

van de rebellie: het boek bevat zeer sterke pagina's die duidelijk de sluimerende aanwezigheid van rebelse ideologie of praktijken in 'vredestijd' laten voelen, een noviteit waarvoor de twee auteurs lof verdienen. Net als Bakhtin kennen ze cultuur en andere elementen van de 'superstructure' een plaats toe die in de traditionele, simplificerende marxistische historiografie ondenkbaar is. De auteurs gebruiken het begrip klasse met grote omzichtigheid. Een van hun belangrijkste bijdragen is immers te laten zien hoe alles wat niet tot de dominante stedelijke 'klasse' behoort, bestaat uit groepen die min of meer van elkaar gescheiden zijn of zelfs tegenover elkaar staan, maar toch met elkaar verweven zijn, waarbij de ene groep de andere meeslept, die op haar beurt de eersten afremt of juist profiteert van hun rebellie.

Zoals Dumolyn en Haemers duidelijk maken ging het niet om rebellie gericht op regimeverandering, maar om het bewerkstelligen van veranderingen in de zittende macht die niet voor elk van de samenstellende elementen van de stedelijke bevolking positief uitpakten. Er is geen betere manier om te laten zien dat deze benadering van het 'historisch materialisme' vruchtbaar en gerechtvaardigd is en dat, in de woorden van Laurent Ripart, 'nog steeds een vruchtbaar conceptueel hulpmiddel is voor de studie van prekapitalistische samenlevingen'.

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Ulbe Bosma, *The World of Sugar. How the Sweet Stuff Transformed Our Politics, Health, and Environment over 2,000 Years* (Cambridge/Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2023). 448 pp. ISBN 9780674279391.

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When you read this book review, you will probably already have digested a fair amount of sugar. The sweet stuff is everywhere, not just in our food, but also in advertisement. Diabetes type 2 and obesity are becoming more and more chronic and problematic. Discussions on a sugar tax are ongoing in many countries or has indeed been implemented. In the Netherlands, oddly enough, soft drinks that are so-called 'light' or sugar free, are also taxed. Still, sugar is easily available and it is very hard indeed to do without.

For most of humankind's history, however, sugar was a luxury product, only available to the (very) wealthy and seen as a symbol of status. How sugar became a part of daily diets and what inequality, environmental damage, suffering and exploitation it has caused, is expertly analysed by Ulbe Bosma in his fascinating *The World of Sugar: How the Sweet Stuff Transformed Our Politics, Health, and Environment over 2,000 Years*. Bosma, Senior Researcher at the International Institute of Social History and Professor at the Free University Amsterdam, follows a trend that has been ongoing for a number of years, i.e., write world/global history based on one commodity. Think for example about books on cotton, chocolate, or paper.

As Bosma states, "white crystalline sugar was once a precious delicacy. For most of its existence, it has been a luxury only affordable by the wealthiest on earth" (p. 6). Cane, however, was ubiquitous in Asia, "from where it was introduced to North Africa, Southern Europe, and the New World" (p. 6-7). Bosma writes with pace, making his book a pleasure to read. The many technical descriptions of harvesting cane, boiling, and the like are very insightful and brought the fore expertly.

Though the Europeans were by no means the ones who discovered sugar or were the first to harvest and produce it, they were the first the really globally exploit it and make it into a worldwide industry. According to Bosma, Europe's rise to become the center of global capitalism began in the Mediterranean Basin, "and sugar played a key role in this. The history of sugar also demonstrates, however, that this capitalism began as part of a much larger Eurasian system" (p. 29-30). The Atlantic sugar industry, which developed later, shared many continuities with the Mediterranean industry. Bosma shows that archaeological findings have made it possible to reconstruct the workings of sugar factories in Cyprus via an eighteenth-century description of Caribbean estates. The histories of the Mediterranean and Atlantic sugar production "overlap because until the late eighteenth century productivity growth in the sugar sector was a matter of slow incremental change [...] The real rupture between the Mediterranean to Atlantic systems of sugar production came with African slavery" (p. 33). Slavery had been an exception, according to Bosma, at Mediterranean estates. That was to change in the New World.

Bosma shows that sugar played an essential role in many countries; around 1660, "a fleet of one hundred ships was carrying sugar to Amsterdam, and the sugar industry was still the largest sector of its economy" (p. 52). Sugar also "connected the various nodal points in the immense Spanish Empire" (p. 44). It were, however, the Portuguese that

came to dominate sugar production in the Atlantic. Bosma wonders why sugar production did not move from São Tomé to West Africa instead of crossing the Atlantic. Here, Bosma makes an interesting link to ecological factors: “However, most of the region proved to be ecologically unfit for sugar, as precipitation throughout the year soaked the soil and turned it acidic. Such soil was fine for palms but ruined sugar cane, which grows best in a monsoon climate with a dry season. And on top of this, horses that turned the mills perished in equatorial Africa, infected by the tsetse fly. It seems that ecology pushed sugar production across the Atlantic, and, as we all know, millions of Africans followed in captivity” (p. 46).

The author states that the main destination of enslaved Africans was the sugar plantations, “where at least half and perhaps two-thirds of the approximately 12.5 million people who were kidnapped in Africa and survived their transport across the Atlantic ended up” (p. 57). Not only that, sugar plantations were far more deadly than tobacco and cotton estates. Bosma calculates that annual mortality ranged from 4 to 6 percent by the end of the eighteenth century (p. 63). He paints gruesome scenes: “During the harvest, exhausted enslaved workers fell asleep while feeding the mill with cane, leading to horrific injuries when the rollers caught their hands or sleeves. Usually, an overseer was nearby with an axe to chop off the arm to prevent the enslaved from being completely pulled between the rollers” (p. 63). Added to this were the dangers of snakes and rats, and, of course, extreme violence.

Sugar production was industrialised around the turn of the nineteenth century, when pharmacists and chemists developed “a viable production process for extracting sugar from beet by boiling it under vacuum, which would also revolutionize the cane sugar sector. Industrialists in France and Britain together with the colonial bourgeoisie would metamorphosize Ancien Régime plantation enclaves into agro-industries dominating large frontiers equipped with railroads and massive steam-driven factories” (p. 80). Although debates about freedom and human rights had made their mark by this time, it had little influence on the fate of the plantation workers. Bosma notes: “Tragically, slavery and labor coercion would not disappear under the regime of industrial capitalism and the global spread of industrial sugar production – it would actually expand” (p. 81). By the late 1860, “when Karl Marx was writing his monumental *Capital*, half of the sugar consumed by the industrial proletariat in Europe and North America was produced by enslaved people” (p. 2).

In the Industrial Revolution, cane crushers were in the vanguard, and these steam-powered quickly found their way across the Atlantic Ocean, for example to Louisiana. Still, slavery persisted in the Caribbean: “In the cane fields, as well as the cotton fields for that matter, mechanization did not all replace gruelling manual harvesting and thus failed to turn labor into less of a determinant of the cost price” (p. 122). The abolition of slavery in the British and French colonial empires did little to improve the freedom of plantation workers (p. 139).

The United States would, over the course of the nineteenth century, develop into a ‘Sugar Kingdom’, as Bosma aptly labels it. Here, the sugar industry would really be turned into an industry. America’s new style of colonialism played an essential role. It operated via control of banking facilities, “which has become known as “dollar diplomacy” – but the marines were never far away, of course [...] Indeed, sugar played a key role in how these territories were formally or informally subordinated to the United States, which by the late nineteenth century has become the single largest sugar-consuming country in the world” (p. 201 and 202). Sugar refiners would forge a cartel that dominated US sugar policies for almost half a century. By the 1920s, over ten million people “stood in the world’s beet and cane fields, most of whom for only part of the year. Nonetheless, sugar involved the work of more than 2 percent of the world population, which translated to 6-8 percent of all the world’s households” (p. 245). In the nineteenth century, sugar was what oil would become in the twentieth: “A key commodity representing immense value in global trade and involving a labor force of legions” (p. 335).

Sugar consumption exploded in the twentieth century: the average Western European consumes 40 kilograms a year, in North America it is almost 60 (p. 3); with it came a global health crisis. Bosma’s book makes for a thrilling and fantastic read, making clear just how destructive the taste for sugar has been and still is, business and politics often working in close tandem, as he has convincingly shown: states have often facilitated capitalists. Bosma concludes: “This overabundance has not only resulted in a global health crisis but is also entangled with a history of environmental destruction, racism, and sharp global inequalities” (p. 335). Bosma convincingly points at a remarkable paradox: “The sugar industry represents the two faces of capitalism: progressive and innovative on the one hand but also indifferent to social and ecological consequences so long as these do not harm business” (p. 336). The sugar sector is not capable of self-regulation, and here a task looms large for governments. Bosma concludes: “Transformative changes

to legislation are needed desperately to cut the Gordian knot of overproduction, overexploitation, and overconsumption in the world of sugar” (p. 338).

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Jo Turner, Helen Johnston, and Marion Pluskota (eds), *Policing Women. Histories in the Western World, 1800 to 1950* (London: Routledge, 2023). 288 pp. ISBN 9780367558192.

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The historiography on police forces in the modern and contemporary eras is nowadays a well-established area of research. Since the pioneering studies of the 1970s and 1980s, there has been a notable expansion of detailed investigations across Europe, the United States, and other parts of the Western world. Despite differences in chronology, themes, and national historiographical approaches, this body of research shares several common characteristics. Authors like David Bailey, Clive Emsley, Livio Antonielli, and Jean-Noël Luc have long emphasized the importance of a comparative approach to highlight the differences and similarities in the development of European and Western statehoods. In addition to this method, two other significant aspects of police studies stand out. The first is the emphasis on the everyday practices of territorial control, focusing on the social interactions between populations and police forces – essentially, a bottom-up history of law enforcement as it was lived and enacted. The second aspect is the social history of the police, examining the sociological characteristics of those employed within these institutions and the relationship between cultural perceptions, police actions, and public behavior.

Amid these inquiries, the book *Policing Women: Histories in the Western World, 1800 to 1950* stands out as a useful contribution to the field. The book aims to re-examine policing practices in the Western world by focusing on the interactions between women and the police during a period of increasing professionalization of law enforcement institutions. By concentrating on these encounters – and, often, clashes – *Policing Women* delves into issues such as criminalization and social marginalization, the influence of gender in shaping both public