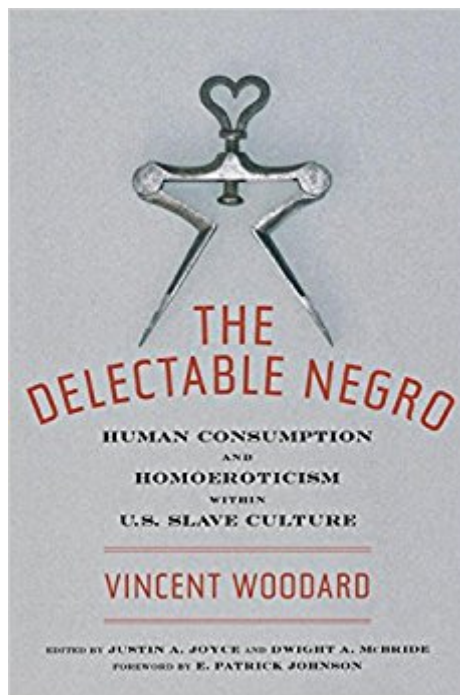


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# The Delectable Negro: Human Consumption And Homoeroticism Within US Slave Culture (Sexual Cultures)



## Synopsis

Winner of the 2015 LGBT Studies Award presented by the Lambda Literary Foundation Scholars of US and transatlantic slavery have largely ignored or dismissed accusations that Black Americans were cannibalized. Vincent Woodard takes the enslaved person's claims of human consumption seriously, focusing on both the literal starvation of the slave and the tropes of cannibalism on the part of the slaveholder, and further draws attention to the ways in which Blacks experienced their consumption as a fundamentally homoerotic occurrence. *The Delectable Negro* explores these connections between homoeroticism, cannibalism, and cultures of consumption in the context of American literature and US slave culture. Utilizing many staples of African American literature and culture, such as the slave narratives of Olaudah Equiano, Harriet Jacobs, and Frederick Douglass, as well as other less circulated materials like James L. Smith's slave narrative, runaway slave advertisements, and numerous articles from Black newspapers published in the nineteenth century, Woodard traces the racial assumptions, political aspirations, gender codes, and philosophical frameworks that dictated both European and white American arousal towards Black males and hunger for Black male flesh. Woodard uses these texts to unpack how slaves struggled not only against social consumption, but also against endemic mechanisms of starvation and hunger designed to break them. He concludes with an examination of the controversial chain gang oral sex scene in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, suggesting that even at the end of the twentieth and beginning of the twenty-first century, we are still at a loss for language with which to describe Black male hunger within a plantation culture of consumption.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"It should be noted here that Woodard died before this book was published; it is a shame that he could not see his daring work enter debate. Praise must go to Joyce and McBride, moreover, for their careful and attentive editorial work that made this publication of this text possible. . . .

Woodard's career would surely have been even bolder after this book, but this text's interruption into critical theory alone is itself worth celebrating."-American Studies

"We have all read about the hunger of slaves whose masters sought to starve them into submission. But *The Delectable Negro* asks of these slaves: 'How does it feel to be an edible, consumed object?' Inverting the trope of slave hunger, Vincent Woodard provocatively suggests that the slaveholder is a parasite who feeds off the slave's body in acts that range from cannibalistic to sexual modes of consumption, especially the homoerotic. In an even greater provocation, however, Woodard argues that within the black community, hunger is transformed into a regenerative space from which the search for home and communal belonging may be initiated. A bold and brilliant book."-Carla L. Peterson, author of *Black Gotham: A Family History of African Americans in Nineteenth-Century New York City*

*The Delectable Negro* is a brilliant, fearless, and deeply political book.

•Early American Literature

With unflinching clarity, *The Delectable Negro* exposes and examines the pervasive cultural fantasies that have rendered the enslaved black body into a consumable object from the eighteenth century to the present. [ ] [I]ts powerful insights will continue to generate new lines of important inquiry for years to come.

•American Historical Review

*The Delectable Negro* uncovers a compelling set of themes in the scholarship on U.S. slave culture: white cannibalism as a significant trope for white depletion of, and desire for, the laboring and eroticized black male body. In a stunning series of arguments, Woodard forces us to reconsider the historical out-of-hand rejection of black African fear (and, not rarely, claims) of white cannibalism, showing how remarkably wide-reaching was the sense that slavery satisfied some sadomasochistic instinct among the slave-owning class.

•Maurice O. Wallace, author of *Constructing the Black Masculine*

Vincent Woodard (1971–2008) was Assistant Professor of English at the University of Colorado-Boulder. He received his PhD in English from the University of Texas, Austin in 2002. Dwight A. McBride is Daniel Hale Williams Professor of African American Studies, English, & Performance Studies at Northwestern University where he also serves as Dean of The Graduate School and Associate Provost for Graduate Education. He is the author of several groundbreaking

works in African American Studies, including Impossible Witnesses and Why I Hate Abercrombie and Fitch. Justin A. Joyce is Postdoctoral Fellow at Northwestern University. He holds a PhD from the University of Illinois at Chicago and is coeditor of A Melvin Dixon Critical Reader.

The terrible American story.

Disturbing facts in this book. Arrived in beautiful condition. I bought it for my husband to add to his book collection on our African American culture and history! It's a very disturbing book to read but teaching us a lot!

This book forces one to investigate some thoughts that was previously unspeakable and definitely not written about the human consumption and homoeroticism during U.S. Slave culture.

I heard a lecture by a PH.D Scientist and he made references from this book. The lecture was for powerful!!!

Incredible book. I am not a sociologist or anything, I just picked this up. So I find it heady but VERY worthwhile to read. I'm learning so so much and I appreciate all the research and analysis that went into it.

Could not follow the author's writing.

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