standoffishly prim building, suggest that he might see in milk nutrition and hope: fresh milk for a fresh start.

This backstory sets up the disaster: an involuntary jerk sends the precious fluid arcing through the air to splatter, wasted, on the concrete. For Hayes, the man’s pose against the wall heightens the crisis by recalling the setting for a firing squad. The picture “induces a momentary state of suspension and expectation,” he writes, “a shock rendered all the more disturbing by the way it mirrors that produced by the milk suspended in space” (p.180).

Years ago, Roland Barthes wrote that milk had displaced water as the anti-wine. Wall broadens this opposition to incorporate alcohol generally, but Barthes’s point stands. Wine mutilates, transmutes, and delivers (in the sense that our interest in this first food involves firing squad. The picture “induces a momentary state of visual (A.M. Worthington, Joseph Plateau) and intellectual (Johann Wolfgang von Goethe) to explain milk’s use in the study of splashes: it offered a “visible middle term between mercury’s glare and water’s transparency” (p.34).

But if our interest lies in the splash, not the milk, why are the milk splashes of Worthington and, especially, Edgerton more popular than the former’s ballistics splashes or the latter’s dramatic picture of a bullet exiting an apple? Perhaps milk’s several contradictory meanings affect us unconsciously. Perhaps Sigmund Freud would call milk “overdetermined.”

That possibility accounts for the allusion in Hayes’s title to Freud’s essay “Mourning and Melancholia.” And while, as Hayes forewarns, he doesn’t psychoanalyze milk’s significance for contemporary art, Freud’s legacy lightly flavors the idea that our interest in this first food involves more than meets the eye.

For instance, if water registers poorly on film, why didn’t Worthington and Edgerton add dye? Does their turn to milk enact a defense mechanism at the level of the social? “Milk was the material repudiation of the transparency in which Idealism saw its most persuasive model of intellectual clarity,” Hayes proposes. “With its indelible taint of the body, milk contested the desire to find equivalence between things in the world and the image of things held in the mind” (p.34). Nineteenth-century discoveries showing that sight isn’t transparent were troubling in the wake of the Enlightenment’s equation of knowledge with clear vision. In this context, seizing on milk (and opacity) as superior to water (and transparency) could redeem vision—not despite our body’s interference between what we see and how we see it, but because of it.

Occasionally, Hayes overreaches. His assertion that the appearance of milk-related work by William Wegman, Jack Goldstein, and David Lamelas in 1972 “marked a peak in the milk-splash discourse” (p.107) makes one wonder what constitutes a peak. And, even with Hayes’s caveats, the title’s nods to Freud or (via Saturn and Melancholy) art historians Erwin Panofsky, Fritz Saxl, and Raymond Kliblanksy aren’t quite justified.

However, Hayes is intriguing on Worthington and Edgerton in the early twentieth century and “smart-art” Conceptualists like Gilbert and George, Richard Prince, and General Idea in the 1970s and 1980s. And, delightfully, the discussion of Wall’s picture from which this book grew reveals (fleetingly) its unconscious, its own—as Slavoj Žižek called it—unknown known. “Despite the assurance of the title, the fluid’s identity is uncertain,” Hayes writes of the milk in Milk. “Its luminosity suggests something more refined, more ethereal” (p.180). He is either hedging or doesn’t know how right he is. But Wall’s milk has its own secret: it fell apart too quickly for the slow shutter of his large-format camera. So milk, having grown used to standing in for water, here needs its own stand-in—its sweeter, milkier-than-milk, and, indeed, “more refined” version: condensed milk.

—Charles Reeve, Ontario College of Art and Design

Note

Sins of the Flesh: A History of Ethical Vegetarian Thought
Rod Preece
Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2008 xiv + 395 pp. $85.00 (cloth)

At first glance Rod Preece’s new book—with its title, cover design (of a pig looking to satisfy its animal urges), and series of six epigraphs (from Tertullian and St. Basil of Caesarea, among others) warning about the sinful lusts of the flesh—would appear designed to address ascetic vegetarianism rather than to trace the history of ethical vegetarian thought. But the book’s subtitle, the author’s dedication (“For my fellows on the path” [p.v]), and his subsequent acknowledgment that his “greatest debt is owed to those who were
role models in the vegetarian journey” (p.xiv) make it clear that Preece intends instead to chronicle the philosophical beliefs that have led him and numerous other individuals over the years to adopt a meatless diet on ethical grounds. Indeed, Preece, a professor emeritus of political science at Wilfrid Laurier University in Ontario, Canada, explains that it was “watching a documentary film in Calgary in 1992 on ‘downer’ animals in stockyards that proved the immediate occasion of my wife and myself pursuing the vegetarian course” (p.xiv). Soon thereafter, Preece coauthored Animal Welfare and Human Values (1993), the first in a series of scholarly works in the field of animal studies that he would proceed to write or edit during the ensuing years.

Several well-researched histories of vegetarianism and studies of ethical vegetarianism (by Colin Spencer, Michael Allan Fox, Tristram Stuart, Karen and Michael Iacobbo, and others) have already been written, of course, as the author himself acknowledges in the opening section of Sins of the Flesh. Preece covers much the same ground as these other scholars in his historical survey of ethical vegetarian thought, but he adds an important new dimension: namely, the perspective of someone who is well versed in the issue of the relationship between humans and (nonhuman) animals. There are chapters in the book devoted to the anthropology of humans as both predators and prey in mankind’s prehistory, Eastern religions and vegetarian practices (Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism), Pythagoreanism in ancient Greece and Rome, and vegetarian beliefs in Judaism and early Christianity (Gnostics, Manicheans) as well as in the late medieval period (Bogomils, Cathars).

These early chapters are followed by an engaging discussion of humanism during the Renaissance, Cartesianism during the Enlightenment, and ethical vegetarianism preached and sometimes (but not always) practiced—mainly in Great Britain—during the modern period. Influenced perhaps by the structure as well as the content of Howard Williams’s The Ethics of Diet (1893; rpt. 2003), the second half of Sins of the Flesh reads less like a history of ethical vegetarian thought and more like a series of biographical sketches of some famous (and some not-so-famous) vegetarian thinkers and practitioners in the West. Preece’s historical survey seems to conclude with a chapter on twentieth-century and contemporary vegetarians, focusing again mostly on British developments. However, a final nonchronological chapter is then added, “Vegetarianism in North America,” which briefly discusses early nineteenth-century vegetarian pioneers (such as Sylvester Graham and William Alcott) as well as contemporary activists (such as Tom Regan and Carol J. Adams).

It quickly becomes clear, as the author proceeds to investigate “the path of ethical vegetarianism in human history” (p.2), that he is not seeking to convert readers to the vegetarian cause (by convincing them to abstain from meat through the cogency of the ethical argument). Instead, he is largely attempting to disabuse some of the more zealous advocates of ethical vegetarianism of some of the misconceptions they harbor and the factual inaccuracies they perpetuate as they mythologize important vegetarian figures in human history, especially those, like Pythagoras, who were actually more concerned with the purification of their soul than with the welfare of nonhuman creatures. Respect for animals, as Preece rightly notes, does not automatically or necessarily entail ethical vegetarianism (p.110). In his effort to set the historical record straight, Preece has occasion to repeat much of what he has already written elsewhere on the history of animal ethics and the evolution of human attitudes toward animals.

There is, in addition, an unfortunate tendency on the author’s part to cite secondary sources, rather than primary ones, even when quoting from the works of such well-known writers as Voltaire, Rousseau, Coleridge, and George Bernard Shaw. Such chronic overreliance on secondary sources is especially regrettable in Preece’s very brief treatment of the vegetarian beliefs of Count Leo Tolstoy, where the author’s choice of a secondary source leads him to perpetuate the same kind of misrepresentations he condemns in other scholars. Rather than examine directly, as a primary source, Tolstoy’s correspondence, where the famous Russian novelist on several occasions expresses quite clearly his views on vegetarianism, Preece instead cites second-hand a selected Tolstoy quote on vivisection (one of the six quotes reproduced in the two pages devoted to Tolstoy in The Extended Circle: A Commonplace Book of Animal Rights, 1989) that makes it sound as if Tolstoy was a strong and active animal-rights advocate. Yet Tolstoy, as several scholars have convincingly shown, adopted vegetarianism mainly on ascetic/religious rather than ethical/humanitarian grounds. Much like Pythagoras, Tolstoy decided to abstain from the use of meat in his diet late in life more as a way to purify his soul rather than out of concern for animal rights. This important aspect of Tolstoy’s vegetarianism is, unfortunately, entirely overlooked in Preece’s treatment. The author appears to take too many scholarly shortcuts of this sort in this book as he pursues research into the history of ethical vegetarian thought.

Despite these and a few other minor shortcomings, Sins of the Flesh, with its animal-welfare orientation, makes a significant contribution to the growing body of scholarship
on the history of vegetarianism in general and of ethical vegetarianism in particular.

—Ronald LeBlanc, University of New Hampshire

Michael Olmert
Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2009
304 pp. Illustrations. $27.95 (cloth)

This is a wonderful book. Artfully designed in a compact square format, it makes for pleasant, informative reading about eighteenth-century outbuildings in Virginia and Maryland. Aimed at nonspecialists, Kitchens, Smokehouses, and Privies is written in an easy style by Michael Olmert, a professor of English at the University of Maryland, College Park and a veteran writer for Smithsonian magazine. The book surveys current scholarship on a subject usually covered only in periodicals or book chapters. Olmert’s writing is not jargon-ridden, technical, or dry, making this book perfect for an afternoon read.

When the historic preservation movement began in the United States in the 1920s, the emphasis was first on researching, restoring, and reconstructing the houses themselves. The outbuildings—each of which was purpose-built and essential to the functioning of the estate—were ignored. It is only in more recent years that scholars have really explored these dependent structures, few of which survive, to give a more complete picture of life on an estate in eighteenth-century Maryland or Virginia.

The book is divided into chapters by type of building: kitchens, laundries, smokehouses, dairies, privies, offices, dovecotes, and icehouses. Olmert explores how the placement of outbuildings on a site, their design, and even their upkeep was determined by the building’s function. For example, the dairy would not have looked like the dovecote or kitchen. There were reasons for the differences: historians now know why the windows were high in a dairy and why the direction that the door faced was crucial in a smokehouse. Olmert makes the interesting point that people who work as costumed interpreters at historic sites are often excellent resources. It is through the buildings’ use by actual people that historians have come to know the whys and wherefores of each design.

Although questions may remain about the nature of a design detail—for example, the use of ladders in dovecotes, or why some privies had as many as five seats together—Olmert presents each new subject as an interesting open matter. He presents nothing as absolute; here, what we don’t know makes the subject more intriguing. Reinforcing the idea that scholarship is ongoing, each chapter ends with a wonderful multipage “Notes and Further Reading” section that acknowledges the author’s sources—both books and the people with whom he has spoken—and suggests where to go to learn more. Not burying the source information in the back of the book and presenting it in the same font size as the chapter material itself is a model approach. The book also includes appendices on two different building shapes: octagons and hexagons. Although they make an interesting postlude, these appendices seem somewhat lost, like two chapters in search of a home in the book. Still, they don’t detract from Olmert’s work as a whole.

A question that remains for me about these outbuildings concerns the use of color in their decoration. Recent scholarship has revealed the degree to which color—sometimes considered gaudy and quite tasteless to our modern eyes—was an important part of eighteenth-century surroundings. How did the outbuildings fit into the eighteenth-century color scheme? Were the dairies white? Was the stucco that covered some smokehouses painted in dark, smoky colors? Olmert has given his readers many ways to find more information and carry out their own investigations into any particular detail—architectural, social, cultural, or culinary—that strikes their fancy.

—Gwendolyn Owens, McGill University

Creating Abundance: Biological Innovation and American Agricultural Development
Alan L. Olmstead and Paul W. Rhode
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008
480 pp. Illustrations. $23.99 (paper)

The abundance of American agriculture is among the country’s great economic successes. The transformation of California from field grain production to a fruit and vegetable cornucopia, the conversion of the “Great American Desert” into corn and wheat belts exporting to the world, and the dramatic rise in the productivity of every sort of plant and animal through human manipulation has made overproduction rather than scarcity the watchword of the age. Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century agricultural innovation was the site of considerable high-stakes espionage and international political intrigue, served as the focus of