

modern period has problematized sexuality in innovative ways, in part as a result of a scientific interest in sex, but also as western society increasingly broke away from the shackles of Christianity and began to speak confidently about sex from a wider variety of perspectives than possible within the Christian canon. This task began with attention to sexually transmitted diseases and masturbation, although it included many related syndromes associated with the “crisis in masculinity”, of which impotence is a part. Important in this respect is neurasthenia. Given that McLaren relies heavily on certain Victorian doctors who gave sex advice, and later focuses closely upon the works of the sexologists Alfred Kinsey and (especially) William Masters and Virginia Johnson, it is surprising that more attention was not given to other nineteenth-century sexologists. Havelock Ellis, Richard von Krafft-Ebing, Alfred Binet, and Albert Moll are mentioned only in passing, despite the fact that they contributed much of the groundwork to understanding impotence psychologically that was later picked up by the psychoanalysts. The work of organotherapists and other surgeons dealing with male sexual dysfunction (Eugen Steinach, Norman Haire, etc.) is rightly prominent. Likewise, American post-Second World War sexologists are allocated much space, as are recent developments like Viagra and other pharmaceuticals designed to treat impotence. It is laudable that throughout his book McLaren does not focus on impotence in isolation, but places the condition in relation to other writing about sexuality (male and female), reproduction, and broader conceptions of masculinity.

Given McLaren’s vast historical scope, it is unsurprising that the book’s historiographical apparatus is underdeveloped (a typical problem of cultural histories of this type, jumping from epoch to epoch and field to field, all contained in a slick narrative). While it is clear from this book that changes in conceptions of impotence took place, the mechanisms for such changes are not fully addressed. The medical sources relied upon

are broadly removed from their intellectual contexts and practices, with only quotations pertaining to impotence cited. The “surfaces” of these discourses are read, not their “formation” (to refer to Foucault). The material herein offers the possibility for a much more developed statement about the interrelation of discursive fields and the historical dynamics of knowledge, the production(s) of impotent subjects, points of resistance that such power makes possible for these subjects, a detailed analysis of the ways science and medicine have variously defined norms and pathologies of masculinity, etc. Much too could have been said about the everyday experience of impotence—especially in this Viagra age which often draws upon the experiences of users, showing more how sexual subjectivities are formed in relation to medical discourses. McLaren is aware of these historiographical issues: he calls this a “constructionist history”, written as a Foucauldian genealogy (pp. xii-xiii). But the issues needing to be addressed in order to produce such a history are subsumed in the text, which results in a fairly limp genealogy of modern sexual dysfunction. What we do have, however, is a good introduction to an important problem in the history of sexuality, examined against a rich backdrop of other sexual problems. It will be a useful book for teaching, but it does not offer the satisfactory theoretical meta-narrative that such cultural histories need.

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**Peter J Atkins, Peter Lummel and Derek J Oddy** (eds), *Food and the city in Europe since 1800*, Aldershot and Burlington, VT, Ashgate, 2007, pp. xvi, 260, £55.00, \$99.95 (hardback 978-0-7546-4989-2)

This volume results from a symposium organized under the auspices of the International Commission for Research into European Food History. It brings together

scholarship from a range of disciplinary perspectives to consider how the development of major conurbations impacted on the supply and distribution of foodstuffs, and how the state, municipal authorities and individual citizens adapted to the challenges that arose from these changes. The essays are divided into four main sections: feeding the multitude, food regulation, food innovations—the product perspective and eating fashions—and the consumer perspective. Each section contains essays on a range of cities and/or national contexts, but these rarely facilitate direct comparisons because their precise themes and chronological coverage are not directly matched. The first section, for example, takes in London and Paris during the 1850s, Berlin at the fin-de-siècle and in the aftermath of the Second World War, and Barcelona between 1870 and 1935. Collectively these essays explore the development of modern production, processing and retailing systems in their different contexts and their impact on food availability. Jürgen Schmidt's contribution on Berlin in the aftermath of the Second World War offers a fresh perspective by drawing attention away from the construction of urban food systems towards their fragility in times of crisis. He shows how official allocations were supplemented by the individual actions of consumers and how the ability of the Allies to feed the citizens during the blockade ensured support for democracy and liberalism.

The second section on food regulation is perhaps the most coherent. Here essays on Brussels, London, Paris, and German cities focus attention on the development, from the second half of the nineteenth century, of systematic monitoring systems that drew on the expertise of chemists. Frequent tensions between central and local authorities in implementing legislation, and between the authorities and consumers who exerted pressure for reforms that favoured their interests above those of producers are revealed.

Section three contains a number of strong essays, including two that address the topic of food supply under communist regimes. Jukka

Gronow offers important insights into the symbolic roles of restaurants and luxury food stores in Stalinist Moscow during the 1930s. These represented the bright future of socialism, open to the common people. They also suggested a future of abundance that placed pressures on officials to deliver and led to scapegoating when they failed. The significance of changing political priorities in shaping the food distribution network of Prague between 1950 and 1970, are assessed by Martin Franc. Initially the supply of food to the city's working population was key, but gradually the emphasis shifted to the development of the city centre, a major tourist destination. Preferential food supplies to shops in this district were intended to present an impressive shop window to foreign visitors, so that the area, which contained only 7.7 per cent of the city's population accounted for 22.8 per cent of food sales.

The final section includes a disparate collection of contributions on the symbolic nature of the public dinners eaten by Berlin scientists, dietary reform in late-nineteenth-century Europe, social and cultural perspectives on food habits in Oslo, and the recent development of food markets in Bordeaux. Collectively, the papers draw attention to the range of factors that interacted to influence and change eating habits and the ways in which these played out in different urban and national contexts. Their diversity draws attention to a range of topics that would merit further, more systematic, comparative research. Indeed, as the editors indicate in their conclusion, the volume as a whole suggests that there is much to be gained by adopting such a research agenda, as their section on food regulation demonstrates. Elsewhere matched pairs of essays begin to do this, but, overall, this collection does more to indicate where fruitful opportunities for future comparative research might lie than it does to present the results of such projects.

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