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Title: Book Review of *Pure and Modern Milk: An Environmental History since 1900*

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Spanish, French, Dutch, and English, Harris relates how each interacted with the Native Americans and arriving Africans (46). Harris's comparison the culinary habits of Native Americans and Africans, as two "agricultural societies" whose "daily life was organized around the hunting and gathering of food," is short, but intriguing (53).

Harris's most compelling arguments come from her analysis of slave cooks and their contributions to American cuisine. She divides the African culinary tradition into two strands and distinguishes between the emerging Europeanized "elite" cuisine and that of traditional African heritage. Despite this division, both contribute to the blending of culinary tastes in America. The cooks in the kitchens of wealthy whites, or "slavery's elite," shape one thread (68). Through their position in the owner's house, slaves could influence the foods served at the table and helped create a creolized diet (71). Harris uses biographies of the prominent slave chefs, Hercules and James Hemings, to illustrate not only the chefs' struggles in bondage, but also how their skill in preparing European-style meals provided them with luxuries rarely afforded to other slaves. The other thread relates to free and enslaved urban caterers and vendors. They used their skills as cooks to create entrepreneurial opportunities and transform their African culinary heritage into marketable American dishes. In the post-Emancipation period, Harris contends, the two distinctive strands of African American culinary history solidified into the "basic African-influenced" fare of the less prosperous and the "European-oriented offerings" of the wealthy (162-163). Representatives of the African-influenced strand, including Black cowboys, the first African American cookbook authors, Harlem street vendors, and professionally trained culinary experts, all used food to secure a place in American society. Mary Ellen Pleasant, a representative of the latter of the two strands, moved west looking for opportunities and used "culinary know-how" to prepare and serve the types of elaborate meals desired by the white upper classes and the "newly affluent" (153). Fueled by necessity, all of these groups drew upon their culinary heritage and the

practices common in African markets.

These two threads become more complex in the mid-twentieth century. The Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s brought an "increasing internationalism and growing awareness of self in the African American community" (213). By the 1970s, class no longer served as the primary factor in African American food choices, and instead, people across classes chose foods that "reflected a newly discovered pride in African roots and international connections" (215-216). African American cuisine became increasingly diverse. Harris concludes her narrative as she began it, by asserting that African Americans should receive acknowledgement for their integral part in America's culinary character and that the stigma attached to "slave food" is ill deserved.

This book's narrative structure seamlessly weaves together individual stories with the broad trends of history. Her range of source material, including city directories, cookbooks, journals, oral histories, literary works, and secondary literature, help Harris tell a myriad of tales. However, historians will feel frustrated by the lack of endnotes and the inclusion of only a select bibliography in the "Further Reading" section. Nonetheless, readers will appreciate Harris's inclusion of twenty-three recipes at the back of the book, including "Gumbo," "Son of a Gun Stew," and "Grandma Harris's Greens," as well as a list of selected African American cookbooks. Anyone with a general interest in culinary history, or the history of African Americans, should appreciate Harris's contribution to the field and her skill as a writer.

BOOK REVIEW | STEPHANIE BOLAND

Pure and Modern Milk: An Environmental History since 1900 *Kendra Smith-Howard*

New York: Bloomsbury. 2011. ix, 304 pp.

Pure and Modern Milk: An Environmental History since 1900 is a cogent study of dairy production from the turn of the twentieth century to the

present. A wide ranging and carefully researched piece of scholarship, Kendra Smith Howard's book takes up, as her introduction explains, the practice of environmental historians who have "elucidated the relationship between production and consumption" (6). Following in the footsteps of authors such as Richard White (whose book, *The Organic Machine*, Smith-Howard references) and historian Edmund Russell, the author joins a growing group of scholars who advocate a more nuanced reading of the urban-rural relationship than has previously been undertaken by environmental histories. Rather than adopting the Marxist (or Ruskian, or any one of other innumerable nineteenth-century thinkers') fear of the "'machine'" encroaching on the bucolic (8), *Pure and Modern Milk* reads twentieth century dairy production as predicated on reciprocal interaction between the city and countryside. This allows Smith-Howard to excavate with the movement of milk between these two locales, both in terms of literal production pathways and in the ideological framing of the substance and its products. At the heart of this book is a dialectic between the pastoral and pastural; between milk as a natural product, and as something sanitized—made safe—by new technology.

As one would expect, then, this is a thorough volume. Smith-Howard explains that her book's methodology is one which seeks to "explain [the] physical settings, economic structures, and political mechanisms through which [purchasing] took place and became meaningful" (9). This excitingly ambitious task sees *Pure and Modern Milk* turn to a range of primary sources: "the papers of consumer organizations, government bodies, surveys of consumer behavior conducted by dairy organizations, cost-of-living surveys, and women's magazines and advertisements" (9). Smith-Howard's extensive consultation of commercial documents—the sort of material evidence increasingly the substance of such studies—both answers her queries and complicates them. "What emerges from such a history," she writes, "is not a simple story about milk, but a history of the evolution of consumer society" (11). This, in turn,

points to a wider theoretical framing still: for "[t]o take milk's history seriously is to understand the compromises, complexity, and challenges involved in our dependence on other organisms for our very sustenance" (11). If it sounds like this assessment of what must be understood might lead to an overly-detailed attempt to understand it, Smith-Howard's study is reassuringly clear-eyed. There are undoubtedly more interesting aspects to *Pure and Modern Milk* than its style, but nevertheless its clear prose deserves mentioning, if only to note how well it allows technical processes which might in other hands feel turgidly digressive—such as artificial insemination and the assessment of fallout-contaminated milk—to be integrated fluently (85, 134-5).

Smith-Howard's evident skill at handling these specialized subjects is particularly fortunate given how necessary they are to *Pure and Modern Milk*'s central thrust. Milk's "purity," she argues, carries two competing narratives: on the one hand unsullied natural origins, and on the other the industrial processes that allow milk to be cleansed of its actual and perceived contaminants. In this sense, her study takes up one of the fundamental dialectics of twentieth century consumerism, and indeed food marketing today: that which advocates progress while resisting untempered appeals to new technology that may be off-putting for the average consumer. As a product that passes from the countryside to the city, milk is particularly illustrative of this marketing dyad. *Pure and Modern Milk*'s chapter on butter is particularly revealing on the subject, presenting the seeming contradiction of packaging which both "assured consumers that even as the world around them changed, their butter remained authentic and simple" and simultaneously "highlighted creameries as modern manufacturers" (56). The complex interplay of milk's nature and nurture had significant ramifications at the point of production and of sale; in following milk goods from the dairy to the self-service grocery, Smith-Howard elegantly lays out how this relationship affected milk at each stage of production.

If the journey from cow to glass is the core narrative of *Pure and Modern Milk*, it also serves as a carrier for a larger story. Just as the relationship at the center of this book reflects general twentieth century concerns, so does milk's passage along the supply chain serve to illustrate the evolving journey of commercialism after 1900. Smith-Howard's analysis of the constant intersection between the changing dairy industry and the juggernaut of commercialism, which gained radically increased traction over the period, is well buttressed with specific examples: how the war impacted the marketing and sales of skim milk (76), and how the rise of supermarket shopping prompted manufacturers to opt for packaging designed to induce impulse buys (81). Accordingly, *Pure and Modern Milk* is attentive to points of contact between dairy production and neighboring industries, recounting, to cite one example, how casein was used to manufacture products that ranged from paper to high fashion items (72-5). If there is a flaw in the book, it is perhaps that these broader contexts might have sometimes been made more explicit; *Pure and Modern Milk*'s well-applied methodology and deftness of thought makes for a text that might easily have resonance beyond environmental history and indeed beyond food studies, and Smith-Howard could justifiably have been more ambitious in stating her work's implications at certain points. Nevertheless, this is a minor point compared to what has been included, and the interested reader will have little trouble spotting the parallels between Smith-Howard's observations and their own fields. As the epilogue makes evident, *Pure and Modern Milk* has much to offer in terms of informing investigations into marketing and consumer habits, including contemporary ones. This is, ultimately, the book's gift: a reminder of the complex social and economic depths that lie beneath the visible surface of food production.

¹ See *Material Powers: Cultural Studies, History and the Material Turn*, ed. Tony Bennett, Patrick Joyce (London: Routledge, 2010), 7.

BOOK REVIEW | MARCIA CARABELLO

Secrets from the Greek Kitchen: Cooking, Skill, and Everyday Life on an Aegean Island *David E. Sutton*

Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014. 256 pp.

At a time when modern society is said to have left the kitchen for the couch,¹ David Sutton's latest book, *Secrets from the Greek Kitchen*, brings welcome empirical and theoretical depth previously lacking from the home cooking discourse. Through his fine grained ethnographic account, supplemented by video footage available online, Sutton provides a truly immersive look at the everyday cooking practices of Kalymnian islanders. This innovative application of visual ethnography lends dimensionality to Sutton's text, and provides an "argument for what is revealed about cooking when one starts from a more complex and contextual understanding of what ordinary people have been doing in kitchens" (5). Sutton's work shows that cooking, while perhaps a practice in transition, is still very much "bound up in the world" of all Kalymnians—young and old, female and male (182).

The book, divided into six thematic chapters, explores everyday kitchen activities on this Aegean island with the purpose of teasing out "the ways that cooking is transmitted, reproduced, and transformed among several generations of Kalymnian cooks" (3). Shifting focus from the general (e.g., theories of skill and knowledge transmission, the gendered and generational propriety of cooking practice, discussion of recipes and cooking shows) to the specific (e.g., cutting ingredients in the hand and other kitchen "micropractices," the kitchen choreography of mother and daughter, instances of continuity and change in familial practice), Sutton crafts a balanced and meaningful text that expertly navigates the central tension of any good ethnographic work: paying due tribute to participants' lived experiences while also presenting an argument resonant to a broader audience of food and culture scholars.

In the first chapter, "Emplacing Cooking,"