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REVIEW ARTICLE

'Omelette Without Eggs': Eating Under War and Dictatorship

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Diana Garvin, *Feeding Fascism: The Politics of Women's Food Work* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2022), 292 pp. (pbk), $36.95, ISBN 9781487551575.

Lara Anderson, *Control and Resistance: Food Discourse in Franco Spain* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2020), 192 pp. (hbk), $61.00, ISBN 9781487506698.

Ingrid de Zwarte, *The Hunger Winter: Fighting Famine in the Occupied Netherlands, 1944–1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 329 pp. (pbk), £22.99, ISBN 9781108819213.

Tatjana Tönsmeyer, Peter Haslinger, Wlodzimierz Borodziej, Stefan Martens and Irina Sherbakova (eds.), *Fighting Hunger, Dealing with Shortage: Everyday Life under Occupation in World War II Europe: A Source Edition* (2 vols) (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 1348 pp. (hbk), €264.00, ISBN 9789004448247.

During the Dutch Hunger Winter (1944–5), a woman sold ration cards on the Noordplein, one of the busiest streets in Rotterdam. She was paid twenty guilders for each ration card. Her buyers, in turn, resold the coupons for sugar, butter or bread separately in order to make a higher profit. They could make up to 150 guilders per ration card. Not far from there, in Amsterdam, people went to the corner of Rozendwarsstraat to fraudulently buy coupons for bread or wheat cake on the black market. Anyone with seven guilders could buy a slice. Considering that some people only earned twenty-two guilders a week, not everyone could afford to go to the black market for extra calories. Both of these stories were told by women who survived the Dutch Hunger Winter, and are included in Ingrid de Zwarte's recent monograph. They illustrate some of the important contributions that have emerged from recent historical works in the related fields of Hunger and Food Studies. They demonstrate the agency of ordinary and marginalised subjects, particularly women, in the face of scarcity. They reveal the importance of the coping strategies people developed, which allows us to think of these individuals beyond their traditional status as passive victims of scarcity. And they show us how, in the context of hunger and famine, ideas of what was normal or acceptable behaviour could be transformed.

This essay seeks to showcase some of these new developments in the scholarship by delving into the ways in which people ate under the European dictatorships of the 1930s and 1940s. On the one hand, it explores food discourses and policies. On the other, it analyses individual and collective responses to periods of food shortages, hunger and even famine during which autarchy and rationing were imposed. It focuses on three specific contexts of deprivation linked to dictatorship and war: fascist Italy (1922–45), early Francoist Spain (1939–52) and Nazi-occupied Europe during the Second World War (1939–45), especially the Netherlands.

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Food and Dictatorships

In recent years, there have been some outstanding works in the field of Food Studies, which have set out to analyse the cultural and identity implications of food politics and discourses. In particular, these studies have explored the potential of such narratives for nation-building, as well as the extent to which they were taken up, rejected or challenged from below by the population. They have sought to refute the depoliticised image that everything related to food, gastronomy and culinary preparations has traditionally been linked to women, who have historically been perceived as non-political or less political subjects than men. Consequently, food narratives and practices have long been associated with the day-to-day, understood and considered as historiographically irrelevant. This trend has been changing in recent years, thanks to studies published by women such as Diana Garvin, Lara Anderson, Suzanne Dunai and Paula Schwartz, that have focused on different authoritarian contexts in 1930s and 1940s Europe, such as fascist Italy, Francoist Spain and Nazi-occupied France during the Second World War.

Two such studies have very recently been published by the University of Toronto Press. They are Diana Garvin's *Feeding Fascism: The Politics of Women's Food Work* (2022) and Lara Anderson's *Control and Resistance: Food Discourse in Franco Spain* (2020). Published barely two years apart, both explore what was cooked and eaten (and why) in two dictatorial contexts in southern Europe during the inter-war period, which makes reading them in tandem particularly fruitful. The former looks primarily at the case of fascist Italy (1922–45) and argues that women transformed the body politically through everyday practices of food production and consumption (eating, feeding and cooking). The latter focuses on the first two decades of Franco's Spain (1939–59), analysing the food discourses produced by cookery book writers and official bodies as an opportunity for both control and imposition, and resistance and contestation.

Both volumes adopt a gender perspective and place women at the centre of the analysis. As Garvin argues, the study of 'women's food work' (cooking, agricultural labour and industrial food production), far from reinforcing gender stereotypes, allows us to think of women as political subjects. In their everyday practices, women interacted with the food politics and discourses of the fascist regime. Sometimes they took these narratives on board (not necessarily out of patriotism, but possibly for practical reasons), and at other times they dared to question them. This connects with women's agency, an issue that the two authors agree on. Both Garvin and Anderson highlight the agency ordinary people were able to maintain even in authoritarian contexts such as fascist Italy and Franco's Spain. They point out that neither Italians nor Spaniards were mere passive recipients of the food politics of the Mussolini or Franco regimes but were in a position to negotiate or discuss them from below. For example, Garvin explains that in the war period Italian women adapted their recipes to the new context of deprivation.

Both books contain indications of the population's discontent. In the Italian case, popular songs depicting the desire to eat wheat pasta, a practice discouraged by the authorities for nationalist reasons because it was imported rather than being produced on national territory, are illustrative. Or the food thefts (interpreted as one of the 'weapons of the weak' spoken of by Scott) featuring the *mondine*, who were not satisfied with insufficient calorie consumption and demanded the right to a varied, tasty diet. As Garvin argues, these countrywomen who worked in rice production and were idealised by fascist discourse managed to preserve their traditionally vindictive identity even under Mussolini's regime. In the Spanish case, there were criticisms in the public space against the distribution of food (perceived as unfair), as well as jokes, chalked signs or small black market operations. In these studies there is also space for expressions of 'culinary resistance' or small counter-hegemonic acts of disapproval towards the official food policy contained in non-official food texts. As these works show, women have historically played a leading role in resistance to scarcity and hunger due to their role traditionally linked to the domestic space. This idea is also supported by studies such as Paula Schwartz's, which explores a women's protest in 1942 in the occupied Paris of scarcity and rationing during which a grocery store was raided and cans of sardines were thrown.[1]

[1] Paula Schwartz, *Today Sardines Are Not for Sale: A Street Protest in Occupied Paris* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).

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Both Garvin and Larson find it useful to refer to the Foucaultian concept of 'biopolitics', a concept that has also been used by historians of Franco's Spain such as Pérez Olivares and Jiménez Aguilar.[2] Specifically, this category is used to underline the potential of food as a means of both obeying and defying power. It is also used to highlight the cultural and subjective relations between government food policy and the individual bodies of the population, understood on both a physical and an emotional level. Galvin employs the concept of 'body politic' in relation to breastfeeding, which closely connects the producer (mother) and the consumer (child) in a twin act of feeding and eating. Both Mussolini's and Franco's regimes promoted pronatalist policies to boost population growth. To this end, they constructed discourses around breastfeeding that presented the act of breastfeeding one's children, future supporters of the fatherland, as a patriotic act. According to fascism's biopolitical idea of breastfeeding, breastmilk was a guarantee that the men of tomorrow would have strong bodies. Another good example of these connections between the body and politics is found in Larson's work, when she refers to the concept of the 'hungry body' formulated by Tatjana Pavlovic. She argued that the Spanish 'hungry body' was subversive because 'it contrasted with that of [Franco]' and 'revealed the failings of autarky, providing evidence of just how deprived most Spaniards were'.

Both studies find room for regional food culture. *Feeding Fascism* shows how under the fascist regime the gastronomy of northern Italy was promoted to the rest of the country. *Risotto allla milanese*, for example, had been prepared in Lombardy since the nineteenth century, but its nation-wide consumption was encouraged by fascist propaganda because it was made primarily from rice, which was produced in Italy. The monograph *Control and Resistance* explores the efforts of Francoism – a regime that made centralism and the unity of Spain one of its main banners – to present Spanish cuisine as monolithic and to erase regional differences for nationalist purposes. On the other hand, both volumes discuss the changes experienced in national diets during periods of economic growth in post-fascist Italy and 1960s Spain. These periods of economic boom meant access to household appliances and other consumer goods, as well as the diversification and improvement of diets. In the case of Spain, it was in this period that the popular *menu del día* emerged, encouraged both by the rise of the middle classes and the arrival of foreign tourists.

Although briefly, both works refer to the continuities between the food discourses constructed by the dictatorships of the 1930s and 1940s and the present day, albeit from different perspectives. Larson's work refers to the survival of Francoist food discourses and symbols in present-day Spain, in restaurants such as the notorious *Casa Pepe* in Ciudad Real which ostentatiously celebrated the Francoist period through their food dishes; or in popular television series such as *Cuéntame cómo pasó* [Tell Me How It Happened]. For her part, Garvin echoes the continuities in food practices between a past marked by hunger and a present characterised by abundance. Specifically, she points out how some rural women who, in their childhood and youth, were exposed to the fascist discourse that encouraged the consumption of locally produced rice and discouraged the consumption of wheat pasta, are reluctant to eat rice in adulthood. These continuities in current food practices have been explored for the Spanish case by anthropologists such as David Conde and Lorenzo Mariano.[3] Similar phenomena have also been reported among Nazi concentration camp survivors.[4]

Despite the numerous connections between the two works, there are surprisingly few references – barely a couple – to the Spanish case in Garvin's volume. The author draws comparisons mainly with Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia (Chapter 1), whereas the similarities are perhaps more evident with Franco's Spain, whose food policy was directly inspired by Mussolini's. Franco's regime also opted for

[2] Alejandro Pérez Olivares, 'Abastecer, racionar… y pasar hambre. Franquismo y control social en la posguerra', in Miguel Ángel Del Arco, ed., *Los años del hambre. Historia y memoria de la posguerra franquista* (Madrid: Marcial Pons, 2020), 173–94; Francisco Jiménez Aguilar, 'No son unos comedores más. Auxilio Social, biopolítica y hambre en el primer franquismo', in *Los años del hambre*, 195–220.

[3] David Conde, Borja Rivero and Lorenzo Mariano, 'Memories of Hunger, Continuities, and Food Choices: An Ethnography of the Elderly in Extremadura (Spain)', *Appetite*, 164 (2021), 1–12.

[4] A. Favaro, F.C. Rodella and P. Santonastaso, 'Binge Eating and Eating Attitudes among Nazi Concentration Camp Survivors', *Psychological Medicine*, 30 (2000), 463–6.

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an autarkic economic policy with nationalist aims that entailed the rationing of basic necessities such as flour. In addition, both dictatorships constructed discourses that idealised and romanticised the rural world as the great 'breeding ground' of the nation. Both Mussolini's Italy and Franco's Spain sought to make the population prioritise patriotism over personal preferences when it came to food. Thus, Franco's regime tried to turn oranges into the symbol of autarkic Spain, in the same way as Italian fascism had done with rice, albeit with less success. This fruit was produced in large quantities on national territory, especially in the Valencian region, and was therefore in keeping with the autarkic spirit that sought to replace imports. Hence, as Javier Lara Fonfría has shown, Spanish authorities closely controlled the production and export of oranges during the post-war period.[5] There were also significant similarities between the Italian and Spanish cases in terms of popular responses to shortages. For example, the recipe for chicken soup without chicken in *La Cucina Italiana* magazine (1943), which supported the autarkic cuisine promoted by fascism and which Garvin refers to in her book, is very reminiscent of the omelette without eggs that became popular in post-war Spain.

Regarding sources, Garvin's second chapter (one of the most interesting in the book) uses some with great potential, such as work and protest songs and *mondine* testimonials, which allow her to take a more social approach to the subject of agricultural life under fascism. However, both Garvin's and Larson's volumes rely mainly on official sources, such as the journal *Alimentación Nacional*, published by the *Comisaría General de Abastecimientos y Transportes*, one of the main interventionist institutions in Franco's autarkic Spain. Both volumes rely heavily on what Larson calls 'food texts', i.e. the cookbooks and cookery manuals of the period – some aimed at women and some at men – as a source for analysing official food policies and discourses. Other authors have explored the subject from a similar perspective, including Suzanne Dunai, who has studied the cookbooks of the Falange's *Sección Femenina* in Spain and who also relied on this type of source.[6] Garvin and Larson highlight the value of these materials by emphasising their status (including in the eyes of censors) as apparently neutral, apolitical and innocuous everyday texts, characteristics that endow them with a great power to convince readers, as well as with enormous subversive potential. Beyond constituting mechanisms of control and indoctrination on gender or nationalist issues, these 'food texts' had the potential to challenge hegemonic discourses. Moreover, as Larson argues, such materials not only talked about how to eat but also about other identity-shaping aspects.

However, at this point, a more incisive critique of this type of historical source is lacking. Although they may have often been disruptive of the official discourse, they have undeniable limitations in terms of exploring popular gastronomy. After all, these were publications aimed at the upper classes, as revealed by the fact that some of the Italian authors assumed that the female readers had a maid and even a cook. The reader wonders how many women were literate under the Italian and Spanish dictatorships. And how many of those who were able to read could afford to buy those books and the (often expensive and hard to find) ingredients for the recipes to prepare them at home in years of scarcity. Moreover, both volumes devote considerable space to upper-class women such as Luisa Spagnoli, founder of the Italian chocolate factory Perugina, or the Marquise de Parabere, author of a history of world gastronomy. Consequently, these volumes – especially Anderson's – offer a view excessively focused on the analysis of official discourses and propaganda (through almanacs or photocollages, for example), without paying attention to the 'reception' among ordinary people. And they do not always place sufficient emphasis on the gap between the official rhetoric on food and everyday practices in most Italian and Spanish kitchens.

[5] Javier Lara Fonfría, 'The Orange Production and the Years of Hunger', *International Conference European Famines: Between History and Memory (19th and 20th centuries)*, Granada, 21–23 Sept. 2022.

[6] Suzanne Dunai, 'A Recipe for Rationing: Women, Cooking and Scarcity During the Early-Franco Dictatorship, 1939–1947', in Miguel Ángel Del Arco and Peter Anderson, eds., *Franco's Famine: Malnutrition, Disease and Starvation in Post-Civil War Spain* (London: Bloomsbury, 2021), 179–202.

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Hunger and War

This gap is largely filled by the contributions made in recent years in the field of Hunger and Famine Studies. Classic works such as those of Cormac Ó Gráda on the Great Irish Famine (1845–52) have been joined in recent years by a series of studies focusing on conflict contexts – wars and post-war periods – that involved hunger and, in the most extreme cases, famine.[7] This is the case with authors such as Jessica Dijkman and Bas van Leeuwen, who analysed the responses offered by the state, the market and civil society to the famines that have occurred in different parts of the world over the last two millennia.[8] Or historians such as Miguel Á. Del Arco and Peter Anderson, who argued that during the Spanish Hunger Years (1939–52) of Franco's post-war period there was a real famine in Spain in particularly critical periods, i.e. 1939–42 and 1946.[9] Or Elizabeth M. Collingham, who highlighted famine as one of the most characteristic features of the Second World War, during which some twenty million people died of starvation. Collingham also analysed how the different nations involved in the conflict struggled to feed their populations in that critical and hostile context.[10] In the rest of the review, however, we focus on two works that deal with hunger in Nazi-occupied Europe during the Second World War. These are the source edition coordinated by Tatjana Tönsmeyer, Peter Haslinger, Wlodzimierz Borodziej, Stefan Martens and Irina Sherbakova, *Fighting Hunger, Dealing with Shortage: Everyday Life under Occupation in World War II Europe* (Brill, 2021) and Ingrid de Zwarte's monograph, *The Hunger Winter: Fighting Famine in the Occupied Netherlands, 1944–1945* (Cambridge University Press, 2020).

The volume coordinated by Tönsmeyer, together with other colleagues, is a source edition that includes various documents from archives in different fields, mainly produced by domestic institutions, trade unions, resistance movements or humanitarian agencies in the context of the Occupation. These include, for example, a 'handwritten recipe from a notebook with an alternative for cooking without meat' from Belgium in the spring of 1941, and an 'entry from the diary of a pastor's wife discussing the food rationing system', written in the Netherlands on 20 December 1940. The main objective is to analyse the supply and shortage, as well as the coping strategies of ordinary people, all in the context of everyday life. The volume also asks about popular opinion in relation to the problem of shortages. One of the most remarkable aspects is the transnational perspective it adopts. This comparative approach allows the authors to explore the particularities and commonalities between different European nations in combating scarcity and surviving hunger. All the societies occupied during the Second World War had in common food shortages and the need to cope with famine. Nevertheless, the situation was more severe in Eastern than in Western Europe. The state response to shortages in the occupied nations consisted primarily of economic autarky and the rationing system. These were instruments of control over the population which, perhaps with the exception of the Danish case, functioned poorly and hierarchically (mainly along racial lines). As a result, people had to fend for themselves.

De Zwarte's monograph analyses both political and social responses to the Dutch Hunger Winter (1944–5) and, in particular, the strategies of households, communities and state institutions (such as the IKG, the main relief NGO during the crisis) to fight the famine. The author asks, among other questions, which of these efforts were most effective, but also how a modern Dutch society in the mid-1940s dealt with such a critical situation as the famine. One of the main differences in the theoretical and methodological approaches of the two volumes has to do with the conceptual category used to name shortages in order to reflect different degrees of severity in the food crisis. While the volume focusing on occupied Europe as a whole speaks of 'hunger', that focusing on the particular case of the Dutch Hunger Winter uses the concept of 'early-stage famine' to refer to the period of

[7] Cormac Ó Gráda: *Ireland's Great Famine: Interdisciplinary Essays* (Dublin: UCD Press, 2006).
[8] Jessica Dijkman and Bas van Leeuwen, eds., *An Economic History of Famine Resilience* (New York: Routledge, 2021).
[9] Del Arco and Anderson, eds., *Franco's Famine*; Del Arco, ed., *Los años del hambre*.
[10] Elizabeth M. Collingham, *The Taste of War: World War Two and the Battle for Food* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011).

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greatest harshness within a broader stage of 'food crisis'. The choice of name for the period of shortages is not innocuous: the word 'famine' refers to a more severe supply crisis in which deaths from starvation occur. In some cases, euphemisms are used to refer to periods of food shortages. For example, in the case of post-Franco Spain, Del Arco and Anderson have argued that to speak of 'Hunger Years' rather than 'famine' – which is more akin to what happened in the 1940s – is a misrepresentation.[11]

Both works are based on the discussion of German responsibility for the supply crisis in the occupied nations. Historiography has long emphasised the violence and exploitation practised by the Nazis in the occupied countries, especially in Eastern Europe, where they went as far as to draw up a 'Hunger Plan' to drive the population (already much weakened by the ravages of the Holodomor, or Great Famine) into starvation. Hunger would thus have been used as a weapon of war and repression. Both volumes accept this view, on the premise that in the absence of the occupation there would have been no famine. However, the two works, and especially that of De Zwarte, make this thesis more complex, opting for multi-causal and nuanced explanations. The author relativises the culpability of the German occupiers on which much of the historiography has insisted, arguing that the German authorities cooperated and allowed the relief. She also qualifies the weight of other political factors such as the national railway strike. And she points to a whole range of causes, including winter frosts. To analyse the triggers of the famine, both authors find the concept of 'perpetrators' useful, which they both try to make more complex and nuanced. Tönsmeyer, for example, wonders who the ordinary people blamed for the shortages, or how they understood the relationship between the shortages and the German occupation.

Both volumes focus on the articulated responses to the famine that struck different parts of occupied Europe. In other words, they look at the efforts made at different levels to relieve and cope with food shortages. In doing so, they emphasise the resilience of civil society, which provided countless examples of its ability to find ways to alleviate the hardships of famine and to cope with such an adverse context. In this sense, one of the main contributions of Tönsmeyer and De Zwarte's work is to underline the agency of ordinary people, even in contexts of enormous oppression such as the German occupation during the Second World War. In doing so, they distance themselves from traditional studies that thought of those who suffered the ravages of famine at some point during the period 1939–45 merely as victims. In this connection, both authors find it useful to use E.P. Thompson's category of 'moral economy' to refer to the widening of the boundaries of what is acceptable in the extremely adverse conjunctures surrounding a famine.

In particular, the volume coordinated by Tönsmeyer points out some of the main popular responses to the scarcity of foodstuffs in occupied Europe. These included eating domestic animals such as cats (reflecting the widening of the limits of what is edible in periods of hunger); the use of substitute or 'ersatz' products such as roasted barley coffee; the preparation of wartime recipes, as in the case of some of those based on tulip bulbs in the Netherlands; and the letters of complaint and the petitions that were sent to authorities. Also common were prostitution and economic crime, including the black market, in which even children were involved as family providers, or the barter trade (often with cigarettes and alcohol). Although these illicit tactics were motivated by necessity rather than enrichment, those who were caught faced severe punishment ranging from fines to arrest and even the death penalty in some parts of Eastern Europe. De Zwarte's book lists both individual and community responses to hunger. Among the former, she notes economic crime, black market trade, food expeditions into the countryside and the hunt for fuel. Among the community responses, which were made possible by the persistence of cooperation networks despite the crisis, she points to the local child-feeding initiatives. As both books point out, all these civil society initiatives prevented the hunger episodes analysed from becoming even more tragic. As many of the sources compiled in these volumes show, women played a prominent role in all these coping strategies. For instance, during

[11] Miguel Ángel Del Arco and Peter Anderson, 'Introduction: Famine not Hunger?', in Del Arco and Anderson, eds., *Franco's Famine,* 1–18.

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the Dutch Hunger Winter there were women's food protests. In this respect, both works follow in the wake of previous studies on female agency in crisis contexts, such as Nancy Reagin's works on German housewives' resistance to Nazi autarkic policy.[12]

Moreover, both volumes coincide in pointing out the socially inequitable impact of the different episodes of hunger they analyse. They argue that scarcity did not affect all social groups equally, but rather according to their different degrees of 'vulnerability'. In this way, they avoid the mistake of homogenising all famine victims, presenting what Mark-FitzGerald describes as 'a single class of hunger sufferers'.[13] The book coordinated by Tönsmeyer argues that Nazi racial policies led Roma and Jews to be victims of both racism and hunger. These groups withstood the worst of the crisis and had the least chance of survival. Children, youths and the elderly – to whom many of the sources in the volume refer – were also among the most vulnerable groups. De Zwarte's book on the Dutch Hunger Winter argues that the most severely affected were those who depended solely on the state for food, as well as the most vulnerable groups, such as the elderly. In the case of children, their situation was partially mitigated by the fact that they were among the main beneficiaries of community aid. Tönsmeyer's volume also highlights the geographically unequal impact of hunger, arguing that people in Eastern Europe were more severely affected than those in Western Europe, and that the shortages did not affect rural and urban populations equally.

Both the volume focusing on occupied Europe as a whole and that focusing on the specific case of the Netherlands ask questions about intra-community social attitudes in the context of famine. The former refers to the complaints filed, especially against Jews, while the latter highlights expressions of solidarity. De Zwarte argues that, albeit with some limitations, mutual support networks continued to exist during the famine.

Since both volumes investigate famine responses, there are also important commonalities in terms of the sources used. Both Tönsmeyer's and De Zwarte's publications draw on written sources from local, national and international archives. This is the case of the archive of the NIOD Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies in Amsterdam, where both authors found numerous ego-documents (diaries, memoires and letters) that provide the reader with a social, commonplace and subjective perspective on the hunger episodes analysed. Perhaps it would also have been enlightening to incorporate the first-hand oral testimonies of those who managed to survive the famine, which would allow the reader to enter into the individual subjectivities of the survivors. Although the book focusing on the Dutch Hunger Winter does include some, it does so only sporadically.

In short, the most recent works in the field of Food Studies, based primarily on official sources that enable the analysis of food discourses and food policies, are well complemented by those published in the field of Hunger Studies, which use ego-documents to analyse periods of food scarcity from a social and everyday perspective and to explore individual subjectivities.

Both illustrate a number of historiographical trends. Firstly, attention is paid to practices traditionally neglected by historiography, such as the production, preparation and consumption of food, because they have been perceived as non-political. Secondly, and related to the above, the focus is placed on historically marginalised subjects such as women, who have traditionally played a leading role in both food and culinary practices. Moreover, these historical subjects are no longer being thought of merely as victims, but above all as individuals who, even in conditions of oppression, such as those in Europe in the 1930s and 1940s, were able to preserve their capacity for agency. The four works reviewed here also highlight women's agency. Traditionally, those who lived through periods of famine have been studied more as oppressed than as resilient individuals with the ability to overcome adversity. Historiography has paid more attention to the suffering of European societies that experienced famine episodes than to their ability to cope with scarcity. In other words, it has focused

[12] Nancy Reagin, 'Marktordnung and Autarkic Housekeeping: Housewives and Private Consumption under the Four-Year Plan, 1936–1939', *German History*, 19, 2 (2001), 162–84.

[13] Emily Mark-FitzGerald, *Commemorating the Irish Famine: Memory and the Monument* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013), 90.

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more on the physical and psychological effects of famine than on coping strategies. However, the volumes by Garvin, Anderson, Tönsmeyer and De Zwarte highlight the long underestimated or overlooked agency of ordinary people in extremely critical contexts, such as a dictatorship or Nazi occupation. In doing so, they study civil society as an active player in the food system, as De Zwarte argues. Finally, the volumes under review highlight how the concept of what is considered normal or acceptable in critical contexts of famine during a dictatorship (fascist Italy or Franco's Spain) or a period of occupation (the Second World War) is transformed. The work of Garvin, Larson, Tönsmeyer and De Zwarte shows how in these exceptional situations the limits of what is edible are widened, or illicit economic practices that were once condemned become socially accepted.

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