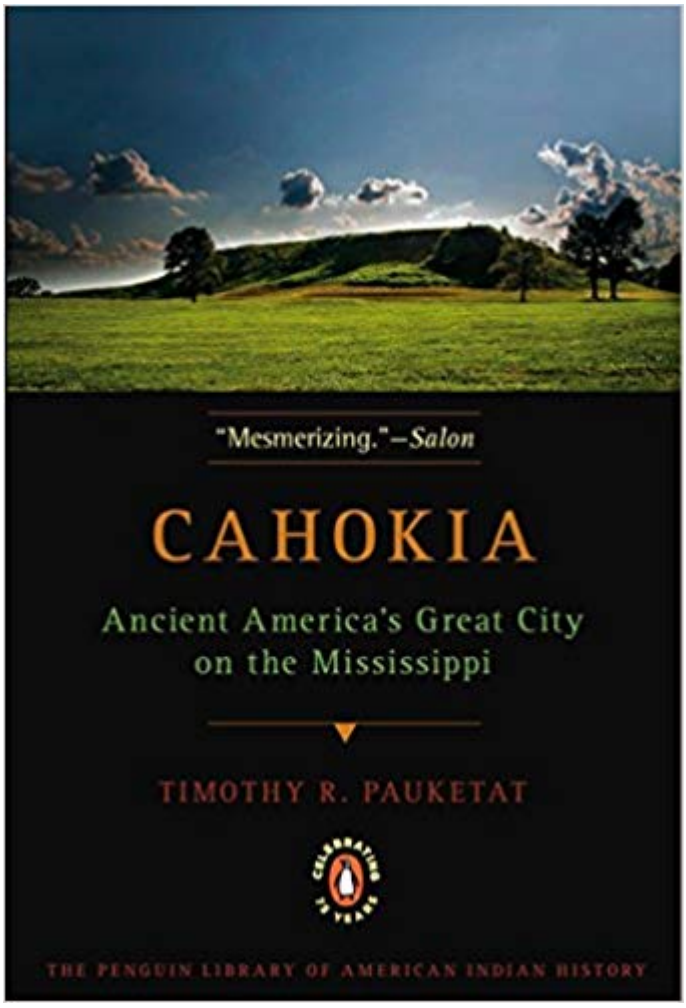
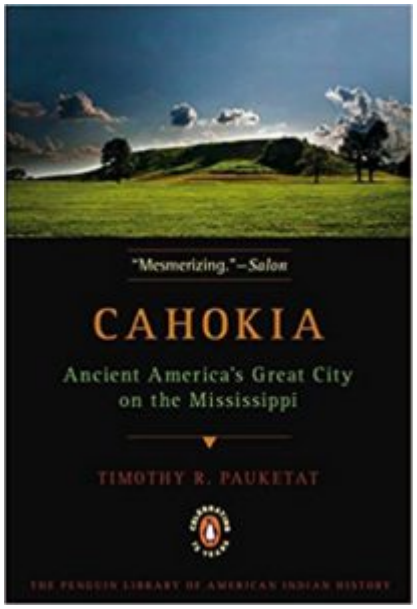
North America’s “Big Bang”



On July 4, 1054, Chinese astronomers noted a “guest star” in the constellation Taurus. They had actually witnessed a supernova, whose remnants today constitute the crab nebula. For twenty-three days, a perceptive observer would have seen this guest star during the day or night. The supernova remained bright in the night sky for the next two years. The indigenous inhabitants of North America, many of them avid sky-watchers, likely pondered the significance of this new visitor. Perhaps not coincidentally, around this time at a spot east of present-day St. Louis, Native North Americans replaced a small village with the greatest city north of Mexico, known today as Cahokia (named after a later group of the Illini). In *Cahokia: Ancient America’s Great City on the Mississippi*, archaeologist Timothy Pauketat sees Cahokia as North America’s “big bang,” an abruptly appearing city that served as the hub of what became known as Mississippian culture, spread up and down the great river by its residents and their descendants. Balancing speculation and empirical findings, he intertwines three stories: the story of Cahokia itself, its near destruction by modern developers, and its rescue by twentieth-century archaeologists.



Full of impressive research, Cahokia also contains fascinating questions and avenues of future exploration.

Drawing upon recent work in archaeology, Pauketat makes a strong case that Cahokia's construction required thousands of laborers and reflected the designs of a stratified society. The city contained more than one hundred and twenty earthwork pyramids, often described as "mounds." At Cahokia's heart stood the pyramid now called "Monks Mounds," with a volume of 25 million cubic feet. In front of Monks Mound, Cahokians carefully leveled a fifty-acre plaza. Pauketat notes that laborers built this grand plaza in one massive public works project, leading him to hypothesize that Cahokia housed approximately 10,000 residents, with another 20,000 to 30,000 in the surrounding hinterland of smaller communities and farms.

Cahokian elites commanded authority through large feasts and rituals, which sometimes involved human sacrifice. These rituals have left a compelling mystery in their wake. "Mound 72," for instance, contained two elite men and evidence of accompanying executions. Cahokians buried these men with two bundles of arrows: light tipped arrows aligned with the summer solstice sunset; dark tipped arrows pointed toward the winter solstice sunset. In an intriguing interpretation, Pauketat connects these elites to later Ho-Chunk sagas of a mythical hero named Red Horn and, more broadly, twin stories found throughout native North America. These stories focused on themes of duality and balance between male and female, good and evil, and upper and lower worlds. The arrows likely represented similar themes: "They simultaneously referred to the passing of a day, the seasons of a year, and the forces of light and dark, day and night, and life and death" (83). Perhaps these two men were unifiers. This interpretation, simultaneously speculative but also well informed, demonstrates how scholars can imagine a distant world that left no written history.

European and European-American writers have long been fascinated by stories of human sacrifice in Native North America, but Pauketat shows equal interest in

the lives of Cahokia's farmers. A day's walk from Cahokia, archaeologists discovered perhaps the most telling of these agricultural sites. Here, the farmers' housing and pottery styles differed from Cahokia, suggesting an immigrant population. Examining their waste, archaeologists conclude that the immigrants ate too little protein and far too much corn (perhaps these people were more like contemporary Americans that we usually assume). These people "had experienced the closest thing to a peasant lifestyle that had ever existed in pre-Columbian North America" (123). At Cahokia, then, Native farmers may have migrated from afar to their own frontier, where they experienced hardships, and eventually moved on to try their luck elsewhere. Less dramatic than human sacrifice, the prospect of poor farmers supporting Cahokia is, in its own subtle way, equally revelatory.

Full of impressive research, Cahokia also contains fascinating questions and avenues of future exploration. With the exception of an obsidian stone found in Oklahoma, no trade goods link Mesoamerica with Cahokia. Yet the two regions contain intriguing similarities in their mythology and artwork. Both Mississippian and Mesoamerican myths contain stories of heroic twins. Mississippian artwork also shared important traits with Mexican works: "goggle eyes, distorted noses, and (via historical accounts) hints of fangs" (147). Some illustrations or photographs would have helped readers see these connections, Cahokia's imprint on the landscape, and its complex culture. Pauketat's previous academic synthesis, *Ancient Cahokia and the Mississippians*, contains striking photographs of Mississippian artifacts, but unfortunately, Cahokia's only illustration depicts a modest home which fails to capture the grandeur of the city.

Pauketat tells a story of a landscape lost—or nearly lost—as much as it was discovered. Unique in scale, Cahokia's treatment by European-Americans was actually rather typical. Creating a new nation involved destroying the landscape and history of old nations. Some European-Americans saw ancient Indian works as remnants of a great civilization, one far too advanced to have been created by Indians. They invented theories of a lost race, or imagined that medieval Europeans somehow built the pyramids. Others, perhaps the majority of Americans, cared little for the Native landscape. Prior to the Civil War, locals destroyed twenty-five mounds in St. Louis as generations of plowing destroyed artifacts and ruined the original designs of earthworks at Cahokia and elsewhere. Through physical destruction and cultural myopia, Americans spun a tale of their nation as an untouched wilderness—a view still fundamental to popular interpretations of the United States' past. In the twentieth century, a steam shovel leveled the second largest mound and the federal government decided to build a freeway through parts of Cahokia. Archaeologists scrambled to salvage what they could, but they were helpless as construction crews destroyed other unstudied sections of the settlement. One resident even decided to put in a swimming pool at the base of the great pyramid (it has since been filled). Pauketat notes that in the end nine of the ten largest pyramids had considerable damage. Today, visitors can see the core of what remains of Cahokia in the Cahokia Mounds State Historic Site.

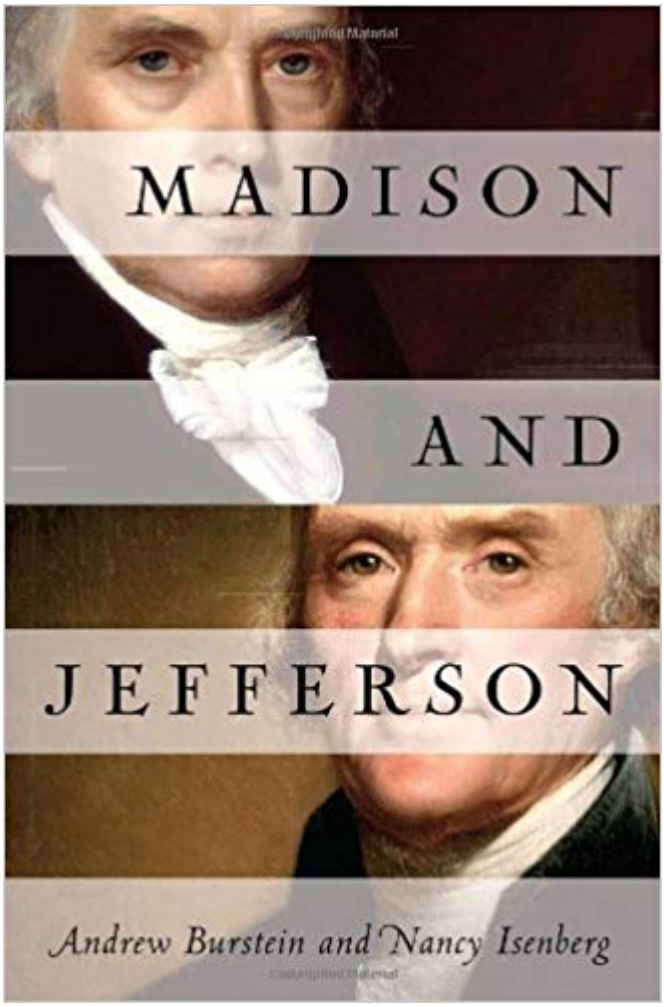
Cahokia's legacy for Native North America becomes murkier in the penultimate chapter, where Pauketat notes that Cahokia left "an almost nonexistent cultural memory" (160). Unlike other great cities, such as Teotihuacán in Mexico, no known oral traditions relate epics of Cahokia. Following such careful reconstruction of such a large city's history and its sprawling cultural reach, this silence is difficult to fathom. Pauketat speculates that during the city's late twelfth-century decline "people were seeking to escape Cahokia, and their desire to forget it—and create a more perfect, communal post-Cahokian society—were all part of starting over" (160). Archaeologists have speculated that the city's living conditions were poor, or that its collapse was too violent to merit remembering. However, earlier in the book, Pauketat relates that Revolutionary War general George Rodgers Clark had spoken to Illini Indians, who claimed mounds south of Cahokia were "the works of their forefathers," and had been "formerly as numerous as the trees in the woods" (27). This claim suggests some memory remained. Perhaps scholars will someday uncover additional evidence that connects "historic" Indians and their memories with Cahokia and America's ancient landscape.

Pauketat places Cahokia at the foundation of subsequent plains and woodland Indian history, but general readers may need additional guidance to ponder the city's legacy. Pauketat's view of Cahokia's legacy relies upon his understanding of Cahokia as a large city, capable of projecting military and cultural power across the plains and woodlands. He speculates that Cahokians sustained a "Pax Cahokiana," and without the city's military power the plains descended into violence, detected by archaeologists (168). Moreover, because the subsequent plains and woodlands Indians drew upon a Cahokian cultural legacy, the city "also affected the shape and direction of European colonization and, later, America's westward expansion" (38-39). Pauketat briefly notes that during the early nineteenth century, the Osage, possible descendants of Cahokians, temporarily obstructed Thomas Jefferson's commercial goals within the Louisiana Purchase. He adds that the Pawnee, another possible nation of Cahokian descendants, "held key portions of the Missouri and remained loyal allies of Spain into the American period, forcing drawn-out negotiations by United States Indian agents" (169). These examples aside, much of Cahokia's lasting significance remains implied.

Perhaps Cahokia's greatest legacy was its collapse, an ending that remains largely unexplained. Pauketat sees Cahokia as "pre-Columbian America's experiment in civilization," an experiment but not a precedent (169). Following Cahokia's collapse, north of Mexico, Native North America trended toward less hierarchal societies. Unlike the Spanish conquistadors in Mexico and South America, European colonizers encountered no centralized powers in the future United States, at least nothing comparable to the empires of the Aztecs or Incas. Navigating the diverse political landscape of North America required complex diplomatic maneuvering for Europeans and Indians alike, as indicated by Pauketat's mention of the Pawnee. Culturally diverse populations, America's Indian nations nevertheless shared some broad commonalities, suggested by the mythology and artwork Pauketat documents. This common ground enabled the

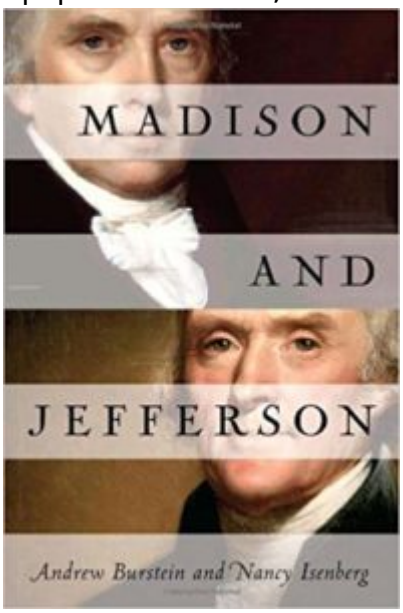
formation of new societies and political alliances, a process in progress after Cahokia's collapse and quickened by the arrival of Europeans, their warfare, and deadly pathogens. Cahokia is an important reminder of this interconnected, deep and dynamic history, which was well underway long before contact with Europeans.

An Enduring Partnership



Andrew Burstein and Nancy Isenberg have written a monumental work, detailing the lives of two men—James Madison and Thomas Jefferson—whose careers are inextricably intertwined with one another and with the birth of the American Republic. *Madison and Jefferson* analyzes the separate experiences and achievements of both its subjects as well as the personal and political partnership the two maintained throughout their long and fruitful lives. Mildly revisionist, the book reminds readers that Madison and Jefferson were not the revered icons that history has too often made of them. They were politicians, flesh and blood men who fought to turn their vision of the new nation into a

reality. Indeed, neither would have recognized themselves in the pages of either their most admiring hagiographers or their most vicious debunkers. Jefferson was not hailed as the author of the Declaration of Independence for decades. When he did begin to emphasize his authorship of the document, nearly a quarter of a century after he wrote it, he did so for political reasons. Madison was not, as most people—even historians—assume, the diminutive second fiddle to the eloquent Jefferson. Nor was he merely "the father of the Constitution" or the author of the "brilliant" Federalist papers. Indeed, he would often flee from the implications of both documents.



Burstein and Isenberg are determined to give Madison his due, to bring him out of the shadows where he has largely remained over the years.

We first meet Madison and Jefferson as provincial men on a provincial stage. They were both talented to be sure—but at the time they seemed to be no more talented than many of their friends and neighbors. They were "prominent but not heralded" (6). After all, Virginia had more than its share of bright and ambitious men who would lend their pens, their tongues, and occasionally their bodies, to the cause of American independence.

We encounter them, as well, before they knew each other. Even when they finally did meet, when Jefferson was governor of Virginia and Madison was one of his most influential advisors, neither "could have predicted that their intimacy … would have long-lasting implications" (63). Still, from the beginning, the two worked well together. Both were thinkers; both were practical politicians. If Jefferson was more inclined to abstractions, he was also a shrewd political animal. If Madison was more inclined to search for practical solutions to practical problems without trying to fit those solutions into a pre-conceived category, he was as much a child of the Enlightenment as Jefferson.

Burstein and Isenberg are determined to give Madison his due, to bring him out of the shadows where he has largely remained over the years. They point out that as late as 1789 Madison had a greater national reputation than Jefferson, and until 1800, Madison, not Jefferson, was at the center of national politics,

a “one man political force” and the leader of the opposition to the Federalist agenda (291). It was Madison who talked Jefferson out of retirement in 1800. Often as not, Madison acted as Jefferson’s “campaign manager” (350) and his “handler” (319). Even after Jefferson’s death, Madison continued to shape his friend’s legacy, somewhat disingenuously claiming, for instance, that Jefferson would have abhorred John C. Calhoun’s “nullification” policy and that the Kentucky Resolutions were designed to keep the union together rather than to destroy it.

Nevertheless, the authors concede that even in these two men’s own lifetimes, Jefferson seemed to attract more attention, more personal loyalty, and more enemies than Madison. Early on in Madison’s presidency, most observers assumed that “the retired president was still calling the shots.” They did not seem to recognize that “Madison scripted Jefferson’s political ascendancy in the 1780s and 1790s.” But they did know that it was Jefferson who operated on a grander scale. It was he, more than Madison, “who conceived and built the Virginia Dynasty of presidents” (478).

Madison and Jefferson is a big—but never tedious—book, chock full of fascinating insights. While it is impossible to do justice to its authors’ mastery of the details, a few points stand out. Especially important is the commitment that both men shared to their native state; they always “acted out of an attachment to Virginia as much as a desire to defend the Union” (620). If both men eventually played their role on a national stage, neither shed the provincialism they had imbibed in their youth. Indeed, the entire book seems to call into question any notion that the “united” States existed at this time. Jefferson, in particular, found that his “Virginia interest prevailed over the unifying interest” (371). But Madison also saw national affairs through a provincial lens. He attended the Constitutional Convention “as a Virginia partisan” and his arguments there and for the rest of his life never strayed far from a perspective that Virginians would find acceptable (165).

If Madison and Jefferson were both loyal to the land of their birth, they were also zealous proponents of American empire. They saw westward expansion as essential to national greatness, and as a way to fend off British meddling in American affairs. Above all, they saw it as a way to extend and reflect Virginia’s interests and character, as they acted upon their “southern-directed lust for land” (442). Theirs would be a nation whose power and material well-being rested on an agrarian culture. It would, moreover, be a slave-based society. The Louisiana Purchase was obviously a central component of the Jefferson-Madison vision. But their ambitions were much more far flung. Jefferson championed a “manly” defense of American honor in Tripoli. Both men set their eyes, not only on Canada and Louisiana, but on Cuba and the Floridas. Clearly, “manifest destiny” was not a product of the mid-nineteenth century.

Finally, Burstein and Isenberg do a fine job of tracing Jefferson and Madison’s changing views of the Constitution. Neither—but especially Jefferson—was quite comfortable with the Constitution and thus neither was a proponent of “original

intent.” Far from being the document’s author, Madison left Philadelphia as a “frustrated composer whose grand symphony has been left unfinished” (150). And he, more than Jefferson, constantly altered his interpretation of the Constitution. Both men’s views were hardened by their opposition to Alexander Hamilton. Indeed, Hamilton’s views moved the two closer together, making their own differences seem less important. Their distrust of England and their sense that the Treasury Secretary was creating an economy based on the British model, serving the interests of bankers and merchants, fed their fears. Moreover, they were convinced that Hamilton was tipping the balance of power toward an executive whose influence might lead to the creation of an American monarchy.

The value of this book is obvious. Its lucid prose will be easy for the non-specialist to appreciate, yet it has plenty to attract professional historians. Its command of the intricacies of the new nation’s economy and its foreign policy is formidable. Organized as a straightforward, chronological narrative, it often hops from one subject to another and back again. In the middle of an analysis of the challenges Madison faced as a war time president, for instance, comes a seemingly unrelated discussion of Jefferson’s and Madison’s views on race. And then we return to a discussion of the war (532-536).

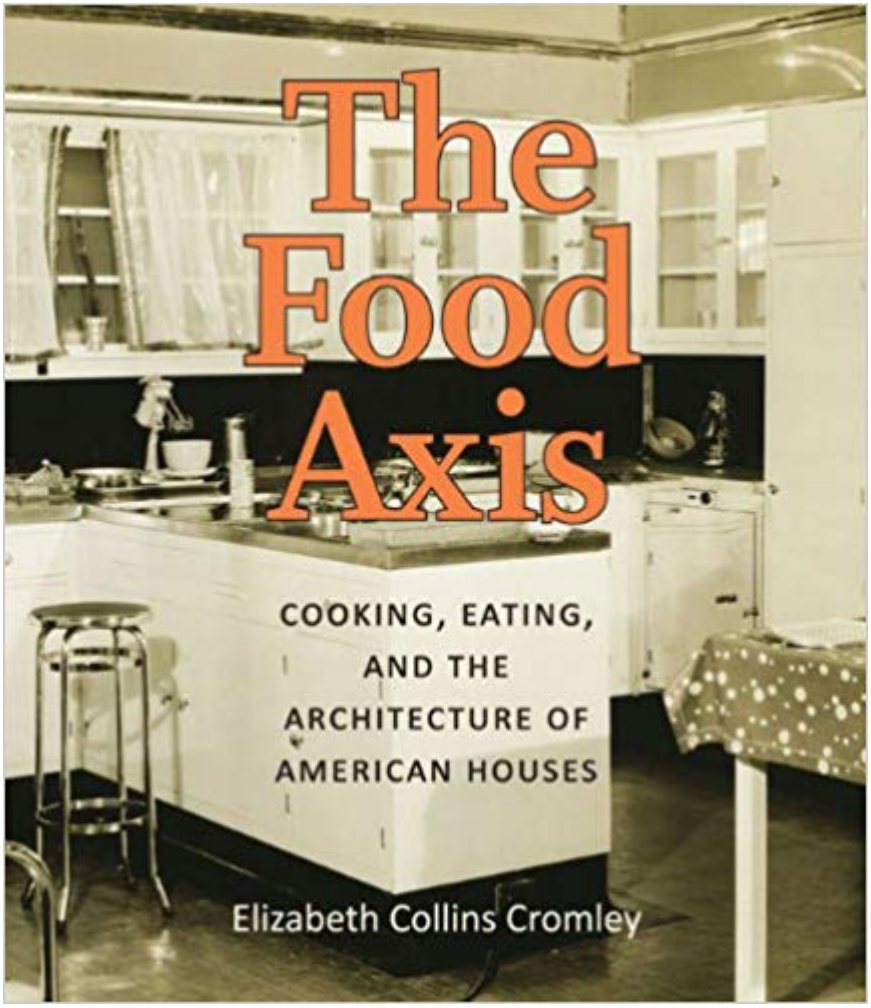
But while it is occasionally disconcerting, this approach helps readers see events unfold as Madison and Jefferson might have experienced them. These men were living in the moment; they were wrestling with a wide array of practical issues that arose on a daily basis. Although their response to those issues might be shaped by an overall perspective, in the real world they had to deal with problems as they happened. This book discusses the past as people actually encountered it, reminding us that for contemporaries, the world appeared to be little more than a series of contingencies.

Some readers will be disappointed by the short shrift this book gives to Jefferson’s relationship with Sally Hemings. We actually hear more about Maria Cosway than we do about Hemings. This omission is due in part to the fact that the book is completely source-driven, and for obvious reasons Jefferson did not discuss his relationship with his slave. Moreover, Winthrop Jordan and Annette Gordon-Reed have already provided brilliant analyses of Jefferson’s relationship with Hemings. Still, the authors’ astute observations about Jefferson’s views of race and gender do beg for some analysis, or at least an acknowledgement of the contradictions with which Jefferson lived.

Generally speaking, Burstein and Isenberg are remarkably even-handed, striving not to favor one man over the other. Still, it is hard to shake the feeling that Madison often emerges as the better of the two men, the more sympathetic, the more open minded, especially where matters of race are an issue. On occasion, the authors appear to adopt the prejudices of their own subjects. Thus, Hamilton was a self-aggrandizing meddler who was not a “team player” and “did not understand boundaries” (267). Patrick Henry was a “militant” and a “sensation-causing oracle” whose intellect was superficial at best (15).

This is a book about two men—at times it seems as though these are parallel biographies of men whose lives periodically intersected. It is also a “life and times” book, and on more than one occasion the “lives” seem to take a back seat to the “times.” Above all, it is the story of a partnership, one that stood the test of time, one that both Jefferson and Madison deeply valued. Neither man, Burstein and Isenberg argue, would have been the same without the other.

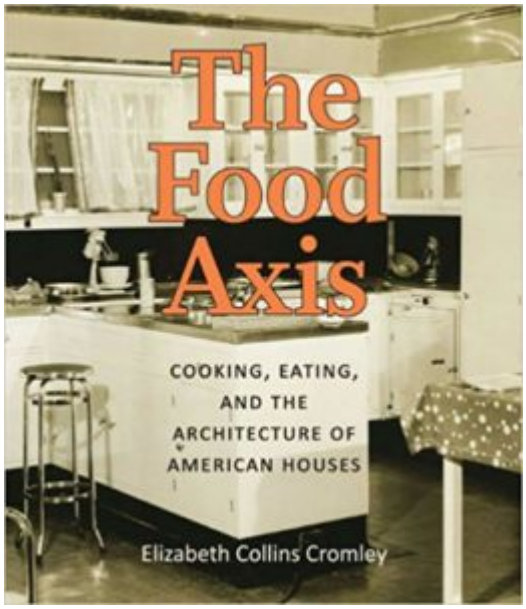
Of Food and Space



This book has many virtues. A chronological look at the architectural implications of food preparation and consumption in America from the seventeenth century to the present, it draws on an extensive secondary literature to tell the history of what the author calls the “food axis” in America. This term embraces the spaces beyond the household kitchen—including dining rooms, patios, orchards, summer kitchens, milkhouses and smoke houses—that were used in provisioning the household. Understanding the kitchen as but one part of a larger, spatial food system is an important aspect of the

book’s ambition and achievement. It is a building-type study with a difference.

The author intends to remediate the “conventional history of residential architecture” with its emphasis on grand structures and moments of origin by focusing on one aspect of the plan and by interjecting greater attention to issues such as gender, class, and linguistic terminology, and by using information on more modest structures and “downstream” histories of adapted structures.



The secondary literature the author favors is that written by the members of the Vernacular Architectural Forum, a respected sub-group of architectural historians who focus on the built environment in North America and who are particularly enthusiastic about hands-on diligent study of extant pre-modern structures. Cromley’s book draws together aspects of the fieldwork and archival research of these scholars to create a narrative about the architectural facets of food use over the past four centuries in parts of what is now the United States, an important and useful project.

Written in straightforward prose, *The Food Axis* is neither jargoned nor poetic. It reads very much like a collection of lectures to undergraduates, and I anticipate that that will be the book’s primary audience. It is, above all, descriptive. One thing happens after another; the evidence proffered takes the form of small vignettes of individual houses at the particularized level of the plan.

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no recent work specifically addresses the spaces associated with food, and in this, *The Food Axis* is original in concept and execution.

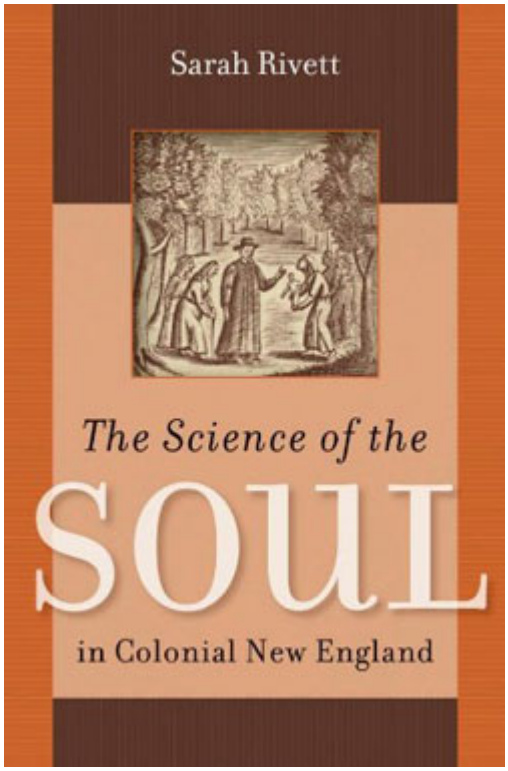
The Food Axis describes multiple homes drawn from studies of mostly East Coast structures. The thesis that threads through the book is straightforward: in the seventeenth century, food production, preparation, and consumption was informal, taking place in multi-function spaces; in the eighteenth century, more specialization occurs, with the advent of "refinement" or "gentility" (92); in the nineteenth century, more formality occurs; in the early twentieth century, efficiency occurs; and in the late twentieth century, salutary informality reemerges. There is nothing surprising about this overarching argument. The author presumes that function is the key element in the food axis, that form (as in the plan) is its most visible expression, and that foodways express social relations and technological developments in a direct manner. Similarly the motives for human action are straightforward (for instance, "to impress guests" [42]). Because of these presumptions about function and motivation, we particularly miss the kinds of multi-dimensional thinking that occur in the paradigm-breaking article by folklorist Robert St. George, "To Set Thine House in Order," from the exhibition catalogue, *New England Begins,* and in the work of anthropologists who attend to food, especially Mary Douglas. For these scholars, foodways and food spaces express complicated and interesting cultural presumptions about important non-food issues. Similarly, *The Food Axis* does not give us the rich material-based social history we find concerning the history of textiles in America in historian Laurel Thatcher Ulrich's *Age of Homespun*, for instance, a perspective that would pique the interest of historians in this dimension of material culture. For undergraduates in architectural history, however, the overall message of change from informal (simple) to formal (complex) to informal (simple with the help of complex technology) is probably a useful armature. Many scholars reading for themselves, however, will hope for something more. As one might expect from such an overall argument, the conclusions of each chapter and of the book as a whole are very terse.

In a few instances, smart broad statements draw us out of the microcosm-sequence of the developmental argument. For instance, the author remarks, "The smaller the house, the larger percent of interior space an interior kitchen occupied" (54). This point is not pursued here but it may prompt others to test and expand on this provocative observation in terms of various social classes in various eras.

The sixth chapter, which brings the study up to the present, seems much more informal than its predecessors. Drawn in a rather ad hoc way from popular culture sources, this chapter is much less fieldwork- and archive-based than the earlier chapters that consolidate studies of other architectural historians. This is not to say this chapter is less authoritative, just that it is based more on the prescriptive-descriptive world of journalism than the others. It therefore seems to present the middle class (and middle class aspirations) as normative.

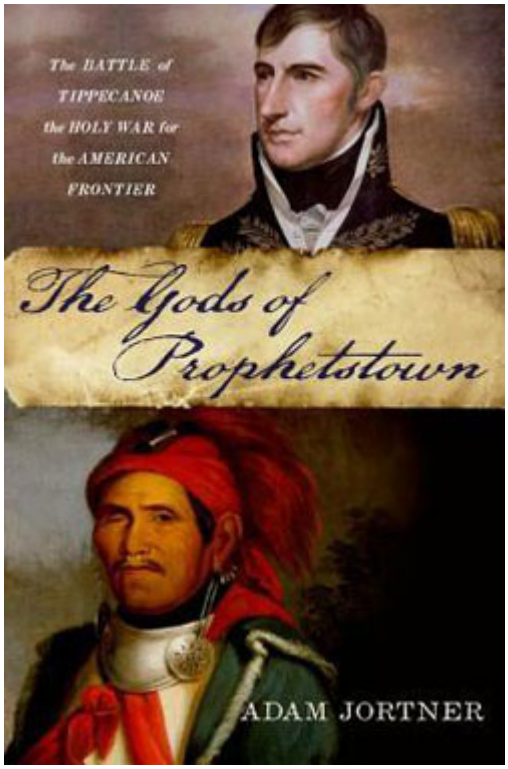
Overall, this is a solid book, one that tells a narrative not easily found elsewhere. *The Food Axis* is both an innovative departure in the field of architectural history and a timely offering in the growing academic field of food studies.

Experiments with God



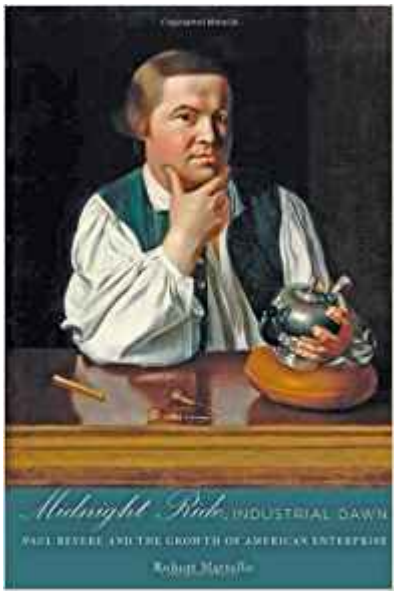
If a decade ago some folks were wondering why we had stopped taking religion seriously as a legitimate academic topic, today many are taking religion seriously enough to be willing to tip one of the sacred cows of Enlightenment modernity itself: that cow being, of course, secularism's sense of its total victory.

Deist Holy War?



If Jortner's point is to regain the contingency, and peel away the sense of inevitability of American expansion, he leaves the reader with no real explanation for the course of events.

Our Capitalistic Founder



Paul Revere was the only major patriot who was also a founder—literally. He

started a successful iron foundry in 1788, and remains the patriot most associated with industrial capitalism and free enterprise. Yet with one important exception, the midnight rider has been overlooked in the recent mania for the founders, an omission that *Midnight Ride, Industrial Dawn* seeks to remedy.

Robert Martello's well-researched and interesting new study focuses on Revere's business and technological practices, mostly eschewing his wartime experiences. His portrait of Revere nicely harmonizes with the one drawn by David Hackett Fischer in his classic *Paul Revere's Ride*, a book that Martello almost entirely ignores. Still, despite his focus on Revere's post-Revolutionary business ventures, Martello could easily have begun his book just as Fischer did with the Texas adage describing Paul Revere as "the yankee who had to go for help."

Revere, like European proto-industrialists, represents a transitional phase between the world of the artisan and industrial capitalism.

Fischer used this epigram to emphasize that Revere was not a lone ranger by any stretch of the imagination, but was instead just one important part of a large community of patriots. Martello makes a parallel argument about Revere the entrepreneur, placing him within an "allied network of innovators, politicians, and influential people who worked together to pool their expertise and solve common problems" (62).

The first third of this book, dealing with Revere's early life and career, drags a bit. Based mostly on secondary sources, it covers well worn ground. Like Fischer, Martello focuses on Revere's status anxieties as a successful artisan craving acceptance from upper class merchant founding fathers and on his uncanny ability to forge personal connections that contributed to his wartime and business successes.

Martello's account really comes alive when he begins relying more heavily on the extensive Revere Family Papers for the period beginning around 1790. Despite never achieving the level of social respectability he longed for, Revere became very rich as a bell and cannon founder and the first American to produce copper sheeting for ships during his post-war career.

Martello uses the concept of proto-industrialization as his theoretical framework for discussing Revere's career, arguing that Revere, like European proto-industrialists, represents a transitional phase between the world of the artisan and industrial capitalism. However, this is proto-industrialism with a twist. Martello argues that American proto-industrialism occurred not in agricultural settings (as in Europe) but within the "early manufacturing community" (8), which included artisans, capitalists, hewers of raw materials, consumers, and government officials. As Martello examines Revere's career, he focuses on changes in capital production, technology, labor, and the environment.

As an artisan, Revere never had the sort of access to capital that was

available to early manufacturers who came from more mercantile backgrounds. His solution was to use the social capital he built up during the war years to secure government contracts. It is astounding how Revere was able to capitalize on his connections throughout his career by landing government contracts for cannon and copper sheeting, procuring a loan from the naval department to help him develop his copper rolling mill, convincing government officials to help him collect used copper, and pushing (unsuccessfully) for tariff protection. Indeed, while Revere may well be a founding father of modern capitalism, some free enterprise promoters would, no doubt, be troubled by such frequent reliance on government largesse.

Revere also adopted modern techniques and technologies, everything from double-entry bookkeeping to mechanical copper rolling, although he never quite attained the industrialists' goal of full standardization. In the case of copper rolling, he became a bold technological pirate who sent his son to England to memorize the state-of-the art equipment employed there. Usually, though, Revere's activities were less dramatic. He was a supreme networker who shared ideas with a broad circle of techies, ranging from fellow manufacturers to government officials to important scientists. Martello suggests that his connections with one such British scientist helped to feed his continual desire for social status. This propensity to share information resembles the behavior of machinists recently described by David R. Meyer in *Networked Machinists* and, as Martello points out, it seems far removed from Revere's artisan heritage in which practitioners sought to protect the secrets and mystery of their craft.

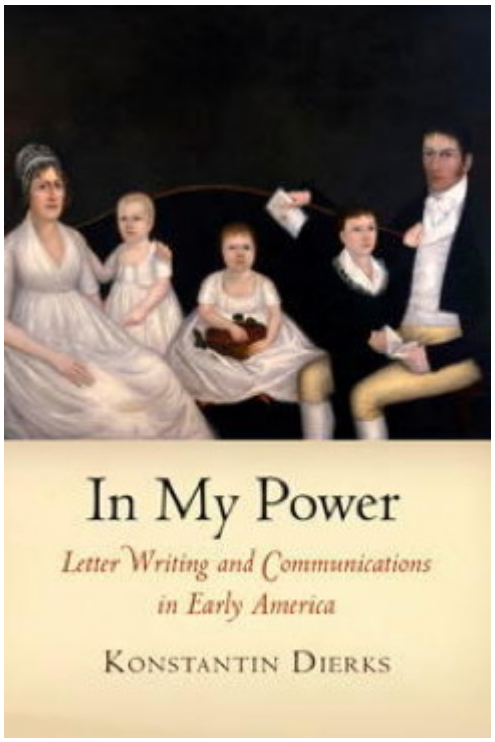
Revere's use of labor clearly fit the proto-industrial framework. Having moved away from the formal apprenticeships and journeyman labor of the artisan shop, Revere's operation nevertheless remained relatively small scale (with perhaps 10 to 20 employees at most) and workers maintained close personal ties to their boss. Martello's discussion of the environmental effects of Revere's business is suggestive, if a bit thin, focusing on riparian disputes and on fuel procurement. He concludes that Revere "increasingly acted in a capitalist-industrialist manner, treating the environment as a commodity and limitation" (151).

For all its divergences from traditional accounts of the founders, like most other founding father biographies, this one ultimately casts its subject in a heroic mold. Martello resists portraying Revere as a modern-day self-interested capitalist working his government connections for all they are worth, preferring to accept Revere's more patriotic self image. Martello's Revere saw himself as an industrial hero for bringing English copper rolling technology to America, fulfilling in that process his earlier ambitions to be venerated as a social leader. Revere "could accurately consider himself the founder of what we now call a national industry as others followed in his footsteps, sought his advice, built upon his achievements, and continued his work" (343).

While Martello occasionally intimates that Revere was typical of artisan-manufacturers of his age, he provides little evidence, and Revere's remarkable

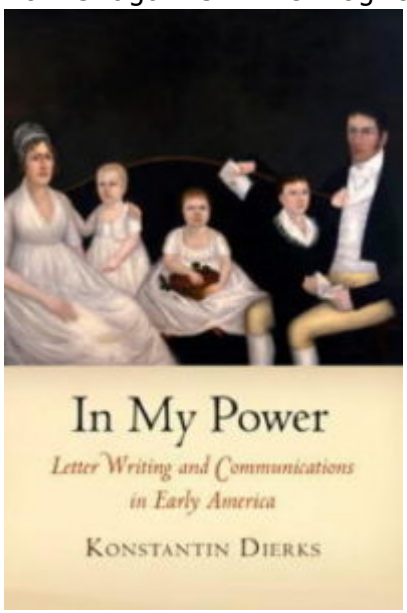
career seems to belie such suggestions. Nevertheless, whether Revere was representative or *sui generis* in his technological adventurousness, his hard-headed business savvy, his gregarious social networking, and his knack for getting government support make for fascinating reading, and Martello's account of Revere's life is a welcome addition to the literature on American industry and on the founding fathers.

What we talk about when we talk about letters



"We Used to Wait," the second single from Arcade Fire's *The Suburbs* (2010), begins like most of the songs on the record—with a lamentation. The speaker distills his experience of suburban or exurban disaffection into a considerably less abstract set of images: "I used to write / I used to write letters / I used to sign my name / I used to sleep at night / Before the flashing light settled deep in my brain." The line between the better past and the bitter present registers as an epistolary problem: before, there were letters and signatures—markers of an active self recording its own presence, leaving material traces of social relations—now, without the writing of letters, there is only sleeplessness and impotence. The flashing light is imperial, too much for the speaker to handle: the space of the suburb (in all of its ideological complexity) has separated him from the life he had and the future he had imagined. As the song progresses, though, there's a critical shift. In spite of

the helplessness, the “wilderness downtown,” the structural impossibility of living in the post-modern age, the speaker finds defiance: “I’m gonna write / A letter to my true love / I’m gonna sign my name / Like a patient on a table / I wanna walk again / Gonna move through the pain.” Letter writing becomes the first stage of a larger awakening—the speaker’s recuperation of his will, of his sense that the external forces aligned against him (here rendered as injury or disease) may be countered effectively. As a concrete assertion of the self and its relations to others—the “I” and the “true love”—the logic of the letter works against the logic of social and cultural alienation.



Ultimately, [Dierks] argues that the production and circulation of letters become a way of articulating individual agency against a backdrop of massive social change.

As it happens, this relationship between the letter and the empowered self that Arcade Fire describes has a long history. In his closely argued, deeply researched, and unfailingly engaging *In My Power*, Konstantin Dierks takes on the personal side of the burgeoning documentary culture of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century anglophone Atlantic. Amassing and interpreting a remarkably broad archive of correspondence (by merchants and diplomats, housewives and frontiersmen, children and generals) Dierks finds in the material and rhetorical practices of letter writing new ways of understanding the relationship between Enlightenment-era Britons and the ideologies that structured their lives. Ultimately, he argues that the production and circulation of letters become a way of articulating individual agency against a backdrop of massive social change.

Dierks opens with the question of empire in the seventeenth century. At a moment in which instantaneous communication across long distances was unimaginable, letters form critical links between far-flung possessions and the metropole. From the colonies comes news of geographical exploration, territorial expansion, and intercultural relations; from the mother country come statements about governmental policy, commercial practice, and the

disposition of resources. Even beyond the flows of information that such letters contain, Dierks argues, the mere fact that these pieces of marked paper could be conveyed over such long distances and through so many stages argued for imperial plausibility; without a communications infrastructure (including paper mills, post-roads, packet boats, and postmasters) and a steady flow of letters through it, the "fantastic leap of the imagination" (51) required to see diverse colonies as part of an integrating whole would have been impossible. In other words, letters and the cultural systems developed to produce and distribute them are critical to the consolidation and maintenance of Britain's imperial ambitions. They are also signally important to the psychology of individual empire-builders—receiving and bearing letters from the imperial center, those on the expansionary front-lines are invested with the power of the mother country; receiving and bearing letters from the expansionary front-lines, those in the mother country are empowered by proofs of their ability to promote nationalist action at a distance.

This empowerment-by-letter works for mercantile concerns and migrating families as well. In his second, third, and fourth chapters, Dierks shows how letters construct business and social relations among the scattering peoples of the Atlantic world. For the merchant, letters contain critical data—about orders to place, prices to be asked and paid, new markets to consider, competitors to watch, and so forth—but also make reputations. Reliability and regularity in writing correlate neatly with trustworthiness in everything else: a good correspondent is a good man to do to business with. Dierks persuasively links this epistolary meritocracy with new ideas about the self; the routinization and standardization of business writing practice allows for an opening of the middle class—a route to material success for the modestly born. Manuals like Daniel Defoe's *The Complete English Tradesman* (second ed., 1727) make the tricks of trade (including the composition of proper commercial correspondence) available even to those without prior connections; young men who might have previously been destined for localized manual labor could learn the adaptable and remunerative skills necessary for global business and earn something like an independence. With this potential for advancement, though, comes anxiety about failure. What Dierks calls the "fraught imperatives of personal agency" in a documentary culture—"the tasks of investment, discipline, internalization, duty, and complaisance" (143)—in turn help to explain what we have come to think of as the "consumer revolution" of the eighteenth century. The more fluid the class dynamic, the more important the purchase and deployment of the material trappings of comfort become—the rise of letter writing and the rise of conspicuous consumption go hand in hand.

Class mobility and geographic mobility, of course, are two sides of the same coin: with the expansion of territory and the expansion of commercial interests to serve (and exploit) that territory comes emigration and the fracturing of kin groups. Sons and daughters leave home to seek their fortunes, then write back with news—about health, about letters received and sent, about everyday affairs. Again, the actual content of the correspondence is less important than the system that supports and conveys it: as proof of continuing personal

relationships and identifications (as a Briton, as a member of a family), the regular exchange of letters posits stability in an unstable world. (Arcade Fire registers this too: “It may seem strange / How we used to wait for letters to arrive / But what’s stranger still / Is how something so small can keep you alive.”) More than this: as Dierks puts it, letter writing was also a form of existential order-making; it allowed an expressive medium for “description, explanation, desire, and aspiration—every intangible realm of meaning that underlay the taking of goal-oriented action in the world, whether felling trees, harvesting crops, stitching shoes, selling fabrics, whipping a slave, or killing an ‘Indian.’ Letter-writing helped turn all those actions into a struggle to make meaning out of the confusion of circumstance and change, dislocation and determination” (115).

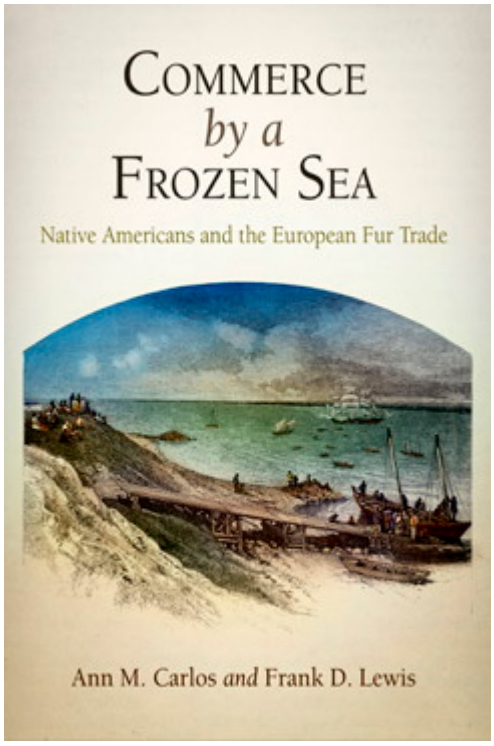
An essential part of the colonizing process, correspondence is also instrumental in empowering the anti-colonial resistance of the second half of the eighteenth century. In the American Revolution, Dierks argues, “[l]etters did not cause anything in a reductive sense, but they were part of everything” (191). For the pre-Revolutionary moment, that means the interception and publication of Loyalist communiqués, the formation of Committees of Correspondence (in charge of orchestrating anti-government protests across geographical space), the building of a pro-colonial postal system to carry their messages. After Lexington and Concord, “part of everything” indicates the importance of sustained efforts to disrupt the British military post and the building of elaborate systems of messengers and cut-outs to convey written orders from Washington to his commanders in the field. Dierks is also admirably attentive to those disempowered by revolution—loyalists, foot soldiers and their spouses—and to the ways that their own correspondence affirms some manner of personal control over and against the situations in which they found themselves.

The final chapter of *In My Power* takes the problem of disempowerment even further, comparing the “universalist” rhetoric of middle-class agency (in which success is open, “without social limit” [236], to anyone who can acquire certain standardized literacy skills) with the exclusionary realities of eighteenth-century America. It charts what Dierks calls an “epistolary divide” between the haves and have-nots: as “writing literacy and letter writing became a baseline skill for participating in a modern commercial economy,” those people who remain largely unlettered—whites of the lower sort, Indians, free and enslaved blacks—are deemed unfit for anything other than menial labor. This in turn “silently and effectively compromised what was understood as a rising political impulse to democracy” in the post-Revolutionary period; “[t]he formal structures of government may have been given the appearance of egalitarianism, but the informal mechanisms of governance remained fundamentally elitist” (237). Such marginalized people work to subvert and exploit these cultural assumptions whenever and wherever they can—literate slaves would forge travel passes, for example; Phillis Wheatley writes epistolary protest poems addressed to colonial officials—but the epistolary divide is an essential (and lasting) barrier to full citizenship. Put another way, the unstated corollary to white

middle-class literary empowerment is a race- and class-based disempowerment; the "universalist" possibility of personal agency is in many ways a useful cover for an increasingly asymmetrical power dynamic in the culture.

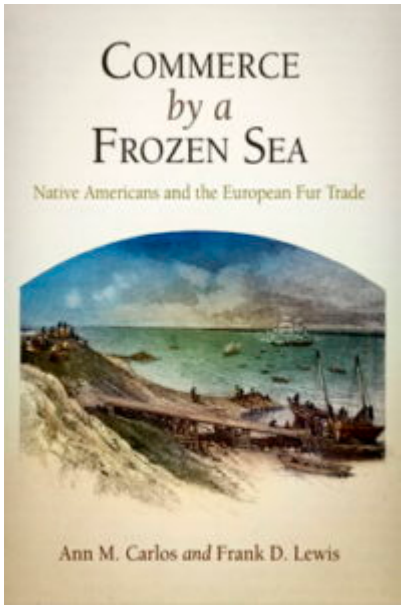
With this acknowledgment of the ways in which the textually mediated fantasy of liberal subjectivity fails—or papers over socially unethical behavior—Dierks's conclusion moves usefully beyond history into polemic. The book's final rhetorical questions—"What…if evil comes not only from the logic of racism and violence, but also from myopia and foreclosure, a failure to recognize the power embedded in material structures and the divide entrenched in cultural imaginaries, and a failure to imagine any human connection across that divide?"—are both spot-on and utterly deserving of non-rhetorical answers. Not coincidentally, the end of "We Used to Wait" provides one response worth considering. The last lines perform the joy of collective, connective action; they move beyond the subject empowered by writing to conjure a subject empowered by an ecstatic merge with a democratic crowd. "We used to wait for [those letters to arrive] / Now we scream and sing the chorus again / We used to wait for it / Now we scream and sing the chorus again." Screaming and singing together is certainly not enough to undo the problems of what Dierks calls the "dark side of history"—but it could well be a start.

For the Want of a Good Hat



At the heart of *Commerce by a Frozen Sea* is the beaver hat, which by the

seventeenth century had become an essential part of European men's fashion. With a high content of beaver "wool," a wet hat would hold its shape. Wet or dry, it was stronger, warmer and more lightweight than its cloth counterpart. Initially, all beaver hats available on the European market were made from European beaver by Russian hatters who had created the complicated felting technique to separate the wool hair from the longer guard hairs on the pelt. When England and France finally developed their own hatters by the early seventeenth century, they relied heavily on North American beaver, which came initially in two types: parchment (sundried skins) and coat (which had been used as clothing by Indians for about a year before being traded). The latter was preferred by hatters since the normal wear process caused the guard hairs to fall out naturally, requiring less work to harvest the wool. When combined, parchment and coat beaver created a high-end hat. (Hudson Bay region beavers produced particularly exceptional pelts due to the subarctic winters.) The ensuing demand for beaver motivated both the French and the English to devote considerable resources to trading with Indians for the pelt.



Prior to the arrival of the Europeans, Indians had neither the tools nor the desire to overhunt beaver, which only served as a food source during times of hardship or feasts.

Economists Ann Carlos and Frank Lewis use this demand for beaver to examine trade between the Cree and Assiniboin Indians who resided in what is now Canada and Britain's Hudson Bay Company (which covers much of present-day Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta). Focusing on the Hudson Bay region reveals a different fur trade than the one described by other scholars. As Carlos and Lewis observe, due to the "great distance involved, France, England, and Indian peoples in the Bay region interacted to a large extent outside the political forces that played out in the lower thirteen colonies and New France" (3). Because Indians were the sole purveyors of pelts in Hudson Bay, trading beaver for a host of consumer goods, Carlos and Lewis illuminate natives not just as producers but also as consumers.

The authors draw their evidence from the rich collection of letters, post journals, and account books between the post managers on the Hudson Bay and the firm's head office in London. Post managers exchanged directly with Indians, set prices, and made copious notes on Indian consumption preferences of European goods which they reported in turn to London. Carlos and Lewis found ten to twenty types of furs provided by Indians and sixty to seventy types of consumer goods sold by the company in these records. Company employees worked from the "official standard," which was the company price list with all goods valued by the region's monetary unit: "made beaver." This facilitated trade during the busy season and gave post employees a base value to work from. There was some leeway as company trading posts closer to French posts had to keep their prices competitive, although any deviation had to be explained to London in the post manager's yearly report.

Like earlier scholars, including Calvin Martin (*Keepers of the Game: Indian-Animal Relationships and the Fur Trade*) and Shepard Krech III (*The Ecological Indian: Myth and History*), Carlos and Lewis ask why Indians, who were in sole control of the beaver population, chose to overhunt beaver despite the fact that this limited their access to consumer goods in the long run. Carlos and Lewis conclude that prior to the arrival of the Europeans, Indians had neither the tools (such as ice chisels and twine) nor the desire to overhunt beaver, which only served as a food source during times of hardship or feasts (the tail was a delicacy). But once they had access to luxury goods such as tobacco, beads, lace, jewelry and vermillion, the Indians took advantage of high fur prices to purchase these items, which raised their standard of living. This self-defeating desire to consume was one major reason for the decline in the beaver population.

Nonetheless, as long as there were beaver pelts to trade, Indians had a significant degree of leverage as consumers. With both France and England in the region, Indians could play the two powers off one another, and trade goods had to be satisfactory. Post managers tried with various levels of success to make officials in London understand what goods met Indian demands. For example, knives and guns turned brittle and broke in the subarctic climate if the metal was even slightly flawed. Post correspondence shows that Indians were so attuned to the quality of the metal goods they traded for, rather than what color the handles were, that London company officials eventually sent gunsmiths to the posts to repair faulty guns rather than shipping the broken ones back.

Consumer goods fell into distinct categories. "Guns were the highest-priced item," report Carlos and Lewis, and "accounted for seventy to eighty percent of [Indian] expenditure on producer goods" (86). Household goods such as kettles, blankets, knives and awls accounted for ten percent (falling to just over five percent over the course of their study). Luxury goods, which Carson and Lewis divide into three categories, made up the rest: "tobacco and related goods; alcohol and related goods; and other luxuries, including beads, cloth, lace, jewelry, and vermillion among many others" (87). By far the most frequently purchased luxury item was tobacco, which Carlos and Lewis note has been grossly

overlooked by other scholars. In contrast, the primary product Indians consumed was never alcohol. At the height of alcohol consumption, around 1760, Bay records show that Indians were still drinking far less than European colonists and Continentals: “at most four two-ounce drinks per person for the entire year” at a time when colonists were drinking 279 two-ounce drinks (93). As fur prices rose, household and producer goods remained steady but Indian purchases of luxury goods increased.

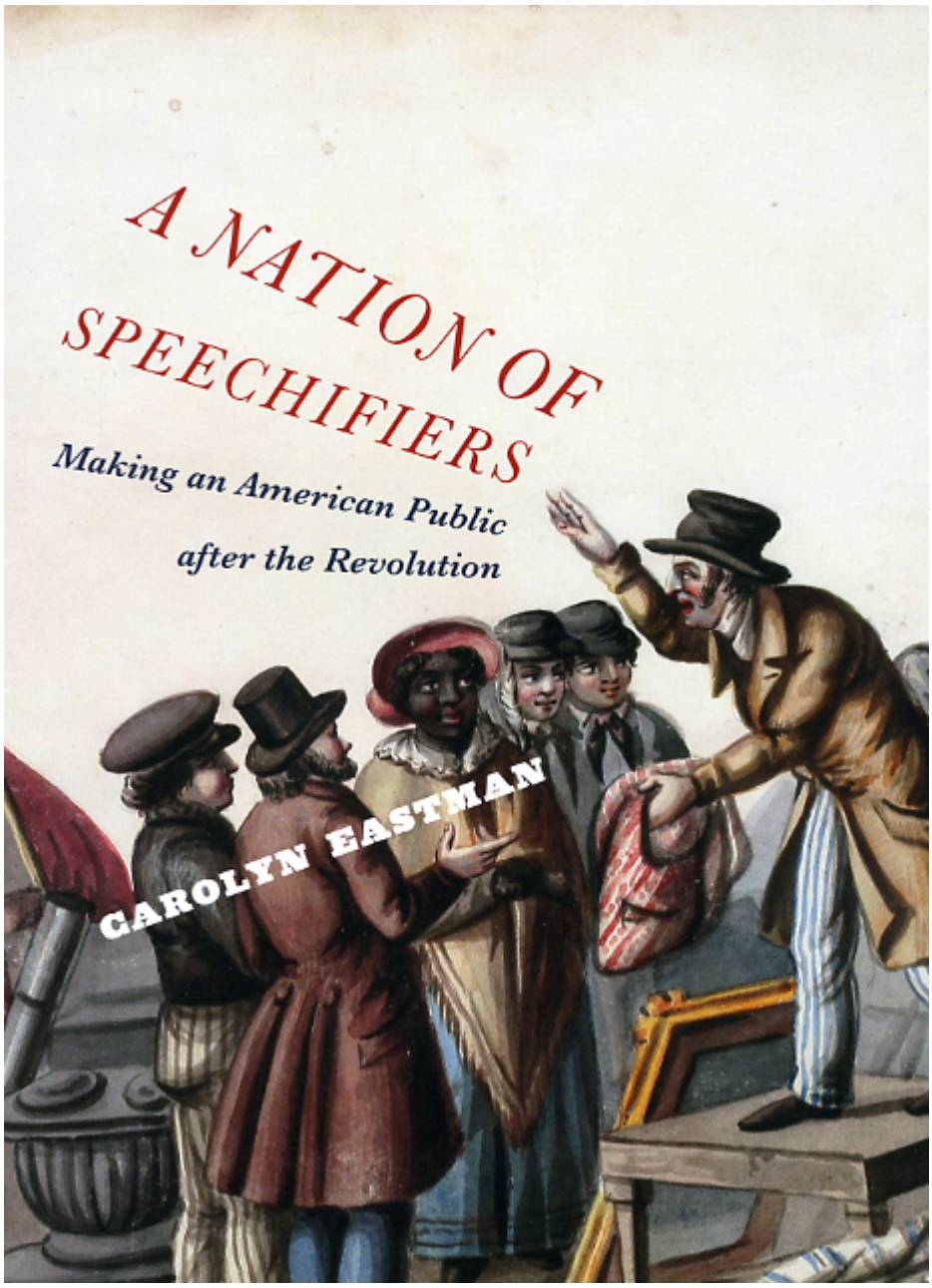
But the penchant for luxury goods cannot entirely explain the decline of the beaver population. Overhunting, Carlos and Lewis argue, was also a function of the fact that beaver were a “common-pool resource,” meaning that it was impossible to prevent others from trapping the beaver. Tribes did not control the beaver population. Moreover, in hard times, Indians would hunt the beaver for food because of their desire to feed those in need. Still, most ended up being traded to the Europeans, and between 1700 and 1763, 2.75 million beaver pelts were received at Hudson Bay Company posts alone—in addition to those received at other British colonial or French posts.

An examination of the consumer goods in Indian homes allows Carson and Lewis to compare Indian and European standards of living and consumption practices. Their findings are striking: “The commodities—beads, combs, magnifying glasses, looking glasses or mirrors, sashes, scissors, thimbles, and shoes—mirror the inventories of both European and colonial households” (105). The authors conclude that mid-eighteenth century Indians were materially equal to low-income English households, although their comparison shows that Indians had better diet and clothing than Europeans, but that Europeans had better housing (due in large part to its durability) and consumed more luxury goods, especially alcohol. In their behavior as consumers and laborers they were not that unlike industrious workers in Europe—ultimately enticed to work harder to purchase luxury goods.

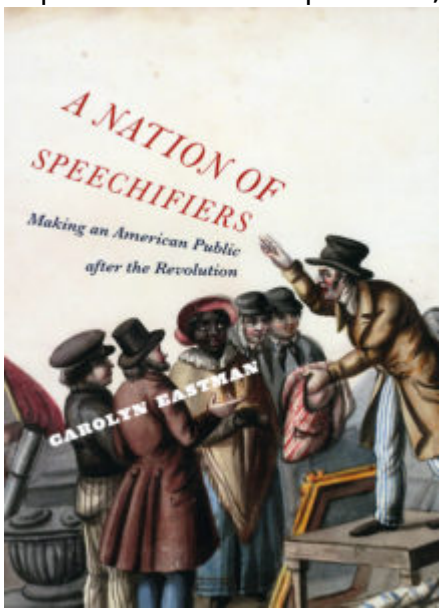
The economic focus of this work is at once its greatest strength and greatest weakness. On the one hand, *Commerce by a Frozen Sea* allows us to see the fur trade in a new light with Indians as active and vocal consumers at its center. By making use of the company’s account books and extrapolating data based on those figures, it provides a detailed look at the fur trade that is absent from social and cultural views of the fur trade (such as Jennifer Brown’s *Strangers in Blood: Fur Trade Company Families in Indian Country* and Sylvia Van Kirk’s *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur Trade Society, 1670-1870*). It provides new explanations for overhunting beaver which challenge the notion of Indians as better ecological managers than Europeans, and gives concrete figures to prove alcohol was not the dominant European good Indians consumed. The detailed look at the types of commodities and their values, and the comparisons to European households, make this a valuable resource as historians continue to make sense of this period. However, it is also truly an economic history, which can make for a cumbersome read. While the authors usually explain jargon, the many formulas and charts scattered throughout the chapters would probably daunt undergraduates. The lack of narrative tends to make the people disappear, which

is odd given that this work is fundamentally about human agency. The authors are right that the isolation of the Hudson Bay region allows us to see Euro-Indian interaction in a way that is normally hidden by politics, violence and middlemen. However, such isolation also means that the Bay is likely the exception to the rule rather than representative of the fur trade as a whole. They leave it to the reader to do additional reading to compare the experiences in the Bay to posts elsewhere. However, since this work joins a rich literature on the fur trade, such a comparison is not difficult.

Speaking and Listening



The Marquis de Lafayette visited Lexington, Kentucky, in May 1825 as part of his triumphal tour of the United States, during which the American people expressed a massive outpouring of love and gratitude for the old hero and his sacrifices in the American Revolution. While in Lexington, Lafayette paid a visit to the Lafayette Female Academy, recently renamed in his honor, where a committee of the academy's pupils greeted him in front of a large crowd. Mary McIntosh and Maria Brown Duncan each delivered an oration to the crowd and to Lafayette to welcome him on behalf of "Kentucky's band of PATRIOT DAUGHTERS." Brown Duncan assured the crowd that, even though young women were "incapacitated from engaging in the active concerns of the government," they were more than able to perform the civic duty of paying tribute to the visiting hero. After the ceremony, the girls gave Lafayette beautifully hand-written copies of their speeches, which were later published as a pamphlet.



Eastman brings new attention to the role of oratory, and the interaction between speechmaking and print culture, in the building of the American public between the 1790s and the 1830s.

This extraordinary occasion highlights important points about oratory and speech-making in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. McIntosh and Brown Duncan were exceptional in being chosen to deliver speeches to the distinguished hero, Lafayette. But their speeches also followed in an established tradition of young women speaking at academic exhibitions in the early republic. The number of girls who spoke at public occasions was declining by the 1820s, but McIntosh and Brown Duncan's presentations to Lafayette illustrate that his traveling companion, the British author Frances Wright, was certainly not the first woman to declaim publicly in the United States when she was attacked for her own controversial speaking tour in 1828 and 1829.

Carolyn Eastman underplays ceremonial occasions such as Lafayette's tour in her new book, but her scholarship offers a number of thought-provoking insights that can help us to understand the importance of such oratory in the early republic. Recently, many scholars have probed how "the public" constituted

itself in the United States in the decades following the Revolution by participating in festive culture, reading books and newspapers, commemorating the Revolutionary War, attending religious revivals, admiring portraits of esteemed leaders, and taking part in partisan political organizations and rituals. Eastman brings new attention to the role of oratory, and the interaction between speechmaking and print culture, in the building of the American public between the 1790s and the 1830s.

Eastman seeks to use the history of popular oratory to show how “nonelites” used speeches and print to include themselves in a collective public that defined American national identity in the early republic. She wants “to demonstrate the broad political import of speeches and writings by ordinary people within the context of constructing an American public,” by which she means not only the “public sphere” as defined by Jürgen Habermas, but also some more specific forms of collective self-understanding (5). Race, class, and especially gender play important roles in Eastman’s analysis of the ways that giving, listening to, and printing speeches helped people who were outside of power define themselves as part of “a public and eventually to identify as national citizens” (4).

Eastman takes a creative approach to her topic. In the first half of the book, she examines how elocutionary education underwent a shift toward more nationalistic themes after 1810; how the “rise and fall” of girls’ public oratory first created and then destroyed a possible female “counterpublic”; and how the frequent repetition of Indian speeches created nationalist, white identities in school children and helped to generate the trope of the “vanishing Indian” in American culture and politics. In the second half, Eastman examines case studies that she sets up as representative of important debates over definitions of “the public” in the early republic. She uncovers how print and oratory sometimes reinforced one another and sometimes clashed as she examines the magazine writings of the New York Calliopean Society, the speeches and publications of protesting journeymen printers, and the clashes between Frances Wright and newspaper publishers in the late 1820s.

Along the way, Eastman makes several significant points. Her examination of schoolbooks is thought-provoking, and she juxtaposes insights about school curricula with the contents of popular instructional speeches in a clever way to demonstrate how “during the second half of the early republic, oratory and print media reimagined the public order—evoking schoolchildren who uncritically admired their leaders, girls who embraced their domestic and nonpolitical roles, and Indians worthy primarily of pity” (111). The chapter on Frances Wright offers an extremely important corrective to historiography that claims Wright was a trailblazer because women were prohibited from speaking in public, especially to “mixed audiences,” before her 1820s speaking tour.

Eastman creatively shows how speaking, listening, publishing, and reading were intertwined, and her readers will come away with a new appreciation for the auditory dimensions of identity formation. While the majority of her evidence

comes from the northeast, Eastman's approach to analyzing oratory does offer a significant addition to the study of national identity. Many scholars have focused on speeches by famous Americans and their audiences, but Eastman provides the tools to think about those audiences giving speeches of their own.

Eastman argues that "rather than focusing on canonical texts or prominent authors, *A Nation of Speechifiers* examines a profusion of oratory and writing by nonelites and their active uses of the media" (5). Eastman does not do enough to convince the reader that the category of "nonelites" can apply equally to all of her subjects. Surely all students at girls academies were disenfranchised by their sex, but many came from resolutely wealthy "elite" families and would go on to exercise a large measure of societal influence. It is not clear what interests the middle-class clerks and businessmen who joined the Calliopean Society shared with the struggling journeymen printers—especially since the rising market economy offered each group opposing opportunities for upward mobility. Frances Wright positioned herself outside mainstream culture as a radical utopian reformer and female activist, but was she truly "nonelite?" Eastman never discusses Wright's association with Lafayette, her visit to the U.S. Congress, or her discourse with many prominent authors and politicians. Eastman does helpfully point us to how all of her examined groups and individuals used oratory to position themselves, but she does not convince us that they necessarily shared a common or "nonelite" sense of identity.

Eastman's book, and her claim that various groups used oratory and print to think of themselves as citizens, would be strengthened by more attention to how these groups interacted with elites, even if she wants to hold on to the idea that her subjects were all firmly outside that category themselves. More discussion of how printers' speeches and toasts resonated with Jeffersonian themes or how girls' speeches stood apart from politicians' prescriptions for gendered behavior would probably strengthen Eastman's claim for the importance of these group's self-perceptions. The ceremony with the Lafayette Female Academy students and the Marquis de Lafayette was certainly not the only occasion when young women such as those studied by Eastman interacted with powerful men in real and symbolic ways that must have influenced their own sense of politics and citizenship.

Eastman offers her voice to the growing number of scholars who helpfully urge us to recognize how those who were outside of power helped to construct public culture and define the issues of the day during the early republic. But her work also reminds us that perhaps a history that includes both elites and "nonelites" will ultimately offer the fullest picture of "the public." In the meantime, readers will happily finish Eastman's book with a renewed appreciation for oratory in the early republic.

Measuring Literature: Digital Humanities, Behavioral Economics, and the Problem of Data in Thomas Piketty's *Capital in the Twenty-first Century*

As a literary scholar, I think we need to reevaluate . . . enthusiasm about Piketty's use of literature as data.