

ON THE VISCERAL

**Sharon P. Holland, Marcia Ochoa,
and Kyla Wazana Tompkins**

In this quest to think through eating and culture, the adjective “visceral” returns again and again: “of the viscera,” the inner organs. Could something as common as eating contain the seeds of an extraordinary reflection, a visceral reaction to who and what we are becoming? In mining eating and its qualities, might we glimpse gut reactions to the histories and present of the cultures in which we live?
—Elspeth Probyn, *Carnal Appetites*

It is hard to know whether war or peace makes the greater changes in our vocabularies, both of the tongue and of the spirit.
Even the wolf, temporarily appeased, cannot live on bread alone.
—M. F. K. Fisher, *How to Cook a Wolf*

*Y*ou know the joke. It begins with three people who walk into a room. It is almost always racial in some way, shape, or form. Take the following lines from *Nigger* (1964), an autobiography by Dick Gregory, athlete, fruitarian, comedian, and civil rights activist:

Last time I was down South I walked into this restaurant, and this white waitress came up to me and said: “We don’t serve colored people here.”

I said: “That’s all right, I don’t eat colored people. Bring me a whole fried chicken.”

About that time these three cousins come in, you know the ones I mean, Klu, Kluck and Klan, and they say: “Boy, we’re givin’ you fair warnin’.

GLQ 20:4

DOI 10.1215/10642684-2721339

© 2014 by Duke University Press

Anything you do to that chicken, we're gonna do to you." About then the waitress brought me my chicken. "Remember, boy, anything you do to that chicken, we're gonna do to you." So I put down my knife and fork, and I picked up that chicken, and I kissed it.¹

This is a "nigger" joke, but of a different ordering. Here, Gregory traverses and upends familiar territory: extralegal violence against brown bodies, claims about (black) excess, the biopolitical erotics of racialization—getting "done" by power—and finally, put simply, the fact that eating conjoins violent, linguistic, erotic, and gustatory appetites into a lexicon with purpose. A standard explication of this *Nigger* joke would be to think about its discrete parts. A (black) man walks into a restaurant, orders a meal, encounters three other (white) men, engages in discourse (about food), and then offers closure for this standard comical scene by delivering the punch line: "I kissed it." Just what "it" is remains constantly aloof in Gregory's brilliant dissection of apartheid's appetites. While the "cousins" are there to "do" or *fuck* the black actor (and his cooked chicken, by extension), they are subjected to another ordering, one in which the object of promised violence seizes subjectivity by making another object into a subject, lovingly, with a kiss that renders naked the violence of white supremacist homosociality.

But whatever passes over the lips soon falls to waste. We are interested here in what happens to fodder when it begins its journey down, in the materiality of what must be cast out, and in the space of the nonproductive—what takes place in the *viscera* at the intersection of food studies, critical race theory, and sexuality studies. Our interest in the question of the visceral goes beyond an interest in commodities—for instance, in the history of chocolate, sugar, and slavery, one possible route that this intervention could have taken—to what we hope will be the beginning of a field of inquiry that puts questions of the animal and the racial, the biological and the historical, into tight relation with each other.² The field is broad indeed, but before we gesture toward the plethora of texts that *could* mark important intersecting trajectories from food, critical race, or sexuality studies, we want to begin with at least four key texts that we believe clear some of the ground for the inquiry on the visceral in this double issue.

Early in her study of food, sex, identity, and carnality, Elspeth Probyn asks: "Is food better than sex?"³ The answer, of course, is *it depends*. We could venture to say that "it" depends on who is having it, if "it" is the unclear but necessary antecedent—remembering Gregory's joke—that can refer to both consumed object and lover. While Probyn's *Carnal Appetites* is in many ways a groundbreaking study, the work focuses on desire and thus often moves away

from negativity, concerning itself with positive representation and affect, rather than with the historic materiality that creates the context for this issue's engagement with viscosity: even in thinking about the viscosity of eating and the connections it maps, Probyn takes pains to stay away from the proclivities and the vicissitudes of the anus and the mouth. While *Carnal Appetites* promises "the very queerness of sex and eating" and explores how such queerness might ground "other forms of living ethically," Probyn delays/forestalls the actual trip through the anus or over the tongue.⁴ In the end, by probing the ethical relations among bodies in acts of eating and having sex, Probyn admits that she has eschewed the "text as alimentary tract."⁵ By "text as alimentary tract," Probyn implies that she is less interested in mapping colonialism's viscosity—its literal tracking in the text—and more interested in the implications of colonialist tropes and their connection to the larger issues she addresses. Not so with Parama Roy's *Alimentary Tracts: Appetites, Aversions, and the Postcolonial* (2010), which maps an "alimentary and digestive economy" of contact and ordering so that "Anglo-Indian anxieties about the particulate, divisible, and racially unstable character of their somatic identity and about the biomoral substances that tended to recast it should make one rethink to some degree at least the received wisdom about the ingestive orders of the subcontinent."⁶ For Roy, the text *is* the body's alimentary tract, and the work is not to think of inside and outside but to think of the impossibility of separation between self and other, body and text, tongue and bowel. Nor with Achille Mbembe's work in *On the Postcolony* (2001), which argues that in the Western imaginary, Africa is both imagined and literal site of the contestation between human and animal, so that "we must speak of Africa only as a chimera on which we all work blindly, a nightmare we produce and from which we make a living—and which we sometimes enjoy, but which somewhere deeply repels us, to the point that we may evince toward it the kind of disgust we feel on seeing a cadaver."⁷ Though *On the Postcolony* is not often counted among the key texts in food studies, Mbembe's readings engage disgust, shame, and incorporation in both revolutionary liberation *and* the "colonizing trick."⁸ As Mbembe observes, "Beyond specifically the mouth, belly, and phallus, the body is the principal locale of the idioms and fantasies used in depicting power. . . . the body in question is first a body that eats and drinks, and second a body that is open."⁹ With the publication of Kyla Wazana Tompkins's *Racial Indigestion: Eating Bodies in the Nineteenth Century* (2012), the movement for a more historically accountable, affective rendering of the proclivities of the alimentary tract in food studies comes full circle. As she notes, racialized bodies, in particular black bodies, are figuratively ingested, harnessed by an incorporation both total and necessary to the

ordering of what is home and what is not, to what constitutes the groundwork of national belonging. Our work here and that of our contributors is in many ways indebted to these texts and their explorations of the gut.

In this issue of *GLQ*, the first of a paired set (20.4 and 21.1), the logics of desire and consumption in (post)colonial circuits reveal the carnal processes through which our bodies are materialized as queer, through which they are racialized. These processes produce us as subjects *and* objects simultaneously, and the sites on (and in) our bodies where we negotiate the boundaries between subjecthood and objectification are what constitute the visceral: the locus of inquiry for all these essays. The theoretical pressure that the visceral conjures as the line between subject and object—the line between my shit and your shit—becomes increasingly obfuscated in a neoliberal, post-neocolonial, environmentally apocalyptic world. Our goal in calling for this work was to map that abject and erotic territory—the blood and guts, the cum and shit—and in doing so push at the cartographic and historiographical edges of food studies, critical race studies, and sexuality studies. As scholars engaged in thinking about consumption in and through these frameworks, we and the authors in these two issues see many points of convergence between sexuality and eating, food, and food labor. These “systems,” embedded in racialized economies, have tremendous impact on the construction of the human and the nonhuman in the context of a transcolonial, transnational, and hemispheric modernity.

We do not claim the work in this double issue as political economy; yet we do understand these essays to engage the effects, affects, and subtended logic of political economy. Many of the sites in the digestive process—from the mouth to the anus—are linked by the erotic and material economies that emerged from colonialism and slavery. Following this geography of the gut, the essays here return again and again to the moments, texts, and processes in and through which food, flesh, and the alimentary tract are linked to the reproducing of systems of inequality. These systems include, but are not limited to, fictions of race, gender, sexuality, and class, and the bodily intensifications produced thereof: fantasies of unmediated and dehistoricized corporeality, nationalism, and community, and the anthropocentric violence of the food-industrial complex, all of which we understand as coevally produced and mutually reinforcing. The essays in this double issue find their commonality in the underbelly of history.

As do we. We, the editors, have come together from diverse areas of inquiry to ask questions *from the gut*; though we begin our questions from food, sexuality, critical race, and animal studies, we wish to discover in this volume how to approach the erotics of race and colonialism in a *visceral* way. To this end,

we offer a preliminary sketch of what we mean by this term. We see viscosity as a phenomenological index for the logics of desire, consumption, disgust, health, disease, belonging, and displacement that are implicit in colonial and postcolonial relations. Emerging from the carnal language of (colonial) excess, viscosity registers those systems of meaning that have lodged in the gut, signifying to the incursion of violent intentionality into the rhythms of everyday life. In *Culture and Practical Reason* (1976), the symbolic anthropologist Marshall Sahlins telegraphs the logics of consumption to which we refer. As part of an extended discussion of *tabu* in North American meat consumption systems, Sahlins asserts:

The symbolic scheme of edibility joins with that organizing the relations of production to precipitate, through income distribution and demand, an entire totemic order, uniting in a parallel series of differences the status of persons and what they eat. The poorer people buy the cheaper cuts, cheaper because they are socially inferior meats.¹⁰

In his deeply structuralist way, he continues, identifying a pattern of ritual defilement:

But poverty is in the first place ethnically and racially encoded. Blacks and whites enter differentially into the American labor market, their participation ordered by an invidious distinction of relative “civilization.” Black is in American society as the savage among us, objective nature in culture itself. Yet then, by virtue of the ensuing distribution of income, the “inferiority” of blacks is realized also as a culinary defilement.¹¹

Sahlins thus articulates “a general logic in which cultural degradation is confirmed by dietary preferences akin to cannibalism, even as this metaphorical attribute of the food is confirmed by the status of those who prefer it.”¹² The fictions of race, in other words, translate into culinary fictions, but come to us disguised as “taste” and “preference.” We seek an engagement with the visceral logics that animate and express these systems.

These visceral logics are, by definition, both ephemeral and local: thus, the archaeological or genealogical work of these two journal issues as they came together reaches to unearth structures of feeling, sensoria, everyday movements, and ways of bodily being obscured either by colonialist historiography or by the entrenched politics of the present. We are speaking, in some senses, of affect: more than that, we are speaking about relational maps that obscure the distinction between self and other, subject and object, persons, things, and animals.

One place where mucking around in the visceral might lead us is the productive political and erotic deployment of alliances and affiliations with animals/animality. Indeed throughout this issue, the inhumanity of populations rendered nonnormative is often figured as animality, as an excess of passion and appetite, and as the abandonment of either piety or reason that enables those in power to figure others as edible, as dead meat (note Mbembe's reference to the "cadaver" above). Borrowing from the tradition of queer scholarship as it has been championed by *GLQ*, the scholars here turn the tables on these distinctions, asking instead how eating and sexuality—in particular, forms of eating and sex configured as vice—expand each other as cathectic and world-making behaviors, behaviors already politicized as points of biopolitical, territorial, economic, and cultural intervention.¹³

Thus one of the central problematics that we engage here is whether speaking to the visceral, speaking through the literal contents of the alimentary tract, as well as its structures, is to engage queerness in some way. For instance: does tarrying with waste or the by-products of capital's colonial project always already subtend queer? The answer to that question remains to be written, but we do want to argue that this kind of reading, which on first sight seems to not always already be *about* queerness, is also concerned with colonial capital's production of deviance. Though their topics are not always legibly "gay," "lesbian," or at times even traditionally "queer," the essays in this issue yield new avenues for resource and research; we are interested less in diluting queerness than in understanding what objects that queer studies, in its most hegemonic and Western formations, obscures.

To put things more frankly, as scholars we are concerned with the overarching liberal whiteness of two of this issue's areas of interest: food studies and queer studies. Yet we cannot help but notice that in seeking a solution to this shared problem we have asked that the two fields get in bed with each other. Doing so, we believe, might allow us to generate and unearth alternative symbolic economies that refuse collusion with neoliberalism's dehumanization of the worker, the poor, the racialized, the queer, and the deviant. Who, after all, served you your last coffee? Who ground your burger? Who farmed your soy? We aim to figure labor and the laboring body not solely in terms of productive capacity but also in terms of its meaning-making and worlding possibilities, which we understand to be, following Cathy Cohen's work, traceable in "queer" and deviant economies of bodily pleasure, labor, and relief.¹⁴ By posing difficult theoretical questions for those in food and queer studies—and we include ourselves in those groups—the scholars in this issue are keen not only to understand patterns of production and

consumption but also to propose new theoretical scaffoldings for our understanding of the intersection of race, food, humanity, and animality. What we focus on here is not how foodways and food systems acquire their purchase on a place, a culture, even an object—and indeed we have remained determinedly nonlocal in the geopolitical spread of the issue—but how such systems are somehow upended as they are taken in through ingesting/digesting, as they evolve, and as they move through an alimentary tract already studded with the imprint of histories, narratives, and all the value-laden discourses that support a ubiquitous colonial project. At the same time, we present essays here that challenge the permanence of that colonial project. What is included here is a protest, loud and clear, against the idea that all such projects produce nothing but an abject body, already shat on, an idea whose contours have been explored at length in African American studies.¹⁵

If studies of food and sexuality converge at all, and we maintain that they most definitely do, then the nexus of such a convergence also comes from discourses of taste, desire, disgust, and appetite. This pair of special issues seeks to displace the familiar *taste*—the sometimes celebratory excesses of queerdome—of what is pleasant with those appetites and desires that mark disgust and rage, shit and blood. Can life—bare life, human life—be theorized from the inside out? So much of the labor of food studies is to think *health*—through companion discourses of well-being that circumscribe studies of nutrition, community food systems, and organic and sustainable farming. But we could argue that these very movements, even in their iteration as a radical politic(s), are provisioned by the very ideas embedded in colonial order, as the ethical language of management and capital—of voluntarily doing what is *for your own good*—subtends all the relationships that orient communities, activists, and even foodies toward their “healthy” forms of political practice and conscientious embodiment. The authors here upset such moral outcomes in the extreme.

In addition, our work moves beyond a politics of respectability in queer, critical race, and food discourses by opening up or perhaps returning to a signature trope in literature about the alimentary tract: the ways that benign lessons in comportment, like table manners or wearing proper dining attire, display colonialism’s governmentalizing scripts. Take, for example, a sampling of chapter titles from David M. Kaplan’s *The Philosophy of Food* (2012). In this collection of essays on food and philosophy, chapter titles and subheads like “What Species to Cultivate and How to Feed Them,” “The Agrarian Mind,” “The Magnitude and Complexity of Animal Use in Food Production,” “Globalization,” and “Agri-Food Bioterrorism” make no mention of the political imaginaries or the structural hierarchies and histories that undergird the very notion of the global or understand-

ings of words like *terror*.¹⁶ In Carolyn Korsmeyer's essay in the same volume on ethical gourmandism, there are sections titled "The Discerning Tongue and the Cultivation of Taste" and "Taste: Aesthetic and Moral Properties," but there is no mention, even in the footnotes, of how we got to thinking of taste and tongue as having any connection to aesthetic and moral properties in the first place. While one essay on localism and cosmopolitanism brings that thing called "race" to the table of ideas, race is either cordoned off as the province of an identity expressed through what one can imagine as foods that represent racial belonging *or* packaged along with "gender and sexual orientation."¹⁷ If this is an exemplary text on food and philosophy, with no sign for colonialism in its index via nomenclature or discussion, it is no wonder that "food studies" writ large does not yet have the mechanism or logical method by which to understand the particular gut feelings produced by centuries of colonial evisceration.

This is not to say that we understand the body as passive material on which is mapped an entirely deterministic social or historical order. If recent scientific studies on the vagus nerve—which extends from the brain to the abdomen—prove anything, then there is copious evidence that how we think is mapped out, not necessarily in the connectivity and electricity of firing neurons and stimulated synapses, but in the belly of our own beastliness, where all manner of "gut microbes" work their subtle magic to bring about thinking *from below*.¹⁸ Additionally, as Elizabeth Wilson's work in *Psychosomatic* and in other places shows, the stomach can well be said to have a mind of its own, not simply because it is the source of various mood-altering hormones, including serotonin, but because it is one stop on the larger enteric nervous system, which operates, in a sense, as a separate nervous system—as "the brain in the gut," "the enteric minibrain," and "the second brain."¹⁹

These biologically grounded approaches to the psychosocial mapping of the body lead us to understand the metaphoricity of the gut as more than political symbolism: we find in the gut a site where the social is registered, broken down, and processed, then ejected and dispersed throughout the body as the kind of nutritive information that the subject, immersed in political culture, needs to survive. If we stay with gut feelings, then we transform food studies, food systems, and food security narratives, which tend to privilege a kind of right, proper cultivation, into stories capable of making room for what might happen when civility goes awry, when the various elements of instruction, even sustainable and friendly production, become mired in the political hangover that comes on that morning after.

In assembling these essays we have been unabashedly delighted by their sheer dirtiness; in these pages you will find a deeply sexphilic queer theory. A running joke among us has been that the double issue reworks the Upton Sinclair

chestnut about the unanticipated success of his novel *The Jungle*, that he “aimed at the public’s heart and by accident hit it in its stomach.”²⁰ We found, to our utter pleasure, that we aimed for the stomach, or at least the gut, and got ass. Not just ass, but pussy, mouths, anuses, intestines, throats, open sores, dead bodies, inhuman genitals, cannibals. The subjects here vomit, suck, fuck, shoot ping-pong balls from their vaginas, erupt, ooze, and monstrously devour—in other words, they open their bodies, and the bodies they are moved to encounter, up to and through an unrelenting mixing of disgust, abjection, and desire. Yet this is neither an unresistant yielding nor a plenitude of pleasures—without yielding their openness, and at times because of that openness, these subjects defy, resist, repulse, and negate. They push back against a world that wishes to flatten and anatomize them, and in doing so they rethink the cartography of bodily being. In the following and final section of this introductory essay, we follow our authors’ topographies to chart the outline of this double issue.

The Visceral Archives

A classic example of archive fever, Zeb Tortorici’s essay begins in the belly of Mexico’s Archivo General de la Nación. Considering the archive’s materiality and its interactions with the bodies of researchers, archivists, and subjects of the Inquisition in Mexico, Tortorici discusses three cases involving sins *contra natura*—one a case of necrophilia, the second of promulgating medical advice that sucking semen was not a sin, and the third of masturbation with the Eucharist. Though these cases suggest the kinds of sins often researched by historians to find traces of sodomy or, in some projects, homosexuality, the cases here have fallen out of analytic attention partly because they exist at the limit of what we consider “sex” to be and partly because of, as Tortorici argues, the layers of historical disgust that work to obscure them. Tortorici takes them up precisely because they allow us to map the relationship of desire and consumption to colonial systems of classification and relations of power. Arguing that “visceral archives of the body come into historicity through the very act of documenting,” Tortorici reveals the chain of consumption that leads to his own encounter with the materials related to these three cases. In this he sets out his vision of consumption not only as embedded in exchange, digestion, or incorporation but also, as he writes, as a mode of “ordering, classifying, and knowing.” By engaging with visceral acts that fall outside the bounds of historical and contemporary forms of classification, Tortorici gets at the gut feelings (and oozings) of colonialism and its messy vicissitudes, and its affective remains.

Doin' the Butt?

Moving away from traditional discourses around the black female body that circumscribe it and create the very impossibility of pleasure, in “Black Anality” Jennifer Nash rewrites the figure of the ass for black cultural consumption. Doin’ the butt, but with a difference, Nash interrogates how prevailing understandings of the black female buttocks mark black female difference while shifting our attention from the buttocks to the anus, to the interiority once again of (b) lack pleasure. What escapes this reading, but can be inferred from Nash’s argument *for* a thorough critique of blackness *and* anality, is that the (black) anal also represents a black analytic. Thus, while this coupling (black *and* anal) carries with it the problem of interrogation, the problem of being overly surveilled, of being subject to a specific kind of ordering, by taking up gay male theorists of the anal, specifically Leo Bersani, Darieck Scott, and Richard Fung, Nash opens up a primary lacuna: the possibility that the female anus might also be a location for “transgressive self-shattering.” Methodically and persuasively, Nash walks us through pornographic scenes that expose black female anuses as productive sites for speaking to the “truth” of black interiority. This study has repercussions for all manner of work—from affect theory to psychoanalysis—as it challenges us to seek alternative, nonheteronormative spaces for understanding how epistemologies of being are formed and variously disseminated. Holding a balance between the ethical imperatives of both transformative politics *and* transgressive pleasure, Nash pushes for a reconceptualization of black feminist work on productive black bodies and black reproduction. If the black female anus represents an interiority that is normative—that does not carry a mark of difference—then what are the possibilities for seeing the (re)productive in black feminism? For Nash, absurdity and parody through the trope of the black anus take queer studies beyond excess as a harbinger of nonconformity.

Animating Animals

From anality to animality, we move to work outside the normative temporality (e.g., before the *now* of the twenty-first century) of queer studies projects. If feeling backward, to borrow from Heather Love, is our (new) destiny as queer scholars, then Leah DeVun in “Animal Appetites” takes us to twelfth- and fourteenth-century debates in the medieval period to challenge our contention that the worry over the human-animal divide is a post–World War II phenomenon. Such work joins that of scholars of the period like Fiona Somerset whose work on the history

of emotion and the heretical tradition asks similar questions.²¹ Thinking through the medieval, DeVun reminds scholars that the principal subject of such inquiries into human identity and being was the hermaphrodite. Taking as her primary texts the Aberdeen Bestiary and the Hereford and Ebstorf Maps, DeVun argues that sexual difference and its taxonomic structures were worked out, understood, and determined based on the ways in which hermaphrodite bodies disturbed all attempts to discern difference at all. This work is significant to our collective thinking on human beings' often messy, somewhat foul interior. In essence, this is *not* Michel Foucault's hermaphrodite, as DeVun not only observes the more obvious utilitarian value of such a body's defiance but also notes that sexual difference was used to mark religious difference as well. In fact, the concern for the hermaphrodite's body did not manifest itself solely in the panic about atypical sex but also entailed, DeVun argues, a concern that such a different body, such a dually marked body, upset the stability of a patriarchal society bent on differentiating between humans and animals, foreigners and members of the community/emerging nation-state. In this sense, the hermaphroditic body was a bioterrain, registering anxieties about place as well as about gender, and in this sense anticipated modern racial taxonomies as well. For DeVun, this rupture of social hierarchy spills over into notions of unquenchable "appetite" that consistently married the vagina and the mouth through discussions of eating and sex. In the end, DeVun observes that queer studies has used the medieval period as evidence and model for sexual fluidity and perhaps even sexual revolution, when actually this period was rife with categorizing, demarking, and otherwise cordoning off queer bodies for their excess(es). This work challenges inaccurate appropriations of history to support ongoing arguments for the regulation of race, sex, excess, and consumption as principal categories of human being.

(Less) Pleasing Pussy

Rachel Lee's "Pussy Ballistics and the Queer Appeal of Peristalsis, or Belly Dancing with Margaret Cho" returns to her work with Korean American comedian Margaret Cho. Lee frames her argument around Cho's 2003 performance *Cho Revolution*, where Cho uses a friend's birthing experience, rendered as "exploding pussy," to provide a metacommentary on pussy's signification, especially through the refrain of the "barkers" in Bangkok's red-light district, who outdo one another shouting slogans ("pussy eat banana") in an attempt to draw the passing public into the space of the live sex act. Lee's work follows nicely from Nash's critique of the absurdity of the black pornographic scene, as Cho bridges sex work and

reproduction, creating between them a fruitful site for engaging the visceral. Lee's approach is two-pronged. She first engages the biological sciences—following on work in feminist, queer, and embodiment studies—and borrows the term *peristaltic* from medical discourse on the digestive and reproductive tracts to think through the kind of *movement* that Cho's work signals. Second, Lee uses this movement to indicate Cho's rather overt commentary on war, empire, and occupation. Cho, Lee argues, brings the excessiveness of the gut, of the reproductive system, into normative spaces, reminding us that even in the consumption of humor, even in the recall of the belly's laughter bubbling up, we are still accountable to biopolitical forces like militarized zones that bring pockets of sex-industry work to major cities.

A Taste of What's to Come (Back Up)

Issue 21.1 promises yet more churnings, as we fully explore how colonialism and genocide do not really go down easy. From the specter of cannibalism that haunts *Little House on the Prairie* to the perverse possibilities of the smiley face and the dead soldier's body, the authors in our second issue unsettle our stomachs and bring up our bile. For Ewa Macura, it all starts with the mouth in "The Alimentary Life of Power." As Macura writes, "The mouth [i]s a most exquisite and potent instrument of and conduit for colonial domination and indoctrination. . . . All orifice, the colonized body finds itself hungry for the spoils of the masters." Macura here recasts the drama of the master's house, but with a twist: instead of tools, we find the remains of a bloody feast. Remembering the etymology of the word *queer* as a twist or turn, the title's pun on *alimentary/elementary* is intended to introduce us afresh to the alimentary track, marking it as a source of great power in the tale of decolonization. For her object, Macura takes Dambuzo Marechera's work *The House of Hunger* (1978), a novel that narrates Zimbabwean independence from Prime Minister Ian Smith to Robert Mugabe and Joshua Nkomo. In the troping of ingestion and vomiting, Macura observes a style of resistance to the hegemony of colonization. What is unique about her perspective is that she moves away from the optic of the carnivalesque, which is often applied to this work in particular, and by extension to works from Frantz Fanon to J. M. Coetzee, to take seriously the theoretical pressures brought to bear by a formidable regurgitation. Eating is power in Macura's deft critical hands, but more so, it is also accompanied by the very notion that what one eats can easily be ejected. If to eat is to be free in a colonial landscape, to vomit is freedom's practice. Indeed, to travel in Macura's fine examination of Zimbabwean independence is to open the possibilities of "alimen-

tary subjection,” thus making and marking colonization—its very insides—complete. In the end she asks, what would it mean to make a pedagogy from such consumptive viscosity?

Ramzi Fawaz, in “‘I Cherish My Bile Duct as Much as Any Other Organ’: Political Disgust and the Digestive Life of AIDS in Tony Kushner’s *Angels in America*,” also brings up engaged retching as a response to genocidal logics. For generations, or so it seems, queer studies has hurled itself at embodiment, thinking in, through, and on the body—ever leaving its messy interior, constantly worrying its margins. In many ways, we have the viscosity of HIV/AIDS scholarship to thank for reminding queer studies of its long dead and still living. Fawaz provides a searing critique of Kushner’s cosmos in *Angels in America*. Through an examination of the main character Prior’s intestinal difficulties, Fawaz’s essay challenges scholars to rethink our comfort level and our capacity to redeploy human suffering, a particularly important intervention in a moment when HIV has become a chronic illness for those who have access to medication and not the spectacular eruption of the body it once was—a form of eruption that mobilized politics for a decade until it was channeled into nonprofit and medical forms of management. When Macura closes her explication of Marechera’s collection, she ends with eating in postcoloniality as a practice verging on an “autoimmune condition”—an indication that something has gone terribly wrong with the self, not the other. This condition creates a kind of exemption, a point that Fawaz interrogates through the concept of “ill liberalism” in the figure of Prior in Kushner’s play, whose gastric rumblings belie the gut feelings of democracy.

Bethany Schneider’s “‘A Queer Little Sort of Tunnel in the Grass’: Between Zitkala-Sa and Laura Ingalls Wilder” takes us back to the work of Laura Ingalls Wilder and the insatiable appetite that settler colonial children have for the indigenous. Schneider contextualizes Wilder’s widely read novels of white prairie childhood in the Indian Removal policies of the nineteenth century and identifies Laura’s desire to “have” a “little Indian baby” as a cannibalistic one. Reading Wilder alongside Zitkala-Sa, a Yankton-Nakota writer of the same era who also represented prairie childhood and forced removal, Schneider argues that Wilder and other settler colonists engaged in “epistemological and ontological cannibalism.”

Finally, Sianne Ngai begins with the smiley face, ☺, that character now encoded in our text messaging vocabularies and word-processing software and myriad other aspects of daily life, to mark benign neutrality. Taking the smiley—the abstracted human head frozen in happiness—as a form of abstraction, Ngai considers the visceral processes of abstraction in Karl Marx’s use of cooked animal parts to signify the proletariat and the figure of the dead male soldier as

eroticized abstraction in Rob Halpern's book of war poetry, *Music for Porn* (2012), in order to arrive at a sense of the violence of abstraction in the production of value.

Cleaning Up the Mess

When we set out to articulate the messy contours of the visceral, we did not fully imagine just how squishy things would get. While questions of affect have been central to this work, the en fleshed and carnal analyses presented in these two issues have expanded our vocabularies of colonialism, alterity, sexualities, racing, and eating. We have found viscosity a productive site from which to trace these processes. We hope these two issues *move* you as you read them, in ways only indexed and identifiable within your own body, marking points of affinity as well as things that do not "sit well," rumbling through you to become something else. Our project has been to become more attuned to this index, to find work that heightens our senses and excites us as it tells us something about the complex modes of becoming in and beyond coloniality. We sit at the end here like Zora Neale Hurston's *Sis Cat*: having eviscerated the rat, we're "washing [our] face[s] and usin' [our] manners" afterward.²²

Notes

1. Dick Gregory, with Robert Lipsyte, *Nigger* (Cutchogue, NY: Buccaneer Books, 1964), 160. Frunitarians consume a fruit-based diet for health, spiritual, or religious reasons. See Gregory, *Dick Gregory's Natural Diet for Folks Who Eat: Cookin' with Mother Nature!* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973).
2. Examples of the commodity-centered approach abound in the contemporary literature in food studies. See James L. Watson and Melissa L. Caldwell, *The Cultural Politics of Food and Eating: A Reader* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005); Sidney W. Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (New York: Viking, 1985); and Sophie D. Coe and Michael D. Coe, *The True History of Chocolate* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1996). While we find these texts useful, and some have indeed informed aspects of our engagement, we seek to extend this inquiry into the consuming and producing body and through the cultural logics of consumption that attend commodification.
3. Elspeth Probyn, *Carnal Appetites: FoodSexIdentities* (London: Routledge, 2000), 60.
4. Probyn, *Carnal Appetites*, 57.
5. Probyn, *Carnal Appetites*, 145.

6. Parama Roy, *Alimentary Tracts: Appetites, Aversions, and the Postcolonial* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 16.
7. Achille Mbembe, *On the Postcolony* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 241.
8. We borrow this phrase from David Kazanjian, *The Colonizing Trick: National Culture and Imperial Citizenship in Early America* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003).
9. Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, 107.
10. Marshall Sahlins, *Culture and Practical Reason* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), 176.
11. Sahlins, *Culture and Practical Reason*, 176.
12. Sahlins, *Culture and Practical Reason*, 176.
13. For a discussion of the difficulty of thinking about the historicity of subjects whose life plans do not always enjoin prevailing definitions of what one could call “a life worth living,” see Lauren Berlant, “Slow Death (Sovereignty, Obesity, Lateral Agency),” *Critical Inquiry* 33, no. 4 (2007): 754–80.
14. See Cathy J. Cohen, “Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens: The Radical Potential of Queer Politics?,” in *Black Queer Studies: A Critical Anthology* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 21–51.
15. We are thinking here about the debate in African American studies over the abjection of the black body. This debate spans the work on the quotidian enslaved life and its consequences for freedom in Saidiya V. Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); Fred Moten’s counter to her reading of Frederick Douglass’s narrative in *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003); Darieck Scott’s fine distillation of power and the black body in *Extravagant Abjection: Blackness, Power, and Sexuality in the African American Literary Imagination* (New York: New York University Press, 2010); and most notably, Frank Wilderson III, *Red, White, and Black: Cinema and the Structures of US Antagonisms* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010).
16. David M. Kaplan, ed., *The Philosophy of Food* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012).
17. Paul B. Thompson, “Nature Politics and the Philosophy of Agriculture,” in Kaplan, *Philosophy of Food*, 215.
18. See Rob Stein, “Gut Bacteria Might Guide the Workings of Our Minds,” www.npr.org/blogs/health/2013/11/18/244526773/gut-bacteria-might-guide-the-workings-of-our-minds (accessed December 18, 2013).
19. Elizabeth A. Wilson, *Psychosomatic: Feminism and the Neurological Body* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 34.
20. Impossible to verify and thus possibly apocryphal, the quip is cited almost every-

where that *The Jungle* is discussed and never footnoted or attributed to any one text or interview. That popularity might demonstrate that the line itself hit on a gut feeling when proposing the idea that the political sphere itself has a stomach and organs, a shared viscosity. This rendering of a public affective life resonates with this issue's mapping of the digestive life of the body.

21. Fiona Somerset, *Feeling like Saints: Lollard Writings after Wycliff* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014).
22. Zora Neale Hurston, *Mules and Men* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1990), 246.