

reconsideration of what it meant to be male. Chapter 3's coverage of the rival masculinities that emerged from clashing political agendas is thus designed to be neither a comprehensive nor a conventional narrative of men and war. Instead, Hughes uses sources ranging from Cavalier pamphlets and the Putney debates to the writings of the Digger Gerrard Winstanley to uncover competing understandings of what it meant to be a "political man." Her analysis demonstrates that martyrdom, authority, household, and the dependent/independent dichotomy all possessed gendered contexts and consequences. Chapter 4, in contrast, shifts attention from the concrete to the theoretical, examining such "political imaginaries" as the body politic and the familial metaphors employed in political discourse. In her assessment of the impact of crisis on gendered understandings of politics, Hughes argues persuasively that parliamentarians tended to distinguish between family and state and between public and private in ways that royalists did not.

There is much to admire in this study, and it is a testament to Hughes's skill that there are several topics a reader may wish she had given slightly expanded consideration. At the end of the introduction, she notes, she has included "neither women nor men form a homogeneous category, and in this book their experiences during the English revolution are structured by age, social and marital status, religious and political allegiance, and sometimes by national or ethnic identity, as well as by gender" (29). The book is at its most effective when probing the interplay of religious and political loyalties with gender; it addresses age and status somewhat less distinctly. Little attention, however, is given to issues of regional diversity. Hughes explicitly excludes Ireland and Scotland as a focus (4), but greater acknowledgment of the ability of local practices and customs to shape individual and communal identities would have given her argument about the multiplicity of English masculinities and femininities added nuance. In addition, while admirably dividing her attention between royalists and parliamentarians, and among radical religious sects, Hughes provides little commentary on men who adopted a neutral or antiwar stance. In what ways did the activities and petitions of the Clubmen, for example, complicate contemporary notions of manhood?

Gender and the English Revolution deserves a wide readership, among specialists and nonspecialists alike. Its brevity (the text concludes on page 149; a 25-page notes section and an index follow), paperback format, and cost make it an attractive selection for an advanced undergraduate or graduate course, although the absence of a bibliography or timeline impedes an easy survey of sources, scholarly literature, and chronological development. Still, Hughes excels at providing lucid, tightly focused explanations of both concepts (gender and patriarchy) and contexts (prewar ideologies and realities) that would inform students without feeling burdensome or redundant to a more expert audience. This accomplished volume is thus a welcome addition to the complex historiography of the seventeenth-century English crises. Hughes has crafted here a valuable reminder, following Joan Scott, of the importance of considering gender as a category of analysis.

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MICHAEL A. LACOMBE. *Political Gastronomy: Food and Authority in the English Atlantic World*. Early American Studies series. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012. Pp. 240. \$39.95 (cloth).
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Civilization begins with agriculture. Whether wine and beer came first or that similar product of fermentation, bread, the securing of a stable supply of food and drink meant the end of nomadism and the beginning of permanent settlement, and along with permanent settlement

whole new ways of social and cultural organization. From settlement, among other things, came property, and from property came hierarchy, divisions of labor, and institutions like the state and state religion, not to mention the vast networks of cultural habits and codes required to mediate social relations, including how people shared, prepared, and ate their food. I write this description of the agricultural origins of civilization using twenty-first-century language, but even in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England, well before the invention of the language I am using, educated people understood these things; they were commonplaces of humanist thought and folk culture alike.

When English explorers and colonists in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries came to the coastal regions of North America, however, they encountered societies where the rule of thumb of civilization did not seem to apply. In the northern regions, some Native American societies were still largely nomadic, dependent on hunting and gathering. In some of the north and most of the south, groups lived in permanent settlements, but only part time, practicing a kind of mixed economy of seasonal migration, where the sowing, supervision, and harvesting of agricultural products was only one among many strategies of food provision. But still, whether in the north or in the south, Native Americans proved to possess strong senses of place and personal belonging, and even of territorial borders, based on reliable food supplies and systems for keeping them reliable. Most societies seemed awash in plenty. Though they did not live in houses built of stone or brick, or use metal tools, they were sophisticated farmers, foragers, hunters, and fishermen, and they seemed to have developed an elaborate sense of hospitality, the sharing of food as both a moral requirement and a means of generating sociality. Meanwhile, when the English arrived in the New World, their own assumptions about food provision and civility were at risk, because the infrastructure of English life had yet to be built and because the apparently reliable rules of authority, deference, and cooperation were not so reliable under conditions of military incursion and colonization.

Michael LaCombe's *Political Gastronomy* is a canny investigation of this problem. How could military leaders and colonial governors maintain their authority when food supplies were so unstable? How could they cooperate with or dominate the local populations, given that the local populations had the food? How could the English understand their own perplexities over these issues? Sometimes the natives seemed not only better supplied but also better behaved. Sometimes the behavior of the natives was humiliating to the English, especially during starving times, when not a few settlers turned to theft and the natives could rightly express (whether in words or in violence) their indignation at the perfidy of the English. Sometimes food culture was just plain troubling: when the English and Indians dined together, they were not only cooperating but also struggling against one another through practices of table etiquette that were also trial assertions of hegemony.

LaCombe has not uncovered new ground in this study. He has rather mastered the voluminous literature left behind by early English travelers and the even more voluminous literature generated by scholars of early English colonization, and he has turned it to a new topic. *Political Gastronomy* is a well-focused synthesis of what we have known or should have known about the role of food in the period, and it is a valuable addition to our understanding of English colonization. "Authority" is the subtheme, for again and again LaCombe shows how control of food provision either reinforced or subverted relations of power. When natives supplied English settlers with gifts of deer, they not only provided needed sustenance but also entered into an exchange system, where an English symbol of aristocratic privilege (venison, and generally the right to hunt for it) was turned on its head. When the aristocratic George Percy, dressed in expensive English finery, invited fellow Virginia colonists to dinner, he not only circulated an important commodity that was at his disposal but also asserted a form of government and deference that did not, and was not supposed to, benefit colonists equally. He was not universally loved for it. The unaristocratic Captain John Smith was the great democratic food provider at Jamestown, and he was admired for it. That was probably one of the reasons why the authorities had to get rid of him.

Political Gastronomy suffers from repetitiveness. The same scenes are gone over and over again; the same key figures—Arthur Barlowe in Roanoke, John Smith in Jamestown, John Winthrop in Boston—are returned to again and again, and key ideas are repeated many times without development. For example, on page 133 we are told, relative to George Percy's flamboyance, that "the symbolic weight of food . . . was a feature of everyday life." Well yes, but we have already been told that, and more important *shown* that, many times before, going back to page 1.

This book can be seen to have tried to pin a conceptual study of the culture of food onto a conventional narrative framework of colonial history, where the personalities and fates of key figures, the great men and writers of the period, bear the main load. One would have hoped for something a little more innovative and pertinent, with more information about the Native Americans and the American ecology of food practices. One would also have liked at least one mention of a dimension of food culture that the study altogether ignores: pleasure. This book is an accomplished work that never quite delights, and has nothing to say about delight, either. It never leaves the reader hungry.

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ANNE LAWRENCE-MATHERS. *The True History of Merlin the Magician*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2012. Pp. 256. \$40.00 (cloth).
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Merlin the prophet and magician is instantly recognizable to modern readers well beyond the confines of medieval studies. However, Anne Lawrence-Mathers's book traces a comparatively neglected aspect of his story. She reminds us that Merlin was more than an important figure in medieval literature, playing a key role in the many romances of King Arthur and the Grail. For many medieval chroniclers, he was also a historical figure who had a place in histories and chronicles from the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries alongside other figures from early British history who were accepted as real. Lawrence-Mathers argues that this "historical" Merlin was presented as a prophet, astrologer, and magician, but he was significantly different from the more flamboyant and powerful Merlin of romance.

Because its focus is on the Merlin whom medieval chroniclers presented as a real historical figure, Lawrence-Mathers's book does not trace in detail either the development of the Celtic Merlin legend before the twelfth century or the representations of Merlin in medieval or modern literature (although some key literary works such as the romances of Robert de Boron are discussed). More information about both of these topics can be found in another recent study, Stephen Knight's *Merlin: Knowledge and Power through the Ages* (Cornell University Press, 2009). Instead, Lawrence-Mathers sets Merlin and his activities firmly in their historical context, exploring why Merlin's story was taken up by twelfth-century historians and where his activities and powers fit into medieval ideas about magic, astrology, and demons. By doing so, she allows us to see how Merlin could have been seen as a credible historical figure and shows why his story was so appealing to later writers.

The book starts by discussing the Merlin who appeared on the British and European historical scene in the twelfth century in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Kings of Britain*, which included a smaller and perhaps earlier work, the *Prophecies of Merlin*. Lawrence-Mathers discusses the reasons for the spectacular success of Geoffrey's *History*, arguing that it was written at just the right time to provide a new national narrative for the new Anglo-Norman aristocracy who did not identify with older histories of the English. She also suggests that Merlin's prophecies may themselves have contributed to the popularity of Geoffrey's