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Embodied Politics: Antebellum Vegetarianism and the Dietary Economy of *Walden*

Henry David Thoreau begins *Walden* with a promise to discover an antidote to the "stereotyped but unconscious despair" afflicting his neighbors and countrymen by pushing aside the dictates of "fashion" and uncovering the "essential laws of man's existence" (2004, 7, 11). To this end, Thoreau dedicates his "experiment in living" to "learn[ing] what are the gross necessaries of life . . . what are the grossest groceries," a choice of metaphor that might remind us just how much of his personal and political reform project in *Walden* hinges on diet and Thoreau's attitude toward literal groceries. Not only the chapter "Economy," but in fact the entire book is littered with "potatoes, a little green corn, and some peas" (56), rice, molasses, Indian meal, apples, and other foodstuffs, often along with their approximate 1845 prices. Descriptions of farming, planting, baking, and cooking abound, and meditations on the ethics of eating practices are a side dish to abundant punning figurations of consumption and digestion that turn dietary matters to literary and philosophical ends. For all its ascetic prescriptions, *Walden* itself is a cornucopia, a book of plenty.

The groceries that fill *Walden*, along with many of the other details of individual life Thoreau examines throughout the book, have been persistently characterized by critics as apolitical details, part of a transcendentalist's concern with a private project of self-culture. Michael Gilmore (1985, 42), in his brilliant account of *Walden* in *American Romanticism and the Marketplace*, takes the apolitical argument a step farther, arguing that Thoreau's obsession with private consumption practices actually stands in the way of his socially minded aims for the book. Despite recognizing *Walden*'s reformist ambitions, Gilmore

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reads Thoreau's text as a "defeated book," one that is ultimately guilty of "a forsaking of civic aspirations for an exclusive concern with 'the art of living well'" (36). Extending this logic, influential critics such as Gilmore and Sacvan Bercovitch (1978) have dismissed *Walden*'s ability to reform its society on the grounds that despite his vocal critique of the economic and political status quo, Thoreau merely replicates the conditions of his society while at Walden instead of imagining a substantive alternative.

Rather than assuming an insignificant, apolitical valence, I wish to take seriously the political possibilities that inhere in Thoreau's concern with "the art of living well" by resituating it amid contemporary antebellum debates about consumption of food and other commodities. *Walden* reads in many places like a domestic guidebook whose obsession with the human body, its diet, and digestion is seemingly at odds with a transcendentalist and reformist author's aims. But only seemingly, as a turn to Sylvester Graham's vegetarian movement, whose principles Thoreau knew well and in fact embodied in nearly every particular while at Walden Pond, reveals. Attention to the interest this popular and culturally influential diet held for Thoreau—and especially to the diet's relation to Thoreau's reformist ambitions—overturns familiar bromides about *Walden*'s political failures. Far from divorced from civic concerns, the vegetarian dietary theory driving Thoreau's practices at Walden Pond played a complicated role in consequential debates over capitalism, citizenship, freedom, and the body taking place in the turbulent antebellum United States.

This essay therefore begins with an examination of the rhetoric and logic of Graham's analysis of the human physiological system. I argue that Graham's vegetarian theories produced a theory of the body designed to combat both the perceived loss of autonomy occasioned by the rise of industrial capitalism and the widespread fears of cultural and political disunion caused by increased immigration, ethnic and religious diversification, and sectional tension. Next, I move to consider Thoreau's adaptation of Graham's vegetarian regimen to his own social reform project at Walden Pond, showing that a careful reading of Graham's vegetarian theories demands a reevaluation of *Walden*'s civic aspirations. This new context reveals the oft-overlooked Grahamite diet in *Walden* as an integral part of a political "experiment in living," uncovering a civic project at the heart of the book that depends on Thoreau's vegetarianism. Expressing no mere private or spiritual interest,

Thoreau taps the power of *regimen*, a historically important component of Hellenic republican citizenship, to revitalize American citizenship by returning it to its classical roots. Ultimately, I argue that through the lens of antebellum vegetarianism, Thoreau's project in *Walden* emerges as a regrounding of US republican virtue in somatic management techniques designed to secure the personal and political freedom of every American body at a moment when such freedom was threatened by both Southern *and* Northern economies.

Sylvester Graham's Vegetarian Politics

In his *Newest Keep-Sake for 1839*, the antebellum wit Richard Ely Selden (1839) mocks the Grahamite movement for its pretensions to social reform, making a joke out of its prodemocratic attack on "the tyranny of appetite," an attack launched by Graham and his acolytes during the 1830s and 1840s**.** Mockery or not, Selden puts his finger on the pulse of a reform movement whose significance has mostly eluded scholars and historians ever since. Improbable though it may seem, Graham's highly symbolic program did indeed reimagine the human physical constitution "from a political point of view," nominating the body disciplined by a vegetarian regimen as a site of potential unity and "complete equality," to use Selden's terms, for a nation in turmoil, on the verge of political disintegration. Developed and popularized during a period of rapid industrialization and market, population, and territorial expansion, the strenuous sexual and dietary temperance of Graham's diet of homegrown, unprocessed, exclusively vegetarian foods was designed to wean antebellum Americans from their "excessive" appetites for food, market goods, and even one another, an aspiration that finally had as much to do with the larger social and political challenges that characterized antebellum life as with physical health (120–21).

The most famous health reformer of the antebellum period, Graham (1794–1851) is now only slightly remembered, if at all, in the name of the Graham cracker—a commercial product that bears a merely ironic relationship to the anticommercial philosophy of Graham himself. Denigrated as "the prophet of sawdust" by antebellum newsmen and "the poet of bran bread and pumpkins" by Ralph Waldo Emerson (Robinson 1957: 12), Graham lived an obscure life until the early 1830s, when he began his popular lecture series.[1] These lectures quickly evolved to

encompass not only temperance, but a more general theory of health that included chastity and a collection of dietary and hygienic recommendations that Graham referred to as "the science of human life." As Graham saw it, American bodies were threatened by food that was produced by increasingly mechanized, commercial processes, represented most acutely for Graham by animal products and the newly popular white bread being sold by urban bakeries. A key component of Graham's vegetarian diet was therefore "Graham bread," made from unrefined flour and baked in the home by a loving wife or mother; only such bread, according to Graham, was capable of providing the proper physiological and spiritual nourishment.

In 1839, Graham's authority and popularity were consolidated with the publication of his magnum opus, *Lectures on the Science of Human Life*, a collection of his physiological and lifestyle recommendations that ran more than twelve hundred pages. Fully established as members of a leading reform movement of the antebellum period, at the height of their enthusiasm Graham's followers established the nation's first vegetarian society, set up Grahamite boarding houses, opened the nation's first health food stores where products such as "Graham flour" were bought and sold,[2] and even ran the student commons at Oberlin College on Grahamite principles. The Grahamites established their own journal, the *Graham Journal of Health and Longevity*, in 1837, and friendly articles were printed about the health system in many other journals during the antebellum period, including Fowler and Wells's popular *Life Illustrated* (Iacobbo and Iacobbo 2004, 49).

Graham's dietary and lifestyle recommendations held such wide appeal because they were a timely response to the "market revolution" taking place in the United States during the first third of the nineteenth century. As the young nation urbanized and industrialized, humanist models of civic virtue became increasingly obsolete, and Americans concerned with the effect of the disappearance of the yeoman farmer began to look for alternative models of self-sufficiency. In the domestic guidebooks of the period, the sentimental home was promoted as the new market haven; by practicing frugality and home economy, such guides promised, Americans could hoard enough capital to insulate themselves from the boom and bust cycles threatening self-determination.

Practitioners of Sylvester Graham's vegetable diet also worked to reimagine market independence, but for them, the site of indepen-

dence was to be the human body itself, rather than the home. By avoiding market "luxuries" (253, 255) such as coffee, tea, alcohol, butter, and meat, Graham promised followers of his diet that they could quiet their "despotic" appetites (473, 479) and maintain order in their internal, "vital econom[ies]" (297, 299, 352). Although Graham's contemporary detractors couldn't see it, Graham bread and the Grahamite regimen more generally were "a serious, if symbolic, attempt to come to terms with life in a marketplace society," representing "the moral equivalent of vanishing economic self-sufficiency," as Stephen Nissenbaum has put it (1980, 7).

Graham's vegetarian diet produced an "equivalent" to literal economic self-sufficiency by advocating for a dietetic "economy" that helped vegetarians achieve mastery over out-of-control appetites. The hunger of a "flesh-eater," Graham insisted to his readers again and again, was fundamentally "imperious," "despotic, vehement, impatient . . . [and] craving" (1839, 479, 558). Those who converted to vegetarianism would defeat controlling and immoral appetites through adherence to the "constitutional laws" of the "permanently established constitutional economy," and thereby preserve their health (42). Indeed, they could preserve not merely the health of individual Americans, but of the nation itself, since only a proper diet, according to Graham, could produce the virtuous citizenry necessary to a virtuous society (253). Graham's system, conceived in the language of republicanism and shot through with the problems of capitalism, actually aimed at the reform of what Graham calls "civic life." Explicitly connecting the care of the individual constitution with the care of political constitutions, antebellum vegetarianism offered Graham and many of his converts a way of thinking about individual human "constitutions" and their proper form of "government," at the same moment that political crises caused these questions to be debated at the national level in the United States.

The idea that personal practices such as diet and sexual behavior could have political effects has deep roots in republican political theory. As Michel Foucault (1990, 30–31) points out in *The Use of Pleasure*, classical republican theory made private life the training ground for civic participation, expecting citizens to create virtuous selves through the regulation of individual appetite. Foucault's outline of the importance of appetite regulation in Hellenic citizenship theory is a useful complement to the Grahamite movement because it neatly describes the

political work Graham and his nineteenth-century vegetarian followers believed their regimen could achieve. According to Graham, "the danger of the table" is primarily that improper indulgence "multipl[ies] and pamper[s]" "appetites" until they threaten to make people "perfect slaves," led "by their lusts to their destruction" (1839, 493). Graham's system promotes civic virtue by exchanging the body politic for individual "political bodies" who could be liberated through a vegetarian diet. Management of physical appetites was part of a strategy for managing one's appetite for market goods, and both forms of management were part of a project of maintaining the self-sufficiency theorized by civic humanism as the precondition for republican virtue. Shifting the site of market insulation from the family farm or domestic home to the human body, and providing an ideologically constructed regimen that said diet and appetite control could serve to resist the pull of industrial capitalism, Grahamite vegetarianism effectively politicized the human body by giving it a role in the maintenance of the polis.

Because it made diet an explicitly political problem, with ramifications for the safety and security of the nation, vegetarian politics denominated the human body as a site of direct civic engagement. Indeed, not just civic engagement, but perhaps even civic salvation, as is made clear in the publication the ailing and mostly retired Graham self-funded in 1850, just a year before his death. Turning from an obsession with the physical constitution to the political constitution in *Letter to the Hon. Daniel Webster, on the Compromises of the Constitution*,[3] Graham, a self-proclaimed Whig writing amid the controversy over the Compromise of 1850, argues against the extension of slavery. He distinguishes the *letter* of the US Constitution—which he admits supports at least the maintenance of slavery—from the antislavery spirit in which, he says, the Constitution was framed and adopted. In Graham's (1850, 5) originary national myth, the framers and the entire inaugural US populace were united in a "universal, national, patriotic, and philanthropic anti-slavery" spirit. These Americans were of one body, "one mind and one heart," and that physiological unity produced the US Constitution. The problem, as Graham explains it, is that unlike at the founding moment, the body politic is now truly divided against itself. Since the South has a legitimate legislative argument in favor of protecting slavery, while the North has an "irrefutable" moral and philosophical argument, the most likely outcome is "political disunion and civil war" (3).

What, then, is to be done? In Graham's analysis, Americans have to "go behind the letter of the Constitution," behind its compromises, to recover the spirit of accord and the antislavery principles upon which the country was founded. Approvingly quoting Thomas Jefferson's claim that "laws and institutions must go hand and hand with the progress of the human mind," Graham posits an evolving US Constitution, one that takes its cues from the natural evolution of the human constitutions that make up the body politic (16). That the human body is the proper engine of political reform is explicit in the last sentence of Graham's *Letter*, which says that "a power above the Constitution" is finally "exercised aright only when it is exercised in strict conformity with the fixed constitutional laws which are divinely established in the nature of things"(14). A wording so abstract as to be almost meaningless, "strict conformity with the fixed constitutional laws which are divinely established in the nature of things" is a stock phrase that occurs over and over in Graham's earlier writings, always as a way of describing the physiological laws that drive Graham's vegetarian system. This last line of the *Letter* makes clear the extent to which Graham's vegetarian theories underwrite his political analysis; problems that cannot be resolved in the political arena by political constitutions, he suggests, can be solved by individual bodies whose perfect "fixed constitutional laws" supersede the imperfect laws of civil society.

Graham can posit the human constitution as a useful substitute for an irreparably flawed political constitution because he theorized a human body that had one crucial characteristic: a constitution in common with all other human bodies. The "compromised" US Constitution that Graham describes in his *Letter* is unable to unite the American population, but Graham's *Lectures on the Science of Human Life* (1839) paints a picture of human constitutions so uniform as to demand the identical management of every body. "We have been told," he scoffs, that "what is best for one man, is not for another . . . . Different constitutions require different treatment" (256). These "erroneous dogmas," he continues, are propagated primarily by those "willing to observe no other rules of life than the leadings of their appetites" (256, 257). According to Graham, such slaves to appetite miss the "incontrovertible truth" that "the human constitution is ONE, and there are no constitutional differences in the human race which will not readily yield to a correct regimen; . . . and consequently, there are no constitutional differences in the human race which stand in the way of adapting one

general regimen to the whole family of man; but, on the contrary . . . what is best for one, is best for all; and therefore, all general reasonings concerning the human constitution, are equally applicable to each and every member of the human family, in all ages of the world, and in all conditions of the race, and in all the various circumstances of individuals" (261).

Echoing the claims of self-evidence and universality that Lynn Hunt's *Inventing Human Rights* (2007) has shown to characterize eighteenth-century human rights theory, Graham posits a new, physiological basis for the claim in the Declaration of Independence that "all men are created equal." Graham expands the meaning of the declaration to include "each and every member of the human family . . . in all conditions of the race" and, presumably, all conditions of gender, since Graham's regimen makes no distinction between the needs of male and female bodies.

Of course, the universal human constitution Graham posits could not literally deliver social or political equality to free blacks, let alone slaves. Yet theorizing a universal human constitution was an important step toward such equality, since activists on both sides of the slavery question identified proof of physiological homogeneity as one of the most significant requirements for African Americans on the path to freedom and equality. Proslavery scientists conducted unthinkably cruel medical experiments and ethnological research into "African" and primate biological similitude in an effort to prove an incommensurable physical difference between black bodies and white ones, while abolitionist literature and lectures responded with depictions of suffering black bodies, to demonstrate that African Americans felt physical and emotional pain as keenly as whites (Clark 1995, 463–93). Physiological homogeneity was an active site of cultural contestation during the antebellum period; in this cultural milieu, Graham's argument for physiological universality, framed in the explicit context of the slavery question, offered trenchant polemic aid to those working toward abolition and racial equality—aid that perhaps helps explain William Lloyd Garrison's supportive interest in Graham's work (see the *Liberator,* March 11, 1837; December 20, 1839; and November 21, 1845). Nissenbaum points out that Garrison even elected to stay in New York City's "Graham Boardinghouse" when he had occasion to travel to the city (1980, 142–43). Ultimately, Graham struck a nerve with many of his contemporaries because while the political arena seemed to offer no means of adjudicating between "local, particular interests" and

"national, universal" ones, Graham's vegetarian "science of human life" promised to teach US citizens a regimen that would subdue their private, antisocial, antidemocratic appetites and uncover a universal "human constitution" able to knit an unraveling populace back together. Rather than representing a simplistic turn to the individual and away from the collective, vegetarian politics recognizes that the collective is disintegrating into individual, private, contradictory interests, and it attempts to imagine a continued basis of national association. At a moment when internecine war seemed to be the increasingly inevitable outcome of a disunified body politic, antebellum US vegetarianism contributed a universal theory of diet and physiology that promised to bind Americans together.

Henry Thoreau's Vegetarian Poetics

Vegetarianism in *Walden* is most often ignored or dismissed as evidence of Thoreau's unlikable sanctimonious side. The few critics who have addressed the topic have generally failed to contextualize Thoreau's *Walden* regimen within the wider popular antebellum vegetarian movement with which Thoreau was clearly in conversation.[4] Yet as Joseph Jones (1957) has noted, Thoreau's close friendship with the famously rigorous vegetarian Bronson Alcott makes it almost certain that he knew of and probably read some of the vegetarian domestic guidebooks written by Alcott's Grahamite cousin, William A. Alcott (141–54).[5] Moreover, Bronson Alcott himself, Thoreau's frequent visitor during his time at Walden Pond, was an admirer of Graham, whom Alcott called "the prophet of physical renewal" (Iacobbo and Iacobbo 2004, 55). Bronson Alcott attended Graham's lectures, invited Graham to lecture at his Boston Temple School, and frequently promoted vegetarianism in his own "Conversations" (57, 58). Even if Thoreau had not read Graham himself, then, he would have been aware of Graham's ideas through the avowedly Grahamite Alcott cousins, as well as from newspaper articles and other popular sources that frequently discussed Graham's ideas during the antebellum period. But since Bronson Alcott, from whom Thoreau frequently borrowed books, owned a copy of Graham's *Lectures on the Science of Human Life*, it is very possible that Thoreau had read Graham's magnum opus by the time he went to live at Walden Pond (see Cameron 1984, 22). Indeed, as I will show, there are clues scattered all over *Walden* that Thoreau had not

only read Graham and William A. Alcott, but had taken their emphasis on physiological economy so seriously as to place it at the heart of his reform project at Walden.

Like many other careful observers of antebellum US culture, Thoreau expresses a keen awareness of the economic changes happening as a result of the antebellum "market revolution." In fact, Thoreau begins *Walden* with advice about the management of household affairs that places his book squarely in the tradition of domestic guidebooks and advice literature of the kind being produced by Catherine Beecher, Lydia Maria Child, William A. Alcott, and Sylvester Graham (see Gleason 1993). *Walden* is thus first and foremost a reform text that takes on the problems confronting American society in an era of profound economic change. And as *Walden* makes clear from the outset, one of the primary obstacles to "improving" life is that the old model for a useful and virtuous life—farming—is no longer viable. In an age of market capitalism, farming, which for Jefferson represented the height of personal freedom, has become a kind of slavery; to be a farmer, according to Thoreau (2004, 3), is to be a "serf of the soil." The vision of the mythically independent, subsistence-farming yeoman has been eradicated, and in its place is a modern farmer whose commercial mentality has produced farms where "nothing grows free, whose fields bear not crops, whose meadows no flowers, whose trees no fruits, but dollars" (190).

Like other antebellum domestic guidebook authors, Thoreau devotes a great deal of space in *Walden* decrying his neighbors' and contemporaries' lack of market independence, painting them as slaves to their consumerist desires. "Honestly think[ing] there is no choice left," Thoreau says (2004, 7), such men spend their lives in mistaken pursuit of luxury (9, 13, 14, 35), adopting a lifestyle intended to impress their neighbors (and losing their freedom in the process) (14–15). Repeatedly in the chapter "Economy," Thoreau recasts prosperity as a burden, envisioning the propertied man as a radically encumbered body, dragged down by "all the trumpery which he saves and will not burn." Ultimately, "the more you have of such things the poorer you are" (63), because they cost so much of a person's limited stock of "life" to keep, and Thoreau agrees with Graham that "life" is the real capital to be hoarded.

Thoreau's "Economy" is concerned with teaching citizens to consume less in order to regain their independence and avoid becoming

the prey of an invasive, rapacious market. But instead of emphasizing the more typical antebellum domestic guidebook solution of saving money, Thoreau focuses on the same kind of appetite management that vegetarian writers such as Alcott and Graham emphasize. This approach shouldn't surprise us, since Thoreau is clearly following the Grahamite regimen in almost every respect while at Walden Pond. Thoreau takes frequent morning baths at Walden, as Graham was one of the earliest to recommend (1839, 631–35), avoids consuming most commercial food products, and eschews stimulating substances such as coffee, tea, alcohol, and for the most part, animal products. Although he does acknowledge consuming wild-caught fish, "a very little salt pork," and one unlucky woodchuck, Thoreau tells his readers that his Walden diet is primarily vegetarian, and composed of "rye and Indian meal without yeast, potatoes, rice . . . and salt, and my drink water" (2004, 58), just as Sylvester Graham recommends. The phrase "without yeast" in particular indicates Graham's influence on Thoreau's diet, as does Thoreau's description of his research into the history of bread making (60), which is little more than a paraphrase of the one Graham provided in both his 1837 *Treatise on Bread and Bread-making* and 1839 *Lectures on the Science of Human Life*. Thoreau even quotes the phrase "'good, sweet, wholesome bread,' the staff of life" (2004, 60), which annotated editions of *Walden* cite as "unidentified" but is almost certainly drawn from Graham, since both Graham's *Treatise* and his *Lectures on the Science of Human Life* refer to bread as "good," "sweet," "wholesome," and "the staff of life" with the almost ritualistic frequency of a classical epithet. Moreover, just like Graham, Thoreau gives homegrown, ground, and baked bread a central place in his Walden Pond diet, taking time to recommend growing one's own wheat and grinding it in one's own handmill as part of a project of appetite control, using the Grahamite rationale that "simplicity and independence" come from "not depend[ing] on distant and fluctuating markets" for "breadstuffs" (2004, 61).

It is not just Thoreau's diet that mirrors Sylvester Graham's recommendations, however. Thoreau echoes Graham's central emphasis on the role stimulation plays in disease and death in his own theory of physiology near the beginning of *Walden* (13). In a passage that sounds quintessentially Grahamite, Thoreau adopts Graham's dichotomy between fast living, with its domestic and civic degeneration, and virtuous slow, economic living:

> The nation itself, with all its so called internal improvements . . . is just [as] . . . ruined by luxury and heedless expense, by want of calculation and a worthy aim, as the million households in the land; and the only cure for it as for them is in a rigid economy, a stern and more than Spartan simplicity of life and elevation of purpose. It lives too fast. (89)

Even Thoreau's famous formulation that "the cost of a thing is the amount of what I will call life which is required to be exchanged for it, immediately or in the long run" (30), when reread in light of Graham's vegetarian physiology, can be seen as drawing on Graham's theory of a limited fund of life that individuals have to "spend" throughout their lives. Both Graham and Thoreau place life as the central value of their economic system, and it is the hoarding of life that represents economic success for both men. Therefore, although Thoreau purports to be "treating the subject [of diet] rather from an economic than a dietetic point of view," from the vantage point of antebellum vegetarianism, the two points of view are identical, and the distinction collapses.

Thoreau's incorporation of Grahamite physiology and regimen signals his commitment to appetite control as a means of attaining personal and market independence. Thoreau believes that his contemporaries are guilty of enslaving themselves, an idea found throughout Graham's work. As Thoreau puts it in a rather infamous passage: "It is hard to have a southern overseer; it is worse to have a northern one; but worst of all when you are the slave-driver of yourself" (6). For both Graham and Thoreau, it is appetite, and the inappropriate consumption patterns related to the indulgence of appetite, that cause self-enslavement. In fact, Thoreau's primary rationale for vegetarianism turns out to be that meat is just one more of the luxuries that keep unimaginative citizens in the thrall of the market:

> One farmer says to me, "You cannot live on vegetable food solely, for it furnishes nothing to make bones with;" and so he religiously devotes a part of his day to supplying his system with the raw material of bones; walking all the while he talks behind his oxen, which, with vegetable-made bones, jerk him and his lumbering plough along in spite of every obstacle. Some things are really necessaries of life in some circles, the most helpless and diseased, which in others are luxuries merely, and in others still are entirely unknown. (9)

This sense of meat as a luxury misrecognized as a necessity is present in Graham's work as well, and in both Graham and Thoreau, consumption of luxuries signifies a failure of economy. Like Graham's *Lectures on the Science of Human Life*, the purpose of *Walden* is to present a picture of abstemious living to all "circles," in order to teach even "helpless and diseased" citizens the difference between luxury and necessity.

At issue in this management of appetite and consumption is nothing short of personal freedom and the meaning of the American dream. Perhaps more than any other chapter in *Walden*, "Baker Farm" makes these stakes clear.[6] Immediately preceding "Higher Laws," Thoreau's more famous chapter about dietary matters, "Baker Farm" is significant for being the only moment in *Walden* when we actually see Thoreau recommend his diet and lifestyle to his contemporaries. In this episode, Thoreau takes refuge from a rainstorm in what he believes to be an abandoned cabin near Baker Farm, but finds it to be occupied by an extremely poor family of Irish immigrants, the Fields. As they wait out the rainstorm together, Thoreau listens to the family patriarch, John Field, give an account of his hard life, to which Thoreau responds by offering his own consumption patterns as a possible solution to the Field family's troubles.

Comparatively little has been written about "Baker Farm," and even in the best account, which comes in Michael West's "Scatology and Eschatology: The Heroic Dimensions of Thoreau's Wordplay," the purpose of the chapter seems to be fundamentally misunderstood. West opines,

> There is perhaps no more unpleasant chapter in *Walden* than "Baker Farm" . . . . The sight of the celibate Thoreau airily patronizing Field and his family in the name of philosophy, urging him to drop his job, change their diet, and go a-huckleberrying, is as unsettling and vaguely repellent as it would be to see Socrates persuading Phaedo and company to commit suicide. (1974, 1,049)

There is no doubt that Thoreau takes a patronizing tone toward Field in this chapter, but to read Thoreau's suggestions to the Field family as being simply "in the name of philosophy" is to miss the point. Thoreau sees John Field's tale of hardship as evidence of a "poor bargain," (2004, 197), and he "trie[s] to help him with [his] experience,

telling him that [he] too, who came a-fishing here, and looked like a loafer,[7] was getting [his] living like himself," with the difference

> that I did not use tea, nor coffee, nor butter, nor milk, nor fresh meat, and so did not have to . . . work hard to pay for them, and when he had worked hard he had to eat hard again to repair the waste to his system. . . . He had rated it a gain in coming to America, that here you could get tea, and coffee, and meat every day. But the only true America is that country where you are at liberty to pursue such a mode of life as may enable you to do without these, where the state does not compel you to sustain the slavery and war and other superfluous expenses which directly or indirectly result from the use of such things. (198)

The lesson that Thoreau tries to teach Field here is not some abstruse philosophical point, but a simple lesson in appetite management. When Thoreau says, "I did not use tea, nor coffee, nor butter, nor milk, nor fresh meat, and so did not have to work to get them," he is highlighting the economy of his Grahamite diet. Field may have "rated it a gain in coming to America, that here you could get tea, and coffee, and meat every day," but Thoreau points out that indulgence in those commodities is at the expense of the autonomy and liberty of the individual. Field's fundamental problem, in Thoreau's account, is that he mistakes freedom with the consumption of market goods, when true freedom in fact inheres in the appetite management that allows one to "do without . . . such things."

Even Thoreau's suggestion that Field and his family "might all go a-huckleberrying in the summer for their amusement," which West finds so morally reprehensible, flows from Thoreau's advice about how to work less by learning to "live simply" (2004, 199). In fact, the idea that a frugal vegetarian diet might help working-class families afford middle-class comforts isn't even a Thoreauvian innovation. Realistic or not, it was a common enough idea during the antebellum period, in wide circulation in both England and the United States. At times used as a scare tactic in elections or to justify low wages for labor (see Gregory 2007), there were also plenty of positive representations of the function an economical vegetarian diet might serve in working-class homes. This latter perspective is visible in the popular newspaper piece "The Mechanic's Home," which was widely reprinted in US newspapers between 1853 and 1871.[8] In this "life lesson," penned by

one T. L. Nichols, MD, "a man" comes to call for the doctor-narrator, and as the doctor sizes him up in his front hall, he finds himself unusually unable to puzzle out his client's class status. The cleanliness and confident address of the client suggest a gentleman, yet there are certain points of refinement that are missing—the client's dress is not actually elegant, but only "almost elegant." The client's house, too, turns out to be "almost luxurious," and once the doctor has attended to his patient (the client's young child), the doctor, able to stand it no longer, blurts out "'Do you work for a living?'" The client, amused, tells the doctor that he is a shoemaker, and offers to explain the "mystery" of how "a shoemaker and his wife, earning but eight dollars a week, could live in comfort and elegance, and lay up money." In addition to more usual frugal practices, the mechanic and his wife turn out to be Grahamites,[9] abstaining from tobacco, tea, coffee, alcohol, and meat, grinding their own grain, and living "cheaply" but healthfully on whole grains, potatoes, vegetables, and fruits. The doctor leaves "satisfied," having met a "happy couple, who, in this expensive city, are living in luxury and growing rich on eight dollars a week." This popular morality tale thus makes the Grahamite diet an integral part of class advancement, the key to achieving the American dream of an "almost luxurious" lifestyle on meager wages. Absurd or even reprehensible though modern critics may find it, Thoreau's advice to the Field family was not unique in its time.

While Thoreau had a different sense of the benefits of dietetic economy than did the author of "The Mechanic's Home," better living through appetite management is nevertheless at the core of what he advocates for his countrymen in *Walden*. Thoreau shares with Graham a sense that regulating appetite is the key to resisting the subjugation of the individual by the market. "He that does not eat need not work," as Thoreau puts it in "Economy" (2004, 214), casting food as the *ur*-commodity that keeps individuals tied to the unstable and compromising capitalist system of exchange that, in the tradition of civic humanism, threatens the virtuous independence of republican citizens. Thoreau devotes himself to the evaluation of man's basic needs—to finding out what are the "grossest groceries"—because such needs are the only necessary ties between an individual and the vampyric capitalist marketplace. Every bit as much as Graham, Thoreau recognizes that the marketplace threatens individual autonomy, and like Graham he sees that it is impossible for individuals to become independent until they have

learned to control their appetites. Such appetite control isn't a *part* of Thoreau's independence project, then, it is *the* project. As he puts it in the chapter "Brute Neighbors," "my greatest skill has been to want but little" (67).

The point of mastering one's appetite, however, is not merely to avoid hard labor or to remain free in an abstract sense. Thoreau goes to Walden, of course, "not to live cheaply nor to live dearly, but to transact some private business with the fewest obstacles" (2004, 19), or in other words, to write. Appetite management and simple living are designed to produce economic freedom and personal liberty, but these abstract concepts are only meaningful insofar as they enable the individual to attend to more important "private business." Through a persistent strain of metaphor that ties the work of conversation, cognition, reading, and writing to consumption and digestion, such "private business" is shown to be the work of self-culture. Positive instances of conversation, insight, and instruction are all punningly compared to simple, vegetarian foods in passages that connect the act of cognition to the food pun most directly. For instance, when Thoreau describes evenings spent with company in the chapter "Winter Visitors," he makes conversation not just a substitute for eating, but a kind of eating when he says "and when dessert failed, we tried our teeth on many a nut which wise squirrels have long since abandoned, for those which have the thickest shells are commonly empty" (259). Similarly, when he writes, "We made many a 'bran new' theory of life over a thin dish of gruel" (259), Thoreau's pun links the food being eaten with the originality of the insight in the most direct sense possible, implying that the one helped produce the other. Continuing in this strain, Thoreau's criticism of the unintellectual "easy reading" with which most of his contemporaries "vegetate and dissipate their faculties" casts the practice as poor appetite control (102). Rather than dining sparely and simply on vegetable foods, such gluttons "like cormorants and ostriches, can digest all sorts of this [easy reading], even after the fullest dinner of meats and vegetables, for they suffer nothing to be wasted. If others are the machines to provide this provender, they are the machines to read it" (102).

Such mechanized overeaters epitomize the problem the Grahamite diet was designed to address, and Thoreau's critique suggests that their voracious consumption of inappropriate nourishment is making not only their bodies, but their minds sick, just as Graham had promised:

> The result [of easy reading] is dullness of sight, a stagnation of the vital circulations, and a general deliquium and sloughing off of all the intellectual faculties. This sort of gingerbread is baked daily and more sedulously than pure wheat or rye-and-Indian in almost every oven, and finds a surer market. (103)

Thoreau's concluding line, which compares easy reading to sugary "gingerbread" of the sort forbidden in a vegetarian diet and laments that such unhealthful bread is to be found "in almost every oven" and that it "finds a surer market" than nourishing "pure wheat or rye-and-Indian," makes the metaphor especially Grahamite. Thoreau's highest form of reading is, of course, reading the classics in a classically strident spirit of self-mastery (99).

Whatever its significance to self-culture, the "private business" of consumption has a history of being granted political importance in republican societies. Scholars frequently point out that Thoreau claims *Walden* is written for "poor students" (2), but Thoreau's later definition of poor students as those who are unlearned in "that economy of living which is synonymous with philosophy" (50) tends to go unremarked. The "economy" Thoreau wishes to impart to his readers is a much more expansive concept than was generally taught, one that includes the usual meanings of frugality and a community's method of wealth creation, but also one that harkens back to the Greek source of the word *economy—oikonomia*—meaning management of a household or household affairs. In classical Greek society, the management of appetite was understood to have important political consequences, which Thoreau, as an accomplished classicist, would well have known. As Michel Foucault describes this relationship in *The Use of Pleasure*:

> The freedom that needed establishing and preserving was that of the citizens of a collectivity of course, but it was also, for each of them, a certain form of relationship of the individual with himself . . . the freedom of individuals, understood as the mastery they were capable of exercising over themselves, was indispensable to the entire state. (1990, 79)

Just as "governing oneself, managing one's estate, and participating in the administration of the city" were represented as "three practices of the same type" in works such as Xenophon's *Oeconomicus* (Foucault 1990,75), *Walden* links the management of appetite to the correct management of domestic arrangements, and makes both

important to Thoreau's civic revitalization project. Thoreau famously attempts to revitalize language in *Walden* through puns that return to the Greek or Latin roots of words, and attention to the issue of diet and regimen reveals that he is also putting forth a formula for the social and political renewal of his materialistic society by returning to the classical roots of American republican citizenship.

Michael Gilmore, one of the only Thoreau scholars who has given the text's engagement with civic humanism serious consideration, calls *Walden* a "defeated book" that fails to live up to its obvious aspiration for political reform because Thoreau's emphasis on growing his own food

> has the effect of privatizing a civic virtue. Farming as a way of life enjoyed the high standing it did in civic humanist thought because it was a training for participation in the public or political sphere. In *Walden*, as a figure for self-reliant labor, it has become a private virtue—a virtue without civic consequences. (1985, 42)

Gilmore reads farming in *Walden* as merely "a private virtue," "self-reliant labor" without "civic consequences." Yet Thoreau is every bit as clear as Graham and many of his other contemporaries that market capitalism has for all practical purposes ended farm work as "self-reliant labor." As Thoreau notes in the chapter "Baker Farm," farming is never his primary interest; rather, his concern is a change in the values and behavior of his contemporaries: "I should be glad if all the meadows on the earth were left in a wild state, if that were the consequence of men's beginning to redeem themselves" (2004, 198).

Americans need to "redeem" not only their private selves through consumption control, but their civic selves as well. Many of the aspects of self-culture Thoreau highlights are related to the Hellenic concept of *lexis*, which was already accorded an important place in the formation of the public sphere and the maintenance of the polis in classical republican theory, but Thoreau's lecture to John Field makes clear the role of even literal, private consumption control. When Thoreau tells Field that "the only true America is that country where you are at liberty to pursue such a mode of life as may enable you to do without [luxurious commodities], where the state does not compel you to sustain the slavery and war and other superfluous expenses which directly or indirectly result from the use of such things" (198), he indicates that it is not only Field's or Thoreau's ability to live freely that is at stake in

appetite management. Following Graham's lead, Thoreau is struggling to enact an anticapitalist citizenship in *Walden*, one in which having one's choice of market goods is not mistaken for a truer freedom—the ability to do without them altogether. Thoreau, like the Grahamite individual, manages his body not in order to compete more effectively in the capitalist marketplace, but in order to withdraw from it as far as is practicable. Thoreau's larger point in all of this is that the demands of capitalism are antithetical to the demands of radical democracy; following the consumerist and acquisitive imperatives of capitalism means not only enslaving others, in the sense that buying the market products of slavery helps perpetuate the slave system, but also enslaving oneself, since an inability to manage one's internal economy means being controlled by the external market economy.

Democratic governance entails active, collective collaboration in the classical republican tradition, but as far as Thoreau is concerned, his neighbors must learn to participate actively in their own lives first. Rather than eating, working, reading, thinking, and consuming mechanically, Thoreau wants his fellow Americans to "live deliberately" (2004, 88), as he does—to engage in deliberation, to think, choose, and act for themselves. This is a political aspiration in a republican society because, as Shannon Mariotti puts it, a "true form of self-government cannot exist without a critical self: when people act like machines, democracy ceases to be practiced on an everyday level" (2010, 23). Like its close contemporary, Karl Marx's *The Communist Manifesto*, *Walden* therefore frequently collapses its critique of the state and critique of the market. From Thoreau's perspective, both the public state and the private market are interfering with how one can manage the most significant private economy—the human body.

Thoreau casts general social reform as a private ill in *Walden*, just one more consequence of an ill-governed appetite (2004, 74), because in most of his political writings he views society as an accretion of distinct individuals. If collectivities are mere accumulations of distinct, individualized bodies and these bodies have been mechanized through immersion in a capitalist marketplace, the revival of the kind of robust independence of mind that self-government requires cannot result from *more* contact with the mechanized "mass of men" (7). Instead, in "Resistance to Civil Government," written while he was living at Walden Pond, Thoreau uses a bread metaphor to explain the social utility of the well-governed individual: "It is not so important

that many should be as good as you, as that there be some absolute goodness somewhere; for that will leaven the whole lump" (1996a, 5). Later in this same essay, Thoreau famously calls for a "resting-place without [society]," from which he might move it (19). Walter Benn Michaels points out that this place cannot be mere "Nature," for Thoreau repeatedly shows that when the individual gazes into nature, he merely sees himself reflected back (1988, 137). Michaels focuses on "the empty space [Thoreau] sometimes calls wilderness" as the solution (139), but in the context of *Walden*, Thoreau's praxis suggests that if the individual cannot disappear into nature, then the individual's body itself needs to become "the resting-place" outside of society. From this perspective, the reform of society comes to seem, in *Walden*, to depend on the social and market autonomy of the individual that Thoreau's vegetarian and domestic lifestyle are designed to promote.

Like Graham in his *Letter to the Hon. Daniel Webster*, Thoreau believes that abolition and significant social reform are impossible as long as the "very Constitution is the evil," as he writes in "Resistance to Civil Government" (1996a, 9), and Thoreau shifts his attention to the same human constitution as Graham for the remedy. In fact, in "Slavery in Massachusetts," Thoreau advocates for the same substitution of a perfect physiological constitution for a flawed political constitution as Graham when he writes:

> The question is not whether you or your grandfather, seventy years ago, did not enter into an agreement to serve the devil, and that service is not accordingly now due; but whether you will not now, for once and at last, serve God,—in spite of your own past recreancy, or that of your ancestor,—by obeying that eternal and only just CONSTITUTION, which He, and not any Jefferson or Adams, has written in your being. (1996b, 132)

Even more than Graham himself, who takes refuge in a constitution that he believes exemplifies equal opportunity but who, like antislavery Constitutionalists such as Charles Sumner, attempts to imaginatively redeem the "spirit" of the US political constitution, Thoreau finds the political constitution to be "an agreement to serve the devil" because he feels it supports slavery. This political constitution is thus finally irrelevant in the face of the "eternal and only just CONSTITUTION . . . written in your being," a physiological constitution theorized as universal and radically egalitarian. Obeying this constitution is clearly denominated as a political act in "Slavery in Massachusetts."

Graham's vegetarian theory transformed the human body into a site of direct civic engagement that promised not only to revitalize American citizenship, but to expand its parameters as well. By appealing to a truly "just Constitution written into [every man's] being," the Grahamite system, and Thoreau, offered a way of thinking about membership in the polis that was detached from the kinds of gender and especially racial markers typically used to limit antebellum US citizenship. As Dana Nelson (1998) and George M. Frederickson (1971) have shown, from the early national period onward US citizenship was not only implicitly but often explicitly theorized as exclusively white. Even among antislavery whites, the supposed inability of the "white" nation to incorporate the black bodies that scientific racism increasingly alleged were radically distinct was often seen as one of the main practical obstacles to ending US slavery. Some opponents of slavery countered this line of argument by reiterating the universalist language of the Revolutionary period's natural rights assertions. Critics such as Robyn Wiegman (1995) and Michael Warner (1992), however, have pointed out that white males were the only group ever intended to access that universalized subject position. Noting that the universalized form of citizenship depends on a form of "unmarked self-abstraction" granted only to white males (Warner 1992, 382–83), this critique hinges on the observation that such citizenship is disembodied or decorporealized and so finally unable to include women and people of color, whose embodied particularity was always insisted upon in the bourgeois public sphere.

In contrast, Graham and Thoreau's vegetarian universalized citizenship is founded in the subject's body. Although it does posit homogeneity rather than pluralism as the basis of citizenship and national association, Grahamite vegetarianism articulates and insists on an embodied homogeneity that is founded on a "universal physical constitution" that all human beings share across race, gender, class, creed, and time. By redefining the human body in these terms, Grahamite vegetarianism helped Thoreau take the declared principles of American democracy literally and develop the body as a site of equality from which none can be exempted and according to which none can be denied.

Private reform is no substitute for political reform; Thoreau's support of John Brown and his active participation in the Underground Railroad, reflected in the brief episode in *Walden* where he shelters a runaway slave (2004, 147), illustrate that Thoreau understood the importance of collective action. Yet the example of the crushingly hard

lives led by free blacks in Concord and other parts of the North demonstrated that emancipation alone was not enough (see Lemire 2009). The contribution of Grahamite vegetarianism to antebellum politics is its linking not only equality but collectivity to a universalized human body and its desires. Virtuous citizenship does not automatically attend whiteness and masculinity: virtuous citizenship not only *can*, but *must* be earned and achieved. Grahamite vegetarianism prescribes a critical removal from the capitalist marketplace and an active self-governance of the internal economy's enslaving appetite. Vegetarianism includes all Americans under its alternative constitution and theorizes a form of civic participation equally available to all.

For Thoreau, the vegetarian regimen provides a path to independence that is not merely important in the narrow context of citizenship. Despite looking back to certain key aspects of republican theory, Thoreau would not be the transcendentalist he is if he maintained the classically republican conception of man as a political animal who is "completed" only through participation in the polis or the imperium (see Pocock 1985, 40–41). Thoreau instead "situates democratic citizenship in the larger contours of a life well spent," as Nancy Rosenblum (1996: xxvii) has argued. The "economy" of consumption Thoreau practices in *Walden* is valuable because it enables him "not to live in this restless, nervous, bustling, trivial Nineteenth Century, but [to] stand or sit thoughtfully while it goes by" (2004, 320). Thoreau's disciplined bachelor's body, growing food and baking bread in a squatter's cabin, finally inhabits a much more solitary domesticity than any Beecher, Child, Graham, or William Alcott ever envisioned. Not merely set apart from the capitalist economy but also, at least in its *Walden* mythologization, set apart from the nuclear family, Thoreau's adaptation of the vegetarian diet is part of a deep and radical separation of the self from society that vegetarianism alone cannot explain. What Thoreau finally gains from his project at Walden Pond, then, is an experience of economy and market, as well as intellectual and spiritual independence, valuable for its civic as well as its transcendental possibilities.

Thoreau's project in *Walden* is not, as it has sometimes been characterized, an attempt to develop a pattern book of a meaningful life that could be replicated by anyone hoping to escape a life of "quiet desperation" (7). Thoreau's intent—and his achievement—is not to provide a maxim, a pattern or model for literal imitation, but to offer a precept, a symbolic formula for the renewal of American individualism, and as

a consequence, American citizenship. The literal life Thoreau lived at Walden is important, but just as important to the political design of *Walden* is how that life stands for a kind of life that can be lived back in Concord, and in every other town and city in the United States. Thoreau goes to the pond to learn to live, he engages in practices designed to make him a good citizen, and then he rejoins society and writes a book about them, holding up his practices at Walden Pond as a symbol of the work his neighbors need to engage in to reform not just their private lives but also their mutual public and political life.

A thorough reexamination of *Walden* in light of Thoreau's vegetarian politics thus troubles the easy distinction between private practices and public reforms that underwrites critiques such as Michael Gilmore's (1985). In *Walden*, Thoreau offers advice about self-regulation that promises not only to renew the worn-out body politic of the United States, but to make it more expansive. Grahamite vegetarianism provides a mechanism at once material and symbolic that offers to recognize the potential individualism and subjectivity of every human being in the United States in a context that produces civic effects. Whether or not domestic economy and a Grahamite vegetarian diet could in fact reform the polity, vegetarian practitioners—including Thoreau—certainly imagined that they could.

Conclusion

For Thoreau, regimen retained its traditional republican value as a training ground for civic participation, but it was also much more. By imagining the state as a mere accumulation of individuals, vegetarians such as Graham and Thoreau were able to replace the constitutionally governed body politic with individual "political bodies" characterized by constitutional laws. Thoreau, like Graham, focuses the bulk of his attention on the "wage slavery" of white northeastern male American bodies, but by engaging in the practices of self-mastery (or "self-emancipation" for which Thoreau [2004, 7] advocates), any *body*, white or black, could theoretically earn the right to become a "free" and equal citizen of the United States. Substituting obedience to the political constitution for obedience to a more radically egalitarian and inclusive physiological constitution is thus an act designed to "move society," so far as Thoreau is concerned. To make republican virtue dependent on consumption practices in which any American—male or

female, black or white—can choose to engage is to significantly renegotiate what it means to be a good citizen, or indeed, a citizen at all. It is not only Thoreau's "thoughts [that] are murder to the state" (1996, 135), but his body as well, at least so long as it is vegetarian.

Despite the use to which Thoreau put it, many elements in Sylvester Graham's "system" for regulating the human body will hardly strike modern readers as progressive; its murky imperialist and gendered particulars have been enumerated by other scholars,[10] and the rigorous self-discipline Graham advocated certainly had the potential to be harnessed to a capitalist as well as an anticapitalist agenda. My intent has not been to rehabilitate Graham, nor to suggest that his physiological project was an unproblematic "solution" to the Constitutional crisis over slavery. Rather, I have been trying to argue that by simply dismissing Graham as a crank Victorian, or worse, we have also too easily dismissed Thoreau's civic project at Walden; in the process, we have missed a fascinating avenue of antebellum thought, one that extended liberalism and anticapitalist resistance into uniquely material and embodied territory.

Recovering the context and texture of antebellum vegetarianism finally suggests that more attention needs to be paid not merely to the fact that "citizens of the early United States were encouraged to locate [their democratic] social impulse in the turbulent and conflicted interiors of their own bodies," as Christopher Castiglia has argued (2008, 2), but to the possibilities opened up by some of these interiorizing discourses and their relationship to theories of classical republican citizenship. Because he examines more hierarchal, institutionalized body reforms such as temperance, Castiglia theorizes only repressive "interior states" in which, "no longer entitled to exert agency *over* institutions, citizens were given the responsibility of regulating and managing the turbulent interiors that supposedly made them unfit for democracy" (6).

The grassroots politics of Grahamite vegetarianism, however, demand a different approach to the rituals of everyday living; they demonstrate that body reform projects were not merely biopolitical stratagems of the state, designed to distract citizens from the real work of social reform by forcing them to spend their lives in the Sisyphean task of reforming themselves. Rather than an internalization of social or governmental power, vegetarian regimen was a form of self-control, rooted in the body, capable of exerting force against the constitution of

society itself. Insisting that reform of the body was the only path to reform of the polity, vegetarianism reframed citizenship from a white male birthright into a privilege to be earned through material practices theoretically available to all. At a historical moment when many white US citizens were unable to imagine a way for the political constitution to incorporate free black, slave, or female bodies as full or sometimes even partial citizens, Thoreau and his fellow Grahamites turned to a more radically democratic physiological constitution that imaginatively incorporated all of these human bodies. In so doing, vegetarians like Thoreau took an important step toward conceiving of "a *more* perfect union," a union able to secure the Constitution's promised "blessings of liberty" for a greater number of Americans.

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Notes

1 For more on Graham's life, see Iacobbo and Iacobbo 2004, 15–70, and Nissenbaum 1980, 13–14.

2 Because Sylvester Graham was the first public person to stridently advocate for its consumption, "Graham flour" was the name antebellum Americans attached to unrefined, whole-grain flour. Such flour had not previously needed special nomenclature because superfine "white" flour was an antebellum innovation.

3 To my knowledge, no previous scholar has discussed or even noted the existence of this publication, yet it is a meaningful companion to Graham's more famous physiological writings, as I argue.

4 Richard J. Schneider writes that "most readers find 'Higher Laws,' the most obviously Transcendentalist chapter in [*Walden*], to be exasperating in its puritanical insistence on the virtues of a vegetarian diet" (1995, 100). Nissenbaum notes in passing that Thoreau was following the Grahamite diet at Walden Pond (1980, xi), and David Reynolds's recent history of Jacksonian America also connects Graham to Thoreau's diet (2008, 259), although only to suggest (erroneously) that Thoreau "went beyond" Graham. Stephen and Barbara Adams (1990) focus solely on whether Thoreau's diet at Walden Pond was nutritionally adequate.

5 Bronson Alcott would today be considered a vegan. His cousin, William A. Alcott, was likely also a vegan. Jones (1957) argues compellingly that Thoreau read at least one of William Alcott's works, *The Young House-keeper* (1838). James Armstrong (1983: 123–44) suggests that Thoreau knew Alcott's *Young Man's Guide*, as well as some of Sylvester Graham's work.

6 Is it sheer coincidence that the name of this chapter, "Baker Farm," connects Thoreau's cautionary tale of thrift and home economy to the great enemy of those virtues, in Sylvester Graham's account, the public baker? Or that the family Thoreau encounters, "The Fields," are nominally connected to the source of independence so essential to the *oikodespotes* and (in a slightly different sense) the vegetarian citizen?

7 Thoreau, like Whitman in *Leaves of Grass*, goes out of his way to point out that he is a "loafer," but in Thoreau's case, the epithet has the advantage of being a Grahamite pun.

8 For example, see *Daily Cleveland (OH) Herald,* September 23, 1853; *Daily Cleveland (OH) Herald*, October 27, 1854; *Boston (MA) Investigator*, September 14, 1853; *Lowell (MA) Daily Citizen and News*, March 30, 1860; *Vermont Patriot* (Montpelier), May 05, 1860; or *Bangor (ME) Daily Whig and Courier*, August 17, 1871.

9 The mechanic and his wife do take a little butter and milk, and Graham himself suggests small amounts of these might be allowed in most diets.

10 For analysis of the troubling gender and imperialist potential of Graham's program, see Tompkins 2009, 50–60. By contrast, Nissenbaum (1980) and Sokolow (1983, 165) offer more favorable evaluations of the Grahamite movement's effects on women.

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