

GLUTTONS AND GOURMANDS: BRITISH ROMANTICISM AND THE
AESTHETICS OF GASTRONOMY

By

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>Blackwood's Magazine</i>	<i>BM</i>
<i>Byron's Letters and Journals</i>	<i>BLJ</i>
<i>Letters of John Keats</i>	<i>LJK</i>
<i>London Magazine</i>	<i>LM</i>
<i>Romantics Reviewed</i>	<i>RR</i>

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: COMMITTEES OF TASTE

Man is an epicure just as he is an artist, a scholar, a poet. The palate, my dear fellow, is as delicate and susceptible of training as the eye or ear, and equally deserving of respect. To be without a sense of taste is to be deficient in an exquisite faculty, that of appreciating the quality of comestibles, just as a person may lack the faculty of appreciating the quality of a book or a work of art.

—Maupassant, “Madame Husson’s Rose King”

Great things were now to be achieved at table
With massy plate for armour, knives and forks
For weapons; but what Muse since Homer’s able
(His feasts are not the worst part of his works)
To draw up in array a single day-bill
Of modern dinners, where more mystery lurks
In soups or sauces or a sole ragout
Than witches, bitches, or physicians brew?

—Byron, *Don Juan* XV, 62

When Byron’s Don Juan arrives in England, he finds himself in the center of fashionable Regency life. At the country seat of Lord Henry and Lady Adeline

Amundeville, Byron describes, among other things, an elaborate dinner that lives up to the proportions established by the epic tradition. But instead of a feast for warriors, or a divine meal attended alike by humans and angels, the dinner of *Don Juan* remains in the contemporary world of fashion. Byron focuses on the food, drawing from a bill of fare from Louis Eustache Ude's *The French Cook* (1813). Although he asserts that "mystery lurks" in modern culinary concoctions, Byron's invocation of Ude's book points toward the flood of culinary information spread during the early-nineteenth century. Toward the close of the scene, Byron remarks on the period's growing culinary science: "Who would suppose from Adam's simple ration / That cookery could have called forth such resources / As form a science and nomenclature / From out the commonest demands of nature?" Eating signals both our closest connection to material nature, and through the science of cookery, our distance from it. During this period in England, writers sought to navigate this space by crafting the "nomenclature" of good eating, or gastronomy. In the process, these writers also engaged with questions fundamental to Romanticism: among others, the meaning of aesthetic taste and its relationship to sensation, the role of public discourse in shaping class identity, and the socio-political functions of bodies.

Byron's dinner scene engages with all of these matters. The various items that Byron "can't withstand or understand," are nonetheless "swallowed with much zest upon the whole." And in the process of integrating them into his poem, the food items become aesthetic objects for the reader to consume "with zest." The poem itself becomes a way for Byron to "dress society / And stuff with sage that very verdant goose" (93).¹ Byron lodges his method in culinary terms, explaining that in order to "get this gourmand stanza through," he must "crowd all into one grand mess / Or mass." The poem is at once meal

and material object, brought together by the aural similarity of “mess” and “mass,” and the ambiguity of each—“mess” refers both to the poem’s jumbled structure and its analogy to a meal, while “mass” implies the material weight of Byron’s gustatory ruminations and sardonically connects his poem, widely received as unholy and amoral, with religious devotion. Similarly, he draws the connection between aesthetic taste and bodily consumption with a bilingual pun: “... all that art refines / From nature for the service of the *gout*— / Taste or the gout, pronounce it as inclines / Your stomach.”² The slippery distinction between the English “gout” and French “*gout*,” emblemizes the difficulty of establishing a unified food discourse, which involves nutritive questions as much as aesthetic ones. Eating engages aesthetically and intellectually, but it ultimately rests in the body. While Byron’s scene portrays only the upper class world of Regency life, food helped to shape class relations at all levels. Like the “tumult of fish, flesh and fowl” placed on the table, the people too “were placed according to their roll, / But various as the various meats displayed.” Byron overlays the class relations onto the place settings—people and food all make up the “tumult.” And amidst this discord, the bodies and the foods all signify in multiple ways. Byron says that “The mind is lost in mighty contemplation / Of intellect expended on two courses,” but just as much goes into his picture of society, his concoction of “verdant goose.” Byron’s concern for the multiple ways in which food culture signifies (and at times confounds the intellect) gestures toward the polysemous nature of gastronomical discourse. The development of this discourse proceeds through committee—the common mission of vying for control of gastronomy ensures that no single voice emerges but from the confluence of others.

The notion of a “committee of taste” comes from the work of William Kitchiner, the most prominent practitioner of the middle-class appropriation of good eating on which this dissertation focuses. His *Apicius Redivivus; or, The Cook’s Oracle* (1817) offered hundreds of recipes, each of which had been sampled and “eaten with unanimous applause by a Committee of Taste, composed of some of the most illustrious Gastronomists of this luxurious Metropolis” (1822 xiii).³ Kitchiner’s project of establishing a middle-class form of gourmandism thus functions as the cultural and textual hub of this dissertation. His publication of *The Cook’s Oracle* in 1817 and his death ten years later serve as symbolic bookends to my account of the Romantic treatment of gustatory aesthetics. Other crucial moments of food culture from outside this brief timeline (the bread crisis of 1795, Malthus’s theory of population, the silver fork novelists’ deployment of gastronomy, which I read as a fundamental shift away from earlier modes) contribute to my account of Romantic gastronomy, but Kitchiner’s career symbolizes the culmination of these moments and their effects, and his death corresponds with a movement to a different kind of gustatory aesthetic.

This conversation also looks further back, particularly to crucial eighteenth-century philosophical debates. From the paradox of the standard of taste to the divide between Cartesian dualism and empiricism, matters of eating raise questions about the relationship between human beings and the material world. David Hume insists that one can never affix a true standard of taste because of individual preferences shaped by the body (“the different humours of particular men”) and by social factors (“the particular manners and opinions of our age and country” [149]). Kant likewise seeks to separate individual from social, body from mind. He divides taste into “the taste of sense” and the

“taste of reflection.” The former refers to individual, private judgments, while the latter implies a more studied, social judgment. Bourdieu reads this separation as the division “between facile pleasure, pleasure reduced to a pleasure of the senses, and pure pleasure, pleasure purified of pleasure, which is predisposed to become a symbol of moral excellence and a measure of the capacity for sublimation which defines the human man” (6). Even if empiricists affirm that all knowledge comes from sensory experience, they nonetheless distinguish between bodily and aesthetic consumption. This tendency of eighteenth-century aesthetics, begins to reverse in Romantic gastronomy specifically, and aesthetics generally.

In her work, *Taste: A Literary History*, Denise Gigante shows how the nascent discourse of gastronomy fits into the longer history of aesthetic philosophy and its articulations in literature from Milton to the Romantics. The French father of gastronomy, Alexandre Balthazar Laurent Grimod de la Reynière, with his *Almanach des gourmands* (1803-1812), established the principles of good eating, which English followers swiftly adopted. Grimod is the disinterested man of taste of eighteenth-century aesthetics, but with a new focus on divining the secrets of culinary art. The study of gustatory pleasure relies on empirical knowledge while also affirming the pleasures of the soul. This shift signals the larger movement in nineteenth-century consumer culture, of which poetry and food were both objects. Gigante argues that Romantic responses to this cultural shift range from “Wordsworth’s transcendently feeding (and digesting) mind” (2) to Charles Lamb’s “masochistic countervision of low-urban taste” (18), and Byron’s critique of capitalism through the figures of cannibalism and vampirism. This literary and intellectual history maps the many articulations of Romantic taste, all of which emerge

from the culture of gastronomy. My dissertation relies on this insight about the relationship between gustatory and aesthetic taste as the foundation for how Romantic writers articulate a middle-class identity through food culture. I diverge from Gigante's model of literary history, and show how the construction of gastronomical discourse occurs largely through the medium of the periodicals, the form best suited to the process of gustatory definition by committee.

This focus on periodical culture (crucial to middle-class identity in the period) also informs my reading of gastronomy's influence on the class positions from which Romantic writers articulate their aesthetic ideologies. Following Dror Wahrman's focus on "*the degree of freedom which in fact exists in the space between social reality and its representation*" (6), my sense of class relations emerges out of the textual *representations* of class, particularly those representations made possible by gastronomy.⁴ Food behaviors constitute the codes and norms that establish a particular class identity. These behaviors, however, require the supplementary force of representation to justify their constitutive power, which writers like Kitchiner and those in the foundational Romantic periodicals provide. Here I am also indebted to Timothy Morton's *Shelley and the Revolution in Taste*, which shows how vegetarianism shapes Shelley's poetics, and more broadly how the discourse of diet constitutes an important part of political radicalism. My work focuses on diet in its relation to middle class identity, and I argue that these mainstream formulations of food aesthetics and food politics made possible the radical stances that Morton has illuminated.

I do not obviate social reality, but rely on a broad set of assumptions from which I analyze the representations of those social conditions. Norbert Elias argues that a large

shift in the manners of Western society corresponds to the movement of social organization that took place contemporaneously. Rather than a mere correlation, Elias suggests that manners evolve and change in order to perform a needed social function. Behaviors at the table, or a specific ways of speaking, become fundamental to the development of a ruling, courtly class, and subsequently, to the formation of a bourgeois intellectual or professional class in opposition to it. Over time, the lower class begins to assume some of the behaviors that the upper classes perform to distinguish themselves from the lower. In response to the pressure from below, the upper classes adopt new behaviors and codes that will distinguish them further from the (now more refined, in the terms of earlier, upper-class civility) lower classes. Eventually, all classes of society reach a point at which they obfuscate this “civilizing process,” and see it as a naturalized, existent presence. Following from this general structure, I examine how the discourse of gastronomy works with and against this paradigm.

Pierre Bourdieu’s extension of Elias’s work brings the issue of representation closer to the fore. For Bourdieu, taste is a kind of habitus, insofar as judgments of it stake claims to its naturalness.⁵ The struggle to establish “cultural capital” occurs through definitions of good taste:

Thus, nothing more rigorously distinguishes the different classes than the disposition objectively demanded by the legitimate consumption of legitimate works, the aptitude for taking a specifically aesthetic point of view on objects already constituted aesthetically—and therefore put forward for the admiration of those who have learned to recognize signs of the admirable—and the even rarer capacity to constitute aesthetically objects that are ordinary or even ‘common’ (because they are appropriated, aesthetically or otherwise, by the ‘common people’) or to apply the principles of a ‘pure’ aesthetic in the most everyday choices of everyday life, in cooking, dress or decoration, for example (40).

The display of one's taste was not new in Romantic England, but the application of it to "everyday choices of everyday life" was. The "barbarous reintegration of aesthetic consumption into the world of ordinary consumption" occurs strikingly in the realm of cuisine (6). Because eating is the most predominant physical art, it necessitates a reevaluation of the status of aesthetic engagement.⁶ Writers take seriously the notion that eating can afford intellectual pleasure akin to reading poetry, which raises the question of what effect a poem has on our senses. Keats claims that the public "want... a sensation of some sort," the ambiguity of which points to the irresolvable nature of such sensation.⁷ Gastronomy attempts to codify public sensation in matters of eating. Other writers, in turn, apply this thinking to matters of art and literature. Both moves involve the recognition that gustatory and literary taste form in response to, while also consolidating, the social contexts in which they exist.⁸

To bridge gastronomy and literature I follow what Jon Klancher calls "the social text." The periodical press in particular helps to shape audiences by "evolving readers' interpretive frameworks and shaping their ideological awareness" (4), while at the same time "Audiences... define themselves according to the interpretive mode they possess and the interpretive strategies through which that mode somehow allows them to 'read' other audiences" (46). One aligns oneself with a particular interpretive mode in order to join an audience, which then allows one to reproduce interpretations of the "social text," which in turn resubstantiate that audience's interpretive strategies. This cyclical process produces "diverging collective interpreters whose 'readings' of the social and intellectual world opened unbridgeable cultural conflicts" (5). Audience formation also revolves around and contributes to class formation: "Writers produced class awareness while they

shaped audiences, and thus they negotiated between these classifications a complex topography: that of the social text” (8). Gastronomers claim that an understanding of food is a necessary part of understanding the social text. For this reason, food discourse helps to define the lines between audiences in different periodicals. Food is subject to interpretive modes, but also produces its own strategies for reading. Many of my analyses rely on the periodical press, since it plays such a fundamental role in Romantic discourse.⁹ In Chapter II, I show how the different treatments of gastronomy in *Blackwood’s Magazine* and the *London Magazine* reflect, while also constituting, the different ideologies that shape the magazines and their audiences. Similarly, my account of Daniel Lambert (the fattest man in the world—weighing 739 pounds at his death—in 1809) in Chapter III relies on his presence in different periodicals. Debates about Malthus’s theory of population were carried out in the periodicals, and I also show how De Quincey’s Opium-Eater (originally from the *London*, and later invoked and spoken for in *Blackwood’s*) turns the Malthusian question of hunger into an aesthetic question. In Chapter V, reviews of Keats in the periodical press show the extent to which judgments of taste regarding the “Cockney School” often invoke the literal register of taste to display the “vulgarity” of such poetry. In my final chapter, the periodical responses to the silver fork novel play a significant part in the development of that genre’s reputation, a crucial part of which revolves around the function of food and taste.

As Byron’s mystery of modern dinners implies, the realm of eating and its socio-cultural significations reached a height of relevance during the Romantic period. The “commonest demands of nature” belie the broad cultural determinants that combine to form the ideological “science and nomenclature” of gastronomy. Food discourse

necessarily develops at the level of social experience, and serves to substantiate the dominant class's control over the definitions of taste, literary and gustatory. Yet during the Romantic period, middle-class gourmandism attempts to change the ways in which food signifies, particularly as it corresponds to middle-class notions of aesthetics. These competing models of how food culture ought to function, engage in combat over and through the contested realm of print culture, which also represents the medium necessary for the shaping and reinforcing of aesthetic principles. While gastronomy begins in the kitchen, the aesthetic debates it occasions play out in the arena of textual production. The committees of taste which constitute Romantic gastronomy form out of the ideological class struggle that in turn defines how poets and writers shape literary culture.¹⁰

Beyond Basins of Gruel: Genres of Gastronomy

Jane Austen's *Emma* (1815) narrates the tension between competing discourses of eating, which characterizes the process of gastronomy's evolution during the Romantic period. Emma's father, Mr. Woodhouse, is notorious for his taste for "a small basin of thin gruel," which he deems the only dish he can, "with thorough self-approbation," recommend to his guests. This dilemma puts his feelings "in sad warfare," because while "he loved to have the cloth laid... his conviction of suppers being very unwholesome made him rather sorry to see any thing put on it." For Mr. Woodhouse, the presence of food negates the social and aesthetic value of the table. Emma on the other hand, performs "all the honours of the meal... recommend[ing] the minced chicken and scalloped oysters with an urgency which she knew would be acceptable to the early hours and civil scruples of their guests" (14). Mr. Woodhouse values hospitality, but believes

that good eating compromises its moral worth. Emma, on the other hand, accepts that the judicious application of taste can unite the social pleasures of the table with the bodily pleasures of eating.

Grimod establishes this focus on eating (as well as on social customs) as the standard for nineteenth-century gastronomy. His *Almanach* was a guide to good eating in Paris (with the culinary samples tasted and judged by a “Tasting Jury”), and also to the principles of good eating. His essays cover topics like table manners and proper carving techniques, but also more abstruse musing on the nature of digestion, or “gourmand geography” (i.e. teaching children about foreign nations and peoples by feeding them foreign foods). English eaters received this wisdom through Grimod’s books, and also from the influx of French chefs who fled to England during the Revolution. Louis Eustache Ude—whose menu was the inspiration for the dinner in *Don Juan*—was one of these.¹¹ He served as chef to the Earl of Sefton, and later to Prince Frederick, the Duke of York. Marie Antonin Carême, whose rise from street urchin to royal chef (and architect of Napoleon’s wedding cake) made him a legendary figure, also briefly worked in England, cooking for the Prince Regent. Carême’s dinner at Brighton Pavilion on January 8, 1817 became notorious as an example of the luxurious indulgence characteristic of the Regent.¹²

Gastronomers, however, quickly began to distance themselves from images of indulgence like the Regent’s banquets, and align the new discourse of good eating with moderation. Stephen Mennell notes that while neither Grimod nor his disciple, Jean-Anthelme Brillat-Savarin, “entirely dismissed a large capacity as an epicurean virtue,” both “emphasise the need for a discriminating palate and scorn as vulgar any merely

quantitative display” (35). Carême makes the point more explicitly as he distinguishes between a discriminating gourmand and a glutton: ““The man who calls himself a gourmand but eats like a glutton is not a gourmand. He is a glutton”” (qtd. in Kelly 141). English gastronomers continue to emphasize the correspondence between good eating and health by disassociating gourmandism from the indulgences typical of the aristocracy. This shifting of priorities also allows gastronomers to draw on the legitimating influence of dietetics. The science of diet reaches back as far as the science of medicine, but it begins to acquire its own disciplinary boundaries during the eighteenth century. With the rising influence of gastronomy, the two discourses make claims for control over the same terrain.¹³ Once again, *Emma* offers an index of the tension inherent in gastronomy’s rise, in this instance specifically between medicine and gastronomy. Upon the occasion of the wedding which opens the novel, Mr. Woodhouse “earnestly tried to dissuade them from having any wedding-cake at all, and when that proved vain, as earnestly tried to prevent any body’s eating it.” To justify his campaign against cake, Mr. Woodhouse consults Mr. Perry, the apothecary, who “could not but acknowledge (though it seemed rather against the bias of inclination) that wedding-cake might certainly disagree with many—perhaps with most people, unless taken moderately” (10). The apothecary’s personal taste collides with his medical expertise, and, one suspects, he acquiesces to Mr. Woodhouse’s view more out of convenience than agreement. Despite Mr. Woodhouse’s best efforts, “still the cake was eaten.” Austen ends the chapter by reemphasizing the gap between Mr. Woodhouse’s older model of medical wisdom and the growing influence of culinary science: “There was a strange rumour in Highbury of all the little Perrys being seen with a slice of Mrs. Weston's wedding-cake in their hands:

but Mr. Woodhouse would never believe it” (11). The apothecary defers to Mr. Woodhouse when necessary, but also indulges the dictates of taste represented by the younger generation.

In the early-eighteenth century, George Cheyne popularized the science of diet with his books, *An Essay of Health and Long Life* (1724), *The English Malady* (1733), and *Essay on Regimen* (1740), in which he advocated for a moderate diet of animal and vegetable food, combined with moderate exercise. Cheyne’s strictures against gustatory indulgence display a potential source for Mr. Woodhouse’s anxiety about eating. The primary charge diet books level against culinary science is that refinements in cookery worsen health. Cheyne writes in *An Essay of Health and Long Life*, that anything but “Plain Roasting and Boiling” are “the Inventions of *Luxury*, [meant] to force an unnatural Appetite, and encrease the *Load*, which Nature, without Incentives from ill Habits, and a vicious Palate, will of itself make more than sufficient for *Health and Long Life*” (29).¹⁴ In his *Treatise on Indigestion*, Alexander Philip Wilson Philip plainly states the opposition between gastronomy and medicine: “There are a few circumstances under which it is proper to bribe the patient to eat; under all others, the refinements of the cook are at variance with the objects of the physician.” Following Cheyne’s dictum, Philip deems “simple roasting or boiling, provided it is not too much done,” the best form of food preparation, and all other gastronomic improvements amount to “pleasing the palate at the expense of the stomach” (110). Likewise, John Sinclair finds, in his exhaustive, four-volume *Code of Health and Longevity*, that “complex food, aided by the art of cookery... acts as a slow poison, in engendering debility and disease, which shortens the period of life” (2: 218). In all of these indictments, the prejudice against French cooking

is present. Sinclair's "complex food" and Cheyne's "Inventions of *Luxury*," implicitly point toward the sauciness of French food. Cheyne's dedication of *The English Malady* capitalizes on this association. In it, he claims the purpose of his book is "to recommend... that plain *Diet* which is most agreeable to the Purity and Simplicity of uncorrupted *Nature*, and unconquer'd *Reason*." As such, "Ill would it suit... with such a design to introduce it with a Dedication cook'd up to the height of a *French* or *Italian* Taste." Cheyne writes that the usual overwrought dedication, filled with "Servile Flattery, fulsome Compliments, and *bombast Panegyrick*," is akin to "a Sort of *Ragous* and *Olios*, compounded of Ingredients as pernicious to the mind as such unnatural Meats are to the body." Food must be "without the artful Composures of *Cookery*, or the Means us'd commonly in making it more *luscious and palatable*" (159). Cheyne substantiates his argument about diet by deferring to literary judgments. Both discourses help to shape each other's effectiveness.

Developments in the definition of health, also serve to substantiate claims against cookery. Definitions of health up through the eighteenth century tended to imply an absence of sensation. Klaus Bergdolt adopts the term, "the silence of the organs," as a useful descriptor of classical definitions of health (2). Eighteenth-century medicine inherits this legacy, and accounts for it with various theories: sensibility and irritability (Albrecht von Haller), excitability and stimulus (John Brown), the principle of life (John Hunter), sympathetic communication (Astley Cooper). In all of these cases, maintenance of health meant managing internal and external stimuli. Haller takes a mechanistic view of the body, which can be controlled through the discipline of nervous sensibility and muscular irritability. In the Brunonian system of medicine, disease can arise from either

an absence (asthenia) or excess (sthenia) of excitability, brought on by the incorrect amount of stimuli. Food is the most fundamental external stimulus, and as such plays an important role in Brunonian medicine. Brown classes vegetable food as a mild stimulant, which, if used as the only form of nourishment, can lead the system into asthenia (1: 11). In this case, Brown recommends the use of “animal food, as well seasoned and as rich as possible” (2: 12), quite the opposite of Cheyne’s recommendations. Hunter’s principle of life, that which distinguishes “animal matter” from “common matter,” receives its realization in digestion. As the stomach converts food into chyle, the substance receives “the living principle”: “out of this change life is to arise, digestion being the first step towards vivification” (1: 231). As Paul Youngquist puts it, “For Hunter... good digestion is divine to the extent that it, and not some deity, creates life from dead matter” (“Romantic Dietetics” 238). The disruption of digestion not only limits health, but impedes the perpetuation of life itself.

While Brown advocates heavy seasoning and rich food in the case of asthenia, in order to maintain health, the goal is a moderate level of stimulation. Christoph Wilhelm Hufeland’s *Art of Prolonging Life* posits that refined cookery damages health through excessive stimulation. Although gastronomic delights may be “friend[s] of our palate,” they are also “enemies of life” (175). Cookery renders all foods “piquant and stimulating,” and thereby distorts the “natural object of [eating], nourishment and restoration.” Spice and seasoning increase “irritation” and “internal consumption,” so that instead of restoring the system, the stomach consumes itself (176). Hufeland concludes, “one might almost imagine that [the art of cookery] was invented to convert one of the noblest gifts of God into secret poison” (178). The stomach’s natural function is to

convert food into nourishment, but gastronomy converts the stomach into an organ that paradoxically consumes itself.

Refined food also dupes the stomach into accepting more than it can easily digest, thus laying blame for indulgence on culinary improvements. Echoing Wordsworth's disavowal of "degrading thirst after outrageous stimulation" in the form of "frantic novels, [and] sickly and stupid German Tragedies," James Makittrick Adair rails against "spicy stimulants," arguing that "their action on the nerves of the nostrils, palate, and stomach... incite us to desire, and provoke the stomach to crave more food than it can properly prepare" (25). In thus perverting the order of things, cookery alters the reasons for its existence. Adair points out that "the intention of preparing or dressing our foods, is to render them more grateful to the palate, and more easily convertible into nourishment by the stomach" (25). Modern gastronomy, as Adair sees it, has dispensed with the latter purpose in preference to the former.¹⁵ Yet some writers on diet give credence to the medical effectiveness of modern cookery. While Cheyne's dietary suggestions were often satirized for being offensive to the palate, many dietary writers in the early-nineteenth century aim to please palate and stomach alike.¹⁶ Alexander Hunter explains that the purpose of his *Culina Famulatrix Medicinæ* (1804) is to "be of use to Gentlemen of the Medical Line, by laying before them a list of the most approved Dishes served up at the tables of the great" (6-7). Since "no man can be a good physician who has not a competent knowledge of Cookery" (7), Hunter's goal is to infuse dietary medicine with a focus on culinary excellence. William Wadd's treatises on obesity subscribe to the commonplace that refined cookery leads to corpulence, but he also recognizes with Hunter that knowledge of cookery can enhance medical dietetics. In order to properly

understand foods' stimulating properties, one must endeavor to test particular foods with the same empirical method applied to the science of digestion.

Austen recognizes that the problem with the empirical study of digestion is that individual physiologies differ. Mr. Woodhouse attempts to dissuade the wedding guests from eating cake because: "His own stomach could bear nothing rich, and he could never believe other people to be different from himself. What was unwholesome to him he regarded as unfit for any body" (10). The construction of gastronomical discourse, however, reveals that the boundaries of diet and taste are drawn by the confluence of multiple voices. Mr. Woodhouse represents the eighteenth-century model of eating in which health and gustatory pleasure never coincide. Emma conceives of a broader definition of health by catering to her guests' palates. Austen dramatizes the melding of multiple food discourses in the excursion to Mr. Knightley's strawberry patches at Donwell. The party gathers in the shade, and Austen's free indirect discourse weaves together the different strands of the conversation:

... strawberries, and only strawberries, could now be thought or spoken of.—'The best fruit in England—every body's favourite—always wholesome.—These the finest beds and finest sorts.—Delightful to gather for one's self—the only way of really enjoying them.—Morning decidedly the best time—never tired—every sort good—hautboy infinitely superior—no comparison—the others hardly eatable—hautboys very scarce—Chili preferred—white wood finest flavour of all—price of strawberries in London—abundance about Bristol—Maple Grove—cultivation—beds when to be renewed—gardeners thinking exactly different—no general rule—gardeners never to be put out of their way—delicious fruit—only too rich to be eaten much of—inferior to cherries—currants more refreshing.'” (234-5)

The voices begin in unison, until they start to assess the gustatory excellence of different varieties of strawberries. The attention to strawberries represents a greater concern for gustatory pleasure, as well as an increasing level of expertise in seeking that pleasure. In

contrast, Mr. Woodhouse's only requirement for good gruel is that it be "smooth" and "thin, but not too thin" (68). Gastronomers emphasize that taste is but one element of many which comprise the experience of good eating, and in accord with that insight, Austen's characters also discuss prices, distribution and cultivation. And finally, with deference to the absent Mr. Woodhouse, one member claims that the fruit is "too rich" to eat to excess (the same quality Mr. Woodhouse ascribes to cake). The older discourse of eating does not disappear with the refinement of gastronomical culture, but continues to hover. Austen's rhetorical device in particular (and the novel in general) registers the ways in which competing discourses of eating vie for prominence. In the consolidation of different articulations of taste, culture emerges. After the "half an hour" devoted to strawberries, the company tours the rest of the gardens, and "disputable... as might be the taste," Emma deems the scene: "sweet to the eye and the mind. English verdure, English culture, English comfort" (235, 236). In *Emma*, Austen recognizes the crucial role that food plays in such constructions of national, social identity.

William Kitchiner explicitly undertakes the task of merging food discourses with *The Cook's Oracle*, which became one of the most popular cookbooks of the nineteenth century. He adopts Grimod's model of the tasting jury, but his "Committee of Taste" seeks to unite judgments of taste with judgments of nutritional value—to "blend the toothsome with the wholesome" (4). Kitchiner verifies every recipe in the book with his own distinguished palate. The book becomes a depository of Kitchiner's experiments in culinary and dietetic science. His later books, *The Art of Invigorating and Prolonging Life* and *Peptic Precepts* (1821), delve further into the relationship between gastronomy and nourishment. These books offer the same implicit counsel of *The Cook's Oracle*, but

now in a codified form. Kitchiner pairs individual precepts with specific numbered recipes, creating a unified science of gastronomy and diet. Judgments of taste do not simply replace those of nourishment; for Kitchiner, the ultimate goal of good eating is to make palatal choices that will delight and nourish, thereby offering a healthy state in which to seek further pleasure. This system aims to maximize pleasure, but in a way that produces a healthy individual and social body. Kitchiner devises how “stimulating” foods can be enjoyed in the process of seeking health.

As Jean Louis Flandrin has shown, cookery in Western culture gradually shifted from a dietetic practice to an aesthetic one. Originally meant to prepare food for easier digestion, cooking came to please the palate in preference to the dietetic goal. As the old dietetic systems fall out of fashion (thanks in part to a greater understanding of digestive processes), judgments of taste prescribe culinary choices. During the period from 1600 to 1800, “cooking, once under the sway of medicine, gradually and quietly freed itself” (431), and “[i]n the nineteenth century, gastronomy, the pseudoscience of eating well, would occupy the space left vacant by the old dietetics and cloak itself in some of the prestigious garments of the discipline it supplanted” (432). The increasing disciplinary boundaries created by the Enlightenment impulse for classification and the nineteenth-century advances in professional structures make it possible for cooking to become an art apart from medical science. Yet just as Mr. Woodhouse’s warnings against rich food recur in the younger generation’s strawberry discussion, writers like Kitchiner appeal to the institutional and epistemological sway of medicine in order to establish gastronomy as a viable alternative discourse. The Romantic period marks the moment at which good eating straddled the line between culinary science and culinary art. Kitchiner’s desire to

create a system in which pleasure and productivity function cooperatively points toward this liminal moment, and the realization of Kitchiner's method traces how eating came to signify as an aesthetic *and* functional practice.

The aesthetic side of eating gets its fullest treatment in the genre of food writing that begins with Grimod, and that Gigante describes as a “comic-philosophical” genre. These works consider the meaning of eating as an aesthetic act. Jean-Anthelme Brillat-Savarin typifies the genre in *The Physiology of Taste* (1825), which combines physiology with the aestheticism of gourmandism. He divides taste into three stages—direct, indirect and reflective—which encompasses the aesthetic experience of food. It relies on sensation and intellect, body and mind. As he defines gourmandism (“an impassioned, reasoned, and habitual preference for everything which gratifies the organs of taste,” and which is distinct from gluttony), Brillat-Savarin opines that it performs both physical and moral functions: “From the physical point of view, it is the result and proof of the sound and perfect condition of the organs of nourishment. From the moral point of view, it shows implicit obedience to the commands of the Creator, who, when He ordered us to eat in order to live, gave us the inducement of appetite, the encouragement of savour, and the reward of pleasure” (132, 133). Typically for this genre of gastronomy, the practice of good eating emblemizes an entire view of civilization. Brillat-Savarin closes part I of *The Physiology of Taste* with the invention of “Gasterea,” or “the Tenth Muse,” who rules over “the delights of taste.” She would rule the entire world “if she wished to claim it; for the world is nothing without life, and all that lives takes nourishment” (287). By worshipping at the temple of Gasterea, gastronomers embrace the notion that eating is

intimately connected to all aspects of being. As Brillat-Savarin says in his fourth aphorism, “Tell me what you eat: I will tell you what you are” (13).

Kitchiner inherits this mode of thinking about food, and adopts it for an inclusive system of health and sensual enjoyment. As food unites people into a utopian ideal for Brillat-Savarin, each individual, gourmand body fulfills Kitchiner’s idealist vision. While this approach to food writing begins in France, Kitchiner is not the only English practitioner. The first English work is the anonymous *The School for Good Living*, first published in 1814, and reissued in 1822 as *Gastronomy; or, The School for Good Living*. The anonymous author dedicates the book to “Professors of Culinary Science,” whom he hails for bringing about a new golden age. His purpose is to show “that the kitchen is the source of all the arts,” and that the advancement of civilization relies on gastronomy’s “prolific fountain whose savoury streams have watered the tree of knowledge, and fed it to luxuriant growth” (9). The book gives a quasi-historical account of the history of cooking, with an attention to the philosophical implications for good eating. In a similar vein is Ange Denis Macquin’s *Tabella Cibaria; or, The Bill of Fare* (1820). A French émigré, Macquin wrote this book in response to a challenge bidding him to enumerate all the intricacies of a French restaurant’s bill of fare, “in decent Latin verses.” Following the 220-line poem, Macquin gives exhaustive notes (in English), which include items from culinary history, anecdotes about the etymology of specific foods, and discussions of the crucial difference between a gourmand and a glutton. The defense of gourmandism against accusations of gluttony begins at least with Grimod, and continues through all the writers of gastronomy. Given his interest in etymology and language, Macquin devotes much energy to the distinction between voracious, indiscriminate gluttony, and refined,

intellectually- and aesthetically-minded gourmandism. Neither he nor the anonymous author of *The School for Good Living* give extensive attention to dietetics, as Kitchiner does. Nonetheless, Macquin's rhetorical defense of good eating still aims to propagate the notion that the culinary art is a laudable cultural force. This genre of gastronomy shows how food was thought to be a crucial aspect of cultural formations, and responses to the discourse from other writers serve to reinforce gastronomy's role in constituting culture.

Periodical Gastronomy

The ideal space for tracing the emergence of gastronomical discourse during the Romantic period is in the periodical press, which operates within a medium inherently multi-vocal and dialogic. More than the texts themselves, the presence of gastronomic discourse in contemporary periodicals gives a sense of the cultural penetration such ideas had received. The periodicals register the pulse of Romantic discourse, and dispatch reverberations of cultural ideas into other realms of print culture. Reviews of Kitchiner's *The Cook's Oracle* appear in several journals, among others, the *Annals of the Fine Arts* (1818), the *Edinburgh Review* (1821), *Blackwood's Magazine* (1821), and the *London Magazine* (1821). *Blackwood's* (1820) also reviews Macquin's work, as does the *Edinburgh* (1821). In addition to reviews of the works, gastronomy often becomes a topic of discussion in the multi-discipline periodicals. Kitchiner's name is invoked synonymously with cuisine and good eating, even well after his death. (In the December 1832 number of the *Quarterly Review*, in an article about the saline content of blood, the writer suggests that salt's nutritive powers may suggest "that after all Kitchener 'reasoned well'" [48: 382]). The *London* shapes definitions of national cuisine with articles like

“English Eating” (September 1821) and “On the Cookery of the French” (August 1824), while the *Noctes Ambrosianae* series in *Blackwood’s* frequently features scenes of gorging amidst discussions of gastronomic issues. These articulations of gastronomy intersect with foundational moments and figures of Romanticism. “English Eating” occurs in the same issue as Part I of De Quincey’s *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater*; Part II appears the following month, alongside the *London’s* review of *The Cook’s Oracle*. In contexts like this, gastronomy operates in conversation with and often appears constitutive of Romantic literary discourses. Decisions of taste, of pleasure, of diet—all figure into the construction of Romantic discourse, and all are informed by the new field of gastronomy. Ultimately, this aesthetic system forms the basis of a middle-class identity rooted in bodily pleasure and productivity.

In *Noctes* XII (October 1823), the pseudonymous figures of Christopher North, Timothy Tickler, the Ettrick Shepherd, and a few other *Blackwood’s* regulars, register this interweaving of food and literary culture.¹⁷ The discussions of gustatory and literary taste occur simultaneously, with judgments about one influencing those of the other. Just as the *Blackwood’s* interlocutors outline their positions on Romantic poetics, they also articulate their takes on the aesthetics of eating. The scene begins with North and Ambrose (owner of the tavern where the *Noctes* take place) discussing the night’s menu. By the time Ambrose returns with Tickler, Mullion (North’s secretary), and Vivian Joyeuse (pseudonymous writer for the recently-founded *Knight’s Quarterly Magazine*), North has fallen asleep with his *Glenlivet* in hand. The Opium-Eater and the Ettrick Shepherd soon join the party. The conversation moves from DeQuincey’s *Confessions* (“yon bit Opium Tract”) to the Lake Poets (“Great yegoists”) to the founding of *Knight’s*

Quarterly (14: 485, 486). North compels Joyeuse and his editorial staff to display more of their classical learning (“Are you not Etonians, Wykeamists, Oxonians, and Cantabs?” [487]), which leads inevitably into a diatribe against the Cockney School. Tickler recalls, “There was John Keats enacting Apollar, because he believed that personage to have been, like himself, an apothecary,” before moving on to show his disdain for Barry Cornwall, William Hazlitt, Leigh and John Hunt, and now Byron, who deigned to publish with the Hunts. Tickler substantiates his claim by quoting a poem from *Knight’s*, which proclaims “The Examiner’s grown dull as well as dirty, / The Indicator’s sick, the Liberal dead— / I hear its readers were some six-and-thirty” (488).¹⁸ North chimes in with Byron’s stanza about Keats in *Don Juan*, which concludes, “‘Tis strange the mind, that very fiery particle, / Should let itself be snuff’d out by an article” (489). North and Hogg note that despite all of *Blackwood’s* attacks, their opponents have yet to seize on any of the magazine’s genuine faults. North slyly remarks, “Good gracious! only think of our shameful violation of truth!” Tickler recognizes “the occasional coarseness to be found in *Maga*,” but excuses it by hoping that “intense wit will season intense coarseness” (489, 490). Just as the Opium Eater offers “to say freely what are your greatest faults,” Ambrose enters and announces dinner, “*just in the nick of time*,” as the editorial stage directions indicate (490).¹⁹

While structurally the dinner bell interrupts the discussion of how *Blackwood’s* actively shapes literary discourse, the dinner scene thematically continues with the same concerns. After carving the goose, Tickler declares that just as there are “vulgar souls who prefer barn-door fowl to pheasants, mutton to venison, and cider to champagne,” there are also those “who prefer curduroy to cassimere breeches, and the ‘Blue and

Yellow' to green-gowned Maga" (491). Taste for food quickly shifts to taste for clothing, and finally to the "clothing" of the *Edinburgh Review* and *Blackwood's*. Hogg and Tickler proceed to argue about the relative merits of potatoes with fish.²⁰ Tickler admonishes Mullion for bringing his food to his mouth on his knife, a practice which Hogg defends. The Opium Eater cites the advice of "medical men" against hot suppers, and so sends away his plate of kidneys and calls for coffee and muffins. North asks Tickler, "what sort of an eater do you suppose Barry Cornwall?" The response paints the typical portrait of a Cockney as effete: "The merry-thought of a chick—three tea-spoonfulls of peas, the eighth part of a French roll, a sprig of cauliflower, and an almost imperceptible dew of parsley and butter" (491).²¹ The scene contrasts with this ethereal eating, thereby corresponding to the difference in taste between *Blackwood's* and the Cockney School. Cornwall's fare pales in comparison to the massive goose ("a ten-pounder" [490]) that the *Noctes* members devour. Indeed, the *Blackwood's* writers are unabashed in their gluttony. In an article titled "On the Gormandizing School of Eloquence" (July 1823) North had criticized a man named D. Abercromby for his gluttonous habits. Lockhart responds to Wilson in a letter: "Who is Mr. D. Abercromby? You have little sympathy for a brother glutton. What would you think of the Gormandizing School, No. II. 'Professor John Wilson?'" (Gordon 262). He signs the letter, "your silent and affectionate brother-glutton," and adds a post-script noting: "Hodge-podge is in glory; also Fish. Potatoes damp and small. Mushrooms begin to look up. Limes abundant" (263). This celebration of gluttonous eating consolidates the contrast between *Blackwood's* corporate identity and what they perceive as the Cockneys' class inferiority, expressed through bad taste. Food functions as a potent

signifier of class status and power, and as such the attacks on the Cockneys in *Blackwood's* (which represent battle for control of public, literary discourse) often revolve around the symbolic economy of taste.

North and Tickler discuss the same question of diet regarding Byron (“Why, bull-beef and pickled salmon, to be sure”), Tom Moore, and Samuel Rogers. The implication with all three is that eating is intimately connected with writing. Regarding Byron, Tickler adds, “I never suspected, at least accused him, of cannibalism. And yet, during the composition of *Cain*, there is no saying what he may have done” (14: 492).²² Once again the appraisal of gustatory behavior accords with literary value. The scene repeatedly reinforces the idea that eating informs literary taste—as a metaphor, and as constitutional quality. Byron’s apostate turn to the Cockneys is reflected in his poetry, and also in his eating. Conversely, the moral controversy surrounding the publication of *Cain* signals the possibility of gustatory transgression (in the form of cannibalism). Elsewhere, *Blackwood's* attempts to recast Byron’s failure of taste to their purposes. In *Noctes* IV (July 1822), Byron himself appears and has a conversation with Morgan ODoherty, which revolves around Byron’s shifting signification in the periodical press. The most relevant example comes from the controversy surrounding *Cain*. John Murray sued to prevent the printing of pirated copies, but the Lord Chancellor ruled against the injunction because the content of *Cain* was deemed blasphemous. The *Quarterly Review* (owned by Murray) reported on the proceedings and underlines the hypocrisy of ruling against a work “injurious to the best interests of society,” when such a ruling makes it possible for the greater dissemination (through piracy) of that work (27: 123).²³ *Blackwood's* rests the blame on Murray, who first consented to publish works injurious to

moral character. In the dialogue with Byron, *Blackwood's* reinforces its position through the figure of the poet himself.²⁴ Byron defends the morality of *Cain*, and expresses surprise that O'Doherty opposes it. Yet the conversation ends with Byron expressing the class superiority that fuels the *Blackwood's* fury: "I do confess—for I was born an aristocrat—that I was a good deal pained when I saw my books... degraded to be published in sixpenny numbers" (12: 105). The transgression of taste that *Cain* represents ultimately comes back to the issue of its dispersal to a mass reading audience. The "cannibalism" that Tickler never suspected of Byron, but admits as a possibility during the writing of *Cain*, corresponds to the social transgression Byron makes by disseminating his work to a lower class of readers.²⁵

By the time Tickler refrains from accusing Byron of cannibalism, the poet had begun publishing *Don Juan* with the Hunts (beginning with Cantos 6-8, published on July 15, 1823). The piracy of *Cain* was not Byron's fault, but *Blackwood's* represents his defection to the Hunts through these same terms of shifting class association. Besides the trespass of colluding with the Hunts, *Blackwood's* and other reviewers decry the preface to the new cantos, in which Byron scathingly celebrates the suicide of Castlereagh. The *Gentleman's Magazine* review focuses on the preface using the imagery of cannibalism: "In this advertisement he reverts to his favourite theme, the death of the late Marquis of Londonderry... [Byron] indulges in a foul and brute-like yell of triumph over the grave of his victim, and once more fastens upon the bleeding and mangled corpse of this ill-fate Minister, with a vampire thirst for vengeance, that would do justice to the unrelenting malignity of a fiend" (RR 1142-3). Similarly, the *Literary Gazette* writes of the "unnatural attacks of which Lord Byron has been guilty upon the corpse of a late

minister” (RR 1461), and the *New European Magazine* reports, “With a malice, more resembling one of his own Vampires than that of a human being, his Lordship’s cold-blooded enmity pursues the Noble Statesman even beyond the grave; and gloats with a demoniac rancour over the manner, and the event, of his decease” (RR 1872). In this context, Tickler’s cannibalism reference appears less of a non sequitur.²⁶ The perception of Byron’s abandonment of class superiority occurs through the language of eating precisely because the discourse of food informs the class relations which constitute literary taste. For Hunt, Byron has been on the receiving end of such venom because, “HE,—a nobleman,—has burst the enthrallment of rank and station; nay more, the stronger ligatures of an aristocratical bias, and declared for the Many against the Few” (RR 1359). Tickler deems that with Cantos 6-8 of *Don Juan* Byron has “endeavoured to write himself down to the level of the capacities and the swinish tastes” of the Cockneys (14: 88). The defense of “the Many against the Few” and the adoption of “swinish tastes” emerge out of the intersection of class struggle and the discourse of gastronomy.

Regarding a different kind of “swinish taste,” perhaps the most striking, detailed image of eating in the Romantic period comes from Charles Lamb’s “A Dissertation upon Roast Pig.” It first appeared in the September 1822 issue of the *London Magazine*, along with two other essays by Lamb. Gigante argues that in it Lamb articulates his vision of “low urban taste,” in contrast to the metaphysical digesting mind of Wordsworth (*Taste* 90). Another important aspect of the literary history of Lamb’s essay, is its original publication in the *London*, which, as is the case with *Blackwood’s*, provides the space for the dialogic construction of taste. When read in the context of the *London*, Lamb’s aesthetic of pleasure receives substantiation from the rest of the issue. The

context of the periodical displays how Lamb's essay performs its cultural function through engagement with the *London*'s committee of taste (and for that matter, the various committees represented by other rival periodicals).

In particular, several poems structure the issue and the placement of Lamb's essays. The "Dissertation" is preceded and followed by sonnets by John Clare. The first ("How sweet the wood shades the hot summer hours") presents an image of tranquil recollection, in which imagination and reading bring back memories "From the black nothingness of days gone by." The process of remembering makes "the thought of death... sweet, / In shaping Heaven to a scene like this." The "sweetness" of Clare's country idyll immediately moves into Lamb's paean to "crackling": "There is no flavour comparable, I will contend, to that of the crisp tawny, well-watched, not over-roasted, *crackling*... O call it not fat—but an indefinable sweetness growing up to it—the tender blossoming of fat—fat cropped in the bud—taken in the shoot—in the first innocence" (247). This aestheticization of innocence resonates with the Wordsworthian idealization of childhood, but Lamb's joke is that we access such purity by devouring a suckling pig. He is not squeamish about the material reality, even as he aestheticizes it: "...see the extreme sensibility of that tender age, he hath wept out his pretty eyes—radiant jellies—shooting stars—." The dish is the pig's "second cradle," and his eternal innocence ensures that he never attains "the grossness and indocility which too often accompany maturer swinehood." In his third sonnet of the issue, Clare imagines what it would mean to exist in this kind of innocent state, "Ere I had known the world... had I been / Left in some lone place" (1, 5-6). The result of this reverie, in which the poet is "Brought up by Nature as her favourite child" and "Emparadised in ignorance of sin," is once again a

heavenly vision: “The future dreamless—beautiful would be / The present—foretaste of eternity” (13-14). For Clare, to taste the divine requires a prelapsarian state, without knowledge of good and evil. Lamb suggests that we can taste this innocence vicariously through the sacrifice of a suckling pig. The “Dissertation” satirizes this element of Romantic ideology, and simultaneously suggests that eating supplies Romantic writers with a powerful cultural trope for articulating aesthetic arguments.

In addition to sketching a form of “low urban taste,” Lamb’s essay also provides an account of how taste civilizes. The essay begins with a long explanation, from an imaginary “Chinese manuscript,” of how humanity came to cook. Ho-ti and Bo-bo, a swineherd and his son, accidentally stumble upon the glory of crackling after Bo-bo burns down their cottage with several “new-farrowed pigs” inside. Bo-bo licks his fingers after burning them on the skin of one of these pigs, and so “he tasted—*crackling!*” He proceeds to voraciously cram “handfuls of the scorched skin with the flesh next to it” down his throat, until Ho-ti returns to view the horrifying scene, “wavering whether he should not put his son to death for an unnatural young monster.” The paternal approval comes, however, when Ho-ti licks his own burnt fingers. Father and son sit down together and finish all the remaining cooked flesh. They must keep their secret, but neighbors soon begin to notice that Ho-ti’s cottage “burnt down now more frequently than ever.” Eventually the community learns of their secret, and they stand accused for their crimes. But when the evidence is presented, the judge tastes crackling, and he rules immediately for a verdict of not guilty. The practice of cooking flesh shifts from an illicit secret to a state-sponsored action, and thus “do the most useful, and seemingly the most obvious arts, make their way among mankind.”

Lamb recognizes that eating is never fully naturalized, but rather always subject to the forces of culture. At the essay's conclusion, he recalls that "our ancestors" formerly whipped pigs to death: "We read of pigs whipt to death with something of a shock, as we hear of any other obsolete custom." What once seemed natural, shocks now that "The age of discipline is gone by." Nonetheless, Lamb suggests: "it would be curious to inquire (in a philosophical light merely) what effect this process might have towards intenerating and dulcifying a substance, naturally so mild and dulcet as the flesh of young pigs. It looks like refining a violet." The judgment should be decided not merely on the basis of morality, but also with consideration of taste: "Yet we should be cautious, while we condemn the inhumanity, how we censure the wisdom of the practice. It might impart a gusto—" (248). Elia recalls from his time as a young student a debate on this question. Specifically, the dilemma is whether the pleasure added to the palate outweighs the suffering endured by a pig who is whipped to death. But Elia merely concludes, "I forget the decision." The answer to the question does not matter—Lamb introduces the logical conundrum in order to show that matters of eating arise out of argument, and that judgments of taste impact how we eat and how we live.

The essay ends with a consideration of how best to prepare suckling pig. Elia encourages a mild sauce: "a few bread crumbs, done up with his liver and brains, and a dash of mild sage." The worst offense is to over-season with "the whole onion tribe." For "whole hogs" garlic and shallots can do no harm, but they will destroy the suckling pig: "he is a weakling—a flower." The page concludes with John Clare's sonnet, "Forest Flowers." The poem praises "Ye simple weeds... / Disdain'd of all" except by the poet himself, who fondly remembers them as "favourites of my early days." Despite the

efforts of “culture’s toil,” which “devours” the scene of Clare’s solitude and the flowers’ habitat, the flowers nonetheless “thrive in silence.” Their ubiquity “shows ye’re prized by better taste than mine.” Nature’s “taste” for wildflowers ensures that “Spring’s gentle showers” will routinely bring about their return, just as Lamb’s taste for suckling pig dictates his recipe for it, and thereby preserves its status as “a flower.” For Lamb, the materiality of taste is primary, but it produces cultural definitions of aesthetics and morality. Clare’s version of taste emanates from an ethereal realm (either divine or natural, or both) and produces effects in the physical world. By putting these articulations of taste together, the *London* cultivates its position on aesthetics through the expression of gastronomic principles. The *London*’s position on taste—insisting on the union of its gustatory and aesthetic aspects—represents a contrast to *Blackwood’s* celebration of gluttony.²⁷ Although *Blackwood’s* often recognizes the importance of gustatory taste, the practice of gluttony and the distanced appreciation of the arts comprise two separate elements of the proper exercise of taste. Looking at how these competing aesthetic models of eating intersect, reveals the production of gustatory judgments by committee, the process which shapes the discourse of Romanticism.

Notes to Chapter I

¹ Carol Shiner Wilson argues that Byron crafts a “culinary esthetic” on the model of the *olla podrida*, a Spanish stew, both of which may equally please and nourish us—despite the confusion of tastes and risks of indigestion” (39).

² Also see Stabler and Wilson on this passage. Wilson points to the etymological origins of the words: “In sporting with the *taste*—*goût/gout*—complex, Byron slips around and through the multiple understandings of those words. *Taste*, from the Middle English *tasten* and Latin *taxare*, means to examine by trial, sample or touch” (46).

³ Again emphasizing the collective aspect of defining taste, Kitchiner borrows the concept of a committee of taste from Alexandre Balthazar Grimod de la Reynière, whose “Tasting Jury” performed a similar task for his work.

⁴ Wahrman questions the traditional account of the rise of the middle class in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Britain: “[the category of middle class]... was rendered a natural and self-evidently visible part of social reality; it was seen as an uncontested and unproblematic statement of fact; it was provided with a cogent storyline that explained its origins and justified its existence; it was given the simplicity and the power of an essence (and, one may add, it was then bequeathed as such to future generations of historians). In sum, it was not so much the rising ‘middle class’ that was the crucial factor in bringing about the Reform Bill of 1832; rather, it was more the Reform Bill of 1832 that was the crucial factor in cementing the invention of the ever-rising ‘middle class’” (18).

⁵ Bourdieu writes, “The ideology of natural taste owes its plausibility and its efficacy to the fact that, like all the ideological strategies generated in the everyday class struggle, it *naturalizes* real differences, converting differences in the mode of acquisition of culture into differences of nature” (68).

⁶ Eating was not the only discourse through which bodily engagement, taste and class status intersect. In one of a series of articles on boxing (“Boxiana No. VIII”), *Blackwood’s* unites the discourses of “poetry, pugilism, and cookery” through the principle of taste. Attributing to Coleridge the dictum “that a great poet must create the taste capable of enjoying his works,” the article suggests that the statement’s “truth is most apparent in poetry, pugilism, and cookery.” Thus, “the fame of Mrs Glasse and Mrs McIver did not spring up like a mushroom,” and the “sole exception” to this rule is “Mrs. Rundle [Rundell],” whose “irresistible appeal to the palates of her own generation” make her “like the universal Pan” (8: 61-2). Food discourse is the most predominant of these three in the sense that it is necessary to survival. As such, it permeates the construction of other discourses, like that of poetry and boxing. And as I discuss in Chapter II, the “irresistible appeal to palates” of any individual purveyor of gastronomical wisdom ultimately falls under the same social and ideological forces in determining the standards of taste. *Blackwood’s* anticipates Bourdieu’s methodology by performing the “barbarous reintegration of aesthetic consumption into the world of ordinary consumption” (6), but also elides the constructedness of the discourse by affirming Rundell as “the universal Pan.” In this instance, the humor of the pun on “Pan” deemphasizes the elision; yet, though facetiously, *Blackwood’s* nonetheless avers that there are exceptions to the ideological determinants of taste.

⁷ Orinn N.C. Wang argues that this comment and its realization in *Lamia* relies on visual sensation and its key role in Keats’s thinking: “*Lamia* demonstrates how visuality becomes the preeminent recourse for negotiating *between* sensation and *its abstraction* in modernity” (479). In Chapter V I discuss eating (or the lack thereof) in *Lamia* as another kind of sensual engagement in which Keats invests.

⁸ Massimo Montanari writes, “The organ of taste is not the tongue, but the brain, a culturally (and therefore historically) determined organ through which are transmitted and learned the criteria for evaluations. . . . From this perspective, taste is not in fact subjective and incommunicable, but rather collective and eminently communicative” (61-2).

⁹ Mark Schoenfield argues for the importance of periodical culture to Romanticism: “The periodical press did not dominate all forms of representation in the Romantic period; rather, periodical representation extended throughout the “social text” and conditioned contemporary discourse that included speeches produced with the expectation of being printed, reported, and repeated, novels written in anticipation of review, and exchanges of private letters guided by public critical principles” (*British Periodicals* 4).

¹⁰ For a sense of how ideology and art intersect, Terry Eagleton’s *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* is helpful. Eagleton suggests that the ideology of the aesthetic is crucial to the formation of modern class society, yet also offers the possibility of critique of the “dominant ideological forms” from which the importance of aesthetics develops: “The construction of the modern notion of the aesthetic artefact is thus inseparable from the construction of the dominant ideological forms of modern class-society, and indeed from a whole new form of human subjectivity appropriate to that social order. It is on this account, rather than because men and women have suddenly awoken to the supreme value of painting or poetry, that aesthetics plays so obtrusive a role in the intellectual heritage of the present. But my argument is also that the aesthetic, understood in a certain sense, provides an unusually powerful challenge and alternative to these dominant ideological forms, and is in this sense an eminently contradictory phenomenon” (3). My argument follows from this insight, insofar as the aesthetics of gastronomy both encodes the ideological forms of thought characteristic of different class positions, while also offering the opportunity to interrogate that process of cultural construction (particularly through the literary works of Romanticism that engage with gastronomical aesthetics).

¹¹ The French invasion of cuisine (Napoleon never managed his invasion) was instrumental to the development of English gastronomic writing. Hannah Glasse’s *The Art of Cookery Made Plain and Easy* (1746) gave up its title as most influential cookbook, as Maria Eliza Rundell’s *A New System of Domestic Cookery* (1806) became the first popular cookbook of the new century. While Glasse and Rundell largely shunned French influences, the practice of chefs like Ude French cuisine increasingly accepted during the first few decades of the century. Books like Ude’s *The French Cook* also helped to make it possible for later popular cookbooks to embrace foreign cuisine along with traditional English fare. Eliza Acton can confidently declare, in her *Modern Cookery* (1845), that although she gives her primary attention to “what are usually termed plain English dishes,” she has also “intermingled many foreign ones. . . . which now so far belong to our national cookery, as to be met with commonly at all refined modern tables” (xi). The process of intermingling national cuisines reached an apex during the Romantic period.

¹² Andrew Kirwan cites the menu from this dinner, which consisted on thirty-two entrées (393). Ian Kelly gives an example of another meal prepared by Carême at the Brighton Pavilion. Just after the thirty-two-entrée private dinner, the Regent welcomed Tsar Alexander’s brother, Archduke Nicholas, with three elaborate banquets on the nights of January 14, 16 and 18. The menu from the last night includes (among others) eight soups, eight fish dishes, forty entrées, eight roasts, and sixteen desserts (134-140). Kelly points out that this display of luxury was not a mere exercise in gluttony, but rather “the banquet was to be seen and experienced as part of the theatre of international relations— Napoleon’s chef creating a gastronomic spectacle for the conquering British monarch and his Russian allies” (141).

¹³ The science of diet has impact on other areas of culture besides gastronomy. For example, naval physician James Lind undertook a project to limit scurvy in the English fleet through dietary means. This project was of great importance to the success of the British Empire, considering that scurvy claimed more than half of George Anson’s 2000 men on his disastrous circumnavigation. Once Lind linked the prevention of scurvy to diet, he nonetheless encountered difficulty in isolating the exact prescription for its cure. While he had success treating scorbutic sailors with lemons and oranges, Lind does not specifically isolate these fruits as the best curative method (knowledge of vitamins was still a century and a half away). He speaks generally of “the use of green herbage or wholesome vegetables” (241) and “a diet of easy digestion” (180) as the best means of alleviating or preventing scurvy. Lind’s work displays both the importance of dietary science to Britain’s imperial strength and the early state of digestive knowledge form which his work proceeds. For a fuller account of scurvy and its symbolic and functional importance in south sea exploration, see Jonathan Lamb (114-31).

¹⁴ Cheyne’s appeal to “natural” eating also includes a plan for husbandry that echoes current trends toward “grass-fed beef” and “free-range chicken”: “The only Way of having sound and healthful *animal* Food, is to leave them to their own *natural Liberty*, in the free Air, and their own proper *Element*, with Plenty of Food, and due Cleanness, and a Shelter from the Injuries of the Weather, when they have a Mind to retire to it.” In contrast to this “natural” method, Cheyne claims, “About *London* we can scarce have any but cramm’d *Poultry*, or *stall-fed* Butchery Meat” (*Health* 28). The appeal to nature also anticipates the “natural diet” of vegetarianism that spread widely during the Romantic period, which Morton reads in the context of philosophical arguments about the rights of animals and political radicalism (*Shelley* 13-56). Morton also points out that Cheyne’s advocacy of plain cookery accorded with the project of vegetarianism: “Against the cult of luxury, eighteenth-century vegetarians were not only opposed to cruelty, they were opposed to flavour. Cheyne emphasised that the blander food was, the better. Blander food more closely resembled the chyle into which it was broken down in the stomach. This is a fantasy of the essence of food, as deparicularised, negated, pure nutrition.” (*Spice* 124).

¹⁵ Cheyne makes a similar accusation in *The English Malady*: “Not only the Materials of *Luxury*, are such as I have describ’d, but the Manner of Dressing or Cooking them, is

carried on to an exalted Height. The ingenious mixing and compounding of *Sauces* with foreign *Spices* and Provocatives, are contriv'd, not only to rouze a sickly Appetite to receive the unnatural Load, but to render a natural good one incapable of knowing when it has enough. Since *French Cookery* has been in such Repute in *England*, and has been improv'd from *Spain, Italy, Turkey*, and every other Country that has any thing remarkably delicious, high, or savoury in Food; since *Eastern Pickles* and Sauces have been brought to embellish our continual Feasts. Dressing, which was design'd to assist the Labour of Digestion, as it is now manag'd, not only counter-acts that Design, but is become the most *difficult, curious, ingenious*, and at the same Time, one of the most profitable Trades" (51).

¹⁶ Stephen Shapin writes that "as influential as [Cheyne] was, many eighteenth-century English readers found his dietary prescriptions ludicrous, impossible, unlikely to do anyone any good" (284). Cheyne's authority, Shapin argues, comes more from individual medical correspondence with his patients, than from his "public literary display of ontological expertise" (297).

¹⁷ While the pseudonyms in *Blackwood's* do not always line up exactly, Christopher North generally referred to the editor, John Wilson, while Timothy Tickler tended to signify John Gibson Lockhart. Lockhart, however, would often write pieces attributed to North, and vice versa for Wilson. The *Noctes* installments were written by Wilson, Lockhart, or Maginn, sometimes in collaboration with one another. All assertions of authorship in *Blackwood's* I take from Alan Lang Strout, unless otherwise noted. He cites Wilson, perhaps in collaboration with Lockhart, for *Noctes* XII (113).

¹⁸ The poem in *Knight's* is actually a more measured critique of Hunt. It accuses him of becoming "what once he most abhorr'd" namely, "a toad-eater to a Lord," but concludes that Hunt "for better things was meant, / And shows, on most occasions pluck and nerve" (I, 386). The quotation in *Blackwood's*, however, fits into that magazine's extreme condemnation of all things Cockney.

¹⁹ Mark Parker notes of *Noctes*: "Yet what becomes most prominent in reading the series is the intensification of the tendencies of the magazine. Features of *Blackwood's*, and of magazine more generally, are distilled into the "Noctes," but in the process they often become something quite different" (111).

²⁰ See Nick Groom for an account of the rise of fish and chips as the English national dish.

²¹ In *Noctes* XVIII, Mullion sees a massive feast laid out, and quips, "This is a supper... What would Barry Cornwall say to such a sight?" O'Doherty responds, "Nothing. He'd faint on the spot" (*BM* 17: 117).

²² With regard to the other two poets, Hogg claims that Tom Moore ate "calf-foot jeellies, stewed prunes, the dish they ca' curry, and oysters" while writing *The Loves of the*

Angels—the stimulating foods presumably fueling the poem’s erotic energy. Tickler shares the rumor that Rogers “never eat animal food, nor drank spirits,” which North denies, having personally witnessed the opposite. Tickler “could not otherwise have believed it,” since Rogers’ poetry lacks the energy associated with vigorous appetite (492).

²³ The *Quarterly* claims that *Don Juan* “would have been confined by its price to a class of readers... who would have turned with disgust from its indecencies, and remembered only its poetry and wit” (27: 127-8). Likewise regarding *Cain*, “The price, to which it was immediately reduced by piracy, was calculated to bring the unhappy opinions which it appears to inculcate as to the origins of evil, before thousands totally unfitted by knowledge and habits of thinking to grapple with its difficulties... The proprietor’s price was intended to confine the circulation among those to whom each side of the question is familiar” (128).

²⁴ *Noctes IV* is the last article in the July 1822 issue. Preceding it is an account of the *Quarterly*’s representation of the court proceedings, in which *Blackwood’s* refutes Murray’s position. Structurally, the issue moves from a polemic statement regarding the case, to a fictional reinforcement voiced by the figure of Byron.

²⁵ Michael Simpson writes, regarding the *Cain* legal proceedings and the *Quarterly*’s account: “That the same periodical that tries to incite prosecutions should also report judicial proceedings after the event suggests just how integrated into an institution of censorship the periodicals really are... By reporting the court’s self-professed omniscience, the article claims to occupy the ultimate perspective in the panopticon of censorship. Self-serving though this distinction, drawn by the text between itself and the court, indubitably is, it also subserves the overall project of surveillance by claiming to advertise, before an audience that includes radicals, the ferocious extent of that surveillance” (277). Simpson also recognizes that the *Quarterly* account of the proceedings gives Murray a way to recoup his financial losses from *Cain*: selling more copies of the magazine by capitalizing on the controversy.

²⁶ Gigante reads Byron’s conception of taste through his figures of vampirism and cannibalism (*Taste* 131-8).

²⁷ In the same issue as the “Gormandizing School of Eloquence No. 1,” Morgan ODoherty cites a poem called “Lament of a big Bristol Butcher.” He affirms that its author’s success rests on the same forces that made it possible for the Cockney School to rise: “We do not hesitate to say, that the author of these verses is a poet, and are not without a hope, that the same age, which saw raised from humble degree to the heights, or at least declivities, of Parnassus, such souls as those of... Clare the hedger, Cunningham the mason, Blomfield the herd, Keates the apothecary, and Mrs Yearsley the milkwoman, will also have the happiness of witnessing the rise of progress of the author of this Lament, Humphry Huggins, the butcher” (*BM* 14: 72).

CHAPTER II

THE LABOR OF GASTRONOMY: WORKING FOR PLEASURE

Amidst periodic food shortages during the decades of the Napoleonic wars, there emerged in England a widespread culture of middle-class gourmandism. Despite general outrage about aristocratic excess—embodied figuratively in the Prince Regent’s luxurious eating habits, and literally in his overstuffed body (Fig. 1)—gourmandism nevertheless flourished. How these paradoxes came to be is the subject of this chapter.

Gastronomers envisioned the revolution in food practices as a result of the French Revolution and of the replacement of the aristocracy with republican ideals. Opulence and hedonism was for the aristocracy—the new bourgeois class would embrace good eating *sans* the excesses of the old regime, and gastronomy becomes the cultural force responsible for spreading these principles. Alexandre Balthazar Laurent Grimod de la Reynière (himself an aristocrat, but nonetheless dedicated to “*de faire bonne-chère avec peu d’argent*” [making good cheer with little money]) formed a “tasting jury,” which sampled the gastronomic delights of Paris and reported back on them in the yearly *Almanach des gourmands* (1803-12). Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin (indebted to Grimod’s work) constructed a “Philosophical History of Cooking,” in *The Physiology of Taste* (1825), which spans from Adam and Eve to the “new and inadequately recognized institution” of the restaurant. For Brillat-Savarin, the rise of the restaurant marks the pinnacle of human culture, and produces an ideal world in which “any fellow with three



Fig. 1

James Gillray's stipple plate, "A Voluptuary Under the Horrors of Digestion," (1792) depicting the Prince Regent. In addition to the overstuffed body, there is also an overflowing chamber pot in the background, as well as a crest featuring a crossed knife and fork.

or four goldpieces in his pocket can immediately, unfailingly, and without any more bother than the mere wishing, buy all the earthly pleasures which his taste buds may dictate” (302). This impulse toward democratization functions in concert with the redefinition of gourmandism such that it appears distinct from aristocratic luxury.

English writers of gastronomy specifically articulate the pursuit of good eating as commensurate with middle class values of moderation and productivity. The first step in establishing middle-class gourmandism is to consolidate its language—in the difference between a “gourmand” and a “glutton” lies the minute, but fundamental key to control of the discourse. The landscape of taste is a battleground for language, and expressions of gastronomical aesthetics are shaped by and help to constitute the workings of print culture, particularly in the periodical press. While the language of good eating sets the stage for a middle-class articulation of gourmandism (and signals its status as middle class), the endeavor’s success also relies on shifting values. William Kitchiner—the author of *The Cook’s Oracle* (1817) and several other popular books—in particular stresses the importance of labor and productivity to gourmandism. For Kitchiner, gourmandism’s social and cultural value comes from the work required to achieve the pleasure of good eating. He views the felicitous union of productivity and pleasure as the ultimate end of gourmandism. In the process of seeking pleasure, the gourmand also produces a healthy social and individual body.

In establishing the stakes for pleasure through productivity, Kitchiner and other gastronomers assert the connection between class values and aesthetics. Food’s aesthetic value comes both from the pleasure it brings and the nutritive process it enacts. The emphasis on labor and the body’s centrality to pleasure brings aesthetics into the material

realm. This material gastronomical aesthetic challenges the notion that Romantic aesthetics transcend history and culture.¹ The product of this material aesthetic—the middle-class body caught between aristocratic ease and laboring for sustenance—further emphasizes the cultural intervention of Romanticism. Since gastronomy informs definitions of taste specifically around the issue of class identity, the influence of this discourse on Romantic poetics, for example, shows how even the claim of transcendence emerges from a material, social context. The changing role of food culture during the Romantic period ensured that the aesthetics of that period engaged with anxieties about class and labor through the terms set forward by gastronomical principles. This chapter traces the development of those principles, primarily in the work and reception of Ange Denis Macquin and William Kitchiner. Their conceptions of gastronomy and its role in defining class aesthetics permeate Romantic print culture, of which their treatment in the periodical press offers an index.

From Glutton to Gourmand: Establishing Discourse

Ange Denis Macquin opens his gastronomical treatise, *Tabella Cibaria; or, The Bill of Fare* (1821), by observing that “there exists a material difference between a *gormand* and a *glutton*.” This clarification of terms aims at the redefinition of the social and aesthetic value of good eating. By insisting on this new distinction, Macquin contributes to a model of gastronomy that departs from mere sensual indulgence. Macquin argues that the gourmand “seeks for peculiar delicacy and distinct flavour in the various dishes presented to the judgment and enjoyment of his discerning palate; while [the glutton] lays aside nearly all that relates to the rational pleasure of creating or

stimulating an appetite by the excellent quality of the cates, and looks merely to quantity” (14). The gourmand bases his experience on “judgment” and “rational pleasure,” or the intellectual and sensual enjoyment gained from aesthetic appreciation—for him, eating is akin to viewing a painting, or reading a poem. The glutton revels solely in the bodily pleasure of excess, while ignoring the intellectual capabilities of the palate; he “has his stomach in view,” while the gourmand cares more for the “exquisite organs of taste” (14). Both seek their pleasure through the body, but only the gourmand unites physiology with intellect and judgment. The distinction between gluttony and gourmandism allows gastronomers to forge a social identity based on rarefied aesthetic enjoyment, even as that enjoyment emerges from and relies on the body. Macquin’s linguistic argument begins as clarification, but ultimately helps to shape his culinary aesthetic and his claim for gourmandism’s cultural significance.

Macquin has to root his argument in terminology because throughout the eighteenth century, “gourmand” and “glutton” were used synonymously.² During the early-nineteenth century, however, food writers began to separate the terms as part of a concerted effort to justify gourmandism as a socially responsible practice. The material conditions necessary for gourmandism (the availability of a wider variety of foods, the rise of the restaurant, the burgeoning middle class) made the shift possible, but cultural forces drove it to fruition. Other writers, along with Macquin, register this process. In 1822, the pseudonymous author of *Essays, Moral, Philosophical and Stomachical*, Launcelot Sturgeon, points out that “Gluttony is, in fact, a mere effort of the appetite, of which the coarsest bolter of bacon in all Hampshire may equally boast with the most distinguished consumer of turtle in a corporation; while Epicurism is the result of ‘that

choicest gift of Heaven,' a refined and discriminating taste" (3). For Sturgeon, gluttony exists across class distinctions, as it may be practiced by a rural "bolter of bacon" or an urban "consumer of turtle." The key to defining good eating lies not in one's class affiliation, but rather in one's aesthetic, gustatory judgments. By acquiring a refined palate, the gourmand distinguishes himself from both classes. Friedrich Accum also upholds this distinction in his book, *Culinary Chemistry* (1821). After borrowing and quoting from Macquin's *Tabella Cibaria*, Accum defends gourmandism by claiming, "Surely cookery is not to blame for the effects of gluttony... yet it does appear, that all its ill effects are erroneously charged to the account of the refined art of cooking" (36). These writers share the common goal of eliminating the association between the art of good eating and excessive indulgence. Macquin approaches from the perspective of philology, dissecting language in the process of establishing new meaning; Sturgeon forges a gastronomical identity for the middle class, eliminating aristocratic hedonism from the definition of gourmandism; and Accum argues from the nascent discourse of chemistry, asserting that the art of cookery stems from the same scientific principles established for chemistry.³ In each case, what appears to be a simple clarification of terminology, additionally functions in the process of discourse formation. The attempt to control the language of gourmandism is not ancillary, but essential, to the defense of its practice.

Macquin conveys an acute account of the interrelationship of gastronomical language and the defense of gourmandism when he concludes his discussion of terminology. After considering the distinctions between "gourmand" and "gourmet," he offers a final summation: "From the foregoing observations we must conclude that the

glutton practises without any regard to theory; and we call him *Gastrophile*. The *gormand* unites theory with practice, and may be denominated *Gastronomer*. The *gourmet* is merely theoretical, cares little about practising, and deserves the higher appellation of *Gastrologer*” (16). This doubling of terms points to Macquin’s fascination with language, and the inherent difficulty of consolidating terms for a nascent discourse (the term, “gastronomy,” had been coined just twenty years earlier by Joseph Berchoux).⁴ “Glutton,” as if belonging to an already existing ontological category, will be “called” *gastrophile*; likewise, the *gormand* will be “denominated” *gastronomer*, and the “gourmet” receives the “higher *appellation*,” *gastrologer*. By attending to what we choose to “call” and “denominate” this or that, Macquin points out language’s fundamental instability, particularly in the complex realm of cuisine. Precisely because of and through this instability, Macquin and other gastronomers actively attempt to consolidate the meaning of these terms. Macquin recognizes that what we “call” a thing dictates how we understand it.⁵

The defense of gourmandism begins with establishing its terms, yet for Macquin it also ends there. His work supplies a cogent account of the *discourse* of gastronomy (as opposed to the historical and material aspects of eating). In addition to focusing on the terms of gourmandism, Macquin casts himself as philologist, with an interest in classicism and etymology. *Tabella Cibaria* belongs to the tradition of poetic virtuosity—the display of one’s ability for the sake of displaying one’s ability. The book’s preface explains that Macquin wrote the poem in an “idle hour” and in response to a “challenge” rooted in the “apparent impossibility” of writing “*decent* Latin verses” illuminating the “hardly intelligible” bills of fare of “French eating-houses and hotels” (iii). These details

convey the difficulty of the task, and implicitly (since he's done it), Macquin's ability to overcome the challenge. Macquin also immediately introduces the learnedness of his project, even amidst his obvious levity. He coyly dismisses the suggestion of an English translation of his poem, asserting that he is "exclusively fond of original and genuine dishes," while a translation is "at best, what the French call 'un réchauffe'"—that is, leftovers. Macquin displays his classical knowledge alongside his gastronomical wit, and the two are intimately connected in his mind. In this way, he puts the language of gastronomy on par with the long established tradition of classical learning.

While Macquin's classicism helps to buttress the claims for gastronomical learning, the two strands of Macquin's work are also conspicuously divided: he displays his learning in the Latin poem, while the gastronomical knowledge gets relegated to the notes. The text, however, reverses the usual proportional relationship between poem and notes. The former spans just two hundred twenty lines and twelve pages, while the latter runs to over seventy pages. The notes read like a series of short essays on food matters, ranging from historical accounts of Roman gourmands to specific gustatory judgments. Since Macquin rejects a translation for the poem, the notes cater to a larger readership, and stand on their own. Macquin claims that the notes are "explanatory of the Poem," but adds that they "may be read without it" and furthermore, "are especially *intended* to afford instruction and amusement." While the poem gives Macquin the occasion to display his "idle" poetic dalliances, the notes represent the product of his gastronomical labor. He has eaten well, and now he can extend his knowledge to others. But in conveying his knowledge, Macquin reverses the emphasis between poem and notes, learned and mundane, classical and gastronomical.

Macquin's passion for lexicography and etymology contributes to his picture of gastronomy's social and cultural functions. The etymological explanations span from simple observations about foods such as cabbage ("The bigness and rotundity of that head gave origin to the name. *Cabus* from *Caput*" [25]), to more complex ones that revolve around extensive cultural history. In both cases, Macquin's focus implies that in order to understand gastronomy, one must understand the *language* of gastronomy. The intention of his work, in addition to clarifying the important distinctions between gourmands and gluttons, is to spread the principles of gastronomy: "Being himself a conscious Gastronomer, the writer anticipates a sort of reward for his spontaneous exertions, in the pleasing idea and congenial hope, that many of his readers may, through the means of his performance, be enabled to select dishes less inaccessible to their understanding, and more suitable to their respective tastes" ("To the Reader"). The key of taste, for Macquin, is knowledge, and to gain such knowledge one must speak the gastronomical language. By lodging this knowledge in the context of classical learning, Macquin lends significance to a seemingly trivial endeavor. He also thereby legitimizes his class status, while simultaneously embracing gourmandism's democratic spirit by spreading his knowledge.

One first needs the knowledge to comprehend the "unintelligible" signifiers plastered all over bills of fare. Before the poem, Macquin gives a four-page list of the relevant food items, translated between French, Latin, and English. After digesting these terms, the gourmand must also understand how food signifies more fully within social and cultural contexts, and the intricate etymological explanations frequently accomplish this goal. They also reveal the extent to which food matters operate at all levels of social

interaction. Macquin's notes explain the terms of gastronomy, and claim for food an indispensable role in shaping culture. To accept the discourse, one must also accept the underlying assumption of gastronomy: that food matters. In a note glossing the etymology of "bread" in various languages, Macquin explains how the word "barbarous" came to be. In the explication he shows how food constitutes the basis for culture:

Bread is of a very ancient origin; the Hebrew called it *lehem*, the Greek *atros*; and it appears that the Gauls and Celts gave it the name of *bar*. The Greeks, having been taught the art of cultivating wheat and of making bread, were generally assailed on the confines of their dominions by those people, who used to call *bar*, *bar*—bread, bread; hence the Greek *barbaros* (44).

Macquin knows about language and etymology, but this explanation reveals most where incorrect. Despite his "great taste for lexicographical knowledge" (134: 181), for which *The Gentleman's Magazine* praises him in his obituary, Macquin shuns prevailing assumptions about the Greek term's roots. His contemporary lexicographers all trace the English word to the Greek *barbaros*,⁶ but diverge on different theories of the Greek word's provenance. The long-standing accepted gloss comes from the Greek geographer, Strabo (64 BCE-24 CE). According to him, it is "an imitative word to express the sound of one who speaks harshly, *βαρ βαρ*" (Valpy 23).⁷ Macquin adheres to the notion that "barbarism" ultimately has to do with speech, but his assertion about the connection with bread appears to be unsupported. The presence of Macquin's false etymology, amidst his learnedness regarding other specifics, reveals further the impulse to designedly shape gastronomic culture on the basis of its linguistic elements.

Macquin is correct, at least, in the Celtic word for bread. Paul-Yves Pezron, in his work, *The Antiquities of Nations* (1706), attempts to show the debt that European nations and languages owe to Celtic cultures. In his section of Greek words with origins from

“the Celtick or Gaulish language,” he claims “*Bopa*... anything that may be eaten, comes from the *Celtick, Bara, Bread*” (235, 236). With such depth of knowledge about the word’s origin, one wonders why Macquin invents his own etiological narrative. There are two related possibilities. First, his story functions as an arcane joke for insiders. The part of his audience he recognizes as “classical readers” would separate the fact from fiction, and find the story of “barbarians” yelling for bread an amusing deviation from the accepted etymology. Macquin’s other related function is to display the importance of food culture. Although language metonymically signifies culture, food precedes it. The division between civilized and barbarous exists in the gap between those with food and those without it. Language registers this divide retroactively; food culture creates it. Bread is the “staff of life,” the food that, in Western culture, defines this gap. The barbarians lack bread, but they first lack the knowledge and tools necessary to make it. Although they have language with which to express and define their culture, in the minds of Macquin’s Greeks, the statement of food-ignorance belies any value of culture their language might provide. By stating their lack of food culture, the barbarians fall outside of civilization.

This brief etymological explanation provides Macquin the space to express, through narrative, the construction of food culture. The process involves language and knowledge, and it defines one’s degree of civilization. In another of his extended etymologies, Macquin extends from eating as a civilizing process, and explores more specific elements of what constitutes food culture. The word in question is “mustard.” Once again, Macquin had access to an accepted etymology of the word. Stephen Skinner, the author of the first etymological dictionary for the English language, derives the

etymology of mustard from the Latin *mustum ardens*, and subsequent lexicographers concur.⁸ *Mustum* comes from *vinum mustum*, or “new wine,” the substance produced when grapes are first crushed. When *mustum* was mixed with *sinapi* (as the Romans called the mustard seed), it became spicy, thus *ardens*. Eventually the French combined the two words into *moutarde*, and then “mustard” in English.

Macquin provides his own alternate explanation for the etymology of mustard. As with “barbarous,” Macquin’s methodology matches and reinforces his ideological task. To define gourmandism is to defend it, and in the process of defining it through etymology, Macquin claims that food constitutes culture. The note on mustard warrants an extended quotation:

In 1382, Philip the bold, Duke of Burgundy, going to march against his revolted neighbours, and Dijon having furnished for that expedition its quantum of 1,000 armed men, the duke, in kind acknowledgement, granted to the town, among other privileges the permission of bearing his armorial ensigns with his motto, *moult me tarde*, ‘I long, I wish ardently.’ In consequence of this mark of princely condescension, the Dijonese municipality ordered the arms and motto to be beautifully sculptured over the principal gate of the city, which was done accordingly. But time, *tempus edax*, and that incessant drop of water which causes the destruction of the hardest stone, *non vi sed sæpe cadendo*, or some particular accident having obliterated the middle word *me*, the remaining ones, *moult, tarde*, gave occasion to the name in the following manner. For a long lapse of time, the merchants of Dijon have been and are still great dealers in *sénévè*, or *sinapi*, (mustard seed,) and have a method of grinding it with salt, vinegar, and other ingredients, in order to preserve it and send it to all parts of the world. On their *sénévè*-pots they used to paste a label, ensigned with the Duke of Burgundy’s arms and the motto as it accidentally remained then over the gate of the city, *moult-tarde*; hence the name which the *sinapi* composition has preserved to this day. (66-7)

Macquin inextricably links food to social, political, and commercial realities. He says nothing about taste—the knowledge of the gourmand must encompass these other elements of food culture as well. The process begins with the manipulation of language.

First, the motto is granted as a sign of gratitude for military assistance, and as such becomes a marker of the city's respectability and power, engraved in its physical delimitation, the city gate. Macquin represents the transition from feudal to commercial society as an erosion, thereby emphasizing the location of that process in material spaces defined by food culture. The material deterioration of the inscription also corresponds to the accidental evolutions in language that occur over time. (*Moult me tarde* is itself a sign of language's mutability, since readers of modern French will recognize it as archaic.) After its material inscription fails, the signifier becomes reconsolidated through its entrance into the marketplace. The foodstuff is preserved for commercial distribution "to all parts of the world," and in this process receives a brand. The food both retains its regional association and gains a universal signifier for its place in an early global marketplace. The label begins with a functional purpose (denoting the pot's contents), and consequently becomes commercial, a sign of the food's association with the region and the region's association with the food. This etymology shows Macquin's vision of gastronomy as one that imbricates the political with the economic, the social with the linguistic, and the gustatory with the cultural. The production of gastronomical discourse necessitates an awareness of how these processes work together. And furthermore, gastronomy actively produces cultural and social change. By promoting this kind of knowledge, Macquin suggests that gourmandism can produce citizens with good taste, who possess an understanding of the world and the ability to change it. Gastronomy produces engagement with the forces of history, not removal from them. Starting from the linguistic level, Macquin builds out to a gastronomical knowledge of all things, from language to politics to commerce.

Dr. William Kitchiner, ‘Epicure and Economist’

Macquin’s assertion of gastronomy’s importance to all aspects of life appears elsewhere in the works of other gastronomers. The father of gastronomy, Grimod de la Reynière, writes that “cuisine is linked to nearly all branches of human knowledge, by which we mean all the physical sciences, as well as the applied sciences, and even those offering only pure enjoyment” (8).⁹ Similarly, his disciple Brillat-Savarin observes that gastronomy “rules over our whole life” and “concerns also every state of society” (51, 52). The economic stability of a nation, for example depends on gourmandism, which “is a common tie which binds nations together by the reciprocal exchange of objects which are part of their daily food” (148). The anonymous author of *The School for Good Living* expresses the same idea in abstract terms, with culinary art as the root of all knowledge: “the kitchen is the source of all the arts... it is the prolific fountain whose savoury streams have watered the tree of knowledge, and fed it to luxuriant growth” (9). William Kitchiner takes this large view and narrows it to the scope of the human body. For him, gastronomy’s best use is to perfect the health of individual bodies, and thereby the health of society. He writes that “*the Art of making use of these means of ameliorating Life, and supporting a healthful Existence—COOKERY, has been neglected*” (4th ed. vii). Kitchiner’s project is to remedy that neglect by uniting the culinary and medical sciences.

In his *Men I Have Known*, William Jerdan recalls that “for medicating and book-making [Kitchiner] had no equal: his medicating was book-making, and his book-making medicating!” He wrote on a broad range of subjects including optics, music, domestic economy, travel, and gastronomy. Jerdan writes, “There was no part or portion of the

human frame that he did not take under his protection” (283). Kitchiner’s focus on the health and vitality of the body distinguishes his food writing from other gastronomers of the period. In his defense of gourmandism, Kitchiner looks particularly to the union of health and palatability. Despite the seeming contradiction between good eating and health, Kitchiner seeks to create the middle-class ideal of a healthy, productive body through the practice of gourmandism.

Not much is known about Kitchiner’s early adulthood,¹⁰ but in the 1810s he started publishing, beginning in 1815 with a treatise on telescopes (which he later expanded into a more general work on optics, titled *The Economy of the Eyes* [1824]). He published *Apicius Redivivus; or, The Cook’s Oracle* in 1817, which he distinguished from other cookbooks by claiming that he had sampled every recipe. He received assistance in this task from his “Committee of Taste,” (modeled on Grimod’s “Tasting Jury”) who met weekly to judge each recipe. In the subsequent editions, Kitchiner extended his prefatory material to such an extent that he was seen not only as a writer of recipes, but also as the “oracle” of gastronomical wisdom himself. In these essays (and later in his *The Art of Invigorating and Prolonging Life and Peptic Precepts* [1821]),¹¹ Kitchiner crafts a practice of good eating on the basis of the economics of pleasure and work. In the preface *The Cook’s Oracle*, he writes: “It has been his Aim, to render Food acceptable to the Palate, without being expensive to the Purse, or offensive to the Stomach—nourishing without being inflammatory, and savoury without being surfeiting, constantly endeavouring to hold the balance even, between the agreeable and the wholesome, the Epicure and the Economist” (xiii). He considers the work undertaken by the body (i.e. digestion) simultaneously with the work undertaken by one’s purse. And

furthermore, he seeks pleasure only through food habits that will also produce a healthy body.

Kitchiner's concern for the conservation of labor and pleasure resonates with Romantic anxieties about the status of writing as a form of labor. The production of poetry at this time occupies a tentative place between leisure and labor,¹² and an analogous liminality occurs in gastronomical texts. Gourmands attempt to justify the practice of good eating as a form of labor that contributes to individual and social health, despite the association of gastronomy with luxury and indulgence. The projects of gastronomers and poets come together on the issue of the complex negotiation between bodily and intellectual labor. Kitchiner provides one rather simple answer to this complex relationship in his introduction to *The Cook's Oracle*. He says of the "Committee of Taste" assigned with judging each of the book's recipes: "they were so truly philosophically and disinterestedly regardless of the wear and tear of teeth and stomach, that their Labour—appeared a Pleasure to them" (4th ed. 4). The simplicity of the statement belies the complex treatment of body and intellect. The physical effects of the committee's work manifest themselves on their bodies. However, through the philosophical principle of "disinterest"—the necessary state of mind for aesthetic judgment—his committee members remove themselves from their worn bodies.¹³ The nature of their pleasure and labor remains ambiguous, however. Kitchiner could refer either to the intellectual labor of aesthetic judgment, or the bodily work of digestion; likewise, the pleasure could be either that afforded by eating or by philosophical musing. The answer for Kitchiner is always both. Labor and pleasure—of mind and body—exist simultaneously with one another. And crucially, they rely on one another. The labor of

digestion and the mental labor that leads to it, Kitchiner argues, are valuable in that they afford greater pleasure.¹⁴

The articulation of the economy of pleasure emerges through the language of middle class ideals, and this aesthetic appreciation of food through economical means allows for a class identity distinct from aristocratic luxury. Both the body and one's money serve as the locus for the pleasure of labor. Kitchiner will give advice on how to conserve one's finances, and in the same breath suggest how to increase the digestive apparatus' functionality; these two strategies combine to create the greatest amount of gustatory pleasure. Aesthetic enjoyment relies on economical management. Throughout his work Kitchiner relies on economic figures and metaphors. The body becomes a productive "machine" that takes in food and produces a healthful existence. Kitchiner's focus on economy begins with *The Cook's Oracle*, and extends to all the elements of health and pleasure in *The Art of Invigorating and Prolonging Life and Peptic Precepts*. Although he spends much of the book talking about food specifically, Kitchiner also discusses sleep, air, wine, clothes, fire, and exercise in economical terms. When discussing the advantages of wise sleep habits, he opines, "Is it not better *Economy of Time*, to go to sleep for half an hour,—than to go on noodling all day in a nerveless and semi-superannuated state—" (75). His insights regarding sleep are conventional, but he presents the idea with an eye toward how it relates to economic principles. He also describes these habits as emblematic of the middle class, as opposed to the behavior of dandies: "When the Body and Mind are both craving repose—to force their action, by the spur of spirituous stimulus, is the most extravagant waste of the 'Vis Vitae' that Fashion ever invented to consume her foolish Votaries—for Fools they certainly are, who

mortgage the comfort of a week, for the conviviality of an hour” (83). Kitchiner does not claim that these votaries of fashion are foolish for desiring pleasure, but because they seek it with a lack of economic responsibility. At the beginning of *Art*, Kitchiner similarly berates the “votaries of fashion” for wasting their efforts at pleasure. His book’s goal is to “*increase the Enjoyment, as well as prolong the duration of Feeble Life*” (4). This enjoyment is not that afforded by the “Aguish existence of the votary of Fashion—whose Body is burning from voluptuous intemperance today, and freezing in miserable collapse tomorrow” (2). Instead, Kitchiner’s goal is to “[keep] the expense of the machinery of Life within the income of Health” (2). The repeated parallel construction reinforces stylistically Kitchiner’s claims about the economy of pleasure. The middle class ideal of eating does not eliminate the desire for pleasure, but seeks it through the principles of good economy.

This attention to economy continues throughout the book’s other sections. When talking about fire and air, Kitchiner writes that “If You leave the Door open for *Five* minutes—it will let in more cold air than your Fire can make warm in *Fifteen*—therefore, initiate your Domestic in these principles of *the Economy of Caloric*” (126). When discussing wine, he claims, “*The true Economy of Drinking*—is to excite as much Exhilaration as may be,—with as little Wine” (160). In all cases, Kitchiner endorses frugality insofar as it leads to more opportunities for gourmandism. While Kitchiner has plenty of economic solutions to the problems posed by lack of sleep or bad wine, the gourmand’s most formidable foe is indigestion. Coming after all of Kitchiner’s sections on sleep, wine, etc., the problem of indigestion presented in *Peptic Precepts* looks like just one more issue that can be solved with the principles of good economy.

Kitchiner is not the first to comment on indigestion and its negative effects on gourmandism. In the 1805 *Gourmand's Almanac*, Grimod de la Reynière writes, in an essay titled, “On Indigestion,” that it is “the most common of ailments for Gourmands,” although usually only “inept Gourmands” fall victim to it, since “those who are truly worthy of the name know how to avoid this, or if they have the misfortune to be afflicted, know how to obtain prompt relief” (11). Grimod has two pieces of advice relating to indigestion. First, every gourmand should “know his own stomach, so that he can supply it with compatible foodstuffs” (11). Second, the gourmand’s desire for a lasting sensual experience incidentally aids in digestion: “[the gourmand] chews more than others, because chewing is a true pleasure for him, and when food lingers on his palate, it gives him profound joy: but chewing is also a first step in the digestive process; the food thus arrives in the esophagus already pulverized, more ready to be broken down and assimilated into our bodies” (11). The process of careful chewing gives the gourmand the sensual and reflective pleasures of eating,¹⁵ but almost as if by a happy accident, chewing also leads to good digestion and allows the gourmand to continue eating. The end in sight for Grimod is eating; digestion is a necessary evil. He concludes that “by observing these precautions, one may eat much, and for a long time, without becoming indisposed; this is what a Gourmand desires above all” (12).

Kitchiner has a similar approach—he wants digestion to happen smoothly so good eating can continue—but he also sees digestion as an art that exists alongside the aesthetic enjoyment afforded by the palate. Kitchiner begins *Peptic Precepts* by stating that it “will point out to the Reader, how to employ Art to afford that assistance to Nature, which, in Indisposition and Age, is so often required” (172). He recognizes that

“INDIGESTION will sometimes overtake the most experienced epicure” (173), and as a result creates a system for aiding digestion that both enables and enhances gourmandism. Kitchiner uses some of the same rhetoric that other gastronomers employ to distinguish gourmandism from gluttony, but he does so with the art of digestion as an additional goal alongside sensual pleasure. For example, he writes that “Some people seem to think, that the more plentifully they stuff themselves, the better they must thrive, and the stronger they must grow.” Kitchiner counters this kind of argument by claiming that “It is not the quantity that we swallow,—but that which is properly digested, which nourishes us” (187). The structure of this argument and counter-argument follows the same kind of logic used by gastronomers avoiding accusations of gluttony. Kitchiner’s emphasis on digestion as a form of pleasurable labor enhances the correlation between his gustatory aesthetics and middle-class productivity. Like Grimod, Kitchiner insists that proper chewing must be performed in order to avoid indigestion. He supplies a euphonic axiom to enforce the idea: “The sagacious *Gourmand* is ever mindful of his motto—‘Masticate, Denticate, Chump, Grind, and Swallow’” (301). But whereas Grimod sees the effect of chewing on digestion as secondary to its effect on taste, Kitchiner puts digestion on equal ground with sensual pleasure. He writes, “The pleasure of the *Palate*, and the health of the *Stomach*, are equally promoted by this salutary habit, which all should be taught to acquire in their infancy” (299). The art of digestion, for Kitchiner, is as important as the sensual goals of the gourmand. By making gourmandism into a productive activity that leads to a healthy social body, Kitchiner implies that good eating helps to uphold values of productive economy.

Contemporary readers did not fail to remark that these kinds of eating habits (figuring out how to avoid indigestion in service of the palate) resemble gluttony. In 1821 Richard Chenevix wrote a review of several gastronomical works for the *Edinburgh Review*, including books by Grimod and Kitchiner. Although Chenevix has much to say about *The Cook's Oracle* and its success, he gives very little space to a discussion of *Peptic Precepts*. He essentially dismisses the book's claims to effectiveness by saying, "We suspect, however, that in all dietetic directions, medical men prescribe pretty much according to what they find suits their own tastes." Suspicion of the book's subjective approach does not prevent Chenevix from offering one further remark about its aims: "a perusal of the work leaves us with the impression, that a considerable proportion of his time had been occupied in good eating, and the remainder in devising the means for releasing himself from the ill effects of repletion" (35: 62). Although this sly assessment of Kitchiner's motives might have some truth to it, Chenevix's previous comment about Kitchiner's methods just misses the mark. Kitchiner's precepts are based on what "suits his own taste," but he repeatedly counsels his readers to trust *their* own taste. His best advice is for readers to follow their own best advice, that given by their stomachs. This argument leads to the necessity for a variety of treatments, which brings us back to Chenevix's final assessment. The book does not simply set out to eliminate "the ill effects of repletion," but also to *justify* the time spent "occupied in good eating."

Although Kitchiner gives many "dietetic directions" throughout *Peptic Precepts*, he also recognizes that they will not work for everyone. He counsels readers to turn to their own stomachs in such cases: "Let every Man consult his Stomach;—to eat and drink such things—and in such quantities—as agree with that perfectly well, is wholesome for

him, whilst they continue to do so” (224). This advice essentially allows whatever kind of fare one deems easily digestible. And furthermore, Kitchiner emphasizes that one should vary such diet as soon as it stops working. The stomach, with its ever-changing desires, even overpowers the whimsy of fashion: “We all think *that is best, which We relish best*, and which agrees best with our Stomach:—in this,—Reason and Fashion, all powerful as they are on most occasions, yield, to the imperative caprices of the palate” (235). As an example of the kind of variety that is required for sound digestion, Kitchiner prints a copy of a bill of fare from a French restaurant. The bill of fare spans fifteen pages, and includes hundreds of items. Kitchiner places the bill of fare within a discussion of variety and its importance for avoiding indigestion, and by doing so he suggests that gourmandism exists not only for the purposes of pleasure. Good eating also leads to the productive goals of health and good digestion.

Gourmandism, then, is at its most productive when one eats what best suits one’s taste. Kitchiner has an explanation for this correspondence between taste and digestion, which is similar to that offered by Grimod years before: “we naturally detain upon our Palate those things which please it,—and the Meat we relish most, is consequently most broken down by chewing, and most intimately incorporated with the Saliva—this is the reason why what we desire most, we digest best” (296). This model of good eating presents the perfect alignment of pleasure and productivity. Desire and intimacy combine through the rational act of “Jaw-work” (300). Pleasure is not the end of gourmandism, but rather the means of achieving a productive goal. Kitchiner sees this as a solution to the criticism brought against gastronomers:

Here, is a sufficient answer, to the Folios which have sprung up from the Pens of cynical and senseless Scribblers—on whom Nature not having

bestowed a Palate, they have proscribed those pleasures they have not Sense to taste, or comprehend the wise purposes for which they were given to us, and

‘Compound for Sins they are inclin’d to,
By damning those they have no mind to.’ (296-7)¹⁶

Kitchiner simultaneously deflects criticism and provides a defense for gourmandism by lodging it within the art of digestion. This model of good eating functions on the same principles of economy that Kitchiner repeatedly uses in *The Art of Invigorating and Prolonging Life*. Good eating brings together pleasure and work so that both are accomplished at the same time, without any waste of energy. Gourmandism not only provides pleasure to the palate, but also brings about the more laudable goal of good health.

Gastronomy, Kitchiner and the Critics

While their own texts show gastronomers engaged in the project of espousing gourmandism, the index of their ideas’ distribution exists in the periodical press. And furthermore, the periodicals perform a function analogous to that of Kitchiner’s committee of taste, both for poetry and gastronomy.¹⁷ This shaping of taste reflects the efforts to mold class identity through aesthetics judgments, including gustatory ones.¹⁸ In these magazines, writers assess the value of gastronomy and ratify it as an emerging cultural development, while articulating different visions of class identity through the intermingling of aesthetic positions. In *Blackwood’s Magazine* in particular, gastronomy appears frequently as a subject of discussion. In the pages of the magazine, writers compete for the cultural capital offered by judgments of taste. *Blackwood’s* satirically performs Bourdieu’s “barbarous reintegration of aesthetic consumption into the world of

ordinary consumption,” but the satire nonetheless points toward the presence of that impulse. At the same time that *Blackwood's* registers gastronomy's cultural force, the magazine also stakes its own claim for a vision of good eating, one that is often at odds with Kitchiner's. The sharp distinctions between the two ideals reveal the ways in which food functions as a marker of class identity, and how periodical treatments of food diffuse through print culture more broadly.

In one of the earliest *Blackwood's* articles about gastronomy, gourmandism appears as a topic of seemingly universal agreement. In a review of *Tabella Cibaria*, John Gibson Lockhart argues that all can agree on food, whereas matters of literary taste create irreconcilable divisions. Acknowledging the often-bitter disagreements between journals, he writes that this subject is a “resting-place of universal harmony where the Edinburgh and the Quarterly are content to dwell together in unity” (7: 667). Although he leaves *Blackwood's* out of this unified space, Lockhart implicitly includes the magazine when he remarks that “the Cookery School and the Cockney School may be said to stand precisely at the two opposite extremes—unmingled contempt being on every occasion and from every quarter showered on the latter, while the former receives nothing but good words” (668). The Cockney School reference looks back on the attacks Lockhart himself leveled against Leigh Hunt, John Keats and others in a series of articles under the heading, “The Cockney School of Poetry,” published in *Blackwood's* three years prior, and integral to the magazine's inception and reputation. The “unmingled contempt... from every quarter” inaccurately reflects the actual critical reception of works by Hunt and Keats, but Lockhart asserts it anyway to justify his own (and *Blackwood's*) position. By claiming that all books of cookery naturally receive universal praise just as all works

from the Cockney School receive their due derision, Lockhart deliberately glosses over the cultural assumptions underlying both judgments. His attacks on the Cockney School result from beliefs about class and literary taste, as do his praises of the Cookery School. By arguing that all books of cookery naturally receive praise, Lockhart denies that his judgments about food result from particular class assumptions. But according to Lockhart, Macquin's value results not simply from his subject, but from his classical training. Keats and Hunt are uneducated pretenders, while Macquin, by contrast, appeals to "our classical and travelled readers" through his "very elegant versification" (674, 668). Lockhart suggests in closing that although the author is anonymous, "we dare say the author must be well known at one or other of the universities" (674). The praise for Macquin's book shows the influence that class identity plays in matters of taste, despite Lockhart's opposite assertion.

Lockhart himself substantiates the role of class in food matters when he reviews Kitchiner. Although Macquin fares well in *Blackwood's* thanks to his learning and sophistication, Kitchiner suffers a harsh attack. In the December 1821 issue, Lockhart reviews the third edition of *The Cook's Oracle*, and the criticism of Kitchiner emerges out of the same social tension behind the Cockney School attacks, which belies Lockhart's former claim that the Cookery School receives universal acclaim. Judgments about food rely not only on palatal preferences, but also the social implications driving such decisions. While individual food choices may seem to occur apart from a cultural context, the class conflict that repeatedly emerges in the formation of gastronomic discourse reinforces the notion, often voiced by gastronomers, that all elements of culture are inscribed in what and how we eat.¹⁹

Like the Cockney School attacks, the review of Kitchiner's book begins with a heading. However, the "Cookery School" of the previous article becomes instead "The Leg of Mutton School of Prose" (10: 563). By classing Kitchiner in a school, the review focuses less on Kitchiner's book, and instead becomes an indictment of his failure to fill a gap in English literature ("A good cookery book, in the higher sense of the word, is still a desideratum in our literature" [569]), and therefore an assessment on the state of English gastronomy. Lockhart's judgment about gastronomy as a discourse is indebted to his justification of class hierarchy. Whereas Kitchiner sees himself spreading the principles of gastronomy to the mass public, Lockhart sees an attempt to transgress the social order.

The *Blackwood's* review of Kitchiner fits into the magazine's larger attempt to define English taste. By classing Kitchiner in the "Leg of Mutton School of Prose," Lockhart brings to mind the Cockney School attacks, but also the "Leg of Mutton School of Poetry," from the June 1821 issue.²⁰ The article classes Edward Walker, author of *Fleurs, a Poem in Four Books*, into the newly established school since "it is the fashion of the present day to arrange poets into schools" (9: 346). Walker "wants the noble simplicity of imagination" associated with the Lake School, and "The Cockneys will have nothing to say to him, in the first place, Because his work contains nothing in praise of incest," so *Blackwood's* creates a new category (346). The school's characteristic quality is writing fawningly to a patron "who keeps a good table," in the hopes of "dining five times a week on hock and venison, at the small expense of acting as a toad-eater to the whole family" (346). Walker's imagination serves his bodily desires: "As he writes, the ghosts of digested haunches, in all their pristine obesity, arise in his prolific fancy" (347). The offense is not that he writes *about* food, but that he writes *for* food.

Blackwood's asserts its control in shaping these poetic schools, which is emphasized by the performative christening, "in the baptismal font of this our Magazine," of the Leg of Mutton School (346).

As the title of Lockhart's review alludes back to this article, the assessment of Kitchiner corresponds to the recognition of *Maga's* role in constructing the bases for judging poetic taste. The review's context in the rest of the issue also reinforces the connection between gastronomic judgments and *Blackwood's* investment in defining literary taste. The fictional editor, Christopher North, designedly shapes the December issue around the common theme of inter-periodical dispute. The issue's opening poem, "Christmas Chit-Chat," allegorically casts *Maga's* rise as a cure for national ignorance. It reminisces about *Blackwood's* battle with "A Serpent [who] had the power to charm the land," which turns out to be the *Edinburgh Review*. William Cobbett's *Political Register*, Leigh Hunt's *Examiner*, Richard Phillips' *Monthly Magazine*, Henry Colburn's *New Monthly Magazine*, and Taylor and Hessey's *London Magazine*, all receive mention in the litany of periodicals inferior to *Blackwood's*. North concludes by promising that *Maga* will continue its domination of the periodical press: "All other periodicals absurd / shall look, when out we sally primely dress'd / In Wisdom's great-coat, richly caped and furr'd... / And Criticism's stiff rattan in our hand" (10: 500). This facetious boasting is characteristic of *Blackwood's*, and it points toward Wilson's continued efforts to control and define the boundaries of public discourse. In the review of Kitchiner's text, gastronomy functions as another arena in which *Blackwood's* can wield its power.²¹

Immediately preceding the review of *The Cook's Oracle*, is "A Midsummer Night's Dream, in Blank Verse, by Blaise Fitztravesty, Esq," which reinforces the issue's

structural argument. The poem is prefaced by a dedicatory letter to North, whom Fitztravesty deems “Prince of Periodicals, and Monarch of Magaziners” (10: 557). He credits North with establishing the fashion of classing writers into schools: “All the world knows that you have indelibly fixed the name of The Cockney School upon a certain captious breed of sentimentalists in the Strand” (558). The “same sort of wit” is also responsible for “classing others as belonging to the Leg of Mutton School” (558). The simultaneous reflection on the two schools anticipates Lockhart’s review, which enhances the class association between Kitchiner and the Cockneys. The introductory letter continues to praise North for his editorship, and concludes by hoping not to join the ranks of those censured by “THE MAGAZINE” (557).

The poem, titled “Drouthiness,” is a parody of Byron’s “Darkness.” Instead of an apocalyptic vision of a world shrouded in perpetual darkness and severe famine, Fitztravesty’s world lacks water. The primary joke revolves around what an unpleasant place the world would be without alcohol; all the “pot-houses” would dry up, and no one would know what to do. This facetious idea, however, yields precedence to Fitztravesty’s larger purpose: to mirror and mock Byron’s vision. Yet by altering the subject from darkness to thirst, the parody glosses over the primary concern in Byron’s poem: the relationship between eating and social order. This obfuscation reinforces the claim that Lockhart makes in his review of Macquin. Byron’s poem shows what happens when social bonds dissolve, and forces us to recognize the material reality of eating (devouring the flesh of other animals). Without sunlight, people burn everything, so that “cities were consumed” (13). Byron parallels the insatiable desire for light with the lust for blood: “War, which for a moment was no more, / Did glut himself again” (38-9). At the same

time that war dissolves social bonds, individual eating reflects the same breakdown. Byron argues for a direct link between the individual sociability of the table and the systemic destruction of civilization. As war and fire consume the earth and its inhabitants, people eat alone: "... a meal was brought / With blood, and each sate sullenly apart / Gorging himself in gloom" (39-41). The archaic past tense of "sit" teases the satiety that such gorging will never bring, and the ambiguous pronoun, "himself," implies that eating alone is a kind of vampiric self-consumption. Gorging accomplishes nothing, as "the pang / Of famine fed upon all entrails" (43-4). Hunger both eats away at one's insides, and leads to cannibalism: "The meagre by the meagre were devour'd, / Even dogs assailed their masters." The only hero present in Byron's poem is the one dog who refuses to eat. He "sought out no food," and instead uses his mouth to lick his master's hand (46-7, 51). Byron contrasts this act of animal compassion with the human jaws that become tools of indiscriminate gorging and, therefore, the cause of mutual destruction.²²

By mocking this connection between eating and civilization, the parody of Byron's poem reinforces Lockhart's assumption about gastronomy. The faithful dog of "Darkness," who refuses to eat his master's corpse, and instead dies while affectionately licking his master's lifeless hand, transforms into a cat who will not betray his mistress because he seeks refreshment "From a pomatum-pot, and so he quell'd / The rage of thirst" (10: 562). In "Darkness," two men survive and pile "a mass of holy things / For an unholy usage," only to die when gazing upon one another: "Ev'n of their mutual hideousness they died, / Unknowing who he was upon whose brow / Famine had written Fiend." In "Drouthiness," the men heap "a mass of pots and mugs / For unavailing usage," namely, to lick off any remaining liquid. When they gaze on one another, they do

not die, but merely grin, “Discovering how upon each foolish face / Shyness had written Quiz.” Fitztravesty’s parody thus ridicules the notion that food plays a constitutive role in the structures of social organization. As Lockhart asserts in his review of Macquin, the parody suggests that gastronomy is a discourse free from the ideological sparring that occurs in discussions of other matters like poetry. Coming directly before the review of *The Cook’s Oracle*, the parody teaches *Blackwood’s* readers how to interpret the review. Although the issue’s structural argument attempts to uphold gastronomy’s status as a “resting-place of universal harmony” between journals, the review itself performs the opposite function.

Lockhart opens, however, not by assailing Kitchiner’s appeals to the middling classes, but by attacking his palate. Yet as he proceeds, the attack on Kitchiner’s palate cannot be separated from the class assumptions underlying Lockhart’s broader criticism. He acknowledges that Kitchiner “is a very hale and praise-worthy person indeed, possessing an excellent appetite and liberal mind, blending considerable knowledge with strong powers of digestion, and uniting the stomach of a horse to the nobler attributes of man” (10: 563). He credits the view of gourmandism as an activity of mind and body (appetite and mind, knowledge and digestion, stomach and nobler attributes), but already with a tone of sarcasm. Once we get to the “stomach of a horse,” Lockhart’s mockery is clear. While he might accept gourmandism as the mutual engagement of sense and intellect, he believes that Kitchiner lacks the finesse of “that delicate and refined discrimination of the palatal organs which forms the very basis of the philosophy of the stew-pan” (563). And in fact, he claims that Kitchiner’s powers of digestion are “perfectly inconsistent” with a sensitive palate. He may be able to “to appreciate with

perfect accuracy the merits or defects of any give dish of beef and cabbage—to shine as a connoisseur on Yorkshire-pudding—a dilettante on bubble-and-squeak—or to descant with much precision on the scientific preparation of roly-poly dumplings, or the mystical union of goose and apple-sauce”—all of which are marked as unsophisticated English fare—but “to that exquisite and transcendental ‘*gout*’ which marks the most complicated dishes of a master, we take leave to consider him an utter stranger” (563). The unstated criticism, hinted at by the distinctly French “transcendental ‘*gout*,’” is that Kitchiner does not understand French cuisine. This inability stems from an apparent class difference—Kitchiner, perceived as a professional man writing to lower-level workers,²³ lacks access to the fineries of Paris dining rooms and its newly-developing restaurants.²⁴ Although Lockhart appears to merely disagree with Kitchiner’s palatal judgments, the unstated class implications drive both their decisions.

Lockhart’s implicit class-based assessment of Kitchiner’s unsophisticated palate becomes clearer as he explains in detail why a strong stomach is incompatible with a sophisticated palate. Mimicking Kitchiner’s aphoristic style, Lockhart claims that “It is an axiom, founded on experience, that strength in the digestive organs is never found united to delicacy of perception in the palatal ones; or, in other words, that nicety of taste is found to be uniformly connected with delicacy of stomach” (10: 563). The chiasmic structure of the logic emphasizes his insistence that Kitchiner can “never” achieve a refined palate as long as his stomach is strong. His experiential argument follows that those with strong stomachs find everything pleasing to the palate because they can digest everything, while those with weaker stomachs must be discerning in order to ensure proper digestion. Lockhart builds his view of palatal excellence on the necessity of weak

digestion. Using the metaphor of a watch, he claims, “as the hands of a watch are found to indicate the existing state of the internal machinery, so is the acuteness of our taste dependant on the internal process of digestion” (564). The problem with this analogy is that acuteness of taste, for Lockhart, is the result and indicator of a feeble constitution, while presumably an accurate watch indicates a well-functioning internal mechanism. Kitchiner employs a similar metaphor (not in response to Lockhart), arguing that “THE STOMACH is the mainspring of our System,—if it be not sufficiently wound up... the whole business of Life, will, in proportion, be ineffectively performed” (*Cook’s Oracle* 4th ed. 7-8). Lockhart’s view directly contradicts Kitchiner’s unification of gourmandism and health, and instead relies on an older model of the fashionable invalid. The two positions are figuratively represented by the productive body of the middle class professional (like Kitchiner himself), and the inert, aristocratic “votaries of fashion,” whom Kitchiner repeatedly censures.

As a result of this fundamental disagreement, Lockhart concludes, “we take it to be evident, that the vigour and vivacity of bowels, by which the Doctor is distinguished, are quite sufficient to incapacitate him for the task he has undertaken” (10: 564). For Lockhart, productivity signals a lack of refinement, which leads not to a productive body, but to an overstuffed one: “Swallow his infernal preparations, and you will live the miserable and unwieldy victim of corpulence, or, by a more merciful dispensation, die at once under the dietetic inflictions of this culinary Hottentot” (564). Whatever medical credentials Kitchiner may claim fail to convince Lockhart of the nutritional value of the system. Lockhart directly points out that Kitchiner *fails* his profession by transgressing its

boundaries. He does not accept Kitchiner's system of eating as a kind of holistic medicine; it represents an overextension of professional capacity:

Why must he exchange the spatula for the carving-knife—the pill, the bolus, the electuary, for the rump, the cutlet, the ragout? Are there no boundaries to the erratic flights of genius in these days of universal acquirement, and are we destined yet to see the astronomer descending to the kitchen from his 'watch-tower in the sky,' squinting with one eye at the spit, and simultaneously watching, with equal ardour, the transit of Venus, and the simmering of the turkey? (563).

The focus on the tools of one's trade as the basis for professional identification resonates with Lockhart's suggestion to John Keats to abandon poetry and go "back to the shop... back to 'plasters, pills, and ointment boxes.'" As with the diagnosis of Keats's "Metromanie," the same ailment that Lockhart believed led to "farm-servants and unmarried ladies... [and] footmen" composing poetry, here the critic asserts that Kitchiner's medical credentials have no place in the kitchen (*RR C*: 95). Kitchiner's attempt to use his medical training to inform his knowledge of cookery is, for Lockhart, yet another sign of the decay of social stratification. The principles of industry and productivity, which uphold both Kitchiner's professionalism and his gourmandism, appear to Lockhart as the trespassing of the middle ranks in the refined realm of cuisine.

What constitutes gastronomical credibility has to do with the palate, but also with class identity. The problem with the current state of gastronomy, for Lockhart, is that progress has stagnated. He claims that despite the "the proud and glorious march of science and philosophy" "... little improvement has taken place in the system of our national cookery" (10: 565). Kitchiner fails both in his attempt to perfect the current system, and in his inability to recognize the need to reinvent the system. Kitchiner's

blindness results both from his unpracticed palate, and, once again, from his class position. Lockhart writes,

For the rich, there is no *national cookery*. The materials of our dishes are furnished by all the regions of the globe. In the compass of a single ragout are congregated productions of every climate, and of every soil... It is only to the management of these extensive materials, to certain specific and customary combinations of them, that the term *national* can be applied. The diet of the poor, indeed, is, and must be, regulated by the productions of the country in which they live. (566)

Lockhart classes himself among “the rich” (“*our dishes*”), and seems to exclude Kitchiner from such company. And this exclusion leads to Kitchiner’s perceived close-mindedness. His receipts rely on national foods, as opposed to national methods. The reviewer compares cookery to literature, claiming that the latter “has been raised to its present eminence, not more by the gigantic efforts of our native genius, than by an intimate knowledge of the beauties and excellence of the literature of foreign nations” (566). Kitchiner’s nationalism, then, is well-intentioned, but misplaced. In order to reach the heights of gastronomy that Lockhart imagines, Kitchiner would need to partake of comparable foreign foodstuffs, from which he is, however, excluded because of his class status.

Lockhart concludes by turning his focus away from Kitchiner’s class identity and toward that of Kitchiner’s readers. His discontent stems less from Kitchiner’s claims about gourmandism and more from the attempt to spread the principles of gastronomy to a broad audience. Kitchiner may not express the particular gustatory sophistication that would please Lockhart, but he nonetheless hopes to spread some form of culinary expertise to the middling classes. Lockhart wants to dismiss the book as nothing more than an example of bad taste, but he cannot hide his contempt for its success among

readers. He ends the review by simultaneously recognizing its success and condemning those who champion it: “We have no doubt it has excited many smiles among the nymphs of the scullery, and even in the more enlightened society of the housekeeper’s room. To the *beau monde* of these regions, therefore, we consign it. It is there, we believe, the Doctor most wishes to be popular, and we are sure it is there only he will succeed” (10: 569). Through the contemptuous ridicule of the working class “*beau monde*,” Lockhart nonetheless manages to identify Kitchiner’s goal: to spread gourmandism to other classes. Although he despises this intention, Lockhart’s review helps to legitimize gastronomy as a discourse in contemporary print culture, and consequently spread its principles more broadly. Gastronomy did not emerge as a monolithic, univocal position, but rather as a series of positions occupied by various people and institutions. The periodical press plays a powerful role in shaping this discourse. Matters of gastronomy offer the writers of *Blackwood’s* a way to articulate their control over public discourse. The shaping of the periodical landscape occurs contemporaneously with the emergence of gastronomy. Both processes uphold and support one another. Here we see the same view of the importance of good eating, but with a fundamental difference on what constitutes such practices and who should have access to them.²⁵

In the *Noctes Ambrosianae* series, *Blackwood’s* dramatizes the reactionary form of gourmandism that emerges from the responses to Kitchiner. At the close of *Noctes* II, Ambrose himself appears, only to excuse the bill, claiming, “I cannot think of making any charge for a few hundred oysters, and a mere gallon of gin” (11: 489). The extreme indulgence serves primarily for humor, but it also provides the writers of *Blackwood’s* an

opportunity to reflect on the cultural implications for gourmandism. In *Noctes XVIII*, a few hundred more oysters are consumed, along with much else. A seating chart gives a clear picture of the kind of excess warned against by Kitchiner (Fig. 2). The feast provides the opportunity for a scene in which different class affiliations correspond to one's level of gustatory prowess, just as they relate to literary value. Upon seeing the supper laid out for them, Malachai Mullion, North's secretary, exclaims, "This *is* a supper... What would Barry Cornwall say to such a sight?" O'Doherty responds, "Nothing. He'd faint on the spot" (17: 117). Although initially praised in *Blackwood's* for his *A Sicilian Story* (1820), Barry Cornwall (the pseudonym of Bryan Waller Procter) became increasingly linked with the Cockney School. (In a review of *The Flood of Thessaly* (1823), Lockhart assails Cornwall for following the "great craze of the Cockneys," namely, "to be Greekish" [13: 534]). While the Cockneys suffered criticism for sensually indulgent poetry, O'Doherty's comment implies that a Cockney would not understand how to indulge in the appropriate, gentlemanly fashion—that is, through bodily excess. While writers like Cornwall or Keats combine aesthetic and gustatory taste, the writers of *Blackwood's* deem such an approach vulgar, a sign of class inferiority. The proper mode of gustatory consumption is excess, while disinterestedness should apply only to works of art.

While gastronomers like Macquin and Kitchiner espouse the opposite belief, the members of the *Noctes* feast nonetheless borrow their techniques for good eating. Morgan O'Doherty launches into a disquisition on the relative merits of different kinds of oysters: "The large oyster is like your large beauty, melting, luxurious, and soul-soothing. The small, like your small beauties, piquant, savoury, soul-awakening." After meditating

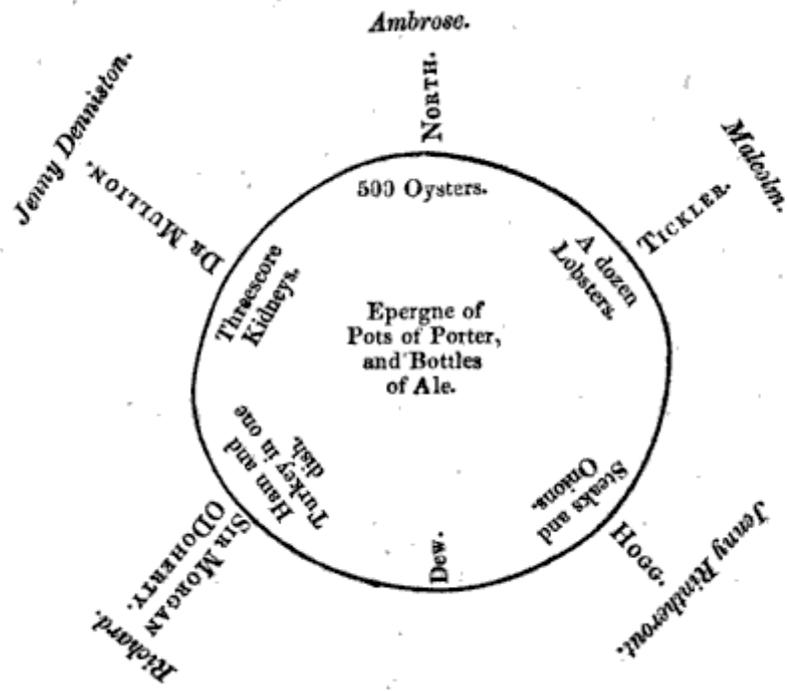


Fig. 2

Seating Chart from the dinner scene in *Noctes XVIII*

on the qualities of his oysters, he quickly swallows a dozen. James Hogg, like Barry Cornwall, serves to show a lack of gastronomic knowledge. His ignorance of and distaste for oysters is “proof that the population of Scotland is not yet civilized.” North and Tickler have more discriminate palates. The scene ends with the pair giving their preferred suppers (devilled kidneys for Tickler, and plain lobster salad for North), and finally a disagreement between North and O’Doherty on the best way to prepare devilled woodcock:

NORTH.

If I be inclined to be luxurious, give me devilled woodcock—cayenned—curry-powdered—truffled—madeiraed—seville-oranged—catsupped—soyed—

ODOHERTY.

Crushed with its tail and brains—beaten to a paste—seasoned with mace and lemon-peel—

NORTH.

—heated—

ODOHERTY.

—with spirits of wine, if you love me—

NORTH.

—in a silver stew-pan, saturated with its piquant juice, and gently liquified with the huile of Aix, city of oil and amphitheatre. It is heavenly. (17: 119)

The scene dramatizes the construction of gastronomical discourse. Different nationalities and class affiliations compete for control of gourmandism. North and O’Doherty harmonize together to create a union of voices which embrace a class-biased, exclusionary indulgence in favor of Kitchiner’s modest, industrious vision of good eating. Those like Cornwall or Kitchiner, who might aspire to gastronomical excellence, become the target for ridicule. The union of sensual indulgence and poetry embraced by the Cockneys emerges out of the class positioning substantiated by gastronomy, and as such poses a threat to *Maga’s* control of taste.

By evaluating gastronomical works and forming their own standards of gustatory (as well as literary) taste, the periodical press serves as the locus for the articulation of gourmandism as well as an index of how these ideas penetrated Romantic discourse. The familiar effect of reviews and reviewers on Romantic poets applies as well to writers of gastronomy. As with discussions of literary taste, the gustatory debates in the periodicals both show the importance of food discourse to class identity, and reinforce the function of such discourse. The question of how food and class identity relate to the status of individual bodies becomes particularly salient when attempting to account for the heaviest man in the world, Daniel Lambert, whose corpulent body paradoxically came to signify for English temperance and moderation. The periodical press shapes the various answers to this question.

Notes to Chapter II

¹ This is the fundamental aspect of what Jerome McGann calls “Romantic Ideology”: “One of the basic illusions of Romantic Ideology is that only a poet and his works can transcend a corrupting appropriation by ‘the world’ of politics and money. Romantic poetry ‘argues’ this (and other) illusions repeatedly, and in the process it ‘suffers’ the contradictions of its own illusions and the arguments it makes for them. The readers of such works can benefit from them by turning this experiential and *aesthetic* level of understanding into a self-conscious and critical one” (13). The job of the literary critic is to avoid “an uncritical absorption in Romanticism’s own self-representations” (1). McGann situates Romantic poetics in its historical and social context by focusing on figures of escapism from those conditions. Attempting to evade the social conditions of the production of art necessitates recognition of that context: “The works of Romantic art... ‘transcend’ their particular socio-historical position only because they are completely incorporated to that position, only because they have localized themselves.” (2). More recent work by scholars like Jeffrey Cox and Nicholas Roe have approached the question of Romanticism’s social engagement through direct expressions, instead of viewing aesthetics as the medium for sublimation of the political and social realms. Gastronomy opens itself to both avenues of critique. On the one hand, statements of food discourse are inherently political. And as they inform key elements of Romantic aesthetics, these articulations of food’s socio-political symbolic work also subsume the category of aesthetics into that of class and history.

² Johnson's *Dictionary* defines the former as "a greedy eater," "to gormandize" as "to feed ravenously," and "gormandizer" as "a voracious eater." Likewise, he defines "glutton" as "one who indulges himself too much in eating." John Locke, in *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693), writes that one must inculcate good eating habits from infancy through childhood, because "many are made *Gormands* and *Gluttons* by Custom, that were not so by Nature" (10). Similarly, in Richard Bradley's influential eighteenth-century cookbook, *The Country Housewife and Lady's Director* (1727), he offers a recipe using the "gourmandine-pea," which he points out "one may call, in *English*, the Glutton's Pea" (2: 15).

³ Accum was an influential chemist and author of the controversial tract, *A Treatise on the Adulterations of Food* (1820), which argued that London bakers, brewers and others were often poisoning their patrons by adulterating (sometimes knowingly, other times not) their products. *Blackwood's Magazine* registers the stir caused by Accum's work by printing a "Letter from an Elderly Gentlewoman to Mr Christopher North." In it, the fictional Mrs. Trollope writes that she met Accum, identified as "Death in the Pot," so named after the Biblical quotation affixed to the title page of the book's second edition. The fictional Accum proceeds to inform Mrs. Trollope, "YOU ARE POISONED," and gives her the "damning proofs" that "your wine-merchant, your brewer, your baker, your confectioner, your grocer, aye, your very butcher are in league against you" (6: 622). *Blackwood's*' satirical portrayal of Accum's warnings about food adulteration was intended to ridicule the work, yet it also shows the pervasiveness of Accum's influence.

⁴ Berchoux coined the term in his poem, *La gastronomie* (1801). An English translation appeared in 1810 under the title, *Gastronomy; or, the Bon-vivant's Guide*.

⁵ Since the terminology serves such an important role in gastronomical discourse, I follow suit in how I employ the different terms. I reserve "gourmand" and "gourmandism" to refer to the practitioners and practice of good eating as an exercise in both sensual pleasure and aesthetic enjoyment. When using "gastronomer," I'm emphasizing someone who *writes* about food, not just *practices* good eating. Likewise, by "gastronomy" I refer to the theory and writing about food, rather than the practice. Here I follow Macquin by adhering to the etymological root, *nomos*, meaning "rule" or "law," from the verb, *nemein*, to "manage" or "hold." Gastronomy, then, refers to the discourse that "rules" or "manages" the principles of good eating. While these distinctions might seem arbitrary—I could easily choose "epicure," or "gourmet" instead of "gourmand," for example—I stress its importance because it underscores my attention to gastronomy's *emergence* as a discourse within a complex set of competing discourses during the first few decades of the nineteenth century.

⁶ In his *English Etymology* (1783), for example, George William Lemon makes this connection, also noting, "the word in its primary sense... only meant *a person born in a distant country*: it was indeed afterwards absurdly perverted into a term of reproach." He refers for this point to John Cleland's *The Way to Things by Words* (1766), in which

Cleland writes in defense of his exploration of the so-called “language of barbarians,” namely “The Antient Celtic, or, Primitive Language of Europe” (1).

⁷ In *The Etymology of the Words of the Greek Language* (1860), Valpy cites Johannes Daniel von Lennep’s work, *Etymologicum Linguae Græcaæ* (1790), who also agrees with Strabo’s explanation. Valpy also suggests a few slightly different glosses: that it comes from the Greek word for “one who has a rough voice,” the Arabic *barbar*, “to murmur,” or the Chaldean *bara*, “abroad” (23).

⁸ Nathan Bailey, in *An Universal Etymological English Dictionary* (1721), and Lemon, in *English Etymology* (1783), both follow Skinner.

⁹ All references to Grimod are from Denise Gigante’s edited volume, *Gusto: Essential Writings in Nineteenth-century Gastronomy*.

¹⁰ Kitchiner was born in 1778 in London, after his father had come to the city to work as a porter at a coal wharf. The elder Kitchiner eventually worked his way into the coal trade, and made a sizeable fortune by the time of his death in 1794. At the age of nineteen, the younger Kitchiner inherited £60,000. While this sum ensured Kitchiner’s financial stability, its source in mercantile business marks him as middle class. See Elspeth Davies’ *Dr Kitchiner and the Cook’s Oracle* (1992) and Tom Bridge and Colin Cooper English’s *Doctor William Kitchiner: Regency Eccentric* (1992).

¹¹ *Peptic Precepts* and *The Art of Invigorating and Prolonging Life* were first published separately in 1821, but from 1822 onward, they appeared together in a single volume with the titles combined.

¹² The career of Lord Byron, for example, demonstrates this instability. He begins his poetic career by publishing *Hours of Idleness* (1807), essentially as the product of an aristocrat’s leisure. By the time of his death, the name “Byron” had become a brand of sorts that signified immediate commercial success for his publisher, John Murray, and Byron himself began to see poetry as a source of income. Similarly, William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge struggle throughout their careers with the tension between aesthetic autonomy and professionalism (see Mark Schoenfield’s *The Professional Wordsworth* and Brian Goldberg’s *The Lake Poets and Professional Identity*). John Keats and the writers of the “*Hunt Circle*,” share a set of other concerns. Unlike Wordsworth and Coleridge, both of whom lived their lives with relative financial independence, Keats contemplated abandoning poetry to pursue a profession in medicine toward the end of his life. For Keats, even if he views poetry as a valuable profession, he still faces the material reality of needing to eat. The increasing numbers of periodicals and magazines also made it possible for more people to earn a living as a writer. In all of these realms, writing was in the process of becoming a viable profession, but it still failed to carry with it the sense of legitimacy it would continue to gain throughout the nineteenth century.

¹³ For a recent discussion of the concept, see David Marshall, who discusses disinterestedness as a key term for aesthetic theory beginning with Shaftesbury and continuing through the twentieth century. In his study, Marshall looks at various forms of aesthetic experience in the eighteenth century with attention to experiences that are *not* detached or disinterested. One could certainly pursue this strand of aesthetic theory in relation to nineteenth-century gastronomy, which at times calls for a detached, reflective experience through the language of aesthetics, but ultimately recognizes that gourmandism requires a greater focus on bodily aesthetic engagement.

¹⁴ Maintaining the health of the body also ensures maximal pleasure: “Pleasing the Palate is the main end in most books of Cookery, but *it is my aim to blend the toothsome with the wholesome*; for, after all, however the hale Gourmand may at first differ from me in opinion, the latter, is the chief concern; since if he be even so entirely devoted to the pleasure of eating, as to think of no other, still the care of his Health becomes part of that;—if he is Sick, he cannot relish his Food” (4th ed. 5).

¹⁵ Brillat-Savarin attempted to break down the different stages of tasting in *The Physiology of Taste* (1825). He writes that “taste gives rise to sensations of three distinct orders, namely, *direct* sensation, *complete* sensation, and *considered* sensation.” The direct sensation refers to “the first impression arising out of the immediate actions of the organs of the mouth;” the complete sensation arises when the food “passes to the back of the mouth, assailing the whole organ with its taste and perfume;” and the considered sensation “is the judgment passed by the brain on the impressions transmitted to it by the organ” (42). This addition of the reflective or “considered” sensation to the process of eating allows Brillat-Savarin to claim, as do other gastronomers, that eating is an intellectual as well as sensual activity.

¹⁶ The couplet Kitchiner borrows from Samuel Butler’s *Hudibras*.

¹⁷ See Lucy Newlyn, for example, who argues that critics faced the task of navigating and shaping a new system of authorial support as patronage became outmoded: “Criticism rose as patronage fell, yet some of the features of a system of patronage were still discernible in the practices of reviewers, who acquired the status of disinterested judges from their position of anonymity” (27). Writers in *Blackwood’s* at times presented this process analogously to cooking. A fictional correspondent hopes that North will soon review Maria Eliza Rundell’s *Domestic Cookery*, and “carve down the materials of [the] feast, and send them up to the snow-white monthly-spread table-cloth of Maga, in the form of *entremets*, not over-much at once, but prettily dished and garnished by some of the tasteful *traiteurs*, who have demonstrated their excellence in your employ” (10: 558). Similarly, *Blackwood’s* writers “are too skilful restaurateurs not to understand how to cater to [the public’s] taste” (9: 345). Edward Bulwer Lytton makes the same point in *Paul Clifford*, when Peter Mac Grawler, former editor of the *Asinaeum* becomes the cook to Paul’s gang of highwaymen. One of the thieves remarks, “Come, Mac, you carve this ham... you have had practice in cutting up” (387).

¹⁸ See Klancher, 47-75.

¹⁹ Brillat-Savarin's well-known axiom best sums up this position: "*Dis-moi ce que tu manges, je te dirai ce que tu es* [Tell me what you eat, and I will tell you who you are]." Number five of twenty aphorisms that open Brillat-Savarin's work, this particular one remains the most remembered. In subsequent editions of the work, it often appeared on the title page. Massimo Montanari's recent work is indebted to this insight. He explains that "We only too readily associate the idea of food with the idea of nature," when "the dominant values of the food system" in fact "result from and represent cultural processes dependent upon the taming, transformation, and reinterpretation of Nature" (xi). At all stages (production, preparation, and consumption) "food takes shape as a decisive element of human identity and as one of the most effective means of expressing and communicating that identity" (xii).

²⁰ Strout tentatively suggests Lockhart as the author, but claims that the "style is more like Wilson's" (80).

²¹ In addition to appearing within the context of these rivalries, the Kitchiner review emerges specifically out of *Blackwood's* frequent attacks on the Cockney School. The December issue also marks the beginning of Lockhart's "Ancient National Melodies" series. In the inaugural article, he contrasts the "Old Cockney"—who "with plays and poems never troubled his pate"—and the "New Cockney" of Leigh Hunt's ilk, who "writes Essays, which he swears are better than Addison's or Locke's" and "Who thinketh himself a Homer" (10: 555). *Blackwood's* also published a second December issue in 1821, which included the article, "Historical View of the Rise, Progress, Decline, and Fall of the Edinburgh Review," as well as the review of Shelley's *Adonais*. In this context, the review of Kitchiner forms yet another piece of *Maga's* continuing jockeying for control of how literary discourse shapes class identity.

²² Byron repeatedly uses non-eaters as figures of heroism in his poetry. In *Don Juan*, for example, Juan refuses to dine on Pedro, although, in a darkly comic reversal of *Darkness*, he does feed, albeit futilely, on his dog. Tom Mole argues that Conrad's abstemiousness in *The Corsair* functions as an assertion of self-control. Denise Gigante reads Byron's deployments of vampirism and cannibalism as critiques of consumer capitalism (*Taste* 117-38). In "Darkness," Byron's depiction of social breakdown concomitant with the departure of taste collapses these concerns into one vision.

²³ The title page of Kitchiner's first edition explains that the book's "receipts" are "the result of actual experiments instituted in the kitchen of a physician, with the purpose of "saving expense to housekeepers, and trouble to servants." Later editions expressly stated that said experiments took place "in the kitchen of William Kitchiner, M.D.," making his name and professional credentials part of the claim to the book's efficacy. Elsewhere Kitchiner makes clear that his goal is "to bring the enjoyments and indulgencies of the Opulent within the middle Ranks of Society" (4th ed. 2), whether by educating those members of the middle ranks themselves, or their servants. In a review of Louis Eustache

Ude's *The French Cook*, *The Southern Review* calls Kitchiner the "oracle of the Bourgeoisie" (3: 416).

²⁴ For a recent history of the restaurant's origins in pre- and post-revolutionary France, see Rebecca Spang's *The Invention of the Restaurant*.

²⁵ Looking at the *London Magazine* review of *The Cook's Oracle*, by John Hamilton Reynolds, similarly points toward the governing ethos of that magazine. The review opens by remarking on Kitchiner's fortuitous name. It is a name "above all disguises," and he has "greatly recognized the genius of his name by taking boldly the path to which it points" (4: 432). This confluence between name and life extends into the confluence of mind and matter. Reynolds casts reading the book as analogous to eating the food described in it. Thus, "the style is a *piquant* sauce to the solid food of the instructions," and "the steam of [Kitchiner's] rich sentences rises about our senses like the odours of flowers around the imagination of a poet" (439, 432). The physical attributes of the food blend with Kitchiner's stylistic tendencies, thereby affirming the connection between sense and intellect. "Odours" exist in the "imagination." This aesthetic principle is characteristic of the *London* and the writers of the Cockney School—*Blackwood's* attacks often focus on this "vulgar" tendency. The integration of aesthetic and gustatory taste culminates in the review's final assertion: "If we were to be cast away upon a desert island, and could only carry one book ashore, we should take care to secure the Cook's Oracle; for, let victuals be ever so scarce... Who could starve with such a larder of reading?" (439). Although Reynolds makes the assertion facetiously, it nonetheless points toward a concern that runs throughout the *London's* early volumes: to affirm the blending of mind and matter, sense and intellect, as a valuable aesthetic principle. In the same issue, Charles Lamb's "Witches, and Other Night-Fears," draws a connection the quality of one's dreams and the creative, poetic faculty. Elia confesses that while Coleridge dreams of Xanadu and the Abyssinian maid, he "cannot muster a fiddle" (387). When he is inspired by reading Barry Cornwall to dream of the sea, Elia's dream ends on the Thames. Lamb thus draws the connection between sensory stimulus and creative work, even as he self-deprecatingly laments his own lack of imagination. Part II of De Quincey's *Confession* also appears in the same issue, and it too investigates the confluence of sensory input and imaginative labor, which I discuss below in Chapter IV.

CHAPTER III

CLINGING TO THE BODY: CORPULENCE AND THE STRUGGLE FOR AESTHETIC TRANSCENDENCE

In the years of the Napoleonic Wars, caricatures of the French leader abounded in England. In three prints published during the spring of 1806, Napoleon was featured alongside an English foe in the shape of Daniel Lambert, the heaviest man in the world, weighing 739 pounds when he died three years later. In the print, alternatively titled “Roast Beef and French Soup,” or “The English Lamb*** and the French Tiger,” Lambert’s massive girth dwarfs the diminutive Corsican (Fig. 3). The caption explains that the English Lamb refers to “Daniel Lambert, who at the age of 36 weighed above 50 stone 14 pounds to the Stone—measured 3 yards 4 inches round the Body and 1 yard 1 inch round the leg is 5 feet 9 inches.” The pun on Lambert’s name belies his strength. Here, the Tiger will not fell the Lamb. English might is rooted in the constitution of Lambert’s body. His meal of bread, beer, and the “roast beef of Old England,” is contrasted with Napoleon’s meager broth, which presumably accounts for his gaunt appearance and small frame.¹ Despite—or rather because of—Lambert’s monstrous bulk, here he stands in for John Bull, the embodiment of English identity. In another print, “Bone and Flesh, or John Bull in Moderate Condition,” Napoleon, once again dwarfed by Lambert, asks if he is “a descendant from the great Joss of China” (Fig. 4). Lambert’s response reinforces his status as a typical, stout Englishman: “No! Sir! I am a true-born



Fig. 3

“Roast Beef and French Soup” or “The English Lamb*** and the French Tiger” (April 1806) by Ansell (Charles Williams), featuring Daniel Lambert and Napoleon eating their respective national dishes



Fig. 4

“Bone and Flesh; or, John Bull in Moderate Condition” by Knight (April 15, 1806). At Lambert’s feet is an advertisement for his exhibition.

Englishman from the County of Leicester, a quiet Mind and a good Constitution, nourished by the free air of Great Britain, makes every Englishman thrive.”² These prints satirically present Lambert’s body as emblematically English, yet through that satire they also reveal the desire to account for his excessive corpulence and the excesses of consumption that it signifies. By turning him into an image of John Bull, with the characteristic dietary habits and bodily constitution of a patriotic citizen, these images normalize what is otherwise an abnormal specimen.³

In contrast to these satirical attempts to register Lambert’s bulk as representative of English identity, corpulence signifies throughout the eighteenth century as a sign of rampant bodily and monetary consumption. In a society driven by the compulsion to produce and consume at ever-increasing rates, the specter of corpulence presents a paradoxical bind that eventually produces the ideal of self-control as its solution. The success of the British empire rests on its ability to expand through production, but with this success comes the prospect of over-consumption. Fears about the ills of luxury permeate much writing from the period.⁴ Accounts of excessive corpulence also circulate widely, along with possible solutions to the problem. George Cheyne’s writings on diet and regimen gained particular credence since the author himself struggled with weight, and overcame it.⁵ The story of Thomas Wood—who exceeded 400 pounds due to excessive eating and drinking, and later regained his slender form through abstemiousness—exemplifies the ideal of self-control. Since “eating like a gentleman encoded the promise of becoming one” (Dacome 199), dietary discipline could result in the form of a gentleman, even amidst the dangers of luxury and over-consumption.

Lambert's case is unique because, by all accounts, he did eat like a gentleman. Statements of his moderate appetite appear as afterthoughts, as though the connection between his body and his eating habits should not matter. Corpulence was linked to variations in individuals' physical constitutions, but in cases of extreme obesity, excessive appetite would be the first explanation. Yet in writings about Lambert, the simplest answer to the origin of his enigmatic form—that he eats more than other people—tends to be ignored.⁶ The focus rests on Lambert's present body, not how it came to be. The lack of this concern is particularly striking considering that during the period when Lambert was gaining hundreds of pounds,⁷ England faced its worst food shortages in modern history. The disastrous harvests of 1794 and 1795, combined with the effects of war with France, led to more than one hundred percent increases in the price of wheat.⁸ These economic realities created famine conditions in several parts of England.⁹ The ensuing food riots were inevitable.¹⁰ Yet even as Lambert lives through this period (indeed, Lambert's biographies connect the 1795 food riots in Birmingham with the failure of his apprenticeship as an engraver, and food riots occurred in Lambert's hometown of Leicester in 1800), the apparent incongruity between food shortage and massive corpulence never causes much notice.

Whereas George III's coach was mobbed by protesters yelling, "Bread, Bread!" and "No famine!," Lambert's corpulence produces no such reactions.¹¹ Amidst these food disturbances, Lambert continued to grow in bulk and eventually profited from his size. For the last three years of his life, Lambert exhibited himself in London and around the country. While Lambert's corpulence ought to signify excessive consumption, his audiences enact another kind of consumption. Visitors travel from all over the country to

gaze on the marvel. In G.H. Wilson's account of Lambert's life, he notes, "Many of the visitors seemed incapable of gratifying their curiosity to its full extent, and called again and again to behold to what an immense magnitude the human figure is capable of attaining; nay, one gentleman, a banker in the city, jocosely observed, that he had fairly had a pound's worth" (*Eccentric Mirror* 14). The inability of Lambert's viewers to achieve satiety mirrors the insatiable appetite signified by his corpulence. In this way, Lambert incites anxiety about multiple forms of consumption. The obsession with his exact dimensions points toward the desire to classify this abnormal body, as well as concerns about the amount of fabric needed to clothe him, or the amount of wood needed to build a special carriage for him (and at his death, the amount of wood required for his coffin). Yet even as Lambert's body creates anxiety about its capacity to consume, his audiences consume him voraciously. The fascination with Lambert results from his emblematic over-consumption, and he also incites that same impulse to consume.

In this chapter I argue that Lambert's body poses a serious threat to the claims of gourmands who insist that appetite can be disciplined without sacrificing pleasure. Corpulence represents the endpoint of gluttony, and yet the accounts of Lambert paint a different picture. If corpulence so readily points toward excessive appetite, why would accounts of the most corpulent man alive make such an effort to represent him as a model of temperance? I suggest that this results from the class anxieties that Lambert evokes. Luxury and intemperance result from wealth, but Lambert was a jailer, hardly a lucrative profession. He did not want to exhibit himself, but decided it was unavoidable because of financial difficulties.¹² By becoming a commodity, Lambert reminds that the middle classes still labor with their bodies. A rich man's corpulence is a badge of honor, a sign

of one's ability consume with abandon. This image of indulgence is what gourmands like Kitchiner hope to distance themselves from. So when a typical middle class Englishman expands to over 700 pounds, the implications of excessive consumption fail to fit into the already established class assumptions.

Viewed more broadly in the context of Romanticism, Lambert's unruly body threatens the category of subjectivity itself. Particularly in Lord Byron's conception of material aesthetics, corpulence marks the beginning of the self's dissolution. Throughout his career, Byron attempts to manipulate how his body signifies in public discourse. Through portraiture, through public acts like swimming the Hellespont and lying on Charles Churchill's grave before fleeing England, and through his idiosyncratic dietary habits, Byron attempts to shape the perception of his famous body.¹³ In all of these cases, Byron signals the impossibility of transcendence from materiality. He dealt with weight issues throughout his life, and his aesthetic theory bears the imprint of his struggle. Byron reveals how eating challenges the notion of Romantic transcendence, and corpulence is the visible sign of that challenge. If food discourse offers a possible class position from which to articulate Romantic aesthetics, the material reality of eating potentially undermines that aesthetic system. Through Byron's treatment of food and Lambert's long shadow over gastronomy, transcendence falls back into the materiality of flesh. And, as Lambert shows, this return to materiality carries with it the class associations characteristic of middle-class food culture.

‘That Hill of Flesh,’ Daniel Lambert

In the spring of 1806, Daniel Lambert left his hometown of Leicester, and took up residence at 53 Piccadilly, where visitors could witness his prodigious girth at the price of one shilling. By the time he left the metropolis in September 1806, Lambert’s name had gone a long way toward becoming synonymous with corpulence. Throughout the nineteenth century, Lambert remained a catchword for enormity. Victorian writers in particular found him fascinating.¹⁴ In 1856, Charles Dickens wrote in a letter to the Duke of Devonshire, mentioning that their mutual friend, Sir Joseph Paxton, has been increasing in weight. He adds, “I don’t know how heavy he is going to be (I mean in the scale), but I begin to think Daniel Lambert must have been in his family” (150). Lambert also gets mentioned in *Vanity Fair* and *Nicholas Nickleby*, as well as in a wide range of magazines and journals, including Dickens’s own *Household Words*.¹⁵

During the Romantic period, Lambert was equally ubiquitous. His name is frequently cited in *Blackwood’s Magazine*, and he seems to have been a favorite in the *London Magazine* (his corpulence is alluded to at least five times between January 1821 and June 1823). William Hazlitt, writing for Leigh Hunt’s *Examiner* in 1816 and bemoaning a recent poor production at Drury Lane, dryly notes, “The town has been entertained this week by seeing Mr. Stephen Kemble in the part of Sir John Falstaff, as they were formerly with seeing Mr. Lambert in his own person” (*Collected Works* V. 340).¹⁶ Lambert’s renown was also impressive during his life. The first full account appeared in *Kirby’s Wonderful and Scientific Museum* in 1804. A longer account appeared after Lambert began to exhibit himself in London, in G. H. Wilson’s *The Eccentric Mirror* (1806), a popular series that went through several editions in the early

decades of the century.¹⁷ After Lambert's death in 1809, obituaries appeared in several newspapers and magazines, including the *Edinburgh Annual Register*, *Gentleman's Magazine*, *Mirror of Taste*, *Monthly Magazine*, *Morning Chronicle*, and *Universal Magazine*.¹⁸

My account of Lambert's cultural function relies on a fundamental aporia in the writings about his life and weight. All of the contemporary accounts seek to explain his size, but fail to raise the most obvious answer: indulgence in appetite. Instead, Lambert's prodigious body signifies English temperance and strength. At the same time that these accounts extol Lambert for his moderate habits, however, general knowledge about the relationship between food and corpulence contradicts such assertions. In medical accounts of Lambert, a different tale appears—that of a diseased man who lacked the fortitude to alter his habits. And finally, although Lambert is conspicuously absent from gastronomic literature, when he does surface, his ambiguous body confronts the ideal of the judicious epicure with a sharp challenge. For if gourmandism requires self-control, the loss of such control threatens the entire endeavor.

Lambert's life began in Leicester, where he was born on March 13, 1770.¹⁹ When he was fourteen, he moved to Birmingham, where he apprenticed as a button engraver and die-sinker. After only four years, he returned to his home in Leicester—the reason for ending his apprenticeship early is usually that fashions changed and the industry became obsolete. His father was the keeper of the prison in Leicester, which position Lambert took over soon after his return. Here he earned the nickname, the “Jolly Gaoler.” His inmates reportedly often wept on having to leave Lambert and incarceration behind. It was also around this period that Lambert began to rapidly gain weight. He had been an

active youth, frequently engaged in hunting and sport. A story involving Lambert wrestling a bear attests to his strength. But with his sedentary occupation, Lambert attained 32 stone (448 pounds) by 1793. From this time until his death he gained weight at the rate of roughly twenty pounds per year.²⁰ Against his wishes for privacy, but also recognizing that his fame had already begun to spread and bring him unwanted visitors, Lambert decided to exhibit himself. After his first stay in London, Lambert toured the countryside taking in more viewers and funds. It was on a trip to Stamford to exhibit himself once again (by some accounts, it was to be for the last time), that Lambert died in his sleep. The wall of the inn had to be cut away to remove his body, and hundreds gathered to view his massive coffin being conveyed to the earth.

While contemporary accounts focus on the details of Lambert's size, they also remark on his character. He seems to have been universally admired for his friendliness, wit, and temperament. The accounts tell of Lambert's ability to outwit impertinent visitors, and of his heroic acts, including the aforementioned bear-wrestling, escaping from a burning building, and rescuing children from drowning. According to the accounts, Lambert's corpulent frame belies the active mind and vivacious spirit within. Wilson's summation that "With respect to humanity, temperance, and liberality of sentiment, Mr. Lambert may be held up as a model worthy of general imitation," reappears in several of the accounts (3).²¹

There are relatively few details about Lambert's diet. Wilson writes, "His food differs in no respect from that of other people: he eats with moderation, and of one dish only at a time" (19). Likewise, *The Christian Observer* notes, "he eats common food, and drinks water only" (378). Despite his excessively large body, Lambert becomes

representative of moderation and temperance. As such, accusations of indulgence must be explained away. Wilson points toward the sedentary nature of Lambert's occupation. The keeper of the prison does not labor with his body; it produces only Lambert's own girth. Lambert's one attempt at physical labor, as an apprentice engraver, gets ruined by the caprices of fashion: "Owing to the fluctuations to which all those manufactures that administer to the luxuries of the community are liable from the caprices of fashion, the wares connected with the professions which had been chosen for young Lambert, ceased to be in request" (5). "Luxuries" and the "caprices of fashion" are the real perpetrators of the crime that leads to Lambert's prodigious body. A further comment connects these luxuries with the suffering from food shortages in the 1790s. Wilson notes that the business to which Lambert was apprenticed, "then one of the most flourishing in that opulent town, was afterwards destroyed in the riots of 1795, by which the celebrated Dr. Priestly was so considerable a sufferer" (5). There were indeed riots in Birmingham in 1795, but they did not bring any suffering to Joseph Priestly, who by that time had left England and settled in Pennsylvania. The so-called Priestley Riots (over the matter of religious doctrine and political beliefs, not a lack of bread) took place in July 1791.²² The riots of 1795 occurred because of the rising price of bread. This conflation of historical events points toward the aporia that Lambert's size induces. How can the heaviest man in the world exist coevally with the bread crisis? The question never comes up because it is impossible to answer without compromising his status as a man of controlled appetite. Instead, Lambert is held up as an ideal of moderation, who happens to be the heaviest man in the world. The riots are mentioned only as an example of labor being disrupted; and *that*, not his diet, is the real cause of Lambert's obesity.

Wilson attempts to offer other explanations for Lambert's size. The first question that "the reader may naturally be disposed to enquire," is if Lambert's family were obese. Wilson answers no, "excepting an uncle and an aunt on the father's side, who were both very heavy" (3-4). *The Christian Observer* also raises this question, and gives more credence to the possibility of a hereditary link: "His father and uncle were both large men; but neither of them exceeded 30 stone [420 pounds]" (378). Although the sedentary occupation of the prison-keeper is credited with starting Lambert's weight gain, most accounts still remark on his regular physical exercise. Wilson writes, "It is not improbable that incessant exercise in the open air, in the early part of his life, laid the foundation of an uncommonly healthy constitution" (19). Even later in life, Lambert impresses with his unusual fitness. Wilson tells an anecdote, frequently referenced by others, that Lambert, when he weighed 448 pounds, "...walked from Woolwich to the metropolis with much less apparent fatigue than several middle-sized men who were of the party" (10). Wilson accepts the assumption that corpulence and diet are linked. He remarks, "It would, perhaps, be an interesting speculation to try how far a certain regimen might tend to reduce Mr. Lambert's excessive bulk" (23). Wilson also repeats the well-known story of Thomas Wood, as well as those of John Love and Edward Bright, both of whom gained their weight through indulging excessive appetites.²³ Yet while recognizing the connection between eating and corpulence, Wilson fails to apply this reasoning to the case of Daniel Lambert.

Lachlan Maclean's *An Enquiry into the Nature, Causes, and Cure of Hydrothorax* (1810), shows that even with the limited empirical study of obesity, generally assumed knowledge affirms that corpulence relates to diet. He offers a nosological explanation of

obesity, or polysarcia, as an excess of fat “beyond certain limits, so as to impede the free exercise of the healthy functions, and to occasion deformity” (278). While he recognizes “*predisposition to obesity*” as an important factor leading to this disease—in some, corpulence ensues from a fairly moderate diet, while in others “unlimited indulgence” fails to produce “any degree of fatness”—Maclean avers, “The general *exciting cause* of polysarcia, independent of peculiarity of habit, is certainly a free indulgence of the appetite in the use of nutritive food, and fermented liquors, since it is only among those who enjoy the means of obtaining the comforts of life without hard labour that this state is at any time observed” (279). What constitutes excess depends on individual predisposition, but without an excess of consumption, obesity cannot ensue. Maclean concludes this theory of obesity by implying that these facts are widely accepted, and affirmed self-evidently: “Whenever a person of a constitution predisposed to obesity, is enabled to indulge in good feeding, leads a calm indolent life, free from mental inquietude, and uses much sleep, corpulency generally ensues. *These facts are too well known and admitted to require illustration*” (280, emphasis added). If we accept these facts as generally known and believed, then Lambert’s moderation would also come into question.

Maclean mentions Lambert as an example of extreme corpulence, and discounts some of the assumptions about his health. Like Wilson, he argues that “John Love and Daniel Lambert might have got rid of the load of fat with which they were encumbered, and by which they were eventually suffocated” (280-1), if they had adopted a different diet and regimen. His solution to obesity is a rather simple process of economic management (the science of caloric intake had not been developed yet, but the principle

is the same). By the “proper management” of “moderation in eating, drinking, and sleeping, together with much bodily exercise, so that the *ingesta* may be less than the *excreta*,” even Daniel Lambert could have reduced in size (280). Maclean differs, however, on the state of Lambert’s health and habits. He quotes from Wilson’s account in *The Eccentric Mirror*, but then offers his own assessment based on an encounter with Lambert in May 1809, just a few months before he died. Maclean does not sketch a picture of an active mind lurking beneath an inconvenient bulk. Rather, Lambert is full of “great anxiety,” answering questions “in a hurried and abrupt manner.” His breathing is “laborious,” and “when his attention was not roused he could scarcely keep his eyes open” (299). Maclean’s version of Lambert is a body and mind in pain. The encounter is rather pathetic, but Maclean shows little sympathy for Lambert. According to Maclean, Lambert has reached his diseased state not because of a rigid hereditary fate, but due to his own habits and behaviors. Maclean challenges the notion of Lambert as a model of moderate appetite. He admits, “Lambert had not lived intemperately for some years,” but in this admittance implies that Lambert had done so earlier in life. And furthermore, even his present temperance is unimpressive: “he was not remarked for those habits of strict self denial and abstinence, either in eating or drinking, which were necessary to render his situation tolerable.” Maclean concludes the anecdote by condemning Lambert’s inability to live healthily. He leaves “with disgust from the sight of such a monster” (300-1). Maclean classes Lambert a monster not simply because of his monstrous body, but also because of Lambert’s unwillingness to curb his appetites.²⁴

Though prevailing medical wisdom links excessive corpulence with excessive appetite, I suggest that Lambert’s body signifies uniquely because of the set of

associations with his class identity. As Maclean points out, obesity in the period is associated with wealth and leisure. It only appears in those “who enjoy the means of obtaining the comforts of life without hard labour” (279). The Prince Regent, later George IV, embodies such aristocratic excess.²⁵ In “The Triumph of the Whale,” Charles Lamb deems him the “PRINCE of WHALES,” with a body characterized not only by its size, but also its ability to ingest and excrete huge amounts without difficulty. Thus, “What a world of drink he swills, / From his trunk, as from a spout, / Which next moment he pours out” (8-10); and “In his stomach some do say / No good thing can ever stay” (29-30). Unlike the productive work of digestion that Kitchiner’s committee of taste would perform, the Regent’s body merely lets objects of pleasure pass through it.

Lambert’s body, in contrast, signifies the work of a stout constitution and strong digestion, and also a different kind of labor.²⁶ Although Lambert did not work with his hands, he nonetheless earned his living from his body. The print from April 1806, “Bone and Flesh,” asserts that Lambert is “a true born Englishman” with “a quiet mind and good constitution.” But in the print’s right corner is a reminder that Lambert’s body is for sale. There sits an advertisement for Lambert’s exhibition (“Mr Daniel Lambert one of the great wonders of the World at the age of 36 weighed 50 stone 14 pounds to the stone is 5 ft 11 in. high and [at?] 3½ yards round in [peak?] Health”).²⁷ The print itself functions doubly as a comment on English identity in opposition to the French “Boney,” and as an advertisement for Lambert. But the sale of one’s body for public consumption conjures up other anxieties. Lambert is a reminder that while aristocratic bodies might be exempt from labor, the middle class body still operates within a market system increasingly reliant on conspicuous consumption, and of which literature was becoming an integral

part. So while upper class corpulence might signify irresponsible luxuriousness, Lambert's body must be productive *because* it is middle class. In order for his body to fit comfortably within a middle-class paradigm, Lambert must be represented as productive.

When Lambert died, he left a lasting legacy. The accounts of his life attempt to shape this legacy by assimilating his body into a paradigm of middle-class values. Despite the general assumptions about the relationship between eating and corpulence, Lambert is employed to signify moderation. This fact anticipates later attempts to justify gourmandism through arguments about moderation and productivity. If even the largest body in the world can be brought under the banner of moderation, then surely less extraordinary bodies can justify their pleasure through similar claims. Nonetheless, I have found only one gastronomical text that broaches the question of gluttony specifically through the figure of Lambert. Considering the way Lambert's biographical accounts rationalize his corpulence into moderation, one might expect him to appear as a hero to gourmands. Instead his absence points toward the irresolvable contradictions that his body presents. One would think that the largest man in the world would be a simple example of gluttony, but the legacy built up around Lambert shows this not to be the case. In Thomas Colley Grattan's "Confessions of an English Glutton," (a parody of De Quincey's similarly titled, *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater*), he satirizes not only the diseased body and mind of the opium eater, but also the entire project of separating gluttons from gourmands. Grattan shows that the practice of judicious good eating can rapidly descend into voracious intemperance. Lambert's presence in the satire offers an opportunity to interrogate the notion that gourmands have control over their appetites. At the same time, Grattan's critique of gastronomical aesthetics quickly shifts to a larger

critique of Romantic aesthetics. The class anxiety that Lambert's body provokes also incites a reconsideration of the relationship between Romantic aesthetics and class.

Published in *Blackwood's* a year after De Quincey's *Confessions* appeared in the *London*, Grattan's satire participates in the battle between rival periodicals for control of public discourse. He opens the essay by making this connection apparent, writing that "This is confessedly the age of confession,—the era of individuality—the triumphant reign of the first person singular." While the ostensible object of his satire is the era's taste for confessions, the periodicals provided the textual space in which articulations of self could emanate from a corporate identity—the editorial *we*—while at the same time performing different visions of individual identity. Grattan admits as much as he deems his confession "the last leaf on this branch of periodical personality." The "reign of the first person singular" exists only in the kingdom of the periodical press. The "*Ego sum* [that] is on the tip of every tongue and the nib of every pen," must be inscribed within the corporate identity of the periodical (13: 86).

Grattan's satirical contemplation of the "periodical personality," engages with the central question of gourmandism—the difference between the glutton and the gourmand. Grattan's Glutton asks for sympathy by explaining that he was "constitutionally a glutton: nature had stamped the impress of greediness upon me at my birth" (87).²⁸ Until the age of fifteen, he continued "mechanically gormandizing," with no sense of distinction. The Glutton believes retrospectively, "Such a man is no better than a digesting automaton—a living mass of forced meat—an animated sausage." Through education and practice, the Glutton becomes a gourmand. No longer a mere "masticating machine," he feels himself "imbued with an essence of pure and ethereal epicurism" (88). Gourmandism allows for

the injection of spirit into corporeal matter. The principle of life that animates the “living mass of forced meat” is the desire for aesthetic pleasure.

A crisis occurs, however, when the Glutton’s mother gives him “a most exquisite and tender two-months porker, in all its sucking innocence,” for his sixteenth birthday. Like a good gourmand (and taking a direct cue from Elia), he revels in the suckling pig’s “symmetry of form and hue,” while the “savory fragrance” seems to “float over [his] imagination.” The intellect and the senses are called to the task of performing aesthetic judgment. But after his first bite, the gourmand regresses to gluttony once again. “[A]ll presence of mind and management of mouth” desert him, and he eats the rest with “indiscriminate voracity,” shoving the carcass down his throat (89). This moment dramatizes the absence of culture that gluttony, at its most extreme, produces. Although the scene is satirical, it nonetheless conveys the danger of good eating—with the loss of self-control, moderate and judicious enjoyment can descend into an animal state. The aesthetic forms the basis of individual identity, but since the Glutton locates this in his body, he risks becoming again a “masticating machine.”

By the end of the “Confessions,” the loss of self-control threatens the total loss of self. While the gourmand formulates his identity on the basis of eating, the act of gluttony appears in mechanistic and animalistic terms. Gluttony dehumanizes the gluttonous subject. The final articulation of this notion occurs when the Glutton recalls seeing Daniel Lambert’s exhibition in 1806. As he enters the room, the other bystanders burst into laughter at the striking contrast between the two bodies. Although the Glutton has an insatiable appetite stamped on his constitution, since birth he has been “the very picture of starvation.” No matter how much food he consumed, “the machinery of [his] stomach

refused to perform its functions.” At fourteen he measured five feet ten, with an emaciated body that belied its owner’s voraciousness: “my bones forcing their way through my skin—and my whole appearance the fac-simile of famine and disease” (87). The Glutton’s self replicates metaphorically through a process of mechanical production (facsimile), but it produces a false signifier. His sense of self is divorced from his bodily constitution.

Similarly, in the accounts of Lambert’s life, his body incorrectly assigns him with the sin of excess, while in actuality (according to the biographical accounts), he eats and drinks with moderation like any other good English citizen. But the sight of Lambert produces the opposite reaction in the Glutton. Now measuring six feet five, the Glutton compares himself to “the Irish Giant.”²⁹ When he sees Lambert, though, a transformation begins to take place. The Glutton sees himself in Lambert, but he does not see a paradigmatic stout Englishman:

You all remember, readers, what Lambert’s figure was. I do, alas! at any rate!—The very instant I saw him, the notion struck me that I had become his second-self—his ditto—his palpable echo—his substantial shadow—that the observers laughed at our ‘double transformation,’ for he was becoming me at the same time—that I was exhibiting as he then was,—and, finally, that I was dying of excessive fat. The idea was like an electric shock, and in one moment I felt that the double identity was completed... that I, in short, was Lambert, and Lambert me!” (92-3)

The Glutton’s ambiguous introduction of Lambert epitomizes the difficulty of accounting for his massive body. Readers remember “what Lambert’s figure was,” but not necessarily what this figure means. The Glutton’s self-image transforms through one particular understanding of the figure. His self, rendered through sight and sound (“shadow,” “echo”), becomes subsumed in Lambert’s ambiguous signification. The Glutton imagines that the observers witness this, thereby affirming the metamorphosis

occurring in his mind. Lambert's body, then, signifies for the other bodies around him. In the social space of the exhibition, the meaning of Lambert's body extends to those who view him. In the act of voyeurism, the voyeur exposes himself. The Glutton's lifelong struggle with an insatiable appetite culminates in the visual representation of his body's potential. No matter how much the gourmand tries to control his body through aesthetic judgment, appetite retains the ability to erase that sense of control. Only after viewing his face in the Thames does the Glutton regain control of his identity. The narcissistic identification cures the uncomfortable transference of identity that Lambert's figure induces.

Fourteen years after his death, Lambert still performs an important function for Grattan's satirical portrayal of gluttony. Lambert is a challenge to the foundation of individual identity in bodily aesthetics, and specifically troubling to gourmands who hope to distinguish their practices from gluttony. As a set of social practices designed to articulate a specific social positioning based on aesthetic enjoyment, gourmandism tries to separate itself from the laboring class, which is defined on the basis of bodily work. At the same time, gourmands must justify their enjoyment with claims to productivity. Lambert's body is a reminder that overzealous enjoyment has consequences writ in the body. So although gourmands identify themselves as aesthetic laborers, an encounter with a body like Lambert's reminds them that the aesthetics of food cannot be divorced from the trappings of corporeality. Looking at how Byron and Wordsworth approach the conundrum of aesthetic transcendence through material means, shows how the anxiety produced by Lambert's body extends to Romantic aesthetics more broadly, which in turn

displays how Romantic ideology emerges from and engages with concerns about food, class and the body.

Byron, Wordsworth and the ‘Pressure of Materialism’

In their conceptions of aesthetic value, both Byron and Wordsworth pose materiality as an obstacle to aesthetic transcendence. Wordsworth in particular expresses reservations about bridging the two through the equation of gustatory enjoyment with aesthetic pleasure. In the “Preface” to *Lyrical Ballads*, he expresses disdain for men “who will converse with us as gravely about a *taste* for Poetry, as they express it, as if it were a thing as indifferent as a taste for Rope-dancing, or Frontinac or Sherry” (257).

Nonetheless, Wordsworth himself still uses the language of taste and eating to express the effects of poetry. Ideal poetic creation occurs “in a healthful state of association” with one’s “taste exalted” (247). In contrast to that effect, the public desire for “frantic novels” and “sickly and stupid German Tragedies” produces a “degrading thirst after stimulation,” and “blunt[s] the discriminating powers of the mind,” the same powers performed by the palate (249). When Byron discusses food, he readily recognizes that eating makes one aware of the material nature of aesthetic pleasure. His dietary habits, a well-known aspect of his fame, signals publicly and privately the same sort of anxiety that Wordsworth expresses about materiality. When confronted with Lambert’s body, the Romantic aesthetics of transcendence fails to elide the complications of eating.

In Wordsworth’s narration of his youth, scenes of natural beauty, “The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood, / Their colours and their forms, were then to me / An appetite” (“Tintern Abbey” 78-80). But “That time is past” (83), and he seeks a

semblance of that originary bodily desire through aesthetic contemplation. The “motion and a spirit, that impels / All thinking things, all objects of thought, / And rolls through all things” seeks to solve the dilemma of materialism (100-2). Aesthetic labor erases the youthful equation of bodily and intellectual appetites. The poet’s sister, Dorothy, affirms the separation of aesthetic and material enjoyment specifically around the issue of eating. In one of the few poems published during her lifetime (in William’s 1835 volume, *Yarrow Revisited*), Dorothy counsels “a child” to distinguish between “loving” and “liking.” At the moment when aesthetic consumption transforms to material ingestion, Dorothy asserts that loving shifts to liking:

... you may love the strawberry flower,
And love the strawberry in its bower;
But when the fruit, so often praised
For beauty, to your lip is raised,
Say not you *love* the delicate treat,
But *like* it, enjoy it, and thankfully eat. (33-8)

The flower and the fruit ought to be “praised / For beauty” only until the object of that beauty becomes an object to be consumed by the body. The metaphor of ingestion offers a model of aesthetic consumption, but it falters when approaching the literal register. At the end of the poem, Dorothy nonetheless returns to the metaphor of eating, maintaining that “likings fresh and innocent, / ... store the mind, the memory feed, / And prompt to many a gentle deed.” William likewise attempts to access aesthetic transcendence through materiality, but the contradictions outlined in Dorothy’s imagery remains. For William, books (like Dorothy’s strawberry’s) are the source of aesthetic truth as well as material vessels: “Poor earthly casket[s] of immortal verse” (*Prelude* 5:164). The parallel construction paradoxically aligns the material with the transcendent, mortality with

eternal poetic insight. Despite the material location of aesthetic truth (or in the face of the seeming contradiction), Romantic ideology dictates that art transcends the forces of time.

Byron never comfortably accepts this notion, but by repeatedly undercutting it he reveals its foundational importance to Romantic discourse. From the beginning of his career, Byron's celebrity was tied to his physical body, thanks largely to his early heroes (always associated with their author), sporting "sable curls in wild profusion" and "dark and unearthly... scowl[s]" (*The Corsair* 1: 204; *The Giaour* 832). After waking to find himself famous, Byron used his body to signify in multiple ways, and in particular through acts of eating, whether viewed publicly or conveyed through print. Anecdotes of the poet's strange eating habits circulate in contemporary letters and public accounts. The most famous one comes from Samuel Rogers, who tells of Byron asking to dine on only "hard biscuits and soda water." When they cannot be had, he eats instead "potatoes bruised down on his plate and drenched with vinegar" (Rogers 230). Rogers's explanation, via Hobhouse, that Byron would continue this diet "Just as long as you continue to notice it," emphasizes the social, performative aspect of Byron's eating (231). Tom Mole argues that Byron's dietary habits began as a way for the poet to control how his celebrity signified, and eventually became a method for asserting self-autonomy more generally.³⁰ Byron's relationship to food played a particularly important role in shaping his public image because "food was the figurative arena in which Byron played out his concerns about subjectivity, agency and representation" (33).³¹

Byron's obsession about his weight shapes his relationship to food and eating. He never mentions Lambert in his writing, but considering this obsession, it is plausible that Byron knew of him. The poet likely owned William Wadd's *Cursory Remarks on*

Corpulency, in which Wadd discusses Lambert,³² and Byron's close friend, Francis Hodgson, penned a satirical epigram about Lambert in his volume of poetry, *Lady Jane Grey* (1809).³³ Moreover, Byron's writings about food display the same kind of anxiety exhibited by the Glutton's encounter with Lambert in Grattan's satire. Concerned from a young age about his bodily appearance, Byron would often go long periods without eating. When he does eat, it induces "sensation from the pressure of materialism" (Blessington 18). That this assertion comes from Blessington's textual recollection of her conversations with Byron emphasizes the public nature of Byron's seemingly private thoughts on eating. The poet's acts (and conversations) of eating fit into his aesthetic model precisely because of and through the public reception of his persona. In private correspondence as well, eating is a reminder that the self is "all mixed up in that one compound of inspired clay" (*BLJ* 3: 239),³⁴ or as Byron voices it dramatically through Manfred, "Half dust, half deity, alike unfit / To sink or soar" (1.2. 40-1). He writes in *Don Juan*, "When dinner has opprest one, / I think it is perhaps the gloomiest hour" because "Repletion rather adds to what he feels." The "feeling" is not necessarily melancholic, but it always enhances, for Byron, the awareness of one's material self: "the act / Of eating... / Makes us feel our mortality in fact / Redoubled" (Canto V, 30:6-7, 31:4, 32:1-3). The fat that Byron so feared would cling to his body is a remainder of the sensation caused by eating, namely the realization of mortality.³⁵

Public knowledge of Byron's relationship to food allowed writers, particularly in periodicals and newspapers, to comment on food culture through his celebrity.³⁶ In a review of Wadd's treatise on obesity, William Maginn does just that. He opens his review with a fictional anecdote about Byron:

Byron, my dear fellow, said we to him one day, you are inclined to corpulency.

Not at all, was the reply; it is entirely against my inclination, but I cannot help it.

This was very well for a joke; but he could help it, and did so—for by taking, as we advised, a raisin and a glass of brandy a-day, and abstaining from all other food, solid or fluid, for the course of a month, he lost flesh vastly, and was nearly as thin as ourself when he died. At the time we spoke to him, he must have been rising eighteen or nineteen stones. (*BM* 17: 69)

This narrative depends on Byron's struggles with weight having enough cultural cachet for readers to understand the implications. The joke about Byron's "inclinations" plays on assumptions about the relationship between self-discipline and the body. In the anecdote, Byron implies that one's relationship to food is outside the realm of personal agency, while Maginn asserts his superiority over the poet by displaying his knowledge and dietary fortitude. Byron also appears in *Noctes* IV (also written by Maginn), in which Morgan ODoherty is "*Transferred (by poetic licence) to Pisa,*" where he encounters Byron. As ODoherty curses the "infernal mixture" of "cabbage soup and roasted raisins," Byron enters and the two discuss the relative merits of Italian wine and Irish whiskey (12: 100). The majority of their discussion though, centers on Byron's reputation in the periodical press. The questions of gustatory and literary taste are presented together and debated in the public dining space. The imagined scene allows Maginn to manipulate Byron's public image based on his readers' understanding about the cultural resonances of Byronic eating.

The association of Byron with diet and corpulence intensifies after his death due to the many biographical accounts. Thomas Moore's biography characterized Byron as "a fat bashful boy" in his youth, and describes his late-adolescent "fear of becoming, what he was naturally inclined to be, enormously fat" (33, 45). Leigh Hunt remarks that when

he joined Byron in Italy in 1822, “I hardly knew him, he was grown so fat” (15). His dietary habits appear erratic in Hunt’s account, leading to his drastic shifts in weight. He would vacillate between extreme abstinence one moment, but the next “make an outrageous dinner; eating all sorts of things that were unfit for him.” Edward Trelawny’s description intensifies further Byron’s dread of corpulence: “his terror of getting fat was so great that he reduced his diet to the point of absolute starvation” (46). Yet unlike Hunt, Trelawny ascribes to Byron masterful self-control. He writes that Byron “was the only human being I ever met with who had sufficient self-restraint and resolution to resist this proneness to fatten,” and explains that “This was not from vanity about his personal appearance, but from a better motive”—Trelawny leaves the nature of this motive for the reader to decide (46-7). Whatever the motive, the description of Byron’s dieting belies mastery, and instead conveys Byron’s irresolvable struggle: “He would exist on biscuits and soda-water for days together, then, to allay the eternal hunger gnawing at his vitals, he would make up a horrid mess of cold potatoes, rice, fish, or greens, deluged in vinegar, and gobble it up like a famished dog” (48).

Through his dietary habits and writings on food, Byron enacts a critique of transcendent Romantic aesthetics. His concern for the “pressure of materialism” on his spirit connects to his repeated critiques of textual materiality. The dilemma of a spirit “coop’d up in clay” mirrors the Romantic concern (particularly for Wordsworth) that one must convey the transcendent truth of beauty through material, commodifiable forms. Ten years after Byron’s death, Lambert appears at the center of a critique of Romanticism, which engages with the same fundamental question about the body’s role in aesthetics. In the April 1834 issue of *La Belle Assemblée*, the author of “Some Account

of the Late Daniel Lambert” crafts a fictional account of traveling to Stamford, where Lambert died, and purchasing Lambert’s papers from the landlord of the inn. Among them is a collection of poems, which the author plans to publish in a volume that will secure Lambert “a huge recess in the temple of Fame.” Although the article consists of several jokes like this one about Lambert’s size, it also features a more substantial satire. The author casts Lambert’s poetry as a characteristic product of Romanticism, in the process satirizing elements of Romantic aesthetics. Lambert shifts from Byronic melancholy to Wordsworthian contemplation of nature, but both modes appear ridiculous in their treatment by Lambert. The first hint of this comes in the brief account given of Lambert’s life. It follows the familiar narrative, and includes some common details, but with one key addition. This account explains that in his youth Lambert “fell in love with an impracticable widow,” whom he woos and who “reject[s] his addresses.” The ensuing despair leads to Lambert’s weight gain: “Stung to madness by this rejection of his proffered suit, he swelled out of all reasonable compass.” By inventing this failed love affair, the author aligns the causes of Lambert’s weight gain and his imagined literary output.

The author offers several of Lambert’s poems to justify his fame. Some may say, ““They seem not like the ruins of his youth, / But like the ruins of those ruins,”” but the author proudly declares, “I opine they are palaces of adamant.”³⁷ The first quality of Lambert’s poetry that entitles him to lasting fame is his egotism. He claims that Lambert “squeezes himself into the smallest compositions,” and that he displays “a morbidness of feeling that Byron himself might have envied” (4: 140). Leading into “Lambert’s Lament,” the article author echoes Byron as he exclaims, “of such contradictory elements

is human nature composed; but, man is an anomaly!” In the poem itself, Lambert wishes for death, or at least freedom from his fatness (“I am sick / Of all this fatness round about”). The Byronic paradox of a spirit “coop’d up in clay,” and the melancholy brooding that ensues, become nothing more than a fat man hoping for death from a “kitchen spit,” which, it turns out, is “not half long enough.” The author also declares that this lament displays “The burden and the mystery / Of all this unintelligible world.” Lambert’s poem, however, does not imagine “that blessed mood” in which the burden “is lightened;” rather, he decries that his fleshly burden will never leave him: “I weep—it only puffs my cheeks, / I sigh—it only swells me more” (141). For Lambert poetry has no curative effect. There is no “sense sublime / Of something far more deeply interfused.” The flesh expands eternally, while his spirit registers its despair through a laughable poem.

The second poem, “To Mr. Woolley. A Sonnet,” continues the satire of Romantic aesthetics. Lambert addresses his poem to a lamb, who “Dancing about the glade with nimble hops,” is ignorant of its imminent death. The poem concludes with Lambert realizing his own mortality from the sight of the lamb: “from thee I learn this lesson just, / That Lambert’s not thy name, but Daniel Dust” (4: 141). While the final image of dust recalls Byronic melancholy again, the poem’s primary narrative is Wordsworthian. In Wordsworth’s “The Pet-Lamb,” the poet comes across a scene of a young girl feeding a lamb, and he imagines a song “that little Maid might sing” (20). She asks the lamb “what is’t that aileth thee?” who ostensibly has no cares (21). She has taken him out of the world “of fearful winds and darkness,” provided food, and promised to make him her playmate (53). For Wordsworth, the poem is an exercise of “the language really used by

men” with an added “colouring of imagination.” The poem concludes with Wordsworth first asserting that the ballad was shared between himself and the girl: “half of it was hers, and one half of it was mine” (64). He amends this split, giving “more than half to the damsel,” but ultimately rests the accomplishment in himself, wherein the girl’s voice and emotion are incorporated: “I almost received her heart into my own” (66, 68).

Lambert’s revision of “The Pet-Lamb” reveals the original poem’s dark undercurrent. Although Wordsworth imagines, based on the scene, a narrative in which the girl’s father rescues the orphaned lamb and gives him to his daughter as a pet, the scene itself tells another story: the girl has hidden the lamb out of fear for its slaughter. Wordsworth anthropomorphizes the lamb’s feeding (“its evening meal;” “his supper took;” “seemed to feast with head and ears”), which calls to mind where the lamb would be if the girl had not hidden it away (8, 9, 10).³⁸ The repetition of “I almost received her heart into my own” also suggests that Wordsworth’s poetic spying is analogous to cannibalistic feeding. Lambert’s poem brings animal food to the forefront. The lamb’s “frisking glee” contrasts with Lambert’s vision of the animal’s future: “Thy fleece upon a great stout man I see; / Thy leg upon a well-laid table drops; / Thy head is broth, thy ribs are mutton chops; / Thou art but active mutton unto me.” The sight of a lamb gamboling around a field produces contemplation of mortality, but through the recognition of the lamb as food. Lambert sees the animals’ “future fate,” but the animals themselves are ignorant: “Yonder bellowing ox... would not answer to the name of beef,” and “yonder calf... does not know his name is veal” (4: 141). Humans define their relationship to animals through their status as food, while the animals lack that knowledge. Lambert attempts to distinguish himself from the animals by registering this knowledge gap, but in

the process he also recognizes his own reliance on material sustenance. The acceptance of meat-eating makes more difficult the prospect of aestheticized eating. Whereas “The Pet-Lamb” presents Wordsworth’s poetic spying without explicitly making the connection between animal food and intellectual feeding, the satire of Lambert registers this subtext.

The author of the satire recognizes the third poem as explicitly Wordsworthian. “To Dr. Buzzby. On a Troublesome Bluebottle Tormenting the Author” is “worthy of Mr. Wordsworth” insofar as “It shows how easily a man of genius can elevate trifles into importance.” The opening line, “Fly, not yet,” however, alludes to Thomas Moore’s “Fly Not Yet,” from his first series of *Irish Melodies*. In that song, the poet pleads with his lover to “fly not yet,” whereas Lambert’s counsels a “fly” to “not yet” disturb his sleep (4: 141).³⁹ The repetition of “Tell me no more” at the beginning of the last three stanzas references a whole tradition of love poetry.⁴⁰ Yet in asserting that the poem “is worthy of Mr. Wordsworth,” the article author most likely has in mind, “Written in Germany, On One of the Coldest Days of the Century.”⁴¹ In that poem, Wordsworth addresses a fly, “A child of the field or the grove,” who has wandered into his house seeking warmth (12). The fly’s confusion typifies the tension between civilization and nature. All of his senses fail, as he, “like a traveller bemaz’d,” cannot navigate his way and “fumbles about the domains / Which this comfortless oven environ” (21, 16-7). “His feelers” point in all directions, but “he finds neither guide-post nor guide” (23, 25). The fly was lured out of “his winter retreat” by the “dull treacherous heat” of Wordsworth’s stove, but now the fly cannot sustain enough warmth to survive (14, 13). His limbs and senses begin to fail, and as “Between life and death his blood freezes and thaws,” the fly becomes an aestheticized object of contemplation: “And his two pretty pinions of blue dusky gauze / Are glued to

his sides by the frost” (28-30). In death the fly loses its life, but gains a place in Wordsworth’s poetic menagerie. While the fly supplies Wordsworth with the imagery needed to sustain his poem, the poet stays warm thanks to human feeling: “I / Can draw warmth from the cheek of my Love; / As blest and as glad, in this desolate gloom, / As if green summer grass were the floor of room” (31-4) He tells the fly, “Thy life I would gladly sustain,” but the prospect of survival seems unlikely for the “small helpless Thing” (37, 36).

In Lambert’s version, the fly is similarly anthropomorphized. Lambert’s cheeks are “made / To be a level fly-parade, / For country dance or spinning waltz [sic];” his ears “serve as dens / For thy absconding citizens”; and the flies produce “soft music.” In contrast to Wordsworth’s poem, here the flies perform all the action. The flies’ meddling is “all a hum” to Lambert, who merely wants to sleep. The fly interrupts “the hour / When vile dyspepsia wields her pow’r” (4: 141). Lambert’s indigestion contrasts with Wordsworth’s warmth from companionship, and with Moore’s sexual anticipation. Moore’s seduction poem opens with the plea to the lover to stay because “’tis just the hour, / When pleasure, like the midnight flower, / That scorns the eye of vulgar light, / Begins to bloom for sons of night” (1-4). Indigestion, not love or desire, seizes control of Lambert. The scene of action for Lambert rests in the belly, but that too proceeds fitfully. The bluebottle mocks Lambert further if we consider its Linnaean classification: *Calliphora vomitoria*. As it dances on Lambert’s face, the fly is seeking flesh to eat. But since flies lack a chewing apparatus, they vomit on potential food sources; enzymes from the saliva break down solids into liquid, which the fly can suck up with its proboscis.

While Lambert's "vile dyspepsia" removes him from the scene of social action, the bluebottle is productive precisely through its vomiting.

In this satirical account of Lambert's life, poetic production (figured as an attempt to lodge aesthetic transcendence in the materiality of print) reflects the anxiety that excessive corpulence produces. For Wordsworth, poetic production is a viable form of labor—one that in these instances engenders social bonds. Likewise, Moore's poem creates sexual energy, itself productive of life (and of future poetry). But since Lambert's poetry cannot escape the conditions of his body, his poems register inactivity. And in the process of critiquing Romantic poetry through Lambert's inertness, the author of the article implies that Wordsworth's investment in the labor of poetry is similarly empty. Even though Romanticism conveys the ideological assumption that aesthetics transcend the material forces of history, this contemporary critique shows an unwillingness to accept such an assumption. Lambert's excessive body, which insists on privileging materiality, asserts that all aesthetics—not just those of eating—take root in the body.

Notes to Chapter III

¹ The phrase comes from a popular song from Henry Fielding's *The Grub-Street Opera*. During the eighteenth century in particular roast beef came to signify as the national dish of England. Kate Colquhoun writes, "meat was such an addictive mainstay of the eighteenth-century middle-class diet that thousands began to suffer from bulging veins and mottled noses, from gout, kidney stones, dyspepsia, diabetes and degenerative diseases caused by eating too much animal protein and fat." The Sublime Society of Beefsteaks, formed in opposition to French cuisine in 1735, continued to celebrate the English dish into the 1860s (216-7).

² The third caricature featuring Lambert and Napoleon is called "Two Wonders of the World, or a Specimen of a New Troupe of Leicestershire Light Horse." It shows Lambert in cavalry garb, atop a massive horse, while Napoleon shrinks away, muttering, "Parbleu, if dis be de specimen of de English Light Horse, vat vill de heavy horse be. Oh, by gur, I will put off de invasion for anoder time." Another print by the same artist features Lambert next to Charles Fox (also famous for being rather portly). The print is titled "The

Two Greatest Men in England.” The caption explains Lambert’s identity, but readers are left to understand that the second of the two greatest men is Fox.

³ Paul Youngquist argues that Lambert’s body performs the “double work of deviance” characteristic of Slavoj Žižek’s sublime object of ideology: “In an increasingly liberal and capitalist social context, Lambert’s lumbering body communicates an impossible delight by materializing the negation of labor, a desideratum whose conditions—what bulk!—frighten as they fascinate. At the same time, it becomes the site of ideological overdetermination, reproducing the cultural norm of the proper body through that anxiety” (*Monstrosities* 40).

⁴ Scholars of the eighteenth century have given much attention to this issue in the past few decades. The seminal *The Birth of a Consumer Society* (1982) paved the way for more recent examples like Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace’s *Consuming Subjects* (1997), Charlotte Sussman’s *Consuming Anxieties* (2000) and Maxine Berg’s *Luxury and Pleasure in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (2005). Kowaleski-Wallace draws particular attention to the gender dynamics of consumption in the eighteenth century, and argues, “British culture projected onto the female subject both its fondest wishes for the transforming power of consumerism and its deepest anxieties about the corrupting influences of goods” (5). She reads the cultural institution of the tea table as a site of the “disciplining and normalizing of the upper-class female body” (20), a function that is necessary because of concerns about consuming foreign goods. Sussman points out, in relation to foreign commodities like tea and sugar, that anxieties about consumption result from the notion that “in taking in colonial objects, consumers were destroying something within themselves” (14). One of the arguments used against consuming sugar was that eating it was akin to cannibalism, i.e. eating the bodies of the slaves used to produce sugar: “British consumers are themselves transformed into the savage cannibals they had once fantasized about as existing only on the colonial periphery” (Sussman 116).

⁵ Cheyne concludes *The English Malady* (1733) with a refutation of the objections raised to his dietary regimens presented in *An Essay of Health and Long Life* (1724). He offers three case histories to indicate the effectiveness of his various regimens, the last of which is his own. Cheyne apologizes for his “indecent and shocking Egotism,” but affirms the importance of refuting the “sneers on my Regimen” (362). He confesses that although he lived “sober, moderate and plain in [his] Diet,” his practice of taking all his food at one meal meant that “every Dinner necessarily became a *Surfeit* and a *Debauch*.” Cheyne grew to an “enormous size... exceed[ing] 32 Stone” (342). At the time of writing and thanks to his regimen, Cheyne claims to “now enjoy as *perfect Health*, as much *Activity* and *Cheerfulness*, with the full, free and perfect Use of my *Faculties*... as I was ever capable of in my best Days” (363). Stephen Shapin shows the tension inherent to Cheyne’s work between his scientific, medical expertise and the kind of common sense, moral guidance used to dictate dietary behavior. The combination of his own case history with his carefully prepared dietetic principles brings together the two aspects of his medical authority.

⁶ Jan Bondeson points out that while Lambert's obesity likely resulted at least in part because of metabolic abnormalities, "the main causes of primary obesity are overeating of calorie-rich food, in combination with a sedentary lifestyle. He also notes, "Nearly all overweight people have a tendency to understate their intake of calories, and it is by no means unlikely that Lambert was one of them" (258).

⁷ According to Wilson's account of Lambert's life, he weighed 32 stone (448 pounds) in 1793 (at age 23). By June 1805, he surpassed 50 stone to attain 704 pounds, and weighed 739 pounds just a few weeks before he died.

⁸ Before the bread crisis in 1795, the cost of bread already accounted for about two-thirds of the average laborer's food expenses. With the average weekly income at 7s. 6d., and the price of a quartern loaf ranging between 6d. and 8d., the money spent on bread also accounted for a sizable portion of overall expenses (Salaman 495-6). In January 1795, wheat sold for 55s. 7d., and by July of the same year it had already reached 77s. 2d; by fall it was over 100s (Tooke 1: 181). For the average laborer, this translates to an increase from 7d. to 12¼d. for a loaf wheat bread, during the space of a few months.

⁹ Rogers Wells's *Wretched Faces* treats the history of the bread crisis as famine, which he claims historians have neglected to do. Wells explains that "famine... is not synonymous with deaths through salvation itself, but enhanced mortality owing to hunger-related disease was common to both famines [1794-6 and 1800-1]" (1-2).

¹⁰ Food riots were documented throughout the country, including in Bristol, Bath, London, Portsmouth, Canterbury, Cambridge, Oxford, Birmingham, Nottingham, Liverpool, Sheffield, Manchester, and Hull. J. Stevenson argues that the food riots of 1795-6 and 1800-1 signaled the decline of food riots as a popular and effective form of protest, which then gave way to strikes and other forms of protest through the rest of the century.

¹¹ Stevenson mentions this anecdote. A fuller account appears in John Barrell's *Imagining the King's Death* (555-7).

¹² He received an annuity of 50£ from the local government after the jail closed early in 1805. One wonders how much of it went to clothing costs, considering the amount of fabric required for his oversized clothing. One of his visitors reportedly inquired about the cost of one of his coats. Lambert replied slyly with a method of divining the information: "If you think proper to make me a present of a new coat, you will then know exactly what it costs" (Wilson, *Eccentric Mirror* 17-18).

¹³ Jerome Christensen notes how Brougham's review of *Hours of Idleness* calls attention to Byron's club foot, which represents "the twist that first makes Byron notable: the deformation of his foot that marks him out and that is the literal, fully embodied performance of a lordship that circumstances will allegorically confirm" (23). In this

sense, Byron begins his navigation of the commercial sphere of publishing precisely through his body. Regarding portraiture, John Clubbe explains, “Byron actively involved himself in shaping both his portraits and the engravings made from them,” both of which played an important role in the construction of his public identity. Christine Kenyon-Jones’ new edited collection testifies to the many ways in which Byron’s visual images contributed to (and continue to shape) Byron’s public identity, and shows how the “range of representation demonstrates the trajectory from Byron to Byronism” (*Image* 17). Andrew Bennett reads Byron’s symbolic “rehearsal of death” (lying on Charles Churchill’s grave before departing from England) as a performance of “a certain posthumous existence,” signaled by his self-imposed banishment from the country, and “framed by the phenomenon of his immense notoriety” (*Posterity* 180).

¹⁴ Joyce L. Huff traces Lambert’s presence in Victorian culture, arguing that “[r]eferences to Lambert in Victorian writings provide a focal point for readers’ fears about the ability to manage consumer desires in a developing commodity culture” (39).

¹⁵ Huff points out that Lambert is also referenced in *The Pickwick Papers* and Thackeray’s *Men’s Wives*, as well as in a speech by Elizabeth Cady Stanton (44). Bondeson also finds references to Lambert in works by Thomas Carlyle, Herman Melville, Thomas Macaulay, and George Meredith (255).

¹⁶ In *Letters from Scotland* (1817), the anonymous author relates an anecdote in which the same Stephen Kemble is mistaken for Lambert. The man claims to recognize Kemble, and says “I paid a shilling to see thee once.” Kemble is flattered (“I am pretty well known”), but is disappointed when the man recollects, “Thou’rt Mr. Daniel Lambert, I think?” Kemble storms off, replying vociferously, “Sir, Sir, do you take me for that monster, that hill of flesh! to whom Falstaff was but a starveling!” (102). The association between Lambert’s corpulence and that of Falstaff was a common one.

¹⁷ In his study of the genre of “eccentric biography” and its influence on Victorian literature (and Dickens in particular), James Gregory cites Wilson’s works (along with Kirby’s) as exemplars of the genre, and particularly popular ones (344).

¹⁸ *Edinburgh Annual Register* in June 1809 (2.2: 164-5); *Gentleman’s Magazine* in July 1809 (79.2: 681-3); *The Mirror of Taste* in Sept. 1810 (2: 179-181); *Monthly Magazine* in August 1809 (28: 110-111); *Universal Magazine* in July 1809 (12: 78-8). For details of Lambert’s life, I generally draw from Wilson’s *Eccentric Mirror*, and refer to others when necessary. The other accounts of Lambert include those found in Kirby’s *Wonderful and Scientific Museum*, *The Life of that Wonderful and Extraordinarily Heavy Man, Daniel Lambert*, *The Sporting Magazine* (April and May 1807, January 1820), *The Christian Observer* (June 1806), and Wilson’s own later revision, *Wonderful Characters*.

¹⁹ While the narrative of Lambert’s life is unreliable, it nonetheless performs an important symbolic function, which contributes to the ways in which Lambert figures in constructions of corpulence in public discourse.

²⁰ There are scant details on Lambert's weight and size during the period between 1793 and 1804. *Kirby's* reports that Lambert weighed 698 pounds in 1804, which amounts to weight gain of twenty-two pounds per year over the space of eleven years. If we calculate between 1793 and 1809, we arrive at eighteen pounds per year over the space of 16 years. I've taken the liberty of rounding this out to 20 pounds per year. Since more numbers do not exist, it is impossible to know if Lambert's weight gain was at anything like a steady rate. His increase of 41 pounds over the last five years of his life shows, however, that he continued to gain weight until he died.

²¹ This line appears verbatim in *The Sporting Magazine* (May 1807, 85) and *The Life of that Wonderful and Extraordinarily Heavy Man* (46).

²² The incorrect date recurs in *The Sporting Magazine* (April 1807, 18) account as well as in Wilson's revision, *Wonderful Characters* (14). In *The Life of that Wonderful and Extraordinarily Heavy Man* the date is changed to 1791 (7).

²³ See Dacome for a discussion of these cases in relation to the discourse of diet in the eighteenth century.

²⁴ Thomas John Graham comes to a similar conclusion in his *Sure Methods of Improving Health and Prolonging Life* (1828): "The famous Daniel Lambert ate and slept moderately, drank only water, and took much exercise in his earlier years, but paying less attention to exercise and regimen, some years before his death, he died suddenly of excessive corpulence in the year 1809" (342-3). In William Wadd's popular *Cursory Remarks on Corpulence* (1810) and later revision, *Comments on Corpulence* (1828), Lambert is not just an example of obesity, but the immediate cause for Wadd to publish. He begins by stating the common belief that modernity has "increased the frequency of corpulence," particularly in England, and wonders why more has not been written on the subject. His answer is that some believe the solution is too obvious to be stated: "keeping 'the eyes open, and the mouth shut,' contains the whole secret of the cure" (*Remarks* 7). However, Lambert is an example that proves the problem to be somewhat more complex. If people continue to die from obesity, then there must be more to say on the matter. Wadd concludes that in the case of Lambert, "it does not appear, that any decided attempt was made to arrest the progress of the disease" (8). He cannot settle the issue of "whether this inattention arose from ignorance, or from the common prejudice, that the complaint is so connected and interwoven with the constitution, as to be irremediable" (8-9). Regarding Lambert, "we are only left to wonder, that this prodigy of clogged machinery should have continued to move so many years" (9). Wadd's project is to prevent others from making the same mistake by disabusing them of the notion that corpulence falls outside the realm of personal control.

²⁵ Gigante argues, "That the modern Man of Taste must subjugate his appetites to middle-class ideals of moderation, tempered by manners, was a fact that the prince (unable to read the times like his more 'Temperate' parents) somehow missed" (*Taste* 165).

Although “George believed himself to be the princely epitome of taste, to many of his contemporaries he was an emblem of immoderate appetite surrounded by his own uncouth remains” (166).

²⁶ In his *Intercepted Letters* (1813), Thomas Moore draws a direct connection between Lambert and the Regent. One of the fictional letters, written by a bookseller denying publication of a play based on its libelous content, also contains a manuscript of that play. Moore offers a summary of its plot along with some extracts. The drama unfolds after the Regent discovers a few fragments of paper on which are written “the unconnected words ‘*Wife neglected*’—‘*the Book*’—‘*Wrong Measures*’—‘*the Queen*’—‘*Mr. Lambert*’—‘*the R—G—T*’” (103). Interpreting mischief in the ambiguous words, the Regent declares, “Ha! treason in my House!” But after a trial which finds two brothers unjustly sent to prison, the play ends with the discovery that the note was sent from a Tailor on professional matters. In full the letter reads:

Honor’d Colonel—my WIFE, who’s the QUEEN of all slatterns,
NEGLECTED to put up THE BOOK of new Patterns.
She sent the WRONG MEASURES too—shamefully wrong—
They’re the same us’d for poor MR. LAMBERT, when young;
But, bless you! they wouldn’t go half round the R—G—T
So, hope you’ll excuse your’s, till death, most obedient. (111)

Thus, in Moore’s account, even Lambert cannot match the Regent in size. Although in truth Lambert was much bigger (even “when young”), the excessive appetites associated with that bodily size make the Regent’s body signify differently than Lambert’s.

²⁷ Thanks to Phillipa Massey of the Stamford Museum (which houses an exhibit dedicated to Lambert). Massey passed on a reproduction of a handbill from Lambert’s exhibition in Hinckley during December 1806 (original from Leicester Record Office). The advertisement reads: “EXHIBITION. Mr. Daniel Lambert, (of Leicester) The Heaviest Man that ever lived! Who at the Age of 36 Years, Weighed upwards of 50 Stone, (Fourteen Pounds to the Stone) Or 87 Stone 4 Pounds London weight, which is 91 Pounds More than the great Mr. Bright ever weighed. Mr. Lambert will see Company at Mr. Tomlinson’s *Bulls-Head-Inn*, HINKLEY On Monday and Tuesday the 15th & 16th. Instant (December 1806.) From 10 till 5. Admittance One Shilling each.”

²⁸ He also asks for sympathy from gastronomers, whom he blames for inciting gluttonous behavior: “To you I appeal, ye cooks by profession—ye gormandizers by privilege—to the whole board of Aldermen—to the shade of Mrs Glass,—to Mrs Rundell, Doctor Kitchener, and the rest of the list of gastronomical literati, who, in teaching the world the science of good living, must have some yearnings, one would think, for those victims whom ye lead into the way of temptation” (87). This kind of critique is commonplace throughout the history of cuisine, but Grattan’s piece also gestures toward the positive effects of gastronomy by recognizing its cultural relevance. In his article, “On the Pleasures of the Table” (in the *New Monthly Magazine*) Grattan makes a more explicit defense of good eating. He argues that gluttony is eating alone, a lesson he claims to have learned from his father’s butler, a man who would “sooner let his most delicate morsels

rot in a crust of mouldiness than devour them alone” (4: 207). Gourmandism, on the other hand, takes shape as a sort of communal, pastoral feast. Drawing on Book V of *Paradise Lost* as a model (in which angels and humans dine together), Grattan encourages sensual enjoyment without excess. He claims, “moderate and honest indulgence is as distinct from that selfish enormity [gluttony], as is the wholesome delight with which a hungry sportsman attacks a leg of mutton from the hellish voraciousness of Count Ugolino, in Dante’s *Inferno*, feeding on the skull of the Archbishop Ruggieri” (210). The reference to Ugolino gives a picture not only of voracity, but also of broken sociability. Ugolino and Ruggieri could not coexist peacefully in life (could not dine together), so they are forced to live out an eternal perversion of companionship. For Grattan, the key to gourmandism is not only the sensual and intellectual pleasure affording by good eating, but also the social good that it performs.

²⁹ Charles Byrne (1761-1783), who claimed to be eight feet four inches tall. His skeleton resides at the Hunterian Museum in London, which shows he in fact measured only seven feet ten inches (Bondeson 236).

³⁰ Mole writes: “Byron’s dieting, which was initially a way of producing a body fit for the public eye, became an attempt to maintain his integrity under public scrutiny by limiting his transactions with the world and a tacit critique of the way his body was viewed as an object for consumption. Restricting his food intake was a way to maintain a minimal level of control. Asserting the right to choose what went into his body was a way to reassert the most basic autonomy. Refusing food, withdrawing into solitude and burning his writings were all connected ways of avoiding the interventions of others into his self-presentation and self-understanding” (30).

³¹ Other works on Byron and food include Jane Stabler’s “Byron’s World of Zest,” in which she traces Byron’s treatment to food through Roland Barthes’ assessment of food’s three cultural associations (maternity, novelty, and conviviality). Stabler cites an interview with Barthes from January 10, 1977 in *Le Nouvel Observateur*. He says: ““As a cultural object, food means at least three things to me. First the aura of the maternal model, nourishment as it is considered and prepared by the mother: that is the food I like. Second, from that home base, I enjoy excursions, digressions toward the new and unusual: I can never resist the temptation of a dish endowed with the prestige of novelty. And finally, I’m particularly sensitive to conviviality, to the companionship of eating together, but only if this conviviality is on a small scale: when the company becomes too numerous, the meal becomes tiresome, and I lose interest in the food, or else I over eat from boredom”” (qtd. in Stabler 143). Carol Shiner Wilson argues that like the food items the poet describes, “Byron’s culinary esthetics may equally please and nourish us—despite the confusion of tastes and risks of indigestion” (39). See also Peter Graham’s “The Order and Disorder of Eating in Byron’s *Don Juan*” and Christine Kenyon-Jones’s “‘Man Is a Carnivorous Production’: Byron and the Anthropology of Food.”

³² J.H. Baron and Mole both suggest that the treatise on corpulence Byron purchased in 1811 was Wadd’s *Cursory Remarks*. Mole also points out that Byron owned James

Makittrick Adair's *An Essay on Diet and Regimen* and John Sinclair's *The Code of Health and Longevity* (34).

³³ Hodgson's poem reads, "Si, quæ magna tument, sublimia rite vocantur, / Mons velut, aut vasti fabrica mira Poli, / Vindicat egregiam Lambertus corpore famam, / Dicitur et vero nomine magnus homo" (81). This translates very roughly to "If the sublime, the vastness of mountain or sky, is spoken of, Lambert, in truth a great man, should be recalled."

³⁴ Byron applies this remark to Robert Burns, whom he describes as "an antithetical mind" characterized by contradictions: "tenderness, roughness—delicacy, coarseness—sentiment, sensuality." He continues by suggesting "a true voluptuary will never abandon his mind to the grossness of reality." The key to pleasure is that it combine body and intellect. Byron introduces this point regarding Burns's unpublished letters "full of oaths and obscene songs," which were lent to him by John Allen, "a devourer, a Helluo of books." Thus, the pleasure to which Byron refers is both Burns's vulgar sensuality and the consumption of books. Byron claims that "it is by exalting the earthly, the material, the *physique* of our pleasures, by veiling these ideas, by forgetting them altogether, or, at least, never naming them hardly to one's self, that we alone can prevent them from disgusting" (*BLJ* 3: 239). The recognition of the aesthetic enjoyment's roots in materiality must be obfuscated in order to avoid disgust. For Byron, this truth applies equally to sensual and aesthetic pleasure.

³⁵ Baron suggests that a retroactive diagnosis of Byron would likely conclude he had bulimia or anorexia. Baron's article also gives a good list of Byron's own writings on his diet.

³⁷ The quotation comes from John Ford's *The Broken Heart*, a play which revolves around issues of eating. Nancy Gutierrez summarizes: "*The Broken Heart* dramatizes the story of Penthea, given in marriage to a man she does not love (Bassanes), and the repercussions of this act upon her former lover (Orgilus), her brother, and her brother's future wife (Calantha): Penthea starves herself to death; Orgilus kills Ithocles and then kills himself through a ritual bloodletting, and Calantha will herself dead of a broken heart. These deaths not only destroy the youth of three families, but they also put an end to the Spartan royal family, since Calantha has just become queen at her father's death" (66). Penthea's death from starvation is intriguing in the context of Lambert, but the author of the article does not allude specifically to this fact. Penthea speaks the lines quoted, regarding her former lover after she has spurned him. Gutierrez argues that "Penthea's decision to deny herself food is neither inhuman nor monstrous, but merely a communicative activity that is uniquely female... Such self-induced starvation has long been used as a tool of resistance by women against repressive social practices" (74).

³⁸ John Hamilton Reynolds explicitly links the pet lamb to mutton. In *Peter Bell* (a parody of the poem of the same title that Wordsworth had advertised but not yet published when Reynolds scooped him), Reynolds depicts Wordsworth as a doltish

egoist, fully absorbed in his own poetic universe. The impostor Wordsworth contemplates the fate of his poetic creations through Peter Bell, and finds that “Harry Gill is gone to rest” and “Goody Blake is food for maggot” (36) Likewise, “Barbara Lewthwaite’s fate [is] the same, / And cold as mutton is her lamb” (39).

³⁹ The author of the article facetiously adds, in a footnote: “Mr. Moore must have seen this poem, and borrowed the first line. I cannot otherwise account for the identity. Mr. Moore’s very popular song was written subsequently to the death of the author, if I recollect rightly” (141).

⁴⁰ Jeremy Treglown writes of “a contemporary [mid-seventeenth century] tradition of poems on the subject of love which share the opening formula ‘Tell me no more.’ Henry King’s statement of submission to the beloved, ‘Tell mee no more how faire she is,’ typifies the idealism of a convention followed also in Thomas Weaver’s ‘Sylvia Singing’ (‘Tell mee no more, to what rare sound / The starres doo daunce theyr Round’) and in a poem attributed to Sir Henry Moody beginning ‘Tell me noe more her eyes are like / two rivall Sunns that wonder strike.’” Treglown also cites examples of poets inverting the convention cynically, which reaches a height with the Earl of Rochester’s “Against Constancy,” which “argues in favour not only of sexual enjoyment, but of promiscuity” (43).

⁴¹ In the 1800 edition of *Lyrical Ballads*, “The Pet-Lamb” and “Written in Germany, On One of the Coldest Days of the Century” were printed immediately next to each other.

CHAPTER IV

THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF THE STOMACH

Thomas Malthus's *Essay on the Principle of Population* (1798) opens by recognizing the French Revolution as its shaping political context. It is a "blazing comet... destined either to inspire with fresh life and vigour, or to scorch up and destroy the shrinking inhabitants of the earth" (16). This apocalyptic vision was not far from the future Malthus's theory predicted for a world with exponentially expanding human population and the limited resources of the land. Despite the opening rhetorical grandeur of the revolutionary "blazing comet," the mathematics of hunger occupies Malthus's thinking. In this regard, the more appropriate immediate context for Malthus's text was the bread crisis of the 1790s. Bad crop harvests and rising wheat prices throughout the 1790s seemed to substantiate Malthus's argument as food riots and famine conditions spread throughout the country. The ensuing debate about the Corn Laws after worse crop shortages in 1811 and 1812, and continuing argument about Malthus's later editions of the *Essay*, show that actual food circumstances (themselves shaped by gastronomy's burgeoning cultural impact) dictate how the nascent field of political economy unfolded in contemporary political and literary culture. Although Malthus posits that the principle of population operates based on two biological necessities (eating and reproduction), the discourse of political economy reveals that the experience of the stomach is always social.

The stomach plays a central role in contemporary physiological descriptions of bodily action. From Albrecht von Haller's concepts of muscular irritability and nervous sensibility to John Brown's generalized principle of excitability (which includes both irritability and sensibility) as "the vital property of all organized or animated existence" (de Almeida 69), the stomach emerges as the primary locus for measuring healthful levels of stimulus. William Kitchiner uses the claim, "THE STOMACH is the centre of sympathy" (*Art* 165), to shape his approach to gourmandism. Yet his assertion engages with contemporary assumptions about physiology, as well as serving to justify gourmandism. Astley Cooper, in his *Lectures*, erases the distinction between "irritation" and "sensibility," and classes them both under the function of "sympathetic communication" (2). And like Kitchiner, Cooper argues that the stomach plays a central role in sympathetic communication: "there is no organ more frequently affected by irritation than the stomach" (4).¹ Both writers trace their conception of the stomach and its role in sympathy to John Hunter's principle of vitality. Instead of differentiating between irritability and sensibility, or insisting on the primacy of excitation, Hunter argues that a "principle of life" precedes any "chemical or mechanical property" (1: 219); this vital principle operates in concert with "the action of the nerves" (1: 317), a secondary principle of which is sympathy. And regarding this principle, Hunter claims: "the stomach appears to have this connexion with the body more than any other part. It would appear that the stomach was the seat of universal sympathy" (324).

Considering that physiological definitions of the stomach's role emanate from a principle of social behavior, it should perhaps come as no surprise that stomachs experience questions of food socially. Yet while Malthus shows an awareness of this

medical discourse, he crafts his theory of population on the notion that eating is a question only of physiology. In the responses to his work, however, this elision of social questions becomes the ammunition for anti-Malthusian attacks. Responses to his work become increasingly hostile after Malthus's second edition, in which he focuses less on the philosophical contradiction between Godwin's system of human perfectibility and the principle of population, and turns instead to his argument against the Poor Laws, the primary means of relief to England's growing mass of laboring poor.² The simplest answer to dilemma posed by the principle of population is one that cannot be countenanced by Malthus's ideology of eating: the rich must eat less.³ Even though the amount of food one can consume is limited by "the narrow capacity of the human stomach" (1st ed. 70), writers define this capacity differently. In particular, the responses of William Hazlitt, Thomas Jarrold, and William Godwin focus on Malthus's justification of the principle of population through the image of "nature's mighty feast" (2nd ed. 531). Although Malthus's theory poses hunger as merely a biological issue, the image of the feast introduces questions about class and social organization. Malthus attempts to formulate his principle of population by ignoring the social and aesthetic experience of the stomach, while responses to his system attack it precisely for insidiously masking the defense of aristocratic paternalism with its disingenuous insistence on the empirical facts of biology.

The ways in which the Malthusian debates proceed reinforces Fredric Jameson's point that "ideological commitment is not first and foremost a matter of moral choice but of taking sides in a struggle between embattled groups" (290). Malthus and his combatants define themselves and their positions with respect to the notion that "class

discourse... is essentially *dialogic* in its structure” (84). Competing ideologies of eating are constructed out of the interplay between the dominant and laboring classes, and the “class fractions” organized around that axis (84). I also recognize from Jameson the importance of combining a negative ideological hermeneutic with a positive one. The stakes for the debate as established during the bread crisis of 1795, followed by the Malthusian controversy itself, display the extent to which “the effectively ideological is also, at the same time, necessarily Utopian” (286). Malthus’s image of nature’s mighty feast in particular relies on utopian impulses, even as Malthus’s detractors recognize “the undiminished power of ideological distortion that persists even within the restored Utopian meaning of cultural artifacts” (299).

In the second half of this chapter, I turn to Thomas De Quincey’s *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater*, in order to show how the navigation of ideology and utopia unfold through a literary work concerned more with aesthetic questions than economic ones. Even so, the *Confessions* relies on the context of political economy to redefine the experience of the stomach through opium use, which thereby alters De Quincey’s aesthetic and digestive systems. Throughout his career, De Quincey investigates both political economy and physiology (in particular, that of the stomach). The two concerns intersect in *Confessions*, which narrates the transformation of De Quincey’s body from a hungry vessel to productive laborer. Opium enables the body to produce imaginative visions that become the subject of De Quincey’s writing. The enhanced imagination comes with a cost, however, as opium seizes control of De Quincey’s body. Opium creates the conditions for imaginative production while also rendering the user dependent on opium. Without the drug, De Quincey loses the ability to work, precisely because of

its effect on his stomach. De Quincey's reliance on opium for aesthetic labor leads him to recognize the crucial support that the economy of the stomach offers to visions of aesthetics. The *Confessions* conveys a middle-class ideal of labor with respect to literary output, which typifies the concurrent ideological and utopian impulses underlying artistic production.

The Taste of Starvation: The Bread Crisis of 1795

In his "Man in the Moon" (1820) William Hone sketches a picture of England in the nineteenth century through the mirror image of Lunataria, a kingdom on the moon. Although Hone's satire addresses a different political climate than that of the 1790s, his treatment of the relation between national and individual health recalls the stakes of the bread crisis from the mid-1790s, the immediate shaping context for Malthus's theory. The speaker of the poem dreams of traveling to the moon, where he hears the Prince of Lunataria make a speech to "That reverend body of Moonarian sages" (23, 35). In the speech, the Prince explains that "CONSPIRACY and TREASON are abroad! / ... gender'd in the wombs / Of spinning-jennies, winding-wheels, and looms." He apologizes that "these cursed State Affairs / Should take you from your pheasants and your hares," but all the signs point toward "rebellion, blood, and riot." He concludes that "The villains would destroy the Constitution!" which presumably refers both to the nation and the stomach (which would rather be at work on pheasants and hares). The sages must take measures "To quell the *Radicals*, and save our bacon," even though the "*temporary evil*" of starvation afflicts many more who cannot afford even bacon. The solution to those who "may still want food" is that "A few STEEL LOZENGES will stop their pain,

/ And set the Constitution right again.” The pun on “constitution” returns, this time signifying trebly: the digestion of the ruling class (whose meals have been interrupted by “State Affairs”), the sovereignty of the nation, and the stomachs of the poor. Hone’s accompanying image shows a group of robust soldiers pointing gun barrels down the throats of several emaciated men (Fig. 5). Hone shows how, in public discourse, the abuses of the polysemous “constitutions” all impinge on the health of the English nation. Similarly, the bread debates of the 1790s aim to preserve the bodily health of English laborers. Yet even in the face of starvation, taste still commands the debate. Survival of the body is the primary concern, but this must be achieved while still maintaining proper English taste. The constitution of the state relies as much on taste as on the health of its laboring bodies.⁴ This framing of hunger through taste provides the immediate context for Malthus’s work, and displays how economic management relies on the cultural signification of taste.

Throughout the eighteenth century, wheat bread had been a staple of the working class diet. So when the harvest of 1795 failed and prices rose rapidly, numerous pamphlets appeared, offering various methods to alleviate the suffering (and stem the tide of food riots spreading across the country).⁵ The responses to the bread crisis repeatedly show how the ideology of social organization—expressed through the language of taste—shapes the discourse of hunger. The Board of Agriculture, “as the sudden exigency of the moment seemed to demand,” encouraged the use of mixed bread (bread made from grains other than wheat). Without having enough time to “ascertain by experiment, the nutritive qualities of all sorts of corn from which bread could be made,” the Board elicited bakers to present them with 70 different varieties of bread made from wheat, rye,



STEEL LOZENGES

will stop their pain,
And set the Constitution
right again.

My L—ds and G—d—n,
The foreign powers
Write me word frequently
that they are ours,
Most truly and sincerely,
in compliance
With our most

Fig. 5

From William Hone's *The Man in the Moon* (1820)

barley, oats, buckwheat, rice, maize, peas, beans and potatoes, in various configurations and proportions (3). Their judgments were made simply on taste. The “general result,” was that “very few, if any, of the loaves then exhibited, were too bad for human food in times of scarcity.” They also add “that the practice of a few days, will reconcile the taste and stomach to different sorts of food, which, at first sight, might be disagreeable” (10). As Samantha Webb notes, the Board’s gustatory judgments imply, “it is the poor who must get used to [wheat substitutes], even be grateful for it” (7). Bread made from one third rice, one third beans, and one third potatoes, might not satisfy the palate, but it will feed people in times of scarcity; and if the poor let their stomachs get used to it, the means of alleviating hunger may become palatable as well.

In the propagandistic *A Friendly Address to the Poor of Great Britain*, Thomas Tapwell, “a journeyman shoemaker,” appeals to his “Friends and Fellow Labourers” to heed the advice of the Board regarding mixed bread, and to trust the government’s management of the crisis. But, according to Tapwell, it is not only the poor who should use mixed bread; in fact, “the king and queen themselves, all the nobility and gentry, and most respectable merchants, manufacturers and tradesmen have, for some time, used only this mixed bread” (6). Tapwell’s *Address* “exploit[s] the notion that the poor will imitate their betters,” and “fuses an ideal of self-denial and self-discipline with the patriotic love of king and country” (Webb 8, 9). And as the Board implies, this sacrifice entails the disciplining of the palate. Although mixed bread may at first seem “not so pleasant to the taste as wheaten bread... by degrees it will become as agreeable and palatable” (5). The process of disciplining one’s taste becomes aligned with the financial and social responsibility necessary to the stability of the state. The prospect of eating mixed bread

falls under proper English taste because the nobility have disciplined their palates as such.

The anonymous author of the pamphlet, *Hints for the Relief of the Poor*, shifts the blame for the bread crisis to the palates of the poor. Like the Board of Agriculture, he advocates the use of mixed bread, yet he claims the crisis has reached its height because the poor refuse to redefine what constitutes palatability. He claims that with all the other crops available in large supply for the making of bread, “so far from there being the least reason to apprehend a famine, there is hardly ground to talk of distress; a scarcity under such circumstances is in truth rather imaginary than real.” The real problem is not the low wheat supply, but rather “the *unwillingness* of the poor to deviate in any degree from their accustomed mode of living, even though the change should be as consistent with their health and comfort, as it would... be productive of their true and lasting advantage, by securing them against the danger of future want” (4). If only the poor would change *their* dietary habits, the crisis surrounding a meager supply of wheat would disappear. The true mark of taste is the ability to vary one’s diet. The author of another pamphlet, *Thoughts on the Most Safe and Effectual Mode of Relieving the Poor*, likewise asserts that the only way to avoid a more disastrous situation regarding wheat is “THE MORE SPARING USE OF BREAD, aided and promoted by the adoption of all the substitutes which can be readily procured.” Unlike the author of *Hints*, however, the author of *Thoughts* implicates members of all classes: “If each individual would resolve to content himself at every meal with a few mouthfuls of bread less than he or she is accustomed to eat, the danger would vanish” (5).⁶ But for the poor who already eat so little, the prospect of eating less is not a favorable one.

One anonymous author suggests that it is not the poor who need to change their habits, but the rich. As bread is “the chief article of [laborers’] subsistence,” the author questions the value of attempting to alter that condition. Instead he asks if the responsibility should instead fall to the rich: “What is the most natural suggestion to occur to every man’s breast in the solitude of his own closet? Is it not, that *if he is wealthy, or has other effectual means of subsistence*, he should *resign his share of aliment by bread, WHOLLY, AND ALTOGETHER TO THE POOR?*” (*Striking Facts* 10-11). The rhetorical shape of this point turns the alteration of diet into a moral imperative for the wealthy. To continue to eat bread, when one can afford sustenance from another source, amounts to a transgression of natural morality. This author forbears from dictating the diet of the laboring classes, but through a slightly different ideology of eating still operates from the assumption that taste comes down to an issue of political, social, and moral responsibility. The utopian impulse of ideology remains, without the same outright defense of the behavior of the dominant class.

Patrick Colquhoun, in his *Useful Suggestions Favourable to the Comfort of the Labouring People* (1795), expressly avoids the kind of dietary imperatives that characterize other attempts to remedy the situation: “It is not, however, here meant that the labouring man, or his family should deny themselves their pot of porter, or occasionally their roast meat when they have a desire for it.—God forbid.” Instead, his main goal is to supply knowledge. Specifically, he provides detailed information “to shew them, that they can have more variety, and that many profitable, palatable, and beneficial dishes may be afforded, by which they may live far better, and at less expence than they do at present” (5). Far from rigidly limiting the diet of the poor, Colquhoun

wants to expand it. (Spreading knowledge of cookery to afford more gustatory variety even anticipates Kitchiner's project.) The particular kind of food he champions, however, brings with it some of the same complications of mixed bread. Colquhoun explains that by preparing meat and vegetables in soup (rather than by roasting), the poor might "make their earnings go as far as possible in a family, and thereby afford a wholesome, palatable, and an abundant supply of savory and nourishing food, at a small expence" (2). By the force of "habit and custom," "it is not a mode of cookery which generally prevails;" and it tends to be "only known to the higher classes of people in London" (2, 3). But through Colquhoun's efforts, the poor might learn the practice, adopt it, and in the process limit their intake of wheat bread. The financial advantage from reaping greater nutrition from their food would even secure a sort of luxury: "Money will be saved, by the use of these different kinds of Soups, for a roasted joint with potatoes and vegetables to be occasionally added to the bill of fare" (11). Colquhoun runs into trouble, however, when we consider the reasons for English prejudice against soup. The image of Napoleon's gaunt figure sipping from a rather unappetizing "French soup," contrasted with Daniel Lambert's "Roast Beef," strikingly displays the Frenchness of soup, and thereby its reputation as an unsubstantial, unsatisfying substitute for the hearty "Roast Beef of Old England."⁷

Colquhoun also struggles when he champions the potato. Among the foods suggested as substitutes for bread, the potato was the most vehemently debated.⁸ Those in favor of the potato, argued that it could be produced in greater amounts and at a lower cost than wheat. Colquhoun points out that the potato is already "the chief food of many of the northern counties of England." It does not render them weak and unproductive, as

opponents of the potato would suggest; on the contrary, Colquhoun asserts that “the people are strong, healthy, and happy,” and can “rear and educate large families with decency, upon much smaller wages than the labouring poor in London receive” (12). In addition to their cheapness and availability, potatoes can also be prepared in a greater variety of ways than wheat. Colquhoun gives several recipes for soups made with potatoes, and also suggests that they be made into puddings, “or with milk boiled,” or in the dish which would come to be associated with Englishness by the end of the nineteenth century: “with salt-fish and butter, which is an excellent dish” (12).⁹ The potato, according to Colquhoun’s vision of its adoption, will provide a wider culinary experience to the working classes, while simultaneously helping them to attain a higher status in society. The “present temporary scarcity of bread” is actually a blessing, since it will lead to “a more frugal, and a more wholesome mode of living,” which will in turn create more disposable income for “decent cloaths; for the education of children; and to render the labouring people more independent of the pawnbroker’s shop than they are at present” (13).¹⁰ The economic conditions, according to Colquhoun, create the opportunity for the laboring class to redefine itself in relation to food and economy. Laborers can achieve a greater degree of culinary sophistication, and thereby aspire to a higher social standing.¹¹

The potato, however, stands in the way of Colquhoun’s utopian vision. William Cobbett’s notorious hatred of the potato serves as an accurate summation of the kinds of arguments leveled against the tuber in the 1790s (even though Cobbett made his statements after this point). Cobbett’s arguments against the potato result from a complex set of associations. Initially he argues from an economic standpoint: the potato is actually

more wasteful than wheat bread, primarily because of the amount of labor that goes into preparing potatoes. Cobbett imagined that laborers' wives would spend all day boiling potatoes, and doing nothing else.¹² But the invective against the potato reaches its height when Cobbett considers the moral and social implications for its adoption. In Cobbett's mind, the Irish often serve as the example of the depths of degradation to which the English laborer may fall. He calls their diet "but one remove from that of the pig, and of the ill-fed pig too" (*Cottage Economy* 49). Part of the problem with potatoes, is that they require little cultivation, little intervention of civilizing forces. To eat potatoes is to eat like animals; and to *eat* like an animal is to *be* an animal. Thus, the diet of potatoes produces "slovenly and beastly habits" precisely because of the nature of the plant's cultivation. In Cobbett's formulation, workers are "constantly lifting their principal food at once out of the earth to their mouths... without the necessity of any implements other than the hands and the teeth." Potatoes—in the manner Cobbett imagines the Irish *do* eat them, and fears that the English *will*—erase the need for the behaviors that civilize us, and as such threaten the basis for our ontological difference from the animals.¹³ The potato is "the root... of slovenliness, filth, misery and slavery" (53). It is the duty of English citizens to fight these forces through a rigorous sense of self-discipline and moral responsibility.

Cobbett's invective notwithstanding, the potato would slowly makes its way into the English diet throughout the nineteenth century. The immediate cause of its rise—the bread crisis of 1795—was economic, but the stakes of the arguments about food for the working classes reveal strong cultural forces. Even at the most fundamental questions regarding food (hunger and subsistence), the forces of class and taste impinge on the

matter. Although brought about by the seemingly natural issue of hunger, the discourse of food in the 1790s revealed the extent to which food is constituted by, and helps to consolidate, the forces of culture. The ideological positions underpinning the suggestions differ, but in all cases the reasoning for how to eliminate starvation emerges out of the social and class implications of different food choices. Malthus attempts to elide these complications in his principle of population, but the responses to his work reinforce the notion that “eating is always much more than just eating” (de Certeau 198).

Natural Laws and Ideologies of Eating

Malthus founds the principle of population on two physiological premises: “First, That food is necessary to the existence of man. Secondly, That the passion between the sexes is necessary and will remain nearly in its present state” (19). Leaving aside the problem that hunger and lust are not equally necessary for *individual* survival,¹⁴ Malthus proceeds with the fundamental principle of population: humans increase their numbers at a geometric rate, while food production increases at an arithmetic one. Malthus concludes that because of this “natural” law, there exist checks on human population, which he identifies in the forms of misery and vice. These two factors ensure that population growth does not outpace food production.

In the first edition, he focuses on how this logic derails William Godwin’s philosophy of perfectibility. Quoting Prospero’s conclusion to his daughter’s wedding pageant, Malthus paints the inevitable failure of Godwin’s system: “These ‘gorgeous palaces’ of happiness and immortality, these ‘solemn temples’ of truth and virtue will dissolve, ‘like the baseless fabric of a vision,’ when we awaken to real life and

contemplate the true and genuine situation of man on earth” (64). He reasons that because misery and vice would disappear in a society of perfect happiness, there would be no checks to population growth, and eventually division and strife would reappear in the face of shortages of food, property and wealth. By the principle of population, Godwin’s society would “from the inevitable laws of nature, and not from any original depravity of man, in a very short period degenerate into a society constructed upon a plan not essentially different from that which prevails in every known State at present; I mean, a society divided into a class of proprietors, and a class of labourers” (72). Even as Malthus’s argument centers on a philosophic dispute, it quickly moves to a statement of economic and political reality—namely, the necessity of class divisions. This movement from “inevitable laws of nature” to social conditions mirrors the logic of Malthus’s treatment of food. The discourse surrounding the bread crisis shows how actual conditions of eating are shaped by the ideologies of taste. Class divisions do not emanate from natural laws—rather, such ideologies of class and taste define the natural laws from which Malthus builds his theory.

In the much-expanded second edition, published in 1803, Malthus shifted the weight of the argument to the immediate political context for the *Essay*: the Poor Laws. While he had in the first edition argued that the Poor Laws “increase population without increasing the food for its support” (38), the revamped rhetoric of the second edition’s fierce attack would incite equally fervent replies. The centerpiece of Malthus’s denunciation of the Poor Laws comes toward the end of the second edition, in the form of an analogy of a feast. Malthus’s curious metaphor shifts his empirical biologism into the realm of capitalistic social organization:

A man who is born into a world already possessed, if he cannot get subsistence from his parents on whom he has a just demand, and if the society do not want his labour, has no claim of *right* to the smallest portion of food, and, in fact, has no business to be where he is. At nature's mighty feast there is no vacant cover for him. She tells him to be gone, and will quickly execute her own orders, if he do not work upon the compassion of some of her guests. If these guests get up and make room for him, other intruders immediately appear demanding the same favour. The report of a provision for all that come, fills the hall with numerous claimants. The order and harmony of the feast is disturbed, the plenty that before reigned is changed into scarcity; and the happiness of the guests is destroyed by the spectacle of misery and dependence in every part of the hall, and by the clamorous importunity of those, who are justly enraged at not finding provision which they had been taught to expect. The guests learn too late their error, in counteracting those strict orders to all intruders, issued by the great mistress of the feast, who, wishing that all her guests should have plenty, and knowing that she could not provide for unlimited numbers, humanely refused to admit fresh comers when her table was already full (531-2).¹⁵

The image of a feast as a microcosmic representation of social order is a familiar one for gastronomers, but the intent tends to be opposite of Malthus's. Gastronomers envision the table as an inclusive, utopian ideal, whereas "the harmony of the feast," for Malthus, disintegrates when others attempt to enter. This passage reinforces stylistically and rhetorically that the principle of population does not exist in a vacuum, but engages with the material reality of food. Shortages of food exist not only because of natural laws, but also because of the details of eating culture. By casting the laws of nature in the image of a social engagement, Malthus undermines his basis of class divisions on biological reality. What appears as the result of biological facts gets explained through the social and ideological terms of eating—the same arena in which gastronomers shape their thinking.

Hazlitt, Godwin, and Jarrold all critique the "nature's mighty feast" passage in their replies to Malthus. Jarrold, in his *Dissertations on Man* (1806), suggests that the

analogy “might have been applauded in the councils of Nero, or in the camps of Attila or of Cortez,” since it would mean that the victims of their tyranny, “were only the unprotected guests, who craved admittance to a table already full” (19, 20). If taken to its logical extreme, Malthus’s analogy excuses extravagance, cruelty and depravity through deference to natural laws. Jarrold suggests that the argument’s fault stems from Malthus’s erroneous reading of “Nature.” He writes, “...at nature’s mighty feast, none are bishops, but all are men; there is no distinction; all that are invited at liberty to partake, and the life of a guest is sacred: to be invited to the same table, implies equality; and to possess life, is to possess the invitation” (20-1). Jarrold’s nature exists prior to class distinctions. This image becomes central to his refutation of the principle of population. He claims that Malthus underestimates the ability of man to reap sustenance from the earth, which has a boundless supply: “she never invites to a feast, and then mocks her guests with an empty plate; but when she bids to an entertainment, she bids also to the preparation for it” (26). Jarrold’s argument, like Malthus’s, crafts an image of nature through a social reality. The difference lies in the conception of the feast—for Malthus it excludes based on economic status, while Jarrold’s utopian vision welcomes all to the table. While Malthus’s version relies on the dominant ideology of the ruling class, it too presents an image of utopia. Both Malthus’s and Jarrold’s positions emerge out of ideological assumptions, and they contribute to the “struggle between embattled groups” which characterizes all cultural productions. Although they begin at biological premises, the stakes of the debate come down to competing principles of social organization, both of which rely on definitions of taste.

Hazlitt's treatment of the passage similarly critiques the construction of "Nature" from social reality, while explicitly interrogating the class assumptions from which Malthus establishes the theory of nature's mighty feast. The "pretty passages" are meant, in Hazlitt's appraisal, "to prove the right of the rich (whenever they conveniently can) to starve the poor" (*Reply* 290). He refuses to accept Malthus's assertion that there are no vacant covers for the poor, instead claiming, "There are plenty of vacant covers but that the guests at the head of the table have seized upon all those at the lower end, before the table was full." Hazlitt emphasizes that the feast takes place in the contested realm of economic production. Those at the head of the table parcel out the wealth gained from the labor-power of the worker, who "only asks for the crumbs which fall from rich men's tables, and the bones which they throw to their dogs" (291). Hazlitt continues, supposing that one must watch idly as an old man, "bent fairly double with hard labour, [who] can no longer get employment in the regular market," must beg for food. The man, "after a life of unceasing labour," has "no claim of *right* (as our author emphatically expresses it) to the smallest portion of food, in fact has no business to be where he is" (292). The process that Malthus describes as nature, Hazlitt recasts as the logic of capitalism. The poor have a right to the feast only if their labor has value. The worker devotes his body to labor, and when that power fails him, he loses his place at nature's feast.¹⁶

In his continued analysis of the nature's feast passage, Hazlitt recurs to a criticism he levels against Malthus throughout his *Reply*: the rich refuse to "retrench their tables." Several times in the first edition of the *Essay*, Malthus uses this formulation to argue against poor relief. If Malthus gives money to the poor, as the contemporary Poor Laws enabled, he claims "I give him a title to a larger share of that produce than formerly,

which share he cannot receive without diminishing the shares of others” (37). In this way, assistance alleviates individual—but increases universal—suffering. As a contrast to this model, Malthus posits, “If I retrench the quantity of food consumed in my house, and give him what I have cut off, I then benefit him, without depressing any but myself and family, who, perhaps, may be well able to bear it” (37). So he concludes, “If the rich were to subscribe and give five shillings a day to five hundred thousand men without retrenching their own tables, no doubt can exist that as these men would naturally live more at their ease and consume a greater quantity of provisions, there would be less food remaining to divide among the rest” (38). The question that Hazlitt raises is why the rich cannot give money *and* retrench their tables. The figure of the table as the locus of the feast launches Hazlitt into a scathing attack on this inconsistency. The “false feeling” behind Malthus’s argument is that “the upper classes cannot be expected to retrench any of their superfluities” (317). Because the poor would die without relief from the upper classes, Hazlitt places the burden on the latter, not on the former. He references the “late scarcity,” (when a poor crop in harvest of 1804 contributed to already rising prices, with wheat again reaching over 100s. per quarter by the beginning of January) and asks, “would [the poor] not have starved, but for the assistance given to them?” (317).¹⁷ The tension revolves around differing conceptions of food: “Food to the rich is in a great measure an article of luxury: to the poor it is a necessary” (311-2). What eventually emerges from these two antithetical principles is a synthesis that becomes denominated gourmandism.

Underlying these two poles are Hazlitt’s ideological assumptions about aristocratic excess, against which the newly-developing middle class establishes its own

codes of eating habits. Presaging the gastronomic advocates who would begin espousing middle-class gourmandism a decade later, Hazlitt offers a picture of false temperance:

I remember to have heard of but one instance of a real, effectual, and judicious determination in the rich to retrench the idle and superfluous waste and expence, some years ago at a time when the poor were *in want of bread*. It originated in a great and noble family, where seventy or eighty servants were kept, and where twenty or thirty guests of the first distinction ‘fared sumptuously every day.’ These humane and enlightened persons, struck with the difference between their own good fortune, and the necessities of others, came to a resolution that the pieces of bread which they left at dinner should neither be thrown nor given away, but that the bread-baskets should be divided into little compartments with each person’s name affixed to them, where he could conveniently put the piece of bread which he left, and have it *saved* till the next day. This humane example was much talked of in the neighbourhood, and soon after followed by several of the gentry, who got their bread-baskets divided into little compartments with the different names affixed, and eat the pieces of bread which they left one day, the day after—so that the poor were thus placed completely out of the reach of want! (318).

The sarcasm emerges from the contrast between the poor “*in want of bread*,” and the gentry with dozens of servants and “sumptuous” daily bread—like the rich man from Luke, who was doomed to eternal damnation for indulging luxury and ignoring the poor beggar, Lazarus. Hazlitt’s critique resides in both class struggle and religious belief, which, in the history of nineteenth-century England, cannot be separated. Bread functions multiply as the “staff of life,” and as the body of Christ. The false attempt at placing the poor “out of the reach of want,” reveals the gap between food’s economic and spiritual functions. For the rich, the bread is an empty signifier, providing neither material nor spiritual sustenance. Their solipsism becomes written on the “bread-baskets” themselves, an indication of how food signifies differently for people of different classes. The bread does not sustain, but only reinforces the self’s primacy. “Our daily bread” becomes “*my* daily bread.”

This passage revolves around the wide gap between what food means for people with different economic and social realities. But Hazlitt points out that food's material function—the first assumption in Malthus's argument—is the same for all. Hazlitt accepts that “food is necessary to the existence of man,” but again asserts that food does more for the rich than simply support their material existence: “But is there really then no difference between being gorged and *not* being starved, between eating venison and turtle-soup, and drinking three bottles of wine a-day, and living on crusts of bread and water?” (299-300). Hazlitt does not categorically condemn “eating venison and turtle-soup;” he objects to Malthus's tacit claim that there is no difference between gorging and not starving. The problem with the rich, for Hazlitt, is the selfishness that attends their indulgence. Like the “great and noble family” who hoards their bread, the rich prefer gorging and wasting food to supporting the poor.¹⁸

Elsewhere, Hazlitt himself admits to “indulging a sweet tooth.” As a contrast to himself, he presents an image of a “Bond Street lounge... coming out of a confectioner's shop, where he has had a couple basons of turtle-soup, an ice, some jellies, and a quantity of pastry.” The lounge, “picking his teeth and putting the change into his pocket, says to a beggar at the door, ‘I have nothing for you.’” This behavior is emblematic of the rich, who have reaped the benefits of taxation by “[taking]...from the necessities of life belonging to the poor, to add to the superfluities of the rich” (*Political Essays* 111). Whereas the Bond Street lounge offers up a clear falsehood, Hazlitt excuses his own indulgence by giving to the beggar: “We confess, we have always felt it in an awkward circumstance to be accosted in this manner, when we have been caught in the act of indulging a sweet tooth, and it costs us an additional penny” (112). The shameful act of

indulgence can be bought away by giving to the beggar (which follows the logic of Christianity). In this allegory of social relations, Hazlitt claims that the “rich and poor may at present be compared to the two classes of frequenters of pastry-cooks’ shops, those on the outside and those on the in” (112). However, this formulation leaves out Hazlitt, who begins inside the shop, and through his “awkward circumstance” shares with those outside. The unstated element in this analogy is the middle class. Hazlitt admits to indulgence, but justifies it by giving to the beggar. And furthermore, he distances his gustatory enjoyment from his advice to the poor, “to recollect, that though custard is nicer than bread, bread is the greatest necessary of the two” (112). In the process of castigating the rich and defending the poor, Hazlitt crafts a middle-class gustatory mode that is distinct from the former *and* the latter.

The question of food’s “necessity,” then, defines the ways in which Malthus and his responders navigate the social implications of eating. As in Hazlitt above, the “greatest necessary” for the poor, namely bread, functions differently for the rich, and for the middle class. These distinctions collapse, however, in discussions of the body. While the response to Malthus from medical professions was scarce, the work nonetheless emerges from and engages with central issues in late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century medicine.¹⁹ Malthus displays some knowledge of this discourse, although only tangentially. In order to refute Godwin’s argument for the infinite prolongation of human life, Malthus discusses the relationship between mind and body, insisting that the body has greater sway over the mind than vice versa. The terms in which he presents his argument owe a debt to the Brunonian and Hunterian systems of medicine. As an example of the body’s control over the mind, he writes, “I happen to have a very bad fit

of the toothache at the time I am writing this.” And although “the eagerness of composition” momentarily relieves his pain, “[he] cannot help thinking that the process which causes the pain is still going forwards, and that the nerves which carry the information of it to the brain are ever during these moments demanding attention and room for their appropriate vibrations” (78). The “vibrations” of the nerves, which convey pain, are distinct from the higher order, intellectual operations, which, for Hunter and other vitalists, function immaterially.²⁰ Malthus believes that the intellect and the body operate distinctly, but admits that “the first object of the mind is to act as purveyor to the wants of the body” (78). In this way, he avoids accusations of materialism, while also preserving the primacy of bodily needs, which is necessary for his argument about population.

Malthus directly discusses the stomach, that pivotal figure in Romantic medicine, relatively few times in the *Essay*. However, one particular mention becomes a locus for Hazlitt’s attack. In detailing the failure of a Godwinian perfect society, Malthus claims that equality would slowly degrade into a system based on hierarchies, with an unequal distribution of wealth. In this case, he supposes that it would be better for those on the side of surplus to share with those in want, even if it would make the latter dependent on the former through the exchange of labor. But the postulate for this argument is that “the quantity of food which one man could consume was necessarily limited by the narrow capacity of the human stomach” (70). Because of this physiological fact, a surplus of food will arise, and thereby make it possible for its exchange via labor. The stomach’s “narrow capacity” becomes a point of repeated contestation for Hazlitt. Three times in the *Reply* he mentions the brief reference, each time in relation to luxury. He describes the

postulate as follows: “every man’s stomach can hold only a certain quantity of food, and what does not go into one man’s stomach necessarily goes into some other’s” (201). The problem with this approach is that it reduces “the whole science of political economy... to a flat calculation of the size of a quartern loaf, and the size of the human stomach” (202). What cannot fit in the stomach of rich men does not make it directly to the mouth of the poor labourer, but instead becomes excess, waste. The vice of luxury cannot be accounted for as a result of the principle of population.²¹

Later Hazlitt questions how such luxury exists despite the “narrow capacity of the human stomach.” He asks: “Is there no such thing as waste in great houses, which must considerably diminish the disproportion between the quantity of food, and the narrow capacity of the human stomach?” Since the rich “are neither a bit taller, nor stouter, nor born with larger stomachs than other men,” Hazlitt finds Malthus’s reasoning spurious (300). Malthus answers the question of waste, by arguing that it functions as a sort of granary, “only opened at the time that they are most wanted” (2nd ed. 478): “The waste among the rich, and the horses kept for pleasure have indeed a little the effect of the consumption of grain in distilleries... the food consumed in this manner may be withdrawn on the occasion of a scarcity, and be applied to the relief of the poor... and must therefore tend rather to benefit than to injure the lower classes of society” (478). Malthus does not make a provision for how this surplus makes its way to the laborer’s stomach, to which Hazlitt and Godwin both object. Godwin writes, “No wonder that his book is always to be found in the country-seats of the court of aldermen, and in the palaces of the great” (565). He adds that Malthus “has undertaken to shew, that while [the rich] thought they were giving way to their vices, and were drawing down the ‘curses, not

loud, but deep,' of the bystanders, they were in reality public benefactors, and that the more they wasted, the more they saved" (566).

Malthus's reliance on the "narrow capacity of the human stomach" results in attacks precisely because he refuses to acknowledge that this capacity varies not only on the basis of biology. The stomach assures physiological nourishment, but in the process of seeking sustenance, culture intervenes in the experience. The competing ideologies of taste battle for control over what constitutes the "natural laws" of the stomach, from which further class ideologies emerge. For Malthus, nature precedes social existence, while Hazlitt and Godwin argue that the economist's conception of nature emanates from preexisting social order. In both cases, the discourse of eating and the class aesthetics associated with it, help to substantiate principles of economic organization. If the palate and the stomach influence economics, the question remains how economics shape the stomach's relationship to aesthetic production. Thomas De Quincey investigates the stomach's sway over creative labor through his intervention in the discourse of political economy.

De Quincey and the Pains of the Stomach

In 'The Pains of Opium' section in De Quincey's *Confessions*, he enters "in medias res" to show the pains at their height, and to give "an account of their palsying effects on the intellectual faculties" (98). Unable to read, except "aloud sometimes for the pleasure of others," and thwarted in his own writing—his unfinished manuscripts menacing him as reminders of "foundations laid that were never to support a superstructure"—De Quincey turns his attention to political economy (99). Despite the

effects of opium on his mind, he still detects the “utter feebleness of the main herd of modern economists” (100). Then, in 1819, a friend gives him a copy of David Ricardo’s *Principles of Political Economy and Taxation*, and De Quincey finds his faith in English thought restored. Reading Ricardo also spurs De Quincey to write. With the help of his wife, Margaret, as amanuensis, De Quincey composes “*Prolegomena to all future Systems of Political Economy*.” After arranging with a publisher and printer, and twice advertising the work, De Quincey needed only to write a preface and a dedication, but his productivity stalled: “I found myself quite unable to accomplish all this” (101). Without the help of his wife, his “whole domestic economy, whatever became of Political Economy, must have gone into irretrievable confusion” (102). The field of political economy briefly brings De Quincey out of his torpor, but opium ultimately renders him “powerless as an infant.” Instead of finishing his work on political economy, De Quincey devotes himself to the *Confessions*. Ricardo’s inspiration makes possible intellectual activity, which culminates in the *Confessions* and a series of articles in the *London Magazine*.²² De Quincey abandons a work that would have been “redolent of opium,” and a topic “to most people... a sufficient opiate,” and instead takes on the subject of opium itself (101).

While De Quincey admires Ricardo, he classes Malthus in the feeble “herd of modern economists.” His brief essay, “Malthus” (published as one of the “Notes from the Pocket-Book of a Late Opium-Eater” in the October 1823 issue of the *London*, and later reprinted as “Malthus on Population” in his collected works), challenges the validity of Malthus’s postulates regarding the arithmetic rate of increase of food production, and the geometric rate of population increase, while also debunking Malthus’s critique of a

Godwinian perfect society. Unlike Hazlitt, however, De Quincey does not believe that this fault renders all of Malthus's work useless.²³ Ultimately, although De Quincey sees merit in Malthus's principle of population, he views Ricardo as the more important political economist. He writes extensively on Ricardo's theory of value, while ridiculing Malthus for his attempts to challenge Ricardo.²⁴ Yet in all of De Quincey's writings on political economy, he shows little interest in the stomach, which plays a pivotal role in the theory of population, and elsewhere occupies De Quincey's thinking. The *Confessions*, which come to be through the inspiration of Ricardo's work, craft a theory of imaginative activity rooted in the digestion. De Quincey's economy of the stomach relies not on food for sustenance—instead, opium is the agent of activity. This produces a physiologically altered body which finds itself caught between the desire for productivity and the inability to achieve it. Lastly, opium riddles De Quincey with a feeling of “disgust” for all mental activity and literary productions. Opium is the only object that pleases the opium eater's taste. De Quincey reinscribes the aesthetic experience of opium through the social experience of the stomach. In the process, he formulates a model of aesthetic labor rooted in the conditions of gastric economy.

The immediate context for the *Confessions*, however, is not political economy. While De Quincey finished writing his narrative of hunger in August 1821, the *London* was reporting on George IV's coronation feast, a lavish display of wealth and spectacle, an exercise of individual English constitutions and a statement of the government's constitutional power. The first part of Thomas De Quincey's *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* was published in the September issue. In these two numbers of the *London*, several kinds of eating appear: feasting on splendor, ceremonial eating, reckless gorging,

“English Eating,” and finally De Quincey’s English opium-eating. Being a confession of another kind of luxurious indulgence, it resonates with the other examples of gluttonous eating in the surrounding articles. De Quincey’s habit of opium-eating—it is worth commenting that opium is *eaten*, not *taken* or *used*—comes out of bodily hunger, and eventually satisfies a kind of spiritual, intellectual craving.²⁵ In a world marked by excess and lack, satiety and hunger, opium figures as a kind of paradisiacal food, capable of satisfying simultaneously the needs of body and intellect. The imagination becomes the tool for disciplining the body into a mode of economic engagement. De Quincey’s body will not obey the dictates of consumption, so opium allows his imagination to rule over his physiological conditions. Eventually, the utopian vision of opium’s reign fails in the face of De Quincey’s deteriorating physiology.

In “On the Spirit of Monarchy,” Hazlitt argues that the coronation satisfies the vulgar desire characteristic of monarchy: “the craving in the human mind after the Sensible and the One... a false appetite in the popular feeling, which must be gratified” achieves its fullest satiety and “highest state of exaltation” through “a Coronation-day.” Hazlitt imagines for his reader the details of the scene:

We now see it in our mind’s eye; the preparation of weeks—the expectations of months—the seats, the privileged places, are occupied in the obscurity of night and in silence—the day dawns slowly big with the hope of Caesar and of Rome—the golden censers are set in order, the tables groan with splendour and with luxury... all eyes drink up the sign, all tongues reverberate the sound.

The details of luxurious tables and the metaphors of ingestion reinforce stylistically Hazlitt’s claim that such a spectacle makes the people “slaves to sense and show.” The imagination enables tyranny and abjection, particularly through the sensory indulgence. (Similarly, De Quincey’s stomach enables the tyranny of opium, even as the drug

provides the imaginative power needed to fuel his literary labors.) As a theatrical display of monarchical power, the coronation consolidates the King's sovereignty through a series of aesthetic signifying acts: an oath, a sermon, a benediction, an inthronization, and several processions, to name a few. The banquet functions as an ideological state apparatus, offering to the public an image of English identity expressed through the practices of the table.

How the coronation expresses national identity through gustatory signification is a complex matter. While the decorum and rituals of the coronation are markedly feudal, harkening back to ancient English traditions (the *Monthly Magazine* calls it "a semi-barbarous feudal pageant" [52: 82]), the food is no mere "roast beef of old England." The coronation banquet is remarkable for the sheer amount of food, and the variety of dishes, including, among others, "7,442 lbs. of beef; 7,133 lbs. of veal; 2,474 lbs. of mutton... 389 cow-heels; 400 calves' feet; 250 lbs. of suet; 160 geese; 720 pullets and capons; 1,610 chickens..." (*Mirror of Literature* 4: 75).²⁶ The food's association with Englishness wanes when we consider that the head chef was Jean-Baptiste Watier, the long-time chef to the Regent (who also lent his services and his name to Watier's, a popular Regency club). Yet even as the food emanates from the hands of a French chef, it nonetheless signifies English superiority over the French. The coronation's massive bill was partially footed by French reparation payments, so even if French cuisine reigns, the British Empire has asserted its political might.²⁷ In accounts of the coronation, statements of national pride abound. Robert Huish, in *An Authentic History of the Coronation* (1821) claims that the splendor of the procession cannot be adequately conveyed to his readers, and that the magnificence of the scene "has never been equalled at the coronation of any

sovereign of this country, and it may be added of any country in Europe” (255).

Likewise, the *Gentleman's Magazine* notes that the sight of the coronation engenders a feeling of national superiority: “It is gratifying to the national pride of an Englishman to reflect that he is a subject of the most powerful Monarch of the globe” (*Gentleman's Magazine* 91.2: 106).

For all the carefully choreographed displays of power and splendor, the ideological work begins to falter at the moment of eating. After asserting that the procession is the most magnificent sight, Huish admits that “the procession on its return to the Hall was not conducted with any thing like the same regularity which had distinguished its departure.” After several hours of standing, waiting, and processing, it is unsurprising that people would be anxious to begin the feast. The aldermen, as soon as they enter the hall, break from their place in the procession and head to their tables, which “occasioned some mirth in the Hall, from the well known attachment of the worthy aldermen to the enjoyment of the table” (259). At the same time, those who had tickets to the galleries had begun spilling into the hall in order to procure some refreshments. The hall had to be cleared before the King could return and the feast begin in earnest. The King himself “partook of several things on the table,” yet “it was evident...that it was a mere ceremony, the forms of which he felt it proper strictly to observe” (263). Even this did not go smoothly. After the first course was served, the Royal table had no soup ladles or carving utensils. These mistakes aside, after three hours of “ceremonial” eating, toasting, and cheering, the King departs.

The people who had spent the entire day in the galleries then descended upon the remaining board. At this point, the orderly control of the procession and ceremony vanishes completely, replaced by a reversion to unrestrained appetites:

From liquids the company proceeded to solids, and here the work of destruction was equally fierce; sweet-meats, pastry and confectionery of all sorts vanished with the rapidity of lightning; the distinctions of sex, and almost the common rules of politeness, seemed to have been forgotten; and it was not till the first cravings of nature were subdued, that something like an anxiety for the accommodation of the ladies found existence.
(Huish 270)

This description anticipates a Darwinian picture of “nature’s mighty feast,” at which the guests ignore social divisions and propriety in service of allaying the “cravings of nature.” The competition for whatever food remains takes precedence over moral rectitude—the banquet becomes a fight for survival, a microcosmic representation of Malthus’s social reality. Huish explains that this company comprised “the humbler classes of visitants,” but those of a higher class also engage in the struggle. The peeresses and those admitted by peers’ tickets find food in Westminster’s other rooms (where approximately twelve hundred additional covers were laid), and “such remnants of the feast as yet remained were greedily seized.” By the end of the night, all the distinctions of class and status—which had been so rigidly controlled all day long—begin to crumble: “Peers and peeresses, judges, and privy councillors, knights of all orders, and commoners of all degrees, were alike worn out by fatigue, and lay promiscuously, some on sofas, some on chairs, and a still greater number on the matted floors of the rooms and passages in which they happened to have sought refuge” (271). Westminster Hall becomes a battlefield, littered with the bodies of those who had earlier helped to produce the

spectacle, and who now show how quickly such a spectacle deteriorates in the face of hunger.

The coronation, then, includes both a spectacular, utopian display of English eating, emblematically signified by the King himself, and the consequent social disintegration that proceeds from hunger. The sheer amount of food at the banquet visually contradicts the Malthusian paradigm, while the chaos that follows shows how hunger breaks down social barriers. In addition to the exhausted bodies sprawled throughout Westminster, the King's absence also leads to mild looting. Huish reports, that "Arms were every where seen stretched forth breaking and destroying the table ornaments... for the purpose of obtaining some trophy commemorative of the occasion." The booty includes "baskets, flower-pots, vases, and figures,... glasses, knives and forks, salt spoons, and, finally, the plates and dishes" (270). The scene acts out the kind of consumption Hazlitt ascribes to the spirit of monarchy. The coronation provides ample food for the senses, which the looting seeks to preserve, but the banquet lacks when it comes to bodily sustenance. In his account for the *London Magazine*, John Hamilton Reynolds makes this same point, albeit satirically. The *London's* fictional correspondent, Edward Herbert, attends the ceremony and reports on it in a letter to "a lady in the country." "Could I not diet on splendour?" he asks, but as he does he also notes that watching the preparation of the tables is "about as painful an exhibition as Mrs. Brownrigg's loaf placed at a respectful distance before her half-starved apprentices" (191).²⁸ Like the others in the galleries, Reynolds's fictional persona had "tasted only of theameleon's dish for some 15 hours." When he gets the chance, he descends to the hall floor, and begins cleaning up the table scraps: "I fell seriously to work upon a cheery pie,

the nearest dish, and followed this victory up with others of a more decisive nature” (196). As he departs, he filches a “sweetmeat dolphin... [to] preserve amongst my scarce papers and curious coins, as a relic of the great Coronation feast” (196). Food functions, then, to please the senses, satisfy the stomach, and commemorate the event. But its tantalizing nearness also signifies the monarchical control of resources that threatens to destabilize society.

This is the context that precedes De Quincey’s *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater*, the first part of which appeared in the September 1821 number. De Quincey’s narrative revolves around the needs of the stomach, and culminates in the erasure of hunger through the “marvellous agency of opium” (114). As such, De Quincey’s concerns about the relationship between aesthetics and the body take on a political element through the context of the coronation and its ideological function. Although the spectacle of the coronation feast and its multiple sensory functions receive their fullest treatment in the August number, readers receive a reminder in the September issue in the form of an article titled “English Eating.” The title alone aligns the piece with De Quincey’s narrative, both of which suggest that national identity is entangled with and shaped by what one ingests.²⁹ “English Eating” ultimately locates national character in the individual constitution, rooted in the stomach. The article opens by praising English stomachs over those of other countries: “the specious miracles of Italian science, the bedizening of Monsieur Very’s coquinarial millinery, has no charms for thy downright simplicity of stomach” (4: 246). After giving a short history of English food, the author ends with the coronation feast as the supreme example of English identity expressed and unified through food: “I have heard a friend boast, that the late venison feast at

Westminster-hall, would have inoculated the severest republican with loyalty to George IV.” The banquet shows “Happy England! secure alike from hunger and from slavery,” and defines the qualities of English identity as “an uncorrupted taste—keen appetite, and the huge sirloin” (249). While the assertion of political unity is offered satirically, the article nonetheless suggests the importance of eating to the national character. Even though the details of the coronation feast belie the “downright simplicity of [the English] stomach,” the spectacle performs an expression of idealized English appetite.

De Quincey conveys his conception of appetite through frequent comments on the stomach and its physiological and intellectual significance. Mary Gordon Wilson relays an anecdote about De Quincey’s own sensitive digestion, which instigated, and later worsened because of, his opium use. He reportedly instructed his cook in such manner:

‘Owing to dyspepsia afflicting my system, and the possibility of any additional disarrangement of the stomach taking place, consequences incalculably distressing would arise, so much so, indeed, as to increase nervous irritation, and prevent me from attending to matters of overwhelming importance, if you do not remember to cut the mutton in a diagonal rather than in a longitudinal form.’ (327)

The “consequences incalculably distressing” could, according to De Quincey, be fatal. He suggests that “Errors of digestion, either from impaired powers, or from powers not so much enfeebled as deranged is the one immeasurable source both of disease and of secret wretchedness to the human race,” and furthermore that “indirectly and virtually, perhaps all suicides may be traced to mismanaged digestion” (“National Temperance Movements” 14: 273).³⁰ In Malthusian terms, misery and vice trace their roots to the bowels. Providing enough food to sustain a population, would itself be insufficient. De Quincey asserts that happiness depends upon the proper functioning of the digestive apparatus.³¹

To achieve digestive ease is a Sisyphean task. The stomach is “where it is that most men fail” (“Dr. Parr” 5: 116). One can hope for a sound mind or a good stomach, but to have both is unlikely: “In general, a man has reason to think himself well off in the great lottery of this life if he draws the prize of a healthy stomach without a mind, or the prize of a fine intellect with a crazy stomach; but that any man should draw both is truly astonishing, and, I suppose, happens only once in a century.”³² Unfortunately, mental activity and digestion are mutually dependent. De Quincey tells of Kant not eating alone because he would “think too much or too closely, an exercise... very injurious to the stomach during the first process of digestion” (“Last Days” 4: 336). Kant’s downfall comes when he can longer carefully discipline his bodily and mental activities, because of “an affection of the stomach, which no medical man had been able to mitigate, or ever to explain.” This “morbid affection of the stomach” produces “dreadful dreams,” which no palliatives can ease (De Quincey suggests, “a quarter grain of opium, every eight hours, would have been the best remedy, perhaps a perfect remedy” [4: 359]). The stomach possesses the potential to fuel creative and productive activity, but also the means to disable cognition. De Quincey upholds this connection because he asserts that the stomach and the brain function together in the process of cognition: “if we must use the phrase ‘organ of thought’ at all, on many grounds I should be disposed to say that the brain and the stomach-apparatus through their reciprocal action and reaction jointly make up the compound organ of thought” (10: 446).³³

The stomach is the locus of cognition, and the site of its failing. De Quincey writes of Kant’s nihilism by comparing the action of his intellect to that of digestion: “as the stomach has been known, by means of its own potent acid secretion, to attack not

only whatsoever alien body is introduced within it, but also (as John Hunter first showed) sometimes to attack itself and its own organic structure, so... did Kant carry forward his destroying functions” (“Coleridge” 2: 156). The stomach attacks itself when it has no “alien body” upon which to act. The state of hunger renders the stomach an agent of destruction. In the narration of De Quincey’s *Confessions*, his hunger produces digestive trouble, which leads to his opium eating. But opium itself transforms the stomach’s physiology. Writing on indigestion, Alexander Philip Wilson Philip observes that opium “act[s] directly on the muscular fibres of the stomach... impairing their power, unless the quantity be extremely minute, and instantly destroying it if the quantity be considerable” (63). The impairment of the stomach’s muscular action can produce indigestion, but opium also works as a cure for indigestion, since it dulls the nervous sensibility of the digestive organs. Opium produces the physiological conditions in the stomach for its use as anodyne. In this sense, it is the perfect commodity—that which produces its own necessity. The logic of opium use is the logic of capitalism. De Quincey’s habit creates a stomach at the mercy of political economy.

De Quincey opens his confession with a plea for a pardon. He defiantly objects to the claim that he brought suffering upon himself through over-indulgence. He excuses his opium eating by correcting, “It was not for the purpose of creating pleasure, but of mitigating pain in the severest degree, that I first began to use opium as an article of daily diet” (35). The ailment was, specifically, “a most painful affection of the stomach, which I had first experienced about ten years before... [and] had originally been caused by extremities of hunger, suffered in my boyish days” (35). This functions as a defense of his habit, but also as a narrative goad to the confession: “As the youthful sufferings which

first produced this derangement of the stomach, were interesting in themselves, and in the circumstances that attended them, I shall here briefly retrace them” (35). Hunger, then, is the cause of De Quincey’s opium use, and the primary narrative drive of the confession.³⁴ Because his hunger and the resulting ailment caused his opium use, it defends him from accusations of pure sensual indulgence. Since the focus on hunger shapes De Quincey’s narrative, the physiology of the stomach plays a central role in his conception of the materialization of imagination (and of cognition more generally).³⁵

In 1802 De Quincey left the Manchester Grammar School (at least in part because of the dietary regimen inflicted upon him there),³⁶ wandered through Wales and northern England, and descended into poverty by the time he reached London. He goes from “one meal a day” to “subsist[ing] either on blackberries, hips, haws, &c., or on the casual hospitalities which I now and then received” (43). By the time he arrives in London, he claims, “I now suffered, for upwards of sixteen weeks, the physical anguish of hunger in various degrees of intensity; but as bitter, perhaps, as ever any human being can have suffered who has survived it” (45). In addition to fueling the narrative, his hunger and the suffering it induced also grant De Quincey a sort of heroic status. He ventures into London’s urban underworld, encounters there the poor and indigent, and returns to tell the tale. One of the lost souls he finds there is, of course, Ann, the young prostitute who befriends him, and in later years haunts his dreams. One evening, as they walk together, De Quincey faints, and Ann rushes off to retrieve help, returning “with a glass of port wine and spices, that acted upon my empty stomach, (which at that time would have rejected all solid food) with an instantaneous power of restoration” (52). The narrative includes a series of deferrals of hunger such as this, but satiety is continually delayed.

Only opium, “the one sole agent equal to the task of tranquillising the miseries left behind by the youthful privations,” manages to briefly allay De Quincey’s hunger pangs.

Toward the end of Part I, De Quincey comes upon a feast that should eliminate his hunger, but once again he fails to achieve satiety. De Quincey leaves London to seek financial help from some Eton friends, and during this expedition, he calls on the Earl of Desart (referred to as “Lord D—”), who invites him to breakfast. Lord D— agrees to offer his name as assurance to a moneylender under specific conditions. When De Quincey returns to London, the moneylender will not agree to the terms, so yet another tantalizing opportunity slips away. This financial disappointment is parallel to the experience of breakfast, which De Quincey cannot eat:

Lord D— placed before me a most magnificent breakfast. It was really so; but in my eyes it seemed trebly magnificent—from being the first regular meal, the first ‘good man’s table,’ that I had sat down to for months. Strange to say, however, I could scarcely eat any thing. On the day when I first received my 10*l.* Bank-note, I had gone to a baker’s shop and bought a couple of rolls: this very shop I had two months or six weeks before surveyed with an eagerness of desire which it was almost humiliating to me to recollect. I remembered the story about Otway; and feared that there might be danger in eating too rapidly. But I had no fear for alarm, my appetite was quite sunk, and I became sick before I had eaten half of what I had bought. This effect from eating what approached to a meal, I continued to feel for weeks: or, when I did not experience any nausea, part of what I ate was rejected, sometimes with acidity, sometimes immediately, and without any acidity. On the present occasion, at Lord D—’s table, I found myself not at all better than usual: and in the midst of luxuries, I had no appetite (62).

De Quincey’s inability to eat at Lord D—’s table is the culmination of a series of rejections, digestive or otherwise. It occasions the narrative about buying rolls, which brings up “the story about Otway,” who died in poverty and serves as a monument to the failure of the authorial patronage system. He fled his creditors, and, according to apocryphal accounts, emerged from hiding only to beg. Upon entering a coffee house, he

procured a gift of a guinea, with which he bought a loaf of bread. However, as he ate, Otway choked and died.³⁷ De Quincey, then, averts this fate (that is, death and indebtedness to a patron), but does not solve his own digestive or financial problems. His stomach requires another kind of feast.

At the beginning of Part II, De Quincey reaffirms that his opium habit comes out of the events of his youth (and those of Part I of his narrative). He writes, “it is true that the calamities of my noviciate in London had struck root so deeply in my bodily constitution that afterwards they shot up and flourished afresh, and grew into a noxious umbrage that has overshadowed and darkened my latter years,” but qualifies this premise by noting, “yet these second assaults of suffering were met with a fortitude more confirmed, with the resources of a maturer intellect” (67).³⁸ The body and mind combine to combat De Quincey’s pains—the sufferings of the body resurface, but are received differently thanks to De Quincey’s advanced mind. However, the body seems to win out, as it drives him into a long period opium indulgence. The pleasures of opium take root from the site of his former pains: “what a revulsion! what an upheaving, from its lowest depths of the inner spirit! what an apocalypse of the world within me! That my pains had vanished, was now a trifle in my eyes:—this negative effect was swallowed up in the immensity of those positive effects which had opened before me—in the abyss of divine enjoyment thus suddenly revealed” (71). The “apocalypse” is the overthrow of De Quincey’s bowels, which are “swallowed up” and replaced with “divine enjoyment.” Bodily pain gets replaced with ethereal pleasure, yet the material conditions for De Quincey’s suffering make possible the aesthetic experience of opium.

The familiar accounts of De Quincey's visions and nightmares show opium at work largely on the imagination. It alters his perception of time and space, enhances the "creative state of the eye" (103), and makes vivid "the minutest incidents of childhood" (104). At the same time, however, the stomach plays a crucial part in De Quincey's imaginings.³⁹ Both the workings of imagination and the pains of physical being take root in the stomach. Opium merely enhances the sympathy between stomach and intellect: "We hear it reported of Dryden, and of Fuseli in modern times, that they thought proper to eat raw meat for the sake of obtaining splendid dreams: how much better, for such a purpose, to have eaten opium" (107).⁴⁰ Eating enables imaginative production, and opium is the best food for this purpose. And as opposed to uncooked flesh, opium signifies civilization and refinement. In the famous passage detailing his first purchase of opium, for example, De Quincey describes the "dull and stupid... mortal druggist" who transforms into "the beatific vision of an immortal druggist" (71) because of the power that the drug wields. "[T]he divine luxuries of opium" nonetheless still emanate from a material source and a physiological mechanism: "happiness might now be bought for a penny, and carried in the waistcoat pocket: portable ecstasies might be had corked up in a pint bottle: and peace of mind could be sent down in gallons by the mail coach" (72). Opium is ethereal and abstract, but also material and commodifiable, delimited by distinct units and conveyed through the systems of transport and trade.

The problem with opium eating, is that once begun it cannot be stopped ("Those eat now, who never ate before; / And those who always ate, now eat the more" [32]). When not taking opium, De Quincey's "unutterable irritation of stomach" returns (98). The pains of the digestive process drive him to use opium. But then the cure creates its

own additional pain, which only opium can alleviate. It is not that opium merely masks the pain of De Quincey's original ailment, which then resurfaces without the aid of opium. The drug actually changes his bodily constitution. It is not a reversion to a former state, but rather "a sort of physical regeneration" (115). In the "Appendix" to the *Confessions*, published in the December 1822 issue of the *London Magazine*, as well as in the book form printed concurrently, De Quincey narrates the course of his opium use after the initial publication of Parts I and II. This additional narrative highlights the bodily transformation that opium had performed. He attempts to leave off opium-eating entirely, but as he does so, his stomach troubles return. The appendix begins with an apology for never writing Part III, as De Quincey had promised when Part II appeared in the *London*. He explains that "intolerable bodily suffering had totally disabled him from almost any exertion of mind" (*LM* 6: 513). But he perseveres for the sake of possibly "contribut[ing] a trifle to the medical history of Opium," although he coyly doubts the "value of a body" which is "the very ideal of a base, crazy, despicable human system." In fact, the writing of Parts I and II rendered this depraved system apparent. He says the effort had created "an increasing callousness or defect of sensibility in the stomach." "An eminent physician" counsels De Quincey to leave off opium completely, and he resolves to do so beginning June 24, and conceives of it as "an experiment" (513).

While the years of opium use had rendered his stomach "callous," De Quincey's system displays "enormous irritability and excitement" during the first six weeks of his experiment, with "the stomach in particular restored to a full feeling of vitality and sensibility" (*LM* 6: 514). This increased stimulus, however, is not entirely pleasant, and keeps De Quincey from any sustained rest. He calls for "a neighbouring surgeon," of

whom he asks, “Whether he did not think that the opium might have acted as a stimulus to the digestive organs; and that the present state of suffering in the stomach... might arise from indigestion?”⁴¹ The surgeon replies, that the opium has merely made the workings of De Quincey’s bowels perceptible, whereas in health they proceed without one’s awareness of their constant work. The evidence of health is the “withdraw[al] from our notice all the vital motions” (514).⁴² De Quincey’s long opium use has made him aware of his body’s own natural processes. This heightened state of awareness, however, prevents him from writing Part III, and in its stead he creates this appendix (with, perhaps, a pun on the bodily correlative of the textual addition). Opium creates a body that works for itself, but consequently disables the mind’s functionality. As De Quincey himself admits at the end of the *Confessions*, “Not the opium-eater, but the opium, is the true hero of the tale; and the legitimate centre on which the interest revolves. The object was to display the marvellous agency of opium” (114). Opium colonizes De Quincey’s body, providing him with vivid dreams and imaginings, but also disabling him from turning those impulses to productive labor.

De Quincey also recalls the attempt to stop opium eating in his “Recollections of Charles Lamb” (1838). During the 1820s, when he came to know Lamb closely, De Quincey was under financial circumstances that required him to “extricate [himself] by literary toils.” His labor was stunted by “the effects of opium upon the liver,” primarily “peculiar depression of spirits” and “from the original physical depression caused by derangement of the liver... a sympathetic depression of the mind” (3: 71). The pains of opium worsen with the removal of the drug (“There was the collision of both evils—that

from the laudanum, and that from the want of laudanum” [72]). This “transition state” proves the biggest challenge to De Quincey’s “literary toils”:

But the transition state was the worst state of all to support. All the pains of martyrdom were there: all the ravages in the economy of the great central organ, the stomach, which had been wrought by opium; the sickening disgust which had attended each separate respiration; and the rooted depravation of the appetite and the digestion—all these must be weathered for months upon months, and without the stimulus (however false and treacherous) which, for some part of each day, the old doses of laudanum would have supplied. (73)

The stomach’s economy suffers from the agency of opium, which makes the body inert, requiring more opium for any semblance of action. The disgust that accompanies “each separate respiration” also mirrors the “sense of disgust the most profound for the subject (no matter what) which detain the thoughts” (72). Opium disables the body, and revises the basis for taste (*gustus*). While opium first produces the imaginative visions that supply De Quincey with the material for his literary toils, ultimately opium transforms his body so that it has a taste only for the drug. The physiology of the stomach, as opium’s alterations reveal, is the basis for taste. Once the “economy of the great central organ” changes, De Quincey’s aesthetic labor likewise alters. Taste, the basis for ideological displays of power like the coronation banquet, ultimately betrays its intentions by revealing its own origins.

The “sense of disgust” for any thought extends also to De Quincey’s own literary productions. He remarks that Coleridge shared the same sensation: “The sensation was that of powerful disgust with any subject upon which he had occupied his thoughts, or had exerted his powers of composition for any length of time, and an equal disgust with the result of his exertions—powerful abhorrence I may call it, absolute loathing, of all that he had produced” (3: 74). By introducing this element of his disgust through

Coleridge's experience, De Quincey universalizes this aspect of opium's agency. The drug's physiological effects impair the user's bodily productivity, and whatever it does produce, the mind judges distasteful. Opium turns itself into the standard of taste. For De Quincey, opium begins as a utopian ideal making possible imaginative and gustatory bliss, but it ultimately descends into "one long nightmare" (Jameson 299). The utopian ideal transforms into an ideological view of labor which recognizes the "horrors of digestion" as the ultimate locus for aesthetic production. As such De Quincey's economy of the stomach insists on the material, ideological foundations underpinning the workings of the imagination.

De Quincey's physiological aesthetics, inspired by political economy and shaped by opium use, shows the degree to which imagination roots itself in the body. The body's economic organization acts as the basis for both Malthus's biological principle of population, and as De Quincey's aesthetic system. Both show how the act of eating imbricates the physiological with the social. In the field of representation, the two concerns come together under the aegis of literary production. That "great central organ, the stomach," provides the platform for the principle of population, which cannot separate itself from aesthetic concerns, since those too emanate from the gut. And the claims of aesthetics recur to social and class identity most predominantly through the realm of eating.

Notes to Chapter IV

¹ The importance of the stomach in Cooper's sympathetic communication is due to its proximity to the "grand sympathetic nerve" (5), which he identifies as distinct from the nerves of the brain. The stomach is at the center of a second nervous system. Cooper's focus on the nervous system of the gut is similar to the thesis recently offered by Michael Gershon in his book, *The Second Brain*.

² Samuel Whitbread, leader of the Whig party after the death of Charles Fox in 1806, proposed a reform to the Poor Laws in 1807, which led to a flood of pamphlets and books on the subject, many of which engaged with Malthus's call for their abolition. Malthus himself entered the fray with *A Letter to Samuel Whitbread, Esq. M.P. on his Proposed Bill for the Amendment of the Poor Laws* (1807).

³ When I use the term “ideology of eating” in this chapter, I focus on the ways in which specific ideas about eating and its social function emerge from the legitimizing power of such formulations for the dominant class. Statements about food (gustatory preferences, dietary guidelines, economic determinants of diet or taste) necessarily occur at the level of social signification. The dominant class and the middle class (which aspires to the level of control and power enjoyed by the dominant class) both articulate competing ideologies of eating in order to delimit their influence on the larger ideological structures that permeate through print culture.

⁴ Charles Mahoney makes this same connection with regard to Hazlitt's use of gustatory metaphors in his periodical writing: “Throughout Hazlitt's consideration of the politics of periodical criticism, metaphors of taste operate both gastronomically and in terms of a decorum that is both literary and political—a crossing which can be read most succinctly in the anagrammatic construction of ‘taste’ as ‘state.’ Indeed, both Hazlitt's account here and his routine practice of periodical criticism may be profitably considered as a continual negotiation between the state-of-taste and the taste-of-the-state” (3).

⁵ See J. Stevenson for a full account of the food riots during the period.

⁶ This individual responsibility for the welfare of the state even extends to the animal kingdom. According to the author of a pamphlet from 1801 (when the poor harvests of the previous two years led to another spate of publications addressing the issue of scarcity), “... the horse, who shares man's daily occupations and operations on the journey and in the field, must also, in the present exigency, share the merit of contributing his *Moderation* to the national *Salvation*” (*Moderation is Salvation* 14). As such, the appeals to laborers—which status seems to apply to horses, here—revolve around patriotism as well as class distinctions.

⁷ William Maginn, reviewing William Wadd's *Cursory Remarks on Corpulence*, has this to say about Wadd's suggestion of soup as a dietary choice to aid in reducing obesity: “What a tremendous abuse of the stomachic region! Sooner would we amplify ourselves to the dimensions of Daniel Lambert himself, than make a washing-tub of our paunch, and convert our gastric juice into suds” (71). Although the tone is clearly satirical, it nonetheless points toward the relevant associations with soup in the English mind. The “abuse” of the stomach seems to result from not giving the organ enough work to do. A proper English stomach like Daniel Lambert's, however, labors industriously. See also Alan Bewell, who traces the production of national, local, and class identity through

representations of diet, with particular focus on the many exaggerated portraits of French and English eating in James Gillray's work (135-54).

⁸ For full accounts of the potato and its rise in Western culture, see Gallagher and Greenblatt, Salaman, and Zuckerman. Salaman notes that 1795 was a crucial year for the potato in England, even though its adoption did not immediately happen (493-517).

⁹ Nick Groom has shown that the adoption of fish and chips as the English national dish took much more than the recommendation of it during the bread crisis. Groom reconsiders William Henry Ireland's literary career (usually dismissed as a forger of Shakespeare) in the context of potato debates from the 1790s and 1830s.

¹⁰ Salaman discusses Arthur Young, editor of the *Annals of Agriculture*, as the main proponent of the potato during this period (511-7).

¹¹ Samantha Webb points out that Colquhoun in this way, like Tapwell, attempts to exploit the belief that the poor will emulate their betters (7). Colquhoun, however, does not offer soup's presence in the kitchens of the rich as his primary justification for the laborer's adoption of it. His more substantial claim is rooted in principles of nutrition, variety, taste and financial sense, whereas Tapwell's fairly transparent jingoism is the primary cause behind his advocacy for mixed bread.

¹² Cobbett calculates that the average laboring family would need to boil water "1095 times in the year" if they relied on the "worse than useless root" (*A Year's Residence* 290, 278).

¹³ Gallagher and Greenblatt argue that "the potato debate allows us to trace a shift in cultural attitudes toward the age-old concept that our bodies have their source in the soil" (134). At different times, the potato stands on both apocalyptic and utopian interpretations of the myth of the autochthonous body; for someone like Cobbett, the potato is a marker of "human degradation," while proponents of the potato like Arthur Young see "abundance, variety, and fertility" (119). In this sense, the potato is an important marker of the nineteenth-century relationships to "the materialist imagination." As discussed below regarding the Malthusian controversy, the potato debate requires both a negative and positive hermeneutic to accurately understand its symbolic function in the context of nineteenth-century thought.

¹⁴ The *Quarterly Review* makes this critique in an article on the Poor Laws (ostensibly occasioned by Patrick Colquhoun's *Propositions for Ameliorating the Condition of the Poor*, although that text gets little treatment). The article's author calls Malthus's system "worthless" and dismisses it based on the faulty notion that "lust and hunger were alike passions of physical necessity, and the one equally with the other, independent of the reason and the will" (13: 322). Hazlitt also writes, "Does Mr. Malthus really mean to say that a man can no more abstain from the commerce of women, then he can live without food? If so, he states what is not the fact" (*Reply* 123).

¹⁵ The passage appeared only in Malthus's second edition, but it remained a potent image associated with his economic philosophy because of the many responses to it. He continues to make the same point about the Poor Laws throughout his later editions. The poor man who receives parish assistance, according to Malthus, "should be taught to know that the laws of nature, which are the laws of God, had doomed him and his family to starve for disobeying their repeated admonitions; that he had no claim of right on society for the smallest portion of food, beyond that which his labour would fairly purchase" (2nd ed. 540). To soften the rhetoric, Malthus replaces "starve" with "suffer" in the later editions.

¹⁶ Godwin offers the same critique against Malthus. He concedes that some are condemned to starve because of a law, but asserts: "it is not *the Law of Nature*. It is *the Law of very artificial life*. It is the Law which 'heaps upon some few with vast excess' the means of every wanton expence and every luxury, while others, some of them not less worthy, are condemned to pine in want" (20). The quotation comes from Milton's *Comus*:

If every just man, that now pines with want
Had but a moderate and beseeming share
Of that which lewdly-pamper'd Luxury
Now heaps upon some few with vast excess,
Nature's full blessings would be well dispens't
In unsuperfluous even proportion (768-773)

In contrast to Malthus, Godwin and Milton assert that inequality stems from the social structures, not from natural laws.

¹⁷ In comparison, the price of wheat per quarter in December 1803 was 51s. Tooke notes that the scarcity and high prices in 1804 were not as severe as those of 1794-5 and 1800-1, but nonetheless prices did not fully recover until 1808 (1: 258ff.).

¹⁸ Mary Robinson's *The Natural Daughter* narrates a disparagement of luxury similar to that aimed at the "Bond Street Lounger." The novel opens with Mr. Bradford, an invalid thanks to his meals of "turtle soup, game, poultry fish," and "voluptuous breakfast[s] on cold turkey and Madeira" (106, 104), traveling to Bath for relief. The Bradfords' coach is stopped by a lame soldier, who begs for some food. Mr. Bradford "exclaim[s] against the insolence of vagrants," while his wife tosses the beggar a shilling (102). After the incident, the Bradfords' daughter, Julia "could not eat," while Mr. Bradford has "a comfortable meal." His "voluptuous breakfast" follows the next morning. Mr. Bradford feels his station in life entitles him to gustatory indulgence, while the beggar has no place, and even displays "impudence" for imposing on the family for alms.

¹⁹ See Kathleen Gallagher-Kamper and Christopher Hamlin.

²⁰ The quarrel over Hunter's principle played out during the 1810s between John Abernethy on the vitalistic side and William Lawrence on the mechanistic side. Lawrence

asserts that the same principles behind our knowledge of other bodily functions “prove that sensation, perception, memory, judgment, reasoning, thought—in a word, all the manifestations called mental or intellectual—are the animal functions of their appropriate organic apparatus, the central organ of the nervous system” (91). Like Byron’s *Cain*, Lawrence’s works were denied copyright because of the perceived blasphemy in his materialist philosophy. See also de Almeida 98-110.

²¹ As an example of this incongruity, Hazlitt proposes, “[The Romans] who ate the tongues of peacocks and nightingales, and the brains of parrots, whose dogs were fed with the livers of geese, their horses with raisins, and their wild beasts with the flesh of partridges and pheasants” were not acting out of “the pressure of population on the means of subsistence” (200).

²² Around the time De Quincey abandoned the *Prolegomena*, he was engaged as editor of the *Westmoreland Gazette*. He resigned in November 1819, and sought work with *Blackwood’s*—that engagement too was short-lived, as De Quincey quarreled with Blackwood over the editorial policy. By June 1821 De Quincey was contracted as a regular contributor for the *London*, which published the first part of the *Confessions* in September.

²³ In the November issue’s Lion’s Head (the opening editorial section of the *London*), a letter from Hazlitt appears in which he claims that De Quincey’s reasoning in the previous number bears a “striking coincidence” to Hazlitt’s own argument from the *Reply to Malthus*. He includes two passages from the *Reply* not “to bring any charge of plagiarism,” but merely to “put in [his] own claim of priority.” After the passages, Hazlitt remarks on the tendency of readers to “swallow incongruities” such as the ones in Malthus’s work, and expresses relief that “our ingenious and studious friend the *Opium-Eater*” is not among them (8: 459-60). In the December issue, De Quincey answers back, displeased by the insinuation of plagiarism, even though Hazlitt framed the response as a “claim of priority.” De Quincey admits that he read Hazlitt’s *Reply* a decade before, but claims, “I read it cursorily,” and finds the coincidence of their critiques owing more to Malthus’s faults, than to De Quincey’s unconscious absorption of Hazlitt’s argument (570). Regarding Hazlitt’s point about “swallowing incongruities,” however, De Quincey objects to dismissing Malthus’s theory wholesale because of its logical failings. While he agrees with Hazlitt on two errors in Malthus’s work (“to affirm a different law of increase for man and for his food” and “to affirm of a perfect state an attribute of imperfection”), De Quincey believes “it is a third error, as great as either of the others, to suppose that these two errors can at all affect the Malthusian doctrine of Population” (572).

²⁴ In his article for the *London*, “Measure of Value,” De Quincey dismisses Malthus’s intellectual strength: “Of all the men of talents, whose writings I have read up to this hour, Mr. Malthus has the most perplexed understanding. He is not only confused himself, but is the cause that confusion is in other men. Logical perplexity is shockingly contagious: and he, who takes Mr. Malthus for his guide through any tangled question, ought to be able to box the compass very well” (*LM* 8: 587). Attempting to measure up to

Ricardo has only made Malthus look worse: “It tends much to heighten the sense of Mr. Malthus’s helplessness in the particular point—that of late years he has given himself the air too much of teasing Mr. Ricardo, one of the ‘ugliest customers’ in point of logic that ever entered the ring” (587). In the March, April, and May numbers of the *London* for 1824, De Quincey published his three-part “Dialogues of Three Templars on Political Economy,” which focused primarily on Ricardo. Again he briefly alludes to Ricardo’s supremacy over Malthus: “Mr. Malthus in his ‘Political Economy’ (1820) repeatedly charged Mr. Ricardo with having confounded the two notions of ‘cost’ and ‘value.’ I smile by the way when I repeat such a charge, as if it were the office of a Ricardo to confound, or of a Malthus to distinguish” (9: 343).

²⁵ One of the earliest uses of “opium eater” comes from Edward Smyth’s “Of the Use of Opium among the Turks,” published in the *Philosophical Transactions* in 1695. He tells of “the most famous *Opium Eater* in the country about *Smyrna*” who usually took “three Drams a Day of Crude *Opium*” (288). The term continued to be the preferred one throughout the eighteenth century. In James Porter’s *Observations on the Religion, Law, Government, and Manners, of the Turks*, he writes that the term “*Tiriachi*, that is, an opium-eater” can mean “a mind extravagant and irregular” (2: 171). Charles Mills writes that although “opium eater is a word of contempt,” opium eating “is the great and general luxury of the Turkish nation (390). While De Quincey’s choice to use “opium-eater” was most likely to follow convention, the term nonetheless resonates with other kinds of eating that occur in the text, and with the descriptions of eating offered elsewhere in the *London*.

²⁶ In Walter Scott’s account of the coronation, he notes that through an error in service, the peers received “only a cold collation,” while the London Aldermen “feasted on venison and turtle” (*Edinburgh Magazine* 88: 284). Whether or not this is true, Scott’s anecdote conveys how food functions in a symbolic economy of class structure (that is, the Aldermen, the known for their luxurious eating habits, conform to the expectations for them by eating rich venison and turtle). The cold dishes, however, were equally diverse and bountiful: “80 dishes of braized ham—80 savoury pies—80 dishes of daubed geese, two in each—80 dishes of savoury cakes—80 pieces of beef braized—80 dishes of capons braized, two in each—1190 side dishes of various sorts—320 dishes of mounted pastry—320 dishes of small pastry—40 dishes of jellies and cream—160 dishes of shell-fish, 80 dishes of lobster, and 80 of cray fish—161 dishes of cold roast fowls—80 dishes of cold house lamb” (278).

²⁷ Ian Kelly notes that “only half of the £276,476 bill for the disastrous Coronation feast was paid by the British Parliament... The rest was demanded... as war reparations following the defeat of Napoleon” (197-8). Walter Scott claims to “pity those... [who] sneer coldly at this solemn festival, and are rather disposed to dwell on the expence which attends it, than on the generous feelings which it ought to awaken.” He further justifies the cost by explaining, “The expence, so far as it is national, has gone directly to the encouragement of the British manufacturer and mechanic” (*Edinburgh Magazine* 88: 282).

²⁸ Elizabeth Brownrigg served as a midwife, and had servant-girls live with her to help in her practice. She was sentenced to death for abusing the girls. Brownrigg denied the girls food, whipped them, tied them naked to the beams of the house, and dipped their heads in pails of water. Her extreme brutality became legendary after her trial and execution (*Complete Newgate Calendar* 4: 46-50).

²⁹ The title of a later *London* article, “On the Cookery of the French” displays the contrast between national cuisine and a kind of *eating* that can be called *English*. The article author jokes about the linguistic differences between French and English cooking, pointing toward the concern in gastronomic discourse to manage the language of food. He writes, for example, “I have often heard dishes called for, which sounded to my ear very like ‘ramrods for strangling,’ and ‘bayonets for the gendarmes.’” The editorial note explains the pun, suggesting “In the last two names our worthy Correspondent probably alludes to Ramereaux á l’étouffade, and Beignets á la gendarme.” (The bilingual pun requires knowledge of the French verb, *étouffer*, meaning *to suffocate*.) Ultimately, however, the author locates national difference in the stomach. He affixes a poem, “LE CUISINER FRANÇAIS *versus* DR. KITCHENER,” which concludes, “If mutton and airs *á la Gasconne* / Don’t agree with the stomachs at all / Of Englishmen—O need I ask one?— / Let us cut Monsieur Véry’s, and Gaul” (10: 180). The Englishness of stomachs is self-evident (“need I ask one?”), and united against French cuisine. In practice, of course, this was often not the case.

³⁰ In this same article, De Quincey specifically brands muffins as having “a plain and direct bounty upon suicide.” He offers an anecdote related in Erasmus Darwin’s *Zoonomia*, in which a military officer “who could not tolerate a breakfast in which this odious article was wanting; but as a savage retribution invariably supervened within an hour or two upon this act of insane sensuality, he came to a resolution that life was intolerable *with* muffins, but still more intolerable *without* muffins.” The officer vows to give muffins one more chance to avoid committing “dyspeptic atrocities,” so he eats one, with his loaded gun at his side. When the indigestion returns, the man “incapable of retreating from his word of honour,” commits suicide. De Quincey allows that “Darwin was a showy philosopher,” and that the incident was told for effect. “It is probable,” De Quincey decides, “that not the special want of muffins, but the general torment of indigestion, was the curse from which the unhappy sufferer sought relief by suicide” (14: 272). As far as I can tell, this story appears nowhere in *Zoonomia*. It seems that De Quincey himself was a “showy philosopher,” and the muffin story certainly produces the effect of conveying the author’s insistence on the digestion’s control over mind and body.

³¹ De Quincey’s sister, Jane, coyly mocks his digestive struggles. In a letter to her brother, she notes that “Everybody... in this generation has stomach complaints,” especially “you philosophers” who neglect the sensible dictates of diet and sleep, and “then swallow opium for the whimsical cure of these heterogeneous ills.” To Jane, the mystery of digestion is no mystery—De Quincey suffers because of his lack of prudence. Jane displays her own medical wisdom by telling the story of a cow, “who, given over by

the *professional* men, was dying in the slow consuming agonies of a stomach complaint.” Jane administers her own cure in defiance of medical authority, and the cow “now eats and thrives like her neighbours” (Japp 2: 66). Presumably she could solve the mystery of De Quincey’s bodily ailments, if he would only submit to her maternal instincts. But De Quincey’s assessment of his physiology comes out of the medical discourse his sister disdains, so her veterinarian skills go unheeded.

³² He refers to Leibnitz and an anonymous “Englishman,” both of whom were lucky enough to possess “minds not merely powerful, but distinguished for variety and compass of power” along with “a bodily constitution resembling that of horses” (“Letters to a Young Man” 10: 16).

³³ Much later in his career, he reaffirms this notion: “There is very slight ground for holding the brain to be the organ of thinking, or the heart of moral sensibilities, more than the stomach, or the bowels, or the intestines generally” (“Judas Iscariot” 8: 196-7). Similarly, in his “Recollection of the Lake Poets,” he suggests that digestive sensations can increase mental activity: “At least, within the whole range of my own experience, I have remarked, that, after any very severe fit of those peculiar pains to which the delicate digestive organs of most infants are liable, there always became apparent on the following day a very considerable increase of vital energy and of quickened attention to the objects around them” (13: 135).

³⁴ Paul Youngquist observes that the “*Confessions* amounts to a personal memoir of a hunger artist” (“De Quincey’s Crazy Body” 351). In his 1856 revision, De Quincey makes the connection between his early digestive suffering and later opium use more directly: “The boyish sufferings, whether in Wales or in London, pressing upon an organ peculiarly weak in my bodily system—viz., the stomach—caused that subsequent distress and irritability of the stomach which drove me to the use of opium as the sole remedy potent enough to control it... The opium would probably never have been promoted into the dignity of a daily and a life-long resource had it not proved itself to be the one sole agent equal to the task of tranquillising the miseries left behind by the youthful privations” (204-5).

³⁵ Paul Youngquist makes this argument about De Quincey’s reading of Kant’s transcendental philosophy: “Contra Kant, De Quincey refuses to take pleasure as a representation for cognitive harmony. On the contrary, even intellectual pleasure is a bodily condition that can be as easily elucidated by opium as by transcendental critique” (“De Quincey’s Crazy Body” 353).

³⁶ In his biography of De Quincey, Sackville West writes: “The severe regime of Mr. Lawson [the school’s headmaster] meant overwork, lack of exercise, bad air and rushed meals. Thomas’ internal constitution, never of the strongest, began to give way under the strain. His nervousness became worse and worse, which in turn reacted unfavourably on his digestion. His liver became torpid and this again begot depression of spirits. Thus the vicious circle was complete” (39).

³⁷ One of the earliest accounts of this story comes from Theophilus Cibber's *The Lives of the Poets of Great Britain and Ireland*. The earlier accounts by Giles Jacob and Gerard Langbaine do not include the story about choking, although Jacob does mention that Otway died in a coffee house on Tower Hill. Cibber writes: "It has been reported, that Mr. Otway, whom delicacy had longed deterred from borrowing small sums, driven at last to the most grievous necessity ventured out of his lurking place, almost naked and shivering, and went into a coffee-house on Tower-hill, where he saw a gentleman, of whom he had some knowledge, and of whome he sollicitated the loan of a shilling. The gentleman was quite shocked, to see the author of Venice Preserved begging bread, and compassionately put into his hand a guinea.

Mr. Otway having thanked his benefactor, retired, and changed the guinea to purchase a roll; as his stomach was full of wind by excess of fasting, the first mouthful choked him, and instantaneously put a period to his days" (334).

³⁸ De Quincey suggests that these "secondary assaults of suffering" may have resulted from the intense grief he felt over the death of Wordsworth's daughter, Kate. Because of his grief, in that summer of 1812, De Quincey "suffered much in bodily health from distress of mind," and by 1813 he was "attacked by a most appalling irritation of the stomach, in all respects the same as that which had caused me so much suffering in youth" (*Confessions* 86). He speculates that the two illnesses may have been related, but does not affirm it. Writing about Kate's death in *Tait's Magazine* twenty years later, De Quincey claims that her death resulted from indigestion. He places the blame on Sarah Green, a young girl who acted as Kate's nurse, but who De Quincey describes as "lazy, luxurious, and sensual: one, in fact, of those nurses who, in their anxiety to gossip about young men, leave their infant or youthful charges to the protection of chance." The event that "determined the fortunes of little Catherine" concerned a few raw carrots. While watching the girls playing, Coleridge "warned the girl [Sarah Green] that raw carrots were an indigestible substance for the stomach of an infant. This warning was neglected: little Catherine ate—it was never known how many; and, in a short time, was seized with strong convulsions" (2: 441). The girl never fully recovered, and died suddenly in her sleep a few months later. The Wordsworths did not share De Quincey's accusations of negligence, and it is unclear how they viewed the carrot story. The intersection of De Quincey's own digestive sufferings and the death of Kate highlights the degree to which digestion figures in his thinking.

³⁹ Elsewhere, De Quincey connects the eye and the stomach through a form of sympathetic communication. In his recollection of Wordsworth, written for *Tait's* in 1839, De Quincey discusses at length the union of Wordsworth's mental energy with his physical constitution: "Wordsworth's intellectual passions were fervent and strong: but they rested upon a basis of preternatural animal sensibility diffused through *all* the animal passions (or appetites)" (2: 246) Regarding the poet's eyes, De Quincey says they are "rather small," but nonetheless produce an "effect, which at times is fine, and suitable to his intellectual character." He adds, "At times, I say, for the depth and subtlety of the

eyes, even their colouring (as to condensation or dilution), varies exceedingly with the state of the stomach” (245).

⁴⁰ I have yet to find a corroborating “report” prior to De Quincey’s. Even if it is a fiction, the anecdote nonetheless performs an important symbolic function in De Quincey’s conception of opium’s physiological impact on his aesthetic experience.

⁴¹ Youngquist suggests, in relation to this anecdote, “Thanks to the ability to perceive digestion, to think the stomach, eating becomes a mode of cognition” (“De Quincey’s Crazy Body” 356).

⁴² De Quincey’s notion of health displays an awareness of contemporary medical science. This definition, for example, resonates with Astley Cooper’s. He writes that “All the actions of the body are excited and sustained by internal and external impressions, which are called stimulants... The beautiful harmony produced by a perfect concurrence of all the actions, is called health” (2).

CHAPTER V

KEATS'S AESTHETIC OF INDIGESTION

The Covent Garden Company is execrable—Young is the best among them and he is a ranting, coxcombical tasteless Actor—A Disgust A Nausea—and yet the very best after Kean—What a set of barren asses are actors! I should like now to promenade round you Gardens—apple tasting—pear-tasting—plum-judging—apricot nibbling—peach sc[r]unching—Nectarine-sucking and Melon carving.

—John Keats, August 28, 1819 (*LJK* 2: 149)

In this letter, John Keats displays a playfulness characteristic of his letters to his younger sister, Fanny, as well as his ability to rapidly move from one disparate idea to another. While the two topics (actors and fruit) seem united merely by location (both found in Covent Garden), Keats also draws them together through the multiple significations of taste. At first dubbing Young “tasteless” using the term’s metaphorical application, Keats quickly shifts to the term’s gustatory register. It does not happen immediately. “Tasteless” becomes “Disgust,” which means, etymologically, “lacking taste,” from the Latin, *gustus*. “Disgust” to “Nausea,” however, requires a jump from abstraction to materiality. The question then becomes, what does it mean to call Young “tasteless?” At first it appears that Keats accuses Young of acting without a sense of dramatic or aesthetic taste. But as he enters the realm of disgust and nausea, Keats reveals that he dislikes the actor because he cannot, as it were, stomach him. The question is

about consumption, not production. It is not that Young produces a performance that lacks taste, but rather that Keats's *reception* of the actor's performance *produces* a disgust, a nausea.

In the context of this aesthetic contemplation, Keats begins to imagine a litany of fruits that he might consume in the same space where the bad acting upsets his digestion. The poetic verve that infuses the outburst suggests that this consumption is meant as a remedy to the prior nausea. Keats launches with gusto into his imagined fruit-tasting. His word choice reinforces the connection between the letter's prior moment—he begins with “apple tasting” and “pear-tasting,” calling back to Young's absence of taste. And as he moves through the market and continues to graze, Keats's language shifts back once again to “tasting” as a form of aesthetic judgment. He “judges” the plums, “nibbles” on apricots, implying a slow, careful analysis, and even “carv[es]” melons, a term for what reviewers did to books.¹ Keats's tasting is not disinterested, however, as his language gestures toward the materiality of eating, with the juice dripping down his lips as he “sucks” and “scrunches.” The letter ultimately shows the ease with which Keats shifts back and forth from sensory taste to aesthetic judgment and from nausea to imagined gustatory bliss.

In this chapter, I examine how Keats's aesthetics emerges out of these kinds of shifts, particularly with regard to digestive metaphors. Throughout his career he displays anxiety revolving around what it means for his poetry to be consumed. Likewise, he struggles with actual eating in a number of ways throughout his life. What emerges is an aesthetic model based on indigestion. Keats's aesthetics invests in gustatory metaphors for the poetic process, but ultimately denies the possibility that his poetry can be fully

consumed. He first articulates these figures for aesthetic production and consumption in his letters, in particular around his experience in the summer of 1818, when he and Charles Brown undertook a walking tour through northern England and Scotland. The northern tour unites Keats's literal indigestion with his series of failures in seeking poetic inspiration from the environs of Wordsworth and Burns. In this sense, Keats's tour establishes the symbolic economy necessary to articulate his gustatory aesthetics in his final volume of poetry. The reviews of Keats's work respond in the language of taste and ingestion, which I suggest is inscribed in the poems themselves. Ultimately, both Keats's aesthetic of indigestion and the varied critical responses it induces, emerge out of the context of gastronomical discourse, which supplies the necessary linguistic and cultural signifiers for the actualization of such symbolic work.

Keats's Palate-Passions

Keats has long been associated with the pleasures of the senses, and more specifically for his hungering after sensations that cannot be had.² Yeats captures these associations in "Ego Dominus Tuus," a poetic dialogue in which one of the speakers deems Keats "poor, ailing and ignorant, / Shut out from all the luxury of the world," akin to "a schoolboy... / With face and nose pressed to a sweet-shop window" (59-60, 55-6). "What porridge had John Keats?" Robert Browning asks, after suggesting that lesser, imitative poets reap rewards in the form of turtle and claret ("Popularity" 65).³ Yet Keats did earn some porridge—and other better fare—and frequently indulged in claret.⁴ He mentions it in several different letters, and at one point calls it "the only palate affair that I am at all sensual in" (*LJK* 2: 64). It turns out, however, that claret is not the only thing

he has a taste for. In the same letter, he later revises his statement: “I said this same Claret is the only palate-passion I have I forgot game I must plead guilty to the breast of a Partridge, the back of a hare, the backbone of a grouse, the wing and side of a Pheasant and a Woodcock...” (64-5). As with his fruit-tasting, the accumulation of pleasures and paratactic structure contribute to the frenetic pace, revealing an excited mind and overstimulated senses. Nonetheless, even in the perceived lack of control, Keats displays some gastronomic facility in the attention to the animals’ specific parts. This moment, as with the fruit-tasting letter, shows Keats engaged in careful dissection of “palate-passion[s],” while still reveling in the imagined pleasures. This combination of contemplation and sensory enjoyment resonates with the approach to eating that contemporary gastronomers championed. Keats did not merely wish for palatal experiences unavailable to him—in his letters he repeatedly displays his zest for gastronomy, which reveals how it helps to constitute his aesthetic theory.

Keats’s letters often contain reflections on materiality and aesthetics, which the medium itself encourages because of its immediacy and intimacy.⁵ Often his thoughts about the material of print occur alongside of, or seem to inspire, thoughts about intellectual labor. Writing to Charles Wentworth Dilke in September 1819, he explains his plan to “acquire something by temporary writing in periodical works,” the prospect of which is not ideal, as Keats had a year earlier imagined himself living on his poetic wages. He expresses his contempt for but acceptance of writing for employment: “Even if I am swept away like a Spider from a drawing room I am determined to spin—home spun any thing for sale.⁶ Yea I will traffic. Any thing but Mortgage my Brain to Blackwood. I am determined not to lie like a dead lump.” The metaphors shift from the natural world to

the feminized domestic sphere and finally to the marketplace, over which Keats had habitual anxiety. And although there is a sense of resignation in the letter, the tone remains hopeful. Keats still asserts, “I am fit for nothing but literature,” and ultimately concludes, “I will settle myself and fag till I can afford to buy Pleasure.” This mention of future pleasure leads him into another digression: “Talking of Pleasure, this moment I was writing with one hand, and with the other holding to my Mouth a Nectarine—good god how fine—It went down soft pulpy, slushy, oozy—all its delicious embonpoint melted down my throat like a large beatified Strawberry” (*LJK* 2: 179). After spending much of the letter contemplating issues of labor, productivity, and consumption, the movement to the world of food happens smoothly. This moment unifies all three issues around the twin activities of writing and eating—the former done with one hand and the latter with the other. In addition to combining the two activities, Keats mutually implicates the mental and physical aspects of writing and eating. The “soft pulpy, slushy, oozy” qualities of the nectarine call attention to the fruit’s physical journey down Keats’s throat while simultaneously aestheticizing the act. “It went down soft pulpy, slushy, oozy” scans pentameter, with the gulps of three consecutive trochees implying the gradual descent into Keats’s stomach. This act of eating is at once marked as an interruption of the letter’s physical production, and as an aestheticized, poetic act. The union between material and ethereal gets reinforced by the transformation of the nectarine into a “beatified Strawberry.” While digestion might be the traditional form of transformation, Keats instead turns the oozy flesh into a sort of divine fruit, divorced from material constraints. This process emblemizes what I call Keats’s aesthetic of indigestion. As the nectarine begins to “melt” from pulp to slush to ooze, he reimagines it

as a newly consolidated “beatified” body. Digestion never occurs—it is replaced by a form of indigestion that produces an aesthetic object, both material and transcendent.

Keats crafts a similar image of aestheticized indigestion, specifically with regard to the status of poetry as such an aesthetic object, in an earlier letter written to John Hamilton Reynolds.⁷ From the outset, this letter examines the structure of production and consumption that underlies poetry. Responding to a letter from Reynolds, which included two sonnets, Keats begins his reply by constructing an elaborate conceit based on eating as a metaphor for reading:

I thank you for your dish of Filberts—Would I could get a basket of them by way of desert every day for the sum of two pence—Would we were a sort of ethereal Pigs, & turn'd loose to feed upon spiritual Mast & Acorns—which would be merely being a squirrel & feed upon filberts. for what is a squirrel but an airy pig, or a filbert but a sort of archangelical acorn. (*LJK* 1: 223)

Keats accomplishes several things with this complex image. First, he establishes the exchange of poetry within a gift-giving economy. He thanks Reynolds for his gift of two sonnets (transformed by Keats into a “dish of Filberts”), and at the end of the letter Keats writes, “In return for your dish of filberts, I have gathered a few Catkins, I hope they’ll look pretty” (225). The “Catkins” are two poems written on Robin Hood (“Robin Hood” and “Lines on the Mermaid Tavern”), the same subject that Reynolds’ poems addressed. In addition to this system of gifting, Keats also points to the commercial element of poetry. He wishes that he could enjoy the filberts everyday by purchasing them “for the sum of two pence.” The introduction of monetary value and economic consumption disappears, however, as Keats moves from an image of eating desert to a fantastical one of foraging for nuts. The poet imagines reading as a process of ingestion that works without complication. The ingesting animal is “ethereal” and the fare is “spiritual” rather

than material. However, just as Keats lapses into this fantasy, he pulls back and returns the metaphor to materiality. The “ethereal pig” becomes simply a squirrel, and the “spiritual Mast & Acorns” become nothing more than “filberts.” However, this shift from fantasy to reality remains lodged within Keats’s larger figurative construction: that of reading as devouring a “dish of Filberts.” So while Keats seems to temper the fantasy somewhat, it still works figuratively. He collapses fantasy and reality (“for what is a squirrel but an airy pig, or a filbert but a sort of archangelical acorn”), but he does so in such a way that fantasy remains the privileged element in this binary. The squirrel *is* an “airy pig” and the filbert *is* an “archangelical acorn.”

In between Keats’s thanks to Reynolds and his own gift of “a few Catkins,” the poet offers an assessment of modern poetry in relation to Elizabethan poetry. He particularly focuses on Wordsworth, whose poetry he describes as having “a few fine and imaginative or domestic passages,” but ultimately “engendered in the whims of an Egoist.” He continues, claiming that “Every man has his speculations, but every man does not brood and peacock over them till he makes a false coinage and deceives himself.” Coming after the letter’s opening metaphor, this analysis of Wordsworth’s “false coinage” points toward the economic realities of print culture that Keats recognizes, even if that recognition causes anxiety. Presumably, the “two pence” Keats imagines spending on Reynolds “filberts,” circulate in an economy of poetry defined by truth, as opposed to “false coinage.” In Keats’s formulation, poetry circulates (between himself and Reynolds, in this case) without the threat of counterfeit. Keats imagines a perfect world of exchange and consumption, one that is not presently in existence.

Wordsworth's poetry, according to Keats, presents a false version of the poet because of the intent behind the work. Keats writes, "We hate poetry that has a palpable design upon us—and if we do not agree, seems to put its hand in its breeches pocket." Poetry—now no longer nuts or "false coinage," but a personified being—must be "great & unobtrusive, a thing which enters into one's soul, and does not startle it or amaze it with itself but with its subject." This image recalls Keats's theory of Negative Capability, of which he had written to his brothers George and Tom just a few months prior to this letter to Reynolds. But it takes on a different resonance in the context of Keats's reflections on consumption. Poetry should be "unobtrusive" because otherwise it would render digestion impossible.

This letter begins with a fantasy of literary exchange, then moves to a criticism of modern poetry based on its incompatibility with such a model, and ends with Keats completing the exchange with Reynolds. However, Keats's representation of his own poetry differs slightly from how he imagines consuming Reynolds's poems. Keats says, "In return for your dish of filberts, I have gathered a few Catkins, I hope they'll look pretty." While Keats feeds on the filberts, his own poetry takes on an inedible form. The "Catkins" cannot be digested, but instead appeal only to the eyes. Keats formulates a mode of literary consumption that corresponds to a kind of eating, one that moves between—but occupies both—a material and transcendent form. This consumption is not separate from economic matters, but rather an exchange that prevents counterfeit. While this model works fine for Keats reading others' poetry, his representation of his own work defies digestion as a working metaphor. As a way of further interrogating this contradiction, I now turn to Keats's tour of Scotland in the summer of 1818, a trip which

challenged Keats's conception of digestion as a metaphor precisely because of the obstacles to his own body's literal digestive processes.

Keats's Cursed Oatcake

Over the course of three months in the summer of 1818, Keats and his friend, Charles Brown, traipsed through Northern England and Scotland on a thousand-mile journey. Keats envisioned the trip as “a sort of Prologue to the Life I intend to pursue—that is to write, to study and to see all Europe at the lowest expence” (*LJK* 1: 264). The purpose of such a life is to enable his literary productions, both financially and in terms of source material. Keats hopes to bolster his poetic sensibility in the same environs that nurtured the minds of Wordsworth and Robert Burns. He tells Reynolds that he “will go to gorge wonders,” as well as several other reasons: “to make my winter chair free from spleen—to enlarge my vision—to escape disquisitions on Poetry and Kingston Criticism.—to promote digestion.” His reasons revolve around three related concerns: to take in natural scenes, to help his health, and to ready his mind for poetic productions. Ideally, the trip and its effect on his mind will then bear results in the sale of his poetry, which will lead to further exploration and further writing: “If my Books will help me to it,—thus will I take all Europe in turn” (268).

Besides getting away from “disquisitions on Poetry and Kingston Criticism,” Keats also plans to study. He tells his publisher, John Taylor, “I find that I can have no enjoyment in the World but continual drinking of Knowledge” (*LJK* 1: 271). Using another digestive metaphor, he tells Reynolds, “I long to feast upon Old Homer as we have upon Shakespeare. and as I have lately upon Milton” (274).⁸ These visions for the

trip—taking in the scenery, studying and preparing himself for a productive fall and winter—do not work out quite as imagined. The problems emerge in a few ways. First, the letters show an increasing preoccupation with the fare and its decrease in quality. This effect on Keats's bodily digestion seems to effect his digestive metaphors, as he employs them only to immediately undercut them. "Gorging on wonders" becomes more difficult than envisioned, and "feasting upon Old Homer" becomes instead failing to digest Wordsworth and Burns. Building on the trend of digestive and gustatory metaphors in Keats's earlier correspondence, I suggest that the tour marks a shift in Keats's thinking about the power of such figures. That is not to say that he abandons such metaphors, but rather that they function less felicitously in the context of the tour. Despite the tour's apparent failure, Keats subsequently develops his aesthetic of indigestion to its fullest extent, which he then employs in the poems of his 1820 volume.

The tour began with much promise and optimism, reflected in the first letter to his brother, Tom: "Here beginneth my journal, this Thursday, the 25th day of June, Anno Domini 1818" (*LJK* 1: 298). The tour is not a grand endeavor, as Keats playfully implies with the overblown language, but nonetheless the young poet takes pride in his humble journey. The whole of this first "journal" entry bursts with descriptions of natural imagery, particularly the detailed depiction of a waterfall near Ambleside. The scene exudes poetic energy, as Keats describes the falls "buried deep in trees," then slowly discovers "the thunder and the freshness." After viewing up close, Keats and Brown move back and view "the whole more mild, streaming silverly through the trees." After this typical neologistic turn, Keats almost lapses into verse as he lists all he sees: "the slate, the stone, the moss, the rock-weed" (301). Keats values the experience not only for

the aesthetic pleasure that it offers, but also for the place's ability to spur him into poetry. He tells Tom, "I shall learn poetry here and shall henceforth write more than ever, for the abstract endeavour of being able to add a mite to that mass of beauty which is *harvested* from these grand materials, by the finest spirits, and put into ethereal existence for the *relish* of one's fellows (301, my emphasis). Keats employs another gustatory metaphor, once again attempting to unite ethereal aesthetics with material taste. In this instance, the threat of indigestion never occurs, perhaps because Keats fails to explain how his fellows experience "relish" through "ethereal existence." This particular image elides the material nature of poetic consumption, even as he recognizes that poetic production relies on "grand materials." The layering of contradictory terms ("abstract... harvested... materials... spirits... ethereal... relish") unfolds without any concern for the physiological basis on which the endeavor rests.

As the tour continues, however, Keats's letters begin to show a marked change. He continues to contemplate the issues of consumption and production, but the optimism of this first letter begins to wane. The first disappointment surrounds Keats's attempted meeting with Wordsworth. The figure of his poetic forebear casts a pall over much of Keats's tour. Even amidst the giddy optimism of his first letter to Tom, Wordsworth makes a brief appearance. He tells Tom that while dining at the White Lion Inn in Bowness, he learns some disappointing news: "I enquired of the waiter for Wordsworth—he said he knew him, and that he had been here a few days ago, canvassing for the Lowthers. What think you of that—Wordsworth versus Brougham!! Sad—sad—sad" (*LJK* 1: 299). William Lowther was the Tory candidate for M.P. in Westmorland county, who would win the seat in a contest against Henry Brougham.

Keats views the support of Lowther as a sign of Wordsworth's continuing abandonment of the liberal cause. Keats does temper his criticism somewhat, as he notes, "and yet the family has been his friend always." Nonetheless, the sense of disappointment with Wordsworth remains.⁹

The rest of the letter focuses on the waterfall at Ambleside, and largely leaves Keats's disappointment behind, with the exception of a final dig at "Lord Wordsworth" for having "his house full in the thick of fashionable visitors... to be pointed at all summer long" (*LJK* 1: 299). Unfortunately, Keats's own visit to Rydal Mount seems to contradict this assertion. After viewing the waterfall on the morning of June 27, Keats and Brown posted their letters and proceeded to Rydal. Keats writes to his brother, George and sister-in-law, Georgiana, "We ate a Monstrous Breakfast on our return (which by the way I do every morning) and after it proceeded to Wordsworths He was not at home nor was any Member of his family—I was much disappointed. I wrote a note for him and stuck it up over what I knew must be Miss Wordsworth's Portrait and set forth again" (302-3). Although superficially, we see here the first hint of a connection between Keats's actual digestion and his attempts to figuratively digest one of his poetic forebears. The "Monstrous Breakfast" satisfies, but the disappointment at Rydal Mount leaves him craving more. The attempt to contact Wordsworth through the letter registers as a sort of pleading, carefully placed by the portrait of Dorothy. In the letter Wordsworth remains on Keats's mind, as he tells George and Georgiana of discovering "that ancient woman seated on Helm Craig" from Wordsworth's "To Joanna." Although Wordsworth's shadow continues to haunt the trip, Keats tries to find ways to reify his presence, and therefore exorcise it. Even if he cannot capture Wordsworth himself, Keats

registers traces of him throughout the trip. And furthermore, Keats leaves behind the remnants of his own presence in the form of the letter on the mantelpiece.

As Keats and Brown near Scotland, Robert Burns begins to loom over the tour as Wordsworth had in the Lake District. With Burns, we see Keats similarly attempting to fully account for a poetic predecessor, while eventually finding it necessary to reject him.¹⁰ Keats and Brown entered Scotland via Gretna Green on July 1, 1818. Keats notes the passage in a letter to Tom by writing out a copy of his sonnet, “On Visiting the Tomb of Burns,” which he wrote in the churchyard at Dumfries that evening. The announcement of their entrance into Scotland corresponds to the same intersection of literary digestion and literal digestion we saw in the letters regarding Wordsworth. After copying out the sonnet, Keats writes, “You will see by this sonnet that I am at Dumfries, we have dined in Scotland.” Burns, as the topic of the sonnet, marks the geopolitical movement from the Lake District to Scotland, which gets reinforced by the detail about “dining” in Scotland. Keats further compounds the association between literal and figurative taste when he notes that “Burns’ tomb is in the Churchyard corner, not very much to my taste” (*LJK* 1: 309).

Keats also marks his entry to Scotland with his repeated comments on oatcake, long a staple of Scottish diet.¹¹ He tells his sister, Fanny, “Oh dear I must soon be contented with an acre or two of oaten cake... morning noon and night” (*LJK* 1: 316). On July 20, he tells Tom that “coarse food” has become the norm, noting, “we have lost sight of white bread entirely” and adding that there is “no oat Cake wanting.” We get a sense of the food’s effect on Keats’s mind and body as he excuses himself for not writing sooner—“I have not been at all in cue to write” (337)—and explains his negligence by

saying, “all together the fare is too coarse—I feel it a little” (338). The food reminds Keats of his own materiality because of its difficulty of digestion. He closes the letter the following day by reiterating the main culprit of his difficulty: “I fell upon a bit of white Bread to day like a Sparrow—it was very fine—I cannot manage the cursed Oatcake” (339). The diet marks a departure from Keats’s more sophisticated urban dining, and it comes in concert with his anxiety over poetic influence.

In addition to oatcake, whiskey also begins to appear repeatedly in the letters once they enter Scotland. Keats calls it “very smart stuff” and adds that “Mixed like our liquors with sugar & water tis called toddy, very pretty drink, & much praised by Burns” (*LJK* 1: 309). Yet as with the oatcake, the whiskey comes to signify Keats’s larger failure to transcend his material experience into the rarefied realm of poetry. In his next letter to Tom, Keats writes that “the Country is very rich—very fine—and with a little of Devon,” but the food is somewhat more coarse: “we dined yesterday on dirty bacon, dirtier eggs and dirtiest Potatoes” (319). After a brief trip to Ireland, Keats and Brown returned to Scotland and visited Burns’ birthplace at Ayr on July 11. As with the visit to Burns’ tomb, Keats hoped the place would provide some poetic inspiration. Although he did write the sonnet, “This mortal body of a thousand days,” Keats deemed the lines “so bad I cannot transcribe them” to Reynolds (324). Keats blames his failure on the presence of a Scottish man at the cottage who knew Burns:

The Man at the Cottage was a great Bore with his Anecdotes—I hate the rascal—his life consists in fuz, fuzzy, fuzziest—He drinks glasses five for the Quarter and twelve for the hour,—he is a mahogany faced old Jackass who knew Burns—He ought to be kicked for having spoken to him... O the flummery of a birth place! Cant! Cant! Cant! It is enough to give a spirit the guts-ache. (324)

The man's apparent vulgarity not only hinders Keats's poetic sensibility, but does so in a way consistent with Keats's other disappointments during the tour. The man is a reminder of materiality—the rhetorical construction of “fuz, fuzzy, fuzziest” even recalling the “coarse” meal of a few days before. Keats's poetic disappointment coincides with his digestive and gustatory complaints. One wonders if Keats felt the “guts-ache” more in the body than the spirit.

By this point in the tour, Keats has failed to digest his two poetic predecessors, and his body has begun to fail him as well. Along with these two correspondent failures, Keats begins to lose his ability to digest the scenery around him, despite his assertions of its aesthetic qualities. He tells Reynolds of his surprise on beholding Burns's native home, Ayr, which he imagined to be “more desolate.” Instead, he asserts, “the Sight was as rich as possible [...] it was rich as Devon—I endeavour'd to drink in the Prospect, that I might spin it out to you as the silkworm makes silk from Mulberry leaves—I cannot recollect it—” (*LJK* 1: 323). This metaphor from the natural world recalls the imagery he employs in the “airy pigs” letter to Reynolds, but here Keats denies the image's effectiveness. The fantasy of spinning out the scene is abortive. In terms of the symbolic economy Keats uses throughout the tour, this moment represents a sort of aesthetic constipation. Keats recognizes the scene's beauty and ingests it, but he fails to produce anything as a result. While for the majority of the tour we see Keats struggling with figurative and literal consumption, this moment looks forward to the issue of production, which Keats examines in his 1820 volume of poetry.

Keats's Critics

Despite worsening conditions, Brown and Keats continued their journey, eventually reaching Inverness on August 8 and making the nine-day passage back to London. From Inverness, Keats wrote to Mrs. James Wylie, his brother George's mother-in-law. Keats employs a playful tone with Mrs. Wylie, who had read a newspaper "giving an account of a Gentleman in a Fur cap, falling over a precipice in Kirkudbrightshire." Keats responds, "If it was me, I did it in a dream, or in some magic interval between the first & second cup of tea," and then continues to spin an elaborate tale of the man who did fall over the precipice—"I daresay his name was Jonas." Since "being half-drowned by falling from a precipice is a very romantic affair," Keats decides to own the story for himself and imagines being "introduced in a drawing room to a Lady who reads Novels, with—"Miss so & so. this is Mr so & so. who fell off a precipice, & was half drowned." Keats playfully mocks the popular taste for novels and their romantic heroes, but nonetheless shows his concern for his own status within the literary marketplace. He knows that the tour has failed to stimulate his poetic production in the ways he had imagined it would, so here he satirically imagines another route toward literary success. Keats continues the fantasy, adding several romantic flairs:

Being run under a Waggon; side lamed at a playhouse; Apoplectic, through Brandy; & a thousand other tolerably decent things for badness would be nothing; but being tumbled over a precipice into the sea—Oh it would make my fortune—especially if you could continue to hint, from this bulletins authority, that I was not upset on my own account, but that I dashed into the waves after Jessy of Dumblane—& pulled her out by the hair—But that, Alas! She was dead or she would have made me happy with her hand. (*LJK* 1: 359)

The first examples of romantic "badness" call to mind, respectively, Byron's lameness and Burns's alcoholism, but Keats opts instead for tragic love. This parody of romantic

conventions shows Keats exploring fame's construction through public discourse in "drawing rooms," newspapers, and "bulletins," which reinforces the tour's figurative meaning. Coming at the end of the tour, which he envisioned as a path toward literary fame, Keats's fantasy symbolically repairs the tour's failure.

The final piece of repair involves a gustatory adjustment. After exploring romantic conventions satirically, Keats shifts tone, but continues to examine fame. He writes, "But I must leave joking & seriously aver that I have been *werry* romantic indeed, among these Mountains & Lakes" (*LJK* 1: 359-60). The description immediately following, however, gives a fairly accurate account of the note-so-romantic conditions: "I have got wet through day after day, eaten oat cake, & drank whiskey, walked up to my knees in Bog, got a sore throat, gone to see Icolmkill & Staffa, met with wholesome food, just here & there as it happened" (360). Clearly fatigued and ready to return home, Keats sounds simultaneously proud of his achievements and utterly defeated by them. Before closing the letter, he has one final fantasy to craft: "Sometimes when I am rather tired, I lean rather languishly on a Rock, & long for some famous Beauty to get down from her Palfrey in passing; approach me with—her saddle bags—& give me—a dozen or two capital roast beef sandwiches" (360). After the satirical digression on Jessy of Dumblane, the jarring sincerity of this image emphasizes its relevance to Keats's experience. Instead of delivering fame, however, this imagined woman brings that which was lacking on the tour: wholesome food. And not just any item, but "roast beef," the food that signifies English identity, as opposed to the Scottish oatcake. The confluence of these two moments—bringing fame and bringing food—is not merely coincidental, but rather sheds

light on Keats's conception of both. The tour's failure occurs in the realm of the stomach as much as in the imagination.

Keats's "La Belle Dame sans Merci," which presents a similar scene to the one imagined in his letter to Mrs. Wylie, suggests how food and aesthetics come together in Keats's thinking. The poem opens with the speaker discovering the "knight at arms, / Alone and palely loitering" (1-2). In a desolate landscape of "wither'd sedge" where "no birds sing," the knight himself looks no better. He is "haggard and woe-begone," with the signs of death inscribed on his face ("a lily on thy brow," "on thy cheeks a fading rose"). We learn from the knight's response to the speaker's questions, that an encounter with la belle dame led to his current defeated state. Presumably seeking honor and fame, the knight comes across a lady, "full beautiful," whose "hair was long," "foot was light," and "eyes were wild." In short, she seems to have all the qualities of a Jessy of Dumblane. Claiming her as his own, the knight adorns her with flowers and places her on his "pacing steed" for a nice stroll.

This moment in particular strikes a clear resemblance to Keats's vision of the "famous Beauty." The lady, on her "Palfrey in passing," brings sustenance to the knight. Instead of the hearty "dozen or two capital roast beef sandwiches," la belle dame finds lighter fare: "roots of relish sweet, / And honey wild, and manna dew" (25-6). Keats never explicitly states if the food gets eaten (in his poetry, it tends not to). The knight instead follows the lady to "her elfin grot," where he proceeds to "shut her wild wild eyes / With kisses four" (31-2). La belle dame returns the favor by "lull[ing] [the knight] asleep" (33). His dreams, however, are not as pleasant as their day in the meads. The knight sees "pale kings, and princes too, / Pale warriors, death pale were they all." These

spirits inform him that “La belle dame sans merci / Hath thee in thrall!” (37-40). He does not wake up, however, until he sees “their starv’d lips in the gloam / With horrid warning gaped wide” (41-2). And that concludes the knight’s answer to why he sojourns in this desolate landscape with death written on his face.

The narrative of the poem follows the same structure of Keats’s letter to Mrs. Wylie. The knight, seeking fame, finds his answer in the lady in the meads, just as Keats’s finds his answer in the drop off a precipice, and in Jessy of Dumblane. In the letter, however, when Keats seriously contemplates the “famous Beauty,” she brings satisfaction in a sandwich. In the poem, the food not only fails to satisfy, but leads into a nightmarish vision of starvation. The kings, princes and warriors, presumably seated around a banquet table, have no food and instead provide only terror. Where food should enter, “starv’d lips” instead emit a “horrid warning.” So the true answer to the speaker’s question, is that the knight is pale and haggard because he has no food. We learn that “the squirrel’s granary is full / And the harvest’s done” (7-8), but whereas the knight had “manna dew” with la belle dame, it has become “fever dew” (10) by the time he meets with the speaker. The knight is a figure of indigestion. His is a spirit with a “guts ache.” This ethereal, fairy-like woman, when encountered in the material realm, produces a spirit and body in disrepair. When we consider, then, that the poem itself has the same name as the woman who creates this condition in the knight, we must wonder if the poem has *us* “in thrall.” The poem, when read, or digested, by the reader, produces an unsettling of mind and body.

Contemporary reviewers responded to this kind of effect in Keats’s poetry, whether positively or negatively. The narrative of Keats’s treatment in the reviews is a

familiar one, tending to revolve around the attacks which emerged out of the ideological gap between the “Cockney School” and its detractors.¹² John Gibson Lockhart’s review of *Endymion* in *Blackwood’s* and John Wilson Croker’s review of the same poem in the *Quarterly Review* both contributed to the notion that Keats was, as Byron put it, “snuffed out by an article.” Lockhart saw Keats as a social pretender, akin to “farm-servants and unmarried ladies... [and] footmen” who have taken to composing poetry, and he counsels “Mr John” to go “back to the shop... back to ‘plasters, pills, and ointment boxes’” (*RR C*: 90, 95). In the beginning of his review, Croker admits, “we have not been able to struggle beyond the first of the four books of which this Poetic Romance consists” (*RR C*: 768). After Keats’s death, his friends and supporters employ this myth as a way to solidify Keats’s posthumous fame.¹³ While this narrative plays an important part of the posthumous reception of Keats’s work, the poet himself claims to have been unaffected by the criticism he received. But my interest here lies neither in Keats’s reactions to the reviews, nor in the range of praise and harsh criticism he received from his supporters and detractors alike. Instead, I focus on how the ideological differences that shape Keats’s reception are constituted by the issues raised in “La belle dame.” Keats’s poems elicit physical reactions, frequently revolving around the metaphorical and literal dimensions of ingestion. These reactions point toward a quality endemic to Keats’s poetry, namely the figures of indigestion that he inscribes in his aesthetic visions.

Lockhart and Croker both focus on how their ideological difference from Cockneyism lies in the matter of Keats’s language. Just as they identify the physical effects Keats’s poetry has on language itself, other reviewers focus on the physical effects the poems produce upon individual bodies. The poems offend particularly because of

their focus on sensuality. A reviewer from the *Eclectic Review* claims that Keats's preference for mythological subjects "comes recommended chiefly by its grossness—its alliance to the sensitive pleasures which belong to the animal" (RR C: 344). Similarly, he views Keats in "a diseased state of feeling, arising from the want of a sufficient and worthy object of hope and enterprise" (345). However, it is not only the poet himself who revels in sensuality and a fevered state. His poems also produce a physical reaction, which tend to revolve around disgust and intoxication. In both cases, reviewers assign a bodily reaction to the act of reading Keats's poetry. "Disgust" operates as a slippery term, as we've seen at the beginning of this chapter, since it refers to taste in a figurative and literal sense. "Intoxication" likewise provides some difficulty since it implies both poison and pleasure, as well as enjoyment and confusion. I argue that the accumulation of these terms throughout reviews of Keats's poetry corresponds to the effect that Keats desires to produce in his readers, namely a feeling of discomfort that can be described as indigestion.

In his belated review of *Endymion*, published in August 1820, Francis Jeffrey admirably attempts to remove himself from the invective that had, two years prior, been tossed about by *Blackwood's* and the *Quarterly*. With characteristic feigned insouciance, he begins by remarking, "We had never happened to see either of these volumes till very lately" (he was also reviewing *Lamia*). This opening gestures toward both Jeffrey's awareness of, and detachment from, the earlier attacks on Keats. His second assertion, that he was "struck with the genius they display, and the spirit of poetry which breathes through all their extravagance," shows, through his surprise, his recognition of the popular estimation of Keats's poetry by rival reviewers. But throughout the review,

Jeffrey maintains that although Keats's poetry possesses its fair share of "extravagance and irregularity, rash attempts at originality, interminable wanderings, and excessive obscurity," it nonetheless "is, in truth, at least as full of genius as of absurdity" (RR 385-6). Jeffrey grants that as Keats remains a young man, he deserves "all the indulgence that can be claimed for a first attempt"—even though it was not quite his first. The reasoning for excusing Keats's unfortunate excesses is that, as Jeffrey points out from the beginning, underneath the extravagance lies genius. Jeffrey's description of how the poetry captures our attention despite its faults relies on the metaphor of intoxication: "they are flashed all over with the rich lights of fancy, and so coloured and bestrewn with the flowers of poetry, that even while perplexed and bewildered in their labyrinths, it is impossible to resist the intoxication of their sweetness" (386). Jeffrey points to sensual effect of Keats's poetry, moving from the "lights of fancy" to the dark "labyrinths" of "bewilderment." As Keats often does in his poetry, Jeffrey shifts from one sense to another, ending with taste. In his formulation, the poems alternately leave us in the light of understanding and the darkness of obscurity, but also make up for this defect by intoxicating us with sweetness.

On similar grounds, Peter George Patmore argues that *Endymion* "is not a poem at all." He continues, "It is an ecstatic dream of poetry—a flush—a fever—a burning light—an involuntary out-pouring of the spirit of poetry—that will not be controuled" (RR 557). Like Jeffrey, Patmore concludes by relating the poem's effect to that of intoxication: "It is as if the muses had steeped their child in the waters of Castaly, and we beheld him emerging from them, with his eyes sparkling and his limbs quivering with the delicious intoxication" (RR 557). Patmore also acknowledges Keats's faults, and in fact

attributes them to this method of composing. The “fever” and “intoxication” created the “ferment of mind in which the whole was composed,” and if they had been curtailed, that state of mind “would have subsided forever.” In other words, Patmore argues that the poem would have lost its luster if Keats attempted to separate the faults from the successes. And taste is the faculty by which Keats would have done so: “If the poet had had time, or patience, or we will even say taste, to have weeded out these faults as they sprang up, he could not have possessed the power to create the beauties to which they are joined.” Whereas Jeffrey claims that the poems create a feeling of intoxication in the reader that temporarily suspends his judgment of the poem’s faults, Patmore posits that the poet’s intoxicated, feverish mind makes up for his lack of taste. In both cases, Jeffrey and Patmore figure intoxication as an overpowering of taste. The poem succeeds where it does because of the absence of taste.

On the opposite pole, reviewers assign Keats’s failure not to a *lack* of taste, but to a perverted one, which leads to disgust and nausea. Most often this results from claims of immorality and vulgarity, as were common to attacks against the Cockneys. *The British Critic*, reviewing *Endymion*, claims that much of Keats’s language is “better adapted to the stews,” and the reviewer vows, “we will not disgust our readers by retailing to them the artifices of vicious refinement” which account for such vulgarity (RR 212). John Scott, reviewing *Lamia* in the *London Magazine*, objects to the harsh attacks on Keats’s poetry, but nonetheless points out several faults. Scott objects to Keats’s “fond[ness] of running out glimmerings of thoughts,” and claims that “plain earnest minds turn away from such tricks in disgust.” Likewise, Scott blames Keats’s “quaint strangeness of phrase” on “bad taste” (RR 593). After making judgments based on taste, Scott ends the

review by abandoning such declarations. Instead he writes, “we are by this time tired of criticism; as we hope our readers are,” and counsels: “let us then all turn together to the book itself. We have said here what we have deemed it our duty to say: we shall there find what it will be our delight to enjoy” (593). By rejecting the “duty” of criticism, Scott posits that he can also divorce himself from the standard of taste. The future tense relieves Scott of making judgments. The poem will simply produce delight, without the reader having to judge whence such pleasure emanates. The editorial “we” here functions ambiguously, as one could read the “us” of the previous clause as antecedent. In this case, the “delight” that “we” will find in the poem refers not only to Scott’s delight, but also to the reader’s. In this curious abdication of critical responsibility, Scott argues that the poem will perform its own judgments.

Other reviewers conceive of their role differently than Scott does, although they share with Scott the assessment of Keats’s obscurity and difficulty. The reviewer for *The Guardian* begins by praising Keats’s for his ambiguity. He writes that the poetry is: “deep and mystical... it is a nosegay of enigmas. And then, what is most delightful, the mysterious is so mixed up with the simple, that the mind is not exhausted by its own conjectures” (RR 470). As he describes Keats’s mysteriousness, however, the reviewer realizes that his job is different: “This is very well for a poet, but it will never do for a critic. It is our province to digest and systematize” (470). Curiously, the reviewer fails to do so. Instead he offers this job to his readers in the form of a contest. He offers three “riddles” (quotations from *Isabella*) and promises prizes in the form of Keats’s books “for the first and second best solutions of the following Enigmas.” Although the reviewer identifies his duty as “digesting and systematizing,” he does neither. Instead, like Scott,

he defers to his readers. In this sense, we might say that Keats's poems create a gustatory response, but also resist efforts to be "digested" figuratively.

The question then becomes, who does digest a poem? Is it the critic's job, or must a poet digest his own poem before writing it. In another moment of ambiguity from his review, Scott suggests both. After pointing out Keats's power evident in *Hyperion*, Scott attempts to account for Croker's dismissal of *Endymion* in the *Quarterly Review*: "Cold-blooded conscious dishonesty, we have no hesitation to say, must have directed the pen of the critic of *Endymion* in the *Quarterly Review*: making every allowance for the callousness of a worldly spirit, it is impossible to conceive a total insensibility to the vast beauties scattered profusely over that disordered, ill-digested work" (RR 592). Whether or not Scott's surmise is correct, his description of *Endymion* as "ill-digested" raises the question, who failed to digest it? Ostensibly, Scott means that Keats failed with the poem because it was "disordered" and not fully conceptualized in the poet's own mind before putting it to paper. But another reading suggests that *Endymion* failed because the critical reception of it could not adequately account for it. Croker, after all, admitted that he could not read past the first book. In this review, Scott assigns agency to both critics and poets. With *Endymion* the critics seem to have seized control of its fate. But as Scott ends his review, he suggests that the poem itself will dictate its own reception, rather than falling victim to judgments of taste.

One final review will show the extent to which the poetry brings upon itself discussions of taste, which tend to move between literal and figurative applications of the term. The most striking of these comes from the *British Critic's* review of *Lamia*. Voicing a common complaint among reviewers of Keats's poems, the reviewer states that

Keats's talent has been misguided by the influence of Leigh Hunt. He opens the review by reiterating Hunt's deleterious effect on *Endymion*: "The effect of this upon Mr. Keats's poetry, was like an infusion of ipecacuanha powder in a dish of marmalade. It created such a sickness and nausea, that the mind felt little inclination to analyse the mixture produced, and to consider, whether after all, the dose might not have been mixed with some ingredients that were in themselves agreeable." The reviewer takes the figure of indigestion to an extreme and suggests that Keats's poetry induces nausea. By invoking a pharmacological substance, the reviewer also tacitly recalls Lockhart's attack, which focused on Keats's medical training. While this point applies to *Endymion*, he also asserts that the same holds true for the new volume, although to a lesser degree. The review ends with a return to nausea. After acknowledging Keats's powers, he laments that "a man who can write so well, should produce such absurd lines, and fall into such ridiculous modes of expression" (RR 227). Again, the problem results from taking liberties with the language. He concludes, "such innovations in language are despicable in themselves, and disgusting to the imagination of every man of virtue and taste, from having been originally *conceited*, as Mr. Keats would say, in the brain of one of the most profligate and wretched scribblers that we can remember to have ever either heard or read of" (228). There are, then, two offenses. First, Keats's abuses of language are "despicable in themselves." Second, they "disgust" because of their provenance—the mind of Leigh Hunt.¹⁴ What appears at first to be a diagnosis of Keats's poems cannot be separated from the ideological attacks on the Cockney School. The poems produce disgust because of their apparent origin in the "King of the Cockneys." Yet, as Scott suggests of *Endymion*, the problem with the reviewers is that they fail to do their job, to "digest" the

poems. Throughout all of these reviews, that common thread remains. Keats's poems produce an inability to digest. At the positive extreme, they disable judgments of taste, while at the negative extreme they induce the antithesis of taste, disgust. And as we will see with the 1820 volume, such reactions are inscribed within the poetry.

Keats's Poetry of Consumption

After Keats failed to achieve commercial success with *Endymion*, he began to question whether or not poetry would make a viable career for him. At some point toward the end of 1819, however, Keats decided to "make one more attempt in the Press" (*LJK* 2: 120).¹⁵ The volume consists of the three narrative poems, *Lamia*, *Isabella*, and *The Eve of St. Agnes*, followed by nine shorter poems, including all the odes (except for the "Ode on Indolence"), and concluded by the unfinished *Hyperion*. My interest lies primarily in the larger narrative that emerges over the course of the volume, namely the different versions of consumption that recur through the entire book. Keats structures the book as a sustained meditation on issues of production and consumption in the opening narrative poems, all three of which foreground these issues. The remaining poems provide further inquiry into the nature of poetic consumption. This culminates in the image of "bursting Joy's grape," in the final stanza of the "Ode on Melancholy."

Correspondences between poems sometimes reach across the entire volume, at other times emerging from adjacent poems. For example, "Ode to a Nightingale" begins as a response to *The Eve of St. Agnes*, although the two are not often considered together. *The Eve* begins and ends with dulled senses: "bitter chill it was" (1), "silent was the flock" (4), "Numb were the beadsman's fingers" (5), "The sculptur'd dead... / praying in

dumb orat'ries" (14, 16); likewise, as Porphyro and Madeline flee the castle, "There are no ears to hear, or eyes to see,— / Drown'd all in Rhenish and the sleepy mead" (348-9). And as the poem closes, the Beadman's formerly numb fingers turn to "ashes cold" (378). When "Nightingale" appears immediately following, with its famous opening, "My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains my sense" (1), the numb senses recall the same structure in *The Eve*. The question of what alleviates this sensory deprivation occupies both the characters in *The Eve* and the speaker of "Ode to a Nightingale." Porphyro and Madeline engage in a feast of the senses, which leads to despair, nightmares and death by the poem's end, while "Nightingale"'s speaker tries wine and drugs before realizing that only "the viewless wings of Poesy" (33) can carry him away from numbness. Yet he too loses sight of his vision, as he wonders, "Do I wake or sleep?" (80).

These kinds of connections occur frequently in the volume, which lends it the aura of thematic continuity. The book's opening poem immediately establishes Keats's investment in the issues of aesthetic production and consumption.¹⁶ *Lamia* begins at a time "Before King Oberon's bright diadem, / Sceptre, and mantle, clasp'd with dewy gem, / Frighted away the Dryads and the Fauns" (I, 3-5)—a time before monarchical wealth and power, symbolized by the "Sceptre" and "dewy gem," took over the natural world. As we learn from the next few lines, however, this former world is not without power structures, as Hermes, "bent warm on amorous theft," seeks to "escape the sight / Of his great summoner" (8, 10-11). The object of Hermes' desire—apart from the desire to escape from Jove's sight—is a nymph adored by "Satyrs" and "Tritons." While pining

for the nymph, Hermes comes across a snake with “a woman’s mouth,” who happens to have control over the nymph. She tells Hermes of the nymph:

Free as the air, invisibly, she strays
About these thornless wilds; her pleasant days
She tastes unseen; unseen her nimble feet
Leave traces in the grass and flowers sweet;
From weary tendrils, and bow’d branches green,
She plucks the fruit unseen, she bathes unseen:
And by my power is her beauty veil’d
To keep it unaffronted, unassail’d
By the love-glances of unlovely eyes. (94-102)

The nymph at this point becomes a figure for poetry. “Unseen,” like the “viewless wings of Poesy,” her “nimble feet / Leave traces,” as if inscribing poetry on the ground itself. The serpent, then, exists as a sort of guardian of taste, ensuring that no one unworthy of the nymph’s greatness taints her beauty. However, the serpent agrees to let Hermes “behold her”—both see and possess the nymph—if he agrees to transform the serpent into the “woman’s form” which she formerly occupied.

The exchange of the nymph between Hermes and the serpent (who then becomes Lamia), offers a model of the perfect union of aesthetic object and audience. Hermes turns to her “Full of adoring tears and blandishment” (1: 135). At first, the nymph recoils and “like a moon in wane, / Faded before him, cower’d. nor could restrain / Her fearful sobs, self-folding like a flower / That faints into itself at evening hour” (136-8). Although frightened of being seen and adored after existing invisibly for so long, Hermes’ care soon turns her fear to acceptance:

But the God fostering her chilled hand,
She felt the warmth, her eyelids open’d bland,
And, like new flowers at morning song of bees,
Bloom’d, and gave up her honey to the lees.
Into the green-recessed woods they flew;
Nor grew they pale, as mortal lovers do. (140-5)

As they disappear into the woods, much like the nightingale will do later in the volume, their union serves as a counterexample of the failed pairing of Lamia and her lover, Lycius, which unfolds over the remainder of the poem. Hermes takes the “chilled hand” of poetry, deprived of warmth by the prospect of being consumed by an audience, and instead of devouring her, he “fosters” and shares warmth with her. The aesthetic, economic, and sexual exchange occurs through a metaphor from nature. The nymph allows her “honey” to be taken, and the assumption is that Hermes, like the bees, will produce something valuable from their union. In this sense, Hermes does not so much consume the nymph; instead, they combine to produce together. Hermes (as reader) and the nymph (as writer) produce together. But as they do so, they leave the world of people and things where their acts of consumption and production will never end, but also never be revealed to others.

For the rest of the poem, Keats narrates another process of aesthetic exchange, which this time ends in the marketplace. As Hermes and the nymph depart, Lamia’s transformation is marked by pain and suffering. “Her eyes” are “in torture fix’d and anguish drear” and “without one cooling tear,” unlike the mutually-sobbing eyes of Hermes and his nymph (1: 150, 152). Throughout the process, Lamia is “convuls’d with scarlet pain” (154), and she loses all the signs of her beauty and value. Her “silver mail” and “golden brede” (158) disappear, and “in moments few, she was undrest / Of all her sapphires, greens, and amethyst, / And rubious-argent” (161-3). After making the exchange with Hermes, Lamia loses all the markers of commerce. The materials and symbols of currency that formerly made up her body quickly disappear, and “nothing but pain and ugliness were left” (164). Before she departs for the city in search of the object

of her desire, Lamia transforms magically into “a lady bright, / A full-born beauty new and exquisite” (171-2). But the knowledge of her painful transformation remains beneath her new surface. While the union of Hermes and the nymph suggests an exchange outside the bonds of commerce, Lamia reminds us that beneath the veneer of beauty in the commercial world lurks ugliness and pain.

The rest of the poem involves this truth coming to light. When Lamia and Lycius meet, her beauty entrances him, and they shut themselves “from the busy world of more incredulous.” Like Hermes and the nymph, Lamia and Lycius leave the world of people, but the latter pair’s seclusion does not last. Lycius is first brought out of his trance and “His spirit pass’d beyond its golden bourn / Into the noisy world almost forsworn” (2: 32-3). The “noisy world” is the realm of commerce, as Lycius makes clear when his thought turns to a request of Lamia:

What mortal hath a prize, that other men
May be confounded and abash’d withal,
But lets it sometimes pace abroad majestic,
And triumph, as in thee I should rejoice
Amid the hoarse alarm of Corinth’s voice. (57-61)

Lycius’s wish to wed Lamia comes from his desire to enter the “noisy world” and proclaim his ownership of his “prize,” Lamia. She weeps at his request, recognizing that it signals “passion’s passing bell” (39). Nonetheless, Lycius takes “delight / Luxurious in her sorrows, soft and new” (73-4), and proceeds with his plan to marry her.

Lamia realizes that “she could never win / [Lycius’s] foolish heart from its mad pompousness” (2: 113-4), so instead she seeks “how to dress / The misery in fit magnificence” (115-6). Lamia’s creations (essentially, decorations for the wedding) signify poetry itself. Once again anticipating “Nightingale,” a “noise of wings” precedes

the creation of “a glowing banquet-room, which is supported by “A haunting music” that “made moan / Throughout, as fearful the whole charm might fade.” Lamia also proceeds, “In pale contented sort of discontent” to “[mission] her viewless servants to enrich / The fretted splendour of each nook and niche,” just as Keats would later tell Percy Bysshe Shelley to “load every rift’ [of his poetry] with ore” (*LJK* 2: 323). After creating her misery dressed in magnificence, Lamia withdraws and awaits her audience: “Approving all, she faded at self-will, / And shut the chamber up, close, hush’d and still, / Complete and ready for the revels rude, / When dreadful guests would come to spoil her solitude” (2: 142-5). The guests arrive, in addition to one uninvited guest: Lycius’s “trusty guide / And good instructor,” Apollonius. He gazes on Lamia, “brow-beating her fair form” until “the sophist’s eye, / Like a sharp spear, went through her utterly, / Keen, cruel, perçant, stinging” (299-301). The masculine gaze of knowledge and criticism takes apart the “form” of Lamia, who “with a frightful scream... vanish[es],” leaving Lycius without a form to behold any longer.

Keats’s allegory revolves around the reception of an aesthetic work and the various ways in which such consumption can be carried out.¹⁷ Hermes and the nymph offer one version, and Lamia, Lycius and Apollonius a second. As I have shown throughout this chapter, Keats’s own ruminations on consumption repeatedly intersect with his thoughts about food. And furthermore, the periodical discourse about Keats and his poetry revolves around these same intersections. However, food is markedly absent from *Lamia*, even though the poem deals with consumption in myriad ways. “Honey” appears when Keats describes the union of Hermes and the nymph, but the emphasis is on the production of honey, not the consumption of it. In fact, the honey merely exists

proleptically as the figurative flowers “give up” their “honey to the lees”—the honey has not yet been produced. The most prominent image of food in the poem is of food not eaten. As Lamia prepares her wedding banquet, she lays out “an untasted feast / Teeming with odours.” “Untasted” suggests merely that food has *yet* to be eaten, and will be consumed later. Yet throughout the poem the feast remains untasted. Once the guests arrive, Keats alludes to the food twice: “loaded with a feast the tables stood” and a few lines later, “all mov’d to the feast” (2: 189, 195). It seems, however, that only wine is served at this feast. Keats describes the slow transformation of the guests “when the happy vintage touch’d their brains” and “Soon was God Bacchus at meridian height” (203, 213). There is no mention of food—only the power of the wine to make the guests hear Lamia’s music and see her creations. Once this happens, Apollonius fixes his eye on Lamia, bringing about the end of the poem. In an earlier draft version, however, Keats presented a different, more raucous account of the feast:

And, as the pleasant appetite entic’d,
 Gush came the wine, and sheer the meats were slic’d.
 Soft went the Music; the flat salver sang
 Kiss’d by the emptied goblet,—and again it rang:
 Swift bustled by the servants:—here’s a health
 Cries one—another—then, as if by stealth,
 A Glutton drains a cup of Helicon,
 Too fast down, down his throat the brief delight is gone.
 “Where is that Music?” cries a Lady fair.
 “Aye, where is it my dear? Up in the air”?
 Another whispers “Poo!” saith Glutton “Mum!”
 Then makes his shiny mouth a napkin for his thumb.

This version emphasizes the uncouth nature of the guests, who figure in the larger allegory as the uninformed, mass reading public. Keats eventually cut the stanza most likely because the tone did not fit the rest of the poem. As in the final version, Keats neglects to describe the ingestion of any solid foods (although he at least mentions one

food item, with the slices of meat.) Keats does, however, gesture toward the implications of ingestion through the presence of the “Glutton.” Keats’s criticism of the glutton accords closely with that leveled by gastronomers. As the glutton empties his cup, Keats notes, “Too fast down, down his throat the brief delight is gone.” Keats does not chastise the glutton for having the desire to seek sensual pleasure, but rather for his lack of care in doing so. The pleasure is “brief” because the glutton imbibes without the regard characteristic of the gourmand. Keats attempts to prolong the pleasure himself by extending the line into an alexandrine, but nonetheless it still flees. Yet the glutton has one more thing to say before Keats leaves him behind: the nonsense word “Mum!” A verbal signifier for an inability to verbalize, “mum” first suggests that the glutton’s mouth is full of food. Furthermore, the infantile act of thumb-sucking that follows reinforces the lack of refinement in the glutton’s desire. In this sense, “mum” functions as an infant’s request for his mother, the primary wish for the fulfillment of desire, and the primary source of food. The glutton, then, focalizes the kind of consumption that Keats and gastronomers alike despise: an unreflective, indulgent gorging.

Even though the glutton, with his indiscriminate gorging and unintelligible speech, captures the kind of consumption Keats detests, he nonetheless eliminates the glutton from the poem. Despite using the term nowhere else in his poetry, he shows an awareness of the kinds of nuances surrounding the word. I suggest that Keats removes the glutton because he positions his poetry as immune to such treatment. Instead of a clear figure for gluttonous ingestion, Keats provides the absence of ingestion with the “untasted feast.” While Lamia herself gets destroyed by Apollonius’s piercing gaze, the other guests never actually taste her feast or damage her creations. If Lamia (the

character) is analogous to *Lamia* (the poem),¹⁸ then Keats's poetic creations likewise remain immured from thoughtless consumption. The source for the story, Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, expressly states that "When she [the lamia] saw herself descried... she, plate, house, and all that was in it, vanished in an instant."¹⁹ In Keats's version, however, the creator dies, but her works remain untouched.

The volume's next poem, *Isabella; or, The Pot of Basil*, puts forward a similar story of aesthetic engagement. As with *Lamia* and Lamia, the same correspondence between character and poem expresses the dynamics of consumption and production. The poem begins by suggesting that Isabella should be consumed by her lover, Lorenzo, who offers to "drink her tears" (39). Keats makes the connection between erotic consumption and poetry apparent: "his erewhile timid lips grew bold, / And poesied with hers in dewy rhyme" (69-70). Lorenzo and Isabella, then, through an erotic form of consumption (Keats of course recognizes the mouth as the site of ingestion as well of erotic pleasure) create the ideal dynamic between reader and text. This union gets severed by Isabella's brothers—"money-bags" and "ledger-men"—who exploit labor from others so that they may consume themselves by "bit[ing] their lips alone" (142, 137, 170). Keats figures this exploitation as a failure of production. Their workers' "once proud-quiver'd loins did melt / In blood from stinging whip," rendering impotent the site of procreative power. In addition to losing the power of production, the workers also become consumed through exploitation: "For them [the brothers] the Ceylon diver held his breath, / And went all naked to the hungry shark; / For them his ears gush'd blood" (113-5). In both examples, blood exiting the body represents an overflow of production, literally squeezing the life out of the labor force.²⁰ And in the case of the "Ceylon diver"—whose blood makes

possible the sale of an aesthetic object—this exploitation inverts the relationship of consumption we see between Lorenzo and Isabella.

The brothers' desire to destroy the bond between Lorenzo and Isabella stems from their hopes for further economic gain. The union between the lovers, while figured as a self-contained form of consumption, does not yield any profit for the brothers. Instead, they hope to "coax her [Isabella] by degrees / To some high noble and his olive-trees" (167-8). In other words, they desire a marriage that provides both landed interest ("high noble") and the possibility for future industry through food production ("his olive-trees"). With this plan in mind, they decide to murder Lorenzo, which they accomplish after luring him into the woods. The brothers, then, interfere with the consumption of lover and text, so Isabella responds by turning herself into a producer. She digs up her lover's corpse, severs his head and plants it in a basil pot. Isabella "ever [feeds] it with thin tears" (425), which Lorenzo formerly consumed. By turning into a producer, Isabella crafts a text: Lorenzo reappears in the form of "perfumed leafits" (432), both the leaves of the basil plant and the pages of the text. As such, the leafits simultaneously signify Lorenzo's absence, Isabella's devotion, and the brothers' crime.

In an ironic turn, Lorenzo is responsible for food production, but without the consequent economic gain envisioned by the brothers. Although the basil "smelt more balmy than its peers / Of basil-tufts in Florence," Isabella keeps it from the marketplace. She cultivates it incessantly, to the point that her own need to consume disappears: "seldom felt she any hunger pain" (468). Isabella receives nourishment from the act of feeding her creation, always watering it with her tears. But such a good product cannot escape the brothers' notice, so they steal the pot and find buried within the "guerdon of

their murder” (477). Lorenzo’s severed head and the plant it produces becomes a physical embodiment of the exploitation on which the brothers built all their economic successes. Realizing this, they flee Florence forever (after disposing of the pot). Isabella, however, remains behind without her lover or the product of their love. She dies “forlorn, / Imploring for her basil to the last” (497-8), but she lives on in one final manifestation. Keats explains that “a sad ditty of this story born / From mouth to mouth through all the country pass’d” (502-3). After the failure of a physical product “born” from the lovers, they continue on in the form of a story. And in this last stanza, the mouth—formerly the site of Lorenzo and Isabella’s union, as well as the consumption of the diver by the shark—takes on its final role: the source of the story. The mouth is no longer the sign of ingestion, but rather of production. Keats begins from the notion that a text must be consumed, but recognizes that, in order to avoid the corruption of market forces, the poem must actively produce its own consumption. Keats denies that his readers can digest his poem like a joint of beef, but he holds onto eating as a model for the production of his poem’s reception. Isabella begins as a text to be consumed and ends as a text that produces itself and resists consumption.

Of the three narrative poems that open the volume, *The Eve of St. Agnes* has the least to do with consumption, and yet the most conspicuous example of food. As discussed above, the poem begins and ends with the senses dulled, and the bulk of the narrative of Madeline and Porphyro revolves around what happens when the senses are fooled. Madeline believes, according to the legend of St. Agnes’ eve, that “Young virgins might have visions of delight, / And soft adorings from their loves receive / Upon the honey’d middle of the night, / If ceremonies due they did aright” (47-50). Porphyro takes

advantage of this belief and appears in the flesh in Madeline's bedroom. This confluence of dream and reality leads Madeline to exclaim, after they consummate their love, "No dream, alas! alas! and woe is mine!" (328). Madeline fails to reconcile the difference between her fantastic vision of love and the corporeal reality of its expression. She accepts sensual indulgence when she believes its provenance is in the mind, but upon realizing it flows from the body, her senses are numbed as the lovers fade into the night.

In order to make the vision seem palpable, Porphyro prepares a feast. In the poem's narrative, it serves to substantiate the confluence between Madeline's dream and Porphyro's ploy. The latter deserves an extended quotation:

...he from forth the closet brought a heap
Of candied apple, quince, and plum, and gourd;
With jellies soother than the creamy curd,
And lucent syrups, tinct with cinnamon;
Manna and dates, in argosy transferr'd
From Fez; and spiced dainties, every one,
From silken Samarcand to cedar'd Lebanon.

These delicates he heap'd with glowing hand
On golden dishes and in baskets bright
Of wreathed silver: sumptuous they stand
In the retired quiet of the night,
Filling the chilly room with perfume light. (264-275)

The passage functions immediately to give a sense of exoticism to the vision. Not only do the items themselves convey exoticism, but Keats also provides details about how such items enter the Western marketplace. He mentions a specific kind of ship ("argosy"), which was associated with Venetian trade (the origin of the word coming from "Ragusa," the Latin name given to what is now Dubrovnik, Croatia, an important port city for Venetian traders). In addition, "silken Samarcand" and "cedar'd Lebanon" both point to the routes used to move goods from Asia to Europe. But despite all Porphyro's efforts,

this feast remains, like the one in *Lamia*, untasted. The curious shift in tense from past to present (“sumptuous they stand”) reinforces that this feast, for all its specificity, will never be consumed.²¹ To further emphasize the divorce between this feast and the consumption of it, Keats ends the description by moving away from the faculty of taste (“Filling the chilly room with perfume light”). The odor matters more than the taste, precisely because Madeline wants sensual stimulation removed from corporeality. The addition of “chilly” gestures toward yet another sense, and with his fondness for puns and synaesthesia, the replacement of “perfume light” with “perfumed light” would most likely please the poet. Keats begins with detail about these food items, but concludes by separating out ingestion from the feast. Once again, the poet figures the denial of consumption.

In the three narrative poems, Keats poses consumption (of texts and of objects) as a fundamental concern for his poetry. Food signifies through this symbolic economy, but when it appears, it registers a reminder of the inability to consume Keats’s poetry. Although he contemplates ingestion as a viable metaphor for literary consumption, ultimately Keats leaves digestion as a tantalizing impossibility. The one moment of explicit food consumption occurs in the final short poem of the volume, the “Ode on Melancholy.” Structurally, the poem produces a dialectic of literal and figurative consumption. The opening stanza examines the implications for poisonous ingestion, which contrasts with the aesthetic consumption of stanza two. Finally the closing stanza interrogates what comes of bringing the literal and figurative registers together. The tasting soul of the final stanza performs a simultaneously physiological and metaphorical ingestion. The logic of the poem’s imagery concludes that to attempt a full digestion of

poetry results in the destruction of the self. Consumption results in the reader's dissolution, a fate literalized by Keats's own physiological demise.

The poem opens with an injunction against consumption: "...neither twist / Wolf's-bane, tight-rooted, for its poisonous wine; / Nor suffer thy pale forehead to be kiss'd / By nightshade, ruby grape of Proserpine; / Make not your rosary of yew-berries" (1-5). The argument continues, contending that indulging in these poisons will not reveal melancholy, but only "drown the wakeful anguish of the soul" (10). As was the case when Keats's spirit suffered a guts-ache, the litany of poisons would effect body as well as soul. The actual effect of wolf's bane, for example, which Keats would have known from his medical training, is to create numbness in the mouth, and specifically the palate. If taken in too large a dose, vomiting will occur.²² The poem's opening image, then, suggests avoiding such substances because they disable the physiological basis for taste.

The second stanza produces several alternative to the poisons of the first. "When the melancholy fit shall fall," one should instead "glut thy sorrow on a morning rose... / Or on the wealth of globed peonies" (11, 15, 17). This version of consumption moves away from the literal ingestion of poison to a figurative digestion of aesthetic objects. Roses and peonies have no practical medicinal uses, but rather serve as emblems of beauty. Similarly, the poet tells us, "If thy mistress some rich anger shows, / Emprison her soft hand, and let her rave, / And feed deep, deep upon her peerless eyes" (18-20). This mirrors the behavior of Lycius, who takes "delight / Luxurious in [Lamia's] sorrows, soft and new." The correspondence between the two moments anticipates the destruction of the consumer in the ode's concluding stanza. And furthermore, the consumption of the angry mistress's beauty turns sinister with the "emprisoning" and

ominous “feeding.” This last moment of figurative consumption starts to move into physicality with the emphasis on feeding, reinforced by the repetition of “deep” and the assonant linkage of “feed,” “deep,” and “peerless.” As the image of consumption shifts back to the realm of literal ingestion, the destructive reality of consumption begins to arise.

The final stanza completes the return to the bodily ingestion gestured toward in stanza one. The “ruby grape of Proserpine” now becomes “Joy’s grape” (28). And instead of having a numb palate from wolf’s bane, the one able to view Melancholy possesses a “strenuous tongue” and “palate fine” (26, 27). The body remains primary in this figure of consumption. Keats emphasizes the physicality of “burst[ing] Joy’s grape” with the “strenuous tongue.” At the same time, he claims that “His soul shall taste the sadness of her [Melancholy’s] might.” The body enables ingestion, but the soul tastes. And the result of this tasting is to “be among her cloudy trophies hung” (30). Keats crafts a narrative of consumption that involves both an active physical apparatus for taste (tongue and palate together) and the immaterial, tasting soul. But the result of such consumption is self annihilation. By bursting Joy’s grape, one becomes a symbol of the “might” formerly tasted. Keats’s readers, then, in order to taste his poetry, must engage with it physically and spiritually. But doing so means that they become static representations of the poetry’s power. In the same way that eating is a reminder of mortality, reading Keats’s poems functions as a reminder of one’s inability to consume and digest them fully. To read these poems means to be possessed by the poet himself. The aesthetic of indigestion culminates in the reader’s destruction through the attempted action of digestion.

As Keats's consumptive body ambled toward death, his doctors decreed that he would be "confined almost entirely to vegetable food" or "pseudo victuals" (*LJK* 2: 261, 271) as the poet himself characterized them. In a letter to Fanny Brawne from this period of dietary restriction, he describes an act of eating which literalizes the notion of reading as eating. After excusing his poor penmanship due to a "vile old pen," Keats digresses:

However these last lines are in a much better style of penmanship thof [though] a little disfigured by the smear of black currant jelly; which has made a little mark on one of the Pages of Brown's Ben Jonson, the very best book he has. I have lick'd it but it remains very purplue—I did not know whether to say purple or blue, so in the mixture of the thought wrote purplue which may be an excellent name for a colour made up of those two, and would suit well to start next spring. (262)

Through the lens of "black currant jelly," Keats condenses his related concerns about sexuality, class and education. Noting that the book is "the very best" Brown has, Keats acknowledges the dual transgression of staining it with jelly, and then smearing it by licking the book. The defiant lack of respect for Brown's book gestures toward the rift between the two friends after the perceived flirtation Brown showed toward Fanny. In the act of licking the book, Keats both strikes back at Brown for the insult and claims ownership of the book. Keats consumes the page, but also leaves a trace of his presence. His reading becomes marked on the text as a reminder of his consumption of it. And as with other food moments, Keats immediately turns this act of feeding into an aesthetic object. The color "purplue" begins as an isolated image inscribed in Keats's consumption, but just as quickly moves into the marketplace. As Keats invents this new color, he recognizes its viability in the marketplace ("would suit well to start next spring"), a necessary aspect of consumption as well as an opportunity for subversion. Yet as with the eater of "Joy's grape," Keats's jelly is a mark of his diseased state. As he eats

and as he reads, Keats knows that his death approaches. “That drop of blood is my death warrant,” Keats remarked upon seeing the color of arterial blood, coughed up from his lungs after a severe hemorrhage (*LJK* 2: 251). The color of his smeared jelly signifies aesthetic entry into fashion and the market, and defines itself against the eating that failed to sustain his body (“pseudo-victuals”). With Keats until his death, Joseph Severn reports that coughing blood was: “the lesser evil compared with his stomach. Not a single thing will digest.” Keats’s “distended stomach keeps him in perpetual hunger or craving” (*LJK* 2: 362). The end of Keats’s life brought his aesthetic theory of consumption to a physiological reality. Unable to consume, the remnants of undigested, aestheticized images of food remain as the insistent signifiers of Keats’s indigestion.

Notes to Chapter V

¹ The fictional correspondent, Blaize Fitztravesty, in *Blackwood’s* asks North to write a review of Maria Eliza Rundell’s *A New System of Domestic Cookery*, which he presents through the metaphor of carving: “carve down the materials of [the] feast, and send them up to the snow-white monthly-spread table-cloth of Maga, in the form of *entremets*, not over-much at once, but prettily dished and garnished by some of the tasteful *traiteurs*, who have demonstrated their excellence in your employ” (10: 558).

² Denise Gigante argues that “Keats is known to have as perplexed a relation to the sensory—particularly the savory—as any poet.” She cites Elizabeth Bishop, who objects to Keats’s “unpleasant insistence on the *palate*,” and Thomas Carlyle, who deems Keats “a miserable creature, hungering after sweet which he can’t get” (qtd. in *Taste* 139), along with Yeats as other examples of this element of Keats’s reputation.

³ In a letter to Browning, John Ruskin expresses confusion over the poem’s meaning: “‘What porridge?’ Porridge is a Scotch dish, I believe; typical of bad fare. Do you mean Keats had bad fare?” (Browning 689).

⁴ Cyrus Redding explains, in *A History and Description of Modern Wines* (1833), that claret is manufactured only for English consumption. Bordeaux wines are strengthened with other kinds of wine in order to accord with English taste: “Bordeaux wine in England and in Bordeaux scarcely resemble each other. The merchants are obliged to ‘work’ the wines before they are shipped, or, in other words, to mingle stronger wines with them. . . . These operations cause the clarets of England to be wines justly

denominated impure, though not injurious to the constitution. There is nothing in them which does not come from the grape. It is only encouraging a coarseness of taste, which, after all, is but matter of fancy, while wholesomer wines cannot be drank” (329). Since a “matter of fancy” dictates English taste for claret, Redding implies that this error can be unlearned. Viewed in this context, Keats’s famous passion for claret marks both his Englishness and its corrupting influence on his taste.

⁵ Timothy Webb notes several of Keats’s gestures towards the materiality of the letter, and distinguishes between them and the material circumstances of fictional texts, because for Keats these signs are “not part of the encompassing fiction but a genuinely material intrusion on the life of the text” (151). An example of this kind of gesture occurs in the May 3 letter to Reynolds, which includes one of the most famous sections in all of Keats’s letters (the “Mansion of Many Apartments” analogy), as well as a less-noticed element: a break for dinner. As Keats introduces the meal, however, it gets mixed up in the figural eating he forwards earlier in the letter (He chides Reynolds for using professional life as an excuse for not writing poetry: “I do not see why a Mind like yours is not capable of harbouring and digesting the whole Mystery of Law as easily as Parson Hugh does Pepins” [*LJK* 1: 276]). Thinking about the “Mystery of Law” again, Keats writes, “Also as a long cause requires two or more sittings of the Court, so a long letter will require two or more sittings of the Breech wherefore I shall resume after dinner” (280). This moment not only alerts us to the materiality of letter-writing, but specifically points to the material necessities of eating and their relationship to writing. Because of the addition of that last clause, “I shall resume after dinner,” Keats’s pun on “sittings” takes on another element. He is not only talking about sessions of court or actually sitting on one’s laurels, but also sittings for a meal. The writing of the letter, then, becomes analogous to sitting for a meal.

⁶ Keats uses the spider image in a letter to John Hamilton Reynolds as well: “Now it appears to me that almost any Man may like the Spider spin from his own inwards his own airy Citadel.” Later in the letter Keats emphasizes instead the importance of receiving inspiration before undertaking one’s own “airy Citadel”: “but let us open our leaves like a flower and be passive and receptive—budding patiently under the eye of Apollo and taking hints from every noble insect that favors us with a visit—sap will be given us for Meat and dew for drink” (*LJK* 1: 232). The notion of inspiration as consumption informs Keats’s northern tour, which fails precisely because of Keats’s inability to reconcile literal and figurative digestion.

⁷ Reynolds tends to be remembered as the friend of John Keats, as Reynolds intuited would be the case. He wrote to Keats on 14 October 1818, “Do *you* get Fame,—and I shall have it in being your affectionate and steady friend” (Jones 13). Yet Reynolds was also an accomplished literary figure himself. Leigh Hunt’s “Young Poets” article from the *Examiner* issue of 1 December 1816 “praised Reynolds equally with Keats and Shelley” (Jones xxiii). Reynolds, however, seems to have known that his powers were not of a piece with Shelley’s and Keats’s. Nonetheless, Reynolds continued to live as a man of letters until his death in 1854 (he also practiced as a lawyer until 1847). He contributed

regularly to the *London Magazine*—including the review of Kitchiner discussed in Chapter II, and the account of the coronation discussed in Chapter IV—in the early 1820s, writing “prose worthy,” according to Jones, “to be printed along with the greatest prose geniuses of the period, Lamb and Hazlitt” (xxx). He owned part of the *Athenaeum* from 1828 to 8 June 1831 (Jones xxi), and wrote for that and other periodicals throughout the 1830s and 1840s, including the *New Sporting Magazine*, *Ainsworth’s Magazine*, the *New Monthly*, and *Bentley’s Miscellany* (Jones xxxii). His name appeared on the first advertisement for *Bentley’s*, and he wrote a short piece on Lady Wortley Montagu in February 1837, while Dickens was the editor (Chittick 107, 111).

⁸ In a letter to Benjamin Bailey, written during the tour, Keats says that the only books with him are the three volumes of Dante, translated by Cary (*LJK* 1: 343).

⁹ Rollins points out that Brown had written in his *Life of Keats* that upon hearing Wordsworth was at Lowther Hall, “The young poet looked thoughtful at this exposure of his elder.” He later deleted the sentence (*LJK* 1: 302).

¹⁰ In his article, “Keats’s Tour of Scotland: Burns and the Anxiety of Hero Worship,” John Glendening performs readings of three poems dealing with Burns, written during the tour, and he argues that “they concomitantly trace out a growing resistance and final rejection of Burns as hero” (98). The first poem he considers, Keats wrote at Dumfries, where he and Brown saw Burns’s grave. Glendening contends that “On Visiting the Tomb of Burns” “intimates Keats’s doubts about his enshrinement of Burns and the consequent projection of negativity onto a Scotland of which Keats already took a dim view” (90). The poem exposes the instability of worshipping Burns, who functions “alternatively as a figure of health and infirmity” for Keats (80). In order to fully deify the Scottish bard, Keats needs to reconcile the conflicting images of Burns as a successful poet and as poor writer who drank himself to death. As Glendening puts it, “Keats’s impulse to celebrate the other poet’s triumph is retarded by an inability to forget Burns’s failure and the possibility of his own” (82).

¹¹ Samuel Johnson’s definition of “oats” as “a grain, which in England is generally given to horses, but in Scotland supports the people” gives a sense of the long association of oats with the Scottish people, and of the English disdain for it.

¹² Although the “Cockney School” was a term derived by John Gibson Lockhart in *Blackwood’s*, and followed by other reviewers, Jeffrey Cox has shown how the group of poets and writers gathered around Leigh Hunt conceived of themselves as a group of sorts.

¹³ Duncan Wu reads the Cockney School attacks in another light, suggesting that they helped Keats’s distinguish his own poetics from Hunt’s: “If his most adversarial readers were small-minded, politically motivated and class biased, their remarks about his affiliation with Hunt’s poetic tastes and technique were sufficiently near the mark to confirm Keats’s own misgivings and to prompt him to discover his own voice. Far from

being his assassins, these critics played a vital role in nurturing Keats's early promise" (50).

¹⁴ Pejoratively claiming that a work had affinities with Hunt and other Cockneys was fairly common among those who disapproved of such an association. Such was the tenor of many attacks on Byron after he began publishing *Don Juan* with the Hunts. The *British Critic* review of Charles Lamb's *Essays of Elia* claims that the "cacodeamon of cockneyism" has taken hold of Elia, particularly in the essay "On the Acting of Munden." The reviewer quotes a section and reflects, "The least touch of the Rimini school is like the twang of garlic to our nostrils" (20: 89). This particular sensory response is intriguing given Lamb's conclusion to the "Dissertation upon Roast-Pig," in which he beseeches cooks to "banish... the whole onion tribe" when preparing suckling pig. For a whole hog, however, he counsels, "steep them in shalots, stuff them out with plantations of the rank and guilty garlic; you cannot poison them." (*LM* 6: 248).

¹⁵ Keats wrote this to Benjamin Haydon on June 17, 1819. That same day, he also wrote his sister, Fanny, explaining, "I am going to try the Press once more and to that end shall retire to live cheaply in the country and compose myself and verses as well as I can" (*LJK* 2: 121). By the fall, Keats seems to have wavered in his determination, as on September 22, he wrote to Woodhouse that he would "no longer live upon hopes" and instead "get employment in some of our elegant Periodical Works" (174). A month later he told his publisher, John Taylor, "I have come to a determination not to publish any thing I have now ready written" (234). Yet by December 20, he writes to his sister, "I have been very busy since I saw you especially the last Week and shall be for some time, in preparing some Poems to come out in the Sp[r]ing" (237). After his severe hemorrhage on February 3, Keats seems to have resolved more strongly to continue with his plans to publish. Brown wrote Taylor on March 13, "[Keats] wishes his Poems to be published as soon as convenient to yourself" (*LJK* 2: 276). In June, Keats wrote to Brown, "My book is coming out with very low hopes, though not spirits on my part. This shall be my last trial; not succeeding, I shall try what I can do in the Apothecary line" (298).

¹⁶ For a recent summation of Keats criticism in the last four decades, see Jack Siler (15-23). Siler focuses in particular on the question of historicism in readings of Keats, and the different forms it has taken. I situate my argument within this project of bringing the material and social conditions of Keats's poems to bear on the formal and stylistic understanding of them. Jerome McGann's *The Romantic Ideology* signals the beginning of that project, while the essays of Nicholas Roe's *Keats and History* (1995) and Susan Wolfson's *Cambridge Companion to Keats* (2001) stand as two important examples of how Keats criticism has evolved since McGann's model. Roe, in particular, stresses the importance of reading socio-political engagements in Keats's poetry not only through figures of evasion and displacement (as he conceives of McGann's approach), but also through more direct means (see Roe's work on Keats's education in *Culture of Dissent*, or Jeffrey Cox's *Poetry and Politics* for examples of this latter mode). Keats's investment in figures of food and eating paradoxically performs a direct and displaced engagement with his cultural context. The aestheticizing of food tends to be understood as a way for

Keats to disengage from the social, but as I have shown throughout this dissertation, ideological class and political struggle is incorporated in the boundaries of food culture from which such aestheticization emerges. What appears to be removal from the conditions of class status and social reality, appears as such only through a lack of understanding about the presence and function of food culture. Gigante and Morton, in their readings of Keats, have both revealed the ways in which food informs Keats's social engagement, a project which my analysis of the figures of indigestion continues.

¹⁷ For an overview of the many allegorical readings of *Lamia*, see Bennett (*Keats* 174, 229). Bennett's argument that *Lamia* "prefigures, constructs, and irreducibly determines its own critical reception as allegorical, while at the same time irreducibly determining such a reading as destructive or impossible," is analogous to my argument about Keats's figures of indigestion. Yet through an understanding of the gastronomical discourse with which the figures of indigestion engage, Keats's rhetorical denial of reading proceeds directly at the level of social engagement.

¹⁸ Bennett, for one, observes the correspondence between character and poem: "Lamia is also, in some sense, 'Lamia,' and 'Lamia' is a lamia, a seductive trap, not what it seems" (*Keats* 176).

¹⁹ A brief quotation from the relative section of Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* appears at the end of *Lamia* in Keats's original publication.

²⁰ In Keats's "This Living Hand," blood likewise represents the source of aesthetic production. The "living hand"—the synecdochic stand-in for the poet, as well as the metonymic representation of the hand-writing that constitutes poetry—remains "warm and capable" only so long as the poet's audience remains: "thou would wish thine own heart dry of blood, / So in my veins red life might stream again" (1, 5-6).

²¹ Morton reads the stanzas as exemplars of what he terms "the poetics of spice": "Marx was puzzled about the eternal charm of Greek statues: how did this square with a historicising imagination? The persistence of the poetics of spice raises similar questions. What this passage is meditating upon, however, is not so much the relationship between history and the imagination as that between enjoyment and the 'thing'" (*Spice* 164). Morton also identifies these stanzas as sources of the typical misreadings of Keats's investment in food. Ultimately the food of stanza 30 is not a reflection of "Keats's narcissism, voyeurism, infantile or onanistic tendencies," as some critics have suggested. Instead, "Keats parodies the rhetoric of commodity by redoubling, in a traversal of the fantasy" (170). My emphasis on the economy of indigestion that characterizes the volume shows how this critique emerges not only out of the discourses of diet and gastronomy, but also the material, bodily conditions that Keats experienced, through and against such discourses.

²² De Almeida traces the different pharmacological associations appropriate to the "Ode on Melancholy" (168-74). The *London Medical Repository* (1819) lists the symptoms of

poisoning from wolf's bane: "Heat in the mouth, tongue, and throat becoming general; spasms, giddiness, debility, sometimes purging and vomiting, delirium, insensibility" (12: 506). Robert John Thorton writes, in *A New Family Herbal* (1810): "The fresh plant and root are very violent poisons, producing remarkable debility, paralysis of the limbs, convulsive motions of the face, bilious vomiting, and catharsis, vertigo, delirium, asphyxia, death. The fresh leaves have very little smell, but when chewed have an acid taste, and excite lancinating pains, and swelling of the tongue" (550).

CHAPTER VI

SILVER FORKS AND THE MEMORY OF ROMANTIC EATING

With the essay, “The Dandy School,” William Hazlitt’s chosen appellation for the spate of fashionable novels published in the late 1820s failed to catch on: the “dandy school” lost out in favor of the “silver-fork” denomination.¹ This name, too, comes from Hazlitt’s essay. He condemns these novelists (specifically Theodore Hook and Benjamin D’Israeli in the essay) for shifting the aim of literature from thought and feeling to the realm of surface affectation, metonymically linked with “a few select persons who eat fish with silver forks” (*Collected Works* 11: 345). He inveighs against “the servility, egotism, and upstart pretensions of the writers” of this newly-formed school (343). Instead of literature “enlarg[ing] the bounds of knowledge and feeling,” works of this kind make “the reader’s mind... so varnished over with affectation that not an avenue to truth or feeling is left open” (343, 345). The obsession with fashion and taste leads the dandy school writers to deem that “a school-master in a black coat is a monster—a tradesman and his wife who eat cold mutton and pickled cabbage are wretches to be hunted out of society” (343-4). The middle-class laborers are condemned by fashionable novelists, according to Hazlitt, through the correspondence between that labor and their absence of taste (in clothing and food, in these examples). And instead of giving us insight to the thoughts and feelings of their characters, these books only convey an aloof fascination with gentility.

Based on Hazlitt's early description of the silver fork genre, it seems a consequence of the spread of gastronomy, which at first appears to merely revolve around careful attention to the details of style and fashion. Indeed, the characters in Edward Bulwer Lytton's *Pelham* (1828) virtually (and sometimes literally) recite aspects of gastronomy out of the pages of Grimod or Kitchiner. Yet silver fork writers also treat and deploy the aesthetics of eating in a fundamentally different way than their Romantic predecessors. Hazlitt's target, Theodore Hook, writes that "In the midst of the golden dishes and golden vases, there is always some mistake at such dinners " which can range from guests "with coarse neckcloths" to having the "*entrées* cold, and the *soufflets* flat and heavy." Ultimately these mistakes combine to convey the failure of the nouveau riche's imitative pretensions to sophistication: "In short, there is always some drawback, some terrible qualifier in the affair, which it would be difficult distinctly to define, but which invariably gives the *air bourgeoisie* to all the attempts of upstart wealth to imitate the tone and manner of the aristocracy of our country" (1: 118). The ambiguously defined gap between aristocracy and bourgeoisie expresses itself through the dinner table. Whereas Romantic gastronomers use the discourse of food aesthetics to articulate middle-class identity, Hook merely ponders the indefinable distinction that renders the middle class inferior.

This difference forms the basis for Hazlitt's specifically political critique of a genre that tends to be characterized as apolitical. The problem with writers like Hook and D'Israeli, for Hazlitt, is that they affirm patrician claims to "the principles of paternal government" (11: 344). The silver fork novel would not offend Hazlitt in the same way, were it written by and for members of the upper class. But writers like Hook and

D'Israeli are not members of the elite society which they write about—at least according to Hazlitt's assessment, and to other contemporary judgments of silver fork writers.² Their awe at the manners and behaviors of the genteel inspires their middle-class readers to have the same reverence. Thus the promises of “paternal government,” that “we are to be all one family of love,” are contradicted by divisive class distinctions. For Hazlitt, the middle-class emulation of gentility is not only “vulgar” and distasteful; it dampens the spirit of reform that was endemic to the period during which the fashionable novel came into existence. The aesthetic principles of the genre offend all the more because of the implicit political effect they produce. Unsurprisingly from Hazlitt, who repudiated Malthus's economic theory as politically abhorrent based on an argument about eating, here he condemns the silver fork novelists through the language of eating. He first introduces the “silver fork” example to support his point about Hook's inability to convey thoughts and feelings of his characters. Hook's novels inform us “that the quality eat fish with silver forks,” but Hazlitt wonders, “is this all they feel?” Hook cannot know the inner thoughts and feelings of people of “quality” because the surface affectation “is new to him” but “old to them” (345). The true mark of quality, according to Hazlitt, is being able to eat fish the correct way, without remarking upon it.³ Ultimately, Hazlitt finds that the fascination with surface markers of gentility instills servility in the middle class consciousness. He concludes that “at first it seems strange that persons of so low a station in life should... inveigh against themselves, and make us despise all but a few arrogant people, who pay them ill for what they do. But this is the natural process of servility” (347). The “vulgar” practice of “aping gentility” produces a middle class antithetical to the ideal of reform that defined the latter half of the decade (346).

Despite Hazlitt's assessment of the lack of social responsibility endemic to novels of fashion, defenders of the genre argue that it made possible the social realism of the latter nineteenth century. Edward Bulwer Lytton specifically connects the work of silver fork writers with the symbolic transformation of English society marked by the Reform Bill. In both accounts (Hazlitt's critique and Bulwer's defense) the silver fork genre thus operates on an aesthetic model rooted in the specificity of social and historical conditions. The silver fork gastronomic aesthetic differs from Romantic gastronomy in two ways: first, the silver fork writers reframe the class argument so that middle-class gourmandism becomes snobbery—mere pretension as opposed to a substantially different class identity. Secondly, in the process of resituating middle-class gourmandism as snobbery, silver fork writers also revise the conception of the Romantic relationship between aesthetics and social function. In order to distinguish themselves from their Romantic predecessors, silver fork writers substantiate the notion that Romantic aesthetics elide social questions. Romantic aesthetics becomes the thing lacking social utility, while the attention to the surface details of fashion in silver fork novels satisfies the concern for usefulness.⁴ Instead of food serving as the basis for class identification through material aesthetics, the silver fork genre treats food as a locus for social action. In the process of shifting the stakes of food discourse, silver fork writers alter the nature of the class identity associated with social realism.⁵

The Usefulness of Silver Forks

While scholars have recently explored the function of fashionable novels, their immediate reception tended to revolve around accusations of uselessness.⁶ William

Maginn, who founded *Fraser's Magazine* in the wake of fashionable novels' success, attempts to secure some sway in the literary marketplace with several attacks on the genre.⁷ Discussing the work of Bulwer, Maginn voices the critique of novels leveled at them as long as they have existed: "Amusement should only be made the organ of instruction." Without a valuable lesson, the amusement afforded by reading about fashionable life is wasteful: "What noble faculties are addressed in such works? Are they calculated... to brace up manly energy, and promote heroic virtue? Or rather, have they not an evident tendency to effeminate and enfeeble the mind" (1: 512). Maginn specifies that Bulwer's transgression is that his work "pretends to give the world as it is, with all its vices and its littlenesses," but does not "set the antidote as well as the bane before the young appetite" (525). Maginn's argument is couched in the language of consumption and production. Novels ought to be consumed so that they produce "manly energy" and "heroic virtue." Instead, Maginn argues, Bulwer's novels create an "effeminate" and "enfeebled" mind (and, presumably, body). This figure, the dandy, consumes without producing.

Despite this criticism from Maginn and others,⁸ Bulwer defended the usefulness of his work (and other fashionable novels) from the beginning. In the preface to *Pelham's* second edition (1828), Bulwer writes, "It is a beautiful part in the economy of this world, that nothing is without its use... we may glean no unimportant wisdom from Folly itself, if we distinguish while we survey, and satirize while we share it" (5). *Pelham* is intended to embody the process of "satirizing while sharing" and "distinguishing while surveying," for he is "a personal combination of antitheses—a fop and a philosopher, a voluptuary and a moralist" (5). From *Pelham's* ability to observe and partake in the scenes of high

fashion, Bulwer intends that his reader can “glean wisdom” from it. This knowledge might then lead to social action. Indeed, in *England and the English* (1833), Bulwer attributes the beginnings of social change (culminating in the 1832 Reform Bill) to fashionable novels. He claims that “the three years’ run of the fashionable novels was a shrewd sign of the times: straws they were, but they showed the upgathering of the storm.” The desire to have access to scenes of fashionable life sprung from class inequality, and the satire of the gentry’s excesses and frivolities served to reinforce the notion that such inequality needed to be redressed. Fashionable novels were not only a “sign of the times,” but also goads to action:

Few writers ever produced so great an effect on the political spirit of their generation as some of these novelists, who, without any other merit, unconsciously exposed the falsehood, the hypocrisy, the arrogant and vulgar insolence of patrician life. Read by all the classes, in every town, in every village, these works, as I have before stated, could not but engender a mingled indignation and disgust at the parade of frivolity, the ridiculous disdain of truth, nature, and mankind, the self-consequence and absurdity which falsely or truly these novels exhibited as a picture of aristocratic society. (2: 74)

Bulwer defends not only fashionable novels with the designed purpose of satirizing aristocratic excess, but also those that “unconsciously” do so. Even the “useless” novels that convey no moral lesson (Maginn classes Bulwer among these, but Bulwer disagrees with the assessment), receive usefulness from this formulation. By simply showing how people of fashion lived, fashionable novels mobilized the middle class “indignation and disgust” to social and political action, symbolized most clearly by the Reform Bill.

After the first wave of fashionable novels exposed patrician life, the public desired a more useful kind of literature: “A description of the mere frivolities of fashion is no longer coveted; for the public mind, once settled towards an examination of the

aristocracy, has pierced from the surface to the depth; it has *probed* the wound, and it now desires to *cure*” (*England and the English* 2: 75). In the preface to *Pelham*’s 1840 edition, Bulwer attempts to show more clearly the kind of moral he wanted to convey, since this was now more in line with the public taste. He writes, “It struck me that it would be a new, an useful, and perhaps a happy moral to show... that we may be both men of the world, even, to a certain degree, men of pleasure, and yet be something wiser—nobler—better” (7). This sounds much like the compromise made by gastronomers in the previous two decades, but Bulwer’s treatment of gastronomy differs from this explicit moral. Instead of using food culture to articulate the spirit of reform that *Pelham* embodies in other elements of his character, Bulwer ridicules middle-class attempts at gourmandism. As the material aesthetics of Romanticism emerge out of the class identity imagined through articulations of middle-class gourmandism, Bulwer’s critique is also a critique of Romanticism. This larger critique becomes clearer in other silver fork novels that more specifically address the reception of the Romantics.

Bulwer’s Food and Romantic Eating

In Bulwer’s *Pelham*, he satirizes middle class pretensions to gourmandism, and reasserts the aristocratic province over matters of food. The first indication of this shift comes in chapter three, after *Pelham* has finished his studies at Cambridge, and sets out to enjoy fashionable life, beginning with a dinner party. There he encounters Mr. Davison, “a great political economist,” Mr. Wormwood, “the *noli-me-tangere* of literary lions,” and Lord Vincent, who becomes a guide for *Pelham* throughout the novel (16). Wormwood inquires about a dish, to which Davison, “a great gourmand,” replies, “*Salmi*

de perdreaux aux truffes.” When Wormwood informs Davison that “truffles are so *very* apoplectic,” Davison is perplexed: “[he] turned perfectly white... closed his lips and did not open them again all dinner-time.” It turns out that while Davison may have been able to name the dish (presumably thanks to consulting the menu), he lacks the knowledge of a true gourmand. Bulwer further mocks Davison by adding, “Mr. Davison left the room first, in order to look out the word ‘truffle,’ in the Encyclopædia.” Pelham gives no explicit evidence of his superior knowledge, but from his narratorial standpoint it is clear that he is the true “great gourmand,” at least in terms of knowledge, if not in practice. The ridicule of pretense to gourmandism comes in concert with the satire of Romantic aesthetics. Wormwood, clearly intended as a play on Wordsworth, cannot engage in gourmandism. The implication is that Romantic aesthetics aspires for transcendence of history out of the necessity of Wormwood’s/Wordsworth’s weak digestion.

This early scene establishes the dining room as a pivotal space for the exercise of taste and assignation of status. While the political economist and poet (both Mr.’s, as opposed to *Lord* Vincent and Pelham, directly descended from “one of our oldest earls” [12]) cannot appreciate truffles—the pinnacle of French taste—the two gentlemen assert their superiority through practiced silence. And the reader who understands the joke against Davison, aligns himself with Pelham’s (and Bulwer’s) stance of greater knowledge. The bourgeois reader’s identification with Pelham is ultimately misguided. Pelham’s disdain for the bourgeoisification of gourmandism undermines the middle class assumption of gastronomical expertise. If the novel attempts to establish Pelham as a man pleasure with a sense of civic responsibility⁹—thereby combining aristocratic and bourgeois values—it still maintains the rejection of middle class gourmandism.

Bulwer interrogates middle-class attempts at finery frequently during Pelham's trip to France. One of their first meals occurs at Véry's restaurant at the Palais Royal, one of the premiere spots for English tourists in post-revolutionary France.¹⁰ After eating there in 1814, Colonel Peter Hawker wrote, "To have dined here is to have seen one of the 'lions' of Paris." He also notes that "the bill of fare was about the size of a newspaper, and the whole place seemed to be a temple of unbounded luxury" (128). Returning again in 1828, Hawker declared: "Véry's (in the Palais Royal) [has] now become the best restaurateur's in Paris. Formerly I thought it about the third best" (337). When Pelham and Lord Vincent sample the fare in that same year, they make a different assessment. As they leave, Vincent quotes *Hamlet*, deeming Véry's "'Weary, stale, and unprofitable!'" (29). The responsibility for its failure is heaped squarely on the shoulders of visitors like Colonel Peter Hawker. According to Pelham, with all the middle class Englishmen flocking to French restaurants, their chefs have compromised their quality.

As they arrive, Pelham and Vincent notice that Véry's is "crowded to excess." Vincent, punning on the restaurateur's name, deems the company "'A very low set!'" Pelham concurs in his narration, similarly diagnosing the English clientele: "There was, indeed, a motley congregation; country esquires; extracts from the universities; half-pay officers; city clerks in frogged coats and mustachios; two or three of a better looking description, but in reality half-swindlers, half gentlemen" (28). Although this last assessment applies to the group as a whole, Pelham would probably as easily apply it to individuals; that is, the half-pay officers and city clerks are each part swindler, part gentleman. It is not only the blending of types gathered in one place that offends, but also

the blending of lowness and sophistication in each individual—precisely the characteristics that Pelham sees in the bourgeoisie.

In the restaurant, the members of the “low set” reveal themselves through their food choices. Pelham and Vincent overhear one of the nearby Englishmen ordering: “*Donnez-nous une sole frite pour un, et des pommes de terre pour trois!*” Although the man has enough sophistication to order in French, Vincent ridicules his selection. Vincent compares preferring “fried soles and potatoes to the various delicacies they can command here” to one who might “by the same perversion, prefer Bloomfield’s poems to Byron’s.” He claims, “Delicate taste depends solely upon the physical construction; and a man who has it not in cookery, must want it in literature.” If taste is a matter of physiology, this implies that the nouveau riche can feign it, but never truly exercise it as well as an aristocrat like Lord Vincent. As Hook suggests, the indefinable remnant of class distinction remains, even as behaviors change. To reinforce the point, Vincent claims that such a man “might be an admirable critic upon ‘Cobbett’s Register,’ or ‘Every Man his own brewer,’” but his taste in literature and in food will never transcend its low origins (28).¹¹ So while gastronomers envision the restaurant as a space for the democratic production of gustatory judgments (through a “Tasting Jury” or “Committee of Taste”), Lord Vincent views it as a way to distinguish the pretenders from the genuine gentlemen.¹²

Lord Vincent’s ridicule of middle class gourmandism could be read satirically, yet in the rest of the scene Pelham—and implicitly, Bulwer—reinforces Vincent’s position. In contrast to the request for fried sole, Vincent begins with oysters from Belgium, and defers the rest of their decisions until they deliberate further (“*deliberare utilia mora*

utilissima est” [To deliberate on useful things is the most useful delay]). The dinner disappoints, however; Véry is “no longer the prince of restaurateurs,” thanks to “the low English who have flocked thither.” Pelham continues to excoriate his countrymen for ruining the restaurant with their bad taste:

What waiter—what cook *can* possibly respect men who take no soup, and begin with a *rôti*; who know neither what is good nor what is bad; who eat *rognons* at dinner instead of at breakfast, and fall into raptures over *sauce Robert* and *pieds de cochon*; who cannot tell, at the first taste, whether the *beaune* is *première qualite*, or the *fricasee* made of yesterday’s chicken; who suffer in the stomach after a *champignon*, and die with indigestion of a *truffle*? (28).

In the process of assigning blame to visitors like Colonel Hawker, Pelham asserts his superior knowledge. He understands the proper practices of the table (taking soup before a roast, etc.), and can also meet gustatory challenges with the requisite intestinal fortitude. The final reference to the truffle brings us back to Mr. Davison, who served as the book’s first example of middle-class food ignorance. While middle-class readers of the book might learn to order soup, Pelham and Vincent both assert that such knowledge will fail to change their “physical construction.” This first restaurant scene recognizes changes in middle-class food culture only to reassert upper class control of the discourse. Bulwer asserts, through Pelham, the upper class superiority in gourmandism throughout the novel.¹³

While Pelham’s first dinner in France is corrupted by the English, his experience at Rocher’s remains pristine in his mind.¹⁴ In a Wordsworthian reverie, Pelham remarks how the “blissful recollections of that dinner” flood upon his “delighted remembrance,” and how his present situation while writing (“digesting with many a throe the iron thews of a British beefsteak”) contrasts with the “grateful apparitions of *Escallopes de Saumon*

and *Laitances de Carpes*.” This contrast between pleasure and work, French and English, past and present, Victorian and Romantic, is typified in his most treasured memory, that of foie gras:

And thou, most beautiful of all—thou evening star of *entremets*—thou that delightest in truffles, and gloriest in a dark cloud of sauces—exquisite *foie gras*!—Have I forgotten thee? Do I not, on the contrary, see thee—smell thee—taste thee—and almost die with rapture of thy possession? What, though the goose of which thou art a part, has, indeed, been roasted alive by a slow fire in order to increase thy divine proportions—yet has not our *Almanach*—the *Almanach des Gourmands*—truly declared the goose rejoiced amid all her tortures—because of the glory that awaited her? Did she not, in prophetic vision, behold her enlarged and ennobled *foie* dilate into *pâtes* and steam into *sautés*—the companion of truffles—the glory of dishes—the delight—the treasure—the transport of gourmands! O, exalted among birds—apotheosized goose, did not thy heart exult even when thy liver parched and swelled within thee, from that most agonizing death; and didst thou not, like the Indian at the stake, triumph in the very torments which alone could render thee illustrious?” (48-9).

This designedly overwrought passage combines all the elements of the gourmand’s philosophy of taste. Eating is not merely a material process, but a kind of divine “possession.” All the senses, as well as the intellect, come together to structure the experience. Pelham also asserts a moral superiority. He approves of the practice described (roasting a goose alive in order to extract the fatty liver in its best condition) because of the justification supplied by Grimod.¹⁵ Yet, in the context of the earlier passages affirming Pelham’s class superiority, his acceptance of gourmandism comes with the rejection of inclusivity. The gastronomic reverie of the experience at Rocher’s depends on the absence of middle-class gourmands, who Pelham believes corrupt advances in taste.

Bulwer’s argument for the book’s usefulness is that Pelham learns to become a man of pleasure united with a sense of civic responsibility. Yet his attitudes to food never

acquire the middle class values that underpin his dedication to social reform. In this sense, *Pelham* marks a pivotal moment in the discourse of gastronomy. Whereas in the Romantic discourse of gastronomy food shapes articulations of middle-class aesthetics, the silver fork approach to food elides its importance to middle class values, and instead returns gastronomy to the aristocracy. While a decade before, William Kitchiner had sought to democratize the practice of good eating, food now fails to support articulations of bourgeois identity. Any attempt at middle-class gourmandism gets denominated snobbery and rendered powerless. In Bulwer's formulation of food culture, the aristocracy retains its control over food discourse while simultaneously co-opting the social values which constituted the middle-class gastronomy of the Romantics.

Pelham's civic responsibility takes shape in his campaign for political office. In the process of defining his political life, Pelham also reasserts his dedication to guarding the upper-class control of gastronomy. His first act of campaigning is to call on "a clergyman of good family" and his wife, who both "valued themselves upon being '*genteel*.'" He comes upon them while they are dining, which horrifies the young gourmand. The domestic scene is incompatible with his gastronomic desires, but necessary for his political aspirations. He must accept the former, if only to secure the latter. The description of the scene reveals Pelham's disgust, but it also corresponds to his vision of the Christ-like, "apotheosized goose." The husband and wife are serving "blackberry pudding" ("some ineffable trash," according to Pelham), veal and potatoes to their children, but it too is lodged in divine terms:

The father himself was carving for the little group, with a napkin stuffed into the top button-hole of his waistcoat, and the mother, with a long bib, plentifully bespattered with congealing gravy, and the nectarian liquor of the 'blackberry pudding,' was sitting, with a sort of presiding

complacency on a high stool, like Juno of Olympus, enjoying rather than stilling the confused hubbub of the little domestic deities, who ate, clattered, spattered, and squabbled around her” (76).

Pelham’s disdain comes across clearly, yet at the same time this scene is not entirely “uncivilized.” The father and mother, depicted sarcastically as Zeus and Juno, oversee the meal attended by “domestic deities.” Despite the “din and confusion,” the divine comparison lends a kind of order to the proceedings. It is perhaps because of its aping of a sophisticated meal that Pelham finds it so deplorable. Ultimately the pagan ritual of a middle class meal gets trumped by Pelham’s preference for the Christian sacrifice of a goose roasted alive. Nonetheless, he charms the family (““Cold veal; ah! ah! nothing I like so much”” [77]), and by the end of the next chapter has gained his seat. The end of social action comes about through the tacit acceptance of middle-class gourmandism. But while he indulges the family’s aspirations to “gentility,” ultimately Pelham asserts that gastronomy belongs to the upper class.

While Bulwer’s revision of gastronomy does not often intersect with his reading of Romanticism, two later silver fork novels show similar treatments of food culture enable a revision of Romantic aesthetics.¹⁶ Catherine Gore’s *Cecil; or, Adventures of a Coxcomb* (1841), uses the celebrity of Byron to fuel her narrative. The eponymous narrator is a Juanesque Byronic hero. He also befriends Byron in the course of his adventures, and claims credit for the story of Haidee and Juan, among other things. An important part of Cecil’s character emerges from Byron’s notion of the relationship between materiality and aesthetics. In particular, Gore interrogates the use of women as objects of ethereal beauty through Cecil’s horror of women eating. While in Germany, Cecil briefly falls in love with Wilhelmina, the wife of a local magistrate. The luster

fades, however, when he watches her eat. She devours her food, even dipping her knife in vinegar and licking it clean. Cecil claims, “I literally shuddered at the unctuousness of lip with which this ethereal being justified her carnivorous propensities” (273). The trespass she commits is not only eliminating Cecil’s lust, but also the negation of aesthetic transcendence. In an overblown, satirical passage, Gore exposes the hypocrisy of this element of Romantic ideology:

...to see the idol of one’s soul fill the lips that Leonardo would have delighted to paint,—lips like the half-open bud of a Boursault rose,—lips that seemed formed only to emit a murmur of tenderness and joy,—the plaint of Margaret,—the song of Thekla,—to see those lips dilate to receive a vile, circumferential slice of Braunsweiger Bratwurst.—Oh! Tommy Moore,—oh! Johannes Secundus,—oh! Lord Strangford!—oh! Camoens!—oh, everybody else who has ever versified upon those ruby portals of the Temple of Beauty,—feel for me! (273).

Wilhelmina’s lips metonymically stand in for the beauty of visual arts, nature, speech, and finally poetry, all of which lose their force when Cecil witnesses the material mouth ingesting a sausage. The body as the basis for aesthetic beauty (in Cecil’s formulation) fails to account for the body’s digestive necessities. The physiology of eating poses a serious challenge to the Romantic union of sensory pleasure and aesthetic transcendence. By satirizing Romantic attempts to bridge this gap, Gore reinforces the notion that Romantic aesthetics remain divorced from materiality and history.

In *Venetia* (1837), D’Israeli structures his work around the mythologies of Byron and Shelley more directly than Gore. He alters the chronology, however, by placing the two poets into the late-eighteenth century. Marmion Herbert, the Shelleyan character, comes of age during the American Revolution, and puts his radical politics into action by fighting for the Americans. Lord Cadurcis, based on Byron, is a generation younger than Marmion, and he too lives out Byron’s biography in a different context. Instead of

waking to find himself famous in 1812, Cadurcis emerges onto the literary scene in the 1780s, amidst the political fervent of the Fox-North Coalition and William Pitt's subsequent rise to power. The culture of eating serves as a tool for D'Israeli to differentiate between the three periods in question: eighteenth century, Romantic, and early-Victorian. In the fourth chapter, Dr. Masham (based on William Wilberforce) visits the Herbert's home at Cherbury and receives a feast. D'Israeli explains how their culinary habits in the 1770s differed from those of his contemporary readers: "Simple as was the usual diet at Cherbury the cook was permitted on Sunday full play to her art, which, in the eighteenth century, indulged in the production of dishes more numerous and substantial than our refined tastes could at present tolerate." The dishes listed, however, do not lack for sophistication. The "battalia pie" that culminates the meal includes pastry statues of "all the once-living forms that were now entombed in that gorgeous sepulchre" (10: 20). The reason why the "refined tastes" of the nineteenth century could not tolerate these dishes results from a perceived difference in national physiology: "The demon dyspepsia had not waved its fell wings over the eighteenth century, and wonderful were the feats then achieved by a country gentleman with the united aid of a good digestion and a good conscience" (20-21). D'Israeli offers this assertion disingenuously, since dyspepsia was no stranger to eighteenth-century stomachs, and was, according to George Cheyne, the affliction most associated with Englishness. While indigestion gained notoriety with the onset of gourmandism, the change in the nineteenth century is the impulse to discipline one's digestion while still seeking gustatory pleasure. Yet by placing Byron and Shelley in this earlier context, D'Israeli erases the indebtedness of Romantic aesthetics to the history of gastronomy.

The eating habits of D'Israeli's Byronic and Shelleyan characters reinforce D'Israeli's revision of food's importance to Romantic aesthetics. Throughout much of the book, Lord Cadurcis's youth gives D'Israeli the opportunity to portray Byronism as childish and weak. Cadurcis dies before he can reach the stage of Byron's career in which he produced *Don Juan* and his other later works, so he remains forever in the mode of *Childe Harold*'s melancholic Byronism. D'Israeli has particular fun showing Cadurcis as an insolent boy with an overbearing mother. The young lord is "silent," "sulky," "sullen," and "curls his lip," all elements of Byron's melancholy heroes (10: 31-2). Yet the Byronic brooding appears ludicrous in the context—his unhappiness stems from Mrs. Cadurcis prodding him to behave, not from some hidden passion or dark secret. His temper tantrum culminates in the refusal to eat. A fundamental aspect of Byron's dietary performances, which were in turn crucial to his conception of material aesthetics, become in the context of a youthful quarrel with his mother, mere acting out.

In addition to the refusal to eat other elements of Byronic eating appear later. Twice D'Israeli relays the famous anecdote about Byron dining on biscuits and soda water. In D'Israeli's novelistic retelling, however, the event takes place not at Samuel Rogers' home, but at a fictional club (Fanshawe's). Mr. Horace Pole (Walpole) conveys it to Lady Monteagle (Lady Jersey), and Pole is horrified that Cadurcis would forego the food at Fanshawe's, which "is famous for [its] cook" (10: 306). He sardonically quips, "What a thing it is to be a great poet" (278). By committing the act in a club, Cadurcis's eating habits register as a mark of bad taste. Lady Monteagle argues that his diet reflects that he is "all spirit" and does not subsist on "coarse food, like you coarse mortals." Pole counters by adding that Cadurcis "cannot endure a woman to eat at all," which will not

effect Lady Monteaule, since she too is “all spirit” (278-9).¹⁷ Instead of eating as a form of defiance and a manipulation of public perceptions, Cadurcis’s biscuits and soda water become a source of mockery from Pole (and thereby from D’Israeli).

D’Israeli strips away whatever aesthetic import might be gleaned from Cadurcis’s eating habits, which appear as an empty simulacrum of Byron’s. He achieves a similar effect with Shelley’s vegetarianism. Like Byron’s eccentric diet, Shelley’s vegetarianism became closely associated with his poetic legacy. Timothy Morton asserts that Shelley’s vegetarianism comes out of a philosophical and political discourse about the rights of animals, and not only as a medicinal practice. He also shows how nineteenth-century biographies of Shelley use diet to portray him as “a hermit-like poet who rose above material affairs” (*Shelley* 57). In both cases, the linkage between Shelley and vegetarianism engages with political, ideological and aesthetic concerns. In *Venetia*, Marmion Herbert advocates a vegetarian diet, but D’Israeli’s presentation anaesthetizes its force. Toward the novel’s conclusion, Marmion has reunited with his wife and daughter, and Cadurcis has escaped his literary lionhood to live with his adopted family, thereby establishing a solid domestic unit. While the family sits down to breakfast, Marmion observes to Cadurcis that their meals the previous autumn (before Cadurcis joined them) were a picture of Eden: “Every fruit of nature seemed crowded before us. It was indeed a meal for a poet or a painter like Paul Veronese; our grapes, our figs, our peaches, our mountain strawberries, they made a glowing picture” (11: 130). However, this aestheticized version of vegetable diet, which characterizes the “hagiography” that Morton identifies in Shelley’s biographies (58), gives way to their present situation. Marmion explains, “For my part, I have an original prejudice against animal food which I

have never quite overcome.” This version of vegetarianism elides Shelley’s philosophical and moral justifications for his practice. D’Israeli portrays it as a weakness to be “overcome.” Marmion has succeeded in some part, not through a revision of his ethics of eating, but instead through his renewal of domestic happiness. He remarks, “I believe it is only to please Lady Annabel that I have relapsed into the heresy of cutlets” (130-1). Like Marmion’s radical poetics, his dietary beliefs transform in order to accommodate his revived domestic union. D’Israeli’s treatment of Shelley and Byron denies the Romantic aesthetics of eating, and instead affirms the Romantic ideology of aesthetics removed from and transcending the material forces of history. Even though D’Israeli criticizes this ideology in favor of his domesticated aesthetics, he nonetheless acknowledges transcendent aesthetics in the process of revising it.

After Marmion confesses his relapse into meat-eating, Cadurcis admits to “terrible excesses” of eating (“only fish,” though), and asks Lady Annabel if he has “grown fatter” (11: 131). Cadurcis’s cousin arrives at this moment, so Lady Annabel does not respond. This particular incident looks back to a conversation between Marmion and Cadurcis that occurred a few pages before. When the topic of death arises, Cadurcis muses: “What can you make of death? There are those poor fishermen now; there will be a white squall some day, and they will go down... and be food for the very prey they were going to catch; and if you continue living here, you may eat one of your neighbours in the shape of shoal of red mullets” (125). While Cadurcis recognizes the material logic of eating, when the discussion of diet occurs a few pages later, the point disappears. Cadurcis only cares if he has grown fatter from eating fish, and Marmion compromises his vegetarian diet in order to please his wife. In D’Israeli’s recasting of Romanticism,

there can be no union of material and ideal. He attempts to show the domestication of Romanticism, but ultimately insists that Byron and Shelley must be purged. They die in a squall and become fish food themselves. By denying the material aesthetics of Romantic gastronomy, D'Israeli in effect begins the consolidation of the Romantic ideology of transcendence. The aesthetics of eating appears as a foolish attempt to merge materiality and transcendence, which solidifies the notion of Romanticism as an aesthetic theory of transcendence born out of the failure of Romantic eating.

Notes to Chapter VI

¹ Hazlitt's essay is always cited as the source of the genre's name, but an earlier review of *Venetia* in *The Monthly Review* (July 1826) also mentions "silver forks" as one of the genre's distinguishing features: "The author is perpetually assuring us that no body is worthy of notice who wears a coat which is not of a peculiar colour and cut—who does not use silver forks—or who lives in Russell-square" (2: 329). As far as I can tell, Hazlitt did not write this review.

² *Blackwood's*, for example, exposes D'Israeli as a "nobody," a mere cog in Henry Colburn's publishing machine (discussed further below). In *Noctes XXVII* (July 1826), Tickler decries this process, thereby asserting his (and *Maga's*) superior knowledge of the mechanisms of literary production: "The foolish part of the public thus set agoing after Vivian Grey, for example, puff after puff continues to excite fading curiosity, and Colburn, knowing all the while that the writer is an obscure person, for whom nobody cares a straw, chuckles over the temporary sale, and sees the names of distinguished writers opprobriously bandied about by the blackguards of the press" (20: 98). The actual class status of the writers, in this case, matters less than the representations of their status by others.

³ Norbert Elias's point about the last stage of the civilizing process is apposite here. By the early-nineteenth century, manners had been codified for a long enough time that they could be seen as "natural." Hook's inability to naturally accept the manners of civility belies his "under-bred" status. (Hazlitt, "Dandy School" 346). Breeding is a tricky notion here, because it can imply both a natural predisposition, or the result of practices meant to produce particular results (i.e., breeding animals for particular traits). Civility must seem natural for it to be considered genuine, but its provenance has a history of deep construction.

⁴ James Secord charts the deployment of “useful knowledge” as a defining feature of early-nineteenth-century print culture, typified by the “Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge,” established in 1826 (42-76).

⁵ In order to frame this transformation, silver fork writers position themselves in a liminal period of transition, which positioning necessitates the formulation of period distinctions. It was a popular practice during the 1820s and '30s to remark on periodization, often in the form of the “spirit of the age.” Paul Schlicke observes, “Hazlitt’s *The Spirit of the Age* began as a series of essays on ‘Spirits of the Age’ in the *New Monthly Magazine*, and the change from plural to singular suggests a move from discrete portraits of individuals to a more generalized usage, referring to the representativeness of the figures he has chosen to discuss” (833). Other examples of this kind of work include John Stuart Mill’s “The Spirit of the Age” (1831) which describes a phenomenon he found unique to the nineteenth century mind: a consciousness of one’s own era, and of the age being “pregnant with change” (228). Schlicke reads Richard Henry Horne’s *A New Spirit of the Age* (1844) alongside Hazlitt’s work to show how the division between Romantic and Victorian became institutionalized throughout the nineteenth century and into the twentieth.

⁶ Francis Russell Hart draws a genealogy back to the works of Frances Burney and Maria Edgeworth, which are characterized by an “obsessive preoccupation with being in society” (95). Principle among the kinds of knowledge needed to be in society, is the awareness of the codes, moral and manners that constitute fashion. Lauren Gillingham recognizes the concern “with how to *be* in the world,” and adds that “the silver-fork school works simultaneously to resolve the questions of historical action—the problem of how to *act* in the world” (66). Many silver fork novels take place in the arena of political action, and Andrew Elfenbein suggests that Bulwer and Disraeli both used their novels to orchestrate their own political success (specifically in relation to how they situate themselves with respect to Byronism). Similarly, Maria K. Bachman looks at the political and moral “rhetoric of reform” that Bulwer’s *Pelham* seeks to instill in its readers: “*Pelham* works not only to interpellate its dandy hero into a grid of liberal values, but also acts as a relay of social mechanisms of regulation, conscripting and disciplining readers to a new (Victorian) moral order” (181, 167). Bachman’s argument is indebted to J.W. Oakley, who writes: “*Pelham* is not a rejection of dandyism from some (supposed) earnest or serious bourgeois standpoint: it is indicative in the reconstructing of a reformed, liberal, popular, aristocratic order in which a reformed dandyism also figures. As redefined, dandyism takes its place with Romanticism, evangelical Christianity, and Benthamite benevolence as an aspect of a new gentry honor” (51). Bachman differs, however, from Oakley by focusing also on Bulwer’s effect on his middle class readers. That is, the silver fork novel helps spread aristocratic manners of behavior to the bourgeoisie, while also adding middle class values to the gentry. As M.L. Bush describes the process, “the aristocratisation of the bourgeoisie combined with the eventual *embourgeoisement* of the aristocracy” (qtd. in Bachman 181). See also Winifred Hughes for an overview of the social contexts for the silver fork novels’ receptions.

⁷ Mark Parker points out, regarding *Fraser's*: “Articles in *Fraser's* bristle with sallies against Bulwer—at times crudely obvious and at others oblique. Over time, disparagement of Bulwer becomes one of the constituent features of the magazine” (177). The attacks on Bulwer, and the designation of him as “whipping boy,” have their roots in the anxiety over literary power wielded by Colburn. Maginn pleads with the public to “reflect for one moment” and “see the very fallacious, absurd principles on which the Colburn and Bentley school of novel-writing has been based,” namely that “the secret of success is involved in the right use of one grand, cabalistic word—PUFF; ay—PUFF—PUFF—PUFF.” (*Fraser's* 1: 319). This system of puffing was understood as a constituent part of the silver fork genre. Winifred Hughes describes Colburn as “a consummate entrepreneur, who viewed literature entirely as a matter of production and profit.” In order to maximize his profit, “advertizing meant not only explicit promotion of his products but the strategic placing of favorable reviews... His platoon of silver fork novelists routinely reviewed each other's books—even, it was rumored, their own” (345, 346).

⁸ An article in the *Quarterly Review* (“Novels of Fashionable Life” Oct. 1832) echoes the same sentiment, although less virulently than Maginn. And the author also imagines that novels of high society might be made useful, particularly if they consider the effect that the upper classes have on the other classes of society: “The fault lies as much with the subject of these books as with the writers. It may, indeed, be within the capabilities of genius to make the field of fashionable life, such as it is in the day that is passing over us, yield something of romantic interest,—as what topic is there, which by a certain alchemy, may not be turned to account?” (48: 165). Given the lack of any such work that accomplishes this purpose, the reviewer asks, “how is it that the reader does not tire?” The answer puts blame on the public’s desire for knowledge about fashionable society: “To this we fear there is no other answer than that a large number of the ‘reading public’ think it material to them to be informed, after what manner persons of a certain rank and consequence in society demean themselves towards each other in the minutest particulars” (166).

⁹ This is the argument Bulwer makes in his 1840 preface to the novel. Similar readings inform Oakley and Bachman’s analyses.

¹⁰ Spang recognizes that an important part of the rise of the restaurant in France depended upon foreign visitors who came to sample French culinary creations, and then circulated their thoughts through print. She quotes a wide range of Anglo-American reactions to French restaurants in the aftermath of Napoleon’s reign, many of which specifically comment on Véry’s. The actual number of people who visited the restaurant matters less than its function as a cultural signifier: “The Restaurant Véry of the 1820s no more fed thousands of Parisians than the Bastille of the 1780s had held hundreds imprisoned (on July 14, 1789, the crowd had found seven prisoners to free), but their statistical insignificance did not prevent either from becoming a potent symbol” (178).

¹¹ Samuel Child writes in his preface to the aforementioned work, “The author of this small Tract, cannot, therefore, expect to escape his share of obloquy and defamation, for exerting his small abilities to serve the labouring part of mankind, and to render their situations more comfortable, by a considerable reduction in their domestic expenses” (3).

¹² Indeed, Véry’s restaurant was lined with mirrors (as were other restaurants), which enables and emphasizes the element of display inherent to the restaurant space. Spang cites an American visitor who “enjoyed looking at the people reflected in the many splendid mirrors of Véry’s, but [also] hastened to assure her mother that ‘at the same time you are almost as secluded from the rest as in your own home’” (200).

¹³ While it would be a mistake to perfectly equate Pelham’s views with those of the author, Bulwer shows his sympathy with his hero several times. For example, when Pelham dines at another famous restaurant, the Frères Provençaux, He notes that it is “an excellent restaurateur’s, by-the-by, where one gets irreproachable *gibier*, and meets few English.” Coming after the denouncement of his countrymen at Véry’s, the absence of them at Frères Provençaux causally relates to the restaurateur’s success. In an editorial aside, Bulwer notes, however, “Mr. Pelham could not say as much for the *Freres Provencaux* at present!” (42). This note appears as early as the 1836 edition, and in other instances, assigns responsibility specifically to the novel’s popularity: “Since he has been pleased to point it out to the notice of his countrymen, it has become thronged with English, and degenerated in its kitchen” (1844 ed. 136). The editorial apparatus allows for the correspondence of voices between author and character.

¹⁴ That the restaurant closed in 1845 is perhaps one reason why in the later editions Bulwer does not find the occasion to remark on its current state.

¹⁵ As far as I have found, Grimod never recommends the roasting of the goose alive. He does, however, justify the force-feeding of geese in order to swell their livers: “It would be an inhuman torture for it if the idea of its destiny did not offer some consolation, a prospect which allows it to face its sufferings with courage; when it reflects that its own liver, larger than the bird itself, stuffed with truffles and wrapped in pastry, will go to carry the glory of its name throughout Europe, the goose resigns itself to its fate and sheds not a single tear” (qtd. in MacDonogh 183). Bulwer perhaps came across Kitchiner’s account of how to roast a goose alive, in the “Culinary Curiosities” section that concludes the introduction to *The Cook’s Oracle*. Kitchiner cites a process (“How to Roast a Goose Alive”) described in Johannes Wecker’s *Secrets of Nature*. The *London’s* review of Kitchiner’s book mentions this description and claims, “We must say it out-horrors all the horrors we ever read of” (4: 434).

¹⁶ Elfenbein argues that *Pelham* narrates the process of Bulwer purging the dangerous aspects of Byronism (sexual and political radicalism), and replacing them with conventional values. The novel’s Byronic character, Sir Reginald Glanville, dies by the end of the novel, and Pelham’s attraction to the dangerous Glanville gets rerouted into a suitable form by marrying Ellen Glanville, Reginald’s sister. Elfenbein summarizes,

“*Pelham* was an important start [to Bulwer’s own political career] because it transformed the rumors about Byron’s relations with men into an allegory about the growth of a new breed of aristocrat responsive to a range of concerns wider than that of the Byronic Glanville” (223). In this sense, Bulwer’s refusal of middle-class gourmandism (as another aspect of his “new breed of aristocrat”) comes in concert with his rejection of Byronism.

¹⁷ D’Israeli abstracts this information about Byron’s eating habits based on a letter to Lady Melbourne, in which Byron opines, “a woman should never be seen eating or drinking, unless it be *lobster sallad & Champagne*, the only truly feminine & becoming viands” (BLJ II, 208). The narrator of *Don Juan* also claims, “I am fond of fire and crickets and all that, / A lobster salad and champagne and chat” (1: 135). D’Israeli’s Cadurcis says this line at dinner, which takes it out of the poetic context, and strips the significance from it. Cadurcis at that moment makes an excuse for eating potatoes and vinegar the day before, and suggests returning to the club: “I was sorry that I could not play my part [i.e. eat gluttonously]; but I have led rather a raking life lately. We must go and dine with him again” (10: 309).

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