

Second Helpings are a given

*"I believe in the flesh and the appetites." Whitman – Song of Myself*

almost a rite, certainly a ritual. A moment passes. Then another. Surely a finger, he thinks, will taste better and be less *chewy* than an unsatisfying snack of thumb.

And why not. They are *his* fingers after-all. He grew them over the long years to frightening lengths at times, nails included, with no help from anyone, as if anyone could possible help. Or help in such a way that might matter.

And so he helps himself to the smallest of the oversized digits, one from the non-dominant left hand which he surmises will therefore be more tender, certainly less stringy, with sweeter marrow than the previously mentioned missing thumb now throbbing in its absence.

Thumbs are, after all, not vestigial structures. Like him they are far more important, signature pieces of creation, and opposable. A thing of beauty to behold. Or once upon a time hold, as in grasp. He is not opposed to the idea of a sampler platter of fingers arranged decoratively like starfish in bloom but minus their thumb

equivalents. The fingernails must be high in protein and a good source of fiber, he surmises. What could be better than a meal of oneself? Certainly no need for a recently derived pretentious sauce. And little need to worry where it was sourced.

Such a sauce would only disguise the subtle time-aged flavors. No reason at all to avoid such deliriously delectable delicacies. Only a fool would file a claim in a territory beyond their grubstake. (You may ignore the pun if you please). Except, he thinks, waiting

for the next moment to catch up and then pass, except, there will be a future function for fingers as he dines, a fully functioning dominant right hand will be necessary as the many courses of his meal are brought forward, presented, and self-served. He knows he is wise beyond his marinated years to have caught himself.

To have avoided hurrying his tasteless assault on hunger. Eating too fast, so he was told often as a child, so often it replaced the family prayer at mealtimes, was gluttony, a sin against the body proper, and not an indulgence offered by the church for the starving masses. So caution and patience were required as seasonings, and reason lightly sautéed was much preferred over sweetmeats eaten

in thoughtless haste and subsequent waste. Surely such attention to detail, along with the precision of his incisors, and the terrible beauty of his canines, all trouble and cavity-free teeth, rest assured will provide for maximum mandible articulation. Perfectly well reasoned seasoning. Or a perfect, if he must say so himself, well-seasoned reason.

But what blood-red rich wine goes best he wonders momentarily distracted by a plump ear lobe, though only for less than a moment, a nano-doubt, knowing himself too well, and already sure of which artery to knowingly tap first, goes best with such a magnificent sampler? Drink well and swallow memory he reminds himself. Drink

steadily in hourly moderation from small vessels as libations to the godless gods, but avoid affectation such as the dining couches preferred by the ancients, and repeated lingering visits to the vomitorium. Be wary of all things distilled when dining alfresco.

Still, there is much to be done. A meal ill-planned is time undone. Onward he goes, bending gracefully toward his toes, such toe-wardness requires extreme flexibility and energy, and only serves to stimulate the appetite. A reward in itself.

A satisfying crunchiness ensues, tissue and bone, phalanges and metatarsals, fibrous cartilage (the ears are best, and best saved for dessert), tender tendons and articular ligaments speak of a taste supreme; be careful not to swallow whole the calcaneus or heel bone. Do remember: always chew 21 times before targeting the tasty talus.

Rest and digest the savory moment. The more subtly flavored fibula and tibia present a worthy wait. Always remember persistence is preferable to bone saws. Hunger may be the best seasoning, so says Chef Cicero, and no less a mind than Pythagoras thought beans were too much like rancid flesh, and should be not be consumed therefore, "a fabis abstineto." Many believed he himself was full of it and should also be avoided.

Ever upward past to the knees and beyond. The patella, a large communion wafer, offers itself twice for your approval. Eager to please and rid itself of that hanger-on the half-moon meniscus, it avoids rest, ice, compression, and elevation. There seems to be no limit to his purpose, no drain of resources, and best yet no pain between courses. Remorse of course is a long dead horse. Riding onward and upward he makes haste else he not place.

Short work is made of lungs and liver, kidneys and other sweet meats, though he pauses at the heart wondering whether ketchup might be a curse, and horseradish a wise substitute since the lower intestine, fine sausages that they were, and the stomach so like haggis now gone gone gone are no longer part and parcel of the equation. So wotthell he surmises. No need for worries at this point. No worries at all. No worries. Prob noblem.

And so he continues. Now entirely unmotivated by hunger, if ever. Careful however to hold an arm in abeyance with a hand attached until he is confident and sure all will end well, that all will no longer be. Clearly there is no turning back, no retreat, there is nothing that can be done to restore what once was. He is disappearing into himself. A black hole swallowing itself and not just its neighbors for once. And so it goes and goes, the ears held back towards the end, when the widening mouth swallows the ravenous tongue and then itself with a self-satisfied smack.