

Steak or Salad? Food, Gender and the Victorian Imagination

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ABSTRACT: The ambition of this essay is to examine the feedback loop that existed (and still exists?) between the imagined relationship of food to femininity and masculinity, and their real-world impact on the male and female appetite. I focus on the nineteenth-century urban bourgeoisie since this was the class that set the tenor for contemporary conversations on diet and decorum. It was the middle class that the authors and the period's mass media all targeted, whether in the form of magazines, behaviour manuals, popularizing medical texts or actual fiction. I argue that the gendered reality of subsequent American twentieth-century food culture is the outcome of this permeable membrane between imagination and reality, with decidedly real-world consequences.

The trouble with fantasy is that it has real-world implications. The V2 rocket and moon-landing both had to be imagined before they could be realized. On a more quotidian level, the perfect meal, the ideal body needs models that exist in the mind before their reification stains tablecloths or compresses abdomens. And imagined ideals affect behaviour. Societies invent performative paradigms which are then imposed on flesh-and-blood women and men. But that's only the first step, once these behaviours are normalized they feed back into the model and, sooner or later they are essentialized: men are defined by brawn and aggression – throw them red meat and watch them brawl; women are sensitive and dainty – a cup of tea and a plateful of gossip will satisfy their appetites.

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As anthropologist Mary Douglas, among others, has noted that belief and behaviour are ineluctably joined.¹ Or, as Carole M. Counihan has succinctly summarized when she links food to society, 'Class, caste, race, and gender hierarchies are maintained,

in part, through differential control over and access to food. One's place in the social system is revealed by what, how much, and with whom one eats.² This is as true of anthropologists' beloved tribal societies as it of the bourgeois milieu, perhaps even more so. In the Victorian era, middle-class gendered bodies supposedly resulted in gendered behaviour, which in turn led to gendered foods and gendered dining – tea rooms for ladies, men's clubs for gentlemen – and even the gendered distribution of pathologies – eating disorders among women and cardiovascular disease in men.

Body and Mind

The nineteenth-century conception of the disparate relationship of mind and body in men and women can be traced to the Enlightenment, when supposedly empirical explorations of sex differences yielded decidedly imaginative conclusions. Observations of socially constructed behaviour led to essentializing deductions. Thus women, for example, had an innate sweet tooth because they were seen to take sugar in their tea.

It's not as if awareness of physical distinctions between sexes or sexism didn't exist in pre-Enlightenment Europe. Even in medicine, Galenic dietary prescriptions were based, in part, on a patient's sex. Nonetheless in Christian Europe, the linkage between mind and soul was preeminent over the physical. This changed as eighteenth-century thinkers began to link women's bodies to their ability to act and think. While intellectual activity might have previously been seen as a distraction from their domestic duties now it was seen as a deviation from their biological nature.³ Behaviour guides make this clear in both England and France, perhaps most influentially in Rousseau's *Emile*, where the famed philosophe laid out in meticulous detail the rules for the raising of boys and (in much lesser detail) those for girls.⁴

Even as the eighteenth century's construct of a gendered linkage between mind and body was gaining steam among the intelligentsia, the mechanisms and gears industrial revolution were giving rise to a new urban class, which had its own reasons to invent a new feminine paradigm. The result was a new bourgeois domesticity, something that would be manifested in reimagined lifestyles, architecture, costume and foodways. This essentially economic and class transformation needed some sort of moral justification, something that the sermonizers of the day were more than happy to provide.

One such public-spirited scribbler was Thomas Gisborne (1758–1846) a Cambridge-educated Anglican priest and anti-slavery activist who weighed in on the roles of men and women at the close of the seventeen-hundreds. In a text that would echo throughout the coming century on both sides of the Atlantic, he neatly summarizes the roles open to women (at least those of 'higher or...middle classes of society'), whose influence 'is like the dew of heaven which descends at all seasons, returns after short intervals, and permanently nourishes every herb of the field'. This moistening effect was to take the following forms:

First, in contributing daily and hourly to the comfort of husbands, of parents, of brothers and sisters, and of other relations, connections, and friends, in the intercourse of domestic life, under every vicissitude of sickness and health, of joy and affliction.

Secondly, in forming and improving the general manners, dispositions, and conduct of the other sex, by society and example.

Thirdly, in modelling the human mind during the early stages of its growth, and fixing, while it is yet ductile, its growing principles of action; children of each sex being, in general, under maternal tuition during their childhood, and girls until they become women.⁵

This virtually doctrinal view of womanhood was periodically tweaked to suit circumstances. In the newly independent colonies, a variant that historian Linda Kerber has dubbed ‘Republican Motherhood’, expected women to feed their offspring with republican virtue as much as wholesome victuals.⁶ Late in the century, the motherly vocation of native-born women’s came with a nativist component when some New Englanders feared for the survival of their ‘race’. The danger was especially severe warned Massachusetts doctor N. Allen in an 1882 panegyric among the members of ‘cultivated and refined society’, who apparently considered the lives of couples with multiple children as ‘vulgar and sensual’. According to the good doctor, the decline of good housekeeping was the culprit here, since, ‘Economy, neatness, order and good cooking are indispensable requisites to the health and happiness of a family’.⁷

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Spiritual, or at least moral, sustenance came with the physical kind. Nurturing the next generation necessarily involved feeding it. Citing Caroline Bynum, Susan Bordo argues that even while home cooking was already a gendered activity in the European Middle Ages it wasn’t until ‘the industrial era, with its idealization of the domestic arena as a place of nurture and comfort for men and children, that feeding others acquire the extended emotional meaning it has today’.⁸ Women were repeatedly enjoined (predominantly by male experts) on how to feed their children, and to a lesser degree their husbands and fathers. Needless to say, a connection between diet and health is hardly spurious, even if we find much of nineteenth-century dietary advice risible. There was, however, an almost equal emphasis on the moral consequences of diet. Thus, a leitmotif of the mid-eighteen hundreds, in particular, was that certain foods – highly spiced dishes or intoxicants for example – would lead to sexual excitement, and inevitably masturbation, the latter an activity deemed not only sinful but actually medically hazardous.⁹ Mothers needed to be extra careful when feeding adolescent daughters. But whatever the specifics of the dietary advice, everyone insisted that feeding the family (or at least supervising the food preparation in affluent households) was a woman’s job. As a result, women, not men,

became knowledgeable, sometimes obsessively so, about nutrition, especially the nutrition of others. And, arguably, remain so to this day.

Of course, before a young woman could graduate to domestic goddess, she had to procure a suitable suitor and, despite the advice of innumerable advice writers to the contrary, 'a pretty face, a smart bonnet [and] a dashing dress' has never been incidental to the mating dance.¹⁰ The impact that the sight of a slim waist and an alluring décolletage had on young men was not lost on contemporary commentators even as they decried the effect.¹¹ Moreover, fashion became not merely a matter of showy display to attract the male of the species, it served, post factum, to validate the male's status in society. As Thorstein Veblen convincingly argued about his compeers, women's costume was specifically designed to make it as impractical as possible, to make it clear that she was exempt 'from personal contact with industrial processes of any kind'. If the yards of drapery did not make this abundantly obvious, the corseted waist made it clear any exertion was potentially perilous.¹² Not incidentally so too was a hearty appetite. The imagined, perfect female body as depicted in fashion plates throughout most of the nineteenth century had to contend with actual stomachs, hips and waists.¹³ Even when women weren't purposefully starving to fit into fashionable dresses they could hardly consume more than a couple of dainty morsels before experiencing discomfort. The corsets were only part of the problem. Young women, especially in any social gatherings, were constantly under surveillance, not merely from libidinous men but from other women seeking to police their behaviour.

274 Contemporary authorities were fully aware of this when they condemned young women who starved themselves due to class pressures. Jerome V. C. Smith, a prolific author, professor at New York Medical College (and one-time mayor of Boston!) was especially aghast at the fashionable abstemious of the socially ambitious, roundly condemning, 'Food most approved and that which carries with it the endorsement of maneuvering mothers anxiously looking forward to the establishment of their children in commanding social positions, even if the intended husband is a baboon, [that] is a slice of dry toast, weak black tea, and an occasional teaspoonful of sweetmeats.'¹⁴ How much, if any, of this advice was followed is an open question. Women – and they were the primary audience of advice manuals as they are today – received a variety of contradictory information: from fashion magazines, cookbooks, novels, lifestyle manual as well as medical authorities. Was at least part of the nervous disorder so noted among affluent women caused by guilt and confusion about food itself?

If today provides any guide, young women likely followed the admonitions of dietary authorities fitfully and incompletely. A more accurate snapshot of actual behaviour can likely be found in the diet doctor's complaints. Mainly that young women, in particular, were more concerned with appearance than health. You could hardly blame them, though, when every other message insisted that their only proper role was to get married and beget children. Looks were the paramount first step and there was an odd sort of congruence between how women should look and what they should eat.

Dainty Dishes

Perhaps the Victorian age's favourite adjective, at least when referring to women, was 'dainty.' The word was so ubiquitous that some commentators even tired of it. 'At one time I used to be rather fond of the word "dainty,"' wrote one griper in *The Irish Monthly* at the close of the century (the word knew no borders), 'and I still greatly admire the elegant quality it expresses. But the word itself has been quite spoiled to me by the indiscriminate use made of it by one of my acquaintance who applied it to every possible purpose. Not content with talking of dainty dishes, dainty manners, dainty fare, dainty dress, and dainty tastes she qualifies scenery, children, clouds, neighbourhood, furniture, and many things besides by her favourite adjective'.¹⁵ That said, daintiness was especially sought for in women's victuals and the more delicate the lady's constitution the daintier the fare. In a satirical novel *The Female Sufferer; Or, Chapters from Life's Comedy* (1883), Augustus Hoppin depicts an indolent upper-class invalid who lives on little more than 'tidbits of fruit and Jelly', 'a snip of a role', 'a wren's leg on toast', though she might occasionally become ravenous for 'dainty' items such as wedding cake, peaches and cream and freshly cut melon – all this while carrying on a perpetual social life.¹⁶ Dozens of cookbooks published in the latter part of the century are dedicated to 'dainty dishes'.¹⁷ Dainty didn't always mean light and delicate – as we might use the word – often it was just a synonym for fancy, but more often it did. And suffice it to say that what women liked, men were supposed to disdain. Serve them plain, solid fare without the fripperies that decorated the luncheon table.¹⁸

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Dainty dishes were often recommended for lunch, which, along with afternoon tea, had become a de facto homosocial meal by the middle of the nineteenth century. As D.M. Morell pointed out in the food-centered ladies' magazine *Table Talk*, 'The midday meal especially in cities belongs to the ladies and children of the household as few businessmen find it possible to lunch en famille'.¹⁹ Nineteenth-century mealtime had become ever more segregated as the distance between men's workplaces and homes grew ever more distant. The family might have breakfast together but men would now eat the formerly main meal of the day, dinner, away. Men generally sought out a chop house or other informal restaurant for their mid-day meal while genteel women took lunch in the modest privacy of their homes at mid-century and, increasingly, at gender-specific 'tea rooms' and 'lunch rooms' as the century waned.²⁰ At home, the lady was permitted a certain latitude in dress 'since the masculine element is almost invariably lacking at that hour'. If she had spent the morning shopping, streetwear was permissible or perhaps a tea gown if the bodice of the former proved too snug. The meal itself was equally informal. A selection of 'dainty nourishing dishes' from the previous night's supper might prove sufficient.²¹ The detail about the clothing is worth noting; women's appetites were literally restricted when in the presence of men. Lord Byron's probably apocryphal quip that 'a woman should never be seen eating or drinking, unless it be lobster salad and champagne, the only truly feminine and becoming

viands' was repeated often enough (often with the second clause omitted).²² Most women were more catholic in their tastes. Mary Alice Brown, in her *Dainty Dining*, has a long list of luncheon menus that do, in fact, feature, lobster with some regularity, mostly in the form of lobster Newberg and lobster cutlets and croquettes. However, chicken, veal, sweetbreads and fish are popular, as are salads, though sandwiches are relatively few. Except for the occasional inclusion of lamb chops, there is zero red meat in evidence. What there are in superabundance are sweets: ices, ice creams, sherberts, cakes, tarts, marshmallows, jellies, sweetmeats (here meaning candy), even that new-fangled invention, chocolate brownies.²³

If luncheon was heavy on the sugar, the other female-centric meal offered little else. Tea the meal, as opposed to just the beverage, went through several transmutations prior to its widespread adoption by polite society. Originally formulated in eighteenth-century Britain where cups of tea really were the focus, the beverage-focused concept was exported to the continent as a relatively informal elite get-together in the early years of the following century. As tea and sugar became increasingly cheap and ubiquitous a second wave of tea enthusiasm in the Victorian era followed eventually resulting in the 'afternoon tea' today's visitors to London's posh hotel tea rooms might still recognize.

Whereas, by the mid-eighteen hundreds, in Britain, just about everyone drank tea, in the United States both the beverage and the meal named after it had specific class and gender associations. The fact of the matter is that even American women weren't especially fond of the Asian beverage. Unlike in Britain, the tea table might feature coffee, hot chocolate, lemonade and iced tea, or even champagne and sherry depending on the season and the attendees' social set. Occasionally a clear broth might be offered. There were typically sandwiches and a variety of cakes, tarts and other sweet nibbles.²⁴ Hotel and department store teas were even more sweet-centric. A 1914 menu at the Waldorf-Astoria Tea Rooms offered seven kinds of sandwiches, twenty-one pastries and more than a score of ice creams and ices.²⁵

The opinion that women had a predilection for sweet foods was a Western cultural trope since at least the 1700's when Rousseau, in his pedagogic manual, *Emile*, critiqued Sophie, the book's supporting player, for her supposedly innate affection for dessert.²⁶ A century later, the female tooth is invoked so often in period literature that it almost seems a peculiarity of Victorian women's anatomy: 'Women, as a broad and general fact, it may be said, comparatively with men, care very little for eating,' pronounced a columnist in an early issue of *Harper's Bazaar*:

Their noted "sweet tooth" would prove this if there were nothing else; for where rich and hearty food is desired and eaten, candies and confections come in merely as a finishing *bonne bouche*, if at all, and, taken before hearty food, destroy all desire for it, anyway. Women, left to themselves, and without the necessity of preserving their health by a different regimen being constantly held up before them, would really have little other eating than bread and tea, with an occasional sweetmeat or a tart.²⁷

Medical authorities typically ascribed women's appetites to a different part of the anatomy, mainly their reproductive organs. Yale obstetrician Stephen G. Hubbard addressing the 1870 meeting of a medical society, explained that 'given the sympathies with every other part of the female organism', it is 'as if the Almighty, in creating the female sex, *had taken the uterus and built up a woman around it*'.²⁸ Pretty much any ailment could be traced to uterine distress, from neuralgia to consumption, from constipation to breast cancer.²⁹ Among other medical interventions diet also had to be adjusted to nourish the womb-dominated body and mind. Again, a dainty diet was imagined as the ideal. Stimulating foods were especially prone to overtax women's sensitive nervous systems, especially spiced dishes ('highly seasoned concentrated aliment'), alcoholic beverages, and red meat or at least meat to excess. New York-based Jerome V. C. Smith explained in 1875 how 'Women with us consume too much meat.... Neither the severity of the [New England] climate nor the necessities of their systems require it in large quantities'. He recommended that 'Farinaceous articles including an abundance of fruit fresh cooked or preserved should be provided in all well-regulated families especially where there are female children. Eggs and fish are proper and avoiding pork always. Mutton is the most wholesome next to good beef'.³⁰ The latter presumably in dainty preparations. Other authorities also contraindicated coffee and tea for being too stimulating and even sweets were to be avoided.

Manly Appetites

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Seemingly men, unless they were paid to do so, didn't fret much about food. That was, after all, a woman's job and, thus, unmanly by definition. And increasingly what nineteenth-century men did fret about was about manliness. The sedentary urban existence of factory accountants and bank managers wasn't likely to engender a society of virile warriors. An earlier, aristocratic definition of manhood seemed in crisis and all the facial hair grown by the Victorians couldn't quite disguise this. Some men found an antidote in sport, whether in boxing, or violent team sports such as rugby at British public schools or the copycat American football at Ivy League universities.³¹ In America, the rough and tumble western frontier was supposed to be a cure for the dyspepsia that plagued the industrial east.³² War and hunting were also options. Or you could roll these last three into one as Theodore Roosevelt did when he ran for New York City mayor as 'the cowboy of the Dakotas', before embarking on a career that included military stunts in Cuba and cynegetic pursuits even further abroad.³³

Masculine men of action required a suitable diet that distinguished them from the feminized epicureans of urban civilization. This imagined male-female duality in diet was best expressed in the semiotic resonance of meat. A character in one of Stanley J. Weyman stories summarized the opposition evident on his plate: 'You have there the manly beef and the feminine peas, so young, so tender!' The inverse was true as well. Women were seen a

disagreeably masculine if they ceased to resemble, or relish those sweet peas. When women craved flesh, especially bloody, roasted flesh, it wasn't merely unseemly, it broke down the 'natural' order of society. George Eliot references this sort of gendered revulsion in a scene in her 1876 novel *Daniel Deronda*, where a group of gentlemen is dining apart, as was the custom, after an afternoon of genteel archery competition. The course of conversation turns to women's appetites. One of the gathered men recalls a story 'about the epicurism of the ladies, who had somehow been reported to show a revolting masculine judgement in venison, even asking for the fat – a proof of the frightful rate at which corruption might go on in women, but for severe social restraint'.³⁴ Here, the unfeminine semiotics of venison is also complicated factors related to class and caste. Beef was a much more commonplace signifier.

In Britain, in particular, beef had long been the most virile of aliments. (A belief later echoed on the other side of the Atlantic.) The British veneration of bovine flesh is perhaps best depicted in William Hogarth's painting *O the Roast Beef of Old England*, where a side of beef, destined for an English inn, takes centre stage even as a weakling Frenchman cowers in the wings.³⁵ The painting's title references Henry Fielding's popular 1730s ditty that glorified the brawny impact of Albion's meaty appetites, in contrast to tastes in 'effeminate Italy, France and Spain' for 'nice dainties'.³⁶ The Briton's diet is often linked to his martial prowess. Phillip Stanhope (Lord Chesterfield), a prolific Georgian letter writer asserted that 'An Englishman...thinks himself equal to beating three Frenchmen. We [Britons] bragging of their boxing, of their meat and ale, of all that can support the force and energy of their virile will. Roast beef and beer make stronger arms than cold water and frogs'.³⁷ William Thackeray echoes this sentiment a half-century later in an ode to a rib roast: 'Fancy a hundred thousand Englishmen, after a meal of stalwart beef ribs, encountering a hundred thousand Frenchmen who had partaken of a trifling collation of soup, turnips, carrots, onions and Gruyère cheese. Would it be manly to engage at such odds? I say no'.³⁸

If war wasn't in the offing, exercise would have to do. For would-be sporty types, nineteenth-century trainers recommended a diet of broiled, bloody beef or mutton steaks and strong ale – avoiding vegetables at all costs.³⁹ This advice is reprised over and over on both sides of the Atlantic. One surprising opiner on the topic is Walt Whitman who, under the pseudonym Mose Velsor wrote a series of advice columns for the *New York Atlas*. 'The man in training,' the famed poet writes:

if he be of too full habit, too heavy, must be restricted to a moderate diet, including, for a while, only one substantial meal of meat a-day... Usually the breakfast, for a hearty man, might consist in a plate of fresh rare lean meat, without fat or gravy, a slice or chunk of bread, and, if desired, a cup of tea, which must be left till the last [and] dinner should consist of a good plate of fresh meat, (rare lean beef, broiled or roast, is best) with as few outside condiments as possible.

Whether he genuinely believed in it or not, this paleo diet seemed no more than a pipe dream as Whitman admits, sniffing that ‘Not one out of fifty eats a really wholesome, manly substantial dinner’. Though he doesn’t quite put it in those words, his real target seems to be all the dainty, feminine food eaten by most Americans:

In our view, if nine-tenths of all the various culinary preparations and combinations, vegetables, pastry, soups, stews, sweets, baked dishes, salads, things fried in grease, and all the vast array of confections, creams, pies, jellies, &c., were utterly swept aside from the habitual eating of the people, and a simple meat diet substituted in their place – we will be candid about it, and say in plain words, an almost exclusive meat diet – the result would be greatly, very greatly, in favor of that noble-bodied, pure-blooded, and superior race we have had a leaning toward, in these articles of ours.⁴⁰

As the century progressed, meat-eating didn’t merely separate men from women, it also came to denote a racialized virility. This discourse took on a more scientific veneer when medical-sounding ‘protein’ replaced ‘meat’ as the manliest of foodstuffs. In a study of potential recruits for the Raj, British doctors evaluated data on ‘the different tribes and races of India’, and concluded that ‘a high level of protein interchange in the body [is] accompanied by a high development of physique and manly qualities; whilst under the opposite conditions poor physique and a cringing effeminate disposition is all that can be expected.’⁴¹ In America, Maine Senator James Blaine made a not dissimilar point – if less scientifically framed – when he explained the negative impact of permitting Chinese workers, since if you work ‘a man who must have beef and bread’ (i.e. native-born American) next to man ‘who can live on rice’ you will inevitably degrade the American down to the standard of the Chinaman.

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Not everyone was convinced that meat and Western manhood were necessarily congruent. In fact, there was a distinct and powerful countercurrent to the paradigm of the carnivorous male exemplified in vegetarian diets promoted by Sylvester Graham, his acolyte John Harvey Kellogg, and others.⁴² Yet vegetarianism has never really caught on in America. While plenty of real men did, in fact, subject themselves to Dr. Kellogg’s regimen at the Battle Creek Sanatorium (Roald Amundsen, Johnny Weismuller, John D. Rockefeller, and even Theodore Roosevelt all made guest appearances) it appears that most reverted to the carnivorous norm.

The meat-eating man stereotype was certainly alive and well in the nineteen thirties. In *Feeding Father* (1939), a cookbook focused on foods men were supposed to like, author Eleanor Howe summarizes the gendered culinary zeitgeist:

Just how does [sic] a man's food preferences differ from those of women? Well, for one thing, a man wants more substantial, plainer food. He likes a meal to be composed of only a few dishes, but he wants those to be tasty, full of flavor and perfectly cooked. He likes, also, to know what he is eating, he wants to be able to recognize each main ingredient in its familiar form. In a word, fancy cooking is wasted on the average man but good cooking is appreciated to the limit!⁴³

By now 'dainty', the adjective, had mostly gone of out style, but men were still supposed to scorn 'fancy cooking'. Even today, meat-eating remains gendered. Multiple studies have shown that vegetarianism and, even more, veganism are much more popular among women than men in the West, and society continues to see a carnivorous diet as more virile than the alternative. Today men still eat steak and women eat salad.

Conclusion

It's important to note that gender is, or was, (even in the nineteenth century, even among the bourgeoisie) hardly the only determinant directing people's dietary choices. Ethnicity, religion, personal preference, convenience, marketing and, above all, availability have guided what the middle classes have been eating ever since they attained cultural dominance some two hundred years back. Moreover, gender is less of a determinant than it used to be in a society where women's roles are less tied up with domesticity and food preparation now that the culinary industrial complex has taken over most food preparation. This is not to say that society doesn't still expect women to be the primary nurturers, as the Covid pandemic has amply demonstrated.

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Nonetheless, food preferences remain gendered. I'd argue that our dietary choices are the cumulation of at least two centuries of performing male- and female-inflected foodways. Following Erving Goffman's proposition that people are inclined to perform in ways expected by the social situation, I would suggest that this expected performance is stage-managed by several factors.⁴⁴ In this paper, I have focused on what might be described as the social imagination, that is the way men and women are portrayed in the popular press, in literature and in a variety of how-to manuals. These constrain behaviour in at least two ways: first by normalizing or stigmatizing certain behaviour; second by reproducing observed behaviour and, in the process, essentializing it in each sex. To take the thespian metaphor a little further, the actors are taught the script at home, perform it in public and eventually come to embody each micro-performance. Each bonbon delicately nibbled, each porterhouse ripped apart with gusto reinforce social constructions of femininity and masculinity. This is then incorporated back into the script reperformed on and on.

Does it matter that we keep repeating our gender-delineated roles? Epidemiological data on eating disorders and cardiovascular disease certainly indicate that it does. And from a

global perspective, it would be helpful if eating kale salad wasn't stigmatized as food for soccer moms and sissies. There is another, pernicious effect of men and women embodying gendered behaviour without being aware of it. It is that if society values equality between the sexes and, perhaps even more importantly, the concept of choice, self-awareness of gendered behaviour must be a necessary precondition. Of course, our foodways aren't the only way we reproduce nineteenth-century ideas of gender, but understanding why we eat what we eat can be used as an indicator of other embodied behaviour that stands in the way of a more equal society.

Notes

1. 'The rituals enact the form of social relations and in giving these relations visible expression they enable people to know their own society. The rituals work upon the body politic through the symbolic medium of the physical body'. Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*. (London; New York: Routledge, 2003), 129.
2. Carole M. Counihan, *The Anthropology of Food and Body: Gender, Meaning and Power* (Routledge, 2018), 8.
3. See Karen O'Brian, 'Sexual Distinctions and Prescriptions: Introduction', in *Women, Gender and Enlightenment*, ed. Sarah Knott and Barbara Taylor (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 3–7.
4. Jean Jacques Rousseau, *Emile: Or, On Education*, trans. Allan David Bloom (New York: Basic Books, 1979).
5. *An Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex* (T. Cadell jun. and W. Davies, 1797), 79,13.
6. *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980).
7. N Allen, 'The New England Family', *The New Englander*, March 1882, 153–54. No Reference
8. *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body* (University of California Press, 2004), 118.
9. Depending on the authority the list also included coffee, tea, chocolate, meat, warm bread and pastry and confectionery. For more on the topic see Joan Jacobs Brumberg, *Fasting Girls: The History of Anorexia Nervosa* (New York; London: Random House ; Hi Marketing, 2001), 172; Jerome Van Crowninshield Smith, a prominent physician noted that avoiding 'highly seasoned' food would improve not only a girl's physical attributes but also lead to her 'brighter mental development', promising that this system promised 'with moral certainty to secure for their daughters sound health the foundation for happiness'. See *The Ways of Women in Their Physical, Moral and Intellectual Relations* (Hartford, CT: Dustin, Gilman & Company, 1875), 129.
10. Uncle David, *Uncle David's Advice to Young Men and Young Women on the Subject of Marriage* (S. W. Partridge, 1863), 5.
11. William Cobbett, *The Friendly Counsellor; or, Advice to Young Men and Young Women* (London: Ward, Lock & Tyler, 1876), 73.
12. Veblen perceptively describes the corset as 'substantially a mutilation, undergone for the purpose of lowering the subject's vitality and rendering her permanently and obviously unfit for work'. *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (New York: Macmillan, 1899), 121.
13. For more on the obsession on slimness and bodily control see Anna Krugovoy Silver, *Victorian Literature and the Anorexic Body* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 27.
14. Smith, *The Ways of Women in Their Physical, Moral and Intellectual Relations*, 115.
15. C.G.D., 'Overworked Words', *The Irish Monthly*, February 1891, 104.
16. Joan Jacobs Brumberg, 'The Appetite as Voice', in *Food and Culture: A Reader*, 2nd Edition (Routledge New York, 2008), 159–79.
17. It would be tedious to list them all but a couple of notable titles should suffice for illustration: Sarah T Rorer, the principal of the influential Philadelphia Cooking School penned *Dainty Dishes for All the Year Round* in 1890 featuring 'such Dainty Dishes as Croquettes, Cutlets, Tempting Sandwiches etc. when one's appetite needs to be pampered with something delicate and tasty'. The book was sponsored

- by the American Machine Company, a manufacturer of ice cream freezers and other kitchen gadgets. Across the Atlantic, Kate Halford, another cooking teacher, authored *Dainty Dinners and Dishes for Jewish Families* (1907), a decidedly aspirational volume of French influenced recipes for London's wealthier Jewish households. Roast haunch of Venison anyone?
18. Men's actual predilection for plain dishes is less clear in the nineteenth century sources than in the twentieth. See Jessamyn Neuhaus, *Manly Meals and Mom's Home Cooking: Cookbooks and Gender in Modern America* (JHU Press, 2003), 77. On the other hand the medical advice books are pretty much unanimous in decrying fancy cuisine for either sex.
 19. D.M. Morrell, 'The Daily Trio: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner', *Table Talk*, May 1894.
 20. See Paul Freedman, 'Women and Restaurants in the Nineteenth-Century United States', *Journal of Social History* 48, no. 1 (2014): 1–19.
 21. Morrell, 'The Daily Trio: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner'.
 22. See for example the opinion of the 'amiable Lord Brackenshaw, who was something of a 'gourmet'. George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda* (OUP Oxford, 2014), 94; According to American George Beard, writing in the 1870s, the romantic teen idol was apparently responsible for girls starving themselves to conform to the dead poet's tastes. See Trumbert, *Fasting Girls*, 180.
 23. Mary Alice Abbott Brown, *Dainty Dining: A Few Simple Luncheons and a Few Not So Simple; But with Tried Recipes [Sic] for Each and All. with a Post-Script for Dinners Added by Request* (Reed Press, 1908).
 24. See, for example, Anna Sawyer, 'Afternoon Tea', *Good Housekeeping*, May 10, 1890, 160; or Mrs. Hamilton Mott, 'Giving an Afternoon Tea', *The Ladies' Home Journal*, March 1893, 4.
 25. Rare Book Division, The New York Public Library. 'Waldorf Astoria' New York Public Library Digital Collections. Accessed December 13, 2020. <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/c6d5d0ca-df25-54db-e040-e00a18063df6>
 26. Rousseau, *Emile*, 395.
 27. 'A Phase of the Cook Question', *Harper's Bazaar*, January 27, 1877, 50.
 28. The italics are the author's. Martin Luther Holbrook, *Parturition Without Pain: A Code of Directions for Escaping from the Primal Curse* (M.L. Holbrook, 1880), 15. I am assuming the 'professor Hubbard of New Haven' mentioned in the text is, Stephen G. Hubbard, professor of obstetrics at Yale Medical School from 1864 to 1880.
 29. Ann Douglas Wood, 'The Fashionable Diseases': Women's Complaints and Their Treatment in Nineteenth-Century America', *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 4, no. 1 (1973): 29.
 30. Smith, *The Ways of Women in Their Physical, Moral and Intellectual Relations*, 175–76.
 31. See David Kirk, *The Sociocultural Foundations of Human Movement* (Macmillan Education AU, 1996), 210.
 32. Colorado was just the place for a cure: 'Chronic invalids are almost always benefited by a mere change of regimen, even if it be, in some minor respects, for the worse. If some change can be made from the humdrum of the Eastern home to the fresh and novel life of a mountain country, with its more substantial bread, more virile, blood invigorating beef, its tempting mountain trout and juicy wild meat, the benefits are multiplied tenfold. H.T.F Gatchell, 'Colorado Climate for Invalids', *The Medical Investigator. A Monthly Journal of the Medical Sciences...* 10, no. 113 (May 1873): 279.
 33. See Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (University of Chicago Press, 2008), 171.
 34. Coed archery was one of the period's elite's peculiarities. Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, 94.
 35. *O the Roast Beef of Old England* ('*The Gate of Calais*'), 1748, oil on canvas, 788 X 945mm, 1748, Tate.
 36. There seem to be several variants of the song in Fielding's plays, and additional verses accumulated over the decades. The following is from *Don Quixote in England* (1733): 'When mighty roast beef was the Englishman's food/It ennobled our hearts, and enriched our blood/Our soldiers were brave, and our courtier's were good/Oh the roast beef of old England/And old England's roast beef!/ Then Britons from all nice dainties refrain/Which effeminate Italy, France, and Spain;/And mighty roast beef shall command on the main'. *The Works of Henry Fielding*. (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1851), 994.
 37. Cited in Hippolyte Taine, *History of English Literature* (Chatto & Windus, 1880), 124.
 38. 'Memorials of Gormandising', in *The Works of William Makepeace Thackeray.*, vol. XIII (New York and London: Harper & Brothers, 1841), 581–82.
 39. Donald Walker, *Walker's Manly Exercises: Containing Rowing, Sailing, Riding, Driving, Racing, Hunting, Shooting and Other Manly Sports ...* (Bohn, 1855), 14.

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40. 'Manly Health and Training: With Off-Hand Hints Toward Their Conditions', *New York Atlas*, September 12, 1858, morning edition.
41. David McCay, *The Protein Element in Nutrition* (E. Arnold, 1912), 206.
42. See for example Kellogg's assertion that a grain-based diet was superior. *The New England Medical Gazette* (Medical Gazette Publishing Company, 1892), 8.
43. Cited in Neuhaus, *Manly Meals and Mom's Home Cooking*, 77.
44. Erving Goffman, 'Gender Display. Studies in the Anthropology of Visual Communication, 3, 69-77.', *Studies in the Anthropology of Visual Communication*, 1976, 69-77.