

*Drinking History: Fifteen Turning Points in the Making of American Beverages.* By Andrew F. Smith. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013. Pp. 319. \$29.95 cloth; 28.99 ebook)

Andrew F. Smith's *Drinking History: Fifteen Turning Points in the Making of American Beverages* is a companion volume to his *Eating History: Thirty Turning Points in the Making of American Cuisine* (2009), also from Columbia University Press. Smith, a professor of food history at the New School in Manhattan and the editor of *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Food and Drink in America*, has been an important and prolific voice in the development of the recently flourishing academic subject of food studies. Like its companion volume, *Drinking History* does not attempt a coherent historical narrative. Rather, it presents a series of discrete chapters, each of which discusses a particular type of beverage—rum, for example, or bottled water—connected to a particular moment in American history (in the examples above, these are the lead-up to the Revolution and the late-twentieth century, respectively). Some of these chapters manage to connect their beverage to social and political history in clever, illuminating ways. The chapter on whiskey—which links early federal tax policy, westward expansion, and the beginnings of the temperance movement—is a particularly good example.

There are problems with Smith's chapter-by-chapter structure, however. First, it makes the book very repetitive. Temperance and Prohibition are crucial stories in the history of American beverages, but the several retellings Smith gives each of them start to drag if one reads the book from cover to cover. Moreover, information gets spread out among the different retellings of a story. For example, we are introduced to Benjamin Rush at least five times. As a pivotal early temperance advocate, he is a vital character in American drinking history. But it is not until the third time we meet him that we learn that his opposition to alcoholic drink did not extend to small beer or cider, and not until the fifth that we learn he drank "a glass or a

glass and a half of old Madeira wine” after dinner (p. 170). On the one hand, these nuggets of additional information add interest and surprise to potentially wearisome retreads. On the other, they can make earlier accounts feel frustratingly incomplete.

On a grander scale, by separating the chapters into such discrete units, Smith sacrifices the chance to explore and develop connections that crop up among the different chapters. The overlap and alliances between antialcohol and anti-immigrant politics clearly fascinate Smith, and he includes interesting discussions of them in chapters on both temperance and Prohibition. Each chapter remains studiously silent on its continuities with the other, however. (A more substantial complaint may be that Smith all but ignores connections between the temperance movement and the causes of antislavery and women’s rights.)

Smith tends to favor a “just the facts” writing style. He includes nothing about these movements’ congruent fears of impure or unhealthy objects contaminating physical bodies and the metaphorical body of the country, for example. This restricted focus may be a strength or a flaw depending on what you want from the book. It does lead, however, to a couple of chapters that are less successful. “Youth Beverages,” for example, is a missed opportunity to explore the new cultures of childhood and adolescence that exploded after World War II, as well as the significance of advertising, phony health claims, and the rise of the junk- and fast-food industries. Instead, we get surprisingly thorough lists of which companies bought, merged with, or separated from which. The post-Prohibition chapters in general focus more on business history than on the imbrication of drinking with larger social and political trends.

As with its companion volume, *Drinking History* seems best suited to providing reading assignments for undergraduate courses. The self-contained nature of the chapters make them ideal for excerpting one at a time, and the best of them do an excellent job of demonstrating the mutual influences of politics, economics, culture, and consumption. Smith’s clear, straightforward writing and for the

most part quite engaging storytelling are perfect for the college reader.

ALEC MAGNET is a doctoral candidate in the English program at the Graduate Center, City University of New York, and teaches at the City College of New York. He is writing a dissertation on reparative reading and echoes of the Gothic in nineteenth-century American and British literature.

## Book Notes

By Robert Murray

*Photography and the American Civil War.* By Jeff L. Rosenheim. (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2013. Pp. 277. \$50.00 cloth)

Photography played a critical and evolving role during the American Civil War as Americans redefined the conflict and how they saw themselves. After the war, the thousands upon thousands of photographs shaped Americans' historical memory of the war by providing what author Jeff L. Rosenheim calls "a national visual library of sorts" (p. 1). Rosenheim, curator in charge of the department of photographs at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, guides his readers through the evolution of wartime photography in a beautifully illustrated work detailing over two hundred photographs. This published accompaniment to the Met's exhibit of the same name mingles famous photographs with lesser-known images and through its highly accessible text provides readers with the most up-to-date scholarship on Civil War photography.

*Kentucky in the Civil War: 150 for the 150<sup>th</sup>, An Annotated Bibliographic Reference.* By The Louisville Civil War Round Table (Louisville: The Louisville Civil War Round Table, 2012. Pp. 51. \$12.50 paper)