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# ‘A Fact in the History of the World’: The *Vegetarian Advocate* (1848–50) and the Serialization of Life

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## ABSTRACT

This essay examines the *Vegetarian Advocate*, a British monthly periodical that ran from 1848 to 1850, and it argues that the periodical’s serial form shaped its representation of vegetarianism. As the first official organ of the UK Vegetarian Society, the *Vegetarian Advocate* carried different messages to different audiences. For members of the Society, it circulated information on the organization’s publications, annual meetings, membership statistics, and finances, subjects that would be of interest only to insiders. For outsiders and the uninitiated, it published articles explaining vegetarian principles, using arguments drawn from physiology, chemistry, natural history, economics, and ethics to persuade curious readers to experiment with a vegetarian diet. However, drawing on press scholarship and Michel Foucault’s techniques of the self, this essay argues that the serial form of the periodical itself carried an important message on the vegetarians’ ‘serialization of life’, their belief that life be lived serially or, in other words, that forward progress and self-improvement come through repetition, attention to routine, and the everyday training of oneself. Specifically, this essay claims that the seriality of the *Vegetarian Advocate* allowed the Vegetarian Society to represent its dietary regimen *as serial* — that is, as a repetitive yet progressive, sequential system of self-transformation in which all forms of activity (from eating to exercising to socializing) accrued meaning sequentially, serially, and relationally, orientating vegetarianism and vegetarians towards a teleological objective, or what Foucault calls the ‘telos of the ethical subject’. Serialization, it claims, was integral to both the practice and concept of vegetarianism: vegetarian print materials were published serially while the practice itself was conceptualized as a progressive step in the development of the individual and the species.

## KEYWORDS

*Vegetarian Advocate*, vegetarianism, serialization, Britain

In September 1848, the *Truth-Tester*, a temperance journal published by William Horsell (1807–63) on the Isle of Man, 'adopted a new title', the *Vegetarian Advocate*, becoming the first official organ of the Vegetarian Society.<sup>1</sup> Horsell continued to produce the two-pence monthly on the Isle of Man until the repeal of Manx postal privileges forced him to move to London, where he established a printing press 'for the publication of the *Vegetarian Advocate*, and a depôt for the sale of Vegetarian Publications'.<sup>2</sup> From its central office at 13 Paternoster Row, the journal began to cultivate a London-based vegetarian culture made up of banquets, lectures, soirees, and something the journal described as vegetarian pleasure parties.<sup>3</sup> However, despite the relocation of Horsell's printing operations, the *Vegetarian Advocate* ceased publication in 1850 — not, it would appear, from lack of interest or support, but because of doctrinal differences between Horsell and James Simpson (1812–59), the Vegetarian Society's first president. Simpson placed his financial support behind the Manchester-based journal, the *Vegetarian Messenger*, once it appeared in 1849, ensuring that this northern city would become the centre of vegetarian activity.<sup>4</sup> Because of its brief publication history, the *Vegetarian Advocate* remains relatively understudied in histories of vegetarianism, but it offers a revealing glimpse into the relationship between text, taste, and identity in the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>5</sup> By examining this advocacy journal, I hope not only to provide an interpretation of the periodical itself, but also contribute to the study of social movement media. Press scholarship can help us understand the emergence of the vegetarian movement, but the Vegetarian Society can also tell us much about the importance of print media in forging material practices, collective identities, and social activism in the nineteenth century.

In this essay, I argue that serialization and the seriality of the press allowed the Vegetarian Society to represent vegetarianism *as serial* — that is, as a progressive, sequential system that (supposedly) followed natural order but also exemplified human reason's capacity to grasp the laws of nature (in this case, humanity's 'natural diet'). Serial modes of publication and production in the nineteenth century created what Secord, Hopwood, and Schaffer term a 'serial culture' in which the very structure of the world seemed serial.<sup>6</sup> They argue that seriality offers a useful category for historical analysis because it focuses attention on *practice*, 'uniting approaches that have variously been dealt with as material (such as publications and exhibitions) and conceptual (such as developmental and evolutionary sequences)'.<sup>7</sup> Serialization, I argue, was integral to both the practice and concept of vegetarianism: its print materials (periodicals, tracts, cookbooks) were published serially and made use of numerical series (in the organization of publications, in the numbering of ingredients and recipes, and in the recording of statistical information, for instance) while the practice itself was conceptualized as a progressive step in the development of the individual and the species. That is, series

1 'To Our Readers', *Vegetarian Advocate* (15 September 1848), 21–22 (p. 21).

2 'Introduction', *Vegetarian Advocate* (1 September 1849), 1–2 (p. 1). On the Isle of Man's taxation privileges, see John Belchem, 'The Neglected "Unstamped": The Manx Pauper Press of the 1840s', *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies*, 24.4 (Winter 1992), 605–16.

3 'Introduction', *Vegetarian Advocate* (1 September 1849), 1–2 (p. 1); 'Vegetarian Intelligence', *Vegetarian Advocate* (1 September 1849), 2–6 (p. 4).

4 On Horsell and Simpson's quarrel, see John Davis, 'Why Manchester?', *Vegetarian* (2014), p. 17. On the financial influence of Simpson in the early years of the movement, see William E.A. Axon, *Sixty Years of the Vegetarian Society* (Manchester: The Vegetarian Society, 1907).

5 For a history of nineteenth-century vegetarianism, see James Gregory, *Of Victorians and Vegetarians: The Vegetarian Movement in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2007). For broader histories, see Tristram Stuart, *The Bloodless Revolution: A Cultural History of Vegetarianism from 1600 to Modern Times* (New York: Norton, 2007) and Colin Spencer, *The Heretic's Feast: A History of Vegetarianism* (London: Fourth Estate, 1993).

6 Nick Hopwood, Simon Schaffer, and Jim Secord, 'Seriality and Scientific Objects in the Nineteenth Century', *History of Science*, 48.161 (2010), 251–85 (p. 251).

7 Hopwood, et al., p. 278.

and serials were the media by which vegetarianism was communicated, but they (serial print media) also represented the practice of vegetarianism as a serial progression or critical step in the forward march of civilization. Vegetarian publications exploited their audience's familiarity with the conventions of seriality in order to make vegetarianism legible within the progressive narratives and 'serial culture' of the nineteenth century.<sup>8</sup>

### The First Annual Banquet of the Vegetarian Society

Volume one of the *Vegetarian Advocate*, a bound edition of which rests in the Vegetarian Society's archives, begins with a banquet:

Whether we regard this banquet as indicative of the progress of the vegetarian movement; as an exhibition of the refined taste and happy feeling; the deep and elevated thought, mingled with unfeigned cheerfulness, and a flow of the purest spirits of humanity (which it is the main object of the movement to promote through individual purification); or whether we regard it in its wider sense, as a fact in the history of the world, marking progress from semi-barbarism to enlightened, orderly, and merciful civilization; we could not enter the Assembly-room of Hayward's Hotel, Manchester, on Friday, the 28<sup>th</sup> of July, 1848, without being forcibly struck with the beautiful and orderly arrangement which was there presented.<sup>9</sup>

The vegetarians were eating their way to civilization. The occasion for this exhibition of refined taste was the one-year anniversary of the Vegetarian Society, founded the previous September of 1847 by Horsell, Simpson, and other mid-century flesh abstainers and Bible Christians.<sup>10</sup> The Society faithfully documented the event in its 'Report of the First Annual Meeting of the Vegetarian Society', which Horsell published separately as a pamphlet but also re-reprinted as the first twenty-two pages of the *Vegetarian Advocate*, volume one. Annual reports were a convention of nineteenth-century voluntary associations, and the vegetarians' report on their First Annual Meeting details the formal proceedings one would expect from such an assembly — the appointment of a chairman, the election of officers, a toast to the monarch (with pure cold water!), the delivery of speeches, and an account of the Society's activities over the past year. But their *Report*, like the meeting itself, placed an unconventional amount of emphasis on the menu, describing the arrangement of the dishes on the tables and the order in which courses were served. Adopting the language of domestic ideology, the report positioned food, its arrangement and presentation, as a metonym for the value of those who prepared and consumed it, the ladies and gentlemen of the Vegetarian Society.<sup>11</sup> The 'beautiful and orderly arrangement' of the vegetarians' banquet tables was both a signifier of, and the means towards, an 'enlightened, orderly, and merciful civilization'.<sup>12</sup>

8 Ibid, pp. 252–85.

9 *Report of the First Annual Meeting of the Vegetarian Society* (Isle of Man: William Horsell, 1848), pp. 1–20 (p. 1).

10 For an account of the Society's relationship to the Bible Christian Church in Salford, see William E.A. Axon, *Sixty Years of the Vegetarian Society* (Manchester: The Vegetarian Society, 1907) and James Gregory, *Of Victorians and Vegetarians: The Vegetarian Movement in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2007).

11 On metonymy in domestic ideology, see Kay Boardman, 'The Ideology of Domesticity: The Regulation of the Household Economy in Victorian Women's Magazines', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 33.2 (2000), 150–64.

12 *Report*, p. 1.

The Banquet's publication, as a tract and in the *Vegetarian Advocate*, encouraged readers to consume the occasion in absentia through the medium of print. Dissemination in the press extended 'the flow of human kindness' to geographically distant consumers.<sup>13</sup> However, as I want to argue, the Vegetarian Society adopted the press not only as medium for outward dissemination, but also as what Michel Foucault terms a 'technology of the self' — that is, a technique that the Vegetarian Society oriented internally toward the conduct of life and the care of the self.<sup>14</sup> Unlike the Victorian 'pressure groups' studied by Brian Harrison, the Vegetarian Society did not place external pressure on parliament; rather, vegetarians put pressure on themselves, using print media to shape their own lives.<sup>15</sup> The periodicals of the Vegetarian Society may have been oriented toward 'the progress of the vegetarian movement', but they also had to engage with the very things that are left on the margins of narratives of progress: everyday domestic routines.<sup>16</sup> The Vegetarian Society had to create vegetarians and everyday vegetarian life: although it regarded the 'vegetarian movement' as part of the linear duration of history, 'marking progress from semi-barbarism to enlightened, orderly, and merciful civilization', the practice of vegetarianism took place within the repetitive time of daily life.<sup>17</sup> The periodical, the *Vegetarian Advocate*, brought these different levels of temporality — linear history and everyday life — together. Each issue contained personal narratives, while the framework of the periodical embedded these individual stories within a larger collective framework. The Vegetarian Society used the regular intervals of the periodical press in order to inform regular habits of vegetarian consumption, giving rise to what Foucault describes as a 'serial attention', that is, a way of viewing one's life and activities *serially*, as a small part in a larger sequence.<sup>18</sup>

## Periodicals and Social Movements

Scott Bennett argues that nineteenth-century Britain 'adopted periodicals as the chief means of carrying forward the discourse by which a society comes to know itself'.<sup>19</sup> The concept of motion, of 'carrying forward', was key to the role of periodicals: they quite literally 'moved through society, from press to bookseller to reader, and, probably, to other readers', but the steady motion of the press 'also moved ideas, images, and representations', narrating and shaping the progress of society.<sup>20</sup> Periodicals circulated ideas, but they also circulated the very idea of movement. For instance, John Sommerville, in *The News Revolution*, argues that the advent of periodical news oriented society 'toward change, toward the future, and toward possibilities [...]. Periodicity is about movement'.<sup>21</sup> This future orientation had commercial motives, fostering desire for the next issue, but, by circulating a cultural model of continuous movement, it also created the conditions in which something like the concept of 'social movement' became possible. Indeed, social

13 Ibid.

14 Michel Foucault, *The Politics of Truth* (Los Angeles: Semiotext[e], 2007), p. 154.

15 Brian Harrison, 'Press and Pressure Groups in Modern Britain', in *The Victorian Periodical Press: Samplings and Soundings*, ed. by Joanne Shattock and Michael Wolff (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1982), pp. 261–95.

16 *Report*, p. 1.

17 *Report*, p. 1.

18 Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 4 vols (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), II, p. 106.

19 Scott Bennet, J. Don Vann, and Rosemary T. VanArsdel, *Victorian Periodicals: A Guide to the Research* (New York: Modern Language Association, 1978), p. 21.

20 James Mussell, *The Nineteenth-Century Press in the Digital Age* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2012), p. 68.

21 C. John Sommerville, *The News Revolution in England: Cultural Dynamics of Daily Information* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 10.

movement theorists have linked the development of social movement repertoires to print media.<sup>22</sup>

However, as others have argued, periodicals are characterized as much by continuity as change: a periodical has to sell the news, but it also has to sell itself by establishing its title and identity in the lives of readers. Margaret Beetham's classic statement on the genre of the periodical offers some balance to Sommerville's emphasis on instability, addressing both the ephemerality of individual issues and the enduring qualities of the form.<sup>23</sup> The periodical, she argues, offers readers new content within a recurrent form; its repeated form allows it to develop 'a recognizable persona' and establish a relationship with readers across time.<sup>24</sup> When analyzing print media, we need to attend to the ways in which periodicals were not only rushing into the future, but were also, with each passing issue, patiently constructing continuity with the past; they created a collective sense of identity among regular readers through repetition. The repetitiveness of the genre embedded it into everyday life and, for vegetarian advocates, made it a significant medium for the gradual conversion of new readers.

Vegetarian print media, I argue, served to construct a history and tradition in the present. Each new issue looked toward the future and built on what came before it; they held up the promise of a better future, which Beetham terms 'the dream of a different future'.<sup>25</sup> But, while building a shared belief among readers in the 'Progress of the Movement', vegetarian periodicals also involved moments of suspension (such as their annual banquets) that oriented readers to a broader narrative of history, connecting the past, present, and future of the vegetarian movement.<sup>26</sup> In his mediation on time in periodicals, Mark Turner argues that all periodicals have built into their publishing cycles a pause between issues.<sup>27</sup> These lapses are when reading occurs; as Turner argues, 'that period of waiting and reading is the link between the past and the future'.<sup>28</sup> For the vegetarian readership, the pause between issues was the time of experimenting, trying out recipes, and meeting with other vegetarians. Beetham concludes her essay on the periodical with a suggestion for future research:

the appearance of the periodicals at regular intervals of time both affirms the reader's place in a time regulated society and promises that this is not the end, there will be another number. I suggest that it is here that we should look not only to continue our discussions about the nature of the periodical as a form but also to understand its continuing vitality.<sup>29</sup>

Following Beetham, I too suggest that it is here, at the periodical's tension between openness and closure, that we identify the form's importance for the vegetarian movement. Indeed, the form's vitality for the Vegetarian Society lay in the way it shaped vegetarian lives, a claim I will make here by looking at an example: not at the periodical itself, but at an advertisement for a series of Vegetarian Tracts that appeared in the *Vegetarian Advocate* (Fig. 1). After the Society's formation, one of its first objectives was to issue a series of Tracts. Tract no. 1 consisted of a description of the Vegetarian Society,

22 Sidney G. Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics*, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 52.

23 Margaret Beetham, 'Open and Closed: Towards a Theory of the Periodical as a Publishing Genre', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 22.3 (1989), 96–100.

24 Beetham, 'Open and Closed', p. 99; Mussell, p. 68.

25 Beetham, 'Open and Closed', p. 99.

26 'Progress of the Movement', *Vegetarian Advocate* (15 October 1848), 35–36 (p. 35).

27 Mark Turner, 'Periodical Time in the Nineteenth Century', *Media History*, 8.2 (2002), 183–96.

28 Turner, p. 194.

29 Beetham, 'Open and Closed', p. 99.

*Now publishing,*

**VEGETARIAN TRACTS.** — No. 1 : THE  
VEGETARIAN SOCIETY ; comprising a description  
of the formation of the Society, with its Rules, and In-  
structions relating to Membership. No. 2 : THE VEGE-  
TARIAN BANQUET. No. 3 and No. 4 : SPEECHES OF  
JOSEPH BROTHERTON, Esq., M.P., and JOHN SMITH,  
Esq., at the Vegetarian Banquet. To be followed by  
others.

The Vegetarian Tracts will be sold, *in large quanti-  
ties, at prime cost, to promote gratuitous circulation ;  
and in sixpenny packets of about 100 pages each.*

LONDON: Houlston and Stoneman. To be had also  
of the Secretary and Local Secretaries of the VEGETA-  
RIAN SOCIETY.

Fig. 1 Advertisement for Vegetarian Tracts in the *Vegetarian Advocate* for 15 October 1848. HathiTrust

its rules for membership, and the declaration of abstinence made by all members; no. 2 I have already mentioned — it contained the Report on the First Annual Banquet, which described the Society's first annual meeting; nos. 3 and 4 reproduced the speeches of Joseph Brotherton (1783–1857) and James Simpson at the Banquet. These tracts were, of course, not themselves periodicals, but they were issued in a numerical series, and are thus a form of serial media. Notably, the advertisement informed readers that these first four numbers were 'to be followed by others'.<sup>30</sup> We see, then, the constitutive *incompletion* of serialization, whether in tract or periodical: the last number, or most recently published tract, would not in fact be the last. The numerical series (nos. 1, 2, 3, 4...) created a model of continuous growth for the Vegetarian Society — there would always be the next number to read and distribute — and this open-ended serialization contributed to what I call the vegetarians' serialization of life, their tendency to see themselves and their actions not in isolation, but, metonymically, as part of a larger whole or sequence.<sup>31</sup> Each individual tract or issue was part of the larger series, just as each vegetarian was part of the larger movement.

Individual issues of the *Vegetarian Advocate* often drew attention to their serial form, making deliberate gestures to locate themselves within the larger series of which they were a part. Take the way in which the editors of the *Vegetarian Advocate*, in a report on the progress of the movement, drew readers' attention to the advertisements for the publication of their new Vegetarian Tracts:

Since our last, it will be seen from our advertising columns, that a series of 'Vegetarian Tracts' has been commenced. No. 1 is now ready, and consists of a Brief Abstract of the Report of the Vegetarian Banquet; the succeeding numbers are to embrace the speech of J. Brotherton, Esq. MP, John Smith Esq., James Simpson Esq., etc.; each forming a separate tract, suitable for the extensive distribution. They are sold in large quantities at prime cost, and in sixpenny packets of about 100 pages, to promote the gratuitous circulation, and will we trust, be productive of much good.<sup>32</sup>

30 Advertisement, *Vegetarian Advocate* (15 October 1848), no page.

31 On the metonymic reading practices produced by serials, see Teresa Goddu, 'The Antislavery Almanac and the Discourse of Numeracy', *Book History*, 12 (2009), 129–55.

32 'Progress of the Movement', *Vegetarian Advocate* (15 October 1848), 35–36 (p. 36).

As James Mussell notes, a phrase such as ‘in our last’ implies seriality, creating continuity across issues: it ‘gestures to what is disallowed in serial publication: the last, the final issue, when publication comes to an end’.<sup>33</sup> ‘Our last’ is not the last or final issue; it is the latest. As Mussell elsewhere argues, periodicals are ‘predicated upon not finishing, where the latest issue is not the last’.<sup>34</sup> This model of limitless growth, on which the latest issue was to be followed by others, created a handy analogy for the future progress of the vegetarian movement itself, but it also provided a model by which individual vegetarians lived their lives. The Annual Report, which was here advertised as a serialized tract, made sure to list, alongside the names of the members in attendance at the Banquet, the number of years each had abstained from flesh, creating an association between the numerical serialization of the text and the serial accumulation of abstinence: we learn, for instance, that Joseph Brotherton and Martha Brotherton had both abstained from flesh for thirty-nine years; John Smith for thirteen years; Thomas Taylor for thirty-five years; Mrs. Simpson for thirty-nine years; Miss Hernton for thirty-eight years; Mr. Gaskill for thirty-four years; and so on. Just as the Vegetarian Society enumerated its publications in an open, unending series, it also tallied up the lives of individual vegetarians, counting their continuous, on-going years of abstinence. Through numerical representation, the Vegetarian Society thus created a close connection among individual vegetarians, vegetarian texts, and the progress of the vegetarian movement itself, in a way that, to paraphrase Beetham, affirmed individual members’ position in the structure of the society and held out the promise of an open future. Vegetarians could look forward to future issues of the journal, future years of abstinence, and future moral progress, while also seeing themselves as an integral part of the society and movement. I would now like to show how this serialization of life appeared in early representations of vegetarianism in the *Vegetarian Advocate*.

### **‘To Our Readers’: The Prospectus to the First Issue of the *Vegetarian Advocate***

After changing its name from the *Truth-Tester*, the *Vegetarian Advocate* became the first periodical to bear the name, *vegetarian*, on its masthead. Issue one began with a prospectus of the journal, in which the editors explained its monthly features and their ‘plans for the future, so that our readers may understand the character of this publication’.<sup>35</sup> The adoption of its new title signalled a break with the past, but the prospectus, by describing the publication’s aims and layout, immediately began the work of developing a new tradition. Outlining ‘the character of this publication’ was also part of the process of outlining the character of vegetarians. It was not only the content of the periodical, but its ‘character’, its typographic appearance, that would mediate and define vegetarianism.

In this address, ‘To Our Readers’, the editors announced their decision to adopt the new title, transforming the *Truth-Tester* into the *Vegetarian Advocate*. They heralded their creation of the *Vegetarian Advocate* as a defining moment in their movement. I focus on this prospectus because it provides us with the structure of the *Vegetarian Advocate*, and it indicates how a combination of novelty and repetition, or ‘miscellaneity and seriality’, went into constituting both the periodical and its readers.<sup>36</sup> Niche journals, such as the *Truth-Tester*, had to cultivate a relationship with their readership; if a periodical

33 James Mussell, ‘Repetition; or In Our Last’, *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 48.3 (2015), 343–58 (p. 345).

34 Mussell, *Digital Age*, p. 31.

35 ‘To Our Readers’, *Vegetarian Advocate* (15 September 1848), 21–22 (p. 21).

36 Mussell, *Digital Age*, p. 68.



attempted to broaden its audience by diversifying its content, it risked alienating its base.<sup>37</sup> The prospectus to the *Vegetarian Advocate* reveals that introducing vegetarianism to readers of the earlier *Truth-Tester* involved some trepidation. When Horsell operated the *Truth-Tester*, he had occasionally featured articles on the 'vegetarian system', but, as he explains, the journal remained 'cautious in introducing this subject to our readers, lest we should give offence'.<sup>38</sup> As a specialist periodical, the *Truth-Tester* had to preserve its base readership, and the editors were wary of straying from their journal's recognized persona. But slowly they became confident that, if 'the subject were judiciously laid before them', their temperance readers would 'find, in the vegetarian movement, a new field of exercise'.<sup>39</sup> This prospectus thus draws attention to the way in which the construction of a periodical is a reciprocal process between publishers and readers.

The introduction of vegetarianism took place incrementally. Whereas the *Truth-Tester* had tentatively presented 'now and then an article on the vegetarian question', the editors 'gradually spoke out more boldly', ultimately placing 'vegetarian' in the journal's title.<sup>40</sup> Vegetarianism now dared to speak its name. In the first issue of the *Vegetarian Advocate*, the editors announced that, with the change in title, 'we feel great confidence and no small degree of pleasure in exhibiting, on every page of our work, the significant words, "The Vegetarian Advocate"'.<sup>41</sup> The editors hoped the journal's adoption of a new title, its decision to declare itself a vegetarian periodical, would offer encouragement to '*secret disciples*' of the diet, those who privately abstained from flesh but had not yet '*come out* and avowed themselves' as vegetarians.<sup>42</sup> The exhibition of 'the significant words, the "Vegetarian Advocate"' suggests that the editors were attempting to construct a model of public speech and self-identification for their readers to follow, demonstrating how its readers ought to make a public declaration of abstinence and their adherence to vegetarianism.

Among the more prominent features of the periodical outlined in its prospectus was the 'Leading Article' (Fig. 2). As the editors explained, these brief essays took on the role of articulating vegetarian principles to the 'unacquainted', while they also furnished established vegetarians with arguments to defend themselves. The leading article in the first issue, titled 'Moral Movements', positioned the Vegetarian Society among contemporary 'societies for the moral elevation of the people', and it represented vegetarianism as the latest development in a series of 'great and important *principles*', including abolitionism, pacifism, teetotalism, communitarianism, hygiene, and educational reform.<sup>43</sup> The leading articles of the subsequent issues — 'Vegetarianism and Education', 'Vegetarianism and Temperance', 'Vegetarianism and Early Closing', and 'Vegetarianism and Sanitary Reform' — framed vegetarianism's relevance in relation to other movements, and created 'a series of papers' that carried on over several issues. By situating itself within a range of social movements, the Vegetarian Society sought to constitute itself out of a pre-existing field of activity, forging what Craig Calhoun describes as a broad network of overlapping memberships.<sup>44</sup> The Vegetarian Society framed itself as the logical extension of these established movements, but also as the means towards their unification.

37 Harrison, pp. 284–85.

38 'To Our Readers', *Vegetarian Advocate* (15 September 1848), 21–22 (p. 21).

39 Ibid.

40 Ibid.

41 Ibid.

42 'Progress of the Movement', *Vegetarian Advocate* (15 October 1848), 35–36 (p. 35).

43 'Moral Movements', *Vegetarian Advocate* (15 September 1848), 22–23 (p. 22).

44 Craig Calhoun, *The Roots of Radicalism: Tradition, The Public Sphere, and Early Nineteenth-Century Social Movements* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), p. 271.

THE VEGETARIAN ADVOCATE. 33

The Vegetarian Advocate.  
DOUGLAS, OCTOBER 15, 1848.

IS THE PRACTICE OF EATING FLESH INJURIOUS TO MAN?  
ARTICLE I.

**T**HE practice of eating the flesh of animals, involves another practice which must precede it: viz., the killing of animals; and this, in the present day, involves another practice: the rearing and fattening of animals for slaughter. To begin with this latter practice, and proceed to the consideration of the two former, and the effects of the whole on man, individually and collectively, is the design of the present series of papers.

The process of rearing and fattening animals for slaughter, is anything but a profitable employment either for the farmer's skill, capital, or land, compared with what a more judicious application of these might realize. John W. Childers, Esq., M.P., in the *Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society of England*, page 169, vol. 1., gives the following statement as to the quantity of food consumed by 20 sheep, when enclosed in a fold for fattening, to which, for the purpose of this paper, we have attached the prices of the various articles, the amount of which we have rather under-stated, in order that our calculations may be indisputable.

FOOD PER DAY FOR 20 LEICESTER SHEEP ENCLOSED IN A FOLD FOR FATTENING.

Articles Consumed.	Quantity.	Price.	Cost.
Turnips,	27 pecks,	2d.	1s 8½d
Linseed-cake,	10 lbs.	1d.	0 10
Barley,	5 quarts,	1½d.	0 8½
Salt,			0 0½
Hay,			0 14
Total cost per day.....			3s 5d

Twenty sheep thus fed, are shown by the gentleman above alluded to, to have increased in weight from the 1st of Jan. to the 1st April (a period of 90 days), 36 stone 8 lbs. The account then stands thus:—

To feeding 20 sheep 90 days, at 3s. 5d. per day.....	£15 7 6
To 36 st. 8 lbs. of mutton (being the increase in 90 days).....	—
at 7s. * a stone .....	12 16 0
Loss to farmer .....	2 11 6
	£15 7 6

In this calculation we have omitted the items labor and manure, which we think may be fairly set off against each other. We have put down the price of mutton at a much higher rate than farmers generally receive for it, as the same gentleman states that he sold '50 at Rother-

\* We have here stated 7s. a stone, which is the full value of the flesh, because it is generally supposed that in fattening, only the genuine flesh and fat are increased in weight, and not the bones and offal.

ham in March, clipped, at from 42s. to 48s. per head;† and at that time it is shown in a previous table that they weigh from 12 to 13 stone. This is not 4s. a stone, whilst we have allowed 7s. In this calculation there are no deductions made for losses occasioned by the death of sheep from disease. There are no less than 26 diseases to which this misused animal is subject, since man has undertaken to feed and fatten it. It is evident from the above calculations, that it is not in the process of fattening that the farmer makes his profit, for every lb. of flesh he manufactures in this unnatural way, costs him at least 7d., which is about double the average price he sells at! How, then, does the farmer live? The fact is, previous to the animals being shut up to fatten, they are allowed to enjoy a certain degree of liberty. They are allowed to ramble up the hills and through the valleys, and to gather the food which nature has provided for them. The land is necessarily let to him in large quantities, and at a much lower rent than it would be worth if cultivated. By this plan (grazing), he can manage his farm with far less labor than if he were to use the plough or the spade; and instead of giving employment to the neighboring poor, he keeps one or two shepherds on several hundred acres of land, where he rears his flocks and his herds at comparatively little cost to himself, though at great cost to those who ought to 'live by sweat of their brow,' instead of being unable to exist on parochial relief or the result of a casual job of work! It is, then, before the fattening commences, that the farmer makes his profit, small though it be, compared with what the land would realize under judicious cultivation.

After spending a spring and a summer in the innocent sports of the green pastures, the sheep is shut up in a close pen or shed (the latter is recommended as the most economical in the quantity of food required), where it is made a prisoner for two or three months, at, as is shown above, an immense cost to the farmer. At the expiration of this period, it is doomed to die! Poor creature! it is almost dead already, for its buoyant spirit was never made to dwell in close confinement! Its limbs now can scarcely support its cumbrous load of 'dull mortality.' However, its life of natural innocence becomes a witness of scenes of cruelty and blood! One by one its fellow-prisoners are murdered, perhaps before its eyes. Its turn comes at last, and puts a stop to the palpitation of its bursting heart! Follow the carcass, which, after all the natural ornaments of its pure nature are stripped from it, is conveyed to the shambles for public inspection! Its unnatural imprisonment and over-feeding had rendered it a re-

† *Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society of England*, vol. 1. page 408.

Fig. 2 Leading article in the *Vegetarian Advocate* for 15 October 1848. This essay was the first of a three-part series on the question, 'Is The Practice of Eating Flesh Injurious To Man?'. HathiTrust

After the 'leading article' addressed to outsiders, the remaining features of the *Vegetarian Advocate* were intended for the inner circle of vegetarians: 'The Progress of the Movement' documented the Vegetarian Society's proceedings; 'Vegetarian Intelligence' reported on the activities of the society's members; 'Correspondence' supplied testimony from readers on their dietary experiments; 'Notices' reviewed books on humanitarian issues; 'Facts and Figures' armed readers with information to deploy against flesh-eaters; 'Miscellany' consisted of 'condensed anecdotes'; and, finally, 'Poetry'

addressed humanitarian sentiments in a literary register.<sup>45</sup> Thus, variety and miscellany, presented within the regularity of a monthly, ensured that 'this periodical will become worthy of the title it has assumed — that it will maintain the character of a firm and consistent, "Vegetarian Advocate"'.<sup>46</sup> Carving out a consistent persona within the cluttered publication market was, as Beetham argues, an economic necessity, but the *Vegetarian Advocate* had its own specific need for modelling steadfast consistency for readers. The *Advocate* wanted to help its readers develop into committed, dependable vegetarians — vegetarians of unwavering character who would resist temptations and form a reliable pattern of behaviour.

As the editors of the *Vegetarian Advocate* further indicated, their goal of inscribing the 'character' of vegetarianism into the minds of readers was made possible by the rhythms of periodical publishing. They used the prospectus to reflect on their medium, and the way in which it structured the passage of time:

The commencement of a new yearly volume of a periodical, is always an interesting opportunity for reviewing the past, improving the present, and pointing to a hopeful future; but in the present instance it is especially so, for not only have we commenced a new volume, but we have adopted a new title, indicating more particularly the character of our work, and the spirit which we rejoice to say is gradually fusing itself into the thoughts, words, and actions of men.<sup>47</sup>

The editors draw our attention to the fact that the periodical operates within overlapping periodicities, the yearly volume and the monthly issue. The commencement of a new yearly cycle creates this 'opportunity' to step back from the smaller monthly cycle, engage with readers, and position their daily 'thoughts, words, and actions' within a broader framework. It punctuates and gives meaning to the passage of time. The editors' comments suggest the periodical creates a sense of timing, of seasonality, a yearly calendar that it shares with readers as a function of its serialization. The division into monthly issues and the yearly volumes grounds one within the flow of time. Serialization encourages one to think historically and teleologically: linked to the past, addressed to the present, and oriented towards the future, the periodical creates an historical and progressive sensibility. Put simply, the conventions of serialization produce this moment for collective self-reflection. Notably, the beginning of a new volume is '*always* an interesting opportunity for reviewing the past' (my emphasis), indicating that this annual review and self-historicization was a perennial convention in Victorian print culture. But, while the management of time is implicit in all forms of serialized media, what is significant about the *Vegetarian Advocate's* address 'To Our Readers' is the editors' explicit attention to the rhythms of their medium and to the distinct roles these rhythms play in structuring time. Their self-conscious demarcation of past, present, and future indicates that their periodical was particularly interested in developing a collective historical narrative from the commencement of its very first issue. This prospectus was not simply an opportunity for reviewing the past and looking to the future, but for temporally unifying 'our readers', investing them in the same past, present moment, and future. The conventions of serialization, by fostering engagement with print over time and by creating synchronicity among a community of readers, allowed the Vegetarian

45 'To Our Readers', *Vegetarian Advocate* (15 September 1848), 21–22 (pp. 21, 22).

46 *Ibid.*, p. 22

47 *Ibid.*, p. 21.

Society to develop a relationship with ‘our readers’ and ‘gradually fus[e] itself into the thoughts, words, and actions of men’.<sup>48</sup>

### ‘The Progress of the Movement’: Making History in the Present

I would like to turn our focus to another one of the *Vegetarian Advocate*’s regular features identified in the prospectus: ‘The Progress of the Movement’. Under this heading, the *Vegetarian Advocate* documented each month ‘cheering evidences of the growth of our principles’, thereby providing ‘a history of the present, such as may be regarded in the future as a faithful record of the past’.<sup>49</sup> The monthly periodical, as ‘a history of the present’, encouraged readers to think of the present as the future’s past. The periodical circulated vegetarianism, but its serial format, by creating, as noted, opportunities ‘for reviewing the past, improving the present, and pointing to a hopeful future’, also informed the self-historicizing impulse of vegetarians — their desire to carve out a canon of texts and authors extending back to Pythagoras.<sup>50</sup> The individual vegetarian was meant to regard his or her life from the point of view of this history: the vegetarian worked towards progress, advancing the vegetarian movement, but he or she also situated this daily activity in a historical narrative. This retrospective view of the present — the present as always-already a part of history — was, as I am suggesting, a function of the genre of the serial: as a ‘date-stamped commodity’, the periodical addressed the present, but also oriented readers’ interest towards the next issue.<sup>51</sup> The newness of the current issue carried with it the foreknowledge that it would soon become the past issue: here today, gone tomorrow, as Beetham says. Each new issue presented itself as a response to the needs of the day, but the editors of the *Vegetarian Advocate* were already looking forward to that time when the individual issues would be bound together and placed on the shelf as a historical record of the vegetarian movement.

I want to suggest here that the serial form, as the historicization of the present, reinforced ‘the serial attention’ of the vegetarian dietary regimen. I borrow the phrase ‘serial attention’ from Michel Foucault, who, in the second volume of *The History of Sexuality, The Use of Pleasure*, applies it to the practices of the self in classical philosophy.<sup>52</sup> The practice of dietetics, he argues, ‘required what we might call a “serial” attention; that is, an attention to sequences: activities were not simply good or bad in themselves; their value was determined in part by those that preceded them or those that followed’.<sup>53</sup> If, as Foucault argues, the technique of dietetics requires a ‘serial attention’, I want to suggest that the serial periodical contributed to this serialization of life, the tendency to see the value of actions as part of a sequence or larger whole. The temporal orientation of the press presented vegetarianism as a goal to work towards: through its monthly documentation of the vegetarian movement, it transformed everyday life into a teleological project of self-formation, a project in which an action was seen not in isolation, but, metonymically, as part of larger series. Individual vegetarians were encouraged to see their daily behaviour as part of pattern of conduct that constituted

48 Ibid.

49 ‘Progress of the Movement’, *Vegetarian Advocate* (1 February 1849), 83–84 (p. 83); ‘To Our Readers’, *Vegetarian Advocate* (15 September 1848), 21–22 (p. 21).

50 ‘To Our Readers’, *Vegetarian Advocate* (15 September 1848), 21–22 (p. 21). See Charles W. Forward’s *Fifty Years of Food Reform: A History of the Vegetarian Movement* (London: The Ideal Publishing Ltd., 1898) and Howard William, *The Ethics Of Diet: A Catena of Authorities Deprecatory of Flesh-Eating* (London: Pitman, 1883; repr. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2003).

51 Margaret Beetham, ‘Towards a Theory of the Periodical as a Publishing Genre’, in *Investigating Victorian Journalism*, ed. by Laurel Brake, Aled Jones, and Lionel Madden (London: Macmillan, 1990), p. 21.

52 Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, II, p. 106.

53 Ibid.

their whole being. To control and manage one's conduct, to bring it into conformity with a declaration of abstinence, required that one think serially; a meal was not just a meal, but was part of a series, a regimen, and, more broadly, the vegetarian movement. The periodical reinforced this serialization of life. The periodical and vegetarianism came together to transform life into a teleological project of self-fashioning in which each moment and action were preparation for the future.

### **The Leading Article: 'Vegetarianism and Education'**

In its February 1849 issue, the *Vegetarian Advocate's* leading article, 'Vegetarianism and Education', defined vegetarianism as a practice of self-formation and serial attention in ways that invite comparisons to Foucault's reading of self-fashioning in classical antiquity. This parallel between Foucault's 'arts of existence' and the nineteenth-century Vegetarian Society is not as tenuous as it might seem insofar as the vegetarians returned to the same classical source material as Foucault.<sup>54</sup> The Pythagoreans were, according to Foucault, responsible for the development of dietary self-government, while Pythagoras was, claimed the nineteenth-century vegetarians, the first vegetarian, an individual who abstained from flesh in principle and practice.<sup>55</sup> Yet Foucault and the nineteenth-century vegetarians had, of course, different reasons for returning to these classical sources. Foucault saw in ancient Greek practices a technique for resisting disciplinary mechanisms while the vegetarians of the nineteenth century saw care of the self as a strategic way of limiting the slaughter of animals.<sup>56</sup> 'Vegetarianism and Education', one of the *Vegetarian Advocate's* early statements on vegetarianism, argued that one practiced vegetarianism 'because it is cruel to kill, opposed to true civilization, and true justice, to mercy, to kindness'.<sup>57</sup> However, the bulk of the article focused not on these moral arguments for abstinence, but on the effects of abstinence on the practitioner, detailing how practicing abstinence gave structure to everyday life. In this way it gave abstinence a productive, rather than negative, element: moral subjects did not decide to practice abstinence; rather, the practice of abstaining itself transformed one into a moral subject. 'Vegetarianism and Education' argued that vegetarianism constituted more than a negation of the norm, defining it instead as form of education that transformed daily life into a project of self-government.

The article began by pointing out that, throughout history, the wealthy ate meat while the majority subsisted on grains and vegetables, practicing a fleshless diet out of necessity rather than choice. In its nineteenth-century incarnation, however, vegetarianism came to entail a conscientious decision; this adoption of a vegetable diet placed one in a lineage of moral figures who had abstained on principle. The article cited the classical philosophers, Pythagoras and Plutarch, and more recent humanitarians, Newton, Wesley and Howard, carving out a historical identity for vegetarians. The invention of a vegetarian tradition represented a way of organizing collective action in the present by giving historical meaning to its everyday practice. This self-historicizing was an act of self-creation. The article then defined its intentional vegetarianism against negative abstinence:

54 Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, II, pp. 10–11. Howard Williams's *The Ethics of Diet* begins with entries on Hesiod, Pythagoras, Plato, Plutarch, Pythagoras, and Seneca, classical philosophers who are also touchstones for Foucault.

55 Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, II, p. 102.

56 Michel Foucault, 'The Subject and Power', *Critical Inquiry*, 8.4 (1982), 777–95 (p. 785).

57 'Vegetarianism and Education', *Vegetarian Advocate* (1 February 1849), 81–83 (p. 82).

By Vegetarianism we do not imply a *mere* system of abstinence from eating the flesh of animals, for such a system has always been the practice of a vast majority of the human race; but by Vegetarianism we mean that system which has been adopted by prophets and philosophers at different periods of the world, as calculated to increase the freedom and consequent power of the moral and intellectual faculties; to prepare the mind to withstand temptations to immorality and crime [...]. It is a Vegetarianism of the *mind* as well as the *body*.<sup>58</sup>

The article presented philosophical vegetarianism as a ‘calculated’ system for forming oneself into an ethical subject. The ‘first motive for its adoption’, such as health or domestic economy, came to matter less than the effect it had on the formation of subjectivity.<sup>59</sup> According to the article, the decision to become a vegetarian, to abstain as a ‘*conscientious principle*’, radically re-oriented one’s life.<sup>60</sup> As soon as one abstains ‘from a certain kind of food for *conscience sake*’, one recognizes the importance of everyday conduct in creating the self.<sup>61</sup> The practice of *conscientious* abstinence ‘reminds him [the abstainer] every day of the connexion between his outward conduct and inward feeling: his sense of justice, of mercy, or of truth’.<sup>62</sup> It is important to note here that the abstainer’s outward conduct did not give expression to already-held inner beliefs. It was precisely the opposite: outward conduct shaped one’s inner subjectivity. The Vegetarian Society had a deterministic view of its diet, believing that the regimen would exert a moralizing influence on the practitioners: vegetarianism ‘leads him [the new vegetarian] to perceive that every action of his life, whether eating or drinking, thinking or speaking, is continually exercising a certain degree of influence over his mind — is continually *exercising, training* him for a worse or a better condition’.<sup>63</sup> Whether we are aware of it or not, simple activities shape us morally and physiologically, but, by practicing vegetarianism, one takes an active role in training one’s body and mind. One might begin to abstain from flesh ‘because it is cruel to kill’, but the continued practice of the diet will react back upon and influence the practitioner, reorienting him or her toward the importance of ‘outward conduct’ in the formation of oneself.<sup>64</sup>

Vegetarianism, as the article defined it, thus represented not ‘mere abstinence’, but a positive form of *exercise*, the continual *training* of the self, a form of education that extended beyond the schoolroom and into everyday life: ‘It is the *education of life* [...] an education which affects our fire-sides and our dinner-tables; our kitchens and our drawing-rooms; our morning walks and our social *soirees*; our private and our public intercourse.’<sup>65</sup> One could not compartmentalize the practice of vegetarianism. It pervaded private and public life. One was always and everywhere a vegetarian, and thus one was always and everywhere training oneself. In the pages of the periodical and in everyday existence, vegetarianism came into being through repetition: that is, through the journal’s monthly reiterations of the movement, and through the individual’s constant training of himself at the fireside, the dinner table, and the drawing-room.

Perhaps most importantly for my argument on serial attention, the conscientious practice of abstaining from flesh taught one ‘to regard the present not for itself alone, but as a preparation for the future’.<sup>66</sup> In looking to the future, vegetarianism created,

58 Ibid., p. 81.

59 Ibid., p. 80.

60 Ibid., p. 81.

61 Ibid.

62 Ibid.

63 Ibid. Emphasis in the original.

64 Ibid., p. 80.

65 Ibid., p. 81.

66 Ibid.

and necessitated, a serialized life that closely integrated reading and eating practices. Vegetarianism aimed at a unified and sequential mode of conduct, in which 'every action of his [the vegetarian's] life, whether eating or drinking, thinking or speaking', was valued 'not for itself alone', but as part of a series, a stage in the continual progress of life.<sup>67</sup> To be a vegetarian required that one see daily activities as accumulative and progressive stages in the production of one's moral identity; successful adherence to the regime demanded that one see a connection between the present moment and future rewards. Its practice taught the practitioner 'that activity in any particular direction to-day, prepares us for the still greater activity tomorrow [...] that every moment is a preparation for its successor'.<sup>68</sup> The vegetarian cultivation of mind and body organized life into a sequence of successive and interconnected 'moments' toward self-completion, 'the realization of a more virtuous life'.<sup>69</sup> Hence, it began to look very similar to its serial medium, which was similarly oriented toward the future.

I want to conclude, then, by suggesting that a complementary relationship between eating and reading developed within the Vegetarian Society; vegetarianism's manner of self-representation was shaped and consolidated by its print forms. Just as the periodical influenced readers to regard the present issue as the future's past, conscientious vegetarianism (as defined by the *Vegetarian Advocate*) taught the eater to regard each moment as preparation for its successor. The discipline of vegetarianism teaches you, but also requires of you, a 'serial attention', an attention to sequential progress. It was the objective of the *Vegetarian Advocate* to instruct readers in this vegetarian lesson, but the journal also put forward its definition of vegetarianism in a serial form (the journal) which oriented readers toward the forthcoming issue. Indeed, 'Vegetarianism and Education' was part of a series of papers that placed the vegetarian question alongside other questions; future articles in the series included 'Vegetarianism and Temperance' (April 1849), 'Vegetarianism and Early Closing' (June 1849), and 'Vegetarianism and Sanitary Reform' (August 1849). Hence, the essay contributed to the definition of vegetarianism, but its serialization informed the mode of vigilance brought to bear on the body in the practice of vegetarianism. The Vegetarian Society used its periodical to disseminate information on vegetarianism, and this leading article, 'Vegetarianism and Education', one of the first statements defining vegetarianism in the *Vegetarian Advocate*, was part of that education, but the form of the periodical contributed to how they framed and defined the daily practice of vegetarianism for readers; the periodicity of the medium reinforced the view 'that every moment is a preparation for its successor', and helped create the 'serial attention' required to sustain a dietetic regimen.<sup>70</sup> Much the way the current issue is always anticipating the release of the next number to collect and consume, vegetarianism, as the calculated management of one's life, 'leads him [the practitioner] to regard the present not for itself alone, but as a preparation for the future'.<sup>71</sup>

The Vegetarian Society, in 'Vegetarianism and Education', thus defined vegetarianism as an exercise of self-transformation, and, in doing so, it forged a strong relationship between the principles and tactics of the Vegetarian Society, or between the Vegetarian Society's message and its medium for disseminating that message. The achievement of a vegetarian subjectivity, and a progressive vegetarian movement, necessitated the development of a serial way of being, in which all forms of activity, whether at the fireside or the dinner table, on a morning walk or in a social soiree,

67 Ibid.

68 Ibid.

69 Ibid.

70 Ibid.

71 Ibid.

accrued meaning sequentially, serially, and relationally, and the form of the periodical reinforced this view, orienting vegetarianism and vegetarians toward a teleological objective, or what Foucault calls the *'telos of the ethical subject'*.<sup>72</sup> The Vegetarian Society adopted the periodical not simply to disseminate disembodied information on vegetarianism, but to constitute the mode of being and self-recognition. To be a vegetarian, one had to submit to its rule of abstinence, and to recognize oneself as an ethical subject obligated to practice it. As 'Vegetarianism and Education' argued, the 'happy thought' that 'every moment is a preparation for its successor' needed to be imprinted on the mind, or 'daguerreotyped there by our active cooperation'.<sup>73</sup> The daguerreotype was among the new media of the Victorian period, a new technology that made the transmission of information seem increasingly immaterial, a way of 'writing with light'.<sup>74</sup> Its reference here, in 'Vegetarianism and Education', suggests the aims and aspirations of the *Vegetarian Advocate*: to infuse and diffuse, ethereally, the spirit of vegetarianism among readers, to inscribe on their minds the attitude of self-recognition that caused one to follow the code of abstinence, and to see oneself as part of part of the vegetarian movement.

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72 Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, II, p. 28.

73 'Vegetarianism and Education', *Vegetarian Advocate* (1 February 1849), 81–83 (p. 81).

74 Richard Menke, *Telegraphic Realism: Victorian Fiction and other Information Systems* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), p. 20.



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