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CARP WARS
by
CLARK L. WAGNER

THE CHICAGO
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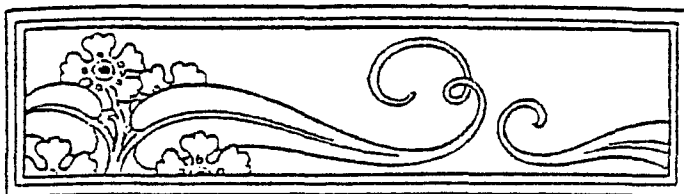
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Carp Wars

Carp may seem like an odd subject for a Literary Club paper. Articles on this subject, however, appear with regularity in the newspapers, particularly, for some reason, *The New York Times*. They appear amidst a wider variety of articles on fish and fishing generally. We hear increasingly, for example, that ocean-fish populations are crashing, both from overfishing and pollution. We know, also, that many native fresh-water species are imperiled, not only as a result of pollution and questionable resource-management practices but from the introduction of predators as well.

With respect to individual species, the sturgeon is a press favorite. It is not a pretty fish, but its luxury cargo appeals to the tastes of the elite consumer. The salmon is another favorite. It made its appearance in a big way when we began to be told by health authorities that we should eat more fish and less steak. Salmon is always on the menu in restaurants, prepared in a seemingly endless variety of ways. Other species also periodically dominate the news. Catfish and sharks are good examples. None of them, however—not the stur-

geon, the salmon, the catfish, or the shark—can consistently compete for press attention with carp.

Why is this? For those of you who don't fish, or know much about fish outside the kitchen or a restaurant, or who ignore the media attention lavished on this animal, a few words of introduction may be in order. Carp is a fresh-water fish, found today throughout the Northern Hemisphere and in South Africa, India, Australia and New Zealand in the Southern Hemisphere. Carp were being farmed for food in Asia as early as 400 B.C. They appeared at a later date in Europe, and were first introduced into this country, in the Hudson River, in the early 1830s. As we will learn later, they have established a stronghold in the Midwest.

The carp is a member of the minnow family. This comes as a surprise to many. When we think of a minnow, we think of a fish about the size of our little finger. Some carp, however, grow to five feet in length and weigh as much as eighty pounds or more.

Carp is also a generic term. If Gertrude Stein were to have thought about it, she might perhaps have observed that a carp is a carp is a carp. The knowledgeable, however, know otherwise. There is a bewildering number of varieties, including the grass carp (the largest in the family), the common (or king) carp, the wild carp, and the leather carp. The domestic goldfish is also a member of the carp family. If it somehow finds its way into the wild, it reverts to its natural carp-like coloration (a dull greenish-bronze) within a few generations and can reach a weight of about six pounds. Except for the leather carp, the adult fish have rather large scales, looking like tiny plates of armor.

This will need to suffice for an introduction to the carp. We will learn more about this creature as we go along. The

larger subject of this paper is carp wars: the battles that are being fought with respect to this fish throughout the United States, and increasingly in the Midwest.

The intentional introduction of carp into the Hudson River in the early 1800s may be traced to the popularity of carp as a game fish in England. Proponents hoped that carp would receive a similar reception here. They were wrong, and as one author puts it, "Carp have generally been reviled both as sport and as meat in the United States."¹ This generally prevailing attitude toward carp in this country is perhaps best summed up in the form of a recipe—fictitious, we must assume—for the preparation of carp for the table. This recipe is many generations old. It goes as follows: Catch a carp. Nail it to a pine board and garnish it with horse manure. Expose the carp to the hot sun by placing the board next to the railroad tracks. After five days, retrieve the pine board. Remove the nails and throw the carp away. Eat the pine board.

What accounts for the unflattering attitude reflected in this recipe? Here it helps to know something about the feeding habits of carp. According to one authority, carp feed "at the surface, on the bottom, or in midwater."² They feed on "plants, algae, snails, worms, insect larvae, shrimps, mussels and many other organisms."³ The hearty appetite of carp is confirmed by the wide range of baits used by carp fishermen: doughballs, worms, maggots, lunch meat, sweet corn, and potatoes.⁴ Carp, in other words, not only eat everywhere in their habitat, they also eat everything in sight. In the process they leave very little, if anything, on the table for competing species of fish.

It is not only the voracious appetite of carp that is a problem. It is also the *manner* in which they feed. "[The carp]

opens its mouth wide and sucks its food in like a vacuum cleaner, and often rummages through the bottom detritus, sending up clouds of silt and uprooting plants.”⁵ It is not, we might say, a good neighbor. As one scientist remarked, “Any fish that prefers clear water simply won’t stay there.”⁶

While carp were originally introduced into this country as a game fish (an experiment that, for the most part, has so far failed), carp have more recently been introduced in lakes and ponds to control aquatic weed problems. An example of this was reported in *The New York Times* on April 8, 2003. It seems that a fast-growing, non-native plant, known as hydrilla, is plaguing the state of Texas. Hydrilla has taken over entire lakes and streams. It not only interferes with water-skiing and boating, but has also throttled water intakes and shut down hydroelectric operations. It grows in such thick tangles that it has even been implicated in drownings. To combat this problem in Lake Austin, 1,600 grass carp were released into the lake in February 2003. According to the *Times*, this species of carp is “a plant-devouring fish that can reach 400 [!] pounds,” and is said “to be able to eat [its] weight in greenery every day.”

The Lake Austin carp-release program illustrates the carp wars phenomenon at its most intense. The president of a Texas fishermen’s association has complained bitterly that the grass carp is “a scourge on the state’s tradition of bass fishing.” He has been joined in his outrage by the Texas program director of an environmental group known as Clean Water Action. The grass carp, he says, is “an eating machine” and will destroy the lake. On the other side of this dispute is an association called the Friends of Lake Austin. Dismissing the economic importance of bass fishing to the area, one member of the association retorts, “Maybe [the

bass fishermen] bought a six pack of beer before they put [their] boat in." Clearly, she and other homeowners on Lake Austin (many homes go for a million or more dollars) want their lake back, and are prepared to do whatever it takes to eradicate the hydrilla.

The results of this hydrilla-eradication experiment in Austin Lake are so far unknown. A similar experiment, however, occurred twenty years ago, when 300,000 grass carp were released in Lake Conroe, also in Texas. Concerning this experiment, the program director of Clean Water Action describes the release as an "unmitigated disaster." "Lake Conroe," he says, "went from being a world-class bass fishery to a big mudhole." The spokeswoman for the Friends of Lake Austin disagrees. "The Lake Conroe people," she reports, "successfully conquered [the problem]. They say [their lake] is beautiful."

Notwithstanding disagreement regarding the results of the Lake Conroe project, the city of Austin has a stand-by permit to release as many as 6,400 additional grass carp in Lake Austin. The city intends to release them incrementally, calibrating the number of carp to the amount of hydrilla that needs to be devoured. In the meantime, plans are afoot to release 23,000 grass carp to combat hydrilla in the Rio Grande. These plans have the potential for significantly worsening our relations with Mexico.

The grass-carp conflict is not confined to the Lone Star State. It's closer to home. In fact, it's on our back doorstep. In a timely article in the *Chicago Tribune* on November 2, 2003, the headline read as follows: "Asian carp taking over state waters." The article states that Asian carp (that is, grass carp) were introduced in Arkansas catfish ponds twenty-five years ago to control aquatic vegetation, but escaped into the

Mississippi River in the 1990s during periodic floods. "The fish have been eating their way north since." Not only are these carp displacing native fish in the Illinois River, they have also disrupted recreational use of the river. Described as having the "troubling habit of leaping 10 feet out of the water when alarmed," one of these airborne carp hit a jet-skiing woman in the head and knocked her unconscious.⁷ Many boaters on the river now use folded lawn chairs to protect themselves against these flying torpedoes.

State authorities seem to concede that the carp war has been lost on the Illinois River. The defenses have now been withdrawn to a sixty-foot stretch of the Chicago Sanitary & Ship Canal near Romeoville, the canal that connects the Illinois River with Lake Michigan. An electric barrier was installed on that stretch of water in April 2002. So far it works for the big carp, but, according to one observer, the baby carp (the size of minnows) "don't seem to feel the electricity." Scientists are convinced that if the Asian carp reaches Lake Michigan, they will crowd out yellow perch, lake trout and coho salmon by destroying the environment in which these species thrive. According to the fisheries chief of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, "If [the Asian carp] get in there, basically the whole ballgame's over." Even Mayor Daley has been alerted to this threat, and in a July 14, 2002, article in the *Chicago Tribune* was reported to be prepared to ask Congress for \$700,000 to help strengthen the state's defenses.

The full dimension of the problem becomes apparent when the fertility of carp is taken into account. Carp spawn in shallow water in late spring and early summer. A female common carp carries many thousands of eggs, and the female grass carp is said to carry hundreds of thousands.

Depending on the species of carp, the eggs hatch in a five-to-twelve-day period, and the young carp can grow to five inches by late fall of their first year. By the spring of their third year of life, they reach sexual maturity and join their brethren in the relentless production of more carp. One is reminded of the Sorcerer's Apprentice scene in Walt Disney's film *Fantasia*. It's no wonder that Mayor Daley and others are alarmed.

So far, efforts to control the Asian carp in the Illinois River have centered on preventing their further migration. Other methods, however, are available. Some of them have been employed in a recent campaign against the northern pike in the state of California. The Golden State has long been a laboratory for all sorts of social, scientific, and governmental experiments. A new chapter is now being written on the nutty extremes to which some of these initiatives can be taken.

On May 6, 2002, *The New York Times* carried an article describing the state's five-year battle against the northern pike in Lake Davis. No one knows how this fish got into the lake. Since its appearance, however, it has threatened the lake's trout fishery, and there is concern that if it enters other, nearby waters, it could destroy California's dwindling salmon and steelhead populations. The northern pike is an aggressive fish, and state authorities have responded with aggressive tactics. In 1997, the Department of Fish and Game poisoned the entire 4,000-acre lake. Unfortunately, the poison destroyed the drinking-water supply of the nearby community of Portola. It also leaked from an outlet of the lake and killed every fish for five miles downstream, putting an entire county out of the fishing business for nearly a year. Some eighteen months later, residents sickened by the

poison fumes and businesses affected by the incident had been awarded nine million dollars in damages. By that time, the pike were somehow back in the lake.

Following this abortive and costly experiment, the state began looking for other creative ways to eradicate the pike. Big brown trout were brought to Lake Davis to eat the pike, but pike apparently were not on the trout's menu. Netting and electrocution were also tried, but neither was successful. The *Times* article then described the state's most recent tactic. Using 1,000 feet of detonation cord, the Department of Fish and Game bombed one acre of the lake. The bombing killed all pike within twenty-five feet of the detonation. These unfortunate pike, it is important to note, had been put in cages in the test area. All of the uncaged pike swam away, although the bombing did manage to kill two free-roaming rainbow trout. A senior biologist for the state summed up the bombing as follows: "It's just another tool to use to manage and maintain the pike."

Nobody is here to poke fun at California. The state has enough problems. Nor should we blame Gray Davis for the pike problem: the fact that the lake in question is named Lake Davis is as unfortunate as it is coincidental. One must wonder, however, whether this series of events could have taken place anywhere else on earth. State authorities are now thinking about draining the lake for a period of five years. There is even talk of another "treatment," as the poisoning is now euphemistically referred to. Perhaps, with the Terminator now in the governor's office, the state will enjoy greater success in eliminating this scourge.

Illinois, in any event, can learn from California's mistakes. Perhaps there is even a larger lesson to be learned: if the northern pike is such a rapacious fish, why not unleash

it against the Asian carp in the Illinois River? Before embracing this measure, we need to take into account the results of a study reported in the journal *Science*.⁸ This study, conducted by researchers from the University of Land in Sweden, found that where crucian carp swam in ponds with carp-eating pike, the carp were able to detect the presence of the pike and quickly adopt an extraordinary defensive measure. What they did was to begin bulking up by adding new muscle growth "until eventually they became hulking enough to make themselves difficult or impossible for a pike to fit in its mouth." The score so far? Carp **ONE**, pike **NOTHING**.⁹

Over a period of many years, perhaps thousands, it is probable that Mother Nature would satisfactorily resolve the hydrilla, the pike, and—yes—the carp problem, quietly restoring a proper balance to the environment. Where carp are concerned, however, it is clear that bass fishermen are not prepared to wait a thousand years. Man is an interventionist animal and will continue to seek a solution of his own making. At the same time, it is apparent that "shock and awe" are not working. Carp are too smart, too prolific, and too durable, and insofar as being regarded as a destructive species, there is something deeply amusing about man calling any other life form on the planet destructive. By now, it should be obvious that the carp problem is a problem that we are going to have *to fish*—and *to eat*—our way out of.

Most fishermen in this country do not consider carp a game fish—that is, a fish worthy of their sporting effort. This is certainly true of trout fishermen, whose attitude regarding their sport is marked by a Rolex-inspired fascination with tackle and equipment, by minute observations

pertaining to insect hatchings on the water's surface, and by their understandable enjoyment of the mountain scenery amidst which their pursuits are frequently carried out. It is true, also, and perhaps with more justification, of those who angle for the scrappiest of all fresh-water fish—the small-mouth bass. At the same time, there are contrarians who vehemently regard carp as worthy prey.

If you wish to take the time, you will find a variety of websites devoted to carp fishing, including the following: Belgian Carp Magazine, Canadian Carp Club, Carp Angling in the UK, Carp Fishing in Portugal, Carp Mania (devoted to carp fishing in Holland and France), Carpaholic, and the Northern Ireland Carp Anglers Society. Before you dismiss these listings as partly a reflection of the fading vigor of what some refer to as Old Europe, consider a case closer to home. In an angry letter appearing in the *Chicago Tribune* of July 2, 2003, the writer attacks the practice of bow-and-arrow fishing for carp that had been reported in an earlier *Tribune* article. He comments first on the unsportsmanlike aspects of this practice—referring to it as shooting fish in a barrel, which is an accurate description of the situation when carp densely congregate in shallow water during the spawning season. The writer then defends carp as a game fish, stating that “American anglers are coming to realize that carp are a great sport fish and the number of hardcore, serious carp anglers is growing rapidly.” The author of this letter is the vice president of the Carp Anglers Group, in Oak Park.

It must be conceded that hooking a carp is akin to hooking a discarded car tire. This was best described in a short story by Graham Parker entitled “Carp Fishing on Valium,” in which the author relates that hooking a carp is like hooking something “that runs like a tank on the bottom.”¹⁰ Carp

are strong, muscular fish, and they don't give up easily. A twenty-pound carp, even on heavy tackle, will stay out ten or twenty minutes, making you think you're on the losing end of a rope-pull contest.

One of the principal objections to carp as a sport fish is that they don't break the water's surface in frenzied attempts to throw the hook—a delight to most sport fishermen, who are eager to get a look at their quarry before bringing it into the boat. The answer to this objection is straightforward: if you want fish that dance, stay away from carp, but if you want fish that fight valiantly all the way to the boat or the shore, the carp is your adversary. Indeed, the virtues of carp were extolled in another *New York Times* article, in which the author, a sometime trout fisherman, narrates his experience fishing for carp with a fly-rod in the waters of northern Lake Michigan. He describes carp as “the most intelligent and finicky of all freshwater game fish.”

As for carp as a table fish, we turn to no less an authority than *Gourmet* magazine. Their May 2002 article on the subject, entitled “Carp Diem,” starts as follows: “The best way to discover the Sundgau, the southernmost corner of Alsace and a beautiful region of half-timbered houses, pine forests, and small, tidy farms, is to spend some time with the locals over a platter of fried carp.” The author then describes the origins of this local specialty in the fourteenth century, and relates how the Sundgauers annually select a Miss Fried Carp and have also established a 20-mile relay of restaurants and fishponds called Routes de la Carpe Frite. The author even recommends that a platter of fried carp be accompanied by a “tart Pinot Blanc,” aptly named Carpe d'Or.

Another, though somewhat dissimilar, article on carp as food appeared in a December 25, 2001, article in—you

guessed it—*The New York Times*. The article describes how the Czech Republic has built a profitable industry around carp farming. Traditionally favored as a festive Christmas Eve dish, carp are breaded, fried “and served with potato salad and a soup made from the fish’s head and innards.” The manager of one of the firms in this carp industry reported that business had been strong and prices “very good and very stable,” in part attributable to the prevalence of mad-cow disease.

Carp can be prepared for eating in a variety of ways. In Mark Bittman’s book *Fish: The Complete Guide to Buying and Cooking*, you can find recipes for braised carp, gefilte fish, fillet of carp with smothered onions, steamed carp, poached carp, and so on.¹¹ Chinese cuisine, incidentally, is heavy on carp dishes, and if you don’t want to test the waters at home, a visit to Chinatown may be in order. Where would such a visit fit within the spectrum of carp wars being fought throughout this country? The answer is simple: if you can’t beat ’em, eat ’em.

While despised as a trash fish in many quarters, carp not only survive in legend and lore, but also sometimes turn up as hero fish in modern times. Six months ago my wife and I spent an afternoon in Bath, England, revisiting the city and its famous spa. On the day in question, we spent several hours at the great bath from which the city takes its name. Constructed by the Romans near the end of the first century A.D., the bath and temple complex fell into ruin during Saxon times and was lost to history for more than a thousand years, until being rediscovered in 1790. Originally covered by the Romans with a wooden roof (and later a large barrel vault), the pool water was clean and clear. Today, without a roof-covering of any kind, the sun combines with

the warm spring water entering the bath to produce conditions favorable to an algae growth that has caused the water to become greenish and cloudy.

Our guide that day said that fish had been introduced in the pool in the 1980s to combat the algae and restore the water to its pristine condition. It was obvious to me that only one fish could answer that call, and our guide confirmed that I was correct in my supposition. The temperature of the water entering the pool from the underground thermal spring is 116 degrees Fahrenheit. We learned from our guide that while the carp introduced in the pool were able to survive this water temperature, they were understandably languid and did not achieve the level of performance expected of them. The carp also broke frequently and unexpectedly to the surface, undoubtedly seeking relief from the hot water but also in the process scaring the tourists who flock to this historic site. After six months the carp were removed—and hopefully returned to a more congenial environment.

One of the more remarkable carp stories of all time appeared in *The New York Times* on March 15, 2003. A twenty-pound carp was about to be slaughtered in the New Square Fish Market in New Square, New York. Two men were present—Mr. Rosen, the owner of the business, and Mr. Niveló, an Hispanic who had worked at the shop for seven years. As Mr. Niveló was about to club the carp with a rubber mallet, it began “speaking in Hebrew, shouting apocalyptic warnings.” Mr. Rosen was summoned, and “when he approached the fish he heard it utter warnings and commands in Hebrew.” “Mr. Rosen panicked and tried to kill the fish with a machete-size knife, but the fish bucked so wildly that Mr. Rosen wound up cutting his own thumb and was taken to

the hospital by ambulance." The story soon spread around the world and was quickly taken up by the Jewish press. Mr. Rosen received hundreds of telephone calls—from Brooklyn, Miami, Israel, London, and elsewhere. "They all want to hear about the talking fish," he said. One supplier of gefilte fish even toyed with the idea of adopting the slogan "Our fish speaks for itself."

What credence can we give this story? Some called it a hoax, pointing out that it occurred on the eve of Purim, a Jewish festival marked by merriment and pranks. Others were more cautious. One said, "It is very rare that God reminds people he exists in this modern world. But when he does, you cannot ignore it." Who is to be the judge? If a burning bush can speak in the Old Testament and a loaf of bread replicate itself a thousand-fold in the New, why cannot a lowly carp issue apocalyptic warnings at the beginning of a new millennium?

The powers of this remarkable fish are not confined to ecclesiastical realms. The carp inhabits the artistic sphere as well. One of Art Institute of Chicago's recent acquisitions is a stunning vase (ca. 1889) executed by the nineteenth-century English glass-making firm Thomas Webb and Sons. The thick, clear-glass walls of the vase are deeply carved to depict a scene of several carp swimming joyfully amidst swirling waters.¹² The inspiration for this theme comes from images in Japanese woodblock prints and textiles that were imported into the West in the late nineteenth century.

The recent "Manet and the Sea" exhibition at the Art Institute provides another such example. The first work encountered in the exhibition was a Manet oil painting, entitled *Still Life with Fish*. It was executed in 1864 and is part of the permanent collection of the museum. Appearing on the

canvas, laid out on a white tablecloth, are a large copper pot, a lemon and a knife, oysters, a black eel, a reddish, trumpet-mouthed fish of indeterminate species, and a larger fish possessing a distinctly carp-like appearance. Standing before this painting, I said to my wife, "That's a carp." She abruptly turned her head toward me with a look that was mixed with disbelief and annoyance. I knew what she was thinking: "Here we are at the Manet exhibit and the first words out of his mouth are that the fish in the picture is a carp." "It's a carp," I repeated. "You can tell by the barbels hanging from its mouth and the size and shape of the scales."¹³

Several days after visiting the exhibition, I went to the local library to find an image of this painting in order to confirm my first-hand observations regarding the identity of the fish in question. I soon found a book entitled *The Art Institute of Chicago: 100 Masterpieces* that was published in 1978.¹⁴ A plate containing the painting was included in the book. Much to my surprise—and delight—the painting was identified not by the title *Still Life with Fish*, but, rather, by the title *Still Life with Carp*.

How can we account for this title change? In January I visited the Ryerson Art Library to see what more I could learn about this painting. It had been acquired by the Art Institute in 1942. Its present title in the collection is *Still Life with Fish*. As late as 1987, however, it continued to be identified by the title *Still Life with Carp*.¹⁵ When—and why—the title was changed I was not able to learn, but intend to pursue these questions at a later date. My wife, more properly focused in these matters than I, remains indifferent to the fact that the large fish in this Manet masterpiece is a carp.¹⁶

Another recent tribute to this redoubtable fish occurred three months ago on national television. On November 4,

at approximately 11:50 a.m., the following appeared on the CNN tape running across the bottom portion of the television screen: "Belgian ambulance driver revives spotted Japanese carp with mouth-to-mouth resuscitation." This message was repeated at least once, and possibly several more times, until it was no longer deemed breaking news.

Once upon a time, many years ago, some 405 million to be exact, when our planet's surface was mostly water, a breathtaking step in evolutionary history took place—the first invasion of land by aquatic vertebrates. Many of us have forgotten that our ancestors were fishes. Today scientists debate whether the coelacanth or the lungfish was man's closest ancestor. New analyses of blood proteins and ear structures of present-day members of both species seem to favor the coelacanth. Some scientists, however, see greater affinities between the tetrapod line and such fishes as the tuna, the herring, and—holy mackerel!—the carp.¹⁷

Those of you who have never come face to face with a carp—to say nothing of having heard one speak Hebrew—may see this ancestral fish at the Chicago Botanic Gardens. On a warm summer's day, you will find ten- and fifteen-pounders suspended one or two feet beneath the surface, in open water or at the edge of the water-lily beds, often in pairs but frequently in greater numbers (for they seem to be a communal animal). Virtually motionless if not disturbed—except for softly fanning the water with their tails—they look at first sight like submerged logs.

As you view this ancient fish, you will quickly discern that they are aware of your presence—whether by sight or by some other sense, it is difficult to tell. What they are thinking, if they think at all, we cannot know. Perhaps they feel

the presence of danger, even hostility, and if they could speak to us, perhaps they would speak pleadingly in the language of the poet. The transposition here may be rough, but if you are able to cross this threshold, perhaps you will agree that the following verse from the *Rubáiyát* is not inappropriate:

For I remember stopping by the way
 To watch a Potter thumping his wet Clay;
 And with its all-obliterated Tongue
 It murmured—"Gently, Brother, gently, pray!"

Those on the frontlines of the carp wars are admonished to recognize the formidable challenges they face in combat with this ancient creature. The species is many hundreds of millions of years old, our own troubled span of existence much shorter. Carp have survived meteor impacts, geological upheavals, and dramatic climate changes; more recently, poisoning, dynamiting, netting, and attempts at electrocution; and in this country particularly, a bad press. As the war against carp goes forward, those in the vanguard need to be mindful that in this, as in most human endeavors, if you want to make God laugh, tell him what your plans are.

Notes

1. Jon R. Luoma, "Anglers' Gain Is Loss for Lakes and Streams," in *The Science Times Book of Fish*, ed. Nicholas Wade (New York: The Lyons Press, 1997), 92.

2. *Angler's Guide to Fish*, ed. Ian Wood (London: Dorling Kindersley Limited, 1997), 18.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid.

6. Luoma, 92.

7. This story was picked up by *Newsweek* magazine and reported (on page 10) in its January 12, 2004 issue. The woman in question was quoted as saying "I got carped."

8. Carol Kaesuk Yoon, "A Fish That Can Alter Its Body Size at Will," in *The Science Times Book of Fish*, 118.

9. Pike were recently released in a Tuscan lake to combat a Louisiana crawfish that had been imported there for farming in 1990. Since arriving, according to a May 19, 2003, *New York Times* article, these "killer crawfish" have terrorized the lake and the surrounding Italian countryside. "I've never seen anything like it," one official is quoted as saying. "They eat the vegetation. They eat everything." Another says, "They even eat the weakest among them." The Louisiana crawfish have their supporters. One fisherman reports, "They are exquisite with spaghetti." So far, the results of this experiment are unknown. The likelihood is that the crawfish will eat their way through the entire pike population.

10. Graham Parker, "Carp Fishing on Valium," in *Carp Fishing on Valium* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 174.

11. Mark Bittman, *Fish: The Complete Guide to Buying and Cooking* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1994), 68-72. Mark Bittman's articles on cooking may occasionally be found in *The New York Times*.

12. All species of carp are not so graceful in appearance. See the *Chicago Tribune* article of June 11, 2003, headlined "Officials fear carp not alone," for a photograph of a 38-pound "Asian big-head carp" pulled out of the pond at Pershing Road and Damen

Notes

Avenue in Chicago. The creature appears to be of mythological origin—the head of a pit bull attached to the body of a fish. This story was picked up by *The New York Times* the same day and reported in its National Briefing column. It was the only story reported for the Midwest that day.

13. Most carp have four barbels, two on each side of the upper jaw. These barbels are packed with taste and touch cells, and act like external tongues with which the fish can examine potential food items. *Angler's Guide to Fish*, 15. Grass carp do not have barbels, nor do goldfish.

14. *The Art Institute of Chicago: 100 Masterpieces*, ed. Janice J. Feldstein (The Art Institute of Chicago, 1978), 85.

15. See *French Salon Artists: 1800-1900* (New York: The Art Institute of Chicago and Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1987). The earliest year during which the painting was styled *Still Life with Carp* that I was able to discover is 1961. *The Art Institute of Chicago: Painting* (The Art Institute of Chicago, 1961). In 1993, the painting was identified in the collection as *Fish (Still Life)*. *The Art Institute of Chicago: The Essential Guide* (The Art Institute of Chicago, 1993), 148.

16. One is often surprised at what little thing that we might take note of will sometimes lead us to a closer inspection of a painting and result in an increase in our appreciation for the painting in question and for the work of the artist generally. The carp in this Manet still life is a case in point, and in respect of my unfolding appreciation of this work I refer to the illuminating description of the painting that I found at the Ryerson Library in pursuit of the question at hand. The description characterized *Still Life with Carp* as an exercise in "bravura brushwork," and continues, in part, as follows: "Manet chose a large, horizontal canvas and placed the great dominating carp at dead center. . . . The oysters—some shucked, others not—appear almost to shriek in the corner of the painting, and both the red fish and the little eel seem desperate to escape their fate. . . . As always, Manet has managed to conjoin the vulgar and the refined by placing his

Notes

kitchen still life on a white tablecloth appropriate for the final meal, when it ought properly to be on a plain, wood kitchen table." *French Salon Artists: 1800-1900*, 55.

17. Malcolm W. Browne, "Biologists Debate Man's Fishy Ancestors," in *The Science Times Book of Fish*, 5.

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