

EATING THE WORLD: LONDON IN 1851

By Thomas Prasch

“LONDON, FOR SOME TIME previous to the opening of the Great Exhibition, has been a curious sight even to Londoners,” Henry Mayhew declared in *1851, or the Adventures of Mr. and Mrs. Sandboys and Family, Who Came Up to London to “Enjoy Themselves,” and to See the Great Exhibition*, his comic instant novel about the transformation of London in the year of the Great Exhibition. Mayhew proceeded to detail what had grown curiuser and curiuser about the London scene in that climactic year: “New amusements were daily springing into existence, or old ones being revived. The Chinese Collection had returned to the Metropolis, with a family from Pekin, and a lady with feet two inches and a half long, as proof of the superior *standing* she had in society; Mr Calin [*sic*; he means Caitlin] had re–opened his Indian exhibit; Mr Wyle [*sic*; he means Wyld; instant novels apparently did not allow much time for proofreading] had bought up the interior of Leicester Square, with a view of cramming into it – ‘yeah, the great globe itself’” (132). Elsewhere in Mayhew’s parodic panorama¹ of London’s exhibition mania, he offered a view of other globalized London scenes, focusing on celebrated chef Alexis Soyer’s new restaurant, “where the universe might dine, from sixpence to a hundred guineas, of *cartes* ranging from pickled whelks to nightingale’s tongues . . . from the ‘long sixes,’ *au natural* of the Russians, to the ‘stewed Missionary of the Marquesas,’ or the ‘cold roast Bishop’ of New Zealand” (2). Mayhew’s imaginary menu, with its cannibalistic extremes, expresses a wider concern about the deluging of London by foreigners come to see the Great Exhibition (some 60000 “extra” foreigners – beyond, that is, standard visiting numbers – were estimated to have actually visited, mostly from the Continent, that year, roughly doubling the existing foreign population of London; see Auerbach 186), which found expression in an amused (when not more genuinely terrified) xenophobia that often focused on foreign foodways.

Mayhew’s catalogs of entertainments available in London in the year of the Great Exhibition cavalierly cross real and imagined opportunities for touristic entertainment. The Chinese Collection (which, in fact, shared space with a showcase of South African artifacts, Cumming’s Exhibition; see *British Metropolis* 267), Caitlin’s Indian show (600 oil paintings and assorted artifacts from Caitlin’s travels among Native Americans; see Limbird 79), and Wyld’s Globe (a massive metal sphere the inside walls of which replicated the earth’s surface and physical features in modeled plaster; for a fuller description, see *British Metropolis* xix–xx), were all real enough, all part of the great exhibitionary year, even if their offerings could not quite match Mayhew’s hyperbole.

Indeed, in the case of Soyer's restaurant, Mayhew seems not to have exaggerated at all. The hyperbolic menu Mayhew offers borrows much of its detail – as well as its best joke – from Soyer's own advance publicity for the restaurant: "Cosmopolitan customs should demand cosmopolitan cookery; and it is by no means an exaggerated expectation, we think, to imagine within the walls of the Symposium grave and lively Frenchmen, expatiating over their potages and fricandeaux; phlegmatic Turks, discussing pillaf and hachis; mercurial Persians, enjoying their sherbet; sententious Spaniards, luxuriating over olla podrida; wide-awake Americans, consuming johnny-cakes and canvas-backed ducks; pigtailed Chinese, devouring their favourite stewed dog; metaphysical Germans, washing down prodigious quantities of sauerkraut with oceans of rhenwein [*sic*]; swarthy Russians, up to their eyes in caviar; Cossacks, calling for more train oil; Tartars, swallowing quarts of mare's milk; and New Zealanders – no, not New Zealanders, for who could form any idea of the horror and dismay which would be caused by some ebony-skinned and boomeranged chieftains demanding 'baked young woman' for two, and a 'cold boiled missionary' to follow?" (Volant and Warren² 200–01). Compared to the promiscuous prodigious international feast Soyer's own publicity promises, Mayhew's catalog seems quite tame.

That all of London had become the fair during the great fair of the world's first international exhibition perfectly suited Mayhew's purposes. The Sandboys, the provincial family that comes to London for the Great Exhibition in Mayhew's novel, because of a series of mishaps and confusions, never quite manage to make their way through the entrance gates (although Mayhew himself does; he interrupts his narrative to entertain readers with his own account of the Crystal Palace's rich offerings). That they never make it into Paxton's palace, however, is finally beside the point, since the city itself has become an exhibition, packed with the foreign. In the teeming boarding houses of the city, the Sandboys encounter a wide range of foreign visitors to London, mustachio'd Frenchmen being especially prominent. And Mayhew's somewhat more sly argument is that the internationalism that characterized the Great Exhibition was fully on display even in the most dismal sectors of the city, as in the second-hand clothing stalls where Mr. Sandboys is forced to go to recover his lost trousers (don't ask how he lost them; it is a very long story): "The buyers, too, were as picturesque and motley a group almost as the sellers – for the purchasers were of all nations" (100). An exhibition of all nations could be found in any street market of the metropolis, and, although Mayhew makes little of their foodways, they brought their recipes with them.

Mayhew spoofs, in his exaggerated catalogs, the ways in which the metropolis of London capitalized on the coming of the Great Exhibition, transforming large parts of the city into extensions of the global display contained under the arches of Paxton's Crystal Palace. If, as Peter Hoffenburg has argued, in the Great Exhibition and its successor international showcases, "Nation and empire were introduced as spectacle, but became personal and accessible... by means of such participatory forms of public culture and entertainment" (245), it is also the case that such public culture extended beyond the limits of exhibition buildings. Mayhew's spoofing has a root in fact: in the actual expansion of internationalized exhibitionary display through the city in 1851, and in the penetration of the foreign – including foreign foodways – into the heart of the city.

Both trends, exhibitionary and gastronomical, had deeper sources, reflecting long-term shifts in the patterns of British, and especially London, life and culture. First of all, the cultural processes set in motion by British imperialism ensured the arrival on British shores of both imperial food products and foreign foodways.³ This is most abundantly evident in the

penetration of Indian cookery into British consumer markets and cookbooks, a process Susan Zlotnick has aptly described, in her discussion of Joseph Sedley’s curry feasts in William Makepeace Thackeray’s *Vanity Fair* (1848),⁴ as, borrowing her language from her source, a “metaphor of incorporation, of delightful gobbling” (Zlotnick 55). What Britain conquers, it also eats.

Second, an internationalization of British cookery was a direct consequence of the consolidation of industrialism, and with it the shift of Britain from a self-sustaining agricultural producer to a consumer dependent upon an increasingly globalized marketplace.⁵ Derek Oddy, addressing shifting British dietary habits, notes that “Change was at its most extreme where industrial development . . . created an urban society dependent almost entirely upon the marketplace [as opposed to local production] for food supplies,” and further observes that “The Great Exhibition of 1851 began an age of commercial entertainment. With this came an unprecedented growth of catering for business travellers and tourists alike” (1, 9). Richard Tames similarly sees in the “second half of the nineteenth century,” in consequence of changing markets, “a significant trend towards the systematic commercialization of the catering business” (31). That commercialization, dependent on global markets, results in changed patterns of consumption and more openness to foreign foods, trends most evident at Britain’s commercial heart, in the markets and restaurants of London.

Third, and linked to both of these other trends, the Victorian age witnessed a dramatic growth of immigrant populations: from the continent (people seeking refuge from political instability in France, the Germanies, and Italy, or fleeing pogroms in Russia and Eastern Europe), from the empire (another part of that two-way dynamic of imperial interaction), and from the broader world (linked by globalizing market trends to London). Such immigrants, predictably, brought their foodways with them (see, for example, Tames’s treatment of “Foreign Flavors” in London restaurants, 100–23). And fourth, on the other side of the traveling coin, from the eighteenth century onward, the Grand Tour tradition brought British elites (and, as commercial travel extended its reach in the Victorian era, broader ranges of the population as well) into contact with foreign cuisines, leading to a demand for chefs (especially French and Italian) who could recreate in London dishes first tasted abroad (Black 149–65). Indeed, many of the chefs in London at midcentury were firmly in the employ of British elites, as Volant and Warren note, mentioning “Bony, who was thirteen years at the late Duke of Wellington’s, and twelve years at the Duke of Buccleuch’s; Aberlin, from Lord Sefton’s of old, and from the Duke of Devonshire; Perron, from the Marquis of Londonderry’s; Loyer, from Lord Chesterfield’s; Deloy, from Baron Brunow’s; Surville, from Lord Wharnccliffe’s; Crépin, from the Duke of Sutherland’s” (Volant and Warren viii). The problem was not so much one of bringing foreign cooking to Britain – that had already been done – but of getting it to a wider urban audience.

All of these trends, well established a century and more before the Great Exhibition opened its doors and continuing after the Crystal Palace was dismantled, mean that in some ways the year 1851 changes nothing. Internationalization of Londoners’ palates was already happening and would continue unabated with or without the exhibition. What does change is attitude: where, before 1851, foreignness was enclaved and shunned by mainstream English opinion, in 1851 the foreign becomes a source of celebration, and that shift (albeit somewhat resisted) becomes a permanent fixture, a new formation of London identity.

And nowhere is that shift in attitude more apparent than in Alexis Soyer’s new restaurant, its opening planned to coincide with the exhibition and its location (at Gore House, where

the Albert Hall now stands) aimed to take advantage of exhibition visitors. The French-born Soyer (after whom William Thackeray modeled his French cook Mirobolant in *History of Pendennis* [1849]) was, by 1851, without doubt the most famous chef in London, the city to which he had fled after the revolution of 1830. Indeed, Michael Garval convincingly argues that, in the full range of exploitation of his public image, from graphic art to cookbooks to mass-marketed sauces and kitchenwares, Soyer can be taken as the first “celebrity chef.” He had established a name for himself as chef of the Reform Club, 1837–50, where, among other notable feasts, he had served up a breakfast for 2000 on the day of Queen Victoria’s coronation and a meal for 150 on the occasion of the visit to London of Egyptian general Ibrahim Pasha, with a wide-ranging menu including French, Italian, Russian, Indian, German, Macedonian, and Egyptian foods (the full menu appears in Volant and Warren 88–89, and as an appendix in Morris); in 1847, he received a royal commission to open an economy kitchen in Dublin, aiming to ameliorate the Irish famine. He also penned (or dictated, or had ghosted on his behalf) a range of books on food, including the hugely popular *Gastronomic Regenerator: A Simplified and New System of Cookery* (1846); *Soyer’s Charitable Cookery, or the Poor Man’s Regenerator* (1847, published while he was working in Ireland, and with a portion of the proceeds dedicated to Irish charity); and, a few years after opening his new restaurant, *The Pantropheon; or, History of food, and its preparation, from the Earliest Ages of the World* (1853).⁶

Soyer would later travel at his own expense to Eastern Europe, where he would cook for the English army during the Crimean War and befriend Florence Nightingale, with whom he teamed up to remake military hospital kitchens.⁷ It is not only Mayhew who tends to wax hyperbolic when it comes to Soyer. The *Globe* declared: “The impression grows on us that the man of his age is neither Sir Robert Peel, nor Lord John Russell, or even Ibrahim Pasha, but Alexis Soyer.”⁸ In the anonymous 1858 pamphlet *London at Dinner, or Where to Dine*, Soyer’s term at the Reform Club was recalled in glowing terms: “It was the clever Alexis who reformed the antiquated excrescences and abuses of the kitchen. Can any patriot *burn* with more devoted and intense zeal for the public good than does Soyer?” (18). The juxtaposition in this praise of foreign cooking styles and English patriotism is especially striking.

Soyer’s new restaurant in 1851 – within walking distance from the Crystal Palace – was specifically designed to play on the promise of the Great Exhibition: on the flood of foreigners to the city, on their food tastes. That broad audience is suggested in the range of guests for Soyer’s opening banquet on May 15: “The visitors came from every corner of the world – Paris, Dresden, Hanover, Leipsic, St. Petersburg, Amsterdam, Frankfurt, Dublin – and the band played the Marseillaise, Yankee Doodle Dandy, God Save the Queen, and any other national anthem they knew” (quoted in Humble 111). Thackeray, writing pseudonymously for *Punch* as “Gobemouche, Man of Letters,” in advance of the restaurant’s opening, styled it a “French Conspiracy” and “invasion”: “yet a few weeks and the palace of SOYER will be opened. This, Milord, is the Conspiracy by which France hopes to conquer you” (Thackeray 63). For Thackeray, this was the final outcome of a process long in the making: “My Lord – there is a conspiracy, but it is patent – a foreign invasion, but it is here . . . Our legions are encamped in Regents’ Quadrant and Leicester Square. . . . The insular habits are rapidly passing away. The Parisian civilization has invaded and conquered the white cliffs” (59–60). And who better as conqueror than the chef Soyer: “Whose name, whose good things are in so many peoples’ mouths as the name, as the good things, of ALEXIS SOYER? Yes, ALEXIS is a great pacific conqueror” (61). On his restaurant’s opening, Soyer’s own speech echoed

the theme of conquest: “now that I have engaged in more extended operations – now that, like Caesar, I have crossed the Rubicon and unfurled the banner of gastronomy” (Volant and Warren 218). Such language underlines the self-consciousness about a shift in dining habits, both in terms of ethnicity and spectacle, accompanying the Great Exhibition.

In a second *Punch* piece as “Gobemouche,” “Authentic Account of the Grand Exhibition,” the presumed Frenchman hails a cabriolet to take him to the exhibition, and indeed thinks, from what he sees, that he has arrived there: “What do I see around me? . . . The cities of the world are giving each other the hand – the Tower of Pisa nods friendly to the Wall of China – the Pont Neuf and the Bridge of Sighs meet and mingle arches – Saint Paul, of London, is of accord with his brother Saint Peter, of Rome – and the Parthenon is united with the Luqсор Obelisk” (71). Nothing, as Gobemouche continues his tour, disabuses him of his belief that he wonders at the International Exhibition: “The chambers of this marvellous palace are decorated in various styles, each dedicated to a nation. One room flames in crimson and yellow, surmounted by a vast golden sun . . . it must be the chamber of the East. Another, decorated with stalactites and piled with looking-glass and eternal snow, at once suggests Kamschatka and the North Pole. In a third apartment, the Chinese dragons and lanterns display their fantastic blazons; while in a fourth, under a canopy of midnight stars, surrounded by waving palm-trees, we feel ourselves at once to be in a primeval forest of Brazil” (Thackeray 71–72). Arriving at last to the final chamber, Gobemouche wonders: “And that vast building on the eastern side . . . is the much-vaunted Palace of Crystal? Yes, the roof is of crystal, and the dimensions are vast” (72–73). But when a gentleman tells him “That is the Baronial Hall of All Nations,” and that it is not open yet, Gobemouche realizes his mistake: “This is not the Crystal Palace I see – this is the rival wonder – yes, this is the Symposium of all Nations, and yonder is ALEXIS SOYER” (73). Thackeray’s trope, with its confusion over whether the exhibition is in fact contained within the Crystal Palace’s walls, could fit right into Mayhew’s novel.

The spectacle on offer in Soyer’s restaurant does indeed seem astounding. *Limbird’s Guide* (1851) describes the Symposium in only slightly less wild words than Mayhew employed: “The rooms are decorated in the style of all nations, and in styles that no nation would acknowledge as its own. The gardens are laid out with great novelty of design . . . There are innumerable quantity of statues, vases, and grottoes, grass-plots, gravel-walks, illuminated flower-beds, and variegated landscapes, with many other attractions. . . . The *Baronial Banqueting Hall* is 100 feet long . . . the walls covered with rich crimson drapery, relieved by the interposition of Corinthian pilasters. The spaces between the columns are filled alternately with richly-framed oil-paintings by Madame Soyer, and club trophies of the insignia of all nations. . . . There is also the Banqueting Bridge, the Flora Retreat, the Gipsy Dell, the Dungeon of Mystery, and the Avenue of Love, the frequenters of which, we sincerely trust, will never be chilled by the icicles in the Grotto of Eternal Snow” (Limbird 141–42). Volant and Warren describe one of its more fabulous banquet halls: “*L’Atelier de Michel Angelo, or Hall of Architectural Wonders*, offered . . . a striking and splendid homage to the architectural genius of all nations . . . in picturesque confusion we saw St. Peter’s, the Leaning Tower of Pisa, the Duomo of Milan, the Louvre, the lions and portions of the Piazza of St. Mark, the Mosque of St. Sophia, the Pyramids of Ghizeh, Pompey’s Pillar, the Porcelain Tower of Nankin, the Bridge of Sighs, the Sphinx, the Walhalla of Munich, the Eddystone Lighthouse, the Colosseum. . . . To come nearer home, we had St. Paul’s, the monument, the new Parliament of Westminster, and the latest triumph of combined engineering skill and

artistic beauty, the Tubular Bridge. Geography, time, place, and locality had certainly been set at defiance in this extraordinary *pêle-mêle* of edifices” (205).⁹ Another guidebook notes that the words on the sign “are at night illuminated, and make a most brilliant appearance,” and adds to the catalog other rooms, including “the ‘*Pavilion Monstre d’Amphytrion*,’ or the “Encampment of All Nations,” specifically tailored, in Soyer’s words, “for those who ‘prefer the promiscuous refection of a public banquet to the less joyous society of a private room’” (*British Metropolis* xviii). Promiscuous interactions with the foreign were very much on offer in Soyer’s saloons.

The menu, as much as the surroundings, displayed an international flair. Thackeray (as Gobemouche) detailed the variety of both its decor and its menu: “A palace of airies he is making it – truly a Symposium of all nations, as SIR SOYER (faithful to his Bacchanalian tradition, and proud of the religion of his apron) has styled it. Halls are here filled in the manners of all nations. . . . The Saloon of Italy, the Saloon of Turkey, the Saloon of Spain; the Hall of France, the Hall of Olde England. You may consume here the cockaliquet of the mountains of Scotland, the garbana of Castille, the shamrocks of Ireland, the maccaroni [*sic*] of Vesuvius, the kari of the Ganges, and the cabab of the Bosphorus” (62). Beyond the site itself and the food served, spectacle found a place in the entertainments offered, including “Various bands of musical performers, singers, black or Ethiopian serenaders (of the most comic power), theatricals, balloons, [and] games of different kinds” (Volant and Warren 215). Soyer’s Symposium was a unique embodiment of both the spectacular and the cosmopolitan reconfiguration of London dining.

It also failed, closing a mere five months after its opening. Sarah Freeman writes of the closing: “To some extent, the lack of impact was due to the unprecedented and altogether extraordinary nature of the overall enterprise: restaurants in the modern sense . . . were also virtually unknown, far less those serving ethnic food, as Soyer sought to do” (287). But Freeman is wrong on all counts here. The closing, in fact, had to do with Soyer’s problematic financial partnerships, exacerbated by disputes over the liquor license, in the wake of large-scale dining events held on the site (see Volant and Warren 232–34). Far from being without impact, the restaurant’s brief life accentuated Soyer’s public image. And Freeman’s own account makes clear that Soyer’s enterprise built upon a growing presence of foreign foodways in London, dominated by Franco-Italian fare (285–287; see also Tames 100–23).

That spread of foreign restaurants reflected the growth of ethnic populations in the city and the development of foreign cuisine as an outlet for those foreign populations. Enclaves (of foreigners and foreign foods) had been long established in Britain, which should come as no great surprise. London had already been for some time a “world city,” to borrow Celina Fox’s term,¹⁰ its foreign population built above all else through the course of the expansion of trade and empire in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and reflecting the geography of that expansion. Thus, Colonel Hughes, estimating the numbers of lascars (whom he categorized as including Indian, Malay, and Chinese dockworkers and shiphands, with sprinklings of West Africans and South Sea islanders) in 1855, suggested that 5–6,000 were resident in Britain (most in London), which closely corresponds to the number James Salter tallied (7815) in 1874 (Visram 52–53). Continued empire-building, the shaping of the empire on which the sun would never set and all that, would accelerate the processes by which growing numbers of colonials came to be and eat in the metropole throughout the nineteenth century, while the nostalgia of a retired-home imperial officialdom would ensure cuisines of East India finding a place on the menus of the city’s clubs.

But other forces at work in the mid-nineteenth century massively expanded these populations, above all else the continental revolutions (especially 1848 – but recall that Soyer came to London on the heels of 1830)¹¹ and the Irish Famine. Thus, 1851 comes in the middle of a period of massive growth and shift in the population of central London, with significant levels of immigration contributing to the transformation of London’s population and self-image. The city had 330,000 immigrants in the decade preceding the opening of the Crystal Palace, and another 286,000 in the decade that followed it (Porter 205). The mid-nineteenth century is focal for the establishment of Arab, Chinese, German, Irish, Italian, Jewish, Polish, and Spanish communities in London, with smaller numbers of Africans and African-Americans present as well (Merriman).

Shirley Brooks, looking in 1849 at this diversity, and at what he perceived to be the evident breakdown of national boundaries brought about by new technologies of travel, suggested “One of these days there will be no foreigners.” He meant that national differences were bound to disappear, not that visitors would be restricted at the shore: “Time is already no more, and we have only to abolish space” (Brooks 175). Meanwhile, however, foreignness was altogether evident in London streets, and his essay on “Foreign Gentlemen in London” offered guides for recognizing the visitor from America, Spain, Italy, or France. In fact, far from disappearing, foreignness would consolidate in London, in the shaping of readily identifiable ethnic enclaves and occupations, already clear to commentators on the London scene at mid-century.

Thus, Augustus Hare wrote of Soho that “The whole district of Soho . . . has now a French aspect . . . There are French schools, French names over many of the shops, French restaurants . . . and the organ-grinders of Soho find that the Marseillaise is the most lucrative tune to play” (2: 130). They shared Soho’s territory, Adolphe Smith adds, with “Mazzinians” exiled from Italy, each with their own hotels, pubs, and restaurants (Adolphe Smith 399–404). In Dickens’s *Household Words*, Sala’s 1851 essay “Down Whitechapel Way” offered a perambulation through enclaves of alien culture in London: at one stage on the journey, “We are in Vaterland at once . . . There are little German public-houses, and German bakers, and little shops, where you can get sauer-kruat and potato-salad, just as though you were in Frankfort” (rpt. in *Gaslight* 266); a little further on, “The children of Jewry begin to encompass us . . . almost all the low coffee-shops you pass are crowded with young Jews” (*Gaslight* 267). An 1862 guidebook, published to lead tourists visiting the second London international exhibition, although it favored in its restaurant listings steakhouses with traditional British fare, also listed West End ethnic options like Bertolini’s, Rouget’s, Simpson’s Divan, Jacquet’s, and the Hotel de l’Europe supper house in the Haymarket, as well as the Oriental among the city’s clubs (*Cruchley’s New Guide* 34–35).

For better or worse, depending on the commentator, Leicester Square teemed with foreigners and foreign shops. As Adolphe Smith put it: “the caricaturists inevitably associated the foreign with Leicester Square, and it is in this neighborhood that are still to be found the greatest number of foreign shops, restaurants, cafés, and hotels” (399). Describing the area in 1861, George Augustus Sala saw the results less positively: “It is astonishing to find how much foreign riff-raff and alien scoundrelry will turn up at a masquerade. Leicester Square and Panton Street, the *cloaques* of the Haymarket and Soho, disgorge the bearded and pomatumed scum of their stale pot-a-feu-smelling purlieus on this dancing floor” (Sala, *Twice* 415). While providing a center for the foreign, it should be recalled as well that Leicester Square simultaneously anchored much of the new exhibitionary technology of the

city: the displays whose features Mayhew exaggerated, and which Sala summarized with words that suggest continuing awe a decade on (see especially Sala, *Gaslight* 173–84; Timbs 513–15).

John Galsworthy described Soho as “full of Greeks, Ishmaelites, cats, Italians,” and other sorts with “queer names” (quoted in Tames 157). Sala’s *Gaslight and Daylight* (1859) dubs the territory of Leicester Square and Soho “perfidious Patmos.” There, after cataloging foreigners of a wide variety, he notes with somewhat more sympathy the political exiles’ plight: “Years ago, Doctor Johnson called London ‘the common sewer of Paris and of Rome;’ but at the present day it is a reservoir, a giant vat, into which flow countless streams of continental immigration” (165). Sala includes a description of their dining: “Towards four or five the foreign eating-houses, of which there are many in Patmos of a fifth or sixth order of excellence, are resorted to by those who yet adhere to the gastronomic traditions of the land they have been driven from; and there they vainly attempt to delude themselves into the belief that they are consuming the *fricassées* and *ragouts*, the suet puddings and *sauerkraut*, the *maccaroni*, risotto, and *stuffato* of France or Germany or Italy – all the delightful messes on which foreigners feed with such extreme gusto and satisfaction. But, alas! these dishes, though compounded from foreign recipes and cooked by foreign hands, are not, or, at least, do not taste like foreign dishes. Cookery, like the *amor patriae*, is indigenous. It cannot be transplanted. It cannot flourish on a foreign soil” (169–70). But flourish, of course, it does, however bitter the bread of the exile.

Beyond the specific enclaves are the interstices of urban life, served by the street-vendors who are so central a focus of Mayhew’s most famous work (no, not *1851*), the vast protosociological compendium of *London Labour and the London Poor* (1862, but see n.1). Ethnicity is a distinctive marker in Mayhew’s mammoth catalog, defining the genuine Englishness of the costermonger against the intruding otherness of the outsider (especially the Irish and Jew), but using a broader array of ethnic identifiers to cement the case.¹² And the foreigners who had come to dominate street-trades¹³ figure not only in the wide assortment of street entertainments – Italian acrobats, Indian jugglers, African drummers, and the rest – but in basic food provision as well.¹⁴ These include at least some importation of foreign foodways: thus Arab Jews from Morocco dominate the street trade in rhubarb, spices, and tortoisés (1: 452–54; 2: 80), and turbaned Doctor Bokavy survived as a street herbalist vending East Indian goods (1: 197). Mayhew’s discussion of working-class diets, while not focused on ethnicity, hints at it strongly: “The relish for onions by the poorer classes is not difficult to explain. Onions are strongly stimulating substances . . . for the uneducated palates of the poor . . . require a more pungent kind of diet” (1: 119).¹⁵ Mayhew attributes the impoverished classes’ love for sprats and herring to the levels of oil in such fish (1: 118), but foreign-influenced foodways provide an obvious alternative explanation. Nor is Mayhew alone in underlining the intersection of street food traders and ethnicity. Lucia Spona, for example, has critically analyzed the Italian domination of the penny-ice trade in the period.

The influence of Jewish cuisine is especially clear in Mayhew’s account: “The callings of which the Jew boys have the monopoly are not connected with the sale of any especial article, but rather with such things as present a variety from those ordinarily offered in the streets, such as cakes, sweetmeats, fried fish, and (in the winter) elder wine. The cakes known as ‘boolers’ – a mixture of egg, flour, and candied orange or lemon peel, cut very thin, and with a slight colouring from saffron or something similar – are now sold principally, and used to be sold exclusively, by the Jew boys. Almond cakes (little round cakes of crushed

almonds) are at present vended by the Jew boys, and their sponge biscuits are in demand. All these dainties are bought by the street-lads of the Jew pastry-cooks. The difference in these cakes, in their sweetmeats, and their elder wine, is that there is a dash of spice about them not ordinarily met with. It is the same with the fried fish, a little spice or pepper being blended with the oil. In the street-sale of pickles the Jews have also the monopoly" (2: 124). That "variety," that "difference," that "dash of spice" is, precisely, ethnicity.

Markets, too, reflected this internationalizing process. In 1862, the year of the second London International Exhibition, a visitors' guidebook insisted that the food markets of London offered "all that he [the Londoner] requires from the uttermost corners of the earth: – turtle and pine apples from the West Indies; canvas-backed ducks, packed in ice; ice itself; flour; preserved meats; cheese, and grain of every kind, from America; ortolans from Egypt; January peas from Algeria; caviare and sturgeon from Russia; fresh fish from Scandinavia; and vegetables from France, earlier and better than they are received in Paris" (Kelly 44).¹⁶ Home consumption, as well as dining out, came increasingly with foreign flavors.

The problem in mid-Victorian Britain is how to translate that difference from the marginal and enclaved to a wider (and implicitly higher) audience. Even before the Great Exhibition, some tendencies in this direction were clear. As early as 1842, *Punch* was making note of the internationalization of London's public spaces, in an account of Gliddon's Divan, an Arabic restaurant where "The waiters are warranted real Musselmans, and are of course habited in oriental costume A real Arab has been imported at vast expense, and tells tales to the curious from eight to ten" ("Gliddon's Divan"). Such processes would accelerate over the next decade.

But 1851, by reformulating foreignness in the city, will fundamentally change the dynamic of it. This work of transformation begins in the Crystal Palace itself, with its emphatic internationalism, and indeed in the Crystal Palace refreshment rooms, where, if the dominant offerings were squarely English (33,456 pounds of savory pies; 73,280 Victoria biscuits; 1092337 bottles of ginger beer), there were at least traces of a world beyond, in the 2000 pineapples, 11797 "Italian cakes," and the 7617 "French rolls," and of course in those staples of imperial trade, tea (1015 lbs., at least some of it served up in the Ceylonese tearoom), coffee (14299 lbs.), and chocolate (4836 lbs.) ("Food Sold at the Crystal Palace"). The work of the Crystal Palace was extended by the surge of guidebooks to London, a booming trade in 1851 (when, by a quick count of holdings at the British Library – www.bl.uk – at least a dozen new guidebooks to London, many explicitly aimed at foreign travelers, and at least two in French, appeared in print). Guidebooks offered predictable sketches of British history, and largely predictable tours of major monuments, but also focused on the more immediate needs (food, housing) of foreign guests.

Even the English grocer, one guide suggests, could meet the need of the internationalist. In G. Dodd's paean to the "very cyclopedia of instruction" offered by the shops of London in 1851, exoticism is trumpeted: "We there place ourselves in communion with artificers and producers from all corners of the earth: the bowls of 'souchang' and 'twankay' in the window of the grocer introduce us to the millions of the Celestial Empire; the spices in the same window carry us in imagination to Ceylon, to the Moluccas, and to the tropical regions generally; the 'Italian warehouse,' with its thousand and one seductions for the palate, shows us what sunny Italy, and Greece, and the Levant can do for us" (qtd. in Knight 5: 385). These are the things, not the people, of course, and it may well be easier to appreciate the goods at a remove from their producers, but contemporary accounts – even of the lower

echelons of foreign life, as in Sala's trip to Whitechapel for *Household Words* that same year (*Gaslight* 263–69) – tend to be more enchanted than appalled by the presence of the foreign in their midst. And London's commercial spaces reflected the impact of new exhibitionary technologies as well as of new international goods, above all else with the use of plate glass, opened display spaces, and new arrangements of goods. As G. Dodd noted: “By what steps the shops of the metropolis have arrived at their present position – how the heavy shapeless window yielded to the light bow window, and the lath to the wooden flat; how small squares of glass have given way to larger ones, crown glass to plate glass, clumsy wooden sash-bars to light brass ones . . . must have been noticed by all who are familiar with the huge metropolis” (qtd. in Knight 5:389). The model of the museum display case, being perfected on the grounds of South Kensington, was being echoed as well in the stores of the city, at the same time as the products displayed reflected a new celebratory internationalism.

The lessons of the exhibition year would prove lasting. “London at Dinner” (1858) explicitly connected expanding dining possibilities to the legacy of the Crystal Palace: “We expected to derive many lessons, and therefore benefits, from the Great Exhibition of 1851, and we were not deceived in the results. . . . But let us not forget certain little practical lessons given to us at the same time, one of them having an intimate connection with the work in hand. We had here a mass of strangers who, to the anxious query (which at a particular hour of the day will occur to Britons equally with foreigners), ‘Where shall we dine?’ had no reply but Echo” (5–6). But that had changed. The anonymous writer of the pamphlet had not quite fully accepted the full range of foreign feasts available in the capital; he writes dismissively that “Leicester Square is the haunt of foreigners, and as they continue to frequent its restaurants, we must presume they are content with the fare provided for them. To English tastes they might not seem so satisfactory.” But his very next sentences suggest how changed English tastes had become: “In Castle Street, Leicester Square, a very unpretending little house, ‘Rouget’s,’ gives English and French dishes capitally done. The soup Julienne is as good as is to be had in London” (12). In as staidly English-sounding a site as the Ascot dinner in St. George’s Hall – on the ceiling “are emblazoned the armorial bearings of the Knights of the noble Order of the Garter” (20), for example – the pamphleteer praises the “home and foreign luxuries,” the “truffle pies,” the “Russian tongues, caviare, sardines, &c. (22–23). Elsewhere, the pamphlet highlights the Oriental Club in Hanover Square, “famed” for its Eastern condiments and wines” (18); notes in a summary of dinners during season in “the average of the best mounted houses” (25) menus that offer “Dutch sauces,” French entrees and pates (with French mustard as well as English), ices (for the most part an Italian import), and “pine-apple cream” (26); and includes sample menus for the Wellington’s set dinners that feature Indian soups, German potatoes, Italian-style salmon, Russian salads, and lots and lots of French (appendix 6). London’s diners may not go to Leicester Square, but that is in part because Leicester Square had come to them.

Cookbooks, too, were by the 1860s increasingly infiltrated by foreign recipes, reflecting in part the impact of London restaurants on broader consuming patterns. Nicola Humble, in her study of Victorian cookbooks, notes that even Mrs. Beeton’s ever-taken-as-staidly-English classic, *Book of Household Management* (1861), was, despite its reputation, “strikingly innovatory, introducing the ever-growing and self-consciously respectable Victorian middle class to a wide range of foreign recipes” (10); in Beeton’s pages, “we find innumerable French dishes. . . . There was little radical in the inclusion of such dishes, but Beeton also gives dishes from less familiar cuisines, notably Italian, German, Belgian, Dutch,

and Portuguese. . . . Another significant body of recipes comes from India: mulligatawny, various curries, kedgerees and a number of chutneys are all included . . . there are roughly as many recipes in the book from India as there are from Wales, Scotland, and Ireland” (19).¹⁷ Humble argues that this trend toward inclusion of foreign foods continued in cookbooks later in the century, and she suggests that it was directly a consequence of the influence of restaurants in her discussion of Mrs. Marshall’s 1888 work: “The food tastes of Mrs. Marshall’s primary readership were increasingly shaped by the restaurant culture that had sprung up in the years since 1867, when the Café Royal opened its doors” (21). The Café Royal, operated by the Parisian ex-wine merchant Daniel Nicholas Thévenon, certainly had an impact, leading Herbert Beerbohm Tree to observe, “if you want to see the English people at their most English, go to the Café Royal where they are trying their hardest to be French” (quoted in *Tames* 149), but the pattern was well established already by then, in spectacularized ethnic dining options opened in the city from the time of Soyer’s Symposium on.

The processes at work from 1851 are fully consolidated by century’s end. By the last decade of the century, Lieutenant-Colonel Newnham-Davis’s restaurant reviews for the *Pall Mall Gazette* regularly reflected both cosmopolitan company and strikingly mixed alternatives to English cuisine. Newnham-Davis could find himself dining with an American woman he had met in Suez on a menu that includes “Oeufs à la Russe” in a vodka sauce and “Salade Vénéétienne” (52) as well as a great deal of French (52–56); could drop in on a Strand establishment run by a proprietor known as “the Roman” and staffed by Italians (23); could feast on French and Russian dishes while listening to Central European waltzes (38–44); can contest a fellow diner’s view “that curry can only be made out of India in St. James’s Square” since “I have eaten good curry at the Criterion, where a sable gentleman is charged with its preparation, and I also remembered that at the Cecil they make a speciality of their curries” (59); can, dining at Gatti’s, remember how once “strange-looking foreigners sat at the marble topped little tables and made the most of one portion of some dish piled high with macaroni,” and how at one such locale he met “an aide-de-camp of Garibaldi” (68, 69); and can feast on Frenchified Russian and Polish food at the Savoy, where the chef had just returned from Cannes and an “African gentleman” served as doorman (73–76). The same French and Italian restaurants that commentators were noting in Soho and Leicester Square at mid-century would be highlighted in Baedeker’s London guide at the turn of the century (16).

By then, given London’s position as imperial city, all this would seem perfectly natural. It would be equally, indeed more natural in the postcolonial metropole that would succeed it, its ethnic population expanded enormously by the brief heyday of the Commonwealth passport.¹⁸ Flash forward about a century, and we have, in Martin Amis’s classic London novel, *London Fields* (1989), that most British of bad boys Keith Talent settling in for a dinner:

“He now doubleparked outside the Indian Mutiny on Cathcart Road. Seated at his usual table, Keith ate poppadams and bombay duck while the staff fondly prepared his mutton vindaloo. ‘The napalm sauce, sir?’ asked Rashid. Keith was resolved, in this as in all things. ‘Yeah. The napalm sauce.’ In the kitchen they were busy responding to Keith’s imperial challenge: to make a curry so hot that he couldn’t eat it. The meal arrived. Lively but silent faces stared through the serving-hatch. The first spoonful swiped a mustache of sweat on to Keith’s upper lip, and drew excited murmurs from the kitchen. ‘Bit mild,’ said Keith when he could talk again” (56).

That there are Indian restaurants in London is less the surprise than that Keith Talent, the most British (albeit lowlife British) of British characters in the novel, an utterly insular

islander, xenophobic to the point of racism, would make the hottest of curries his dietary staple, finding it every bit as English as his darts or his pub-drawn beer.¹⁹

The roots of the metropolis's new cosmopolitanism, its internationalized palate, came in the years around 1851. It was accomplished through the fusion of new exhibitionary technologies and a changed appreciation of internationalism, building on existing structures and longstanding populations, but resituated from margin to center in a process magnified by the long shadows of the Crystal Palace. It made London a place where, of all the world cuisines on offer, increasingly the hardest to find was English cooking. And there's no real loss in that.

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NOTES

1. *1851* illustrates, in fact, Mayhew's growing obsession with panoramic view and compulsive catalog, which would be fully embodied, had he ever finished it, in his *Great World of London*, commenced in 1856 (nine serial numbers were published before it was discontinued), and intended to incorporate the reworked material of *London Labour and the London Poor* (rooted from the *Morning Chronicle* columns of 1848–49, with additions; published in serial format in 1852, and in the more familiar bound volumes, with finishing touches by Joseph Binney and others, in 1862; for a fuller publishing history, see Humpherys 16–28) as well as his survey *Criminal Prisons of London* (also 1862, again finished up by Binney); indeed, the anomalous panorama sequence that opens *Criminal Prisons* is a trace of the by-then-dead larger project. Which has nothing to do with food, of course, but it does situate Mayhew, especially in relation to the Great Exhibition's own compulsive categorization of the world.
2. Soyer's posthumously published *Memoirs* (1859) constitute a third-person relation of the significant events in his life, larded with extensive quotations from Soyer's papers (like this one). Thus, although Alexis Soyer appears as "author" on the title page, it is really not his work, and I have credited it to the "compilers," Volant and Warren.
3. Not coincidentally, empire and imperial themes also come to dominate international exhibitions themselves, especially in the last quarter of the nineteenth century (see Greenhalgh 52–81; Hoffenberg *passim*). Indeed, Hoffenberg notes, in his discussion of the "political economy" of the exhibitionary tradition, that colonial participants (both exhibition visitors and those sending displays) hoped for economic and trade benefits accruing from their involvement (see esp. 99–128).
4. Thackeray's novel is, of course, set decades earlier, during the Napoleonic wars, but it is significant that a novel written at mid-century so strongly underlines the presence of empire in the metropole, as Zlotnick's reading recognizes, and as Nair's recent film adaptation (2004) interestingly emphasizes.
5. Current culinary arguments for "eating locally" can, in this context, be seen as an attempt to reverse precisely this long-term trend. Thus, when Barbara Kingsolver, after noting that the "drift away from our agricultural roots is a natural consequence of migration from the land to the factory, which is as old as the Industrial Revolution" (13), argues for a more ecologically sound and sustainable regime – "a genuine food culture is an affinity between people and the land that feeds them. Step one, probably, is to *live* on the land that feeds them, or at least on the same continent" (20) – she is arguing against a trend that is first identifiable in nineteenth-century Britain, precisely because of Britain's primacy in industrialization.
6. It is, however, clear that Soyer did not actually write the book; that credit goes to Adolphe Duhart-Fauvet, paid by Soyer to compose the work, which was then translated into English (see Clement-Lorford).

7. Biographical details on Soyer from the *Dictionary of National Biography*, where, I strongly suspect, he may be the only foreign-born chef to merit an entry (at least none of the other obvious candidates – Ude, Careme, or Escoffier – gets in). See also Humble 10, and Volant and Warren, Morris (although it largely recapitulates the material in the *Memoir*), Menel 151–53, or Garval for more detailed accounts.
8. Quoted at ruthbrandon.co.uk/menu.htm, where it is employed to promote Ruth Brandon’s new biography of Soyer, *The People’s Chef* (2004). Brandon dates the quotation to 1841, but that seems unlikely, given that the meal for Ibrahim Pasha was still five years away; 1851 and the occasion of the new restaurant’s opening seems a more likely date.
9. Probably this fresco, and certainly the decoration of “*The Grand Macédoine*, being a ‘comigrotesquepanofanifoolishiorama, or such a getting up stairs to the Great Exhibition of 1851,’ with its caricatures of famous politicians, foreign dignitaries, and literati placed amid a fanciful bestiary (“Hippogriffs, griffins, dragons, elephants, hippopotomi, rhinoceri, mastadon,” etc.), were the work of George Augustus Sala (Volant and Warren 208), whose own guidebooks to London (some of which are discussed below) would significantly contribute to the image of London as a cosmopolitan center, and one with a cosmopolitan palate as well. His late Victorian contribution to the cookbook genre, *The Thorough Good Cook* (1896), compressing “a lifetime’s experience of eating from Andalucia to Australia” (Tames 66; in his American dining, he shows a particular weakness for pies), is available online at http://www.eatdangerously.com/thorough_cook/index.html.
10. It is worth noting that recent historians have shown far more interest in these developments. For a very useful and insightful survey of recent historiography concerning foreigners in London, see Burton 1–24. Of particular importance is her contribution to postcolonial theory: her insistence that the interaction between colonizer and colonized never be seen as a one-way street.
11. Adolphe Smith’s contribution to Besant is particularly good at mapping the political exiles to London in this period. The most famous among them, of course, were Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. For Engels’s own account of working-class diets – focused more on their paucity than their particularity – see *Condition of the Working Class in England* (1844) in Marx & Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 4, 368–74.
12. This argument about Mayhew’s *London Labour and the London Poor* is one I have dealt with in more detail elsewhere, and so will not re-rehearse in detail here. See my “Ethnicity as Marker in Henry Mayhew’s *London Labour*,” paper presented at the NACBS national conference, October 1998, and Mayhew, *London Labour*, pretty much *passim*.
13. Nor was Mayhew alone in this opinion. Charles Manley Smith concludes his own catalog of street-traders: “With respect to these sundries, one thing is remarkable: they are all, with the exception of a small savour of Irishmen, foreigners” (17). Many of Smith’s contemporaries would be less generous in making the Irish their own.
14. It is a foundational premise of *London Labour* that the “nomads” of the modern city – see the opening passage of volume 1 – provide essential service by being the small-traders on the streets who supply the needs of the growing working class.
15. Whether the growing dependence of the working-class diet on the potato also reflects ethnic pressures, specifically the influence of the Irish influx, or merely represents a deterioration in working-class diets, the potato replacing tradition-honored meat, is an open question. Certainly it is the latter argument that has held among commentators from the time (Mayhew’s statistics – always suspect – assert: “Of vegetables we have seen that the greatest quantity consumed by the poor consists of potatoes, of which 60,500,000 lbs. are annually sold in the street” [1: 119]; Engels similarly argued – although at least noting an Irish connection – “Where wages are less, meat is used only two or three times a week, and the proportion of bread and potatoes increases. Descending gradually, we find the animal food reduced . . . until on the lowest round of the ladder, among the Irish, potatoes form the sole food” [372]), and the view has been echoed by commentators since (most notably E. P. Thompson, who uses the increase of potato consumption as a clear index of pauperization of the working class;

- 314–16). But such commentators do not seem to consider the possibility that potatoes might constitute a preference.
16. Interestingly, the listing of foreign goods is imbedded in an argument for free trade. Thus, the guide insists, British free-trade policies, where “the supply of food is left to individual initiative and enterprise,” ensured “abundant and cheap supplies,” while “Monarchs, like Napoleon I, in their ignorance of the simple laws of political economy,” only interfered with supplies through attempts at subsidies (Kelly 44).
 17. Zlotnick, too, notes that the three most influential nineteenth-century cookbooks, including Beeton’s (and the much earlier Maria Rundell [1807] and slightly earlier Eliza Acton [1845]) “all contain chapters on curry,” but that each insists on naturalizing (and domesticating) the dish, asserting its Englishness. Zlotnick notes that Acton’s curries do not appear in her chapter on “Foreign and Jewish Cookery,” and quotes from the anonymous *Modern Domestic Cookery* (1851), “Curry . . . is now so completely naturalized, that few dinners are thought to be complete unless one is on the table,” but insists that such works “can claim curry as a ‘naturalized’ dish in part because it ignores the origins of curry in Indian – not Anglo-Indian – culture” (60). In contrast, Collingham asserts that British curry is essentially a hybrid metropolitan production, not an Indian foodway, to the extent that she titles her chapter on the subject “The British Invention of Curry” (107; 145–52).
 18. This condenses an enormous amount of further history into a sentence, but suffice it to say that the peculiar British arrangements of the postwar Commonwealth, designed to maintain the trade advantages of empire while shucking off the onerous duties of imperial rule, opened the floodgates of immigration (especially from South Asia, but also from Jamaica and portions of West Africa) until renewed xenophobia, personified by “Rivers of Blood” MP Enoch Powell, closed off the option in 1962. For a handy summary, see Cohen, esp. 37–98.
 19. And never mind that the hot-food trope in the novel does assorted other metaphoric work, playing out in essence as the equivalent of the dark female character Nicola Six’s penchant for sodomy. We are just paying attention to the food here. And never mind as well the whole question of whether that beer is a lager.

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