ISSN : 2225-8078

Praxis

A Peer-Reviewed Journal of
The Department of English
University of Rajshahi

VOLUME 15
December 2025

ISSN : 2225-8078

Praxis

A Peer-Reviewed Journal of the Department of English, Rajshahi University

Volume 15
December 2025

ISSN 2225-8078

Published by
The Department of English, Rajshahi University

Printed by
The City Offset Printers
Talaimari, Rajshahi

Price: 300 Taka
10 US Dollars

Editorial Preface

Praxis: Journal of the Department of English, University of Rajshahi is committed to maintaining rigorous academic and ethical standards in the publication of scholarly research in the English language, linguistics, and literature. As a double-blind peer-reviewed journal, *Praxis* ensures that all submitted manuscripts undergo an impartial and thorough evaluation process, safeguarding both academic integrity and intellectual merit.

The journal adheres strictly to a policy of originality. Submissions are unpublished and not be under consideration for publication elsewhere. Any form of plagiarism, including self-plagiarism, is considered a serious breach of academic ethics and results in immediate rejection. Authors are responsible for ensuring the authenticity of their work and for properly acknowledging all sources in accordance with recognized citation standards.

To maintain disciplinary coherence while encouraging intellectual diversity, *Praxis* accepts contributions primarily within the fields of English studies, linguistics and English Language Teaching. Interdisciplinary work is welcomed, provided it demonstrates a clear and substantive engagement with these core areas. All manuscripts are written in English and follow either the MLA (9th edition) or the APA (7th edition) style, depending on the disciplinary orientation of the paper.

The journal enforces a structured submission protocol. Manuscripts fall within the prescribed length and include an abstract and a brief author bio-note. Submissions are accepted in both print and digital formats, prepared according to specified formatting guidelines. To ensure equitable representation, each author is permitted to submit only one manuscript per volume. In cases of joint authorship, full disclosure of all contributors and their institutional affiliations is required.

The editorial board reserves the right to make necessary revisions for clarity, coherence, and consistency without altering the substantive argument of the work. Final decisions regarding publication rest solely with the editorial board, based on reviewers' recommendations and the journal's standards. Individual authors, and not the Editorial Board, are responsible for the views expressed in their writting.

Through these policies, *Praxis* seeks to uphold excellence, transparency, and fairness in academic publishing, fostering a scholarly environment that values critical inquiry, methodological rigor, and intellectual responsibility.

In Memoriam: Professor Dr. Idris Ahmed

Md. Sakhawat Hossain

I had the privilege of being a direct student of Professor Dr. Idris Ahmed, and the memory of his classroom remains one of the most formative experiences of my intellectual life. He was not a teacher of abundance in number, but of precision and distinction; he took relatively few classes, yet each one bore the mark of rare excellence. His lectures were events that were often animated, lucid, and deeply engaging, without ever obscuring the depth of his scholarship.

What set him apart most strikingly was his method. He had the remarkable ability to render even the most extended and complex texts into something graspable without diminishing their intellectual weight. With a lightness of touch and a finely tuned sense of humour, he guided students into the depths of a text as if it were the most natural of movements. His wit was never ornamental; it was pedagogical and it was an instrument through which difficulty dissolved and insight emerged. Many of his students would testify that his classes were filled with mirth, yet never lost their seriousness of purpose.

In demeanour, he was at once formal and disarmingly intimate. His English was impeccable, measured, and refined, reflecting a deep command of language and tradition. Yet he was not bound by rigidity; at moments, he would slip into Bangla, often to delightful effect, using humour to draw students closer into the discussion. He had a characteristic habit of addressing students as “thou,” a gesture that seemed to collapse distance while invoking an older, almost Shakespearean intimacy. Standing before the class, he maintained an alert and penetrating gaze so that no student could afford inattentiveness, yet none felt excluded or disengaged. His presence commanded attention without coercion.

His intellectual range was formidable. He possessed a sharp and integrated knowledge of English literature, history, philosophy, and the broader Christian and Western intellectual traditions. Yet his scholarly vision was not confined within conventional disciplinary boundaries. His doctoral work on the literary techniques of *Surah Yasin* remains a landmark contribution that demonstrates his courageous attempt to bring Islamic textuality into the sphere of literary criticism. In doing so, he opened a space for dialogue between traditions that are too often kept apart.

Born on 31 December 1938, Professor Dr. Idris Ahmed completed his MA in English from the Department of English, University of Rajshahi, in 1960, and qualified in the then Special East Pakistan Civil Service (EPCS) examination. He joined the Department of English at the University of Rajshahi on 10 March 1973 and served there with distinction until his retirement as Professor on 30 December 2004. He passed away on 16 May 2022, leaving behind a legacy of intellectual brilliance, pedagogical excellence, and humane values.

Dedication

Professor Dr. Idris Ahmed
(31 December 1938-16 May 2022)

This Volume is dedicated to the cherished memory of Professor Dr. Idris Ahmed—a teacher of rare brilliance, a scholar of profound humanity.

Contents

When Meals Become Manifestos:
Narrating Power and Resistance through Food

Irtifa Hasan
Lecturer, Department of English, Rajshahi University

Abstract

This article aims to investigate literary representations of food function as narrative strategies across four diverse literary texts spanning from Renaissance to contemporary literature— Herman Melville's "Bartleby, the Scrivener," George Orwell's *Animal Farm*, Christopher Marlowe's *The Tragedy of Doctor Faustus*, and Han Kang's *The Vegetarian*. Though distinct in genre and era, what unites these works is the way they illustrate how the consumption or refraining of food operate as narrative devices through which structures of authority, social hierarchy, and resistance are articulated across different historical and cultural contexts. Whether it is Bartleby's refusal to food and Yeong-hye's vegetal transformation, or the overindulgence of the pigs, the extravagant banquets of the Pope and the gluttony of Faustus, the paper argues how these very different works reveal one persistent literary motif which is the politics of food. Adopting a comparative framework grounded in close textual analysis, the study examines how food moves beyond sustenance and becomes a contested terrain through which relations of power are enacted, resisted, and exposed.

Keywords: Food, resistance, power, capitalism, Marxism, vegetarianism

I. Introduction

Throughout literature, food has long been used as a focal point around which themes of morality, power, control, or resistance have been built. From ancient classics to contemporary works, food has become a means of illustrating cultural values, sociopolitical structures, and tensions, thereby shaping identities and social hierarchies. Therefore, an inextricable link is found between food and literature where food ceases to remain a mere biological necessity and instead emerges as a complex socio-cultural phenomenon.

The objective of this study is to examine how food functions as a symbolic and political device in four literary works from different historical and cultural contexts. The texts analyzed here, selected for the prominence and significance of food and consumption in their plots, include: *Bartleby, the Scrivener* (1856), *The Vegetarian* (2007), *Animal Farm* (1945) and *The Tragedy of Doctor Faustus* (1604). In *Bartleby, the Scrivener*, we discover how Herman Melville employs Bartleby's growing refusal of food as a symbolic, embodied protest against the industrialized, bureaucratic norms of the nineteenth-century America, while Han Kang reimagines food in *The Vegetarian* as a site of resistance and an exertion of autonomy and defiance of social and patriarchal standards. On the other hand, the pigs' manipulation of food distribution as means of ideological control, is a key political tactic used in George Orwell's *Animal Farm* to exhibit how the ruling class makes use of the basic resources to consolidate their power. Power is also displayed through the metaphor of food in Christopher Marlowe's *The Tragedy of Doctor Faustus*, where the opulence of the feast reveals a church more invested in indulgence than salvation. By placing these texts within a shared thematic framework, an attempt has been made to unravel how each of these narratives transform the acts of consuming food or refraining from it into forms of political expression. The article first examines food refusal as embodied resistance in "Bartleby, the Scrivener" and *The*

Vegetarian, and then analyzes how food functions as an instrument of institutional authority and ideological control in *Animal Farm* and *Doctor Faustus*. It reveals how food is relegated not merely to a background detail but is brought to the foreground, operating as mechanisms of institutional authority, capitalist discipline, patriarchal control, and individual defiance.

II. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative, comparative textual analysis to examine the symbolic and political significance of food in the selected literary works. Drawing on close textual exegesis as a methodological tool, it allows for a nuanced exploration of diverse texts within a shared thematic framework. The paper engages with critical insights such as Marxist notions of class and labour, Foucauldian perspectives on discipline and bodily control as well as Feminist views on sexual politics in order to achieve an in-depth and interpretative understanding of how the thematic use of food reveals deeper ideological structures within society.

III. Food as Embodied Refusal in "Bartleby, the Scrivener" and *The Vegetarian*

Both "Bartleby, the Scrivener" (1856) and *The Vegetarian* (2007) embody acts of resistance through refusal to food with their protagonists turning their bodies into sites of dissent. Written across different time periods and in foregrounding completely different societal contexts, these two texts draw the readers' attention towards how their common theme of the refusal of food becomes more than a personal choice, and a direct indictment of social norms and expectations.

Herman Melville's "Bartleby, the Scrivener", a central text of what we now call the American Renaissance, is undoubtedly one of the finest works of fiction in literature. But the voluminous criticism and scholarship devoted to this work mostly focuses on psychoanalytical interpretation, Marxist analysis, and so on. For instance, David Kuebrich's article "Melville's Doctrine of Assumptions" focuses on a Marxist interpretation of Melville's "Bartleby," emphasizing how the story reflects the economic conditions and class conflicts of its time. It further reveals the hidden ideologies of capitalist production and the profound effects of economic conditions on individual behavior and societal structures. Moreover, Sheila Post-Lauria takes a similar critical approach to the short story, aligning her reading of the text with Marxist themes of class struggle and the individual's plight in a commodified society. Conversely, works like "Melville's Lost Self" and "Bartleby the Scrivener": Language as Wall" reveal deeper existential struggles within both the characters of Bartleby and the narrator while exploring themes of isolation, the search for meaning, and the complexities of human relationships within the framework of psychoanalysis. This article's focus on the short story steers away from the traditional approach taken towards the text to a more pragmatic one. It focuses on something as simple as food, how it is embedded into the structure of the capitalist society, and how its refusal corresponds to the protagonist's way of resisting the capitalist system.

To understand the radical weight of Bartleby's resistance, it is necessary to place him within the machinery he resists. Originally published in 1853, "Bartleby, the Scrivener" emerged at the height of American industrial expansion, where human labor was increasingly mechanized, and individuality dissolved into office routines. The lawyer's sterile chambers on Wall Street, filled with clerks copying ceaselessly, became a microcosm of a society obsessed with order, output, and obedience. It was a space where the value of a person was increasingly defined by their productivity. Melville, writing just before the Civil War, captures a society in transition from rural labor to urban industry, from craftsman to clerk, from voice to silence. In this world, the scrivener, once a symbol of literacy and skill, is simply expected to perform the same mechanical task day after day. Inside the lawyer's chambers, clerks spend their days copying legal documents in a space

"deficient in what landscape painters call 'life'" (Melville 3). The narrator frequently comments on the eating habits of his clerks as food is part of the workday's rhythm. Turkey works briskly before lunch but becomes reckless in the latter part of the day as seen from his blotchy documents; Nippers is irritable in the morning and steady by noon after he had had his meal. Ginger Nut, the twelve-year-old office boy, earns his name fetching 'oysters, ginger-cakes, and other dainties' for the older clerks. The snacks are so common that one day Turkey even "moisten[ed] a ginger-cake between his lips, and clap[ped] it on to a mortgage for a seal" (Melville 9). The tedious job of copying means the workers are in constant need of refreshments. Eating is folded into the ritual of the work day—fuel for labor, a reward for surviving the morning.

A closer look reveals how these characters are themselves named after food items: 'Turkey' (festive bird), 'Nippers' (lobster claws), and 'Ginger Nut' (ginger cakes). As Marvin Fisher has rightfully pointed out, by giving them "demeaning nicknames which turn them into things", the lawyer has stripped them of their humanity and reduced their bodies to the food they consume through "a functional reduction of the body" as defined by Foucault in *Discipline and Punish* (164). The office is welded around the characters' appetites and their workplace personas are inextricably linked to their capacities to produce. Even Bartleby is typified to be the opposite of the food which he eats, as the lawyer acutely observes that the hot and spicy ginger nuts, the only food he lives on, are unable to change his temperament or behaviour in any way. The lawyer's attempts to understand the apparently distant Bartleby also involves the metaphor of food as he characterizes Bartleby's initial industry in terms of consuming food: "as if long *famishing* for something to copy, he seemed to *gorge* himself," with "no pause for *digestion*" (Melville 10; emphasis mine). This reveals how the lawyer-narrator associates the productivity of his employees with their habits of eating, suggesting the capitalist mindset of how food is the driving factor behind human labor and hence how by keeping a close watch of their food intake, the lawyer can monitor the productivity of his employees. He applies the same strategy to tackle the 'eccentricities' of Turkey and Nippers. Turkey's overeating after lunch makes his face blaze "like a grate full of Christmas coals" which "continued blazing — but, as it were, with a gradual wane — till 6 o'clock, p.m. or thereabouts" (Melville 5). This also affected his temper and caused his work to suffer post lunch as it was usually full of mistakes. The reverse happened with Nippers; his indigestion accounted for his irritable mood in the morning and he can only work efficiently "after lunch possibly because his stomach is more at ease over time" (Melville 7). The narrator noticing this direct correlation that food has with his employees' capacity to work found it convenient that Turkey's reckless blunders happened in the morning and Nippers' restlessness was only witnessed during the day since "their fits relieved each other like guards" (Melville 8). This is how he, in Foucault's words, tried to "establish an equilibrium" (246) in the office where humans are reduced to units of labor and profits are derived from their resultant efficiency. Amidst this, Bartleby's rebellion single handedly disrupts these equilibria that hold the office together and forces the lawyer, albeit momentarily, to question the calculable, rational, orderly system.

The final pages of the story reveal how Bartleby "neither eats nor hungers any more" and at last "lives without dining" (Melville 34). It is his way of not letting the capitalist system feed his laboring body but it is also a refusal that does not outright attack the system but quietly steps outside its grammar by refusing to operate in America's capitalist society. The lawyer, who easily manipulates the food consumption of his other employees, finds himself helpless against Bartleby's absolute refusal to eat. Thus, Bartleby tries to claim his subjectivity through his self-imposed starvation and resolutely refuses the mechanism of capitalism. In the middle of Wall Street's restless energy, Bartleby chooses to fade. His withdrawal, culminating in his refusal to eat,

mirrors a deeper form of resistance to a system that sees people as a mere cog in the larger machinery of capitalism, not as individuals. Marvin Hunt has explained how, over the course of the story, Bartleby is increasingly depersonalized by making him function less as an individual and more as a mere "symbolic presence" (281).

Bartleby's recalcitrance is directed both to the capitalist order and the person who embodies it, the lawyer. The lawyer establishes himself as a megalomaniac when he condescendingly says that his patience and kindness towards Bartleby is a "sweet morsel for his conscience" (Melville 14) and if he gives up on him, then Bartleby would be "driven forth miserably to starve" (Melville 13). Even here the narrator uses the language of food to express his desire of exerting his control over Bartleby which he does when he arranges for Bartleby's dinner in prison. Speaking to the grub man the narrator says, "I want you to give particular attention to my friend there; let him have the best dinner you can get" (Melville 32). Bartleby's refusal to food, seen under the light of such occurrences, becomes an inevitable refusal to cater to the mechanism of capitalism. This is exactly how hunger-based protests in history—suffragette fasts, Gandhi's hunger strikes—have opposed the existing social structure: "It is true that hunger depends upon its context for its meaning, but it is also true that self-inflicted hunger is a struggle to release the body from all contexts, even from the context of embodiment itself."[6] Bartleby's fasting operates as his resistance to the way the lawyer's office and the broader capitalist society function. He acts out his passive resistance through his body by first refusing to eat and then refusing to work altogether, a refusal deemed to be absolute rejection of capitalist society as Ellmann puts it, "To fast is to create a dungeon of the body by rejecting any influx from the outer world" (93). In the bustling Wall Street, Bartleby's starving self itself acts as a disturbance. As he becomes one of those dead bodies who neither "[eat] nor [hunger] any more" (Melville 34), Bartleby's silence becomes as loud and impactful as any other hunger strikers who declare their intention.

Bartleby, was "singularly sedate in aspect"; he copied with "incessant industry," and to his employer's questions he answered, "I would prefer not to" (Melville 14). We are told that "the young man's countenance was shaded with constitutional or habitual melancholy," and he "declined telling who he was, or whence he came, or whether he had any relatives in the world." Bartleby's "morbid state of mind" is also reflected in his author. When Nathaniel Hawthorne writes about Herman Melville, he mentions how his friend "pretty much made up his mind to be annihilated" (432-33). It was in this state of mind that Melville composed and wrote "Bartleby, The Scrivener." Hence what we find in the story is a complicated synergy of psychic damage and creative insight in the mere wasteland that is Wall Street. What started as a consequent emotional trauma from working in the Dead Letter Office (Bartleby's former work place) finally reaches its culmination in the capitalist workplace of Wall Street and shoves Bartleby into the void he had already been staring at. This is the reason why Bartleby's final lapse—deemed as a political act—seems a perfectly natural reaction to his dehumanizing occupation both in the Dead Letter and the lawyer's office and necessary for conveying the extent of Bartleby's impact. Through his silent and gradual withdrawal from food that also parallels his withdrawal from the capitalist labour industry, Bartleby makes evident his indifference to a system that equates consumption with participation and survival with compliance. Similarly, Yeong-hye's vegetarianism in *The Vegetarian* directly opposes a patriarchal society that normalizes bodily control and masculine authority.

[6] According to Freud, an anorectic understands consumption of food as "danger to the ego" as it is "being eaten from within by the very objects it is trying to engorge" (qtd. from Ellmann 30).

Written more than a century later, Han Kang's *The Vegetarian* unravels through three fragmented perspectives and centers on the unsettling choice of the protagonist's eating (or non-eating). Yoeng-hye's decision not to eat meat stems from a recurring nightmare and is a consequence of a lifetime of domestic violence and patriarchal oppression. It's a common trope in art for meat to represent masculinity. Yeong-he's disgust towards meat could be because she unconsciously likened it to something primal. Her refusal to eat meat goes against her husband's wishes and is an exercise in control on her part. This writer tries to examine the protagonist's transformation from meat-eater to vegetarian and eventually to a tree, drawing on the connection between refusal to meat and resistance to patriarchy on the protagonist's part.

Critical works like Hayley Singer's "The Art of Carnism," brings to the forefront the cultural intertextuality between meat-eating and masculinity in the novel, others like Caitlin E. Stobie's essay "The Good Wife? Sibling Species in Han Kang's *The Vegetarian*" draw on a small body of ecocritical scholarship and critical animal studies to examine vegetarianism as a feminist movement. On the other hand, expressing her own views about the novel, the author states in an interview: "If I could say one thing, [*The Vegetarian*] isn't a singular indictment of the Korean patriarchy. I wanted to deal with my long-lasting questions about the possibility/impossibility of innocence in this world, which is mingled with such violence and beauty. These were universal questions that occupied me as I wrote it" (Han Kang qtd. in Patrick). While her comments do not endorse prioritizing one interpretation over the other, *The Vegetarian* nonetheless depicts a world embedded in which individual desire and resistance are intermingled with the overarching structures of gender-based violence. Narrated from the perspectives of Yeong-hye's ex-husband, her brother-in-law, and her elder sister, the novel leaves little space for the protagonist Yeong-hye's voice to be heard, and eventually, with the progress of the novel, her voice recedes, and silence takes over. Therefore, *The Vegetarian* is a novel that raises complex questions not just about consumption and the mere fact of turning vegetarian, but the notions of identity, speech, subjectivity, power, and resistance that are so closely intertwined with it.

The novel, despite being about Yeong-hye's journey, opens with her husband Mr. Cheong's strikingly indifferent statement: "Before my wife turned vegetarian, I'd always thought of her as completely unremarkable in every way" (Han, *The Vegetarian* 3). Just like Han Kang's short story "The Fruit of My Woman", here too the husband takes Yeong-hye's vegetarianism as a personal insult, finding it to be privately irritating and socially embarrassing. His unsympathetic attitude towards Yeong-hye point towards his inherent 'phallocentric' valuation of traditional patriarchal culture, whose only expectation from his life partner is that she continues playing the humble role of a submissive wife. This is why we never see him calling Yeong-hye by her name but only referring to her merely as a 'wife,' a term which neatly condenses his understanding and expectations of her. Through his descriptions, Yeong-hye appears remote and incomprehensible to the readers as well. Despite this, there are moments when Yeong-hye's voice pushes through her husband's patriarchal gaze, and we get a glimpse into her own mind through her interior monologue:

> Barbecuing meat, the sounds of singing and happy laughter.
>
> But the fear. My clothes still wet with blood. Hide, hide behind the trees. My bloody mouth. In that barn, what had I done? Pushed that red raw mass into my mouth, felt it squish against my gums, the roof of my mouth, slick with crimson blood. (Han, *The Vegetarian* 19–20)

The grotesque image of consumption that she witnesses in her dream is what makes Yeong-hye forgo meat altogether, a decision which befuddles her entire family, including her husband, who

complains about her wife's "odd" behaviors. In her husband's eyes, Yoeng-hye's avowed refusal to eat meat is tantamount to "sheer obstinacy" (Han, *The Vegetarian* 14). In an interview, Han Kang stated how, for her, "eating meat, cooking meat, all these daily activities embody a violence that has been normalized". *The Vegetarian* is her attempt to "depict a woman who rejects an omnipresent and precarious violence even at the cost to herself" (Han, "Interview with Han Kang"). In Han's opinion, this 'omnipresent and precarious violence' is the violence against all animals, which Yeong-hye rejects by refusing to consume meat altogether. Yeong-hye condemns the act of meat-eating, realizing its complicity in violence and describing the physical sensations of pain she experiences, she says: "Something is stuck in my solar plexus….The lives of the animals I ate have all lodged there" (Han, *The Vegetarian* 49). She longs for a kind of redemption, a purging of the carnist or patriarchal violence. However, Yeong-hye is met by masculine opposition when her father brings together the other male members in the family – Mr. Cheong and Yeong-hye's brother Yeong-ho – to force-feed his daughter after she disobeys his command to eat meat. This act of violence brings to Yeong-hye's mind the memory of her father torturing a dog to death, thus explicitly associating violence against animals with violence perpetrated against women. This association echoes Carol Adams' assertion in *The Sexual Politics of Meat* that the virility endorsed by a meat-consuming culture is linked to the formation of masculinity under a patriarchal framework. By imposing carnism on the female Other, the meat-imposing male is associated with the "*carnophallocentric*"[7] subjectivity, which Derrida refers to as "a quintessentially *human, animal-flesh-eating* subject" (Derrida 112). Moreover, we see how Yeong-hye's body itself becomes the site of consumption by her husband when he forcefully asserts himself on her and views it not as an act of spousal rape but rather compared to a Japanese soldier's forced advances towards a comfort woman, linking the modern-day domestic violence to colonial history.[8] Again, we see Yeong-hye's brother-in-law, who, after filming her naked, thinks aloud, "I want to swallow you, have you melt into me and flow through my veins" (Han, *The Vegetarian* 121). Here again Yeong-hye is objectified, seen as something to be consumed both in flesh and in images, through the male lens. Nevertheless, while interpreting Han Kang's novel as a "patriarchal text of meat," it should also be noted that this 'patriarchal culture' doesn't only encompass meat-eating male figures, as even the feminine presence in Yeong-hye's life, her mother and her sister, remain unempathetic towards her. Her mother tries to reenact the same force-feeding scene carried out by her father when she brings lamb soup disguised as herbal medicine to Yoeng-hye in the hospital. "Stop eating meat, and the world will devour you whole", her mother threatens (Han, *The Vegetarian* 55–56). Her sister, too, is shown as a carnivore throughout who takes her husband's side and tries to persuade Yeong-hye to eat meat. Just as Yeong-hye appears incomprehensible to her family, the lawyer also had a difficult time understanding Bartleby only because he did not neatly fit into the box society forced to put him into. Yeong-hye's defiance shown by her refusal to prepare meat for her husband and throwing it away is reflected in Bartleby's outright refusal to dine at all.

[7] "Carno-phallocentrism" has since been explored in recent studies on feminism and food politics to denote a hegemonic culture premised on the sexual politics of meat.

[8] Comfort women, or military comfort women, were women and girls forced to provide sexual services to Japanese Imperial Army troops before and during World War II. Comfort women were held captive in brothels called "comfort stations" that were systematically installed and maintained by the Japanese government from 1932 to the end of World War II in 1945 all over Japanese-occupied areas.

Towards the end of the novel, Yeong-hye's refusal of meat turns into her refusal to take in food altogether. We see her telling her brother-in-law: "I thought it was all because of eating meat [. . .]. I thought all I had to do was to stop eating meat and then the faces [in my nightmares] wouldn't come back. But it didn't work. And so . . . now I know. The face is inside my stomach" (Han, *The Vegetarian* 178). Hence, it is only by depriving herself of food altogether that she can fully liberate herself from her haunting nightmares, such is the price she has to pay. Since her refusal to 'be' is, in Singer's words, "a refusal to be *othered* by a system that demands her subjugation" (Singer 273), her first step towards 'not-being' becomes that of 'not-eating.' Ironically, it is through her vegetal transformation that we see Yeong-hye attempting to reclaim her marginal identity and embody some agency. When In-hye visits the psychiatric hospital, she is astonished to find her sister Yeong-hye doing a handstand under the belief that she is no longer an animal: "Yeong-hye moved her emaciated face closer to her sister. "I'm not an animal anymore, sister," she said, first scanning the empty ward as if about to disclose a momentous secret. "I don't need to eat, not now. I can live without it. All I need is sunlight" (Han, *The Vegetarian* 37). Luce Irigaray explains how the vegetal world "[gives] authority back to [her,]" how it proves to Yeong-hye that she is "dependent upon no one to live: breathing suffices for living, . . . with the help of the vegetal world" (Irigaray 45). Yeong-hye's transformation from vegetarianism to becoming vegetal is a radical political act through the performative politics of silence and starvation. As Susan Bordo rightfully points out, her body becomes the site of "embodied protest – unconscious, inchoate, and counterproductive protest without an effective language, voice, or politics, but protest nonetheless" (Bordo 189). Yeong-hye's body, through its rejection of edible food, love of sunlight, and attempts to take roots by way of headstands, now becomes a performative indictment against human institutions of power and oppression. Her body, aptly painted florally, by her brother-in-law becomes a graphic text that demands to be read as a cultural statement about gender on the one hand and humanity on the other. One critic argues how Yeong-hye's "transformation into a gendered vegetal being metaphorizes an 'escape-impulse' that captures the irreducible desire to overcome, move beyond, or step over one's physical or social limits" (Zolkos 104).[9] But for Yeong-hye, it is not the 'escaping from' but the 'escaping into' a world of plants that defines her resistance. She seeks to escape from humanity altogether, whose predisposition to violence is inherent and inescapable.

Yeong-hye's insistence on vegetarianism and Bartleby's quiet refusal to eat, though operating under different regimes of power, are acts of political dissent that transform their bodies into sites of resistance. It is the renunciation of food coupled with the resistance of these characters that shape the narrative arcs of these two texts. Through self-starvation both of them assert their agencies as individuals and are able to challenge and defy the patriarchal and capitalist ideologies deeply rooted in their respective societies. Bartleby's abstention embodies negation of capitalist society and Yeong-hye's vegetarianism confronts the violent and patriarchal domestic order. Both texts reveal how refusal of food ceases to be a personal choice of the characters and becomes something of greater significance: a radical interruption of social expectations and a terrain through which society itself is challenged.

IV. Food as Spectacle and Institutional Hypocrisy in *Animal Farm* and *Doctor Faustus*

If Herman Melville's "Bartleby, the Scrivener" and Han Kang's *The Vegetarian* showcase food as a domain of personal resistance, George Orwell's political satire *Animal Farm* and Chritopher

[9] The dramatization of women's inner world is a commonly used trope in literature and is seen in famous works like Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* (1899), Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar* (1963), and many others.

Marlowe's Elizabethan tragedy *The Tragedy of Doctor Faustus* expose it as a tool of institutional hypocrisy and manipulation. In both works, authority consolidates itself through control over consumption. Food becomes a language through which institutions naturalize inequality across Renaissance and the twentieth century allegory.

George Orwell's intention behind writing *Animal Farm* was "to fuse political purpose and artistic purpose into one whole" (Orwell, *The Collected Essays* 29). While Orwell's allegory had the possibility of meaning 'very different things to different readers' as warned by critics, he makes his stance quite clear in his essay "Why I Write" in which he states: "Every line of serious work I have written since 1936 has been written, directly or indirectly, against totalitarianism and for democratic socialism" (Orwell, *The Collected Essays* 440). Through the novella *Animal Farm*, Orwell reveals how totalitarianism in socialist clothing is doomed when Old Major parodies Marxist notion of a utopian society by calling forth a rebellion which only leads to the emerging of a tyrant governing class. As George Woodcock later discovers, it shows "the identity of governing class interests everywhere" (Woodcock 158-59) and this article examines how the ruling class uses food as one of its means of oppression. Ultimately, it makes a point that Orwell uses the politics of food allocation in the novel to address how those in power consolidate their authority, manipulate ideologies and establish inequalities, disguised as collective progress.

From the very onset of the story, Orwell uses food to represent the establishment of distinctions in class in the novella. Before the Rebellion, Mr. Jones exploits the animals not only for their labor but also for their produce. Old Major reminds the hens, "how many eggs have you laid in this last year, and how many of those eggs ever hatched into chickens? The rest have all gone to market to bring in money for Jones and his men" (Orwell, *Animal Farm* 7). This sharp reminder reveals the extraction at the heart of Jones's ownership- the animals' food and reproductive labor are diverted to human profit, not animal survival. Marx and Engels describe this same exploitation in *The Communist Manifesto*, where they write, "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles" (Marx and Engels, *Manifesto* 1). On Manor Farm, food is already implicated in this struggle, as the animals labor to produce nourishment they themselves are denied. Later, all the animals in the farm revolt against and overthrow Mr. Jones to establish their own society. Initially, the animals are promised equal rations of food and the freedom to enjoy the fruits of their own labour. However, the situation quickly worsens as is seen in the case of the mystery of the missing milk which is later discovered to be "mixed every day into the pigs' mash" (Orwell, *Animal Farm* 30). When met with protests from the other animals, Squealer, the spokesperson for the pigs, justifies this by saying: "Our sole object in taking these things is to preserve our health…We pigs are brainworkers. The whole management and organisation of this farm depend on us" (Orwell, *Animal Farm* 30). The rhetoric is highly ideological for the reason that it encompasses the idea of how basic food like milk and apples are no longer seen as resources accessible to every animal in the farm, but markers of intellectual privilege. While this statement masks the exploitation of the other animals by the pigs with benevolence, it also sows the initial seeds of inequality and the emergence of a hierarchy. It shows how, even the language involving food becomes more weaponized, as the pigs can control not just the food, but the narratives around it too. Thus, a new class system emerges based on biological inequality.

In *Das Kapital*, Marx defines class in terms of the relationship to the means of production, i.e., the bourgeoisie who are in charge of them and the proletariat who must put in their labour to survive. The same principle can be applied here to the pigs who do not labour physically, but consume

rather disproportionately. Food works as both a material resource and an ideological tool, symbolizing a class structure where consumption reflects a social standing. As the pigs progressively gain power, the illusion of equality is maintained even as the disparities grow between them and the other animals. While the pigs enjoy themselves with the luxuries of milk and apples, and even beer at one point, the rest of the animals suffer. The line "The animals were always cold, and usually hungry too" (Orwell, *Animal Farm* 37) goes to show the effects of the inequalities faced by the animals in a normalized manner. According to Marxist theory, it is suggested that capitalism is often perpetuated by making inequalities appear to be quite natural. Marx explains, "Life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life" (*The German Ideology* 42). In other words, ideology grows out of material conditions, and Orwell manages to mirror this through the pigs' privileged access to food, which reshapes the very consciousness of the other animals, who come to believe that inequality is logical and even necessary. The animals not only work harder for less food, but they are also conditioned to accept this inequality as natural, even righteous for a "just" cause, showing the power of ideology in maintaining a class distinction. By the end of the novella, the pigs monopolise food while the other animals suffer and live in a state of depravity. This disparity between the living conditions of the pigs and the other animals' parallels Marx's critique of capitalism, where the worker "becomes all the poorer, the more wealth he produces" (*Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts 71*). Food in the farm is thus not just sustenance, but capital as well. Those who control its distribution control power. As the pigs slowly become the very oppressors they overthrew once, it shows the betrayal of revolutionary ideals and the re-emergence of class hierarchy under a new leader. The novella ends by showing the pigs' feasting with humans which is not an indicator of their fellowship but rather proof of the business-like relationship that the two parties have. Pilkington, one of the neighboring farmers, very aptly tells Napoleon that "If you have your lower animals to contend with, we have our lower classes!" (Orwell, *Animal Farm* 115)—revealing how the exploitation of food by the upper-class pigs in the novella mirrors the exploitation of lower-class workers in human society. A similar criticism of institutional hypocrisy is also seen in *Doctor Faustus* where Marlowe parodies the papal banquet revealing how gluttony dramatizes moral decay.

In *The Tragedy of Doctor Faustus*, Christopher Marlowe paints a satiric portrait of Pope Adrian by showing his greed for everything, ranging from power to food. The Pope is cruel, power-hungry, and the farthest thing from holy. In the scene of the papal banquet, food is not just there for nourishment— it is also a display of power and dominance. The holy man sits at a table of grandeur and indulgence, where power and appetite intersect.

The character of Pope Adrian from *The Tragedy of Doctor Faustus* can be examined in the context of his gluttony and overindulgence using a Freudian lens of repression. Through the lens of Freud's psychoanalytic theory, it can be analyzed that the Pope's gluttony is an eruption of his repressed desires. Keeping this theory in mind, the author tries to answer the question: What does it signify when the desire to consume consumes a holy man? Freud argues that repression "simply turns something away, keeping it at a distance from the conscious" (Freud 147). But when the superego censors these unconscious desires don't just simply vanish but "return in distorted or excessive forms" (Freud 147). Hence, even though Pope's superego enforces discipline and restraint, his gluttony emerges as the eruption of his repressed desires. A similar incident is also seen in the case of the minister Arthur Dimmesdale in Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* when he lets the

blasphemous thoughts reign free in his mind after a meeting with Hester Prynne in the forest. Both these priests are well aware of how they should always conceal their lust, violence, and ambition. Food then becomes one of the few socially permissible outlets where the hidden urges of these holy men can find expression.

The papal office demands the suppression of bodily and worldly desires, yet those urges reappear through excessive appetite. Duxfield observes that Doctor Faustus continually oscillates between depicting “a morally barren scholar” and “a celebration of Renaissance humanism” (Duxfield 33) through its titular character. This oscillation is mirrored in Pope Adrian as well: he is at once the supreme image of sanctity and a man enslaved to appetite. His outrage: “How now! Who snatched the meat from me? Villains, why speak you not?” (iii.i.100–101) shows his inability to tolerate even the smallest intrusion on his plate. Again, his anger is very much evident when the invisible Faustus, by means of his magical powers, makes the Pope’s food vanish: “What, again? My wine gone too? — Faustus, I’ll be paid!” (iii.i.125–26). The fury shown by him is quite disproportionate to the offense, but it reveals how fragile the papal façade is. Freud would interpret Adrian’s violent reaction as the collapse of his superego and the surfacing of his repressed desire in the form of rage. The Pope’s loss of composure shows how precariously his power rests upon ritual consumption. It is such kinds of excess that the critics like A. Bartlett Giamatti describe as Marlowe’s exposure of “the grotesque marriage of appetite and authority” (104). The Pope’s appetite has become inseparable from his identity, and by depriving him of his feast, Faustus is undermining not just the appetite of the Pope but his authority as well. From this scene with the Pope to the one which ends with Faustus and Mephistophilis tossing fireworks and chanting Friars amidst the ruins of the feast and the Pope’s exit, a display of pure slapstick is visible and shows the degeneration of both the Pope and Faustus alike. Along with the Pope, the titular character’s physical and sexual gluttony is also shown where Faustus is fed by a feast brought by the devils, a feast of "such belly- cheer” which “Wagner in his life ne'er saw the like" (v.i.7-8). When visiting the Duke and Duchess of Vanholt, Faustus demonstrates his eagerness to fulfill a fantasy he expressed in Act 1, Scene 1: “I’ll have them … / search all corners of the newfound world / For pleasant fruits and princely delicates” (i.i.84-87). He ranks ‘pleasant fruits’ with gold and ‘orient pearl’ as rare and sought-after objects which can only be procured through magic. Again, when Helen of Troy is brought in to him as per his demands, Faustus asks her to "To glut the longing of [his] heart's desire” (v.i.91). Both the scenes with the female characters living and dead point towards Faustus’s repressed libidinal desire and show how his sexual appetite is manifested through his hidden desire for the opposite sex. Finally, Mephistophilis and the Bad Angel torment him with the sight of Hell and of gluttons being fed with “sops of flaming fire,” which acts a brutal reminder of the feast the devils had served him for his enjoyment, a parody of the last supper.

Animal Farm and *The Tragedy of Doctor Faustus* thus represent two sides of the same mechanism: how the authority uses food to mask institutional hypocrisy and moral corruption.

V. Conclusion

To conclude, it can be said that the above discussion makes it explicitly clear that literature spread across centuries can be united in their recognition of universal themes which in this case is how the idea of consumption is never ideologically neutral. Whether through self-imposed vegetarianism or starvation, or through the spectacle of gluttony and power, food becomes the medium through which power is reinforced or systems of authority are resisted. Taken together,

these texts, thus, serve as reminders of how the politics of food extends far beyond the plate and become narratives that reveal how meanings can be ascribed onto the simplest of human acts.

Works Cited

Adams, Carol J. *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory*. Bloomsbury Academic, 1990.

Bollas, Christopher. "Melville's Lost Self: 'Bartleby.'" *American Imago*, vol. 31, no. 4, 1974, pp. 401–11.

Bordo, Susan. *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body*. University of California Press, 1993.

Derrida, Jacques. "Eating Well, or the Calculation of the Subject: An Interview with Jacques Derrida." *Who Comes After the Subject?*, edited by Eduardo Cadava, Peter Connor, and Jean-Luc Nancy, Routledge, 1991, pp. 96–119.

Duxfield, Andrew. *Christopher Marlowe and the Failure to Unify*. Routledge, 2019.

Ellmann, Maud. *The Hunger Artists: Starving, Writing, and Imprisonment*. Harvard UP, 1993.

Fisher, Marvin, "'Bartleby,' Melville's Circumscribed Scrivener," *Southern Review*, vol. 10, 1974, pp. 54-79.

Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Translated by Alan Sheridan, Vintage, 1995.

Freud, Sigmund. "Repression." *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 14, translated by James Strachey, Hogarth Press, 1957, pp. 141–58.

Giamatti, A. Bartlett. *Play of Double Senses: Spenser's Faerie Queene*. W. W. Norton, 1975.

Han, Kang. "Interview with Han Kang." Interview by Sarah Shin. *The White Review*, Mar. 2016, https://www.thewhitereview.org/feature/interview-with-han-kang/.

---. "Han Kang on Violence, Beauty, and the (Im)possibility of Innocence." Interview by Bethanne Patrick. *Literary Hub*, 12 Feb. 2016, https://lithub.com/han-kang-on-violence-beauty-and-the-impossibility-of-innocence/.

---. *The Vegetarian*. Translated by Deborah Smith, Hogarth, 2016.

Hawthorne, Nathaniel. *The English Notebooks of Nathaniel Hawthorne*, ed. Randall Stewart, Modern Language Association of America, 1941, pp. 432-33.

---. *The Scarlet Letter*, edited by Thomas E. Connolly, Penguin Classics, 2019.

Hunt, Marvin. "'*That's* the Word': Turning Tongues and Heads in 'Bartleby, the Scrivener,'" *ESQ: A Journal of the American Renaissance,* 40, 1994, p.279.

Irigaray, Luce. *Through Vegetal Being: Two Philosophical Perspectives*, Co-authored with Michael Marder, Columbia University Press, 2016.

Kuebrich, David. "Melville's Doctrine of Assumptions: The Hidden Ideology of Capitalist Production in 'Bartleby.'" *The New England Quarterly*, vol. 69, no. 3, 1996, pp. 381–405. *JSTOR*, https://doi.org/10.2307/366781.

Marlowe, Christopher. *Doctor Faustus: The B-Text (1616)*, edited by David Bevington and Eric Rasmussen, Manchester University Press, 1993.

Marx, Karl. *Das Kapital: A Critique of Political Economy*. Translated by Ben Fowkes, Penguin Classics, 1990.

---. *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*. Translated by Martin Milligan, Progress Publishers, 1959.

---. *The German Ideology*. Translated by C. J. Arthur, International Publishers, 1970.

Marx, Karl, and Friedrich Engels. *The Communist Manifesto*, edited by David McLellan, Oxford University Press, 1998.

Melville, Herman. "Bartleby, The Scrivener: A Story of Wall-street," *Melville's Short Novels 1st ed.* Ed. Dan McCall, W. W. Norton & Company, 2002, pp. 3-34.

Orwell, George. *Animal Farm*. Secker and Warburg, 1945.

---. *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell*, ed. S. Orwell and I. Angus, Harmondsworth, 1970.

Pinsker, Sanford. "'Bartleby the Scrivener': Language as Wall." *College Literature*, vol. 2, no. 1, 1975, pp. 17–27. *JSTOR*, http://www.jstor.org/stable/25111055.

Post-Lauria, Sheila. "Canonical Texts and Context: The Example of Herman Melville's 'Bartleby, the Scrivener: A Story of Wall Street.'" *College Literature*, vol. 20, no. 2, 1993, pp. 196–205. *JSTOR*, http://www.jstor.org/stable/25112038.

Singer, Hayley. "The Art of Carnism." *Australian Feminist Studies*, vol. 27, no. 74, 2012, pp. 273–82.

Stobie, Caitlin E. "The Good Wife? Sibling Species in Han Kang's *The Vegetarian*." *ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*, vol. 23, no. 4, 2016, pp. 708–23.

Woodcock, George. *The Crystal Spirit.* London, 1967.

Zolkos, Magdalena. *Violence and the Vegetal: Transformative Politics in Literature*. Edinburgh University Press, 2012.