



“I Would I Had No Tongue, No Ears”: Oral, Aural and Sexual Openness in Heywood’s *A Woman Killed With Kindness*

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Abstract

Following historicist and materialist feminist criticisms, material food studies and the cultural attitudes towards food and female speech and hearing in early modern England, I argue that Thomas Heywood’s *A Woman Killed with Kindness* (1607) dramatizes the interrelatedness of oral, aural and sexual appetites. I contend that Anne’s oral, aural and sexual openness to Wendoll is a complex form of subversive complicity; she subverts the authority of her husband while obeying him in submitting aurally and sexually to Wendoll whom Frankford invites to use his table and unconsciously his wife. I argue that Heywood perceived appetite as an instrument for revenge, penitence and redemption. While Anne’s aural and oral openness to Wendoll’s seductive speech leads to her sexual openness, I explain that her self-starvation is an oral revenge in which she consumes the flesh that has bred her sin. I argue that Anne’s starvation is an act of political resistance against a patriarchal society that uses food and eating as forms of control.

Key words: Food; Appetite; Oral and aural openness; Adultery; Starvation

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INTRODUCTION

Some feminist critics such as Karen Newman (1991, pp.10-11) and Dympna Callaghan (1989, p.82) have

demonstrated how many early modern texts associate female speech with lasciviousness. The association between female speech, sexual looseness and tragedy is linked to the prevailing comparison of women to Eve, whose persuasion of Adam to eat from the fruits of the forbidden tree shattered the established divine order and brought about sin and death (Jardine, 1983, pp.110-11). As speech was bound up with women’s sexuality and disobedience, as Luckyj (2002) notes, “[i]t is almost obligatory for scholars who write about early modern women to begin with a nod in the direction of the triple feminine virtues of chastity, silence and obedience” (p.3). While critics discuss the association between female speech and lasciviousness, and silence and chastity, they have overlooked hearing and its agent, the ear. The link between the ear and vagina is often ignored because of the tendency to perceive ears as passive orifices (Kilgour, 1990, p.131; Woodbridge, 1994, p.256). However, ears are vulnerable holes subject to penetration by external tongues. Green (2005) argues that “in the early modern period, ears, like mouths and vaginas, were regarded not only as passive openings through which the body could be penetrated, but also as sites through which desire could be expressed” (p.54). As feminist critics have demonstrated, controlling the unruly female was associated in early modern England with managing what she said and heard (Stallybrass, 1986, pp.123-44; Green, 2005, pp.53-74).

In early modern England, the analogy of speech to food suggests an underlying concern with consumption. The mouth and ear are sites of consumption that had to be monitored. Eve’s first sin may have been of the ear when she listened to and believed the serpent, but her second sin was of the mouth when she ate the forbidden fruit. As Edward Reyner put it in his 1656 treatise,

original sin came first out at the mouth by speaking before it entered in by eating. The first use we find Eve to have made of her language was to enter parley with the tempter and from that

to become a tempter to her husband. (quoted in Fletcher, 1995, p.14)

Such an interpretation of Eve's transgression encouraged writers to conflate female aural and oral appetites. "Managing the appetite", argues Appelbaum (2006), "was a fundamental to the conduct of civil society as putting food on the table, or for that matter managing its cousin, sexual appetite" (p.201). This equation of food and sexual appetites suggests that "the sexual organs were contiguous with the digestive organs and *dependent* for arousal on tasting, touching, seeing, smelling, and hearing" (p.232, original emphasis). In this conflation of food and sexual appetite, Appelbaum (2006) notes that "the life [...] of eating and drinking is [...] a life of erotic attachments" (p.224) and he notes that "sexual desire [...] is so often oral and oral first" (p.231). In this article, I will discuss the yoking of oral, aural and sexual openness in Thomas Heywood's *A Woman Killed with Kindness* with a particular focus on the main plot of Wendoll and Frankford as it offers a complex presentation of the causes and effects of adultery and the link between female aural, oral and sexual appetites.

DISCUSSION

Anne's adulterous relationship with Wendoll is attributed to Frankford's violation of companionship that protestant preachers put "above the need to avoid fornication" (Newman, 1991, p.19). "Because the wedlock is a divinely ordained manifestation of the civil order", Comensoli (1996) notes, "it must be carefully maintained through the power of the house-holder" (p.67). The moral and social ideals of the wedlock are not, however, maintained in the marital union of Anne and Frankford because Frankford defiles the chastity of marriage in his failure to live up to his role as a companion to his wife. Frankford expresses his feelings of tiredness in the wedding scene. "Ay, you may caper, you are light and free", says Frankford to Sir Francis, "marriage hath yok'd my heels, pray then pardon me" (I. 10-11). Frankford perceives Anne as "all ornament" that enables him "to maintain a gentleman" (IV. 6). Frankford's marriage to Anne is represented as an exchange of property between men; "by your leave, sister—by your husband's leave", says Sir Francis, Anne's brother (I. 6). Sir Francis and Sir Charles compliment Anne's noble birth, education, "beauty and perfection" (I. 22-3). Anne is socially equal to Frankford; "there's equality" says Charles, "in this fair combination; you are both scholars./ Both young, both being descended nobly" (I. 66-68). However, Sir Charles' verbal and visual depiction of the marital union highlights Anne's loss of subjectivity and agency.

She doth become you like a well-made suit
[...]

She's no chain
To tie your neck and curb you to the yoke,
But she's a chain of gold to adorn your neck. (I. 59-64)

This articulation of Anne as "a well-made suit" and "a chain of gold" reduces her status within this play, clearly delineating for her a female role beneath and subject to her husband. McQuade (2000) maintains that "Sir Charles recognizes that as a married woman, Anne's virtue is to be measured by a different standard: no longer is she valuable for her own "ornaments of mind and body" but, rather, for how well she ornaments her husband" (p.241). When Frankford catches Anne and Wendoll, his "best" companion, in the adulterous affair, Frankford's questions indicate his tragic flaw. "Was thou not supply'd with every pleasure, fashion, and new toy?" (XIII.109), asks Frankford, "did I not lodge thee in my bosom?" (XIII.113). Frankford's questions to Anne are an affirmation of his negation of his duty as a companion to his wife. This view is reinforced by his overhasty knotted, hyperbolic identification with Wendoll.

Frankford's openness to Wendoll leads to the destruction of his marriage and replicates his wife in adultery. Wendoll does not penetrate the walls of the household, but Frankford entertains him. While Anne's adulterous relationship with Wendoll disrupts the orderly household, in asking him to "be a present Frankford in his absence" (VI. 79) and "prefer(ing) him to a second place" (IV. 34), Frankford is responsible for the tragedy (Comensoli 1996, p.75; Findlay, 1999, p.159). Metaphorically speaking, it is Wendoll, not Anne, who is "one flesh" with Frankford who seeks out Wendoll to fill the place that his wife ought to hold. Keeble (1994) argues that "unless there be a joining of hearts, and knitting of affections together, it is not marriage indeed, but in show and name" (p.16). Wendoll's talk of hearts "join'd and knit together" (VI. 50) in dissecting his relationship with Frankford reaffirms Anne's exclusion from the sphere of marriage. "She must act as her husband's representative only", asserts Gough, "over whom if she take any authority, she usurpeth it" (cited in Richardson, 2006, p.47). While "a woman's authority as domestic head in her husband's absence is set against the power of a man from outside the household" (Richardson, 2006, p.52), Frankford "in [his] opinion and [his] best regard" (IV. 34-5) invites Wendoll to be "a present Frankford" in his absence.

The relationship between Frankford and Wendoll is figured out in corporeal terms of consumption and digestion which "was the root of life because digestion was the main point of contact between the body and the world" (Appelbaum, 2006, p.49). "He cannot eat without me" says Wendoll, "Nor laugh without me / I am to his body/As necessary as his digestion, And equally do

make him whole or sick” (VI. 40-43). Wendoll, whom Frankford sees “press’d by want” (IV. 33), penetrates Frankford’s bodily recess and the health and sickness of the household’s body, therefore, are at the mercy of Wendoll. Anne uses the organs of appetite and consumption in describing the bond between Frankford and Wendoll. My husband “esteems you”, says Anne to Wendoll, “even as his brain, his eyeball, or his heart” (VI. 114-15). Frankford, therefore, is represented as the head that does not head.

Frankford’s lack of perception, short-sightedness in welcoming Wendoll is reaffirmed by the servant Nicholas who sees serving Wendoll as “an act of self-mutilation” (Wall, 2002, p.205). “If I pluck off his boots, says Nicholas, “I’ll eat the spurs/ And they shall stick fast in my throat like burrs” (IV. 98-9). Nicholas, “the play’s ethical barometer” (Wall, 2002, p.201), shows that a cannibalistic eating of Wendoll is the only means of restoring the harmonious routine of the household. “I cannot eat” says Nicholas, “but had I Wendoll’s heart / I would eat that” (VIII. 16-17). Nicholas’s resentfulness towards Wendoll is a parody of Frankford’s overdependence on Wendoll. Wall (2006) perceptively argues that Nicholas’ impulse in these scenes represents his attempt to “replace Frankford’s voluntary incorporation of Wendoll with Nick’s forced penetration into Frankford’s heart” (p.206). Metaphorically, Nicholas kills Frankford “with a weapon whose sharp”ned point / Hath prick’d quite through and through my shivering heart” (VIII. 56-57). Frankford, therefore, is revealed “to be a penetrable authority—blazoned fragments capable of self-destruction” (Wall, 2002, p.204). Wendoll, his best companion, penetrates his wife and Nicholas, the servant, who is supposed to be corrected by the master and mistress of the household, plays the role of the moral physician—a physician who “turns the play’s somatic tropes of incorporation into overt threats of dismemberment and cannibalism” (Wall, 2002, p.25) in an attempt to keep the subordination hierarchy in the household. Nicholas’s pedagogy of his master continues all over the play. When Frankford rushes to kill Wendoll, Nicholas stops him from killing and Frankford recognizes the importance of his intervention. “I thank thee, maid” says Frankford, “thou like the angel’s hand / Hast stay’d me from a bloody sacrifice” (XIII. 68-9).

Critics find Anne’s overhasty entanglement “in the labyrinth of sin” (VI. 161) debateable for Heywood, Panek (1994) argues, “refuses to provide Anne with any truly clear motivation for her adultery” (p.367). Scholars propose that she holds no real agency (Bennett, 2000, p.49) and that her acquiescence to Wendoll’s seduction is motivated by a desire to please men in general and her husband in particular. Panek (1994) argues that in Frankford’s absence Anne must fulfill his obligation to please his guests, and if she were to “reject [Wendoll] and

report his advances to Frankford”, she would make “a choice that would sever Frankford from his dearest friend. Faced with such a decision, the “labyrinth” Anne finds herself in may be more complicated—to her, at least—than a simple matter of fidelity or infidelity” (p.366). Anne’s sexual submission to Wendoll is, therefore, a complex form of subversive complicity. She obeys her husband in sleeping with Wendoll whom Frankford entreats to be a “present Frankford” and in doing so, she simultaneously betrays her husband. It is Anne’s complicity with, submission to, male authority that causes the primary conflict of the play and entangles her in the labyrinth of adultery.

Anne’s adultery is a comment on Frankford’s objectification of his wife and his failure to live up to his role as a companion to her. Frankford’s perception of Anne as an object underlines his suppression of her capacities. “[G]iven the suddenness of her response to Wendoll”, notes Gutierrez (2003), “it is possible to read her as a woman whose natural passions and life-enjoying capacities have somehow been suppressed” (p.47). The suppression of her sexual desires, however, implies her capacity to fulfil what she lacks. “I would I had no tongue, no ears, no eyes”, says Anne, “no apprehension, no capacity” (XIII. 90-1). The implication of these lines, ornamented with organs of appetite, is two-fold. First, Anne’s anticipation of corporeal punishment because of her adultery is a manifestation and reaffirmation of her corporeality that is objectified in the wedding celebration. Second, her wish to negate her organs of appetite is an indication and reaffirmation that self-denial and appetite is incompatible in the sense that woman are “objects of male desire”, argues Karen Newman (1991), “and dependent on that desire for their status, livelihood, even their lives” (p.7). Regardless of the fragile nature of the female to resist temptation, Frankford’s companionship with Wendoll curtails Anne’s agency; she sees Wendoll, I think, as “a present Frankford” (VI. 79).

Anne’s aural openness to Wendoll’s speech fuels her oral openness and both her hearing and speaking are inextricably linked to sexual desire. Anne emphasizes this association between aural and oral openings, food and sexual appetites when she reaffirms her husband’s invitation of Wendoll to the household:

He wills you as you prize his love,
[...]
To make bold in his absence and command
Even as himself were present in the house;
For you must keep his table, use his servants,
And be a present Frankford in his absence. (VI. 74-9)

Anne’s final statement can be read as Frankford’s implicit invitation to Wendoll to have sex with Anne. She reminds Wendoll of his freedom to “keep his table, use

his servants” and act as Frankford. “Anne’s repetition of Frankford’s invitation”, notes Green (2005), “simply confirms Wendoll’s view of himself as “a present Frankford” (p.59). The seduction scene is the leading scene of the play where the vehemence of sexual appetite is registered in hurt bodily parts. “And when I come by chance into her presence”, says Wendoll, “Ill hale these balls until my eyestrings crack” (V. 114-15). Anne’s speech with Wendoll awakens his capturing rhetoric that leads Anne to hear inappropriate speech. “Give me a name”, says Wendoll aside, “you whose infectious tongues / Are tipp’d with gall and poison” (VI. 81-2). Anne’s beauty and perfection, that Frankford underprizes and puts in a corporeal frame of “ornament”, along with her speech, clips the wings of Wendoll’s praying and reasoning to “arm” himself against “her divine perfection” (V. 11-12). Anne, who is portrayed as the “perfect wife” (I. 37), whose only desire is to please her husband (I.31-36), shows no intention to dishonour her husband. This is manifested by her shock at Wendoll’s initiation of love attack; “the host of Heaven forbid” says Anne, “Wendoll should hatch such a disloyal thought” (VI. 110-11). Her attempt to resist Wendoll’s verbal attack is indicated by Wendoll’s verse. “Start not, speak not, answer not / I love—nay, let me speak the rest” (VI. 107-08). Wendoll’s initial demand for Anne’s silence suggests that he expects her to object to his expressions of love. However, he outlines what may happen if she tells her husband:

Go, tell your husband; he will turn me off,
And I am then undone. I care not, I—
“Twas for your sake. Perchance in rage he’ll kill me.
I care not—” twas for you. Say I incur
The general name of villain through the world,
Of traitor to my friend—I care not, I.
Beggary, shame, death, scandal, and reproach,
For you I’ll hazard all—what care I?
For you I’ll live, and in your love I’ll die. (VI.130-38)

Even though Anne does not want to hear this speech, she is unable to swim away from the whirlpool of Wendoll’s words due to the openness of her ears. Wendoll’s suggestion of what will happen to him if Anne tells her husband “move[s her] to passion and to pity” (VI. 139). Anne’s body is like the drum upon which Wendoll beats; he throws his words into her ears and swells her with excitement. “O Master Wendoll”, appeals Anne to him, “pray God I be not born to curse your tongue, / That hath enchanted me” (VI. 158-160, my italics). Anne’s appreciation of Wendoll’s words is a manifestation of his satisfying of her lack. Wendoll, in his use of euphemistic and musical words, is a parody of Frankford who regards Anne “all ornament” (IV. 12). What follows Wendoll and Anne’s oral and aural consumption is Wendoll’s “knock at (Anne’s mouth)

with a (corporeal) kiss” (VI. 63), which forms the threshold of her bodily recess that Wendoll penetrates.

The play, with its emphasis on the world of senses and the collapsing of hearing, speaking and food and sexual appetites, echoes the Fall of Man from the Garden of Eden. Anne is Eve whose aural opening to Satan is the threshold of her entanglement in the bestial World. “It is that Satan hath corrupted her” says Nicholas, for she was “chaste and fair” (VII. 95). Later, Sir Francis’ words echo Nicholas; “T was his tongue” says Francis, “that did corrupt her” (XVII. 112-13). That Anne perceives herself as Eve is illuminated in her remark that Wendoll’s “tongue [...] hath enchanted [her]” (VI. 158-59) and that her “soul is wandering and hath lost her way” in the “labyrinth of sin” (p.150, 159-60). Anne’s oral and aural openings, therefore, lead to her sexual openness. “Come, come, let’s in”, says Anne, “once o’er shoes, we are straight o’er head in sin” (XI. 113-14). Thus, Wendoll consumes Frankford’s hospitality by eating at his table and by, metaphorically, devouring his wife.

A Woman Killed with Kindness is a tragedy of food and consumption. The verbal and visual description of preparing and consuming meals registers the order of the household in *A Woman Killed with Kindness* (XI. 19-20). The household of the early modern period was represented as “a theatre of hospitality” (Comensoli, 1996, p.72). Food was the articulation of the tongue of civility “for the civilities of civil society”, Appelbaum (2006) argues, “were understood in relation to appetite” (p.201). Frankford, therefore, expresses his civility, “companionship” with Wendoll by inviting him to dinner. “To dinner. Come, sir, from this present day”, says Frankford, “welcome to me forever” (IV. 83-4). However, the tragedy suggests that food is a symbol of lust, specifically that of Wendoll for Anne.

The familial tragedy, brought about by the wife’s adultery, is attributed to the husband / head’s abrogation of his duty to manage his body. In the body of Renaissance writings—sermons, conduct books and plays—marriage is corporeally represented as the union of man and woman into “one flesh” where “man is figured as the head, woman as the body” (Newman, 1991, p.16). Newman (1991) argues that the husband is represented as the living image of the divine will and upon him lies the responsibility of managing his earthly, base and mortal body. “Man figures God’s voice”, notes Karen Newman, “representing his power, instantiating it, inscribing it, on woman’s body; woman figures the human body, its corruptibility, fragility” (p.6). In early modern England, the woman was a symbol of the bestial, irrational, lustful and corruptible part of human nature while man was a symbol of the spiritual and rational part. Furthermore, the female body was articulated as a garden and state and the head/husband is the gardener and governor who manages and dominates his body / garden. “If our bodies

were our gardens”, argues Robert Appelbaum (2006), “it was our rational and selfsame selves that undertook the gardening” (p.226). While it is the responsibility of the husband / head / mind to manage and master his body / wife, Frankford’s openness to Wendoll implicates his wife in adultery.

Frankford’s excessive invitation of Wendoll “to use (his) table” (IV. 65) goes out the sphere of civility; he, figuratively, I argue, invites him to “use” his wife. Frankford pointedly makes a request of his companion: “Master Wendoll, in my absence use / The very ripest pleasure of my house” (11. 63-64). As the word ripest suggests, Frankford designates Anne as food and, unconsciously, offers his wife to Wendoll. When Frankford pretends that he is leaving for an errand, Wendoll ponders:

I am husband now in Master Frankford’s place
And must command the house. [To Anne.] My pleasure is
We will not sup abroad so publicly
But in your private chamber, Mistress Frankford.
(XI. 89-91)

These lines highlight the equation of food with sexual appetite. “The physical appetites satisfied by cooking and dining”, observes Richardson (2006), “are transmuted into their anti-domestic other, the satisfaction of sexual hunger” (p.163). As Anne’s and Wendoll’s relationship is carnal, supper denotes satisfying their private sexual appetite. Jenkin expresses his concern to another servant: “If they do sup together, pray god they do not lie together” (XII. 12-13). As he approaches his “polluted bed-chamber,” Frankford characterizes the room as “[t]he place where sins in all their ripeness dwell” (XIII. 14-16). In response to Frankford’s command to tread softly, Nick refers to food: “I will walk on eggs this pace” (XIII.21). Bryan (1974) points out that this food reference lends irony to the scene “since eggs were commonly believed to be an aphrodisiac” (p.13). After catching Anne and Wendoll in the shameful act of adultery, Frankford orders that his and Anne’s children be brought to shame Anne and then immediately be taken away, “lest as her spotted body / Hath stained their names with stripe of bastardy, / So her adulterous breath may blast their spirits / With her infectious thoughts” (XIII. 125-128). Here again, illicit sex is compared to food; luscious food upon Anne’s mouth stains her children with “adulterous breath”.

While Anne’s adultery is caused by her oral and aural openness, it is ultimately reformed by her oral and aural closure. Once defined as a “spotted strumpet” (XIII. 109, 125), Anne renounces food as a means of recompense for adultery: “So to my deathbed”, says Anne, “for from this sad hour / I never will nor eat, nor drink, nor taste / Of any cates that may preserve my life” (XVI. 101-02). She starves her adulterous body by consuming neither food nor drink as a means of penance for her sexual sin. Frey and

Lieblen (2004) note that “the language of the scene insists upon the physical consequences of Anne Frankford’s decision to starve herself [...]. It emphasizes her thinness, her weakness, her faintness, and her paleness. She asks for some air, needs assistance to be raised a little higher in bed, and is, in the words of the servant Jenkin, “as lean as a lath” (p.45).

From a religious point of view, Anne’s self-imposed starvation results in her suicide and that, according to Christian theology, would lead to her eternal damnation. Christian doctrines perceived that bodily mortification through food refusal was a means of achieving holiness. “Bodily, earthly desires were vicious and had to be curbed in favour of the sublime power” (Vandereycken, 1994, p.18). “Women”, argues Bynum (1987),

understood themselves to be a symbol of the flesh, saw fasting and other forms of asceticism as weapons for routing that flesh, and therefore adopted extreme starvation and other forms of self-mutilation in an effort to rise to the level of spirit and became, metaphorically speaking, male. (p.217)

However, Anne’s food refusal is a suicide she imposed upon herself. She has the premonition of death – she “wish[es her]self dead” (XVI. 62)—which was rejected on theological grounds. Anne’s self-starvation can be read as a public spectacle that demonstrates her agency and subjectivity.

Anne’s self-starvation in the context of the household, where food and consumption form the appetitive spirit of, the hustle and bustle of, the means of control of, the household’s patriarchy, is, by and large, a manifestation of her renunciation of the household’s norms and “an individual valuation of self over and above public values” (Gutierrez, 2003, p.2). In early modern period, food was represented as a means of communication between the individual and the world. Gutierrez (2003) contends that eating “is a strategy by which an individual becomes part of a collective” (p.2). Based on this, “food is related to culture”, argues Appelbaum (2006), “in much the same way as language is related to culture”; “food is itself a kind of language, a system of communication” (p.10). Eating and drinking are social and public activities that connect the individual with others and the world. In this sense, “food refusal in early modern texts”, argues Gutierrez (2003), “shows subjectivity, since being removed from the commensality is clearly a severance of an individual part from a social whole” (p.3). Anne’s starvation is a subjective space of authority that challenges Frankford’s will and voice. Like her husband who claims a higher authority when he declares that “[his] words are registered in Heaven already” (XIII. 153), Anne declares that her will is “writ in heaven and decreed here” (XVI. 66). In other words, Anne’s starvation is a subversive response to Frankford’s sentence and his abrogation of divine authority. He banishes her, but she starves herself and forces him to restore to her the name of wife.

Anne’s starvation is simultaneously a sign of female virtue and a rebellion against the boundaries prescribed for her. Anne’s choice to starve herself is a powerful act of resistance against a patriarchal society that uses food and eating as forms of social control. Anne’s crushing of the lute, a symbol of sexuality, is a manifestation of her transformation from being an instrument upon which male figures play their bodily desire to a rebellious subject. “Go break this lute”, says Anne, “upon my coach’s wheel / As the last music that I e’er shall make” (XVI. 71-2). “The last music” that she will make is quelling her sexuality by playing upon her body through starvation.

Frankford’s view of Anne as an object is reaffirmed when he orders Master Cranwell to empty the body of the household of “all that was my wife’s” (XV. 4); “I would not have a bodkin or a cuff”, says Frankford, “A bracelet, necklace, or rebato wire/Nor anything that ever was call’d hers (XV. 7-9). Frankford’s denial of her corporeality is reaffirmed by the punishment he imposes upon her; Frankford denies her corporeal significance, driving her away from home and stripping her off her sons. Christopher Frey and Leane Lieblein (2004) argue that “Frankford’s decision to not punish Anne physically but rather “torment [her] soul” by removing her children and placing her in exile is an attempt to deny the significance of her corporeality” (p.60). This punishment opposes the punishment that Anne anticipates. “I would have this hand cut off”, says Anne, “these my breasts sear’d” (XIII. 135). Anne, however, negates his denial of her body by food refusal, which depletes the flesh that has propagated her sin. While Anne’s self-starvation results in the elimination of the sexual characteristics that previously defined her as marriageable, it reaffirms her corporeal significance and compels Frankford to remarry her and to restore her name as a mother; “my wife, the mother to my pretty babes” says Frankford “Both those lost names I do restore thee back, /And with this (corporeal) kiss I wed thee once again” (XVII. 115-16).

CONCLUSION

Thomas Heywood’s *A Women Killed with Kindness* highlights the conflation of, interrelatedness of, aural, oral and genital openings and food and sexual appetites. This domestic tragedy, following the plot pattern of sin, punishment, repentance and salvation, shows readers and audiences that the reward of good and the punishment of evil. I argued that Heywood criticises the renaissance practice of objectifying female figures and reveals the web of complex demands on female behaviour. While Anne is complicit with her husband’s demand that she show Wendoll “loving’st courtesy” (IV.80), Frankford does not acknowledge his participation to her oral, aural and sexual openness. He fails to consider that his aural openness to Wendoll’s speech is the cause of the tragedy. I have contended that food in the play is a symbol of lust and

Anne’s self-starvation is, therefore, a weapon of rebellion, of protest against the role to which women are assigned, that of object of exchange between male lustful voices.

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