

Making a Man

G W E N H Y M A N



Gentlemanly Appetites in the
Nineteenth-Century British Novel

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出版者:

出版时间:2009-5

装帧:

isbn:9780821418536

Gruel and truffles, wine and gin, opium and cocaine. "Making a Man: Gentlemanly Appetites in the Nineteenth-Century British Novel" addresses consumption of food, drink, and drugs in the conspicuously consuming nineteenth century in order to explore the question of what, in fact, makes a man in novels of the period. Gwen Hyman analyzes the rituals of dining room, drawing room, opium den, and cocaine lab, and the ways in which these alimentary behaviors make, unmake, and remake the gentlemanly body.

The gentleman, "Making a Man" argues, is a dangerous alimental force. Threatened with placelessness, he seeks to locate and mark himself through his feasting and fasting. But in doing so, he inevitably threatens to starve, to subsume, to swallow the community around him. The gentleman is at once fundamental and fundamentally threatening to the health of the nation: his alimental monstrousness constitutes the nightmare of the period's striving, anxious, alimentally fraught middle class.

"Making a Man" makes use of food history and theory, literary criticism, anthropology, gender theory, economics, and social criticism to read gentlemanly consumers from Mr. Woodhouse, the gruel-eater in Jane Austen's *Emma*, through the vampire and the men who hunt him in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. Hyman argues that appetite is a crucial means of casting light on the elusive identity of the gentleman, a figure who is the embodiment of power and yet is hardly embodied in Victorian literature.

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