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Chapter 5 is arguably the most crucial of the book. In it Csiszar demonstrates how the Royal Society in London engaged in a process of 'canon formation' through the production of its *Catalogue of Scientific Papers* in the 1850s, the first volume of which appeared in 1866 (p. 224). It was this project that identified the journal article as the basic unit of scientific knowledge by excluding other forms of print media such as the monograph or encyclopedia entry from consideration. Organizing the catalogue by author name also reified earlier determinations about the importance of authorship, which meant that the production of articles became an even more essential part of the professional persona of a scientist. This, Csiszar argues, contributed to the notion 'of scientific periodicals as collections of original papers attributed to individual authors' more than any individual text (p. 238). It is here that we can see crystalize most clearly the modern ideal of the scientific journal as both a medium through which new knowledge is advanced and the repository of all scientific knowledge.

Yet this is only one of the threads in Csiszar's book upon which this review could have focused. There are many other compelling lines of investigation running through Csiszar's analysis, criss-crossing the book in productive and dynamic ways. Questions about the openness and accessibility of science, as well as about the public for whom a given text was written, reoccur throughout the book. So, too, do discussions about the impact that evolving political circumstances had on the politics of knowledge. Especially in France, for example, censorship laws and government regulations influenced the kinds of publication that could appear in a given moment. And although Csiszar's book is explicitly not an economic history of scientific print media, socio-economic factors that limited or facilitated access to both the means and the products of publishing feature in virtually every chapter.

This book is undoubtedly a valuable contribution to the history of scientific publishing and the history of science. Clearly and cogently written, this volume is engaging to read. Non-specialists may, however, find the breadth of this work disorienting and the depth daunting. Some readers will also, of course, kvetch about the exclusion of various topics near and dear to their own hearts. Thus, even though the reviewer understands why Germany was excluded from this analysis, she cannot help but think that further attention to Central European journals would have been especially productive. But this is arguably another strength of the work. Instead of cordoning off an area of research as completed, *The Scientific Journal* invites others to further inquiry.

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Rebecca Earle, Feeding the People: The Politics of the Potato

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020. Pp. 308. ISBN 978-1-1086-8845-1. £17.99 (hardback).

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Feeding the People is a history of the potato, but at a more intimate level it is a history of the tension between two ideas most of us hold to be true, however contradictory they

might be. The first idea persuades us that eating is a matter of personal choice, while the second idea encourages us to view eating as an aspect of our lives suitable for government intervention (p. 5). Why, Rebecca Earle asks, are we ambivalent about such intervention? Across six chapters, Earle explores the introduction of potatoes across the globe, their role in Enlightenment-era schemes to promote happiness and security, capitalist debates over their place in the economy, and the diverse ideologies read into potato cultivation during the world wars that threatened self-sufficiency and agricultural production both within and beyond Europe's borders. Tracing the history of the potato from European contact with the Americas in the fifteenth century to present-day health campaigns in the United States, *Feeding the People* presents an argument that the proliferation of the potato happened largely independently from the efforts of agriculturalists, economists and politicians to promote or hinder its cultivation, but that these intellectual debates over potato cultivation nonetheless have had a lasting impact on the world we inhabit today.

If the potato is political, so too are histories of the potato. *Feeding the People* is the first book to focus on the global history of potato cultivation since the publication in 1949 of Redcliffe Salaman's *The History and Social Influence of the Potato*. While apologizing for his lack of training in economics or history, Salaman (a plant geneticist) was unabashed in advancing a strong theory on the social influence of the potato: it was a plant used by the powerful to further class divisions. He went so far as to label it 'the perfect instrument of exploitation'. Earle's work provides a much-needed reassessment of the political roles and utopian ambitions the potato plant has adopted during the centuries of its cultivation. Here, we find a politics of food that moves beyond the views of nineteenth-century economic writers that viewed potato cultivation as a symptom of the powerlessness of the poor. While the diets of the poor in Europe were constrained and determined by coercion (p. 103), as Earle shows throughout her work, potato cultivation often provided a means for the poor to avoid tithes, requisitions and taxation on crops (pp. 28, 134), and its widespread cultivation in Europe by the nineteenth century afforded many families a degree of economic independence from the pressures of the market on food prices. In her account of the introduction of potatoes to India, Earle focuses on showing how India had begun cultivating and consuming potatoes long before British imperial propaganda promoted the plant as a means of furthering happiness and gratitude amongst rural farmers and populations (pp. 118–20). If the potato provided, in the eyes of some imperialists, a means of furthering control over Indian agriculture and food production, those motives had little relation to the proliferation of the plants as they were communicated between agricultural communities.

A particularly compelling aspect of the work traces how the politics of the potato metamorphose in response to the shifting fears and utopian aspirations of each generation. In the eighteenth century, in Europe as well as in colonies and imperial territories, the potato was seen as a vehicle and catalyst for progress and happiness, ambitions that seemed ridiculous and misguided to nineteenth-century critics who viewed potato cultivation as a threat to the health of the population and against the tenets of capitalism. Contrasting 'enlightened potatoes' with 'capitalist potatoes', Earle proceeds to chart how the ambitions of eighteenth-century agriculturalists were subjected to scrutiny by a generation of thinkers influenced by the writings of Thomas Malthus and the poverty of rural communities that subsisted all but exclusively on potatoes. As the book demonstrates, the potato had come by the early nineteenth century, even before the Great Irish Famine, 'to epitomise a stagnant world devoid of sociability and consumer desires, and characterised by the persistence of pre-capitalist forms of production' (p. 157). Undisturbed by these warnings, people everywhere adapted the potato to new recipes, new means of cultivation and preparation, represented in the book by the inclusion of recipes from numerous times, countries and cultural traditions.

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At one level, Earle's book works to argue against the false understanding that the potato's introduction to European diets was pioneered by botanists, agriculturalists and political interests, while peasants and farm labourers viewed the root with suspicion and distrust. As she shows, peasants, sailors, farm labourers and poor families were almost always the vanguard for introducing the root to new places, cultivating and distributing new varieties, and introducing its consumption to labouring communities. This contributes further acknowledgement to the ways in which peasant agriculture has contributed to global food security (p. 205). It also raises a long-standing question within agricultural history: what relation, if any, was there between the instructional and educational agricultural literature produced in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and agricultural practice? If pamphlets, magazines and treatises weren't vectors for the potato and its increased cultivation, then how ought historians to approach the promotional writings aimed at agricultural improvement that proliferated during this period?

The approach encouraged by Earle is to view these texts and treatises as contributing to political debates (or *oeconomical* debates) over how the security of both state and property rested on agricultural policies that would ensure an abundance of cheap nutrition for agricultural labouring populations. In the chapter 'Enlightened potatoes', Earle explores the intersection between physiocratic ambitions to increase populations and widespread fears across Europe that the threat of famine and scarcity endangered the security of property and the state. While seventeenth-century writers such as William Petty warned that potato cultivation permitted labourers to procure subsistence through easy labour that contributed nothing to the goals of the state, the eighteenth century sees numerous agriculturalists and political writers across Europe and its colonial and imperial holdings promote the potato as a means of establishing lasting security and happiness (and, at the same time, of eliminating the threat of revolution). Later chapters develop on this theme. In 'Global potatoes', Earle explores how the introduction of potatoes to colonies and imperial territories contributed to maintaining the appearance of paternal care and concern, while obscuring the devastating impacts that British rule had upon food security in India (pp. 118–20). In a brief discussion of efforts in the UK and the United States to tackle malnutrition and obesity, Earle returns to the question whether or not political powers really do work to defend our right to eat as we please, or whether or not this message serves to conceal indifference to the lives and health of the marginalized and the poor.

Unfortunately, *Feeding the People* is also a timely piece of scholarship, as food insecurity, malnutrition and poverty have all re-entered public consciousness in the wake of the impacts of COVID-19. Having drawn initial inspiration for the work from an interest in the soup recipes for the poor developed and promoted by Count Rumford in the late eighteenth century, Earle's work recognizes that one of the most challenging aspects of writing the history of the potato comes in recognizing its position as a staple of last resort for many populations and communities that have been, through history, pushed to the brink of starvation. The economic impact of the recent epidemic has reintroduced the political relevance of the history of Rumford's soup, as images of meagre, insufficient and unappetizing food parcels are shared across social and news media. *Feeding the People* contains numerous instances where authorities in the past have argued and wrangled over the nutritional suitability of the potato as a dietary staple: as generation after generation falls short of the goal of eliminating want and hunger, the book is certain to have relevance and importance for many years to come.

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