

The Vegetarian Crusade: The Rise of an American Reform Movement, 1817-1921

By Adam D. Shprintzen

(Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013. Pp. 288. Notes, bibliography, index. \$39.95.)

Adam Shprintzen has crafted a history of the institutions and central characters that gave shape to American vegetarianism from the arrival of British Bible Christians in 1817 to the dissolution of the American Vegetarian Society in 1921. Through much of the early nineteenth century, vegetarianism was closely associated with other social reform movements; vegetarians were also abolitionists, pacifists, opponents of alcohol consumption and capital punishment, and proponents of women's suffrage. Many thought that meat consumption aroused the passions, clouded rational thought, and debased humans into animals. The Bible Christians believed that a vegetarian diet was prescribed in the Bible and that Jesus himself did not eat meat.

At a time when meat consumption symbolized prosperity and the freedoms of the New World, and a vegetable or grain diet was a sign of poverty, vegetarianism was a potent form of dissent, and it was distinctly unpopular. This book traces the evolution of political and religious vegetarianism into a much more diverse movement concerned mainly with personal health and well-being, a variety of T. J. Jackson Lears's "therapeutic consumption."

Vegetarian history in the U. S. was shaped by a colorful cast of characters, of whom only some—including

Sylvester Graham, William Alcott, and John and Ella Kellogg—will be familiar to culinary historians. The story follows vegetarianism to its peak of popularity and respectability at the Columbian Exposition in 1893. By the early twentieth century, there were hundreds of vegetarian restaurants around the country, as well as a national organization with local branches, clubs, congresses, magazines and newsletters, often under the patronage of the social and financial elite. Like other fashions, however, vegetarianism did not last; it faded with World War I and the subsequent rise of scientific nutrition and home economics.

The book's most interesting section concerns the fraught relationship between food and gender identity. Meat is so closely connected with masculinity in the U. S. that groups forswearing meat were suspected of contributing to mass emasculation during the late nineteenth-century crisis of masculinity. Vegetarians responded with a form of "muscular vegetarianism" (chapter 7) that involved contests and public exhibitions of strength and a close connection with physical culture and gymnasium movements. The University of Chicago even featured a vegetarian football team led by Amos Alonzo Stagg.

While the book ends rather abruptly with the demise of the na-

tional organization in 1921, many of the ideological and political threads of the vegetarian movement continued to be important in American foodways. Readers will see strong continuities with contemporary food movements: the close association of food with morality, an ambivalent relationship with science, and fear of pollution and adulteration. Those who want to reform today's industrial food system could find many useful cautionary tales here.

Written in workmanlike prose, the book maintains a steady linear narrative, and Shprintzen rarely follows tangents, even as the movement repeatedly fragments and the figure of the vegetarian loses its danger and singularity. This approach lets the reader do the work of connecting the vegetarian movement with the other forms of social and political reform

that swept the U. S. during this period. If vegetarianism was a counter-movement, a form of resistance, we need to know more about what its adherents were reacting to, in a period when the American food economy was transformed by industry, urbanization, and new forms of marketing and retailing. The book rushes too quickly past other issues—utopianism, the increasingly public nature of the human body, and the changing class and gender valences of dietary practice. Nevertheless, this book provides an important piece of the puzzle of Americans and their food.

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Ring Shout, Wheel About: The Racial Politics of Music and Dance in North American Slavery

By Katrina Dyonne Thompson

(Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2014. Pp. 242. Notes, index. Clothbound, \$85.00; paperbound, \$28.00.)

Toward the end of Phillip Seitz's brief though brilliant book, *Slavery in Philadelphia* (2014), the author writes: "By turning the light on enslaved peoples' agency rather than their victimization, we made an important distinction between helplessness and the fight for freedom" (p. 117). Katrina Dyonne Thompson achieves the same end in *Ring Shout, Wheel About*.

Building on the limited work that interrogates performance as a barometer of culture, and referencing the extensive literature that deals with other aspects of American slavery (economic, pseudo-scientific, theological), the author utilizes the performance of enslaved African Americans as the measure for understanding slave society. In keeping with her theme, her