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Wendy A. Woloson. Refined Tastes: Sugar, Confectionery, and Consumers in Nineteenth-Century America

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upon American material life, the articles primarily address objects and individuals within the Delaware River valley. Philadelphia, New Jersey, and Delaware are treated extensively. Outlying Quaker communities, such as those in New England, North Carolina, and New York state, are essentially absent from the study. Similarly, the volume focuses overwhelmingly upon the material life of the elite of American Quaker society. Carved Chippendale high chests, Duncan Phyfe sofas, and portraits by John Singleton Copley and Charles Willson Peale are lovely to contemplate, but their inclusion in these studies probably reflects the hierarchies of late-twentieth-century connoisseurship rather than these objects' centrality to historical constructions of American Quaker identity.

The greatest success of *Quaker Aesthetics* is that it demonstrates the complexity of the question addressed. By investigating the material with which believers shaped their worlds, this volume indicates that a monolithic American Quakerism has never existed. It introduces us to varied Quaker identities that developed in the Delaware River valley as the result of divisions in class, time, and religious orthodoxy. Instead of codifying a reified American Quaker aesthetic, this book informs us of the various ways in which believers have negotiated the Friends' spiritual ambivalence to the physical world. Rather than furnishing one simple answer to the intricate and important question of how Quaker belief has affected American material culture, the authors and editors clarify the questions we should ask in establishing our own conclusions.

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Wendy A. Woloson. *Refined Tastes: Sugar, Confectionery, and Consumers in Nineteenth-Century America.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002. xi+277 pp.; 36 illustrations, essay on sources, index. $46.00.

Refined Tastes: Sugar, Confectionery, and Consumers in Nineteenth-Century America is an elegantly structured and beautifully written exploration of the changing meaning of candy, ice cream, and related confections in nineteenth-century America. The book ultimately explains how sugar has today gained its preeminent role in the American diet. As a biography of comestibles and how their fortunes reflect larger changes in American society, the book will appeal to historians of material culture, anthropologists, and sociologists as well as food historians. It also serves as a vivid account of the emergence of consumer culture in general, focusing on the democratization of once-expensive sweets due to new technologies and industrial production and their shift from symbols of power and status to indulgent ephemera best left to women and children. Woloson is particularly apt at describing how candy itself was classified (expensive French bonbons for the elite and cheaper sweets for the common rabble) and how the middle and lower classes, through social emulation, continually forced exclusive confectioners to reinvent their products to maintain distinction. That is, the catalysts of fashion and taste in sweets were its very ubiquity and the myriad ways producers sought to capture new markets.

The author shows that to nineteenth-century Americans, the meaning of sugar not only changed over time but was created by a complex interplay of competing voices, a phenomenon true of all consumables, especially food. Objects can mean varied things to different people, or even to the same person, depending on the context or company. Woloson describes shrewd advertising campaigns, the opinions of nutritionists and food-purity experts, the stern warnings of rabid reformers, and then the ideas and aspirations of consumers themselves negotiating among these various claims. In the end, sugar and sweetness became feminized as the domestic ideal of the period increasingly cast women as pretty possessions, themselves to be adorned, admired, and consumed as status symbols. Whether the Valentine's Day gift, ice cream in an elegant pleasure garden or saloon, or a grandiose wedding cake, these items were increasingly fetishized as indispensable conveyors of personal sentiment and affection, even as they were mass produced.

Indeed, something sinister lurks beneath all these processes in Woloson's account. She points out how children were trained to be competitive consumers at the candy-store window, how the food industries usurped socially meaningful traditions of production for holidays and special occasions within the family setting, and how artisinal confectioners were pushed out by machines cranking out shoddy imitations. Some nostalgia surfaces here, although we are never really shown that candy was once a true manifestation of individual creativity connecting the craftsman or domestic producer with eager and appreciative consumers. Marx, or perhaps even William Morris, seems to unconsciously pervade these pages. Not

that this thread mars the account, but it runs consistently through the narrative, and the reader, with hindsight, is often left wishing that the moralists' dire exhortations had been heeded and that we had not unwittingly become a sugar-addicted culture.

Refined Tastes picks up a story where three classics of food studies left off: Sidney Mintz's *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History*, Elizabeth David's *Harvest of the Cold Months*, and Michael Coe and Sophie Coe's *True History of Chocolate*.[1] It focuses on the American side of the story but also carefully probes the meaning of these sweets in a specific and shifting economic context. The author points out correctly that America was a good century behind Europe in the marginalization of sweets and their increasing association with immature and effeminate palates. Sugar retained its aristocratic bearing much longer in the United States due to its limited availability well into the eighteenth century. This fact perhaps explains the rapid and decisive shift in meaning that sugar experienced once it finally became available and affordable. Sugar sculptures remained as vestigial rudiments of medieval "subtleties," but sugar had also evolved into new species, such as penny candies, portable ice cream cones, and a variety of other popular confections, that were better adapted to compete in the transformed marketplace.

Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of the story is how Americans consistently and consciously ignored the harsh realities of sugar and cacao production on what were at first slave plantations. This ignorance itself is another facet of modern foodways that the author illustrates well: consumers increasingly disregarded the consequences of their eating habits as products became cheaper, more available, and in greater supply. For wealthy people in the eighteenth century, the rarity of sugar, its exotic origins, and the domination of colonial possessions required for its growth and manufacture were merely salient proof of the power of those who could afford to indulge. Yet during the nineteenth century, these associations inevitably fell away, and sweets became demoted and feminized. Exploitation of workers in both the field and the factory necessarily intensified as sweets became increasingly available in ever more forms to the masses. Apart from a few dissenters, whom Woloson cites, nineteenth-century consumers blithely munched their candies without the slightest concern, yet another way this story relates hauntingly to the present.

Woloson also masterfully illustrates the role of advertising in promoting the American sweet tooth, particularly the ways in which manufacturers created meaning for consumers. The successful marketing strategy sold not just candy but a complex message or even a lifestyle. Manufacturers allowed children to mimic adult behaviors by puffing candy cigarettes or playing with miniature versions of status objects cast in sugar or tin. Advertising encouraged middle-class women to aspire socially by receiving elegant candy boxes that imitated elite confectionery. Modern convenience foods allowed housewives to impress their guests by presenting them with fancy molded ice cream forms, demonstrations of the women's largesse and dexterity as well as their leisure time devoted to such frippery while servants did the hard work. Once again, one can not help but think how much our own culture is informed by the nineteenth-century processes Woloson describes.

The author recounts many smaller and equally fascinating stories as well. Each chapter presents a smaller vignette that highlights the larger themes. The first chapter focuses on sugar itself and its history up to the colonial period. In America, simply because of its scarcity, sugar remained the exclusive preserve of the wealthy and was used primarily as a condiment, much like spices, or as medicine in small amounts. Yet Woloson demonstrates that when production began to be mechanized in the nineteenth century, Americans were well positioned to become major consumers of the white refined variety, rather than maple sugar and molasses. Beyond new technologies, such new sources as sugar beets and new territories where sugar could be grown facilitated the proliferation of sugar in the American diet.

Chapter 2 explores how children were ingeniously targeted—indeed, trained as future consumers—through the candy-shop window. Woloson carefully counterpoises the voices of reformers, who were concerned over issues of food purity and fearful lest these adolescent indulgences blossom into such adult vices as drinking and smoking, with the inevitable onslaught of new ways to cram sweets down children's gullets. She explains how the stimulation of artificial desires, which prompted children to become discerning shoppers who could

[1] Sidney Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (New York: Penguin Books, 1986); Elizabeth David and Jill Norman, *Harvest of the Cold Months: The History of Ice and Ices* (New York: Viking, 1995); Michael D. Coe and Sophie D. Coe, *The True History of Chocolate* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1996).

maximize their buying power by choosing from a vast array of cheap candies, made permanent competitive consumers out of an entire generation. Through candy and the toys included with it, children learned to "appreciate the power of possessions. . . . Like adults, children of all classes busied themselves by amassing a collection of paraphernalia that provided evidence of one's life experiences and economic status" (p. 47). In the era of industrial capitalism, you are what you own, and that manufacturers could hammer this message so thoroughly into children's heads is truly daunting. That these premiums were usually miniature versions of adult status symbols, "talismans," as Woloson astutely calls them, only drives home the point that stimulating the desire to acquire was the ultimate goal of the manufacturers in the first place. Furthermore, the irony, here as elsewhere, is that these unique possessions were owned by every child on the block, if not across the country.

As in other chapters of *Refined Tastes*, Woloson shows how purchasing patterns served to strengthen class hierarchies. Children unable to afford expensive treats were consigned to a few penny candies while driven to lust after the finer types. Even the rebukes of moralists are classist in this case. Attacks on the degrading effects of eating candy tainted with poisonous dyes, unwrapped, in the form of cigars and liquor bottles, and consumed in the streets by filthy urchins sharply contrasted with the more civilized party thrown by wealthy and doting parents who could assure the quality and domestic purity of the sweets they served to their children.

A chapter on ice cream provides further insight into the larger themes. Ice cream also began as a rare luxury item, particularly because of the difficulty of cutting and storing ice from inland ponds during the winter to be used later in the heat of summer. Here, the story of the democratization of ice cream shifts to the actual sites of consumption. At first there were exclusive pleasure gardens, magical settings separate from the bustle of the city where wealthy people could escape, flirt with the opposite sex, and enjoy a cold dollop of ice cream—only if they could afford the entry fee, of course. Before long the middle classes sought to sate their own palates, and ice cream was increasingly sold in tarted-up "saloons" decked with mirrors and froufrou, which indulged their aspirations to gentility, albeit in a less expensive setting. These shops were specifically designed to appeal to women, for whom they afforded a measure of freedom while on the town. Next, as technology advanced with the advent of the soda fountain, ice cream became democratized. Drug stores and department stores, fitted with the latest, most fashionable, gleaming machines, brought frozen confections to the masses. Finally the street vendor, often an Italian immigrant, brought ice cream to the poor in the street. Naturally these operations threatened the posh establishments, and moralists were quick to lash out against the unsanitary nature of pushcart peddlers. Indeed, this story continues to unfold today. Small operators are pushed out by larger manufacturers advertising their wholesome ingredients, modern and streamlined operations, and pristine service staff.

Chapter 4 focuses on chocolate. Once the exotic aphrodisiac beverage associated with the effete Spanish aristocracy, chocolate, too, shifts from being a food of the gods (the botanical nomenclature is *theobroma*) to a treat for the masses. Technology is once again responsible, in the form of the mid-nineteenth-century invention of affordable solid eating chocolate. Here Woloson traces the history of French bonbons, elegantly packaged and outrageously expensive, which were given as tokens of affection. The more expensive the chocolate, the deeper the sentiment. Even the boxes became objects of desire and, when fitted with frills, were suitable metaphors for women themselves: ornate packages for something soft, ephemeral, and of little substance. Advertisers naturally capitalized on the erotic associations of gooey, tumescent sweetmeats and co-opted personal expressions of affection with the mass-produced Valentine's Day assortment. The "sentiments of Valentine's Day had become inextricably embedded in the world of commerce, and a personalized, heartfelt gift merely a purchase away" (p. 132). The industry had transformed that holiday, along with Easter, into just another opportunity to make a dollar. As Woloson puts it, "This was part of a trend that replaced human relationships and personal sentiment with commodities" (p. 148).

Chocolates nonetheless remained a dangerous indulgence in the minds of reformers, especially if eaten in private by women. As a reciprocal act, the gift giving of chocolate was considered a necessary part of courtship ritual; alone, however, it signaled submission to base and uncontrollable urges, something especially hazardous among women who were supposed to be nurturing and giving. Could this attitude be the root of our own

ambivalence toward chocolate, perhaps along with a good dose of fat anxiety? For nineteenth-century thinkers, the chocoholic represented a threat to the moral fiber of society; coupled with cheap romances, bonbons threatened to entice women beyond their station and outside of the protection of the sacred conjugal bed. Woloson is really at her most acute in this type of analysis.

Cakes serve as the subject of the next chapter—in particular, wedding cakes and ornamental sugar work. Professionals in this trade were highly trained and at first catered solely to the wealthiest households. Sugar sculptures originate in the medieval "subtlety," as Woloson points out, but the direct stylistic ancestor of nineteenth-century sugar work is really the Renaissance and the baroque era. This chapter delves briefly into changing fashions, although more analysis of why and how neoclassical ornament vied with neo-Gothic and precisely what these forms meant to consumers might have proved more interesting. This century is, after all, one of nationalism and a return to Germanic roots, myth, folktales, and popular music. It further represents a conscious rejection of aristocratic, classical ornament and occurs just as such products are brought to a popular, or at a least middle-class, audience. Woloson's study of the ways in which the more exclusive artisans clung to the standard putti, grottoes, swags, and classical forms while castigating the tawdry, colorful efforts of the mass producers is yet another thought-provoking line of inquiry.

Woloson's discussion of the wedding cake as bride—both lavish displays meant to assert status, the domination by the husband who chose its form, and its eventual consumption by guests—is truly fascinating. The act of cutting into the cake (the author might have added "deflowering" as well) brings a new perspective to this strange ritual that persists today.

As in other chapters, the advent of mechanized production, cheap imitations sold to the masses, and the concomitant loss of specialized craftsmanship are construed as a classic paradox. On one hand, democratizing sugar and cake decorations brought these products to a broader clientele, but it also made the artistry obsolete, or at least more expensive and exclusive where it survived at all. One could say much the same of the entire arts and crafts movement, its socialist connections notwithstanding. For those who had to settle for the affordable sugar ornaments, uniqueness was found in buying eccentric (although mass-produced) perversities such as wedding bells, cupids, doves, wishbones, miniature brides and grooms, and one that seems to defy explanation—"Dwarf pushing Wheelbarrow with Flowers" (p. 182).

The final chapter of *Refined Tastes* focuses on the domestic scene, the infiltration of sugar into culinary culture, and what "home-made" came to mean for nineteenth-century Americans. Cookbooks and candymaking manuals taught women not only how to make a plethora of dainties to impress their families and friends but also what constituted their proper role as mothers. At the same time, the marketplace penetrated the sheltered domestic sphere, as store-bought goods promised to ease the burden of creating these confections. Powdered gelatin is perhaps the best example of industry fostering the consumption of sugar while advertising convenience and allowing women to create imitations of labor-intensive upper-class confections. The popularity of home ice cream machines did much the same. Whether food technology really spelled the demise of idyllic family rituals of candymaking and ice cream making, as Woloson suggests, or merely made some unpleasant tasks easier is a matter for debate. (She even admits how disgusting making gelatin from calves' feet can be.) Yet, one cannot argue with her assertion that "homemade ice cream from the best ingredients must have been richer and more satisfying in taste and texture than that mixed from a box of chemically formulated powder" (p. 205).

The gradual shift from preparing sweets as a household chore to creating showpieces as an act of leisure is another way that this era prefigures our own. Having the free time to devote to such tasks and then using them to boost one's reputation among guests are good illustrations of how cooking in general gradually became a leisure activity, especially among those who could afford not to cook at all. That cookbooks promoting labor-saving ingredients and gadgets taught women to make these homemade and old-fashioned treats is an irony not lost on the author. But one has to wonder whether these innovations really did displace "personal manuscript recipe books that women used to keep—which through their circulation, solidified community bonds and reinforced family traditions" (p. 213). This rosy picture might prove to be as much of a myth as is the traditional nuclear family. Could it not be equally possible that some women first learned to cook from printed cookbooks and that manuscript

cookbooks were largely the preserve of the elite, perhaps even proliferating because of the broader print culture?

Despite this dose of nostalgia, *Refined Tastes* ultimately proves to be an extremely astute examination of the ways in which sugar and confections demarcated social boundaries and constructed gender roles in the nineteenth century. Central to the story is the influence of technology and mass production in transforming the meaning of sweets and how their democratization forced the reinvention of new and more elaborate creations among the wealthy. As simply an explanation of how Americans became such avid consumers of sugar, this book is superb and can be recommended highly. The postscript on the present is well worth waiting for.

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Chris Wilson and Paul Groth, eds. *Everyday America: Cultural Landscape Studies after J. B. Jackson.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003. x+385 pp.; 111 illustrations, index. $49.95 (cloth); $19.95 (paper).

"A rich and beautiful book is always open before us. We have but to learn how to read it." This oft-cited quote by John Brinckherhoff Jackson appeared in the first volume of *Landscape,* a journal Jackson founded in 1951 as the first, and at that time exclusive, publication venue for studies of American cultural landscapes. Written as part of the statement of intentions for the journal, Jackson's quote served (and continues to serve) as a call-to-arms for those interested in studying the landscape. It also speaks profoundly to Jackson's legacy, for it is with the intent to "read" the landscape that scholars today, working in disciplines and fields as different as American studies, anthropology, architectural history, folklore, geography, history, and landscape architecture, continue Jackson's project of exploring and interpreting the history of America's diverse places. In addition, Jackson's statement may be understood as a challenge to persons engaged in landscape study, for learning *how* to read the landscape involves considering questions of method and agenda that no one working in the field today can ignore.

It is with this context in mind that we can examine *Everyday America: Cultural Landscape Studies after J. B. Jackson*, a fascinating collection of essays about the American cultural landscape recently published under the editorship of Chris Wilson (J. B. Jackson Professor of Cultural Landscape Studies at the University of New Mexico School of Architecture and Planning) and Paul Groth (associate professor in the departments of Architecture and Geography at the University of California, Berkeley). As the title suggests, the anthology celebrates Jackson's contributions to the field while also functioning as a timely survey of cultural landscape studies in America. Like other books in the Festschrift vein honoring senior scholars that have become fashionable recently, it pays homage to Jackson, with many of the essays in the volume coming from his students or friends and nearly all of them centered on landscapes that Jackson studied or certainly would have found of interest, particularly ordinary ones.

What distinguishes this anthology are the ways it challenges what we have become accustomed to with volumes of this type. One notable difference is that the book has a lengthy section devoted to teaching and fieldwork that gives it practical applicability for those of us working in the field and makes the book appealing to lay readers, even those who may never have heard of Jackson. Further, while none of the authors in the volume would deny Jackson's pivotal role in shaping cultural landscape studies, many of them engage with contradictions or problems with his "method" as a means of raising questions about the field today, something unusual for these types of volumes, which rarely are critical of the person being honored. Finally, the range of approaches taken by contributors to the volume suggests that the field is anything but stagnant and homogenous; if celebrated by the editors as evidence of the field's "polyphony" and "strength," it is unusual for a Festschrift to rejoice in this, particularly given that the authors often move far from Jackson in several ways. If partly celebrating and honoring Jackson's legacy, the book is in fact much more than that; it is essential reading for anyone interested in cultural landscape studies specifically and material culture more broadly, particularly because it addresses head-on the issues of how one "reads" the landscape and for what purposes. For a field such as cultural landscape studies, which is still, and perhaps always will be, (re)defining itself, asking such questions never proves fruitless, and the essays in this volume, which collectively prompt reflection upon the nature of the field, clearly show the importance of doing so.