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"Do You Bant?" William Banting and Bantingism: A Cultural History of a Victorian Anti-Fat Aesthetic

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**“DO YOU BANT?” WILLIAM BANTING AND BANTINGISM: A CULTURAL
HISTORY OF A VICTORIAN ANTI-FAT AESTHETIC**

by

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**A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of
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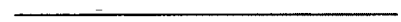
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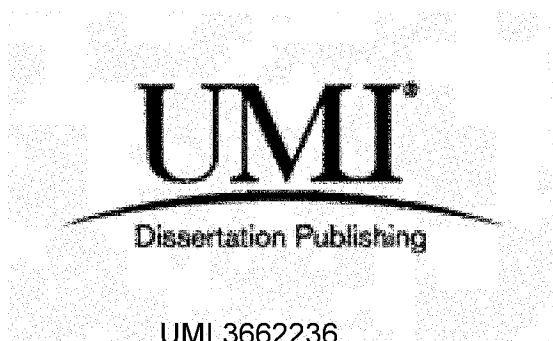
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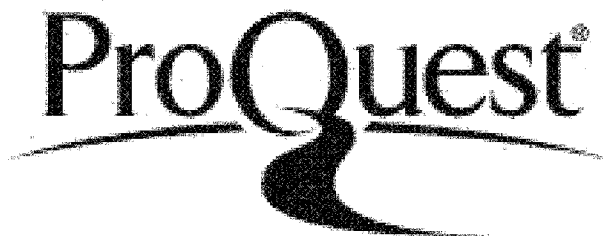


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ABSTRACT

“DO YOU BANT?” WILLIAM BANTING AND BANTINGISM: A CULTURAL HISTORY OF A VICTORIAN ANTI-FAT AESTHETIC

Jaime Michelle Miller
Old Dominion University, 2014
Director: Dr. Imtiaz Habib

In the second half of the nineteenth century, a retired Victorian undertaker named William Banting (1796-1878) dramatically altered attitudes toward fat by initiating the profoundly consequential idea of the diet as a saleable commodity capable of marking identity within particular social and racial contexts and connecting obesity with degeneracy, illness, and evil. His work *Letter on Corpulence Addressed to the General Public* self-published in 1863 describes how, with physician William Harvey, Banting reduced his weight by nearly fifty pounds by following a high-protein, low-carbohydrate diet. Banting and his dieting phenomenon transformed the English cultural consciousness of fatness, and created a Victorian cultural craze that valorized slimness as a marker of privilege and prestige by drawing on the escalating regularization of medicine and the conventions of medical discourse that were increasingly popular among readers. Though there were both positive and negative reactions to Banting, his work undoubtedly became a subject of busy popular conversation, challenging and transforming Victorian notions of body, self, and power in social and national contexts. After its importation into India, the diet served as a way to maintain colonial control and to reify the English imagination of its imperial identity. It likewise established a form of control over Indian subjects of the British raj, who, after the Mutiny of 1857, were seen increasingly as a threat that needed to be addressed. A study of Banting's work thus invites skepticism of the various ways

such anti-fat discourses are deployed to further entrench hierarchies of power and preference. It also recognizes the perpetuation of the colonial episteme in modern discourses about healthful dietary practices.

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This thesis is dedicated to my mother, who has always had faith in my dreams, and strength enough to see them through to fruition. She has been my best friend, staunchest supporter, greatest confidant, and biggest inspiration. She learned from my Granna, who taught me early in life about being fiercely independent and strong. It is also dedicated to my father, who supported me in every respect along the way. Finally, it is dedicated to my brother, whose tenacity and perseverance are an inspiration to me every day. To these people and the others who inspired me every day, there are no words to express my gratitude. Finally, it is dedicated to Dr. Jeffrey Richards, who inspired me more than I can convey.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Fat is a dirty little word, writes Kathleen LeBesco. It is an “ugly noun, with its inescapable pejorative implications, [it is a] term for unhealthy corpulence” (LeBesco 35). However, despite LeBesco’s notion that today the word is synonymous with unhealthiness and carries ‘inescapable’ negative connotations, slimness has not always been valorized, nor have fatness and amplitude always been deemed unhealthy and undesirable. Rather, the vocabulary of the body has been culturally constructed and reflects the values and assumptions of the dominant discourse (Bordo 67). In classical Greek, fat meant “to hold or contain like a precious vessel” (LeBesco 36). Derived from the Latin word *obesus*, the word obese meant “having eaten well,” and the word fat originates from a complimentary Teutonic term. Fat has changed historically from being a marker of privilege as indicated by the positive connotations of “eaten well” and “precious,” to connoting today an inability to restrain impulses, and indicating a weakness of character or will. Susan Bordo cites the prevalent tendency in modern society to attribute obesity to gluttony and a lack of exercise: both indicate a lack of self-control (Bordo 30). The very vocabulary of fat in contemporary culture is fraught with stigmas, derived from the depictions of fatness in nineteenth century medical discourse.

The transformation of fat in contemporary western medical and cultural discourse arguably can be traced to Victorian England and William Banting. Between 1800 and 1870, for the first time in nearly four hundred years, fat fell out of vogue and was

replaced by ideal Western notions of masculinity and femininity which necessitated slimness (Klein 35). Sander Gilman notes corpulence was once a marker of status and privilege in English society, a desirable state indicative of power and accomplishment, but Victorian discourse after the 1860s marks corpulence as an undesired state, one that is contaminated and weak (Gilman 83-84). The terms fatness, plumpness, and corpulence were deployed as antithetical to slimness, and stigmatized bodies by appending terms indicating unruliness or nonconformity.

The alteration in attitudes toward fat indicates that figurations of the body are not essentially or objectively stable, but the product of discursive agendas. From the constructivist position, disease categories are not necessarily natural or objectively definable. Constructivist contentions posit that calling a condition a disease is making a judgment of harm explained through bodily processes (Murphy). Constructivists explore the ramifications and possibilities of understanding that certain diseases are not objectively malfunctioning biological processes which cause harm. Rather, these conditions are judged to be unusual because they depart from a shared, cultural conception. In a constructivist outlook, fatness and slimness are not essential physiognomic attributes, but rather malleable, mutable categories deployed for a variety of political and social purposes. Thus, from a constructivist standpoint, even scientific information is unstable; nutritional information is “not as much a science as expressions of current thinking,” which often are discordant and contradictory (Orbach 117). Examples in contemporary media include the avocado, around which the popular food chain Subway has built a health food campaign. Avocados are high in fat, something

people were once cautioned to avoid, but today are billed as a “superfood” with an “incredible array of health benefits” (Jockers).

The social and cultural construction of scientific knowledge is evident in a variety of Victorian texts that precede Banting. Researchers in the rhetoric of science Jane Gregory and Steve Miller note, “Popularizers of science have had various intentions: in the first half of the 19th century, they wanted to bring the masses the joy and moral benefit of knowledge...they wanted, by exposing the world as an organized, ordered system, to keep the working classes in their place” (23). The pecuniary and disciplinary effects of popularizations of Victorian anti-fat discourse—those suggested by Gregory and Miller—can be seen in the work of William Banting and illustrate the social control enacted by popularizations of science.

Among these significant medical discourses creating discipline and generating revenue by denigrating fat was retired undertaker William Banting’s 1863 publication, in which he set forth his autobiographical battle of the bulge. His *Letter on Corpulence Addressed to the Public* transformed conceptions of fat forever in the second half of the nineteenth century by initiating the profoundly consequential idea of the diet as a saleable commodity capable of marking identity within particular social and racial contexts and connecting obesity with degeneracy, illness, and evil. Banting constructs fat as antithetical to English identity, and as he revised and republished his *Letter* in five separate editions, he had a significant impact on the popular Victorian social imagination, as Banting’s pamphlet became a best-seller and started serious, scientific inquiry into the causes and effects of obesity (Gilman 83). Banting’s work drew on a variety of developments in Victorian medical discourse, including the format of the case study, the

increasing insistence on scientific methods for gathering and quantifying data, and the rise of popular medical discourse in journals and magazines. The text became a pop-culture sensation, and though often lampooned in *Punch*, he was lauded in Victorian novels and in letters by famous novelists. Banting became a household name in Britain and abroad, and his work modulated and challenged Victorian notions of body, self, and power in social and national contexts. His work was an important cultural phenomenon that through its English national and colonial Indian effects shaped modern pejorative moralistic attitudes toward obesity in public and personal life, and which accelerated and validated his kind of literary form of amateur case study diet discourse as a commercial, profitable commodity.

The significance of Banting's work is perhaps best understood by locating him in the long line of early modern anti-fat discourses in which he appears. Banting illuminates these discourses, which include figures such as the doctor William Wadd (1776-1829) and the writer Jean Brillat-Savarin (1775-1826) who laid the groundwork for Banting by establishing norms for measuring obesity scientifically and for reporting the treatment of obesity as a disease. As well as Wadd and Brillat-Savarin, medical men Claude Bernard, Adolphe Quetelet, and Jean-Francois Dancel contributed to a scientific study of obesity and its potential remedies by offering ways of constructing a scientific method for medical discourse, methodologies for assessing evidence, and ways to quantify data. The developments in medical discourse, as well as the contribution of these scientists, paved the way for William Banting to publish his text on obesity. This context is crucial for an examination of what Banting did: to commodify his diet as a remedy for the disease of obesity.

Additionally, the rise of fringe alternative-health discourses that challenged these norms set the stage for Banting's work. Though Banting challenged the dominant discourse, his text employed various tactics to draw upon the ethos of medical practitioners, such as the case study, the use of scientific forms of measurement, and the use of data to quantify and objectively categorize obesity. Even though Banting was attacked as a quack, Banting's preemptive strike at popular medical remedies found favor with those who could identify with the pathos and moral panic he presented as he chronicled his anxiety over fatness and berated the medical community's ineffective remedies for corpulence.

Though there were other treatises on fat as a disease, Banting's work set the tone of the debate as he depicted fat as not just an illness, but a disgusting one. He connects fatness with deleterious health effects and constructs fat, rhetorically, as a parasitical malady compromising the afflicted's health and dignity. To Banting, fat was not just loathsome aesthetically; in his representing fat as a parasite, he showed the individual's body as compromised by an invader. A fat body connoted weakness and disease, and dieting to abet slimness created visible boundaries by which to establish identity and belonging. Bantingism's stigmatizing fatness as a disease imbedded identities within an existing set of power and class relationships. Demonizing fat had not only medical and personal ramifications, but political and social ones as well. Indeed, the consumption of proper food in limited quantities and a slender body size signaled membership in proper social contexts; commensurately, failure to adhere to such proportions was shameful, since, as Orbach has shown, to reject standards of size is to reject the values to which people are to aspire (Orbach 13). Fear of stigmatization created agitation about

conforming to a particularized English identity constructed through dieting. In his tract, Banting derided “the crying evil of obesity- that dreadful tormenting parasite on health and comfort” (Banting 11). Banting not only mentions the torment, but the shame that stems from his own obesity. Sander Gilman has explored the institutionalizing of fear of fatness, which resulted from the perception of the body’s permeable boundaries needing protection from compromising forces. Banting’s moralizing created a class identity that was in part defined by avoiding obesity and participating in dieting rituals, and also marked by shame for failure to attain standards of slimness and for becoming diseased and therefore abnormal.

This realignment of identity markers corresponded to the shift from scientific racism to commodity racism that Anne McClintock has traced. Scientific racism was disseminated through a variety of medical journals, but shifted during the Victorian period to what she terms “Commodity racism,” in which cleansing and cleaning rituals became essential to the policing of social hierarchies (McClintock 33). McClintock explores the fetishization of dirt as a means to create and entrench boundaries of identity. She explores how “the iconography of ‘pollution,’ ‘disorder,’ ‘plagues,’ ‘moral contagion,’ and racial ‘degeneration’” figure crucially in Victorian imperialist endeavors (McClintock 154). Though McClintock’s work treats cleansing literally, as she examines the development of soap as a marketable commodity, Banting’s pamphlet also concerned itself with bodily cleansing through dietary changes and restrictions, and fetishizing the slender body. The diet industry spawned by Banting’s methodology similarly abetted racism, as Banting and his mentor Dr. William Harvey both redefined obesity as a physiological disease with the ability to compromise the essence of civilized society.

With the development of photography and print advertising, the craze of ‘banting’ became widespread as a practice and even synonymous with dieting. Indeed, the term banting became medicalized, illustrating the far-reaching consequences of Banting’s seminal work on fat and its implications for the construction of Western identity (Gilman 84). Bantingism may have begun as a medical remedy for obesity-linked illnesses, but the rhetoric of fat also served political purposes; the plan created regimented meals and dictated multiple facets of domestic life by depicting fat as incommensurate with civility.

Banting’s work also coincided with the increased regularization and standardization of public spaces in England, and the byproduct of industrialization supported Banting’s claims about fatness as a detrimental state. For both men and women in Victorian England after Banting’s publication, slimness was rendered as a way to afford privilege and to avoid social stigmas. Men who were slim, for example, were encouraged to participate in a variety of sports seen as markers of sophistication, including riding, a sport which necessitated slimness, as weight limits became obligatory for participants (Vester 41). Banting’s work described how his corpulence left him without the ability to do everyday tasks, such as the ability to climb stairs, and which also prevented his participation in manly activities outdoors. Banting specifically mentioned rowing, for example, as an activity restricted by corpulence. Early commentators on dieting have argued that the first diet regimens that were popular in the middle of the 19th century were actually developed for athletes such as jockeys (Vester 60). Banting, though, challenged the idea that exercise leads to weight loss, and instead argued that things such as exercise, tonics, or pills could never ameliorate the scourge of fat. Through his challenge to accepted social practices, he established diet alone as a treatment for

obesity. While today such a claim is hardly astonishing, for Banting's Victorian audience it was quite a challenge given the conventional understandings of exercise as a cure-all for corpulence. Instead, he promoted his diet as a commodity capable of creating greater social motility, literally and figuratively.

Women and men were encouraged to avoid fat, and doing so was purported to afford more social freedom. Several ads for dieting which emerged with direct connections to Banting cited the regularization and standardization of public spaces as specific reasons to avoid fatness. Banting's work, as well as subsequent advertisements and magazines which drew on his fame, highlighted the difficulty in navigating increasingly homogenized public spaces such as turnstiles or public walkways when obese. These ads depicted those who conformed to a slender body type as having greater freedom. With the reduction of body fat comes rewards for capitulating to standards of slimness. Banting mentions this in his *Letter*: his fatness creates difficulty in an increasingly industrial, regimented, and homogenized Victorian society. Weight loss afforded social freedom and avoided ridicule. By constructing fatness as a deleterious social condition, Banting promoted his diet as a commodity and created a fervor for anti-fat discourse.

The various satirical jibes at Banting visibly registered the cultural changes initiated by Banting's work. Though there were both positive and negative reactions to Banting, his work undoubtedly became a busy subject of popular conversation, and his work inspired parodies, plays, songs, and cartoons. A variety of satires as well as supportive editorials illustrate the currency of Banting and his diet in the cultural conversation of the time. The responses indicate the profound ways Banting modulated

and challenged Victorian notions of body, self, and power in social and national contexts. These too participated in the ideological and discursive project of Banting's work. Banting initiated a popular discourse that drew attention to shame and to moralizing about fat.

Banting's representation of fatness as a humiliating condition unfit for Englishness also made it a successful tool of colonialism in British India, where the Mutiny of 1857 had already prompted a reorganization of culture and a reimagining of the British presence in India. Joshua Duke's text *How to Get Thin: Or Banting in India* set forth ways for English people to abide by Banting's diet while in India. In a review of the text in the December 1878 edition of *The British Medical Journal*, the reviewer explained that it was directed to and most useful for "European residents in India" (924). Duke protested specifically against intemperance and cautioned against any loss of control. The absence of moderation was embodied by fatness, and fatness served as a tool which provided a ready reckoning of a status contrary to those who were English and slim. Duke's rendering of Banting enabled the reproduction of an English imagined identity predicated on consumption patterns and dietary habits. The changes made to Banting's plan by Duke indicate the way anti-fat discourse in a colonial context could be used to wield power and control. Banting's work was also reproduced in Duke's text on eating in mess-halls in the military. Thus, the extent of Banting's effect is also manifest in the changes in British military colonial discourse.

Banting's work in British colonial India was used to bolster the idea of an abstemious English identity in the wake of the Indian Mutiny of 1857. To fight degeneration and to prevent future insurrections, the British in India had to be moderate

in all things, including food and sex. Just as in England adherence to regimens of diet served to differentiate among social classes, in India, dieting or Banting enabled English men and women to differentiate themselves from the native population. As a result of Banting's popularity, a new paradigm emerged, praising the energetic, ascetic subject. It must be noted that Banting's work helped reinforce an imagined English identity in India against which the idea of "other" was defined. Thus, even though Banting's discourse on dieting was disseminated concurrently with instances of widespread famines across the various parts of the British Empire in the 1870s, Banting's work initiated discussions of English natural disposition and health, in which slimness, a product of restraint, demonstrated British fitness and hardiness, whereas starvation indicated the frailty of the native form. Anti-fat rhetoric was subsumed as a part of colonial discourses which promoted the development of a European sense of self that was independent, abstemious, morally pure, and respectable, avoiding any cultural contagion which could jeopardize the interior landscape of 'true' Europeans (Stoler 157). Discipline, morality, and self control become the hallmarks of middle class rearing, and become a way to discern European sensibilities from native ones which more easily succumbed to disease. Implicit in the discourse on famine and food that Mike Davis has examined in *Late Victorian Holocausts* is the rhetoric of race and disease. Davis illustrates that the British cited asceticism, specifically through diet and exercise, as proof of British constitutional fitness which could withstand deprivation (Davis 112). Likewise, Sheldon Watts has noted the condemnation of colonial Indian subjects as naturally unhealthy, diseased, and famine prone (Watts 91). Thus, while the British imagined themselves as engaging in practices of self-denial to strengthen the body and temperament, what they considered less

constitutionally healthy classes failed to thrive under such conditions. The ideology of superiority legitimized through food control enabled the British to maintain control and justify the lack of interference in times of famine. Additionally, the connection of slimness to health was possible even within times of famine after Banting's identification of fatness as a parasite. Not only did pejorative attitudes toward fat affect identities within the metropolis, but the addition of fat politics to British colonial racial rhetoric enabled the entrenchment of an ideal British identity against which the native subject was juxtaposed.

Commodity racism's effect on African colonial endeavors, such as what Anne McClintock has shown, has its counterpart in British colonial India traceable through Banting's discourse. The commodity being sold was the diet, while slimness became the spectacle produced by the Banting diet. This phenomenon confirms McClintock's earlier cited observation that the shift from scientific to commodity racism re-invented the domestic sphere as a space for spectacle and display; the colonies "became a theater for exhibiting the Victorian cult of domesticity" (McClintock 34). The importation of Banting into India exemplifies how colonial endeavors and the new discourse on slimness shared similar rhetoric and goals: control. The project of colonization and the experience of the colony in India necessitated a new lexicon for creating compliant subjects. Fat was depicted as a scourge capable of afflicting both men and women, which necessitated vigilance and compliance lest a subject could be compromised. Bodies out of bounds, or bodies which failed to comply with expected standards, were subject to ridicule and eventual reformation. The personal became political, and the body became useful as a tool for the nation-state. The importation of Bantingism into India exemplified the

Victorian preoccupation with distinct bodily boundaries which needed constant monitoring to ensure order. Bantingism was a method of enforcing indefinite discipline, as slimness cultivated and continually reinscribed discipline on its subjects.

Prior to Bantingism, there was no marked emphasis on slimness in the Indian cultural imagination. Some may argue depictions of plumpness are dependent upon the modes or styles of representation of particular historical periods, but portraits from the Victorian period suggest the widespread effect of the spread of Bantingism by colonial authorities. To achieve status, subjects of the British raj, both civilian and military, had to accept the principles of Bantingism. Examples of *Punch* cartoons depicting Sir Pratap Singh show the pervasiveness of Bantingism in India. Singh was the administrator of the Powlett Nobles School in Jodhpur in the 1880s. The school's aim was to educate the sons of noblemen, specifically to make them literate in English, which was becoming the language of administration. According to the diary of a former Indian soldier, the school's English-educated administrator was a firm "believer in making youth fit and hard" (qtd. in Rudolph and Rudolph 61). Pratap was the personification of "gentlemanly public school virtues...[and] the exoticism and romance of the imperial 'other'" (Rudolph and Rudolph 10). The *Punch* cartoons featuring Singh make much of his slender figure. The images show that being part of the ruling class meant not just speaking English, but also accepting and practicing the various moral treatises on fat such as Banting's. Photographs of Singh from India likewise embellish his slimness (as well as his students') as evidence of his acceptance of Banting's dietary restrictions (Rudolph and Rudolph 61).

Indian cultural consciousness once neither valorized nor criticized fatness or plumpness, but changes during the Victorian period affected this consciousness. What is observable in images of Singh is the emphasis on slimness to assert civility in light of the dominant discourse fueled by Banting that judged fatness or plumpness pejoratively. Fat thus had a pivotal role in creating and maintaining colonial control. Besides Singh's cartoons, the link between slimness and imperial masculinity can be seen in the diary of Amar Singh. He frequently describes his participation in the regimentation of diet and exercise derived from Banting to facilitate horseback riding and polo playing. A member of the Jodhpur Lancers, Amar Singh attests to the rise of polo's popularity in India in his diary, and mentions polo's effect on dietary practices. He recalls how he both practiced and ate well because "we are trying so hard to win the good opinion of these Britishers" through proper dieting and participation and sportsmanship in polo (Rudolph and Rudolph 349). Adherence to standards of slimness, such as those proffered by Banting, abetted this attempt to win English preferment. As Singh's diary entries reveal, he believed power could be attained in part by the martial classes who fully subscribed to English ideas of hierarchy. The dramatic restructuring and stratification of India's aristocracy began in the 1860s, concurrent with Banting's publication, and it was regrouped to conform to British hierarchical notions (Keay 446). The replacement of the old dynastic order necessitated demonstrations of loyalty by those who would claim prestige. Singh not only recounts participation in polo, but also his reading a variety of English texts and learning mess hall deportment as part of his education and training (Rudolph and Rudolph 130). Not only did fat connote incivility, it also served to

distinguish between the legitimate British hierarchy and the Indian imitator in the English imagination.

An uncritical approval of fatness as a physiognomic preference is of course both untenable and undesirable. Rather, the negative cultural construction of fatness in the British colonial regime in India, as an attribute of British colonialism's mechanism of power and control in India, is something that needs to be examined. Especially significant is the construction of fatness within Indian cultural history, where fatness had not been either negative or positive. While many studies have examined the contours of the topic of fat, there has been little examination so far of how fat became a technology of rule in the context of British imperialism. A variety of studies already have attempted to produce new understandings that help to dismantle the binaries structuring modern existence: upper class/poor, moral/immoral, desirable/undesirable, and black/white. However, when it comes to the body, binaries of fat and slim have not dissipated, and fat remains stigmatized even while other such divisive categories formerly thought incontestable have been challenged (Orbach 174). Understanding the historical context of Victorian fat phobia by tracing Banting's deployment in a colonial context may help to change these perceptions. The worldwide spread of the aesthetic of slimness may have had its roots in this phenomenon of Bantingism and its application in British colonial India, and a study of its effects may have implications for other geographic European colonized regimes elsewhere. Thus, although fat was once claimed as a feminist issue, its implications transcend feminist critical theory and have resonance for cultural studies. As may be clear from this discussion, Banting's contribution to the construction of fatness, whether in England or colonial India, cannot be ignored.

Literature Survey

Multiple areas of scholarship connect to the topic, and in understanding the state of knowledge that exists, it is necessary to examine these various trajectories. These include the history of obesity in a post-Enlightenment context; the emergent field of Fat Studies; Feminist fat studies; Foucauldian analysis of fat; and issues of Victorian medical discourse such as the history of Victorian medical letters; studies of Victorian visual culture; Victorian popular discourse as it relates to fat; and fat discourse in colonial contexts. Additionally, scholarship on Banting himself is also useful in framing this project.

Obesity History

Many authors have attempted to chronicle the history of obesity. Despite the mythologizing today of the leaner and fitter figure of antiquity in the popular press, historians remain unconvinced. George Bray's "History of Obesity" chronicles the various stone-age artifacts that illustrate a variety of researchers' claims that obesity is not a novel or new phenomenon of the twenty-first century. Like Bray, Haslam and Rigby also examine the historical development of anti-fat rhetoric. Both Bray and Haslam and Rigby chronicle how obesity begins to be marked as undesirable in western cultural texts, and cite examples of ancient Greek medical texts that warn against obesity and its deleterious health effects. Physicians adopted the ideas of ancient writers, repurposing the suggestions about eating in order to preserve health. English physician Thomas Venner was the first physician to use the word obesity in a medical context in 1620, in his treatise about remedies and treatments of being "unseemly corpulent" (qtd. in Haslam 33).

Different contemporary scholars have endeavored to explain the development of cultural disdain for fat, though there is much disagreement about when and where such pejorative attitudes developed. Joan Jacobs Brumberg (1997) contends that contempt for fat began at the end of the 19th century, as Victorians refocused attention away from morality and towards their bodies. Contrarily, Peter Stearns' *Fat History: Bodies and Beauty in the Modern West* examines the rise of slimness as an aesthetic in the West. Stearns uses this analysis to support a genesis for antipathy to fat beginning in the 1920s. Stearns situates fat-phobia as a post World War I phenomenon. He argues that World War I changes notions of femininity, and the focus on the body reinscribes docility on female subjects temporarily liberated from the home. Stearns' Western historiography of slimness roots its onset in the 1920s as the effect of guilt over rising consumerism and the loosening of sexual mores. He also traces the misogyny of slimness in the 1920's, as women became subject to extensive moralizing about fat. He theorizes that women could show character and willpower through self-sacrificing dieting; such prescriptive eating countermanded laxity and liberation in sexual constraints. Stearns also claims the idea that fat people were morally flabby was reinforced after mid-century, as an affluent society and resurgent consumerism renewed the need to rein in over-indulgence (Stearns 62). However, Stearns' focus on women belies another analysis which suggests that men were the primary targets of early Victorian diet discourses; women were only later the focus of diet discourses. Katharina Vester (2010) writes, "the target audience for diet advice as well as the imagined identity of dieters until the 1890s remained white, male and middle-class" (Vester 45). Though she claims that the target audience was male until 1890, a variety of print ads and magazine submissions by women in the 1860s seeking

dieting advice suggest otherwise. Both of these analyses overlook some of the forces at work in popular and medical discourse on fat in the Victorian period. Thus, while Stearns' analysis roots moralizing and commodification in the 1920s, arguably Banting's Victorian work begins the extensive moralizing and focus on consumerism that leads to anti-fat discourse.

Fat Studies

Chief among research in anti-fat discourse has been a field called Fat Studies, a growing interdisciplinary body of scholarship which interrogates the construction of fat discourse and challenges the normativity of slimness. A new discipline that tries to denaturalize categories of race, weight, and class, Fat Studies seeks to problematize and question traditional understandings of obesity that render it as a pathological medical, psychological, and social problem. Fat Studies have enabled the examination of obesity's status as a culturally produced phenomenon, as they draw heavily from cultural studies in their examinations of fat. Attitudes toward fat which transcend the boundaries of the national have not been fully examined, though, and the topic is open to new approaches that connect the body with empire. What is needed is an examination of how corpulence is used to configure the relationships between men and women, and among men and women of Western and non-Western cultures, both past and present. Such an examination will pose an inherent critique of the medicalized term obesity, and necessitate broadening Fat Studies to include poststructuralist theory, in particular the use of fat discourse in Victorian England and colonial India.

Fat Studies was often seen as a primarily feminist issue, and therefore feminist scholarship dominated early Fat Studies. For example, Susie Orbach's *Fat is a Feminist*

Issue exemplifies that trend to subsume issues of fat and its study under feminist scholarship. Such feminist studies of fat began by interrogating the political ramifications of fat identity in the cultural contexts of modern America and Great Britain. For example, an early work, Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, argues that the body is politically constructed, and although she interrogates sex/gender construction, her work also implicitly seeks to denaturalize and resignify categories of body shape and type. Butler suggests that the denigrating effects of fat discourse can be recuperated by resignifying fat. Butler's suggestion recalls early attempts to resignify, or as April Herndon (2002) suggests, reframe, the discourses on fat that were considered. However, these attempts to resignify fat have not been adequate. Examining the ways that structural power is enacted on fat bodies, such studies broached considerations of the cultural context of fat. These, in turn, drew upon Foucault's "Discourse on Language," in which he describes discourse as power, a power controlled by institutions which seek to retain this primacy and privilege. In early feminist attempts to reframe discourse, Foucault's work was useful in establishing fat as an inscribed cultural idea with a long past. Foucault asserted that in every society, "The production of discourse is controlled, selected, organized, and redistributed according to a certain number of procedures, whose role is to avert its powers and its dangers, to cope with chance events, to evade its ponderous, awesome materiality" (216). Because language is at once the site of both power and conflict, for feminist analyses of fat, Foucault offered three ways language could rebel and resist hegemonic patriarchal constructions: "question our will to truth, restore to discourse its character as an event; abolish the sovereignty of the signifier" (229).

These early feminist attempts through a Foucauldian interrogation of language to reframe or resignify fat did not, however, receive unanimous support from later feminist scholarship. They were critiqued by subsequent feminist scholars as inadequate (Probyn). Such critiques argued that the politics of the term cannot be recuperated by simply reappropriating the idea of fat, and that Foucault's advocacy of eliminating the terms of the dominant discourse such as "fat" that stigmatize the physical body and constrain it is not an easy or effective intervention. Elspeth Probyn (2008) points to rising obesity rates despite modern government campaigns against fat as indications of resistance. Such scholars as Probyn have also noted that Foucauldian analysis overlooks the power of the individual to resist and reject the imposition of regularization. As LeBesco put it, though 'phat,' a contemporary slang acronym for pretty, hot, and tempting, may indeed be a form of compliment in the modern world, it is not enough to reappropriate the term fat, nor can it necessarily be rehabilitated from its accretions in imperial politics (LeBesco 109).

Despite these critiques, though, it should be noted though that Foucauldian analysis is useful for fat studies for drawing attention to technologies of power and control. It can connect technologies of power and control to knowledge production, as identity is often defined by participation in and adherence to disciplinary behaviors. As a result, even when participating in conditions of deprivation, individuals subjected to such rituals can be sated by the desire for inclusion into a particular social group. Foucault's remedy for this unequal power relationship is the concept of biopower in which the individual polices him or herself. In these ways, Foucauldian methodology can be an effective heuristic for studying the discourse of fat.

Researchers also have begun to examine the social and political profitability of stigmatizing fat. Because obesity discourse stigmatizes and discriminates, fat hatred can be politically and socially lucrative, but again, most studies focus on feminist analyses. Susie Orbach (1978), Susan Bordo (1993), Naomi Wolf (1990), and Kim Chernin (1983) all position the issue of obesity within larger feminist discourses on slenderness and the patriarchy. In her work *Bodies*, Bordo focuses on the inherent instability of the body, and how people's internalization of the discourse about food and size indicates acceptance of social norms and membership in particular communities (Bordo 13). Michelle Lehwica (2009) also agrees with Bordo's research about membership, citing the Internet subculture that promotes a "pro-Ana" lifestyle that views anorexia and bulimia as lifestyle choices, not illnesses (19). Lehwica, Emma Hoglund, and Jenna McNallie conclude that women's bodies are the primary sites of conflict and colonization, and like Bordo, explore American culture's devotion to feminine thinness and its effects on Western expansion (19). Bordo notes, "Body hatred is becoming one of the West's hidden exports" (16). However, her statement focuses on "becoming," suggesting a process that is ongoing and contemporary, yet body dissatisfaction has a much more deeply rooted past, as Victorian medical and popular discourse reveals. Her work is useful, though, in contesting the Freudian notion that disorders originate in the mind, rather than stemming from the complex deployment of social forces on the individual. Bordo also shows that times of historical or economic changes often focus national governments' attention on bodies (Bordo 56). More attention must be paid, however, to the connection between instability of government and the writing of all bodies—not just the bodies of women. Additional turns of feminist thought on the politics of the body

include those by Sandra Bartsky (1990), and Wolf, Chernin, and Roberta Seid (1989), among others. These discussions of fat often focus simply on how the pursuit of standards of slimness subjugates women. Abigail Saguy and Rene Almeling (2005) and Samantha Kwan (2009) all see reframing fat as contested by government, industry, and activists.

These studies have shown how the designation ‘fat’ can be used as a mechanism for control within a particular culture, underlining the powerful implications for the body by hegemonic political forces bearing down on it. These studies can be profitably extended, however, to examine the political entailments of fat, and commensurately slimness, going beyond language recuperation attempts and beyond being a discourse on patriarchy and women.

Foucauldian discursive epistemology about the operation of power in public discourse should be invoked in conjunction with Louis Althusser’s notion of the ‘interpellation’ of the subject by the apparatuses of the state which he identifies or describes as schools, colleges, and educational institutions. His processes of social power are also significant and useful to move beyond feminist analysis. A properly interpellated Banting subject feels not only shame over the body, but then takes steps to ameliorate the condition of the body (Huff 53). Althusser’s conceptual framework provides the language through which the mass media’s influence can be identified and defined as affecting interpellation. Hailing, or the action of the hail to engage others to attend to the message being proffered is evident in the rise of advertising and texts calling attention to diet practices. As Althusser suggests, through participation in these ritual practices, individuals do not notice their own subjection. In the case of Banting, his *Letter* created a

public fervor over fatness, marking the individual as abnormal and transgressive if he or she did not take steps to participate in the socially acceptable dietary practices described in his work.

Studies can show how fat as a cultural construct not only affects power and identity differentials within the context of the nation, but within the colonial setting as well. There is already some scholarship on moralizing in diet discourse, a trend Banting initiated with his *Letter*, and such studies do move away from a solely feminist paradigm. Moral discourse on slenderness is addressed in Herndon (2002) and Saguy and Almeling (2005), in which moral panic about fat is linked to race, nation, class, and economic conditions. These studies attempt to address the fact that many previous studies are too narrowly focused on obesity as an issue for women, or a problem for a particular western nation. However, there is still little research on the construction of slimness in the West as a whole and the effect of such constructions in the Victorian context. LeBesco's works attempt to alter the discourse of fat identity, focusing not on medicalized discourse, but social and cultural ones, recognizing the role of culture on the construction of fatness. W. Goodman (1995) sees fat as related to caste; dehumanization and discrimination are facilitated by appending 'fat' as a descriptor. Others who are interested in the historical construction of fat include Peter Stearns (1997), Sander Gilman (2008), and Swee Kian Tay (2003), who have shown how notions of fatness result from cross-cultural bodily comparisons.

There are many more inquiries into the historical construction of fat identity now that Fat Studies has emerged as a discipline, including those of V.W. Chang and Nicholas Christakis (2002) who show how changes in the medicalization of fat have occurred over

time; however, despite challenging the stability of the discourse, this critical literature does not challenge the historical underpinnings of dominant obesity discourse. Some Fat Studies scholarship has argued that anxiety about corpulence connects with anxieties about the expansion of British commercial power (Huff, “Freaklore” 37). However, more research needs to be done in this area.

Victorian Medical letters and Visual Culture

Obviously studies of Victorian medical letters and Victorian visual culture are necessary for undertaking a project such as is being proposed here. Previous studies have shown medical discourse in the Victorian period often featured a battle for appreciation and acknowledgement of the author’s ethos, especially as medicine was loosely regulated and quite varied in its training and parameters. Mary Wilson Carpenter’s text *Health, Medicine, and Society in Victorian England* details the changes in medical practices in Britain, though she acknowledges such changes are asynchronous and different from region to region. She examines the understandings of health and disease conceptualized by physicians, patients, and society in general from the beginning of the 1800s to the end of the century. In her social history of medical training and practice, she establishes that at the beginning of the century, medicine was practiced by surgeons, physicians, and apothecaries whose training varied from many years of university study to a few months of apprenticeship with a local surgeon or apothecary (Carpenter 4). Similarly, Nicole Buscemi’s dissertation “Diagnosing Narratives: Illness, the Case History, and Victorian Fiction” has discussed the proliferation of case histories in correlation with the periodical boom of the mid-1800s. Buscemi cites the launching and flourishing of journals such as *The Lancet* and *The British Medical Journal*, and estimates that one periodical emerged

every twenty-seven days, increasing the market for a wider range of health-related subjects (Buscemi 8). Case studies comprised a large portion of these periodicals, and more doctors were able to circulate accounts of their experiences with various diseases. In her work on the cultural studies of medicine, Meegan Kennedy, cited by Buscemi for her work in understanding the form of Victorian medical literature, suggests that the form of medical discourse reveals attributes of Victorian culture. These works are essential for understanding the case study format, and its effect on attaining credibility in medical discourse. Banting draws on these developments to shore up his ethos, suggest his suitability as a diagnostician, and to excuse his discussions of the body in popular culture by drawing on conventions of medical discourse. The increase in available periodicals in which to publish medical discourse for the public was also important in facilitating Banting's meteoric rise to popularity.

Scholarship on the representation of fat in popular visual culture has already revealed some attitudes toward fat in Victorian England after Banting. Studies of Victorian visual culture include those by Kate Flint, Julia Thomas, Carol Christ, and John Jordan, as well as studies of Victorian periodical presses by Peter Sinnema and Paul Kreps. Thomas' work, for example, examines how visual culture propelled Alfred, Lord Tennyson's fame. Her work suggests that both parodic and reverent reproductions of Tennyson and his work created a significant market for his materials. As her work implies, both serious representations of Banting in medical discourse and satires of Bantingism reveal much about Victorian attitudes toward fat, and as Thomas' analysis of Tennyson suggests, these representations were essential in increasing his fame. Cartoons in magazines such as *Punch* and parodies in other Victorian periodicals thus have much

to say about Banting and his effect on Victorian popular culture, even as they represented—or misrepresented—him in visual culture. Richard Noakes' literature review in "*Punch* and comic journalism in mid-Victorian Britain" traces the complex representations of science in comedic presses (93). As noted by one visual culture scholar on satire, "Victorian illustrations and cartoons often complemented or supplemented written texts or captions, and sometimes created contradictions or ambiguities" (Codell 410). This kind of scholarship establishes satire and mockery as socially significant, and signals the pervasive effect of Banting on Victorian culture.

Scholarship on William Banting

Much of the scholarship pertaining to Banting deals with the diet itself, and how it was eventually forgotten despite having attained national attention. Current investigations have chronicled how the *Letter* invokes many of the suggestions being proffered as new today. As early as 1953, Richard MacKarness discussed Banting in his book *Eat Fat and Grow Slim* as a forgotten proponent of a low-carbohydrate diet (3). Avoiding carbohydrates has recently been the buzz among dieticians, and the recommendation has been touted as a new scientific discovery in the treatment of obesity (Taubes 2). Contemporary scholarship on Banting examines how more than a hundred years before Atkins made the controversial claim that consuming carbohydrates led to an increase in body fat, Banting had suggested a diet low in carbohydrates and high in fat. In the face of conventional medical wisdom, such a diet proved effective. It is a combination that worked for him, but although it worked, the high calorie intake and fat content flouted conventional Victorian wisdom and thus exposed Banting to public criticism (Taubes 4). Parallels between Banting and Atkins—both were subjected to medical scrutiny and

condemnation—have been drawn by a variety of authors. Similarly, several authors have examined Banting's work for pop-culture audiences, hailing Banting as a precursor for modern low-carb diets, including Ellen Shell (2002) and Jack Berryman (2010). For example, Gary Taubes in his book *Good Calories, Bad Calories* (2007) devotes a section on Banting as the progenitor of the low-carbohydrate diet. However, Taubes is more interested in Banting's diet than in the cultural context of Banting and on his effect in Victorian culture. Similarly, other historians interested in pop-culture have rediscovered Banting: Michelle Mouton (2001) writes a short article for *Studies in Pop Culture* examining high-protein diets in the Victorian period, contrasting the efficacy of marketing the idea of a high-protein diet then and now, as with diets such as the South Beach diet and the Atkins plan.

The term slimness seems to naturalize the dichotomy of health and sickness that colonial social figurations of fat help to represent, but a poststructural approach to Banting challenges uncritically positivist stances presented in such discourse. Categorizing and pathologizing fat fails to interrogate the historical premises on which such frameworks depend. While Joyce Huff has dealt with the cultural significance of Banting's work and its effect on creating the idea of Victorian freakery by heightening anxiety about fat, still more investigation into Banting's work, its precursors, its attacks in satirical jibes, and its effects on Victorian society as well as on colonial India is needed, as Banting's world is the highpoint of British colonial history.

What is needed is a study that seeks to examine the historical, cultural, and racial implications of fat as a tool of social control, tracing the history of fat, and using Banting's *Letter on Corpulence* as an example of the confluence of Victorian medical,

aesthetic, and moral discourse on the development of anti-fat sentiments. Such a project undertakes to develop connections between perceived identity and fat, which enabled the construction of hierarchies based on evident dichotomies of physical attributes. Using a variety of cultural artifacts, the study will demonstrate the connection between anxious embodiment of subjects and docility, a characteristic necessary to maintain control within the metropole and the colonies.

Studies of Fat and Health Discourse in a British Colonial Context

Scholarly examinations of fat and discourse in a British colonial discourse can benefit from New Historicist theories such as Stephen Greenblatt and Louis Adrian Montrose have advanced, as they recognized the importance of establishing historical context through literary analysis. Modern imperialist colonial discourse can be rooted in the Victorian period, an idea which Montrose established. Indeed, the Victorian period is a high point of English cultural and economic imperialism as New Historicist theorists established long ago.

Historical researchers have shown how an increasingly robust Bengali medical sphere developed with the rise of vernacular presses, and both articles and advertisements in these presses show evidence of Banting's influence. Most advertisements in English dailies, as well as English journals and magazines read in India, were for imported medicine and scholarly English medical knowledge. European medical products dominated the advertising space in English dailies and journals (Sharma 214). As Madhuri Sharma has indicated, the British Indian colonial context also saw an emergence of print media that disseminated new kinds of information about health, hygiene, and medicine to both men and women, especially including advertisements (Sharma 213).

Sharma's work is important for illustrating how Banting's work was disseminated in India to British colonial men and women through vernacular presses. However, Sharma misses the opportunity to connect these developments specifically to Banting. Though she points to advertising for products related to slimness, she does not address his particular influence. In one advertisement, she points to an adaptation of English advertisement for Indian audiences. It features an English figure depicted as waifish and fairy-like who encourages the acceptance of slimness and cleanliness, a sign of Banting's effect (Sharma 220). A closer examination of these advertisements, such as Sharma begins, is needed to more fully explore Banting's presence in India.

Also indicative of Banting's influence is the emergence of public health as one of the most important themes of Bengali books published in the 1860s. Many scholars have examined public health in colonial India as a tool for social control. For example, Utsa Ray's work looks at the construction of a Hindu, middle-class Bengali body, and how it is constructed through debates about nutrition. By exploring the politics of nutrition and health, it is evident that discourses on public health sought to legitimize control, using discourses of caste, gender, and health to substantiate political aims (Ray 1). She claims that the central concern was constructing an ideal type of body constructed by 'tradition' and bounded by ideas of 'purity'; she argues purity has a double meaning of both clean and hygienic, as well as uncontaminated by lower castes (Ray 1). Her work is useful in that it shows that issues of nutrition and health can be used as tools of control and differentiation of identity, as Banting's does, and expands discourse on fat to include men as well as women. Although Ray is interested primarily in anticolonial discourse, her

work is important to illustrate the various diet discourses constructing the Indian colonial subject and the implications of such forms of control.

Studies pertaining to the effect of fat in India include those who reassess the British encounter with India in light of various theories of Orientalism and hybridity. A variety of historical, literary, and cultural texts must be examined to discover the competing apparatuses of control and resistance to the discourses inscribed through them. Kirit K. Shah and Radika Seshan's (2005) *Visibilizing Women: Facets of History Through a Gendered Lens* provides a critical review of the historiography of Indian medicine in order to make visible women's relations to medical practice and beliefs. They survey available literature partially or wholly devoted to women's health care in a colonial Indian context. Their work is important for examining how diet discourse such as Banting's affected women, and how such discourses were used as a tool to define identity within a colonial context.

In the colonial context, issues of subjugation involved complex networks or grids of control: slimness was not only a women's issue. Rather, Bantingism helped define men's roles and bolstered the European imaginings of identity. Max Harrison has demonstrated that after 1858 there was more attention to the subject of military nutrition, and this work is useful for showing that in a colonial context, fat cannot be considered simply from a feminist perspective. Also helpful in establishing that women were not the only target of diet discourse is David Arnold's *Colonizing the Body: State, Medicine, and Epidemic diseases in Nineteenth Century India*, which focuses on Indian responses to medical intervention in instances of epidemic diseases. Diet, Arnold articulates, was a way of policing the population and imposing rules in order to eradicate diseases.

Clearly, Banting's fad diet and its impact on nineteenth century and modern cultural history is situated at the intersection of a variety of scholarly concerns. Pursuing the cultural ramifications of Banting's work necessitates a recognition of precursors in many fields, including obesity history, Fat Studies and its feminist strains of inquiry, Foucauldian analysis, Victorian medical discourse, and of course scholarship on Banting himself. Such an investigation as is undertaken here would transcend current probes of the diet's effectiveness and of its connection to present-day mimickers and fad diets. Instead, rather, it would illuminate the topic of the history of Banting and Bantingism in British national, transnational, and transhistorical contexts.

Methodology

This project studies William Banting as the progenitor of dieting as a saleable commodity capable of marking identity within particular social and racial contexts and connecting obesity with degeneracy, illness, and evil. By tracking the relatively unexamined effects of the 1863 publication of William Banting's *Letter on Corpulence Addressed to the Public*, the project will study the cultural archeology of the emergence of anti-fat rhetoric in the modern age. The phenomenon of Bantingism created a Victorian notion of English identity unambiguously connected to anti-fat discourse. This had a significant impact on the popular Victorian social imagination, and on British colonial attitudes in India. Banting's work will be seen as illuminating and consolidating a long line of early modern anti-fat discourses comprised of figures such as William Wadd and Jean Brillat-Savarin who established norms for measuring obesity scientifically and for reporting the treatment of obesity as a disease. Studying the rise of fringe alternative-health discourses that challenged these norms reveals how Banting

capitalizes on and promotes this emergent literary form. Because his *Letter* accelerated the kind of literary form of amateur case study that was emerging in Victorian England at this time, and because he establishes diet alone as a remedy for fatness, he created a popular cultural phenomenon called “Bantingism.” By appending to fat a significant moralizing force, Banting enabled the reimagining of fat as a parasite. Banting’s moralizing set off a busy popular discourse that spans a range of different attitudes from disdainful to reverent, which together visibly register the cultural change that Banting’s work produced, and the ways in which it revised and disputed Victorian notions of body, self, and power in social and national contexts. Banting’s representation of fatness as a humiliating condition unfit for Englishness also made it a successful tool of colonialism in British India, where the Mutiny of 1857 had already prompted a reorganization of culture and a reimagining of the British presence in India. Joshua Duke’s rendering of Banting enabled the reproduction of an English imagined identity predicated on consumption patterns and dietary habits. The project traces the origins of anti-fat discourse in the Victorian period, and examines Banting’s repercussions on Victorian and British colonial society as he introduced the diet as a marketable commodity; the purchase and practice of his diet were able to firmly establish social, national, and racial identity.

As noted in the literature survey, multiple vectors of scholarship overwrite this project. These methodological perspectives accompany the project, even if implicit or not directly invoked. Centered in Foucauldian analysis, pursuing this study positions Banting in the field of cultural studies, as quite clearly a project like this has cultural studies implications. Foucault has been perhaps the most influential theorist invoked in studies of

the body and body size. This dissertation situates this topic at the intersection of Foucauldian analysis, particularly biopower, which is useful in examining the construction of subjects through self-regulation of the body (Foucault 1979, 1980). His concept of biopower links the ability to control the self with various kinds of knowledge produced in discourse. Though Foucault referred to himself as a genealogist rather than a Poststructuralist, Foucault can be useful to Poststructuralist critiques of fat. According to his analysis, both the body politic and the corporeal body are subject to power struggles and appropriations to serve the interests of the state or colonial power. In his analysis of the relationship between power and oppression and in his discussions of biopower, the body is produced by and exists in discourse. The body is a socially constituted phenomenon, which allows it to be controlled by those in power. The purpose, Foucault asserts, is “to discipline the body, optimize its capabilities, extort its forces, increase its usefulness and docility, integrate it into systems of efficient and economic controls” (Foucault 1980: 139). Foucault makes a distinction between disciplinary power and biopower: disciplinary power is the individually imbued force which enables punishment, training, and surveillance. Biopower focuses on the power of the state to regulate the deployment of these individual powers through self-discipline, thereby subjugating the individual and creating the body required by the state, usually one that is docile. According to Foucault, political order depends on the regulation of passive, productive, controlled bodies. The goal is to create compliant bodies. Importantly, biopower illustrates that subjugation stems not only from the external imposition of power or force, but from the individual’s participation in various habitual practices or routines involving the body. Both the individual and society at large perpetuate these practices which extend

to hygiene and health, and the result is self-disciplinary practices which align the individual with the interests of the nation-state.

Coupling Poststructuralist readings with Fat Studies produces another reading of Foucault. If racial classification is not a scientifically validated discourse, but rather is a polyvalent mobility capable of being usurped, enacted, and retooled contextually, then discourse about slimness is also subject to usurpation by colonial endeavors. The conflation of race and slimness helps to explain Victorian anxieties about fat. This approach to the problem through the rejection of discourses of slimness and fatness as ontological will help open up new ways to examine Victorian anti-fat discourse.

To explore exportation of Banting to India it is necessary to consult anti-imperial studies. In tracking its expansion into the colonial register in India, the project traces its expansion and how it serves as a subtle tool of the colonial machinery of rulership and subjectification. The connections of dietetic cultural conversations with issues of body control and social compliance are thus highlighted. Exploring the rendering of slimness in popular culture artifacts and the scientific studies about slimness in the context of sociopolitical concerns regarding India as a colony will provide further insight into the imagined identity of the colonial power. Questions about cultural productions and reproductions of fat, and their embodiment in various kinds of texts will also help to extend the scope of Fat Studies into cultural studies. The extent of Banting's effect is also manifest in the changes in British colonial discourse. It was not only effective in transforming bodies in Victorian England. Joshua Duke's rendering of Banting enabled the reproduction of an English imagined identity predicated on consumption patterns and dietary habits. Rhetorically examining Surgeon Joshua Duke's work on how to Bant in

India is one way to track the exportation of Banting and to discuss the implications of Banting's work on Victorian culture and its exportation to the colonies. *How to Get Thin; or, Banting in India* and Duke's other work on dietetics *Queries at a mess table: What shall I eat? What shall I drink?* are used to show the spread of Banting's anti-fat rhetoric. Other examples of Banting's spread throughout India include Calcutta library circulation logs and references to Banting in colonial periodicals.

This study is positioned within converging vectors of Postcolonial, Victorian cultural materialism, and cultural studies. However, the project is Postcolonial only in the way of reading anti-fat as a discourse of oppression of bodies within the historical episteme of British colonial discourse. Unavoidably, in the imbrications of fat with empire that this study will demonstrate, the dynamic interaction of the Anglo-European self and other will appear at selective points. Foundational axioms of Postcolonial theory such as the dialectic of the colonizer and the colonized, the Anglo-European self and the native, and the restless reflex of sameness and difference that endlessly shapes that dialectic will underwrite the complex configurations of Banting's fat discourse in British India. Postcolonial theory as such will be drawn on only in this fashion. It attempts to place Banting's work within existing cultural discourse on weight control and fatness. The poststructuralist reading of Banting's work will illuminate Victorian society's discursive practices, and by contextualizing literature within historical and cultural debates, it will show the ways fat bodies in texts after Banting are constructed and positioned as morally and physically inferior and in need of reformation.

The project will additionally draw on the techniques of hard rhetorical analysis. The first and second chapters focus on a Poststructuralist approach to Banting's work as

well as to those that preceded him to discover the cultural ramifications of nascent anti-fat discourse. A rhetorical analysis of Banting's work examines how his language contributes to shaping and regulating scientific thought. Banting steps into Victorian fat discourse with his *Letter* to append to fat a significant moralizing force, imagining fat as a parasite. His work significantly addresses fat as a deleterious health condition that can be ameliorated by diet alone. Banting's prolifically self-published work challenged established medical discourse, accelerated this kind of literary form that was also emerging in Victorian England at this time, and thereby created a popular cultural phenomenon called "Bantingism." The study looks at how Banting continually attaches morality to a body condition: the connection of fatness with immorality illustrates the genealogy or archeology of knowledge Foucault believed was possible to chronicle.

Concerned with the cultural ramifications of Banting's work, the project leans primarily upon cultural studies to illustrate how discourse about slimness exemplifies the ways discursive practices can shape behaviors. As studies of fat have indicated, discourses on fat are laden with morality. Banting's work inaugurated moralizing about fat and connected anti-fat discourse to attitudes toward social class, race, and identity, which are closely tied to positions against fat, especially after diet becomes a commodity. Looking specifically at Victorian periodicals of the time period which feature reactions to Banting's work, such as *Cornhill*, *Blackwoods*, and *Punch* cartoons, this close Poststructuralist text analysis examines Foucauldian notions of how power is expressed through discourse; academic disciplines discipline, and thus what is considered correct or true is based on a particular constructed understanding of the body. This project examines slimness as a cultural aesthetic in England, and why the popularization of dieting

practices such as Bantingism were useful in promoting anti-fat rhetoric. The study examines the relationship between the metaphor of fat as a disease established in Banting's work and particular dieting practices within the Victorian period. Fat Studies and Poststructuralist theory provide insight into the history of slimness as a cultural aesthetic, while paying particular attention to constructionist theories of the concept of slimness to show how the rejection of fat becomes associated with putatively superior, unquestionably civilized tastes. Examining the contours of the topic in literary, cultural, and popular culture texts reveals the connection between diet and discipline.

The examination hopes to complicate readings of slimness as markers of health and civility, and establish how slimness became a technology of rule; however, this does not endorse an uncritical acceptance of fat as a physiognomic preference. Placing Banting in his specific cultural and historical context not only reminds us of the relatively recent genesis of anti-fat discourses, but also invites skepticism about the ways in which such discourses are deployed and employed to further entrench hierarchies of power and preference.

Chapter Outlines

The significance of Banting's work is perhaps best understood by locating him in the long line of early modern anti-fat discourses in which he appears. The first chapter provides a brief history of the development of anti-fat rhetoric in the Victorian period by examining the works to which Banting refers, and examines some of the texts of which he claims ignorance in his *Letter*. Though the history of anti-fat rhetoric can be traced to antiquity, a few representative texts are particularly important for more contemporary discussions of the development of an anti-fat aesthetic in Victorian England. This

discourse which includes figures such as William Wadd and Jean Brillat-Savarin laid the groundwork for Banting by establishing norms for measuring obesity scientifically and for reporting the treatment of obesity as a disease. Additionally, the rise of fringe alternative-health discourses that challenged these norms set the stage for Banting's work.

Through a brief survey of Greek and Egyptian discourses connecting fat with disease, the chapter shows that stigmatization of fat in the modern western world began with England's William Wadd's attempt to paint obesity as a disease. His assertions met resistance until the medical profession gained status, publications began to target lay readers, and moral overtures appeared connecting body reformation with righteous behavior. Using examples such as Lambert Adolphe Quetelet's *A Treatise of Man and the Development of his Faculties* (1835) and Jean Brillat-Savarin's *The Physiology of Taste: Or Meditation on Transcendental Gastronomy* (1825), this chapter shows how fat was valorized as a marker of privilege prior to Banting. The introduction of these texts—and several others mentioned by Banting—paved the way for William Banting's work's success.

The second chapter is devoted to a rhetorical analysis of Banting's seminal work *Letter on Corpulence*. Banting steps into this anti-fat discourse with his *Letter* to append to fat a significant moralizing force, imagining fat as a parasite. His work significantly addresses fat as a deleterious health condition that can be ameliorated by diet alone. Banting's prolifically self-published work challenged established medical discourse, accelerated this kind of literary form that was also emerging in Victorian England at this time, and thereby created a popular cultural phenomenon called "Bantingism." William

Banting's *Letter* is often considered the first diet plan, but the publication and its history had a significant effect on the development of anti-fat rhetoric in Victorian England. His letter drew on the confluence of popularizations, moralizations, and the ability to quantify corpulence and adiposity. This chapter introduces William Banting, a corpulent man who, working with physician William Harvey, developed a diet plan that enabled Banting to lose a significant amount of weight. Conducting a hard rhetorical analysis of Banting's letter, studying its reception history and the details of its multiple editions, and the multiple rhetorical strategies he uses in that letter to achieve his effects locate the work within its literary and cultural genres, and show how Banting accelerated the particular literary form of diet discourse. These include the species of Victorian popular publications, Victorian case studies, and medical conversations of prestigious Victorian medical journal literature. Through this close examination, the chapter demonstrates how Banting's work begins the moralizing about fat that will permeate later fat discourses. Invoking Foucauldian notions of biopower and Althusserian interpellation, this chapter illustrates how policing the body for signs of fatness or transgression became markedly evident in Victorian culture, as demonstrated in periodicals and medical journals after Banting.

The third chapter is devoted to an examination of busy popular reactions to Banting, including criticism and lampooning, that occurred subsequent to Banting's publication. Examining the interest in dieting and body reformation in magazines, fictional literature, and *Punch* cartoons that Banting's publication created, as well as other popular publications such as *Blackwood's* and *Cornhill*, the chapter illustrates Banting's effect on Victorian culture, specifically in terms of a popular discourse that

drew attention to shame and moralizing about fat. Also to be illustrated will be the farcical one-act play that Banting's work spawned to show the pervasiveness of Banting's effect in Victorian England. A variety of fictional texts and literary references to Banting are used to illustrate the currency of Banting and his diet in the cultural conversation of the time. These too participated in the ideological and discursive project of Banting's work. Poststructuralist examinations of a variety of parodies have been conducted to illuminate Banting's contribution to Victorian discourse on fat and its correlation to immorality.

Banting's work was also exported to the colonies, which is examined in the fourth chapter. The principal text used for this purpose is that of surgeon Joshua Duke, a physician with the 3rd Punjab Cavalry, entitled *How to Get Thin: Or Banting in India*. Analysis of this text demonstrates how Banting's work helped to restructure the British colonial military in India. It shows how the text inspired a variety of reiterations, through which it affected Indian civil society and Anglo-Indian women. The chapter also puts Banting's effect in India in the context of non-judgmental Indian cultural mores about food, alcohol, and sex which prior to Banting were not stigmatized nor condemned. Foucauldian biopower will again be invoked to explore the connection between Banting's diet and the control exerted in military and civilian contexts. It will trace the emphasis on a pure, masculine identity, fitness, and superior British comportment that Banting's work set off after it appeared in India. Included in the examination of these materials will also be a variety of references to Bantingism to show how the Banting brand of civility and propriety became a subject of social conversation, and how Bantingism became a part of colonial discourse that is still apparent in some forms today.

CHAPTER TWO

SETTING BANTING'S STAGE: DEVELOPMENTS, DOCTORS' DISCOURSE, AND DEVIANT QUACKERY

Introduction

Looking at the shelves in a contemporary drug store, it is hard to imagine a time when slimness was not the norm, as the preponderance of items for sale easily indicates the undesirable nature of fat as a physical characteristic. The weight management section features a plethora of treatments for the disease of obesity, promising consumers immediate results. Lining the aisles, bottles of pills promise instantaneous weight loss, and various creams and lotions claim to remedy stubborn fat deposits and camouflage cellulite. The diet industry is a behemoth, peddling both prescription and over-the-counter solutions to the problem of fatness. Though weight-loss methods have long been a part of popular culture, marketable diet plans are relatively recent in their genesis. Amidst today's diet-fad frenzy, it is easy to overlook the history of dieting as a recent cultural phenomenon.

This is not to say that concerns about fatness are necessarily contemporary in their origins. For example, Hippocrates and the ancient Greeks made connections between infertility and death and obesity, bringing attention to the condition only insofar as it was linked to other impairing health conditions (Haslam 32). Hippocrates' writings described illnesses created by poor diet, and counseled the improvement in health possible with the revision of dietary practices. Herodotus describes practices of purging, undergone monthly, to prevent ailments associated with excessive consumption. Pythagoras, rather

than arguing for fasting or purgation through vomiting, advocated moderation in diet (32). The focus on the regulation of intake was designed to cure or stave off illness. Illness itself was not directly correlated with obesity. Plutarch, though not a physician, did ultimately connect weight and health: “Thin people are generally the most healthy; we should not therefore indulge our appetites with delicacies or high living, for fear of growing corpulent” (qtd. in Haslam 32). The Greeks were not the only ancient people to be preoccupied with dieting. The ancient Egyptians were likewise concerned with diet as a means of preserving health, and a variety of texts deal with proper types and quantities of food (Haslam 32). These classical texts though, while instructive, failed to create a single commodity—a diet plan—and were not fueled by developments in media and advertising. Though undoubtedly diets and body fat were concerns long before the Victorian period, the idea of a diet as a saleable commodity can be traced to Victorian dieter William Banting, whose diet plan espoused in his *Letter on Corpulence Addressed to the General Public* produced significant effects on modern culture.

Banting created the diet as a commodity, one effect of his publication. Banting’s product—his diet—follows the trajectory mapped by Anne McClintock. As will be demonstrated, Banting’s work established norms of weight which also served to indicate belonging to desirable social classes and racial groups. McClintock has traced the shift from scientific racism to what she describes as “commodity racism,” whereby through consumerism and the rise of advertising, various bathing rituals became incredibly popular and enabled the reification of social hierarchies, fueling the craze for certain items. She uses Pears’ Soap as the means to examine the phenomenon. According to McClintock’s analysis of soap as a saleable, profitable commodity, before 1851,

advertising barely existed, and was limited to small advertisements in newspapers, handbills, or posters (McClintock 210). She demonstrates clearly that pictorial advertising redefined ideas of class, gender identity, race, and even body fat. McClintock argues that the emergence of commodity fetishism and consumption offered regeneration and stability in a time of instability and economic upheaval. Victorian advertising specifically focused on racial difference as a tool for marketing, and featured intimate markers of domesticity to sell products and entrench social norms.

While scientific racism was disseminated through a variety of medical journals, commodity racism facilitated the rise of cleansing and cleaning rituals which became essential to the policing of social hierarchies (McClintock 33). McClintock explores the fetishization of dirt as a means to create and entrench boundaries of identity. She explores how “the iconography of ‘pollution,’ ‘disorder,’ ‘plagues,’ ‘moral contagion,’ and racial ‘degeneration’” figure crucially in Victorian imperialist endeavors (McClintock 154). Though McClintock’s work treats cleansing literally as she examines the development of soap as a marketable commodity, her work is useful in explaining the success of Banting’s diet, as he too promotes a commodity, his plan, as a means of combating moral and racial degeneracy. Marketing the diet as a commodity was significant, as previous plans referred to dietary habits, but did not stipulate a fully-developed, comprehensive diet plan. As McClintock’s argument implies, Banting’s diet plan created a fervor by promoting a lifestyle and a particular commodity whereby to attain slimness.

Banting’s success did not happen overnight, though. The commodification of the idea of a diet is important, but so too are the works of a variety of precursors to Banting who affected the development of the concept of a marketable diet plan. A variety of

changes in the medical field enabled the growth of anti-fat rhetoric, and its subsequent marketability in Victorian England. The significance of Banting's work is perhaps best understood by locating him in the long line of early modern anti-fat discourses in which he appears. Banting's work illuminated this discourse which includes figures such as William Wadd and Jean Brillat-Savarin by establishing norms for measuring obesity scientifically and for reporting the treatment of obesity as a disease. Specifically, the works of William Wadd, Claude Bernard, Jean Brillat-Savarin, Adolphe Quetelet, and Jean-Francois Dancel contributed to a scientific study of obesity and its potential remedies by offering ways of defining the doctor's role as socially prestigious, standardizing medical practice, constructing a scientific method for studying and reporting medical treatments, presenting methodologies for assessing evidence, and delineating ways to quantify data.

These developments in medical discourse, as well as the contribution of these scientists, paved the way for William Banting to publish his text on obesity in 1863. This text, his *Letter on Corpulence Addressed to the Public* created a widespread zeal about diet and rendered obesity a public scourge. The impact of the text was fueled by a variety of factors which enabled the phenomenon to spread, such as the rise of fringe health discourses to challenge increasingly regulated medical professionals; the availability of opportunities to self-publish pamphlets, letters, and responses; and the increased ability to quantify medical data through technology and experimentation. As a result, Banting's diet plan initiated a cycle still evident in contemporary conversations¹. Some of the main objections that were levied against Banting's plan then are still invoked against diet plans today. Banting's responses to the objections raised against his diet plan in the social

conversations at that time—such as the doubtfulness of the author’s qualifications, the diet’s lack of novelty, and the inability to prove its efficacy—reified slimness as a physiognomic preference, and identified fatness as a disease in quantifiable terms that must be remedied by dieting. Such responses are still in use today.

Medicine and its Modernization in Victorian England

There were major changes happening in the medical field when Banting appeared. A significant development was the increase in the prestige of physicians, which accompanied the standardization of medical practices. Various historians have detailed the changes in medical practices in nineteenth century Britain that lead to increased regulation, though they acknowledge such changes are asynchronous and different from region to region (Carpenter 3). Mary Wilson Carpenter’s examination of medical training and practice establishes that at the beginning of the century, medicine was practiced by surgeons, physicians, and apothecaries whose training varied from many years of university study to a few months of apprenticeship with a local surgeon or apothecary (Carpenter 4). She delineates there were many people who “practiced as midwives, venereologists, smallpox inoculators, itinerant oculists, traveling quacks or healers, and those who simply advertised themselves as surgeons or practitioners of ‘physic’” (Carpenter 4). While the training and qualifications were standardized according to Carpenter by the end of the nineteenth century, at midcentury no such regulations were imposed. The lack of specific preparation and instruction made precise distinctions between these amateur or fringe practitioners and legitimate physicians difficult to establish. Changes in medical regulations altered and exacerbated the disparity between legitimate and fringe discourses. Hence, later Victorian medical discourse often featured

battles between authors for appreciation and acknowledgement of their particular standing or reputation.

Because of the lack of regulatory directives and the disparity in training, social arguments began to advocate the standardization of the practice. As a result, dichotomies widened between those who claimed legitimacy and those who were deemed to be charlatans. In contrast to the medical establishment, various forms of homeopathy fell outside the purview of scientific medicine and practitioners of such a trade were ostracized by the practitioners of establishment medicine (Weatherall 129).

Understandings of health and disease as conceptualized by physicians, patients, and society in general from the beginning of the 1800s to the end of the century changed rapidly. The reconfiguration of medicine had particular resonance with issues such as obesity, which were conscripted under the auspices of traditional medicine for the first time. This staunch divide between those who represented traditional understandings of medicine and those who were labeled “quacks” is evident in medical publications discussing obesity. Various strategies were used to construct the proper parameters of scientific medicine, and boundaries between empirical research and quackery were constructed by educating the public about what were ‘proper’ forms of medicine². For-profit cures were deemed a sure sign of quackery, while legitimate doctors provided services without monetary gain from a particular product or panacea. The rise of medical journals allowed these comparisons to flourish for educational purposes, and to enhance the status of doctors in comparison to those deemed part of fringe discourses.

Publication through legitimate means also took on increased importance in denying accusations of quackery and in establishing a physician’s status. Therefore, the

form of publication was significant in the development of anti-fat discourse. The importance of medical journals can be seen in one of the earliest and most vehement campaigns against quackery, which began in the 1820s by Thomas Wakley, the founder of *The Lancet*. Wakley vowed to rid the profession of “the satanic system of quackery” (qtd. in Porter 223). He attacked both the profit-oriented and the medically unqualified, and he used the journal to spearhead his crusade, encouraging readers to denounce “egregious operators” who bilked the public with schemes to sell remedies (Porter 223). Wakley, among others, believed that the public had to be educated to make the campaign against quackery effective. Wakley excoriated various practitioners for their spurious claims, and even set up an anti-medical quackery society whose prime task was to educate the public and to eradicate patented medicines sold without proof of efficacy. These nostrums included Morison’s Vegetable Pills.³ James Morison, a citizen without particular medical knowledge, promoted his cure-all panacea, and argued that every individual had the potential to cure him or herself using commonly available knowledge. Morison rejected claims of the medical community being privy to specialized knowledge, and ridiculed the idea of it being the purveyor of specific, expert wisdom. As Kathleen Beres notes, “This democratic, humanistic argument is exactly that put forth by most early nineteenth-century fringe practitioners” (Beres 14). She uses the term “fringe practitioner” to refer to those without medical training or authority—those whom Wakley called quacks. In her analysis, she shows that the backlash against the increasing divide between the establishment and fringe necessitated new and novel ways to assert validity and authority. The form of publication became a means to disparage or accept a discourse’s validity.

However, alternative forms of publication could also be effective means of challenging the field of medicine's legitimacy and authority. Morison was one of the many who used pamphlets to provide advice and to prescribe a course of treatment despite having no authority. He did this while promoting his Vegetable Pills. To substantiate his ethos, Morison attacked the reputable members of the medical community. Morison vehemently protested against the "old medical science" which he thought to be wrong, and in his manual against medical practitioners he notes, "Every one may now be his own doctor and surgeon, at a cheap rate, and enjoy a sound mind and a sound body" (qtd. in Beres 10). In some ways, as Beres has argued, his success was predicated on the challenges levied to the status quo: "Morison's cure-all achieved its popularity not because of its ingredients but because of Morison's rebellion against the social and mind-forged manacles which medical counter-movements simultaneously embraced and resisted" (Beres 21). The privileging of the individual, the use of biblical language in promotional tracts, and the sale of a product to enable the individual to treat himself are all outcomes of the reform movement and its challengers typified by Morison. He, of course, was not the only 'quack' to find himself challenged by the medical community, but his case is important as it establishes the divide between fringe practitioners and the medical community, and shows how such a divide can actually serve as a means of promoting a diet product. Morison, as Banting will later do, touts his outsider status to enhance his ethos and to create suspicion and doubt of the medical community. Morison created the British College of Health to support the sale of his pills, and the grandiose name was designed to separate him from the quacks and to establish his legitimacy despite proffering a proprietary, profit-making medicine. Though

Morison's pills were not promoted as a dietary aid *per se*, he employed his status as an outsider to serve as a promotional tool, a tactic still employed by diet-developers that responded to the divide between quackery and legitimacy that emerged.

Regulating the medical community also established important behavioral guidelines for those who would bill themselves as experts. In his campaign against quackery, Wakley condemned the established medical community for not regulating, educating, and properly demonstrating professionalism (Beres 224). In his condemnation, he charged that empiricism was necessary, as was standardization, to remove corruption within the established ranks. In response to his criticism and the attacks of others, medicine itself underwent a variety of changes in the Victorian period which affected the practices accepted as valid and reliable. For example, medical practice shifted from mere observation and patient history to physical examination and the use of diagnostic tools. According to one source on the changes in medicine wrought by science, "the Victorians saw medicine, using science, as a tool for transforming people's lives...just as science and technology in general could" ("Victorian Science and Medicine"). The idea of science creating radical transformations shaped expectations about diagnostics and medical remedies, as well as of the diagnosticians themselves. Physicians, using science, were expected to create significant changes in individuals, changes which would in turn benefit society as a whole. For example, germ theory enabled not only the treatment of an individual through diagnosis and examination, but its application would also lead to the eradication of epidemics and therefore benefited society as a whole. The concept of the physician espoused by Wakely imbued a physician with expectations for performance, as well as elevated the role of the doctor to that of a social savior through the various

diagnostic functions performed and treatment regimens prescribed. The notion of doctors' far-reaching consequences in society is significant in the development of diet discourse, as the changes to professional obligations begin the moral imperative to treatment that features readily in discussions about fat.

Not only did the role of the physician change, so too did the process by which treatment was to occur, privileging the doctor and his skills in assessment. Medical practice changed substantially between 1838 and 1864, as it transformed from the patient's history as being critical to diagnosis and management, to a focus on physical examination aided by instrumentation ("Victorian Science and Medicine"). Tools available to practitioners included the stethoscope, auroscope and ophthalmoscope, laryngoscope, and the vaginal speculum. These tools created a significant change in medicine; before, doctors' diagnoses depended largely on the patient's reporting of symptoms. After the development of technology such as x-rays, thermometers, microscopes, and sphygmomanometers, practitioners could detect illnesses sometimes even before the patients themselves (Carpenter 5). Patients were no longer the authorities and their input was not required to assess bodily conditions. Rather, doctors were transformed into purveyors of specialized scientific knowledge with which to treat, diagnose, and predict conditions. The significance for the treatment of obesity is profound. First, more reliable scales, calipers, and tools for measurement created normative standards for weight. Secondly, physicians were tasked with assessing and diagnosing illness independent of patient complaints. Hence, someone obese with no other health impairments could be diagnosed and treated as ill, not only for the betterment of himself, but for society as well. The use of science in medicine was seen as

increasingly important in the laboratory and in the community, as these diagnostic tools created remedies for ills, both physical and social, as perceived by the physician. This elevated the physician into a socially prestigious figure.

There was, however, an inherent paradox in these new Victorian cultural constructions of physicians' social status. On the one hand, the backlash against quackery necessitated empirical, objective conclusions. On the other hand, the physician was expected to approach the moral evil of disease to draw attention to particular social maladies. As such, the social status of the physician was a tricky posture to cultivate, and often prone to failure as doctors had to convince a skeptical audience of their prowess and reliability as physicians before levying moral critiques or face dismissal.

One early instance of the trickiness of the physician's new social stance of being both moral and objective can be seen in the case of Dr. Shadrach Ricketson, who appeared more than fifty years before Banting. In 1806, New York physician Dr. Shadrach Ricketson published a text dealing with the perils of fat in America, which was also published in England.⁴ Because his target audience was lay readers, he employed religious moralizing to convince readers to engage in careful consumption patterns. Though its publication demonstrates the growing market for medical literature for lay readers both in America and in England, it was not successful in Victorian England because of his overt moralizing without establishing his credentials objectively, as other mid-century writers will do.

It may be worthwhile to quickly examine how Ricketson's text exemplifies the kind of moralistic details that will become a pattern in popular medical literature later. Throughout his text, *Means of Preserving Health and Preventing Diseases*, he describes

maladies such as headaches and pain as punishments for excess. Such descriptions confuse religious and physical terms, and suggest disease is the result of sin. He describes how the “fullness of blood, and corpulency, are the disagreeable effects of gluttony,” and delineates a variety of ills that come from excessive indulgence or sins (61). He warns readers of the perils of overindulgence, and cautions that even though many obese people felt no ill effects of their condition, the persistence of poor dietary habits would result in suffering and death. The warnings serve as a scare tactic, ensuring that restraint is connected with longevity, whereas indulgence and its byproduct, obesity, are sure paths to self-destruction. His work describes unhealthy people who practice “excessive drinking” (61) and who are “luxurious eaters” (61) as inferior to those who practice “moderation and temperance” (62). Notable here are the religious overtones of physical and moral superiority through cultivation, refinement, and restraint. Significantly, though Ricketson moralizes about fatness, unlike Banting, he makes little mention of more than restraint and refraining from overindulgence as a solution for it. However, because the new socially defined role of the physician had to be moral as well as objective, Ricketson’s text did not succeed in England. Works like this, though it failed to do well in Britain, might well have paved the way for Banting by introducing anti-fat discourse to the general public and inviting condemnation of fatness as a sign of moral turpitude. Additionally significant was Ricketson’s reduction in the price of his work to reach a broader audience: his work was priced between one and two dollars, whereas a similar text was extravagantly priced at twenty (Altonen). Ricketson openly expressed dissatisfaction with the pricey nature of medical texts, an important challenge for Banting’s text to arrive. Necessary to achieve success were the changes being initiated in

forms of publication (initiated by people like Ricketson, among others) which would ensure the proper cultivation of reputation despite the tenuously navigated and frequently contradictory position of objectivity and moralizing.

Victorian Publications and Self-Help Texts

As the roles of physicians became increasingly vital and standardized, so too did the means for disseminating information. As the doctor emerged as the first and foremost authority on bodily conditions, doctors sought ways to enhance their authority, prestige, and standing with the general public (Carpenter 5). This was enabled by the boom in mid-century Victorian publications, which included not only professional periodicals such as *The Lancet* and *The British Medical Journal*, but also included affordably-priced periodicals which targeted the general, middle class reading public. These kinds of publications, such as *The Cornhill Magazine* or *Blackwood's*, not only featured non-fiction essays, novels, stories, and poems, but also featured advice about health⁵. It is in these forums that doctors and men of letters began to publish a variety of letters and articles designed to reach a middle class audience. The simultaneous proliferation of manners magazines for popular consumption such as *The Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine* and *The English Woman's Journal* helped to fuel a market for popular medical letters and articles, but within these discourses though, physicians had to be mindful of carefully attending to their reputations, because they were addressing a lay audience. As Nicole Buscemi showed, the case study established the form of the popular medical narrative. The case study form that emerged as a result of the rise in mid-Victorian publications created a solution for the problem of objectively rendering information while simultaneously moralizing. It is through these cases studies that doctors were able to

circulate on a popular level accounts of their experiences with various diseases. These studies objectified the patients under an increasingly scrutinizing medical gaze, but for public consumption, and with a moral imperative clearly displayed. The case study became one of the primary means of establishing a scientific approach readable to a general audience, while still maintaining the doctors' authority over their topics about which they wrote.

The opportunities for physicians as social figures to be moral and objective offered in the case study were reinforced by Victorian novels. Drawing moral attention to a social ill was a common trope of Victorian novels, one that was also taken up by self-help pamphlets. For example, Wilkie Collins' novel *The Woman in White* deals with the treatment of mental illness and the exploitation of the underclass by those in positions of power. The focus on veracity, as the novel is written from various characters' points of view, creates not only mystery, but a form of a medical case-study, in which diagnosis and speculation are necessary parts of solving the dilemmas the characters face. Likewise, Charles Dickens' novel *Bleak House* (1851-53) tackles corruption in Parliament, insincere revivalist preaching, ridiculous and disingenuous acts of philanthropy, and the rapaciousness and deceitfulness of practitioners of the legal profession. He also tackles issues relating to health in his novels, often through satirical characterization of obesity. As Sander Gilman has argued in his analysis of the character Joe in Dickens' *The Pickwick Papers*, Dickens' characterization of the obese serving boy as excessively slow, lazy, amoral, and dull is meant to pathologize fatness. Similar characterizations associate fatness and moral turpitude in more of Dickens' novels. In *Nicholas Nickelby* (1838-39), schoolmaster Wackford Squeers' son is described as

having “the fatness of twenty boys,” to which the clerk Newman replies flatly, “he has” (Dickens 22). While Mr. Squeers is proud of his spoiled son’s corpulence, Newman exhibits blatant disdain through his rejoinder, although it is dismissed by Squeers as signs of Newman’s being drunk or mad. Squeers fails to see the other man’s contempt for his son’s fatness. Meegan Kennedy has argued that such novels clearly try to inculcate moral reforms, and in that, they are allied to and reinforce the moral undertones of Victorian medical texts. Specifically, the characterization and pathologizing of disease in these novels mirrors the case-study format’s stigmatization of patients and their afflictions as malevolent social phenomena that the physicians are attempting to confront. Conversely, as Jason Daniel Tougaw has shown in *Strange Cases: The Medical Case History and the British Novel* (2006), the case study also influenced the novel by depicting the suffering of patients alleviated by doctors’ aptitudes, thus excusing the macabre subject matter through its focus on valorizing the physicians’ prowess. These rhetorical appeals to encourage the audience’s indulgence in discussion of bodily diseases enabled the publication of novelistic texts which similarly addressed these subjects once deemed taboo. These depictions of disease valorized the acumen of physicians and established the vital nature of the case study—and by proxy the novel—as social documents chronicling medical and moral maladies. As Tougaw’s work implies, the form of the medical case study establishes the writer as an individual explorer of mysterious bodily health ailments, including fatness.

While legitimacy for doctors was enhanced by publication in reputable journals, the emerging Victorian phenomenon of self-publishing also affected the style of medical discourse. Self-publications commonly had a moral component which helped to reify the

author's status as a moral and medical authority. Like many Victorian novels which utilized the case study format to advertise the acumen of the physician or specialist, many self-published self-help books relied upon personal experiences and specific cases to solve mysterious health-related issues. Samuel Smiles' two books embody the moralistic content of fringe medicinal rhetoric which gained widespread dissemination through the means of self-publication, an option increasingly available in the Victorian period. Smiles was a reformer and editor of *The Leeds Times*. Prior to becoming a self-help guru and political pundit, Smiles published a successful travel narrative⁶. Smiles tapped in to a discourse about health that found widespread popularity by the latter part of the Victorian period. Smiles' first book, *Self-Help*, was actually rejected by Routledge in 1855, which shows the market had not yet accepted such texts. When, however, Smiles self-published it, the work sold more than a quarter of a million copies. This illustrates the growth in the market for health-related works available to the general public. It sold 20,000 copies in its first year of publication, and more than 150,000 by 1889; the book was translated into a variety of languages, including several Indian languages (Rudolph and Rudolph 505). Smiles' book showed not only the possibilities of self-publishing, but also the tremendous efficacy of the moralizing strain possible in these kinds of publications. In describing the didactic benefit of knowledge, Smiles states, "It is not how much a man may know...as the end and purpose for which he knows it. The object of knowledge should be, to mature wisdom and improve character, to render us better, happier and more useful; more benevolent, more energetic, and more efficient" (*Self-Help* 161). Clearly, Smiles views himself and his writing as remedies for ignorance, and as leading to the betterment of the self and society by educating the general public about a variety of

issues, including health. His tremendous success indicates that the market had exploded by the latter part of the Victorian period, and it is within this phenomenon that Banting's work itself would appear.

Smiles' subsequent self-help book entitled *Duty* published in 1883 continues to demonstrate the usefulness of the moralizing tendency enabled in these kinds of self-published works. In that work, Smiles remarked on the instruction he claimed every dutiful citizen needed to heed: "Obedience, to the parent, to the master, to the officer, is what everyone who would do right should be taught to learn...Duty, in its purest form, is so constraining that one never thinks, in performing it, of one's self at all...It has to be done without any thought of self-sacrifice" (Smiles 2). Through their moral anxiety, Smiles' works represent the transmission of cultural anxiousness and anxious embodiments prevalent in health and self-help discourse of the period. As Suzie Orbach has observed, moralizing anxieties of such self-help discourse is a common component of fat discourse. Exemplifying what Orbach has noted about self-help works' tendency to moralize, Smiles counsels that the best methodology to attain happiness is through obedience. Obedience calls for methods of restriction—diet and otherwise—that enable the body to decorporealize itself so that the physical body feels no affliction or ordinary human frailty. Thus, fleeing the body's materiality protects it from compromised boundaries. The text counsels social duties, including consumption patterns. It notes that proper food and body size signal membership in proper social contexts, while failure is laden with shame at having rejected the values to which people are to aspire. The manner of his conversation assumes a pseudo-objectivist tone, while also overtly moralizing. It

signals a new tone in medical conversations in the second half of the nineteenth century in England, one that was deemed legitimate despite its being self-published.

While Smiles' texts are not technically nor solely diet treatises, they are significant for showing the moralizing trend which occurs in such self-published works which enabled the presentation of the physician or self-help specialist as a socially prestigious person. Neither Smiles nor Ricketson addresses diet as a remedy for corpulence, as Banting will, but their contribution to his success is notable. Jessica Lamb-Shapiro directly connects Smiles' self-help text to the success of Banting, as she claims that such works primed mid-nineteenth century readers for the kind of discourse Banting will create (Lamb-Shapiro 18). Banting will draw upon the texts' tendency to moralize using the case study format in health discourse targeted to lay readers, and exploit the increased acceptance of self-published, self-help texts.⁷ These developments will ultimately set the stage for Banting through the works of medical practitioners immediately preceding him.

Precursors of Banting's Obesity Discourse

A series of popular medical writers illustrate many of the features of new Victorian lay-health publications. For example, in William Wadd's medical publication *Cursory Remarks on Corpulence or Obesity Considered as a Disease* (1810) the case study format particularly emerges in the metaphor of the physician as a competent and qualified investigator of health mysteries afflicting the individual, just as Banting will do later. The individual experience is studied with objectivity in order to explain what seems to be a mystery, establishing the doctor as reputable and special in his ability to assess and diagnose medical maladies. Importantly, Wadd draws upon his reputation to establish

himself as a legitimate source of medical expertise, and then addresses the suitability of the cases and conditions he must solve. To first confirm his skills, he provides his credentials. Wadd accrued quite a name for himself over the span of his career. He was appointed Surgeon Extraordinary to the Prince Regent in 1817, and Surgeon Extraordinary to George IV in 1821. He establishes his authority in order to prove his legitimacy as a doctor and a scientist, and to prove his subject as worthy of study. While Wadd does refer to obesity as a disease, he laments the relative inattention paid to it by other doctors less willing to undertake the case of identifying and solving the problem of obesity, and which therefore remained a mystery.⁸ He comments on the acumen of physicians in general, in whose ranks he includes himself, whose skills should be employed to detect perils long before other individuals: “The approach of most chronic diseases is so gradual, that till they are far advanced they rarely become an object of attention. This is particularly the case in corpulency” (Wadd 44). He also notes that many laypeople “even congratulate themselves on their comely appearance, and consequently do not seek a remedy for what they do not consider an evil” (46). Wadd valorizes physicians’ prowess in detecting and identifying diseases of which the general public is unaware. He differentiates himself from non-medical professionals incapable of identifying problems, and also from untrained, commonplace individuals unable to see the mystery or perils before them. Whereas the rising obesity rates have not alarmed the general public, he alludes to his knowledge and reputation as a man of letters to show that his alertness to the problematic state of fatness is warranted. He explains, “The accumulation of fat, or what is commonly called corpulency, and by nosologists denominated polysarcia, is a state of body so generally met with in inhabitants of this

country, that it may exist to a certain degree without being deemed worthy of attention” (14). Wadd uses his status as a physician to explain his particular faculties, and explains the common man’s inattention comes from a lack of comprehension and training. He appeals to the status of the doctor as a special person, one imbued with powers of perception which enable him to solve profound medical mysteries.

Once he establishes his aptitude as a detective and as a specialist, Wadd uses his work to scientifically quantify and explain the prevalence of obesity through a central hypothesis to address the medical mystery, keeping with the novelistic form of the case study. He explains the necessity of studying obesity: “It has been conjectured by some that for one fat person in France or Spain, there are a hundred in England” (4). Indulging in hyperbole, he compares the proliferation of chimneys and fat, claiming that the rates of obesity have risen as fast as the population. Wadd’s text exemplifies the movement toward the case study as a literary form which would reconcile the tendency to moralize with a need to be seemingly objective. He refers to “conjecture” and the proliferation of fatness as signs of a growing problem for society. Wadd addresses the role of quantifying fat in delimiting the social and medical stigmas appended. During the 19th century, obesity came to replace polysarcia and other terms such as *embonpoint* and *corpulence* (Bray 7). The change in terminology is significant, as obesity is pejorative, whereas *embonpointment* carried a more positive connotation. Wadd illustrates this shift when he remarks that, “In the female form the *embonpoint* is, to a certain degree, universally agreeable” (45). However, he notes that in excess (which is not enumerated), it is “disgusting” (46). The change in diction is significant; obesity, unlike the term *embonpoint*, is laden with derogatory and unpleasant connotations. He also remarks that

diet plans to remedy body fat require perseverance, and he comments that corpulent people's "habits are generally connected with great inactivity of body and indecision of mind, and who are consequently, little inclined to minister to themselves" (Wadd 30).

Wadd engages in moralizing by appending terms such as "disgusting" to obesity's presence. Central to his process of drawing attention to obesity as a disease is the commensurate appellation of the stigma of excess. While later writers such as Banting borrow from religious tracts in order to ascribe moral judgment on the condition, Wadd moralizes only to the extent that he establishes fatness as worthy of a remedy or solution. While Wadd's text chronicles various examples to appear objective in calling it a disease, it engages in limited moralizing, drawing on enthymemes established by others. He criticizes that "Corpulent persons generally indulge to excess" (34). Connecting fatness to weakness of the mind and slovenly indulgence marks a change from it as a marker of privilege and status⁹. What is missing from Wadd's discourse, what Banting will capitalize upon, is a means for appearing objective in quantifying obesity medically and rendering it abnormal through standardized means of measurement.

In order to appear objective in rendering obesity abnormal without such standards, Wadd cites various sources. He extracts quotations from an assortment of historical figures from antiquity, such as Herodicus, Asclepiades, Hippocrates, and Celsus, who all proposed remedies for obesity and connected it to various health impairments. Wadd's citations of these authorities are not to provide new insights, but simply to chronicle and vet various remedies and to formally establish obesity as a medical condition worthy of study. The text uses these examples to illustrate that "Corpulency, as has already been shown, is not only a disease itself, but the harbinger of others" (Wadd 50). Wadd uses

literary language to describe fatness as a ‘harbinger’ of sorrow and disease. He deftly navigates between citing historical figures as signs of his objectivity, and moralizing to show that obesity exists as a deleterious condition. Although he claims it “has already been shown,” his style introduces the argument to a new audience of readers eager to be impressed by his erudition and therefore convinced of his solution to the mystery.

Wadd also draws on the work of a number of more modern sources to lend credibility to his assertions, including invoking “the accomplished Lord Chesterfield” by paraphrasing his words. Echoing Chesterfield’s language, Wadd says “fat and stupidity...are looked upon as such inseparable companions, that they are used as synonymous terms” (55). Appropriating “the celebrated” Edmund Burke’s remarks in the context of the French Revolution, Wadd invokes his words as proof that “fat, stupidity, irreligion and avarice” arise from one common source” (55).¹⁰ In his moralizing, though, he avoids religious connections and instead focuses on secular expertise to provide a seemingly more objective position.

Wadd also introduces a stylistic consciousness that will appear in later case studies as a common phenomenon employed by medical writers to establish their reputations as moral and scientific authorities. Wadd’s stylistic consciousness, which may even be termed a metacritical consciousness, can be seen in his third edition, published in 1816. In it, he comments that he never intended his work for publication, and he admits that he was surprised at the popular reception of the text. He laments the disorganization of ideas in early editions, and says they were simply notes and observations. Wadd calls it a “motley collection, formed from much and varied reading, medical correspondence, and personal observation” (128). The intended audience for the piece was undoubtedly

physicians, but popularizations in magazines drew attention to the work, broadening the readership and the scope of the work. At times, he serves as a social critic, moralizing and offering criticisms. At others, he assumes a defensive position as a scientist, arguing that fat is not conducive to health and longevity, and must not be understood as a sign of privilege despite popular conceptions of it as such. This position can best be seen as he attempts to rebut claims that he has misrepresented an important medical discovery. He summarizes it for the reader, and claims he simply avoids being “tedious” and “detain[ing] the reader” with excessive jargon and details (62). He also explains a variety of medical cases so that “my readers may [not] suspect a hoax” (65). The titillating presentation of a variety of clinical cases is not only edifying, but meant to entertain as well as to be didactic. As Wadd’s text depicts, a very attractive first-person authorial position begins to emerge, one that will be reflected in later works such as Banting’s directed to an audience of lay-readers. Many of these first-person conversations that Wadd has include various sorts of anecdotes, another feature of his text.

His first-person style, which facilitates the idea of objectively conducted case study as an individual experience, is also anecdotal. Wadd’s medical text relates how he personally counsels a man with a tendency toward corpulence, and the various health impairments observed from the condition. His case studies indicate a variety of dreadful maladies brought about by obesity. As he depicts the autopsies which reveal excess fatty tissue, he illustrates that ‘remarkable’ obesity is shocking and ultimately fatal. Not only does his case-study style increase the readability and suspense of his text by providing enticing examples, it also seemingly objectively links the inevitable effects of obesity with morbidity. He explains that restriction of respiration and flow through blood vessels

have resulted in “premature death by the excessive accumulation of fat” (9). To prove this, he recounts anecdotes of Daniel Lambert, among other patients, and states that his “accurate account of those who have succeeded in opposing and conquering this disease” will “excite our astonishment” and “form a very useful and interesting narrative” (Wadd 9). His description of his text as a “narrative” is important for connecting the case study style to Victorian novelistic discourse, as is its ability to create “astonishment” through these vignettes.

Wadd, of course, also varies from these features case studies have. Typically, case studies presented in such literary styles created suspense, and then suggested a novel solution to the problem addressed. Instead, Wadd describes the works of earlier writers as having provided sufficient advice, and simply counsels to “keep the eyes open, and mouth shut” to avoid the complications of fatness (7). He literally means that people should watch what they eat and prevent their mouths from eating to avoid obesity. This feature of Wadd’s does provide a context for Banting, as it puts Banting’s solution to this particular phenomenon into perspective. His straightforward, matter-of-fact tone indicates Wadd’s belief that one clear solution exists: he suggests that fat is a simple condition remedied by eating little.

It is significant to note that Wadd does not strictly follow the case study style in every instance, but merely appropriates some stylistic features to serve his own purposes. Although he considers many solutions, he appropriates the mystery to suggest his solution is the best one. He pointedly solves the medical quandary with his simplistic suggestion, and then, he chronicles various solutions proposed for fat to more explicitly debunk other remedies for the mystery of fatness and to establish his solution’s primacy.

These treatments include exercise, drinking vinegar, soap, and purgative medicines (20). Wadd attempts to objectively address each cure. As an example of his presentation of both supporting and detracting evidence, while providing a specific case attesting to the success of imbibing soap, Wadd includes the words of a dissenter, Dr. Cullen, who notes that vinegar and soap remedies may “have worse consequences than the corpulency it was intended to correct...The diet must be sparing” (qtd. in Wadd 26). After evaluating the merits of each therapy as a detective might examine clues, Wadd notes that all of the remedies for corpulence—including pills, tonics, and bandages—lack efficacy, in part because of the weakness of will of obese people, and partly because of the contradictory medical advice proffered. Diets are another treatment Wadd briefly addresses before rejecting. He explores the usefulness and “The salutary effect of vegetable diet and rigid abstemiousness” (35). However, he notes that not all people have success on such a diet, and offers counterexamples of meat diets said to help shed pounds. For each potential solution to the disorder of obesity, he provides medical evidence for it and to the contrary, which indicates the early disagreement among physicians about a treatment plan. The idea of a particular diet as a commodity is conspicuously absent in Wadd’s discussion of various remedies, and it is this lack on which Banting will capitalize.

Wadd’s work clearly indicates a single hypothesis or a definitive solution to the disease of obesity. His remedies for removal are simplistic: “The three principal points then in the removal of obesity are, diet, exercise, and sleep” (91). By diet, he simply means not eating: he does not counsel a particular form of food-plan. Wadd’s work also exemplifies the trend in preventive medical literature by recommending exercise. While not new, throughout the late 19th century, the idea of self improvement through action

such as healthy eating and exercise began to hold sway (Berryman 1). Wadd notes that these three factors can help to eliminate the difficulties imposed by obesity, and he links breathing trouble, sleep apnea, and stomach troubles to the deplorable state of being obese. Men are also not the only ones who suffer from the ills of obesity: “The fair sex are not exempt from this complaint; the instances, if less numerous, are equally remarkable” (113). Describing women as “equally remarkable” begins the trend of stigmatizing fat women. Though he uses the term ‘remarkable’ for what his solution of eating little and exercising could achieve, Wadd stops short of proposing any kind of specific regimen, while Banting’s work will commodify the diet as a remedy after evaluating exercise’s failure to bring about a solution.

Furthermore, Wadd’s case-study text is also useful in examining the connection between health and race. Using particular examples, Wadd indicates the pervasiveness of the obesity problem, and explores the existence of the condition outside of England. He tries to show how fatness and obesity are foreign diseases which may afflict Englishmen in regions abroad. For example, he chronicles the case of a fat Englishman returned from India, who needed “discipline” in order to reduce his unwieldy bulk, and who was prescribed exercise as well as digitalis to reduce his weight (48). He also explains that obesity can be the product of traumatic experiences. He uses the example of the survivor of the infamous Black Hole of Calcutta to lend credence to his suppositions. Not only can ethnic conventions contribute to obesity, he says, “Mr. Burdett, one of the last survivors of those confined in the black hole at Calcutta, was known to have attributed his obesity to that distressing event” (74). Linking obesity to trauma continually medicalizes the condition as aberrant, the product of appalling conditions outside the norm. Wadd links

weight to uncivilized and unrefined people. He invokes historical examples to illustrate the explicit connection between fatness and indulgence, and explains how the Tunisians purposely fatten their daughters. Likewise, he remarks on the Hottentot's admiration of fat women. The race-based explanations for obesity can also be seen as Wadd's text describes the various different ethnicities who either valorize obesity or who take pride in tendencies toward fat. Wadd comments, "Among the Asiatics, there is a sect of Bramins, who pride themselves on their extreme corpulency. They look upon corpulency as proof of opulence, and many arrive at a great degree of obesity" (80). He mentions that fat is the result of consumption, using examples of Chinese and West Indian workers becoming fat in the sugar season, and provides a personal testament of a "negro" who becomes too fat for work during certain harvesting seasons (81). He attempts to create a marked contrast between British and other cultures by stating that these uncivilized ideas glorifying fatness must be markedly different from British ones.¹¹ Banting will further cultivate these ideas of fat's abnormality and its connection with a decidedly uncivilized state in his work.

Interestingly, Wadd indulges the prevalence and incidence of fatness in Western populations by offering an extenuating explanation for it. Ancient as well as modern Western populations were and are more culturally advanced, unlike African populations, for instance, who were and are undeveloped, primitive, and barbaric, and the former of whom may have had and may sometimes still have fatness in their peoples because of the increased availability of food and overconsumption habits, enabled by efficient methods of food production. To remedy this problem, just as the ancient Romans starved women to make them slender, so too must English men and women engage in abstemiousness.

To differentiate English corpulence from the fatness of other cultures, he invokes scientific breakthroughs and modernization. Obesity is ironically described as the product of English superiority in scientific management of farms and cooking techniques. Using observation, he surmises that the availability of beef, as well as modern cooking preparations, led to the prominence of corpulence. He points out that “modern improvements in the fattening of cattle, as well as the culinary arts, may have rendered it more common in these days” (58). He blames the “increased frequency of corpulence” on “the increase in wealth and refinement of modern times” (Wadd 3). Fatness in the West is thus not rendered as a marker of barbarism, although it is not necessarily excusable, either. He insists that fat must not be considered normalized, but stigmatized and deigned a disease. For Wadd, the indisputable “truth” is that obese people are “connected with great inactivity of body and indecision of mind,” which in the non-western context is the product of laziness, disease, and moral degeneracy (30). As an example, Wadd refers to the “accomplished and gallant Lord Heathfield, who was perhaps the most abstemious man of the age” (42). The purpose of the invocation is to show hardiness, restraint, and vigor are integral parts of the English identity. Banting’s work will draw on Wadd’s focus on obesity as a decidedly negative, primitive disease with pejorative connotations. He too constructs obesity as a disease antithetical to a proper English identity.

Though Wadd’s text is directly connected to the case study, its manner also mirrors a familiar text type: the travel narrative, which also implicitly moralized in its description of non-English lands and people¹². This moralizing extends the racist aspects of the case study that Wadd develops. Common to both the case study format that Wadd develops and to the travel narratives that Victorian audiences already knew is the idea of

diseases spreading from the Orient and the denigrating discussion of the natives' conditions (Gilman 137). Travel narratives often featured commentary on the perceived fatness of natives. For example, James Cook and Georg Forster's journey around the world in the 1770s took them to Tahiti, where Forster reports sighting very fat people, and learning that the word for corpulence is "Oo'peea" (Gilman 167). The corpulence of the natives was rendered as the product of overindulgence and moral inferiority. In Forster's dealings with a particular chief who was being fed by a servant, he observes him as indolent and simple, and explains that his fatness is a sign of his overindulgence¹³. Forster condemns the social implications of his indulgence. He critiques the "sluggish inactivity...without one benefit to society" and denounces him for "fattening on the superfluous produce of the soil, of which he robbed the laboring multitudes" (qtd. in Thomas 194). The invocation of fatness's effect on society is significant, as Forster condemns not only the individual for his condition, but also invokes the detrimental effect on the society at large.

The contradictions implicit in these travel discourses are also present in Wadd's case study format. Wadd directly contradicts his earlier argument that obesity was not always considered a disease when he says that corpulence "beyond a certain point has always been considered a disease" (57). Significantly, such a reversal follows his discussion of obesity being a product of degeneracy and sloth in non-western contexts only for the purpose of creating an imagined English imperial identity. In order to foster ideas of racial superiority, obesity in England had to be minimized and stigmatized so as to create circumstances in which 'othering' could occur. Christopher Forth's study of fatness has shown how the denigration of fat emerges from ethnographies and middle-

class medical literature which depicts fatness and the acceptance of it as savage and uncivilized. For example, the Khoi-Khoin (Hottentots) of Southern Africa were considered by Victorian travel writers as huge and deformed because of their girth. Writer Francis Galton (1852) specifically focused on the weight and girth of the inhabitants as a way to render them as 'other' and therefore inferior to the proportions of Europeans (Gilman 170). The imagined ideal of a healthier colonizing society has also been chronicled by Sander Gilman, who notes colonial medical discourses focus primarily on the spread of native diseases to civilization; tropical medicine takes little note of Western diseases, and is primarily concerned with differential diagnoses (Gilman 170). With the rise of discourse of obesity as a disease, it is evident that moral panic about obesity is part of other discourses on race that surfaced in the nineteenth century.¹⁴

A more complex contradiction involves the recommendation of the food of that same primitive man as an antidote for obesity in superior Western man. Although on the one hand Wadd's text and travel narratives suggest non-Western conditions are unhealthy and produce fatness, on the other hand, just as the travel narrative romanticizes the natural man, Wadd praises the food of primitive societies as items the Victorians should also include for better health and diet control. Victorian discussions of obesity in general are often correlated and connected to the impulsiveness of natural man, and a part of the entire myth of natural man that was in existence after the Enlightenment¹⁵. Man in a state of nature is juxtaposed with modern, urban man to show the superiority of Western civility, restraint, and slenderness. To create the preferred condition of the body, it had to be contrasted with the invented identity of the primitive: "By inventing the primitive, the idea of deviance in Europe came to serve a peculiarly modern form of social discipline"

(McClintock 182). Immanuel Kant's lectures on anthropology, for example, point to a connection between natural man and overindulgence. The counter to natural man is the scholar: one who uses medical discourse for control (Gilman 168). A variety of authors in the nineteenth century advocated dieting as a means to stave off the condition of natural man. Through thinking, attentiveness, and dietary restrictions, the civilized man could avoid the pitfalls of compromised virtue. Ironically, the cure for 'the scholar' is the diet of natural man (Gilman 168). The contradictory recommendation of the food of primitive, natural man to cure fatness in the superior European civilization hinges on the idea of European exceptionalism. Fatness in the West is not an innate state, but an exceptional one, and the product of modern European progress. As a later commentator will put it: "Overnutrition seems to be associated with the civilized state." Here, obesity is connected with privilege, and while stigmatized, it has a remedy.¹⁶ Education and restraint can 'cure' the 'civilized state' of the contamination. These contradictions appear in Wadd's text as a part of his struggle to construct fatness as a disease (not inherent as it is in non-Western peoples, but as the product of luxury in European people) for which a cure can then be proposed. What Banting will do is to deny English fatness even any extenuating positivity, and instead will make participating in his diet—itsself rendered a Western commodity—a sign of prestige. Banting will propose a natural diet free from many of the luxuries of the Western world.

The case study format created a particular style of discourse attractive to the general public, and led to the adoption of a self-reflexive stylistic approach in such writings. The growing market created a new problem: scholarly works often suffered from the problem of plagiarism by derivative texts for popular circulation, and these less-

specialized works for lay-readers were denounced by the scholarly community. This problem is resolved by Jean-Francois Dancel over his writing career. His text *Obesity or Excessive Corpulence: The various causes and the rational means of cure* (1854) was distributed in Paris in 1854, but a reprint of the text in 1864 was deemed necessary as “an act of justice” (1). Too many popular publications had quoted the precepts espoused by Dancel without giving proper credit or attribution. In the preface to the 1864 edition, the translator R. Barrett explains, “Some members of the medical profession have, in the course of their practice, availed themselves of the theory first propounded by our Author, but have failed to acknowledge- through ignorance or inadvertence- the source of their information” (1). The preface of Dancel’s 1864 version of *Obesity* suggests that the English reprinting of it would resolve the problem of plagiarism and lack of ascription to Dancel’s seminal work. A case in point is that Banting will make a passing reference to Dancel, yet will claim himself ignorant of the content of his work, primarily due to the specialized nature of its publication.¹⁷ The reprinting and reworking of Dancel’s text not only shows the movement toward revising medical discourse to make it more authoritative and reliable, but also more readable to the public, while simultaneously raising the prestige of the physician.

Dancel’s text seeks to scientifically explain the causes of obesity, and to do so, he employs a concretely empirical hypothesis, but in a transparent style. Proposing “a system for the reduction of corpulence, based on...well recognized truths,” (x) he proceeds with the disarmingly simple query, “Can corpulence be reduced without injuriously affecting the general health?” (i), which, after quickly answering in the affirmative, he proceeds to pose another equally lucid question: “are there any substances

generally known to the profession which have the power either to destroy fat and to cause its disappearance?" (viii). The accessible manner in which he poses his research questions here is significant, as he attempts to make commonly understandable the scientific methodology of his inquiry. Significantly, he notes he will not rely on learned theories. Instead, he will decode the medical mysteries with which he was challenged, and inviting by his friendly manner readers to participate in the resolution as they follow the chronicles of his success.

Though Dancel's audience was initially other learned men, and not the popular reading public, the case study format makes scientific discourse reliable, accessible, and familiar to a general public eager to participate in the investigation of health mysteries. Sometimes, in making his subject matter more readable, he will employ striking images less scientific than sensational. Notable in Dancel's text is what Kennedy terms "the visual turn" that is magnified and channeled in medical narratives at this time (Kennedy 26). Dancel focuses the Victorian fascination on the kinds of "curious bodies" Kennedy has identified in this kind of prose style, as he includes a graphic description of a young woman destroyed by the scourge of obesity. With this example, he discusses how corpulence renders a beautiful young woman "repulsive" (15). To excuse his attention to something "repulsive," he appeals to his responsibility to educate a general audience. For example, he states, "I feel called upon, however, to relate the following account given by one of my patients, the correctness of which was vouched for by several of her acquaintances" (Dancel 119). Describing himself as "called upon" excuses the possible offensiveness of these cases and argues for their educational necessity and reliability.

This kind of pandering to the audience's desire for sensationalism is part of Dancel's way of making his subject matter attractive to average readers aroused by lurid stories.

Dancel's attempt to stigmatize fatness as a disease and to make it morally offensive in a manner that is accessible to the lay public additionally involves rendering this idea as commonsensical and irrefutable. Like later texts on fat such as Banting's will more fully delineate, Dancel denounces fat as a taint on "personal charms" and "beauty" (18). Unlike Wadd though, he presents the cases in such a way as to make the injurious condition an obvious truth, such as when he states fat can render people "incompetent to discharge the duties of a profession" (15). He presents examples whose points are self-explanatory to show the undeniably deleterious effects of fat. For example, when Dancel recounts the treatment course he proscribed for "Madame de M.,"¹⁸ he explains how at the end of a fortnight, "Madame de M. had perceptibly grown thinner," (133) decreasing her weight from 190 pounds, and concludes with the observation, "how forcibly does her present condition contrast with the previous eight long years, passed in weariness and suffering" (Dancel 135). Dancel's work pathologizes fatness in such a way that its undesirability becomes a simple truism. Though he makes sweeping connections between fat and other conditions, he qualifies them slightly. He notes, "Corpulency is the true cause of many diseases, yet it would be folly to assign obesity as a cause of every disease" (119). Other works will broaden these correlations, such as William Banting's *Letter on Corpulence, Addressed to the Public* that will further the reach of obesity, attributing deafness, gout, and carbuncles to corpulence.

In keeping with his case study's reliable, readable format, Dancel also affably extends the negativity of fatness from individual case histories to the nation as a whole.

For example, he states, “Superabundance of fat prevents an infantry officer from following his regiment- a cavalry officer from being long on horseback; and thus both are alike compelled to retire from the service” (16). In his description of the failings of infantry and cavalry officers, Dancel establishes fat as incommensurate with masculinity, potency, and effectiveness, though this is only implicit in his matter-of-fact discourse. Overall, Dancel’s casual expansion of the effect of fatness to the entire nation exemplifies Kennedy’s claim that, “The case history also mediates vexing questions of empire by providing a textual site for medicalizing racial and cultural differences” (Kennedy 28). What Dancel hints at Banting will render explicit in his *Letter*, establishing fatness as antithetical to a virile English identity.

Dancel’s commonsensical style also extends the connection of fat’s effect on the body to its effects on the mind with the kind of simple logic that the average reader would find appealing and would accept as unquestionable truth. While it may seem that Dancel refers to the ease with which one can work if one is not fat, he actually refers to a degradation of intellect because of the presence of excess body fat. He states, “everyone engaged in intellectual pursuits will say that since he has increased in fat he finds that he cannot work so easily as he did when he was thin” (17). He associates fatness with the decline of “wealth,” “intellectual ability,” and “imagination” (18). The sweeping generalization of ‘everyone’ shows how he expects that the case study form he employs—emphasizing the reliability and objectivity of his observations—renders his expertise infallible. Dancel admits, however, “that it would be a grave error to assert that all persons suffering under an excess of fat are invariably wanting;” he notes there are “proofs to the contrary,” but adds that “among women chiefly” there is great mental

susceptibility that accompanies attaining a “lamentable size” (19). Offering counterclaims and qualifiers makes his argument appear more sensible in a way that everyone can understand.

Because Dancel wants to project fat as categorically detrimental to the body, he renders the restriction of carbohydrates as a scientific method that is also incontestably sensible. For each food he forbids, he features a short, uncomplicated rationale for his prohibition. For example, in holding up the example of the herbivore hippopotamus as obese because it consumes a variety of vegetation, Dancel bans forms of plant life and suggests the consumption of protein leads to leaner figures. Additionally, he argues that those prone to corpulence should avoid “eggs, cream, cheese, and butter” (189). He limits dietary fats from foods like milk, and points to cattle’s fatness as evidence of the connection between dairy and corpulence. As can be seen here, the conclusion he derives attempts to translate a seemingly scientific observation into an easily comprehensible truth. Dancel merely suggests physicians counsel their patients about the deleterious effect of certain foods on body weight. He initiates a conversation about the source of fat and its connection to food, since there was little consensus among physicians, and even more discord between fringe and legitimate anti-fat discourses as to the causes and remedies for fat. What is missing from Dancel that Banting will utilize is the creation of a particular diet as a commodity to be sold or marketed to the public, and an explanation of its efficacy.

In the popular dissemination of the explanation of fatness to which Dancel contributes with his readable style, and particularly his connection between fatness and specific foods, the next development is the connection of fat to alcohol and the

demonstration of this at a cellular level. Responsible for the link was Arthur Hill Hassall's publication *The Microscopic Anatomy of the human body, in health and disease Volume 2* (1849), in which he examined fat cells and their connection with obesity. An article in the March 1849 edition of the *Medical Gazette* refers to Hassall's groundbreaking work on fat cells, and links studies on fattening animals through sugar to the effect of sugar on human physiology. The article specifically addresses drinking liquor, and how imbibing alcoholic beverages leads to "extreme degrees of corpulency" as sugar from drinks such as rum is stored as fat (Braithwaite, Braithwaite, and Trevelyan 328). Unlike Wadd, who notes that obesity was more prevalent than ever, the article claims obesity was more common "a century ago," "when the yeomanry and middle classes drank deep potations of malt liquors" (328). The article shows the importance of Hassall's work, as the discovery fueled further inquiries into remedying fat through diet and abstention from a variety of foods and beverages. The text was not meant for popular and widespread reading, but in it Hassall refers to obesity as a condition in which "fat is secreted in vast and abnormal quantities: where this augmentation is general it constitutes the diseased condition of obesity" (Hassall 230). His work was subsequently subject to a variety of reviews and popularizations in *The Lancet*, so his diction is significant, as words such as "abnormal" and "diseased" contributed to the popular medical discourse of the period that rendered obesity as a scourge on public health. In his text, he examines fat cells, and defines fat as "the aggregation of a number of globules or vesicles... which are held in juxtaposition by intersecting bands of cellular tissue" (222). This physical description of adipose tissue enabled medical researchers to focus on what causes the proliferation of fat cells, and to analyze the causes and treatment options available. Like

Dancel, Hasall's work only achieved renown through its reprinting to a more popular audience where it encouraged lay-readers to consider alcohol's effect on fatness, a contentious issue Banting will take up in his work.

While the case study styles and mediums of publication were important to set the scene for Banting, another significant development was the ability to quantify medical data. *A Treatise of Man and the Development of his Faculties* written by the Belgian writer Lambert Adolphe Quetelet (1835) was considered one of the century's most influential books, and its numerous reprints and translations into English capitalized on the growing fervor among the populace for medical information on dietetics. One of the English reprints entitled "The People's Edition" (1842) bills itself as one of the most "Striking examples yet given of the powers of the press in diffusing useful knowledge" (1).¹⁹ Indeed, the book was reprinted several times, and amended to become a popularized medical text, as its very title illustrates. In its preface, Quetelet notes, "The work upon Man was published at Paris in 1835. In the year following, a copy of it was printed at Brussels; and in 1838, Dr. Riecke gave a German translation of the work, enriched with my notes. The Brussels copy was published without my participation, and indeed against my will" (iv). The Publishers' Notice in 1842 provides a glowing review of the credentials of the author, establishing the scientific nature of the work through the invocation of statistical and mathematical data used to derive conclusions. The notice claims that he has "earned a high reputation among men of science, being distinguished peculiarly by the cautious, accurate, and comprehensive character of all his researches, and by his acumen in applying the important science of numbers to every subject which he investigated" (2). The introduction illustrates the movement toward elevating the

status of the physician, and also shows the importance of quantification in establishing that medical authority.

‘Quetelet’s introduction of statistical data based on standard measurements and methods also revealed an interest in the development of uniform nomenclature to classify disease, which exemplifies the move towards the standardization of medical practice mentioned earlier in the chapter. The publisher refers to the text as the “first attempt made to apply the art of calculation to the social movements of the human being, and to examine by it his moral anatomy with the view of detecting the real sources and amount of the evils under which he labours, and remedying them when known” (2). Though the publishers’ note mentions criticism of the work, the defense offered is “incontrovertible facts furnished by statistical data” (2). Using diction such as “incontrovertible” shows a movement within obesity discourse to be able to quantify data as ‘proof’ of findings. Whereas Wadd and Dancel provide innumerable examples and case studies, Quetelet’s work enabled obesity to be quantified in statistical terms. According to the note, the text derives the “truth by the only legitimate way, namely the examination of facts” (2). The claims of establishing legitimate science are important, as Quetelet’s standards provided norms against which obesity could be defined. He set up an index of a person’s weight in kilograms divided by the square of the height in meters, a normative scale which would allow for seemingly objective descriptors of obesity. What Quetelet designed would later be called the Body Mass Index, as it was renamed in 1972. The use of specific figures not only enhanced the physician’s reputation, but also his ability to objectively assess patients’ health. In the *People’s Edition* of his text, he sets up parameters easy to understand for the general public: “When man and woman have attained their complete

development, they weigh nearly exactly twenty times as much as at birth” (67). Through his analysis, he sets baselines for normalcy and deviance, and his use of statistics concretizes the standards of body mass. Unlike previous works such as Wadd’s in which obesity is undefined, Quetelet’s work precisely delineated the parameters of obesity and normalized body weights. The translation into English codified these scientifically derived indexes, and enabled the application of a uniform system of terminology for diagnosis. At the same time, the publisher of Quetelet uses terms specific to case-studies, such as “detecting” and “remedying them when known,” to capitalize on the fervor for medical mysteries and their demystification by seemingly objective analysis. As will be discussed in a later chapter, while Banting does not directly cite Quetelet, he does include a chart of proper heights and weights. He attributes the chart to Dr. John Hutchinson, even though Hutchinson’s work derived from Quetelet’s standards.

The next step in the development of the popular medical discourse that will appear full-blown in Banting is the inculcation of empiricism in the study of fatness as a disease by Claude Bernard, a French physiologist. His work, entitled *An Introduction to the Study of Experimental Medicine* (1865), recorded his use of blind experimentation to test the objectivity of observations, as for instance in his discovery that the liver of animals contained a milky fluid called glycogen, a substance which could be changed into sugar. Through the observation and experimentation with glycogen—including the effects of boiling it to release energy—he was able to speculate on the cause of obesity: that corpulence comes from an increase in consumption of starchy, glycogen rich foods (Hughes 124). This discovery of obesity’s connection to sugar or carbohydrate intake is directly connected to Banting by William Harvey, arguably Banting’s most important

mentor, when in his work *On Corpulence in Relation to Disease* (1872) he cites Bernard as “an authority of the highest eminence” (Harvey 43).²⁰ Bernard was well-renowned in the medical community, and spoke widely on the lecture circuit where he gained a following among legitimate practitioners because of his emphasis on experimentation. Though Bernard’s text lacks the moralizing on fat prevalent in other works, it is important in the development of Victorian obesity discourse because he establishes his findings through empirical forms of measurement and experimentation. Laying down the value of empirical investigation of fatness, as Banting will deploy later, Bernard uses the case study as a form of data collection that enabled him to make inferences and suggest a course of treatment. His authority is wielded through the evocation of experimentation chronicled through particular case studies, which enabled him to depict diet as a scientific remedy for the newly discovered processes which contributed to disease. While clinical research was valorized, Bernard’s publications and lectures were specialized and thus often unavailable or unintelligible to a general audience.

While writers such as Harvey made accessible Bernard’s work because of the emerging popularity of obesity discourse and made use of the expected forms for those physicians who would proffer medical expertise to the general public, the publication in 1826 of Jean Brillat-Savarin’s diet based method of weight loss exemplified the beginning trend of readable diet discourses outside of the medical field itself.²¹ Brillat-Savarin was a French lawyer and politician, not a doctor or specialist, who claimed to be one who was a “lover of doctors” and who loved to associate with “men of science” (30). In writing *The Physiology of Taste: Or Meditation on Transcendental Gastronomy*, he describes himself as playing the role of “doctor, chemist, physiologist, and even

something of a scholar” (30). He successfully projected himself as a socially prestigious position of a man of letters informing the public about the mysteries of health.

Throughout the text, Brillat-Savarin uses the case study format to establish his credentials as a health expert, using observations, anecdotes, and discussions that he disingenuously “offers” to the public only because of the “public’s kindness” in allowing him to speak on such matters (30). In his work, he draws on his own observations, as well as interviews with “fat” or “particularly fat” individuals. He goes on to identify bread, rice, potatoes, or foods that he felt were starchy or floury, to be the main causes of obesity in males. His attention to this type of fat, once considered a marker of privilege, shows changing attitudes toward fat and its ability to connote prestige and class. *The Physiology of Taste* articulated as well Brillat-Savarin’s claims that he could identify the causes of obesity, which for him was sugar because it exacerbated weight gain. He recommended a diet to reduce weight through “rigid abstinence from everything that is starchy or floury” (qtd. in Taubes 3). His work caused Europeans to examine their foodways, , or the ways in which people defined, found, prepared, and consumed nutrients, including drinks as well as solid and liquid foods (Altonen 1). The text set the scene for the acceptance of an alteration of foodways by an individual un-affiliated with medicine except as a patient.²² As such, his work does two things. First, it claims to have found a specific cause for obesity; secondly, it prescribes a specific remedy. Both of these stylistic features Banting will later adopt as he expands them into a fully-developed diet plan. Lacking from Brillat-Savarin’s text is the articulation of his own experience with controlling fat, which Banting will use in his case-study to capitalize on the individual’s ability to follow his particular plan to achieve success.

The multiplicity of changes occurring within Victorian England rendered fat conversations as a cultural phenomenon. Commodification of diet as a tool for weight-management was one such alteration. Similarly, the movement to standardize physicians' roles necessitated ways to differentiate between charlatans and legitimate medical men. Selling nostrums for profit was one means of identifying quacks, so early discourse on fatness shied away from offering such for-profit cure-alls as fat fell under the purview of genuine medical concerns. Instead, reputation was established by first-person texts in the case study format which sought to show the authors' qualifications, deductive powers, prestigious social standing, and personal interest in quantifying and measuring success. The increased ability to self-publish led to significant alterations in the style and in the way that these anti-fat discourses began to be addressed to popular audiences. The public's expectations were transformed as popular readers wanted to see authors using medical instruments to provide quantifiable proof of their claims. These developments help to understand the long line of medical writers who made this topic a cultural phenomenon.

Anti-Fat Discourse Developments

William Banting's open discussion of his body and its physical processes and his chronicling of his own journey to lose weight and reduce corpulence blurred class distinctions as it defied upper class etiquette and its reticence about the body. The changes occurring in popular Victorian medical writing described above facilitated Banting's emergence. These previous discourses that have been chronicled set the stage for Banting in many ways, for popularizations were in vogue, obesity had been presented as a scourge on public health, and it had already been associated with a variety of moral

and racial objections to fat as a condition. The establishment of the case study as a legitimate format enabled him to find a niche in which to cultivate popular acceptance. Likewise, his first-person narrative had become a familiar trope of medical narrative, as had the self-publication of pamphlets. In his work, he evinces strains of thought present in a variety of previous medical discourses on fat and man's nature, capitalizes on the moralizing already present in anti-fat rhetoric, and even attacks the medical community in order to enhance his own reputation as an outsider or fringe practitioner. Banting eschews what he deems quack remedies, and instead fashions his diet as a product in and of itself whose benefits could be measured in a quantifiable and scrutinizable manner. To maintain his claims of legitimacy, he denies making any profit, and instead fashions himself as a benevolent reformer who offered his suggestions. His predecessors set the stage for a work which would postulate suggestions to ameliorate the problems associated with corpulence, and his text achieved renown because of the confluence of these modifications to anti-fat discourse.

CHAPTER THREE

BANTING AND HIS MUCH MALIGNED WEIGHT LOSS METHOD

Introduction

Medicine in England underwent sweeping changes during the Victorian period. The development of tools and scientific methodologies for quantifying data and for examining patients necessitated a reworking of the idea of the doctor, as well as a change in the means of disseminating information to make it credible and scholarly. Attacks on ‘quackery’ increased awareness of the need to regulate medicine and its practitioners so as to differentiate between ineptitude and competence. Medical men’s narratives took on a variety of conventional features to herald these doctors’ erudition and skill, and certain forms became popular as a result of the desire to avoid condemnation. First, these narratives were often composed as case studies in which the doctor—referring to himself in first person—diagnosed the illness and chronicled the treatments prescribed in order to assert his abilities. Likewise, various diagnostic tools began to be used to quantify data: charts, diagrams, and instruments were used not only to assess the patient but to prove the doctor’s scientific training. Finally, many of these narratives were published in ways to display the doctor’s acumen. For example, publication in popular medical journals such as the *British Medical Journal* or popular culture magazines such as *Cornhill* or *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine* enabled doctors to promulgate information as well as to make manifest their own reputations. The works of writers such as William Wadd and Francois Dancel not only solidified the tropes of medical discourse—they set the scene for a particular kind of anti-fat discourse which demonized fat as an illness, and

suggested—through case studies—remedies for corpulence and its deleterious and injurious effects. The growth of popular mediums for self-publication provided a plethora of outlets for this form of anti-fat discourse to thrive, one based on moralizing and providing fixes to a pernicious problem, rather than one based on scientific evidence. Banting represents the full fruition of these previous discourses in his *Letter on Corpulence Addressed to the General Public* (1863). Banting's *Letter* moralized on fatness significantly, imagining fat as a parasite. It addressed fat as a deleterious health condition that could be ameliorated by diet alone. Aggressively self-published and reprinted several times, Banting's work challenged established medical discourse, accelerated this kind of literary form that was also emerging in Victorian England at this time, and thereby created a popular cultural phenomenon called "Bantingism."²³ The publication was received by an eager audience primed for a particular type of anti-fat discourse, which he provided to Victorian readers. The *Letter on Corpulence* finally established anti-fat and its regimes as a popular discourse in Victorian England and in subsequent ages.

Banting was a corpulent man. Working with physician William Harvey, Harvey developed a diet plan for Banting that enabled him to lose a significant amount of weight. Banting's detailed articulation of this diet plan and the experience that produced it in a publication aimed at lay-readers endeared him to popular culture. The efficacy of his low-carb diet plan and the vigorous social conversations that it set off made him a seminal figure in popular culture on the subject of personal health and well-being. After the publication of Banting's *Letter*, the mainstream journals as well as expert, professional publications took up the discussion of weight loss, nutritional advice, and dieting

practices. The early detection of the effects of the elimination of carbohydrates from the diet and the questioning of the value of high-fat, high-protein intake are aspects of popular modern consciousness that Banting's mid-Victorian work established. Modern plans such as Atkins, the Paleo-diet, and SugarBusters! all work by restricting carbohydrate intake in favor of high-protein diets, a legacy of Banting's plan.

Banting's desire for weight loss was motivated by his personal history. Banting lived from 1796 to 1878. He was the son of Thomas Banting and his wife Ann. Thomas Banting was an established carpenter who was commissioned to supply furniture to a variety of notable households. He worked with famous cabinet makers such as Thomas Chippendale, and the business with which he was connected, named France and Banting, earned the Royal warrant to supply furnishings ("Thomas Banting Royal Undertaker"). Banting's carpentry business received a number of notable commissions, one of which included a commission to supply furniture for Napoleon's use on St. Helena ("Thomas Banting"). Thomas' son William Banting was baptized in St Martin-in-the-Fields, Westminster, in December of 1796. On January 20, 1818, William Banting was married at St. Mary's, Newington, London, to Mary Ann Thurmott (Harrison). He joined his father's successful firm, which handled a variety of royal funerals. In his thirties, though, he found himself steadily gaining weight, which affected his health and his business. Banting, by then, was a renowned English undertaker and carpenter. He maintained a parlor in St. James's Street in London, from which he served as a furnisher of funerals.

In his own autobiographical recollections in the *Letter*, he explains how he struggled with obesity throughout his working years, despite not having a family history of fatness. Seeking advice from physicians to remedy his growing corpulence, he was

advised initially by the physician whom he first consulted to begin a regimen of exercise. He bought a boat and began rowing, only to find himself even more famished. His hunger caused his weight to rise, and so he sought further counsel, especially when a variety of ailments such as deafness and an umbilical rupture threatened his health even further. These consultations resulted in the recommendation of popularly accepted but ineffective remedies: his weight continued to rise. By the time he was sixty-five, he was five foot five and weighed 202 pounds. He had difficulty descending stairs and could not bend to tie his shoes.

In 1862, concerned by his growing deafness, he consulted Dr. William Harvey. Harvey specialized in treating hearing problems, and Banting's hearing impairment drove him to seek further medical advice about the possible remedies for his ailments. Harvey diagnosed the deafness as the result of fat deposits blocking Banting's Eustachian tubes, which connect the middle ears to the back of the throat and help the ears drain fluid. Harvey had read the work of Charles Bernard, who had conducted a case study linking the development of excess adipose matter to the blockage of the Eustachian tubes (Huff 40). Harvey thus connected Banting's deafness with his weight, and subsequently created a high-protein, low-carbohydrate diet to remedy the ailment. Harvey not only knew of Barnard, but he had recently been to a conference in Paris at which Barnard lectured. In this symposium, Barnard spoke of the role of the liver in diabetes. During the course of the conference, Barnard's discussions of diabetes linked diet to health problems. Harvey specifically focused on Barnard's new discoveries involving glucose production, and he drew on the latter's belief that since saccharine and farinaceous diets were used to fatten farm animals, such diets in humans likewise created adiposity (Taubes 2). Harvey's

suggestions were rooted in Victorian understandings of weight loss; saccharine and farinaceous foods were made largely of hydrogen and carbon, the same elements that comprise human fat, so substitution of protein for carbohydrates would lead to weight loss (Mouton 1). Harvey created a diet for Banting to alleviate his hearing loss, and the low-carbohydrate diet resulted in immediate weight reduction. The first week Banting lost two pounds, the next three, and the third week four pounds. Eventually, he lost a total of fifty pounds and reduced his weight to 152, and found his hearing and vision much improved from the weight loss. After meeting with such success, Banting sought to share his program, and composed and self-published his *Letter on Corpulence Addressed to the General Public* (1863).

The publication was prompted not only by his own personal history of weight-loss success, but also by an article on the genesis of fat in *Cornhill Magazine*, titled “What is the Cause of Obesity” published in 1863, which Banting found unsatisfactory and rebutted with his own testimony of the origins of his own fatness. This was the *Letter on Corpulence Addressed to the General Public* in 1863, which discussed the problems of obesity and his potential remedy for it. Though Banting worked with his physician William Harvey, he published his text as a first-person account of his own endeavors. As he explained in a subsequent republication of the *Letter*, he was writing because the article in *Cornhill* “offered no tangible remedy, or even a positive solution of the problem” of obesity, which prompted his writing (Banting 9). Reprinting his letter multiple times, Banting not only criticized medical publications, but also laid out a successful system of weight loss to counter claims of corpulence’s incurability.

Because his work challenged the established understandings of fat, it was attacked in the professional medical community. The diet itself featured an astonishing 2,800 calories per day and consisted almost entirely of protein and fat, limiting starches and carbohydrates (MacKarness 3). Banting claimed that this diet, developed from Harvey's design, worked because of this restriction of carbohydrates. Banting's diet achieved instant popularity. However, the medical profession refused initially to accept the success of the diet, clinging to earlier assumptions about weight-loss methods. In essence, doctors reviled the fat in the diet, and its calorie count (MacKarness 9). The medical community denounced Banting as a quack. As MacKarness puts it, "the views of William Wadd prevailed, and, apart from the Banting interlude, starvation [had] been the basis of treatment of obesity...up to the present day" (MacKarness 10).²⁴ Recent studies of weight loss have revealed that though reviled in the medical community, Banting's popularity among the public was warranted. Despite the contentions of the medical profession, Banting's diet worked and his system produced results. Although Harvey's diet plan worked, fear of being labeled as a quack made him bring his ideology back in line with the prevailing understanding espoused in prior Victorian anti-fat rhetoric. Banting, however, continued to promote the diet which enabled him to lose weight and live a more comfortable life, and the diet achieved great currency with the masses throughout the reprintings of his *Letter*. Even after being subjected to questions and condemnation, Banting continued to revise and publish his history with the intent of assisting others in their quest to reduce obesity. His popularity despite the rejection of the medical community was due to the moralizing and anxiety about fat that his work spread. The work's success pointed to the efficacy that popular medical discourse had now achieved.

Publication History

Banting's argument about obesity's origins and its cure developed over a lengthy process, which can be seen in the history of its multiple, complicated revisions and reprints. The first two editions of the *Letter* were self-published, and Banting's work underwent a variety of revisions for subsequent widespread publication by professional publishing houses. The first edition, published in 1863, featured a run of 2,500 copies, which Banting self-published and gave away free of charge. It became the talk of London society. The second edition (1863) ran 1,500 copies. The third edition (1864) sold 50,000 copies, and the fourth in 1869 another 13,000. Both the third and fourth editions were published by Harrison, a reputable publishing company, which sought to capitalize on the popularity of the texts. The fourth edition of his *Letter on Corpulence, Addressed to the Public* increased the prefatory remarks by the author, as well as added "copious information from correspondents and confirmatory evidence" of his suggestions for remedying corpulence, as its title page claims. It was priced at one shilling. An American edition (1864) was also published, but it remained unchanged.²⁵ Taken together, the four British editions make a continuously developing cultural text of anti-fatness for which Banting is known.

The text of the first edition is relatively short. With the preface, it spans only twenty-five pages. The second edition features some small changes to the preface, but the text essentially remains unchanged. The third substantially lengthens the preface, and by the fourth edition, the text grows to more than 100 pages, as Banting appended correspondence from individuals who testified to the efficacy of his plan. Additionally, the fourth edition features both Banting and Harvey responding to some of the critiques

of the plan, and reiterates Banting's firm dedication to the precepts of the system.

Banting's apparent apologia in the fourth edition's preface reads, "The preceding editions were composed and issued with all sorts of apparent defects and deformities from my utter inability to afford any substantial evidence of the merit and utility of the system beyond my own personal and short experience" (1). In his own opinion, the fourth edition offers the richest repository of evidence and best addresses the "defects" of the previous texts. Though it was revised and altered in small ways in each of the four editions, the essential structure of the work remained the same. However, each edition increased and substantially developed his argument. Crucial revisions included those to the development and explanation of his methodology, his depiction of Harvey's role, his discussions of profit and money, and his response to his critics.

The *Letter* in its multiple manifestations is concerned with explaining his method for reducing corpulence and his basis for claiming scientific expertise. This is begun with the short authorial preface of the first edition, as well as subsequent longer ones, in which Banting explains why he chose to publish privately and demonstrates how his methods were nonetheless scientifically derived. He explains in each edition that the editor of *The Lancet* would not publish him without some letters of introduction. The same difficulty—his obscurity—prevented him from sending it to *Cornhill Magazine*. Fully admitting his lack of professional standing, Banting repeatedly denies being anything other than a layman, and though he admits to being fascinated by the diet's success, he claims he has no pretensions of true physiological or chemical knowledge. Instead, he offers his "five past years' experience" as evidence of the diet's scientific effectiveness (3). In the fourth edition, he states that these years of "personal experience" afford opportunities to

quantitatively study the diet's efficacy, and he draws on the apparent objectivity of data as he claims that "the facts which I have related are indisputable" (7). Each edition more fully develops his claims of reliability and the apparently unquestionable truth of his experience. Though he fashions himself as "utterly ignorant" of the medical knowledge to explicate his results, he states that his ignorance only further points to how he can only show the "important truth" of his diet's effectiveness (3). In the fourth edition, he retrospectively remarks on his experiment, saying, "It may possibly interest the public to know the result of my own proceedings and personal experience since I published my third edition in 1864. My weight has continued at about ii stone...and I have proved very satisfactorily that it is and was sugar and saccharine elements" (15). In this fourth edition, he specifically chronicles his developing methodological trajectory over the revisions which he felt "proved" the cause of fatness and the means by which one could remove it.

Because he was not a medical professional, the revisions offered a way to render his experience and observations as forms of quantifiable, reliable data. Early editions focus on small, private ways to record progress in reducing fatness. Weekly weighings, he maintains, will prove the merit and success of his plan (17). For example, he speculates that any person "accurately weighed" at the beginning and end of seven days cannot help but see a diminution of weight on his plan (5). Banting also encourages the use of photography as a tool to chronicle and document fat loss. He notes that such evidence will provide proof of the effectiveness of his plan.²⁶ As well as these tools, in the third and fourth editions of the *Letter*, he includes a chart of height and weight furnished to him by a correspondent (15). The ability to weigh accurately and to qualify weights as obese were developments that helped lend credence to Banting's science, and

are only included in later editions. Through these revisions, in effect, Banting's methodology is developing, and progressing to incorporate professionally vetted ways to measure. By the third and fourth edition, he includes a chart of body weights by height taken from the work of Dr. John Hutchinson, a physician who compiled a mean weight from those of 2,648 men in order to verify health for an insurance company. In the fourth edition, he explains that "a kind friend has furnished me with a tabular statement in regard to weight as proportioned to stature" (15). Though he does not name the "kind friend," he uses the data to provide "sound medical authority" to quantify obesity (15). Through the repetition and emphasis on these empirical charts over the publication's history, Banting asserts the scientific efficacy of his plan, and attempts to establish his methodology—despite his lack of professional training—as sound.

Not only do the revisions attempt to establish his quantifiable methodology, Banting's reprinting also extend and alter the role of Mr. William Harvey, his medical adviser, who was attacked in the medical community for his role in developing the Banting system. In the face of derision and ridicule after the initial publications, William Harvey recanted his claims of having developed a new diet for the effective treatment of obesity, and fell in line with the medical professionals in the community who had ostracized him for his part in the Banting pamphlet (MacKarness 6). In first and second editions, Banting completely omits the work of William Harvey and focuses on his "personal experience" (8). He claims that although it would "afford [him] infinite pleasure and satisfaction to name the author of my redemption from the calamity...such publicity might be construed improperly" (8). In the first and second editions, Banting obscures Harvey's name and information, but finally includes it in his third edition. He

admits, “the medical gentleman to whom I am so deeply indebted is Mr. Harvey...In the first and second editions, I thought that to give his name would appear like a puff, which I know he abhors” (43). Naming the doctor provided substance and credibility, despite Harvey’s own distancing of himself from the project after his identity was revealed.

The denials of any monetary benefits reaped from his popularity also increase in length in each revision. Since the preface attempts to show his purpose for writing the text and to establish his credibility, it proceeds in a digressive fashion: he works to promote his reputation before addressing the diet program, and returns to his standing in the community quite frequently throughout the preface and the letter. In the preface’s attempt to establish his motives, the text’s progress becomes quite excursive, and each edition substantially lengthens the authorial preface. It meanders as he periodically interjects information about remuneration received. The digressive fashion of the letter is quite clear by the printing of the third edition, in which he addresses payment several times. While the first two editions were distributed at no charge, he received payment for the third edition. The sum of nine-hundred and sixty-nine pounds was often cited by critics who accused him of profiting from the misery of others. Because of the critics’ denigration of his work as solely a moneymaking scheme, the preface to the third edition focuses on the remuneration—or lack thereof—received from the prior publications. Through the transparent presentation of his finances, he establishes the altruism behind his publication, a motive he often iterates in the preface as he describes his “earnest hope” to help others attain “comfort and happiness” (8). He does not deny his success, but rather relishes it. In describing how “gratifying” his success has been, he reports that the publication exceeded his “most sanguine expectations” (*3rd Edition* 1). The third

edition sold for sixpence a copy, whereas the first and second were free of charge, except when someone chose to pay for it. However, he takes particular pains to show that all of the profits from the subsequent editions will be donated to the Printers' Pension Society. Through the explanation of his plans for donations, he attempts to show he has no plans to profit from his endeavor. Rather, expects the "small charge" will merely cover the printing expenses.

Arguing he has no motive to seek profit or recompense, he reminds readers that "The first and second editions were no very serious expense to me, scarcely three pence a copy" (*3rd Edition* 1). He mentions that the cost of production and correspondence subsequent to the publication have cost him much more, an appeal to his earnest desire to be forthright. By correspondence, he means his replies to curious physicians, as well as the numerous letters he wrote responding to detractors.²⁷ The correspondence was necessary, he claims, as he wished to "secure [his] motives from misconception" (*3rd Edition* 1). Throughout the preface to the third edition, Banting includes charts which indicate the charitable donations made by all those who may have purchased the early editions. His purpose is to persuade critics of the legitimacy and sincerity of his enterprise by undermining and discounting accusations of being a charlatan seeking pecuniary advantage. Instead, he claims "The truthful tale" has already had "marvelous effect;" thus, the public will "prefer to purchase the third edition at a reasonable charge" (*3rd Edition* 1). He uses the letter's success to vindicate his purpose, and to deny accusations of his exploitation of his case for profit. The popularity of the work is indicated by the numbers of public purchases of it that he chronicles: twenty thousand copies of the third edition were sold. He dedicates the book to the public "simply and

entirely from an earnest desire to confer benefit on my fellow creatures,” a benign motive he illustrates through the inclusion of a chart of profits and expenses (*3rd Edition* 2). Though a digression from the diet itself, the discursive format makes an appeal to his endeavor’s altruistic purpose to defend himself from accusations of quackery. Banting’s eagerness to show his authority and his altruistic purpose for writing can be linked to the erratic progress of the letter, especially by the fourth edition which features the longest of the explanations.

By the fourth edition, he included even more charts and details about his expenses, charitable contributions, and profit to highlight the trustworthiness of his motives and the earnestness of his purpose. In the preface of his fourth edition Banting elucidates that his “unpretending brochure” had met with unprecedented success, including widespread circulation in England and in the United States, and even mentions translations in German and French (6). Because of its popularity abroad, he interrupts the fourth edition preface with a chart to dispel rumors about the “fortune which it was generally reported that [he] had made by the ‘speculation’” (6-7). Putting “speculation” in quotations communicates Banting’s frustration with his detractors who accused him of quackery because he made a profit. His defensive tone is evident in the way he treats what he considers specious allegations that his diet is merely quackery because it was profitable. As a matter of fact, though he does not deny the diet’s turning a profit, to defend himself from such accusations, in the preface to the fourth edition he includes a detailed variety of charts illustrating the various charities to which he donates his profits. Through one chart, for example, he shows his net profit of two hundred and twenty five pounds, a sum he distributes to twelve charities. These charities include the Printers’ Sick

Fund, The Royal Hospital for Incurables, and the British Home for Incurables, among others. The repeated interruption of his text with fiscal summaries is significant, as it shows Banting's need to justify his motives for publishing and to differentiate himself more directly from quack doctors seeking only wealth, not patients' well-being. As the revisions illustrate, by the fourth edition, his interest in demonstrating the benevolent intentions of his diet had grown as a result of increasing critical attention to his diet as a saleable commodity.

By the fourth edition, the publication had grown from twenty-five pages to 100 with the edition of letters and testimonials. It included letters and selections from 1800 readers who wrote to Banting supporting his assertions. Over the various editions of the *Letter*, Banting strives to defend the necessity of its publication to a popular audience, but the fourth edition is quite clear about his popular reception. Acknowledging the positive reactions to his work, he states, "I have received nearly 2,000 very complimentary and grateful letters from all quarters of the world" (1). Despite the popularity of his third edition, he continued to revise in order to offer further personal experience, adduce some new proofs, and to contribute to charity through the sales of the edition (2). The multiple revisions also offer him the ability to reflect on his diet's efficacy and very necessity, seen as he notes that "Five years have now elapsed since the third edition was published" (6). The appending of correspondence is a method he uses in the fourth edition to show the public's need for such a discourse as he provides, especially as he feels the lapse of time has substantiated his claims.

The fourth edition particularly features a more pointed attack on his critics after experiencing several years of censure since his first publication, and yet he defends the

choices of language made in his first edition. Banting uses the latter two pages of his pamphlet to respond to the critics who challenged his assertions, specifically in his use of the metaphor of fat as a parasite, and in his cultivation of a particular audience. First, he tackles those who suggest his diet precludes the participation of the poor, and then he defends his use of the term parasite to describe obesity. While “a very poor corpulent man is not so frequently met with,” he combats the assertion by declaring his system would remedy the ailment “when the tendency does exist in that class” (17). Banting’s sweeping generalization broadens his audience by excluding no one. Such a tactic increases the potential purchasers for the pamphlet. He also defends the use of the metaphor of the parasite for disease, as it is this metaphor that demonstrated the evils and sickness of obesity, moralizing on which his success was predicated. He begins the first edition with such figurative language, and continues to use it in every subsequent edition. The first edition of the text begins with Banting describing fat as a parasite, marking it as one of the most distressing ailments to affect humanity. The parasite conceit continues in every edition, as he refers to fat as an invader “detrimental to comfort if not really to health” (4th Edition 9). This hallmark feature of his publication was exceedingly popular among his readers, and in his revisions, he explains his unwillingness to recant this trademark metaphor despite critical disapproval.

The Letter on Corpulence Addressed to the Public

While the publication history illustrates the development of his arguments, the style of the basic letter remains unchanged, which is that of a personal case study of the diet which enabled him to shed pounds successfully. A case study implies a detailed narrative of a patient’s unique history as well as the broader description of a disease and

its pathology.²⁸ Case studies balance scientific narrative with subjective interest in the human subject, and as Kennedy has described it, “The case is a peculiar genre, perched as it is—like the novel—between individual and more general knowledge. The modern ‘case,’ an anecdote or exemplar, collects details about an occurrence or person in order to come to some conclusion” (Kennedy 21). Kennedy suggests that reporting of cases often follows a pattern, moving from perplexity to certainty, and the author “concludes by offering and confirming his diagnoses, bringing closure to these cases, and with evidence provided by clinical technology” (Kennedy 16). The closure to which Kennedy refers is a particularly important facet of Banting’s *Letter*, as he describes his remedy as the penultimate solution for the problem of corpulence. The case history “shares one of the novel’s major concerns: how to narrativize the self...the case history similarly constructs the modern subject” (Kennedy 26). Through his description of himself, Banting constructs the Victorian man as capable of scientific thought and rational thinking unencumbered by the burdens of tradition. The certainty with which Banting approaches his subject is a stylistic feature since he lacks the status of clinician or diagnostician, yet assumes the role as is expected by the genre. Banting constructs himself as a “narrator sufferer,” which is a particular feature of the case study as it uses that narrator role to produce particular patterns in the conversation and to define what constituted medical knowledge (Buscemi 1).

Banting’s *Letter* begins with the problem—his obesity—and chronicles the mystery of his inability to lose weight. The climax of his personal story occurs with his introduction to Harvey and the inception of his diet plan. From this point forward, Banting offers charts and other examples of “clinical technology” to verify his success

and to bring closure to his case. As Kennedy puts it, “Although it lacks the authority of logic or the force of numbers, it strengthens an argument through its narrative appeal” (21). He uses his own story of visiting doctors more than twenty times for obesity-related conditions to amplify the relief from the eventual cure he discovered through this diet. In subsequent editions, Banting increases the “force of numbers” by adding testimonials to the diet’s efficacy in subsequent reprintings, proving that it not only worked for him, but for others as well.

Through the case study format, Banting claims authority over medical matters and contests other competing discourses. This is because, as Kennedy explains, medical case studies “allow authors to establish, as a normative frame, a discourse that may confer narrative and professional authority within their historical context- for nineteenth-century medicine, clinical discourse. However, to meet specific demands, their text may strategically...discredit other discourses” (22). In confirmation as it were, Banting strategically attacks other writings, particularly those in papers such as the *British Medical Journal* and *The Lancet*, as being too insular to be useful to the common man. The discrediting of other discourses such as travel narratives which promote Turkish baths and doctors’ asseverations through conduct books enables Banting to use his narrative as a counterpoint. While these remedies are unsuccessful, he points to his own weight loss as proof of his diet’s efficacy. Though others dismissed his ideas, making a mockery of his critics only enhances his reputation among the common man, of whose status he can claim to be through a recognizable genre: the case study. The case study style also enables him to claim a professionalism which a simple letter form alone could not do, a professionalism that is made up of a self-conscious method of inquiry.

Banting's focus on his methods indicates a stylistic transformation in which, "Discussions of professional methodology became especially acute... These often focus on techniques of visual observation (collection of knowledge) and representation (transmission of knowledge)" (Kennedy 23). Banting relies upon visual observation to communicate the truths of his weight loss. He concerns himself with "gradual reductions in [his] weight which [he is] able to show" (Banting 13). The verb 'show' is significant, as Banting must prove to his audience the veracity of his claims through instruments that are verifiable and reliable. He uses the scale and a table of weights appropriate to height to properly tabulate and calculate his success. Through these examples, he is able to engage in representation, or transmission of knowledge, to those professionals and lay readers alike who require proof using scientific data to convince them of the errors of obesity. Though by 1890 a distanced, formalized, third-person prose style typified medical discourse, at midcentury, case studies featuring more hybrid discourses were common, a form which Banting employed successfully and accelerated (Kennedy 15). In studying clinical medical practice in Victorian England, Kennedy describes how "clinical observation, such as the accurate examination, careful quantification, and dispassionate stance... developed into a theory of clinical realism marked predominantly by mechanical objectivity, the term Daston and Galison use to identify a nineteenth-century moral ideal for producing scientific knowledge" (Kennedy 4). While by 1890 such a form had taken precedence, Banting's presentation for lay readers in the case-study format provided readable, easily accessible information to a popular audience and thereby catapulted him to fame.

To construct an easily readable form, the contents of Banting's *Letter* include a precise list of foods to be eaten, as well as a list of foods to be avoided as Banting details his daily routine and develops a commodifiable diet. His diet is high in protein, which he exemplifies by recording his eating habits which include "five to six ounces of beef, mutton, fish, bacon, or cold meat of any kind except pork or veal" in the morning (15). He repeats this at 2:00 p.m. for dinner, and for supper eats three or four ounces of meat, similar to his dinner repast. Banting includes a few vegetables, but avoids breads and sugar. Though his diet is high protein, it is also high in fat, and contains approximately 2700 calories per day, based on his estimated servings in ounces. He includes his sample menu in the style of a log-book. One of the clinical pieces of evidence he next includes is a segment from what he calls his diet journal. He claims in the prefatory material before the journal that its inclusion will "better elucidate the dietary plan" (11). He explains,

For breakfast, at 9:00 A.M, I take five or six ounces of either beef mutton, kidneys, broiled fish, bacon, or cold meat of any kind except pork or veal; a very large cup of tea or coffee (without milk or sugar), a little biscuit, or one ounce of dry toast; making together six ounces solid, nine liquid. (11)

Banting's daily diet consists of breakfast, dinner, tea, supper, and a nightcap, and he points out that "that man must be an extraordinary person who would desire a better table" (11). The journal-style entries project Banting's confidence that the diet does not deprive the practitioner of delicious viands. He strings together diet options using semicolons to give the appearance of choice and plenty, while simultaneously creating a limited and therefore easy to follow program to appeal to those needing a carefully constructed plan. Similarly, using numerical measurements, he advertises his diet's

careful and pragmatic approach to weight management. The use of numbers is for affirming the clinical nature of his diet plan, and the list of foods and their quantities is for countering critics who contended that the plan was not scientific or quantifiable enough.

Banting's diet journal within the *Letter* employs charts and shorthand style outlines. It uses paragraphs, in which some elements are separated for emphasis, to accentuate and to explain his motives.²⁹ He states:

My sole objects in issuing a fourth edition are—

First.—To offer my further personal experience on the subject since I published the third edition in 1864.

Secondly.—To adduce some remarkable proofs of the benefits afforded to others by the dietary system, in verification of my own testimony.

Thirdly.—To apply any profits which may arise from its sale to various charitable objects, after the plan I followed with the unexpected gains of the third edition.

(Banting 2)

Also present in the journal are a variety of short, syntactically incomplete phrases to highlight the effects of his diet:

I have not felt better in health than now for the last twenty-six years.

Have suffered no inconvenience whatever in the probational remedy or since.

Am reduced nearly 13 inches in bulk, and 50lbs in weight.

Can perform every necessary office for myself. (13)

The use of the list, specifically those in seeming shorthand without the subject "I" to begin the sentence, communicates in an informal register what Banting believes are the

“bodily ailments [that] have become mere matters of history” (13). The jotted format of the notes parallels a doctor’s annotations on medical charts to help convince readers of the efficacy of his plan and the legitimacy of his declarations. The same objective is meant to be achieved with his weight charts illustrating his fifty pound reduction from August 26, 1862 to September 12, 1863. There is a chart of his weight loss in the preface of the *Letter* as well.

Banting also uses italicization, especially toward the *Letter*’s end, to add emphasis and importance. To make the point that constant vigilance is important to guard against obesity and that anyone except those who feel too helpless can lose weight following his remedy, he states in italics, “*Many under this feeling doubtless return to their former habits, encouraged so to act by the ill-judged advice of friends who...become unthinking accomplices*” (16). By italicizing the language, the pamphlet contends that dieters need not self-sabotage nor succumb to “ill-judged” suggestions that only land them in the misery of continuing obesity. The italics are meant to urgently expose this social ill and rescue people from it. The italicization of the words thus broadcasts that his remedy is foolproof, something that “friends” cannot sabotage. To communicate that obesity cannot be combated without proper advice such as what he produces with his medical charts, testimonials, and physician’s statements, he italicizes “*under proper advice.*” The word “proper” signals the indispensability of his advice over that given by others.

The *Letter*’s self-conscious, systematic rhetoric uses wording to mark the progress and end of its journey. It concludes by announcing he has “now finished [his] task” (18). He uses food metaphors to close the work in describing the “harvest of benefits” he hopes it will afford the public (18). In a closing gesture, he also addresses the

medical “faculty” he hopes will air or “ventilate this question” about the proper cures for obesity (18). The pitch is with the hope that if his diet is accepted, he will add to the number of “able practitioners” (18). Finally, he signs the letter. The *Letter* is authenticated by the inclusion of his signature at the end, which affirms the veracity of his case study.

The *Letter* in its multiple manifestations employs several rhetorical moves to achieve its objectives. First, it consistently upholds his outsider status in order to turn that estrangement to his advantage and make his assessments of the ineptitude of the medical community seem more objective. The *Letter* describes those in the medical field as a “fraternity,” connoting the insular nature of the medical community and its medical discourse, but also his alienation from it. Banting uses fraternity pejoratively, suggesting that it is exclusive and therefore not amenable to challenges or innovations. In that vein, the men of eminence are full of “rashness and folly,” unable to see the truth of science beyond what is commonly accepted. As an outsider, he proposes he is more readily positioned to understand the “remedy he had found so efficacious” (2). His critique is obvious as he speaks with great disdain and condescension about how he “can now look with pity, not unmixed with sorrow, upon men of eminence who...designate[d] the dietary system as “humbug,” and [who] hold up to scorn the man who put it forth” (2). His contempt is evident as he describes medical professionals as pathetically unable to admit new advances. Rather, like Ebenezer Scrooge, such men scorn his work as “humbug” and dismiss his assertions with prejudice. He thus characterizes them as intractable and miserly, positioning them as antithetical to benefitting the population at large.

Secondly, that criticism of the medical community from an outsider's status acts as a strategy to in fact gain attention from them and possibly acceptance. He often targets the medical community in an attempt to curry favor. For instance, he states, "I believe medical men will be found in all quarters of the world who have been induced to investigate this important subject, and that in consequence the public generally will now be more properly advised" (5). The use of the word "induced" suggests the struggle to overcome the insularity of medicine as a discipline, and it is a word that he repeats to highlight his goal, which is to gain acceptance in the circles of proper medical men. He details his fervent hope that "the evidence which I have collected may induce medical and scientific men to promote a still wider knowledge of this important truth" that diet is necessary to remedy obesity (6). Again, he returns to the word induced, a significant use of repetition that indicates that although he is an interloper in the medical field, he hopes to impart wisdom that will be popularly accepted in the dominant discourse.

Thirdly, in order to cast off any taint of quackery from his discussions, the *Letter*'s preface frankly presents his purpose and motivation in accents of humility: he merely seeks a chance to explain to the public the particularities of a diet which enabled him to shed the pounds that plagued him. He is driven by the worthiness of finding a solution to the aberrant condition. The *Letter* thus begins with an affirmation that there is no "condition more distressing than obesity," an "affliction" from whose "long probation" and negative effects from which he has only recently emerged (8). That opening gambit is aimed at evoking pathos for the narrator-sufferer, a familiar tactic in case studies, as Buscemi has identified. Words such as "humble" underline his supplication for public favor, only for the purpose of being "desirous" to share his means

of attaining freedom from this health curse (8). This language establishes Banting as genuine, humble, and pathetic, all of which serves to substantiate his authority. The pathetic tactic employed for the alleviation of a common suffering deflects attention away from his lack of medical credentials and scholarly standing.

Fourth, the letter debunks popular existing beliefs about weight loss to profile the efficacy of his own recommendation. He specifically attacks the idea of exercise as a remedy for corpulence, arguing that despite rowing for several hours, his weight increased³⁰. Exercise increased an already prodigious appetite (9).³¹ Using his own experience as proof, he constructs an ethos of reliability for his discussion, to effectively explode a commonly held belief about exercise. Banting specifically critiques Victorian medical practitioners for not separating diet from exercise as different treatments for corpulence: “No doubt the system was known, and had been practised, but only to promote muscular vigour in healthy people, for special objects, yet had never been applied to the unhealthy and corpulent, because it was impossible for such people to take the necessary exercise and sweating” (1). Chastising the medical community for ineffectively using exercise among the “unhealthy and corpulent,” he asserts that such activity is “impossible” for this population to take up, and therefore a fruitless solution. The chastisement of this ineffective medical recommendation not only undermines the ability of physicians to effectively solve the problem of corpulence, but also alludes to their ignorance of how to treat the issue appropriately. He summarily notes, “It is now proved that, by proper diet alone, the evils of corpulence may be removed without the addition of those active exercises” (1). In his final sentence, he uses the word “proved” to make a definitive declaration. His case study conclusively demonstrates, he claims, that

diet alone can combat the evils of obesity. He also makes the important and novel argument that corpulence can be “removed,” or completely eliminated. With this kind of diction, Banting tries to claim authority for what he is saying, utilizing his personal experience to countermand medical suppositions. Authority is necessary as he challenges the dominant discourse suggesting exercise is a sufficient remedy for corpulence. The authoritative identity he constructs in his case study enables his challenge to conventional wisdom to be effective. Banting argues against exercise and other methods of weight loss with his personal anecdotes, and instead articulates a marketable diet plan as a remedy.

Most notably, he focuses on the supposedly salubrious recommendations of his time, and eschews medicines or correctives such as Turkish baths, finding them unhelpful in the battle of the bulge (10). He has “tried sea air and bathing in various localities, with much walking exercise; taken gallons of physic and liquor potassae, advisedly and abundantly,” but without success (9). He rejects the idea of “Turkish baths” as a purported “philosopher’s stone” (10). Though he recounts improvements in rheumatism and a decrease in the severity of colds, he finds no success in weight loss. He disparages various cordials proscribed as useless, and points to the reason behind the inclusion of this discursive section: he shows weight loss as happening “almost entirely by a system of diet” (14). He makes the important rhetorical move to describe diet itself as a form of medicine. In the treatment of corpulence, diet will “attack only the superfluous deposit of fat” (17). The regulation of diet, therefore, is “in a certain sense a medicine” (17).

Fifth, the letter expands his authority over his subject by naming new and different ailments that fatness can cause. Banting claims his weight “caused many

obnoxious boils to appear, and two rather formidable carbuncles” (10). He attributes deafness, for instance, to his fatness, and uses his example to show the ailments are ameliorated by his weight loss. Banting links hearing loss, weak knees and ankles, and an umbilical rupture to his obesity. In consequence, he also attributes short life spans to fatness.³² In this prolific cataloguing of new consequences of fatness, Banting both echoes, as well as transcends, his predecessors in medical writing such as Dancel and Bernard, and thereby sets up Banting’s work as much more original.

Sixth, he uses humor to further strengthen his authority by disarming critics who have perpetuated fallacious rumors of his diet’s failure. He quips that his detractors have no better foundation on which to discredit his claims than the rumors of his death. Using the fictitious reports of his death, he is able to undermine the totality of his critics’ claims, including those that said he was overreaching by connecting illnesses to fat. Thus, he chides the “frequent reports of [his] *death*” for having no substance (15). He twice writes to the *Times* of London, and takes out time in the fourth edition to describe reports of his illness and subsequent death as “silly rumours” (5). The gentle jocularitas of such responses to his critics helps to make his undermining of their professional expertise, and their depiction as unenlightened, more effective. The use of humor allows Banting to make criticism of his remedy for corpulence laughable.

Seventh, perhaps the most important rhetorical move Banting makes is his framing of fatness as a moral ailment. Banting’s stout defense of his use of the parasite conceit to describe fatness (one critic had taken him to task for employing) marks obesity not only as a disease, but also aligns it with incivility. Thus, the parasite conceit shows fat to be “detrimental to comfort” (9). Fat’s serious social disadvantages included

hindering everyday tasks and social outings, and taunting, as happened to him. For example, he describes the “sneers and remarks” of his peers in public assemblies (10). Moreover, he conveys the embarrassment of being subjected to “taunts” when seeking refreshment in public. Reiterating the fact that fat is “frequently painful in society,” (9) he describes fat as an infestation, a contagion, “an insidious creeping enemy,” “a burden to the flesh,” (17) and “the parasite of barnacles on a ship” (10). Thus too, fat makes uncomfortable the “progress in the path of life” both figuratively and literally, such as finding adequate space at public events (10). He refers to himself as “in dock” at least twenty times for the “reduction” or repair of this disease, but clarifies that cures are not long lasting. The conceit of himself as a vessel helps the reader to understand the deleterious nature of fat. He continues his metaphor to show that just as barnacles compromise the structure of a ship and impede its progress, so too does fat compromise the body and hinder movement. His continual use of terms such as “parasite,” “barnacles,” and “contagion” forces a direct connection between fatness as a physiological as well as a moral illness.

In personifying fat as “wicked” and sinful, the *Letter* draws religious condemnation into medical evaluation. Employing terms from evangelical literature, his anti-corpulence rhetoric becomes a crusade not against vanity, but against venal sin (Huff 48). As a moral crusade, the text implicitly projects him as a Christ-like figure. By referring to the “men of eminence...[who] hold up to scorn the man who put it [his diet] forth,” the text connects Banting’s campaign with Jesus among the scholars at the temple. Like Jesus’ utterings, his is also a gospel of self-rectitude, spread not for “pecuniary or personal recompense, but simply desired, out of gratitude, to make known to other

sufferers the remedy” (2). Appropriately, the text testifies to how Banting “subdued [his] discourteous assailants by silence and patience” (2). The proselytizing tone of the text’s anti-fat rhetoric positions him as a martyr for his cause, humbly asking forgiveness from the public for any form of “trespass” he may have committed in his “crusade against Corpulence” (7). The pamphlet’s biblical resonance serves a purpose: through depictions of himself as a religious savior of the people, he encourages faithful men and women to abide by his fastidious principles. His language, rich in biblical allusion, appeals not to scientific principles, but to the morals of the common man.

The religious language has an additional purpose: the depiction of him as a savior figure actually functions as a bonding mechanism that attaches his readers to his dietetic approach. The text’s religious connotations aim to forge a community willing to receive his teachings. Projecting himself as a savior figure given guidance by “almighty providence,” he claims the eponymously named diet has already helped his “afflicted brethren” in England (5). In the Bible, the Gospel of Mark states, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners” (Mark 2:17). Alluding to the parable in the Bible of the sower, in the *Letter* he hopes his “humble efforts may prove to be good seed well sown” that will “produce a large harvest of benefit to my fellow creatures” (18). The images of reaping and sowing continue the idea of Banting as a benevolent apostle of the word of diet. The biblically allusive language of the text appeals not to scientific principles, but to the morals of the common man.

Another equally notable rhetorical strategy is the text’s deployment of militant terms to establish a veritable war on obesity. It treats the obese condition as something

that must be warred against. Starchy foods “are the most insidious enemies man...can possess” (12). Referring to starches as enemies is not only personification, but also sets up dieting as a war against corpulence. In crafting the metaphor of war, as he lists foods to be avoided, he categorizes a whole group of foods as “enemies.”³³ Calling comparisons to his past dietary offerings “simply ridiculous,” he professes that he “can hardly imagine that any man, even in sound health, would choose the former, even if it were not an enemy” (12). The idea of being traitorous is invoked to create a moral analogy in which cheating on the Banting diet is tantamount to sedition. His diet is the plan to “attack” fat (17). Failure to follow the regulations means succumbing to an “insidious” invader, a corruption of the body meant to incite fear. Continuing with war metaphors, he discusses the goal of dieting: “the disease is stopped and the parasite annihilated” (17). The term annihilated continues the battle of the bulge imagery, and associates fat with evil. Calling obesity a “crying evil,” he later refers to it again as “that dreadful tormenting parasite on health and comfort” (13). Furthermore, Banting holds to the opinion that “Little do the [medical] faculty imagine the misery and bitterness to life through the parasite of corpulence or obesity” (16). By the faculty, he refers in general to medical professionals, and he explains their ignorance to the everyday experiences of an individual in the proverbial trenches, beset by obesity.

Eighth, the text’s final rhetorical move is to connect the imperative of an anti-fat regime to individual discipline and control. Just as resisting sin is a matter of vigilance and regimentation, so too are will power and self-restraint the keys to successful fat subjugation. As such, his “extraordinary and speedy result” is attributed to his “rigid adherence to his [William Harvey’s] advice,” and his “very strict compliance” (3). Just as

rejecting temptation of the flesh is difficult, but possible, it is also possible for individuals to spurn the temptation offered by food. Thus, constant vigilance is required to police the body and to avoid fat, just as vigilance is necessary to avoid sin. He deplores that people may quickly “return to their former habits,” a recidivism similar to sin (16). Personally watchful devotion to a carefully constructed diet plan such as his will lead anyone to success. The urging of all to a campaign of self-control, will power, and discipline in following an anti-fat program makes the *Letter*’s prescriptions not elitist but populist.

In urging self-discipline, the text also is alluding to a kind of superior social stratification: those who succeed in fighting obesity versus those who cannot. It appeals to the sense of English identity as superior and self-controlled, by condemning those who are corpulent as socially undesirable. Because some still considered fat a marker of privilege and considered corpulence as comely, they “refrained from seeking advice or a remedy for that which they did not consider an evil” (16). To such people Banting firmly retorts, “an evil I can say most truly it is” (16). Through such language, the text is reversing the social connotations of body size and declaring that which was once attractive to be something that is now ugly and evil. The moral term “evil” is deployed to accentuate the social ugliness of fat. He rejects the attitudes of those people who fail to remedy fatness, and states that condition must be “obviated by proper means,” and he uses language such as “speedy amelioration” and “final cure” (16). As fatness is a disease, it is by its nature deleterious, not something that is to be esteemed or for which an individual who has it to be “congratulated” (16). The shame and denigration of corpulence that Banting projects also functions to create a new elitism of slimness and body aesthetics that points to a kind of virtual class ideology.

Specifically, he connects the social inferiority of fatness to ill-informed food choices and bad diets. Banting shows that fat is a product of poor people's diets and thus a marker of inferiority. Using a simple analogy, he describes certain foods as detrimental to the human body. He compares human patterns of consumption of carbohydrates to a horse eating beans. It is a food occasionally useful, but more frequently harmful. The "human beans" as he calls them include many staples in poor people's diets: "Bread, butter, milk, sugar, beer, and potatoes" (11). Banting's treatise advises individuals to abstain from foods which comprised the average diet of the poor, which consisted of bread, butter, milk, sugar, beer, and potatoes. Alluding to the class-consciousness of these staples, he states that the diet only requires the sacrifice "merely of simple, for the advantage of more generous and comforting food" (15). He directly addresses the apparent class bias implicit in his plan when he recalls the critics who claim his diet "was too good and expensive for a poor man" (16). He establishes obesity as a problem for the wealthy, as the poor "cannot afford to procure the means for creating fat" (17). However, he does not discount the physical possibility of obese poor people; rather, he notes that they simply have fewer opportunities for indulgence in that class. Thus, he tries to appeal to all classes, suggesting that it is opportunity which must be curtailed, no matter the class. Remarking about the elitism of his diet late in the letter, he claims "a poor, corpulent man is not so frequently met with" (17). The French food writer Brillat-Savarin claimed in 1825 that obesity was unknown among savages and lower classes who work in order to eat and who do not eat except to exist (Gilman 165). Brillat-Savarin amends his depiction of savage slimness by commenting, "savages will eat gluttonously and drink themselves insensible whenever they have a chance to" (qtd.in Gilman 165). Thus,

slimness is not the only requirement for demonstrating civility, but abstemiousness is: the choice of restriction in the presence of plenty. Given the inflammatory language, as Susan Bordo remarks, it is no wonder that, “In the late Victorian era, arguably for the first time in the West, those who could afford to eat well began systematically to deny themselves food in the pursuit of an aesthetic ideal” (Bordo 185).

Rhetorically, Banting attempts to present himself as a man of some prestige, despite his solidly middle class background, a move which legitimizes the idea of thinness producing social superiority. As an undertaker, he did boast an elite clientele. He was renowned for making the Duke of Wellington’s coffin. As he discusses his desire to be useful to the public, an endeavor that has “consumed a great deal of my time,” he calls himself fortunate enough to have “leisure, inclination, and means at my disposal” (2). The references to being a man of leisure and means are significant, as he elevates his class status and belies his working class roots. While earlier he emphasizes his firmly middle class, layperson identity, in the latter portion of the letter he elevates his status to that of a benefactor of the public, while still cultivating identification with the common man through shared sensibilities. He establishes himself as a wealthy philanthropist, spending time and money to “benefit the public at large” (2). Likewise, his mention of “considerable expense” occasioned by his endeavor also aligns him with the upper echelons of society with disposable income (2). Referencing that he has a cook to prepare his meals furthers this depiction of Banting’s status, though he admits the foods are simple enough to prepare. Banting establishes fighting fat as a sign of prosperity and affluence, a worthy cause to which he has devoted himself at great expense. Moreover, the image of himself as a purveyor of wisdom associates him with the academic and

intellectual elite. He mentions the correspondence which has been “a great source of interest,” fashioning himself as a man of letters. Banting’s attachment of his achievement of slimness to an elevated social status is a way to suggest that the crusade against fat is a cause worthy of the affluent and the privileged.

A consequence of the text’s attachment of the campaign against corpulence to a superior self-control and to an enhanced social status is the depiction of submission or acquiescence to his diet plan as liberation, and denial of it with indulgence. The plan is carefully couched to assure readers it is not a recommendation of deprivation. If submission to his regime sounds paradoxical, it is because only “those who have suffered from corpulence can adequately understand its miseries or appreciate the merits of a system so admirably adapted to its relief” (8). Bantingism purports to eliminate suffering by adherence to its principles, providing relief that more than compensates for any self-denial. Furthermore, his “present dietary table is far superior to the former- more luxurious” (12). The use of the terms “luxurious” and “extravagant” (12) markets the diet to the middle and upper classes desirous of achieving such comforts without feeling a sense of scarcity. He assures readers that he “never lived so well as under the new plan of dietary” restriction (12). Additionally, he aligns weight loss with freedom from restraint. For example, he describes boot hooks and knee bandages as “indispensable” aids that have now become “unnecessary” (14). The comfort which accompanies the diet appeals to an audience desirous of such ease. By repeatedly asserting that the plan requires the substitution of the “meager” for the “generous,” he refutes the notion that dieting relates to dispossession (17). Instead, he takes care to illustrate the benefits of avoiding corpulence.

For Banting's text, just as controlling corpulence is a way of achieving social elevation over those who are fat, it is also a way of distinguishing that which is English from that which is foreign. Control exerted by adherence to certain rules becomes essential to English identity. Fat becomes an enemy of the slim body, against which the dutiful subject must continually guard through education and regimentation. As the *Letter* stipulates, "every thinking man and woman in the civilized world," once educated or informed, will completely adhere to his dietary restrictions (3). The use of diction such as "civilized" and "thinking" create clear dichotomies of race and identity. He intimates that those who belong to the civilized world will adopt such restrictive measures as logical and rational. While corpulence among the natives is a sign of incivility, among English men and women, corpulence can be ameliorated by the use of rationality and reason. Thus, while the uncivilized native and the civilized English can potentially share the condition of corpulence, only those who are civilized will take the steps necessary to remedy the condition and to comply with rules and regulations. Again and again he refers to his dieting techniques as "general, reasonable" and impossible for any civilized, western individual to contest. Compliance is expected, and slimness becomes linked to identity as civilized members of a society that will similarly liberate others. This is because a civilized Victorian England is also the colonial liberator of other regions of the world. Banting's text makes very clear dichotomies: using medical discourse to correct bodily infirmities differentiating the enlightened westerner from uncivilized man. He describes those who avoid fat as "superior and liberal" in contrast to those who indulge (16). In such an expanding agenda, the text here is confirming what Sander Gilman has demonstrated: the recommendation of many 19th century scholars of diet as ways of

avoiding moral and intellectual lassitude (Gilman 168). Banting's text literally sets up a number of juxtapositions, such as slimness, normalcy, and rationalism against fatness, abnormality, and incivility. Thus, juxtapositions between rich and poor, diseased and healthy, productive and unproductive, and indulgent and abstemious led to a dichotomy between a civilized Europe and the rest of the world.

The totality of these rhetorical moves helps to show how the text achieved such significant success with the Victorian public. Though he is not a member of the medical profession, he cultivates his status through presenting a clinical methodology, and although he often critiques medical professionals, he also attempts to cultivate acceptance among them by adopting a tone of humility and benevolence. Even as he debunks existing beliefs about how to lose weight, he illuminates a new, more effective method: dieting. To encourage people to 'bant,' he introduces new and different ailments which he connects to obesity. As well as salvation from physical pain, he begins religious moralizing about fat that will encourage people to engage in self-discipline to form an acceptable figure and a superior social, national, and colonial identity. He develops this argument over his series of reprints, which achieved popular acceptance and repute. The *Letter* began a campaign against fatness. The low-carb regulations inspired Victorians to reconsider their eating habits and to revise their attitudes towards corpulence entirely.

Reception

However, this success was not achieved instantly, nor did Banting immediately gain the acceptance he desired. Banting's work inspired a variety of reactions in the contemporary media. *The London Times*, for example, while it presented guardedly favorable reviews and commentary, hosted a debate over the diet's efficacy. Likewise, innumerable journals and scientific magazines published reviews and critiques. In these debates, he was praised by some as a medical marvel—a man of the people who succeeded in solving a mystery unanswered by the medical community. Others ridiculed his work as sheer 'quackery,' while paradoxically, another vein of critique accused him of being derivative of already-established medical knowledge. Although there were detractors and dissenters, the debate in medical journals helped to move Banting's work from obscurity to a form of legitimate medicine proffered by a man with outsider status, but broad popular appeal.

Many publications took seriously Banting's criticism of the medical profession, and saw him as a reformer. For example, "A Cure for Corpulence" published in *The British Medical Journal* (1864) exemplifies the trend of celebrating Banting's acumen and specifically sets up Banting as a counterpoint for ineffectual medical advice: "Our readers and all obese individuals, of course, will like to know how this change was affected- this change which so many of our great doctors had failed to bring about" (99). The "change" refers to the elimination of fatness, and the author denigrates medical professionals as having shortcomings that need to be remedied by intervention and transformation. The article not only mentions the doctors having "failed" at remedying corpulence, but also describes how all physicians' labors were "in vain," whereas Banting

succeeds (99). Contrastingly, it describes Banting's system as having created "regeneration almost miraculous," elevating Banting's system to miracle healing while simultaneously demeaning popular medicine and its practitioners as ineffectual (99). The belief in Banting's miraculous plan also is exemplified by the word 'bant' entering into the lexicon as a verb, meaning to diet. As proof of his renown, in June of 1865, an advice column author in *The Pall Mall Gazette* noted, "If he is gouty, obese, or nervous, we strongly recommend him to 'bant'" (qtd. in Taubes 3).

The *British Medical Journal (BMJ)* shows debates over the Banting diet continuing as late as 1896, by which time many had accepted Banting's work as a truism. For example, a letter appears from an anonymous medical practitioner seeking advice on the application of Banting's principles. He writes, "Your correspondents have enunciated such general truths as are found in standard textbooks of physiology and medicine, and which are fully appreciated by every intelligent practitioner. It is as to the application of this knowledge" for which he seeks advice ("The Treatment of Obesity" 1243). The author recognizes the "truths" of Banting's work, and he looks to him for the practical or common sense applications and treatments he believes Banting's work represents. The letter is significant, as it marks an interesting discursive shift. It recognizes as "fully appreciated" the underlying medical soundness of Banting's letter, a concession not readily offered by earlier detractors of Banting's system. By 1898, articles in the *BMJ* often referred to his diet as the progenitor of all others: "the oldest method is that of Banting," one article affirmed, placing him in a long line of acceptable anti-fat discourse ("The Treatment of Obesity: Epitome of Current Medical Literature" 60).

After his initial publication, there were many widely read articles in periodicals contesting Bantingism and his laughable ideas of forced restriction and moderation, ideas for which for many critics found Banting “an oafish dupe” and not a true medical professional (Mouton 5). These criticisms often relegated Banting’s suppositions to the realm of quackery, a stigma that limited his professional acceptance. The publication by a layman offered an affront to the dignity as well as to the superiority of medical practitioners, and thus attacks were often levied on his work for being unscientific. *The Lancet*’s editors in 1864 commented: “We advise Mr. Banting and everyone of his kind, not to meddle with medical literature again, but to be content to mind his own business” (qtd. in Taubes 3). Referring to those “of his kind” is telling in that it creates a dichotomy between legitimate medical professionals and their unquestioned authority, and those ignorant imposters who would challenge the status quo. Not only did critics object to certain facets of the diet, but they believed the diet could be dangerous “for the credibility of those physicians who did not embrace his ideas” (Taubes 4). Early criticisms such as these set Banting’s work as antithetical to medical discourse. In one September 1875 review of a work by T. King Chambers, for example, the author describes how “most mischievous consequences have followed the adoption of Bantingism as a means of reducing excessive weight- this scheme has laid a solid foundation of information amidst the public at large” (“Reviews and Notices: A Manual of Diet in Health and Disease” 299). The “consequences” he refers to come from “earnestness,” but “not with very profound knowledge” (299). The writer critiques Banting for having made his work available to the public at large, as a system for “the corpulent of all ages, of both sexes, and of all grades of society” (299). His discontent stems from Banting’s lack of medical

knowledge, and also from the popularity and acceptance of Banting despite his layman status. The complaint against accessibility of dieting for “all grades” is significant, as it indicates his belief in the inherent connection between bodily transformation and class: only those with money are able to alter the self through the application of discipline and “knowledge.” Those in lower classes, the reviewer of Chambers contends, should not be afforded such knowledge or opportunities as Banting provides them.

Though Banting was often denounced as a quack without true medical knowledge, there was ironically another competing strain of discourse that lambasted Banting for being an unoriginal plagiarist of legitimate discourses. By October of 1864, a representative article in the *British Medical Journal* describes Banting as having “given a name to a system; he has occupied the public attention...He has obtained for the profession a hearing on the subject of dietetics” (469). While earlier the *BMJ* praised the novelty of Banting’s system, here, it downplays his contribution and shows it as a part of the already established compendium of common medical practices. Rather than excluding Banting on the basis of being unscientific, instead, the criticism is that he is ignorantly restating known facts to physicians and their patients, unaware of his own redundancy. A *BMJ* article entitled “Bantingism” (1864) includes an apology for its earlier criticism of medical professionals, stating, “The *Times* has on several occasions roundly accused the medical profession of complete ignorance on the subject of dietetics...all Mr. Banting’s facts [have been] anticipated before he came into the world” (470). Reversing its earlier position on the novelty of Banting’s work, the article incorporates Banting’s material into commonly accepted dogma, moving him from a revolutionary miracle worker to yet another expression of practical, conventional medical wisdom. *The Lancet* (1864), a

competitor of the *BMJ*, also began to attack facets of Banting's plan as unoriginal.

Ironically, though it initially debunked his plan as unscientific nonsense, later articles critiqued Banting's work as merely derivative of current medical theory, stating that the current medical literature is "tolerably complete, and supplies abundant evidence that all which Mr. Banting advises has been written over and over again" (qtd. in Taubes 4). The Banting diet thus underwent ridicule, rejection, and then adoption, creating a variety of contradictory, discordant reactions in medical discourse.

Even in discussions of his growing popularity abroad, critics offered reminders of his supposed borrowing from others in the medical community to undercut his fame. Among the masses, Banting found favor and widespread adherence to his suggestions not only because of the style of his missive, but because of his fervent dedication to countering the claims of the "pundits" in plain and simple yet inflammatory language accessible to the common man. His common audience incensed those who saw Banting as derivative and plagiaristic. An 1864 essay entitled "Practical Dietary for Families, Schools, and the Labouring Classes" by Edward Smith in the *BMJ* accuses Banting of being "last in the field of diet-teachers, and yet the most esteemed" (67). Smith is acerbic in calling Banting "esteemed," and he belittlingly depicts the masses falling at Banting's feet. His article illustrates his disdain for Banting's ability to reach a broad audience. In England, Banting reached the upper class as well as middle and laboring classes. By 1865, popular Victorian medical discussions of Banting's system in Germany and in India were replete with comments that Banting's ideas were "neither new nor original" ("Bantingism Abroad" 43). The only element a critic in "Bantingism Abroad" acknowledges as original is Banting's use of humor to communicate to the lay reader his

principles. However derivative, his address to that “peculiar class of beings,” as the article states, makes medical knowledge accessible to the common man, who would be less inclined to read medical essays. Referring to the common man as “peculiar...beings” intimates the disdain for the common man for whom Banting’s work held mass appeal. By July of 1865, the *BMJ* reported that Banting was the rage in Vienna, and it described the raging mania as being so prevalent that “There is not at present a house in Vienna wherein some dweller cannot be found worshipping Banting” (“A Banting Mania” 97). The epithet “dweller” suggests some disdain for the fascination and zealousness witnessed among the working classes for Banting’s diet.

Though the class-snobbery in reaction to Banting is significant, perhaps the most interesting condemnation of Banting’s letter relates indirectly to class, but more directly to Victorian notions of character as indicated by physiognomy. An attack by W.E. Aytoun in *Blackwood’s* entitled “Banting on Corpulence” (1864) argued that Banting could not be credible because of his weight loss, and he suggested that weight loss made people inherently untrustworthy. He equated thinness with deviousness, and stated, “Corpulence, we maintain, is the outward sign not only of a good constitution, but of inward rectitude and virtue” (Aytoun 607). The same author pointed out that thinness is ambitious, and to be mistrusted, and reasserts corpulence as a sign of social status and gentility. As Mouton asserts, Banting’s desire to be thin was read by many as an inappropriate desire to enhance his social class, as his mention of increased mobility via weight loss was seen as a hint at greater aspirations of social motility (Mouton 4). The debates over the medical merits of Banting’s system were often tinged with class discrimination, seen in articles published in *The British Medical Journal* such as one

from January 1883 which unfavorably compared Banting's diet plan to others, arguing his plan's inferiority and denigrating its low-brow audience ("Banting Outdone" 26). Banting posed a threat to the established medical discourse at the time, not only through his claims, but through the very audience to which he directed them.

The *Letter* in Perspective

Though some of Banting's methods might not pass scientific muster today, he prompted his Victorian audience to look in fatness in new ways as he reconfigured the social meanings of the body and health, often drawing on others' works for legitimacy. There were popular discussions of fatness emerging before him, but Banting introduced fatness as a topic of social conversation as he stigmatized its existence, which may explain the echoes of earlier discourses. While he claims complete ignorance of prior writers, he draws almost verbatim from William Wadd, who remarked that many obese individuals "even congratulate themselves on their comely appearance, and consequently do not seek a remedy for what they do not consider an evil" (Wadd 46). Banting's version reads that many obese people "have even congratulated themselves on their comely appearance" (16). Though it could be a coincidence, this is unlikely. He does, however, address a paradox in Victorian society, one to which Wadd drew attention decades before. Though society often ridiculed the corpulent, it also simultaneously associated fatness with attractiveness. By reiterating the work of previous writers, Banting shows what he is able to do when others have failed: namely, to reverse the social meanings of fatness and to eliminate all associations of positivity through the appending of morality-laden language.

Banting's critics often attacked him for being derivative, and while he may have plagiarized, he brings together prior discourses and their developments into a sense of completeness that was lacking before, especially as many texts were unavailable to lay readers because of their specialization. In the fourth edition of his letter he acknowledges the work of other writers including Charles Bernard and Francois Dancel, but claims he had no knowledge of them because of their publications' unavailability to the common man, as well as their foreignness. Citing the exclusivity of their medical knowledge, he debunks the availability of these foreign writers' texts for average readers. To prove this, he refers directly to the even more popularly read anti-fat rhetoric of Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin as one he ignored in favor of "the best authorities" in England (10) and "high orthodox authorities (never any inferior adviser)" (9). Banting argues for his own novelty as he cites the inferiority of these foreign writers and his ignorance of them in favor of domestic doctors. Though he reiterates that critics call his plan "old as the hills," he argues it "was *quite new to us*" (3). The use of italics is significant. He uses them to chastise the British medical community for its failure to communicate with the general public, a feat for which he congratulates himself.

What Banting's text does is to make dieting a saleable commodity, which he markets through the evocation of thoroughly biblical and Christian moral overtones. Prior to Banting, a commodifiable system of dieting was not popularly known, though there were indeed a variety of products that guaranteed weight loss. Banting himself argued that idea of a specific diet to combat obesity had been neglected until his "perseverance under Mr. Harvey's treatment happily brought it under complete examination," defending his approach of a diet as a commodity as novel, and claiming the focus on exercise in

medical discourse belied dieting alone as the cure for obesity (4). Banting appended moral evil to fatness, a marketing tool which obliged restraint and forced the existing social meanings of fatness' positivity to be reconfigured.

Directed to a popular audience, Banting's success is predicated on his ability to reach lay-readers, but in some ways the digressive and defensive revisions to his *Letter* compromise and obscure the original clarity of the text as he focuses on reifying his own prestige. For example, although he denies financial interest, it is impossible to rule out his sense of the project as a moneymaking endeavor as he focuses more and more attention on his own self-sacrifice and altruism in each revision. Likewise, though he attempts to bolster his reputation as objective, the moral convictions which he steadfastly refuses to moderate do, in fact, undercut the scientific claims he attempts to proffer. In defending his use of the metaphor of the parasite, he misses opportunities to provide objective measures of his diet's success, such as pictures of himself to testify to the diet's efficacy. The lack of provable claims is obscured by the zealousness of his moral convictions. Similarly, the digressive trajectory of the *Letter's* revisions that were designed to respond to his critics also detracts from the apparent empiricism of the text. In Banting's fourth edition of his *Letter on Corpulence*, he directly addresses the detractors who subjected him to ridicule, and appeals to pathos through hyperbole when he depicts, "Probably no one was ever subjected to more ridicule and abuse than I have been" (4). He explains his stalwart determination to persevere in his re-publications as a result of his benevolent desire to help the public. He states he "became invulnerable to the ridicule, contempt, or abuse which were not spared in the earlier stages of the discussion" (2). He is obviously not invulnerable, as he devotes an increasingly large amount of each edition to his self-

defense. He depicts himself as a martyr, bearing the slings and arrows with “silence and patience” (2). In imagining himself as a suffering saint, he solidifies his letter as both important to the public and worthy of his martyrdom, again returning to Christian language to defend himself, rather than offering more objective kinds of evidence to establish his credibility. Rendering himself a martyr, though, is a clever tactic for endearing him to the public and for demonizing his critics without providing more empirical evidence of his plan’s success.

The moralizing strain present in Banting’s work makes him instantly potent because of a new connection that emerges in the pantheon of the term: fatness as evil. Just as Shadrach Ricketson capitalized on the Clean Living Movement in America to attain renown, Banting emerges within a particular kind of moral fervor in Victorian England. By comparing Ricketson’s failure in England to Banting’s later success, it must be understood that the reason for Banting’s sensation is in part this development of a kind of moral self-consciousness about the need for discipline and self-control of the individual and the social body. The significance lies not in that he is necessarily the first to do it, but the pervasiveness and extent to which he successfully deploys it to leverage capitulation to a product that encourages restriction. By invoking calls to morality, he packages and sells self-denial, using a very Christian ethic of asceticism to propagate his commercial appeal in the already morality-laden social moment in which he appears. The extensive moralizing is also revelatory of the means by which Victorian colonial discourse itself was built, as Banting confirms fears of contagion by natives by moralizing about the evils of compromising the body. These remnants of the colonial episteme survive today.

Banting's work was certainly perceived in his own day as a threat to commonly-held and disseminated medical information, one which needed to be discredited or domesticated. The idea of a low-carb diet which did not also restrict fat puzzled those in the medical field as to how it could possibly achieve success. In his work on different diets called *Good Calories, Bad Calories*, Gary Taubes suggests that an uneasy truce between Banting and his detractors was forged in the medical community through German physician Felix von Niemeyer, who modified Banting's diet by suggesting a restriction in fat as well as carbohydrate (Taubes 2). Banting explicitly mentions and thanks von Neimeyer in his fourth edition, though he does not acknowledge Neimeyer's correctness. He merely thanks him for testifying as to "the truth of the system...and for his gratifying tribute to my own motives and conduct in publishing my experience to the world" (Banting 9). Taubes explains, "By deliberately lumping fat and carbohydrate together where Harvey had tried to separate them, Dr. Niemeyer had effectively turned Banting's diet upside down, and the day was saved for the pundits" (Taubes 2). Niemeyer's re-interpretation enabled critics to save face, to continue to propagate established medical facts, and to successfully re-interpret Banting along already established lines of thinking. Taubes argues this domestication relegated Banting to relative obscurity years after the widespread success of his diet. This same conundrum—how low-carb diets works—still puzzles people today, as it seems to defy common-sense wisdom that a high-fat diet could lead to weight loss. As Banting showed, it did, and does, work, though its very success challenges seemingly logical truths about reducing corpulence. The extent to which the medical community tried to revise Banting points to his importance in his historical moment. This outsider to medical discourse offered a

solution to corpulence through his marketable diet plan, challenging many developing ideas about medicine, including the idea of all for-profit remedies as quackery, the extent to which moralizing could be effective in medical discourse, and the idea of medical doctors as infallible purveyors of wisdom.

Banting's publication created a Victorian pop-culture phenomenon that challenged many of the conventional understandings of medical discourse. His popularity wrought a number of changes in Victorian society, many of which will be explored in depth in the next chapter through archival periodical evidence and popular literary texts about Banting. The novelists of the day were already intrigued by the rise of medical literature available to the common man, and Banting's work increased the interest in writers interrogating the premises on which scientific discourse depended. Charles Dickens satirized the British Association, the same group against whom Banting rails, in one of his books. He derides it as the "Mudfog Society for the Advancement of Everything" in the *Mudfog Papers*. He parodies the "sage and learned men" as they debate pedantic issues such as "how soon it shall be lawful for people to eat their dinner on church days" (Dickens 2). Similarly, other literary figures in Victorian England reacted to the phenomenon of Banting's popularity and discussed the contentiousness of the battle over the diet's efficacy. Anthony Trollope attempted the Banting diet, and successfully lost weight. Near the end of 1864, George Eliot confirmed Trollope's weight loss as she writes to a friend, "I have seen people much changed by the Banting System. Mr. A Trollope is thinner by means of it, and is otherwise the better for the self denial" (Eliot 170). Despite this, Trollope himself publically satirized Banting, referring to him in one of his novels as having "preserved us all so completely from the horrors of obesity"

(qtd. in Glendenning 22). Thus, though many authors discussed Banting, took up conversations of diet, and even tried his system, few intellectuals publically acknowledged his success. Despite the lack of public endorsement by these authors, the letters and textual references show the extent of Banting's impact. He became a household name, and the subject of great interest because of his diet's salubrious effects.

These letters indicate Banting's pervasiveness among men of great renown, especially authors, which attests to the readability of Banting's narrative style and burgeoning popularity. On January 21, 1865, Sarah Harriet wrote to a correspondent to say that Thomas Chandler Haliburton had been strictly following the Banting system. Haliburton was a Canadian author whose novels featuring the protagonist Sam Slick were wildly popular in England. Harriet writes, "He [Haliburton] has been entirely free from gout for that time, has lost a stone & half in weight, & 10 inches in waist- the effect has altogether been marvelous" (qtd. in Davies 223). Haliburton tried the diet because he hoped it would specifically address Haliburton's deleterious affliction with gout. In his text, Banting claims he has "a very strong feeling that gout(another terrible parasite upon humanity) might be greatly relieved, if not cured, but this proper natural" diet and with his advice (17). The reports from so many writers who found success with Banting's method are significant. His case study successfully incorporated familiar facets of narrative to appeal to authors, a move which enabled not only the literary elite, but readers of such writers to recognize and respond to familiar literary tropes. Such familiar conventions in the case-study style increased Banting's readability and hence his popularity, despite his failure to attain full sanctioning by the medical community.

After the publication of Banting's *Letter*, the mainstream journals as well as professional, expert publications took up the discussion of weight loss, nutritional advice, and dieting practices. Men were the primary audience for these discussions, as Banting used himself as a model for his fellow men. However, Banting's work was not limited to an entirely male audience, as his use of religious overtones and appeals to his fellow corpulent people broadened his authorial attractiveness to middle-class individuals. Weight and body management even became topics of an evolving idea of masculinity that was predicated on imperial fantasies, and unsurprisingly, as a later chapter will illustrate, India especially was ripe for the importation of Bantingism because of the readership it cultivated. Likewise, the publication of his work dovetailed with the rise of medical popularizations abroad, increasing his visibility and marketability, especially given the controversy surrounding his claims of fatness as a disease to be disciplined. As the next chapter will discuss, the moralizing about fat and control had a significant impact on Victorian culture, one that can be seen in a variety of literary works, most specifically in satires and busy popular conversations involving Banting and Bantingism.

CHAPTER FOUR

BANTING EVERYWHERE: BANTING IN VICTORIAN CULTURE AND BEYOND

Banting's Victorian Impact

The complex reception history of Banting is merely one visible register of his larger effect on Victorian popular culture. In England, Banting's self-published text created quite a social stir, and reactions to his work or references to it are observable in a variety of popular culture periodicals widely read in Victorian England. Banting—both the man and the dieting practice—spawned plays, generated vigorous discussions, and appeared in cartoons that parodied his *Letter* and its dietary regulations. Banting's impact can be seen in the busy popular discourse that immediately envelops him and which spans a range of different attitudes, going from sharply critical to mildly satirical to approving. They visibly register the cultural change that Banting's work was producing, and the ways in which it was modulating and challenging Victorian notions of body, self, and power in social and national contexts. His image and his works were absorbed by popular culture, and the Banting sensation ultimately spread to America and beyond through references and appropriations in Victorian media.

Banting's material produced contentious conversations, and opened up popular discussions by initiating, facilitating, and accelerating a variety of vectors of existing social, cultural, and national debates over power, self-denial, and the proper parameters for a socially acceptable body. First, public discourse debated the idea of diet as deprivation despite Banting's assurances that Bantingism required no particular forms of

denial. Diet and drinking provided another thread of social discourse, as affording some indulgence in alcohol contradicted the idea of complete asceticism traditional forms of weight loss dictated. Additionally providing probative discussion and stimulating some satire was Banting's reconfiguration of social class through diet. Finally, Banting's work challenged the idea of the primacy of doctors' roles in medical care, and fostered discussion of a patient's power to heal him or herself. Such a claim challenged the increasing standardization and assertion of specialization occurring in the medical field, and discussions of Banting's text fostered critiques of doctors' growing prominence and claims of authority.

In generating these conversations, Banting undoubtedly inspired a range of attitudes which was manifested in a wide variety of ways. Some were approving, while others were more critical and condemnatory. Those which offered cautious approval and tacit acceptance show the effect of Banting in altering Victorian attitudes toward food and fat. However, even the satires and negative reactions also importantly demonstrate the extent to which Banting's work challenged the concepts of the body, self, and power. The voluminous response and the span of reactions themselves are important in indicating Banting's importance and the ways in which he transformed Victorian culture by modulating a number of important ideas about dieting and its place in the medical field by attaching to it a moral imperative as well as a physical one.

Banting's absorption into the Victorian popular consciousness can be seen in stage adaptations, in satirical non-fiction pieces, and in parodic cartoons. A cultural studies analysis of visuals in popular Victorian periodicals reveals the rich ways images convey meanings in relationship to other periodical content, including texts,

advertisements, layout, and broader cultural fields. This can be seen in the studies of Victorian visual culture conducted by Kate Flint, Julia Thomas, Carol Christ, and John Jordan, and in the studies of Victorian periodical presses by Peter Sinnema and Paul Kreps. As Shafquat Towheed remarked, “Both quantitative and qualitative studies have provided us with compelling evidence of the massive increase in the range, frequency and variety of reading that took place during the [Victorian] period. Not only were readers consuming an unprecedented volume and range of reading material, but they were recording their widespread engagement with textual matter...for the first time” (Towheed 139). By examining cultural productions and reproductions of Bantingism, and their embodiment in various kinds of texts, the power of Banting’s anti-fat discourse and resultant anxieties over fat can be clearly seen and linked to issues of class, race, and even imperial identity.

Banting on Stage

Stage representations and popular theatrical caricatures exemplify how Banting became an indelible aspect of Victorian social thinking. He inspired a number of parodic plays, as well as a few plays that were never actually performed, but which were only humorously suggested in popular presses. These parodic pieces are important for showing Banting’s pervasive power in Victorian culture, and the changes he wrought on attitudes toward fat. For example, the Surrey Theater was playing a piece by William Anderson entitled *A Fight with Fate* (1864), and since “the stout undertaker [William Banting] lived but two doors from Leech in The Terrace at Kensington, and was then the talk of the town,” both *Punch* and another publication *The Arrow* both immediately made connections to Banting and suggested a more fitting show for the viewing public at the

time would be “A Fight with Fat” with a disciple of Banting as the chief character (Spielman 118). *The Arrow*, a competitor of *Punch*, accused its rival of plagiarizing its Banting joke, citing *Punch*’s call for a similarly parodic play as proof of *Punch*’s unoriginality. *The Arrow*’s editor, Henry S. Leigh, appealed to Banting’s cultural salience to critique the rival publication’s derivative style:

Take mental exertion- fight shy of diversion

(Remember the proverb says ‘Laugh and grow fat’);

You may venture securely on *Punch*, because surely

There can’t be much fear of your laughing at that. (Spielman 118)

Though the fictitious play the two magazines jokingly suggested was never actually performed, the desire of each popular publication to receive credit for the satire shows the currency Banting had in garnering public attention.

Another theatrical appropriation of Banting was “The Banting Quadrille,” composed by C.H.R. Marriott. The piece appeared in 1866, and was written for piano.³⁴ Unlike many quadrilles that lack lyrics, this particular one featured humorous verses promising dancers that they too could be thin like Banting. The performance of the quadrille, though not technically a theatrical piece, had a variety of elements of theatrical caricatures. The cover to the musical score featured dual images of Banting as a conductor (see fig. 1). One is of Banting enormous and balloon-shaped, while the other is of him slender and waiflike. Besides the humorous cartoon on the cover, “The Banting Quadrille” features a character who tells a story through the lyrics. It is written from the



Fig. 1. The Banting Quadrille.

point of view of an “enormous figure” who has been Banting, and who proclaims himself, “of flesh I’m almost free/don’t you see” and who reminds people that Banting’s system is the only one “if you wish to slender be” (Marriott). The speaker cautions that

“Unless [he] take[s] to Banting’s plan/ [he] surely will get bigger,” and he praises how participation in Banting’s system will make him as “thin as Pepper’s ghost’s reflection” (Marriott). The theatrical nature of the satirical quadrille illustrates Banting’s immense popularity with a Victorian audience eager to hear more about Banting’s claims about weight loss through stage productions and musical numbers.

One of the more satirical theatrical jibes at Banting’s diet plan was the one-act play *Doing Banting: An Apropos Farce in One Act* (1864) by William Brough and Andrew Halliday. The play illustrates the various ways in which Bantingism facilitated an examination of the roles of physicians, the idea of accepting deprivation, and the connection of dieting and social class. The play was first performed at the Adelphi Theatre in The Strand, London on Monday, October 24th, 1864³⁵. As its title connotes, *Doing Banting* is a farcical one-act play that spans eighteen pages, and only eight characters comprise the cast. The play features a family of individuals retired from the tallow trade who desire thinness as a means of procuring gentility. Alderman Podge and his sister Miss Fatima Podge are two corpulent English people determined to discover the secrets of dieting to attain a slimmer physique. Alderman Podge has already consulted the physician Dr. Lavender, and Podge pronounces him an absolutely inept physician when Lavender tells him there is no easy remedy for corpulence. It is a conclusion Podge refuses to accept, as he believes that thinness—procured by a miracle diet—will make him more genteel. Displeased with Lavender’s diagnosis, Podge banishes him from his home, though Lavender has been courting Podge’s daughter Patty Podge. Since Lavender has fallen out of favor in the Podge household, the doctor plots with Patty to elope. To complicate matters in the pudgy Podge home, the illustrious Professor Pankey arrives on

scene to deliver a speech about the diet system discovered by his mentor William Banting, and Pankey ingratiates himself with the Podges to serve his own pecuniary advantage. Pankey is a charlatan, and he uses the Podges' desire for thinness to rob them of their dinner delicacies and to keep the excellent fare for himself. Forbidding the Podges and their fat servant Dollop succulent viands such as duck and delicious wine, Pankey sends the household to bed unsatisfied with their measly supper repast. Starving and unwilling to admit their weakness of willpower, Dollop, Podge, and Fatima Podge each sneaks down to the kitchen to find leftovers with which to satiate their hunger, complicating Patty's plan to elope with Doctor Lavender. None wishes to be seen by the others. Pankey too eventually finds his way to the larder, gorging himself on more pie and wine to satisfy his hunger. Two police officers arrive at the Podge home to prevent a suspected burglary, but simply catch the Podges and their servant sneaking snacks, and Patty absconding with her beau. The police recognize their error in deeming the Podges thieves, but then accost Pankey who stumbles in from the yard quite inebriated. Lavender identifies Pankey as a charlatan, a runaway apprentice from Clerkenwell. Pankey is ousted, Lavender is forgiven, and Dollop and the Podges forgo banting in favor of food.

The theater at which the play was performed was known for staging adaptations of Charles Dickens' works, and this play shares some features of Dickens' works, including the social critiques implicit in even his comical writings. In this play, for example, the names are quite Dickensian and offer criticisms of each individual. Professor Pankey's name is not only alliterative and amusing, but suggests "hanky panky," a term which refers to questionable or underhanded activities. The term's etymology dates to 1841. Adopted from hoky-poky, a British slang term referring to

deception or fraud, “hanky panky” means not only illicit sexual dalliances, but also trickery and fraud of any kind (“Hanky Panky”). Pankey’s name suggests that Banting’s system is merely a ruse to beguile people, and immediately alerts the audience to be aware of his untrustworthiness.

The play questions Banting’s honesty through Pankey’s antics, though it indirectly addresses changes in the way fat and its loss can be quantified, a development pioneered by Banting through his self-published text. For example, Pankey can only prove his weight loss through questionable methods of illustration, including a quick visual assessment made by the butler. Upon Pankey’s arrival at the Podges, Alderman Podge asks the butler, “is he thin?” and Dollop replies, “Thin as a farthing rushlight, sir” (5). His appearance is enough to convince the easily duped Podge of the success of his diet plan. In an aside, Podge confesses his thinness comes not from a purposeful diet, but from his poverty. He tells the audience he has not eaten in quite some time. Other forms of visual evidence are equally suspect. For example, Pankey produces a coat which he claims used to fit him. He puts this on a wire frame which he wears to show his formerly fat body, and he claims that this “hocular demonstration” is enough to show “what he used to be, before I left off starch and sugar” (7). The word “hocular” is repeated; a pun on ocular and hoax, the proof he provides is neither convincing nor satisfactory. In the stage directions, the scene calls for a wire cage that flattens as a method of illustrating the rapid deflation of Professor Pankey. The rapid shrinking is another sign that Banting’s methods are all “hocus-pocus” or deceptive. The easily duped Fatima Podge cannot see through his ruse, and calls him a “Daniel Lambert,” alluding to his size before his dieting, and accepting his claims without further proof or documentation³⁶ (7). The play draws

attention to the fact that Banting provides no pictorial evidence in his *Letter*. After he produces his chart of weight loss, he explains that “My diminished girth, in tailor phraseology, was hardly conceivable even by my own friends, or my respected medical adviser, until I put on my former clothing, over what I now wear, which is a thoroughly convincing proof of the remarkable change” (44). Like his satirical counterpart, Banting has little evidence to support his transformation other than a large jacket which no longer fits³⁷. In the *Letter* he admits he “deeply regret[s] not having secured a photographic portrait of my original figure in 1862, to place in juxtaposition with one of my present form. It might have amused some, but certainly would have been very convincing to others, and astonishing to all” (Banting 44). Banting encourages his corpulent readers to “get accurately weighed” to “arm them in perfect confidence in the merit and ultimate success of the plan” (44). The play ridicules Banting’s lack of proof of success, and insinuates that even if he had procured substantiation, evidence can easily be distorted by charlatans eager to exploit curious, corpulent clients. Though the play is comical and meant to be humorous, it also addresses one of Banting’s concerns, which is the way in which fat loss is demonstrable.³⁸ The play already accepts the premise that weight loss is desirable, which shows Banting’s effect on the Victorian cultural imagination despite the comical depiction of him and accusations of his charlatanism. Banting’s work, though, importantly called for demonstrable and quantifiable results as proof of efficacy, and despite the satire of the play, it reflects the growing standardization of ways to document, measure, and record weight loss.

As well as Professor Pankey, the name of the family—Podge—is reminiscent of pudge, a disparaging term for fatness, and it indicates the changing feelings toward

corpulence in Victorian England after Banting by appending decidedly negative connotations. Alderman Podge is introduced as the “fattest father in the universe,” an alliterative use of hyperbole that establishes Podge’s corpulence (3). The sister’s given name—Fatima—connects quite directly with fatness, and also seems to develop an ethnic or a racial stereotype, as Fatima is a common Arabic Muslim name. Though she is white, and the name “Fatima” is connected with ‘fat,’ implicit is a critique of the mental acuity physical fatness precludes. Fatima is as dull-witted as she is corpulent, drawing closer attention to the emergent connection of fat and folly in the Victorian imagination. Initially, she downplays her girth, suggesting that she and her brother are only “rather stout” (4). Podge rebukes her for using the word “rather,” and remarks, “I’m as fat as a boiled leg of pork, and you’re the very picture of a pease-pudding” (4). Importantly, the fatness of the two is not a source of pride or status, but rather a debilitating condition both physically and mentally. The two are repeatedly described as “puffing and blowing” as they move, more proof of their obesity and rotund stature that hinders speech and action (4). Their fatness is not only shown as physically deleterious, but mentally a hindrance as well.

Satire of stupidity and corpulence is not limited to the wealthy, but seen after Banting as afflicting all groups. In the play, the butler’s name is Dollop, and a dollop is a large spoonful of something, connoting his rotund physique. The stage directions indicate at his first sighting, “*Enter Dollop, the fat butler,*” leaving no room to misinterpret his corpulence or its immediately comic connotations (4). The comedy of the family’s fatness shows Banting’s effect, as corpulence is undeniably associated with idiocy and ineffectuality, even in this satirical piece.

The young surgeon's name is Dr. Lavender, and his name alone has positive connotations within the play. Purple is associated with royalty and devotion, and in the play, Lavender is the rationalist who uses his wits to comport himself with dignity. He is forthright and direct enough to issue the edict to Podge that no quick cure for corpulence can be attained. However, despite his forthright analysis and decorous comportment, Lavender is reviled by Podge for his ineptitude. Even though he could easily dupe Podge to marry his daughter, Lavender chooses to elope rather than engage in Podge's scheme to lose weight rapidly. While mocked as an impostor, his name connotes honesty and dedication to his profession that is juxtaposed with Pankey, who promises to reduce Podge "to a shadder!" (i.e. a shadow) an obvious mockery of his charlatanism (7). Banting's work was important in the development of medical discourse, as he called into question such sharp dichotomies between quackery and legitimacy. Lavender and Pankey are antithetical characters in the play, and Banting's discourse did legitimate the contribution to medicine by parties outside of the field. While Lavender is a physician and unwilling to lie in order to pacify his patient, in his personal life, he is not above engaging in deception and duplicity to attain his aims. Thus, the play examines some of the dangers of assuming physicians to be beyond reproach, a legacy of Banting.

The characters' costumes are also significant forms of mockery. In his analysis of Victorian satire, Marc Usunier argues that commentary on fashion was a means of drawing attention to imposters of gentility. The dandy—or the swell as Punch referred to him—was a frequent subject for attack (Usunier 55). Fashion, and preoccupation with the latest trends, was one mark of a true swell. The fashion trends adopted by swells were often subjects of satire, especially in *Punch*. As Usunier puts it, "As the *Punch* men

understood them, the gents and swells that featured so prominently in the pages of *Punch* were highly susceptible to any new fad whether in dress or any other aspect of fashionable life...the *Punch* men were critical and often suspicious of new fads, and thus used this as another avenue of criticism” (Usunier 65). One fashion trend adopted by the swell was high men’s shirt collars; the detachable collar allowed great variation in height and style. In *Doing Banting*, the detachable collar indicates the pretensions shared by the main characters. While Podge has many at his disposal, seen as he offers “a dozen, if he [Pankey] wants them,” Pankey is depicted as neither “over clean, nor over well dressed” (9). Podge is the swell, caring about “clean linen” (9). Pankey, conversely, is decidedly inferior in status, and constantly critiqued for his low manners and sartorial choices. Banting’s status as a middle class man is obviously being satirized through Pankey’s poverty. However, despite the joshing, the play illustrates that post- Banting, a preoccupation with avoiding fat had become firmly entrenched in the middle-class consciousness as a sign of sophistication, as much as shirt collars were worn and admired for their social meaning.

Likewise indicative of satire are the sartorial choices made by Alderman Podge, but his character importantly shows Banting’s far-reaching effect on popular consciousness. Magazines such as *Punch* often assailed dress as a sign of pretention, and negative stereotypes were associated with ready-made clothing. As Usunier notes, “The swells and gents who wore coats and trousers that were not especially made for them by a tailor were, it was believed, attempting to present themselves as something they were not” (56). Podge’s preoccupation with appearing genteel reinforces the idea of his affectations. His concern for his appearance indicates his ambitions and desire to be

perceived as sophisticated despite his tallow-trade business. He wears a “Blue coat, brass buttons; white waistcoat; Nankeen trowsers” (1). Nankeen is a durable, pale yellow colored cotton cloth. Its name derives from Nanking, the city in China where it was produced. Nankeen trousers were popular during the early Victorian period because they did not require a perfect body to be tailored well enough to provide a classic line, and Nankeen fabric particularly allowed stretching and flexibility (Thrift 3). Podge’s corpulence adds to the satire as it suggests his pants are tailored only because of his size, not as a sign of his wealth. Podge attempts to elevate his class status through his appearance, and he firmly believes that Banting is a part of that affectation of manners and clothing.

In contrast to Podge, very little development occurs with the costume of Fatima Podge. She sports a “Brown satin dress” (1). The lack of development is important, as it suggests the dress is both plain and without the adornments indicative of higher class status. In their discussion of the first staging of *The Importance of Being Earnest*, editors Joseph Donahue and Ruth Berggren discuss women’s costumes in depth, and note that costume directions often provided very descriptive details (4). Though *Earnest* is staged much later than *Doing Banting*, the work of Donahue and Berggren suggests that the lack of elaboration itself is significant for the farce: without discussions of the dress’s design, it suggests there is no particular tailoring, a sign of not only Fatima’s corpulence, but of her class status as well. The color is also significant, as the brown, in conjunction with the name Fatima, suggests a particular type of racial marking on which the play capitalizes. The noticeable lack of description of Fatima shows the inculcation of fatness as a particularly undesirable state of being. She is not an alluring ingénue: instead, the

costuming is reminiscent of Muslim garb, and it (worn on account of her corpulence) marks her as inferior and decidedly objectionable and unattractive to traditional Victorian sensibilities which dictated more colorful, tailored, and prim attire to avoid unfavorable or unflattering descriptions.

Tailoring becomes equally important for the play's antagonist's costume. The ridiculous Professor Pankey is attired in a "Tight black suit: rather shabby" (1). The tightness of his suit, as he is described as "thin as a farthing rushlight" suggests that his suit is not tailored, but ill-fitting because it is ready-made (5). Both his dress and his manners are often subject to derision by other characters. Throughout the play, genius and good manners are constantly made antithetical as a form of ridicule. Fatima notes, "The Professor doesn't seem over burdened with good manners," to which her brother replies, "Genius never is, my dear" (11). This motif recurs quite frequently. Fatima earlier in the play remarks, "The Professor isn't over polite," and Podge retorts, "Genius never is, my dear; the two great signs of genius is a want of polish, and a love of liquor" (6). In his *Letter*, Banting asks the audience to "patiently peruse [his letter] and thoughtfully consider it, with forbearance for any fault of style or diction, and for any seeming presumption in publishing it" (Banting 8). While he denigrates his faults, including potential offensiveness or impoliteness, he does so for sympathy and to convince his audience to consider his claims. The play instead mocks Pankey as a simpleton and an unrefined charlatan with pretensions and illusions of grandeur, an obvious attack on Banting's open discussion of his body, which defied upper class etiquette.

Not only does the play ridicule the poor manners of the would-be elite, it also critiques their lack of education, an obvious affront to Banting for his lack of medical knowledge. The Podges have a discussion involving a parasol after Fatima Podge mistakes the word parasite for parasol, as ‘parasite’ is a term with which she is unfamiliar. Her familiarity with the parasol is a marker of critique, as the satirical periodical *Punch* often attacked both the umbrella and parasol as markers of ostentatious accessorizing. In a *Punch* cartoon entitled “Reaction,” a man holding a small umbrella encounters a “Great Swell” with an enormous one. When the man with the smaller umbrella inquires about the size of the other’s umbrella, he replies, “the fact is, you know, every Snob, you know, has a Little Umbrella now, you know; so I carry this to show I’m not a Snob, you know” (“Reaction”). His eagerness to display his status is mocked in the cartoon, as is his affectations in repeating “you know” in order to appear distinctive from those whom he deems “Snobs.” In *Doing Banting*, Fatima is well familiar with the parasol, and uses her knowledge of the accessory to participate in conversation. She uses her exposure to the accessory as a sign of her erudition. As Usunier argues, “For Mr. Punch and his associates, over-emphasis of particularly genteel characteristics was also a means by which to identify social climbers. The subtlety of the true gentleman could not be mirrored” (58). Her pretensions are obviously mocked, as well as her credulity as she confuses a parasite and parasol. However, Pankey is no better, allowing her to correct him as he himself is unable to properly explain the idea.

Pankey’s inability to explicate things and ideas properly ridicules Banting’s own inabilities to explain difficult concepts. In the *Letter*, he states he “will not presume to descant on the bodily structural tissues...nor how they are supported and renovated,

having no mind or power to enter into these questions” (Banting 11). The lack of “mind” and “power” are critiqued in the play, as like Banting, Pankey cannot explain the idea of corpulence. Much of the satire in *Doing Banting* comes from puns and malapropisms. For example, Fatima listens to Dr. Pankey discussing adiposity and queries, “what is a deposity? Is it something they put into the savings’ bank?” (6). While Podge silences her by claiming she knows nothing, he too questions, “What’s adiposity, Pankey, my boy?” (6). Pankey can only answer the question by making a metaphor: “Corpulence, my dear sir, as my esteemed friend and preceptor, Mr. Banting, states, is a parasite” (6). By Banting’s own admissions, one of the medical professionals’ greatest objections to Banting was his use of the term “parasite” to describe obesity. Banting comments, “The word ‘parasite’ has been much commented upon, as inappropriate to any but a living creeping thing (of course I use the word in a figurative sense, as a burden to the flesh), but if fat is not an insidious creeping enemy, I do not know what is” (42-43). Though the metaphor makes fat a disgusting scourge, it does not define the condition or explain it medically. He uses the metaphor at length in the *Letter*, and Pankey too lectures without defining corpulence, except through iteration of the same metaphor, one which Fatima cannot comprehend. He states that “persons overcharged with adiposity may get rid of the affliction, or as my esteemed friend and preceptor, Mr. Banting, terms it, the parasite of corpulence” (6). Though Banting’s metaphor of the parasite is central to creating anti-fat sentiments and moral revulsion, the Podges mistake the word for whimsical kinds of rotund objects. Podge misunderstands, and queries, “A parachute, you mean; a thing that’s blown out, like a balloon” (6). Fatima interrupts with, “I’ve always heard it is called a parasol” (7). Rather than clarify, Pankey says, “some call it a parasite, some

parachute; there's no rule about it, but it's all the same thing" (6-7). In many criticisms, Banting was attacked for his trademark use of the metaphor of fat as a parasite, a figure of speech he refused to recant as he used it to establish the disgusting nature of fatness. In the context of the play, the misunderstanding points to a larger problem within Banting's work: he fails to properly define and to make understandable the actual condition of body fat. Banting acknowledges his lack of medical expertise in the preface to the fourth edition of the *Letter*, in which he reminds readers he has "never assumed the slightest medical knowledge" (3). Therefore, he cannot understand or explain the "physiological or chemical reasons for the wonderful results" (4th Edition 3). The ridiculous character Professor Pankey also cannot explain corpulence. To him, it is equally plausible as a condition in which people's bodies are "blown out" like a balloon or like a parasol when opened.

The play also looks at the misunderstandings surrounding fat and how people grow obese, a conversation furthered by Banting's work and reactions to it. In trying to explain his condition, Podge supposes "the tallow must have got into our systems" (5). He imagines that fat comes from the absorption of tallow, and even surmises of his fat servant Dollop that "if you could only put a wick into him, you could burn him" (5). Similarly, Professor Pankey describes the subject of his lecture as avoiding "all kinds of sugar in your food, and all kinds of starch in your shirt collars" (6). While conventional medical wisdom did associate the consumption of sugar with the accretion of body fat, absorbing starch from shirt collars obviously cannot cause adiposity. Pankey attributes his remarkable success to "avoiding starch" (7). Even the idea of a starch is not always comprehensible to a person outside the medical field. Podge, after listening to Pankey

describe his method of weight loss, tells Dollop that the key to losing weight is “the starch you’ve been eating” (8). The servant responds incredulously, “Starch!—sir—I haven’t been eating the starch! I suppose you’ll accuse me next of eating the hearthstone!” (8). Dollop misunderstands the idea of a ‘starch,’ just as Podge, Fatima, and Pankey himself all confuse laundry starch with the idea of carbohydrates. Banting does minimally define starches, but without any precise claims as to why starches lead to corpulence. He claims, “Bread, butter, milk, sugar, beer, and potatoes... These, said my excellent adviser, contain starch and saccharine matter, tending to create fat, and should be avoided altogether” (Banting 17). His work, as he himself admits, is not one of an eminent physician, and thus “tending to create fat” is the only explanation he provides for the warning against those items; even this bit of information comes not from Banting’s own discovery, but from his adviser Dr. Harvey’s medical training. The play capitalizes on critiquing Banting’s limited medical knowledge, and the readiness of his followers to accept the wisdom he proffers. In the play, despite the absurdity of Pankey’s misinformation, he is lauded as “a prodigy of learning” and “a stunner” (6). By the end of the play, when Lavender identifies Pankey, he announces, “he’s no professor, he’s a runaway apprentice from the druggist’s in Clerkenwell, and an arrant quack and impostor” (17). The description of Pankey as a “quack” and “impostor” is significant, as his limited information and training are revealed to expose him as a fraud. So too does the play indicate a fundamental fault of Banting: he is simply a layman who speaks from “personal experience” rather than from formal education (8). However, despite the critique, as Banting himself notes in his *Letter*, there was much discussion about fat and its causes. Though the play scorns Banting at times, it shows how he was able to further

the discussion and popular debate about fat and what to avoid in order to escape the difficulties imposed by fatness.

It is similarly significant that the play refers to the condition of corpulence not as a disease which might merit sympathetic treatment, but as an aberrant condition still without properly defined causes, a part of fat discourse Banting found himself unqualified to address fully. The play fully capitalizes on Banting's moralizing, and rather than a disease or illness, Podge calls fat "this sort of thing" (4). He does not label it as a medical issue necessarily, and renders it as a vague term. The vagueness of the word "thing" suggests that corpulence still defies understanding and treatment, a supposition Banting hotly contests in the *Letter*. Though Banting admits being unable to completely explain every nuance of fat, he claims his remedy to be a viable option for curing it. The play illustrates some of the unresolved tension created by Banting's approach which remedied obesity without completely delineating why it worked.

Banting's personal lamentations in his *Letter* are mocked and alluded to in *Doing Banting*, and besides being humorous, they show the extent of people's familiarity with the contents of his work, important for illustrating the role of Banting in changing the perception of fat people in popular culture. For example, Podge has difficulty with stairs, and proclaims they will "be the death of me, and if this sort of thing is to last, I shall be obliged to have a crane to hoist me up like a hogshead of tallow" (4). Stairs are one of the small offices of daily life that Banting laments in the *Letter*. Because of his corpulence, Banting reports having "been compelled to go down stairs slowly backwards, to save the jar of increased weight upon the ankle and knee joints, and have been obliged to puff and blow with every slight exertion, particularly that of going up stairs" (Banting 14).

Interestingly, there is no sympathy for Banting's inabilities in the play, but rather his limitations are mocked, and such satire indicates the way in which fatness after Banting became condemnable. While Banting's temporary remedy prior to weight loss was to descend the stairs backwards, the proffered solution in the play is even more ridiculous and embarrassing: a crane to hoist his corpulent body. Comparing his physique to a "hogshead of tallow" is likewise insulting and satirical, and illustrates those who struggle with fatness are afforded little sympathy.

Banting's unconventional style also levied unexpected challenges to common knowledge, particularly to ideas about exercise, which many found hard to accept because it defied traditional medical treatment options. Although one of the recommendations given to Banting prior to his weight loss was exercise, Banting defies conventional wisdom and suggests that diets alone have "especial efficacy" (4). Because of his rejection of exercise as a tool for weight management, he becomes a target for attack in the play. Miss Fatima Podge and her brother discuss exercise as a remedy in *Doing Banting*. Fatima says to her brother, "I don't think we take exercise enough" (4). She proposes exercise as a method for controlling their corpulence. In his *Letter*, Banting recalls a physician advising him to row as a form of exercise. While he attempts to lose weight by this method, he records that it merely increases his hunger and therefore fails to remedy his corpulence. Banting's *Letter* relates, "I had the command of a good, heavy, safe boat, lived near the river, and adopted it for a couple of hours in the early morning. It is true I gained muscular vigor, but with it a prodigious appetite" (12). Though like Fatima, Banting considers conventional suggestions, he finds them insufficient means of curing his corpulence. Alderman Podge faces an even more embarrassing end to the

suggestion he take up rowing: “the very first time I got into the boat, didn’t I swamp her, and the vessel go down with all aboard?” (4). The farcical image of the swamped boat on its maiden voyage undercuts Banting’s assertions that he did exercise. Rather, through subtle lampooning, the play suggests exercise was not fully tried as a potential solution to the problem of corpulence. The play’s treatment of exercise shows the varying degrees to which Banting was able to alter popular consciousness about exercise’s effectiveness.

Discussions of exercise within the satire continue as Podge likewise eschews hunting as a remedy for his corpulence. He declares, “the moment I got on the horse, didn’t he go down on his knees as if he was praying of me to come off again?” (4). The imagery of Podge bringing a horse to its knees from his fatness is comical. Like the depiction of Podge sinking his rowboat, the humorous rendering of him overburdening a horse suggests that neither form of exercise truly was attempted as a way to produce results. Banting describes how he “adopted riding on horseback” as a remedy proposed by “high orthodox authorities,” but claims that exercise had no effect and so he was advised to “forsake the exercise” (Banting 12). Though the play only means to lambast Banting for comedic effect, it does reify the dominant discourse of Victorian medical experts that exercise is a true method for reducing body fat. It is this belief that Banting continuously confronts in his *Letter*, explaining exercise alone is not conducive to weight loss. He explains that “few men have led a more active life—bodily or mentally” and argues that his “corpulence and obesity were not through neglect of necessary bodily activity” (Banting 10). Banting countermands traditional medical discourse when he claims that through his system of diet, “It is now proved that, by proper diet alone, the evils of corpulence may be removed without the addition of those active exercises” (4).

Through the depiction of Alderman Podge's failures, *Doing Banting* undercuts Banting's claims and reaffirms the notion that exercise is the superior method for reducing corpulence. Although the play is obviously meant to entertain, it does show the way in which Banting prompted and stimulated busy social conversations about exercise's role and raised doubts about conventional wisdom which touted exercise alone as sufficient.

Though the play does critique Banting in some ways, it also supports his position as the play challenges the role of the physician, a privileged position which Banting's system undermines through his endorsement of a non-medically sanctioned remedy. As Fatima reads a circular, she proclaims, " 'Professor Pankey.' —Oh! Then he's sure to be clever, if he's a Professor!' (5). Her remark about his clever nature draws attention to a Victorian concern: the lack of standardization in education and training that created distrust of medical authorities. The lack of credibility is obvious as Fatima lauds his title without knowing any of his accolades or commendations. Though Fatima speaks without disingenuousness, the audience understands the facetiousness of the authors' attitudes. In the list of dramatis personae, Pankey is listed as an "itinerant lecturer." His job description is important, as the growing tension between doctors as healers and as clinicians in a laboratory is exemplified in the play. As a lecturer, practical medical experience is not guaranteed. The tension illustrates a further debate intensified by Banting about the exact scope of a physician's training and his actual job description.

The doctor-patient relationship provides moments of hilarity—not necessarily at Banting's expense—and the play exemplifies the tension Banting's work created about the physician's status in Victorian society. Victorian medical letters around mid-century sought to establish the primacy of the physician who worked to diagnose and treat the

patient. Fatima's response indicates the view of the physician as omnipotent as she chortles, "What's the use of a doctor, if he doesn't interfere with Nature?" (4). Her rhetorical question seems straightforward, as it is the role of the doctor to interfere with maladies and propose remedies. However, the idea that the doctor has power over "Nature" is problematic, as it suggests he is imbued with supernatural gifts beyond those of average learned men.

Fatima's comment uncovers the tension emerging in Victorian medical discourses which proffered the doctor's supremacy and the patient's own ineptitude. In many discourses, the patient him or herself cannot be trusted, whereas the physician's own abilities—specifically rationality and scientific study—provide information and deductions that are beyond question (Kennedy 16). Banting's work revises the relationship to suggest the patient needs only the physician's advice, but that the patient's power is in fact more important than the doctor's prowess. This subordination of the physician is hinted at in the third edition, but not fully developed as Banting attempts to omit the work of William Harvey and focus on his "personal experience" (8). He claims it would "afford [him] infinite pleasure and satisfaction to name the author of my redemption from the calamity...but such publicity might be construed improperly" (8). In the first and second editions, Banting omits the name of Harvey, but finally includes it in his third edition. He admits, "the medical gentleman to whom I am so deeply indebted is Mr. Harvey...In the first and second editions, I thought that to give his name would appear like a puff, which I know he abhors" (43). While Banting claims he omits the name to avoid embarrassing Harvey with praise, doing so purposefully privileges his own observations and powers of will as central to his development of anti-fat discourse.

Banting established a viable conversation about willpower as a form of remedy for fatness. Though present in the third edition, the fourth edition's preface more fully develops the role of the patient by articulating that the patient himself can just as effectively treat his own ailments. In this fourth edition, Banting specifically names William Harvey as his physician, but uses the word "my" three times in quick succession in discussing his case after introducing Harvey, emphasizing his own role in curing his corpulence. He claims his result comes from "my rigid adherence to his advice," and claims "my very strict compliance" proved the accuracy of Harvey's claims (Banting 4th Edition 3). Finally, he states that "My only merit consists in entire obedience to Mr. Harvey's advice" (4th Edition 3). While he explicitly says that "To him alone belongs all the credit of the remedy," the emphasis on his role in his own treatment cannot be missed (4th Edition 3). Banting's work illustrates the idea of the patient as the primary source of power, and *Doing Banting* seems to cautiously support the idea of the individual's importance in treating him or herself.

In *Doing Banting*, the patient is privileged especially during the introduction of Pankey and Podge's relationship. Podge calls Pankey "my boy," and then asks "will you allow me to call you 'my boy?'" (5). Rather than being offended by the condescending and familiar tone, Pankey replies, "I rather prefer it than otherwise—it sounds hospitable. If you will allow me to say so, it is a form of address highly significant of an invitation to partake in something" (5). The relationship established between them is important, as the particular attention paid to the form of address indicates. Rather than a respectful and reverent bond, Podge's discourteous "my boy" denigrates the doctor's authority. Like Banting, the play seems to suggest that doctors' self-aggrandizement is unwarranted.

Banting refers to Harvey in the text as “my excellent adviser” and “kind friend” (17). Though he references Harvey’s advice as instrumental, calling him a “kind friend” changes the nature of the relationship to one far more collegial in nature (17). Banting creates a partnership in which each man partakes.

However, the play farcically exaggerates the detrimental effects of such an equal relationship, cautioning against the extremes of Banting’s recommendations. Alderman Podge exemplifies the problem of the patient with undue power when he explains his disdain for Lavender who “Can’t do what he’s told to do, by a wealthy Alderman, who’s got plenty of money to pay for anything!” (9). Without the privileged status of the physician, the patient exerts control and expects results, even when such expectations are impossible or not conducive to health. The play illustrates the complicated reactions to Banting, in that it both supports his challenges to physicians and their claims of preternatural powers, but also condemns the extreme of privileging the patient too much.

Doing Banting also examines how the religious language of the *Letter* sets up unrealistic expectations for physicians as saviors. Throughout the *Letter*, Banting uses biblical language to show the wickedness of fat. He describes his results as “marvelous blessings” (21) and claims his results are “simply miraculous” (21). Thanking “Almighty Providence” for his deliverance from corpulence also adds to the religious zeal of the *Letter* (21). He elevates himself to the position of disciple, preaching a gospel of the evils of corpulence. The play scorns such declarations of medicine men as magicians and miracle workers and satirizes the “miracle” cure Banting’s religious language intimates he has discovered. When the news arrives that a “disciple” of Banting has arrived at the Podge home, Fatima exclaims, “Oh! Good gracious, Peter!” (5). Peter is not a character’s

name. She rather connects the Professor as a disciple of Banting with Peter, Jesus' disciple. The play pokes fun at this kind of proselytizing, referring repeatedly to Professor Pankey as "a disciple of the renowned Banting!" (5). Lavender derides Podge for expecting him to "perform impossibilities" (2). Lavender also laments Podge's naiveté in believing such an expeditious cure for corpulence is possible: "because my medical skill is unequal to the performance of a miracle, he called me an ignoramus, and told me to go to—well never mind where it was, it wasn't Bath" (2). The exchange between Lavender and Patty illustrates the tension between what Victorians considered legitimate science and what was deemed quackery. The former required quantifiable, measureable results over time, while the latter promised immediate and miraculous results. Banting uses the term "miracle" repeatedly in the letter. In the fourth edition, to answer to criticisms made, he denies that he has "offered...nostrum or quack remedy" (Banting *4th Edition* 5). Rather, he claims that his "extraordinary and speedy result" came as a result of "rigid adherence to his [William Harvey's] advice" (Banting *4th Edition* 3). Despite Banting's language which emphasizes 'speed' and 'miraculous' results, the process he chronicles takes more than a year of dieting. The play therefore illustrates the growing tensions in a society increasingly eager for instantaneous results, but suspicious of claims akin to quackery which suggested that Banting's diet could produce immediate and spectacular results. The critique of the public is important in showing Banting's position in Victorian culture. He created a saleable commodity of his diet, and marketing dictated remarkable exaggeration, and yet such an approach risked deeming his product ridiculous. Banting's work therefore is important for indicating some of the developing tension involved in marketing fat-phobia despite the regulations imposed on the practice

of medicine. On the one hand, his public expected a miracle and anticipated the use of promotional incendiary language, while on the other, they were skeptical of outrageous claims.

Also at issue within the play is the emergent, peculiar Victorian cultural association of slenderness and gentility made by Banting. The connection is made evident in the play as Podge and his sister repeatedly mark thinness as a desirable quality possessed by the gentry. Lavender indicates that Podge is disgusted by his corpulence not because he finds the condition itself loathsome or disagreeable, but because he “has gone in for high society,” and as a result “he is disgusted with his corpulent figure and aspires to be slim and genteel” (2). In conversation, Fatima remarks that neither she nor Podge minded their fatness while in trade, and Podge explains that “trade is naturally gross, Fatima; and retirement on a competency is slim and genteel, or if it isn’t, it ought to be” (4). Podge tells his daughter Patty, “That young doctor you are so sweet upon is a humbug! He says it’s impossible to make me slim and genteel!” (8). He reiterates the connection between slimness and status when he announces to her that “a disciple of the celebrated Mr. Banting...can make me slim and genteel” (8). For the third time in a row, the two words are announced when Fatima chimes in, “Make both of us slim and genteel” (9). Podge’s obsession with status is evident when he tells Patty, “If he reduces me to something like genteel proportions, I shall reward him with your hand” (9). Pankey panders to their desires by claiming that after depriving themselves of dinner one evening, “You’ll both of you wake up, and find yourselves so slim and aristocratic, that you’ll begin to think your ancestors came over with the Conqueror” (15). The connection between gentility and slimness parodies Banting’s class-consciousness in the *Letter*, but

also indicates the degree to which the association of ideas found acceptance in Victorian culture. Banting acknowledges that “a poor corpulent man is not so frequently met with,” and marks the act of Banting or dieting as an exclusive privilege afforded to those who had wealth enough to be fat (41). However, being fat was no longer considered respectable. Rather, class was demonstrated by participating in Bantingism.

None of the characters wishes to be fat, and the play illustrates Banting’s effect in initiating anti-fat discourse among the lower classes. When the servant Dollop arrives on scene early in the play, Pankey remarks, “Now there’s another fat ‘un” (4). He makes no distinction among social classes, and instead lumps all the members of the household into the status of “fat ‘un[s]” to be readily exploited. Dollop serves several functions in the play. First, he establishes the relative wealth of the Podges, as the presence of a Victorian male domestic servant in a household cost significantly more than female help, and indicated considerable wealth and status (Usunier 49). In Pankey’s estimation, though, fat is as much of an undesirable quality for a servant as for the master, and Pankey sees opportunities to exploit the whole household with his scheme. The play clearly reflects the changing Victorian notion of fat as a pandemic social problem. Though not entirely attributable to Banting alone, he certainly precipitated these discussions. Banting comments in his *Letter* that “It has also been remarked that such a dietary as mine was too good and expensive for a poor man and that I had wholly lost sight of that class” (Banting 41). In the play, Dollop himself asks to “be treated like one of the family, as [he’s] not precisely a sylph either” when he discovers the family plans on “going in for getting thin” (10). Banting’s popularity affects all social classes, a point the play exaggerates by Dollop’s enthusiastic desire to Bant along with his master.

The play also shows the changes Banting made in making dieting more socially acceptable to discuss and even desirable as a sign of status. Rather than a secretive enterprise, dieting after Banting became fashionable as a trend. Dollop's presence also important, as he indicates Banting's changes to discourse about the body within Victorian households. The servant's role in the play shows the comfort with discussing fat that Banting's work prompted.³⁹ Dollop openly joins into the discourse with his masters, and eagerly participates in the plans to try Bantingism. The process is not secretive nor scandalous.

In fact, Banting is connected with improvements in domestic life, and the play tacitly supports diet as a form of household management. Dollop, originally an apprentice in the tallow trade, was "as thin as a herring" when he arrived at the Podges' home (5). With an increase in his weight comes a decrease in productivity, and the play humorously discusses the connection of fat and sloth. For example, the now domestic Dollop comments on the difficulties he has navigating the stairs, a task he claims will force him to "give warning" (8). Not only does he have difficulties with domestic duties because of his obesity, he is also depicted as falling asleep in the middle of conversation. The stage directions note that in the middle of a short dialogue, Dollop has "gone to sleep on Pankey's box" (8). Pankey wakes him by saying, "Now, then, Adiposity, wake up!" (8). The synecdoche is important, as referring to him as fatness shows the inherent critique of all fat people—servants included—as lazy and inept. The servant's transformation from productive to porcine shows how fatness and sloth are indelibly connected after Bantingism became popular. Thus, not only is dieting beneficial to the

master's health, his servant's health is also depicted as important to the master as it increases Dollop's ability to contribute to the household.

Though Banting touted the salubrious effects of his diet, the play satirizes Banting by reversing some of his restrictions, as Banting's diet was difficult for many to accept and defied conventional understandings of fat and its relation to weight gain. Just as his dismissal of exercise was met with suspicion, his acceptance of fatty foods was also treated with incredulity and skepticism. This reaction can be seen in the play as Pankey refuses the Podges duck, and allows them bread for dinner. The diet endorsed by Banting did not restrict fat, but did limit carbohydrates such as bread. While Banting does admit having some of the fat trimmed from his meat, his plan enabled him to eat foods high in fat such as duck as long as he controlled beer, sugar, bread, and potatoes (11). In the fourth edition, Banting elaborates on his diet and adds the information that his plan allowed "agreeable food and savoury viands, meat and game pies" (*4th Edition* 7). In the third edition, he makes a mock diary entry which states that he is able to indulge in large quantities of "any kind of poultry or game" (18). In the play, since duck is quite fatty and rich, the Podges are advised to abstain, and are fed on bread and water to exaggerate the idea of diet as deprivation. Though the public had accepted the idea of Bantingism as a tool to stave off fat, which foods had to be avoided were still the subject of some debate, as were the quantities allowed.

Though Banting repeatedly denies feeling famished or starved by his diet, the play reveals the public's lingering doubts about a diet being non-restrictive and filling. Pankey's asides reveal him as a shyster and consummate con artist determined to deprive his patients of food. When he discovers that Patty Podge has money, and will be his prize

should his plan bring about a reduction in Podge's weight, he reveals his plot: "I'll starve him to a skeleton!" (11). The idea of weight loss without deprivation and starvation seems impossible, and Pankey's plan plays on the traditional understanding of a diet. The comedy of dieting comes from the misery it creates. Podge exclaims, "Flesh and blood can't stand it!" (16). The "it" to which he refers is the diet, which leaves him hungry and irritable after only a few minutes. He decides to sneak pigeon-pie in the middle of the night. He justifies it by rationalizing, "Fortified by this, I shall be able to do Banting tomorrow!" (16). Fatima cannot abide by the diet either, and declares, "I must have something to eat—Banting or no Banting!" (16). Even Dollop ridicules the notion that people can be satisfied while dieting. He says, "I'll go and have a mouthful to sustain Nature.—Mine's a Nature that wants a good deal of sustaining!" (16). Banting's claims rendered him an easy target for satire, as he denied his diet caused any self-deprivation. In the *Letter* he claims his "present dietary table is far superior" and argues that he "can hardly imagine that any man...would choose the former" (21). Though he repeatedly protests that he has "never lived so well," the play indicates the contrary (21). Rationally, any individual, despite Banting's declarations, would prefer satiation to deprivation, and the play's characters depict this notion. While the cultural pressure to be thin was indeed high, it sat in sharp contrast to the desire for satiety. Banting's diet created a difficult conundrum: for it to be successful, people had to choose to not indulge in foods that were commonly desired, and Banting propagated the value of self-denial even in the face of want.

Regulating desires was a difficult sell, and the play examines the ways in which Banting's success is remarkable given the stipulations of the diet. The comedy ends as

Podge must recognize Lavender is correct, and that Pankey is an “ignorant pretender” (17). He makes the declamatory statement, “we’ve had enough of Banting” (17). While of course Podge refers to the diet, the statement also recognizes the popularity of Banting and the attention garnered by his work. Lavender defends Banting. He counsels, “Don’t blame Mr. Banting, sir, because a mercenary quack has tried to impose upon you. His system is no mystery, and needs no charlatan to teach it—you can buy the book for a sixpence” (18). Though the play ridicules Banting thoroughly, the end of the play defends him from those who exploit the Banting system for their own pecuniary advantage, especially as Banting himself explains in the *Letter* that all people should be “pleased to believe that [they] hold the reins of health and comfort” (21). His system requires no treatment with exorbitant costs. The reins to which he refers are the dietary prescriptions set forth in his text. By following the rules, individuals are free to pursue the course Banting suggests will lead to results, free of charge. The *Letter* informs readers that “many are practicing the diet after consultation with their own medical advisers; some few have gone to mine, and others are practicing upon their own convictions of the advantages detailed in the pamphlet” (32). Banting manages to find a way to negotiate carefully the need for a physician, not completely ruling out their potential benefit in the process. Though he states any individual can easily follow his methods, he does “not recommend every corpulent man to rush headlong into such a change of diet, but to act advisedly and after full consultation with a physician” (21). The conclusion hints at some of the reasons for Banting’s success in popular culture: his work emphasizes the fact that it is free, and requires little by way of monetary expense.

The play cautiously supports Banting as well by drawing attention to the ridiculousness of those who would discredit him for simply making a profit. Pankey gets the last word in the play, eschewing the fictional Town Hall for a bigger venue. He breaks the third wall by suggesting his lecture will be held at “the Adelphi Theater, with the kind permission of Mr. Benjamin Webster, and if you’ll only come and patronize me, and send your friends—I have no fear of any lack of audience to witness our attempt at—*Doing Banting*” (18). Ironically, though he has just been accused within the play of exploiting the Banting craze for his own profit, the actor draws attention to the fact that the production is doing just that: exploiting the Banting phenomenon for money. The play ironically supports Banting by showing that profit does not preclude a beneficial, fruitful program. The concluding comment about “no fear of any lack of audience” indicates Banting’s popularity and ability to capture the Victorian cultural imagination. Indeed, the Banting phenomenon would last throughout the end of the Victorian period.

Banting in Popular Publications

Banting was also featured in the popular presses of the day, which routinely mentioned his dieting phenomenon and which illustrate Banting’s pervasive effect. Non-fictional examinations of Banting in magazines provide ways of tracing Banting’s absorption and promulgation in the mind of the Victorian public. For example, *Temple Bar—A London Magazine for Town and Country Readers* was founded a year after the first publication of *The Cornhill Magazine* (1859). The editor of *Temple Bar*, George Augustus Salas, promised in his prospectus that the magazine would be both entertaining and interesting in its appeal to English men and women, and it sought to reach a respectable middle class family readership (Blake 185). One of the leading literary

magazines of the era, it sold for one shilling and was published monthly. It began with a circulation of about 30,000 (DeBaun 7). In his analysis of the periodical's treatment of scientific controversy, Vincent DeBaun suggests that *Temple Bar* never delved very deeply into heretical or probative sciences, and he suggests that the periodical was "fundamentally superficial in its treatment of science" (DeBaun 14). Nevertheless, the periodical did tackle scientific subjects of interest to Victorian readers, and William Banting's diet was among those subjects of popular curiosity in what has been deemed the Victorian era's "volatile and experimental market for visual culture" (Maidment 133).

This is particularly clear in the case of William Banting and his *Letter*, as the treatment of him in the press offers a great deal of "satirical commentary rather than" a true representation of his *Letter's* content (Maidment 133). In fact, *Temple Bar* Volume 19 features a comical attack on Banting that exposes the difficulties in accepting his premises about the ease and relative simplicity of dieting. It begins with a discourse on language, and investigates the phrase "doing Banting." The verb doing, according to the article, "does wonders, e.g. doing penance, implying the walking with peas in the shoes, a process much prescribed by ecclesiastics of old as a means of subduing the flesh; but when dilated into 'Doing Banting,' it accommodates itself to dietetic principles, representing a formulary of reduction as propounded in person by him who has achieved greatness in learning to lessen" (116). The article immediately associates dieting—doing Banting—with suffering. Comparing it to such self-mortification practices undertaken by clergy as a sign of penance countermands Banting's assertions that dieting is not sacrifice or torment. In his *Letter*, he argues that "Some, I believe, would willingly submit to even a violent remedy" for corpulence, but he claims that no such drastic or violent measures

are needed (Banting 40). The comic discussion of Banting shows the conversation about dieting as deprivation that Banting stirred, and how even in jest the ascetic practices of Bantingism were connected with religious restriction.

The satire also connects Banting's dietary asceticism to religious practices, an ironic link as Banting himself employs a great deal of religious language in his text to promote himself as a prophet of anti-fat discourse. While he imagines himself as a disciple revealing miracles, the periodical article lampoons him as having "achieved greatness in learning to lessen" (116). Downplaying his role and his contribution to science mocks his historical significance, despite the fact that his name was given to the system of dieting. Even in the mockery, though, the piece shows his "greatness" in the Victorian popular cultural imagination. While this article sees "lessening" as insignificant and mocks his revelations, it was obviously significant enough to warrant discussion in popular periodicals. Not only does it attack the verb Banting and the prestige afforded to him, it also criticizes the *Letter*'s presentation of Banting's story as clinical and objective. The satire begins as a fairy tale, opening with the iconic, "Once upon a time be it known to all that Banting was small" (117). Reworking Banting's case-study format provided in the *Letter*, the article instead iterates Banting's struggle as a form of children's story, downplaying its scientific nature. Rather than a serious medical narrative, it becomes a comical fight against an arch-nemesis: "Fat was his bane" (117). The narrative features the traditional elements of Freytag's pyramid. It has an exposition, rising action, climax, and resolution. The comical rendering features elements of Banting's struggle with which the *Letter* deals at length, including the ridicule and condemnation his fatness provokes. Though condensed, the satire depicts how "enlarging...the diameter of his being" results

in boys who “jeered” at him and men who “gibed” or “looked askance” (117). Like the play *Doing Banting*, this farcical story also notes Banting’s problem with navigating stairs: “Never was there such a getting upstairs, except getting down again” (117). It also mentions how Banting “walked, he rowed, he sweated” (117). These exercises act as a form of rising action, chronicling his attempts to resolve the problem of corpulence, but to no avail. Despite his exercise, his fat—the source of his woe—remains. The work is a bit anti-climactic: “He yielded up his purse for the purpose, but his flesh yielded not...At length, after long years of woe, he found relief” (117). The comedic work glosses over the diet itself, simply concluding the tale with a form of happily-ever-after as he finally finds “relief.” How such sought-after “relief” arrives is not clarified. Much like in children’s stories, the magical ending provides a tidy conclusion. The fairy tale format undercuts the seriousness of Banting’s diet, but it also shows the familiarity of people with his story. It is well-known enough to be rendered as a familiar fairy tale. In the parody the fat fantastically disappears, calling attention to the wish-fulfillment such rapid shrinking connoted for the Victorians after Banting’s publication appeared.

The parody capitalizes on whimsical images of magic and lightness created by “doing Banting.” The imagery casts Banting as a fairy godmother who brings great relief and understanding. Banting’s *Letter* gives grounds for such a fantastical comparison, as he refers to metaphorically seeing the light, and he repeatedly uses the conceit of light to describe the effect of his diet plan in one particular paragraph. He is astonished that “such a light should have remained so long unnoticed and hidden” (38). Throughout the conceit, he explains that he is wiser and hopes to share this “glimmer” and “new light” with others (38). The use of the words “glimmer” and “new light” cast Banting in the role

of the enlightened sage, but also provide grounds for criticism as he creates a sense of whimsy in what should be a clinical, medical document. Despite the comical depiction of Banting, the article shows how much of an iconic figure Banting had become. Regardless of his lack of medical training, the connection of Banting with enlightenment illustrates how the discourse that surrounded him rendered him a figure of great wisdom and power, while earning him some ridicule for his self-aggrandizement.

After the comical condensed version of Banting's story, the article moves to a poem meant to represent a dialogue between Banting and William Harvey, interrogating the primacy of the physician. The piece critiques Banting by depicting him as powerless and dependent upon the whims of his doctor. In a jaunty, childlike nursery rhyme, Banting queries, "Will you tell me I pray/Can you melt fat away?" (117). In his fourth edition of the *Letter*, Banting asserts that he consults Harvey only because of his deafness. Harvey was a "celebrated aurist" (Banting 2). He claims specifically "I will not affirm that I said to each 'pray remove my corpulence,' for I had been told that it was...incurable" (Banting *Fourth Edition* 2). The mocking lines in the satire affirm specifically that which Banting denies: asking to have his corpulence cured. He insists he simply sought remedy for his deafness, and discovered consequently that his corpulence was the cause. While Banting sought to create a sense of his influence in his work, the satire obviously undermines the extent of his power. Importantly, it shows the increasingly contentious conversation about Banting's authority.

The piece continually mocks Banting's clout. The poem continues, "So Banting did Banting/Got rid of his panting" (119). Obviously mocking the fame from having his name converted into a verb, "Banting did Banting" lampoons the understated pride

present in his letter when he explains the “system [is] now called ‘Banting’” (4).

Additionally, the piece pokes fun at the apparent simplicity of Banting’s diet through Harvey’s feigned instructions: “And mark you will never grow thinner/If you take to old port/or to beer you resort” (119). It is interesting that the piece picks this particular advice, as Banting did allow some moderate consumption of alcohol, and Harvey’s response contradicts the dietary allowances made to afford these indulgences. Instead of signaling a new approach, Harvey’s fictitious retort reiterates old understandings of fat, and indicates the public’s incredulity with Banting’s proposed plan. The exchange makes Banting’s diet plan seem to reify commonplace understandings, as port and beer obviously are not conducive to weight loss. Similarly, the childlike request to “melt fat away” contributes to the depiction of Banting not as a participant in his own curing, but as naïve and lacking elementary erudition. Though it does critique Banting, the piece is important in showing the extent to which his discourse about avoiding fat had attained preference and had become accepted as an enthymeme. Banting’s desire to ‘remove corpulence’ and ‘grow thinner’ are never questioned as underlying premises, even as his intellect as to the methodology for doing so is challenged.

Banting is also lambasted for his allusions to Shakespeare in his *Letter*, a rhetorical flourish meant to signify his status as a scholar and man of letters. The parodic text plays on *Hamlet*, and alludes to Hamlet’s infamous lament, “O that this too, too solid flesh should melt” (I.ii.131-132). Despite the mocking, it is significant that Banting’s name is as recognizable as Shakespeare’s character. The satire claims, “The wish, Oh! that this too too solid flesh would melt, thaw, or resolve itself into a dew, or into anything for that matter, has often been expressed, no doubt, but the melting process was not

understood until Banting submitted to the feat” (120). Yet again, the satire refers to fat as simply being able to “melt” away, suggesting a supernatural riddance outside of human control. The word “submitted” denies his power to effect change, and again undercuts his intellect. Comparing him to Hamlet, too, suggests ineffectiveness or dithering that precludes his own success in treating his condition. Even amidst the humor though, there is recognition of Banting’s role in bringing anti-fat discourse to the forefront of Victorian consciousness. The piece admits that “until Banting,” dieting was perhaps privately wished, but not en vogue nor popularly contemplated.

The “melting process” quip also points to difficulties in marketing a diet. Once anti-fat sentiments took root, individuals desired immediate remedies. The goal of marketing is to pander to the satiation of desires, and to promise success. The piece mocks the supposed speed with which fat is desired to disappear, a testament to Banting’s effectiveness in changing the Victorian popular consciousness. The chart Banting provides in his *Letter* chronicles a slow loss of weight over the period of a year (29). His weight on “26th August, 1862, was 202lbs...12 September 156” (Banting 29). His weight loss is modest, ranging from one to four pounds in a week, yet the idea of ‘melting’ suggests a much more rapid loss than Banting chronicles. In fact, Banting uses italics to discuss his “*very gradual reductions*” (28). The use of the term ‘melt’ suggests the growing desire in Victorian culture for a quick-fix to a suddenly serious problem. The discussion of ‘melting’ highlights some of the tensions his work created: on the one hand, marketing a product requires some exaggeration of expedience and efficacy to garner consumers, but too much hyperbole leads to incredulity and claims of fraud.

Not only does it ridicule the process of weight loss, the *Temple Bar* piece also mocks Banting's inability to explain the success of his diet plan. Again, allusions to Shakespeare serve to show the discussion Banting prompted. The satire plays on Hamlet's remark to Horatio: "There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in any one's philosophy, and especially is this the case in doing Banting" (120). In failing to explain the medical rationale for the diet's efficacy, Banting opens himself to such barbs. However, it does not merely critique Banting. The comments illustrate how the diet gained attention in the popular imagination despite people's failure to comprehend the mechanisms for its effectiveness. The medical mystery of the diet's success forced practitioners to submit on the basis of faith and on Banting's testimonial. The satirical allusion is also appropriate, as Banting references *Hamlet* as he explains the variety of ailments individuals suffer during their lives. Banting waxes Shakespearean in the *Letter* when he acknowledges "I cannot expect to remain free from some coming natural infirmity that all flesh is heir to" (Banting 21). As he discusses that his seventy-two years cannot be free from all ailments, he references Hamlet's famous "To be, or not to be" soliloquy in which he ponders "the heart ache and the thousand natural shocks/ That flesh is heir to" (III.i.70-71). In using Shakespeare, the satire's author points to the number of weaknesses in Banting's methodology. Banting admits he cannot stave off all ills, and likewise acknowledges that he cannot medically account for the success he has achieved. Despite his inability to explain completely, the piece indicates how Banting took root in the popular consciousness. Banting's work was as recognizable as the references to *Hamlet* on which the satire draws, and linking Banting to the popular icon Shakespeare is proof of his cultural significance at the time.

Another Shakespearean allusion present in the satirical piece is to *The Tempest*, and it calls Banting “airy as Ariel” (120). The assonance present contributes to the humor in depicting Banting as an “airy” spirit. Especially humorous in the mockery is the way it depicts the transition of Banting from corpulent and awkward to light and ethereal. The *Letter* details the successes of Banting after his weight loss. They include the fact that he “can perform every necessary office” for himself, and can “come down stairs forward naturally, with perfect ease” (Banting 22). His weight loss ameliorates a variety of conditions that are hindrances, but the humorous allusion to Ariel amplifies the freedom afforded by weight loss. Though in some ways it pokes fun at Banting, it buys in to the important idea of weight-loss as liberating and empowering. Banting uses a variety of images to show fat as a violent and hindering force: “Corpulence, though giving no actual pain...must naturally press with undue violence upon the bodily viscera, driving one part upon another, and stopping the free action of all,” Banting argues (22). Words like “press,” “driving,” and “stopping” illustrate and exaggerate corpulence’s deleterious effects, and the satire also employs hyperbole to show the removal of such forces is liberating through the image of Banting as Ariel as he attains his freedom. Though comic, the satire shows an important effect of Banting’s discourse: thinness is viewed as liberty and participating in Banting is constructed as an act of freedom, not restriction.

Also under attack is Banting’s own obscurity and lack of credentials prior to his publication. The author mocks how “he cast his little book forth from his solitude in the suburbs, and the world picked it up. But lo! –a marvel!” (120). With the ridicule implicit in the word “marvel,” the article intimates Banting cannot be considered erudite because of his upbringing. “Solitude in the suburbs” dismisses Banting’s career in London, and

focuses on his latter years as a corpulent retired man. The periodical's satire again undercuts Banting's credibility and reduces him to a fad accidentally discovered and promulgated. Though undoubtedly farcical, it shows changes made by Banting through his ability to self-publish. The 'marvel' of his work reaching the world is evident in the reverence afforded to 'his little book,' despite the satire. The hyperbole of 'the world picked it up' also indicates the widespread pervasiveness of Bantingism.

Not only did Banting's emergence from humble beginnings become a subject of satire, so too did his apparent indulgence in calorie-laden beverages, as such freedom to imbibe countered popular understandings of weight loss. Many critics of Banting argued that his indulgence in alcohol—and his differentiation among types—was counterproductive to weight loss and yet another sign of his lack of medical knowledge. The article mocks, "doing Banting is not starving; nor can that diet be called dry which may be washed down with fullbodied generous wine" (120). In his third edition, Banting remarks that he allowed himself a nightcap, but avoided sugar and beer (19). He acknowledges, "Perhaps I did not wholly escape starchy or saccharine matter," but claims he avoids the majority of such dietary sins (Banting 19). Though Banting admits to breaking his diet occasionally and transgressing a bit, the satire exaggerates these small allowances. The satire doubles the allotted amount: "as a plenary Bucolic was heard to observe upon it: I like Banting; he allows two glasses of grog at night" (120). In the third edition, Banting allows "A tumbler of grog—(gin, whiskey, or brandy, without sugar)—or a glass or two of claret or sherry (19). Doubling the amount afforded to dieters is a significant exaggeration. While Banting claims that a small indulgence "leads to an excellent night's rest," the satire imagines the quantities as irreconcilable with weight

loss (19). Also mocked is Banting's claim that he is "not, however, strictly limited to any quantity...so that the nature of the food is rigidly adhered to" (19). The belief that his quantity is not controlled becomes a subject of incredulity, and it is this excessive indulgence that becomes the source of humor in the piece. Banting's work spawned popular discussions about indulgence in alcohol, a subject germane to more than weight loss. Victorian notions of morality and propriety were substantiated by Banting's suggestions of restraint. However, against these mandates were forces that sought to rescind such dictates against indulgence in alcohol. Thus, besides weight loss, Banting's work validated other fringe discourses such as prohibition by painting overindulgence as a vice.

Ironically, given the work the article does in discrediting Banting, it also establishes him as part of a long line of anti-fat discourses. After ridiculing his lack of credibility, the work then attacks Banting for his reiteration of the findings of previous physicians without giving them credit. The satire notes, "The formation of fat depends upon a secretion of the liver, the very existence of which was not known or dreamt of until its discovery by a French physician, M. Bernard, some twenty years ago" (120). The emphasis on 'twenty years ago' hints that though Banting calls his work novel and new, it is neither. The author claims, "it was all known before. Had not Hippocrates—had not Celus—had not Galen—all written about it?" (120). Banting's work created a great deal of conversation about its novelty. While its newness afforded critics the opportunity to dismiss it as a fad, its reiteration of previous points was likewise targeted as proof of its charlatanism. The span of reactions to Banting modulated and challenged ideas of body, self, and power in already extant discourses about fat. The extent to which predecessors

should be acknowledged and whether novelty is necessarily important were elements of diet discourse provoked by reactions to Banting.

Also critiqued are Banting's motives, which prompted a great deal of social discussion about whether seeking pecuniary advantage completely negated a product's medical benefit. Banting's work continued a conversation about the dangers of medicine as a lucrative business, as unscrupulous businessmen often capitalized on quack nostrums to serve their own advantage. Reactions to Banting often examined the debate over the propriety of practicing medicine as a moneymaking endeavor. The *Letter* is lampooned as Banting's "song of sixpence," though it notes he works "pro bono" (121). It suggests a pecuniary motive for his publication, one that Banting denies wholeheartedly. What it does reveal though, is the popular imagination of the diet as a successful commodity. After Banting, the diet itself was viewed as a saleable commodity, as the reference to the "sixpence" illustrates.

Banting, of course, faced a difficult sale with his product, as dieting requires abstaining from certain pleasures to attain results, and the conflict between the rewards of dieting and its detriments are evident in the discourse surrounding Banting. Clearly in the Victorian press the idea of dieting as deprivation persists, despite Banting's attempt to show otherwise. Like the play *Doing Banting*, the article sees dieting as extreme, and cautions, "There are bounds to all things, even to doing Banting" (121). While Banting is careful to suggest that his plan should be guided by a physician, he also implies that the system can be easily followed by those without medical training, and that no ill-effects will come from following his plan. Directly critiquing such an understanding, the article states, "It has been said by them of old that at forty a man is either a physician or a fool.

With yourself as a guide, you are clearly no physician, thou self-doer of Banting” (121). The obvious inference is that those who undertake Banting’s system are fools. The article indicates that suffering and deprivation associated with dieting were not entirely assuaged by Banting’s claims, though he argues satiation is possible while practicing his system. The article offers a critique of those who would suffer in life, given the ephemeral nature of human existence. It offers the warning, “If you suffer in the attempt, blame yourself, not the system, which, based upon the principles of nature, will live long after your body has become the victim” (121). Calling dieters ‘victims’ suggests the trauma and difficulties to which they will be subjected under the Banting system, and warns that though they suffer, it will not stave off death, as it is inevitable.

Banting promised an increase in the quality of life that accompanied fat loss, and he even argued fat loss could produce greater longevity, but the connection between long life and slimness was a source of busy popular conversation. For example, the text returns to Shakespearean allusions when it states that death is “that bourne from which even doing Banting cannot exempt it, and from whence no traveler returns” (121). Although Banting recognizes dieting cannot stave off all ills, here, the implication is that dieting hastens death as well as not exempting ones from it. While Banting argues his quality of life is enhanced by dieting, the satire reiterates the idea that it leads people to “suffer” until death relieves them (121). The piece also jests at the diet’s faddish popularity, claiming it will outlive the dieters themselves. Here, the Shakespearean reference is intended to establish Banting as an ephemeral phenomenon in contrast to Shakespeare’s firm root in the English cultural imagination.

What the contestation over suffering reveals, though, is the extent to which Banting's work did successfully convince many followers of the ease of following his program and the rewards obedience to it would beget. He enticed many with his appeals to the liberation afforded by weight loss, rewards which he claimed would outweigh the deprivation undergone. Though this piece comically addresses Banting's connection to deprivation and death, it also shows his resonance in the popular Victorian cultural imagination in suggesting that some forms of self-denial actually enhanced the quality of one's life, and even perhaps extended his or her lifespan. Comedy and satire enabled the furtherance of busy public debate initiated by Banting. The attention generated even in satire indicates the myriad ways Banting's plan produced changes in the Victorian conception of the body, self, and power. The widespread availability of these satirical publications, and specifically the success of *Punch, or the London Charivari*, further engendered Banting's contribution to popular consciousness by not only verbally but also pictorially breeding robust debates about these issues of fat and class, fat and identity, and fat and sloth.

Banting in Graphical Caricatures

Perhaps the most visible manifestations of Banting in the popular Victorian mindset are the graphical caricatures of him in leading social magazines such as *Punch, or the London Charivari*; *Fun*; and *The Owl: A Wednesday Journal of Politics and Society*, among others.⁴⁰ Because of its popularity, *Punch* had tremendous ability to prominently project topics that were the conversations of the day. As one Victorian visual culture expert puts it, "*Punch's* critics wielded considerable power in the world of culture...the magazine was highly suspicious of innovation, of anything unorthodox"

(Prager 1). *Punch* documented popular reactions to scientific topics of the day, ranging from public health to invention.⁴¹ The magazine also afforded some latitude in discussing the body and medical issues in the interest of advancing knowledge and creating a more sophisticated, enlightened audience: “the Punch men [wished] to be recognized as gentlemen. The status of gentleman was much sought after in Victorian Britain, with the result that the varying definitions of this status were heavily contested” (Usunier i). Commentary on morality, social class, and men’s fashion in *Punch* furthered a shift in the popular understanding of gentility by using “cartoon images to convey messages that he [Mr.Punch] could not, as a gentleman, write about” (Usunier 25). Banting’s discussion of the body and fat could have fallen unnoticed, but for magazines like *Punch* which used cartoons to address some of the concerns about the self that once were deemed too low-brow for debate. In humorous cartoons, though, often more latitude was allowed in the subject matter presented and therefore they reveal more anxieties about the body produced by Banting’s discourse. A variety of *Punch* cartoons about Banting connect his anti-fat discourse with a new type of gentility predicated on slimness and restraint.

“Banting Be Blowed”

In “Banting Be Blowed,” a cartoon from 1865, a needy nephew addresses his corpulent uncle (see fig. 2). He states, “I believe you’re right there, Uncle, and that it’s my debts keep me so thin. What do you say to take ‘em off my hands, give over Banting, and go in for that Old Port again!!” (“Banting Be Blowed”).

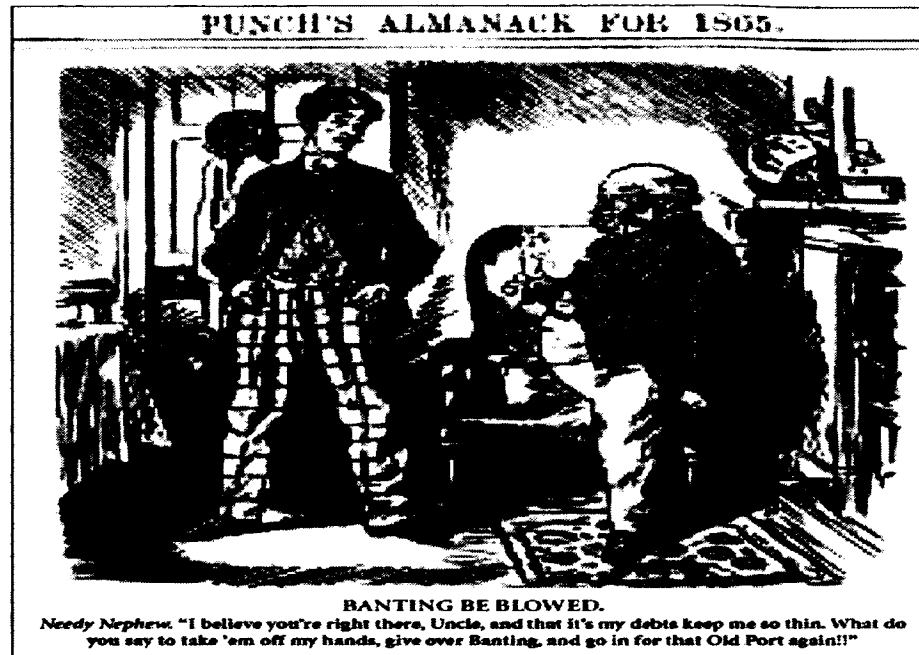


Fig. 2. Banting Be Blowed.

The cartoon explores the relationship between thinness and poverty, and wealth and fatness. The wealthy uncle is advised to stop dieting, and instead to take on the nephew's debts as a means of remedying his corpulence. In his discussions of *Punch's* renderings of social class, Mark Usunier remarks, "For the men of *Punch*, the gentleman, as they understood him, was financially prudent. He did not spend frivolously, he avoided gambling and betting, and he never incurred large amounts of debt that he could not pay" (40). Banting does not suggest poor people cannot be corpulent, but he does note that it is rare. The image directly connects poverty with thinness, and wealth with corpulence, reversing the new hierarchy Banting creates in his work. As one scholar notes, "Images complemented, supplemented or even contradicted, sometimes unwittingly, texts with which they were paired. Images often added an emotional dimension and reinforced

stereotypes” (Codell 410). This image directly connects wealth and privilege with fatness.

Slimness is also rendered as deprivation, a discussion facilitated by Banting’s diet. The cessation of Banting enables the uncle to indulge in “Old Port” again. As in the play, Banting is associated with deprivation and want, though he claims his diet creates satiety. While cartoons are vehicles for humor, “The cartoon images in *Punch* were the means by which the editors and artists chose to convey their opinions on what, to them, were some of the most important topics of the day” (Usunier 24). Though critical, Banting’s work featured prominently in scientific discourse in magazines. Here, Banting prevents indulgence in alcohol, and his diet is shown in use among the elite to curb the effects of overindulgence. Despite the satire, there is a recognition of Banting’s effect on abstention from alcohol, a form of moderation often supported by Victorian discussions of manners and morality.

“A Case for Mr. Banting”

The cartoon “A Case for Mr. Banting” also appeared in *Punch* in 1865 (see fig. 3). It features an extremely corpulent man and woman in a carriage. The caption reads, “Driver (of the Herring Mould to Party inclining to embonpoint). ‘Hollo, Bill! How many sacks o’ pertaters and hogsheads of sugar ‘ave yer got there?’”



A CASE FOR MR. BANTING.

Driver (of the Herring Mould to Party inclining to endonpoint). "HOLLO, BILL! HOW MANY SACKS O' PERTATERS AND HOORHEADS O' SUGAR 'AVE YEE GOT THERE?"

Fig. 3. A Case for Mr. Banting.

Obviously, the cartoon references Banting's diet which prohibited such viands as "milk, sugar, beer, butter, & etc." as a means to cure corpulence (12). Taking a herring mould to the party suggests the couple is Banting: herring moulds are mostly protein, and the dish is comprised mostly of herring and eggs in gelatin⁴². Although they are dieting, they have obviously not found much success, and the couple is mocked in a litote for "inclining" to fatness, when they are obviously quite obese. The bystander confuses the couple's weight with the heaviness of sacks of potatoes and barrels of sugar. The onlookers directly connect the driver's fatness with his consumption of sugar and potatoes. The cartoon points to Banting's burgeoning popularity, as all social classes depicted in the cartoon know of Banting's infamous diet and directly connect the driver's fatness with particular foods. The "emergence of what might be called 'middlebrow'

mass circulation periodicals was associated, in varying degrees, with a widespread social awareness” (Maidment 133). Banting became part of the social awareness of Victorian men and women partly through cartoons which reinforced the principles of his diet and its benefit for individuals. This burgeoning awareness is exemplified by the common man who speaks. He understands the effects of carbohydrates, as he immediately connects sugar and potatoes with the couple’s fatness. The excess of carbohydrates is of concern to the onlookers, who well understand the effect of their consumption on fatness, and who are disturbed by the corpulent couple. The cartoon illustrates that obesity after Banting attracts negative attention, and is decidedly undesirable as a preference, even among the middle class. It is also implied that fatness is restrictive and prohibitive. They cannot walk because of their weight. In the illustration, their cart also impedes others’ progress, and their girth creates a spectacle as well as an impediment to others.

The cartoon extends some of the social ridicule Banting chronicles as affecting corpulent people in public. As one Victorian scholar notes, “Periodical images were often para-texts, by which I mean they do not simply ‘illustrate’ a text in a literal way...but rather provide visual comment on the topic that may not simply repeat something from the text” (Codell 410). Banting never describes difficulties riding in carriages, but he does explore the difficulties imposed by his fatness. He mentions being subjected to the jeers of others because of his corpulence. In this cartoon, the character’s weight draws negative attention and commentary, leading to shame and discomfort. The cartoon expands on Banting’s anti-fat rhetoric by suggesting that fatness will be met with open derision and mockery, no matter the class status of the afflicted person.

As Julie Codell observes, “Victorian illustrations and cartoons often complemented or supplemented written texts or captions, and sometimes created contradictions or ambiguities not in the text they accompanied but generated in the space between image and text” (Codell 410). In this case, though Banting notes that fatness usually affects the wealthier citizens, he does not go so far as to suggest that fatness causes a loss of status and reverence. The cartoon’s exaggeration suggests just that. Fatness is just cause for mockery, no matter the person’s wealth or prestige.

“Banting in the Yeomanry”

On July 15, 1865, artist Charles Samuel Keene’s “Banting in the Yeomanry” appeared in *Punch* (see fig. 4). In it, a very portly Yeomanry Officer tells his captain that unless he receives a larger jacket, he will be forced to forgo one of his meals. The troop Sergeant Major says, “It comes to this, Captain, ‘a mun e’ther hev a new jacket or knock off one o’ my meals!”

This particular illustration responds to the complaints of restriction and self-control required by Banting’s plan. Obviously, the officer would not be harmed by missing a meal, so this particular cartoon cautiously supports Banting’s plan for its promotion of self-control. In popular discourse, Banting’s diet is often connected with deprivation, though Banting takes great pains to assure his readers that his table has superior fare and sufficient quantity under the Banting system. “It comes to this” creates a juxtaposition of two options: consuming food and gaining weight, or “knocking off” a meal. Banting finds such either/or propositions fallacious. In the fourth edition of the



BANTING IN THE YEOMANRY.

Troop-Sergeant Major. "IT COMES TO THIS, CAPTAIN, 'A MUN E'THER HEV' A NEW JACKET OR KNOCK OFF ONE O' MY MEALS!"

Fig. 4. Banting in the Yeomanry.

Letter he remarks, "I am thoroughly convinced, that it is **QUALITY** alone which requires notice, and not *quantity*" (3). Through the use of bold font, Banting highlights the importance of what is eaten, and relegates to relative unimportance how much is eaten. Commenting on his detractors in the preface of the *Letter*, Banting states, "This [the importance of quality over quantity] has been emphatically denied by some writers in the public papers, but I can confidently assert, upon the indisputable evidence of many of my correspondents, as well as my own, that they are mistaken" (4th Edition 3). Repeatedly, Banting iterates the idea that dieting does not mean total deprivation, but in

this cartoon, the comic supports the idea that in certain cases, forgoing meals is the proper and fitting course of action.

Though Banting never addresses the military context, the idea of refraining from overindulgence, especially as depicted in the cartoon, had implications for both military and civilian life. As one researcher observed, trends in men's fashion were often highly influenced by the style of dress found in the British military (Usunier 65). In his analysis of *Punch* cartoons, Usunier argues that the attitude of military men often is remarkably similar to that of the swell. The demand for a new jacket seems to substantiate Usunier's claims, as his demands easily afford a comparison of the man's attitude to the swell's. Obviously, the cartoon intimates the soldier could stand to miss a few meals, and the satirical depiction of his bombast indicts all those who would complain about small instances of self-denial. Like the soldier, the swell is reminded that self-restraint is often necessary.

The cartoon also has implications for the nation, as well as for social bodies because of its support of Banting's call for self-regulation. In Clare Horrocks' examination of the periodical and its role in raising awareness of the severity of public health problems, she argues that weekly journals like *Punch* were essential in articulating concerns about the state of the nation (23).⁴³ In this cartoon, fatness is treated pejoratively, and thus reflects negatively on the state of military readiness. A fat soldier concerned about his uniform is decidedly unprepared to carry out his duties. Fat creates enervation; conversely, thinness is associated with vigor and energy. In this cartoon, fatness is constructed as antithetical to such occupations, as it prohibits the active cultivation of the tenets of the English gentility. Rather than comporting himself with

dignity, the soldier is concerned with his jacket fitting and is whining about meals. By no means is he the rugged force needed to carry out imperial endeavors.

The satirizing of Banting in text and in pictures ultimately reinforced Banting's depiction of fat as abnormal and humiliating. Thus, it solidified Victorian cultural understandings of fat as a disease that creates a dis-ease of the corporeal body, capable of compromising the whole nation. Fat is depicted here as a problem, as it requires measures to be taken to make it less debilitating. Not attending to diet allows the body to be unruly and undisciplined, and thus preoccupation with dieting is preferable to the contrary. The idea of fat as a troublesome burden is also significant, and couches dieting in terms often reserved for empire building: "the white man's burden." Fat here is a burden that prevents the execution of imperialism. Extending Banting to a military context, albeit humorously, shows the national implications of the Victorian preoccupation with bodily reformation created by his anti-fat discourse. Power resided with those who could adhere to a diet and thus be physically prepared to serve the nation. To Bant was no longer a personal choice, but a political one with consequences for the nation.

Banting's Effect on Victorian Marketing

One way of examining more closely the impact of Banting on Victorian anti-fat discourse is to study an advertising campaign that capitalized on the fervor Bantingism created. Vestiges of Banting's work can be seen in the diet market his diet discourse inspired, as some of the particular threads of the busy discourse surrounding Banting include the social limitations and humiliation caused by fatness, and the connection of fat and social class (Gilman 130). Allan's Anti-Fat was a vegetable based substance that purported to help dieters lose two to five pounds per week. The six ounce bottle

contained a fluid extract of *Fucus vesiculosus* (bladder wrack), a substance akin to iodine (Rance). It was sold throughout England and advertised extensively in magazines such as *The Illustrated London News* and *The Belfast News-letter*. These advertisements circulated not only in England, but among other worldwide publications, though the company was based originally in New York. While Banting argued no medicines or tonics were useful for reducing corpulence, the advertisements produced in England featured many of the tropes expounded by Banting in his *Letter*. Admittedly, there were diet products advertised before Banting. However, what is important about the Allan's ads, for this argument, is the way they employ particular features of Banting's discourse to sell the product to a Victorian audience. In *Imperial Leather*, Anne McClintock examined commodity fetishism through an examination of Pears Soap advertisements. Allan's advertisements reveal some of the primary concerns about fatness expressed particularly by Banting in his work. Looking at these advertisements after Banting illustrates the pervasive effect of his discourse, and the specific ways in which ads capitalized on the anti-fat sentiment his work produced, particularly in drawing attention to shame and morality and social class.

A November 17, 1880 article in the *Evening Post* directly connects Banting's diet with the Allan's Anti-Fat campaign, establishing the Allan's products as directly capitalizing on some of the tropes of Banting's publication. The article states, "It is not at all surprising that 'Allan's Anti-Fat' should have been in so great demand lately...No doubt Banting's celebrated instructions were first carried out...Allan's Anti-Fat we presume, was only resorted to in dire extremity, when Banting's rules had been tried" ("Hospital Hospitality" 2). The article points to the time constraints of Banting's diet, and

the “more speedy” need to reduce “monstrous corpulence” (2). The article specifically links Allan’s to the Banting’s diet, and shows how transformative Banting was in weight-loss advertising.

In the *Letter*, not only was freedom associated with thinness, ridicule and shame were appended to fatness, a thread quite obvious in Victorian advertisements for weight loss after Banting. A non pictorial ad for Allan’s in 1879 which was printed in *The Belfast News-letter* features the following text:

A Ludicrous Scene- Thermometer 94 deg. in the shade
Dramatis personae: An exceedingly fat lady puffing like a
 Steam engine, and clinging to the arm of a small wiry
 gentleman, whose face has become very red either from the
 unusual exercise or the consciousness that a hundred eyes are
 looking at him with a ha ha! in each pupil. *Naughty boy:* ‘I
 say, Charlie, pretty small tug to tow her in with that cargo.’ (84)

The ad exemplifies a variety of tensions about identity and gender underlying discourse about fat produced by Banting’s work. First, the man is described as “small and wiry,” a humorous foil for the “steam engine” beside him. Fat, therefore, emasculates by threatening traditional binaries of size and weight ratios for men and women. The ad also creates fat as a spectacle. The man is subjected to ridicule and laughter because of the fatness of the woman with whom he appears. The advertisement appeals to men who would purchase diet products for their spouses, counseling them to avoid the humiliation produced by this ludicrous spectacle. Whether it is the fatness of this woman, or the contrast of the fat woman and wiry man that is so laughable, the ad points to the complex

gender dynamics underlying the sale of diet products. This is not only a domestic spectacle. The emasculation of the gentleman ends any hope of attaining prestige among the masses, represented by those watching the “ludicrous” spectacle of gentility undone by fatness. Additionally, the advertisement indicates the importance of women’s regulation of fatness to avoid embarrassing themselves, and it indicates they must avoid stigmatizing their husbands and reducing their level of respectability among the masses to whom they should be superior. Banting’s text addresses this very concern when he describes the ridicule he endured for his corpulence. He describes the jeers he endured as he waddled to his office, and comments on being the object of “the sneers and remarks of the cruel and injudicious” (Banting 3). Despite the ignominious treatment, Banting proposes a remedy to return an individual to a state of comfort and happiness. Humiliation and shame can be ameliorated by dieting. Thus, diet is linked to social standing, and the maintenance of reputation among inferiors.

Banting’s work promoted feelings of shame among the corpulent and emphasized the social consequences of failing to diet, extending fatness beyond the purview of the individual’s prerogative. Just as in the Banting *Punch* cartoon featuring the obese people in the cart, fat was often depicted as problematic for others in an increasingly busy and regulated social space, creating shame over the nuisance body fat created for others. Yet another ad for Allan’s capitalizes on the shame of social inconvenience chronicled by Banting in his *Letter*.

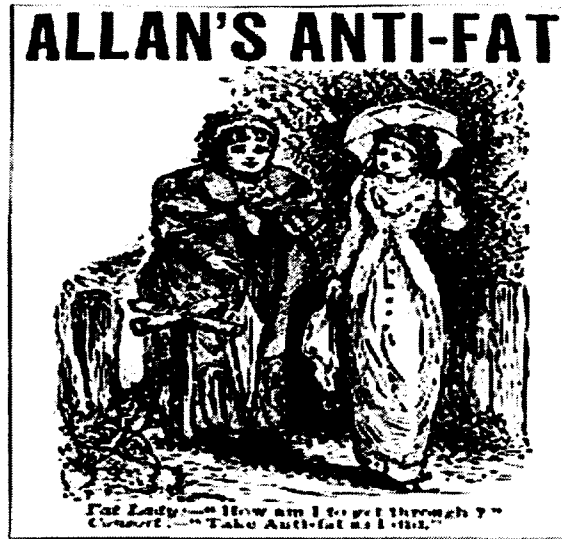


Fig. 5. Allan's Anti-Fat Ad.

The advertisement depicts a lady and her companion, and the dialogue appended features the lady asking how she will ever be thin enough to make herself fit through the turnstile (see fig. 5). The turnstile represents social barriers and impediments which cannot be navigated without ascribing to particular conventions, specifically in terms of avoiding fat. Her thinner friend retorts: "Take Anti-fat as I did." The advertisement suggests the ease of movement afforded by a thin frame, associating fat with a variety of impediments to mobility and productivity. In the advertisement, women are counseled to reduce girth in order to have more freedom in traversing increasingly homogenized public spaces. Those who conformed to a slender body type were afforded more privilege, freedom, and ease of movement, the advertisement claims. Banting's text capitalized on such desires for freedom and fears of being ostracized or excluded from activities because of a failure to conform. In his *Letter*, he describes his inability to perform simple tasks, such as navigating stairs. Likewise, he laments his inability to find

space at public gatherings, and the difficulty in using forms of public transportation because of his size. He depicts his tendency to avoid, “public assemblies, public vehicles, or the ordinary street traffic” because of his size and body mass (14). Using the fear of exclusion cultivated by Banting in his discourse makes diet ads such as the Anti-fat one particularly effective. The principle of exclusion encouraged those who desired social ascendancy to follow prescribed dietetics in order to attain the freedom and social motility promised by the rhetoric surrounding Banting’s work. Banting claims that fat is not merely a condition of excess adiposity, but a dangerous and disgraceful state. The advertisement echoes Banting’s preoccupation with the humiliation of corpulence. Describing fat as abnormal and humiliating exemplifies the cultural understanding in which fat as a disease creates an inescapable social stigma. Fatness is constructed as antithetical to progress and motility, as it prohibits the active cultivation of the tenets of English gentility. The advertisement draws on the popular sentiment created by Banting, and shows the pervasive anti-fat attitudes that existed after the publication of his discourse.

Banting promoted a cultural attitude in which fat was seen as injurious and inconvenient to fellow English people, and as a condition that must be changed. Thus, his work inspired attention to bodily transformation in response to the individual’s desire to produce a socially acceptable body (Orbach 102). Reframing the body required accepting that there was a bodily flaw that could be remedied with effort and vigilance, and Banting’s work capitalized on this to create a culture of fat-phobia. Although unlike the Allan’s ads he indicated no tonics were necessary, he did incite understandings that it was an individual’s obligation to choose to reduce fat. Banting capitalized on the power of the

individual when he states, “I hold the reins of health and comfort in my own hands” (Banting 21). The emphasis on “my” and “own” creates the rhetoric of individual empowerment. As Orbach notes, “A rhetoric of empowerment supports and provokes their desires and suggests that not to alter themselves would be a sign of self-neglect” (102). The language of empowerment and choice suggests that individuals do have the control and ability necessary to transform body sizes that are incompatible with what is deemed acceptable. Banting’s text also describes the reformable body, and suggests that obesity can be injurious not only to the self, but to others as well. For example, he dedicates the book to “my fellow creatures” in an “earnest desire to confer benefit” (21). The reduction of girth not only helps those afflicted, but also the families shamed by the presence of a fat member. He recalls his own shame at huffing and puffing with small exertion, and such discomfiting behavior bothers not only himself, but those around him. Thus, the emphasis on reforming the body to avoid the discomfort of others is used to encourage individuals to remedy the condition of obesity in both Banting’s work and in ads like Allan’s which drew upon his influence.

Finally, Banting connected fat and social class in indelible ways, and this is echoed in a variety of media representations throughout Victorian culture. An 1882 ad for Allan’s Anti-fat medicine borrows from Banting’s *Letter* quite clearly. The advertisement features a before and after image (see fig. 6).

BEFORE AND AFTER



ANTI-FAT

The GREAT REMEDY for
CORPULENCE.

ALLAN'S ANTI-FAT

is purely vegetable and perfectly harmless. It acts upon the food in the stomach, preventing its being converted into fat. Taken in accordance with directions, it will reduce a fat person from two to five pounds per week.

"Corpulence is not only a disease itself, but the harbinger of others." So wrote Hippocrates two thousand years ago, and what was true then is none the less so to-day.

Sold by druggists, or sent, by express, upon receipt of \$1.50. Quarter-dozen \$4.00. Address,

BOTANIC MEDICINE CO.,
Proprietors, Buffalo, N. Y.

Fig. 6. Take Allan's As I Did.

The image of before features a woman's expansive bosom and stout arm. The ad truncates below the chest. The after image features a much more slender rendition of the woman who proudly displays her neck and bustline, though with none of the fullness of breast displayed in the previous image. The ad not only counsels women that slimness is beautiful and results in increased pride and attention, but also is replete with class laden understandings of fatness as a sign of lower status. The first image is matronly; the high

collar cannot hide the plumpness of her torso, and the clothing suggests a working-class occupation. Rather than a sense of ascendancy in class hierarchy, the drawing intimates subordination, revising past notions of fat as a hallmark of upper class status. This confirms McClintock's analysis of Victorian photographic images of working women whose girth, especially in the arms, was commensurate with working class occupations (63). In the advertisement, the reduction of fat is connected with superiority of status, as her arms are conspicuously more dainty after the weight loss. In the after drawing, the woman appears considerably younger, and shows more décolletage. Rather than appearing to be of the working class, the cut of her dress and the scooped neck collar suggest a more leisurely lifestyle, surely one that does not require stooping. Thus, the advertisement conflates class and fat, suggesting that not only can an individual lose fat, but gain youthful vigor and class status through simply purchasing the pills. Banting suggested the same to his audience. Class status could be attained by shedding pounds and ascribing to his particular dietary regimen. Appealing to class consciousness was a means of enforcing compliance to norms of slimness, and the connection of class sophistication and slimness was a legacy of Banting's *Letter* to the Victorian public.

If the pervasive satirizing of Banting in text and in pictures shows the largeness of his stature in Victorian popular thinking, that effect understandably grows beyond England and spreads far and wide. His *Letter on Corpulence* was published in Europe and America, and the references to him also catapulted him to fame far beyond the boundaries of England. Sander Gilman (2008) has traced Banting's popularity in America, specifically in the South, where Banting was especially popular in Georgia (130). While Gilman and Amy Erdman Farrell (2011) point to the responsibility of social

and economic changes in the 19th century for shifting attitudes toward corpulence, Banting's discourse facilitated a number of changes in popular consciousness in England and beyond (Farrell 40). Diet ads are helpful in revealing the cultural attitudes toward fat, but there are a variety of other cultural representations of fatness as a humiliating condition unfit for Englishness that also reflect the impact of Banting on Victorian anti-fat discourse. In the next chapter, Banting's exportation to India will be chronicled as a means of tracing concerns about fat bodies and imperial identities. In a colonial context, such ideas of bodily reformation and morality are important, especially as many of the early East India Company men behaved indecorously. Reforming attitudes and behaviors significantly enhanced the project of empire, and Banting's focus on shame, social class, and reformation were important in re-developing the idea of English identity in India, especially after the Mutiny of 1857. Despite past transgressions, through the regulation of dietary practices, individuals were expected to curb disreputable behavior through individual determination to exert control over weight and consumption habits.

CHAPTER FIVE

BANTING IN BRITISH COLONIAL INDIA

Banting's Spread from England

Banting was a pervasive presence in the nineteenth century English popular imagination. Though Banting and his diet were objects of social satire, the number of cartoons, Banting-inspired diet ads, quips, and plays indicate his widespread popularity and social significance. That he was well-known enough to merit mocking attests to his influence and success in attracting the attention and imagination of Victorian popular culture. For example, in an 1864 article "Training in Relation to Health," readers are urged to "Take advantage of Mr. Banting's experience to address a word of advice...and listen with attention to Mr. Banting, preaching from the text of his own experience" (230). The casual reference to "Mr. Banting's experience" indicates an awareness of his name and the eponymous diet the article's author believes all British readers share. Such casual references to Banting appeared quite often in magazines, illustrating the familiarity of Victorian readers with Banting's diet and its patronymic namesake⁴⁴. For example, in an edition of *Cornhill* magazine, a nonfiction piece entitled "Mountain Stumps" (1890) describes the volcano Mull in the Hebrides. The author queries, "How, then, has it come to be reduced so soon, as by some heroic course of Banting, to such small dimensions?" (271). The writer assumes the audience will be well-versed in the allusion, and its casual inclusion indicates the proliferation of Banting's fame in Victorian popular culture. Additionally, in an 1865 article published in England entitled "Mr. Banting and the Benedictine Order," the author facetiously notes that "The discipline of Mr. Banting

seems at first sight particularly suitable to so self-denying a set of gentlemen...Loss of flesh is, we assume, an object of the Order, and fasting is supposed to be thinning” (3). The article ends with the idea that by adopting the Banting diet plan, “by one and the same regimen, [they are] serving the cause of religion and social science” (3). Though in some ways critiquing Banting, the reference illustrates his name and his principles were as familiar as the Benedictine Order’s. The gospel of Bantingism, metaphorically, was widespread.

These examples illustrate a greater point: the transformative nature of Banting’s diet in Victorian England predicted its spread to other locales, inevitably to British colonial India. The connection of fat discourse with colonial projects has been well studied in modern scholarship. In Elena Levy-Navarro’s introduction to *Historicizing Fat* (2010), she draws attention to the complex relationship of fat and empire. Fat has a history, she observes, one which is in need of cultural and historical analysis, as fat has not always been a scourge, criticized and condemned for deleterious health effects. Instead, Navarro argues that the genesis of fat as undesirable and avoidable can be traced to the reinscription of racial, cultural, and national identity brought about in part by colonial endeavors. She explains, “anxiety over the state of the British empire manifested itself in the anxiety over the supposed fattening of its primarily male citizens” (9). Fat is involved with a variety of political and economic changes, including the growth of the British Empire, the rise of consumerism, and modernization itself. As the vocabulary of the body is culturally constructed, the dominant discourse is responsible for the accretions surrounding fat, impelling a closer analysis of the colonial historical context and effects of anti-fat discourse. It is not surprising that Bantingism would spread to

India, where it pathologized fat. His diet had far reaching consequences, ones that extended beyond the waistlines of nineteenth century English men and women.

Just as in England the diet craze was fueled and fostered by a variety of developments which contributed to Banting's popularity, the *Letter's* favorable reception in the colonial Indian context was predicated on a number of political and social events, chief of which were the circumstances of the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857.⁴⁵ Traditional arguments about the causes of the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857 point to the refusal of British Indian soldiers to handle the grease that the British Army was mandating as a lubricant for its rifles and cartridges. Not only did soldiers have to force the cartridge down the rifle's barrel, the cartridges had to be bitten open by mouth (Keay 438). Even though the problem was somewhat resolved by the introduction of the breech-loading rifle in 1867, much of the rancor remained, and spilled over into social aspects. This kind of argument focused exclusively on grease as the immediate sparking point of the rebellion misses the larger implications and subsequent consequences of this point of contention between the Indian Army and its conscripts. What the opposition represented was a deepening of the sense of exclusion between the colonial British who preferred meat-eating and the use of byproducts of meat consumption such as grease, and the native Indians who did not prefer such a diet and the handling of such byproducts. The focus on food both during and post-rebellion is significant as it marked a moment in which consumption patterns and religious preferences became markers of racial difference. The implicit distinction between the meat-consuming colonial British and the meat-avoiding native Indian subject is reinforced and articulated by Banting's diet when it arrives in India. The Sepoy Mutiny's other consequence was a re-examination of dietary and sexual indulgence, as

befitting a superior, disciplined British colonial personality, and in this too, Bantingism's emphasis on moderation and self-control was directly contributory.⁴⁶ As such, Banting's text, arriving in India in the wake of the Mutiny, enabled instrumental changes to occur in Anglo-Indian military and civil society predicated on food and consumption habits in India.

Banting arrived in India on the backs of administrative and missionary discourses that featured an evangelical battle between good and evil. Officials of the British Indian administration and missionaries were attracted to Banting's discussion of dieting as a way to attain health, preferment, and to declare a distinctive British identity. The *Letter's* rendering of morality served to reify the idea of a morally superior England in the colonial scene. Conversely, it was also secular enough in its prescriptions to provide the elite in Indian society, eager to gain acceptance in the upper echelons of British colonial Indian society, with a model dietary code of conduct. Banting's work arrived in India via Company men educated in England, missionaries familiar with his work, and through the increased availability of printed material in cities of colonial contact such as Calcutta, where his work was sold and accessible in public libraries and discussed in various publications. These provided a means for widely disseminating information about health and disease for eager audiences primed for such discourses about control, superiority, and differentiation.

Accelerating and visibly reinforcing the dissemination of Banting in India were the publications of a physician with the 3rd Punjab Cavalry named Joshua Duke. Duke's two works, *How to Get Thin: Or Banting in India, With some Remarks on Diet and Things in General* (1870) and *Queries at a Mess Table, What Shall I Eat? What Shall I*

Drink? (1878) provided a far more effective discourse permeating all aspects of British colonial culture.⁴⁷ Duke's propagation of Banting's diet plan adapted it to life in India, but in doing so, it also expanded and extended it in specific ways that highlight the role that Bantingism played in consolidating colonial authority. Bantingism enhanced the idea of empire and helped to produce the idea of an imagined English identity predicated on slimness and fitness which created hierarchies and legitimized British control. Joshua Duke's rendering of Banting enabled the reproduction of an imagined English identity that was superior in physiology and temperament befitting colonial administration. Medically justifying British fitness to rule, Duke's modification and the adaptation of Banting that accompanied the dissemination of Banting into India included mandated exercise and reformation in manners.

Banting's spread to colonial India is unsurprising, given his status as a figure of popular culture fascination in England. British colonial India was primed for Banting by seperative consequences that flowed from a British colonial culture preferring and advocating meat consumption and the use of its byproducts, and a local Indian culture that abhorred such preferences. The subsequent uneasiness produced by the uprising permeated the military and civil society, and led to a reflection on the prior excesses and initiated a variety of steps to re-create an English identity that was fit to rule. Banting's arrival in India through available copies of his *Letter* and subsequent adaptations of his work by men such as Duke facilitated his spread throughout areas of colonial contact. What is significant about Bantingism in India is its ubiquitous employment as a remedy for a variety of military and social ills. While Banting himself attacked fat, in India, his

discourse served as a panacea for a myriad problems that the Mutiny of 1857 made undeniable for military and civilian society.

Military and Social Situation in India before Banting

The seeds of the Indian mutiny sprouted long before the first shots were fired, and many of these were significant in the development of anti-fat discourse in British colonial India. Historically, for almost one hundred and fifty years, the Honourable East India Company had jurisdiction over its British citizens in India, and almost functioned as an autonomous state. It had the ability to mint coins, employ soldiers, and administer justice (Read and Fisher 11). By 1700, Calcutta had a European population of 1200, and attracted a variety of investors and people seeking to bank securely. While an entire history of English colonization in India is beyond the scope of this project, at certain key moments in British Indian colonial military and social history of the early nineteenth century, issues of food indulgence and excessive consumption in colonial and native subjects, specifically in Calcutta, appeared.⁴⁸ The Sepoy Mutiny of 1857 was merely the climax of these events which generated anxiety over indulgences in food and alcohol by the English colonial population, and over their sexual liaisons with the working class. Indulgence and self-control were longstanding issues for English imperial endeavor in India.

Between 1763 and 1856, there were no fewer than forty armed revolts in various parts of British India (Harrison 45). A significant number of the problems that led to these mutinies and to the eventual larger one were perceived by the English authorities to be connected to immoderation in consumption habits among their population. Many of the Company servants and soldiers who arrived in Calcutta in the early 1800s were

typically younger sons of provincial landed families, Anglo-Irish landowners, clergymen's sons, and Scots who had lost their estates in one of the Jacobite uprisings. The desire for success enhanced the propensity for gluttony, as well as ironically the adoption of habits of excess (Klein 545). Rather than frugality, the opportunity and availability of vices pandered to the youth and lack of inhibition of arrivals in India. The relative youth, too, of the Company's Calcutta employees also led to a variety of issues, as many were as young as fifteen. After six months of a voyage, Writers (as Company employees were called) were free from much supervision and had the freedom to engage in extravagant and excessive luxuries. Debt and other indulgence often ended dreams of success and fortune.

Food in colonial Calcutta was another sign of colonial overindulgence which compromised ideas of English superiority. In 1806, William Hickey, an attorney working for the Chief Justice of Bengal, commented on the excesses of Calcutta by chronicling "the barbarous [Calcutta] custom of pelleting [fellow diners] with little balls of bread, made like pills" in the local taverns and dining rooms (qtd. in Dalrymple 321). Hickey pointed out that this behavior "was even practiced by the fair sex," and recounted many clerks in punch houses throwing half-eaten chickens across the tables (qtd. in Dalrymple 321). Other than illustrating wastefulness and poor manners among men and women, the anecdote conveys the excesses offered to those in Calcutta who indulged in food and alcohol as forms of entertainment and relaxation. Hickey referred to the custom as 'barbarous,' but indulgence was commonplace, as were large meals and lavish libations.⁴⁹ Several modern studies of the decades prior to 1857 have demonstrated how extensive this problem was. Andrea Major (2012) has pointed out the immoderate habits of the

British colonials, despite the presence of missionaries and the imposition of various reform efforts to curb these habits. Harald Fischer-Tine (2012) likewise has chronicled various examples of the gluttony and indulgence of company men in British India, primarily in Calcutta and Bombay. He provides various examples of the working class being “intemperate, violent, and troublesome among colonial authorities” and prone to “disorderly behavior” (384). These he attributes to visits to “punch houses and cheap-eating places” where overindulgence was a common phenomenon (390). Like Major, Fischer-Tine points to immoderation as a significant problem for colonial Calcutta.

As well as excess in food, another problem included the consumption of alcohol among the English in India, where the availability of cheap liquor created a variety of problems for British soldiers and company men. Drinking problems often originated on the initial voyage, but the initial indulgence on the crossing often did not abate, evident as soldiers were permitted up to a gallon of spirits every twenty days, and one or two drams of rum or arrack (Harrison 62-63). Records from 1833 show that 710 men in the 26th regiment stationed in Calcutta consumed 5320 gallons of a rice liquor locally distilled, 220 gallons of brandy, and 249 gallons of gin, together with 207 hogsheads (each 52 ½ gallons) of beer (James 138). Earlier records testify to similar patterns in drinking; 1833 was not an exceptional year. Arrack and other liquors were available for purchase in bazaars relatively inexpensively, and by 1866, drinking was considered a vice more detrimental than any other, though attempts to curb it met with little success (James 138). The consumption patterns described here establish a pattern of immoderation against which few effective restrictions were levied.

Immoderate appetites of another kind mentioned also created another issue for military regiments and company men in early Calcutta: venereal disease. Between 1827-1833 the infection rates among British soldiers in Bengal fluctuated between 16 and 31% (James 139). Though various measures were undertaken to curb the spread, including treatment of garrison prostitutes, the presence of brothels throughout Calcutta made such attempts difficult to regiment and implement. The presence of Calcutta's brothels led to the spread of "atashak," a severe venereal disease that affected people of all classes. In the military, instances of venereal disease were tremendously debilitating. Treatment meant men would recover, but the convalescence diminished manpower and thus at any given time, nearly every British regiment was under strength by as much as a quarter (James 139). Recovery, therefore, was not only personal, but also affected imperial endeavors. Early commentators on the problem found fault with the European elite for the failure to set exemplary moral standards for others to follow.

The problems created by sexual excess facilitated the public control of private bodies in the colonial state. Antoinette Burton's work illustrates how the comportment of the upper echelons of society, and their failure to embody the principles defined as uniquely English, including manners and deportment, was a growing problem.⁵⁰ Burton's research into the laws passed to prevent the spread of venereal diseases has shown that the personal became political, and in many ways, in the colonial state, the condition of bodies—once private and personal—became public domain and subject to regulation. Analogously, in discourses about proper English identity written to discourage the solicitation of prostitutes in the colonial domain, the descriptions of the bodies of native Indians were replete with images of contamination, decay, or illness to serve as warnings

(Stoler 109). The issue of sexual excess connected to the construction of proper English comportment and its colonial manifestation, on the one hand, and into the rhetoric of racial separation between the colonial British and Indian subjects. Phillipa Levine (1979) has also examined the connection between venereal disease and the development of racism. The rhetoric of racial separation she traces is evident in the post-mutiny increase in the overseas market for British brides; in these advertisements, many men referred to their Indian “housekeepers” as “treacherous,” and spoke of desiring the “security” of a British spouse (Wolpert 245). Fear encouraged complete abstinence from any compromising sources of possible degeneracy, including native women.

Governor-General Lord Dalhousie, in his reports immediately prior to the mutiny, often pointed to the conspicuous consumption engaged in and offered warnings that such behavior compromised the dignity and decorum of British rule (Keay 384). After the mutiny, more attention was paid to the excesses of the ruling class, excesses which compromised the ability to govern and maintain dominion under the auspices of claims of moral superiority. Thus, post mutiny, the late eighteenth century figure of the nabob—a self-made man who made his fortune in India before returning to England—was associated with having acquired ‘oriental’ proclivities, including a tendency toward gluttony and portliness. The fat nabob’s identity set him apart from shifting ideals of British manliness, and corpulence was a part of this othering (Forth 5).

Not only was maintaining an uncompromised individual identity important, so too was it important to create a domestic life which demonstrated civility. Segregation and differentiation featured heavily in the rhetoric of the times.⁵¹ English settlements in India after the mutiny were designed to restore order (Keay 383). One source notes that “the

arrival of Englishwomen” in the wake of the mutiny “more sharply defined racial distinctions” (Woodcock 163). Distancing the British community in India from those deemed disorderly and uncivilized resulted in an imagined community as defined by Benedict Anderson (1991): a system of cultural representation through which people came to imagine a shared experience of identification with an extended community. Borders and identities are often fashioned through imagination, and the imperialist imagination showed as India was defined in terms of a variety of juxtapositions with other places lacking civility, such as Java, which was described as the “Bengal of the East Indies;” Ann Stoler has examined at length how British discourse fashioned Java and India as commensurate, creating an identification between incongruous groups of people based on the imagined identification of British men and women (Stoler 212).⁵² Colonial authorities, as Stoler notes, “were obsessed with moral, sexual, and racial affronts to European identity...but most definitely where they had equivocal control- in the home” (153). As a result, the protecting the insularity of the family unit was as important as defending the self from contagion. Discipline, morality, and self-control became the hallmarks of middle class rearing, and became a way to discern European sensibilities from Indian ones.

Post-mutiny, it became increasingly important to visibly demonstrate the home as a site of uncompromised English aesthetics. British women writers after the mutiny began to assert their adherence to a distinctively British lifestyle as a sign of their refinement. As one source claims, “The Indian Rebellion of 1857 directly and indirectly accounts for this change [the increased number of women’s publications]...[the rebellion] created a market for personal narratives of domestic heroism in the Empire” (Chaudhuri

556). Heroism here refers to the policing of the household to avoid contamination. Such visible demonstrations of English identity were cultivated post-mutiny. For example, Flora Annie Steel's *The Complete Indian Housekeeper and Cook* (1888) warns against heavy lunches, and advises women to keep to the traditional English fashions: "there is no reason why English fashions should not be adhered to in every way" (Steel and Gardiner 55). Unlike other earlier advice texts which set India as a place very different from England and requiring very unique approaches, Steel's text argued British culture could be exactly reproduced, fending off accusations of degeneracy or moral lassitude in the colonies. Adherence to British food and diet were ways to assert cultural superiority; by maintaining British foodways and dietetics, women in the colonies defended their integrity. Food consumption was therefore a means by which colonial men and women could demonstrate and proclaim habits little influenced by the surrounding culture.

The climate, however, prevented an exact reproduction of English dietary habits and customs despite arguments to the contrary. Formal dinner in Calcutta, for example, was eaten between four and five, and afterwards, ladies and gentlemen went about in carriages until ten. While this was a common habit at the turn of the century, by 1840, customs changed to encompass a formal dinner in more traditional British style. After dinner, there were often entertainments. Several diaries of men described feelings of nausea at tables of hot food in hot weather; others expressed revulsion at the preponderance of flies, shooed away by attendants, whose presence only created more stifling heat (James 170). Food, then, was one place in which English identity could not be performed or reproduced exactly, despite attempts to do so.

Despite this, the home became the site in which to demonstrate the retention of an uncompromised English identity, and women and men were expected to participate in the creation of a distinctively English way of life. Paul Gilroy notes that “Race differences are displayed in a culture which is reproduced in educational institutions and, above all, in family life” (43). For women confined primarily to the domestic sphere, attitudes toward Indians in general were shaped by interactions with servants, the group with whom women had the most interaction, and in India, even modest British families could afford to hire and employ more servants than at home (Chaudhuri 551). In order to publically illustrate the inviolability of the home, many women wrote letters, personal accounts, and recollections of events which were popular in England. From the 1850s on, memsahibs produced advice manual and wrote articles for women’s periodicals, specifically for the *Englishwoman’s Domestic Journal* and the *Queen* (Chaudhuri 550). In these writings, a common post-mutiny theme is the interaction with servants who have a lack of self-control, particularly in appetites. Many of the descriptions characterize the servants as lazy or filthy, contrasting their habits with those of their British employers. Ascribing filthiness or a lack of cleanliness is a means of separating colonizer from colonized, and emphasizes otherness or inferiority (Chaudhuri 554). In these depictions, food is used to create a dichotomy between master and servant. The servants are shown to be greedy, gluttonous, and insatiable in appetite, whereas the English mistress is the executor of a tightly controlled pantry. Micromanaging food and its preparations were hallmarks of a good memsahib. Such control dictated a way to demonstrate English identity in the home through compliance with diet and eating practices.

Even though the phenomena described are best seen in Calcutta, as was mentioned earlier, it must be understood that at the time of the mutiny, all of Calcutta was not immediately affected. For example, during the mutiny, the annual ball was held on the queen's birthday with no additional precautions deemed necessary, and even at the height of the rebellion, new western-style universities were founded there to perpetuate the idea of a perfectly ordered society (Read and Fisher 52). Although the actual revolt's danger itself did not affect Calcutta directly, the resonance was felt through a variety of changes in beliefs and social structures that did have an effect. When the effects did reach it, though, they revealed the fundamental aspects of the phenomena described above. Its aftermath would have great social ramifications for the colonial endeavor as the upper echelon of men and women attempted to re-create the order and control of an imagined England in India. Banting's book, which arrived in India well after the Mutiny, helped to redefine British identity and made significant contributions to the creation of the moral and physical aesthetics of colonial administrators.

The Arrival of Banting in India

The mutiny led to a stricter regimentation of these perceived excesses and created the context for Bantingism to arrive. The Banting diet, introduced into this post-mutiny environment of social uncertainty, served as a means of solidifying an acceptable British identity. A cardinal feature of Banting's pervasive popularity in England at this time was predicated on the increased prestige of the patient as physician that Banting's work personified. Banting derived from and consolidated the growing prestige of the physician in the social imagination in Victorian England. Correspondingly, Bantingism succeeded in attaining social acceptance in colonial India because his diet established moral

superiority and codified the rules of behavior which became adopted by the colonial English gentry to further a sense of righteousness and supremacy.

The Banting dietetic ideology arrived in India on the backs of several kinds of printed material: administrative, military, evangelical, and derivative works.

Administratively, Banting's spread in India was facilitated by the East India Company's educational offerings at Haileybury, the company's military academy in England, where "generations of young Britons were imbued with the belief that they had been born to lead the Indians out of the darkness of superstition and into the light of western civilization" (Read and Fisher 30). *The Memorials of Old Haileybury College* (1894) reminds readers that Haileybury was designed to provide education that would answer the "question of the best educational system for Indian civilians" (xxi). To that end, Haileybury taught "Chemistry of Food and Nutrition at the East India College at Haileybury" ("Monthly Bulletin of the Library" 9). These courses began as early as 1857, and yet most certainly would later include Banting's diet system. Evidence describes how the curriculum at Haileybury addressed "Other degenerative conditions impacted by alteration in the diet" and provided dietetic instruction at "Haileybury, the College of the East India Company" ("Alteration in Diet" 18). These dietetic lessons were meant to create "personnel who would promote" such diets in India (19). Another textbook from Haileybury suggests that the college literally and metaphorically was preparing the "learning intellectual [with] food for the improvement of" themselves (Williams 22). Information provided at Haileybury included comportment, language study, and cultural instruction. Monier Williams, a Professor of Sanskrit at the East India College, Haileybury, read Banting and was concerned with "excessive leanness and its opposite,"

and his orientalist scholarship would inspire Joshua Duke to adapt Banting's diet in India (qtd. in Forth 10).⁵³ *Blackwood's Magazine*, to which Banting originally wrote, published a review of "Memorials of Old Haileybury" and specifically sought to define the nature of the Haileybury student as it asked, "And who was the Haileybury student?" (107). The magazine praised Haileybury for producing students who could do away with the previous "licentiousness," "indolence," and "greed without conscience" that English erudition combated (107). Haileybury offered its attendees lessons in morality and instruction in the importance of empire, and students were expected to use their education to foster administrative and political imperatives in India. As the article "Memorials" shows, the British diet and education provided at Haileybury facilitated the creation of men who were imagined as "chivalrous" and "mighty hunter[s]," whereas Indians were described as "fat" (108). Bantingism furthered this particular type of argument about English fitness to rule, as it claimed that diet created constitutions which were both physically and morally superior. Banting's work was available in Haileybury's library, and his work established a precise connection between diet and the imperial mission of civilizing and educating colonial subjects. The text *The Rail and the Rod* (1867) commended the dietary instruction at Haileybury for creating men fit to rule. The author praises the Haileybury education for "returning energy amongst a class of men who require little exercise short of Bantingism" (Fennell 86). Additionally, the *Haileybury Register, 1862-1887* lists several references to Haileybury students who would propagate William Banting and his diet (*Haileybury Register, 1862-1887*). One such student was Lieutenant-Colonel John Haughton, whose relative Sir Graves Chamney Haughton was for many years a Professor of Oriental Languages at Haileybury (Yate 17). During his

service in India, Lieutenant-Colonel John Haughton would invoke Bantingism humorously as an analogy to the trimming process to which Indian Army regulations should be subjected (Yate 74).

Besides introducing Banting into a curriculum with a decidedly imperial agenda, Haileybury had another effect on reading habits: with its opening in England, the previous Company-run college in Calcutta was repurposed and charged with the publication of hundreds of texts to create educated workers. It eventually had one of the largest collections of books and manuscripts in India (Read and Fisher 31). These included Banting's diet treatise. Calcutta publications often targeted military and company men, and these frequently invoked Banting's name as a vital piece of knowledge to have in India. *The Foreign Officer List and Diplomatic and Consular Handbook, With Maps* (1877) makes note of Banting's text as an item to read for those abroad. It lists, "*Corpulence. A letter addressed to the public by William Banting*" under the heading of works useful to consult (7). The *Foreign Officer List* was a "work compiled from official documents, by permission of the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs" (i). *A Guide To Hindustani Specifically Designed for the Use of Officers and Men Serving in India, Including Colloquial Phrases in Persian and Roman Character and a Collection of Arzīs, with Transliteration in Roman-Urdu and English Translations* (1895) published in Calcutta by Thacker, Spink, and Company for government officials was another such book which cited Banting and made him available as it lists: "Duke...Banting in India...16" (50).⁵⁴ Duke's book on Banting was translated into Urdu, and the *Guide* translates this "kitab" or book as providing information on Banting's diet (16). The company libraries were soon joined by public libraries carrying Banting's

work. By the 1870s, numerous libraries in Calcutta, as recorded by the *Catalogue of the Library of India Office*, had acquired a variety of Banting items.⁵⁵ The Calcutta Public Library, which was established in 1836, had Banting's texts in its collections and loaned them to its clientele.⁵⁶ The catalogue entry reads, "Banting, Wm. *Letter on Corpulence*" (*Catalogue of the Calcutta Public Library* 121). Although it is difficult to be precise about the exact reading habits of the clientele of such libraries, what is certain is that Banting's text was available in a fairly visible fashion in libraries in India. It was carried in the National Library of India, as indicated by the catalogue of the National Library from 1908, which references Banting's name and work under the heading of "food and diet" (74). The *Author-Catalogue of Printed Books in European Languages* published in India also lists Banting's work in its Imperial Library holdings (384). Additionally, the Bagbazar Library in Calcutta, established in 1883, which did tabulate data about its collection and classes of books in stock, included Banting's text in its available books. It is catalogued in the report *Bagbaz of the Calcutta Public Library for the 19th Year Ending on June 1902*.

Advertisements and news articles in British Indian presses also featured Banting's name. One publication in which advertisements for Banting's text appeared was in directories for Thacker, Spink & Company, a Calcutta based company. Thacker's directory was essentially an annual almanac which listed and advertised—among other things—books available for purchase in Bengal from British and foreign merchants. Banting's work is prominently listed for sale in the directories, and it appears as early as the 1870s in Thacker, Spink & Company's catalogues for popular reading material. As in England, these advertisements for Banting took the form of letters, news columns, and

editorial comments. Banting's work also features in the available texts for sale in the *Asiatic Journal and Monthly Register* for 1875 (507). It lists "Banting's *Letter on Corpulence*" as available for purchase, even though it does not provide a short endorsement or description as the register does for some works (507). Conversely, *The Colonial Office List* (1877) provides a much longer entry for Banting's text. It advertises, "Corpulence. A letter addressed to the public by WILLIAM WILLIAM (sic). Fourth Edition, with prefatory remarks made by the author, copious information from correspondents, and confirmatory evidence of the benefit of his dietary system, which he recommended to public notice. Price is 1s" (*The Colonial Office List* 7). It then reprints two endorsements: one from the *Post*: "The author has made a discovery at which every corpulent man has reason to rejoice" (qtd. in *The Colonial Office List* 7). Then, it reprints a line from *Standard*, "Banting has become a household word in men's mouths. 'Have you tried Banting' is as common a question as 'How do you do?'" (qtd. in *The Colonial Office List* 7). *The India Office and Burma Office List* (1893) also advertises Banting's "Corpulence. A Letter on, addressed to the Public By W. Banting. 4th Edition (reprinted 1885)" (80). Similarly, in *The India List and India Office List* from 1905, it catalogues the entry thus: "Banting, William. The Rational Cure of Obesity, being a Letter on Corpulence addressed to the Public. Re-edited with Notes, Addenda, and a Preface by a Barrister" (84). Though succinct, it firmly places Banting's work in India.

Banting's name also appears in news articles, sometimes favorably and sometimes not. One instance of a favorable mention is the article in the *Calcutta Review* (1893), in which the author sarcastically states, "We are not prepared to declare the yearly increasing bulk of Bengal Administration reports an altogether avoidable evil, but

we certainly think more might be done towards mitigation of their obeseness, by application of a Banting system” (427). Banting’s name is sufficient enough to merit no accompanying explanation. Just as in England, in India Banting was also critiqued in the medical press for creating a dietary craze with potential deleterious effects. For example, in the *Madras Monthly Journal of Medical Science Volume 2*, an article accused Banting’s dietary plan of causing Bright’s disease.⁵⁷ The author recounts the findings of a doctor from Frankfurt who reported three cases of patients who “carried Banting-ism to an excess” (“Banting’s System a Cause of Bright’s Disease” 226). The report concludes, “So insidious was the invasion of the renal disorder...All the cases were fatal,” and the author speculates that Banting’s fat reduction system caused “the loss of fat of the kidney” and led to renal disease (226). Despite its critique of Bantingism, the article illustrates Banting’s pervasive influence in India, and the widespread availability of the text to readers who were already familiar with the diet phenomenon.

Additionally, Banting’s work on diet also appeared in missionary literature in England, and spread to India. Missionaries going to India seemed to find Banting useful to further a particular agenda of moral abstemiousness. The print runs of a variety of manuals for those traveling to the colonies reveal the growing interest in diet and hygiene as a practical part of health regulation abroad. For example, *A Manual of Family Medicine and Hygiene for India* garnered a wide readership among those who would make the voyage.⁵⁸ The similarly composed *The Handy Book on Food and Diet, in Health and Disease* (1871) contains a section on Banting’s plan. Its author notes, “Sparse as Mr. Banting’s diet is in some respects, it is, perhaps, superior to the fare enforced amongst the monks in the order of La Trappe” (90). The author concludes that “Many

persons have been benefitted from imitating him in the moderation of his diet, and his temperance in the use of alcohol” (90). Banting’s moralizing over obesity secured his readership among missionaries to India, as missionary health manuals directed young visitors to avoid the habits associated with corpulence, including excessive indulgence in food, alcohol, and sloth. *The Youth’s Magazine, or Evangelical Miscellany* (1865) contains references to Banting, and shows how he was a vital part of missionary culture. In a vignette describing the death of a fly, a moralistic tale reflecting on the busy nature of life and the need for contemplation, the author invokes Banting. He says, “As we regarded his rotund and inflated body, vague notions of the veterinary art, and even of Mr. Banting, flitted through our mind” (75). As its plumpness is described, the writer notes “disease had arrested its playful gambols and thieving propensities” (75). One can see Banting’s articulation of fat as an evil, deleterious condition which impaired health, reflected in this parable for young evangelicals. Banting’s diet was also recognized as being secular enough to be propagated successfully. In “The Life and Philosophy of Bishop Berkeley,” (1872), an article which describes the life of George Berkeley, a priest of the Church of Ireland in the 1720s, the editor describes some of the dietary remedies for ailments Berkeley employed toward the end of his life. The editor invokes Banting as a “method [which is] universal,” suggesting that “Bantingism...had its day” in England and would be also useful for “Mahomedans in India” (55).⁵⁹

This idea of Bantingism’s usefulness is present in Indian missionary health manuals, such as *The Indian Missionary Manual; or, Hints to Young Missionaries in India* (1870). The author, John Murdoch, was a member of the Christian Literature Society for India, formerly called the Christian Vernacular Education Society, and its

purpose was to publish Christian books in Indian languages. It also established the Female Normal School in Calcutta as part of its educational endeavors. Murdoch's publishing enterprises in India certainly would have made him familiar with Banting's fame, both in India and England, where Banting's success as a self-published man was well-known.⁶⁰ Murdoch's manual mentions the special conditions that made fat in India an especially significant health impairment that must be remedied: "Health demands attention everywhere, but its preservation in India is of special consequence. The climate is depressing, and when even slight bodily ailment is superadded, a person is rendered almost useless" (29). The word 'useless' not only warns missionaries to preserve health for self-serving reasons, but also warns that without proper adherence to the rules set forth for the climate and its particularities, individuals will fail in their endeavors to convert. Such a prospect immediately renders the dietary advice as not merely helpful, but integral to success of the imperial project. The utilitarian idea of 'usefulness' also connects weight management with imperialism, as an individual's use value is rendered here in terms of his/her health. Controlling weight is depicted as beneficial to the self, but more so to the nation. The text solidifies the importance of dietetics in the arsenal of the would-be missionary's plan of attack: "There are no points of hygiene to which the attention of a new-comer should be more particularly directed than to moderation and simplicity in his diet" (33). Moderation and simplicity demand attention, the text notes, reiterating the importance of avoiding fat, excess, and anything that might hinder the efforts to spread Christianity to India. Although Banting's name is not directly mentioned, concepts of fat as debilitating is almost certainly derived from Banting, who describes in great detail the handicaps presented by corpulence. Additionally evocative of

Banting's language is his description of the "evil results of overfeeding cattle," a metaphor Banting employed as he described 'human beans,' or foods which people should not eat, comparing their effects on humans to beans' deleterious effects on cattle (34). Murdoch's recommendations, while possibly of an independent character, resonate with things that Banting's diet prescribes, particularly in terms of its depiction of fat and its iteration of an avoidance of carbohydrate-laden foods such as rice.

More specific evidence of Banting's presence in Indian missionary literature can be found in the memoir of Samuel Scott Alnutt of Delhi, an Englishman who went to India in 1879⁶¹. In the memoir, the author includes letters from Alnutt to his mentor, the Bishop of Creighton, and a variety of letters written to his family members in England. Alnutt directly mentions Banting and participation in the diet, assuming his readers' familiarity with Banting and his diet, and demonstrating his own knowledge of Bantingism. He writes, "Imagine what you would be if you were to get rid of your present nature...I should call such an attempt Spiritual banting...God grant I may have said something which may help and guide you" (6). Though these were letters to his Christian family in England, Alnutt was well known in Delhi for his missionary work with the native population, and he served as the founder of St. Stephen's College where he was a professor of Logic and Literature (1881-1898).

Additional symptoms of Banting's arrival and popularity include the publication in India of a variety of works based on his text. The *Catalogue of the Library of the India Office* (1900) records multiple publications on medicine and hygiene available for purchase inspired by Banting, such as "Surgeon Major J. Burkes's *Banting in India*" which was published in Calcutta in 1885 (43). This is almost certainly a misprint of

Joshua Duke's name, and actually refers to the an edition of his text *Banting in India*. This book, together with two other editions of *How to Get Thin, or Banting in India*, as well as several editions of Banting's *Letter on Corpulence* were items already in circulation in Calcutta. The *Catalogue* advertises another Banting-inspired text as commercially available: the third edition of *Banting in India*. It also advertises the book *Banting Up-to-Date*, by the author of "A Bobbery Pack in India." The full title of this latter text was "A Bobbery Pack in India: How to Collect, Train, and Hunt; also Full Instructions for Laying a Drag in India. With an Appendix Containing a Short Excursus on Banting, and Half an Hour with Mr. Pickwick," and it was published by Captain Julian (a pseudonym for Julian Young) in Calcutta in 1896. *Thacker's Guide to Calcutta* (1906) also indicates a number of Banting-inspired works for sale. It lists:

BANTING IN INDIA.

WITH SOME REMARKS ON DIET AND THINGS IN
GENERAL.

By Lieut.-Col. JOSHUA DUKE, I.M.S. (Retired).

Crown 8vo. , paper boards. Rs. 2.

BANTING UP-TO-DATE.

By the Author of "A Bobbery Pack in India." (Firminger 47)

It also includes some reprinting of praise about *Banting Up-To-Date* from *The Pioneer*: "It may be heartily commended to all who really want to improve health and figure alike by getting rid of what our doctors call 'superfluous adipose deposit' and our horrid friends call 'fat'" (qtd. in Firminger 47). The *Catalogue* and *Thacker's Guide* list the recognizably Banting-inspired texts along with some which merely contain mentions

of Banting's diet. *Thacker* also indicates that Joshua Duke's Banting-inspired text *Queries at a Mess Table, What Shall I Eat? What Shall I Drink?* was for sale. The catalogue entry appends comments from Anglo-Indian presses praising *Queries*. It quotes from a review in the *Indian Medical Gazette* which states that "It contains a mass of useful information on food and drink. The advice given is sound and to be relied on. We hope it will find its way back to the mess tables of India" (qtd. in Firminger 47). It also contains a review from *The Madras Times* as a selling point: "It is good all through. It is almost impossible to open this book anywhere without finding some wise advice. There is a valuable chapter on exercise" (qtd. in Firminger 47). Other Banting inspired texts also appear. *Camp Recipes for Camp People* was published in Madras in 1890, and *Simple Menus and Recipes for the Indian Table* was published in Bombay in 1891. Both texts discuss the benefits of a protein-rich diet in a similar fashion as the *Letter on Corpulence*. In *Camp Recipes*, for example, the text shifts away from curries and rice and instead offers recipes for tinned ham (Collingham 287). This more decided preference for English foods among the British has been described by Lizzie Collingham, and she explains in *Curry: A Tale of Cooks and Conquerors* (2006) that even dishes considered traditionally Indian are the much more recent product of revisions and adaptations by cooks abroad (12). The shift to English foods was a direct result of Banting's popularity in India, as the prescriptions of the diet reinforced the superiority of English fare. Other writers in India also demonstrated familiarity with Banting's plan and its effect on Indian meals. Cecil Webb-Johnson (1922) was a Civil Surgeon and Officer commanding Station Hospital. She was a specialist in midwifery and diseases of women and children in the 8th Division in Lucknow. Calling Banting one of "the greatest authorities on reducing

obesity,” she iterates that “Banting advises a proportion of 1/8 fat” (Webb-Johnson 139). Webb-Johnson’s mention of Banting again was meant to promote British fare in India in her dietary suggestions.

The most important of these Indian publications deriving from Banting was unquestionably Joshua Duke’s *How to Get Thin: or Banting in India*. This item was listed by British colonial government records as available for sale under the category of “Medicine-European,” and descriptions of the book in such catalogues say that Duke, “gives the pith of Mr. William Banting’s book published in 1869, as well as information gathered from other scientific works” (*Records of the Government of India* 84). Duke’s work garnered a great deal of public interest, and was well-renowned, as can be seen in Isidore Lyon’s *A Textbook of Medical Jurisprudence for India*, in which she lists Duke’s *Banting in India* and his other Banting-inspired text *Queries at the Mess Table* as invaluable sources of information in her index of general publications about health in India. Similarly, Duke was culturally important enough to be discussed in the *Indian Medical Gazette* under “Current Topics,” illustrating his fame among medical publications for adapting Bantingism to an Indian audience. This was no minor citation, as the *Gazette*, founded in 1865, billed itself as representative of all ranks of the profession in India, and reviewed articles by medical officers with special knowledge and experience. The *Gazette* lists Duke as a “frequent contributor to our columns, and...the author of several books, e.g. on *Banting in India*” (255). The *Indian Medical Gazette* also published excerpts from *Banting Up-To-Date* in response to the public’s continued interest in Banting in India. The *Catalogue of the Library of the India Office, Volume 1* also lists “Kitab i Banting. A Treatise on ‘Banting.’ Translated from the English of

Joshua Duke by Bhagavan Das” as available in Lahore in 1877 (41). This kind of reference, as will be shown later, reveals the spreading of Bantingism even within Indian popular publications.

In summary, Banting’s work spread in India and it was appropriated by military, evangelical, and administrative discourses. In its military context, Banting helped to standardize and re-entrench norms of acceptable body types. Likewise, in pitting fat as an evangelical battle between good and evil, he became useful in proselytizing and in entrenching a sense of British cultural superiority rendered through consumption habits. Banting’s name was not necessarily on the lips of everyone in India, but certainly his name was well known enough to merit the kind of context-less name dropping he acquired in England, as was shown in the examples of publications that mention Banting. Banting’s widespread influence can be seen in a number of derivative texts, in records of library holdings, and in a variety of advertisements in British Indian presses. Most important of these texts dealing with Banting was Joshua Duke’s work, which not only assisted in spreading Bantingism in India, but which significantly retooled Banting’s work to develop a means for addressing pertinent problems post-Mutiny.

Duke Does Banting

Far more prominent than any of these titles in British Indian colonial publications, however, were Joshua Duke’s writings. It is important to discuss Duke and his adaptations of Banting as his position as a military medical officer helped to propagate Banting’s fame throughout India. Joshua Duke’s life (1847-1920) remains somewhat sketchy, despite his impact as a military surgeon and writer in India. What is known about him is as follows. He was born on June 14, 1847 in Lambeth, London. His father

was a doctor, and his brother too would become a doctor and serve in the Afghan War as a political officer. He was educated at St. Paul's School, and at St. Thomas's and Guy's Hospitals. He served as a ship's surgeon, and as a resident assistant surgeon to Bendigo Hospital. He joined the Indian Medical Service in 1872. In 1878, he was granted six months leave for "private affairs" during which time he wrote and published several texts ("The Second Anglo-Afghan War Database Project"). He married Frances Harriette Hall in Allahabad in February of 1882, and they had several children, one of whom would also become a doctor and serve in the Colonial Service. During the Afghan War, Duke served as the medical man in charge of the 5th Gurkhas and Derejat Mountain Battery, and then with the 3rd Punjab Cavalry, and was awarded the Kandahar Bronze Star for his service with distinction. He was promoted from Surgeon Major to Surgeon Lt. Colonel in March of 1892, and he was the brigade Surgeon Lt. Colonel by 1898. He retired from the service in 1902, but rejoined during World War I and served at the York Place Indian Hospital at Brighton from 1914-15, and at the hospital in Bermondsey until 1917.

As well as serving in the Indian Medical Service, Duke wrote a number of articles and books on topics ranging from the treatment of snakebites to a guide for visitors to Kashmir and Jammu. These various publications included chronicles of the Kabul campaigns, and some works which examined diet and fitness for British colonial figures in India based on William Banting's *Letter on Corpulence*. Duke worried about the prevalence of weight gain among the Cavalry Native Officers (Forth 10). In *How to Get Thin: or Banting in India* (1870), Duke composed a thirty-three page text with four additional pages of information from the publisher. The work featured charts and lists of foods to be avoided, as well as a short explanation about why he composed the text

though he was warned Bantingism “never can be carried out by natives of this country” (32). For this reason, he performed an adaptation and modification of Banting for the purposes of his book. The text was published in Calcutta by Thacker, Spink, and Company, and it was reprinted in 1878 in a second edition, and in a third edition in 1885. By the third edition, the tone was far more ominous as he worried about the “external and foreign influences” that he saw as having “altered” the British character (*3rd Edition* 11). He attributed his concern to his “matured experience” (*3rd Edition* 11). His other Banting inspired work *Queries* featured sixty-five pages, and the publisher Thacker, Spink, and Co. included a variety of texts on medical topics and reviews of those works at the end of Duke’s piece. *Queries* is organized into seven sections by rhetorical questions that open the chapters, such as “How Much?” in reference to quantities of food to be consumed (11). *Queries* too draws on Banting, yet features particular departures from his advice to fashion Duke’s version of Indian Bantingism.

Bantingism in Duke’s hands, as will be made evident, contributed directly to the greater agenda of British imperial conquest. As discussed, the Mutiny of 1857-58 had indelible consequences, especially on the structure of the army and the reification of British superiority through the principles of ascetic living. Banting’s text helped facilitate this restructuring. The dietetic regime promoted by Banting’s *Letter*, and the independent, morally pure, and respectable sense of self that it promoted, had made diet and comportment topics of social conversation in England. These qualities naturally enabled the importation and appropriation of Bantingism into British colonial India, especially through Duke’s writings. What Duke appropriated from Banting was a way of avoiding any cultural contagion that could jeopardize the correct mindset of the true European.

Duke points out that “effeminacy, unmanliness...are represented by the esthetic” of fatness, and he employs Banting to render such qualities as inimical to the British thin, masculine constitution which was more fit to rule (10). Central to the project of the perpetuation of the colonial hierarchy after the mutiny was the creation and sustenance of an imagined identity. This was facilitated by the emerging idea of redefined English gentility, with which restraint and slimness were integrally linked. In modifying Banting, Duke helped to develop the idea of the temperate, self-controlled British martial administrator or soldier whose fitness to rule or defend the empire was beyond question. Likewise, Duke enabled the indoctrination of martial attitudes used to justify alterations to the military’s hierarchy. Duke’s Bantingism sought to entrench the idea of British superiority as it cultivated the idea of an innately superior British constitution; used control of food and regulation of consumption patterns to justify racial changes to the military’s composition and policies; promoted abstemiousness for colonial administrators; and even extrapolated and modified Bantingism in order to deploy it to create men who were fit, literally and metaphorically, to rule.

Clearly, *How to Get Thin* extends Banting’s association of fat with disease, and disease with the decomposition of English identity, power, and longevity, which can only be avoided through dieting. Especially after the Great Rebellion of 1857, reification of the superiority of the English identity in British colonial India often meant invoking segregation and differentiation (Stoler 33). Banting’s work, on which Duke draws, parallels similar rhetoric of segregation by making precise demarcations of belonging based on hierarchies of power and preference. Banting himself explained that his system should be adopted as well as “thoroughly understood and properly appreciated by every

thinking man and woman in the civilized world” (Banting *4th Edition* 3). In the Indian context, those who do not participate in Bantingism are rendered unfit for governing since they cannot govern even their own appetites and are not a part of the “civilized world.” While the worthy choose restraint, others indulge in the grotesque—with which fat is associated as a physical preference. As Duke projects it, avoiding fat has positive health benefits for those in India, benefits which enabled the maintenance of dominion. As “undue development of fat...renders them less liable to resist disease” and thereby less able to maintain control, Duke counsels not only the personal health benefits of dieting, but the social and political ones as well (Duke 17). Duke describes fat as a weakened, diseased physical condition, akin to degeneracy. In Duke’s rendering of it, fatness becomes disproportionate, obscene, and exorbitant: it is against this stigmatized image of diseased and weak fatness that slimness is rendered normative. Certainly, before Banting, fascinated Victorian discussions of the notoriously obese Daniel Lambert (mentioned earlier) illustrated this preoccupation with the grotesque, and appended contempt and condescension to excessive corpulence precisely because of the lack of control obesity represented⁶². However, Indian Bantingism renders as disgusting much smaller amounts of fat than what Daniel Lambert had acquired, and positions them as markers of degeneracy. In Duke’s hands, it appends to fatness a stigma of otherness and exoticism that can be held at bay only through constant policing of the body and diet. Thus, the body becomes a site on which to wage war against the evils of fat, contagion, and incivility. To be sure, Banting refers to fatness as “that dreadful tormenting parasite on health and comfort” (Banting *4th Edition* 13). However, in Duke’s treatment of it, Bantingism must be practiced to maintain the superiority of the English identity, as the

constitutionally weaker and inferior could not exert such self-control or self-rule. Thus, the text presents the audience with a choice: they can participate and govern themselves and others, or be excluded and relegated to the bottom of the hierarchy reserved for those too weak—and consequently too fat—to take part.

For Duke, Bantingism is obviously also an exclusive, patriotic duty that is also a part of maintaining the status quo. He states, “Constitutions have been weakened by a long residence in India” (50). The “terrible and enervating heat of an Indian climate” has put the hardihood of the British constitution at risk, a risk that can be combated by engaging in the Banting diet (50). The object of introducing Bantingism in the context of colonial India specifically is to “aid in maintaining the vigor, hardihood, and manliness of the British nation” (77). Duke’s statement of purpose specifically links dietary practices of individuals to the empire, suggesting diet can increase the hardiness of the imperial endeavor itself. Diet becomes, through Duke’s rendering of Bantingism, not only an individual pursuit to facilitate health, but a way to procure the health of the British colonial system. Banting refers to the “crying evil of obesity” (Banting *4th Edition* 13). Thus, in language reminiscent and evocative of the *Letter*, Duke’s text warns of the “grave and dangerous consequences of obesity,” referring not to the consequences for the individual, but also for England’s dominance in India as a whole (13). Duke further explains that the diet of “Musalmans and Hindoos” is “inferior” and the British must “avoid succumbing” to indulgence in rice, zarda, and milk, as it produces weaker constitutions (70). The idea of succumbing to the rule of inferior men is meant to catalyze adherence to the Banting diet among the British in India. To not only endure, but to help the colonial endeavor endure, the text insists that British citizens in India must engage in

regulation and restriction, made possible through Banting's system. Warnings of life and rule as potentially finite reappear several times at the end of the pamphlet for this purpose, suggesting that "Popular voice still awards but a short life to the corpulent" (31), and reiterating that "Experience shows that enormously fat people do not attain old age" (32). Because of the connection of the body to empire, Duke's text implies that to sustain the imperial conquest, individuals must adhere strictly to diets that enhance and solidify the idea of English identity, making Banting's diet a technology of rule.

Specifically, to cultivate this fortitude, Duke's Indian Bantingistic diet focuses on "the rich nitrogenous diet of Englishmen...[as] the source of their indomitable energy" (22). Longevity is related to eating habits, and proper food consumption through Bantingism is equated with strength and vigor, with implications for proper parental healthful breastfeeding to ward off racial contamination: "the use of artificial food in infancy can affect, or perhaps has affected, the physique, or the physical qualities of a race, it is a matter of grave consideration" (14). Concerns about proper foods are linked visibly to warnings of British racial purity and fitness to rule. Proposing that English weakness and effeminacy have resulted from imbibing artificial foods, the text advocates a return to natural ones because "England's supremacy is due...to the influence, training, example, and lastly, but not leastly, to the very food our own mothers consumed" (11). In the view of Indian Bantingism, the maintenance of an appropriately authoritative British colonial rulership is linked even to the purity of English children's constitution. Fruit, once thought bad for children, now becomes a recommended item, as colonial cultural historians have documented (Hoppen 347). *How to Get Thin* urges proper eating for

creating robust, flourishing British children who will be the future of the British colonial administration. That kind of proper eating will continue the British history of dominance.

In invoking the “food our own mothers consumed,” *How to Get Thin* argues for the insufficiency of the Banting diet for creating superiority if practiced only in one generation (11). Banting had discussed “the extraordinary and speedy result of [his] rigid adherence” to the diet (Banting *4th Edition* 3). However, in Duke’s rendering of it, such constitutional fitness cannot merely be adopted overnight, if surrendering to Indian self-rule is to be avoided. Duke, for example, points out the vital importance of the Banting diet, as an improper diet “tarnishes the fertility of the male, and the fecundity of the female” (91). The achievement of such constitutional fitness as a condition of British rulership of India, *How to Get Thin* approvingly points out, is precisely what the British colonial army’s recent reorganization of its hierarchic ranks sought to reflect. Duke derides diet of “rice, milk, chapattis, and potatoes” eaten by native Indians including nawabs as well as the lower classes as signs of their inferiority (70).

How to Get Thin deepened the divisions among the British and Indian populations in the army and elsewhere in Anglo-Indian society, and heightened the belief in ‘martial and non-martial’ races with fatness as a delimiting quality for exclusion. It is this racial ideology from which the text’s version of Bantingism takes its cue. Bantingism, in other words, facilitated the consolidation of the idea of the British colonial military as an instrument of control and authority, and concomitantly the marking of the Indians as constitutionally unfit to rule themselves. This political context of *How to Get Thin*’s urging of the adoption of Bantingism in a sustained manner rather than in one generation

becomes a natural element of the British colonial administration's rationalization of its dominion over India.

By 1863, the Indian component in the Bengal, Bombay, and Madras armies had been reduced by about forty percent, which brought down the Indian-British army ratio to 3:1, whereas before it had been 9:1 (Keay 445). In the wake of the Mutiny, no Indian troops were given artillery training, as this and other "scientific branches" were reserved for British units (Read and Fisher 59). While issues of race had been problematic since the early 1800s, "Racial divisions were deepening and hardening [post rebellion], and as they did so, a marked change was taking place in British thinking. The concept of introducing western ideas and education in order to prepare India for early self-government was replaced by a belief that the British were there to stay" (Read and Fisher 57). Steps were undertaken to shore up and simplify administrative rules and military might. The transfer of power to the crown through the Government of India Act of 1858 attempted to solidify the power of the crown and remove the burdensome dual machinery of company rule as well as home rule. Consolidation of the armies constructed a "royal machine designed to prevent any signs of rebellion" (Wolpert 241). These developments indicate the important role of the Sepoy Mutiny in changing the structure and paradigm of British rule, and additionally the important role of Bantingism in enabling such changes, as it was a means to consolidate hierarchies of power and to justify British constitutional superiority.

Banting, in Duke's treatment of it, became a method to simplify and justify new military policies. The connection between Bantingism and revisions to the military's administration is illustrated in the biography of one army Lieutenant Colonel. Lieutenant

Colonel John Haughton, the Commandant of the 36th Sikhs, in his biography remarks that British Army regulations were made to “submit to a special process of banting in vogue at army headquarters” (Yate 74).⁶³ The author explains metaphorically that “When a volume of India Army Regulations comes forth to the army, it looks neat and trim...but...year by year it is fed liberally with the slips and cuttings [of more rules and regulations]...the shapely figure grows bulky and unwieldy” (Yate 74). What the text playfully does is to use the trimming effect of Bantingism as an analogy for the “licking into shape” of the swollen, bloated army regulations (Yate 74). The account states Bantingism has “restored” the army to “more or less to its pristine shapeliness,” and is described as a “boon and a blessing to a grateful army” (Yate 74).

Reorganizing British military hierarchic culture was also facilitated by the adopting of Bantingism insofar as it created a proper class of officers to rule over Indian enlistments. The book *On Tactics and Organization, or English Military Institutions and the Continental Systems* (1888) cited not only information about the new racial divisions informing military organization, but also encouraged the reading of Duke’s *How to Get Thin* as a tactic for maintaining the hierarchy. In one section of *On Tactics* entitled “Discipline and the Breech-loader,” the author explains to fellow British officers, “It must not be forgotten that we do not claim to be merely the equals of these other races, but we are all more or less convinced that we are decidedly their superiors” (Maude 293). Although the “breech-loader” rifle was expected and perceived to reduce the discontent of native Indians over handling meat and meat by products, and hopefully foster more compliance on their part, and better integrate them into the Indian Army, the rancor and elitism remained, as is evident in his claim of British superiority. These changes were

permanent alterations that would affect future cadres of the British military, and to that extent, they address the call for sustained adoption of the Bantingist ideology that *How to Get Thin* was reiterating.

In one available instance, the positive effects of Indian Bantingism on British colonial Indian military officers are acknowledged by the latter itself. In the memoirs of General John Briggs, the editor Evans Bell praises the General's "remarkable activity of body and mind in old age" and states such qualities are directly attributable to the "Good effects of Banting" (Bell 259).⁶⁴ The connection made between mental and physical acuity and Banting is important for establishing the extent to which the publication of the diet informed popular perceptions. The comment about General Briggs also exemplifies how identity was often defined by participation in and adherence to disciplinary behaviors. Here, Briggs' career and endurance are attributed to Bantingism. By casting away fat and its entailments, Briggs was rewarded with social acceptance and commended as 'remarkable' for his commitment to Banting. As additional incentive, he was perceived as having reaped salubrious effects. The editor describes how "A great improvement had, by his [Briggs'] own account, taken place in his health, which he attributed to the adoption of the dietary popularly known as 'Banting'" (Bell 259). Participation in the act of restraint that Briggs approvingly attributes to Bantingism makes it a sign of cultural superiority by creating it as an exclusive enterprise for creating "remarkable" men. Duke's adaptation of Bantingism for the in British in India, which was Duke's response to what he had been told could "never" be reproduced in India, enabled the British colonial identification with an uncontaminated, unadulterated, uniquely English identity predicated on participation in the Banting diet. In another

instance, military men discussed the effect of long distance riding on weight loss, and the usefulness of Bantingism in regulating military men's weight. *The Times of India* recorded Lieutenant Broadwood riding with his men from Bangalore to Mysore in March of 1887. Commenting on that same event, a piece titled "Long Distance Riding" published in *The Public Service Review* (1887) points out that of the twelve who made the ride, only two lost weight. To be sure, the author's comments cannot be said to amount to a simple approval of Bantingism, but the very fact that the article alludes to Banting in this connection shows its hold in British military culture. He remarks, "It must be a despairing revelation to any man who is thinking of 'Banting' to find that he may ride 180 miles in two days under an Indian sun and a camp diet and yet become heavier," but then concedes that Banting cannot be expected to work in a mere two days' time (411). The article goes on to praise the incredible fortitude of these riders, and explains ultimately that Bantingism is beneficial to military men seeking to perform remarkable feats such as long rides and marches. Rather than a failure of Bantingism, the "severe work" and "hard training" may have caused fat to be "replaced by heavier muscle," a benefit to military men (411). Also, in a listing of "Who's Who" to celebrate the accomplishments of honorable men, Colonel Thomas Deane, who joined the Indian Army in 1862 and who served with the Madras Cavalry, lists his recreations as "banting, shooting, fishing" (391). That he includes Banting among his hobbies is indicative of the diet's correlation with creating a class of officers fit to rule.

Control of protein intake from meats is another recommended feature of the Banting diet in Duke's discourse, a recommendation that is advocated for the building of stamina and strength. For athletes, it is pointed out, that "lean meat is the chief

component of the training diet” (21). *How to Get Thin* attributes their success to diet, and states that a similar regimen of Bantingism will prepare officers for the equally strenuous and arduous task of empire-building and protecting. Thus, invoking the ideals of masculinity and gentility, the text relates that “prize fighters, jockeys, and athletes” have adopted meat-heavy diets (20). The protein-rich approach was consequential in reinforcing hierarchies of identity, since the English soldier could have no religious restrictions on meat intake unlike the Indian. These kinds of propositions disenfranchise Sikhs and Hindu vegetarians. Natural examples are used to justify this difference, as it is pointed out that “Carnivorous animals are...not only stronger than herbivorous, but are fiercer” (22). Such sentiments of racial differentiation based on food intake as Duke’s Indian Bantingism proposes are part and parcel of the racial discourse surrounding food consumption in England itself at this moment. For example, the 1869 article “The Diet of Brain-Workers” claims that grain- and fish-eating nations, such as “Hindoos” and Japanese, were inferior to meat-eating societies. Additionally, a nutrition handbook from 1871 claims, “The most powerful nations and the greatest and best men everywhere are flesh eaters” (45). So, Bantingism becomes a duty for all British citizens, since to eat well is to uphold “England’s supremacy,” which connects the idea of dietary practices to the imperial imagination and colonial authority.

Given the connection with prowess and control that Duke’s Indian Bantingism was proposing, its ideas brought about changes not just in consumption patterns, but also recommended behavioral alterations in the officer class, particularly with an eye to alleviating the problems of insubordination and rebellion. As Anthony Read and David Fisher (1997) have shown, after the Mutiny, British officers of the Indian army were

expected to live closer to their men, and to be more proactive in identifying concerns: “The first priority after the revolt was security, which meant reorganizing the army” with increased attention to eating habits (Read and Fisher 58-59). As not eating meat was a visible sign of potential insubordination, officers were specifically ordered to dine with their men to identify possible sources of discontent. Implicated in the recommendations for British officers to dine with their Indian men was also the taking up of the Bantingistic meat-heavy diet. The enforcement and surveillance of such a diet for all ranks by British military officers was perceived to identify and encourage loyalty. Among competing eating regimens that were proposed for the British Indian Army, such as Edmund Parkes, who suggested a balanced diet of nitrogenous substances, fats, and carbohydrates, and those of Robert Caldwell who warned of imbibing too much fat, Banting’s dietetic regime was preferred (Harrison 42). Attesting to this fact, was a piece in the *Medical Times and Gazette Volume 2* (1864), in which the editor notes that “The condition of the dietary of the army and navy was, until recent years, most deplorable,” and the article suggests that Bantingism’s introduction was instrumental in bringing changes and “new regulations” to military dietetic culture (333). *Essays on the Indian Mutiny* by John Holloway of the 32nd Light Infantry more explicitly noted “The disciples of Banting” in the army who practiced “anti-corpulent” restrictions (Holloway 320). Banting’s prohibition against rice, butter, and oils in favor of a protein-rich diet became, in Duke’s treatment of it, the recommended diet for enabling loyal and dutiful military service. Duke hierarchically lists foods that are appropriate, and on his list, the first item is “Meat” (70). This echoed Banting’s recommended breakfast of “five to six ounces of either beef mutton, kidneys, broiled fish, bacon, or cold meat of any kind” (Banting 4th

Edition 11). Thus with Duke's Bantingism, the very food imbibed in the mess tent became a tool of control and a method of establishing a uniquely British identity, as discipline during mealtimes was enforced to prevent rebellious sentiments. Whereas before the revolution curry and rice was a staple of the military mess tent, after the mutiny, the menu reverted to more common British staples (James 178).⁶⁵ The decrying of the evil of rice and other foods meant that such items were disdained at the mess table in favor of more protein-rich British fare. Indeed, the modern disfavoring of rice and other foods today classified as carbohydrates is a direct result of the Bantingism that Duke's text projected. That in Duke's hands, Banting's diet was associated with being meat-heavy in its Indian adaptation, is reflected in *The Imperial Dictionary on the Basis of Webster's English Dictionary Vol. 7* (1882), which defined the "Banting System" as the "use of butcher-meat principally" (215). Eating meat was a means of demonstrating adherence to not only the Banting system, but loyalty to the British Army. Monitoring consumption served as well to facilitate self-regulation among officers attempting to advance in ranks.

These changes were paradoxically intended to domesticate rebellious tendencies among Indian enlisted soldiers, on the basis of food and food intake, but also with an eye to keeping differentiation between the Indians and the English intact. The latter, in particular, became "a dogma proclaimed with theological rancor" even more markedly after the rebellion (Mason 348-349). Indeed, in Captain Maude's monograph *On Tactics*, the author describes how it is necessary to foster "remote relationships between themselves [enlisted Indian subordinates] and the general commanding [officers]," a remote relationship reinforced in part by food consumption (399). The idea of officers

dining with their men and ensuring they eat meat was not meant as such to create camaraderie or congeniality, as much as it was meant to re-entrench subordination. Bantingism, as developed in Duke, thus exacerbated tensions already chronicled: race, upper class responsibility, and proper comportment with food as a sign of sophistication, especially within the military's officer ranks.

The effect of Bantingism went, in some ways, further than *How to Get Thin* shows. For example, the second revised edition of *How to Get Thin; or, Banting in India* (1878) by Duke was seen by British reviewers as affecting members of various Indian cadres within the army. Gary Taubes (2007) has noted that Bantingism was especially popular among Bengalis, "who had taken on the most trappings of the European" diet, showing their European sensibilities by eating meat as prescribed by Banting (Taubes 28). When Duke's work was reviewed by the *British Medical Journal* in 1878, the article noticeably highlighted "the Banting diet for Musalmans and Hindoos; and the consequences of obesity" (924). The reviewer noted, "the author's practical common sense suggestions are sure to render highly serviceable to any obese native whom it may reach" (924). The "native" audience here refers to the different Indian denominations in the British Army, typically in places like Bombay, Calcutta, and Delhi.

Yet, the adoption of the Bantingistic diet by the military had, however, unintended effects on Indian conscripts. For instance, if the British army's adoption of the Bantingistic ideal enforced separation between the different ranks of the British army, including by implication differentiation and separation from the Indian soldiers who were also being inculcated into the British army's hierarchy, these compound differentiations, especially the last category, also absorbed the effect of the Bantingistic ideal. If the

instinct for racial separation was connected to the colonization of the native and the remaking of the native in the English image, then the creation of hierarchies was also going to lead to phenomena that undermined those hierarchies. Thus, for instance, if certain categories of Indians were deemed unfit for military service, and the categories excluded corpulent Indians, then the compliant, colonized, thin native could elevate himself and become “brave, courageous, dignified, handsome, manly- and devoted to Queen Victoria” (Mason 389).⁶⁶ If the Bantingistic ideal as absorbed by British military thinking produced a hierarchy of thinness as good and fatness as bad, with the former being synonymous with the British and the latter with the enlisted Indian soldier, that in turn bred in the latter a desire to transcend this differentiation and achieve parity with his British colleagues. Banting’s separatist prescription of the superiority of the colonial ruler’s constitution in effect led to desires in those thus separated to overcome that separation and undermine the very hierarchy that such division was intended to establish.

That Duke’s rhetoric affected Indian cadres in the British Indian Army in such a way as described is evident in *A Manual of Dietetics* (1886). It describes how within the army, “There were a few Englishmen and a number of Sepoys...[who] desire to reduce their corpulence,” and who practiced “Bantingism for that end” (88). As the *Manual* notes, it affected Indian elements, and created a power differential between the British and their counterparts. Parama Roy (2002) has pointed to the “homosocial community of British and modernizing Indian males” created by projects that indoctrinated “culinary masculinity” (66). This inculcation of culinary masculinity can be illustrated by the case of the English-educated member of the Jodhpur Lancers, Amar Singh. In his diary of his life in the British Indian Army (1902), he shows evidence of his internalization of the

naturalized descriptors of race and consumption proffered by Duke. Amar Singh recalls the changes in the mess tent as a result of the introduction of a Banting-inspired style of eating: “The food was English and was eaten [in the English manner]. This is the first day that the Rajpoot mess has done it. From today the dinners are always to be English” (qtd. in Rudolph and Rudolph 258). The Rajput adoption of English-style dinners propagated by Banting was a means of attaining preferment and acceptance, and so was accepted by Singh. Approvingly, Singh notes, “the new Jat cadet...apparently had no problems with the new mess arrangements” (qtd. in Rudolph and Rudolph 258). *How to Get Thin* is unable to track this level of the Bantingism that it propagates, but this kind of phenomenon is predicted by its dissemination of the separatist idea of British superiority and fitness to rule. Additionally, Sheikh Mehtab, Gandhi’s classmate at Rajkok in 1883 also demonstrated acceptance of these principles as he claimed, “You know how hardy I am...It is because I am a meat-eater” (qtd. in Roy 66). Even Mahatma Gandhi recalls in his autobiography a doggerel in fashion among schoolboys about the prowess conferred by meat eating: “Behold the mighty Englishman/He rules the Indian small/Because being a meat-eater/He is five cubits tall” (qtd. in Roy 65-66).

Understandably, the Duke’s inculcation of a Bantingistic meat-heavy diet in the military produced additional frictions within the Indian enlistments. Tensions developed between those who accepted the Bantingistic military diet, and those who resented it. Commenting on other Indians’ dietary habits, Singh states that the Indians of Idar are “ugly looking and as a rule weak. They resemble the Bunyas [merchant castes]...they look like miserable beggars. Most of them have big stomachs” (qtd. in Rudolph and Rudolph 444). Implicit in his critique of the non-martial abilities of “people of this part of

India” is English rhetoric against fat, which he iterates to bolster his own sense of superiority (444). Amar Singh’s denigration of his own countrymen along the directions of the Banting-inspired British army attitude of the inferior constitution of the Indian has traces of the absorption of the Bantingistic ideology. Though Singh accepted this, on the other hand, in a report by the *Civil and Military Gazette* (1928) it describes how “Jats do not want it [meat] unless they have acquired the taste by service in the Army” (182).⁶⁷ This acceptance is more likely the result of desire for inclusion and attaining acceptance rather than a true preference for meat.⁶⁸ This conflict has been demonstrated by Rajit K. Mazumder (2003) who has noted that in the late 1800s, “Jat Sikhs...ate meat,” though most who did so were “military pensioners or persons who are still serving in the Army and are at home on leave” (35). Likewise, although Gandhi’s friend approved of the meat eating diet, Gandhi resisted and resented such preferment created by meat-eating that created a power differential among Indian classes.

For the most part, however, the effect of Bantingism was less on Indian ranks within the army, and more in addressing concerns of unruliness in British civilian colonial life. Bantingism in Duke becomes a way to create firm and hardy civilian British Indian subjects through avoidance of alcohol, engaging in exercise, and in reforming manners. This is particularly manifest in the other text of Duke: *Queries at a mess table: What shall I eat? What shall I drink?* In this text, dietary solutions predicated on Banting’s plan are proposed which would prevent a colonial administrator from being compromised. Even though it is specifically addressed to soldiers, the work reinvokes the idea of English supremacy as established through restraint and abstemiousness to project Banting’s dietetic recommendations as a template for fitness in general.⁶⁹ *Queries*

explains that men who overindulge and become dyspeptic are slow in “duty and work” and “physically below par” (56). The diagnosis here directly recalls Banting’s warning against large portions of food, which Banting declares are “inimical to both health and comfort” (Banting *4th Edition* 12). Duke’s text reads, “There can be no doubt that a large proportion of the diseases of the digestive apparatus which are so fatal amongst European residents in Indian and other tropical climates result from the habitual ingestion of a much larger quantity of food, and this especially of a rich and stimulating character, than the system requires” (11).

The Bantingistic conversation in *Queries at the Mess Table* explains that too much indulgence leads to corruption of the body, a decimation that ultimately is fatal. The terms “rich” and “stimulating” obviously refer to food, but also connote other forms of social indulgences, such as alcohol, against which the work also warns. By using food, the work is able to argue for abstemiousness in India, connecting diet with gentility and the continuation of English superiority in culture and decorum. The text presents the maxim that restriction cannot be considered deprivation, but rather is a form of self-preservation: “I think as a rule a small eater who partakes of food in a regular and methodical manner escapes a great deal of suffering in India” (11). Echoing this, as it were, *The Indian Medical Gazette* (1908) brings up “the important question of the nutritive value of the diet scales in use in the Prisons and Asylums of India,” and hopes “the matter will be further investigated” to encourage regulation and restriction in society at large (22). The scales to which the article refers weighed and measured portion sizes for prisoners and inmates, and the article suggests that such regulation of eating habits produced health in those contexts, and might also for the general public. Banting

particularly advocated weighing and measuring portions, and described his meals in terms of quantity: “For supper...four ounces solid and seven liquid” (Banting *4th Edition* 12). Similarly, capitulation to regulatory practices of personal consumption, Duke’s Bantingism illustrates, is not considered servile, but rather a panacea for greater ills and suffering. Banting himself had noted that men might not “descend into premature graves” or “endure so much bodily...infirmity” if they were “better acquainted” with his dietary plan (Banting *4th Edition* 13). Evident here is the fact that Banting’s doctrine of health and stamina acquired great appeal, especially after the challenge levied by the Mutiny. Its appeal was quite simply to offer a clear solution to a remediable problem, by placing blame on an ephemeral tendency to overindulge and not on an innately flawed trait of the British gentlemanly character.

The effect of Duke’s Bantingism on British colonial civil deportment is particularly visible in its admonishments about alcohol abuse. Referring to the vast quantities of alcohol available to most British subjects in India, *Queries* states, “the stomach requires a gradual education after bad habits...These principles should, I think, be more carefully adopted in India than elsewhere” (20). That it must be “more carefully adopted” indicates the tendency to overindulge that must be methodically rectified, and it is to this use that Bantingism is put. In affirmation, as it were, is the *Indian Medical Gazette*’s caution in 1908 that drinking “is a very common disease” that is a “frequent cause of death, among the general population,” but one which can be avoided through temperance (321). Dyspepsia and indigestion are “In India the [result of] the abuse of spirituous liquors and tobacco,” as well as too many sedentary pursuits (*Queries* 52). Duke’s language here is replicating Banting’s assertion that “a glass or two of claret or

sherry” is acceptable, but that against any more indulgence, a man must “mount guard against such an enemy if he is not a fool to himself” (Banting 4th Edition 13-14). While Duke’s text claims it avoids preaching “a tirade here against excess” drinking, it notes those who consume alcohol to excess “generally terminate their career in a lingering death, after being a burden to themselves, and still more so to others, or by a miserable suicide” (46). This pathos-laden invective attempts to convince its audience of the folly of drinking: it ends in misery and death. The appeal to pathos not only attempts to reform habits, but to enhance the idea of the true English gentleman: he is abstemious, moderate, and therefore successful and independent. It may be noted that Banting’s diet allowed some alcohol, and he is far more lenient in his condemnation of the ill-effects of alcohol than is Duke, but for Duke, the audience in India necessitated an alteration in the attitude toward consumption, given the lassitude created by alcohol in the Indian climate. Invoking Banting as a form of dietary education against “sedentary employment” controlled patterns of alcohol consumption indirectly (Banting 4th Edition 16).

Indian Bantingism, as *Queries* projects it, not only propagates typical Bantingistic ideas, but also extends and expands them in many ways. To promote the cultivation of a particular civic aesthetic, the text expands on Banting to regulate dining manners, once again deploying Bantingism for maintenance of socially superior English habits and perhaps even to discourage the solicitation of prostitutes. “A change of clothes, clean hands, and courteous manners should be enforced as a habit,” the text suggests, adding that good companionship at dinner aids digestion (16). Unlike Banting’s focus, which was bereft of any prescriptions for manners and which was primarily about the diet itself, Duke’s addition of instruction on manners and cleanliness became a way to promulgate

not only health, but the idea of English gentility in India. The cultivation of “courteous manners” and conversation, he states, are essential to health and well-being. Amar Singh’s comments in his diary about his education in manners seem to reflect the effect of such advice: “I am much in favour of eating in the European fashion rather than the Indian. The former is much more neat and clean, and has the advantage of the dishes coming one by one and at intervals. This helps conversation,” and he adds, “As regards Indian custom...it is a much dirtier way. People may say what they like but truth is truth after all” (qtd. in Rudolph and Rudolph 298). Singh’s responses are symptoms of an aspiration for modern living that he associates with the British, and that clearly has resonance of the effects of Bantingism. Singh read Sushila Tahl Ram’s work *Cosmopolitan Hindustani* (1902) and *Uttam Acharan Shiksha* (*The Teaching of Good Manners*), and was impressed by her work, which he admired for its depiction of the life of a battalion of military Irregulars. *Cosmopolitan Hindustani* addresses manners in the mess tent, explaining that it should be a time for “mirth and laughter” of a refined sort, accompanied by a glass of champagne “sparkling and merrily clinking” (Ram 10). In these ways, Duke’s Indian Bantingism had an impact on changing upper class Indian social manners.

What Bantingism in Duke’s hands accomplished was to inculcate superior attitudes and to introduce the idea of modern health in a British administrative context. For instance, *Queries* pushed exercise, in a post-mutiny context, as a key to success and manliness, a regimen not markedly proposed by Banting. In fact, his descriptions of rowing indicated the inability of exercise alone to create weight change. Banting affirmed clearly that it was not exercise, but diet that reduced corpulence, and he explained that

diet's "especial efficacy was overlooked, because other rules relating to exercise, sweating, &c., were mixed up with them" (Banting 4th Edition 4). Joshua Duke's clear recommendation of exercise as a means of demonstrating manhood and prowess marks his modification of Bantingism in India. Furthermore, while Banting appeals to religion and fear of public ridicule as reasons to avoid fatness, Duke's Indian Bantingism invokes vulnerability to attack as a method of persuasion. The author of *Queries* advises, "Every officer in India, be he a subaltern, a general, or a commissioner, or his deputy, should always devote one hour or more in the evening to exercise, let it be rackets, cricket, lawn tennis, riding, or walking" (53). So too, a sedentary lifestyle is held to diminish the masculine prowess of a man. In order to establish British men's physical superiority, discourse about exercise and leisure time conflated responsibilities of empire with self-discipline and gentility. Thus, the work linked exercise to masculinity, and fat to bodily lethargy which created defenselessness against a sudden attack. Though Duke claimed that his text was an unbiased medical document free from hyperbole, his underlying aim is evident in his claim that he was attempting "To place on record practical facts" (65). Though this logical and common-sense advice "has been the author's aim," he avers that "if in so doing he has helped to clear up the gloomy but unseen cloud that threatened to burst upon the careless eater and drinker his object will have been accomplished" (65). His evocation of an unseen threat waiting to "burst" upon the unsuspecting Englishman plays upon the post-rebellion tension and fear of attack that necessitated exercise. Worries of being caught unaware prompted "careless," corpulent soldiers and civilians to protect themselves through fitness and to make themselves impervious to the looming danger by taking heed of Banting's plan and practicing his suggestions.

One historian's tracing of the changing expectations of gentility in Victorian England shows that manliness, as well as exercise regimes, captured the imagination of the British in the colonies, also. The change is apparent in India in the comments of one army officer who remarked, "The English character might get too refined" without exposure to an exercise regimen, and detract from personal courage and humility (qtd. in James 155). The officer's comment was facilitated by Banting's popularity, as it circulated through the cultural conversations about life in the colonies. For example, a review of Rudyard Kipling's *Kim* in 1902 praised the idea of sport and exercise to prevent the contamination of Englishmen in India. The review claimed the English in India must, "Defend themselves from the magic of the land by sport, games, clubs, the chatter of fresh imported girls, and fairly regular attendance at church," or else the "empire would be lost" (qtd. in James 312). The equation of engaging in sport with defense of the empire is significant: the physical body's regulation was part of imperial progress. Indulgence of any kind had to be balanced by exercise "if an exile was not to succumb to distempers" (James 168). To avoid the decline of morality and physicality, medical advice often included an hour set aside for riding. In colder temperatures, two hours was suggested. These activities not only helped to create a British society that self-policed and regulated, but proffered ways to keep young men active and away from the excessive "distempers" associated with drinking and sex. These prescriptions were part and parcel of what was shown above as Duke's absorption and projection of Banting to further the British colonial project in India. Banting's doctrine of moderation and civility communicated through Duke was instrumental in inscribing an English identity which would defy any compromising forces.

Banting and Biopower: Addressing Indulgence

Banting captured the attention of Victorian audiences with his diet plan. By challenging traditional markers of physical aesthetics, Banting transformed attitudes toward fat and appended social and religious stigmas. His plan, though subject to innumerable satires and criticism, created a phenomenon so well known that it needed no explanation when referenced in popular magazines. He was so well known in England that people asked each other, “ ‘Do you Bant?’ Or ‘Have you been Bantingized?’ ” (“Mr. Double Stout” 110). Not surprisingly, therefore, in British colonial India as well, Banting achieved the kind of cultural saliency that enabled similar references to appear.

In British colonial India, Banting’s fame spread through the military, evangelical, and adaptive texts based on his original publication. Banting’s plan treated a variety of concerns. Evidence of the arguments against alcohol can be seen in several of the post-mutiny publications about health and hygiene and the military that predated Banting, but these types of works paved the way for a popular reception of Banting’s moralizing about fat and incivility. Michelle Lelwica explains that though there were precursors in England who advocated purifying the body through diet, Banting particularly appealed to “the autonomy of the individual will and the malleability of the flesh” and these precepts “set the stage for William Banting” to counsel control of appetites in India, where rapaciousness was an issue (74). In the Indian context, through the contribution of individuals like Joshua Duke who appropriated Banting, Bantingism is put to use to reduce drinking obliquely, whereas previous works attacked the issue unambiguously and achieved little success. Banting’s diet restricted alcohol consumption without belaboring the evils of drinking. Instead, he offered reasons outside of moral imperatives against

liquor specifically as reasons to resist indulgence. His indirect injunctions against drinking avoided the direct condemnation that often proved inflammatory and which was rejected as overtly moralistic.

Also, Banting's description of fat as a parasite had already furthered in England such images of evil and vice outwardly manifested, and which could be immediately detected. In India, as he connected slimness to superiority and fatness to infectivity, fat became a visible external indicator of the degeneracy of the native condition and a sign of its pollution. Because fat was a sign of disease and corruption, thinness was promoted as a means of claiming an uncontaminated body. It was a visible symbol of compliance: it connoted rejecting the perceived indulgence of Indian eating habits, laziness, and immoderation of appetites of all kinds. In the Anglo-Indian cultural context, abetted by Duke's adaptation of Banting, fat fueled a racial discourse in which markers of difference could be more readily and carefully defined. The contrast of the pure, European body with 'othered,' diseased bodies which should not touch them exemplifies how boundaries of the self were established and upheld for colonial political purposes. Anne McClintock has connected this form of abjection with the imperial imagination to show how constructions of the perverse (as fatness was rendered here) concretize identity. The identity of the robust, uncontaminated upper class or officer class became inherently connected with the putative superiority of slenderness as an aesthetic.

Though a variety of acts were passed in England and imposed in India to attempt to curb the contraction and spread of venereal disease, these interventions were largely unsuccessful and repealed. While not exactly related to food, this pattern of indulgence and immoderation is important for understanding the circumstances that made Calcutta

ripe for the importation and popularity of Banting and his diet, where his *Letter*'s inculcation of a form of secular morality facilitated the imperial project by not inciting the kind of resentment and hostility which followed evangelical moralizing⁷⁰. Without openly indoctrinating religious ideologies, more subtle forms of inculcation were practiced. As Gauri Viswanathan's *Masks of Conquest* has demonstrated, educational literature was often as religious and as moral as evangelical education, and tacit edifying was usually more successful in imparting didactic lessons.⁷¹ Banting's *Letter* certainly operated in such a fashion, as did Duke's version of it. While it demonstrated social forms of propriety and dictated proper diet, the tract was laden with moral undertones, allowing morality to be conveyed through a secular method of education in dietetics.

The acceptance of self-discipline has been extensively treated by contemporary cultural philosopher Michel Foucault, whose work is useful in understanding the ways the self-policing prescribed by Banting would serve the needs of the nation-state. Foucault makes a distinction between disciplinary power and biopower: disciplinary power is the individually imbued force which enables punishment, training, and surveillance. Biopower focuses on the power of the state to regulate the deployment of these individual powers through self-discipline, thereby subjugating the individual and creating the body required by the state, usually one that is docile. According to Foucault, political order depends on the regulation of passive, productive, controlled bodies. The goal is to create bodies acceptant of hegemony. What is important about Foucault is the ways he demonstrates how new heuristics can be deployed to create submissive subjects. Whereas consumption and eating habits were of little significance before the rebellion, afterwards, food was a means of creating class and military affiliations.⁷² Importantly,

biopower illustrates that subjugation stems not only from the external imposition of power or force, but from the individual's participation in various habitual practices or routines involving the body. Both the individual and society at large perpetuate these practices which extend to hygiene and health, and the result is self-disciplinary practices which align the individual with the interests of the nation-state. The purpose, Foucault asserts, is "to discipline the body, optimize its capabilities, extort its forces, increase its usefulness and docility, integrate it into systems of efficient and economic controls" (Foucault 1980: 139). In the British Indian colonial context, Banting's anti-fat discourse in the wake of great military and social upheaval created such docile bodies eager to engage in self-discipline to prove fitness to rule.

More than simply affecting diet, Banting's rhetoric against fat created a national identity for the English colonizing subject in non-western spaces. Post-Mutiny India was primed for the importation of Bantingism as the concept of the English gentleman underwent great transformation after the mutiny, and Banting's moralistic discourse helped to directly connect fatness and civic insufficiency. Shifts in dietary habits created by Banting in England even affected the presentation of dishes at the Anglo-Indian table, as the old method of individuals at the table serving themselves from large number of dishes at once was replaced with service *a la Russe*, in which individual dishes were presented and served by servants from the sideboard (Hoppen 347).⁷³ This change in serving style had moral implications, and affirmed the British sense of superiority of manners and morality. Amar Singh commented on the absurdity of the dinners hosted by leading noblemen of Jaipur state, and iterates his disgust at the inclusion of "common prostitutes" who "come with a cup of wine and give manwar [a gift of food among

equals]” (qtd. in Rudolph and Rudolph 386). He concludes “If dinners were started on the English principle, when there was no fooling and no unnecessary expense, [he] would be the first man to back them up” (386). Though Banting himself never anticipated his fame in England and abroad, he found himself a household name and useful for invoking a particularly slender physical aesthetic associated with rulership and supremacy.

Certainly, as has been demonstrated, Bantingism was known in India. While the full extent of his fame and impact is difficult to ascertain, his legacy is evident in producing an understanding of corpulence that persists to this day.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

The Legacy of William Banting

Today, periodicals counsel a variety of solutions for the problem of corpulence, including diets, exercise, pills, creams, and surgeries. Commercials and advertisements also suggest a plethora of possible remedies, ranging from the absurd to the plausible⁷⁴. What is observable in the marketing and reception of these contemporary dietary regimens is the effect of William Banting, who dramatically altered attitudes toward fat by initiating the profoundly consequential idea of the diet as a saleable commodity capable of marking identity within particular social and racial contexts and who connected obesity with degeneracy, illness, and evil. This had a significant impact on the popular Victorian social imagination, and on British colonial attitudes in India, and his impact is still visible today. Though the name William Banting has faded from popular consciousness, his legacy of legitimizing laymen-purveyors of popular medical wisdom has persisted, as has his focus on individual will-power and self-help to remedy obesity. Bantingism's legacy bequeathed to us is the dietetic culture that comprises the healthy living practices of today. Also, objections to these diets generally remain unchanged from those directed at Banting's *Letter on Corpulence*, indicating the perpetuation of many debates initiated over Bantingism. Complaints of such diets' lack of novelty, of the qualifications of the proposers of miraculous, cure-all dietetic regimes, and about their ways of disseminating information, all attempt to undercut the popularity of these phenomena, though such objections merely further the fervor over the scourge of obesity.

Finally, though Banting is not the household name he once was, his name has been broadcasted by contemporary researchers interested in the genesis of diets, and in popular novels of both the Victorian and the modern period, all of which record Banting's efficacy in changing the socially constructed meanings of fat.

Banting challenged the authority of medical practitioners using the case study format, and as he promoted his reputation and questioned traditional medical practices, his anti-fat rhetoric contributed to a skeptical attitude toward medical authorities among a variety of lay-readers of all social classes. In some ways, the criticism of him by the medical community bolstered Banting's popular following. Michelle Mouton suggests that Banting's *Letter* "evidences a split between a populist discourse, made up of testimonials, personal experience, self-diagnoses and self help, and a literary culture, whose language, publishing venues, and uses of satire positioned the Victorian intellectual elite as more sophisticated than such mundane confessions of the body allowed" (4-5). Banting addressed this dichotomy directly as he acknowledged that he was "deeply indebted to the *Morning Advertiser* for its able article...when I was so sadly and unjustly attacked by certain prominent members of the British Association" ("The Banting System" 2). The *Morning Advertiser*, whose circulation at the time of the October 1865 article was second to *The Times*, was a trade publication.⁷⁵ In contrast, the British Association, or the British Association for the Advancement of Science, was founded in 1831 to promote science and the examination of scientific matters. As Mouton clarifies, Banting's work capitalized on the effect of the burgeoning popular press and its attention to scientific inquiry, under whose purview Banting's work situated fat. Banting positions himself rhetorically in the fourth edition of his *Letter* as supported by the

popular press, and savagely attacked by the intellectual, professional community. His attack on the medical elite for their snobbery endeared him to the public as he invited individuals to participate in their own healing. Because he contradicted many claims proffered by the medical establishment, he created a juxtaposition between his practical knowledge and what he depicted as physicians' ossified, outdated, and ineffectual knowledge. Banting's work illustrated that at the one end of the spectrum of advice lies the medical advice touted by practitioners, and at the other is the miraculous cure often offered by compelling figures outside of the bounds of medical discourse. These polarities are still extant today.

Though Banting positioned fatness as a medical problem necessitating a remedy, he constructed his dietary regime as a salubrious system which did not require a doctor's direct supervision to carry out. Throughout the *Letter*, he proposed that "no harm can come" of the system now known as "Banting," and as he did so, he invoked the ethos of medical authorities whose Hippocratic oath begins with the pithy promise to do no harm (4). Not only was it harmless, Banting claimed, it was also a simple solution that could be accomplished by anyone without the assistance of a medical doctor. He argued that his system was capable of "unlocking the whole mystery" of weight loss, he showed that its simplicity was the reason for its efficacy, and by doing so, he rendered compliance a matter of common-sense (20). Though not himself a physician, he used his experience and the straightforwardness of the diet system to prove that any individual could achieve weight loss through 'banting.' This 'heal thyself' ideology required only control on the part of the dieter to confer the benefits that could come from the regimen of his anti-fat diet. By presenting the harmlessness and simplicity of his cure, he naturalized obedience

and adherence to his regime (4). The betterment of the individual because of dietary control was a central focus of Banting's letter. By attending to the body and remedying fatness, the subject gains mastery not only over the self, but also over those who fail to "unlock the mystery," or those who fail to achieve self-awareness. This can be seen in a cartoon that shows the importance of an education in Bantingism.



Newspaper Boy (Confidentially to little Captain Podgers on his Wedding Tour). "BANTING ON CORPULENCE, SER!"

Fig. 7. Newspaper Boy: Banting on Corpulence.

In the cartoon which illustrates this phenomenon, the paper boy provides the portly gentleman with a copy of Banting's dietetic treatise as a remedy for his corpulence (see fig. 7). He is invited to participate in his own treatment through reading the *Letter*. The illustration shows the role of mass media and self-publication in disseminating anti-fat rhetoric by laymen-purveyors of dietary wisdom, a trend which is even more markedly apparent now. Just as Bantingism permeated all social classes in the Victorian period,

studies suggest that today individuals of all classes are now more likely to seek medical information directly, and from sources such as the news media rather than scientific studies (Schlesinger 185). At the touch of a button or click of the mouse, individuals can research symptoms, diagnose conditions, and order medications. More and more people are self-diagnosing, managing, and treating themselves along the lines Banting suggests, a legacy of the Banting phenomenon. In 2001, a study in the United Kingdom found that of twenty-five million people with web access, searching for health information was listed as one of the most common uses of the web (Tang 333). In this country, websites like Web MD have facilitated this research, and a recent study by the Pew Research Center's Internet and American Life project (2011) found that 80% of Internet-using Americans (which is roughly 59% of all adults) looked online for information about fifteen specific diseases or treatments, of which obesity was one (Hendrick). Likewise, the same study found that 34% of adults used the internet to read someone else's commentary or experience about health or medical issues on an online news group, web site, or blog. Similarly affording individuals the opportunity to heal themselves is the proliferation of advice on health available using any search engine. An article in the *British Medical Journal* (2006) found that both doctors and patients often search with Google to make a diagnosis, and in over 58% of the cases, Google "popped right out" the correct answer because of its ready access to more than three billion health-related medical articles on the web (qtd. in Tang 333). Just as Banting promised that those who accessed his *Letter* could "unlock the mystery" of fat, Google instantly resolves the quandary of health management by pointing to the correct way to do so.

Another modern phenomenon precipitated by Bantingism was the participation in dieting as an indication of superior social class, as can be seen in another cartoon from *Punch* (see fig. 8). As the cartoon implies, Bantingism was pervasive, and was also



Swell (to Corpulent Cabman). "HAW, HERE'S SIXPENCE—GET YOURSELF—GLASS—BEER."
Cabby. "THANK YOU, SIR, ALL THE SAME; BUT I NEVER TAKE IT. I'M A FOLLOWERIN' MR. BANTIN'S ADVICE FOR CORPULENCE, SIR. HE SAYS, I MAY TAKE TWO OR THREE GLASSES O' GOOD CLARET, OR A GLASS OR TWO O' SHERRY WINE, OR RED PORT, OR MADRIDY; ANY SORT O' SPIRITS—" (*Swell, deeply touched, makes the Sixpence Half-a-Crown.*)

Fig. 8. Swell (To Corpulent Cabman).

seen as a way of demonstrating refinement. The swell recognizes the man's attempts to reduce his corpulence, and rewards him for it.⁷⁶ A recent article (2010) in *Newsweek* supports this classist modern day dietetic culture, claiming, "modern America is a place of extremes, and what you eat for dinner has become the definitive marker of social status" (Miller). Lower-income families choose sugary, fatty, and processed foods, he argues, because they are cheaper and because they taste good, while people who are wealthy can afford to participate in what the author calls a 'foodie' culture of more healthful, diet foods. This has resulted in a staunch divide between those who are low-

income and corpulent because of the foods they eat, and those who can afford to eat better and participate in various dietetic regimes to manage fatness.

Not only did participation in Bantingism indicate higher social standing in Victorian England, Banting also helped to legitimize the idea of the diet as a saleable commodity, since prior to Banting, for-profit cures were often associated with quackery. Numerous arguments in Banting's day attacked him for making money from his diet. Though he went to great lengths to contest it, he did make money. What is significant here is not the amount of money he made, but rather the connection forged between cures which turned a profit and quackery. The controversy surrounding Banting's profiteering—the same debate that has plagued diets subsequent to his—is evident in “A Dietary Question: Corpulence and Leanness,” an article by an unnamed author examining how Dr. Edward Smith reproved the subject of Banting at the inaugural address of the British Association at Bath. The author supports Banting and illustrates the nature of Smith's attack as based on Banting's supposed motives: “A great and unjust outcry has been raised against Mr. Banting...But the motives of Mr. Banting, are, we conceive, eminently philanthropical and praiseworthy. He wished to do his fellow-countrymen suffering from obesity as service by showing them how such a disease might be got rid of...and surely this is an object altogether laudable and meritorious” (829). While the article defends Banting as “praiseworthy,” it records some of the objections levied against Banting's diet, especially the perceived pecuniary motives of the diet's founder. One of the legacies of Banting's diet is the debate he fostered about whether medicine for profit can also be considered “philanthropical.” In his *Letter*, he explains how he made a profit of 225 pounds, ten shillings (Banting 4th Edition 6).

While Banting went to great lengths to demonstrate his charitable contributions, it cannot be denied that his diet plan was profitable. The point remains that Banting accumulated wealth from his product, a common phenomenon which remains today. Making his diet a marketable commodity was an important change, and yet his success was pointed to by his critics as a sign of his fraudulence. What Banting did was to provide legitimacy for the idea of individuals paying for diets that worked. This is a feature of healthful dietetic commodities of modern times. Modern weight loss remedies are undeniably profitable. Though it is understood that though a person may have to spend money, he or she may be rewarded with the desired body by purchasing these diets or drugs. For example, one anti-obesity drug was projected to net six billion dollars in sales in a two-year period (Wadman). The U.S. Weight Loss Market was estimated as being worth \$60.9 billion dollars (“Weight Loss Market in U.S. up 1.7% to \$61 Billion”). This market included commercial weight loss diets such as Jenny Craig, a company which netted \$343 million. Online dieting such as WeightWatchers.com reported 1.7 million paid subscribers and its 2012 revenue was \$504 million. The staggering statistics are not limited to America. The U.K. reported twenty-nine million dieters as of January 2014, and these dieters contributed to worldwide diet market estimated at \$220 billion (Leaver). Likewise, India’s diet industry showed growth of 18.6% from 2006 to 2010, and it grew by 26.95% in 2010 (“Nutritional and Dietary Supplements Market in India”). While such colossal amounts dwarf the income Banting’s diet produced, they indicate the legitimizing of weight-loss for profit, a Banting-bequeathed legacy.

The pivotal legacy of Banting was attaching to corpulence the stigma of disease and moral evil. The author of “A Dietary Question” claims, “Corpulency is no doubt

detrimental to strength and beauty. It impedes respiration, rendering impossible any labor which requires prolonged exertion. It is prejudicial to beauty and the harmony of proportions, and leads to...a cohort of other [medical] complaints” (831). Where Banting succeeded most markedly was in his marketing of deprivation as desirable, facilitated by his overtly Christian moralizing over the sins of indulgence. His critics attempted to reverse Banting’s appeal by using the same tactics, appending the stigma of evil to his plan. The article quotes Dr. Smith’s defamatory address, in which Smith claims he feels “compelled to state that it would be an evil to this nation, both physically and mentally, if the system of reduction were to become at all general, and that on the contrary, regarding the whole population, we need to add to, rather than take from, the weight of the body” (830). Smith takes issue with Banting’s basic principle that the population needed to lose weight, and also with the general audience Banting cultivates with his appeal. Instead, Smith asserts that the population needs to gain weight, citing instances of famine and starvation in England. Despite Smith’s claims, “A Dietary Question” endorses Banting’s premise and reiterates his language that fat is a ‘disease’ that must be ‘got rid of’ (829). This premise, albeit an accepted truism today, is a legacy of Banting and his work to associate corpulence with disease through his metaphor of fat as a loathsome parasite.

Banting certainly brought awareness to obesity, and stigmatized it for subsequent generations who connected it with moral and social evils. Another *Punch* cartoon illustrates this transformation of fatness in Victorian society (see fig. 9).



Fig. 9. Might Be Worse.

In the cartoon, adiposity or fatness is illustrated as having acquired a social stigma because of Banting's indoctrination of the public. Although the daughter humorously mispronounces and misunderstands the word "Averdupoise," she approves of her mother's weight loss, which shows recognition of Banting's role in marking fatness as an undesirable state. An almost unlimited access to information in modernity has led to an increased awareness of obesity as a disease, a connection Banting indelibly forged by appending the stigma of evil to fat in his popularized publication. The moralizing over fat today is especially prevalent in the news media, where obesity is represented using words such as "epidemic," "time bomb," "scourge," "war," and "battle" (Saguy and Almeling 63). Abigail Saguy and Rene Almeling (2008) showed in a recent study that modern news reporting of the obesity epidemic tends to dramatize and stigmatize corpulence with evocative language and metaphors, and to do so in an alarmist and individual-blaming

fashion (53). They concluded that news reporting does significantly affect the way obesity is framed as a social problem and public health crisis. Citing “An additional layer of morality...added to body weight and eating” added by the alarmist news reporting of obesity, they note that “trim bodies have come to represent healthy living in a society where the pursuit of health is a moral end in itself” (55). Creating such a panic is profitable, and results in the sale of a variety of diet commodities. Additionally, such a presentation belies the fact that normative bodies and health are socially constructed frames of reference. Likewise, reports of obesity as a public health crisis make fat as a neutral or positive form of biological diversity more difficult to accept or promote, and these sensationalized reports also maintain moral hierarchies by communicating normative understandings (Saguy and Almeling 78). Banting’s contribution to the dietetic culture of modern day is his stigmatization of fatness, making its prevention an undeniable moral obligation.

Although Banting firmly entrenched his anti-fat rhetoric in the minds of the Victorian population, he was not able to quell all of the controversies over his diet. Even today, controversies over originality are often used to undercut the popularity and success of particular diets, as they were with Banting’s plan. The author of “A Dietary Question” addresses the fact that Banting is not the “first or the twentieth” who has written about diet (830). This allusion to the precursors of Banting is meant to undermine the authority and credibility gained from being the first. Certainly, Banting’s was positioned within a busy history of discourse about obesity, and to show this, the author mentions Venetian dieter Luigi Cornaro, who lived to be “100, some say to 104 years of age,” and through whose writing about diet became a “benefactor to his race,” not an “obtrusive egoist”

(830).⁷⁷ Cornaro's work appeared in sixteenth century Italy, and mirrored Banting's description of his own struggles with fat and dieting.⁷⁸ The article uses the comparison to Coronaro to illustrate the perpetual difficulties experienced by authors who attempt to establish credible positions as authorities outside of the bounds of the medical profession. Coronaro, writing about his own difficulties with obesity like Banting, was deemed an 'egoist.' The same critique was levied against Banting for being an "obtrusive egoist" as he shared his story and openly discussed his body as he chronicled his success. Though Cornaro did achieve some success, Banting's ability to capitalize on self-publishing, as well as the rise of fringe medical discourses, helped to establish the credibility of his position within Victorian society and to refute claims of his egotism.

By discussing Cornaro, the author reminds readers that Banting's story is not novel: other discourses on weight management did exist, and he cheekily remarks, "There is nothing new under the sun" as he recalls the Venetian's quest to reduce his weight beginning in his forties in a work that parallels Banting's in many ways. Thus, though the article notes that Banting's weight reduction was by no means the most spectacular, his did capture the public's imagination in ways previous discourses did not, a point which the comparison illuminates. The author even points out a number of diets more outlandish (albeit successful) than Banting's, which illustrate the paradox purveyors of weight-loss methods face even in contemporary contexts. When novel, they are eschewed as quackery. However, they simultaneously are critiqued for a lack of novelty, and this argument too is used to discredit their viability. What Banting contributed was an awareness of this conundrum, as the busy popular discourse which enveloped him drew attention to the speciousness of this argument over novelty, as even Banting himself

acknowledged he was not the first to discuss fatness and its remedies. Though he was not necessarily the first, his popularity and success made him socially significant. Banting managed to benefit from the rise of the diet as a marketable phenomenon, as well as from the growing market for self-published self-help books which employed the case-study format as an acceptable form of scientific discourse, and which made discussions of the body socially acceptable.

The same difficulty that Banting faced about the originality of his proposal characterizes the reception that modern proponents of dietetic regimes face today. A prominent example is the Atkins plan. Many have called The Atkins Diet a contemporary rendering and revival of Banting's plan, though the diet did not acknowledge Banting as its inspiration. The Atkins Diet, the eponymous low-carb diet created by Robert Atkins, was developed in 1972, but became a worldwide sensation in 2002 with the publication of *Dr. Atkins' New Diet Revolution*. Atkins was a cardiologist who sought a solution to his own weight-management problems. He based his diet on the research of another doctor, and advocated an avoidance of dietary carbohydrates as a means of weight loss⁷⁹. Like Banting, Atkins was critiqued for being derivative.

The phenomenon of such regimes facing difficulty in proving originality exists in another example. One Banting-inspired craze immensely popular today is the Paleo Diet, a phenomenon which swept the multi-billion dollar a year diet industry in 2010, and which is still widely propagated in the mass media and in social media. The Paleo Diet advocated a return to earlier prehistoric foodways as a solution to the supposedly modern issue of fatness. The Paleo-Diet touted its low-carbohydrate diet as the key to combating obesity and other related health problems. The Paleo Diet offered a low-carb system to

remedy popular misconceptions about foods to eat while dieting and the erroneous medical recommendations made by the United States Department of Agriculture in its food pyramid.⁸⁰ Loren Cordain, the self-proclaimed world “expert on Paleolithic diets and founder of the Paleo Movement” wrote a variety of books and academic articles based on the premise that weight loss is predicated on consumption of food groups based on those available to our agricultural, hunter-gatherer ancestors (“The Paleo Diet Premise”). The Paleo Diet allowed the intake of contemporary foods based on Paleolithic era foods, essentially reverting to food groups available to people about 2.6 million years ago. Dr. Cordain, who is a PhD., not a M.D., wrote several popular-culture diet books including a cookbook, appeared with Dr. Mehmet Oz, and spawned countless blogs and websites about his diet⁸¹. In each text and public appearance, Cordain advocated a higher protein intake than the USDA recommends, citing that modern protein consumption is far lower than the hunter-gatherer average of nineteen to thirty-five percent (“The Paleo Diet Premise”). Staples of the diet therefore include meat and seafood accessible to Paleolithic man to increase the consumption of protein-rich foods. Breads and processed foods are not allowed, and are instead replaced with non-starchy vegetables and fruits. Following such a diet, Cordain claimed, would help people “optimize [their] health, minimize [their] risk of chronic disease, and lose weight” (“The Paleo Diet Premise”). The diet promised relief from obesity, diabetes, cancers, autoimmune diseases, gout, and myopia. Cordain marketed his diet to a broad audience, as well as to specific groups such as athletes and older individuals. The diet gained followers with its claims of primitive foods’ superiority to processed ones, but also created a great deal of controversy. The debate is reminiscent of the same critiques levied toward Banting, though the underlying enthymeme—that fat

is evil and dreadful—persists as accepted common knowledge, a legacy of William Banting's *Letter on Corpulence*.

A great deal of criticism focuses on the lack of novelty present in the Paleo plan's structure, an attack to which Banting himself was also subjected. Cordain has been accused of touting established information as novel, and indeed, Cordain's website offers scholarly articles he wrote as early as 1997. These articles include the same basic premises of the Paleo Diet, and note that nutritional changes since the agricultural revolution some 10,000 years ago have contributed to a variety of medical issues.⁸² Though medical information existed prior to the 2010 explosion of the Paleo Diet, its popularity was attained through the publication of pop-culture books and personal appearances on popular culture television shows. Likewise, much of the fervor over the Paleo diet prompted inquiry into the history of diet crazes, as diet plans have a long history connected to the transformation of medicine. This inquiry revealed the pivotal role of William Banting in the history of dieting. As is evident, the Paleo plan echoes many of the elements of Banting's plan. And, as happened to Banting, novelty is decried as quackery, and a history of obesity renders these diets neither novel nor particularly cutting edge in their claims.

Like Banting, whose fundamental premise that thinness was desirable was greeted with skepticism, the Paleo plan's argument also inspired similar cynical responses. Unconvinced of the basic hypothesis of this modern dieting phenomenon—first, that Paleo man was slim—detractors critiqued the factual research of the plan. Despite the mythologizing in the popular press of the leaner and fitter figure of antiquity, historians remain unconvinced of the existence of the leanness of primitive man. For example,

George Bray's "History of Obesity" chronicles the various stone-age artifacts that illustrate a variety of researchers' claims that obesity is not a novel or new phenomenon of the twenty-first century. Rather, it is a state of being that has periodically been the focus of negative attention. As one scholar notes, "Some 30,000 years ago, prehistoric statuettes, including the famous Venus of Willendorf, depicted anatomically accurate abdominally obese women" (Haslam 31). Bray chronicles examples from ancient Mesopotamia, the Incas, Mayans, and Aztecs, as well as other artifacts, to illustrate the pervasiveness of images of corpulence as a normative or even valued condition. Academics also attack the plan's play on nostalgia, claiming that a return to the Pleistocene is simply a ridiculous concept that appeals to people's desire to romanticize a primitive past. Marlene Zuk's *PaleoFantasy: What Evolution Really tells us about Sex, Diet, and How We Live* attacks the paleo-premise as a "misunderstanding of evolution" which requires accepting the idea that "The notion that humans got to a point in evolutionary history where their bodies were somehow in sync with the environment" (Zuk 3). Zuk contests the idea that the hunter-gatherer era represents such a moment of fantastical concord, just as Banting painted slimness as a romanticized condition for social harmony and acceptance. What both diet plans naturalize is the idea of slimness as an idyllic condition, one in which man is in harmony and at ease in his own body and in his surrounding environment.

Not only did scholars take issue with Cordain's basic framework, many contested his claim to medical expertise, just as critics did with Banting's credentials. Cordain is a professor in the Department of Health and Exercise Science at Colorado State University. While he has a doctoral degree from the University of Pennsylvania, he is not a medical

doctor. His publications furthered debate about the nature of medical discourse, and about who is qualified to be considered an expert in medical issues. Little has changed from Banting's Victorian excoriations in the medical press: debates still rage about who is qualified to speak about medical issues such as the treatment of obesity.

Banting's legacy has been perpetuated not only by low-carbohydrate diets which have prompted inquiry into these modern diets' precursors, but also has been propagated by references to him in a variety of novels, both Victorian and contemporary. In George Gissing's novel *The Whirlpool* (1897), the author compares Bantingism to the British Empire's imperialist tendencies: "Who believes for a moment that England will remain satisfied with bits here and there? We have to swallow the whole" (56). He continues, "We shall fight like blazes in the twentieth century. It's the only thing that keeps Englishmen sound; commercialism is their curse. Happily, no sooner do they get fat than they kick, and somebody's shin suffers; then they fight off the excessive flesh. War is England's Banting" (56).

The still popular murder-mystery writer Agatha Christie mentions Banting in "The Tuesday Night Club." In the short story, after a heated debate about the delights of unraveling unsolved mysteries, Miss Marple and her compatriots form a club called the Tuesday Night club to "propound a problem. Some mystery of which they have personal knowledge, and to which, of course, they know the answer" (Christie 6). Miss Marple's group investigates a suspicious death of Mrs. Jones by poison. There are a number of promising suspects, including Mr. Jones and Miss Clark, the wife's attendant, but a crucial clue is that the prime suspect, "Miss Clark, alarmed at her increasing stoutness, was doing a course of what is popular known as 'banting'" (Christie 11). Miss Clark

wishes to eat a bowl of corn flour, and the murdered woman urges her to eat it: “It is not good for you, Milly, it really isn’t...If the Lord made you stout he meant you to be stout. You drink up that bowl of corn-flour. It will do you all the good in the world” (Christie 11). The police originally suspect the husband of poisoning the wife’s porridge, but since Miss Clark eats it, it ruins the case against him. Miss Marple adeptly solves the mystery, identifying that the cooks “nearly always put hundreds and thousands on trifle...Those little pink and white sugar things” (Christie 15). Banting figures prominently in solving the mystery, as does Miss Marple’s knowledge of it. She observes that not everyone ate the trifle because “The companion was banting, you remember. You never eat anything like trifle if you are banting; and I expect Jones just scraped the hundreds and thousands off his share and left them at the side of his plate” (Christie 15). Participation in Banting not only saves the lives of those who are not poisoned by the sugary decorations, but Marple’s knowledge of Banting is pivotal in exonerating the innocent who are accused of a crime.

Similarly revelatory of Banting’s legacy is a reference to Banting which appears in the contemporary popular teen paranormal romance series *The Infernal Devices* by Cassandra Clare. Her prequel to her wildly popular novel sequence *The Mortal Instruments* is set in the Victorian period. One of the characters in this work, *Clockwork Angel*, inquires of a particularly thin individual, “I suppose you needn’t ever bant, do you? You can just use magic to make yourself slender” (Clare 55). The character does indeed have supernatural powers, but the reference indicates contemporary authors’ awareness of Banting’s salience in his own time, and the desirability of thinness that is a result of Banting’s dietetic treatise.

Banting's legacy has been resurrected in both novelistic discourse and in popular cultural diets such as the Atkins diet and the Paleo plan, as both Paleo dieting and the Atkins diet parallel Banting's *Letter on Corpulence*, and offer essentially the same premises and conclusions. Despite the changes in the nomenclature from Banting to Atkins or the Paleo plan, what has remained unchallenged is the idea that fat is synonymous with ill-health, slovenliness, and laziness. While an uncritical acceptance of fat is not the purpose of this dissertation, it is important to interrogate the construction of fat discourse, and to challenge normativity. As Susan Bordo has reminded us, discourses have the power to gradually change conceptions of and acceptable parameters for bodies, and Banting's discourse is one which shows this assertion quite clearly (2003). When popular constructions of obesity fail to question society's views of what bodies are acceptable, the "othering" of fatness as a moral evil rather than as a pathology will not change. It remains crucial for Fat Studies, postcolonial scholarship, and the field of rhetoric to continue to look at how contemporary and historical discourses marginalize and stigmatize fat bodies.

As this study has tried to demonstrate, Banting's regime, controversial or not, popularized the idea of controlling eating habits as a part of modern life. This culture of "healthful living" of modern individuals can be seen in the proliferation of health advice from such individuals as Mehmet Oz, Deepak Chopra, and Sanjay Gupta; whether individuals follow these dietetic rules or not, they are a part of a modern Western individual's consciousness. The phenomenon of such figures creating a consciousness about healthy living echoes what Banting and his diet did for the world of Victorian England and British colonial India. This is unsurprising, as colonialism is a transmitter of

modernity, to the extent that western modernity is a politicized agenda. One of the principal aspects of the transmission of colonial epistemology is the pervasiveness of modern, supposedly healthful practices. Banting and the spread of Bantingism is a clear example of this. Just as colonialism spread the English language, its legal and political systems, and its educational practices as signs of cultural superiority, colonialism spread aspects of healthful living. Colonialism likewise spread the culture of modern, healthful living, of all varieties, including traditional and fringe discourses. While it is beyond the scope of the project to see how Bantingism spread to areas other than India, it is sufficient to say that its spread to India is merely a replica of what it may have done or contributed to globally. Despite its beginnings as a Victorian phenomenon, Bantingism should be regarded as constituting a chapter in the history of modern cultural practices.

NOTES

Notes Chapter 1

¹ These conversations take place in a variety of different media, including on television and radio shows, news broadcasts, and in blogs, magazine, and newspaper articles.

² Weatherall argues that homeopathic remedies were excluded from the medical establishment's attempts to decisively demarcate scientific medicine from unscientific. He centers his research primarily in Cambridge, and examines the reasons for the exclusion of various kinds of competing practitioners, and the means by which such heuristics were constructed and marketed to the public.

³ As an example of the challenges levied to the profession, in her analysis of the widely popular Morison's pill to combat all ills, Kathleen Beres examines James Morison's use of pamphlets to retort against commonly accepted medical knowledge.

⁴Ricketson was part of the first Clean Living Movement in America, which had ties to the second Great Awakening (Engs 56). The Movement saw a surge of health-reform crusades sweep into popular consciousness and resulted in a fervor about eliminating health problems. Ruth C. Eng's work in 1990 coined the term. Her text historicizes the Clean Living Movement and identifies the confluence of moral overtones with health crusades which helped to popularize anti-tobacco and anti-alcohol coalitions of the late twentieth century. The Clean Living Movement created a receptive audience for moralizing about health. Although Ricketson was a New York physician, his book was not "merely designed for physicians, but for the information of others" (1). Eng examines Shadrach Ricketson's *Means of Preserving Health and Preventing Diseases*

(1806) as an example of the importance of a moral component of public health campaigns. Interestingly, in his analysis of Ricketson's work, Brian Altonen examines the similarity of Ricketson's work to George Cheyne's 1722 "Essay on Health and Long Life," and suggests Ricketson intended to replace Cheyne's out-of-date presentation with something more appealing. Both of these works establish patterns: the moralizing that accompanies public health crusades, and the ironic accusations of plagiarism or re-vamping that occur as backlashes to movements which attempt to draw public attention to established medical knowledge. Altonen also establishes that Ricketson's inexpensive text sold more readily than his medical contemporaries' volumes, one of which sold for twenty dollars, as opposed to Ricketson's \$1.00 to \$1.25 per book. Though the work was published in England, it was not as successful there as in the United States, where the moralizing from the Great Awakening had created a popular fervor for such texts invoking temperance and restraint.

⁵For example, *Blackwood's Magazine*, and the *Cornhill Magazine*, edited by William Makepeace Thackeray and which sold 120,000 copies in its opening editions, held a large market share. In these forums, doctors and men of letters could publish a variety of letters and articles designed to reach a middle class audience. These kinds of writings rapidly assumed the form of case study, as Nicole Bucemi has shown. She estimates that one periodical emerged every twenty-seven days (Buscemi 8). Domestic publications in England during the middle of the century are replete with articles and readers' questions about health and consumption habits; with the growth in popular medical discourse geared toward the public, magazines often capitalized on growing trends and preoccupations. One such publication of importance was Samuel and Isabella

Beeton's *Beeton's Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine*. Started in 1852, by 1856, the magazine boasted a circulation of more than 50,000 copies. Though the cover of the magazine features women engaged in a variety of domestic duties, neither cooking nor eating is displayed. The magazine does offer a variety of recipes, but ingesting and food preparation are conspicuously absent. Women are positioned in the magazine as caretakers and supervisors of the household, managers of all domestic matters. The emphasis on control is evident and manifested in magazine's content, and food itself is an area of control supervised and managed to avoid obesity. Though Banting's work was not published until 1863, food and its regulation was clearly a concern. After Banting, food and weight-management are a far more prevalent concern.

⁶ Travel narratives were similar in many ways to the case study. They present the explorer or medical detective as seeking solutions through observation. Similarly, moralizing is often done under the auspices of recording objective details about a particular culture or condition. A travel narrative recording incidents in Paraguay incorporated references to Banting, and suggested there were "no fat Gauchos, Illustrating the Banting theory" (Hutchinson 86).

⁷ Both Banting and Smiles lived in London, specifically in Kensington, and both are buried in the same cemetery: Brompton.

⁸Wadd's text, which spanned four print runs, demonstrated that by the time of his death in 1829, "obesity was commonplace and that dieting would become a popular concern in the Victorian era" (Haslam and Rigby 86). Wadd's text is less about dieting, though, and more about transforming fat into a significant health concern that would fall under a doctor's purview. What is most significant about Wadd is the variety of stylistic

changes to his medical discourse on fatness including the manner of his moralizing that Banting will illuminate.

⁹English physician Thomas Venner was the first physician to use the word obesity in a medical context in 1620, in his treatise about remedies and treatments of being “unseemly corpulent” (qtd in Haslam 33). In his work *Via Recta*, Venner describes fat as a marker of social class, an unfortunate consequence of gentility. Though Venner begins to stigmatize obesity, he reveals the dominant discourse venerating it as a marker of gentility. Venner advocated a dietary regimen aligned with sufficient sleep and the avoidance of certain practices that encouraged indolence. His text counseled people to live “the right way” in order to achieve longevity and avoid illness. Venner’s work not only marks obesity as a detriment to health, but begins to align it with error and vice. His work responds to the prevalent discourse which did not malign obesity, but privileged it as an outward manifestation of superior social standing which allowed the luxury of indolence.

¹⁰Burke was remarking on the French Revolution, connecting fatness with greed and avarice. Burke contended that irreligiousness and stupidity shared a common source with fat. Here, Wadd invokes paraphrases of his words along with those of Lord Chesterfield to support his connection of fat to undesirable qualities such as sloth and ignorance.

¹¹ Separation is also a response that leads to sameness, as colonialism has a tendency to clone itself. The nature of the dialectic of sameness and difference creates this similarity: in the dialectic, the urge exists to pull in an identity against which to define oneself. This separation is also a dialectic that will rebound on the separation itself

in the sense that once separation is achieved, through a civilizing process, sameness will occur.

¹²It is significant that Samuel Smiles, the self-published self-help writer, first wrote travel narratives. It suggests a close link between the two stylistic forms, as both make observations in a seemingly objective fashion while moralizing and suggesting ways of viewing the subject subjectively.

¹³The concept of “tapu” or taboo was not well understood. In Polynesian culture, the body is sacred, and represents the abundance of the land. The feeding ritual, a form of religious practice, reflects the notion of the body’s connectedness to the health, prosperity, and well-being of the land. He was fed not because he was too lazy to do so, but because contact with cooked food would have violated the sacredness of his body (Thomas 194). Thus, while his observations render the ritual a disgusting show of slothfulness, in fact, the ritual was designed to enhance the community’s status and wealth.

¹⁴ Fat as a product of race prevailed until Hilda Bruch’s family-based diagnosis of the pathology of obesity appeared (1940s). It replaced race-or ethnicity-based explanations in favor of inter-familial explanations.

¹⁵ Locke and Rousseau both discussed the idea of the state of nature as a hypothetical rather than historical period. Wadd will capitalize on these post-Enlightenment contrasts in order to better define what he deems civil society.

¹⁶ Cyril Percy Donnison, like Wadd, called fat a “harbinger of disease” (qtd. in Gilman 139). Donnison published his text *Civilization and Disease* in 1937, and claimed that fatness was a Western disease, but one that was inherently different from “primitive

“races” corpulence. Donnison continues to differentiate Western obesity as a result of cultural sophistication from the slatternly, slothful habits of non-western people that result in fatness.

¹⁷ In his work, Banting claims to be unfamiliar with Brillat-Savarin, Bernard, and Dancel, though he mentions them by name. While he never directly mentions Wadd, he mirrors Wadd’s wording almost directly in several instances, and his borrowing indicates the contrary. Likewise, though he never directly references Quetelet, he refers to another work that derived its standards from his work.

¹⁸ Casebooks certainly existed before the Victorian period. For example, physician Simon Foreman’s casebooks in the Elizabethan period recorded a variety of interactions with patients. However, as Lilian R. Furst illustrates in her text *Between Doctors and Patients: The Changing Balance of Power*, surgeons and physicians were regarded more as skilled tradesmen than as learned professionals. She explores how medical technology such as the stethoscope and other advances which enabled doctors to quantify, diagnose, and cure led to the development of physicians’ authority.

¹⁹ The 1842 “People’s Edition” of the *Treatise on Man* sought to correct prior versions of the text that he felt were incomplete and not cohesive enough for public consumption. Quetelet remarked that his revisions clarified his intentions: his work was designed to not to “explain phenomena,” but rather to “establish their existence,” revealing his interest in empirical data (vii).

²⁰ Bernard relays a case study involving a woman without olfactory nerves. Harvey uses the case study format to support his own conclusions, and praises Bernard

for the “case...recorded by him” that enables successful prediction and conclusions (Harvey 44).

²¹ Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin (1755-1826) was a French lawyer and politician. He served as mayor of Belley, but opposed the Jacobins during the French Revolution and fled France for Switzerland. He travelled to New York, Connecticut, and other cities in the United States during his absence from France, familiarizing himself with American food and culture. Upon his return to France after almost four years abroad, he immersed himself in French food and culture, and his love of food led him to publish *The Physiology of Taste, or Meditations on Transcendental Gastronomy*. The text discussed a variety of food issues, including the nature of digestion, the aphrodisiac properties of certain foods, and the chemistry of various types of foods. Though the book was well received by the Parisian public, critics met the book with disdain when the anonymous author was revealed, as he was judged to be inexperienced in the field of medicine and nutrition.

²² When the first American edition of *The Physiology of Taste* was published (1865), it was entitled *The Handbook of Dining, or Corpulence and Leanness Scientifically Considered* to capitalize on the Banting diet craze (Taubes 3). Though Brillat-Savarin’s text was published first in Europe, it followed Banting’s importation into America. Nevertheless, Brillat-Savarin’s work was an important precursor for establishing Banting’s acceptance.

Notes Chapter 2

²³ Correspondingly, Banting and Bantingism will be used interchangeably throughout this work. In its strictest fashion, Bantingism refers to the diet. In its largest sense, Bantingism refers to a kind of social ideology of modern health and fitness.

²⁴ MacKarness's observation is reminiscent of William Wadd's solution to obesity. It involved keeping the mouth shut. Literally, he advocated not eating as a remedy for fatness.

²⁵ Banting's fifth edition was published in the U.K and in America. Its sales figures—some seventy thousand copies—is the equivalent of a half million in sales today, according to Katharina Vester in her article "Regime Change: Gender, Class, and the invention of Dieting in Post-Bellum America."

²⁶ Banting laments in the *Letter* that he has no photographic evidence chronicling the success of his diet plan. However, in a personal letter to George Swan Nottage on January 26, 1865, Banting states, "Public curiosity is one of the most troublesome and dangerous elements to excite- my present unfortunate popularity may have accomplished this but as long is my physiognomy is not known I am safe." He reports that he has "felt bound to decline having my likeness taken" and has eschewed photography to preserve his anonymity.

²⁷ Banting reprints some of these letters in the fourth edition. The inquiries range from physicians to overweight men attempting to procure more information about Banting's dietary habits. Banting also had to write to a number of journals to repudiate rumors of his demise. He ridicules the reports and testifies to his diet's salubrious effects

in his correspondence with a variety of magazines, as will be discussed later in the chapter.

²⁸ Harvard Law School introduced case study as a viable method of instruction in 1870 (Kennedy 21).

²⁹ For this purpose, he also includes charts and graphs.

³⁰ It is worth noting that Banting uses the fourth edition and its preface to argue that exercise does not combat corpulence, as physicians believed.

³¹ Unless otherwise indicated, the fourth edition thus will be used for the analysis that follows as its preface and subsequent testimonials provide ample material to illustrate Banting's effect on Victorian diet discourse, especially through the responses provided by the public and his critics, and Banting's responses to them.

³² He claims his "simple remedy to reduce and destroy superfluous fat" can cure other ills such as boils, carbuncles, and dyspepsia, too (16).

³³ Banting creates an analogy, explaining that horses cannot eat certain foods, such as beans, without critical and serious repercussions. He likewise refers to certain foods—specifically carbohydrates—as antithetical to human health, and calls these "human beans."

Notes Chapter 3

³⁴ "The Banting Quadrille" featured a cover humorously depicting Banting as both thin and fat. See the appendix. Unlike most quadrilles, this features lyrics, and is quite theatrical in nature as well as musical.

³⁵ The Adelphi was founded in 1806 as the Sans Pareil. The theater received its present moniker in 1819. The Adelphi was known for featuring a variety of Dickens'

works adapted for the stage, and the theater even received a small mention in Dickens' *The Pickwick Papers*. The building was demolished and a larger theater was constructed and finished in 1858. It was in this larger, 1500 person capacity building in which the play *Doing Banting* was staged. The end of the performance references the Adelphi theatre and its manager Mr. Benjamin Webster, claiming that at such a venue, Banting's work would reach a far wider audience than simply at town or lecture halls.

³⁶ Daniel Lambert (1770-1809) was famous for his unusually large size. By 1805, Lambert's size was measured at 50 stone, or 700 pounds, and he became the heaviest authenticated person. At the time of his death, he weighed a whopping 739 pounds. While he no longer holds the record as the heaviest person in history, he was famous in Leicester and surrounding areas for his weight. Unlike Banting and his parodic double Professor Pankey, Lambert's weight was documented and authenticated.

³⁷ The quotations from Banting's *Letter*, unless otherwise noted, are from Banting's third edition, published in 1864. The popularity of the first and second editions, which were self-published, led to the publication by Harrison, a "Bookseller to the Queen and H.R.H the Prince of Wales." The third edition includes a preface responding to some of his critics' allegations, and was the text most likely known and used to create the parody.

³⁸ This particular play is not the only one to take up the parody of Banting's demonstration of weight loss. A 1905 edition of *Printers' Ink* recounts a particularly farcical interaction concocted by a well-known humorist who chronicled a fabricated interview between the Duchess of Teck who was "inclined toward embonpoint" and Mr. Banting. When she meets him, he is wearing a coat, and she exclaims, "Your system does

not appear to have made you very thin, Mr. Banting.” He then proposes to “undeceive” her by taking off his coat and revealing the “slender proportions of the real Banting” (31).

³⁹Beginning in the 1850s, a serial group of cartoons entitled “Flunkeyiana” appeared, ridiculing the relationships between servants and masters, and even the hierarchy of servants as well. Satire was designed to hide the uneasiness about the master/servant relationship, and the conditions in which the servants lived. Davidoff and Hawthorn argue that ridicule eased tensions over the amount of knowledge to which such servants were privy, and made light of the difficulties if such household intimacies were made known by dismissed servants (17).

⁴⁰In the mid 1830s, the engraver Ebenezer Landells and the journalist Henry Mayhew began discussions of a new satirical news magazine, a magazine which would be a contemporary London version of the *Paris Charivari*. The printing of the first edition of *Punch, or the London Charivari* on July 17, 1841 realized those aspirations. *Punch*’s weekly circulation was 50-60,000 copies in the mid Victorian period, but readership would have been much greater, perhaps by a multiple of four or five (Miller 267).

⁴¹Much has been written on *Punch* and its attacks on science. Richard Noakes has traced through his literature review the complex representations of science in mid-Victorian comic journalism (93). Noakes’ analysis encourages readers to think of *Punch* as “active in the production of truth,” and suggests that popular perceptions of controversial scientific claims were directly related to how such claims were represented in illustrated periodicals (93). As Noakes notes, “Among the most common subjects of discussion were the fair and foul deeds of medical practitioners (physicians, surgeons,

nurses, and quacks), new medical legislation, novel remedies and other treatments, questions of public health, sanitation and disease” (107). Noakes also contends that “*Punch*’s illustrations represent some of the most complex engagements with science in the periodical” (Noakes 112). Thus, the inclusion of Banting in magazines like *Punch* disseminated the conversation about dieting and the treatment of fatness to a popular audience eager for such discourse.

⁴² Recipes for herring moulds were quite common, and on average called for the following ingredients: 1 ½ pounds of herring and roes, vinegar, water, gelatin, bay leaves, peppercorns, salt, a hard boiled egg, and cucumber. All of the ingredients were sanctioned by Banting.

⁴³ In Horrocks’ work, she draws on the issues raised by Professor Aled Jones in the 2000 Michael Wolff lecture (revised and printed in *Victorian Periodicals Review* Spring 2002. As well as Wolff, she draws on Celina Fox and others who argued that periodicals often focus attention on issues otherwise separated from each other through juxtaposition and humorous parody.

Notes Chapter 4

⁴⁴ Participating in Banting’s diet was referred to as Banting. Similarly, Bantingism was also used as a term to indicate adherence to these dietary principles. They will be used interchangeably, though Bantingism will be used more frequently to differentiate the diet from the individual for whom it was named.

⁴⁵ In 1857, sections of the Bengal Army of the British East India Company mutinied. It developed into a widespread uprising of native soldiers against British rule in India. Also called the Sepoy Rebellion or Mutiny of 1857, there is still great debate about

not only the proper name for the conflict, but about the causes of the mutiny, ranging from the overconfidence of the East India Company to types of musket cartridges to the reforms made by James Ramsay, the Earl of Dalhousie (“The Indian Mutiny 1857-1858”). Regardless of the scholarly dissent over the causes and nomenclature, the event was a watershed in British rule in India, and is often cited as one of the first nationalist uprisings against British occupation.

⁴⁶ The important role food played in the rebellion is often rhetorically rendered in contemporary historical texts using imagery of cooking and food: the ‘conflagration’ ‘spread like wildfire’ and the ‘flames of rebellion’ were feared to potentially ‘flare up’ again (Keay 438). In another text, the sepoys were “fed up” and “refused to swallow” the restrictions being imposed (James 42). The role of food in exacerbating tensions cannot be overlooked, despite historians’ contention over the extent to which these cartridges were truly the issue.

⁴⁷ Surgeon Lieutenant Colonel Joshua Duke (1847-1920) served as a surgeon in the 3rd Punjab Cavalry. He served as a ship’s surgeon in Melbourne, and was involved in the Afghan campaigns as a Sergeant- Major where he was attached to the 5th Gurkhas and Derajat Mountain Battery. He was a resident surgeon in Kashmir, and served in the UK during World War I (Ewing). Duke wrote and described his tending to a variety of patients as he opened a dispensary at Ali Khel in May of 1879, detailing his daily occupations applying splints and sewing wounds. Besides his book on Banting, in 1883 he published *Recollections of the Kabul Campaign, 1879-1880*. A report from *The Indian Medical Gazette* reported Duke receiving a “good service” pension of a hundred pounds, and identifies him as having “entered the service in March 1872, and...employed in the

Foreign Department. He has been a frequent contributor to our columns...He will be 55 on 11 June 1902" (254).

⁴⁸ This study focuses on Banting's effect in India specifically in Calcutta because it was a site of colonial contact, and this city saw an especially large volume of literature imported during the time period of Banting's fame. The significantly larger volume of archived colonial material pertaining to Calcutta makes his salience more evident. This is not to say that Banting's Indian effects lack material in the rest of India, or that studies of Banting's impact outside Calcutta are not warranted. While studies specifically of Bantingism in the rest of India are lacking, some research in related directions include the growth of publications discussing health in colonial India, and information about dietetic changes occurring in the military. Further work could, and should, expand the scope of Banting's effect into other areas of India, especially as Banting was translated into Urdu.

⁴⁹ It must also be acknowledged that William Dalrymple's work is also a subject of contention among historians. Though he is an award-winning author, his anecdotal style, while helpful to an extent in providing evidence of colonial life in India among the working classes, has been critiqued by many scholars as providing an erroneous picture of the English presence in India and the Indian reaction to it. Dalrymple has defended his work on the Mutiny of 1857 by saying he "stirred up controversy on two fronts—one was the method and style of writing and one was the contents, what it actually said about 1857" ("William Dalrymple- The Last Mughal"). Much like Banting, Dalrymple has been taken to task for writing to lay-readers and for critiquing academics and admonishing historians to make "sure that their work is widely available and accessible to the general public" ("William Dalrymple- The Last Mughal"). In response to his

claims of making history accessible, Farrukh Dhondy has critiqued “The motives of people like Dalrymple, who willfully set out to deny the facts” in order to tell a story readable and marketable to a general audience (5). Dhondy, among others, has accused Dalrymple of making history “someone’s pet interpretation” (Sirohi). Despite the controversy over his accuracy and his narrativizing of history, Dalrymple has authored numerous books on India and Indian history, and his primary source information, much of which was previously unexamined, does present some insight into early colonial Calcutta, which is useful here.

⁵⁰ Burton’s *Burdens of History: British Feminists, Indian Women, and Imperial Culture, 1865-1915* explores the link between feminism and imperialism. She specifically examines the British middle-class feminist movement and its attitudes toward Indian women, particularly focusing on their condemnatory stance on prostitution. Burton’s work has established the attitudes of the women’s movement as highly critical of any perceived threats to the purity and respectability of the English identity.

⁵¹This idea of innate English nobility had been fostered throughout military campaigns, and indeed there are examples of pre-mutiny connections between civility and gentility and the British imagination of selfhood. For example, when Siraj-ud-daula, the nawab of Bengal, seized Fort William in 1757, he ordered the remaining English prisoners locked up; they were, on the hottest and most oppressive night of the year, in an airless punishment cell. Forty-three of the sixty-four prisoners died, giving rise to the legendary Black Hole of Calcutta. It fostered feelings of retribution for ‘native atrocities’ and was used to justify repressive measures long after Clive drove Siraj out of Calcutta (Read and Fisher 19). In the early British imagination, this incident of deprivation was

often used to excuse various empire-building endeavors, and was invoked at the subsequent battle of Plassey in 1757, which has always been regarded as the decisive moment of establishing British hegemony in Bengal, leading to the domination of all of India (Read and Fisher 19). The deaths of the English prisoners and the tenacity of the survivors in the infamous Black Hole were not only greatly exaggerated, but also used to invoke an imagined English identity: unlike the uncivilized natives, English men in the colonies were depicted as humane and benevolent, despite evidence to the contrary. Any deviation from this supposed definition of English moral rectitude was met with suspicion and disbelief. It was also a moment at which British identity was made commensurate with fortitude derived from deprivation rather than indulgence.

⁵² It must be acknowledged that native fatness was in part the product of the British imagined identity, reified by interactions with the upper classes of Indian men and women unaffected by occurrences like famine. Mike Davis's *Late Victorian Holocausts* examines the rhetoric of race and disease, remarking that asceticism via diet and exercise was often touted as proof of British constitutional fitness which could withstand deprivation (Davis 112). Likewise, Sheldon Watts comments on the creation of artificial binaries through the categorical condemnation of colonial Indian subjects as naturally unhealthy, diseased, and famine prone (Watts 91). Thus, while the British imagined themselves as engaging in dieting practices of self-denial to strengthen the body and temperament, less constitutionally healthy classes failed to thrive under such conditions. The British constitution, perceived as naturally rugged, could withstand ascetic living and dieting while others succumbed. The ideology of superiority legitimized through food control enabled the British to maintain colonial rule and justify the lack of interference or

aid. Additionally, the connection of slimness to health was possible even when famine struck, as the British constitution was imagined as innately hardier and more robust.

⁵³ Likely, it is to men like Monier Williams to whom Duke refers when he recalls being warned that Bantingism “never can be carried out by natives of this country” (51).

⁵⁴ The subsection in which this appears is directed to “Officers and men serving in India” (22).

⁵⁵ Banting’s work was most readily available in places such as Calcutta because these ports were visibly Europeanized because of their exposure to British administrative and cultural imports (Joshi 41). Exposure occurred both through the importation of materials as well as their circulation in public libraries. Importation statistics show the trends in reading underwent significant shifts in the mid-nineteenth century, as between 1850 and 1863-64, the exportation of books and printed matter from Britain to India doubled in value as demand increased (Joshi 37).

⁵⁶ Calcutta would quickly go from having 49 libraries and reading rooms in 1886 to 137 in 1901, and Banting was included in the libraries’ holdings.

⁵⁷ The disease affects the renal system, and is often fatal as it causes a shutdown of the kidneys.

⁵⁸ The print runs of a variety of manuals for evangelicals traveling to the colonies reveal the growing interest in diet and hygiene as a practical part of health regulation abroad. For example, *A Manual of Family Medicine and Hygiene for India* garnered a wide readership among those who would make the voyage. It was in its fifth edition in London by 1889, and sixth edition by 1893. Victorian publications about India in

England for prospective missionaries took the forms of letters, manuals, and reflections, and addressed a variety of issues, including diet.

⁵⁹ Bishop Berkley suffered from a variety of ailments late in life, and he sought a number of remedies to fix these conditions.

⁶⁰ The American doctor Helen Densmore was an early proponent of Banting's diet. She not only advocated it in New York, but also often visited London where she spoke of its great successes. Densmore was a prolific journalist, and a bit of an anomaly for the time (as she was the first female reporter to sit in on the House of Representatives to report), making her rather well known in London, to which Murdoch often returned for conferences (Guinn 1216). Murdoch himself was a printer, and he invested in a variety of printing tools in order to publish texts in India. Given this, he is likely to have been familiar with Banting, whose self-published work was a widely-discussed phenomenon in London.

⁶¹ Samuel Scott Alnutt was born in St. George's Terrace, Brighton in 1850. The Englishman went to India in 1879. He continued his work at the Cambridge Mission in Delhi until his death in 1917. Delhi was an important center for missionary work: the Delhi Mission of The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel opened in 1854 at the behest of the Reverend Midgley John Jennings, a chaplain of the East India Company. He was killed during the Mutiny of 1857. The work *Alnutt of Delhi: A Memoir* by Cecil Henry Martin (1921) tells of Alnutt's missionary work in India and records his correspondence with a variety of clergymen in England. Alnutt not only served the Cambridge Mission in Delhi, but was also the founder and first Principal of St. Stephen's

College (founded in 1881). His position should lend credence to the possibility that Banting was spread through missionary educational endeavors as well.

⁶² At the time of his death in 1809, he weighed 52 stone 11 pounds, or 739 pounds. His coffin required 112 square feet of wood, and it took more than twenty men to drag his coffin into the newly-dug trench. The spectacle of the truly fat man shows the changing attitudes toward corpulence as unruly and deviant.

⁶³ Major A.C. Yate composed the biography of Lieutenant Colonel John Haughton in 1900. Haughton was a Commandant of the 36th Sikhs and is described as “a hero” of Tirah.

⁶⁴ John Briggs served in the 15th Madras Native Infantry; he began his military service before the age of sixteen, and died in 1875 at the age of ninety. While he never figured conspicuously in the annals of the Indian Empire, his memoir is useful in capturing some of the sensibilities of the age (Bell 13).

⁶⁵ Attention to nutrition and fat after Banting changed dietary practices not only in India, but in England as well. Prior to Banting, the food habits of many middle-class Britons in England were affected by the publication of various recipes for curry and rice in a variety of popular British periodicals. Curry itself was not widely popular in England until officials of the East India Company began to return home on leave in the early part of the nineteenth century (Chaudhuri 238). As Nupur Chaudhuri has noted, by the 1860s, fish curries were touted as a new form of health food, and turmeric’s powers to reduce bile and discomfort were proffered as additional reasons to indulge in healthy curried foods. While the elite could easily afford curry powders, even the middle class and poor could take advantage of the increased importation midcentury. Chaudhuri includes the

Duke of Norfolk's 1845 assertion that the poor should use curry to ease the problems of food shortages, as "a pinch of this powder mixed with warm water...warms the stomach incredibly...and a man without food can go to bed comfortably on it" (qtd. in Chaudhuri 241). The desire for curries transcended classes, as it was affordable and touted as a healthful way to prevent biliousness and obesity. After Banting's publication, though, such Indian staples were disdained. E.M. Collingham has also shown that many of the curries and dishes believed to be Indian are actually the concoctions of British chefs. Changes in public opinion can be seen in the *Bazar Book of Decorum* which urged its readers to follow the plan of "Banting, an Englishman" and to avoid "Bread, butter, milk, sugar, potatoes, beer" and rice. The author explains that "Thinness is by no means the sign of a bad constitution. On the contrary, it often belongs to the most vigorous of our race" (86). Referring to Banting as an Englishman and the reference to "our race" show Banting's plan abetted racism, albeit indirectly.

⁶⁶ As has been noted before, separation subsequently leads to sameness, as colonialism has a tendency to clone itself. It is the nature of the dialectic of sameness and difference: the urge exists to pull in an identity against which to define oneself. This separation is also a dialectic that will rebound on the separation itself in the sense that once separation is achieved, through a civilizing process, sameness will occur. The more differentiation occurs, in short, the more sameness returns.

⁶⁷ The Jat people are a community of traditional herders and tillers in Northern India.

⁶⁸ It must be kept in mind, however, that the power of colonial discourse was limited, and most visible in areas of administrative contact and in the upper echelons of

society. To claim effects on the domains beyond these areas is outside the purview of this dissertation, though it might be both fruitful and worthwhile to pursue Banting's effect on Indian culture at large in a subsequent work.

⁶⁹ It should be understood that these remarks palpably exceed their immediate textual context and apply to British subjects as a whole. This wider purview is what will be assumed in the discussions below.

⁷⁰ Antoinette Burton's research into the various attempts to curb venereal disease proposes a connection between the lobbyists—proponents of women's suffrage and evangelical Christians—and hostile reception to the laws themselves.

⁷¹ While a full study of Banting's effects on the native population is beyond the scope of this project, efforts were made to widen the market for products by advertising in vernacular presses (Sharma 217). By 1885 there were 319 vernacular titles with a total circulation of 150,000, and 96 English papers with a circulation of 59,000 (James 356). By 1895, the Calcutta *Bangabasi* sold 20,000 copies each week (James 356). Public health was one of the most important themes of Bengali books on medicine in the 1860s, and an increasingly robust Bengali medical sphere developed with the rise of vernacular presses. These medical journals were predominantly subscribed to by the lower echelons of the colonial medical establishment. While initially the advertisement campaigns simply transplanted pictorial ads from the British context, subsequent marketing attempts made use of the wider market by incorporating local deities and signs and symbols recognizable to a native market. Medical advertisements often referred to universal panaceas to cure all ills, using words such as "Ramban" and "Sulaimani" to exemplify a product's efficacy (Sharma 219). Advertisements were targeted toward issues of the

upper classes of Indian society. Few advertisements exist for cholera or plague remedies, for example, which affected the masses (Sharma 225). Banting's publication would suit this niche, as his diet could be marketed to upper classes of Indian society eager to adopt English trends. A translation of Joshua Duke's work on Banting was available in Madras and Lahore, indicating he was read, so an extension of this project could trace the development and importation of Banting into these Indian works.

⁷² Also, the spread of the female education movement for Indian women beginning in the 1850s led to a rise in magazines and publications directed toward women. In Calcutta particularly, a variety of Christian missionaries founded schools for women, including the Bengali Female Normal School in 1819; though they faced early opposition, the success of the schools helped to create a literate class of women who were the target for a variety of educational and improvement manuals (Das 112). Priya Joshi's (2002) *In Another Country: Colonialism, Culture, and the English Novel in India* notes that despite British representations, Indians read a variety of materials, including nonfiction and fiction (Joshi 36). Though literacy rates were indeed low, men and women in India did engage in a variety of reading activities. For example, Joshi shows, by examining articles in the *Calcutta Review*, the broad interest in reading almost entirely ignored in British representations of India. Joshi also establishes the reading practices of many Indians as she examines the testimony of James Long, a civil servant in the Bengal Presidency, who establishes that though literacy rates throughout the 1880s were low, it was common practice for women to be read to, and among elites, many women were taught to read (Joshi 42). Using Long's report, Joshi establishes that although literacy rates for women were at about 0.3 percent, women did have access to a variety of printed

material for reading (42). Banting's text was among these reading materials to which women may have had access, and further work could examine his affect on women in India. A full discussion of Banting's presence in Indian reading material is a challenging terrain which this study cannot pursue, for a number of reasons such as the linguistic variety of India, but perhaps further studies might take this up.

⁷³ Amar Singh discusses this in his observations about dining changes.

Notes on Conclusion

⁷⁴ Ridiculous products include the Get Slim Slippers and vibrating HAPIfork, as well as the Ab Belt and Slendertone Flex Pro, both electronic ab exercisers based on EMS technology. Ironically, these belts are similar to the vibration belts of the early 1900s which sought to shake away the pounds. The premise remains unchanged, but the supposed science has grown more technical. Electronic Muscle Stimulation is typically used to prevent muscle atrophy in individuals with injuries or illness, but these impulses have no effect on developing muscle tone, nor do they burn calories (Crawford).

Plausible products include Hydroxycut, a pill that markets itself as "America's #1 Selling Weight Loss Supplement brand," a claim that speaks not to efficacy, only a twenty-four week period of sales data ending March 20, 2011. The ingredients in Hydroxycut Herbal are primarily Vitamin C and Calcium, which have no value for weight loss, though it touts its patented Herbal Blend of products whose FDA Daily Value has not been established.

⁷⁵ Banting gave money to "The Sick Fund of the Morning Advertiser...500" pounds (Banting *4th Edition* 6).

⁷⁶ As Chapter Three discussed, the swell was often subjected to ridicule in *Punch*, but his penchant for following trends popular in the upper class is helpful for tracing the historical popularity of various fads. Fashion, and preoccupation with the latest trends, was one mark of a true swell. The fashion trends adopted by swells were often subjects of satire, especially in *Punch*. Here, it is significant that the “Corpulent Cabman,” a symbol of the working class, is “follerin’ Mr. Bantin’s advice,” as it shows the pervasiveness of the trend.

⁷⁷ Cornaro (1467-1566) gained weight in his late thirties as the result of gluttony. He wrote a treatise on diet entitled “Discorsi della Vita Sobria, ne quali con l’esempio di se stesso demonstra con quai messi possa l’uomo conservari sano, fino a l’estrema vecchiezza.” He wrote this text at the age of 83, and *The Sure and Certain Method of Attaining a Long and Healthful Life* was reprinted in numerous editions and translated into English.

⁷⁸ Indeed, this connection was not lost on Joshua Duke, who mentions Coronaro in his *Queries at the Mess Table*. Rather than fault Banting for being derivative, Duke notes, “Coronaro’s example in a moderate degree should help to warn the healthy of the state they may fall into by excessive table indulgence, and it should point out the general principles which a man who has drifted into such a condition may adopt” (*Queries* 17).

⁷⁹ Dr. Alfred Pennington’s “A New Concept in the Treatment of Obesity” advocated an elimination of starch and sugar; a review of the research published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* published in 1963 kindled Atkins’ interest. Like Banting, Atkins pointed to his own weight loss success as an indicator of his plan’s effectiveness. He also was subjected to innumerable criticisms of the science of his high-

fat diet, and paradoxically to critiques that his work was derivative and uninspired. Though he had detractors, Atkins achieved considerable fanfare, and was even named one of *Time* magazine's most influential figures of 2002. Though his popularity soared in the early 2000s, he has been ultimately eclipsed by other popular diet fads, though the products and diet which bear his name afford him a bit more familiarity in popular culture than Banting, for whom no product endorsements were available. He shares other similarities with Banting, such as having rumors of his death having been caused by his diet spread in the popular press.

⁸⁰ The Food Pyramid graphic was released by the USDA after extensive research and testing of the graphic's effectiveness in educating the public about proper consumption of items from each of the food groups ("USDA's Food Guide: Background and Development" 33). Information about consumption was obtained from studies of USDA recommendations extending as far back as 1894. The USDA replaced the Food Pyramid with My Plate in February of 2013, suggesting the plate-shaped diagram and its mealtime divisions were better visual aids for individuals to follow. The serving recommendations remained unchanged. Further projects could, and should pursue the effect of dieting on American presidential policymaking. Shadrach Ricketson, with whose work Banting was familiar, wrote frequently to Thomas Jefferson. William Taft tried Bantingism, and Helen Densmore, an American disciple of Bantingism, convinced Ulysses S. Grant to adopt the Banting diet for a time.

⁸¹ Dr. Oz, though a medical doctor with a degree from The University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine, is best known for his status as an expert in medical issues on the *Oprah Winfrey Show*. After the show ended, Dr. Oz was offered his own

spinoff television show, *The Dr. Oz Show*, in which he hosts sessions that allow individuals to ask pertinent health questions, to expose public health dangers, and to debate various medical issues.

⁸² In “Old Genes, New Fuels: Nutritional Changes since Agriculture,” S.B Eaton and Cordain identify consumption patterns post-agricultural revolution as the basis of many diseases, including obesity. The authors contend that humans’ nutritional patterns at present differ from their preagricultural ancestors, and that these differences have negative results and implications for growth, development, and health. As a result, the paper proposes several solutions, including ingesting smaller quantities of foods the body is not evolutionarily designed to process, and reducing consumption levels of post-agrarian foods.

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