



CHICAGO JOURNALS

NACBS
North American
Conference on
British Studies

James Gregory. Of Victorians and Vegetarians: The Vegetarian Movement in Nineteenth-Century Britain

Author(s): Margaret Puskar-Pasewicz

Source: *The Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 48, No. 2 (April 2009), pp. 534-536

Published by: [The University of Chicago Press](#) on behalf of [The North American Conference on British Studies](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/598906>

Accessed: 16/04/2011 05:07

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>. JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at <http://www.jstor.org/action/showPublisher?publisherCode=ucpress>.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



The University of Chicago Press and The North American Conference on British Studies are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to The Journal of British Studies.

<http://www.jstor.org>

Most of the subtleties of circumstance, in other words, that need to be taken into account to examine adequately Frederick Douglass's distinctive reception in Scotland, or Carlyle's position on emancipation in the West Indies. Asserting that "Victoria's 'subjects' . . . tended to be optimistic, dogmatic, earnest and enthusiastic" (8) not only makes the inhabitants of the whole Empire identical in general character with the British (or is that only the English?), but the statement immediately summons up all the important "Victorians" for whom this description would be ludicrous (Emily Brontë? John Ruskin? Carlyle himself?).

One can't fault Dickerson's range, or the reading that has clearly gone into this work: the first chapter offers an overview of the history of British slavery, followed by glimpses of the United States travel writing of Captain Marryat, Harriet Martineau, both Trollopes (Frances and Anthony), Charles Dickens, Thackeray, Fanny Kemble, and Rudyard Kipling, while the second chapter introduces the British travels of, among others, Frederick Douglass, Ida B. Wells, William Wells Brown, Josephine Brown, John Brown, and the Reverend J. W. C. Pennington. As the length of these lists suggest, though, most travelers and texts are dealt with fairly cursorily. There is however, a welcome close reading of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's "The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim's Point" and in later chapters of Carlyle's *Occasional Discourse* and Du Bois's novel *Dark Princess* and the epigraphs of *The Souls of Black Folk*. Some of the most interesting discussions seemed to me those about Alexander Crummell's promotion of British values in Liberia (107–8), and the observation that Du Bois came to Africa through Europe (112). Du Bois's Europe was of course as much German as British, and many of the artists admired by the characters in *Dark Princess*—whom Dickerson ropes in with Du Bois's "Victorian" interests—are continentals. They are also more usually identified with revolutionizing nineteenth-century aesthetics than embodying them (Wassily Kandinsky, Paul Gauguin, Pablo Picasso, Henri Matisse). It is not quite clear whether Dickerson would consider nineteenth-century African American connections with Europe to be continuous with those between the Harlem Renaissance and European Modernism, or whether she would see the latter as a transformation of the former. Clearly, she has got hold of an important moment in African American cultural history, even if one could wish she had sorted out its implications more thoroughly before pressing ahead into print.

Sarah Meer, University of Cambridge

JAMES GREGORY. *Of Victorians and Vegetarians: The Vegetarian Movement in Nineteenth-Century Britain*. London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2007. Pp. 313. \$79.95 (cloth).

Of Victorians and Vegetarians provides a timely and deeply researched account of nineteenth-century Britons' efforts to promote abstention from meat. In spite of the popular perception that western vegetarianism did not flourish until the mid-twentieth century, James Gregory (University of Bradford) traces the movement's longer roots in Victorian Britain. Unlike previous scholars—such as Stephen Nissenbaum, James C. Whorton, Elisabeth Meyer-Renschhausen, and Albert Wirz—who have described food reform in both Britain and the United States primarily in terms of ideology and/or merely as a less significant offshoot of popular health reform, Gregory convincingly depicts vegetarianism as a distinct movement in its own right. He adeptly reviews the multitude of connections between vegetarianism and other Victorian reforms throughout the nineteenth century, but he does not use the simultaneous development of unorthodox medicine, temperance, women's rights, or anti-vivisection sentiments to explain the whole story. The book's strongest contribution to existing scholarship on early vegetarianism in Great Britain is its discussion of the creation of the vegetarian press, local and national vegetarian societies, and meatless restaurants.

Furthermore, Gregory explores how Britons attempted to live out these beliefs in their everyday lives and how class and gender influenced the vegetarian movement.

The book begins with vegetarianism's development in Manchester and Salford, England, among a group of radical communitarians known as "The Concordium." Building on Julia M. Twigg and Robert H. Abzug's works, Gregory shows how the establishment of the Vegetarian Society (VS) in the 1830s and 1840s represented the coming together of religious fervor and other social forces aimed at personal reform. In the VS's earliest years, its membership remained primarily limited to a small branch of Swedenborgians known as the Bible Christians or Cowherdites who promoted temperance reform (21). Although the United States was not the origin of British vegetarianism—in fact, quite the opposite was true—English vegetarians often utilized the writings of popular American health reformers, most notably William A. Alcott and Sylvester Graham. Among its most important early leaders were James Simpson, the first president of the (English) Vegetarian Society and Joseph Brotherton, a member of Parliament (31).

Gregory emphasizes the critical role of environment—namely, the increasingly urban areas of northern England and London where the movement historically gained the most adherents—in the emergence of vegetarianism throughout the nineteenth century. "Metropolitan vegetarianism," he argues, benefited not only from the fears associated with urban life (e.g., threats of food adulteration, challenges to the traditional social order, and rampant immorality) but also from more positive trends such as greater access to education and openness to the formation of voluntary societies aimed at self-improvement (45). These first three chapters provide a useful but not entirely original—as Gregory acknowledges—overview of the movement's close connections to other Victorian reform efforts, most importantly temperance, health reform, and animal welfare. Gregory departs from previous renditions of this story, however, by closely looking at how Victorians attempted to institutionalize vegetarianism through the creation of local societies, publications, lectures, and public events in parts of England as well as Scotland, Ireland, and Wales. Although the early movement's influence remained very limited, Gregory shows how these early leaders and ideas provided the foundation for the movement's heyday during the last three decades of the nineteenth century.

After a decline at midcentury, British vegetarianism experienced a widespread revival beginning in the 1870s. Victorians continued to emphasize the vegetarian movement's close associations with health reform and temperance principles, but as chapter 4 explains, "vegetarianism featured as part of that larger counterculture against capitalism, traditional gender relations and positivistic science" (113). The author describes the intersections between food reform and radicalism, in particular Victorian socialism and "anti-everythingarianism," including popular criticisms of vivisection, vaccination policies, slavery, and war. Equally important, London began to overshadow Manchester as the institutional center/base for English vegetarianism, prompted by the formation of the London Vegetarian Society (LVS) and its wealthy patron, Arnold Hills. Initially established as a branch of the Manchester-based VS, the LVS developed important connections to nonvegetarian food reformers in London, and the groups officially split in 1888. The broader agenda promoted by Hills and the LVS, including their support for women's suffrage, also resulted in greater participation among women in the vegetarian movement itself. (Gregory points out that Victorian women were most likely active in the movement earlier on in the century, too, but their roles are harder to define due to the lack of female authorship and strong female leaders.)

Gregory devotes the next chapter to a much overlooked aspect of Victorian reform—how ordinary men and women attempted to integrate their ideals into everyday life. Here, the author relies on evidence from the plethora of meatless cookbooks and both the vegetarian and nonvegetarian press's descriptions of meatless restaurants. He also provides valuable insight into food reform propaganda and the commercialization of vegetarianism, but he ultimately fails to disclose much about how Victorian families experimented with

meatless regimens in the home. Although Gregory's research reveals a wealth of vegetarian and health reform periodicals and books that have gone relatively unexamined by scholars, I regretted that he was not able to make better use of personal diaries and testimonies to illuminate more about how vegetarianism was "lived"—such as its effects on holidays and celebrations and whether or not it created tensions within the home between spouses or parents and children.

The last two chapters of the book take a step back and examine the vegetarian movement through the lenses of class, gender, and Victorian culture. Chapter 6 explores how ideas of class and gender influenced the emerging vegetarian movement, primarily in terms of its (failed) efforts to attract working-class families and the expanding role of women through groups such as the Women's Vegetarian Union.

In these chapters, the author also expands on his notion of Victorian vegetarianism as a distinctly urban phenomenon and its close development to Britons' hopes and fears of industrialization. In chapter 7, the book takes a more interdisciplinary bent and addresses representations of vegetarians in Victorian fiction and scholarly works by philosophers and social scientists. This final chapter explores how notions of "modernity" contributed to the emergence of a distinct social movement to promote abstention from meat. Gregory also hints at the vegetarian movement's role in turn-of-the-century attempts to construct a cohesive national identity and culture for Great Britain. This theme, however, is not sufficiently explored. Nonetheless, there is still significant work to be done on vegetarianism as a means of "cultural nationalism" as well as both a pro- and antimodernity movements.

Gregory's work serves as an important step beyond recent scholars' mere acceptance of vegetarianism and other "unorthodox" health reforms as legitimate subjects for historical analysis. The author successfully demonstrates the social, cultural, and political significance of the nineteenth-century vegetarian movement in Great Britain and raises new questions about the meanings of food and diet in the past.

Margaret Puskar-Pasewicz, Pittsburgh

PETER HAVHOLM. *Politics and Awe in Rudyard Kipling's Fiction*. Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2008. Pp. 188. \$99.95 (cloth).

One of the perennial questions that swirl about Rudyard Kipling is how readers who vehemently object to his conservative and imperialist politics can nonetheless take deep pleasure in his art, even when that art is underwritten by the very politics they despise. It is a measure of the bold ambition of Peter Havholm's *Politics and Awe in Rudyard Kipling's Fiction* that this is the precise question he seeks to answer.

Havholm believes that to read Kipling correctly, we must first understand the hard lessons in politics he learned shortly after arriving in India in 1882 to assume his position as subeditor of the official Anglo-Indian newspaper *The Civil and Military Gazette*. Those political lessons—delivered as much by the young journalist's father, Lockwood Kipling, as by the members of the Anglo-Indian club to which Rudyard belonged—rested upon the firm cultural view that Indians were so far below Britons in the scale of civilization that they were wholly different in kind. For Havholm, this perception of difference is key, since out of it grows for Kipling, in Indian tale after Indian tale, a sense of wonder (the "awe" in Havholm's title) at human beings who are distinctly "other" than Britons. This awareness of wonder at the strange persists throughout Kipling's career as the hallmark of his art, even after he as a writer had left India and Indians behind and taken up treating other subjects, some of which (animals, ships, and locomotives) were alterior in a nonhuman sense and