elevating the top human form and everything that surmounts it just for the sake of encouraging arousal. George Bataille offered a literal example of ‘high and low’, its operations and how ‘...the function of the human foot consists in giving a firm foundation to the erection of which man is so proud.’<sup>56</sup>, still ‘...sees it as spit, on the pretext that he has this foot in the mud.’<sup>57</sup> even when, ‘...within the body blood flows in equal quantities from high to low and from low to high.’<sup>58</sup> I feel that whatever base or support is used to heighten forms physically, they are still at the mercy of the ground and especially in the context of desserts are more susceptible to slapstick treatment because they are not taken seriously as an example of hearty sustenance, or as a prop for violence or destruction. Much like the custard pie trope that is used in such early examples of film history.

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<sup>54</sup> Captain Frederik Marryat, *The Diary in America Vol II* {1839} {Philadelphia, Carey & Hart, 1839} page 45

<sup>55</sup> *ibid* {1839 : 45}

<sup>56</sup> Georges Bataille, *Visions of Excess Selected Writings, 1927-1939 in Theory and History of Literature*, Volume 14, Edited: Allan Stoekl Translated: Allan Stoekl, with Carl R. Lovitt and Donald M. Leslie, Jr. {University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1985} page 20

<sup>57</sup> *ibid* {1985: 20}

<sup>58</sup> *ibid* {1985: 20}

As well as a support, the big toe analogy referred to a ‘...phenomenon of base seduction, which accounts for the burlesque value that is always more or less attached to the pleasures condemned by pure and superficial men.’<sup>59</sup> like foot fetishes. The unravelling of the dinner table brings with it an anxiety of detritus: mirroring, associating and bringing together the floor and base with everything heady and digestible. These opposites, through their concealment are still at the mercy of the base, especially in the example by Marryat. The table, if it is to be seen as a human comparison, operating between the high and low offers a restraint and thus strengthens the abjection of the ground more because when, ‘Order implies restriction; from all possible materials, a limited selection has been made and from all possible relations a limited set has been used...’<sup>60</sup> which ‘...disorder by implication is unlimited.’<sup>61</sup> In this, Mary Douglas almost reiterates that in concealing it, you refer to it even more strongly because it has the potential to be confronting, which, ‘...symbolises both danger and power.’<sup>62</sup> The low abjection is not really the main point, but rather to see the table as a tool where cues and codes are used as a kind of self-promotion and security, strengthened more so things don’t become homogenous and indistinguishable. Quoting from another Victorian household manual from 1879 Margaret Visser elaborates that in terms of “Society” it refers explicitly to ‘...a tiny part of society’ those who are distinguished from everyone else because of their manners.’<sup>63</sup> and are ‘...anxious enough to put on armour and enclose itself’<sup>64</sup> as ‘it knows that people who are not in “society” are trying to break in.’<sup>65</sup> In line with Visser and society, the Viennetta represents an ideal but offers a false sense of status especially in its preparation, which is contradictory to its marketing scheme of grandeur and exclusivity.

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<sup>59</sup> *ibid* {1985: 23}

<sup>60</sup> Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger. An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*. {London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966} p. 94.

<sup>61</sup> *ibid* {1966: 94}

<sup>62</sup> *ibid* {1966: 95}

<sup>63</sup> Margaret Visser, “*The Rituals of Dinner*”. 2015 ed. Page 171

<sup>64</sup> *ibid* {2015: 171}

<sup>65</sup> *ibid* {2015: 171}

## A Few Rules for 'Viennetta':

*With most iced-desserts there is always the tendency for it to be pitted with ice chasms that crystallise within the body of its cream structure, not too different to licking the frosted residue from an air-conditioning unit or the back of a refrigerator. This will have to sit in a cold but not freezing environment. When out of its cardboard packaging the thin plastic layer has to be carefully taken away so it does not mess with the woven cream structure. The cardboard and plastic has to be disposed of quickly and usually in a bin outside, away from the house so the dinner guests do not assume its origins, even though they are obviously apparent. The dessert is then to be placed onto a serving tray of equal dimensions, assuming a harmony between an effortless performance and making. A quick dusting of cacao that falls on both the dessert and the serving tray will allow the allusion of the handmade more apparent because it reconnects the base support with the dessert as a conscious finishing touch to the previous 'painstaking' preparation and making.*



Figure 13. Viennetta on the bone china serving tray {own image}

## High and Low

By re-positioning Viennetta on a serving tray, as described before, re-negotiates it into an object of desire, regardless of its origins. However, its other precariousness is in its balance {from the serving tray to the table} whilst it slowly melts into the provisional bone-china base. Balancing whilst walking recalls a certain type poise that was needed for ladies of a ‘decent-breeding’ from upper class circles and may account for the reason why Edwardian hats were so large and top-heavy, requiring those ladies to put their skills into practice. Many of these hats, especially those bonnets worn for the Easter Day Parade in New York in the early 20th century resemble those forms of fluffy soft-serve Viennetta ice-cream: overly balanced but also teasing the notion of collapse. Much like a priceless Chinese Ming vase situated on a plinth reveals my own malign satisfaction for the potential destruction for things of presumed value. It also recalls a stereotype of contemporary haute couture whose fashions are not practical but used as a performative gesture of balance and determination on the catwalk requiring both a forward motion alongside an awkward need to keep everything in place and upright. The upside-down shoe hat by Schiaparelli {Figure 14.} is the perfect analogy for this because it shuffles the lumbar support of the heel and the anchor of the foot, upturning the connection to the ground in a balanced stylish precariousness, which refers more to the overbearing and overdone use of ornament and display through this playful design choice. It also seemingly mimics the point of attention for men : the ankle and foot and places it in a gregarious way, to almost poke fun at the areas of desire.



Figure 14. Schiaparelli shoe hat from winter 1937-38 {image courtesy of Metropolitan Museum of Modern Art}

### The *Titanic* and the Stratifications of Class

Other vessels can also allude to the need to keep everything in place as well as refer to the strata of : high, low, rich and poor but also refer to these opposites through their own iconic destruction such as the *Titanic*. The vessel which sank in both horizontal and vertical orientations, lifting crockery, tables and furnishings to destruction upturned the symbolic economy of all things heady and up-right which we can also see within the *Viennetta* especially due to its own layering of ice-cream that collapses as it melts. Even on the serving tray the ice-cream is still at the mercy of its temperature challenged condition and if *Viennetta* is an embodiment for behaviours of a certain time then its physical collapse is the loosening of these conditions and the contradictions within them. The physical striations of the dessert are reminiscent of social hierarchies of the *Titanic* which literally exemplifies all the unfortunate prejudices of the time {the vertical distinction between steerage and the first class passengers} manifested into a disastrous event that revelled in these cultural aspects. And those layers personify all the social hierarchies of the

time through the dessert and the foundering of the Titanic and its accoutrements, such as the bone china, silverware and solid wooden furniture, that were all the bases for these types of Viennetta desserts and over-indulgent forms had now sunk along with the vessel which once carried and supported them.

The invisible force that pulls objects towards the ground involves a recurring slapstick notion for all ice-creams and over-indulgent forms of confectionary. What if the ice-cream should fall? exposing the ornamental charade and relegating it back to the abjection of the floor? The balancing act also, that tries to keep everything in order and the need for food to be at a vertical orientation, carefully transported from the plate to the server are at the mercy of the gravitational pull of the floor and the abjection of the ground. The striations of the Viennetta dessert are well established as the physical representations of these stifling etiquettes within the advert but also refer to the physical strata of the Titanic which I think is a pinnacle point to understand the social inequality through which an industrial disaster even prior to the First World War unravelled many social frictions and cultural insecurities. Curiously, one piece of literature that specifically recalls the Titanic event as a type of foreshadowing is the play by J.B Priestley 'An Inspector Calls', set in 1912 and retro-actively gazing from the point of 1945, where the world had already went through many existential phases. The protagonist Mr Birling, an over-confident Edwardian man of the house who discusses over the dinner table that the Titanic is "Unsinkable, absolutely unsinkable"<sup>66</sup> and from the 45' viewer is understood as a humorous way Priestley uses an example of dramatic irony to make the patriarch Mr Birling look foolish and to further the positive ideas of socialism against capitalism as the best type of future for the reader. It also uses the conventions of the dinner table, seen through the previous analysis of the advertising within the Viennetta and After-Eight, as an initial impression presenting one of stability within the upper-middle class Edwardians.

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<sup>66</sup> J.B Priestley , *An Inspector Calls* {New York, NY, Dramatists Play Service Inc. 1972}  
Page 10

The dinner table and the conventions surrounding it still allude to a front or cover of gentility that is exposed by the reader from their own futuristic lense whereas the adverts of Viennetta and Ater-Eight are seen through a more compassionate and positive treatment where no specific events or behaviours are used that would shed any obvious negativity to the products. Reviving the surface layer of the old-order without the need of the actual order is something Viennetta and the After-Eight aspires to. It is therefore a prop to manufacture an image and the essence of an ideal without compromising itself and takes the best aspects of these images, leaving the off-cuts and sediments behind, just like in process of the preparation for the dinner party and the disposed cardboard packaging in the bin.

### Bases, Class and Artists

There is one nano-second image within the restaurant scene of American Psycho {2000} which provides an interesting link with gastrophysics; how food utensils are represented but also a satirical look at dining within the context of elite circles. The plate {Figure 15.} provides a silhouette made from some kind of white powder that produces a negative space of a knife and fork made on top, suggesting activation and function, like an advertisement to eating. The recreation of these inanimate utensils from food itself as an image or indicator aligns with an example of fashionable novelty whilst assuming some kind of link of eating the ghosts of objects which are all important to consuming and enhancing the food experience. It simplistically speaks of the remnants that the performance of eating takes, like those seen in Spoerri however these are more ephemeral, fleeting and hard to preserve as an image. There is a certain anxiety with something that reminds me of the breakdown of image and experience if it has not been properly documented especially within the realm of eating where things constantly change states. The aspect of high-class eating that relies or uses more overt examples of food-fads also relate to a type of unnecessary excess that can be justified through their pure novel factor even though they that are not related to actual hearty sustenance. It operates in a similar way to the over-indulgence of, for example: royal-court eating where food waste was in abundance and was a signifier of wealth and elite behaviours throughout.



Figure 15. Icing sugar dusting from American Psycho {2000}

Not only the general composition of a table in relation to the base for food but also the composition of food itself: sandwich bases and the plane of painting are apparent in artists, such as Jackson Pollock who, ‘...combined pasta with vegetables, creating a dense interweave from the ingredients.’<sup>67</sup> or, ‘...Arshile Gorky who based his diet on lunches by Cezanne and Picasso.’<sup>68</sup> Using novelty and composition inspired by their own work and research to construct sandwiches they were considered to have ‘...changed the concept lunch around the world.’<sup>69</sup> with the idea of the sandwich as a snack upturned and represented as a sufficient meal. However they also operate between the line of sculpture as food and food as document, especially since they are so novel in their making and operate the same as the the table settings of Spoerri, talking about something ephemeral, too good to eat or good times lived and passed.

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<sup>67</sup> Carmean, E. A. “*The Sandwiches of the Artist.*” In *October*, vol. 16 {Cambridge, Massachusetts, The MIT Press, 1981} page 93

<sup>68</sup> *ibid* {1981: 89}

<sup>69</sup> *ibid* {1981: 87}



## Food, Mortality and Memory

One particular example that links food, mortality and memory {in line with Spoerri} would be the peculiar nature of preserving and keeping food associated with events such as the wedding or birthday cake. The chemical nature of confectionary, full of preservatives and refined dextrose {sugar} or alcohol {brandy & sherry} allow it to be kept for longer periods of time through a process of maturity, with only thing that degrades is the colour or hardness usually from light and fluctuating temperature. In certain traditions the wedding cake would be eaten incrementally at the time of an anniversary but others they would be kept as the most visceral sculptural document that provides a more sensual memory of an event, something a photograph could not. Iced desserts like Viennetta could not operate in the same way but a soiled napkin from the dessert could be kept to remind one of the dessert or a permanent stain on an item of clothing would solidify the memory and the remainder of the event.

Not only in a cultural sphere of the dinner party, linking mortality and anxiety within a lessening of control, but also in the sense of sculpture in the 20th Century, artists that use degradable materials almost refer to this idea of decay, entropy and the potential for loss as it's total reading. They almost contradict the anxiety of detritus, especially because the material chosen is conceptually linked within the work itself and by preserving it and changing its material state challenges authenticity especially in the institutional context. What if something was so heavily preserved that it no longer had any material that was of the original? Could it be still seen as an original work? Institutional effort for preservation of food rather than a personal effort can be seen to be problematic especially in the works of Dieter Roth an artist who used a range of materials, from: chocolate, cheese and spices. His rotting waste pictures made from left-overs of food, used on works seen as failures provided that '...rotting is beautiful in its own way - no one can have anything against it...' <sup>70</sup> because he '...smothered them with an automatic beauty'. <sup>71</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Dieter Roth, *Balle Balle Knalle*, edited Ulrike Groos, Sven Beckstette {Kunstmuseum, Stuttgart, Walther König, Köln, 2015} page 136

<sup>71</sup> *ibid* {2015:136}

The conscious use of these materials reveal the question of, 'What strategies can an institution pursue if the conservation of a work appears to contradict the intention of the artist who created it?'<sup>72</sup> and if '...a replica be a way of overcoming this paradox?'<sup>73</sup>

### The Screen and Food

Instead of looking at the obvious environments associated with eating such as the restaurant or the conventional eating space I feel like turning towards more child-orientated arena where the relationship between images on the television and the physical location of eating such as the living room can reveal other readings. I think that images on the screen are anachronistic as they refer to multiple spaces and dimensions through the switching of daytime channels, varying from: the typical 50's Western, period dramas and the contemporary news event. I also think that the images could be regarded as a piece of stimuli just like those outlined in the performative works of the Futurists, that were used to think about food differently, not only in terms of taste but about re-imagining other spaces and sensations in parallel to eating certain foods. I also tend to come back to these food items not in an ironic sense but as a way to re-represent a certain feeling and setting that relates exclusively to those food items in my mind, even for times not lived. Can food become a prop for extending or even re-living experience in a performative way, situating ourselves as actors? Maybe think of the French baguette in a wicker basket or even an apple danish wrapped around a gingham napkin. As a signifier they can take us to places that can romanticise the domestic, the rustic or a time not lived but still able to be imagined through food.

The personal interpretations for these objects on the screen were coming from a period before HD or remastered versions, played on the VHS or through a live channel television set. The quality of things in the screen, how they are used and preformed allow materiality to become misrepresented in objects

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<sup>72</sup> Heide Skowranek, 'Should We Reproduce the Beauty of Decay? A Museumsleben in the work of Dieter Roth', in *Tate Papers*, no.8, Autumn 2007, <https://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers>, accessed 28 February 2022.

<sup>73</sup> *ibid* {2007} accessed 28 February 2022

and can become stand-ins for food or accidentally realised as food. In short, I have long associated objects {mostly inanimate} from the screen as stand-ins for food because they don't have any physical presence informed by nearness or tactile handling. Their colour, composition and perceived material quality was easily associated as food because they were seen as being purely delicious. These associations can come from both human and non-human {animation} images and eating whilst watching these images also informed both the food I was eating at the time but also how these objects could have tasted. Oppositely, how can inanimate objects on the screen issue similarities in food outside that physical realm and make us drawn towards them? And through this how can food and images simultaneously provide aversions or attractions to the things we eat or imagine? The screen influences eating habits that are not just associated with literal food advertising but rather a kind of self-made advertising from our own visual and sensory associations of objects in the screen. Eating food whilst watching T.V is a modern habit that provides us with sensory multitasking. How could objects in the screen become stand-ins for the food we eat and vice versa. And how could these objects inform our decision making in the foods we are drawn to, through their pure physical handling or even colour, regardless of taste?

#### Eating the T.V. : The Wild West and the Wagon Wheel Biscuit

*The Western movie felt like it had a film of oily syrup washed over it, and this lacquer came from the black and white celluloids that bowed from the oval screen, glassy and buffed. However at times, the static energy from the broken cable that was taped into the back of the TV gave grainy, nauseating vibrations of black pepper, like the protruding sand and dirt from the canyons and rotating wagon wheels. Pepper which is seen as a very quotidian condiment of any household, its exoticness and dangerousness was exemplified by the the gun's barrel smoke shot through the spicy hot Mexican landscape within the itchiness of my nose and the dusty living room, was a perfect image of Appalachian living. The alternative technicolour palette from the rodeo's rayon attire and the crazy Navajo twills intensified by the TV's endless changing saturation, alongside the make-up of the cowboy was a sickening glow of pulsating endurance and pain.*

*And through this pain, eating bread & butter pudding somehow emanated the material quality of the cowboy's plaster cast, from his injury. The pieces of bread that were soaked and then dried out, were used in the same way that the plaster would dry. There was a sickening aversion to this type of dessert, it was a layer of skin from the cowboy's arrow attack but also the canvas medical dressing that would cover it. The sponge-like epidermis of the bleached anaemic bread was skin, human skin, and the currants were the wrinkled insects that fed the infected skin. The pudding was always left in the living room, in a bowl, saturated like fleshy parts, with dried crusts of the bread emanating the scabs. Bread and butter pudding was a medical dessert, saturated in syrup, left out with puss and gangrenous moistness.*

*The Western set, whether it was original or remade was dusty, from the chamois leather of the cowboy's garb to the Conestoga canvas wagon. A bowl of cheerios operated the same way as the bread and butter dessert, saturated within a ring of crusted calcified milk that was left to 'turn' on top of the black Sony television set. The tan cheerios in the bowl were a miniature diorama of these canyons and the dried milk rings were the geological sediments of the Sierra Nevada landscape. The bowl of cheerios became a drought canyon landscape within the rice paper painted backdrop. Just as delicious as the hardness of those sweet cheerio rocks, that equalled the dizzying sherbet constellations of rhinestone studs found on the back of the cowboy's gabardine shirts were also like the porous popcorn skulls from the French catacombs or the attire worn by the Pearly Kings of East London.*

*Simultaneously the Wagon Wheel biscuit, which was an underwhelming disc of kraft cardboard, with a light mallow inside was the opposite of what was literally intended: biting into a wheel of a weatherbeaten stagecoach. The biscuit didn't have the fiery rustiness of the Sierra landscape of broken horse legs but rather a smooth brown playmobil tea coaster of some plastic synthetic finish. It was a mahogany plinth for a desk lamp or a miniature quaint sculpture for a Greek column base. The jam blood in the middle, trying to emanate the blood from the shattered horse against the wheel spindles ended up being a limp ratio of filling and if you were to dissect the biscuit by taking off the first layer of chocolate you are left with a construction site*

*of mallow and jam glue on a cardboard disc. The biscuit also didn't have the modular form of neatly assorted biscuits that should have been in a tin, but a long packet of awkward dimensions and flatness that didn't suit the Cowboy and his romantic perilous adventures. However, the only thing that could save the treat would be its display, on a disposable gingham napkin. Gingham placed the object back into its intended emotion of picnics, a treat enjoyed at a saloon table, or on the bosom of a blouse, with crumbs falling neatly and rustically, emanating the innocence and danger of the Wild West.*

### Containers and Display

I grew up in a house where I was always aware of boxes and the things stored within them, finding it strange that some of the boxes used and the advertising on the facade of these boxes did not relate to their contents: Ritz cracker boxes full of sewing materials or cake tins full of hardware tools. The way of re-using these vessels to contain objects was purely practical however I saw them as disturbing or underwhelming, especially when the appealing biscuit tin contained dried rice or a hammer. The categorisation of these objects influenced the notion between the edible and inanimate and things that assumed a quality of deliciousness as well as relating to a specific time, relevant to the type of advertising, usually outdated and outmoded from current use. A box in iconic dimension, like a shoebox or a cereal packet confers specific usage but also a type of longevity. The shoebox tends to last longer mainly because of a secured lid and the ability to restore other objects. The cereal packet is usually used in a manner of craft: paper sculptures or decorations where the back of the cereal packet could refer to a product obsolete or just out-dated in its advertising. This childhood regression is important as it feeds into how the un-monumental within sculpture can last even when there is a presumed lack of permanence.

One experience that solidified this idea was in Havana where I walked around a store of a Neptune-turquoise interior, a kind of blue you rarely see but straightway pushes you into the early 1960s of Thunderbirds, plastic picnic cups and discoloured diving boards. The shop display had carefully positioned objects, labels facing but sparsely curated and the evident lack of products

made me think more how the proprietor managed the space. The display sensibility was like a gallery and this absent decision making attracted me more to the objects because they all had their separate stage and distant importance. Thus, it was less about transaction or the obvious political embargo but how the lack of abundance was almost stylish and boutique-like. The objects were works in themselves, not too different to the full frontal silkscreens of Warhol's soup cans that hovered in an elastic but protruding space, forcing the idea of product exclusivity. Examples of display as well as the link between food as inanimate sculpture and vice versa can be seen in the work of Claes Oldenburg, specifically his work: 'The Store' {1961}. Oldenburg rented a Manhattan store front to display and sell a collection of works that were all designed for the space. He specifically drew attention to an institutional critique but especially the '...romantic fallacy that art resists commodification...' <sup>74</sup> and issued the '...rhetorical question: what is an art gallery anyway but a supermarket...' <sup>75</sup>

### Animation, Food and the Inanimate

Animations like Tom and Jerry mark distinctions between films that have real-life characters because objects within are either human, inanimate, other, or portrayed as one another in a deceptive way. Objects would be used as literal stand-ins for food that deceive materiality, such as: a metal bolt painted and perfumed to become a wedge of cheese to trick Jerry. This bolt felt so satisfying and I too wanted to eat that metal bolt in real life {Figures. 16/17}.

Also, the way a tin can was opened made me think about the value of packaging of those cans, even though the food within were seen as both convenient and harmfully oxidised versions of food. Spam luncheon meat, a term only familiar with recently, as there was no word to describe this type of product when I ate it between an unbalanced ratio of tomato ketchup, pressed into a paper plate, is now easier to label. Spam, a meat product of dubious

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<sup>74</sup> Andy Stewart Mackay, *The Story of Pop Art* {Lewes, United Kingdom, Octopus Publishing Group, 2020} page 75

<sup>75</sup> *ibid* {2020:75}

origins with its functional-type packaging referred to a type of sustenance only for military-use or survival-type emergencies, was its defining quality. It also referred back to an era of optimistic domesticity and modular pyramids of food cans and the way it is preformed in animation, with its handheld stackable dimensions was similar to the ammunition cartridges that Tom would use to kill Jerry, were dangerously enticing to me. A scene from 'Yankee Doodle Mouse' {Figure 18.} which shows another stand-off between the two animals with obvious thematic undercurrents of World War II and a heightened sense of American patriotism throughout. Jerry uses an egg carton box to glide like a plane above Tom and drops lightbulbs that were both stand-ins for eggs because of their similarity in shape but also missile bombs. The shattering and popping of these lightbulbs also made me think about the link between egg shells in a very simplistic way and the energy they could produce by plummeting to the ground. One scene that linked the inanimate and food consecutively is in {Figure 19.} whereby Jerry's other mouse cousin starts eating everything on the table, taking three large comic half-moon bites from: a quiche, a stick of celery and then a candle stick. The very obvious link between these three food items assumed that the inanimate could be consumed, even though we are dealing with mice that have a tendency to eat anything even in real life, the material relationship and forms that are presented on the same plane of the table made it concrete that non-food objects are important within the scenography of food and can operate on the same level of consumption. The battles also reveal the vulnerability of the domestic and especially the arenas associated with calm and control within the virtues of mid-century domesticity through the carefully displayed furniture.



Figures 16 & 17 : Tom & Jerry stills from 'Trap Happy' 1946





Figure 18. Still from Tom and Jerry 'Yankee Doodle Mouse' 1943

These objects, painted in small animation cells have little or no difference in texture between other matter and can pertain to the same sheen and surface quality that makes them mistakably all delicious to the eye and stomach, regardless of their edible or inedible objectifications. The continuous chintzy interior of early Tom & Jerry exalted the common food item and these zeitgeisty furnishings from the 1940s such as Chippendale furniture, were advertising backdrops to them. As a child, I would be sitting on the floor in the living room which seemingly resembled the domestic interior of T&J especially the television table which was a mythical lathed wooden object with griffin-like feet and legs {Figure 20.}. Also within the animation the elevation was mostly dramatised at foot height alongside plush skirting boards, chair trims and endless running carpets, used as the continuous battle ground between the two animals. The domestic orientation, as well as the setting changed the food experience: away from the table however recurring shapes within T&J still framed the cartoon, such as: table legs, balustrades, glasses and candlesticks. These solid objects presumed an anthropomorphic character that alluded to animal legs and feet, which many domestic objects emanated at that time and operated like the table, as described before, providing a separation from the ground and top, between detritus and the valorised, edible or sacred object. However, in the animation they are all related to potential destruction or the destroyed bodies of both cat and mouse that can be seen as surrogates for the furniture, especially when table legs are used as weapons or extensions to these bodies.



Figure 19. Still from Tom and Jerry 'Little Orphan' 1949

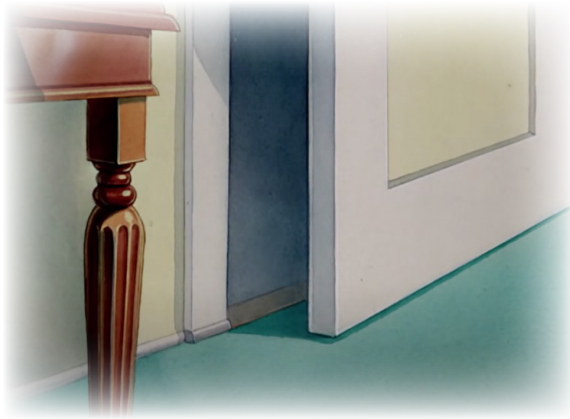


Figure 20. Still from Tom and Jerry 'Little Orphan' 1949

This is especially true with the use of the ham-hock or chicken-leg trope that is persistently used in T&J {Figures 21/22}. Whilst I consumed the animation and a chicken leg simultaneously it reminded me back to the table legs in the animation but also the smooth grain of the television table which also emanated the lathed eagle legs that grasped a spherical ball on the base. Eating a chicken leg was not a graceful procedure but the choice of disposable napkin was key. A pale lemon napkin would give the right amount of intense radioactive orange grease, camouflaging it neatly and a gingham napkin would work because it alludes to the virtues of the domestic and the great outdoors. The plaid interlocking gradients gives it a sense of rigidity to an already sloppy affair and the bone was the rigid form of those furnishings, at an orientation seen at ankle level. A total scenography of things allows the inanimate and the edible to be on the same plane of potential consumption. One scene provides a composition of: pleated chiffon curtains, a bobbin chair and a frilled table runner surmounted by colourfully ribbed jelly of three separate elevations {Figure.23}. Because of the painterly quality within celluloid animation that were composites of 4 different images painted on acetate and then brought together, provided different uses of textures which assumes objects to be ungraspable or not from the same dimensions.

Deception in objects and food are commonplace in Tom & Jerry because as an operation it is used to trick both rival counterparts throughout each cartoon in the effort for elimination. What is also clear in the short films is the literal examples of physics, especially gravity, whereby the shape of an animal would smash through a wall leaving a defined impression of the animal. Although know not to actually happen in the real life, it seems technically possible for a child and also provides a dimension whereby anything could be possible, even the edibility of objects such as the brocade red plumed chairs alongside layered cakes on serving trays, hopefully operating on the same level of mental satiation.



Figures 21 and 22: Chicken trope in Part Time Pal 1947  
& Ham-Hock trope in Baby-Butch 1954



Figure 23. A ribbed jelly and chiffon interior 1948

As a comparison, Laurel & Hardy, an example of human representation still operates in the same way as Tom and Jerry because it uses the frictional-duo narrative, leading to an active use of material deception as they try trick one another accidentally or obviously. One example from the 1930 short *Brats* presents Stan and Ollie playing a game of billiards whilst eating marshmallows as a snack throughout the game {Figure.24}. The chalky materiality and cuboid dimensions of the marshmallow comfortably mirrors the billiard chalk, placed on the side of the table which Ollie accidentally eats. They both bring together the idea of the inanimate and the edible through a simplistic material relationship but also cement the potentiality for objects being dangerously delicious. The early films of Laurel and Hardy were all black and white, coupled with a grainy VHS quality that allowed the film sets to assume a dusty quality, heightening the delicious chalky quality of eating a billiard chalk in real-life.



Figure 24. Stan Laurel in the short *Brats* 1930 applying a marshmallow to the snooker cue

Food objects and their slaptick treatment is mostly seen within confectionary because their preparation requires a scientific method of: setting, timing and ornamentation, so carefully constructed that it almost calls for its own destruction and collapse.



Departing from animation but linking back to previous themes within the Viennetta is one film that encapsulates previous ideas of class consciousness as well as confectionary history. Simultaneously demolishing and bringing together the social conventions of a specific era is the 1968 film 'Chitty Chitty Bang Bang'.

### *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*

The film is vaguely positioned at a time before the First World War which makes the idea of class divisions more obvious because the effects of the Great War had not changed peoples' prejudices and societal ideas fully. CCBB is essentially a typical love narrative between two people of opposing social strata but also like many films from post-war Britain presents a heavy thread between goodies and baddies - with the bad people being mostly foreign and Germanic and the virtuous being eccentric and English. Written by Ian Fleming, the inventor of James Bond we see an apparent link between a very pronounced nationalistic characterisation of the English and their other deviant adversaries. Also, what you, as a child thought was specific and authentic to your particular time or fantasy was actually a revival from a period of a much earlier time. And in the case of Chitty Chitty Bang Bang which was presenting an era that was even pre-motion picture technology itself, it is not until you grow older that you understand and situate it as a revivalist pastiche. It also allows you to acknowledge the nuances of social attitudes of that time, and reconstructed with new political elements that were apparent in Great Britain post-war, becoming anachronistic and retroactive at the same time. For me, it was the best example of understanding history and their imbued attitudes, all contained within the genre of adventure and thrilling action.

Apart from this political reading, the film provides an interesting relationship with industrial history and how the production of certain objects were made to have magical qualities such as the main automobile protagonist : Chitty Chitty Bang Bang which could fly and sail, created by the inventor Caractacus Potts. The main protagonist is Mr Potts, a maker or tinkerer of things, which is seen to be his only occupation, as well as a widow and guardian to his two

children. What is interesting is that, by contemporary standards Mr.Potts would place him in very upper-middle class position, purely in terms of his occupation because it assumes an abundance of time for his hobbyist endeavours and a total removal of conscripted labour. However in the film, and the standards of the time {Edwardian era} portrays him as a thrifty, resourceful person who needs to make something out of nothing just to survive. He lives in a country cottage flanked by a large windmill surrounded by lush green pastures, which again by any current standpoint would seem culturally desirable, especially in the fashion for all things cute, rustic and English. Like the Viennetta, which operated as the epitome of class and was marketed as such, especially in the eyes of naive children like myself, is now seen as a cheap, heavily adulterated ice-cream product that does not have the real essence of class or fine confectionary connoisseurship as a comparison.

Not only with industry, the characters also imbued elements that related to food like qualities, not only in their objective naming but their costumes. The heroine in the film and the social antithesis to Mr. Potts, is the appropriately named: Truly Scrumptious {Figure.25} who epitomised everything saccharine in her very name, was a personified dessert through the reoccurrence of her clumsy Edwardian hats that had the sturdy precariousness of flimsy cake boxes, rolls of fondant icing but also perched meringue nests. One frilled hat had the decorative motifs of Viennetta set ice-cream with soft lace that referred to fluttering seaside napkins of embossed moulding and the 'gay' times of seaside excursions. Like many heroines, who are always in between states of potential misfortune or entrapment, Truly's costumes still pertain to a sense of decorum through their prim and proper appearance, but still tease the notion that they could fall foul to the elements of persistent adventure throughout the film.

Coming back to Caitlin Hines' analysis within '*WOMEN AS DESSERT metaphor*' we can link the naming of the heroine character, because as her name suggests through the use of the adverb 'Truly', meaning in truth or really and 'Scrumptious' that denotes something delicious, and sweet. Her name also seems to relegate all the other women who are not worthy of explanation and alongside her social position elevates her to a status as the most original or

the best version. What this suggests is a kind of feminine passivity for Truly because of her class, but also her need for escaping her social confines that subjugate her freedom.



Figure 25. *'Truly Scrumptious'* played by Sally Ann-Howes in the motion picture *'Chitty Chitty Bang Bang'* {1968}

Truly, the daughter of a confectionary magnate Lord Scrumptious comes into contact with an eccentric inventor named Caractacus Potts after nearly running over his children on the road by her car which first cements Truly's status in her ownership of the newly developed automobile. Through her encounter with Mr Potts she questions his lack of control over his children who should have been at school, providing a further example in the class divisions of different attitudes to authority and general respectability. Truly comes into Potts' workshop {Figure.26} and queries why one of his sweet making machines produces a product full of holes , further commenting that the "boiling point of his sugar is too high", the type of knowledge only held if one was the daughter of a successful sweet tycoon. Through Mr Potts'

realisation that his invention produces a piece of candy full of holes serendipitously finds that it also can play a tuneful whistle through the positioning of these holes that emanate a flute like instrument. And through the single use of the sweet he tries his luck in pitching his latest invention to Lord Scrumptious, only to find the connection between Truly when he bumps into her at the sweet factory. The first instance of two disparate worlds perfectly colliding.

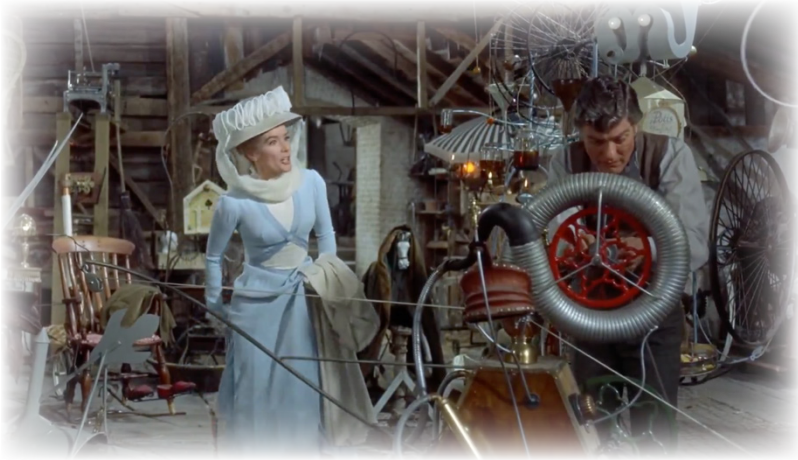


Figure 26. Truly at Mr. Potts' workshop

After their meeting a subsequent musical score is preformed in a recreation of an Edwardian sweet factory, relating to Mr Potts' new invention aptly named : Toot Sweets. Even though the setting is contrived filmic scenography, the props, such as : enlarged copper cogs, tractions and iron steelwork girders still assumed to a type of functionality and presence of confectionary history that was present in the U.K and still today, like Viennetta and After Eight. Even though Viennetta and the After Eight point to other histories and locations in their own marketing scheme namely through their advertisements, origin of production as being the same as the remnants of British sweet making history, built around images of mass production and the after-effects made by the Industrial Revolution. The difference with this example of sweet factory is that it has an aesthetic relationship with the actual products that

were made within them, in other words the architecture and civic pride of the time matched the aesthetic complexity with the alluring products made within ,something that is quite the opposite to the factory settings in Viennetta or After Eight, where the setting is not glamourised through the emotion of production in the same way as a place of spectacle and production.

### The Bricoleur

One of the main points within the film that also leads back to previous discussions is how Mr Potts. sources and utilises material that are seen as remnants and by-products from industrial acceleration and enterprises, like those of Lord Scrumptious. The car he eventually creates is bought at a scrap yard and turned into an automobile that exemplifies Mr Potts' determination but also his mystical ability to create something that, unknown to him could do more than just drive and look pretty but fly and float. The car is also custom made and exists as a bespoke unique original, unlike the factory produced cars of the Model "T" Ford at that time. If Mr Potts' is seen to be creating or marketing mystic qualities in objects in a clairvoyant way he could be justified as a 'bricoleur', '...someone who works with his hands and uses devious means compared to those of a craftsman.'<sup>76</sup> {Levi-Strauss}. Strauss almost negates the role of the 'bricoleur' through the idea that he/she could manipulate objects for reasons that are threatening or even just counterproductive, however Potts' production sensibility and 'Mythical thought is like intellectual bricolage...'<sup>77</sup> which can further explain his '...heterogeneous repertoire which, even if extensive, is nevertheless limited'<sup>78</sup>. What I take from this previous statement is Strauss is portraying someone who spreads thin over many facets and does not follow one specific goal. This is apparent in Mr Potts' numerous failed inventions and collections of objects that comically explode or break-down throughout the film. The relationship of the bricoleur set out by Strauss makes Mr Potts communicate '...not only with things...'<sup>79</sup> but '...through the medium

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<sup>76</sup> Claude Levi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind {Le Pensee de Sauvage}*, ed : Julian Pitt-Rivers , Ernest Gellner { Oxford, U.K, Oxford University Press, 1966} pages 16/17

<sup>77</sup> *ibid* {1966:17}

<sup>78</sup> *ibid* {1966:17}

<sup>79</sup> *ibid* {1966:21}

of things'<sup>80</sup> providing '...an account of his personality and life by the choices he makes through limited possibilities.'<sup>81</sup> And these limited possibilities : social class divisions and widowed status, which in normal non-fantasy dimensions would be more consequential, allow him to thrive through the typical narrative of adversary and hardship, contained within an appropriate filmic fantasy genre.

The sweet invention that was meant to convince Lord Scrumptious when it is played in the musical score summons a pack of dogs that destroys the factory, which could further cement the idea by Strauss, and the devious qualities imbued in the bricoleur. It also makes a distinction between the conservative engineer of Lord Scrumptious and the fanciful bricoleur of Mr. Potts that assumes an interesting historic comparison, making Mr. Potts 'Luddite' in his actions, that wreck the technological enterprises which have not allowed him to flourish and be recognized in his own right. His automobile invention however allows him to succeed and consequentially becomes the main protagonist of the feature film:

*'Chitty Chitty Bang Bang's' red, brown and tan spectrum layers of Neapolitan ice-cream were the car's caramel and vanilla chassis with inlaid red-tufted strawberry seats. The soft muslin from Truly's dress were strings of fluffy egg and whipped Stracciatella falling on top of the automobile dessert and the brushed aluminium bonnet was a long horizontal wafer cone with embossed crosshair detail. The grille became a caramel bakelite radio, vibrating and shaking the 'twig-like' gold windshield that had the finish of foil chocolate wrapping. The inflatable raft which lifts the car above the water was an icing fondant base in jarring ascot stripes of racing green, purple grape and titanium white. {Figure.27.}*

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<sup>80</sup> *ibid* {1966:21}

<sup>81</sup> *ibid* {1966:21}



Figure 27. The floating car from the film {1968}

Like early hot-air balloons that were made from silk or paper and copied the forms and patterns of floating Faberge eggs of Versace-type baroque prints, or even the early aircrafts of Orville Wright which were made from canvas and wood, 'Chitty Chitty Bang Bang' also imbued qualities that mixed decoration, furnishings and the functional. As a child, this automobile seems quite unplaceable as it upturned the understanding of the 'typified' image of a car into something overly decorative, bringing elements of the domestic objects and engineering together. This contradiction is apparent in the cars design that included a: lacquered yacht chassis, a brass serpent horn and plush feathered upholsteries. Also, the historic original car in which CCB was based on, driven by Count Louis Zabrowski in the 1920s that harboured an aero-engine, remodelled from early planes, brings an interesting similarity of these opposing sensibilities. Made in 1968, and relating to re-imagined futuristic elements, such as a flying and floating car, all supported by images of 'Edwardiana' could be attributed as an early example of a 'steampunk' aesthetic. Although the term was not established until 1987 by K.W Jeter it still reimagines alternate histories within the guise and aesthetic of the Victorian/Edwardian, as well as using clear historic elements that were specific at that

time such as social divisions and elements of exaggerated industrial enterprises. The key link between Chitty Chitty Bang Bang and confectionary are the examples of historic anachronisms, lack of provenences but also how they operate as vessels to reimagine alternate histories or warped versions. What links these two examples is the overt use of food imagery that relate to the inanimate and vice versa. Within them, themes of class, industry, the camp aesthetic and their material deception within different modes of production: the engineer and the bricoleur, the handcrafted and the mass-produced are all inherently apparent.

### Conclusion

By starting with specific food items I hope to have unveiled some coded truths that would not normally be revealed because of their ephemeral nature and their need for immediate satiation and instant gratification. The type of analysis is very specific but also reveals my own working methods, which is to extract as many possible threads from one particular point or example. I feel prosaic items like The Viennetta and the After Eight Dinner Mint actually reveal comparisons and contradictions that seemingly make sense in my own analysis of them even though they seem to come from 'coded' knoweldge. I feel there is a whole body of this knowledge concealed in such examples, especially in line with Barthes idea of myths and thus have to be mined and extracted.



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