

A FOOD CRAZE IN EUROPE: The *pain intégral* in Belgium around 1900

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IN SEARCH OF BREAD CRAZES

Bread varies *ad infinitum*. Over the past decades, the millers' and bakers' ingenuity has yielded an innumerable diversity of bread throughout the world. They use various sorts and mixtures of cereals, apply different grades of removing bran and of sieving flour, use leavening agents or not, add diverse ingredients like milk, herbs, raisins or nuts, employ different baking techniques, and concoct several shapes, colours and weights. All these sorts have specific names, qualities, prices and meanings that vary from region to region and season to season. Such rich variation allows the producer or consumer to emphasize identity, accentuate social and cultural differences, and include or exclude people, even today. This is the reason why a relatively banal foodstuff may constitute a craze or 'an exaggerated and often transient enthusiasm' (*Merriam-Webster Dictionary*). The recent, huge interest in sourdough bread testifies to this. This example makes clear why it is relevant to study bread crazes: they inform about consumers' deeper concerns, desires or fears regarding health, status or identity. Primarily, food crazes provide insight in the way food innovation may occur.

How about bread crazes in the past? Did some sorts of bread receive attention that made them popular during a particular period? If so, when, where, and why? Wider questions ensue: what exactly is the role of a food craze in the history of food? Answering these questions requires a crystal-clear understanding of 'craze', 'fad', 'vogue' or 'cult' (the latter in the non-religious sense). Jonathan Deutsch gives the following definition: 'Food fads are crazes or trends that enter popular culture rather quickly but then

fade away, usually just as quickly, although in some cases, fads may evolve into long-term trends'.¹ Food fads, he continues, may be connected to cooking, health, ethnicity, aesthetics or technology. Past and recent food crazes are, for example, the soda fountains in the USA in the 1860s, Horace Fletcher's masticating technique in the 1890s, and countless diets since the 1930s. Deutsch's definition requires closer consideration, which I will give by asking questions that this essay cannot answer in every instance. These relate to three aspects of a food craze: the duration, the pattern, and the partakers. Mostly, a food fad is temporary. But how long might it persist? A couple of weeks, a season, one year or longer? More importantly, why would it appear and then vanish? Following Everett Rogers, a fad develops rapidly.² But would a food fad always occur at speed, as a sensation? And does 'rapid' mean days, weeks or months? Both Deutsch and Rogers accept that a food craze may evolve into a trend, which complicates the search for a clear definition. A food craze may indeed be part of the life-cycle of a product, practice or idea and represent the initial stage of something persistent. But why would one food fad have a sequel, and another not? Other questions relate to the role manufacturers, diverse mediators (scientists, journalists, marketers, *influencers*, ...) and consumers play. Rogers touches upon the latter. According to him, some consumers are in search of status (the innovators, fashionistas or aficionados). Would only élites, searching status and distinction, propel a craze, as suggested by Deutsch? Is *everybody* looking for status and thus potentially able to generate fads? How many people have to be involved in a food craze? And how would non-participants perceive this phenomenon?

'Fad', 'craze', 'vogue' or 'cult' barely emerge in the canon of food-history writing. Little or no systematic attention has been paid to it, although it pops up in food historiography that stresses innovation. Few sociologists considered food fads, and even fewer historians have contributed to its systematic investigation. Sylvia Lovegren's exploration of food fads in the USA in the twentieth century reads like a nostalgic recipe book with context. She doubts

now and then whether all phenomena she considers actually are fads³. Jeffrey Pilcher surveyed food fads since the late eighteenth century, opening his piece by mentioning one-sided views on food fads that are often connected to dieting.⁴ In contrast, he emphasizes their diverse inspirations such as industrial capitalism (e.g., the first Parisian restaurants), morality (e.g., food recommendations), and identity (e.g., national cuisines). Joan Thirsk studied food innovations in early-modern England and included food fads. She considers the example of York Mayne bread that was very fashionable around 1590 but was replaced by spiced cake some years later. She concludes that ‘we can acknowledge as proven that people in every generation saw their bread changing in some way in accordance with phases, fads and fashions’.⁵ In her general conclusion (that goes beyond bread), she stresses the role of food fads and the desire of the rich for rare and expensive foods and the trickle-down to the middle classes, although she advocates the longing for new flavours by all classes. Kima Cargill’s book includes chapters with a historical dimension; it has two papers on bread.⁶ Sasha Gora, arguing that bread ‘has many cults’, examines the recent and antagonistic obsession with sourdough bread and gluten-free bread, and Jennifer Martin studies the tension between coeliac sufferers and what she calls the gluten-free hobbyists.

The above shows that a handful of historians have found, albeit sometimes hesitantly, food and bread crazes in the past, that these were studied by using diverse sources and approaches, and that general conclusions with regard to duration, intensity and partakers are impossible. Inspired by Thirsk’s York Mayne bread, Lovegren’s use of advertisements and Gora’s use of newspapers, I look at nineteenth-century newspapers to investigate discourses and practices about bread fads. I tackle my topic in a pragmatic way. First, there is the geographical limitation. Because bread has so many types and meanings throughout the world it is necessary to select a specific region, and Belgium will be studied.⁷ Second, this essay will focus on the *Belle Époque* (1890 to 1914). Milling and baking industrialized in the course of the nineteenth century, which led to a fundamental shift in production and consumption

of bread and allowed a greater variety of bread types. And third, I combine discourses and practices, because studying food crazes requires attention to both.

Tracking a food or bread craze in the past is far from simple. Only exceptionally did contemporaries unequivocally pinpoint this phenomenon.⁸ Following the above mentioned literature, I turned to newspapers – close to the daily concerns of very diverse people and, fortunately, increasingly digitalized. I used the on-line newspaper collection of the Royal Library of Brussels which contains 94 national and regional dailies between 1826 and 1970. I focussed on the years 1850 to 1914 and searched for several French and Dutch words related to types of bread with a healthy or therapeutic image (*pain bis*, *pain complet*, *pain intégral*, *pain graham*, *pain naturel*, *pain Kneipp*, *pain entier*, *graham brood*, *kneippbrood*, *integraalbrood*, *natuurbrood* and *volkorenbrood*). This yielded disappointing results (a couple of mentions over the whole period), except for *pain intégral* / *integraalbrood* ('integral bread', or wheaten wholemeal bread). Up to 1896, the Belgian press did not mention *pain intégral* at all, but in 1897 this word combination appeared suddenly on 26 occasions. The next year *pain intégral* was mentioned 87 times, in 1899 22, and in 1900 20 times. In 1901 the interest faded away to re-appear modestly in 1911. Between 1897 and 1914, '*pain intégral*' showed up on 186 occasions in eleven newspapers.⁹ Although the 87 mentions in 1898 do not suggest a crushing popular interest, these may reveal a much broader concern. So, I take as a hypothesis that the *pain intégral*-case in Belgium in 1898 is an example of a bread craze. By the way, Dutch and French newspaper databases reveal that *integraalbrood* and *pain intégral* also only appeared in the late 1890s.¹⁰

THE ROYAL WHITE

In order to put *pain intégral* into context, this investigation continues by considering bread types and their evaluation and consumption in Belgium in the nineteenth century. For a very long time, a clear hierarchy with regard to bread cereals existed with wheat at the top, and rye, oats, barley, buckwheat, peas,

beans, and, later, corn and potatoes clearly subordinate to wheat. Price differences confirmed this hierarchy.¹¹ At best, rye, barley or buckwheat could provide additional ingredients to wheat. Not only did the sort of grain determine the price and status of the bread, but also the degree of bolting (removing the bran) and sieving. The type of grain and its handling led to different sorts of breads in one place at any one specific period. For example, in 1841 the city of Brussels had six varieties from cheap to expensive: rye bread, maslin bread (half rye and half wheat), unbolted wheat (*'pain de farine non-tamisée comme elle sort du moulin'*), wheaten bread without coarse bran (*'pain bis'* or *'troisième qualité'*), semi-white wheaten bread without coarse and fine bran (*'deuxième qualité'*), and bread of the finest wheat flour (*'première qualité'* or *'fleur de farine'*).¹² As a general rule – with, of course, exceptions – one may say that, in many places and periods, the richer the bread eater, the whiter the bread; and the richer a region, the more people will have whiter bread.

Gastronomic and health treatises of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries confirm the grain hierarchy and the image of wheaten bread. The latter provides a tasty, fragrant and digestible bread. Most authors assert that wheaten bread is innately meant for richer people, whereas unbolted maslin and rye bread is naturally for the working classes. Sensitive stomachs can only tolerate bread made from wheat that has been sieved, while rye bread is suitable for the rough digestive system of workmen.¹³ Besides, it was commonly known that bran does not nourish. In fact, concluded a French report in 1856, bran is not meant for human consumption, its presence in flour is harmful to the quality of the bread and, just like water, bran adds to the weight but not to the bread.¹⁴ The proliferation of bread made of finer wheat after 1850 did not alter the perception of social distinction insofar as it related to bread consumption. For instance, in 1855 Dr Lombard of the *Faculté de Médecine* of Paris wrote about white and brown wheaten bread as follows: 'White bread has a crispy, golden-yellow crust, the crumb is white with airy holes, and smells and tastes pleasant. It suits the weak organs of the city

dweller. *Pain bis* contains a certain amount of bran and has more gluten than white bread, it is more compact, making it more suited for the working class.¹⁵

After 1850, the scientific analysis of food gained ground, and it became clear that rye bread was hardly inferior to wheaten bread in terms of nutrition. Moreover, unbolted bread can help against constipation. Bread from rye is described as 'reasonably tasty with a pleasant scent that can be stored for seven to eight days'.¹⁶ Yet, the body absorbs fewer substances of rye flour. However, these facts did not change many significant opinions: a French architect, former baker and influential author, A. Boland, asserted that rye bread can only be tolerated by robust stomachs, with which the lower class has no problem;¹⁷ the author L. Figuiet concluded, 'White bread nourishes more than brown bread, which is a truth that long has been questioned but has become very obvious today';¹⁸ and C. Touaillon, engineer and mill owner, developed this view even more radically when visiting upon bran any number of disadvantages, 'Bran prevents the bread to leaven, makes it heavy, compact, and gives a bitter taste, and finally, as Parmentier rightly said, it produces weight but no bread.'¹⁹ Up to 1914, many experts confirmed the vision that white wheaten bread was simply superior to all other sorts.

However, the continuing changes of the production process of milling and baking throughout the nineteenth century, leading to more and more refined bread, caused increasing interest in a *natural* product. So, despite the supremacy of the white, whiter and whitest bread, some discourses favoured brown and unbolted bread for health reasons. In 1837, the American Reverend S. Graham promoted unbolted and naturally fermented bread. He influenced many theorists and consumers throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and 'Graham bread' was mentioned in newspapers in England from the 1830s, and in France, the Netherlands and Belgium from the 1870s. Graham bread seduced vegetarians and devotees of the 'natural way of life'.²⁰ Others propagated brown bread, such as the English doctor Daniel Carr who conducted a crusade against white bread that he

blamed for many diseases and even premature deaths.²¹ A. Gautier fiercely condemned the 'exaggerated bolting of flour by the use of the Hungarian milling with cylinders' and favoured brown bread.²² As detailed above, these advocates of brown and unbolted bread were refuted by many, and by 1890 a vigorous debate about the relative value of white and brown bread had emerged in Western Europe.²³ This controversy was not confined to cloistered experts: it showed up in the press around 1900, where both wheaten and brown bread had their enthusiastic supporters. The Brussels-based, conservative daily *Le Vingtième Siècle*, for example, ended a long piece on the characteristics of white and brown bread by concluding that, 'without any fear we continue to enjoy the luxury of eating white bread,' whereas the socialist *Le Peuple* concluded, 'From a nutritional point of view, brown bread is far more superior because it digests better and provides all nutrients.'²⁴

What about actual daily bread consumption? For many decades, rich people had been eating bread, rolls, cookies and pastries made from fine wheaten flour. Its luxurious image and especially its higher price set its consumers clearly apart from the common populace. However, by the last decade of the nineteenth century a handful of people with high social and cultural capital began to pick up on medical suggestions that bread made with refined flour might not be the best route to good health. Some started to eat brown bread. This shift was mentioned in *Le Courrier de l'Escaut* (Tournai, province of Hainault) where it was reported in 1911, 'It is chic to eat brown bread, and you'll see that from top to bottom of the social ladder this fashion will spread, and that brown bread will replace white bread.'²⁵ Most likely, the growing consumption of brown bread in these circles was not only inspired by health, but also by a desire to re-erect boundaries between themselves and the majority of the population who, by the turn of the twentieth century, were economically capable of aping the habits of their betters and were adopting white wheaten bread in preference to their previous unrefined diet.

In the first quarter of the nineteenth century, poor Londoners, Parisian bricklayers and poorly paid Brussels workers longed for

white bread.²⁶ This craving was stirred by the idea that it was tasty and healthy and, especially, by the awareness that it was the bread of the well-to-do. Almost every social layer gazed at the customs and behaviours of richer people to take over bits and pieces of their consumption, and so, eating white bread was on the wish-list of many people living in towns and cities, including the poor. It actually was eaten on very rare occasions, like during the annual fair or a stay in the hospital (thus reinforcing the wheaten bread's healthy image). The high price of this bread prevented steady consumption, and so working-class families had to make do with maslin or rye bread. The change came in two stages: first, in the 1860s and 1870s, when semi-bolted wheaten bread spread because of improvements in agriculture and transportation; then, around 1900, when white bread of refined wheat started to be eaten widely because of technical changes in milling (the 'Hungarian cylinders'), decreasing prices and rising purchasing power. The 1843 enquiry into the conditions of the working classes in Belgium bears the traces of a slow transition, where one region still had plenty of rye, another region occasionally had wheat, and yet another swung between the two types of bread. The wage determined who had rye, maslin or wheat.²⁷ In 1886, however, the *Commission du Travail* testified to the almost complete transition from rye to wheaten bread. For example, the governor of the province of East Flanders noted, 'The only important change in terms of the nutrition of the worker is that he doesn't eat rye bread, but only wheaten bread.'²⁸ Regions with industries that paid well switched not just to wheaten bread but to fine white bread, which testified to the second shift in bread consumption of the ordinary Belgian. In 1896, *Le Vingtième Siècle* wrote, 'Wheaten bread spreads more and more in our countryside, and because of the fast progress, one may predict the total disappearance of brown bread that even the poor will not have and view as animal fodder.'²⁹

THE SALUBRIOUS INTÉGRAL

By 1912, unbolted wheaten and rye bread had not disappeared in Belgium. On the contrary, new varieties had appeared. For

example, in Brussels in 1906, a baker sold new sorts as *pain gris allemand*, *pain noir* and *pain de seigle rond* (all at 0.26 frs per kilo).³⁰ Moreover, a wholly new bread had appeared in the early 1890s. It was made of unbolted wheat, no ingredients were added (except water and salt), and, in some cases, it was naturally fermented. It definitely differed from the semi-white, brown or rye breads that were eaten by the common people up to the 1880s. The first advertisement for wholemeal bread in a Belgian newspaper appeared in July 1892.³¹ In 1897 one of the largest bakeries of Ghent, aiming at a general public, sold *Kneippbrood* and *Volledig tarwe brood* ('*pain complet de froment*'), and in 1906 a Brussels baker sold *Pain Kneipp intégral*.³² The price of these wholemeal breads did not differ from that of the mainstream breads.

For some time, attempts had been made to optimize the milling, kneading and baking processes, which resulted in big and small changes like the steel roller mill, kneading machines and the hot-air convection oven. Some doctors, chemists and bakers experimented with new systems, and some even wished to leave out the milling. In this respect, several names popped up in the Belgian, Dutch and French press in the 1890s, for instance Steinmetz, Gelinck, Avedyk, Desgoffe and Girard.³³ Some of them wished to use the bran, germ and endosperm of wheat with as little intervention as possible, so as to fully retain their nutritional and digestive value. This fitted within the trend of 'natural eating' that was successful in some parts of Europe and particularly in Germany, where Gustav Simons, 'the bread reformer', was a good example.³⁴ Various entrepreneurs saw business opportunities in this emerging interest in 'natural eating'. In 1897 a new bakery opened in Brussels: the Société Anonyme Compagnie Générale de Panification, and a spin-off from this, La Panification Nouvelle, opened in Charleroi in 1898. Both bakeries produced *pain intégral* as their main product.

The Brussels company was headed by Octave Avedyk, born in Kiev in 1845. He came to Belgium in 1867, studied in Ghent, married a Belgian woman, became an entrepreneur and Belgian citizen.³⁵ He set up his Compagnie in May 1897, with the significant

capital of 1.5 million francs. He used the *panificateur antispire* that he had invented with Auguste Desgoffe, and that was patented in Belgium, Germany, Italy, the USA, Great Britain, Australia, and Canada. The process appears quite straightforward.³⁶ The wheat is cleaned, then soaked in lukewarm water; salt and yeast are added; the wheat doubles in volume. No milling intervenes. This mix is put into the *panificateur* (consisting of rapidly rotating cylinders), producing a dough that is ready to bake as a *pain intégral*.³⁷ All nutrients of the wheat are maintained, production time is much shorter than the traditional process, and so bread is manufactured at low cost. Business flourished. The bakery produced 12,000 loaves per day, which could be increased to 25,000.³⁸ By 1903 the *société* had opened two more shops in the Brussels area, and the bakery sold its bread through subcontractors throughout the province of Brabant.³⁹ By 1904, however, the bakery had vanished without leaving a trace. The spin-off bakery of Charleroi which opened in September 1898 had a capital of 225,000 frs. It used the *antispire* machine, opened a shop in a neighbouring town, and signed agreements with bakers throughout the provinces of Hainault and Namur.⁴⁰ By 1904, the Panification Nouvelle also ceased to trade, most likely because of the disappearance of the Brussels company. However, its capital passed into a new company, the S.A. Alimentation Moderne, that sold various foodstuffs but no longer *pain intégral*.

Prior to the start of the Compagnie Générale de Panification in 1897, *pain intégral*, the *antispire* machine and the new *panification* had been mentioned a couple of times in the Belgian press. In late 1896, '*pain de froment entier sans farine*' and the *antispire* machine appeared in an announcement of a talk by Avedyk.⁴¹ He seemingly impressed his audience or, at least, was able to get the attention of newspapers. Reports about the new way of producing bread appeared in *Le Soir*, *La Réforme*, *Le Peuple* and *Le Vingtième Siècle*, titling their reports 'A Food Revolution'. Avedyk not only gave a talk, but the audience could also see the machine at work. The newspapers all praised the new way of producing bread, and one even mentioned that this was 'the most useful, if not the biggest

invention of the century'.⁴² The advantages of the new process to health were particularly stressed: 'The bread cures diabetes, gout, anaemia. It prevents obesity. It is excellent for children.'⁴³ One week before the opening of Avedyk's bakery, a newspaper piece referred to the 'bread crisis' (i.e., the controversy about white bread) and welcomed 'the new bread with bran, the integral bread, that will dethrone the white bread.'⁴⁴ The opening of the Charleroi bakery in 1898 was greeted in the press in a similar vein, once again with particular stress on health.⁴⁵ The launching of these new bakeries was evidently well prepared.

Interest in *pain intégral* and the *antispire* machine reached neighbouring countries. Already, in 1895, an article in a French newspaper used the word *intégral* as a variant of *complet*, *bis*, *Kneipp* and *Graham*. This piece concluded with *une remarque curieuse*: the bourgeoisie would have wholemeal bread, but certainly not the labouring classes.⁴⁶ *Pain intégral* was also mentioned during the International Congress of Hygiene and Demography, held in Madrid in July 1898. A French newspaper commented that it was too early to evaluate this bread because a factory near Paris had only manufactured *pain intégral* in the last couple of weeks.⁴⁷ Another newspaper condemned *pain intégral* because it contained bran, known to be totally ineffectual.⁴⁸ In Holland, in 1897, a newspaper asked why the general public so distrusted new types of bread, among which they included *integraalbrood*: 'This method, to obtain bread out of grain that has not been ground, is not new. It is only the [Avedyk] machine and the publicity about it that is new. ... Yet, in England, the N.A.P. Bread Company has been established with a capital of 2 million Guilders.'⁴⁹ In England, *The Tablet* referred to the *antispire* machine of Desgoffe and Avedyk as having been 'the subject of much discussion'.⁵⁰

When starting their business, both Belgian companies launched lots of advertisements, which partly explains the sudden increase of press interest in *pain intégral* in 1897 and 1898. Some advertisements were short and very plain. For example, five months after the opening of the Brussels bakery, '*pain intégral*' was printed three times in a bold and bigger font between ordinary

articles, without further information.⁵¹ The latter seems odd in that '*pain intégral*' was a new product with an unusual new word. Yet, just mentioning '*pain intégral*' without any explanation appeared later too.⁵² Was the word *intégral* sufficiently familiar? However, other advertisements supplied plenty of information. In July 1897, only a couple of weeks after the opening of the Compagnie Générale de Panification, an advertisement appeared that said, 'Why does your doctor recommend integral bread of whole wheat without milling and without flour? Because this is 'full' bread, the healthiest, the most nutritious, the most digestible, the tastiest, and the least expensive.'⁵³ This advertisement contains elements that reappeared later: '*intégral*' was defined, taste and good health were mentioned, and the low price was highlighted. However, both companies were comparatively low-key in discussing the novelty of their bread. Explanations about the process of making the bread appeared only twice and the *panificateur antispire* was mentioned only three times in the whole set of newspaper pieces related to *pain intégral*.⁵⁴

From 1897 to 1900, the bread's price, health, nutritious value, and taste appeared in advertisements that looked like ordinary articles and could be of various lengths (today's advertorials). Examples abound: 'It doesn't suffice to eat, one must nourish oneself. Adopt the integral bread of the Panification company, Quai au Foin, that is twice more nourishing than ordinary bread. One kilo: 20 centimes,' or '... The bread that is produced by the Panification Nouvelle is without doubt the best and the cheapest, and those who care about their health and purse, will know about its many advantages.'⁵⁵ The low price of the *pain intégral* was constantly emphasized, as for example in September 1897, 'Don't pay 25 or 30 centimes for a savourless and indigestible white bread. Buy integral bread, brought to your home, for only 20 centimes per kilo.'⁵⁶ Eating integral bread would save money, because 'integral bread nourishes twice as much as white bread.'⁵⁷ The low price of the wholemeal bread would certainly not prevent success. Health emerged under different forms in the advertisements: the bread is nutritious, regulates digestion,

prevents constipation, and is excellent for children.⁵⁸ And, finally, taste is emphasized, often, too, in contrast to bland white bread. Some examples are, 'Integral bread has a particular savour and is appetizing,' it is a 'delicious nutrient,' and 'most savoury.'⁵⁹ Some of these advertorials were quite lengthy. For example, in October 1898 one read,

Integral bread, recommended by all luminary doctors and among them dr. Desmedt of Brussels, as a main remedy against stomach affections, is particularly fit for people who sit during work. The daily use of integral bread immediately generates a feeling of well-being by regulating the intestinal functions and preventing constipation. All who have tried this bread of the Panification Nouvelle cannot do without it. This explains the considerable vogue that this company has acquired so rapidly (home delivery; telephone no. 405).⁶⁰

Did this Dr Desmedt recommend integral bread, and – quite intriguing – was there actually a *vogue*?

The concept of 'vogue' particularly appeared with regard to the Charleroi bakery. On various occasions and in different ways the success of the *pain intégral* was highlighted. 'Within a couple of hours, all breads were sold. A big crowd stood in front of the shop and visited with huge attention the superb installations.' 'The success of the integral bread of the Panification Nouvelle, rue de Marcinelle, is really extraordinary. Every morning there is a queue. This vogue is, by the way, absolutely deserved Soon, integral bread will be on the table of every family.'⁶¹ 'Vogue' was frequently used in September and October 1898, both in *Journal de Charleroi* (social-democrat) and *Gazette de Charleroi* (liberal-conservative), but also in *Le Vingtième Siècle* with regard to the Brussels bakery.⁶² The latter wrote, 'If its vogue is already big, it surely will increase more and more.'⁶³ Sufficed it to use the label 'vogue' to create one? Anyway, both bakeries of *pain intégral* went out of their way to make the public believe that their product sold excellently, hoping that this would attract new customers.

'*Pain intégral*' also surfaced in ordinary newspaper articles,

although the difference between these and advertorials is not always crystal-clear. Out of the 186 mentions of *pain intégral* in the corpus, 43 (or 23 per cent) were ordinary articles. Often, these pieces were lengthy and signed. But primarily, they show that *pain intégral* definitely had a successful life outside the purely commercial attention of some newspapers. Only a couple of weeks after opening, the Compagnie Générale de Panification participated in the bakery section of the 1897 Brussels International Exhibition,⁶⁴ thus showing an amazing entrepreneurial spirit. It had set up the *antispire* machine to show the new process of bread making, allowing visitors to taste the *pain intégral*. One of these was King Leopold II, whose visit was covered by the press. *Le Soir* published a long, lively piece, that started, ‘The King listens with great attention to Mr Avedyk’s explanations who describes the functioning of the *antispire* machine.’⁶⁵ The low production cost, the application outside Belgium, the nutritious value of wholemeal bread, its square form (‘preferred by English people’), and the fact that the German Emperor eats wholemeal bread every day, were mentioned. By the way, the word *intégral* was put between inverted commas, as if it was not very familiar to the readers. *Journal de Bruxelles* also wrote about the King’s visit in a more sober fashion than the vivid style of *Le Soir*: ‘Progress is twofold: in hygiene and in economics. Hygiene, because the gluten, the aromatic oils and the phosphates, crucial elements for health and development, are preserved. In economic terms, because the cost of milling is absent, and the output is considerably higher.’⁶⁶ This article noticed the crowd that witnessed the conversation between the King and Avedyk and his enjoying a slice of *pain intégral*. Finally, *La Réforme* also reported this visit. Stress was put on health issues: ‘The *‘pain intégral*’ is infinitely better for one’s health than the white, luxury bread So, this is, said the King, a new product to be particularly recommended to the workers.’⁶⁷ Unexpectedly, the Compagnie Générale obtained an award at the Exhibition: ‘The company, participating for the first time in a competition, wins a golden medal awarded by the jury of the bakery group of the Exposition of 1897.’⁶⁸ Even a couple of

months later, this medal was mentioned in a newspaper article, adding that ‘thousands and thousands of people have tasted the integral bread.’⁶⁹

A few newspaper articles echoed criticism about the *pain intégral* and its bakeries. *Le Petit Bleu* published an article by a Dr Veeken, that opened, ‘Many questions have been put about the nutritive value of the integral bread, produced by the Compagnie Générale de Panification.’⁷⁰ Unfortunately, the author did not mention which questions nor by whom they were voiced. Dr Veeken concluded in favour of the wholemeal bread, ‘The creation [of the *pain intégral*] is beneficial to the working class that now has a digestible, healthy and nourishing bread at low cost.’

The latter point touches upon the buyers of the *pain intégral*, and also leads us to speculate on who it was that was party to this possible bread craze. Both bakeries aimed for the broadest audience, to whom the low price of the bread would surely be a recommendation. Hence, words in the discourse like ‘vogue’, ‘the customers’, ‘every family’ or ‘the public’ were readily used.⁷¹ Yet, *Le Soir* published a letter of a reader: ‘But why is the integral bread, economical and nourishing par excellence, solely sold in the rich quarters of Brussels?’ *Le Soir* put this question to the Compagnie Générale, but the somewhat inadequate reply was that the bakery must serve the costumers who come first.⁷² The reader’s question suggested a more élitist public. Now and then the bakeries’ discourse spoke about ‘bourgeois tables’,⁷³ and, moreover, a publicity poster of the company (see the frontispiece, above) clearly showed a bourgeois décor.⁷⁴ Yet, it is impossible to know who the buyers of *pain intégral* were because of lack of information. The low price did certainly not prevent wide sales. Would this bread particularly appeal to a small group of well-informed and rather wealthy people, as *La Dépêche* suggested in 1895?⁷⁵

In 1904 both bakeries of *pain intégral* closed. Apart from the announcement in the Belgian press of a meeting where the liquidation was to be dealt with, there is no information about the end of both enterprises. Was the Brussels company too ambitious in having three shops? Did the consumers lose interest in *pain intégral*

and was the momentum gone? Was the impact of the white-bread adherents underestimated? Wholemeal bread was indeed strongly opposed, as mentioned above. One of the opponents was a French military doctor Jules Arnould: 'Let us mention also integral bread obtained by the *antispire* machine, that was welcomed by Pagliani; but Celli and Serafino have found that integral bread contains harmful ingredients and that it is not conducive to good digestion.'⁷⁶ Of course, such negative evaluations did not reach the general public, but perhaps Arnould's view was typical of a more general assessment of wholemeal bread in those days.

The attention in the Belgian press for *pain intégral* declined in 1899 and 1900 (22 mentions each) and collapsed in 1901 (only 6 mentions). The phrase *pain intégral* only appeared four times between 1902 and 1910: two advertisements, a report of a visit to a school cafeteria, and a longer piece that surveyed the qualities of various types of bread, among which were included 'the *complet* bread, also labelled Graham bread, natural bread and integral bread.'⁷⁷ The Compagnie Générale de Panification and the Panification Nouvelle did not advertise at all between 1901 and 1904: a sign of difficulties? Between 1911 and 1914, a Brussels bakery advertised with 'Constipation! Eat integral bread, the best, 21, rue Montagne aux Herbes Potagères.'⁷⁸ The exceptional appearance of '*pain intégral*' after 1900 showed that this label had been accepted as a variant of '*complet*', '*naturel*' or 'Graham', and that it was definitely linked to smooth digestion.

AN ABORTED BREAD FAD

In 1897 and 1898 *pain intégral* undoubtedly had its moment in Belgium. It obtained a gold medal at the 1897 Brussels International Exhibition, where thousands of people could taste a totally new bread and get acquainted with a new name. Shops multiplied, and bakeries sold the bread in the provinces, which suggests its success. There was much publicity for *pain intégral* in newspapers. However, judging by the appearance of *pain intégral* in the media, the momentum has dissipated by 1900. So, do we witness a *genuine* craze?

Let us return to the questions I put at the outset of this paper. The interest was sudden. The 1897 Universal Exhibition triggered this, followed by media attention in the same year. Much more attention ensued in 1898, when another bakery started selling *pain intégral*, but the interest was limited to a couple of years: already, by 1899, it was on the decrease. Secondly, the manufacturers themselves made the running in drumming up interest, in creating their own vogue for the bread, by incessantly publishing advertorials and overt advertisements. Beyond this publicity, however, the bread did not enjoy much attention in the media, even if a certain degree of curiosity can be identified. Thirdly, it remains wholly unclear which social classes bought the wholemeal bread. Price was certainly not an obstacle for the labouring classes, however, they preferred to eat white bread. *Pain intégral* was never a popular item. Taking all three elements together, I might conclude that the bakeries certainly had hoped for a craze about their *pain intégral*, that sales were initially satisfactory, but that the wider public did not pick up on their enthusiasm. So, rather than telling a story about a bread craze, this paper is an account of a failed creation of such a craze.

Taking these conclusions to a more general level, it appears that newspapers provide good sources for researching food crazes but that other documents must be used too (e.g., treatises, magazines, flyers, posters, travel guides, pictures, diaries, private letters, et cetera). Discourses must be linked to practices in order to learn about the actual extent and duration of a craze. The progression, or stages, of a food fad needs to be highlighted in order to fully grasp the phenomenon. It starts somewhere and somehow on the initiative of someone, often in a manner that might be deemed sensational, and ends with or evolves into more durable consumption. But whether the latter occurs depends on many elements such as the food itself, its image, particular events, and consumers' views and prejudices. In other words, plenty of research ahead.

NOTES

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2. Rogers, Everett, *Diffusion of innovations*. New York: Free Press, 2003³, p. 231.
3. Lovegren, Sylvia, *Fashionable foods. Seven decades of food fads*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005².
4. Pilcher, Jeffrey, 'Food fads', in Kenneth Kiple & Kriemhild Coneè Ornelas (eds), *The Cambridge World History of Food*, volume 2. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, pp. 1486–1495.
5. Thirsk, Joan, *Food in early modern England: phases, fads, fashions 1500–1760*. London: Continuum, 2006, p. 235.
6. Cargill, Kima (ed.), *Food Cults. How fads, dogma and doctrine influence diet*. London: Rowan & Littlefield, 2017; Gora, Sasha, 'Breaking bread. The Clashing Cults of Sourdough and Gluten Free', in Cargill, *Food Cults...*, pp. 173–186; Martin, Jennifer, 'The gluten-free cult', in Cargill, *Food cults ...*, pp. 187–203.
7. The reason for this choice is not just pragmatic. Belgium had lots of contacts with its neighbouring countries and was open to various influences. So, this country mirrored what happened elsewhere earlier or later.
8. E.g., 'The Graham bread reform started about half a century ago, and now it is largely supplanted by the whole-wheat bread fad', *Table Talk*, vol. 14, 1899, p. 115.
9. If '*pain intégral*' appears several times in one newspaper article, I counted it only once.
10. <https://www.delpher.nl/nl/kranten> and <https://gallica.bnf.fr/html/und/presse-et-revues/les-principaux-quotidiens?mode=desktop> (accessed October and November 2019).
11. For example, in the city of Ghent in 1816 a kilo of white wheaten bread cost 0.38 francs and rye bread 0.17 francs (Gerda Avondts & Peter Scholliers, *Gentse prijzen, huishuren en budgetonderzoeken in de 19^e en 20^e eeuw*. Brussels: Centre for Contemporary Social History, 1981, p. 47.
12. *Journal de Bruxelles*, 18 January 1841, p. 4.
13. Becquerel, Alfred, *Traité élémentaire d'hygiène publique et privée*. Paris: Asselin, 1864, p. 544.
14. Poggiale, M, *Rapport inédit de Parmentier sur le pain des troupes*. Paris: Noblet, 1856, p. 47.
15. Lombard, Léandre, *Le cuisinier et le médecin*. Paris: Curmer, 1855, p. 167.
16. Lévy, Michel, *Traité d'hygiène publique et privée*. Paris: Baillièere, 1869, p. 675.
17. Boland, A., *Traité pratique de la boulangerie*. Paris: Lacroix, 1860, pp. 48–49, 155–156.
18. Figuier, Louis, *Les merveilles de l'industrie. Industrie agricole et alimentaire*. Paris: Furne, 1877, p. 43.
19. Touaillon, Charles, *Meunerie, boulangerie, biscuiterie*. Paris: Maison rustique, 1879³, p. 344.
20. E.g., Dock, Fr-Wilhelm, *Du végétarisme ou de la manière de vivre selon les lois de la nature*, St-Gall: Zollikofer, 1878.
21. Carr, Daniel, *The necessity of brown bread for digestion, nourishment and sound health and the injurious effects of white bread*. London: E. Wilson, 1847.

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24. *Le Vingtième Siècle*, 13 August 1896, p. 1; *Le Peuple*, 25 March 1914, p. 5.
25. *Le Courrier de l'Escaut*, 27 February 1911, p. 2.
26. Accum, Frederic, *A Treatise on the Art of Making Good and Wholesome Bread*. London: T. Boys, 1821, pp. 21–24; *Enquête sur la boulangerie du département de la Seine*. Paris: Imprimerie Impériale, 1854, p. 118; *Enquête sur la condition des classes ouvrières et sur le travail des enfants*, Brussels: Lesigne, 1848, III, 623.
27. *Enquête sur la condition, ...*, 1848, III, 139.
28. *Commission du Travail. Comptes rendus des séances plénières*. Brussels: Lesigne, 1887, I, p. 651.
29. *Le Vingtième Siècle*, 13 August 1896, p. 1.
30. *Le Soir*, 27 April 1906, p. 5.
31. *La Meuse*, 9 July 1892, p. 3.
32. Reverend Sebastian Kneipp (1821–1897, Bavaria) proposed natural ways of healing, including cold baths, long walks in the fields, and a natural diet that included fruits, vegetables and wholemeal bread. On Kneipp's influence in Belgium, see Peeters, Evert, 'Burning bodies. Catholic hydrotherapy and mystical performance', *Revue belge de Philologie et d'Histoire*, 88 : 4 (2010), pp. 1213–1228.
33. Spickermann, Uwe, 'Vollkornbrot in Deutschland', *Comparativ*, 11 : 1 (2001), pp. 27–50.
34. Treitel, Corinna, *Eating nature in modern Germany*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017, p. 58.
35. Chamber of Representatives, 10 February 1885 (https://sites.google.com/site/bplenium/proceedings/1885/k00132374/k00132374_09), accessed on 15 November 2019.
36. The US patent includes a detailed description of the machine, Patent no. 582272, 11 May 1897, (<https://patents.google.com/patent/US582272>), accessed on 14 August 2019.
37. *Le Soir*, 27 September 1897, p. 2.
38. *Le Soir*, 7 June 1897, p. 3; *Gazette de Charleroi*, 3 September 1898, p. 3.
39. *Bruxelles et sa banlieue. Indications des habitants classés par ordre alphabétique des professions*, Brussels, 1903, p. 911, (https://archieff.brussel.be/almanach/watch/AC/AC_1903/AC_1903_PROFESSIONS%20BEROEPEN#page/283).
40. *Journal de Charleroi*, 5 July 1899, p. 3.
41. *Le Peuple*, 25 September 1896, p. 1.
42. *Le Soir*, 1 October 1896, p. 6. See too *Le Vingtième Siècle*, 27 September 1896, p. 2; *La Réforme*, 27 September 1896, p. 3; and *Le Peuple*, 8 October 1896, p. 3.
43. *Le Peuple*, 8 October 1896, p. 3.
44. *Le Soir*, 22 May 1897, p. 1.
45. *Gazette de Charleroi*, 27 August 1898, p. 2, 28 August 1898, p. 2, and 30 August 1898, p. 2; *Journal de Charleroi*, 28 August 1898, p. 2, and 2 September 1898, p. 3.
46. *La Dépêche* (Toulouse), 8 December 1895, p. 1.
47. *Le Progrès de la Côte d'Or* (Dijon), 19 July 1898, pp. 2–3; *Le Génie Civil* (Paris), 11 June 1898, p. 2.
48. *La Croix* (Paris), 16 October 1898, pp. 1–2.

49. *Provinciale Noordbrabantsche en 's Hertogenbossche Courant*, 11 October 1897, p. 2. The article also appeared in *De Grondwet*, 2 November 1897, p. 1.
50. *The Tablet* (London), 5 March 1898, pp. 10–11.
51. *Le Soir*, 9 October 1897, p. 2; *Le Vingtième Siècle*, 6 October 1897, p. 2; *La Réforme*, 9 October 1897, p. 3.
52. E.g., *Le Vingtième Siècle*, 12 November 1898, p. 4.
53. *La Réforme*, 25 July 1897, p. 6.
54. *Gazette de Charleroi*, 28 August 1898, p. 2.
55. *Le Petit Bleu*, 6 October 1897, p. 3; *Gazette de Charleroi*, 30 May 1899, p. 3.
56. *Le Soir*, 9 September 1897, p. 1; *Le Soir* 16 September 1897, p. 2.
57. *Le Soir*, 3 October 1897, p. 2, 12 October 1898, p. 4.
58. *Le Soir*, 22 May 1898, p. 1; *Le Vingtième Siècle*, 22 February 1898, p. 2; *Gazette de Charleroi*, 30 October 1898, p. 3.
59. *Gazette de Charleroi*, 10 September 1898, p. 2; *Gazette de Charleroi*, 24 September 1898, p. 3, *La Réforme*, 25 July 1897, p. 6.
60. *Gazette de Charleroi*, 30 October 1898, p. 3.
61. *Gazette de Charleroi*, 4 September 1898, p. 2; *Gazette de Charleroi*, 10 September 1898, p. 2.
62. *Journal de Charleroi*, 15 September 1898, p. 3, 18 September 1898, p. 3, 29 September 1898, p. 3; *Gazette de Charleroi*, 10 September 1898, p. 2, 24 September 1898, p. 3, 30 October 1898, p. 3.
63. *Le Vingtième Siècle*, 22 February 1898, p. 2.
64. This exhibition was formally recognized by the *Bureau International des Expositions*, it attracted over 6 million visitors (<https://www.bie-paris.org/site/en/1897-brussels>).
65. *Le Soir*, 19 August 1897, p. 2.
66. *Journal de Bruxelles*, 19 August 1897, p. 2.
67. *La Réforme*, 19 August 1897, pp. 1–2.
68. *Le Soir*, 31 October 1897, p. 2; *Le Petit Bleu*, 7 November 1897, p. 3.
69. *La Réforme*, 15 April 1898, p. 2.
70. *Le Petit Bleu*, 7 November 1897, p. 3.
71. *Gazette de Charleroi*, 23 January 1899, p. 3; *Gazette de Charleroi*, 10 September 1898, p. 2; *Journal de Charleroi*, 9 January 1899, p. 2.
72. *Le Soir*, 26 May 1898, p. 3.
73. *Gazette de Charleroi*, 9 October 1898, p. 2.
74. © KIK-IRPA, Brussels, by Georges Lemmens, 1899, <http://balat.kikirpa.be/object/50003596>
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78. *Le Soir*, 5 October 1911, p. 9 (repeated various times).

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