

On the Civilizing of Appetite

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Although *The Civilizing Process* has a great deal to say about the civilizing of table manners — how people ate — it says relatively little about what people ate and how much. Elias mentions in passing the well-known carnivorous bent of the medieval upper classes, in marked contrast to the largely leguminous and farinaceous diet of the peasants, and he discusses the gradual growth of feelings of repugnance towards the carving at table of large and recognizable carcasses (Elias, 1978: 117–22). Of appetite he says nothing. Yet the general thesis of *The Civilizing Process* is of course a powerful one, capable of wide application, and it gives general grounds for looking for evidence of a long-term process of the civilizing of appetite. Elias has demonstrated, not only in *The Civilizing Process* but in *The Court Society* and in many essays and lectures, how civilizing processes were manifested in changing taste in literature and the arts. The culinary arts are no exception, as I have tried to show in my book *All Manners of Food* (1985). In this particular paper, however, I am concerned less with changes in qualitative tastes in food than with the more difficult question of changes in the regulation of appetite in the quantitative sense. Is it not likely that the same long-term changes in the structure of societies which brought about changes in manners, in the expression of affect, and in the tension-balance of personalities would also be reflected in the patterning and expression of so basic a drive as appetite?

One aspect of the problem of control over appetite has been raised by Bryan Turner (1982a, 1982b, 1984) in his discussions of medical discourse about diet. Turner mentions Elias in passing, but his own theoretical orientation is derived from Foucault (especially *The Birth of the Clinic* and *Discipline and Punish*) and from Max Weber's views on rationalization in European culture and its roots in religion. In Foucault, however, as Turner pointed out, 'the

discourse appears to be almost sociologically disembodied' and 'there is a pronounced reluctance to reduce systematic thought to interests, especially the economic interests of social groups, so that the growth of formal knowledge appears to be one which is immanent in discourse itself' (1982b: 257). Weber certainly is not vulnerable to that criticism, but in his case it is well to recall Goudsblom's (1977: 188–9) warning that although *The Protestant Ethic* will always stand as 'a masterpiece of well-documented "interpretative understanding"', it is hopelessly inconclusive when it comes to explaining the actual part played by Calvinism in the sociogenesis of capitalism. Attempts to extend notions of elective affinity into realms like medical writings on diet are likely to be even more inconclusive. Besides, medical opinion — and even the increasing power of the medical profession — are only small parts of the complex history of appetite and its control in European society. I therefore want to explore whether ideas derived from Elias and figurational sociology can help to make sense of that history, and to ask whether we can speak of the 'civilizing of appetite'.

Hunger and Appetite

Appetite, it must be remembered, is not the same thing as hunger. Hunger is a body drive which recurs in all human beings in a reasonably regular cycle. Appetite for food, on the other hand, in the words of Daniel Cappon, a psychotherapist specializing in eating disorders is:

basically a state of mind, an inner mental awareness of desire that is the setting for hunger. . . . An individual's appetite is his desire and inclination to eat, his interest in consuming food. Eating is what a person *does*. Appetite is what he *feels* like doing, mostly a psychological state. (1973: 21)

We tend to think of hunger and appetite as directly linked, but in fact, as Cappon argues, there is no simple relationship. The link between hunger and appetite is provided by what is sometimes referred to as the 'appostat', by which is meant a *psychological*, not simply physiological, control mechanism regulating food intake. Just as a thermostat can be set too high or too low, so a person's 'appostat' can be set too high or too low in relation to the physiological optimum range. Too high a setting, too much food intake, is a condition of 'bulimia', likely to lead to excessive body weight; too low a setting represents the condition of 'anorexia', leading to problems of underweight.

A person's 'appetate' setting is determined not only by the underlying hunger drive, but also by often rather complex psychological processes in which social pressures can play a considerable part. Body image is a particularly notable element: how a person perceives his or her own body and its relation to what he or she perceives to be the socially approved body image. Today psychologists understand much more about the psychological problems which can lead individual people to have pathological 'eating disorders' and body weights deviating from what is healthy.

But what about the regulation of appetite in the 'normal' majority? Can that be studied according to the model provided by Elias in a long-term developmental perspective? Cappon (1973: 45) provides a clue that perhaps it can, when he argues that his patients with eating disorders are in some sense 'immature' personalities, and that the normal mature individual today 'is able to change his eating habits at will — when he eats, how long he lingers over a meal, what he eats, and the amount'. In other words, Cappon is arguing that normal eating behaviour involves a capacity for considerable self-control. Has this capacity developed over the long term in European society in the same way that Elias argues other facets of self-control have done?

The Appetite of Gargantua

The celebrated banquets of the Middle Ages and Renaissance, known to us from literary sources like Rabelais and from numerous documents throughout Europe, give a misleading image of typical eating in that period. Not only did they involve just a small minority of society — even if we allow that servants and retainers received their share — but from the spectacular bills of fare it is difficult to work out how much each individual actually ate. For example, the menu for a feast given by the City of Paris for Cathérine de Medici in 1549 (Franklin, 1887–1902: III, 93) lists twenty-four sorts of animals (mainly birds and other game, because butcher's meat was disdained for such grand occasions), many kinds of cakes and pastry, and a mere four vegetable dishes — but we do not know how many shared the food. At the feast for the enthronement of Archbishop Nevill at York in 1465 (Warner, 1791: 93ff.), a thousand sheep, two thousand pigs, two thousand geese, four thousand rabbits, fish and game by the hundred, numerous kinds of bird, and twelve porpoises and seals were eaten; but though we know the order of courses and even the seating plan for the most

important guests, it is uncertain how many others took part, or indeed how long the feast lasted — it may have been several days. There is little doubt that guests could if they wished eat as much as they could take. The number of dishes set before the diners on such great occasions was very large — for example, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (c. 1400: 25) mentions twelve dishes between each pair of diners — but they did not necessarily finish them, for it is known that surplus from the high table generally found its way to lower tables and eventually to the poor. Whatever the uncertainties, however, there seems little doubt that prodigious feats of appetite were witnessed at these great feasts, which were at least symptomatic of great inequalities in the social distribution of nourishment. The great people who had the power to do so sometimes indulged in such banquets in times of widespread dearth,¹ which itself, as a sign of a relatively low level of identification with the sufferings of fellow men, marks in Elias's terms a relatively low point on the curve of civilizing processes.

In other ways, the great banquets are highly misleading as a guide to medieval patterns of appetite. Their social function can be understood more by analogy with the Kwakiutl potlatch than in relation to culinary taste and appetite (Mennell, 1985, chapter 3; Codere, 1950). Moreover they were untypical even of upper-class eating. They were high-points of an oscillating dietary regime even for the courtiers and nobility. Even this élite did not eat like that all the time. Perhaps, unlike most people, they rarely went hungry, but they did not always enjoy the wide choice which (rather than the sophistication of the cooking) was the hallmark of the feast. The rhythm of the seasons and the hazards of the harvest impinged even on their diet; even they knew periods of frugality.² Breakfasts even in a royal household 'would not now be regarded as extravagant in a day labourer's family', and on ordinary days dinners consisted of no more than two joints of meat, roast or boiled, or fish (Weber, 1973: 198). Robert Mandrou recognizes the significance of these fluctuations in the pattern of eating:

... without any doubt it was normal for all social classes to alternate between frugality and feasting. A consequence of the general insecurity where food was concerned, this oscillation imposed itself as a rite, some signs of which can still be found today. The festivals of the fraternities ... in the towns and those of the harvest, vintage or St Martin's Day in the country were always occasions for fine living for a few hours at least — and with innumerable variations in the form it took, of course.³ But these huge feasts, after which a man had to live on bread and

water for months on end provided compensation, however meagre, for ill-fortune, and were appreciated for that reason; the very precariousness of existence explained them. The virtue of thrift, of making one's resources spread evenly over a given period, cannot be conceived of without a certain margin of supply. . . . One other factor to be taken into account in explaining these 'orgies' is the ever-present dangers threatening the granary; what was the good of laying up large stocks if brigands or soldiers might come along the next day and carry them off? (Mandrou, 1975: 24)

This oscillation between fasting and feasting runs parallel to the extreme emotional volatility of medieval people noted by Elias, their ability to express emotion with greater freedom than today, and to fluctuate quickly between extremes. And their sources are the same.

Mandrou, like Elias, Bloch (1961: I, 73 and II, 411) and Huizinga (1924: chapter 1) before him, notes this general psychological volatility but, curiously, relates it only indirectly to the insecurity of life in medieval and early modern Europe; he attributes it in large part to the physiological effects of inadequate and irregular feeding. 'The effect of this chronic malnutrition was to produce in man the mentality of the hunted, with its superstitions, its sudden outbursts of anger and its hypersensitivity' (1975: 26). Such direct physiological effects of nutrition on psychology should perhaps not be entirely discounted, but they should equally not be overstressed; the suggestion merely adds one more complication to an already complex causal nexus. More important — as Mandrou himself seemed to see clearly when specifically discussing the fluctuation between feasting and fasting — is the link between the general precariousness and unpredictability of existence and its reflection in personality, beliefs and social behaviour. Keith Thomas (1971) has emphasized the connection between the hazards of life in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and the prevalence of superstition and magical beliefs, which declined noticeably with the growing security of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. But it is Norbert Elias who has traced most fully the general connection between the changing emotional economy of the personality and the gradually growing calculability of social existence brought about by long-term processes of change in the structure of societies.

The Civilizing Process presents a theory of state-formation and of the internal pacification of larger and larger territories which the growth of states involved. But Elias has also made it clear that state-formation is only one of several intertwining and interdepen-

dent long-term processes of social development which gradually increased the security and calculability of life in society. Internal pacification permitted the division of labour and growth of trade — eventually increasing the security of food supplies among many other things — which in turn provided the economic basis for further expansion of the territory and the internal regulative power of states. *The Civilizing Process* is also a study of the changing codes of manners and standards of social behaviour which broadly accompanied these processes. Elias (1982: 233–4) gives a characteristically vivid illustration of the connection between these two aspects of his study. Travelling by road, he observes, was dangerous in medieval times, and it remains so today — but the nature of the danger has changed. The medieval traveller had to have the ability — temperamental as well as physical — to defend himself violently against violent attack. Today, the chief danger is from road accidents, and avoiding them depends to a great extent on high capacity for self-control in the expression of (and skill in warding off) aggression, whether in overt or in disguised form. And aggression is only one of the manifestations of affect over which people came gradually to be subject to increased pressures to exercise greater self-control. Not that the expression of feeling by people in the Middle Ages lacked all social patterning and control. There is no zero-point. But in the long-term the controls grew not just stronger but also more even.

Against this background, the oscillation between extremes of gluttonous gorging and enforced fasting seems all of a piece with other aspects of the medieval and early modern personality. I would therefore argue that it is connected not simply with the insecurity and unpredictability of food supplies alone, but also with the more general insecurity of conditions of life.

Famines and Other Hazards

Life in medieval and early modern Europe certainly was by today's standards very insecure. Goubert (1960) speaks vividly of 'steeples' of mortality, from the appearance of the suddenly soaring graphs of death-rates in the Beauvaisis in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Mortality among élites, whom one might expect to have been better fed, seems to have been just as high as among the mass of the population in Western Europe. This is especially well-documented for Britain. T.H. Hollingsworth's calculations (1977) of mortality in British peerage families since 1600 differ scarcely at all from those of Wrigley and Schofield (1981). As late as the third

quarter of the seventeenth century, the life-expectancy of males at birth was only about thirty years. Mortality among ruling groups elsewhere in Europe was also high, 'which makes it unlikely that they enjoyed appreciable advantages over the rest of the population' (Livi-Bacci, 1985: 98).

There were many causes other than dearth for the steeples of mortality which from time to time towered over localities, regions, or even whole countries. In towns, there were frequent disastrous fires, made worse in their consequences by organization inadequate to control them (Thomas, 1971: 15). Epidemic diseases including smallpox and plague periodically cut swathes through all ranks of society, poor sanitation and hygiene — reflecting deficiencies in medical knowledge and technology as well as once more in social organization — played their part in this. And then there were wars and vagrancy. All these were in addition to crop failures, and they could interact in complex ways — war, for instance, not only killed people directly, but disrupted food supplies, led to increased vagrancy, and helped to spread disease.

Not even in the worst times of famine is it thought that a great proportion of people actually starved to death. The general view is that hunger made many more people susceptible to disease, and that others who survived the immediate famine had their lifespans curtailed by the effects of hunger and malnutrition. Even this is in some dispute: Livi-Bacci (1985: 96) has pointed out 'that the majority of cases of extraordinary and catastrophic mortality are independent of famine, hunger and starvation, and Watkins and Van de Walle (1985: 21) have contended that 'the evidence linking malnutrition and mortality is surprisingly sparse and inadequate'. Most historians would accept, however, at least that 'even if many of the deaths in a famine period were due rather to disease than to outright starvation, nevertheless the sudden rise in death rates was sometimes associated with an abrupt fall in the availability of food, whatever the causes of this scarcity' (Watkins and Van de Walle, 1985: 17).

Famines, in any case, are not a simple function of crop failure. Sen's study of modern famines (1981) has already influenced historians' thinking about famines in the past. Sen shows that even in times of famine, food is available. People starve because of their inability to command food through 'entitlement' relationships such as ownership, exchange, employment, and social security rights. In other words, the effects of crop failures have to be understood in

terms of patterns of social interdependence. The breaking of the chain which linked crop failure to famines and famines to steeples of mortality is the story more of developing social organization's contribution to an increasing security of life than simply of increasingly reliable food production.

In medieval and early modern Europe, bad harvests and food shortages sometimes affected whole countries, even the whole continent at the same time. An example is the great European famine of 1315–17. Often, however, only a limited region was affected by harvest failure, though before authorities were able to organize the holding of sufficient stocks of grain, and before trade and transport were adequate to remedy local shortage, they could be serious enough.⁴ Inadequate transport meant that food could not be moved, or could be moved only with difficulty, from surplus to deficit areas. Shortages led to panic buying, hoarding, and speculation, prices soaring and putting what food was available for sale quite beyond the means of the poor. Holding stocks could have helped to remedy this, but administrative difficulties defeated most governments before the late seventeenth or eighteenth century. The direct relationship between harvest failures and soaring rates of mortality only gradually disappeared from western Europe from the late seventeenth century onwards. By then, large grain stocks held for example at Amsterdam were helping to alleviate the effects of dearth not only in the Low Countries but in coastal and other areas of neighbouring countries accessible to trade. In the eighteenth century, food production increased markedly, but so did population. There was more food, though not necessarily greater consumption per capita. Food supplies, however, became gradually more reliable and shortages less frequent. After 1750, according to Braudel and Spooner (in Rich and Wilson, 1977: 396), only 'suppressed' famines ('almost bearable ones') continued to occur in Western Europe, very largely because of improvements in trade and transport, the effects of which can be seen in the levelling out of food prices plotted (as on a weather map) across the continent. In England scarcity following crop failures no longer reached famine proportions by the first decade of the eighteenth century, though food prices rose very high and death rates were still noticeably up in years of bad harvests in the 1720s and 1740s. In France, the last full nation-wide famine was that of 1709–10, but regional dearths accompanied by rising mortality still happened as late as 1795–6 and 1810–12 (Cobb, 1970: 220–2).

Improved trade and transport were not altogether straightforward in their effects:

the growth of trade, if it enabled the surplus of one region rather more often than before to relieve the dearth of another, also left a larger number of people at the mercy of market fluctuation, tended to depress or hold down real wages, and increase the gap between the rich and the poor. (Wernham, 1968: 5)

Furthermore, what Peltó and Peltó call the 'delocalization' of food-use over the last few centuries — meaning 'processes in which food varieties, production methods, and consumption patterns are disseminated throughout the world in an ever-increasing and intensifying network of socio-economic and political interdependency' (1985: 309) — had a differential impact between centres and peripheries. In the industrialized countries it was eventually to bring about increased diversity for available foods and improved diets for lower as well as upper social ranks; in the less industrialized world, in contrast, the same process has led through commercialization to concentration in many regions on only a few cash crops with a concomitant reduction of food diversity. In a shorter-term period of transition, the same sort of contrast could be seen *within* the countries of Europe. This conflict between national markets and local needs was one reason why food riots were still common in eighteenth-century England and France (Tilly, 1975: 380–455; Rudé 1964; Thompson, 1971; Cobb, 1970).

Another reason was more important: what could not immediately disappear with general famines was the fear of going hungry engendered by centuries of experience. Mandrou observes that one of the most characteristic features of early modern Europe was

the obsession with starving to death, an obsession which varied in intensity according to locality and class, being stronger in the country than in the town, rare among the upper-classes and well-fed fighting men, and constant among the lower classes. (1961: 26–7)

The themes of starvation, child abandonment and outright cannibalism so common in European folklore are further evidence of the pervasive fear of food scarcity.⁵ So equally, as Jacques Le Goff (1964) has argued, were the countering themes of the *mythes de ripaille* ('myths about having a good blow-out') found in early peasant folklore, becoming by the thirteenth century a literary theme in the French fable *Cocaigne* and the English poem *The Land*

of Cockayne, and the food miracles which multiplied around many saints. Both sets of themes, though superficially opposites, are signs of deep-rooted fears which could not disappear overnight. As late as 1828, notes Cobb (1970: 215), dearth was still being written about as a major threat to public order in France, because 'the fear of dearth was permanent, especially at the lower levels of society, and it took very little at any time for this fear to become hysterical and to develop into the proportions of panic'.

External Constraints on Appetite: Church, State and Doctors

In these circumstances, self-control over appetite was scarcely a pressing problem for the vast majority of Europeans from medieval until relatively recent times. At first glance, in medieval and early modern Europe there might appear to be at least three sources of pressures towards self-control over appetite: first, the large number of fasts expected of the fervent Catholic; second, the sumptuary laws which apparently demonstrated the interest of states in suppressing gluttony; and, thirdly, medical opinion. I shall, however, argue that each of these represented a form only of external constraint (*Fremdzwang* was Elias's original word), and only very gradually did this come to be accompanied by a considerable measure of self-restraint (*Selbstzwang*).

Fasting

Fasting was in theory required on three days a week (Wednesday, Friday and Saturday), on the vigils for major saints days, for three days at each of the Quarter Days, and for the whole of Lent except Sundays. Strict fasting consisted essentially of eating only once in twenty-four hours, after Vespers, and as far as possible then eating only bread and water. But, of course, for all but the most ascetic, fish was permitted, as were vegetables, but wine as well as meat and any other animal product were excluded (Franklin, 1887-1902: VIII, 124ff.; Henisch, 1976: 28-50). As time passed, the Church made more and more exceptions, such as permitting eggs to be eaten on fast days — and made the requirements less stringent, but the rules were still in principle in force in Catholic countries in the late eighteenth century. After the Reformation, the Protestant churches generally disapproved of fasting on specific days as an integral part of Catholic ritual. In a characteristic compromise, the Elizabethan Church of England frowned on fasting as a form of display, though it allowed that at the discretion of individuals it

could be a useful adjunct to prayer; and it adjured Christians to observe fasts decreed by law, not for religious but for political reasons:

as when any realm in consideration of the maintenance of fisher-towns bordering upon the seas, and for the increase of fishermen, of whom do spring mariners to go upon the sea, to the furnishing of the Navy of the Realm, whereby not only commodities of other countries may be transported, but also may be a necessary defence to resist the invasion of the adversary. (Homilies, 1562: 300; cf. O'Hara-May, 1977: 122ff.)

Yet even when and where the Church's authority fully upheld the ritual of fasting, how much difference did it effectively make to how much people actually ate? The majority of people would have considered themselves fortunate if there was meat to eat as often as four days a week. Nor did the rules of fasting do anything to impede their enjoyment of the great binges which at times of plenty relieved the monotony and sparsity of their usual diet. As for the minority for whom plenty was not exceptional, they could eat sumptuously even on *jours maigres*, breaking not the letter but merely the spirit of the fasting rules. How little abstinence a dinner on a fish day might represent is suggested by the vigil dinner set before Sir Gawain on Christmas Eve:

Several fine soups, seasoned lavishly
Twice-fold, as is fitting, and fish of all kinds —
Some baked in bread, some browned on coals,
Some seethed, some stewed and savoured with spices,
But always subtly sauced, and so the man liked it.
The gentle knight generously judged it a feast,
And often said so, while the servers spurred
him on thus

As he ate
'This present penance do;
It soon shall be offset'. (1974: 54-5)

Much later, French courtly recipe books of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries also show what could be achieved within the rules on *jours maigres*. In fact, the observance of fasting in the medieval and early modern period has all the hallmarks of *Fremdzwang* rather than *Selbstzwang*. That is to say, there is very little evidence of people having internalized the controls the rules embodied; few evidently felt any personal guilt or repugnance at breaking the rules. In any case, the prescribed fasts in their full

severity were probably only ever observed in some religious orders.⁶ And such exceptional instances of extreme abstinence are indeed a symptom of the unevenness of controls over eating. This general unevenness of controls is, according to Elias, typical of socially highly unequal societies, and Jack Goody has specifically pointed to fasting as characteristic of hierarchical societies:

The other side of hierarchical cuisine was the extended notion of the fast, a rejection of food for religious, medical or moral reasons. . . . Abstinence and prohibition are widely recognized as ways of attaining grace in hierarchical societies such as China and India. . . . Such a philosophy of rejection could develop only within the context of hierarchical cuisine since abstention only exists in the wider context of indulgence. (1982: 116–17)

Very gradually there was to take place a process of development towards controls over appetite which, to use a phrase of Elias's, were both 'more even and all-round' — meaning that individuals acquired the capacity typically to be able to exercise more consistent self-control, and that the controls came to apply more uniformly to people in all strata of society. But in this process, the teachings of the Church seem not to have played any very significant part.⁷

Sumptuary Laws

Perhaps more significant than the Church's teaching is that from the late Middle Ages onwards the secular authorities in England, France and other countries showed their concern to discourage over-elaborate banqueting by enacting sumptuary laws. That the problem was seen as one of social display, not of sheer physical appetite, can be seen from the fact that such laws often sought to control the clothes people wore as well as the food they ate (see Baldwin, 1926; Boucher d'Argis, 1765). The enactment of these laws is possibly a consequence of European society becoming somewhat more open. Enormous banquets were perhaps acceptable when given by feudal lords sharing their viands by custom and obligation with their followers and distributing remains to the poor, but were seen as excess and mere social display when copied by rising strata whose social obligations were ill-defined and dependents few. Not that sumptuary laws were ever effective. Like many other laws before the seventeenth century, the same law was often re-enacted at frequent intervals without ever being effectively enforced; the states simply did not have the power to enforce them. In France, a law of 1563 forbade even private families to have meals of

more than three courses, and the number and type of dishes to constitute each course was also specified in detail. But very much the same law had to be re-enacted in 1565, 1567, 1572, 1577, 1590, 1591, and finally in 1629 (Franklin, 1887–1902: I, 102). In England, Archbishop Cranmer and his bishops agreed in 1541 on very detailed rules carefully grading the number of courses and number of dishes which the archbishops, bishops, deans, archdeacons and junior clergy might eat; but Cranmer appends a sad little memorandum ‘that this order was kept for two or three months, till, by the disusing of certain wilful persons, it came again to the old excess’ (Combe, 1846: 491).

Medical Opinion

It would be equally incautious to overemphasize the influence of medical opinion, or of the rationalization of medical knowledge, in pressurizing people to exercise self-control over appetite. One of the major thrusts of *The Civilizing Process* is to demonstrate that “‘Rational understanding” is not the motor of the “civilizing” of eating or of other behaviour’ (Elias, 1978: I, 116; see also Goudsblom, 1979). Throughout the Middle Ages medical opinion, dominated by the views of the Salerno School, had favoured moderation in eating in the treatment of numerous illnesses. Doctors were certainly aware of the medical dangers of obesity, although they tended to interpret it as a result of inactivity and laziness rather than of overeating per se (O’Hara-May, 1977: 127). But medical opinion is and was brought to bear most effectively on the ill, and there is little evidence to suggest that their opinions had much effect on the daily eating habits of the normally healthy.

Although the social power of the medical profession was growing during the eighteenth century, it is too easy to follow Foucault in looking too hard for dramatic ruptures, and thus to exaggerate both the profession’s power and the novelty of its opinions at this period. Certainly, as Jean-Paul Aron has shown (1961: 971–7), the notion of *régime alimentaire* began to be prominent in medical circles during the eighteenth century, and was reflected in the writings of Rousseau, who favoured moderation and pure foods. Early in the century both in England and France a number of doctors advocated strict diets as a way to health: Bryan Turner has focused particularly on the writings of George Cheyne (1724, 1733), and a little earlier in France Philippe Hecquet (1709) propounded similar ideas in a famous controversy. Jones and Sonenscher (1983) describe how,

later in the century, the diet of hospital inmates was the subject of conflict between doctors and nurses at the Hôtel-Dieu in Nîmes. The nursing sisters had traditionally seen their role as a charitable one and, aware that many illnesses had resulted from repeated subsistence crises, saw it as their duty to feed up the poor and needy ill. One of the doctors at Nîmes complained bitterly against the overplentifulness of the patients' diet, which often impeded their recovery. 'They are always afraid in this hospital that people will die of hunger . . . they always feed the sick too much.' A colleague in neighbouring Montpellier in the 1760s documented how over-feeding by the sisters had led to patients' premature deaths, and 'gave the impression that over-eating was one of the major causes of hospital mortality!' Significantly, the doctors in eighteenth-century Montpellier also launched an onslaught on the tradition of marking the hospital's patron saint's day with feasting.

All the same, it is unsound to pursue an explanation in terms of a few artificially isolated causal 'factors'. A figurational investigation looks first for the sorts of problems people encounter within the webs of social interdependence in which they are caught up. In this case, it is well to remember that the problem of appetite in relation to over-abundant food had still scarcely arisen in the eighteenth century for the great majority of the people of western Europe; for them the most pressing external constraints on appetite were still the shortage or irregularity of food supplies. As for the minority for whom the problem had already arisen they had begun to show signs of adapting to it before any dramatic shift in medical opinion. (There is of course no reason why medical opinion, as one thread in a complex process of development, should not be both cause and effect in various ways and at different stages of the process.)

Quantity and Quality

When food was scarce for most and supplies insecure and irregular for nearly all, the powerful distinguished themselves from their inferiors by the sheer quantities they ate: 'those who could, gorged themselves; those who couldn't, aimed to' (Weber, 1973: 202). Evidence for this is found in one of the most detailed studies of diet in the late Middle Ages. Stouff's study of Provence. Stouff shows that in various ecclesiastical communities, not only did those in the higher echelons eat proportionately more meat, fish and other proteins in relation to bread and wine than did their inferiors, they

also ate a great deal more overall. In one case study typical of the general pattern,

One conclusion must be drawn: in 1429 (and it appears to be equally true throughout the fifteenth century), the food intake of the Archbishop of Arles and the senior members of his household was too large, but relatively well balanced. (Stouff, 1970: 238)

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, there were many who seem to have been noted more for their capacity than for their refinement of taste. Cathérine de Medici was celebrated for her appetite and frequent indigestion. Diarists at the court of Louis XIV have left graphic accounts of the great king's prodigious consumption. Nor does he appear to have been untypical of his court.⁸

Faint traces of the beginnings of pressures towards self-restraint in appetite can be seen a century earlier. In appetite as in so many other facets of the civilizing process, Montaigne is a good witness (Mennell, 1981). He reports that he himself has little self-restraint in eating, but bemoans the fact:

if they preach abstinence once a dish is in front of me, they are wasting their time. . . . To eat greedily as I do, is not only harmful to health, and even to one's pleasure, but it is unmannerly into the bargain. So hurried am I that I often bite my tongue, and sometimes my fingers . . . My greed leaves me no time for talk. (Montaigne, 1967: 445)

By the mid-eighteenth century extreme gluttony appears to have become the exception. Louis XVI, who saw off chicken, lamb cutlets, eggs, ham and a bottle and a half of wine before setting out to hunt, without it diminishing his appetite at dinner, appears to have been considered something of a throwback:

By his appetite, and by his appetite alone did the unfortunate Louis XVI revive memories of Louis XIV. Like him, he did not bother himself with cookery, nor with any refinements; to him, always afraid of not having enough to eat, sheer quantity was more important than anything else; he did not eat, he stuffed himself, going as far as to incapacitate himself at his wedding dinner, scandalizing his grandfather [Louis XV]. (Gottschalk, 1939: 232)

Even in England, another famous trencherman of that time, Dr Johnson, though of less exalted social rank, was also considered a coarse eater. Not only did he show so little sense of what was proper as to call for the boat containing the lobster sauce left over from the

previous course and pour it over his plum-pudding (Piozzi, 1785), but he wolfed his food down in a shameful manner:

When at table, Johnson was totally absorbed in the business of the moment; his looks seemed rivetted to his plate; nor would he, unless when in very high company, say one word, or even pay the least attention to what was said by others, till he had satisfied his appetite, which was so fierce and indulged with such intenseness that while in the act of eating, the veins of his forehead swelled and generally a strong perspiration was evident. To those whose sensations were delicate, this could not but be disgusting; and it was doubtless not very suitable to the character of a philosopher, who should be distinguished by self-command. (Boswell, 1791: I, 323)

Significantly, Boswell comments that everything about Johnson's character and manners was forcible and violent, and adds

Johnson, though he could be rigidly *abstemious*, was not a *temperate* man either in eating or drinking. He could refrain, but he could not use moderately.

That sounds very much like a throwback to the mode of behaviour typical of medieval and early modern Europe. But by the mid-eighteenth century it was no longer considered quite the right thing in the better circles. What changes were taking place?

The civilizing of appetite, if we may call it that, appears to have been partly related to the increasing security, regularity, reliability and variety of food supplies. But just as the civilizing of appetite was entangled with several other strands of the civilizing process including the transformation of table manners, so the improvement in food supplies was only one strand in a complex of developments within the social figuration which together exerted a compelling force over the way people behaved. The increased security of food supplies was made possible by the extension of trade, the progressive division of labour in a growing commercial economy, and also by the process of state-formation and internal pacification. Even a small improvement was enough to enable a small powerful minority to distinguish themselves from the lower ranks of society by the sheer quantities they ate and the regularity with which they ate them. As the improvement continued, somewhat wider segments of the better-off groups in society came to be able to copy the élite. The same structural processes, however, served not only to permit social emulation but positively to promote it. The longer chains of social interdependence produced by state-formation and the division of labour tended to tilt the balance of power little by little

towards lower social groups, leading to increased pressure 'from below' and to intensified social competition. The sumptuary laws, with their vain attempt to relate quantities eaten to social rank, seem symptomatic of that.

By the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries, for the nobility to eat quantitatively more would have been physically impossible.⁹ That was one reason for increasing demands made upon the skill of the cook in making food more palatable; as a modern expert explains,

A variety of studies demonstrates that hunger and palatability are substitutive for each other and algebraically additive in their effects. Equal amounts are eaten of a highly palatable food in a minimal state of hunger and even without hunger, and of a minimally palatable food in a state of hunger. Thus it is equally true to assume that hunger potentiates palatability and that palatability potentiates hunger in their common effect of eliciting eating. The consequences of this relationship is that the differential palatability of two foods decreases with increased hunger. (Le Magnen, 1972: 76)

Or, as Andrew Combe wrote in a nineteenth-century classic of dietetics,

Appetite . . . may . . . be educated or trained to considerable deviations from the ordinary standard of quantity and quality . . . The most common source . . . of the errors into which we are apt to fall in taking appetite as our only guide, is unquestionably the *confounding of appetite with taste*, and continuing to eat for the gratification of the latter long after the former is satisfied. In fact, the whole science of a skilful cook is expended in producing this *willing* mistake on our part. (Combe, 1846: 29–30)

Here, then, is the psychological basis for the elaboration of cooking in an age of plenty. And the skills of cooks had another advantage: they could be applied not simply to stimulating the sated appetites of the glutton, but also to the invention and elaboration of an endless variety of ever more refined and delicate dishes; when the possibilities of quantitative consumption for the expression of social superiority had been exhausted, the qualitative possibilities were inexhaustible.

The links between the changing social figuration, changing patterns of social contest, the changing arts of the cook, and the civilizing of appetite are most clearly discernible, like so many facets of civilizing processes, in France. The development there of 'court society' was particularly significant (Elias, 1982; Mennell, 1985, Ch. 5). The revenues, political power and social functions of the old *noblesse d'épée* were gradually declining, while those of the

bourgeoisie and of the essentially bourgeois *noblesse de robe* were increasing. Parts of the old nobility acquired positions at court and became highly dependent on royal favour. They became in effect specialists in the arts of consumption, entrapped in a system of fine distinctions, status battles and competitive expenditure from which they could not escape because their whole social identity depended upon it. They were under constant pressure to differentiate themselves from the *robins*, the despised *noblesse campagnarde*, and the bourgeoisie. How was this reflected in eating?

The break with medieval cookery seems to have begun in the city courts of Renaissance Italy, but the leadership in matters of culinary innovation seems to have passed to France in the late sixteenth or early seventeenth centuries (see Mennell, 1985, Ch. 4). By early in the reign of Louis XIV, the beginnings of modern French cuisine are visible in the more refined techniques, the less exuberant use of ingredients, and the greater variety of dishes given in a book like La Varenne's *Le Cuisinier François* of 1651. Another period of rapid development followed in the next reign. The gluttony of Louis XIV and many of his courtiers was replaced by the delicate *soupers* for which the Regent was noted. Indeed the Regent himself, like several others among the high nobility, seems himself to have been an expert cook, and his mother the Princess Palatine implies that this was a part of *bon ton* which could be ranked with skills in other arts like music:

My son knows how to cook; it is something he learned in Spain. He is a good musician, as all musicians recognize; he has composed two operas, which he had produced in his chambers and which had some merit, but he did not want them to be shown in public. (Orléans, 1855: I, 349–50)

The change of fashion during the eighteenth century away from quantitative display towards more varied and delicate ragouts is noted by Louis-Sebastien Mercier in 1783:

In the last century, they used to serve huge pieces of meat, and pile them up in pyramids. These little dishes, costing ten times as much as one of those big ones, were not yet known. Delicate eating has been known for only half a century. The delicious cuisine of the reign of Louis XV was unknown even to Louis XIV. (1783: V, 597–8)

The sense of delicacy and pressures towards self-control are, as Elias has shown, closely interwoven. In eating it is the developing

sense of delicacy which first becomes apparent, but that eventually becomes entangled with restraint. In the late sixteenth century Montaigne, who as we have already seen claimed to have little self-restraint over his own eating, also poked fun in his *essai* on 'La vanité des paroles' at Cardinal Caraffa's Italian chef for the gravity with which he held forth on the propriety of courses and sauces, sequences of dishes and balances of flavours (Montaigne, 1967: 134-5). By the time of La Varenne, French cooks were at least as much concerned with such matters as their Italian forerunners. And only a couple of decades later, the next generation of French cookery writers spoke of La Varenne's meals and dishes as coarse and rustic. Molière mocks the seriousness with which these growing conventions were taken, and their social significance (see *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, Act 4; *L'Avare*, Act 3). By the middle of the eighteenth century the first truly gastronomic controversies were taking place, in which defenders of old styles of cooking and eating railed against the preciousness, pretentiousness and over-developed sense of culinary propriety of the proponents of the *nouvelle cuisine*.

By then too, larger segments of the bourgeoisie were seeking to copy the courtly models of refined and delicate eating, and this probably gave increased impetus to the movement towards greater delicacy and self-restraint. The connections are complex. We have noted that courtly fashion moved towards the proliferation of small, delicate and costly dishes, and that knowledgeability and a sense of delicacy in matters of food became something of a mark of the courtier. Now a sense of delicacy implies a degree of restraint too, in so far as it involves discrimination and selection, the rejection as well as the acceptance of certain foods or combinations of foods, guided at least as much by social proprieties as by individual fancies. No courtly gourmet would pour the lobster sauce over his plum pudding. But while the development of systems of fashionable preferences involves a degree of rationalization, what Elias calls 'court-rationality' was antithetical to that of bourgeois economic rationality; lavish consumption was too closely part of the courtier's social identity for him to economize like a good bourgeois. While there is plenty of evidence that, in France at least, the bourgeoisie wanted in the eighteenth century to follow courtly models of eating, it is also clear that most did not have the resources to eat on such a lavish scale; they were therefore both under more pressure than the nobility to choose and select, and also more easily able to do so. The

bourgeoisie was in many ways a more appropriate *couche* for the emergence of a body of gastronomic theorizing. Moreover, given that a fairly high degree of internal pacification and a measure of economic surplus are prerequisites for the development of the cultural syndrome of bourgeois rationality as a whole, it seems no coincidence that gastronomic theorizing as a genre first appeared during the period when the insecurity of food supplies ceased to be of catastrophic proportions, and burgeoned fully during the nineteenth century.¹⁰ At any rate, when it did emerge, the theorists were indeed mainly members of the high bourgeoisie, and the themes of delicacy and self-restraint were prominent in their writings, the latter increasingly so as time went on.

Gastronomy and Moderation

Neither Grimod de la Reynière (1803–12) nor Brillat-Savarin (1826), the two most noted pioneers of gastronomy, entirely dismissed a large capacity as an epicurean virtue. But their writings emphasize the need for a discriminating palate and scorn as vulgar any merely quantitative display. They set the pattern for gastronomic writing in both France and England for the rest of the century. An Englishman strongly influenced by Grimod writes in 1822:

Gluttony is, in fact, a mere effort of the appetite, of which the coarsest bolter of bacon in all Hampshire may equally boast with the most distinguished consumer of turtle in a Corporation: while Epicurism is the result of 'that choicest gift of Heaven', a refined and discriminating taste: this is the peculiar attribute of the palate, that of the stomach. It is the happy combination of both these enviable qualities that constitutes that truly estimable character, the real epicure. He is not only endowed with a capacious stomach and an insatiable appetite, but with a delicate susceptibility in the organs of degustation, which enables him to appreciate the true relish of each ingredient in the most compound ragout, and to detect the slightest aberration of the cook; added to which advantages, he possesses a profound acquaintance with the rules of art in all the most approved schools of cookery, and an enlightened judgment on their several merits, matured by long and sedulous experience. (Sturgeon, 1822: 3–4)

A few decades later, in 1868, another writer bemoans England's lagging behind France in gastronomic *savoir-faire*, and now directly disparages the lack of discrimination masked by plenty:

Not only our merchant princes, but our gentry and nobility, have merely a superficial knowledge of the science of cookery and the art of giving good dinners. Consider the barbarism implied in the popular phrase for ample hospitality! The table is described as groaning under the plenty of the host. (Jerrold, 1868: 5)

By the twentieth century, the theme of moderation was still more explicit. G.F. Scotson-Clark, in a book entitled *Eating without Fears* published in 1924, writes that

Consuming large quantities of food is only a habit. What is often called a 'healthy appetite' is nothing of the sort. The only people who should eat really large quantities of food are those whose regular daily life involves a vast amount of physical exercise — like the road-mender. (1924: 65)

And André L. Simon reiterates an argument prominent in his extensive writings between the 1930s and 1960s.

There cannot be any intelligent choice nor real appreciation where there is excess. Gastronomy stands or falls by moderation. No gourmand and no glutton can be a gastronome. (1969: 94)

Gradually moderation became more clearly linked to questions of health as well as discrimination. Scotson-Clark says:

Cookery plays such a large part in our life, it is really the fundamental basis of our life, our very existence, that it is foolish to belittle its importance. To take no interest in it is as bad for one's health as to take no interest in one's ablutions. An individual should cultivate his palate just as much as he should cultivate his brain. Good taste in food and wine is as necessary as good taste in art, literature and music, and the very fact of looking upon gastronomy as one of the arts will keep a man from becoming that most disgusting of creatures, a glutton . . .

I am sure that moderation is the keynote of good health, and I contend that anyone can eat anything I mention in this book, without increasing his girth, and if taken in moderation he can reduce to normal weight. It is not necessary for one to deprive oneself of all the things one loves, for fear of getting too fat, but it is necessary to take an intelligent interest in the provender with which one intends to stoke the human furnace. (1924: 8-9)

At about the same time in France, Edouard de Pomiane, the medical doctor turned cookery writer, was developing similar themes in books (1922) and in the popular press. Although dieting for health and slimness became a prominent concern in mass circulation publications like women's magazines (see Mennell, 1985, Ch. 9) only after the Second World War, the slim body-image had begun to appeal in higher social circles considerably earlier.

The Fear of Fatness

It would be interesting to know whether fatness was common and whether it carried any stigma in medieval and early modern Europe. The evidence is not entirely unambiguous. Kunzle (1982:

65) traces the ideal of the slender female figure as far back as courtly circles in the later Middle Ages, but it is easy to find literary evidence of plumpness being considered attractive. As for visual evidence, Jane O'Hara-May (1977: 127) argues that paintings show relatively few very fat people, and suggests that the frequent use of purges and the large amount of exercise which in this period even the wealthy could scarcely avoid tended to balance excessive intake. In contrast, Kristoff Glamann draws precisely opposite conclusions from portraits, and states that corporal bulk was in all ranks of society a source not of shame but of prestige.

Eating made one handsome. A thin wife brought disgrace to a peasant. But of a plump wife it was said that 'a man will love her and not begrudge the food she eats'. Men too ought to be stout. That this ideal was not confined to the rustic world is plain from a glance at the magnificent amplitude of the human frame so abundantly depicted by the Renaissance painters. (Rich and Wilson, 1977: 195)

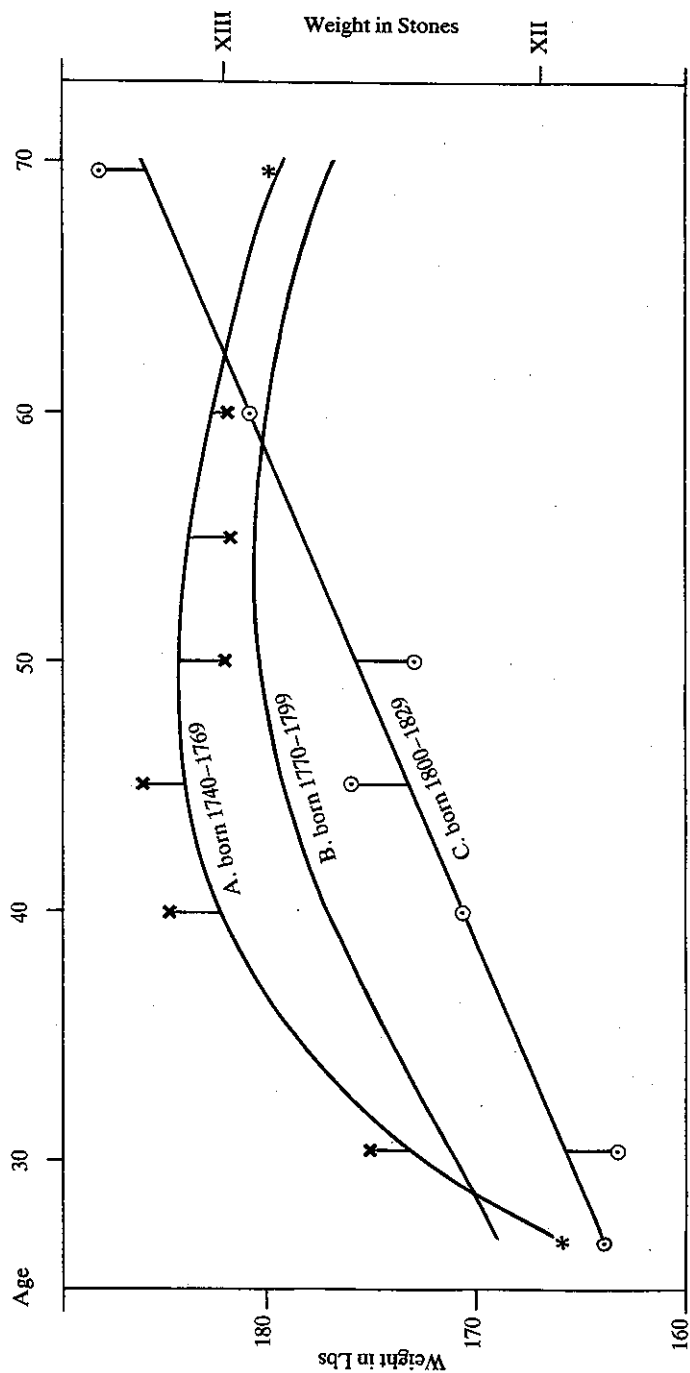
The contradictory conclusions about average girth in paintings point to the need for more systematic studies. But on the more general question of the prestige or otherwise of bodily bulk, the most likely conclusion is that while obesity which impeded health and activity was deplored (particularly by the doctors whom O'Hara-May is studying), a healthy stoutness was widely considered prestigious.

The problem and the fear of being overweight seems, not surprisingly, to have started towards the top of the social scale and progressed steadily downwards. The 'magnificent amplitude of the human frame' which once constituted the cultural model in Europe — and still does in many societies where poverty is rife — was gradually replaced by the ideal of the slim figure. The changing standard of beauty among the upper strata can be seen around the time of the Romantic movement, when 'for both women and men paleness, frailness, slenderness became the vogue' (Young, 1970: 16). Burnett (1966: 80) quotes some fairly abstemious diets recommended for well-to-do ladies at that period. Up to the end of the Edwardian era, as Dally and Gomez (1979: 25) point out, many successful men tended to be rather stout, but today there tend to be lower rates of obesity among the upper socio-economic groups.

Exactly when the ideal began to be reflected in an actual decline in typical body weights, and how the decline progressed down the social scale, is very difficult to demonstrate. Quite a lot of historical evidence is available about people's *heights* (Fogel et al., 1985) but,

FIGURE 1

Mean Age-Weight of British Noblemen in Three Successive Generations



given the complexities of relating body weights to height, age and sex, let alone to social class, little in the way of time-series data over the long period required is available or likely to become available. An interesting clue is an article by Sir Francis Galton in *Nature*, 1884, comparing the weights of three generations of British noblemen among the customers of Berry Brothers, grocers and wine-merchants in St James's, London, from the mid-eighteenth century to the late nineteenth (see Figure 1). This evidence is far from conclusive, but it does suggest that by the late nineteenth century men in the highest stratum of English society were no longer putting on weight so rapidly as young men as their fathers and grandfathers had done. They reached the same weight in the end, but possibly this is consistent with them having over-eaten slightly but persistently rather than indulging in dramatically excessive overeating.

Whatever happened to actual body weights, however, there is plenty of evidence of the worry the subject caused in the upper reaches of society. Gastronomic writers from Brillat-Savarin to Ali-Bab (1907) discussed obesity as a worry and affliction among gourmets. In the latter part of the nineteenth century, great innovating chefs such as Escoffier, Philéas Gilbert and Prosper Montagné, cooking for a fashionable clientele, were beginning a trend towards simpler, lighter food and fewer courses. Yet at the same time, books were still being written on how to put on weight (for example, T.C. Duncan, *How to Become Plump*, 1878), and the cookery columns addressed to the lower middle classes (especially in England) emphasized the need to eat fat and heavy food for body-building (Mennell, 1985, Ch. 9). The upper and upper-middle classes often commented on the greed of servants:

In towns we often observe the bad effects of overfeeding in young female servants recently arrived from the country. From being accustomed to constant exercise in the open air, and to the comparatively innutritious diet on which the labouring classes subsist, they pass all at once, with appetite, digestion and health in their fullest vigour, to the confinement of a house, to the impure atmosphere of a crowded city, and to a rich and stimulating diet. Appetite, still keen, is freely indulged; but waste being diminished, fulness is speedily induced . . . (Combe, 1846: 217)

And, at Buckingham Palace (no less), at the turn of the century:

The plentiful meals of those days naturally enough encouraged greed, particularly among some of the servants. After a five-course breakfast those who visited the kitchens often slipped two or three hardboiled eggs into their pockets to help

them last out the next few hours until it was time for morning tea. (Tschumi, 1954: 63)

It is hardly surprising if people drawn from ranks of society where the fear for centuries had been simply getting enough to eat did not immediately develop self-control when suddenly confronted with plentiful food.

Even at the present day, in the world's affluent societies the incidence of obesity is highest in the lower and poorer strata, in contrast to the countries of the Third World where it occurs only among the privileged few (Bruch, 1974: 14). Obviously the plentiful availability of food is a prerequisite for the development of obesity, but clinical evidence suggests that psychological pressures to overeat are often rooted in past hunger, perhaps in a previous generation. For instance, among the mothers of obese children in America,

Many of these women had been poor immigrants who had suffered hunger during their early lives. They did not understand why anyone should object to a child's being big and fat, which to them indicated success and freedom from want. (Bruch, 1974: 15)

Conversely, cases of anorexia nervosa arise disproportionately among the more well-to-do strata. There may have been instances of this affliction, which is far more common among females than males, in earlier centuries. Neither classical literature nor the Bible, according to Dally and Gomez (1979: 1), contains any recognizable picture of anorexia nervosa, nor does it seem to have been known in the Middle Ages. A number of 'miraculously fasting' girls are known to have excited attention from the sixteenth century onwards, and though several were probably frauds, some were possibly cases where psychological disturbance led to serious undereating (Morgan, 1977). The first reliable description of cases seems to have been by Morton in 1694, but the condition did not attract much medical interest and was probably not at all common until the latter half of the nineteenth century, when it was named by Sir William Gull (1874). Gull in England and E.C. Lasègue (1873) in France both gave clear accounts of it among their middle-class patients at that period. Today, it is a very familiar illness in Europe and North America. Again, there appears to be a clear connection with the reliable and plentiful availability of food: apparently anorexia nervosa is not reported from countries where there is still danger of

widespread starvation or famine, nor among blacks and other underprivileged groups in the USA (Bruch, 1974: 13).

Anorexia nervosa and obesity can be regarded as similar if opposite disturbances of the normal patterns of self-control over appetite now normally expected and necessary in prosperous Western societies. Though the process may not yet be complete, in the course of the twentieth century the concern with weight-watching and slimming has gradually become more widespread in all ranks of society: its progress can be observed in cookery columns in popular magazines. For example, ever since the early 1950s, the French women's magazine *Elle* has had weekly columns giving menus and recipes with calorie counts, playing on and encouraging the reader's concern with her own weight and that of her family. A typical early instance is an article in *Elle*, 2 February 1953, entitled 'Unconscious Overeating can Threaten your Life', with a photograph of a slim girl in a swimsuit to illustrate the prevailing body image. The not-very-subliminal connection between self-control over the appetite, slimmness, health, and sex-appeal is one of the most salient themes in British as well as French mass-circulation women's magazines since the Second World War. Which is not to deny that persistent slight but definite overeating remains a characteristic problem among the populations of England, France and other Western industrial states. But a general anxiety to avoid obesity is very widespread, and the fitful extreme over-eating of an earlier era seems less common.

Conclusion

The process of the civilizing of appetite is in detail more complex than it has been possible to depict here. Very broadly speaking, the argument is that the increasing interdependence and more equal balances of power between social classes has been reflected in more equal distribution of foodstuffs, which in turn has been associated with somewhat greater similarity of cuisine, and also with less extreme differences between festival or banquet food and everyday eating; and that these changes have been accompanied by the growth of pressures towards more even and 'all-round' self-controls over appetite. It has not, however, been a simple linear development; in fact there have been spurts and reversals, exceptions and sub-themes. For example, the seasonal rhythm and ritual of early modern eating, the observance of festivals and eating of festival fare, persisted longer in the countryside than in the towns,¹¹ where

the special dishes of an earlier age have become the commonplace dishes of industrialized eating. At the opposite end of the social scale, a figure like King Edward VII might convince us that in the early twentieth century nothing had greatly changed since the carnivorous accomplishments of the medieval nobility. Yet within a couple of decades of his death, British royalty too was eating relatively abstemiously food which would not be very unfamiliar to most of their subjects (Magnus, 1964: 268–9; Tschumi, 1954). If it has not been possible here to pursue every detail and complexity of what I believe is one more example of a long-term civilizing process, I hope this paper has served to suggest the fruitfulness of applying figurational sociology — and in particular ideas derived from *The Civilizing Process* — to the development of eating and appetite.

Notes

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1. Henry IV was one culprit (Franklin, 1887–1902: III, 115), and in February 1558, the Pope gave a banquet while people were dying of hunger in Rome (Weber, 1973: 194).

2. Although this is true, it should also be noted that historians no longer believe that noble households had to exist throughout the winter on salt meat following the 'autumn slaughter' at Martinmas: some meat was salted, certainly, but some fresh meat was also generally available (see Dyer, 1983: 193). Again, however, the extent of autumn slaughter would probably be related to the success or failure of the harvest.

3. For more details of the cycle of feasts in medieval and early modern Europe, see Burke, 1978: 194–6; Coulton, 1926: 28–30; and Henisch, 1976: 50–1.

4. For a recent study of local famines in north-west England, see Appleby, 1978.

5. Nor should it be thought that fantasy was always necessarily very distant from reality: at least some incidents of cannibalism in time of famine seem reasonably well-authenticated — see Curschmann, 1900: 59–60.

6. And observed by no means in all. Accounts abound of monastic gluttony. See Alfred Gottschalk (1948: I, 343) who quotes St Bernard's denunciation of monks' gluttony.

7. For further discussion of religious views of gluttony in the medieval and early modern period, see Mennell, 1985: 29–30.

8. The Princess Palatine often describes the gorging of the French nobility, though the Duchesse de Berri's eating herself to death seems to have been even then

considered an instance of a pathologically abnormal appetite (Orléans, 1855: I, 348; II, 54, 85, 131, 145).

9. Cf. Eli Hecksher on the Swedish nobility, cited by Glamann, in Rich and Wilson (1977: 195).

10. For a more adequate discussion of the social context of the emergence of gastronomes, see Mennell, 1985: 142–3, 265ff.

11. For a general impression supporting this point, see Thomas Hardy, 1874; Oyler, 1950; Guillaumin, 1905; for more scholarly evidence regarding France, see Tardieu, 1964; Claudian et al., 1969; Weber, 1977.

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