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Reading response to Mary Roach

In “A Head is a Terrible Thing to Waste: Practicing Surgery on The Dead” the author, Mary Roach, gives us a behind the scenes look at the process of practicing surgery on the dead. Roach gives us an in depth look at the training of plastic surgeons and some of the necessary comping mechanism needed to get through some of the gruesome task they will encounter. One mechanism in particular that caught my attention was objectification. Objectification is defined as the act of treating a person or animal as an object. Which is used widely among surgeons to help depersonalize the human that they are about to cut up. However surgeons are not the only people to use this coping mechanism, most of us use objectification in our daily lives and do not even think about it.

Most people that eat meat use objectification. It helps us as people separate are self’s from the animal that is on are our plate. Roach puts it well when she writes “It’s the Reason most of us prefer a pork chop to a slice of whole suckling pig. It’s the reason we say ‘pork’ and ‘beef’ instead of ‘pig’ and ‘cow’” (3). The words and pork and beef and a very good example of how we use objectification in our daily lives, similarly to how surgeons use it to depersonalize human they have to do surgery on. Meat eating requires a set of illusions, not as drastic as those needed by surgeons, but similar in the fact that they are meant to steer us away from the fact that what we are eating use to be a living animal. No one goes to breakfast and says I want some baby chickens scrambled with some pig fat and a stack of pancakes. Instead we order scrambled eggs, bacon and a stack of pancakes