

and communities is especially effective. Particularly noteworthy is its foregrounding of the agency of Indigenous and enslaved people, groups often marginalized in imperial narratives. Acknowledging contemporary debates around diversity and identity politics, the volume offers a timely reminder that such issues are nothing new. Scholars and students of empire will find in this collection a nuanced and generative contribution – one that deepens our understanding of how difference was constructed, regulated, and experienced across empires, and why those histories continue to resonate today.

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Peter Scholliers, *A History of Bread. Consumers, Bakers and Public Authorities since the 18th Century* (New York & London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2024). 192 pp. ISBN 9781350361775.

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In food history, bread – particularly the production and consumption of French bread – has dominated the field. The worldwide sweep of *The Structures of Everyday Life. The Limits of the Possible* (the first of three volumes of Ferdinand Braudel's *Civilization and Capitalism, 15th – 18th Century*, first published in French in 1967) established the centrality of daily bread in the European diet and inspired a generation of French historians in the Annales School tradition to pursue social histories of bakers and bread crises, economic histories of market prices, political histories of grain provisioning, and cultural histories of taste, especially what makes “good bread” so good. Steven L. Kaplan has devoted his career to the topic of bread across three centuries, publishing four monographs on this topic, as well as a Parisian guide to bakeries. It raises the question of how a history of bread since the eighteenth century provides any new knowledge to the field. Peter Scholliers, a leading scholar of diet, consumer society, and labor history, as well as co-editor of numerous collections on European foodways, has provided a masterful history of bread in the Belgian context which draws on vibrant and varied scientific and culinary sources, as well as serial studies of bread prices and standards of living among Belgium's rural and urban populace.

The scope of the book is impressive, spanning from the 1700s to the present. Scholliers writes with a lively and accessible style that provides

clear explanations of his methodology. He forwards convincing analyses of essential questions: “What is good and bad bread?” and “What is the value of the global grain trade?” as well as “How important is bread in the calorie intake and everyday life?” While these are not new questions, they are ones that historians continue to explore, as they offer various ways to view and interpret the significance of bread from one era to another. Rather than a grand narrative, this book provides, with rigor and clarity, an essential compendium on the history of bread – replete with a glossary of terms, over a dozen charts and figures, and several appendices. The work synthesizes decades of research, being the culmination of a career spent thinking and writing about this topic.

The book embeds enormous amounts of historical detail into a well-organized whole that is divided into three parts: 1) bread eaters, 2) bread makers (the bakers), and 3) bread regulators (the authorities). Each part is divided into several subtopics that delve into substantive issues, such as the structural complexities of post-1950s industrial bakeries (pp. 86-87), and how regulators addressed the problem of food fraud in relation to how journalists brought attention to it throughout the nineteenth century. Other subtopics illuminate historical realities with granular evidence, such as the diverse range of bread types, from brown to white, and the shifting hierarchies of *pain de ménage* (p. 10). Another fascinating example is presented in the third section, which focuses on nutritional advice provided to public schools, drawing on Dutch and French translations of school manuals (pp. 177-181). My only complaint was that some of the abbreviated references in the notes were not included in the bibliography.

Throughout the monograph, Scholliers presents several convincing arguments supporting the central thesis that “revolutions” in diet and food production transformed the European bread habit from a necessity to a choice. We see in multiple ways – through the close examination of early modern medical literature to the serial analysis of modern sociological studies – how bread had dominated the lives of Belgians, forming as much as 45% of their total food expenditure and half their daily calories at the end of the eighteenth century to as little as 0.8% of their spending and just 12% of daily calorie intake at the end of the period under analysis. Scholliers concludes that the price revolution gave way to the taste revolution through significant structural changes and minor modifications to our everyday diet. To convey such findings requires exhaustive research and attention to patterns that reveal the relationship between the multiple forces of change, as Scholliers calls

them, the “grand and everyday changes” in which local and national polities intervened.

In this masterful, tightly woven work, Scholliers demonstrates his facility in conveying a wealth of historical information to illuminate all aspects of bread that shaped individual beliefs and experiences, corporate pursuits and obligations, as well as societal needs and wants.

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Wim Blockmans, *The Voice of the People. Political Participation before the Revolutions*, translated from the Dutch by Michiel Horn (Abingdon: Routledge, 2024). 440 pp. ISBN9781032063942.

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In 1978, Wim Blockmans published a PhD dissertation on the representational institutions in the County of Flanders during the Middle Ages. In the following 45 years, Blockmans embarked on an eminently productive and successful career that included professorships in Rotterdam and Leiden, but more notably the involvement in many international projects which have given his work a distinctly comparative European perspective. Blockmans has now done us all the great service of summing up what he has learned about medieval and early modern representation in a single volume. The book was first published in Dutch in 2020 but has now been translated into English in an amended version. Out is a chapter on political participation today, but in are reflections on the development of representative institutions in especially the English colonies in Northern America, which were absent from the original text. According to Blockmans’ acknowledgements, the translator, who is based in Canada, had proposed this addition.

This book provides two fundamental contributions to that literature. In the first place, Blockmans gives us perhaps the best and most comprehensive summary of the literature on representative institutions and state-formation during the pre-modern era. It can be comprehensive, because the author is able to read an unusually large number of European languages, allowing him to bring the full range of national literatures to bear on his argument. This book well and truly covers all regions of Europe in often remarkable detail. It is an outstanding treatment of the subject, because the author offers his