

An Archive of Taste: Race and Eating in the Early United States. By Lauren F. Klein. (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2020. Pp. 256. \$25.00 paperback.)

Noma is closing. In the coverage of the end of René Redzepi's Michelin-starred, five-time winner of world's best restaurant, a truth emerged: its staggeringly expensive food requires the labor of dozens of unknown, unpaid chefs taking a "stage" at Noma to build their resumes. Today's lauded chefs make taste by exploiting workers. In *An Archive of Taste*, Lauren Klein considers their historical antecedents in the long eighteenth century, offering new ways of surfacing the invisible labor on which the founders depended.

To meet the dual challenge of the diffuse nature of sources on eating, taste, and appetite in the literature and history of the early United States and scholars' extended focus on the founders, Klein's interdisciplinary method draws on scholarship on aesthetics, the body, the senses, slavery, and speculation. Using archival methods of recovery and reimagination, Klein argues that eating emerged as a type "of aesthetic expression over the course of the eighteenth century," metamorphosing into a way to express "both allegiance and resistance" to a dominant Enlightenment view of republican taste (2). Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, Benjamin Franklin, Lydia Maria Child, Mary Randolph, Amelia Simmons, and others framed republican taste as the right to levy moral judgment and delineate political behavior, emphasizing cultivation over farming and the regulation of cooking over cooking itself. Klein shows how others posited "explicitly oppositional aesthetic theories" by juxtaposing writing by normative white authors with work by disabled people such as Alexandre Balthazar Grimod de la Reynière, and people of African descent including Hercules, James Hemings, Harriet Jacobs, Phillis Wheatley, and Malinda Russell (2). She lays bare how their "knowledge and labor directly underwrote" the republican project of taste even as that project "forcibly excluded" them from it (7).

An Archive of Taste contains five chapters. Klein addresses Jefferson's and Madison's tables; appetite in writings by

Grimod, Franklin, and Wheatley; satisfaction in cookbooks by Simmons, Randolph, and Russell; imagination in literary works of Jacobs and Child; and absence in the *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*. Klein's interest is in those "places in the archive where we might reconnect knowledge with 'the knower,'" and in the farming, cooking, and serving that are unevidenced in the archives (48). In addition to close reading and historical synthesis, Klein addresses archival evidence in part by accounting for instances in which it is dispersed or missing, employing a version of Marisa J. Fuentes' technique of reading "along the bias grain" to expand the significance of fragmented sources (15). These fragments include cooking stains on cookbooks and manuscript recipes, farmers' almanacs, household inventories, letters, narratives, packing lists, purchase receipts, seed catalogues, and shipping logs.

Jefferson, Madison, and George Washington viewed themselves as authorities on the subject of Republican taste, and Klein's first chapter uses both extant and absent evidence on Jefferson's enslaved cook, James Hemings, and Madison's enslaved valet, Paul Jennings, to reveal nascent critiques of the exploitative process of shaping culture through cooking. Klein then shows how critiques of taste expanded in writing by Franklin, Grimod, and Wheatley, demonstrating how the latter two used "their actual bodies" as well as their literary works to challenge the qualities associated with republican taste (52). Klein explains that "a speculative philosophical mode" helped them to make sense of taste, which required satisfying other people rather than gratifying their own desires (18).

In the chapter on satisfaction, Klein reads the cookbook as a genre that performs philosophical work. She suggests that "cookbooks can be read as narratives, narratives can be read as cookbooks," and "both can be read as aesthetic theory" (18). Reading Amelia Simmons (white author of the first American cookbook in 1796), Mary Randolph (slaveholder and writer of the southern cookbook *The Virginia House-Wife* in 1824), and Malinda Russell (author of *A Domestic Cookbook* in 1866, the first cookbook published by a Black woman) together, Klein studies the speculative theories of aesthetics that emerged in

opposition to republican taste. Russell, responding to women like Randolph who relied on enslaved labor to cook, and Simons, who was privileged in ways that Russell was not, replaced “the cultivation of civic virtue with the satisfaction of financial need” (84). Russell thus expressed personal agency and national belonging despite lacking political rights.

The penultimate chapter on imagination contrasts well-known literary works by Child, including *Hobomok* and the short story “Willie Wharton,” with Harriet Jacobs’ *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*. Klein argues that where Child portrayed taste as a mechanism to prompt collective action, Jacobs cast perverted taste as the defining feature of her violent enslaver, Dr. Flint. For Jacobs, a failure of good taste indicated that readers could feel only sympathetic obligation—rather than shared sympathy—with enslaved people.

The last chapter considers the absence of archival material documenting enslaved people’s labor in relation to French culinary knowledge. Klein’s intervention is not to create a narrative of silence, but rather to reveal additional absences and to acknowledge that some material “resists interpretation” or may “forever remain unknown” (170). Using social network analysis and data visualization, Klein convincingly interprets Jefferson’s vision of republican taste as a performance. Taking *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson* as an example, Klein cautions against assuming that digital technology makes the archives’ silences accessible. Klein praises what editors of the digital archive have done well: It is possible to find material on Hemings without searching for him as a letter author or recipient because editors of the papers knew enough about him to identify him when Jefferson mentioned him by first name; because they added a footnote to a letter identifying him; because digital notes and encoding appear in the metadata of each letter; and because text from notes is included by default in keyword searches (138–39). Klein’s arc diagrams for data visualization show “relationships among people mentioned *in* the letters,” rather than Jefferson’s correspondents, revealing that the complex relations among individuals and across social groups were most prominent between Jefferson and the men and women he enslaved,

relying on them as he did to cook and buy provisions, garden seeds, and supplies.

Although this book deals with white authors' elision of the knowledge and labor of enslaved people, Klein's conclusion is optimistic. These "unsettling absences," she suggests, allow for the emergence of "the most expansive version of the archive of the early United States" (163). In order to use this archive, Klein urges interaction between archivists, texts, and technologies to expose and reckon with the limits of knowledge. *An Archive of Taste* makes a persuasive case for heeding this call.

Rachel B. Herrmann *is a historian of water, hunger, and borders. Her most recent book is No Useless Mouth: Waging War and Fighting Hunger in the American Revolution.*

Agrotopias: An American Literary History of Sustainability. By Abby L. Goode. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2022. Pp. 294. \$34.95 paperback. \$27.00 e-book.)

In her compelling and astute reconsideration of the development of early American agricultural thought, Abby L. Goode pays special attention to the ways that racist, nativist, eugenic, and expansionist rhetoric influenced the evolution of the concept of sustainability across America's long nineteenth century and beyond. The book begins with a helpful roadmap to demonstrate how the texts explored in *Agrotopias* challenge accepted views of how Thomas Jefferson's agricultural ideas informed early concepts of sustainability. Chapter 1, "No Rural Bowl of Milk: Unsustainability and the Demographic Agrarian Ideal," examines Herman Melville's 1852 novel, *Pierre*, along with some of his lesser-known agricultural essays. Goode argues that in *Pierre*, Melville highlights the anxieties of certain mid-nineteenth-century labor and agricultural reformers who advocated for the formation of small, demographically diverse farming communities that would embody what they saw as a sustainable agricultural ideal. *Pierre*, however, disrupts this ideal to present, as Goode writes, "the reproductive subtext of