

Shopping for the Ballin Baby: Infant Food and Maternal Authority in *Baby Magazine*(1)

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<1> In assembling her famous 1861 domestic compendium, Isabella Beeton imported most of her *Book of Household Management's* nearly two thousand recipes from husband Samuel Beeton's *The Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine*, where they had appeared previously as contributions from anonymous readers.(2) She continued the tradition of anonymous contribution in *Household Management*, neither crediting recipes to the women who had supplied them nor distinguishing others' recipes from her own. In a rare instance of attribution, she does identify the source of a recipe for "Baroness Pudding," at least by title if not by name, noting, "This pudding the editress cannot too highly recommend. The recipe was kindly given to her family by a lady who bore the title here prefixed to it." She also uncharacteristically claims this recipe as the particular property of her family and as her own contribution to the book, subtitling "Baroness Pudding" with the designation "Author's Recipe."(3) Mrs. Beeton informs readers of the source of her recipes only when authorship is synonymous with authority. Such is also the case in *Household Management's* chapter on "The Rearing, Management, and Diseases of Infancy and Childhood." This chapter, along with the chapter on medical advice, Mrs. Beeton is careful to reassure readers, was written by an expert on such matters. Neither *Household Management's* chapter on child rearing nor the nine-part *Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine* series it duplicates(4) name their author. Mrs. Beeton, does, though, identify him in the former as a "gentlem[a]n" and "an experienced surgeon...fully entitled to confidence"(5) —that is, as an authority to whose opinions about child rearing her largely female readers should defer. That Mrs. Beeton, herself a mother writing for mothers, should concede to a medical man on issues of childcare is no great surprise. Indeed, as Rima Apple has shown, pediatricians established their area of medical specialty in the last decades of the nineteenth century by removing authority from mothers and investing it in physicians.(6) Published mid-century, though, *The Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine* and *Household Management* do offer earlier examples of physicians' presumption of parenting expertise than those explored so thoroughly in the fin-de-siècle American context by Apple. In the intervening decades, physicians and scientific men moved their laboratories ever farther into the nursery; by the end of the century, mothers who wanted to claim authority over their children's upbringing had either to become amateur baby-scientists themselves, or to challenge the scientific model.

<2> By the late 1880s, when Ada Ballin followed in Isabella Beeton's footsteps by editing and contributing both regular articles and translations to a domestic magazine published by her husband, respectable parenting was often portrayed as a thoroughly scientific endeavor only to be

attempted by qualified individuals. As Sally Shuttleworth demonstrates,(7) Ballin's *Baby* magazine's primary approach to child rearing is a scientific one. Published monthly in London from 1887 to 1915 and subtitled "A Guide to their [children's] Management in Health and Disease,"(8) *Baby* in effect told mothers, "Do try this at home, but only after our articles penned by medical experts teach you how." In this sense, *Baby* supports Apple's and Shuttleworth's conclusions that motherhood became increasingly scientific in the late nineteenth century. For example, Ballin contributes to each issue an article on the latest, most scientific methods of education and an article on "Rational Dress for Children." Best known as a dress reformer, Ballin thought all children should wear all wool all the time. She also thought that the best approach to examining what she termed "the great milk question" and every other issue related to infant feeding was a scientific one, as evidenced by her request to the London Sanitary Commissioner for a report on the milk supply that *Baby* published in January 1888. That same year, *Baby* ran a five part article on infant feeding by Edmund Owen, a medical doctor, titled "The Science of the Nursery" and an analysis of one hundred cases of artificial feeding by Robert William Parker, surgeon to the East London Hospital for Children. Ballin even works to establish her own scientific credentials, signing an article titled "How to Feed Young Children" as "Ada S. Ballin, Lecturer to the National Health Society. Editor of the Health Department of the 'Lady's Pictorial.'"(9) It is no coincidence that Ballin seems to have felt a particular need to reassert the authority of science in an article addressing the contested topic of infant feeding. On the subjects of children's general health, education, and fashion, in articles by both regular and special contributors, all of whom it styled as experts in their fields, *Baby* adhered to its official, scientific editorial stance. In the sections of the magazine devoted to printing the writing of mothers, however, a different kind of expertise appears, particularly when mothers write about feeding their babies.

<3> Scholars of infant feeding have long recognized a conflict between knowledge based on scientists' experiments and knowledge based on mothers' experiences. Rima Apple argues persuasively that the discourse surrounding infant feeding went a long way toward what she calls "medicalizing motherhood," and Jacqueline Wolf (10) describes the infant feeding debates of the late nineteenth century as the battleground on which pediatricians fought for the right to claim expertise in childcare. While *Baby* magazine overtly privileges physicians' empirical knowledge, mothers' experiential knowledge asserts its claims in the sections titled "Advice to Correspondents," in which Ballin responds to readers' questions, and "Mothers' Parliament," in which readers are invited to share "hints and suggestions of all sorts which may be useful to others interested in the care and management of children."(11) Both Ada Ballin's responses to inquirers and the advice that mothers share with one another through the pages of *Baby* consist largely of advice to buy something, often to buy one brand or another of patent infant food. In effect, these women speak from positions of consumer and aesthetic expertise that challenge the authority of medical men, and of science itself, in making infant feeding decisions.

<4> Before the introduction in the 1860s of nutritionally-improved (though still far from nutritionally complete by today's standards) commercial infant food, mothers who wanted their babies to thrive physically and who also wanted to protect them from the moral uncertainties threatened by wet nurses(12) really had no option other than to breastfeed their own infants. Liebig's Food, available for purchase in London by the late 1860s and imitated quickly by Mellin's Food, Nestlé's Food, Ridge's Food, Frame Food, and dozens of other infant-food

manufacturers whose products were widely used by the 1880s, offered mothers the first reasonably nutritious alternative to breastfeeding.(13) At the same time, anxieties accreted around breastfeeding itself so that handfeeding became a reasonable option to consider for mothers who were capable of nursing their children, rather than a dangerous last resort reserved for orphans or other children to whom breastmilk was wholly unavailable. Breastfeeding, fitting neither the category of nature nor of nurture neatly,(14) served as a focal point for Victorian questions of heredity and of the extent to which body and behavior depend upon one another. It also raised questions about the relationship of the individual to the state as debates about the physical and behavioral traits children might inherit via their mothers' or wet nurses' breastmilk moved infant feeding from the relative privacy of the family to the public arena.(15)

Commercial infant foods further publicized and complicated these issues by bringing infant feeding and thus the supposedly hereditary function of milk to the marketplace. Handfeeding promised mothers a measure of control over what their infants would eat, and thus what they would inherit. Choosing a particular brand of patent infant food, mixing it with variable amounts of also variable liquids,(16) selecting from among new bottle technologies, and administering feedings according to carefully regulated schedules allowed mothers to feel that they were designing individualized feedings suitable for their particular children, and that they were thereby actively participating in designing individualized children. Unlike feeding babies with the passive breast and its uncontrollable, unalterable milk that would imbue her children with all her own desirable and undesirable characteristics, feeding them with the active hand promised the mother choice in the traits she wanted to pass on to their children. Analysis of infant-feeding discourse in advertisements and periodicals reveals that Victorian mothers made infant-feeding choices, which were, in effect, choices about their babies' heredity, in response to consumer and aesthetic, rather than scientific, appeals, thereby challenging the scientific basis for authority in child rearing. Consumer and aesthetic appeals, evident in the newspaper advertisements and the excerpts from *Baby* magazine that I examine below, construct mothers as consumer experts. At the same time, they instill in babies a naturalized aesthetic taste that appears to originate in the child's body but in fact comes from the mother's pocketbook. In this way, handfed babies inherit as aesthetic taste their mothers' consumer preferences, via artificial milk that creates natural bodies.

<5> Bernice Hausman has argued that late twentieth-century American baby formula advertisements operate according to what she calls a “symbolics of ingestion” by which certain formulas promise to create specific behaviors in the infants who consume them—in other words, “you are what you eat.”(17) Victorian advertisements also promise specific traits and behaviors to infants, both physical traits like bright complexions and behavioral ones like good spirits, in effect offering mothers the opportunity to purchase the characteristics they want their children to have. A Mellin's Food advertisement appearing in 1893 includes a testimonial from “grateful mother” J. McFarlane describing the desirable physical and behavioral characteristics she believes Mellin's has imparted to her twelve-month-old son. She writes, “I attribute his good spirits to his good health, and his good health to his good food, which is Mellin's...My boy has throughout been bright, healthy, plump, and firm, and I ascribe this particularly to the extreme nourishment of ‘Mellin's Food’ (Figure 1).(18) An 1896 Mellin's advertisement includes a catchy rhyme, ostensibly spoken in the voice of a mother who credits Mellin's with producing good behavior: “Sixteen Babies, as you see, one and all belong to me;/ Only one is really good, he's brought up on Mellin's Food” (Figure 2).(19) The sentiment in this jingle is endorsed by N.

Crowther in another Mellin's advertisement when she writes that her youngest son "is a bigger, stronger, and finer child than [her] others, and the only one who has been entirely fed on your 'Food' (Figure 1).(20) Another ad features a photograph of five siblings who "have ALL been brought up on [Mellin's] Food" (Figure 3).(21) The children thus testifying to the efficacy of Mellin's in producing fine children appear to be between two and ten years old and long past their days of consuming infant food. As these advertisements present them, then, the effects of infant food appear to persist long beyond infancy, shaping both physical form and character for life. The nineteenth-century equivalent of our hypothetical "designer babies," with similar class implications, Victorian handfed infants were the beneficiaries of their mothers' consumer choices, choices that allowed artificial milk to function as a vehicle for a kind of non-genetic inheritance that included the transmission of class characteristics.(22)

<6> Writing in 1887 for *Baby* magazine, Catherine S. Wood highlights the differences between babies who have inherited their middle-class mothers' good taste and those who have suffered from their working-class mothers' consumer ignorance. Titling her article "Ignorance in Mothers," Wood seems to be instructing infant-food advertisers to educate poor mothers in the ways of the marketplace when she says, "Show them [poor mothers] that the distorted, wailing babe is not the babe that God intended them to have and rear for Him, that there is an ideal for the babes to which they must work up, and that they can, if they will."(23) This "ideal for the babes" to which Wood hopes working-class mothers will aspire appears over and over again in infant food advertisements, along with the "distorted, wailing babe" it would have been if its mother had not chosen, or had not been able to afford, the proper food. Sometimes the children are illustrations, as in the plump cherub who proudly reports in a 1900 *Weekly Dispatch* ad to having been brought up on Frame Food, and the pitiful urchin who whimpers that he wasn't (Figure 4).(24) The transformative powers of Frame Food are illustrated in the advertisement appearing in the next week's issue, in which the same healthy child claims in the same words while pointing to a Frame Food sign, "My Mammy brought me up on THAT." In the second ad, though, the frail, dark child who had bemoaned his Frameless diet by whimpering, "Mine Didn't" in the first ad explains his sudden acquisition of dimpled hands and blond ringlets with a new response to the Frame Food child: "Mine does now"(Figure 5).(25) Mellin's Food advertisements of the 1890s often feature a large photograph of a plump baby and a written description by the mother of the weak, sickly child it used to be before Mellin's saved its life, (26) so that the ideal and distorted child—the middle and working class child(27)—are the same child, give or take Mellin's Food. An 1892 advertisement featuring Gustav Mellin's own children also includes descriptions of weak and dying babies that contrast strikingly with the photographs of the same children restored to health by Mellin's Food. E. Crowden writes of her daughter, depicted as a plump, active one-year old in the photograph, that "six months ago she was suffering with eczema, and was in such a weak state—one could count every bone—and was unable to hold up her head. My medical man almost gave her up, and ordered her other foods, but the child became weaker. Three days after giving your Food the child revived like a flower in water; and not a more healthy or stronger child can be found." Also appearing in the ad is thirteen-month old Dora Saxon, who, like baby Crowden, only six months ago was "reduced almost to a skeleton" by the wrong kind of food (Figure 6).(28) From sickly, skeletal children distorted by skin disease and weakness, Mellin's Food has miraculously raised up the ideal babes Wood hopes to grow by remedying the "ignorance" of "poor mothers" who have yet to learn the middle-class lesson that Mellin's advertisements teach: purchasing good baby food means

purchasing a good baby.

<7> It is frustrating to be unable to compare with Wood's article the infant-food advertisements that appeared in *Baby* alongside it. Describing "The Rise of Periodical Studies," Sean Latham and Robert Scholes observe that the common decision not to preserve the advertisements included in Victorian periodicals has created "a hole in the archive."⁽²⁹⁾ This archival hole exists in *Baby* magazine, the extensive advertising section—24 pages in a 1900 issue made up of only 34 pages of text—having been unfortunately removed.⁽³⁰⁾ In addition to consulting advertisements that appeared elsewhere contemporaneously, though, we can partially recover the missing advertisements by hearing them echoed in the way mothers responded to them by repeating their messages in a newly-acquired language of consumer expertise. For example, in the August 1888 "Mothers' Parliament," a mother signing herself "A Busybody" writes: "what I want specially to recommend...is...Mellin's Food.... It is added as a powder to milk and water, and given in a feeding bottle or spoon." In the very next letter, "Diamond" endorses "a most useful and convenient feeding-bottle. It has no tube and is very easily kept clean.... It is called 'Carnrick's Safety Feeding-Bottle,' and a sample one can be obtained with all instructions for 1s., from Hart-street, Bloomsbury, London." She also recommends Carnrick's Food. Both writers follow their recommendations for product purchases with testimonials citing their personal experiences and successes with the items they promote, suggesting that women's expertise on the subject of infant feeding rests on experiential and consumer, rather than scientific, knowledge.⁽³¹⁾

<8> In addition to implied challenges to the scientific model of motherhood in the form of testimonials, *Baby* also allows direct opposition to medical authority, as in the case of a mother whose letter in the September 1888 "Mother's Parliament" disputes Dr. Owen's conclusion in the January issue that milk should be boiled before being fed to infants. By signing herself "Ignoramus" and by citing the example of her own child who thrived on unboiled milk, she explicitly founds her argument on the evidence of her own experience and boldly asserts the superiority of that evidence to Owen's scientific knowledge, ignorance of which she feels does not stop her from being right, and mastery of which does not stop Owen from being wrong. The usually self-assured Ballin replies to Ignoramus sheepishly. She begins by defending Owen's expertise as "a medical man who makes a special study of children's diseases." Then, still defending Owen, she shifts the argument onto Ignoramus's terms by citing Owen's experiential reason for recommending boiled milk: "His own baby, a splendid specimen, was brought up on boiled milk." Ballin ends her response by privileging mothers' over doctors' authority; having given lip-service to Owen's expertise, she admits that "nevertheless [she], personally, agree[s] with 'Ignoramus.'"⁽³²⁾

<9> Supported by consumer expertise and couched in the language of the marketplace, *Baby*'s "Mothers' Parliament" and "Advice to Correspondents" features echo three important messages prominent in baby-milk advertisements: you are what you eat; a good mother is a good shopper; and a mother shops best for her baby when she matches his natural taste to the food that agrees with that taste, thus nourishing not only his body but also his nascent aestheticism. Ballin directly endorses the notion of congenital aestheticism, writing in March 1888, "I believe that there is in children a natural instinct with regard to certain foods which leads them to dislike certain things, and crave for others."⁽³³⁾ In her April 1888 advice column, she tells one reader

that “the only way to find a food that will suit such a child is to try a variety of foods suitable to infants.... It is very possible that Neave’s Food may agree with him—try it”. She suggests that the same reader also try Nestlé’s Food, and tells another that “It is good to change the food now and then. Ridge’s Food would, I think, suit your child well.”(34) Like those given in the testimonials often included in advertisements,(35) Ballin’s reason for suggesting a switch from one formula to another or even from breastmilk to artificial milk seems to be that the baby lacks a “taste” for the milk—an aesthetic rather than a scientific reason. In recommending breastfeeding but then offering numerous suggestions for artificial foods that a particular baby might prefer either to other foods or to mother’s milk, Ballin echoes the medical authorities of her day. For example, Pye Henry Chavasse’s 1878 *Advice to Mothers* stongly advocates maternal breastfeeding and attributes high infant mortality rates to artificial feeding in vivid terms: “The number of children who die under five years of age is enormous—many of them from the want of the mother's milk. There is a regular ‘parental baby-slaughter’ — ‘a massacre of the innocents’ — constantly going on in England, in consequence of infants being thus deprived of their proper nutriment and just dues!” In spite of his vehement opposition to handfeeding, Chavasse goes on to recommend no fewer than eighteen different infant food preparations to assist parents in choosing the nourishment best suited to individual children.(36) But, while Chavasse hopes to match the composition of food to children’s individual constitutions, Ballin wants to suit a baby’s taste; her criteria for matching child to food are aesthetic rather than scientific.

<10> Determining which kind of infant food would best suit her baby’s taste was no easy task for a Victorian consumer-mother, especially with the introduction in 1888 of Rotch’s Percentage Method. Finding that the chemical composition of breastmilk varies from woman to woman and even in the same woman as her baby ages, Harvard physician Thomas Morgan Rotch attempted to modify cow’s milk to suit individual infants by devising hundreds of different formulas containing varying percentages of fat, carbohydrates, and protein.(37) Not only could a mother alter her child’s physical and behavioral makeup through the brand of food she chose, but the amount she then mixed with an also variable amount of water, milk, or broth also had purported effects. And, every baby needed an individualized formula. Just as food scientists today theorize that human children’s preference for sweet foods is part of an adaptation that promotes infant survival by imparting an inborn taste for sweet breastmilk,(38) Victorian advertisements for and writing about artificial milk implied that preferences for one kind of artificial milk over another were innate. Paradoxically, tastes for a particular kind of milk were presumed to be both an inborn feature of all human children and, at the same time, unique to each child. Although they consumed mass-produced infant food, babies nourished by patent infant foods did not become thereby the homogeneous “‘masses’ of mass consumption...represented as other than human, indistinguishable from one another.”(39) Rather than mass consumers, advertisements implied, such babies became tasteful choosers of aesthetic objects. Both the percentage method and the large number of infant food choices available for purchase promised mothers the ability to create both individualized food and aesthetically individuated babies whose taste demanded that particular food.

<11> The contradiction implicit in the idea that mothers and children achieved individuation through the consumer choices they made in unison with multitudes of others did not go unremarked.(40) Appearing in *Baby* in 1888, W. Jerdan’s “Autobiography of a Baby” recounts

the story of a fictional newborn infant killed in its first day of life by its nurse force-feeding it gin, castor oil, and pap (usually bread or another starch moistened with water, milk, or broth) and withholding its mother's breastmilk.(41) Through this story, Jerdan satirizes the notion that both a child's physical health and its aesthetic taste thrive only when its food is matched to its constitutional preference. The child in the story claims, "I was born with literary tastes and a taste for fine arts. I am sure, had my life been prolonged, I should have turned a celebrated author as well as a painter."(42) Prolonging his life and allowing his talents to develop requires matching his aesthetic taste to his taste for food, in this case for his mother's milk. Unlike all the nurse's ministrations, which the baby experiences as torture, the mother's embrace suits his sensibilities: "In truth this soft and yielding breast was delightful whereon to rest my fevered cheek. I raised my little hand towards it, I threw the latest glance of my closing eye upon it, I drew one draught of nature from its fountain, I uttered one short sigh, I had for one moment tasted an earthly heaven, and for an everlasting heaven I winged my flight."(43) His small sip of mother's milk comes too late to save him, but in time to inspire "one short sigh," the baby's version of an Aesthete's poem on the sensory experience of touching, seeing, and tasting the mother's breast. Although the infant is born with a preference for one food over another, his inheritance is incomplete and his poem unspoken until he ingests the milk that conveys aesthetic taste as hereditary legacy from mother to child. Jerdan's satire points to the paradox that the instinctual taste the baby considers his unique inheritance in fact unites the unnamed baby with every other human newborn. His wants make him who he is, but he wants what every baby wants: milk and his mother.

<12> Given the presumption that a baby's preferences define it, a mother's job was to shape her child's emerging aesthetic taste—and thus its distinctive personality—by feeding it the milk it "naturally" preferred. She could only hope, I suppose, that it naturally preferred one of the formulas available for sale. Artificial milk may be history's best example of supply creating demand, rather than vice versa. Not only did infant-food manufacturers successfully market their artificial milk to mothers fully capable of breastfeeding,(44) but they also managed to create in babies supposedly natural preferences for their particular products. In this way, a manufactured commodity constructed a natural need, so that the perception of milk as a post-natal agent of heredity that informs the child's body with its mother's non-biological traits comes to apply to handfeeding as thoroughly as it had applied to breastfeeding since antiquity.

<13> The notion that aesthetic preference—first recognizable in an infant's taste for one kind of milk over another—is innate and individual, means that for a child to thrive, its mother must make consumer decisions based not on medical information but rather on the child's preferences, or at least on the mother's impression of the child's preferences as detected through her astute shopping skills. In effect, then, a mother passes on her own preferences through the milk she buys, so that the infant inherits as aesthetic taste its mother's consumer taste. This marketplace inheritance is paradoxical, in that the supposedly unique taste that individuates the baby, that constitutes his consumer DNA, so to speak, is shared by all the other children whose mothers have selected the same heavily-marketed infant-food. Ironically for mothers, too, the choice to handfeed, which may have been made in an effort to avoid anxiety created by the undifferentiated nursing dyad of mother and child,(45) actually lumps them together with all the other mothers who make the same consumer choices. Despite advertisers' promises of aesthetic individuation, handfeeding mothers become indistinguishable from each other for the sake of

being distinguishable from their babies. And, they consistently attempt to increase the number of mothers allied to them through similar consumer tastes by recommending their brand of formula in advertising testimonials and letters to parenting magazines.

<14> Such mother-to-mother recommendations suggest that Victorian women may have sought justification for their infant-feeding decisions outside of those arenas like medicine and religion traditionally governed by male authority. In fact, the increasing popularity of handfeeding (46) in the second half of the nineteenth century suggests that middle-class women were beginning to reject male notions of how infant-feeding practices should be used to the benefit the family and the nation. Victorian mothers were expected to nurse their own babies in deference to nature, duty, science, and patriotism. Medical authorities, then as now, were virtually unanimous in asserting the superiority of maternal breastmilk to any other infant food, and Sanitary Associations vigorously promoted maternal breastfeeding. Chavasse states succinctly the medical community's position: "Never bring up a baby, if you can possibly avoid it, on artificial food." In spite of the overwhelming consensus against it, though, and as evidenced by ubiquitous polemics opposing the practice, handfeeding increased greatly in popularity in the second half of the nineteenth century.

<15> This increase in a behavior unsanctioned by authorities leads us to ask how women came to feel authorized to choose handfeeding when all the experts told mothers not to do it—in fact, told them that handfeeding was tantamount to intentional infanticide.(47) And, given the hereditary function of milk, middle-class women were enjoined to believe that handfeeding, by preventing transmission to babies of mothers' own valuable middle-class behaviors via wholesome middle-class breastmilk, endangered not just individual infants but also society as a whole. Even with such powerful incentives to breastfeed, though, more and more women chose handfeeding and felt justified enough in that choice to recommend it to other women. Toni Bowers has argued that eighteenth-century conduct manuals, which almost universally prescribed maternal breastfeeding, may have offered mothers an alternative source of authority for their infant-feeding decisions to that of their husbands, who often insisted on hiring wet nurses.(48) I suggest that *Baby* magazine and Victorian infant-food advertisements function similarly to the conduct manuals in Bowers' reading—that is, as alternative authorities available to support women's infant-feeding choices when those choices ran contrary to the mandate that mothers nurse their own children.

<16> In promoting artificial milk, advertisements and *Baby* magazine authorize mothers to make their own decisions primarily by shifting the focus of the infant-feeding debate from the question of who should feed the baby—mother or wet nurse—to that of what to feed the baby—which brand of artificial milk.(49) Along with this shift comes a change in focus from the quality of a mother's milk to the quality of her shopping skills as advertisements and magazines address women as experts in the field of shopping. Rachel Bowlby has demonstrated that "the history of shopping is largely a history of women" and that women emerged in the Victorian era as "shoppers"—that is, as expert consumers.(50) By the end of the century, then, no one—especially no man—would know better than a mother what to buy for her baby. Choosing from among the range of infant-feeding choices available by the end of the century, which included not just breastmilk, paps, and modified or unmodified animal milk but also many brands of

artificial baby milk, required not a medical expert or even a childcare expert, but rather an expert consumer. In particular, in order to purchase the food best suited to a child's unique and defining aesthetic taste, a mother must have developed a refined aesthetic sense of her own. She should be not only an expert shopper but also something of an aesthete. Mellin's Food advertisements promoted the notion that handfeeding mothers were perforce interested and talented in the arts by sponsoring competitions among their customers. Entries could include "original paintings in oil; water colour; black and white; and photography"(Figure 7).(51) Mellin's appealed to customers' literary tastes by offering gratis "Shakespearian Wisdom on the Feeding and Rearing of Infants. A pamphlet of quotations from Shakespeare and portraits of beautiful children, together with testimonials [i.e., Mellin's Food advertisements], which are of the highest interest to all mothers"(Figure 6).(52) As did *Baby* magazine, these advertisements addressed mothers as aesthetic experts with good taste, simultaneously authorizing them to ignore competing expert opinions and constructing mothers in terms of their consumer abilities. At the same time, they constructed children as the products of their mothers' consumer choices.

<17> To a certain extent, heredity had always been for sale in the form of marriages entered into for the sake of the pedigrees they would confer on the children they produced. However, the control artificial milk promised mothers in allowing them to pass on their consumer decisions directly as aesthetic taste is unprecedented in the history of human attempts to circumvent the biological basis of heredity. Much nineteenth-century literature, including everything from *Frankenstein* to *Great Expectations* to *Dracula*, fictionalizes these attempts. Victor Frankenstein's experiment can be described as an effort to achieve non-genetic inheritance. The monster is, in effect, created from his father's writing rather than from his father's body. *Dracula*, of course, the vampire and the novel, is produced and endlessly reproduced through the written journals and letters of the vampire hunters. Dickens' Pip, too, appears to spring from the written image of his father's name, so that his genetic inheritance is linguistic rather than physical. In fact, *Great Expectations*, like *Frankenstein* and *Dracula*, can be read as a series of experiments in circumventing the dependence of heredity on the parents' bodies. In relating those experiments, Dickens relies heavily on the hereditary function of milk and on the equivalence between instilling in a baby a taste for a particular kind of milk and nourishing in him or her a kind of constitutional aesthetic taste. In narrating *Great Expectations*, Pip tells readers that he was "brought up by hand" to comment on the lack of nurture in Mrs. Joe's parenting, which consisted at least as much of beating as it did feeding.(53) Whether Pip was handfed with animal milk or with one of the first commercial infant formulas that, like the novel, appeared in the 1860s, his handfeeding, important enough to merit repeated mention in the novel, helps shape the economic and aesthetic aspirations that come to define his character. As Pip himself says, "my sister's bringing up had made me sensitive."(54) Estella's early feeding, too, shapes her character. In the crucial scene in which Estella tells Miss Havisham, "I am what you have made me," Miss Havisham responds with the striking image of breastfeeding Estella with blood, saying: "Look at her, so hard and thankless, on the hearth where she was reared! Where I took her into this wretched breast when it was first bleeding from its stabs."(55) This image, coupled with the novel's preoccupation with handfeeding, depicts infant feeding as a means through which a child inherits as natural and immutable traits its mother's taste and character. And, since Mrs. Joe and Miss Havisham are not biological mothers, those traits come to inhabit Pip and Estella's natures not through their genes but through the milk that literally constructs their growing bodies by nourishing them as babies.

<18> Published nearly two generations of babies after *Great Expectations*, Bram Stoker's *Dracula* also makes use of milk's age-old equivalence with blood to remark on anxieties about heredity. By the time of *Dracula*'s publication in 1897, Lombroso, Krafft-Ebing, and Nordau had catalogued physical traits according to their supposedly correspondent mental, social, and artistic characteristics, and English eugenicists had made clear the mother's primary responsibility for endowing future generations of Englishmen with the features deemed desirable by these latter-day physiognomists.(56) Stoker explores Victorian technologies of reproduction, both human and informational, throughout the novel, particularly through the character of Lucy Westenra and her vampiric incarnation, the "Bloofer Lady." While Stoker does not depict *Dracula*'s exchange of blood with Lucy, readers can assume its similarity to his attack on Mina. Breastfeeding Mina with blood as Miss Havisham does Estella, *Dracula* "gripped her by the back of the neck, forcing her face down on his bosom. Her white night-dress was smeared with blood, and a thin stream trickled down the man's bare chest which was shown by his torn-open dress. The attitude of the two had a terrible resemblance to a child forcing a kitten's nose into a saucer of milk to compel it to drink."(57) Through the vampire's milk, Mina, like Lucy before her, acquires his characteristic languor and appetite. The vampire hunters attempt to cure these traits in Lucy through the new technology of blood transfusion, a kind of artificial feeding through which the hunters hope to instill in Lucy their own noble characteristics. Though they fail to write over the vampiric legacy *Dracula* imparts to Lucy through the strange breastfeeding by which he remakes her in his image, the effect of the hunters' attempts at artificial feeding remain in the Bloofer Lady as she, too, rejects breastfeeding. Like *Dracula*, her breastfeeding vampire mother, the Bloofer Lady first appears with her child-victim as "a dim white figure, which held something dark at its breast."(58) When she leaves off breastfeeding, an act depicted in Victorian infant-feeding discourse as that of an unfeeling and unnatural handfeeding mother, it becomes clear to the hunters that her apparent feeding *of* the child is in fact her feeding *on* it. Paradoxically, the Bloofer Lady appears unfeeling to the hunters only when she ceases her vampiric breastfeeding to imitate their earlier handfeeding of her. Now acting as the unnatural handfeeding mother, "With a careless motion, she flung to the ground, callous as a devil, the child that up to now she had clutched strenuously to her breast, growling over it as a dog growls over a bone."(59) In the Bloofer Lady, Stoker embodies the consumer mother that emerges in *Baby* magazine and literalizes the notion that handfeeding makes children, specifically children designed to exhibit carefully selected traits, objects of consumption. He reverses the image of the vampiric baby who, Mrs. Beeton's surgeon says, consumes its breastfeeding mother. Exactly like Lucy and Mina, the nursing mother "wakes languid and unrefreshed from her sleep, with febrile symptoms and hectic flushes, caused by her baby vampire, who, while dragging from her her health and strength, has excited in itself a set of symptoms directly opposite, but fraught with the same injurious consequences—'functional derangement.'"(60) In contrast to the breastfed child that consumes its mother, the handfed child is consumed by its appetitive mother, literally in *Dracula* and figuratively in the Victorian marketplace.

<19> For Victorian infants and their mothers, the maxim "you are what you eat" and the linking of aesthetic taste to both character and biology that the phrase implies requires a corollary truism that had held for adult men for almost a century: "you are what you buy." Artificial milk as a manufactured and purchased commodity that instills biological and aesthetic features in the child who consumes it as well as in the mother who buys it, reveals that for women and children as for men, taste and character depend largely upon possession of both the knowledge of which

products to purchase and the funds with which to purchase them. Late-century handfeeding, as it appears in novels, in *Baby* magazine, and in advertisements for patent infant foods, posits the natural as a product of the artificial and the child as a product of his or her mother's consumer choices. In fact, a child whose mother had followed *Baby's* product recommendations was recognizable as a "Ballin Baby," a phrase that had attained the status of "household word" by the turn of the twentieth century.⁽⁶¹⁾ It is likely that the phrase "Ballin Baby" referred primarily to children clothed according to the principles of rational dress that Ada Ballin championed rather than to those fed with the infant foods she recommended. However, the very idea of the Ballin Baby demonstrates that children were perceived and classified according to characteristics accorded them by their mothers' consumer choices, as influenced by the pages of *Baby*.

However much those pages overtly endorsed scientific authority over child rearing, the writing on infant feeding, particularly in letters from correspondents and in Ballin's responses to those letters, shows that mothers did contest the notion that child rearing required scientific knowledge, and that they did so by claiming for themselves consumer and aesthetic expertise.

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Endnotes

(1)For their insightful comments on earlier versions of this essay, my thanks go to Dan Bivona, Rachel Fuchs, Heather Hoyt, anonymous reviewers at *Victorian Periodicals Review* and *Nineteenth-Century Gender Studies*, and participants in the 2006 NAVSA panel titled "Beating

the Mother's Breast." I also want to thank Paul at The Front Page, Jennifer Ziller, and Laura Barnard for their research assistance. I am particularly grateful to Sue Watts, whose photographs of the Mellin's Food ads in her collection I have included here with her generous permission.(^)

(2)Humble, Nicola. "Introduction." *Mrs. Beeton's Book of Household Management*. Ed. Nicola Humble. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000. xii.(^)

(3)Beeton, Isabella. *Mrs. Beeton's Book of Household Management*. Ed. Nicola Humble. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000. 266.(^)

(4)The nine-part series ran monthly from July 1858-April 1859, omitting October 1858. I have been unable to discover the surgeon's name.(^)

(5)Beeton, 4.(^)

(6)Apple, Rima. *Mothers and Medicine: A Social History of Infant Feeding, 1890-1950*. Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1987.(^)

(7)Shuttleworth examines the scientific language and ethos apparent in *Baby's* pages to argue that the magazine presents a representative example of the way "baby science" developed between the 1870s and the 1890s into both a serious subject of study for male scientists and also into a subject of broad interest that bridged the gap between the popular and the scientific periodical press, and between the genders. Shuttleworth, Sally. "Tickling Babies: Gender, Authority, and 'Baby Science.'" *Science in the Nineteenth-Century Periodical: Reading the Magazine of Nature*. Ed. Geoffrey Cantor, et al. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004: 199-215. Shuttleworth's article is one of the only instances of scholarly attention to *Baby*, a periodical that Kay Boardman identifies as a "neglected title" within Victorian periodical studies. Boardman, Kay. "'Charting the Golden Stream': Recent Work on Victorian Periodicals." *Victorian Studies* 48.3 (2006): 508. *Baby: An Illustrated Monthly Magazine for Mothers* will hereafter be referred to as *Baby*.(^)

(8)North, John S. *The Waterloo Directory of English Newspapers and Periodicals, 1800-1900, Series I*. Waterloo, Ont: North Waterloo Academic Press, 1994. Hereafter cited as *Waterloo Directory*.(^)

(9)*Baby* vol. 2, issue 1 (March 1889): 16.(^)

(10)Wolf, Jacqueline H. *Don't Kill Your Baby: Public Health and the Decline of Breastfeeding in the 19th and 20th Centuries*. Columbus: Ohio State UP, 2001.(^)

(11)"Mothers' Parliament." *Baby* 1.9 (August 1888): 234.(^)

(12)C.H.F. Routh, a physician notable for his debate with William Acton in the *Lancet* over whether "fallen women" could make suitable wet nurses for respectable middle-class babies,

offers a representative statement of the fear surrounding wet nurses' transmission of their moral failings to their nurslings: "If a nurse of confirmed vicious and passionate habits suckles a child, that child is in danger of having its own morality tainted likewise... Once the morbid cell has been developed, it will impart its nature to surrounding parts, and poison the whole blood...it is possible to sow a seed in the infant which shall contaminate the life of the man, taint his whole constitution, and influence his psychical power." Routh, "On the Selection of Wet Nurses from Among Fallen Women." the *Lancet* I (1859): 580-82. A number of literary critics have analyzed Victorian anxieties surrounding moral corruption of children by means of their nurses' milk. See, for example, Matus, Jill. *Unstable Bodies: Victorian Representations of Sexuality and Maternity*. Manchester and New York: Manchester UP, 1995; Berry, Laura C. *The Child, the State, and the Victorian Novel*. Charlottesville and London: UP of Virginia, 1999; and Klimaszewski, Melisa. "Examining the Wet Nurse: Breasts, Power, and Penetration in Victorian England." *Women's Studies* 35 (2006): 323-46.(^)

(13)Harvey Levenstein, "'Best for Babies' or 'Preventable Infanticide'?: The Controversy over Artificial Feeding of Infants in America, 1880-1920." *Journal of American History* 70.1 (1983): 77; Apple, Rima D. "'Advertised by our loving friends': The Infant Formula Industry and the Creation of New Pharmaceutical Markets, 1870-1910," *The Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 41(1986): 4-6; Fildes, Valerie. *Wet Nursing: A History from Antiquity to the Present*. Oxford and New York: Blackwell, 1988: 202-204. Mephram, T.B. "'Humanizing' Milk: The Formulation of Artificial Feeds for Infants (1850-1910)." *Medical History* 37 (1993): 248. (^)

(14)See Vanessa Maher's introduction to *The Anthropology of Breast-Feeding: Natural Law or Social Construct* (Oxford: Berg, 1992) for a discussion of how breastfeeding comes to appear natural when it is in fact a culturally contingent practice. See also Bartlett, Alison. "Black Breasts, White Milk? Ways of Constructing Breastfeeding and Race in Australia." *Australian Feminist Studies* 19.45 (2004): 341-355.(^)

(15)Berry, Laura C. *The Child, the State, and the Victorian Novel*. Charlottesville and London: UP of Virginia, 1999; Chase, Karen and Michael Levenson. *The Spectacle of Intimacy: A Public Life for the Victorian Family*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton UP, 2000.(^)

(16)Infant foods could be mixed with water, milk, or broth, each of which offered further variations on the baby's meal. For example, mothers could use beef or chicken broth, each purported to convey particular nutritional benefits. Milk was even more variable. Not only could mothers use boiled or unboiled, canned or fresh milk, but if they chose fresh milk they would ideally select milk from country over city dairies and only from those dairies that government inspectors had verified as offering unadulterated milk and as having a large percentage of non-tubercular cows and sanitary collection and transportation methods. Use of a "lactometer" to assess the quality of milk—both bovine and human—on the basis of its fat content was widely advocated by infant feeding specialists throughout the last decades of the nineteenth century.(^)

(17) Hausman, Bernice. *Mother's Milk: Breastfeeding Controversies in American Culture*. New York: Routledge (2003): 93.(^)

(18) *The London Illustrated News*. September 16, 1893: 365.(^)

(19) Mellin's Food. *The Graphic*. October 17, 1896: 509.(^)

(20) Mellin's Food. *The Illustrated London News*. September 16, 1893: 365.(^)

(21) Mellin's Food. *The Graphic*. February 25, 1893: 205.(^)

(22) Working-class women, though less likely to breastfeed than middle (but not upper) class mothers, could afford neither commercial food preparations nor "safe" feeding vessels; they largely continued to feed their children the paps used in artificial feeding prior to the 1860s. See Fildes, *Wet Nursing*, and Ross, *Ellen. Love, and Toil: Motherhood in Outcast London, 1870–1918*. New York: Oxford UP, 1993.(^)

(23) Wood, Catherine S. "Ignorance in Poor Mothers" *Baby* 1.1 (December 1887):14.(^)

(24) Frame Food. *Weekly Dispatch* (February 11, 1900): 18.(^)

(25) Frame Food. *Weekly Dispatch* (February 18, 1900): 16.(^)

(26) Rima Apple discusses similar American Mellin's Food advertisements. Her reading differs from mine in that she interprets the scientific language in mothers' testimonials as evidence that they have been medicalized, while I want to suggest that the inclusion of testimonials describing mothers' experiences itself challenges the scientific model (Apple, "Advertised" 18-21).(^)

(27) See Wohl, Anthony S. *Endangered Lives: Public Health in Victorian Britain*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1983, 57-58 for a description of the way different diets led to both perceived and actual physical differences between middle and working class children. Pye Henry Chavasse, a physician specializing in child rearing, directly associates maternal nursing with the working classes and handfeeding with wealthy parents in his 1878 *Advice to Mothers*, asserting that "poor married women, as a rule, nurse their own children." His intention is to argue—in opposition to the abundant evidence to the contrary that Wohl has collected—that poor children enjoy better health, but the effect was likely to associate handfeeding with "grand" "rich people" living in "luxury."(^)

(28) Mellin's Food. *The Illustrated London News*. January 2, 1892: 27.(^)

(29) Latham, Sean and Robert Scholes. "The Rise of Periodical Studies." *PMLA* 121.2 (March 2006): 520.(^)

(30)According to *Waterloo Directory*; the bound copies of *Baby* that I consulted included no advertisements.(^)

(31)“Mothers’ Parliament,” *Baby*_1.9 (August 1888): 235.(^)

(32)“Mothers’ Parliament,” *Baby*_1.10 (September 1888): 261.(^)

(33) “Advice to Mothers,” *Baby* 1.4 (March 1888): 112.(^)

(34)“Advice to Mothers,” *Baby* 1.5 (April 1888): 167-168.(^)

(35)Apple, “Advertised,” 14.(^)

(36)Chavasse, Pye Henry. *Advice to a Mother on the Management of Her Children: And on the Treatment on the Moment of Some of Their More Pressing Illnesses and Accidents*. London: Churchill, 1878.(^)

(37)Levenstein, 81; Apple, “Advertised,” 17.(^)

(38)Eliot, Lise. *What's Going On In There? How the Brain and Mind Develop in the First Five Years of Life*. New York: Bantam, 1999. 192.(^)

(39)Bowlby, Rachel. *Carried Away: The Invention of Modern Shopping*. New York: Columbia UP, 2001, 110.(^)

(40)For a detailed discussion of individuation through consumer and aesthetic choices, see Gagnier, Regenia. *The Insatiability of Human Wants: Economics and Aesthetics in Market Society*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000.(^)

(41)I suspect but cannot prove that the author of “Autobiography of a Baby” is William Jerdan (1782-1869), contributor to *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine*, the *Edinburgh Review*, *Fraser's Magazine*, and *Bentley's Miscellany*, editor of *The Sun* and *The Literary Gazette*, and purported father of L.E. L.'s three children. “Autobiography of a Baby” quotes L.E.L. in its epigraph. It also, however, postdates William Jerdan's death and I have been unable to locate a previous printing of the piece.(^)

(42)Jerdan, W. “Autobiography of a Baby” *Baby*_1.4 (March 1888):110.(^)

(43)Ibid, 1.6 (May 1888):157.(^)

(44)Infant food manufacturers covered all their bases by also marketing their products to nursing mothers, claiming their use would increase milk supply. See Apple, “Advertised” on the similarity between the way Victorian formula companies and twentieth century pharmaceutical

companies created a market for their products that did not exist before their marketing campaigns.(^)

(45)Carroll, Alicia. “*Human Milk in the Modern World: Breastfeeding and the Cult of the Dairy in Adam Bede and Tess of the d’Urbervilles.*” *Women's Studies* 31.2 (2002): 165-197. Carroll discusses the anxieties surrounding the nursing dyad.(^)

(46)See Fildes, Valerie. *Breasts, Bottles and Babies: A History of Infant Feeding*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1986, Fildes, *Wet Nursing*, and Maher, Vanessa, Ed. *The Anthropology of Breast-Feeding: Natural Law or Social Construct*. Cross-cultural perspectives on women. Oxford: Berg, 1992. (^)

(47)Wohl describes Victorian doctors’ condemnation of artificial feeding, which they equated with infanticide and blamed for high rates of infant mortality, 20-23.(^)

(48)Bowers,Toni. “‘A Point of Conscience’: *Breastfeeding and Maternal Authority in Pamela, Part 2*” in Greenfield, Susan C. and Carol Barash, eds. *Inventing Maternity: Politics, Science, and Literature, 1650–1865*. Lexington: U Kentucky P, 1999.(^)

(49)The focus of infant feeding debates had been on maternal as opposed to wet nursing at least since William Cadogan’s 1748 essay championing maternal nursing. In the late 1850s, William Acton and physician C.H.F. Routh continued to argue about the dangers of wet nursing, but the wide availability of patent infant foods from the 1860s changed the terms of the debate. Ruth Perry notes that the breast vs. bottle argument over what to feed the baby first emerged in England during a brief handfeeding fad among seventeenth-century aristocrats, but was shortlived as the deaths of handfed babies quickly demonstrated the superiority of breastfeeding in that period. Perry, Ruth. “Colonizing the Breast: Sexuality and Maternity in Eighteenth-Century England” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 2.2, Special Issue, Part 1: The State, Society, and the Regulation of Sexuality in Modern Europe. (Oct. 1991): 218.(^)

(50)Bowlby, Rachel. *Carried Away: The Invention of Modern Shopping*. New York: Columbia UP, 2001, 7.(^)

(51)Mellin’s Food. *The Graphic*. August 1, 1896: 157.(^)

(52)Mellin’s Food. *The Illustrated London News*. January 2, 1892: 27.(^)

(53)Dickens, Charles. *Great Expectations* [1860-61]. Ed. Charlotte Mitchell. London: Penguin, 1996, 35. The text attests to the danger of artificial feeding by reporting that Mrs. Joe “had established a great reputation with herself and the neighbors because she had brought [Pip] up ‘by hand.’” Pip’s survival despite the dangers of handfeeding is a surprise to the neighborhood and a source of pride for his sister.(^)

(54) Ibid, 63.(^)

(55)Ibid, 304.(^)

(56)Davin, Anna. "Motherhood and Imperialism," *History Workshop Journal* 5 (1978): 9-65.(^)

(57)Stoker, Bram. *Dracula* [1897]. Ed. John Paul Riquelme. Boston: Bedford/ St. Martin's, 2002: 283.(^)

(58) Ibid, 218.(^)

(59)Ibid, 218.(^)

(60)Beeton, 489.(^)

(61)Gomersall, W.J. "The Late Mrs. Ada S. Ballin." *Westminster Review* (July 1906): 114.(^)

clothes for babies should cover every part of the body while leaving the arms free.[23][39]. She also advocated for the use of bifurcated skirts as women's underwear.[38] Underwear was a particularly fraught topic in dress reform, with connotations of both class and morality. Women's underclothing was associated with their sexual accessibility and their virtue or lack thereof.Â "Shopping for the Ballin Baby: Infant Food and Maternal Authority in Baby Magazine". *Nineteenth-Century Gender Studies*. 4 (1). ISSN 1556-7524. Giving your baby his or her first taste of solid food is a major milestone. Here's what you need to know before your baby takes that first bite. Is your baby ready for solid foods? Breast milk or formula is the only food your newborn needs. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends exclusive breast-feeding for the first six months after birth. But by ages 4 months to 6 months, most babies are ready to begin eating solid foods as a complement to breast-feeding or formula-feeding. During this time babies typically stop using their tongues to push food out of their mouths and begin to develop the coordination to move solid food from the front of the mouth to the back for swallowing. In addition to age, look for other signs that your baby is ready for solid foods. For example Introducing your baby to solid foods is an exciting milestone. When you start introducing children to the world of solid foods, you are helping them shape their relationship with food and establish a healthy eating style. The timing for introducing solid foods will depend on the infant, but it is not recommended before the age of four months or after the age of six months. Not sure how to get your baby started on solid foods? Consider these helpful tips. Is Your Baby Ready to Transition? Each child's readiness for solid food depends on their own rate of development. Signs a baby may be ready to start solid foods include sitting up with minimal support, demonstrating good head control, bringing objects to the mouth or grasping at small objects. Check with your pediatrician before starting solid foods.