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Food and Northern Identities in the mid-Nineteenth Century

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Abstract

This dissertation examines two related issues: how food and its consumption were used by northerners and by others to describe and reinforce northern English identities in the mid-nineteenth century; and how this can be related to other aspects of identity and place. It brings together evidence from varied sources to build on existing descriptive work about food in and of the North in the nineteenth century. Alongside this, it draws on ideas about the North and northernness previously articulated in other contexts and largely in relation to later periods, complementing them with approaches to the study of food and identity more broadly. It concludes that in the discourse relating to food, its consumption, and its lack, we can already see clear signs in this period of the development of the northern identities that had been observed later in the century. The early symbolism of the North, linked to differences in staple grains and seen for example by Celia Fiennes in the seventeenth century, remained and developed further. In both the Hungry Forties and the Lancashire Cotton Famine the North was often identified as a place of hunger and poverty. However plenty, prosperity and civic pride were seen in both the way northernness was performed by its people, and the way the North was perceived from elsewhere. While some of these features relate to the North as a whole, pan-regional feeling was not always well developed and more local northern identities could be seen in many ways, from the preference of working women who had migrated within the North for the local oatcakes they had learned to make at their mothers' knees, to the civic pride of elite men in their city expressed at banquets. So in this period, and through the lens of food, we can see a proto-northernness, the beginnings of the northern identity that has been noted in relation to other aspects of elite and popular culture in the late nineteenth and the twentieth centuries.

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INTRODUCTION

Social and cultural historians have increasingly recognised the significance of food in the construction of national identity and in the intersection of this with other facets of identity including class. Similarly, northern regional identities have been examined in relation to aspects of elite and popular culture such as sport, music and literature. There is also descriptive writing about food in and of the North ranging from locally focussed material on specific towns to discussions of regional differences in work with a broader canvas. However, relatively little has been written about the way food has been used to construct northernness or indeed other regional identities in England.¹ When Phil Kirby sought evidence of the link he assumed between fish and chips and northernness he 'read all the books [he] could find on the history of fish and chips' but discovered little about northern identity. There are nevertheless enough passing references in works whose focus is elsewhere to suggest a link worth investigating. Stuart Rawnsley and Fred Singleton offer the Barnsley chop as part of a twentieth-century representation of a 'lumpen and lumpish North'. Jeffrey Richards, introducing Dave Russell who does not otherwise pay much attention to food, refers to tripe and black pudding. Elizabeth David describes how oatcakes were such a symbol of local identity that they were used by a Yorkshire regiment as a recruiting symbol and it was known as the Haver-cake lads. There does not, however, appear to be any more systematic treatment of the topic, even for a restricted period or sub-region. So there was already a gap to be filled before the Covid pandemic highlighted the contemporary relevance both of the North-South divide, and of food, and the lack of food, as a social and cultural issue.²

Some of the existing scholarship on food in and of the North, and on food and identity (including place-based identities) is examined later in this introduction and a separate chapter discusses 'The Idea of the North' and the related historiography. This study seeks to build on these areas of work to provide insights that may have been overlooked by focussing on any of them individually. It examines a pair of related questions: how has food and its consumption been used by northerners and by others to describe and reinforce northern

¹ Phil Kirby, 'Fish & Chips, Wrapped', in *These Northern Types*, ed. by Oli Bentley (Leeds: Split, 2018), [n.pag.]; S.J. Rawnsley and F.B Singleton, *A History of Yorkshire* (Chichester: Phillimore, 1995), p.134; Jeffrey Richards, 'General Editor's Foreword', in Dave Russell, *Looking North: Northern England and the National Imagination* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), p.ix; Elizabeth David, *English Bread and Yeast Cookery* (London: Penguin, 1979), p.530.

² See for example Emmie Harrison-West, 'Covid Has Reignited The North-South Divide With A Vengeance', *HuffPostUK*, 9 October 2020 <https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/north-south-divide_uk_5f7ed5adc5b6a9322e23737d> [accessed 25 May 2021] and Rachel Rich, 'Food during Covid-19' <<https://www.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/blogs/lbu-together/2020/05/food-during-covid-19/>> [accessed 19 May 2021].

English identities in the mid-nineteenth century, and to what extent can this be related to other aspects of identity and place.

I will argue that looking through the lens of food we can see, in the mid-nineteenth century, a proto-northern identity that goes beyond the idea of the wild North expounded by earlier travellers. This is demonstrated through the analysis of four key themes: the imaginative power of traditional staple grains; the trope of the hungry North; the counterbalancing idea of the North as a place of plenty and extravagance; and the place of civic pride in performing northernness. These themes illustrate many of the characteristics that were identified with the North in later periods and include elements of self-identification by northerners rather than just othering from the South. However this identification is often more local than the region, and the extent to which specific areas such as counties stands for the North as a whole varies.

The choice of the period 1840-1870 is driven by several factors. It provides a sufficiently focussed period to allow a reasonably broad and deep examination of the issues but also has some specific advantages in terms of source availability. It is when several key 'condition of England' novels with northern settings were published (though some were set earlier) and also when the provincial press was becoming established as a source of local news and opinion.³ Alongside these practical advantages, the existing historiography suggests that a consciousness of northernness was developing throughout the nineteenth century. This mid-century period allows examination of how the trend was playing out in relation to food during both the Hungry Forties and the Lancashire Cotton Famine.⁴ It also comes immediately after the 1830s which David Cannadine describes as the 'hinge decade' for domestic politics – with *inter alia* the beginning of electoral reform and the introduction of the New Poor Law.⁵

Overall approach

The project takes a largely empirical approach, recognising that there is a sense in which this, in itself, constitutes a theoretical perspective. Its conceptual framework draws, however, on earlier work, in particular on Neville Kirk's 'three closely interconnected issues': the

³ In particular those of the Brontës and Elizabeth Gaskell; Andrew Walker, 'The Development of the Provincial Press in England c.1780-1914: An Overview', *Journalism Studies*, 7.3 (2006), 373-86 (p.373).

⁴ See for example Stuart Rawnsley, 'Constructing 'The North': Space and a Sense of Place', in *Northern Identities: Historical Interpretations of 'The North' and 'Northernness'*, ed. by Neville Kirk (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), pp. 3-22 (pp.6-9).

⁵ David Cannadine, *Victorious Century: The United Kingdom, 1800-1906* ([n.p.]: Penguin, 2018), p.185.

construction of the North; consciousness of northernness; and the interaction of the latter with other senses of place.⁶ These, along with the value of regional analysis and in particular historical interpretations of 'the North' and 'northernness', both in general and in relation to some specific aspects of elite and popular culture, are discussed further in Chapter 1.

A classic challenge for the food historian is to tease out what people actually ate in the past by using evidence from recipe books and other prescriptive or aspirational material such as training manuals or medical and dietary advice. The less concrete nature of my questions requires a slightly different approach, while still reading both with and against the grain. This work brings together and triangulates evidence from four main types of sources: cookery books; newspapers and magazines; diaries, travel and life writing; and the fiction of the period, supplemented by occasional use of other material such as folk song and menus. The sources used, and some specific issues about their analysis and interpretation, are discussed below but they are not on the whole ones that require specialist techniques. What is important is careful textual analysis against a background of understanding their circumstances of production.⁷ I am using the term 'text' here in its wider sense but in practice these are mainly words on paper or electronic images thereof.

Some of the analysis makes use of evidence and case studies relating to particular localities within the North. The original plan for this project had been to start work using sources available in and relating to Leeds with the intention of testing, at a later stage, the emerging conclusions on a wider range of sources to assess the extent to which they offered insights about northern identity as a whole and whether any intra-regional differences and more local place-based identities could be identified. However because of the restrictions of the Covid pandemic it has not been possible to extend the primary research in quite the way envisaged. Nevertheless two Leeds archives offer more than local resources. The Leeds Library has an extensive collection of nineteenth-century topography and travel writing. It is not restricted to the Leeds area or to Yorkshire but includes accounts of travel across the North of England and indeed beyond. The Brotherton Library's Cookery Collection is designated as one of national importance and includes printed and manuscript material from the late fifteenth century to the present. It has also been possible to fill gaps to some extent using digital versions of, or replacements for, some sources.

Sources

⁶ Neville Kirk, 'Introduction', in *Northern Identities*, ed. by Kirk, pp.ix-xiv (p.ix).

⁷ See for example, Ludmilla Jordanova, *History in Practice*, 2nd edn (London: Hodder, 2006), p.160.

Cookery books might appear the only or most obvious source for a food historian whether concerned with the history of the books and their recipes themselves, with recipes as a means to understand what people actually ate in the past, or with wider social and cultural issues about food and its consumption in a particular period. Polly Russell argues convincingly that on the whole manuscript recipe books tend to be best for understanding what people actually cooked and ate while printed ones can throw light on the attitudes, expectations and aspirations of societies.⁸ It is this second aim that has been particularly relevant to students of wider social and cultural history, including issues of identity.⁹ In her book on food culture in British colonial Asia, Celia Leong-Salobir notes that some scholars reject cookbooks as historical documents while others see them as the prime source for food history but takes what she describes as the middle ground, recognising the value of cookery books but supplementing them with other sources.¹⁰ I follow her approach in broad terms but use a different range of other sources reflecting a different focus in time and place.

Previous studies of the relationship between northern identity and aspects of popular culture have made good use of (mainly local) newspapers.¹¹ Such sources have also been used by food historians.¹² As William Marshall indicates these papers do not just report events they play a part in the development as well as the expression of place-based identities.¹³ The strength of the provincial press grew in the first half of the nineteenth century. Andrew Walker describes the 'development of the provincial press from the "scissors and paste" approach of the 18th century to [...] an increasingly locally orientated and politically partisan local press'.¹⁴ While he places its peak in the 30 years from 1855, when stamp duty on newspapers was fully repealed, it was influential throughout our period. Recent advances in digitisation of historical newspapers make searching for and using evidence from them considerably less unwieldy than previously, and indeed opens up some new methods of analysis. It does not of course remove the need for careful interpretation of the context in

⁸ Polly Russell at 'Cookery Books Collections', *British Library Food Season* [online live event 6 October 2020].

⁹ See for example: Elaine Leong, 'Collecting Knowledge for the Family', *Centaurus*, 55 (2013), 81-104; Rafia Zafar, 'The Signifying Dish: Autobiography and History in Two Black Women's Cookbooks', *Feminist Studies*, 25.2 (1999), 449-69.

¹⁰ Celia Y. Leong-Salobir, *Food Culture in Colonial Asia: A Taste of Empire* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), p.6.

¹¹ See for example, Dave Russell, 'Music and Northern Identity, 1890-c.1965' and Mike Huggins, 'Sport and the Social Construction of Identity in North-East England, 1800-1914', in *Northern Identities*, ed. by Kirk, pp.23-46 and pp.132-63 respectively.

¹² For example Peter Brears notes, citing an article in the *Leeds Mercury*, how a Benjamin Wilson was jailed in 1800 after he 'headed a mob with an oatcake upon a stick exciting them to riot' during a period of high food prices (*Traditional Food in Yorkshire* (Totnes: Prospect, 2014), p.122).

¹³ William Marshall, *The Creation of Yorkshireness: Cultural Identities in Yorkshire c. 1850-1918* (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Huddersfield, 2011), p.75.

¹⁴ Walker, p.373.

which material was produced, including the need to understand the perspectives and potential biases of both journalists and proprietors. It can even introduce some additional problems, such as inaccuracies arising from imperfect optical character recognition, and tempt the historian to read specific items out of context.¹⁵ However it does provide an opportunity to access and search a much richer selection of local papers than would be available otherwise, especially since the launch of the British Newspaper Archive which aims to digitise up to 40 million pages from the British Library's collection. This has provided the main access to newspapers used in the dissertation, although some of the initial work was undertaken using the earlier and more limited Gale British Library newspapers database.

The extent to which novels can be regarded as providing useful evidence of the time in which they are written is contested but fiction can be valuable provided it is approached in the same questioning frame of mind as any other primary source.¹⁶ This last point carries particular force when we consider issues of identity - or more broadly of how people thought as well as simply what they did. Keith Snell notes that fiction can fill a particular gap in British regional history in the absence of other evidence and advocates an interdisciplinary approach.¹⁷ In addition to this reflective function several commentators see an important constitutive role for mid-nineteenth century literature in establishing a sense of the North in the popular imagination.¹⁸ My consideration of the role of food and foodways in the way northernness was symbolised in mid-nineteenth century novels will focus on six works by archetypal northern writers: *North and South*, *Mary Barton*, and *Sylvia's Lovers* by Elizabeth Gaskell; *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Brontë; and *Shirley* and *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë, making occasional reference to other novels of the period.¹⁹ All these were published between 1840 and 1870, so reflecting the attitudes of that period, but several are set earlier. *Sylvia's Lovers* takes place during the late-eighteenth century French Revolutionary Wars. *Shirley* is set in the Napoleonic Wars, another period of bad harvests and social unrest. In

¹⁵ Adrian Bingham, 'The Digitization of Newspaper Archives: Opportunities and Challenges for Historians', *Twentieth Century British History*, 21.2 (2010), 225-31 (p.228) DOI:10.1093/tcbh/hwq007.

¹⁶ See for example, David Cannadine, *This Little World: the Value of the Novels of Francis Brett Young as a Guide to the State of Midland Society, 1870-1925* (Worcester: Worcester Historical Society, 1982), pp.5-7,57-58.

¹⁷ K.M.D. Snell, 'The Regional Novel: Themes for Interdisciplinary Research', in *The Regional Novel in Britain and Ireland 1800-1990*, ed. by K.M.D Snell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp.14-21.

¹⁸ See for example Rawnsley, 'Constructing', p.8 and Jane Mansfield, 'Fiction and the Meaning of Place: Writing the North of England 1845-1855 and 1955-1965' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Leeds Metropolitan University, 2010), p.285.

¹⁹ Elizabeth Gaskell, *North and South*, ed. by Dorothy Collin (1854-5; London: Penguin, 1970); Elizabeth Gaskell, *Mary Barton – A Tale of Manchester Life*, ed. By Macdonald Daly (1848; London: Penguin, 1996); Elizabeth Gaskell, *Sylvia's Lovers*, ed. by Andrew Sanders (1863; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982); Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*, ed. by Ian Jack (1847; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995); Charlotte Brontë, *Shirley*, ed. by Andrew and Judith Hook (1849; London: Penguin, 1974); Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, ed. by Q. D. Leavis (1847; London: Penguin, 1966).

Wuthering Heights, Lockwood narrates the story from the early nineteenth century but the much of the action dates back to the 1770s. This suggests there may be an element of nostalgia for an earlier, rural, imagined northern community in these Victorian depictions.

The accounts of early modern visitors to the North of England such as Celia Fiennes have been well used by both food historians and those concerned with the north.²⁰ Nineteenth-century travellers may perhaps have been slightly less concerned with commenting on food but it has also been suggested that there has been less scholarly interest in the general travel writing of this period.²¹ Topography and travel writing have nevertheless been a valuable resource for this study. I have also made occasional use of life writing and related material such as the recently transcribed notebooks of Robert Pounder, a Leeds working man.²²

Food in and of the North

There is much, mainly descriptive, writing about the history of food in and of the north, ranging from locally focussed material on specific towns to discussions of regional differences in works with a broader canvas. For example, Peter Brears explores the history and heritage of Malton and area through food and farming in a book published by the local museum and otherwise devoted to recipes. Helen Pollard describes Lancashire foodways pointing up differences between different parts of the county. Laura Mason considers the nature of regional food in relation to a single city, York. Anne Wilson's ground-breaking account of *Food and Drink in Britain: From the Stone Age to Recent Times* makes frequent reference to northern England as well as to specific northern counties, while Joan Thirsk's account of food in a slightly earlier period includes a chapter on regional and social patterns of diet.²³ As well as descriptive material from a variety of sources relating to specific parts of the North, Thirsk highlights the significance of Sir Fredrick Eden's report on *The State of the Poor*, at the very end of the eighteenth century which she sees as a golden chance to get information on labourers' diets of his time – half a century before our period. She notes

²⁰ See for example C. Anne Wilson, 'Travellers' Fare: Food Encountered by Some Earlier Visitors to the Pennine Region', in *Traditional Foods East and West of the Pennines*, ed. by C. Anne Wilson (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), pp.38-65 (pp.46-47) and Russell, *Looking North*, p.34.

²¹ Kirsty McHugh, 'Yorkshire Tourists: The Beginnings of Middle-Class Travel in Georgian Britain', *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal*, 9.1 (2018), 111-27 (p.111).

²² *The Notebooks of Robert Pounder*, ed. by Ann Alexander (Leeds: Thoresby Society, 2015).

²³ Peter Brears, *Malton Goes to Market* (Malton: Malton Museum, 2017); Helen Pollard, 'Lancashire's Heritage', in *Traditional Foods East and West of the Pennines*, ed. by Wilson, pp.117-42; Laura Mason, 'York Ham and other "Regional" Foods', in *Feeding a City: York: The Provision of Food from Roman Times to the Beginning of the Twentieth Century*, ed. by Eileen White (Totnes: Prospect, 2000) pp.203-12; C. Anne Wilson, *Food and Drink in Britain: From the Stone Age to Recent Times* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976); Joan Thirsk, *Food in Early Modern England – Phases, Fads, Fashions 1500-1760* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2007).

regional variations in diet and that differences tend to be between north and south rather than east and west. She suggests that factors such as the colder climate and the easier availability of fuel in the north encouraged the consumption of soups but also refers to local food traditions and rich regional variety, arguing against the idea of a single history of English food.²⁴

Historians have also analysed Eden's data alongside that from other surveys to understand geographical variations in the diets of ordinary people in the early and mid-nineteenth century. Sara Horrell and Deborah Oxley use Eden's data with that collected for the 1834 Royal Commission on the Poor Laws to ascribe nutritional values to the diet of individual counties.²⁵ They note, quoting Eden himself, the importance of the price and availability of milk and fuel, the latter point also emphasised by Daniel Zylberberg, and suggest that there was little overall change between the two dates and little difference between urban and rural areas but that diets in the North of England were more nutritious than those of the South at both dates.²⁶ Their detailed modelling indicates that two factors had a significant positive impact on county-level nutrition measures: availability of domestic outwork for women and common land availability, with largely arable counties having a negative effect but surprisingly the availability of fuel does not appear to have a significant influence. They suggest some ways in which this could be interpreted but their necessarily broad brush measure of 'nutrition value', alongside the unknown effects of interactions between the explanatory variables, and the reliance of the 1834 data on reports of what informants, typically clergymen, felt the labouring classes could or should be eating rather than what they actually ate, mean that any such interpretation can only be tentative.

W.A. Armstrong, focusing on rural workers and citing Derek Oddy's detailed analysis, shares the interpretation of Eden's results as indicating that northerners were better fed than southerners in the 1790s.²⁷ However he notes that another contemporary budgetary survey by David Davies, while supporting the view that the quality of northern diets was on the whole better, suggests that the calorific difference was in fact reversed. So Eden may have overstated the superiority of northern diets at that point. Turning however to the mid-nineteenth century and considering two rather different surveys: James Caird's *English*

²⁴ Thirsk, pp.195-228.

²⁵ Sara Horrell and Deborah Oxley, 'Bringing Home the Bacon? Regional Nutrition, Stature, and Gender in the Industrial Revolution', *Economic History Review*, 65.4 (2012), 1354-79 (pp.1354-66).

²⁶ Daniel Zylberberg, 'Fuel Prices, Regional Diets and Cooking Habits in the English Industrial Revolution', *Past and Present*, 229 (2015), 91-122 (p.122).

²⁷ W.A. Armstrong 'Food, Shelter and Self-Help', in *The Agrarian History of England and Wales: vi: 1750-1850*, ed. by G. E. Mingay (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 729-54 (pp.738-40).

Agriculture in 1850-51 and Dr Edward Smith's 1863 report for the Medical Department of the Privy Council, Armstrong finds that despite greater reliance on wheaten bread in some parts of the North by then, and overall modest dietary improvements, some regional differences remain. John Burnett also sees northern counties, specifically Yorkshire and Northumberland, as better off, citing an 1843 Parliamentary report on women and children employed in agriculture.²⁸ Overall the picture is that there were some regional differences in diet and that access to animal foodstuffs (including dairy products) was probably better in the North. The details of these and the extent to which they had changed in the first half of the nineteenth century are difficult to tease out reliably.

Underlying much of this cross-sectional work on the economics and nutritional adequacy of different regional diets is an explicit or implicit concern with what became known as the Standard of Living Debate. The underlying question is whether the living standards of ordinary working people improved over the period from the mid-eighteenth century to the mid-nineteenth. The optimists argue, using a wide variety of quantitative data some of which are in themselves the subject of debate, that living standards had improved in the period. The pessimists challenge this, often referring also to more experiential evidence.²⁹ However Clark Nardinelli, writing in the early twenty-first century, suggests that the debate is no longer about whether the industrial revolution made people better off, but about when. He argues, plausibly, that while growing inequality before 1840 may have meant modest growth in national income per head was accompanied by a fall in living standards for the working classes, fast growth in the mid-nineteenth century meant that by then living standards, as measured by working families' average real wages, were improving.³⁰ Emma Griffin seeks to problematise this consensus, which she describes in more pessimistic terms than does Nardinelli, arguing for a more nuanced approach that takes account of differences between urban and rural occupations and between children, women and men.³¹ She notes the inherent fragility of some of the quantification and argues for a history of the industrial revolution that takes account of cultural as well as economic change. This study does not directly address her concerns but it aims to illuminate some of the issues around food that

²⁸ John Burnett, *Plenty and Want: A Social History of Diet in England from 1815 to the Present Day* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968), p.46.

²⁹ Peter Kirby, 'The Standard of Living Debate and the Industrial Revolution', *ReFRESH*, 25 (Autumn 1997), 1-4 (p.2) <<https://www.ehs.org.uk/dotAsset/5939a390-8a91-4eb3-ac29-d09e51f7fb08.pdf>> [accessed 23 February 2020]; on data, see Roger Middleton, 'Historical Statistics and British Economic History', *Historical Methods*, 45.3 (2012), 103-18 (pp.103-04).

³⁰ Clark Nardinelli, 'Industrial Revolution and the Standard of Living', *The Library of Economics and Liberty* <<https://www.econlib.org/library/Enc/IndustrialRevolutionandtheStandardofLiving.html>> [accessed 18 February 2020].

³¹ Emma Griffin, 'Diets, Hunger and Living Standards during the British Industrial Revolution', *Past and Present*, 239 (2018), 71-111 (p.72).

do not lend themselves to simplistic quantification, while moving beyond a descriptive history of local and regional foods.

Food and identity

Food as a symbol of national identity is well recognised by both historians and food writers, and offers at least a partial model for how other types of place-related identity might be analysed. Many see beef as a symbol of English identity sometimes linking it to Shakespeare's late sixteenth-century portrayals of earlier times.³² Menno Spiering notes that this can only partly be attributed to what people actually consumed and postulates three reasons for the symbolism, focusing particularly on the eighteenth century.³³ It was high status when England was prosperous (particularly in comparison with France); simply served roast beef reflected the protestant virtues of simplicity and honesty; and, by extension, though not for obvious reasons, liberty. There are some suggestions that this symbolism widened, in the eighteenth or early nineteenth century, to signify British rather than specifically English identity.³⁴ However historians and their sources do not always make a clear distinction between the two and I will consider later how some place-identities encompass or are encompassed by related ones, for example in relation to the Lancashire Cotton Famine. For Nadja Durbach the link between beef and identity was illustrated by disputes in the 1830s and 1840s between local workhouse guardians, who felt it proper to offer roast beef to their inmates at Christmas and other national festivals, and the national Poor Law Commission, which objected on the grounds that independent labourers could not afford such fare.³⁵ While the case for beef was put in terms of national solidarity, she also touches on the way this could have been a respectable justification for generosity from those who were unsympathetic to the New Poor Law but did not wish to challenge it directly.

Other discussions of national foods identify tensions between different aspects of their symbolism. Prys Morgan refers to the leek being used to decorate pavilions as part of the invented traditions of nineteenth-century Eisteddfod rites.³⁶ He emphasises however that the leek had been used as a badge of Welshness as far back as the fourteenth century so has an authenticity of its own. Christine Knight discusses how from the 1990s the deep-fried Mars bar has replaced haggis as the stereotypical Scottish food, supporting a narrative of an

³² See for example Steven Shapin "‘You Are What You Eat’: Historical Changes in Ideas about Food and Identity", *Historical Research*, 87.237 (August 2014), 377-92 (pp.386-87).

³³ Menno Spiering, 'Food, Phagophobia and English National Identity', in *Food, Drink and Identity in Europe*, ed. by Thomas M. Wilson (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006), pp.31-48 (pp.34-36).

³⁴ Shapin, pp.384-90; Ben Rogers, *Beef and Liberty: Roast Beef, John Bull and the English Nation* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2003); Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (London: Pimlico, 1994), pp.33-34.

³⁵ Nadja Durbach, 'Roast Beef, the New Poor Law, and the British Nation, 1834-63', *Journal of British Studies*, 52 (October 2013), 963-89.

³⁶ Prys Morgan, 'From a Death to a View: The Hunt for the Welsh Past in the Romantic Period', in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp.43-100 (p.90).

unhealthy diet.³⁷ However she suggests that in some ways this symbol is used subsequently as an indication of an imaginative approach, to promote 'gastronomic Scotland'. Marcella Hazan expresses doubt about whether there is such a thing as Italian cooking, referring to Italy's relatively recent formation as a nation state.³⁸ She sees the cooking of Italy as really that of its regions, contrasting for example the dishes of Naples with those of Venice despite their shared emphasis on fish. Elizabeth David discusses the way in which pasta, normally seen as the archetypal Italian food, was rejected by some nationalists in the 1930s as unsuitable for a military nation.³⁹

The twenty-first century saw a growing interest in the historical relationship between food and identity generally. Three scholars, two introducing collections of essays, the third in a revised version of a plenary lecture, offer slightly different perspectives on the broader issues. Peter Scholliers notes that food (with which he implicitly includes drink) is used as a language by which people classify and judge each other but that people can signal their identity(ies) through food without making a conscious effort to do so.⁴⁰ Thomas Wilson suggests that food and drink have previously been neglected by the academy but he believes that recent greater emphases on culture, identity and looking at history from below offer an opportunity for this to change.⁴¹ Steven Shapin takes 'You are what you eat' as his starting point but suggests that the words have very different meanings in different cultures and times.⁴² Others focus more specifically on ways in which non-place identities were related to food, sometimes in much earlier periods. For example Harriet Publicover describes how the forbidding of specific foods in the Torah was extended, during the late Second Temple period of the Greek occupation of Israel, to include a custom of abstaining from 'foreign' or Gentile food.⁴³ She attributes this to the fluidity of Greek identity, and hence the fear of assimilation if the pious did not clearly distance themselves from the other. Lynn

³⁷ Christine Knight, 'Deep-frying the Nation: Communicating about Scottish Food and Nutrition', in *Food & Communication: Proceedings of the Oxford Symposium on Food and Cookery 2015*, ed. by Mark McWilliams (London: Prospect, 2016), pp.206-15 (pp.213-14).

³⁸ Marcella Hazan, *The Classic Italian Cookbook* (London: Papermac, 1981), p.1. See also Massimo d'Azeleglio 'We have made Italy, now we have to make Italians', quoted by Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p.44.

³⁹ Elizabeth David, *Italian Food* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977), p.93.

⁴⁰ Peter Scholliers, 'Meals, Food Narratives, and Sentiments of Belonging in Past and Present', in *Food, Drink and Identity: Cooking, Eating and Drinking in Europe Since the Middle Ages*, ed. by Peter Scholliers (Oxford: Berg, 2001), pp.3-22 (p.18).

⁴¹ Thomas M. Wilson 'Food, Drink and Identity in Europe: Consumption and the Construction of Local National and Cosmopolitan Culture' in *Food, Drink and Identity in Europe*, ed. by Thomas M. Wilson, pp.11-29 (p.26).

⁴² Shapin, pp.377-78.

⁴³ Harriet Publicover, 'I Am What I Don't Eat: Food and Eating as a Form of Communicating Distinction in the Jewish Literature of the Second Temple Period', in *Food & Communication*, ed. by McWilliams, pp.319-28 (p.319).

Martin describes how alcohol formed part of the identity of old people in late mediaeval and early modern Europe.⁴⁴ This study will build on these varied perspectives, in particular in considering the intersection of place-based identities with others.

Chapter outlines

This dissertation examines how food was used to construct and reflect northern English identities in the mid-nineteenth century, and how this interacted with other aspects of identity. The first chapter, however, provides context for what follows by discussing the idea of the North, and how northernness has been related to aspects of elite and popular culture. From this it takes a broad conceptual framework and suggests both a geographical definition of the North and some characteristics of northernness. Subsequent chapters build on this and the descriptive and economic work summarised earlier in this Introduction. They apply some of the approaches and methods used for the investigation of food and identities elsewhere to examine food and northern identities from four complementary perspectives. Chapter 2 considers how staple grains stood for northern and more local identities at a period when in reality wheaten bread had become very much the norm across the country. It contextualises the issues by reference to historical differences in the production and consumption of different grains before examining how both fiction and non-fiction writing of the period used oatcakes and porridge to characterise the North in a variety of ways. It also considers how northern identities were sometimes represented as intersecting with gender and class and how intra-regional differences were also present. Chapter 3 explores how hunger and plenty were seen in relation to the North and starts by situating the issues in the political and social environment of the time. It discusses the extent to which the 'Hungry Forties' were, in perception and in reality, regionally differentiated and identifies the way in which the Lancashire Cotton Famine changed perceptions of hunger in the national discourse. Chapter 4 considers the performative nature of the provision and consumption of food and examines how the North was also seen as associated with plenty in several ways: the vulgar extravagance of successful industrialists, spendthrift mill workers, and, in rural areas, a wholesome and simple plenty. Last, Chapter 5 explores how northernness was performed in a more public sphere, for elites and in the street, further exploring the tensions between nostalgia and modernity identified earlier.

The conclusion brings the threads together and argues that in this period, and looking through the lens of food, there are clear signs of the development of the northern identity

⁴⁴ A. Lynn Martin, 'Old People, Alcohol and Identity in Europe, 130-1700' in *Food, Drink and Identity*, ed. by Scholliers, pp.119-37.

that has been noted later in the century. However there were ways in which more local identities remained more important. And the nature of this northernness involved several tensions between for example: hunger and plenty, nostalgia and modernity.

CHAPTER 1: THE IDEA OF THE NORTH

While not much has been written about food and northern identities there is a considerable body of work about the concepts of the North and northernness more generally, including how they can be related to other aspects of elite and popular culture. This chapter reviews this historiography and starts by looking at the idea of a region, primarily but not solely in the English context. It then considers how the idea of the North has developed and how the region and its peoples have been characterised. This characterisation, together with Neville Kirk's conceptual framework, provides the basis of my analysis of evidence relating to food and its consumption. Subsequent sections consider the boundaries of the North and its subdivisions, including the way specific sub-regions have stood for the North in the popular imagination or for individual scholars. A final section refers to the intersection of northern identities with those of class, gender and ethnicity and touches on the international context. I conclude that while there have been no substantial studies of the relationship between food and northernness, a variety of work that examines the idea of the North more generally or focuses on other aspects such as sport and music provides fruitful approaches that can be applied to the consideration of food and northern identities in the mid-nineteenth century.

What is a region?

Since the mid-twentieth century historians have increasingly recognised the value of looking at the local and regional.¹ Precisely what is meant by a region is not always clear-cut. John Walton offers a definition of:

one of a small number of substantial geographical divisions within a nation that both generates subjective identification with its imputed characteristics, and constitutes an heuristic device (for bureaucrats as well as historians) that helps us make sense of variety without losing ourselves in diversity.²

He recognises, however, that this can be problematic in a modern English setting where we lack consistent administrative divisions that meet the other criteria. He cites North-West England as an example of a region with shifting boundaries, according to context, and limited consciousness of regional identity. This lack of well and consistently defined regional boundaries is one of the issues discussed at the Rewley House conference on 'Are British

¹ See for example Asa Briggs, 'Themes in Northern History', *Northern History*, 1 (1966), 1-6 (p.1).

² John Walton, 'Imagining Regions in Comparative Perspective: The Strange Birth of North-West England', in *An Agenda for Regional History*, ed. by Bill Lancaster, Diana Newton and Natasha Vall (Newcastle: Northumbria University Press, 2007), pp.289-302 (p.290).

Regions Neglected?'.³ John Langdon argues convincingly that this is not a matter of concern. Just as historical periodisation may change according to the substantive question of interest so does the appropriate regional definition. Asa Briggs agrees and notes the distinction between regions for institutional purposes and regional awareness of identity. I would argue, however, that Langdon's point goes wider than the sort of dichotomy to which Briggs refers. Not only are different regional definitions relevant for specific practical purposes but people may embrace different regional identities according to context – the examples of subdivisions of the North discussed later in this chapter provide examples. This suggests it may be helpful in considering place-based identities to take large regions, such as the North as a whole, as the starting point while remaining open to evidence that identities may relate to a more local level.

Economic historians have paid particular attention to regions. Pat Hudson argues, citing a range of scholars from J.H. Clapham to Sidney Pollard and John Langdon, that industrialisation in Britain and elsewhere occurred first and foremost within regions.⁴ She suggests also that, while London continued to dominate in many ways, the period from the late eighteenth to late nineteenth century was when regions' power was relatively greatest. She notes the domination (in the 1980s when she was writing) of quantitative methods that tend to ignore the regional and focus on national aggregates, offering some convincing detailed methodological arguments against these (for example around the handling of price indices). For Langdon the weakness of both neo-classical econometricians' numerical models and Marxists' conceptual ones is simpler, though no less plausible.⁵ He suggests that they assume rather than demonstrate that the national as opposed to the regional is where one should focus. In reality, he argues, there continued to be considerable regional differences in social and political movements in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and people, especially in newly industrialising areas, actually became more conscious of these. Taken together Hudson and Langdon offer an appealing case for the study of regions in the mid-nineteenth century.

Much of the local and regional work noted above involved geographically specific studies as building blocks to understand the bigger picture at national or international level – rather like

³ 'Are British Regions Neglected?', *The Journal of Regional and Local Studies*, 10.2 (1990), 1-58 (p.17).

⁴ Pat Hudson, 'Introduction' and 'The Regional Perspective', in *Regions and Industries: A Perspective on the Industrial Revolution in Britain*, ed. by Pat Hudson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp.1-38 (pp.5-18).

⁵ John Langdon, 'The Industrial Revolution and the Regional Geography of England', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 9.2 (1984), 145-67 (p.159).

the use of individual or collective biography to understand wider society.⁶ However the late twentieth century 'spatial turn', saw place as a useful category of historical analysis in itself. For example Doreen Massey argues for a history of place that combines historical depth with an understanding of space rather than focussing on one or the other, whereas Charles Withers sees links between this (re)new(ed) attention to place and the earlier work of the *Annales* School.⁷ While neither this general focus on place, nor Hudson and Langdon's case for the importance of regions in the nineteenth century necessarily extend to place-identities, they provide part of the context for the present study.

Characterising northernness

In referring to the *Annales* School Withers does not make explicit reference to ideas of geological time but I would link his comment to Helen Jewell's suggestion that the English North-South divide is as old as the hills.⁸ A geographical and geological line, running approximately from the Tees to the Exe, influenced the nature of farming and hence of settlement patterns, with villages in the more fertile lowland to the south and east of the line and hamlets more typical in the pastoral higher lands to the north and west. The idea of 'the North' as having more than a purely geographical meaning is also longstanding. While some link this to thirteenth-century opposition to King John from a northern aristocracy, Jewell suggests that it goes back further. She notes the Romans divided Britain into two provinces – *Britannia Inferior* to the north and *Britannia Superior* to the south while Norman apprehensions of northern separatism led William I to put down rebellion in what became known as the 'Harrying of the North'. She cites a mid-fourteenth century reference to regional differences in character: 'men of the south beeth easier and more mylde; the men of the north be more unstable, more cruel, and more uneasy' and notes that the sixteenth-century Pilgrimage of Grace, while symbolically a religious rising, also constituted provincial resistance to aggressive government centralisation. The extent to which, at this stage, the people of the North felt a strong sense of identity rather than simply being othered from elsewhere is not, however, clear.

Neville Kirk sets ideas of the North and northernness in an explicit conceptual framework.⁹ He identifies three interconnected strands: the construction in the nineteenth and twentieth

⁶ See for example Briggs, 'Themes', p.4.

⁷ Doreen Massey, 'Places and their Pasts', *History Workshop Journal*, 39 (Spring 1995), 182-92 (pp.190-91); Charles W.J. Withers, 'Place and the "Spatial Turn" in Geography and in History', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 70. 4 (2009), 637-58, (p.658).

⁸ Helen M. Jewell, 'North and South: The Antiquity of the Great Divide', *Northern History*, 27.1 (1991), 1-25 (pp.23,2,20).

⁹ Kirk, p.ix.

centuries of 'the North' mainly referring to the north of England; the consciousness of northern identity or 'northernness'; and the exploration of the ways and extent to which northernness interacts with other space/place-based identities. The third strand could be extended to encompass the intersection with other aspects of personal identity and I shall return to this later in the chapter. Stuart Rawnsley builds on Kirk's framework, emphasising the first two strands.¹⁰ He roots these concepts in earlier centuries, noting, as Jewell did, how nineteenth-century constructions of the North draw on earlier times and even prehistory and geology. However, he sees the industrial revolution and the making of the English working class as crucial to their development. He argues that the industrial revolution intensified many regional differences and that while E. P. Thompson talks about the *English* working class his evidence has a strong *regional* aspect. Industrial decline in the inter-war years of the twentieth century added to this association between class and region in the national imagination. For Rawnsley, the North evokes a greater sense of place than any other English region, something he attributes, paradoxically, to the looseness of its geographical definition. A later section will refer to the specific challenges of defining the North's southern boundary but there is an underlying issue about the relationship between the imagined and the material North to which I now turn.

Building on earlier work, Dave Russell makes a distinction, but also sees an association, between the image of the North and the objective reality from which this arises.¹¹ Alan Baker and Mark Billinge, introducing a collection of essays looking back as far as 1066, make a similar point, identifying two aspects to the North-South divide.¹² The first is about actual regional differences in the material or tangible environment: population, economy, society, culture, landscape. The second is the reconstruction of how people in past times thought about place: their imagined geography. They argue that while there were material regional differences in earlier times, it was only in the later part of the eighteenth century that the idea of such a divide entered the popular (or even the elite) consciousness, and it took until the early twentieth century to become common currency in the national imagination. It is not clear how far their view is different from Rawnsley's in relation to the significance of the industrial revolution as opposed to expressing the same view in a different way, but there does seem to be a broad consensus among early twenty-first century scholars that a consciousness of differences between North and South was present by 1800 and continued

¹⁰ Rawnsley, 'Constructing', pp.3-6.

¹¹ Dave Russell, *Looking North: Northern England and the National Imagination* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), p.9.

¹² Alan R.H. Baker and Mark Billinge, 'Material and Imagined Geographies of England', in *Geographies of England: The North-South Divide, Imagined and Material*, ed. by Alan R.H. Baker and Mark Billinge (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp.1-14 (p.3).

to have traction in the national imagination into and throughout the twentieth century. There is one exception to this. Danny Dorling argues, somewhat unconvincingly, that although there were material differences between North and South in the inter-war period, these were not generally understood and reflected in the mentalities of the time.¹³ My study takes the consensus view as its starting point and explores, through the lens of food, how the image of northern identity developed in one specific short period, the mid-nineteenth century.

Although the obvious other against which, and from within which, the North is defined is the South of England, exactly what that means is contested.¹⁴ Russell puts the emphasis on London and the Home Counties, explicitly assuming that the national culture in terms of both mentalities and underpinning institutions is constructed from London and its environs so the North is unavoidably the other and ultimately perceived as inferior. Rawnsley however suggests a different picture and a rural Deep England as the other to which the North (or perhaps the Deep North) was compared particularly in the inter-war period. He recognises that for commentators such as H.V. Morton this Deep England was a sensuous landscape involving 'meadows [...] smooth movement of rivers [...] somnolence of cathedral cities [...] bells among elm trees on cool summer mornings' - a vague but potent force. Peter Taylor analyses Morton further noting how he identifies 'the real north' of ancient cities like York and the countryside in opposition to the 'Black England' of industrial areas – the latter similar to Rawnsley's Deep North. Bringing these together I would suggest that rather than a simple North-South dichotomy we have a more nuanced picture in which an urban/rural difference (with the latter including small historic towns) interacts with a north/south one to define four rather than two imagined communities. This urban/rural distinction offers one, perhaps particularly strong, example of the way a North-South distinction is only one part of place-identity and this is something to which I will return.

For Raphael Samuel the nineteenth-century North is industrial rather than agricultural.¹⁵ He sees it as associated with the non-conformist chapel rather than the Anglican Church and describes it as politically Liberal, a citadel of self-help, especially collective self-help such as co-operative societies, and the home of the autodidact. While in some ways this is the view of a Londoner and ignores the diversity of the North it resonates with aspects of self-perceived northern identity. Russell suggests that by this time there was a self-defined

¹³ Danny Dorling, 'Distressed Times and Areas: Poverty, Polarisation and Politics in England, 1918-1971', in *Geographies of England*, ed. by Baker and Billinge, pp.44-63 (pp.46-49).

¹⁴ Russell, *Looking North*, p.24-26; Rawnsley, 'Constructing', p.15; Peter J. Taylor, 'Which Britain? Which England? Which North?', in *British Cultural Studies: Geography, Nationality and Identity*, ed. by David Morley and Kevin Robbins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 127-44 (p.137).

¹⁵ Raphael Samuel, *Island Stories: Unravelling Britain: Theatres of Memory: II*, ed. by Alison Light with Sally Alexander and Gareth Stedman Jones (London: Verso, 1999), pp.162-63.

northern character whose characteristics included being hard-working and hard-playing, physically tough, blunt, shrewd, homely, unpretentious, independent of outlook, assertive and possessed of a strong spirit of justness and fairness. For Jane Mansfield the nineteenth-century North is an uncivilised but authentic place, a land of bleakness and poverty where only hard men and strong women survive. She argues that it is, however, a changing imaginary land and in the mid-twentieth century northernness is more misogynistic, more materialistic and less authentic. Karl Spracklen takes the northern landscape as his starting point, examining myths from forged Roman texts to contemporary BBC comedy, and emphasising the performative nature of northernness also noted by Mansfield. He links this to Benedict Anderson's ideas of imagined communities, echoing the term imagined geographies used by Baker and Billinge.¹⁶ These descriptions suggest that different scholars privilege different aspects of the North and northernness. They have many common themes, however, and appear to be primarily differences of emphasis rather than opposing views, particularly in relation to the nineteenth century. So, while the historiography does not point to one single characterisation of the North and its peoples, it is possible to identify some broad components of northernness reflecting a degree of consensus.

To underpin my analysis through the lens of food I build on Russell's characterisation. I consider the ideas that the North is wholesome and homely, a place of simplicity and domestic peace, linking perhaps to Claire Langhammer's ideas of 'ordinariness'.¹⁷ In tension with this it is wild and uncivilised, reflecting the northern landscape, and this can at times shade in one direction to the primitive and superstitious and in another to a lack of sophistication manifest in an ostentatious vulgarity. But also the North can be a place of poverty and hunger. Alongside this we can characterise northerners themselves as hard-working, hard-playing and tough, and while the dominant trope here refers to its urban male industrial workforce there is also the ruthless business man, the hardy Dalesman and the strong northern matriarch. They are also blunt, independent of outlook, proud of their roots, and possessed of a strong spirit of justness and fairness. The people of the North are also shrewd, and careful with money, but at the same time hospitable and friendly.

Where is the North?

The North of England is bounded to the west, north and east by other countries or the sea, but its southern boundary is less well-defined. Jewell offers a range of lines focussing often

¹⁶ Russell, *Looking North*, p.37; Mansfield, p.3; Karl Spracklen, 'Theorising Northernness and Northern Culture: The North of England, Northern Englishness, and Sympathetic Magic', *Journal for Cultural Research*, 20.1 (2016), 4-16 (pp.4-6) DOI 10.1080/14797585.215.1134056.

¹⁷ Claire Langhammer, "'Who the Hell are Ordinary People?' Ordinariness as a Category of Historical Analysis', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th ser., 28 (2018), 175-96 (p.175).

on the Trent, but noting for example that the thirteenth-century rivalries between northern and southern students at Oxford seem to take the Nene as their boundary.¹⁸ For Rawnsley the North is intrinsically ill-defined. He refers to the range of proposals made, implicitly accepting the area of study defined by *Northern History* as the seven historic northern counties if a hard-edged definition is needed. These are Cumberland, Westmorland, Northumberland, Durham, Lancashire, Yorkshire and Cheshire. Russell more explicitly adopts the same definition on pragmatic grounds, while admitting to being tempted by more 'soft and interesting' boundaries offered by other scholars such as Jewell. Wherever the line is drawn however there will be areas that fall in some respects on the 'wrong' side of it. Melanie Tebbutt argues that Derbyshire's Dark Peak is a particularly rich case-study, describing it as 'In the Midlands but not of them'.¹⁹ Spracklen carefully avoids defining the North in space, preferring to emphasise its imagined nature. However, by his wide choice of illustrations (including for example that part of the BBC's *League of Gentlemen* is filmed in Hadfield, in the Dark Peak) he pushes the southern boundary into the liminal midlands areas. I follow Russell in largely adopting the seven historic northern counties but making occasional reference to areas outside these boundaries and recognising the imaginative power of the more loosely defined area.

Subdivisions of the North

Kirk's third strand asks how northernness interacts with other place-identities. Russell questions the extent to which we can talk about a single northern consciousness and suggests that the link between local, sub-regional and regional identities is an intricate one with the most local ones tending to be strongest.²⁰ It is not surprising therefore that different scholars take different approaches. Some are primarily concerned with the North as a whole but choose to examine one or more areas within it to draw general conclusions. Others examine smaller areas within the North which may nevertheless be described as regions in Walton's terms. Still others focus on individual counties or even cities.

Mansfield is concerned with the idea of the North but restricts her analysis to the literature of Manchester and West Yorkshire, selecting these as representative of the North.²¹ In contrast Russell regards his own focus on examples from Lancashire and Yorkshire as less than

¹⁸ Jewell, pp.10,22; Rawnsley, 'Constructing', p.3; Russell, *Looking North*, pp.16-17.

¹⁹ Melanie Tebbutt, "'In the Midlands but not of them": Derbyshire's Dark Peak – an Imagined Northern Landscape', in *Northern Identities*, ed. by Kirk, pp.163-94 (p.183); Spracklen, pp.4-6.

²⁰ Dave Russell, 'Culture and the Formation of Northern English Identities from c.1850' in *Agenda*, ed. by Lancaster, Newton and Vall, pp. 271-88 (pp.273-74).

²¹ Mansfield, pp.12-15; Russell, 'Culture', p.272; Stephen Caunce, 'Urban Systems, Identity and Development in Lancashire and Yorkshire: A Complex Question', in *Northern Identities*, ed. by Kirk, pp.47-70.

ideal. Stephen Caunce argues for consideration of a 'near North', a loosely defined urban cluster stretching from Liverpool to Hull, as a functional entity. This appears to be based on transport routes and economics and he does not discuss whether or how mentalities or imagined communities follow. I would argue that while Mansfield's industrial areas close to the southern Pennines make an important contribution to the idea of the North, a case that they are representative needs to be made by reference to other northern areas too, otherwise we risk the partial picture presented by Samuel.

Mike Huggins examines the relationship between place-identity and sport in the North-East and concludes this underwent substantial change over the long nineteenth century.²² At times intra-regional rivalries were important with Tyneside, Wearside and Teesside providing the important focuses. There were however periods when London was the other against which north-eastern or Newcastle identity was defined. Overall the broader North-South rivalry felt in Lancashire and Yorkshire was less evident in the North-East in the later nineteenth century. Huggins offer a number of plausible reasons for this, ranging from long distances affecting the economies of travel for team sports to the effect of the north-eastern climate on county cricket. He suggests that in some ways and at some times Lancashire and Yorkshire actually provided the other against which the North-East defined itself and makes a convincing case that in relation to sport in the nineteenth century the North-East provided the focus for regional identity – an example perhaps of Langdon's suggestion that different issues require different regional definitions.

William Marshall uses Yorkshire as a case-study for the development of county identities alongside an English one after 1850.²³ He concludes that, although the 1890s can be regarded as the high watermark for Yorkshire consciousness in some ways, the cultural identity he sees as rooted in the early modern period survived into the twentieth century and can be seen across socio-economic groups. For John Belchem Liverpool is almost a city state with an identity quite distinct from its Merseyside hinterland, still more from the North or North-West as a whole.²⁴ He attributes this to its nature as a port city whose inward migration was largely from Ireland and overseas not from the surrounding rural areas, although he also notes that in some ways much of North Wales can be regarded as forming Liverpool's hinterland.

²² Huggins, pp.132-62.

²³ Marshall, p.204.

²⁴ John Belchem, 'A City Apart: Liverpool, Merseyside and the North West Region', in *Agenda*, ed. by Lancaster, Newton and Vall, pp.217-32 (p.219).

Rhiannon Pickin examines the different ways northern identity is represented in two Yorkshire crime and punishment museums.²⁵ These range from using specifically local oral testimony at Ripon Workhouse Museum and displays presenting individual historical inmates at York Castle Gaol, to more generic representations of Northern identity suitable for the international visitors both sites attract – including people whose ancestors may have been imprisoned in the Castle prior to transportation. She sees these various ways of personalising the past as helping visitor understanding but suggests it may also impose an artificial identity on the past. Stephen Etheridge also uses a local focus to examine broader ideas of northernness.²⁶ He examines brass bands in the southern Pennines to consider the way the stereotypes of the hard North and soft South played out between 1840 and 1914, suggesting that the bands were ‘expressions of their landscape, and their cultural productions always bore the signature of place’.

These case-studies give some support to Russell’s hypothesis about the multiplicity of different place-identities in the North but do not fully address his implied question about their inter-relationships. This present study is primarily concerned with the idea of the North as a whole but also considers the way this regional identity relates to more local place-based ones along with other identities such as class and gender. Much of its evidence links in one way or another to specific places within the North and the extent to which these case-studies can be regarded as illuminating regional or more local identities provides a key challenge for the analysis in the following chapters.

Intersectionality and transnational perspectives

Two aspects of northern identities are not explicitly identified in Kirk’s three strands but are addressed implicitly or explicitly by some of his contributors and in other work. These are the intersection of northernness with other aspects of personal identity, and ideas of northernness in a transnational context.

Place is just one factor in the rich mix that goes to form identities for people of the North and the interrelation with other attributes such as class, gender and ethnicity is important.²⁷

²⁵ Rhiannon Pickin, ‘Representations of Northern Identity in Yorkshire Crime and Punishment Museums’, *International Journal of Regional and Local History*, 12.2 (2017), 107-19 (p.116) DOI 10.1080/20514530.2017.1400718.

²⁶ Stephen Etheridge, ‘Southern Pennine Brass Bands and the creation of Northern Identity, c.1840-1914: Musical Constructions of Space, Place And Region’, *Northern History*, 54:2 (2017), 244-61 (p.261) DOI 10.1080/0078172X.2016.1254379.

²⁷ Mark Billinge, ‘Divided by a Common Language: North and South, 1750-1830’, in *Geographies*, ed. by Baker and Billinge, pp.88-111 (p.106); Rawnsley, ‘Constructing’, pp.7-8; Russell, *Looking North*, p.279; Rob Shields, *Places on the Margin: Alternative Geographies of Modernity* (London: Routledge, 1991), pp.208,211.

Billinge describes the Georgian stereotypical northerner as bourgeois, rather than aristocratic, but this is not reflected in writing on later periods. Rawnsley sees how types such as the handloom weaver and the coal miner fed into the general construction of a northern working class while recognising the parallel development of a stereotypical northern businessman, a philistine who made his money from the urban grime. Russell notes that historians have long viewed the North as the province of the working class, and that some narratives assume that the association between northernness and the working class is so close that they become indivisible. He suggests, however, that northern identity tends to be a conservative force despite its association in the popular imagination with a radical political and industrial culture. He relates this to strong links with traditional working-class culture and also to the way local identity has been used by local elites. Shields criticises the simple image of the 'Northern Working Class' and makes a plea for attention to be paid to cross-class spatial insights and for recognition of both urban and agricultural poverty in the nineteenth-century South. I will return to this last specific issue in Chapter 3. More generally there are strong links between northernness and working-class identity but we need to be wary of too simplistic an interpretation of this and consider other intersections too.

Russell notes that self-defined northernness is typically masculine and this can be seen in many of the studies of the relationship between northern identity and specific aspects of elite and popular culture including sport.²⁸ The northernness here is often implicitly white and working-class as well as male but Diane Frost examines black and white 'Scouse' identities and their interaction with gender in twentieth-century Liverpool, finding a complex and fluid picture. More recent autobiographical writers examine northernness or more local identities interacting with gender or race. For example, Caryl Phillips was subject to racist abuse and violence as a young black Leeds United supporter in the 1960s and 70s and describes the conflicting loyalties he felt. In later chapters I will explore how mid-nineteenth century ideas of northern identity intersected with those of class and gender making occasional reference to race.

Walton's definition of a region focuses on one within a single nation state, but he recognises that international and transnational perspectives can also be illuminating from a number of different angles. First he notes that the definition does not allow for economic regions that cross international boundaries or trans-national regions such as those based around seas and oceans. Edward Royle refers to a number of such, including Fernand Braudel's seminal

²⁸ Russell, 'Culture', p.273; Diane Frost, 'Ambiguous Identities: Constructing and De-constructing Black and White "Scouse" Identity and Race in Twentieth Century Liverpool', in *Northern Identities*, ed. by Kirk, pp.195-217; Caryl Phillips, 'Leeds United, Life and Me', *Columbia: A Journal of Literature and Art*, 32 (Summer 1999), 182-85 (p.183).

work on the Mediterranean world.²⁹ A second aspect is the insight one can derive from comparing regions in different nations – as Walton himself does in his work with Luis Castells on North West England and the Basque Country.³⁰ Third, the concept of a North-South divide is not unique to England. Mike Reeve and Andrew McTominey draw attention to similar divides in other countries, including ones such as Italy where the points of the compass are reversed and it is the South that is othered but sometimes romanticised by a culturally and economically more developed North.³¹ The third point is the most directly relevant to the current study, for example the different staple foods of different parts of Italy resonates with the discussion in Chapter 2, but is not directly addressed in the following chapters.³²

Conclusion

The existing historiography examines a range of issues around the construction and reflection of ideas of the North and northern identities. Some relate to specific periods in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, or to specific aspects of elite or popular culture but others are more general. I have not however identified any substantial body of work that relates food and northern identities. Studies in other areas do however offer a variety of approaches on which I will build to explore, through the lens of food and how it was consumed, how northern identities developed in the mid-nineteenth century. In doing so I will (mainly) take the North as consisting of the seven historic counties; adopt Kirk's conceptual framework of three interconnected strands; consider the characteristics of the North and its peoples identified above; and examine also the interaction with other aspects of identity, including those related to more local place.

²⁹ Walton, *Imagining Regions*, p.290; Edward Royle, 'Introduction', in *Issues of Regional Identity: In Honour of John Marshall*, ed. by Edward Royle (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), pp.1-13 (p.1).

³⁰ Luis Castells and John Walton, 'Contrasting Identities: North-West England and the Basque Country, 1840-1936', in *Issues of Regional Identity*, ed. by Royle, pp.44-77 (pp.60-61,76).

³¹ Mike Reeve and Andrew McTominey, 'T'other Half (Epilogue)' in *Northern Types*, ed. by Bentley, [n.pag.].

³² Hazan, p.1.

CHAPTER 2: GREAT RACKS OF OATCAKES AND WATERLOO PORRIDGE - STAPLE GRAINS AND NORTHERN IDENTITIES

Climate and elevation affect what cereals can be grown in different parts of England.¹ In the mid-eighteenth century there was still relatively little wheat in the North, mainly on the coastal plain. Rye and wheat were mixed for bread north of the Vale of York, with oats, barley and rye mixed in lowland Cumbria, and a combination of barley and pease used near the Scottish border, though in the latter case oatmeal porridge was also an important staple. Oatbread and oatcake predominated however through Westmorland, Lancashire, the Pennine regions and into Cheshire. Although John Burnett suggests that by 1815 wheat had become the universal bread corn of England, other writers imply that while oats may no longer have dominated across the North in the nineteenth century they did survive as an important component of the diet in some areas. As late as the 1960s Marie Hartley and Joan Ingilby were able to observe the making of riddlebread at a farmhouse and speak to people who had made and eaten it regularly earlier in their lives. So we might expect oats and other grains used as staple foods to be among those that play a part in the expression of northern identity. This chapter examines how foods based on the traditional staple grains of the North, and specifically oatcakes and porridge, were used in both fiction and non-fiction writing of the mid-century as symbols of northern identity. It argues that they characterised the North and its peoples in a range of ways including the reflection of more local identities in different types of oatcakes.

The wholesome, homely North?

Mid-nineteenth century novels offer many examples of using oatcakes and porridge to construct and reflect an image of the North as a homely and wholesome place. Elizabeth Gaskell was born in London but settled in Manchester. In *Sylvia's Lovers* she uses oatcakes as a representation of plain wholesome northern food at several points. The novel is set on the North Yorkshire coast where Sylvia is the daughter of local farmer Daniel Robson and his Cumberland-born wife Bell. An account of the autumn tasks of good housewives on bleak northern farmsteads refers to the need to fill the 'great racks for oatcakes'.² At one level this is a simple description of food, and of the lived experience of northern farmers'

¹ Mark Dawson, 'Oats and Oatcakes: Farming and Diet in the North Midlands in the Post-mediaeval Period', in *Farmers, Consumers, Innovators: The World of Joan Thirsk*, ed. by Richard Jones and Christopher Dyer (Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2016), pp.124-38 (pp.126-27); John Burnett, pp.16,53; Brears, *Yorkshire*, p.11; Marie Hartley and Joan Ingilby, *Life and Tradition in the Yorkshire Dales*, ed. by Gillian Cookson and Kirsty McHugh (1968; Leeds: Yorkshire Archaeological & Historical Society, 2018), pp.34-38.

² *Sylvia's Lovers*, pp.85,211,390,132.

wives as Gaskell believes they had been at the time she is writing about – during the French Revolutionary Wars. But it is also an account of how half a century on, in the mid-nineteenth century, a middle-class urban woman saw a distinctive northern identity reflected in food. Later references to a great chest for oatcakes and to cold bacon and coarse oatcake bought by the recruiting sergeant carry the same implication. The specifically ‘plain’ nature of oatcakes is reinforced by Daniel’s comment to Sylvia that they (unlike Bell and her nephew Philip Hepburn, whose family were socially superior) are ‘oat-cake folk, while they’s pie-crust’ suggesting an element of class too.

The Brontë sisters were more firmly rooted in the rural Pennines but Emily Brontë’s first mention of oatcakes in *Wuthering Heights* is similar to many of Gaskell’s. When Lockwood visits Heathcliff, his new landlord, at Wuthering Heights for the first time he sees in the family sitting room a ‘frame of wood laden with oatcakes’ along with legs of beef, mutton and lamb, noting these would have been ‘nothing extraordinary as belonging to a homely northern farmer’.³ On another visit - later in the book but earlier in time - Nelly Dean reluctantly accompanies young Catherine (Cathy Linton) to Wuthering Heights to see her estranged cousin Linton Heathcliff. They find the servant ‘Joseph [...] beside a roaring fire; a quart of ale on a table near him, bristling with large pieces of toasted oat cake; and his black, short pipe in his mouth’ - a slightly different more rugged and masculine picture of northern homeliness, perhaps with plainness dominating.

These ideas are not restricted to fiction. The Reverend John Pickford, described as ‘late curate of Bolton Percy in the county of York’ but by that time rector of Newbourne in Suffolk, spent a week in the Yorkshire Dales in the late 1860s. He was impressed by the plentiful plain wholesome food he saw and, perhaps because he associated it with earlier years and his time as a curate in Yorkshire, chose to report it in the words of Robert Southey who had travelled in Wensleydale earlier in the century:

As you entered the kitchen there was one of those open chimneys which afforded more comfort on a winter evening than the finest register stove [...] chests in which the oaten bread was kept. The chimney was well hung with bacon; [...] an odour of cheese from the adjoining dairy which the turf fire [...] did not overpower.⁴

The image of simple wholesome plenty reflected in the foods described, with oaten bread being the first mentioned, is similar to Brontë’s picture of Lockwood’s first reaction to

³ *Wuthering Heights*, p.3,208.

⁴ John Pickford, *A Week in the Yorkshire Dales*, 2nd edn (1869; Manchester: Henry Grey, 1882), p.29.

Wuthering Heights. However, it is firmly tied to a golden past by both the main fireplace and the simple turf fire and by quoting this already nostalgic passage decades later Pickford reinforces this association. The open chimney would have been used for cooking as well as heating the room but the (absent) 'finest register stove' that represents modernity might simply have served to heat the room.⁵ Although superficially rural this association between northernness and earlier times may link to Peter Mandler's suggestion that the cult of 'Olden Time' was if anything greater in the northern industrial towns than in the South.⁶

Porridge too appears several times in *Sylvia's Lovers* to reinforce a picture of domestic peace and comfort in a northern farmhouse, often implicitly contrasted with the wild northern outdoors. When Daniel Robson is confined to the house, by a combination of weather and his resulting rheumatism, he interferes in 'boiling potatoes, the making of porridge, all work on which [his wife] specially piqued herself'.⁷ At a different time, Robson shares a supper of porridge and milk with Kester, his farm servant, after returning from a tough day's work pasturing sheep on distant moors – in contrast to the more urban, and perhaps urbane, Philip who is trying to teach the young Sylvia to read after a day working indoors at Fosters' shop. Robson and Kester share porridge again, this time for breakfast, later in the story, as Robson recovers from his encounter with the press gang. So, although it represents comfort and domesticity, this can be seen as a rugged masculine form of domesticity, chiming with the male and working class characterisation of northernness noted by, for example, Dave Russell.⁸

Underlying and partly in tension with the peaceful northern homeliness and wholesomeness is the idea of the wild and primitive North. This association of wildness and uncivilised behaviour with porridge is at the centre of one of Emily Brontë's scenes. Isabella arrives at an unwelcoming Wuthering Heights after her marriage to Heathcliff and finds the only supper on offer is the porridge about to be made by the manservant Joseph. She decides that to make it edible she should take over the preparation but produces what is, by her own admission, 'a rather rough mess' unsuitable for civilised people to eat.⁹ But this does not deter Hareton Earnshaw, who has been brought up by Heathcliff to occupy a servile position

⁵ Register stoves were a new luxury in the late eighteenth century and Todd Willmert suggests that in the early nineteenth century the distinction between grates and stoves was rather fluid ('Heating Methods and Their Impact on Soane's Work: Lincoln's Inn Fields and Dulwich Picture Gallery', *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 52.1 (1993), 26-58 (p.38)) <<https://www.jstor.com/stable/990756>> [accessed 25 June 2020].

⁶ Peter Mandler, "'Olden Time' Revisited", in *Tudorism: Historical Imagination and the Appropriation of the Sixteenth Century*, ed. by Tatania C. String and Marcus Bull (London: British Academy, 2011), pp.13-35 (p.24).

⁷ *Sylvia's Lovers*, pp.45,94,269.

⁸ Russell, 'Culture', p.273.

⁹ *Wuthering Heights*, pp.124-25.

after his father's financial ruin and Heathcliff's taking possession of Wuthering Heights. Not only does he eat it, but to her horror, he accompanies it by drinking milk direct from the communal pitcher. Here it is behaviour around porridge rather than the food item itself that signals uncouthness, part of Brontë's image of the way the wild country round Wuthering Heights links to wild people.

I shall return to the question of poverty, hunger and the North in Chapter 3 but links can be made between hunger and porridge, perhaps for its association with workhouse gruel. In the largely urban settings of Elisabeth Gaskell's *Mary Barton* and *North and South*, porridge (or in some cases the type, or lack, of porridge) is not related to comfort but to poverty or hunger. When Alice Wilson invites Mary Barton and Margaret Jennings to a small tea party, Margaret entertains them by singing the 'Oldham Weaver' – a dialect song about the weaver's hard lot. He has to live on nettles and 'Waterloo porridge the best o'eawr food, Oi'm tellin' yo' true'.¹⁰ Waterloo porridge is oatmeal porridge made with water only. None of the three women are well off so this ties in with their own experience. In a more direct reference to porridge as basic subsistence food, Mrs Davenport, a poor widow cannot afford to send her son to school but he is not allowed to work under the Factory Act. She regrets 'this law o' theirs, keeping childer fra' factory work, whether they be weakly or strong. There is our Ben; why, porridge seems to go no way wi' him, he eats so much'. The latter reference is northern in the sense that the incident takes place in a northern town and it is expressed in dialect but it chimes with an overall picture of northern urban poverty. In *North and South*, when Thornton senior died leaving large debts, John Thornton and his mother 'absolutely lived on water-porridge for years' in order to repay them.¹¹ While this is perhaps more correctly described as frugality than poverty it resonates with ideas of dour northern self-denial.

Charlotte Brontë makes similar use of porridge (and its lack) as a sign of poverty. In *Shirley*, the family of William Farren who has been thrown out of work by mechanisation, have 'only porridge, and too little of that'.¹² In *Jane Eyre*, after she leaves Mr Rochester's house following the revelation of his first marriage, Jane begs cold porridge intended to be fed to pigs because she is so hungry.¹³ The northernness may not be explicit in the incident but adds to the overall picture of a bleak north country.

¹⁰ *Mary Barton*, pp.35-37,88.

¹¹ *North and South*, p.129.

¹² *Shirley*, p.158.

¹³ *Jane Eyre*, p. 355.

Typically newspaper reports of hunger do not make the same sort of reference to specific staple foods as we find in novels, but the *Leeds Mercury* reports in 1840 on one case where a parish apprentice, in the service of a Mr Jones, was charged with neglecting his work and general misconduct. The defendant had said that he did not get enough to eat and:

his master only took two penny worth of milk each morning, from which two cream jugs were filled for the use of the family, and the remainder was made into six pint pots of porridge for himself and the two other apprentices.¹⁴

The issue here seems to be that he felt a diet of porridge, rather than the quantity, was inadequate. The magistrates clearly had mixed feelings and 'admonished the lad [but] recommended Mr Jones to give him another trial'.

The Anti-Corn Law League activist William Cooke Taylor saw oatcakes and porridge as relating to the hunger he observed in Lancashire and Cheshire.¹⁵ He noted a family whose only meal for 24 hours was two small plates of meal porridge and thin oaten cake along with very weak tea and little sugar, clearly feeling that the reliance on oats rather than wheat made the hunger worse. Later he refers to 'oatmeal and water' as another example of extreme deprivation and quotes Mr Blackshaw, of the Stockport (workhouse) Union, 'A great many families exist on potatoes and meal, and occasionally a little animal food'. He comments again on the lack of wheaten bread which he believes is more nutritious. This view is in contrast with the advocacy of oats discussed below and it is not clear what the consensus of the time was about relative nutritional values or how this relates to longstanding perceptions of the greater digestibility of white wheaten bread.

Tough and proud northerners

The characteristics of northern people identified in Chapter 1 are multidimensional but two aspects were linked to staple grains. There is an element of toughness in the masculine aspects of homeliness discussed above but it can be seen more clearly in an episode in *Wuthering Heights*. When Linton Heathcliff (just brought back from the south of England after his mother's death) rejects milk porridge when, in the servant Joseph's words, his cousin 'Maister Hareton nivar ate nowt else, when he wer a little un', he is shown as a 'dainty chap', a southerner unsuited to life at Wuthering Heights.¹⁶ Here we have othering, not from

¹⁴ 'A Refractory Apprentice', *Leeds Mercury*, 19 December 1840, p.7.

¹⁵ William C. Taylor, *Notes of a Tour in the Manufacturing Districts of Lancashire: A Series of Letters to His Grace the Archbishop of Dublin*, 2nd edn (London: Duncan and Malcolm, 1842), pp.41, 79, 200-01.

¹⁶ *Wuthering Heights*, p.184

the dominant group but by the lower status northerner, albeit on his own territory. The trope of toughness was not restricted to novels. At a vegetarian meeting in Leeds in 1853 it was noted that oatmeal was 91 parts in the hundred solid matter compared with 85¹/₂ for even brown wheat flour. The speaker went on to explain:

No wonder then that the men of Yorkshire (who liked porridge, and knew the virtue of "thick'uns") should live well and build up the body in health and strength [...]. He wished these articles of food were as well-known in the southern counties as they were in Yorkshire and Lancashire.¹⁷

So again the implied other is the 'soft southerner'. The meeting went on to discuss the view - rather more mainstream in the twenty-first century than it was then - that 'all nutrients are derived from the vegetable kingdom [...] if they would eat flesh they only took in a circuitous and expensive way the very principles which the animal derived from the produce', so, perhaps, also giving an example of another northern stereotype of being 'careful' with money.

Another component of the northern stereotype is pride in roots, as seen in the *Leeds Mercury* report on the Craven Agricultural Show in Skipton, which served a wider area than the current Craven district:

The weather was most favourable, and the attendance of visitors quite as large as usual. They included not only persons from that district of Yorkshire, but also from part of North Lancashire, as well as from Manchester [...]. This was the first year there have been prizes for oatcakes, and 11 competitors came forward.¹⁸

A special prize was given for the best basket of (riddled) oatcakes and was won by a Mr Braithwaite. The innovation was clearly successful and oatcakes continued to be shown at least to the end of our period in 1870, suggesting this pride in place and in specifically northern foods persisted. Whether the visiting Mancunians and Lancastrians embraced oatcakes as their own local food or simply appreciated it as that of neighbours in the West Riding of Yorkshire is not clear but the ethos is one of shared northern pride.

However oatcakes can more clearly signify local identification than an overall North. There are two main types of oatcakes: the beaten or rolled clapbread, and the poured or thrown

¹⁷ 'Vegetarian Soiree at Leeds', *Leeds Mercury*, 14 May 1853, p.8. Vegetarianism was strong in the North at this time, see James Gregory, *Of Victorians and Vegetarians: The Vegetarian Movement in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (London: Tauris, 2007), p.34.

¹⁸ 'Craven Agricultural Show, Yesterday', *Leeds Mercury*, 29 August 1863, p.5; 'Craven Agricultural Society's Show', *Leeds Mercury*, 29 August 1870, p.8.

riddlebread associated with different areas within the North.¹⁹ Gaskell uses them to highlight intra-regional differences, in particular between Cumbria and more southerly parts of the North. At the tea party mentioned above, Alice offers her precious 'oatbread of the north, the "clap-bread" of Cumberland and Westmoreland' (that is the two traditional counties forming most of modern Cumbria) as a special treat, taken from her old deal box.²⁰ The two girls' enjoyment of this dainty provides the prompt for Alice's account of how she left home and moved to Manchester in search of work. Although her migration, initially in service, was a relatively short distance in modern terms, she had never been able to return home while her mother was still alive, or even go to her funeral, but she now hankered after one last visit to her birthplace while she herself still lived. So for her it was county, or even more local, roots that had the emotional pull. Bell Robson, in *Sylvia's Lovers*, had also moved from her Cumbrian birthplace, to marry a Yorkshireman and settle on a farm near the east coast.²¹ She too attaches importance to the clapbread of her youth. In this case she has a 'great rack of clap-bread' hung in her house symbolising how she thinks she is a better housekeeper than, and generally superior to, the Yorkshire women among whom she now lives and who make the 'leavened and partly sour kind' of oatcake. Later in the novel, while waiting for news of her husband Daniel's trial for attacking press gang collaborators, she encourages Sylvia (their daughter) to make clapbread 'for him', thus demonstrating a bond within the family but also asserting her Cumbrian identity.

Conclusion

Although by the mid-nineteenth century wheat had largely replaced oats as the staple grain of most people in the North, oatcakes and porridge held a symbolic association with northern identities in a variety of ways. Oatcakes offered an image of northern simplicity and wholesomeness that was often tinged with nostalgia. Closely related to this were the ideas of northern homeliness and domestic peace. While this included an element of 'good housewifery' it also had a masculine aspect. Porridge could carry a similar message of comfort, often implicitly contrasted with the wild northern outdoors. However, especially in an urban setting, porridge was sometimes related not to comfort but to poverty and hunger. The idea of northerners as primitive and uncouth could also be signalled, if not by porridge itself, by behaviours around eating porridge. Other stereotypes such as the tough northerner or northerners' pride in roots were also a part of the discourse, these particular characteristics being linked to porridge and oatcakes respectively. The local variation underpinning northern

¹⁹ Brears, *Yorkshire*, p.98 and *Traditional Food in Cumbria* (Carlisle: Bookcase, 2017), pp.161-68.

²⁰ *Mary Barton*, pp.30-32.

²¹ *Sylvia's Lovers*, pp.35-36,313.

identities can be seen in the way different types of oatcake were favoured in different districts and this difference could have real emotional charge for people who had migrated within the north. So these staple foods carried different messages in different contexts. The dominance of oats rather than other grains in this analysis derives from its dependence largely on sources relating to the 'near North' and to Yorkshire in particular. The extent to which barley and rye play the same role in areas where they were important foods remains to be explored.

CHAPTER 3: THE HUNGRY NORTH

This chapter will consider how hunger was associated with the North in two periods, the 1840s, known as the 'Hungry Forties', and the Cotton Famine, when hunger and its causes were important in the national discourse. I will argue that in the first of these there was an implicit association between the North and hunger despite probably equal rural poverty in the south of England and urban squalor in London. Conversely in the latter period distress in one part of the region caught the national imagination and was associated with the North as a whole. However I will start by outlining the broader political context of mid-century hunger.

In the early nineteenth century, arrangements for the relief of poverty and hunger were already coming under pressure in a number of ways.¹ The New Poor Law of 1834 aimed to remove access to outdoor relief for the able-bodied and ensure that conditions in the workhouse were 'less eligible' than those of labourers in work, while retaining the principle of settlement that tied individuals' right to assistance to their parish of birth. This was widely criticised and gave rise to heated local conflicts. Scandals such as the Bridgwater 'gruel question' and the Andover 'cannibalism' accusations took the national stage, pointing to mismanagement of workhouses. The mid-century was a time when food, or perhaps more usually the lack of food, was prominent in public and political discourse. In 1839 Thomas Carlyle, the historian and social commentator, had coined the phrase 'The Condition of England Question' to refer to what we would now call issues of poverty and inequality. Although the designation of the 'Hungry Forties' did not come into use until the twentieth century, the years 1837-43 were ones of deep economic depression and poor harvests.

Against this background emerged two contrasting political campaigns that were relevant to food and hunger: the Anti-Corn Law League (ACLL) and Chartism.² The Corn Law prevented imports of wheat until its home-grown price reached a very high level. The declared intention was to promote domestic production and price stability but it was widely regarded as prioritising the landed interest. The ACLL was formed in Manchester in 1839 to seek repeal. While it became a national organisation its headquarters remained there and the majority of its affiliated societies were in London, Lancashire and Yorkshire. For many of its adherents repeal was not simply a matter of cheaper and more plentiful food, though that

¹ S.G. Checkland & E.O.A. Checkland, 'Introduction' in *The Poor Law Report 1834*, ed. by S.G. Checkland & E.O.A. Checkland (1834; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974), pp. 11-43; Peter Gurney, *Wanting and Having: Popular Politics and Liberal Consumerism in England, 1830-70* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015), pp.65,316; Thomas Carlyle, *Chartism*, 2nd edn (London: James Fraser, 1840), p.1 <<https://archive.org/details/chartism00carlgoog/page/n7/mode/2up?q=condition>> [accessed 01 July 2020]; Cannadine, *Victorious Century*, p.202-08.

² Gurney, *Wanting and Having: Popular Politics*, pp.7-8; Cannadine, *Victorious Century*, pp.208-22.

was clearly a direct concern both for working-class supporters and for manufacturing employers who saw low food costs as helping keep wages low. Rather it was part of a wider issue of free trade – an almost religious enthusiasm. The Corn Laws were eventually repealed in 1846 during the Irish Potato Famine.

Although the roots of Chartism go back further, the limited nature of the 1832 electoral reforms was a key point in its development. The Reform Act had removed some of the worst abuses of the old electoral system and enfranchised many middle-class men. It had not however offered anything to working-class people and indeed had narrowed the franchise in a few places. The Charter, published in 1838, made six demands including universal manhood suffrage. Although the Chartist movement was a national one it showed much regional and local diversity and was strong both in the textile areas of Lancashire and Yorkshire and in the North-East. While the specific demands related to the electoral system, the movement had wider cultural and economic aspects. As Methodist minister J.R. Stephens declared at a major Chartist meeting, suffrage was 'a knife and fork question [...] a bread and cheese question'.³ Other Chartists such as James Bronterre O'Brien drew on partly invented tradition to describe their vision of a 'moral economy' where basic necessities such as food were not left entirely to an unregulated market. The phrase 'moral economy of the crowd' has been given wide currency by E.P. Thompson's using it to argue that eighteenth-century food riots were at least partly caused by a perception that traditional rights and customs enforcing fair prices were being lost.⁴ For Thompson the riots were a form of bottom-up price control as earlier legislation was repealed or fell into disuse. As he indicates the term came to be used in a very wide range of contexts beyond that he originally intended.

Both these movements built on and fed into the debate about 'The Condition of England'.⁵ Although the economy generally improved in the mid-1840s a further downturn was to come in 1847-48. Meanwhile the Irish potato famine of 1845-48, and the role of hunger in the origins of the 1848 continental European revolutions, kept issues of hunger and starvation to the fore. From about 1850, however, short-term cyclical fluctuations in the economy were less significant than long-term growth. Food prices were high in 1853-54 during the Crimean War, and a commercial and financial crisis in 1857 coincided with the First Indian War of

³ Edward Royle, *Chartism*, 2nd edn (Harlow: Longman, 1986), pp.11,66,134,38.

⁴ Gurney, *Wanting and Having: Popular Politics*, p.3,54; E.P. Thompson, *Customs in Common* (London: Penguin, 1993), pp.185-89,337,351.

⁵ Cannadine, *Victorious Century*, pp.216,240,319. Burnett, pp.123-24.

Independence, but the overall effect of these was small compared with earlier disruptions. This is not however to say that no-one was ever hungry or that inequality had gone.

The 'Cotton Famine' of the early 1860s brought particular hardship in Lancashire.⁶ At the time this was perceived as the result of accepting the Unionist blockade on cotton during the American Civil War, and so supporting both the abolition of slavery and Britain's strategic interests but as John Walton notes it 'conveniently masked a severe cyclical depression'.⁷ The distress was distinguished by two things. First the underlying shortage was not of food but of work: there was widespread unemployment and short time working in the county, and hence food poverty and hunger. Second, and perhaps for the first time, the workers affected had been among the better off. Many had small savings or household goods that could be sold and were reluctant to turn to the Poor Law.⁸

The 'Hungry Forties'

In Chapter 2 we saw how porridge was used in nineteenth century fiction to portray the North as a place of poverty and hunger but other novels make a link between hunger and the North more directly. Frances Trollope's *The Life and Adventures of Michael Armstrong, the Factory Boy* is probably the first 'industrial' novel – defined as one which attempts to depict the great transformation of the industrial revolution or to grapple with its significant social dislocations.⁹ In a north-country mill, pauper apprentices exhibit 'the frightful spectacle of young features pinched by famine'. The northern identity may not be explicit but these hungry apprentices are archetypal figures of the industrial North. Exactly where the provincial parts of Benjamin Disraeli's *Sybil* are set is elusive, and the subtitle ('or *The Two Nations*') clearly refers to class not region.¹⁰ However general references to the North, ranging from mention of the ruins of Marney Abbey as the 'unrivalled remains of one of the greatest religious houses of the North' to 'The whole of the north of England, and a great part of the midland counties were in a state of disaffection' situate the hunger and deprivation found in it as northern.

⁶ Cannadine, *Victorious Century*, pp. 245,319.

⁷ John Walton, 'The North West' in *The Cambridge Social History of Britain 1750-1950: 1: Regions and Communities*, ed. by F.M.L. Thompson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp.355-414 (p.386).

⁸ Gurney, *Wanting and Having: Popular Politics*, p.264-67.

⁹ 'The Industrial Novel', in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of British Literature*, ed. by David Scott Kastan <<https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10/1093/acref/978019516928-e-0231>> [accessed 9 June 2020]; Frances Trollope, *The Life and Adventures of Michael Armstrong, the Factory Boy* (London: Henry Colborn, 1840), pp.178,186.

¹⁰ Benjamin Disraeli, *Sybil*, ed. by Thom Braun (1845; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1980), pp 96,443.

Corn Law campaigners also saw the industrial north as a place of hunger. William Cooke Taylor, whom we encountered in Chapter 2, toured the manufacturing districts in 1842 and found plenty of the evidence he was seeking.¹¹ In the streets of Colne were children eating decayed vegetables and a woman 'in very last stage of extenuation' suckling a 15-month-old who 'could scarcely draw a single drop of nutriment from her exhausted breast'. In Hyde 'abundance of food has been changed into a superabundance of famine'. This confirmed his expectation that hunger was widespread in the North. His concern about hunger in the industrial areas was greater because he saw those affected as hard-working northerners. For him the factory workers were more deserving because they were respectable and were not in the habit of relying on public or charitable funds. He deplored the fact that 'clever intelligent operatives and mechanics' were driven to apply to for relief. He noted a workhouse surgeon's opinion that two people had died because of want of food, both soon after seeking relief. They had left it too late from a 'spirit of independence'. However, there is an unspoken implication that this respectability was a little fragile. He asserts that the Anti-Corn Law League alone was preserving public peace in the North of England and commented that 'Ample granaries have been kept locked in the sight of starving people [...] [who] made no effort to burst the doors'. Hard-working respectable northerners could, he implies, turn to wildness *in extremis*.

Taylor also challenges the idea that the factory operatives of Lancashire should be content with any wages that were higher than those of agricultural labourers. He linked this view to ideas of racial superiority. Otherwise, why not go further (he wondered) and expect them to be content 'with a handful of rice like the Hindoos'?¹² He is shocked at the idea they may be reduced to the Irish 'potatoes and point' (i.e. plain potatoes with a single fish for the family at which people may only look or point). So while there is an element of othering in his view of the northern working class he places them in a hierarchy above both agricultural labourers and other races.

In *Mary Barton*, written in the 1840s and set in an ill-defined period starting slightly earlier, Gaskell expounds a closer relationship between hunger and the North and links this with a sense of (in)justice. Following a fire at Carson's mill, John Barton, who was on short time, and his friend George Wilson, who was laid off from Carson's and was reluctantly depending on the wages of his grown-up son, visited the Davenports who were even worse off. Bob Davenport was also laid off but was ill too and they had had 'no money fra' th' town' because they feared claiming relief would risk them being sent back to Buckinghamshire, where

¹¹ Taylor, *Notes*, pp.78-79,184,81,214,201-02,212,221.

¹² Taylor, *Notes*, pp.161,176,161.

Davenport was born, under the settlement laws.¹³ The two men had brought some food they could ill spare:

The children clamoured again for bread; but this time Barton took a piece first to the poor helpless, hopeless woman [...]. She took the bread, when it was put into her hand, and broke a bit, but could not eat. She was past hunger [...]. 'She's well-nigh clemmed,' said Barton. 'Folk so say one mustn't give clemmed people much to eat; but bless us she'll eat nought.'

The Davenports' situation is in stark contrast with the Carsons' house where Mrs Carson has ordered: 'her breakfast upstairs [...] the cold partridge as was left from yesterday, and put plenty of cream in her coffee'. Meanwhile in 'the luxurious library, at the well-spread breakfast-table, sat the two Mr Carsons, father and son'. In this vignette we have the North as a place of hunger but of hunger made all the worse by the plenty that can be seen alongside it. The dialect reinforces this as northern and the incident points up the offence to the northern sense of justice and fairness.

Association with place could however be more local. Robert Walsh Pounder was a Leeds artisan in the wool-finishing trade and an associate of Robert Oastler, the factory reformer.¹⁴ He suffered hunger and poverty himself and wrote: 'The masters his foste [*forced*] the poore men in the street by lowering the men there wages some 20 to 40 percent below thyr allwredy starvation wages'. He gives geographically specific information about the closed mills and the disturbances but his writing reflects his local dialect suggesting a rootedness. This is reinforced by his reference to Oastler as 'Our old Yorksher King' – his own variant on Oastler's more common designation as the 'Factory King'. Pounder's views are also tinged with nostalgia. He looks back with a neighbour to a perceived golden age of plenty having:

plesent conversation together about old times [...] when a man could have some use for is flour chists and is meal bins & is gantres & and [*sic*] is croucks naild to the beams of the house to peak a good fat pig up this time of the yeare.

The following year, the *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent* published a letter from 'Will Hunger' who exhorted his readers to petition the Queen against the Corn Laws in terms that called very much to their local identity:

Let her know your misery from want of adequate food [...] Working Men of Sheffield! [...]. Men of Hallamshire! be yourselves; meet, meet, and address your Queen; many

¹³ *Mary Barton*, pp.64,61,68.

¹⁴ *Pounder Notebooks*, pp.1-2,42-43,83,66.

of you have unjustly had no voice in the late election, but by such addresses you will accomplish more than if you had possession of a vote.¹⁵

Again, we have a more local version of northern identity, possibly suggesting that there is a class dimension. Working men (and regardless of Will Hunger's own circumstances he was explicitly addressing working men) had a narrower concept of their local geographical identity, probably reflecting the reality of more restricted experience and communications. We will return to the relationship between class and the granularity of local identity in other contexts.

We have seen hunger and the North reflected in fiction, in the press, and in travel and life writing. These reflections in turn influenced the general discourse. James Vernon suggests that in the 1840s *The Times* discovered hunger and sees this as beginning a longer-term trend in which the politicisation of food and hunger was driven by the press.¹⁶ Peter Gurney however argues more convincingly that both other papers and novelists such as Charles Dickens and Elizabeth Gaskell were drawing middle-class attention to working-class hunger as well, and that pressure from below was also important.¹⁷ The after-life of one scene from *Mary Barton* shows this. Job Legh explains to Mary that he is not interested in joining her father in his trip to Glasgow on Trades' Union business. He had joined the Union simply for the sake of peace and says:

I think half a loaf better than no bread. I would work for low wages rather than sit idle and starve. But come the Trades' Union, and says, "Well, if you take the half loaf, we'll worry you out of your life. Will you be clemmed, or will you be worried?" Now clemming is a quiet death, and worrying isn't, so I choose clemming, and comes unto th' Union. But I wish they would leave me free, if I am a fool.¹⁸

While his explicit point that he had succumbed to pressure to join the Union despite his belief that doing so (and going on strike) made hunger more likely, the way it is expressed and specifically the use of the Lancashire word 'clemming' signal northern identity. The influence of fiction on the wider discourse of the time can be seen in the way the passage was widely quoted in the press. For example as late as 1859 the *Morning Post*, a conservative London paper, was quoting it in support of their view that 'if details of most strikes were recorded,

¹⁵ 'To the Reformers of Sheffield', *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 31 July 1841, p.6.

¹⁶ James Vernon, *Hunger: A Modern History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), p.18.

¹⁷ Peter Gurney, 'Wanting and Having: New Histories of Scarcity and Excess in Modern Britain', *Twentieth Century British History*, 20.1 (2009), 97-109 (pp.98-99).

¹⁸ *Mary Barton*, p.197

they would contain innumerable proofs of moral cowardice'.¹⁹ While the primary issue here is of Trade Unionism there is a clear recognition of a regional element to perceptions of, and reactions to, hunger – whether or not that reflects a physical reality. Here the press was reflecting a trope already articulated in fiction.

The Lancashire Cotton Famine

While there were periods of economic downturn or food shortages during the 1850s it was the Lancashire Cotton Famine of the early 1860s that next gave hunger in northern England the same traction in the national discourse as it had had in the 1840s. Whatever the causes, neither the unemployed cotton workers nor the small traders who relied on their custom could be expected to have planned for this, nor were they comfortable relying on the parish. They were people who had in Vernon's terms 'learn[ed] the discipline of the market economy'.²⁰ They were both modern workers and modern consumers. They could not be accused of choosing to be paupers.

From early 1862 reporting of the Cotton Famine made explicit reference to a North-South divide. An article published in the *Bradford Observer*, though copied as was common then from another paper, the London based free-trade Conservative *Saturday Review*, reported that:

The south of England is divided from the north by a great chasm [...] there is great misery in the North [...] the sufferers are bearing their sorrows with a touching and generous patience [...] sustained in their tribulation by the proud consciousness that they are assisting to uphold a great national principle, and are helping the government of the Queen in pursuing the difficult path of right at a very critical moment.²¹

Here we have Lancashire workers standing for the North as a whole and at the same time showing their pride in a wider national identity by enduring hunger in the English or British interest – this interpretation focusing on the British strategic interest in remaining neutral in the American Civil War rather than the cyclic economic factors. The extent of the workers' agency in accepting this suffering is not explored – it is assumed. Indeed the writer goes on to suggest that 'The starving factory labourer [...] enduring all that neutrality entails, has done more to realise [...] the duties and privilege, of an Englishman than if he had gone to the polling-booth at a dozen elections'. Many of these men (though not of course the women)

¹⁹ *Morning Post*, 24 March 1859, pp.4-5.

²⁰ Vernon, p.20.

²¹ 'The Forbearance of the Poor', *Bradford Observer*, 13 February 1862, p.7.

would be granted the franchise under the Second Reform Act five years later, but the suggestion that starving is in some way a substitute for voting is strange. Others made a more comprehensible link. Gladstone promised that 'When Parliament again considered the franchise the conduct of the men of Lancashire would be taken into account' and while the final form of the Second Reform Act was not Gladstone's, this perspective played a part in the debate.²²

A more complex set of northern identities related to this period of hunger was articulated in the Liberal *Leeds Mercury* later in the year. In an article headlined 'The Distress in Lancashire' it set the scene for regional solidarity: 'The rest of England is sending in subscriptions [...]. At such a time as this, Leeds and the rest of Yorkshire must come forward'.²³ This theme was developed the following week by a piece bringing in nuances of gender and class:

The ladies of Leeds have at length taken the first step, and only the first step, towards one of the most effectual modes of helping the distressed poor in Lancashire. [...] while in another department gentlemen may often render considerable assistance.²⁴

We are left in no doubt that men and women (or rather ladies and gentlemen) should keep to their separate spheres in this demonstration of regional feeling. Similarly, different classes should make separate contributions. The working people of Yorkshire are expected to give but 'Masters have a very proper delicacy in asking their men to contribute [...]. We appeal to the mill-hands of Yorkshire, many of whom are getting first-rate wages, on behalf of their suffering fellow-workmen in Lancashire'. Delicacy may have prevented the individual master from pressurising his men but it was no bar to the newspaper of the employing classes telling the workforce as a whole how they should spend their wages. The *Mercury* demanded: 'shall it be said that the great industrial West Riding was deficient? If not, it must be up and doing'. As well as signalling overall regional identity the *Mercury* is making a particular link between the Pennine industrial areas – or at least asserting that fellow-feeling is to be expected in the working class of the areas.

At the end of December 1862 *The Standard*, a Conservative London paper, reported on 'Distress in the North' focussing on one particular depressed cotton town:

²² Gurney, *Wanting and Having: Popular Politics*, p.289.

²³ 'The Distress in Lancashire', *Leeds Mercury*, 19 September 1862, p.2.

²⁴ 'Relief of Lancashire Distress', *Leeds Mercury*, 23 September 1862, p.2.

Accrington affords no exception to the general disinclination existing amongst the operatives respecting making a parade of their distress, [...] [and] in their foolish and mistaken pride, endeavour to struggle onwards without assistance from the relief committee or the parish [...]. The operatives themselves have considerably lightened their position by their habits of providence and economy, as exemplified by their establishment of a co-operative society.²⁵

Not only is there sympathy but there is also a strong consciousness that these people were not responsible for their unemployment. They were to be admired for their reluctance to claim relief, but at the same time it was foolish of them not to do so. So we have the proud independent northerner but can also detect, as we could with the *Mercury*, a degree of othering of the working-class northerner by a patronising middle-class press. However the depiction is largely positive; not only were the mill workers willing to work but they had previously worked hard and saved. They would have been able to support themselves through normal downturns in trade but not through the exceptional circumstances of the Cotton Famine. Here we have the North as a site of hunger and poverty but whose people demonstrate the characteristics of prudence, pride and self-reliance – closely related to but not perhaps identical to the independence of outlook and spirit of justice and fairness suggested earlier as one of the characteristics of northernness.

A similar picture of hard-working respectable operatives who were reluctant to resort to the Poor Law and who did not deserve to be treated like paupers can be seen in the newspapers of the cotton areas themselves. The *Blackburn Standard* (another Conservative paper) published 'The Lancashire Operative's Appeal' which refers to 'our' reluctance to go begging, having to sell household goods to buy food, and in the end being reduced to appealing to 'our country'. Whether this is national charity or the dreaded Poor Law, it is a last resort:

Pray help us, we are starving;
And cannot work obtain;
To go about a begging
Runs sore against the grain.
[...]
Pray help us, we are starving;
Our chattels one by one
We've had to sell to buy us food,
And now the last is gone.
[...]
Pray help us, we are starving;
To our country we apply,

²⁵ 'Distress in the North (Accrington)', *The Standard*, 30 December 1862, p.7.

She promptly must support us,
Or we shall droop and die.²⁶

This appeal is from a self-identified Lancastrian to 'our country'. There is a clear northern identity but it is specific to county and expressed in the context of a wider claim on the whole country. Again we have self-reliance and pride underlying a reluctance to seek help.

During 1862 the Lancashire dialect poet Edwin Waugh wrote a number of pieces about the poverty he saw in the area in the local press. These were subsequently published in book form and, although he was local, they have in some ways the tenor of a sympathetic travel writer rather than a journalist reporting on immediate news or expounding a specific editorial line. The accounts are in standard English but he made liberal use of dialect quotations including of short passages of poetry such as:

"Mother, heaw leets we han no brade,
Heawever con it be?
Iv aw don't get some brade to eat,
Aw think 'at aw mun dee."

The direct message is very simple – a hungry child is asking his mother for bread and is fearful he will die if he does not get any, but the dialect positions this hunger as being of as well as in the North. Waugh reports visiting a cottage where there was no furniture except the chair an old woman sat on and she explained that she 'did sell the childer's bedstead [...] sold the bed from under them [...]. We all sleep on straw now'.²⁷ In this we can see a clear case of the 'respectable operative' family having to sell off their hard-won consumer goods to survive.

The interest shown by writers and readers of fiction in 'The Condition of England' appears to have worked its way out by the 1860s and I have found little reference to the Cotton Famine in novels of the time. Clare Pettitt suggests that *Sylvia's Lovers* (written during the Cotton Famine but set in the Napoleonic wars and on the east coast of Yorkshire well away from the textile areas) was influenced by Gaskell's experience of the way a distant war impacted on life in Manchester.²⁸ However the famine of 1800 described by Gaskell does not seem to

²⁶ 'Poetry', *Blackburn Standard*, 26 November 1862, p.4.

²⁷ Edwin, *Home-Life of Lancashire Factory Folk during the Cotton Famine* (1862; London: Simpkin, Marshall, 1867), pp.v,163,55
<<https://archive.org/details/homelifelancash00wauggoog/page/n8/mode/2up>> [accessed 27 May 2021].

²⁸ Clare Pettitt, 'Time Lag and Elizabeth Gaskell's Transatlantic Imagination', *Victorian Studies*, 54:4 (September 2012), 599-623 (p.601).

have any regional dimension. It is attributed explicitly to harvest failure, war (with France), and corn laws.²⁹

²⁹ *Sylvia's Lovers*, p.481.

Conclusion

In what subsequently became known as the Hungry Forties there was an implicit association between the North and hunger, despite probably equal rural poverty in the south of England and urban squalor in London. While hunger and poverty were core images, we can see in some of the portrayals of hunger, the wild north, the hard-working northerner, and a northern sense of (un)fairness. There are elements of nostalgia for a happier era but not perhaps as strong as Chartist ideas around the old moral economy might lead one to expect. For some northernness was focussed on the industrial areas either side of the Pennines. For others, particularly for working-class writers, it was a more local identification with town or county. A growing understanding of hunger as a humanitarian issue had multiple drivers and was not just a product of a few London papers, or indeed the press alone.

Two decades later, reporting of the Lancashire Cotton Famine in both the national and the regional press identified the resulting hunger as intrinsically northern rather than simply located in the North. Sometimes Lancashire appeared to stand for the North as a whole, at other times it defined a specific (county level) northern identity distinct for example from that of Yorkshire. While, predictably, the dominant characteristic was of the North as a place of poverty and hunger, we can also see a strong secondary association with the idea of the independent and proud northerner who was also hard-working, though the suggestion of a wild North has gone. These were prudent, respectable people who had made appropriate provision for the ups and downs of life. They were not the paupers, not even the deserving impotent poor, for whom the 1834 Poor Law relief had been designed. The Cotton Famine did not however have the same traction in mid nineteenth century fiction and travel writing. To the extent to which it fed into contemporary literature it was primarily through the vernacular poetry of the time.

CHAPTER 4: PERFORMANCE AND PLENTY

The performative nature of identity, including place-based identities, is well recognised, as is the ritual significance of food and its consumption. Both these have been analysed from a wide range of perspectives from the abstract to ones firmly rooted in lived experience.¹ For example Karl Spracklen theorises the performance of northernness via shared myths linking it to ideas of Frazerian sympathetic magic, while Kate Fox grounds her understanding of northernness in her own othering when performing in different professional contexts. She stands out as a northerner on Radio 4, as a woman on the comedy club circuit. Sidney Mintz and Christine Du Bois identify eating and ritual as one of the richest topics in their review of food ethnographies and argue that ritual meals perform critical social functions. Margaret Visser describes this more concretely with an account of a twentieth century North American teenager learning to eat spaghetti in the approved way at adult social events. In this chapter I examine some ways in which the consumption of food played a particular part in the performance of northern identities in the mid-nineteenth century. I will consider three strands of performance: conspicuous consumption and extravagance, the depiction of the North as a place of simple wholesome plenty, and how the retention of less fashionable meal patterns was associated with traditional northern hospitality. This more prosperous and plentiful picture was in tension with the image of the hungry North described in the previous chapter.

Conspicuous consumption and extravagance

The sometimes indirect, but nevertheless widespread, association of the North with hunger, described in the previous chapter, is balanced by an association of northernness, perhaps particularly of the industrial North, with extravagance of various kinds. The North was a place where 'new money' was being made. The successful mill owners were not necessarily from 'gentlemanly' backgrounds; many were self made. At the same time factories and mines provided some relatively highly-paid work. There was also more work for women and children meaning that, whatever the downsides of this, some families had higher incomes than one breadwinner's wage. The combination of social mobility and inequality provided the opportunity both for conspicuous consumption and for the disapproval of its showiness.

¹ Spracklen, p.6; Kathryn Elizabeth Fox, 'Stand Up and Be (En)Counterd: Resistance in Solo Stand-up Performance by Northern English Women, Marginalised on the Basis of Gender, Class and Regional Identity' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Leeds, 2017), p.4; Sidney W. Mintz and Christine M. Du Bois, 'The Anthropology of Food and Eating', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 31 (2002), 99-119 (pp.99,107); Margaret Visser, *The Rituals of Dinner: The Origins, Evolution, Eccentricities, and Meaning of Table Manners* (New York: Penguin, 1992), p.17.

In *North and South*, Mrs Thornton (the widowed mother of a mill owner) gives a sumptuous dinner party, attended by Margaret Hale and her father who have moved to Milton from the south of England. At this:

Margaret with her London cultivated taste, felt the number of delicacies to be oppressive; one half of the quantity would have been enough, and the effect lighter and more elegant. But it was one of Mrs Thornton's rigorous laws of hospitality, that of each separate dainty enough should be provided for all the guests to partake, if they felt inclined.²

Here we are presented with a more extravagant lifestyle in the North. We can recognise a version of conspicuous consumption that is not only extravagant but demonstrates a lack of sophistication verging on the uncivilised.

A simpler association of a part of the North with conspicuous consumption can be seen in the way cookery books refer to the Yorkshire or Christmas pie. This is a complex construction where poultry and game birds of various types are boned and nested, Russian-doll style, within a pastry crust. The chef and cookery writer Charles Francatelli noted in his *Modern Cook* that their 'substantial aspect renders them worthy of appearing on the side tables of those wealthy epicures who are wont to keep up the good old English style, at this season of hospitality and good cheer'.³ This mix of regional identity with national pride and an element of nostalgia can also be seen in a letter written in 1845 by the painter J.M.W. Turner who had received such a pie from his friend Hawksworth Fawkes of Farnley Hall near Otley in Yorkshire. He thanked Fawkes for his 'remembrance of me by the Yorkshire Pie equally good to the Olden-time of Hannah's [...] culinary exploits', combining gratitude for a generous present with nostalgia for the earlier period when he had spent a lot of time at Farnley Hall.⁴

The trope of northern extravagance was not specific to the better off. Before Mrs Thornton's dinner party Mr Hale visits the house of a striker and comments:

I hardly know how to compare one of these houses with our Helstone cottages. I see [...] food commonly used which they would consider luxuries; yet for these

² *North and South*, p.213.

³ Charles Elmé Francatelli, *The Modern Cook: A Practical Guide to the Culinary Art in All its Branches, Adapted as well for the Largest Establishments as for the Use of Private Families* (London: Richard Bentley, 1846), p.379

<<https://archive.org/details/b21530038/page/378/mode/2up?q=yorkshire>> [accessed 10 April 2021].

⁴ Jane Grigson, *English Food* (London: Penguin, 1993), p.240.

very families there seems to be no other resource [...]. One needs to learn a different language and measure by a different standard, up here in Milton.⁵

This description of imprudent luxury at a Milton cottage, a working-class version of the extravagance shown by Mrs Thornton, seems in direct opposition to the idea of the prudent and respectable Lancastrian during the Cotton Famine. However it resonates with later disapproval of fish and chips by middle-class commentators, who saw it as more expensive than home cooking and hence a source of secondary poverty, because they did not take account of the opportunity costs of women's labour or of fuel, and also chimes with twenty-first century criticism of poor families for buying ready-meals.⁶

Charles Dickens's *Hard Times* was set in the industrial North of England but, as Kate Flint suggests, it is not entirely an 'industrial novel' and is concerned with many aspects of public and of family life.⁷ However the trope of working-class extravagance (or to be precise middle-class belief in such) appears in the comments of Bounderby the banker and manufacturer whose inaccurate descriptions of his own deprived childhood also establishes his hypocrisy. Bounderby and his friend Gradgrind believe that many labouring people 'lived upon the best, and bought fresh butter, and insisted on Mocha coffee, and rejected all but prime parts of meat, and yet were eternally dissatisfied and unmanageable'. Similar comments of varying degrees of flamboyance recur later in the novel. Bounderby tells James Harthouse, a visitor from London, that 'There is not a Hand in this town, sir, man, woman, or child, but has one ultimate objective in life. That objective is, to be fed on turtle soup and venison with a golden spoon'. He is asserting that the mill workers of Coketown had unreasonably extravagant dietary expectations and, while Dickens may not have agreed, he presents it as an extreme expression of a common view.

A cookbook of the period refers to extravagance of a more routine kind.⁸ Tabitha Tickletooth (a *nom de plume* of the actor and dramatist Charles Selby) wrote *The Dinner Question or How to Dine Well & Economically*. The instructions for boiling potatoes the Lancashire way (that is finishing them off in a dry pan) ended with a comment that 'Lancashire cooks dress the vegetable in this way to perfection, but it is far from an economical mode, as a large portion of the potato adheres to the saucepan; it has, however many admirers'. This comment was clearly taken verbatim from an earlier recipe of Eliza Acton but the fact it was

⁵ *North and South*, p. 212.

⁶ John Walton, *Fish and Chips and the British Working Class, 1870-1940* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1992), pp.137-46.

⁷ Charles Dickens, *Hard Times*, ed. by Kate Flint (1854; London: Penguin, 1995), pp.xi,30,130.

⁸ Tabitha Tickletooth [Charles Selby], *The Dinner Question or How to Dine Well & Economically*, ed. by Alan Davidson (1860; Totnes: Prospect, 1999), p.98.

repeated in full suggests that it still resonated. For Tickletooth, as for Acton, Lancashire people are wasteful in their approach to cookery.

In these examples we have a range of different sorts of culinary extravagance associated with the North. Some are associated with a lack of sophistication, or even a lack of prudence, maybe challenging the trope of northerners being careful with money. Others however seem to have been rooted in nostalgia for a North where traditional English hospitality and good cheer thrived.

Plain wholesomeness

The contrasting characterisations of the North as either a site of hunger or a site of extravagance do not however constitute the full picture. In travel writing of the period, particularly for those who visited the rural North Country, we see a third strand linking strongly to the idea of the North as wholesome and homely, seen through the lens of food. This ranges from simple homely plenty to wholesome but austere adequacy.

Walter White, a librarian and writer from London, took a walking tour in Northumberland and the Borders in July 1858, returning to the area in April 1859. He was clearly interested in the landscape, the people, and the industries of the area but also commented on the food, seeing it in relation to the land and the people. He does not appear to have a particular view to promote. In some areas he saw a land of plenty – not of ostentatious over-consumption but of good and wholesome food in more than adequate quantity. One meal he appreciated – both for the food itself and because he had, in a small way, been involved in its preparation – was Sunday dinner with the Lucas family at Keeldar (Kielder) Castle:

on the suggestion that a cranberry-pudding would be nice at tomorrow's dinner, the children go away to gather 'cranes', and I soon follow. [...] What a happy party we sat down at dinner [...] we enjoyed the fowls and bacon and the vegetables we had gathered, and that cranberry-pudding, an honest family pudding, that invited the plate up for a second portion.⁹

Some of the plenty he encountered was even simpler than this. The waiter at the Red Lion Hotel in Berwick offered 'You'd like some hawing?' (herring) and then presented him with two whole fish. White commented 'Once in Holland the twentieth portion of a July herring was handed me as a special treat; but Berwick gives two whole ones, and would not

⁹ Walter White, *Northumberland and the Border* (London: Chapman Hall, 1859), pp.361,365,244.

begrudge more'. He saw simple plenty in the produce of the sea as well as of the land in the North.

In other places he found a bare sufficiency but nevertheless with elements of wholesomeness and homeliness. Near Haltwistle, White encountered a labouring man who invited him in to his parents' cottage to shelter from the weather.¹⁰ They described themselves as 'puir folks' who could offer him 'no meat or beer [...] but eggs and tea, and barley bread, and household bread, and home-made currant cakes'. The man's mother remembered how in previous times she had only bought wheaten flour to:

make a cake as a special treat for the bairns [...] [as for meat] "if we could na get it we just wanted it. And whiles we could get only a little bit, and then we made a few broth, and wur bairns supped that, and so a' got a taste." And this old woman is still hale and hearty, and though past her sixtieth year walks to Haltwistle market once a week with her butter.

This leads to later discussion with the labourer about how a working man can bring up a family on eighteen shillings a week. The answer is that it is not easy. As in previous generations there are times of no meat, but again the importance of milk for children is emphasised. The message is one of difficulty and restricted choice, not of absolute hunger. In this anecdote we have a picture of austere adequacy that perhaps combines elements of the North as a place of poverty and the image of the hard-working northerner.

Other travellers found wholesomeness and simplicity with varying degrees of plenty or austerity. In 1840, William Howitt, a Quaker writer based in the home counties but born in Derbyshire and educated in Yorkshire, visited parts of the rural North. Near Flodden, in Northumberland, he found the source of wholesome plenty commenting that 'up to the very ridges of the Cheviots extend large corn farms, where all the improvements and scientific triumphs of modern agriculture are displayed'.¹¹ Further south near Barden Tower in Wharfedale he 'inquired for a public-house to get luncheon; there was no such thing; but we procured bread and butter, and milk at one of the cottages'. He appreciated this wholesome simplicity and noted that 'From this place, and such as this issued "The stout Lords Cliffords that did fight in France"'. This adds to a slightly nostalgic picture of traditional and wholesome food, the sturdy Yorkshireman doing his duty as an Englishman, albeit benefiting

¹⁰ White, pp.447-48.

¹¹ William Howitt, *Visits to Remarkable Places: Old Halls, Battlefields, and Scenes Illustrative of Striking Passages in English History and Poetry, Chiefly in the Counties of Durham and Northumberland* (London: Longman, Orme, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1840), p. 190,215.

from the modern agricultural improvements. The report of the Reverend John Pickford mentioned in Chapter 2 has a similar but more domestic tone.

We get a slightly different view from James Croston, a writer from Manchester, who travelled in the Derbyshire Peak District in summer 1861, just before the Cotton Famine which affected part of it. The Peak District can be seen as a liminal space, on the edge of the North.¹² Croston found a counter view to the nostalgia noted elsewhere quoting ‘an honest hearted miller from Darley’ he had met in the Red Lion at Wensley and who had said ‘They might talk of the good old times as they would, but in his opinion, the poor were never so well off as now’. This may to some extent reflect the precise timing, the 1850s had on the whole been more prosperous than the 1840s, particularly than the early 1840s, or the rural location towards the southern edge of the Peak District, but there is also an element of othering ‘the poor’ as having unreasonable expectations. This is similar in some ways to the disapproval of extravagance we have seen earlier. However Croston still found wholesomeness at the Blue Bell at Tissington where there was ‘not much choice [...] plentiful though simple repast’.¹³ This wholesome simplicity and plenty were available to the middle-class traveller, whether or not to the local poor.

In a variety of travellers’ accounts we can see the North as a welcoming place of wholesomeness and homeliness. Sometimes, but not always, this is aligned with nostalgia which could take a national or a domestic form. Sometimes, it is associated with plenty, but at others more austere. Perhaps related to this nostalgia the wholesome plenty found by travellers was largely rural compared with the urban or industrial North that provides the context for the extravagance discussed earlier in this chapter.

The naming and timing of meals: sophistication and hospitality

In contemporary discourse when you eat your main meal and what you call it says much about social class and other identities. Jeanette Winterson ‘grew up in Lancashire in the 1960s. Dinner was eaten at 12 noon’.¹⁴ During the 2010-16 Cameron administration the Chipping Norton Set was seen to wield influence via ‘country suppers’ in Oxfordshire. Most

¹² See for example Tebbutt, p.163.

¹³ James Croston, *On Foot Through the Peak, Or A Summer Saunter Among the Hills and Dales of Derbyshire* (London: Whittaker, 1862), pp.241,320.

¹⁴ ‘Tea with Grayson Perry. Or is it Dinner, or Supper?’, *Guardian*, 3 August 2012, <<https://www.theguardian.com/lifestyle/2012/aug/03/tea-with-grayson-perry>> [accessed 8 March 2021]; Ben Fenton, ‘A Year in a Word: Country Supper’, *Financial Times*, 27 December 2012 <<https://www.ft.com/content/a4e6b928-4ba9-11e2-b821-00144feab49a>> [accessed 4 April 2021]; You Gov, ‘Dinner Time or Teatime? It Depends Where You Live’ <<https://yougov.co.uk/topics/politics/articles-reports/2018/05/22/dinner-time-or-tea-time-it-depends-where-you-live>> [accessed 15 March 2021].

recently a survey in 2018 found that region more than class determined what people call the evening meal. Such variation is not new. Maggie Lane refers to the changing fashionable dinner hour in Jane Austen's time, describing it mainly in terms of class and urban versus rural habits, but she also cites Boswell from the eighteenth century as mentioning a Londoner who settled in Durham and impressed the locals by dining at two or three but 'How little and how poor he would seem to a fashionable man in London who dines between four and five'.¹⁵

The historiographical consensus is that the timing of dinner – as the main meal of the day – tended to get later during the nineteenth century. Underlying this however are different views on whether it was a one-off change or part of a longer term trend, with social and cultural historians such as Leonora Davidoff tending to describe the change as specific to the period while food writers such as Tom Jaine see something approaching a *longue durée* shift.¹⁶ Scholars also differ in the extent to which they describe this change as affecting solely elites but it is clear from the sources cited that they are mainly concerned with the middle and upper classes.¹⁷ The differences of detail appear to reflect the piecemeal nature of the relevant evidence. As Arnold Palmer, Rachel Rich and Stephen Mennell all discuss in their different contexts, the details of how families came together to cook and eat in private are elusive even for highly literate elites. Everyday food consumption seldom warrants a mention in diaries, letters, and the like, making evidence rather 'circumstantial', as Mennell says. This leads Palmer to rely on novels and hence to his focus on 'gentle folk'.

Perhaps surprisingly, considering how much emphasis they put on punctuality, mid-century advice writers such as Mrs Beeton have little to say about mealtimes, suggesting perhaps that they were in such flux there was no consensus to reflect.¹⁸ In the 1861 edition of *The*

¹⁵ Maggie Lane, *Jane Austen and Food* (London: Hambledon, 1995), pp.33,37.

¹⁶ Leonore Davidoff, *The Best Circles*, 2nd edn (London: Hutchinson, 1986), p.47; Tom Jaine, 'Foreword', in *Luncheon, Nuncheon and Other Meals: Eating with the Victorians*, ed. by C. Anne Wilson (Stroud: Alan Sutton, 1994), p.ix; See also Judith Flanders, 'Dining, Dinner, and Performance', *Victorian Review*, 45.2 (2019), 173-77 (p.173); Burnett, p.79; Arnold Palmer, *Movable Feasts: A Reconnaissance of the Origins and Consequences of Fluctuations in Meal-Times With Special Attention to the Introduction of Luncheon and Afternoon Tea* (London: Oxford University Press, 1952), p.8; Gilly Lehmann, 'Meals and Mealtimes, 1600-1800', in *The Meal: Proceedings of the Oxford Symposium on Food and Cookery 2001*, ed. by Harlan Walker (Totnes: Prospect, 2002), pp.139-50 (p.139).

¹⁷ Palmer, p.3; Rachel Rich, *Bourgeois Consumption: Food, Space and Identity in London and Paris, 1850-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011), p.62; Stephen Mennell, *All Manners of Food: Eating and Taste in England and France from the Middle Ages to the Present* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985), p.211.

¹⁸ Rachel Rich, "'If You Desire to Enjoy Life, Avoid Unpunctual People": Women, Timetabling and Domestic Advice, 1850-1910', *Cultural and Social History*, 1.1 (2015), 95-112 (p.96); Isabella Beeton, *The Book of Household Management* (London: S.O. Beeton, 1861), (pp.9,1024,12) <<https://archive.org/details/b21527799/page/n7/mode/2up?q=o%27clock>> [accessed 15 March 2021]. Editions published later in the century are more specific about timing.

Book of Household Management there are just two substantive references to mealtimes, both relate mainly to children and servants dining around one o'clock, though one of these does recognise the existence of 'establishments where an early dinner is served'. Beeton provides a model invitation to dinner that does not specify a time though she goes on to emphasise the importance of guests arriving punctually.

Looking overall, however, Anne Wilson paints a plausible picture of changes during Victoria's reign.¹⁹ She suggests that in the 1830s the upper and middle classes had started to dine at five o'clock but 'dinner for servants, artisans and less fashionable folk continued to take place around one or two o'clock' and notes in passing that the drinking of tea a few hours after dinner was beginning to expand into a full-scale late afternoon or early evening meal in Scotland and northern England. She argues, citing Sir Hugh Thompson, that such a dual system, which was to continue to be widely followed through the twentieth century, developed over the following decades. The English provincial pattern consisted of four meals: a substantial breakfast at eight or nine o'clock, dinner at one or two, a light tea about five, and supper at nine or ten o'clock. The London pattern had just three meals with breakfast between eight and ten, lunch at two, and dinner between seven and half past eight or even later.

Thompson's account of the late nineteenth-century arrangements clearly includes both prescriptive and descriptive elements but there is also a sense of his othering the North. The Suffolk-born, London-based surgeon refers to a meal pattern that applies 'throughout our provincial districts, and also among middle-class society of our northern districts throughout both town and country'.²⁰ Thompson's North is an unsophisticated place, although the way he elides northernness with provincialism is not easy to unpack. However, the earliest edition of his book was 1880 and, as discussed above, mid-century advice literature does not say much about the actual timing of meals.

Novels of the period offer a little more information in their handling of mealtimes and their names. One scene from *North and South* shows the gap between the habits of London society and those of a rural vicarage in Helstone, Hampshire, when Margaret reassures her mother that their unexpected guest, Mr Lennox, will be perfectly happy to eat simple cold meat for his two o'clock dinner as he will regard it as an ample lunch. The contrast however is between fashionable London and the less sophisticated rural southern counties. When the main action of the book moves north there is no such contrast drawn between Milton and

¹⁹ C. Anne Wilson, 'Introduction' in *Luncheon, Nuncheon and Other Meals*, ed. by Wilson, p.xvi.

²⁰ Sir Henry Thompson, *Food and Feeding* (London: Frederick Warne, 1894), p.142, <<https://archive.org/details/b21528482/page/142/mode/2up>> [accessed 15 March 2021]

London, and indeed when Margaret and her father dine with the Thorntons they walk home together in the 'cool, fresh night air' suggesting they had dined quite late.²¹ Mrs Thornton's northern lack of sophistication has been manifest in the extravagance of the food itself, not its timing.

A more complex set of associations and some signs of an emerging consciousness of northern identity can be seen in two novels by different Brontë sisters first published in the 1840s but set early in the century, so probably reflecting some mixture of the habits of the 1840s, memories of their 1820s childhoods, and what they knew of the even earlier times in which the novels are set. Laura Mason suggests, referring to the tea party below, that it was unclear whether Charlotte Brontë was extrapolating from childhood memories or writing from hearsay, but I would argue that in both cases the descriptions also reflected, and to some extent influenced, the mentalities of the time of writing – the 1840s.²²

In *Shirley* we have a contrast between the dining habits of Shirley herself and those of her young cousin and his tutor.²³ Shirley is about to leave the schoolroom where she has been spending time with them, to dress for dinner as 'Twilight was closing on the diminishing autumn day [...] the fire gave enough light to talk by [when a] servant came in with Mr Moore's candle and tea: for the tutor and his pupil usually dined at luncheon time'. Here middle-class adults dine in the evening but children and tutors, with their ambiguous social status, dine in the middle of the day. There is also a difference between Shirley's own meal patterns and those of her friend Caroline Helstone, who lives with her uncle at the Rectory.²⁴ We are not told the precise time but it is 'afternoon' when Caroline leaves the Rector alone after dinner with 'his temperate glass of port wine'. The two women come from broadly the same social class, though Caroline's current position is more precarious, so the reasons for the difference are not clear. Perhaps Shirley as an heiress in charge of her own household chooses the newer ways or wishes to accommodate the habits of her houseguests, whereas Caroline is abiding by the habits of her uncle's generation. In these differences we have a mix of factors including social status and fashion associated with the different mealtimes but little sign of an explicit regional aspect.

However the timing of dinner affects the nature of secondary meals and there we do see signs of northern identity. The Rector's early dining means that social calls take place after dinner. One day he has been joined by the three curates, who follow each other round the

²¹ *North and South*, pp.56,220.

²² Laura Mason, 'Everything Stops for Tea', in *Luncheon, Nuncheon and Other Meals*, ed. by Wilson, pp.71-90 (p.80).

²³ *Shirley*, p.464.

²⁴ *Shirley*, pp.130-31.

neighbourhood in search of hospitality throughout the book.²⁵ Caroline is hoping that they will not stay for tea when Mrs Sykes and the three Misses Sykes arrive to 'see her "in a friendly way", as the custom of that neighbourhood was'. So she finds herself obliged, by the conventions of Yorkshire hospitality, to give an impromptu tea party for an uncomfortably mixed group of guests. She has to cope with the twin challenges of keeping conversation going with this ill-assorted company and the practicalities of feeding them. The evening is indeed a social trial for her but, after hurried consultation and the despatch of the maid to buy baked goods from the village, a suitable spread is provided:

Yorkshire people, in those days, took their tea round the table; sitting well into it, with their knees duly introduced under the mahogany. It was essential to have a multitude of plates of bread and butter, varied in sorts and plentiful in quantity: it was thought proper too, that on the centre plate should stand a glass dish of marmalade. Among the viands was expected to be found a small assortment of cheesecakes and tarts. If there was also a plate of thin slices of pink ham garnished with green parsley, so much the better [...] the tea was spread forth in handsome style, and neither ham, tarts, nor marmalade were wanting [...]. The curates, summoned to this bounteous repast, entered joyous

This scene of simple but generous hospitality is framed as specifically Yorkshire, if not even more local, but we can see the regional meal pattern and that of Wilson's 'less fashionable folks' interacting with what can probably be described as generous hospitality rather than conspicuous consumption.

Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* offers a simpler example. Lockwood, a Londoner who is renting Thrushcross Grange from Heathcliff in 1801, explains that he dined between twelve and one o'clock because his local housekeeper could not, or would not, comprehend his request for a later main meal.²⁶ While Lockwood is not explicit that this is a regional habit, rather than a simple matter of the servant's inflexibility, the housekeeper (Nelly Dean) is not generally presented as unreasonable or obstructive. In her notes on the text, Patsy Stoneman suggests convincingly that the request for a five o'clock dinner would have appeared pretentious and 'southern' illustrating the way northern meal patterns could be equated with simple homeliness and a lack of sophistication.²⁷

²⁵ *Shirley*, pp.131,135-36.

²⁶ *Wuthering Heights*, p.6.

²⁷ *Wuthering Heights*, p.302.

On the whole these sources support the idea that the shift to later dining, and consequent implications for the naming and nature of other meals such as tea, was primarily a phenomenon of the better-off classes and within these fashion and urban/rural differences were as manifest as regional ones. However the last two examples, both set in the early-nineteenth century, though described from the vantage of mid-century, suggest the eighteenth-century or even earlier pattern was associated with the North. They are both set in Yorkshire but here it appears to be standing for the North as a whole – or at least the more traditional and rural northern areas. Lockwood's early dinner is forced on him by Nelly Dean's simple unsophisticated ways. The substantial Yorkshire tea Caroline Helstone provides for her visitors is wholesome but is primarily an example of generous hospitality, all the more so because of its impromptu nature. So the old fashioned mealtimes also represent nostalgia for a traditional sort of hospitality – rather different from that of Mrs Beeton's aspirational dinner parties with written invitations in prescribed form. They are more akin to the plain and wholesome hospitality found by travellers to the North and discussed in the previous section.

Conclusion

While the image of the hungry North described in the previous chapter was an important strand of emerging northern identity in the mid-nineteenth century it was in tension with the perception of the North, or parts of the North, as places of prosperity and plenty. The combination of social mobility and inequality in the industrial North provided the opportunity for both conspicuous consumption and for disapproval of it. This extravagance could be associated with a lack of sophistication, or even a lack of prudence. Other forms of culinary indulgence were rooted in nostalgia for a North where traditional English hospitality and good cheer thrived. The elaborate and festive Yorkshire Christmas Pie sent to Turner was at one end of a spectrum. At the other were the home-made currant cakes offered to White which present a simple old-fashioned homeliness only slightly more luxurious than the oatcakes discussed in Chapter 2. Nostalgia is also seen in the treatment of less fashionable patterns of mealtimes surviving in the North. Early dinners signalled lack of sophistication of a different kind from conspicuous consumption and the wholesome high tea offered an opportunity for a particular form of generous impromptu hospitality that had more in common with that found by travellers than with formal Victorian dinner parties.

CHAPTER 5: CIVIC PRIDE

The examples of conspicuous consumption, extravagance, and hospitality discussed in the previous chapter were on a domestic scale. I will now turn to the performance of northernness on more public stages and its relationship with civic pride. First, I consider how civic pride and aspects of northernness were performed at banquets by elite men, and they were men: although some of the events included women they were sometimes only spectators and even when allowed to dine took a low profile.¹ Eating together promoted both bonding between these men and the expression of local pride. Second, I examine the Leeds Dripping Riot, when working-class and women's perspectives were visible in the handling and reception of an initially minor dispute about customary rights. This led to street protest and wider debate about topics ranging from the extension of the franchise to the reform of the local criminal justice system which had particular resonance for the growing industrial cities of the North. I will argue that although food underpins both these examples, in the one case through the consumption of elaborate meals, and in the other through the sale of a basic foodstuff, they stimulated debate in different ways. The public arena offered two contrasting contexts for the performance of northernness in ways that appealed to modernity, as well as making the calls to tradition seen in earlier chapters.

Public banquets and civic pride

Conspicuous public consumption can be seen in the civic and celebratory banquets of the mid-nineteenth century northern industrial city. David Cannadine suggests that the period from about 1880 was when city fathers throughout Britain invented traditions and developed civic spectacle.² He argues convincingly that this timescale applies to his case study, the development of the Colchester Oyster Feast, which can perhaps be seen as the archetypal traditional civic banquet. However growing industrial areas would not necessarily see the same timing as Colchester, which was at this period primarily concerned with servicing its agricultural hinterland and accommodating a large military barracks. Simon Gunn points to ways in which aspects of civic ritual such as large scale pageantry developed in industrial towns from around 1840 and Peter Brears highlights a range of what he describes as 'Great Banquets' in Leeds throughout the nineteenth century.³ This section considers several

¹ Simon Morgan, *A Victorian Woman's Place: Public Culture in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Tauris, 2007), p.173.

² David Cannadine, 'The Transformation of Civic Ritual in Modern Britain: The Colchester Oyster Feast', *Past and Present*, 94 (1982), 107-30 (p.128,109).

³ Simon Gunn, *The Public Culture of the Victorian Middle Class: Ritual and Authority in the English Industrial City 1840-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), p.165; Peter Brears, *A Taste of Leeds* (Derby: Breedon, 1998), pp.64-71.

examples of civic banquets and similar formal events and argues that some ceremonial meals were already being used to develop and display local identities in the North of England mid-century.

Town halls were an important focus of civic pride in Victorian industrial cities.⁴ They often included banqueting facilities either in the main hall or separate rooms, for example as part of mayors' apartments.⁵ I suggest that the banquets organised as part of town hall opening ceremonies provided a particular opportunity for constructing and celebrating civic pride. The extent to which this feeling for individual towns and cities can be interpreted as part of a wider feeling of northern identity is examined in the following examples.

The building of Leeds Town Hall opened by Queen Victoria on 7 September 1858 is a magnificent case-study of Victorian civic pride.⁶ After the Queen had departed, the Mayor of Leeds, Sir Peter Fairbain, gave a banquet at the Town Hall 'to about 400 ladies and gentlemen'.⁷ The food, while elaborate, was not the main point of civic pride. It warranted a single short sentence in the *Leeds Intelligencer's* long and detailed report of the event, saying 'The repast (a very choice one), was provided by Mr Godfrey Wood, confectioner, of this town'. What mattered to the *Intelligencer* and its readers was that a local supplier was able to provide a suitably ostentatious meal. A record of the menu survives as part of Wood's papers and from that we can see that while no doubt many of the dishes such as 'Roast Lamb' and 'Boeuf à la mode' (the menu is written in a mix of languages) were made of local ingredients only one, 'Jambon de York', is described in local terms.⁸ And, as Laura Mason indicates, by this period 'York ham' was already being used to describe a style of cure rather than a geographical origin.⁹ The interest and the expressions of civic pride came in the guest list and the extensive toasts and speeches made after the meal.¹⁰ In proposing the loyal toast Fairbain commented that 'I know that, Yorkshire and Englishmen, you will do your duty'. Later, referring to the knighthood that had been conferred on him earlier in the day, he suggested it was intended as a mark of honour to the inhabitants of this large and important borough, as well as to himself. This local feeling was linked to a concept of Leeds as an industrial and economic entity. In response to a toast of 'Prosperity to the Town and Trade of Leeds', John Gott, a prominent local industrialist, noted that 'There was probably no

⁴ Asa Briggs, *Victorian Cities* (London: Odhams, 1963), p.43.

⁵ Colin Cunningham, *Victorian and Edwardian Town Halls* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), p.5.

⁶ Briggs, *Victorian Cities*, p.158.

⁷ 'The Mayor's Banquet', *Leeds Intelligencer*, 11 September 1858, pp.11-12.

⁸ See Appendix A for menus

⁹ Laura Mason, 'York Ham', pp.251-2.

¹⁰ 'The Mayor's Banquet', pp.11-12.

part of Her Majesty's dominions which was so varied in resources as the district of which Leeds was the centre'. So the sense of Leeds's civic pride is well embedded in its immediate hinterland, in Yorkshire, and in England but we do not get a clear sense of a shared northern identity, even with the other industrial cities of the West Riding and Lancashire.

Slightly later, and elsewhere in the North, we see a similar focus on civic pride in town, within county, and on English national identity. Hexham Corn Market and Town Hall was opened on 13 September 1866. In the afternoon of the ceremony a public luncheon was held where 'nearly two hundred ladies and gentlemen sat down to a sumptuous repast, served in the usual excellent style by Mrs Chesters, hostess of the Old Grey Bull'.¹¹ Again the quality of the meal and its provision by a local firm were what mattered, the detailed menu was not described. The toasts and speeches were what demonstrated civic pride. This time the town was even more firmly identified as in the county, perhaps reflecting its smaller size. Captain Charlton, replying to a toast on behalf of the Volunteers, 'congratulated the town of Hexham on possessing as smart a corps as any in the county'. Then Sir Rowland Errington proposed a toast to 'The members for the County' and noted to cheers that the town of Hexham was 'one of the principal places of business in the county of Northumberland', and the Hon H.G. Liddell MP, replying to that, saw 'the inauguration of that noble building [as a sign of] the progress and improvements which, after all, was the secret of the greatness of the English nation'.

New town halls were not however the only excuse for a banquet. As Simon Morgan notes, testimonials were a ubiquitous form of public ritual in the nineteenth century, peaking mid-century, and provided a place where community values and identities were formed and expressed.¹² These events ranged from the national to the parochial, and while some involved cash gifts, for example to support non-conformist clergymen in retirement, others were of decorative items intended purely for display. While the gift was the most important part of the testimonial, the presentation ceremony almost always took the form of a dinner. Morgan emphasises the relevance of these rituals to debates on paternalism and deference in nineteenth-century class relationships but suggests reports of these testimonials can also throw light on gender, religious, and place-based identities. The dinners relating to some of the higher-profile and more ceremonial testimonials were reported in detail in the local press but, being less closely tied to local government than the town hall banquets discussed

¹¹ 'Opening of the Corn Market and Town Hall Hexham', *Newcastle Journal*, 14 September 1866, p.3.

¹² Simon Morgan, 'The Reward of Public Service: Nineteenth-Century Testimonials in Context', *Historical Research*, 80.208 (May 2007), 261-85.

above, might be expected to better reflect any emerging geographical loyalties that were independent of local government boundaries. However the differences are small.

At the 1852 election Sir George Grey, who had been Whig Member of Parliament for North Northumberland and Home Secretary, lost his seat to a member of the Percy family, local Conservative landowners (Grey too held inherited land in the area).¹³ Following this defeat a collection was raised in his honour and although he soon returned to Parliament as member for Morpeth the subscription was 'enthusiastically adopted by the industrial classes' and the testimonial dinner held at Alnwick in March 1853, was described as 'one of the largest and most influential Reform demonstrations ever held in the North of England'.¹⁴ Despite the flamboyance of the gift, a 'massive silver candelabra and a salver', the dinner itself was more austere than those described above. Perhaps demonstrating the northern characteristic of wholesome or homely simplicity, 'a plain and plenteous repast, was provided [...] [a]le was supplied [...] wines and other liquors could be procured, at the pleasure and expense of the parties'. While this press report contained an explicit reference to the North of England, the geographically specific references in the extensive toasts were again more local – apart from one mention of a speech made in Leeds. Grey described himself as speaking 'Northumbrian to Northumbrians [...] with a feeling of pride'. The emphasis of the speeches reflected the wording of the inscription in the gift, which included 'from more than thirteen thousand of the Working Men of Northumberland, in testimony of their gratitude for his support of the just, wise and beneficial measure of free trade'. They also referred to the belief of Grey's supporters that his loss of the 1852 election had been the result of Percy tenants who had 'almost uniformly voted with their landlords'. This belief was however clearly in tension with the confidence expressed in a toast to 'The independent electors of North Northumberland'. Place-identity again relates to county rather than the North as a whole and is probably less important than class. However, it encompasses a locally-focussed manifestation of the northern characteristic of independence.

An even more elaborate example of public banqueting can be seen in the 25 October 1850 banquet given by the Lord Mayor of York for the Lord Mayor of London and attended also by Prince Albert. It was one of two banquets organised, in London and York, to publicise and garner support for Prince Albert's forthcoming 'Exhibition of the works of Industry of all the Nations' – now known as the Great Exhibition of 1851. For Valerie Mars these were more

¹³ David Frederick Smith, 'Grey, Sir George, second baronet', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/11533>>.

¹⁴ 'Great Reform Gathering at Alnwick', *Newcastle Guardian and Tyne Mercury*, 2 April 1852, pp. 6-7.

than two notable dinners.¹⁵ They represented the distinct constituencies of the City of London, as the hub of the establishment, and a new alliance of British civic leaders headed by the Mayor of York. Although her account is titled 'North and South: Two Banquets Given to Promote the Great 1851 Exhibition' there is an ambiguity in her analysis – reflecting a similar tension in some of the available sources – about whether the two constituencies are South and North or London and the provinces. She notes that the catering for the York event was even more elaborate than that for the London dinner and suggests this was because it was a unique event. Such dinners were more common in London and catering there was by the usual Mayoral caterers of Ring and Brymer, whereas the famous Alexis Soyer had been commissioned to cater for the York event. It certainly was elaborate with a separate menu for the Royal Table including the intriguingly named '*L'Extravagance Culinaire à l'Alderman, or One Hundred Guinea Dish*'. Soyer himself gave pride of place to this York banquet in his 'Modern Banquets' section of *The Pantropheon*, but describes it in terms of modernity, a contrast with the appeals to nostalgia seen elsewhere.¹⁶ Although Mars refers to distinctive cuisines, the extent to which the individual dishes served can be seen to reflect the North or the South specifically is relatively minor. She suggests that the baron of beef served in London represented domestic trade while the haunches of venison in York corresponded to nature captured, offering an image of abundant landscape as well as being a more exclusively elite dish.¹⁷ However the complexity of the menus makes interpretation of individual dishes slightly speculative. Roast beef in general was well established as a signifier of Englishness but baron of beef specifically appears to have been a signature dish for banquets given by Lord Mayors of London so the choice of venison for the York banquet might simply have been to emphasise the difference between the two.¹⁸ There are a few dishes in the York menus that include York in the name (including the ubiquitous York Ham this time described as '*Jambon à la York*') but no obviously local names in the London menu. Two magnificent pineapples were sent from Chatsworth House by the Duke of Devonshire.¹⁹ Chatsworth is not in one of the seven historic northern counties but in the Derbyshire Peak District so probably near enough for the purpose of showing that exotic fruits can be grown

¹⁵ Valerie Mars, 'North and South: Two Banquets Given to Promote the Great 1851 Exhibition', in *Proceedings of the Oxford Symposium on Food and Cookery 2011: Celebrations*, ed. by Mark McWilliams (Totnes: Prospect, 2012), pp.184-98 (pp.184,187).

¹⁶ Alexis Soyer, *The Pantropheon: or, History of Food, and its Preparation, from the Earliest Ages of the World* (London: Simpkins, Marshall, & Co, 1853), pp.403-07
<https://archive.org/details/b2152953x/page/410/mode/1up> [accessed 8 April 2021].

¹⁷ Mars, pp.184,187.

¹⁸ Rich, *Bourgeois Consumption*, p.194.

¹⁹ See Appendix A.

in more northern climates, and the fact that the conservatory there was by Paxton, who was now building the Crystal Palace for the exhibition, gave this extra resonance.²⁰

Although we know more about the actual food here than we did for other banquets, that was only part of the story. Despite the ambiguity about whether the two complementary banquets related to London and the provinces or South and North, speeches made in York offered a variety of perceptions of northernness from the elite men attending. The Lord Mayor of York made clear the pride he felt in his role as leader of northern mayors, tying this to York's long history. He linked this pride with hospitality which he presented, not entirely plausibly in the circumstances of this banquet, as being of a wholesome simple kind – that of a 'country cousin'.²¹ The Prime Minister of the day, Lord John Russell, also mentioned northern hospitality in the context of independence. Responding to a toast to the government he noted:

I am happy to think that we have two Yorkshiremen in the Cabinet, who are ever ready to exercise their Independence [...]. Citizens of London are in the habit of thinking that in point of civic hospitality, our own Lord Mayor is above all others, but I must own there is good reason to apprehend some rivalry, that we must look to our laurels that we lose not our name for hospitality.

Free-trader Richard Cobden, proposing the toast to the working classes, which he clearly associated with the northern industrial working classes, said:

We have heard apprehensions expressed that the metropolis will be in danger, in consequence of the influx of operatives from the north of England. [...] we shall see next year our millions from the manufacturing districts conveyed to London to witness the Exhibition, and then those who have hitherto supposed them to be a ferocious mob, will have an opportunity of judging by the courteous demeanour of these people in Hyde Park how far they have been right in forming such an opinion of them. I believe that we shall then form a better opinion of our fellow countrymen.

He clearly saw the unifying effect of the exhibition as being as much about class as region but by associating the two in these terms challenged what he saw as a southern (or maybe metropolitan) stereotype of northern wildness.

Thus we can see different aspects of northern identities displayed at different types of public banquet. A strong sense of local civic pride was manifest at, and probably further reinforced

²⁰ I am grateful to Simon Morgan for pointing out the Paxton link.

²¹ 'Grand Civic Banquet in York', *Leeds Mercury*, 2 November 1850, p.7.

by, town hall banquets. While this is focussed on the towns it is firmly embedded in county and country, but not at this stage, at least in the context of town hall openings, much associated with a sense of broader northern identity. Elite testimonial dinners offer a similar picture. In both cases it is possible that the emphasis on county and country in, for example, formal toasts is to some extent formulaic and relating to the presence of local dignitaries with corresponding responsibilities such as the county Lord Lieutenant. It may also be that the town and county remit of the press of the time may have contributed to as well as reflected this focus, although the length of the reports suggests they are, if not verbatim, not very selective. However this emphasis on county rather than the North as a whole, does chime with Martin Hewitt and Robert Poole's conclusions, in a very different social context, that dialect writer Samuel Bamford 'successively describes himself as a weaver, a rustic, an author, a husband, a poor man, a Middletonian, a Lancastrian and a patriot. [...] Of northern identity as such, there is scarcely a trace'.²² However, the developing pan-northern feeling within the region, and recognition of that identity from London can be seen in reports of the York Great Exhibition banquet where elite men used tropes such as northern hospitality and northern independence to underpin an argument for a national, indeed aspiring to be international, and consciously modern initiative.

The Leeds Dripping Riot

A different form of civic feeling was shown by ordinary people, involving aspirations about what might be as much as pride in what was. A riot, especially one connected to such a common foodstuff as dripping, might not seem a good symbol of local identity and pride, but the tale of the 1865 Dripping Riot makes regular appearances in the popular historiography of Leeds and also has a place in local folk song.²³ It was not a food riot in the normal sense but as discussed below it can similarly be seen as looking back to a time when a moral economy was underpinned by the actions of the crowd. Mrs Eliza Stafford, a cook, was prosecuted by her employers, Dr and Mrs Chorley, for giving or selling some dripping from the kitchen to a dressmaker, and sentenced to a month in Armley Gaol. She did not deny what she had done but argued that it was a customary perquisite of the job. There was public sympathy for this interpretation, a general feeling that the sentence was in any case harsh, and concern that her employer was a magistrate as well as a doctor and her trial had been held in private by two of his fellow magistrates. A collection was held for her and on the

²² Martin Hewitt and Robert Poole, 'Samuel Bamford and Northern Identity', in *Northern Identities*, ed. by Kirk, pp.111-31 (p.128).

²³ See for example, David Thornton, *The Story of Leeds* (Stroud: History Press, 2013), p.156; Steven Burt and Kevin Grady, *The Illustrated History of Leeds* (Derby: Breedon, 2002), p.169-70; Brears, *A Taste of Leeds*, p.57-58.

day she was released from gaol large crowds assembled to greet her. Mrs Stafford herself had been released slightly early and left Leeds to go to her daughter's house in Scarborough. While the potential disturbance at Armley was dispersed, the crowd reassembled outside the Chorleys' house in Park Square in the city centre. Missiles were thrown and the situation escalated with police reinforcements being called from Bradford and troops from York. One demonstrator was killed and several demonstrators and policemen injured. The accounts are largely factual, while emphasising the oddity of the incident. Steven Burt and Kevin Grady comment, however, that it indicated that 'the working classes were not prepared to respect the law if its implementation was blatantly unjust' and Brears expresses similar sympathies. However the contemporary ballads from which some accounts quote, and the newspaper reports of the time, suggest that regional and gender identities were relevant as well as class, and that the incident was interpreted in the context of matters of national concern of the time, with a specifically northern dimension.

The boundary between petty theft and workers' customary rights to payments in kind was contested in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.²⁴ It is perhaps simplistic to see this either as rooted in agricultural enclosure undermining longstanding rights such as gleaning, that can be argued to have biblical authority, or alternatively as an aspect of protest against the new wage discipline brought by the industrial revolution – though both views have some appeal. As with Chartist ideas about the moral economy there are elements of lost (and possibly invented) traditions which resonated particularly when applied to everyday foodstuffs. Against this background domestic servants' position was complicated by both the personal nature of relationships within the employing household, and the fact that they were not seen as part of the modern working class – they were not productive.²⁵ In the mid-nineteenth century the perquisites of domestic servants' had become a source of anxiety. Gerald and Valerie Mars suggest that disputes relating to the sale of surplus dripping were common through the nineteenth century.²⁶ Kathryn Crossley notes the role of 'College

²⁴ Clive Emsley, *Crime and Society in England 1750-1900*, 5th edn (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), pp.146-61; Jason Ditton, 'Perks, Pilferage and the Fiddle: The Historical Structure of Invisible Wages', *Theory and Society*, 4 (1977), 39-71 (p. 41).

²⁵ Leonore Davidoff, *Worlds Between: Historical Perspectives on Gender and Class* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995), p.34; Carolyn Steedman, *Labour's Lost: Domestic Service and the Making of Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p.16.

²⁶ Gerald Mars and Valerie Mars, 'Fat in the Victorian Kitchen: A Medium for Cooking, Control, Deviance and Crime', in *The Fat of the Land: Proceedings of the Oxford Symposium on Food and Cooking 2002*, ed. by Harland Walker (Bristol: Footwork, 2003), pp.216-36 (p.217).

dripping' as a perquisite of Oxford college cooks and as a source of a secondary income for the villagers of nearby Headington Quarry.²⁷

In reporting the incident the three main Leeds newspapers of the time took different views of the rights and wrongs of the case.²⁸ The radical *Leeds Times* felt perquisites should be replaced by higher wages but opined that 'so long as the system does exist it is monstrous to place a servant who takes a "perquisite" sanctioned by custom, in the same category as a thief'. The conservative *Leeds Intelligencer*, while focussing most of its criticism on the crowd, clearly sympathised with Dr Chorley and referred to Mrs Stafford's 'want of fidelity to her employer in the office of trust which she occupied'. The Liberal *Leeds Mercury* was mildly critical of both parties suggesting that Dr Chorley 'made a mistake in prosecuting with no better charge', but was clear that 'he was actuated by an upright feeling, and not by any of the base or mean motives which have been too lavishly attributed to him'. On the other hand, it suggested that 'unless the evidence was really much stronger than any we have seen reported, we cannot wonder that many persons thought the servant had been severely dealt with, and found guilty of theft, when in reality she had only been guilty of an imprudence or an error.' While these newspaper accounts all refer to the location of the incident it is in the quotation of a street ballad of the time that we see the strongest signal of northern identity by the use of dialect. The *Leeds Times* referred to 'poets of a patriotic [...] turn [who] celebrated Mrs. Strafford's deliverance [...] in broad and homely Yorkshire' quoting:

Nah t'month e Armley jail is past,
An shoo cums aght agean at last,
While throo each road, an lane, an street,
The public this poor servant meet,
An show their luv ov truth an right,
Ageean this wod be man of might!
Drippin, drippin, drippin,
Noa perquisite, noa tippin.²⁹

So at one level the issues seem to be largely ones of class and political perspective but an element of local feeling caught the popular imagination.

²⁷ Kathryn Crossley "Using their Native Cunning": Oxford College Servants and their Perquisites in the Nineteenth Century', unpublished draft paper presented to the Oxford Symposium on Food and Cooking 2019.

²⁸ 'Our Revolution' *Leeds Times*, 25 February 1865, p.4; 'Shameful disturbance in Leeds', *Leeds Intelligencer*, 25 February 1865, p.8; 'The Dripping Row', *Leeds Mercury*, 23 February 1865, p.2.

²⁹ 'Dripping disturbances', *Leeds Times*, 25 February 1865, p.8; Roger DeV. Renwick quotes a different popular song 'Oh don't I love my dripping!' but largely in standard English, *English Folk Poetry: Structure and Meaning*, (London: Batsford, 1980), pp.134-36.

The case attracted attention from papers outside Leeds. Many simply picked up the local accounts, sometimes focussing on the issues about modernising the magistracy discussed below, but the report in the *Leamington Spa Courier* was more explicit than usual about the gendered attitudes underlying some of the other reporting. In a piece largely devoted to other issues of servants' perquisites it said:

By an easy transition we might pass to the controversy about dripping, which now agitates the parlour and the kitchen in a perilous manner, the mistress urging that the cook is not entitled to the dripping as perquisite, and the cook as resolutely contending that it belongs to her by ancient usage, whereof the memory of the oldest inhabitant runneth not to the contrary; but seeing that the parties litigant belong to the gentler sex, we respectfully decline to interfere.³⁰

This patronising tone is amplified by its then going on to say 'One suggestion only will we make [...] the mistress will find it to her advantage, in the long run, to appropriate the dripping no matter what equivalent may be conceded.' The issue, being one for women, was not important, but nevertheless the (presumably male) writer knew best how it should be handled. We can see multiple identities reflected in press coverage of the incident and general attitudes to servants' perquisites. Class and appeal to customary rights dominate but there is a clear regional dimension. This is largely associated with the northern characteristic of a strong spirit of justice and fairness but the frequent use of the word dripping (rather than referring to it as the Chorley or the Stafford case) suggests an underlying element of simple homeliness.

In the years leading up to the 1867 Reform Act the extension of the franchise was discussed in terms of respectability.³¹ Leeds papers differed, according to their overall political stance, in how they saw the dripping incident as relevant to this. The *Leeds Times* noted the 'excitement in the town on Wednesday' but attributed it to 'that instinctive love of fair-play and that hatred of oppression which are among the best qualities of the English people, and which certainly afford no reasons for withholding from them their rights.'³² The *Leeds Mercury* was also clear that this did not undermine the case for widening the franchise but it distinguished between the solid artisans who deserved the vote and 'the mob [...] of lads and "roughs", always ready for a row of this kind'.³³ The *Intelligencer* did not agree and quoted approvingly from a letter it had received which referred to 'this most disgraceful riot, not in a

³⁰ 'Per-centages to Servants', *Leamington Spa Courier*, 18 February 1865, p.4.

³¹ Angus Hawkins, *Victorian Political Culture: 'Habits of Heart and Mind'* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp.247-48.

³² 'Our Revolution', p.4.

³³ 'The "Dripping" Row', p.2.

strange town [...] but [...] in Leeds' and to 'the consequences of placing the franchise in the hands of men who are so easily led away by their passions and prejudices'.³⁴ Here we had a debate about the implications, for the national issue of extending the franchise, of this incident in Leeds. It was not explicitly framed in terms of local or regional identity but put Leeds (and other northern industrial cities) at the centre of the question. The *Times* implicitly linked a northern concern for justice and fairness with that of England as a whole – the regional identity incorporating the national identity, just as William Howitt implied when referring to men of Wharfedale fighting for England. For the *Intelligencer* the wild and uncivilised behaviour of the rioters reflected shame on the citizens of Leeds as a whole and undermined the case for franchise extension.

The Leeds press was equally keen to relate this event to another topical issue, that of reforming the magistracy. In the early nineteenth century serious criminal cases were tried at the county assizes while less serious ones were tried by part-time amateur justices of the peace (magistrates). This was increasingly seen as unsuitable for growing urban areas and from 1835 it was possible for any borough that so wished to appoint a stipendiary magistrate but Leeds had still not made such an appointment in 1865.³⁵ The *Leeds Times* felt the incident added to the case it had been advocating for some time and the *Leeds Mercury* argued in the light of it to 'let the thinking men of Leeds inquire whether a large town like this might not be better with a stipendiary magistrate [...] the mass of the people seem not to feel the confidence in the impartiality and legal acumen of the justices which they would doubtless repose in the decisions of an able stipendiary magistrate'.³⁶ This opinion was not shared by all local papers. The *Leeds Intelligencer* complained about attempts 'to disgust the public mind with the administration of justice by the unpaid magistracy in Leeds'.³⁷ The issue was picked up by papers from outside the city too.³⁸ The *Bradford Observer* could not resist the temptation to gloat that its rival had 'fallen into much trouble [...]. It would almost seem as if Leeds cared not a straw for making good her large pretensions to be a model town'. The *Newcastle Daily Chronicle* reported that 'Leeds made itself notorious last week [...] when a mob of three or four thousand people rise in arms against the decision of a borough bench, [...] some sort of necessity for a change is implied'. The *Grantham Journal* referred to 'serious disturbance at Leeds' and advocated the substitution of a stipendiary for an amateur magistracy, on the principle that what is not worth paying for is not worth having. The

³⁴ 'The Mob Outrage at Leeds', *Leeds Intelligencer*, 25 February 1865, p.8.

³⁵ Emsley, pp.212-13.

³⁶ 'Mr Chorley and his Cook', *Leeds Times*, 18 February 1865, p.5; 'The "Dripping" Row', p.2.

³⁷ 'Shameful disturbance in Leeds', p.8.

³⁸ 'Leeds in Trouble', *Bradford Observer*, 9 March 1865, p.4; 'Local Gossip', *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 27 February 1865, p.2; 'Our London Correspondent', *Grantham Journal*, 4 March 1865, p.2.

general message was that Leeds's reputation as a modern forward-thinking town was undermined by the almost feudal way this incident had been handled, while customary rights relating to a basic foodstuff were ignored. The characterisation of a northern concern for fairness and justice runs through the commentary, in the context of Leeds's status as a modern industrial city. Its civic pride required that its institutions should match its new status. It was no longer the market town serving a rural hinterland that it had been.

Thus the way the Leeds Dripping Riot was reported and linked to other issues reflects some northern characteristics with a concern for justice and fairness was the dominant trope. This general northern identity is often intertwined with that of an industrial city. The other against which Leeds is placed is sometimes London but could be traditional rural Yorkshire. There is an aspiration to modernity, not something necessarily associated with the North as a whole but part of the civic pride of the northern industrial city of the period. At the same time an attachment to traditional rights is also there. This single example must of course be interpreted with caution but space does not allow a similar examination of other food-related incidents or local traditions that survive in the popular historiography. Others that it might be illuminating to consider include the 1846 baking of a Denby Dale Pie to celebrate the repeal of the Corn Laws and the development of 'traditional' events like the Egton Bridge gooseberry competition.³⁹

Conclusion

In the public sphere local, if not pan-northern, identities and pride were expressed in varied ways. Banquets promoted civic pride in developing northern towns and cities. This feeling was placed in the geographical context of county and country, and not generally framed in terms of broader northern identity. However here, as in other performances around food, we can see appeals to characteristics such as northern hospitality and northern independence. There is less nostalgia and more consciousness of the modernity that was touched on in Chapter 4. The civic and local feeling manifest in the Dripping Riot and its reporting is perhaps better described as aspiration rather than pride and a concern for justice and fairness is dominant. The original issue about the sale of foodstuffs initially raised questions about the customary rights of a specific group of working women, domestic cooks. Then a heavy-handed response by the authorities provided a prompt, or at least a peg, for street protest and for wider debate about topics ranging from the extension of the franchise to the reform of the local justice system, both of which were current in northern cities of the time.

³⁹ The late John Thorp, *History of the World-Famous Denby Dale Pies* (Nelson: [Ball], [1928]), I am grateful to Jane Riley for drawing my attention to this pamphlet; Alan Davidson, *A Kipper With My Tea: Selected Food Essays* (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1990), pp.14-17.

Northern identities, often quite local, were demonstrated both in the civic pride expressed by elite men at banquets and in the desires of the ordinary people of one growing industrial city for it to be a place that combined respect for customary rights with modern reforms.

CONCLUSION

This dissertation has addressed two related issues: how food and its consumption were used by northerners and by others to describe and reinforce northern English identities in the mid-nineteenth century; and how this can be related to other aspects of identity and place. It has filled a gap between three strands of the existing historiography. Descriptive, and occasionally quantitative, work on food in and of the North had ranged from locally-focussed material on specific towns to discussion of regional differences in studies with a broader canvas. Social and cultural historians had increasingly recognized the significance of food in the construction of national identity and the intersection of this with other facets of identity including class. At the same time, northern regional identities had been examined in relation to aspects of elite and popular culture such as sport, music and literature. However, relatively little had been written about the way food has been used to imagine northernness or indeed other regional identities in England. To address this, I have drawn on ideas about the North and northernness previously articulated in other contexts and largely in relation to later periods.

Chapter 1 explored the existing historiography of northern identities and adopted Kirk's 'three interconnected strands' as a loose conceptual framework for the study. It identified some characteristics typically associated with the North and a working definition of its geographical bounds. Although by the mid-nineteenth century wheat had largely replaced oats as the staple grain of most people in the North, Chapter 2 suggested that oatcakes and porridge made with oats still held a symbolic association with northern identities in a variety of ways. The local variation underpinning northern identities could be seen in the way different types of oatcake were favoured in different districts and this difference could have real emotional charge for people who had migrated within the north. Chapter 3 focussed on one specific characteristic attributed to the North and argued that in what subsequently became known as the Hungry Forties there was an implicit association between the North and hunger despite probably equal rural poverty in the south of England and urban squalor in London. This association was reinforced two decades later by the Lancashire Cotton Famine. Predictably, the dominant link was to the idea of the North as a place of poverty and hunger, but there was a strong secondary association with the idea of the independent and proud northerner who was also hard-working. In tension with the trope of the hungry North, Chapter 4 considered how the performance of northernness was linked to prosperity and plenty in different ways, ranging from vulgar extravagance to simple wholesomeness. Aspects of these, particularly the latter, were underpinned by a feeling for nostalgia and tradition. And last, Chapter 5 extended the discussion of performing northernness into more

public spaces to consider how banquets promoted and displayed civic pride and local identity in developing northern towns and cities. This local feeling was, however, embedded in the geographical context of county and country, and not generally framed in terms of broader northern identity. The chapter also discussed one specific incident and the narratives to which it gave rise. The civic and local feeling manifest in the Leeds Dripping Riot and its reporting is perhaps better described as aspiration than pride. This was underpinned by a concern for justice and fairness. In the public space we see less nostalgia and more consciousness of the modernity that was touched on in earlier chapters.

I have shown that in this period, and in the discourse relating to food, its consumption, and its lack, there were already clear signs of the development of the northern identities that would be observed, in relation to other aspects of elite and popular culture, in the late-nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. While some of these signs relate to the North as a whole, regional feeling was not always well-developed and more local northern identities could be seen in many ways, from the preference of working women who had migrated within the North for the local oatcakes they had learned to make at their mothers' knees, to the civic pride of elite men in their city expressed at banquets. Issues of gender and class can often be seen but the northern identities of the mid-century were not as predominantly male and working-class as twentieth-century tropes sometimes suggest. Some aspects of these emerging identities appear to be rooted in nostalgia for (possibly invented) tradition but others speak to modernity, especially in the newer industrial towns. Looking through the lens of food we can see in the mid-nineteenth century a proto-northernness with many of the characteristics that were attributed to the North in later periods and also elements of self-identification by northerners as well as othering from the South.

The twenty-first century relevance of how people think about both food and northern identities has been reinforced by the Covid pandemic. Variations in infection rates and differing economic impacts have highlighted consciousness of a North-South divide already visible in the politics of the Brexit referendum and the northern 'Red Wall'. At the same time the importance of food (and the lack of food) as a social and cultural issue has taken a higher profile. Panic buying of food at the beginning of the pandemic gave way to two distinct tropes. On the one hand food banks came under increasing pressure as people lost jobs, and the dependence of some families on free school meals took a high profile. On the other many better-off people, able to work from home and restricted in what else they could do, put more emphasis on food, whether or not baking sourdough bread was as widespread as the popular cliché implies. Ideas around food justice, and nostalgia for traditional wholesome

foods, resonate with similar issues found in the mid-nineteenth century – in another period of social change.

FOOD AND NORTHERN IDENTITY – Transcripts of Banquet Menus

7 September 1858 Leeds Town Hall Royal Inauguration Banquet¹

Potages

Potage de Tortue. Potage Clair.

Relevés

Cuisse de boeuf. Matelotte d'anguilles.
Balotine d'angeau. Jambon de York.
Galantines de veau à la Princess Royale.
Langues de boeuf.
Salad de Homard. Remolade Italienne.
Galantines de volailles aux Truffes.
Poulardes au Béchamelle. Patés de Gibier.
Les Perdeaux. Grouse.
Boeuf Désossé. Hure de Sanglier.
Gibellotte épicée à l'Indienne. Pigeons en gelée.
Roast Lamb. Boeuf à la mode.
Roast Fowl.
Veau roulé au jambon. Rolard Veal.

Second Service.

Sand Torte. Apfel Torte.
Gelée à la Dantzig.
Gelée à la Macédoine de Fruits.
Chartreuse de pêche à la Noble Dame.
Chartreuse d'Abricot. Compôte de Poires au Ris.
Petits Pâtisseries en Millefleurs
Krans Kuchen. Wiener Torte.
Petits Puits d'Amour. Crêmes de Vanille.
Poudings Diplomatiques. Poudings Glacé à la Cérito.
Pariser Torte. Eigenbatin Torte.

Dessert

Pines. Melons. Peaches.
Apricots. Nectarines.
Melons. Grapes. Greengages.
Plums. Pears.
Apples. Filberts.

**Godfrey Wood
15, Commercial Street, Leeds**

¹ 'Wood's Catering Ledger' in Leeds City Libraries, Family and Local History Library, Special Collections, item 57 of ledger register, reproduced in Helen Skilbeck, 'Godfrey Wood's Victorian Catering Ledger' <<https://secretlibraryleeds.net/2020/06/19/a-victorian-catering-ledger/>> [accessed 29 January 2021]. Transcription from image assisted by email from Rhian Isaac to GE of 7 April 2021.

Saturday 5 October 1867, Preston Town Hall Opening²

The following is the bill of fare : —

MENU. — Tortue Claire.

POISSONS

Saumon à l'Anglaise, sauce Mayonnaise.

Fillets de Sole à la Montpensier. Homard en Aspic.

RELEVES.

Hanches de Venaison. Quartleres d'Agneau rôtis.

Boeuf piqué. Dindon bouilli ou rôti

Aloyau de Boeuf rôti à l'Anglais. Poussin de Dindon

Ballotin d'Agneau. Pâtés de Gibier. Canard rôti. Chapon
au Gros Sel

Galantines Veau. Galantines Volaille. Langues de Boeuf.

Jambon bouilli. Poulets à la Française. Pâtés de Huitre.

Pâtés de Homard.

Pâtés de Pigeon. Salade de Homard. Poulets en Béchamel.

GIBIER

Coq de Bruyère. Perdrix. Faisans.

ENTREMETS SUCRES

Gelée de Maraschino. Gelée de Noyeau. Gelée de Citron.

Gelée de Orange. Gelée à la Victoria.

Gelée en Mosaïque. Gelée de Groseilles, Crème de Vanille.

Crème de Fraises

Crème de Framboises. Crème de Citron.

Charlotte Russe. Blanc Mange. Biscuits de Reims. Bonbons.

Tartlettes aux Fruits. Pâtisserie à la Française.

DESSERT

Ananas, Raisin (Grapes), Pêches, Pommes, Poires, Amandes,

Figues, Pastilles, &c.

VINS.

Punch, Sherry, Hock, Champagne, Claret, Sherry.

² 'The Mayor's Banquet', *Preston Herald*, 5 October 1867, p. 5.

Thursday 21 March 1850 London Great Exhibition Banquet³

The bill of fare included: -

First Course.-Tortue claire, tortue a l'Anglaise, turbots bouillis a la sauce de homard, turbans de filets de soles, saumon de Glo'ster bouilli, mackerel en matelot, anguille aux tomato, tranches de saumon a la Tartare, fried fish, filets de merlans a la horly.

Side Board.-Petit patés, baron of beef, filets de poulets au supreme, ris de veau a la St. Cloud, homard a la Indienne, fiicandeau de veaux, pigeons aux champignons, cotelettes homarde, grenadines de veau, turbans de filets lepreaux, chickens, capons, turkey poultls larded, hams and tongues ornamented, ribs of lamb, raised ornamented pies, lobster salads, prawns, Chantilly baskets, ornamented trifles, pine, strawberry, noyeau, Rhenish and Italian creams, Dantzic, noyeau, and Maraschino jellies, nougat with cream, Charlotte a la Russe, gateau de pomme, gateau a la Duchesse, apple tarts, fanchonnettes, boudin St. Clair, raspberry, apricot, and green gage tourtes, hunting puddings, trifles, cabinet puddings, Nesselrode puddings, creamed tarts.

Removes.-Haunches mutton, chines mutton, sirloins beef, quarters lamb, Guinea fowls, ducklings, goslings, Turkey poultls, pea fowls.

Dessert.-Pines, grapes, oranges, apples, nuts, dried fruits, preserved ginger, brandy and cherries, Savoy cakes, almond cakes, mixed cakes, wafers.

Ices.-Pine, millefruit, raspberry, lemon, ginger, cherry, &c.

³ 'The Exhibition of All Nations: Grand Banquet at the Mansion-House', *The Times*, 22 March 1850, p. 5.

Friday 25 October 1850 York Great Exhibition Banquet⁴

(includes commentary on the Hundred Guinea Dish)

FIRST COURSE—

Trente-deux Potages : Quatre potages a la Victoria, quatre id a la Prince of Wales, huit id a la tortue transparente, seize id a la moderne.

Trente-deux Poissons : Huit turbots a la Mazarin, huit truites saumonees a la mariniere, huit filets de merlans a la creme, huit crimp cod aux huitres.

Trente-deux Releves : Six chapons la Nelson, six saddleback, de mouton Gallois, quatre aloyaux de Boeuf au Raifort, six haunches de venaison, six quartier d'agneau de maison il la Sevigne, quatre dindonneaux en diadème.

Trente-deux flancs: Huit jambons a la York, huit poularde à la Russe, huit timballes de riz a la Royale, huit patés chaud Vesphalienne.

Quarante-huit Entrées : Huit sautés de faisans au fumet de gibier aux truffes, huit de cotelettes de mouton à la Vicomtesse, huit de blancs de volaille à la York Minster, huit de riz de veau à la Palestine, huit de rissolettes de volaille a la Pompadour, huit de salmi gibier a la chasseur.

SECOND COURSE—

Quarante Rôtis: Huit de perdreaux aux feuilles de céleri, huit de faisans bardés au cresson, six de cannetons au jus d'oranges, six de grouses a l'Ecosaise, six de levreaux au jus de groseilles, six de bécasses et bécaasines au jus.

Cent Entremets: Dix chartreuses de pêches, dix gelées de fraises Francaises à la Fontainebleau, dix salades grouses à la Soyer, dix galantines aspiques à la Valifere, dix pelits Macedoines de fruit cristallisé, dix mirontons de homard aux olives, dix crevetts au vin de champagne, dix gâteaux cremant à la Duke of York, dix crèmes transparentes au kirchenwagser, dix tartlettes pralinés aux cerises de Montmorency.

Vingt Relévés: paniers de fruits Glacés à la Lady Mayoress, dix jambons surprise à l'Ananas. Celeri à la Crème, Choux-fleurs au beurre, Haricots vert, Choux de Bruxelles.

Side-table: Vegetables, grand dessert floreal à Watteau, sea-kale.

Extra Dishes the Royal Table—Les rougets à l'Italienne blanche, le John Dory à la mariniere, l'extravagance culinaire à la alderman, le volau vent à la Talleyrand, le paon à l'ancienne Rome, garni des ortolans; les guillemôts des Ardennes, la crème de la Grand Bretagne à la Victoria, la crème de la Grand Bretagne à la Albert, les roçailles aux huitres giatinees l'Ostend, la hure de sanglier à l'Allemande en surprise. Dessert floreal à la Watteau. Raisins de Fontainebleau, fraises des bois Français, pêches Montreuil, ananas,

⁴ 'The Banquet', *Illustrated London News*, 2 November 1850, p.10.

raisins Muscat, melons, bananas, compôte de Chaumontelle. Poires à la Duchesse d'Angoulême.

We have engraved the "Hundred Guinea Dish", from the Royal table. This Apician group contained a small portion of the following articles, viz.:-

		£	s.	d.
5	Turtle Heads, part of fins, and green fat	<i>costing</i>	34	0 0
24	Capons, the two small <i>noix</i> from each side of the middle of the back only used	<i>costing</i>	8	8 0
18	Turkeys, the same	"	8	12 0
18	Poulardes, the same	"	5	17 0
16	Fowls, the same	"	2	8 0
10	Grouse	"	2	5 0
20	Pheasants, <i>noix</i> only	"	3	0 0
45	Partridges, the same	"	3	7 0
70	Plovers, whole	"	0	9 0
40	Woodcocks, the same	"	8	0 0
3	Quails, whole	"	3	0 0
doz	Snipes, <i>noix</i> only	"	5	0 0
100	Pigeons, only	"	0	14 0
3	Larks, stuffed	"	0	15 0
doz	Ortolans from Belgium	"	5	0 0
6	The <i>garniture</i> , consisting of cockscombs, truffles, mushrooms, crawfish, olives, American asparagus, <i>croustades</i> , sweetbreads, <i>quenelles de volaille</i> , green mangoes, and a new sauce .	<i>costing</i>	14	10 0
			105	5 0

The way M. Soyer accounts for the extravagance of this dish is as follows, viz. that if an epicure were to order this dish only, he would be obliged to provide the whole of the above-mentioned articles.

At the Royal table also, were two magnificent pines (from Chatsworth), presented by his Grace the Duke of Devonshire. These pines weighed nearly 15 lb. each, and were of the variety named by Mr. Paxton, the "Royal Providence".

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