Decoding Modern Consumer Societies

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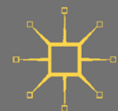
Edited by

Hartmut Berghoff and Uwe Spiekermann



Decoding Modern Consumer Societies

Worlds of Consumption

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Worlds of Consumption is a peer-reviewed venue for the history of consumption and consumerism in the modern era, especially the twentieth century, with a particular focus on comparative and transnational studies. It aims to make research available in English from an increasingly internationalized and interdisciplinary field. The history of consumption offers a vital link among diverse fields of history and other social sciences, because modern societies are consumer societies whose political, cultural, social, and economic structures and practices are bound up with the history of consumption. *Worlds of Consumption* highlights and explores these linkages, which deserve wide attention, since they shape who we are as individuals and societies.

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By Hartmut Berghoff and Uwe Spiekermann, eds.

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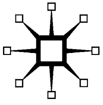

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Taking Stock and Forging Ahead: The Past and Future of Consumption History

Hartmut Berghoff and Uwe Spiekermann

Historians have long been preoccupied with production. Until about the 1980s, the whole fabric of society seemed to reflect the different positions that individuals and groups held in the realm of production. During the past two decades, however, there has been a profound paradigm shift, and consumption has emerged as a sphere in its own right. The way people shop, eat, and spend their leisure has come to be seen not as a direct extension of their income and social status, that is, their position in the sphere of production, but as an expression of more complex cultural and social constellations. Even people with the same budget and class background consume differently. With this shift in historiographical perspective, consumption studies have metamorphosed from a niche topic into one of the most stimulating and vital areas of historical research. Since the late 1980s, interest in the history of consumption has soared in a way previously unimaginable.[1]

The reasons for this boom are manifold. In the humanities, it was closely related to the rise of cultural studies, which concentrate on the individual's subjectivity. The cultural turn heightened our awareness of the importance of norms and symbols, objects and discourses, as well as everyday practices and mechanisms of distinction.[2] In the process, many scholars came to understand consumption as an aspect of self-expression and self-definition. Consumers' desires and emotions were no longer perceived as irrational but as integral for understanding consumption, commodification, and everyday life. At the same time, economics and sociology expanded their focuses and became more interested in the choices individuals make and in the dynamics of consumer goods markets. Among the external factors that contributed to this paradigm shift were the emergence of advanced mass consumer societies and the impact of new consumption patterns on the construction of lifestyles and social identities. The deindustrialization of Western economies, especially the structural crises in industries that

had flourished since the mid-nineteenth century, diverted attention from production toward consumption. This field encompasses a broad array of formerly neglected subjects, including retailing, shopping, supply chains, consumer goods, advertising, and the media as well as the interrelationship of politics, state regulation, consumption, and consumer protests.[3]

Some scholars see consumption as the key to understanding long-term historical trajectories such as the rise of the West, the economic dominance of the Netherlands in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries and of Britain in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries,[4] or the particularities of German history in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[5] Others regard specific consumption patterns mainly as a medium of cultural and political expression.[6] To some authors, consumption is the underpinning of political stability and legitimacy,[7] the explanation of profound cultural and social differences between nations and continents,[8] or the medium through which transnational exchanges or one-sided influences flow.[9] These manifold perspectives have led to a rich body of work that has now been synthesized in several surveys of consumption history.[10] Having reached this level of maturity, the field continues to grow, as new questions and perspectives emerge and further sources are exploited. The field's ongoing vitality is due to several factors.

To start with, consumption is an essential human activity, and it is hard to think of any sphere that is not directly affected by it. Consequently, consumption history has not developed as the exclusive domain of any particular historical discipline. For a long time, consumption history strongly benefited from historical data produced by economic and social historians.[11] However, this group was predominantly interested in the quantitative analysis of consumption. This approach was indispensable but has rightly been criticized as insufficient. From the early 1980s, discussions on postmodernism changed the way sociologists and historians looked at consumption.[12] It was placed in a broader setting that included not only classic social factors such as age, gender, race, status, and class but also more complex cultural categories such as mentalities, personalities, emotions, and individual lifestyles. After all, identical products can have different meanings in different milieus. Coca-Cola, for instance, is predominantly advertised as an American icon and an expression of youth and freedom. At the same time, however, it can symbolize an unhealthy lifestyle (in a clinic for obese children), a world dominated by multinationals (among intellectuals), cultural imperialism (in postwar France[13]), or an evil empire (in many parts of the contemporary Muslim world).[14] The cultural turn strengthened this more nuanced view of consumption. Indeed, consumption studies have become a preferred avenue upon which historians of gender, race, the body, and material culture approach their respective issues.[15] The history of consumption requires a broad set of methodological tools and theoretical perspectives. Fortunately, the field has been open to the scholarly trends of the last decades, from which it has benefited substantially, including the linguistic, spatial, visual, and cultural turns.[16] Having established itself as a dynamic laboratory for methodological experiments, this openness to new research approaches will continue in consumption history.

Such an orientation is appropriate, for consumption remains a powerful and contested force in our present-day lives. Developing countries continue to adopt Western models of consumption. The pressures of globalization, increasing environmental problems, and the competitive struggle for scarce resources will undoubtedly challenge the viability of these models in the future.[17] The antagonism between commercialization and morality, along with the burgeoning conflicts between market logic and public responsibility, are even now shaping future political and economic agendas. Consumers, for example, exercise moral judgment through their purchases, "shopping for a better world." Some campaigns such as Fair Trade aim to give producers in poorer countries a greater share of the business proceeds. Advertisements for corporate social responsibility claim that ethical standards for production and social relations are being honored. However, morality in consumption is often nothing more than an attitude of affluent people or a marketing strategy of large corporations.[18] These challenges in turn underscore the value and relevance of consumption history. Decision makers can, if they wish, strategically utilize such historical decoding of consumer practices in economic, political, and social spheres to solve existing problems. Historical research institutes have a particular responsibility to enter this academic, political, and public debate.

As the history of consumption is such a wide field with an enormous diversity of approaches and perspectives, the German Historical Institute (GHI), Washington, D.C., has launched a new series with Palgrave-Macmillan called "Worlds of Consumption." This title expresses the diversity and openness of the series. It seeks to bridge the gulfs that have opened between different schools of historical research and bring their members into scholarly exchange with each other. It is open to contributions from neighboring social sciences and humanities. The series reflects both the growing internationalization and globalization of consumption history as well as the need for comparative research in a world with heterogeneous and conflicting models of consumption.

The aim of this first volume in the series is to take stock of past achievements and current agendas in historical consumption studies, identify crucial topics and areas for future research, and examine the theoretical and methodological approaches that might be used to forge ahead. By reaching beyond the North Atlantic to Asia and Africa, this volume underlines the need to develop transnational and even global perspectives. It brings together essays by economic, cultural, political, social, environmental, and intellectual historians. The resultant broad, sometimes conflicting variety of chapters reveals a permanent need for self-reflection and discourse across disciplinary boundaries for all who work in the field of consumption studies. This volume aims to promote this process.

What research has been done in Europe, the United States, Japan, and Africa during the last two decades? What consequences did different consumer cultures and traditions have for the choice of topics, theories, and methodologies? Do current approaches to global or transnational history offer opportunities for more advanced research in future, or will research still be dominated by national

perspectives and questions? Finally, are we entering a period of more specialized, less integrative research driven by advanced theoretical and methodological studies on consumers, consumer goods, and supply chains as well as the experience, perception, and practice of consumption? Most of the chapters in this book argue in favor of an integrative approach, but this broad agreement might not typify future research trends.

It is still an open question whether consumption studies will form a new discipline or mainly enrich and alter established branches of research. How can consumption studies change the agenda of certain well-established historical disciplines such as business, political, environmental, spatial, and intellectual history? Again, this book's authors are interested in a more integrative perspective. Even for them, however, it is not yet clear whether consumption history can bridge the gulfs between the historical disciplines.

The answers to such questions depend on the topics that researchers choose in the coming years. The cultural turn draws attention to the fact that consumption patterns are not self-explanatory but are instead infused with meaning by complex processes of semantic attribution. Consequently, this volume is called *Decoding Modern Consumer Societies*. This title acknowledges the fundamental fact that consumption is closely entangled with other historical phenomena and is much more than a function of incomes. Although reaching a level of "freedom from want,"[19] as Franklin D. Roosevelt famously put it in 1941, marks a historical watershed, and although many societies have struggled for centuries to satisfy basic, biologically determined needs, modern consumer societies run according to a different, much more complex logic. For them, mere analysis of disposable incomes leads nowhere, as consumption patterns are linked to cultural and political agendas and aspirations. During the Civil Rights Movement, the exclusion of African Americans from places of consumption such as luncheonettes and shops carried high symbolic value and triggered protests.[20] In the 1920s, the sight of women smoking on the street was more than a fad but gave rise to highly emotional debates about gender roles and the limits of women's independence.[21] The same has been true of certain fashions in specific historical contexts. Consumption often entails symbolic acts asserting status and identity.[22] Consumption is about class,[23] about inclusion versus exclusion, about self-assertion and self-expression, about recognition and legitimacy. Changes in consumption often signal shifting social or cultural boundaries.[24] To fully understand their significance, historical analysis must move beyond asking which products are bought and instead decode their complex semantics. A thorough examination of all relevant political, economic, social, and cultural contexts is necessary—including their hidden meanings and implicit agendas. In other words, the history of consumption must adopt an integrative approach.

This volume has three parts: an assessment of the current state of consumption history, an outline of the role of consumption studies in several historical disciplines, and a collection of case studies.

Part I, "Consumption History Today," focuses not only on the historiography of Europe and the United States but includes two non-Western fields that could not be more different, namely, Africa and Japan. Heinz-Gerhard Haupt's survey of European historiography points out that one cannot speak of a "European" consumption history because historians are still writing national histories. Still, a transnational perspective on consumer goods has at least partially emerged. Haupt compares the heterogeneous scholarly traditions and approaches in Britain, Germany, France, and the Netherlands. His conclusion is surprising: despite the attractiveness of "consumer culture" and in contrast to the United States, European historiography suffers from a deficit of cultural studies on consumption. Additionally, in some countries there is a lack of empirical knowledge about the pre–World War II period, the shape and structure of supply chains, and the interaction of factors such as class, gender, ethnicity, generation, age, and space.

Gary Cross paints a quite different picture of historiography in the United States. This country has become the epitome of an advanced consumer society not only because of its boundless promises of wealth and happiness but also because of its threats of vice and fraud. For both reasons, much research on consumption has been pioneered in the United States. The cultural turn has pushed back formerly dominant economic approaches. Consumption studies have explored race, class, and gender as their prime topics, very often relying on advertisements as their main source. Additionally, the flourishing historiography on marketing and retailing has tackled leisure activities and even taken up impulses from the spatial turn, incorporating the impact of space, place, and the geographical imagination on social and individual practices. Moreover, consumers have come to be seen as key political actors. Like Haupt, Cross criticizes the lack of comparative analysis, the often overestimated relevance of "Americanization" for studying foreign consumer cultures, and the diminishing role of economic history. In addition, he notes that scholars need a deeper understanding of the function and symbolism of goods, including for human senses like sight, taste, smell, and touch.

For most historians, "modern" consumption is closely intertwined with the results of nineteenth-century industrialization and the "Westernization" of the world. Since the "great divergence," standards of living improved significantly in the European and American centers of industrial development. Other nations and societies, above all India and China, fell back and had to catch up not only in their industrial performance but also in their levels of consumption. However, it is still an open question whether or not there are different paths to modern consumption and whether the Western model will remain dominant in future. Penelope Francks' essay explores the historical roots of contemporary Japanese consumer culture. Looking back to the "premodern" eighteenth-century Tokugawa period, she finds key elements of a consumer society, including urban shopping and leisure activities determined by fashion, taste, and emulation. As in Britain, status, class, and differences between rural and urban regions shaped early forms of

consumerism in Japan, although it is still debatable whether consumption stimulated sustainable industrial growth. Trade with Western societies increased from the mid-nineteenth century and led to intense debates about "Western-style" goods and consumption patterns. In spite of these developments, there were only minor changes in daily routines. More significant were infrastructure and technology closely linked to industrial developments, for instance, railways, media, and the growth of urban centers. Western-style clothing, food, furniture, apartments, and electrical goods gained increasing importance during the interwar period and especially during the "industrial miracle" of the postwar decades. Consumption patterns, however, were still shaped by the heritage of the Tokugawa period. Car use, retail structures, and traditional gift giving are good examples for a consumer culture in its own right, a mix of Western-style and adapted traditional Japanese elements. In a global context, such hybrid consumer cultures are perhaps more typical than the Western or even the American model.

Indeed, Hans Peter Hahn's essay on African consumer cultures urges us to rethink many of our categories, which stem from Western societies. He emphasizes that consumption patterns in Africa have developed quite differently, because per capita consumption has declined in many African countries in recent decades. Hahn argues that standard economic theories cannot explain the specifics of this development, so he uses an anthropological approach instead. He focuses on the local contexts of African societies, the different significance of material goods in an environment with few material possessions, and their semantic transformation from globally distributed consumer goods into things with new locally embedded meanings. Without examining this cultural appropriation, any understanding of historical and contemporary African consumer cultures will fail.

Part II, "Consumption and Historical Disciplines," deals with the ways in which different historical disciplines integrate consumption into their agendas and methodological arsenals. Pamela W. Laird analyzes business history, which has dedicated increasing attention to consumption-related topics in recent decades and greatly benefited from the impulses of cultural history. Corporations are seen less as the embodiment of the production function and more as organizations that interact with consumers and the state. These "externalities" are viewed as crucial for corporate survival and success. The production of consumer goods, research and development, packaging, marketing, and company communications are the most important activities for analyzing these interactions between corporations and their environment. Using marketing examples from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Laird recommends that business history take a broader analytical approach that accounts not only for factors such as security, confidence, risk, education, and culture, but also for consumer beliefs and practices.

Frank Uekötter argues for a new relationship between environmental history and consumption. Environmental history, he avers, should not only accentuate problems and the ugly underbelly of consumption, but it could potentially

add at least six different narratives to our understanding of consumer societies. First, resource use has grown more efficient, although it has mostly been outpaced by the growth of consumption. Second, there is the history of consumer protests, which paradoxically often encouraged changes that benefited producers. Third, changes in various plant and animal species are influenced by the ongoing transformation of natural resources and our objects of desire. Fourth, the ambiguities of tourism contribute to both environmental protection and destruction. Fifth, there is the history of green consumption, which can shape the future of mass markets. Finally, the burgeoning field of commodity history opens our eyes to the relevance of specific consumer goods and their repercussions in everyday life. Despite these nuanced perspectives, Uekötter's overall evaluation is that mass consumption engenders a destructive dynamic. From a long-term historical perspective, he maintains, modern consumer societies are highly exceptional and simply unsustainable.

This quandary sensitizes us to the need for political steering mechanisms. The politics of consumption entail much more than regulation and intervention, however, as Hartmut Berghoff highlights in his chapter on Germany between 1900 and 1939. After the Hohenzollern monarchy and the Weimar democracy failed to deliver on promises of prosperity, the Nazi dictatorship instrumentalized the frustrations and the hopes of German citizens. Based on Darwinist pessimism and an ideology of ongoing racial struggle, National Socialism tried to establish wealth and the highest possible standard of living for the supposedly superior race—and misery for the beaten rest. The U.S. model of consumption served as a point of reference, but the Nazi regime rejected its universal promise and propagated a combination of sacrifice and wealth creation. Berghoff argues that the Nazi model of consumption was typical of a Janus-faced dictatorship that relied on both enticement and deprivation. Increased consumption in some sectors—automobiles and radios, for instance—was combined with suppressed and virtual consumption in others.

National Socialist consumption policy was characterized by a new understanding of "space" that seemed to be arbitrarily malleable at the will of the stronger to the detriment of the weaker. The result was ethnic cleansing, brutal resettlements, and megalomanic plans for a new division of labor and consumption in a future Europe under German rule. After the war, such plans were no longer pursued, but the malleability of space, informed by different values, remained a guiding principle for geographers and urban planners. Inspired by the spatial turn in the historiography, Jan Logemann examines the reshaping of shopping spaces in West Germany and the United States after 1945. The American model of suburban development centered around the car and shopping mall, while West Germany saw the parallel development of pedestrian malls in city centers and large stores in the outer districts of the cities that were accessible by public transportation. In West Germany, the car entered the picture only at a later stage. It did not shape urban planning in the 1950s to the same degree as in the United States. Hence, Logemann maintains, public transportation must be analyzed as a kind of collective good or object of public consumption. Since places and spaces of

consumption developed quite differently in each country, Logemann, like Cross, rejects simplistic models of "Americanization."

Daniel Horowitz turns from the spatial to the intellectual dimension. He examines the ideas of three leading European social scientists who reflected on consumer culture in the same period. In the 1950s, Jürgen Habermas developed a critical position toward postwar consumption based on his studies of German idealism and Marxism. In contrast to his later mentors Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, he emphasized not only the depravation and alienation of modern industrial work and the manipulation of the "culture industry" and consumer products but also the emancipatory elements of modern Western design, architecture, and even cartoons.[25] Similarly, Roland Barthes and Umberto Eco both criticized the one-sided analysis of the Frankfurt School and its idea of mass manipulation. In contrast, they highlighted the ambivalent symbolic meanings of mass consumer culture's products. Although Barthes concentrated mostly on France, he also used American examples to understand the "frozen speech" of goods and communication. Barthes' key terms—signifier, signified, and signs—permitted analysis of the products of mass culture as expressions of cultural power and persuasion. Eco, on the other hand, emphasized the interpretative openness of products such as the Peanuts comic strip, live television, and quiz shows; although consumer culture was predominantly regressive and kitschy, many products supported critical attitudes and strengthened consumer's individuality. Horowitz makes clear that these European intellectuals discussed consumer culture during the 1950s in a way that became common in the United States only after the mid-1960s, when the first translations were available and a new generation of American intellectuals questioned the black-and-white discussion about modern consumerism. While the quantity of consumer goods crossing the Atlantic grew rapidly during the postwar era, the intellectual discussion about consumer cultures remained astonishingly national, shaped by the limits of language skills—an interesting parallel to the findings of Haupt and Cross.

Part III assembles "Case Studies" in order to show the variety and richness of contemporary research. Using different theoretical approaches, the chapters demonstrate how traditional fields of research can benefit from integrating the dimension of consumption. A good example is the history of religion. Uta Balbier works on mass evangelism in the 1950s, when the great postwar boom shaped a new American consumer society based in the suburbs. She demonstrates how in this climate of rapid change and escalating prosperity, an evangelical like Billy Graham successfully adapted to and even legitimized this new way of life. He was able to build on a long tradition of commercialized religious campaigns, especially in the religious market of the United States; however, he took the commodification of religion one step further by using modern media, especially television, and by promoting a vision of religious practices without any material sacrifices or social obligations. This "super salesman" propagated a mentality of unapologetic affluence, strident anticommunism, and "traditional" family values during the Cold War. He was the most successful representative of this modernized evangelism, which combined entertainment and faith,

bringing the latter in line with the rising consumer culture of the mushrooming middle classes.

Consumer objects have emerged as another important area of study in the last two decades. Medical herbs are a prominent example of a consumer good located at the nexus between the private and public spheres, that is, between households and businesses. Susan Strasser uses medical herbs as a lens through which to view—and rethink—the cultural process of commodification in the mid-nineteenth century. At that time, the "alternative" medical sector of herbal remedies was not only part of women's domestic work. Mainstream doctors also used such prescriptions, but to comfort their patients rather than cure them. Strasser shows that trust in medical herbs was rational from the consumer's perspective, because these herbs had tangible medical effects and were far less expensive than a doctor's visit. On the other hand, she analyzes the relative decline of herbalism caused by standardized pharmaceutical products and new groups of male experts. The emergence of "modern" pharmaceutical industries and scientists—although deeply involved in the sale and use of medical herbs—undermined the position of female practitioners and ordinary housewives. Professional control and government regulation took over most of these women's functions, as new experts accused those who sought to heal with medical herbs of fraud and quackery. However, the commercialization of this extraordinarily personal sphere was questioned as well, although it was not before the late 1960s, when "alternative" herbal medicine was reintroduced into the mainstream from the counterculture. Its idea of "natural" consumer goods referred to a more humane and sustainable combination of nature and science.

Implicit but unexamined in most consumption studies is a strong link between the development of expert knowledge and changes in modes of consumption. Proceeding from this insight and integrating the history of science, Uwe Spiekermann sheds light on this nexus in his essay about the shift to science-based nutrition in Germany. In his view, consumer societies have always been knowledge societies; therefore, the interaction of knowledge and consumption is crucial for any understanding of consumption and commodification. This recognition has important theoretical and methodological consequences, because commonly used categories and analytical tools of consumption history undergo critical examination. Spiekermann uses changing attitudes toward fruits and vegetables as examples of how problematic the use of terms such as "household," "consumer," "state," "economy," and "science" can be. Such categories construct actor groups and institutions and, therefore, differences between them, although these actors and institutions often shared the same knowledge base. In this case study, agricultural scientists had the same idea of fruits and vegetables as gardeners, regulating politicians, traders, and well-educated consumers. Using such categories creates differences, even if common ground is much more important. Analysis of knowledge patterns can therefore identify new coalitions and conflict lines in consumer societies.

Jonathan Wiesen also challenges seemingly clear-cut categories, in his case in social history. American consumer culture was a reference point for most Western

societies during the twentieth century. Its vision of consumer citizenship, namely, the satisfaction of all basic needs, the guarantee of individual rights, and the growth of global integration, was an attractive model. As Hartmut Berghoff and Daniel Horowitz show in their chapters, racist Nazi policy makers and European intellectuals alike faced this challenge. In his essay, Wiesen analyzes how German businessmen in the 1930s discussed these topics and found answers within the framework of German consumer culture, but not through an ideological reading based on Nazi principles. He focuses, first, on members of the German Rotary Clubs, who were devoted to the ideals of "Service above Self" and held some ideas in common with the Nazi ideology of "people's community" (*Volksgemeinschaft*). The Rotarians had strong ties to the United States, but they were deeply convinced of the incompatibility of American consumer culture with Germany. In their eyes, quality products, craftsmanship, and the role of the small shopkeeper sharply distinguished German business from its American counterpart. This ambivalent appraisal was typical, as well, of the marketing experts in Germany's leading Society for Consumer Research (*Gesellschaft für Konsumforschung*). They discussed and used American methodology to learn more about the German consumer. However, they developed and used their own, more qualitative methodology, because German shoppers did not seem to act like supposedly stereotypical American "mass men" but rather as individuals deeply rooted in their traditions and communities. Wiesen argues that German businessmen shared some values with leading Nazi representatives, although the businessmen acted and discussed consumption relatively independently of the political sphere. His essay ends with a discussion of the complex question of continuity. All nuances aside, it is quite obvious that postwar West Germany was deeply influenced by ideas about American consumerism that had been developed and widely disseminated during the Nazi period. To what extent this reception influenced the West German approach to the shopping spaces that Jan Logemann analyzes remains an open question.

All three parts of *Decoding Modern Consumer Societies* represent an ongoing effort to understand worlds of consumption in the past and present. This volume reflects the contributions of the humanities and social sciences to the subject, draws attention to opportunities for consumption studies to push forward several branches of history, and provides an idea of the research agenda of tomorrow. Focusing on consumption not only adds a broad, new field to the traditional branches of history. It also encourages an integrative and multidimensional understanding of history, new theoretical and methodological approaches, and a more complex understanding of our world, which is predominantly a world of consumption.

* * *

This book originated in a workshop by the same title held at the GHI, Washington, D.C.[26] We would like to thank the GHI for the support that it lent to both the workshop and this volume. We are also indebted to the participants

of the conference for many stimulating discussions, as well as those colleagues who joined the project later on to help fill in gaps in this stocktaking of the field of consumption history. We have learned much from our colleagues. Next, we would like to thank Mark Stoneman for his untiring editorial work and critical suggestions. Finally, our thanks go to Chris Chappell and Sarah Whalen at Palgrave-Macmillan for their helpful advice and for shepherding this manuscript on its way to publication.

Notes

1. Frank Trentmann, "Beyond Consumerism: New Historical Perspectives on Consumption," *Journal of Contemporary History* 39 (2004): 373–401; David Goodman, "Rethinking Food Production-Consumption: Integrative Perspectives," *Sociologia Ruralis* 42 (2002): 271–77.
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PART I

Consumption History Today

CHAPTER 1

Consumption History in Europe: An Overview of Recent Trends

Heinz-Gerhard Haupt

There is no convincing history of European consumption but only histories of consumption in Europe. No single title purports to present an overall picture of consumption patterns in Europe. Only individual chapters in histories of Europe try to present the main trends in the field, and these chapters concentrate mostly on premodern Europe or developments after 1945. Massimo Montanari's volume on consumption in the prominent book series *Europa bauen* (Building Europe) mainly concentrates on the history of nutrition and developments before 1789. Curiously, the period of consumption history between 1800 and 1945 has received less attention in European histories. Harold James mentions developments in consumption, but without insisting on its specificity, and the category of consumption is nearly absent in Walther Bernecker's textbook.[1] Some authors privilege the post–World War II period in their studies and focus on the particularities of mass consumption. In 1996, a French team of authors insisted on the centrality of the second half of the twentieth century and presented quantitative data on the variety of consumption practices in different countries in that period. Hartmut Kaelble has also used quantitative data in a broad international comparison, in which he underlines differences inside Europe as well as indications of convergence toward a common European style and pattern of consumption.[2] Despite these and other welcome contributions, consumption history remains underrepresented in European histories. This relative neglect is even more striking when compared to the attention that developments in the production sector have received in European histories.

This situation might be the consequence of similar circumstances in comparative history. Only some articles offer international comparative approaches to consumption history. Sabine Haustein's book on Germany, France, and Great

Britain between 1945 and 1970 is the largest, but mainly quantitative effort.[3] Consumption history shares the particularity with gender history at its beginning that, until the central paradigm and methods are developed, the national framework is preferred. It is only after a certain level of self-assurance and consolidation is obtained that new fields of expertise use comparative methods in order to relativize results or test hypotheses.[4] Some other works understand Europe as the field that American marketing and organizational practices structured in the interwar period and after 1945.[5] Besides these examples, however, there is no history of European consumption. Even these works tend to overemphasize the unity of Europe by leaving out important parts of the story and devoting more attention to some regions than others. The core countries described are Britain, Germany, and France, while southern, northern, and central European countries are frequently absent. This historiography also overemphasizes the impact of the American market society. Frank Trentmann trenchantly argues against a holistic vision of European developments, observing that the common ownership patterns of consumer goods that developed after 1945 did not mean common consumer practices. The cultural meanings of these goods also varied in different countries.[6] Thomas Welskopp makes strong arguments against the "irresistible" American consumption empire and insists on endogenous developments in post–World War II Europe.[7]

If there is no history of European consumption, but instead histories of consumption in Europe, these histories are mostly national. Until now, few works have tried to compare national cases by examining primary literature in light of a systematic set of questions. Mostly the secondary literature is mobilized in order to state differences between national types or regimes of consumption. The unit of comparison for consumer organizations, policies, and practices—and their meanings—is mainly the nation-state, too. Consumption thus remains a part of different national histories.[8]

This predominance of the national has recently been challenged by transnational studies that focus on specific goods or organizational structures. Sidney Mintz's study of sugar has been imitated for cotton, chocolate, oil, fish, salt, and Chinese porcelain. These studies follow the mediators and geographic displacement of products across the world. As products move from producer to consumer, a whole network of political, social, and economic relationships can develop—as can cultural meanings.[9] The same result can be expected from studies that stress the transfer of organizational knowledge (embodied in self-service shops, for instance) and the spread of transnational organizations (such as consumer associations) that formulate and defend consumer interests.[10] This transnational enlargement of the history of consumption raises new and interesting perspectives as well as new questions. Until now, this past has mainly been written as a success story of those goods and people who changed practices and structures. More attention should be addressed to failures of migration and movement in order to learn more about the logic of these transnational processes. At the same time, it is important to deepen the study of the impact of goods and organizational models. It is not enough to note the arrival of the department

store in Japan, China, and the Near East; its relationship with the local retail trade must also be probed, as must the structure, cultural features, and traditions of local urban communities. Nevertheless, until recently, this transnational perspective has largely been missing, leaving consumption historiography closely linked to the nation-state in its chronology and central paradigms.

That national studies should predominate in this field is not self-evident. A look at diets and eating practices inside national societies indicates that clear borders existed that might have blurred with the rise of the mass market but that still exist. In France, a clear line separates those regions that prefer butter from those in which oil is the predominant form of fat.[11] The beer of northern Germany is not the same as that produced in Bavaria. References to region were often made in Germany and Austria as a way to market and advertise goods.[12] If studies want to deal with the specificities of eating and drinking, the national level does not make a lot of sense. For an in-depth analysis of the consumption practices of different age groups, ethnic communities, genders, and classes, there are clear limits to national surveys, at least in the period before the 1950s, before the start of more sophisticated sociological studies.[13] Previously, inquiries conducted by priests, charity organizations, trade unions, and state agencies often relied on the self-observations of a limited number of consumers.[14] For this reason, these data are valuable for some social groups in certain cities but can only be used with difficulty for an entire nation. Comparative analysis of consumption patterns in different cities—as has been done for World War I, for instance—might be a way to test the importance of different factors influencing consumption.[15] If the study of consumer practices deals with links between these practices and city life, its rhythms and architecture, then the local level is unavoidable. Michel de Certeau, for instance, has chosen this space for his in-depth study of consumption in one part of Lyon.[16] Studies on inflation and their impact on consumption and consumers concentrate on urban settings, for example, Munich. Steve Kaplan presents the case of a southern French town, Pont St. Esprit, in order to show the links between bakers, millers, nutritional experts, and state authorities in 1940, when the quality of bread was in question.[17]

The nation-state is an important reference point in studies that consider the politics of consumption, because decisions about whether consumer or producer interests would predominate were taken mainly by national parliaments. On the other hand, such national measures were also implemented by municipalities.[18] Intellectual debates over new forms of retailing like department stores, over luxuries and needs, and over links between consumption and citizenship extended beyond local spaces, but they might also reveal special accents and paths of development when the conditions and interests of a certain discursive community are considered.[19] The national orientation of consumption history is not useful for dealing with all questions and problems related to consumption, nor should the nation-state be the most adequate—or even the only—unit of comparison in these studies.

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What are the main features of consumption history inside national historiographies? What are their chronologies and central problems? What is their analytical scope? In Britain, the starting point for modern consumption studies is *The Birth of a Consumer Society* by Neil McKendrick, John Brewer, and J. H. Plumb.[20] It situates the British experience in a *longue durée* or long-term perspective and draws attention to both the active role of entrepreneurs and the middle classes' social emulation of the aristocracy. These mechanisms are supposed to have been responsible for the spread of consumer goods beyond elite circles. This 1982 book was pioneering in Europe. Since it appeared, there have been studies on the quantity and social distribution of commodities as well as publications on consumer goods and identity, and their number is increasing inside the British historiography. As Brewer points out, two phases of the twentieth-century debate on consumer society are present in this research: the Cold War debate, which insisted on the rise of mass consumption and the affluence society in connection with rapid economic growth, and neoliberal and postmodern concerns about consumers' choices and identities.[21] Since the 1990s, politics has been situated between consumer society's structures and individual consumers. In this new orientation, first offered by Martin Daunton and Matthew Hilton, the range of consumer goods under consideration has expanded to include commodities such as water, electricity, and gas; and research focuses not only on governmental regulations but also on how consumers organize and defend their interests.[22] Linked to this perspective is a new interest in consumers and their practices of consumption. Frank Trentmann shifts attention from consumed goods to the consumers of those goods, and he argues that the amount of consumed goods does not necessarily imply an increased consciousness or public awareness on the part of consumers. He draws attention to the invention of the consumer. He also points to different national linkages between political discourses and the figure of the consumer. In Britain, he argues, consumption and citizenship were closely associated; in France, the middle classes conceived of themselves as consumers in advocating the interests of workers as producers; and, in Germany, consumption was part of a national endeavor during the First World.[23]

The historiography of British consumption is the richest and most active inside Europe. Its current tendencies can be seen in the successful research program "Cultures of Consumption," which ran from 2002 to 2007.[24] The twenty-six projects financed by this program analyze an impressive variety of consumer goods, from cappuccino to chewing gum, water to media, and the Internet to horticulture. The consumers analyzed are citizen-consumers, active or passive consumers, children as new consumers, housewives, water users, and so on. The problems considered include the commodification of water, modes of consumption and citizenship, intergenerational consumption, design and consumption, banking and housing, and alternative food networks.

The situation is different in Germany. In both West and East German historical research, consumption did not play any significant role in the social and political history written before 1990. The main paradigms of social history in the Federal Republic were Germany's passage from an agrarian to an industrial society

and the political consequences of industrialization. Little or no attention was paid to consumption when these paradigms were applied. The debate over Germany's *Sonderweg* or "special path," for instance, took place without consumption studies.[25] To be sure, food riots are not missing from the history of urban and rural life, and hunger, for instance, is considered in the study of working-class living conditions. But the main concern of this research was to ask how social groups developed into homogenous classes and how they acted politically. In this context, scholars did not attribute any significant role to consumption. This is astonishing, because the question of the "feudalization of the German bourgeoisie" as part of the German Sonderweg might have been discussed by looking not only at marriage patterns but also at consumption practices, as has been done for Switzerland.[26] But social-historical research in Germany remained centrally linked to the problems of production and work. Even studies that refrained from taking a structural approach to social history, such as Lutz Niethammer's oral history of workers in the Ruhr region from the 1930s to the 1960s, remained inside this paradigm and abstained from examining consumption patterns.[27] Only ethnologists and social historians on the margins of dominant trends in social history did research on consumption. One example was Hans-Jürgen Teuteberg and his team in Münster. They concentrated on standards of living, including housing, eating, and drinking patterns, and then enlarged their field of observation to include advertising.[28]

It was around 1990 under the catchphrase "enlargement of social history" that consumption began to attract more attention in the historiography in Germany. This openness to other social phenomena, more than the cultural turn, influenced consumption history in Germany after reunification. Cultural history approaches have been employed more by American than by German scholars.[29] Indeed, there has been a clear continuity of research inside the German discussion. Scholars continue to be interested in the budgets of different social groups; the link between working-class consumption, which has also been studied for the Social Democratic Party before 1918, and consumer cooperatives; food riots and related manifestations before and after 1918; and the debate on the modernizing nature of National Socialism, which has been the main point of reference in the works of Hartmut Berghoff, Wolfgang König, and others.[30] But there were also new tendencies in the German discussion. The question of when mass consumption was established after 1945 has been debated.[31] Also, the link between consumption and regional identities has been analyzed, and the range of consumer goods to be studied has expanded to include the media, music, and leisure.[32] Some lively consumption research is taking place in business history. Works by Karl-Peter Ellerbrock, Uwe Spiekermann, and Hartmut Berghoff deal with consumer goods, the enterprises producing them, and the marketing strategies employed to sell them. Also, a new interest in the production, marketing, and representation of certain consumer goods has developed, including the car, the bicycle, and various brands.[33] But consumption history is not yet a primary field of historical research in Germany. In fact, journals in English and French published special issues on consumption in Germany before any German journals did. The *Jahrbuch für*

Wirtschaftsgeschichte only came out with a special issue on mass consumer society in 2007.[34]

The French case is unusual. The amount and importance of theoretical reflection on consumption in France is greater than the historiographical discussion there. Moreover, the diagnosis offered by these theoretical approaches has stirred some controversies. Jean Baudrillard and Guy Debord are convinced that consumer society aims only at its own reproduction through its images and mechanisms. "Consumption," as Baudrillard puts it, "is the virtual totality of all objects and messages presently constituted in a more or less coherent discourse. Consumption, insofar as it is meaningful, is a systematic act of the manipulation of signs."[35] Michel de Certeau, who has also studied the practices of consumers, is convinced that consumers can create their own meanings for goods and, therefore, their own consumption practices, even in a capitalist context.[36] French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu distanced himself from this interpretation, instead linking consumption patterns to social class. Criticizing the image of a one-class consumer society, he emphasized distinctions between various kinds of consumption, which the social classes used strategically in their struggles over cultural hegemony.[37]

Compared to this rich and internationally influential body of theoretical literature, the number of empirical historical studies on consumption is rather modest in France. They mainly follow Bourdieu's interest in the role of nomenclature in the construction of the consumer and in the politics of consumption. State measures as well as the role of voluntary associations have been analyzed, as well. Advertising and marketing are the main fields of expertise in the French context.[38] As in the German case, many important studies on French consumption have been written by American scholars, including, for instance, studies on department stores, consumer cooperatives, leisure organizations, and women's relationships to consumption.[39] The impact of strong Marxist and other structuralist traditions in the French historiography could be responsible for its long neglect of consumption problems in social history. But recent interest in the consumer as a category of political life and an actor inside associations is linked to challenges to the Jacobin model of French society, according to which no intermediate categories are permitted between the state and the sovereign citizen. For a long time, this model was accepted as an adequate description of reality; however, Pierre Rosanvallon and others have recently drawn attention to mediating institutions and actors, and the consumer is one of them.[40]

The historiographical and thematic contexts of consumption history in other European countries are also interesting. For example, technology matters in the Dutch context, business history provides an important starting point in Italy, and a rather challenging mixture of approaches from social history and the history of science has informed the historiography in Switzerland.

In Dutch historiography, consumption history is developing in the context of debates on technology and product innovation. Consumers are seen not only as passive buyers of consumer goods, but also as actors who can be understood in terms of their purchasing practices and predilections as "co-producers

of new technologies and products."[41] The main focus of this research is "how these technologies were designed, spread, reworked, and appropriated in the Dutch context."[42] The theoretical focus is on the importance of mediation practices between production and consumption, which include not only the market and its organization, but also consumer organizations and the state. Relevant empirical topics include Dutch women's organizations and working-class representation, automobile technology and the role of the Dutch Touring Club, Unilever and Dutch snacks, as well as Philips and the Dutch media. Scholars in the Netherlands are analyzing the importance of consumer organizations and the media as mediators between production and consumption. The underlying philosophy of this approach is that the interventions of consumers matter. Consumer organizations supposedly influence the design, marketing, and success of products more than the purchasing power of consumers does.

Consumption history in Italy proceeded from a different set of problems. The relatively late commercialization of Italy and the persistence of traditional forms of retailing are important points of reference for studies in that country. The comparatively late founding of department stores (La Rinascente was created in 1917) and the importance of American examples for the still limited *revoluzione commerciale* inform historical research.[43] Social history studies on the retail trade and petite bourgeoisie in Italy call attention to some factors that might explain the survival of family enterprises and the difficulties of larger commercial enterprises in Italy to this day.[44] In reaction to these studies that emphasize the country's late capitalization, recent studies stress the importance of consumption for the unification of the country's heterogeneous society.[45]

In Switzerland, by contrast, the historiography emphasizes the roles of cooperatives and large enterprises in the development of new forms of retailing and in the promotion of a modern consumer society. The early introduction of self-service and supermarkets in Switzerland in the 1950s has been underlined not only in business history but also in a cultural approach that emphasizes both the promise of the new consumer society and its disciplining character in the sense of Michel Foucault.[46] An outstanding example of consumption history that is difficult to categorize is Jakob Tanner's book on meals provided inside Swiss enterprises. It attends to the social practices and configurations around these meals as well as the relationship between scientific work organization and the history of nutritional science.[47]

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Quantitative analysis of the distribution of consumer goods continues in European historiography, but it is often a starting point for broader analysis, too. Especially for studies on post–World War II Europe, the statistics assembled inside the European Union are used to situate the development of different countries in a broader context and to compare these countries with each other. In so doing, these studies can enlarge the scope of European history, which in the past has frequently been limited to the core countries of Western Europe without

reference to northern, southern, eastern, and central European societies.[48] At the same time, however, it is unclear whether the indicators used to characterize consumption patterns and levels across Europe can be the same for different countries or whether more detailed parameters should be used, as Frank Trentmann suggests.[49] It would also be useful to check the underlying program and logic of data collection in Europe. The statistics produced should be read in connection with not only contemporary European debates on consumption but also the strategies that the European Commission and Europe's national governments employ to deal with it. Seen in such contexts, data on consumption might reflect politics more than social realities.

The problem of consumption in former communist countries has been discussed mainly since 1989, and the research on the consumption history of Eastern Europe is expanding.[50] For some observers, the collapse of the Soviet bloc was to be situated in the systematic competition between communism and capitalism in the development of a high standard of living. In this competition, the capitalist market economy was seen as more successful than the socialist planned economy. No doubt the attractiveness of Western consumer goods displayed in advertisements, television, and special shops for privileged consumers in Eastern European countries contributed to the delegitimation of communism in the long run.[51] But this monolithic image obscures specific consumption practices and cultures, for instance, in East Germany, and neglects the goal of consumption policy in communist societies, which was to abolish the need for any material representations of social goods and iron out all social differences. After 1989, some literature began to discuss specific forms of consumer practices within this broad topic and show the "obstinacy" of consumers in dealing with official regulations and problems of scarcity.[52] The project organized by Joachim von Puttkamer at the University of Jena on *Schleichwege* or "hidden paths" is examining the smuggling of goods across eastern European frontiers by ordinary citizens posing as tourists.[53] Consumption is now seen as an important field inside the broader discussion about ways of life and survival under communist dictatorial and authoritarian regimes.[54]

Nonetheless, European historiography still finds itself at the beginning of research on consumption. Such scholarship is often linked to economic history and aims to determine the threshold that separates consumer from mass consumer societies.[55] This approach ties in with the traditional scheme of economic history and examines the end of the self-subsistence economy, the development of the market economy, the rise of real wages, and the mass fabrication of consumer goods. Different levels of development can be detected among the European countries based on these criteria, whereby the period between 1945 and 1960 is frequently considered crucial.[56] These studies tell the story of the rise of the affluence society; not surprisingly, they often cite J. K. Galbraith. A different chronology would be developed if consumers, along with their interventions and organizations, were highlighted. In this perspective, the conceptual separation of consumer and producer is important, and so is the significance attributed to the new actor—the consumer. Following Trentmann, the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries were—at least in Britain, France, and

Germany—important moments when the consumer intervened in political and social life, apparently informed by different values.[57]

Within economic history, business history has contributed to the expansion and diversification of consumption history. In those works that deal with marketing strategies and related issues, the relationship between consumers and producers is at issue.[58] If the analysis concentrates on specific enterprises and their expansion beyond the regional or national market, it presents their advertising methods and product variations.[59] Even if these studies do not always succeed in addressing the practices of consumers, they at least reconstruct the framework in which consumption occurred.[60]

The emphasis of social history on eating and drinking patterns is moving toward a more general notion of consumption practices and their interactions, but studies on food history continue to predominate. In 1989, an International Commission for Research into European Food History was created in Münster, and the European Institute for Food History in Tours began publishing the journal *Food & History*. The resulting studies reveal the cultural significance of different eating practices in different societies, but they also insist on the importance of new fast-food practices.[61] The food supply in Europe was not assured even in the twentieth century, which led to a variety of conflicts inside national societies. A volume edited by Frank Trentmann and Flemming Just reconstructs the different lines of conflict and the results of collective actions in France, Britain, Germany, Italy, Sweden, and the Netherlands. With this focus, consumption history may again take up the long forgotten historiographical tradition of studying collective processes, which were important in international historiography during the 1970s and which are still examined by the sociology of social movements.[62] In a global perspective, the chains between producers and consumers are considered, as are the global strategies of enterprises. Angelika Epple's study on Stollwerck deals with chocolate, and Alexander Nütznadel and Frank Trentmann present a broad framework of challenging questions and stimulating case studies.[63] Along with clothing, music, and other aspects of daily life, eating is presented as a component of ethnic representation. This research, already well developed in Britain and France, has been pursued by Maren Möhring for Germany's past.[64]

Several studies deconstruct the category of consumer in terms of social differentiation. Different ethnic groups, classes, generations, and sexes use various consumer goods differently.[65] The field of gender and consumption is rather well established,[66] but generational differences in consumption are not commonly examined in the research.[67] The problem of class-specific consumption patterns remains at the center of research agendas, as class manifests itself in significant and manifold ways for different conjunctures, contexts, and goods. The need to go beyond national surveys is generally accepted, and the importance of local case studies has been highlighted. The focus has been on urban societies; however, rural communities and the countryside have been widely ignored—even in those societies in which they profoundly influenced consumption patterns until the second half of the twentieth century. After the path-breaking study of Austrian

peasants and consumption by Roman Sandgruber, few studies have focused on the consumption practices of peasants or journeymen. The countryside has often been understood only as a target of marketing strategies and a space in which consumer goods spread. The specific responses of peasants to consumer goods, including how they used them inside their households, have frequently been neglected.[68]

The move from social to cultural history approaches has not been general, but it has produced important studies. Not only has it resulted in studies on the consumption of cultural goods such as films, newspapers, and paintings, but it has also shown the extent to which consumption has become a cultural practice in which meaning is assigned to the material world.[69] This process has been analyzed for the coding of exotic goods, which takes place not only in shops and department stores but also in expositions.[70] In this context, the consumer is not only the object of influences, norms, and images but also an actor and, therefore, the subject of his or her own story, as Michel de Certeau convincingly argues. The subjective side of the story—the process of how the consumer appropriates, perceives, and codes goods—is not yet well researched. In studying these things, consumption history would deal with the history of emotions and desires, aversions and predilections, dreams and deceptions.[71] In Britain, the broad concept of "consumer cultures" has helped to bring together different fields of research and various approaches, but it is too broad and holistic as an analytical and explanatory concept.[72]

Interest in the political history of consumers is more recent. Martin Daunton and Matthew Hilton have brought out an important publication that opens new fields of research in this area.[73] Its understanding of political organizations comprises not only political parties and trade unions but also consumer cooperatives, including their ideas and interventions in the sector of consumption.[74] In this context, the field of political action has been enlarged to encompass consumption issues, even if the effects of this enlargement on consumption practices and the strategy of consumer organizations are not always clear. Male and female consumers and their organizations, practices, and perspectives have been widely studied.[75] Nonetheless, the main question remains unanswered. Under what conditions was it possible in different societies to organize such a heterogeneous group of people as consumers? It could be that organization followed class lines, like in consumer cooperatives, or the gender divide, like in bourgeois buyers associations, but research might also highlight specific conjunctures—postwar situations, for instance.[76]

A central question in the political field is whether and when the image of the consumer became fused with that of the citizen, as Liz Cohen argues in her famous book, *A Consumers' Republic*. This question has also been debated in relation to ideas about the future and the role of consumption therein.[77] An important group of studies in political history examines the regulative intervention of the state in the consumption sector. As the provision of sufficient quantities of healthy food is one of the major tests of a state's ability to take care of its population, public officials have shown interest in this issue. Recently, the

problem of quality assurance and its regulation have interested scholars, as this topic encompasses state actions, parallel developments in nutritional science, the question of consumer trust in the state's regulatory mechanisms, and the reactions of producers to restrictive and normative practices.[78]

The implementation of official regulations at the local, regional, national, and international levels is less well known than official statements and strategies. In fact, consumption history runs the risk of overemphasizing the effectiveness of government measures and underestimating resistance to them and their symbolic character. For instance, studies on the beginning of the Weimar Republic show that the prosecution of profiteers was a major theme in public discourse while the efficacy of this prosecution was fairly ineffective.[79] Even official terminology was not always successful. In Britain, New Labour tried to label citizens as clients to whom government should deliver services, conflating power relations with a purchasing act. But citizens' reactions showed that they did not accept this new nomenclature.[80] In order not to privilege the top-down perspective of state regulation, it is important to link regulations to detailed studies of their reception and implementation, even if such studies are not easy to carry out.

Consumption practices are also important in the field of political history because of their possible relationship to the depoliticization of citizens, as per consumption critics, or a plausible contrary politicizing effect.[81] Willibald Steinmetz has shown how the public campaign of parents of disabled children against one drug, thalidomide, succeeded in creating public awareness of the problem and put the negative effects of drugs on Germany's political agenda.[82] And even if Matthew Hilton is right about the creation of fair trade and ethical consumption not being political acts per se, the groups promoting such practices are anchoring the problematic nature of food supply chains between metropolitan regions and dependent societies in public and political debates.[83] In so doing, they are able to appeal to state officials for intervention in this field. Once consumption patterns or goods are politicized, it is difficult to depoliticize them again.

Political debates on consumption and consumers are not necessarily restricted to problems of eating and drinking or buying and selling. Very often they deal with much broader issues. They touch on social boundaries when the access of different parts of the population to specific kinds of consumer goods or consumer credit is discussed.[84] Discussions on luxury are also linked to these broader issues.[85] They are closely related to ideas of social justice and equitable distribution, topics of particular importance during economic or political crises. The political history of consumption would gain in importance and depth if these relationships were systematically explored.[86]

Notes

1. Massimo Montanari, *Der Hunger und der Überfluß: Kulturgeschichte der Ernährung in Europa* (Munich, 1993); Harold James, *Geschichte Europas im 20. Jahrhundert: Fall und Aufstieg 1914–2001* (Munich, 2004); Walther L. Bernecker, *Europa zwischen den Weltkriegen 1914–1945* (Stuttgart, 2002).

2. Alain Beltran, Patrice Carré, and Michel Ruffat, "Nascita, crescita e dominio della società dei consumi," in *L'età contemporanea, secoli XIX-XX,* ed. Paul Bairoch and Eric Hobsbawm, vol. 5 of *Storia d'Europa* (Turin, 1996), 468–87; Hartmut Kaelble, *Sozialgeschichte Europas: 1945 bis zur Gegenwart* (Munich, 2007), 87–118. The scope of analysis is chronologically broader in Heinz-Gerhard Haupt, *Konsum und Handel: Europa im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen, 2003); Hannes Siegrist, Hartmut Kaelble, and Jürgen Kocka, eds., *Europäische Konsumgeschichte: Zur Gesellschafts- und Kulturgeschichte des Konsums (18. bis 20. Jahrhundert)* (Frankfurt am Main, 1997); Hannes Siegrist, Jakob Tanner, and Béatrice Veyrassat, eds., *Geschichte der Konsumgesellschaft: Märkte, Kultur und Identität (15–20. Jahrhundert)* (Zürich, 1997); and Heinz-Gerhard Haupt, "The History of Consumption in Western Europe in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries," in *The European Way: European Societies in the 19th and 20th Centuries,* ed. Hartmut Kaelble (New York and Oxford, 2004), 161–85.
3. Sabine Haustein, *Vom Mangel zum Massenkonsum: Deutschland, Frankreich und Großbritannien im Vergleich 1945–1970* (Frankfurt am Main, 2007). See also Uwe Spiekermann, "Brown Bread for Victory: German and British Wholemeal Politics in the Inter-War Period," in *Food and Conflict in Europe in the Age of the Two World Wars,* ed. Frank Trentmann and Flemming Just (Basingstoke and New York, 2006), 143–71; Heinz-Gerhard Haupt and Paul Nolte, "Market: Consumption and Commerce," in *The United States and Germany during the Twentieth Century: Competition and Convergence,* ed. Christof Mauch and Kiran Klaus Patel (Washington, DC, 2010), 121–43.
4. See the remarks and suggestions in Heinz-Gerhard Haupt and Jürgen Kocka, "Historischer Vergleich: Methoden, Aufgaben, Probleme: Eine Einleitung," *Geschichte und Vergleich: Ansätze und Ergebnisse international vergleichender Geschichtsschreibung,* ed. Haupt and Kocka (Frankfurt am Main, 1996), 35–39; Hartmut Kaelble, *Der historische Vergleich: Eine Einführung zum 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt am Main, 1999); Deborah Cohen and Maura O'Connor, eds., *Comparison and History: Europe in Cross-National Perspective* (New York and London, 2004).
5. Victoria de Grazia, *Irresistible Empire: America's Advance through 20th-Century Europe* (Cambridge, MA, 2005); see also Heinz-Gerhard Haupt and Paul Nolte, "Konsum und Kommerz," in *Wettlauf um die Moderne: Die USA und Deutschland 1890 bis heute,* ed. Christof Mauch and Kiran Klaus Patel (Munich, 2008), 187–224.
6. Frank Trentmann, "The Long History of Contemporary Consumer Society: Chronologies, Practices, and Politics in Modern Europe," *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* 49 (2009): 107–28; Trentmann, "Beyond Consumerism: New Historical Perspectives on Consumption," *Journal of Contemporary History* 39 (2004): 373–401.
7. Thomas Welskopp, "Startrampe für die Gesellschaft des Massenkonsums: Verbreitung und Entwicklung der Selbstbedienung in Europa nach 1945," in *Unterwegs in Europa: Beiträge zu einer vergleichenden Sozial- und Kulturgeschichte,* ed. Christina Benninghaus et al. (Frankfurt am Main, 2008), 247–70.
8. See Michael Wildt, *Am Beginn der Konsumgesellschaft: Mangelerfahrung, Lebenshaltung, Wohlstandshoffnung in Westdeutschland in den fünfziger Jahren* (Hamburg, 1994); Konrad Jarausch and Michael Geyer, "Streben nach Glück: Konsum, Massenkultur und Konsumdenken," in *Zerbrochener Spiegel: Deutsche Geschichten im 20. Jahrhundert,* ed. Jarausch and Geyer (Munich, 2005), 303–53; Lizabeth

Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York 2003); Olivier Barrot and Pascal Ory, eds., *Entre deux guerres: La creation française entre 1919 et 1939* (Paris, 1990).

9. Sidney W. Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (New York, 1985); John Brewer and Roy Porter, eds., *Consumption and the World of Goods* (New York, 1993); Daniel Roche, *Histoire des chose banales: Naissance de la consommation XVIIe-XIXe siècle* (Paris, 1997).
10. See Welskopp, "Startrampe"; Matthew Hilton, *Prosperity for All: Consumer Activism in an Era of Globalization* (Ithaca, NY, 2008); Alain Chatriot, Marie-Emmanuelle Chesell, and Mathew Hilton, eds., *The Expert Consumer: Associations and Professionals in Consumer Society* (Aldershot, 2007).
11. For this argument, see Haupt, "History of Consumption," 161–85.
12. Hannes Siegrist and Manuel Schramm, eds., *Regionalisierung europäischer Konsumkulturen im 20. Jahrhundert* (Leipzig, 2003).
13. See the long-term analysis in Michael Prinz, ed., *Der lange Weg in den Überfluss: Anfänge und Entwicklung der Konsumgesellschaft seit der Vormoderne* (Paderborn, 2003). For social scientists' approaches, see Claire Donovan, "Consuming Social Science," in *Governance, Consumers and Citizens,* ed. Mark Bevir and Frank Trentmann (Palgrave, 2007), 69–94.
14. Haupt, *Konsum und Handel.*
15. See Thierry Bonzon, "Consumption and Total Warfare in Paris (1914–1918)," in *Food and Conflict,* ed. Trentmann and Just, 49–64; Thimo de Nijs, "Food Provision and Food Retailing in the Hague, 1914–1930," in *Food and Conflict,* ed. Trentmann and Just, 65–87.
16. Michel de Certeau, Luce Girard, and Pierre Mayol, *L'invention du quotidian,* vol. 2, *Habiter, cuisiner* (Paris, 1990).
17. Martin H. Geyer, *Verkehrte Welt: Revolution, Inflation und Moderne, München 1914–1924* (Göttingen, 1998); Steven L. Kaplan, *Le pain maudit: Retour sur la France des années oubliées 1945–1958* (Paris, 2008).
18. See Claudius Torp, "Das Janusgesicht der Weimarer Konsumpolitik," in *Die Konsumgesellschaft in Deutschland 1890–1990: Ein Handbuch,* ed. Heinz-Gerhard Haupt and Claudius Torp (Frankfurt am Main, 2009), 250–67.
19. Lisa Tiersten, "Marianne in the Department Store: Gender and the Politics of Consumption in Turn-of-the-Century Paris," in *Cathedrals of Consumption: The European Department Store 1850–1939,* ed. Geoffrey Crossick and Serge Jaumain (Aldershot, 1999), 116–34.
20. Neil McKendrick, John Brewer, and J. H. Plumb, *The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialization of Eighteenth-Century England* (London, 1982).
21. John Brewer, "Was können wir aus der Geschichte der frühen Neuzeit für die moderne Konsumgeschichte lernen?," in *Europäische Konsumgeschichte,* ed. Siegrist, Kaelble, and Kocka, 51–74; Brewer, "The Error of Our Ways: Historians and the Birth of Consumer Society," Cultures of Consumption, Working Paper Series 12 (June 2004), http://www.consume.bbk.ac.uk/working_papers/Brewer%20talk.doc.
22. Martin Daunton and Matthew Hilton, eds., *The Politics of Consumption: Material Culture and Citizenship in Europe and America* (Oxford and New York, 2001); Mathew Hilton, *Consumerism in 20th-Century Britain* (Cambridge, 2003), 8. For the reception of this trend or similar initiatives in other European countries, see Alain Chatriot, Marie-Emmanuelle Chessel, and Matthew Hilton, eds., *Au nom du consommateur: Consommation et politique en Europe et aux Etats-Unis au XXe siècle*

(Paris, 2004) and Hartmut Berghoff, ed, *Konsumpolitik: Die Regulierung des privaten Verbrauchs im 20. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen, 1999).

23. Frank Trentmann, "Knowing Consumers: Histories, Identities, Practices: An Introduction," in *The Making of the Consumer: Knowledge, Power and Identity in the Modern World,* ed. Trentman (Oxford and New York, 2006), 1–27; Trentmann, "Long History."
24. "Cultures of Consumption," directed by Frank Trentmann, http://www.consume.bbk.ac.uk.
25. See Hannes Siegrist, "Konsum, Kultur und Gesellschaft im modernen Europa," in *Europäische Konsumgeschichte,* ed. Siegrist, Kaelble, and Kocka, 13–48; Heinz-Gerhard Haupt, "Pour une histoire de la consommation en Allemagne au XXe siècle," *Le Mouvement Social* 206 (2004): 3–16.
26. Albert Tanner, *Arbeitsame Patrioten, wohlanständige Damen: Bürgertum und Bürgerlichkeit in der Schweiz 1830–1914* (Zürich, 1995); Philipp Sarasin, *Stadt der Bürger: Struktureller Wandel und bürgerliche Lebensweise* (Basel, 1990).
27. Lutz Niethammer, ed., *Lebensgeschichte und Sozialkultur im Ruhrgebiet 1930–1960,* 3 vols. (Berlin and Bonn, 1983–85).
28. Hans-Jürgen Teuteberg, ed., *Durchbruch zum Massenkonsum: Lebensmittelmärkte und Lebensmittelqualität im Städtewachstum des Industriezeitralters* (Münster, 1987).
29. See Alon Confino and Rudy Koshar, "Regimes of Consumer Culture: New Narratives in Twentieth Century German History," *German History* 19, no. 2 (2001): 135–61.
30. Armin Triebel, *Zwei Klassen und die Vielfalt des Konsums: Haushaltsbudgetierung bei abhängigen Erwerbstätigen in Deutschland im ersten Drittel des 20. Jahrhunderts,* 2 vols. (Berlin, 1991); Reinhard Spree, "Knappheit und differentieller Konsum während des ersten Drittels des 20. Jahrhunderts," in *Ressourcenverknappung als Problem der Wirtschaftsgeschichte,* ed. Hansjörg Siegenthaler (Berlin, 1990), 171–221; Christoph Nonn, *Verbraucherprotest und Parteiensystem im wilhelminischen Deutschland* (Düsseldorf, 1996); Michael Prinz, *Brot und Dividende: Konsumvereine in Deutschland und England vor 1914* (Göttingen, 1996); Manfred Gailus and Heinrich Volkmann, eds., *Der Kampf um das tägliche Brot: Nahrungsmangel, Versorgungspolitik und Protest 1770–1970* (Opladen, 1994); Geyer, *Verkehrte Welt;* Hartmut Berghoff, "Konsumgüterindustrie im Nationalsozialismus: Marketing im Spannungsfeld von Profit- und Regimeinteressen," *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* 36 (1996): 203–322; Hartmut Berghoff, "Träume und Alpträume: Konsumpolitik im nationalsozialistischen Deutschland," in *Konsumgesellschaft,* ed. Haupt and Torp, eds., 268–88; Günter Könke, " 'Modernisierungsschub' oder relative Stagnation? Einige Anmerkungen zum Verhältnis von Nationalsozialismus und Moderne," *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 20 (1994): 585–610.
31. Michael Wildt, *Vom kleinen Wohlstand: Eine Konsumgeschichte der fünfziger Jahre* (Hamburg, 1994); Axel Schildt, *Moderne Zeiten: Freizeit, Massemmedien und "Zeitgeist" in der Bundesrepublik der 50er Jahre* (Hamburg, 1995).
32. Kaspar Maase, *Bravo Amerika: Erkundungen zur Jugendkultur der Bundesrepublik in den fünfziger Jahren* (Hamburg, 1992); Arne Andersen, *Der Traum vom guten Leben: Alltags- und Konsumgeschichte vom Wirtschaftswunder bis heute* (Frankfurt am Main, 1997).
33. Uwe Spiekermann, *Basis der Konsumgesellschaft: Entstehung und Entwicklung des modernen Kleinhandels in Deutschland 1850–1914* (Munich, 1999); Karl-Peter Ellerbrock, *Geschichte der deutschen Nahrungs-und Genussmittelindustrie 1750–1914* (Stuttgart, 1993); Hartmut Berghoff, *Zwischen Kleinstadt und Weltmarkt: Hohner*

und die Harmonika 1857–1961: Unternehmensgeschichte als Gesellschaftsgeschichte (Paderborn, 1997).

34. *German History* 19, no. 2 (2001): 135–276; *Au Bonheur des Allemands: Consommateurs et consommation au XXe siècle,* special issue of *Le mouvement social,* no. 206 (2004): 3–153; *Die bundesdeutsche Massenkonsumgesellschaft 1950–2000,* special issue of *Jahrbuch für Wirtschaftsgeschichte,* no. 2 (2007): 17–167.
35. Jean Baudrillard, *La société de consummation: Ses myths, ses structures* (Paris, 1990).
36. Michel de Certeau, *L'invention du quotidien,* vol. 1, *Arts de faire* (Paris, 1980).
37. Pierre Bourdieu, *La distinction: Critique sociale du jugement* (Paris, 1979). See also an older sociological study by Maurice Halbwachs, *L'evolution des besoins dans les classes ouvrières* (Paris, 1933).
38. Marie-Emmanuelle Chessel, *La publicité: Naissance d'une profession 1900–1940* (Paris, 1998); Michel Wieworka, *L'etat, le patronat et les consommateurs: Etude des mouvements de consommateurs* (Paris, 1977); Louis Pinto, *La constitution du consommateur comme catégorie de l'espace public* (Paris, 1989); Alain Chatriot, "Consumers' Associations and the State: Protection and Defence of the Consumer in France 1950–2000," in *Expert Consumer,* ed. Chatriot, Chesell, and Hilton, 123–36.
39. Michael Miller, *The Bon Marché: Bourgeois Culture and the Department Store, 1860–1920* (Princeton, NJ, 1981); Ellen Furlough and Carl Strikwerda, eds., *Consumers against Capitalism? Consumer Cooperation in Europe, North America, and Japan, 1840–1990* (Lanham, MD, 1999).
40. Pierre Rosanvallon, *Le modèl politique francais: La société civile contre le jacobinisme de 1789 à nos jours* (Paris, 2004).
41. Ruth Oldenziel, Adri Albert de la Bruhèze, and Onno de Wit, "Europe's Mediation Junction: Technology and Consumer Society in the 20th Century," *History and Technology* 21 (2005): 107–39, quote 110; Adri Albert de la Bruhèze and Ruth Oldenziel, eds., *Manufacturing Technologies, Manufacturing Consumers: The Making of Dutch Consumer Society* (Amsterdam, 2009).
42. Ruth Oldenziel and Adri Albert de la Bruhèze, "Theorizing the Mediation Junction for Technology and Consumption," in *Manufacturing,* ed. Albert de la Bruhèze and Oldenziel, 12.
43. Emanuela Scarpellini, *Material Nation: A Consumer's History of Modern Italy* (Oxford and New York, 2011); Franco Amatori, *Proprietà e direzione: La Rinascente, 1917–1969* (Milano, 1989); Vera Zamagni, *La distribuzione commerciale in Italia fra le due guerre* (Milano, 1981). See also Grazia, *Irresistible Empire*.
44. Jonathan Morris, "Retailers, Fascism and the Origins of the Social Protection of Shopkeepers in Italy," *Contemporary European History* 5 (1996): 285–318.
45. Emanuela Scarpellini, *L'Italia dei consumi: Della belle époque al nuovo millennio* (Roma-Bari, 2008); Claudia Baldoli and Jonathan Morris, eds., *Made in Italy: Consumi e identità nel secondo dopoguerra*, special issue of *Memoria e Ricera* 14, no. 23 (2006).
46. A good example is Sibylle Brändli, *Der Supermarkt im Kopf: Konsumkultur und Wohlstand in der Schweiz nach 1945* (Vienna, Cologne, and Weimar, 2000).
47. Jakob Tanner, *Fabrikmahlzeit: Ernährungswissenschaft, Industriearbeit und Volksernährung in der Schweiz 1890–1950* (Zürich, 1999).
48. Hartmut Kaelble draws extensively on OECD data and Eurostat publications in *Sozialgeschichte Europas,* 87–117.
49. See Trentmann, "Long History."

50. I thank my colleague Pavel Kolàr for the very helpful information and suggestions he gave me. See Sorin Antohi, Balázs Trencsényi, and Péter Apor, eds., *Narratives Unbound: Historical Studies in Post-Communist Eastern Europe* (Budapest, 2007).
51. For the German case, see Christoph Klessmann, *Arbeiter im 'Arbeiterstaat' DDR: Deutsche Traditionen, sowjetisches Modell, westdeutsches Magnetfeld (1945 bis 1971)* (Bonn, 2007).
52. See Malgorzata Mazurek, "Les experts dans la 'société des files d'attente': les chances du consumérisme dans la Pologne communiste de Solidarność," in *Vie quotidienne et pouvoir sous le communisme: Consommer à l'Est,* ed. Nadège Ragaru and Antonela Capelle-Pogăcean (Paris, 2010), 175–205; Malgorzata Mazurek and Matthew Hilton, "Consumerism, Solidarity and Communism: Consumer Protection and the Consumer Movement in Poland," *Journal of Contemporary History* 42, no. 2 (2007): 315–43; Ulf Brunnbauer, *"Die sozialistische Lebensweise": Ideologie, Politik und Alltag in Bulgarien (1944–89)* (Wien, 2007); David Crowley and Susan E. Reid, eds., *Socialist Spaces: Sites of Everyday Life in the Eastern Bloc* (Oxford, 2002). Anthropological studies have often been promising: Zuzana Búrikovà, "'Christian' Shops: Morality and Commerce in the Slovak Village," *Anthropological Journal on European Cultures* 12 (2003): 187–203.
53. Wlodzimierz Borodziej, Jerzy Kochanowski, and Joachim von Puttkamer, eds., *"Schleichwege": Inoffizielle Begegnungen sozialistischer Staatsbürger zwischen 1956 und 1989* (Cologne, 2010).
54. See Ina Merkel, *Utopie und Bedürfnis: Die Geschichte der Konsumkultur in der DDR* (Cologne, 1999); Katherine Pence, "Politiques de la consommation, femmes et citoyenneté dans les deux Allemagnes," in *Au nom du consommateur,* ed. Chatriot, Chessel, and Hilton, 115–34; Philipp Heldmann, "Konsumpolitik in der DDR: Jugendmode in den 1960er Jahren," in *Konsumpolitik,* ed. Berghoff, 135–58; Patrice G. Poutrus, "Lebensmittelversorgung, Versorgungskrisen und die Entscheidung für den 'Goldbroiler': Problemlagen und Problemlösungen der Agrar- und Konsumpolitik in der DDR 1958–1965," *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* 39 (1999): 391–421; Sheila Fitzpatrick, ed., *Stalinism: New Directions* (London, 2000). See also the project titled "Socialist Dictatorship as a World of Meaning: Representations of Social Order and Transformation of Authority in East Central Europe after 1945" by the Institute of Contemporary History, Prague, and the Centre for Contemporary History, Potsdam, http://www.sinnwelt.usd.cas.cz.
55. On this debate: Frank Trentmann, "Long History."
56. See Haupt, *Konsum und Handel.*
57. Frank Trentmann, "The Modern Genealogy of the Consumer: Meanings, Identities, and Political Synapses," in *Consuming Cultures, Global Perspectives: Historical Trajectories, Transnational Exchanges*, ed. John Brewer and Frank Trentmann (Oxford, 2006), 19–69.
58. Franck Cochoy, *Une histoire du marketing: Discipliner l'èconomie de marché* (Paris, 1999); Stephen L. Harp, *Marketing Michelin: Advertising and Cultural Identity in Twentieth-Century France* (Baltimore, MD, 2001); Hartmut Berghoff, ed., *Marketinggeschichte: Die Genese einer modernen Sozialtechnik* (Frankfurt am Main, 2007).
59. See Hartmut Berghoff, "Marketing Diversity: The Making of a Global Consumer Product—Hohner's Harmonicas, 1857–1930," *Enterprise and Society: The International Journal of Business History* 2 (2001): 338–72.

60. This is what Angelika Epple does in *Das Unternehmen Stollwerck: Eine Mikrogeschichte der Globalisierung* (Frankfurt am Main, 2010), but she does not succeed in showing convincingly the changes in consumer practices brought about by the vending machine restaurant.
61. Hans Jürgen Teuteberg, Gerhard Neumann, and Alois Wierlacher, eds., *Essen und kulturelle Identität: Europäische Perspektiven* (Berlin, 1997); Marc Jacobs and Peter Scholliers, eds., *Eating Out in Europe: Picnics, Gourmet Dining and Snacks since the Late Eighteenth Century* (Oxford, 2003); Keith R. Allen, *Hungrige Metropole: Essen, Wohlfahrt und Kommerz in Berlin* (Hamburg, 2002); George Ritzer, *The McDonaldization of Society,* rev. ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA, 2004).
62. Trentmann and Just, eds., *Food and Conflict*; Donatella della Porta and Mario Diani, *Social Movements: An Introduction,* 2nd ed. (Oxford, 2006).
63. Epple, *Stollwerck*; Alexander Nützennadel and Frank Trentmann, eds., *Food and Globalization: Consumption, Markets and Politics in the Modern World* (Oxford and New York, 2008).
64. Maren Möhring, "Gastronomie in Bewegung: Migration, kulinarischer Transfer und die Internationalisierung der Ernährung in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland," *Comparativ* 17, no. 3 (2007): 68–85; Möhring, "Transnational Food Migration and the Internationalization of Food Consumption: Ethnic Cuisine in West Germany," in *Food and Globalization,* ed. Nützennadel and Trentmann, 129–50; Möhring, "Ethnizität und Konsum," *Konsumgesellschaft,* ed. Haupt and Torp, 172–89. See also Anne J. Kershen, *Food in the Migrant Experience* (Aldershot, 2002); Möhring and Nützenadel, eds., *Ernährung im Zeitalter der Globalisierung,* special issue of *Comparativ* 17, no. 3 (2007): 7–85; David Goodman and Michael Watts, eds., *Globalising Food: Agrarian Questions and Global Restructuring* (London and New York, 1997).
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66. Erica Carter, "Frauen und die Öffentlichkeit des Konsums," in *Konsumgesellschaft,* ed. Haupt and Torp, 154–71;Victoria de Grazia and Ellen Furlough, eds., *The Sex of Things: Gender and Consumption in Historical Perspective* (Berkeley, CA, 1996).
67. For a specific approach, see Rainer Gries, "Waren und Produkte als Generationenmarker: Die Generationen der DDR im Spiegel ihrer Konsumhorizonte," in *Die DDR aus generationengeschichtlicher Perspektive: Eine Inventur,* ed. Thomas Ahbe, Rainer Gries, Annegret Schüle (Leipzig, 2006), 271–300.
68. For Germany, see Daniela Münkel, "Konsum auf dem Land vom Kaiserreich bis in die Bundesrepublik," in *Konsumgesellschaft,* ed. Haupt and Torp, 205–20. Roman Sandgruber, *Die Anfänge der Konsumgesellschaft: Konsumgüterverbrauch, Lebensstandard und Alltagskultur in Österreich im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert* (Vienna, 1982); Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Stalin's Peasants: Resistance and Survival in the Russian Village after Collectivization* (New York and Oxford, 1994).
69. Victoria de Grazia deals with a broad variety of cultural goods in *Irresistible Empire.* On consumption as a cultural practice, see the important plea by John Brewer, "Was können wir aus der Geschichte der frühen Neuzeit für die moderne Konsumgeschichte lernen?" in *Europäische Konsumgeschichte,* ed. Siegrist, Kaelble, and Kocka.
70. Hans-Peter Bayerdörfer and Eckhart Hellmuth, eds., *Exotica: Konsum und Inszenierung des Fremden im 19. Jahrhundert* (Munich, 2003); Crossick and Jaumain,

eds., *Cathedrals of Consumption*; Alexander C. T. Geppert, *Fleeting Cities: Imperial Expositions in Fin-de-Siècle Europe* (Basingstoke, 2010).

71. From a sociological point of view, see Andreas Reckwitz, "Das Subjekt des Konsums in der Kultur der Moderne: Der kulturelle Wandel der Konsumtion," in *Soziale Ungleichheit, Kulturelle Unterschiede,* ed. Karl-Siegbert Rehberg (Frankfurt am Main and New York, 2006), 424–36; Colin Campbell, *The Romantic Ethic and the Spirit of Modern Consumerism* (Oxford, 1987).
72. See the "Cultures of Consumption" research program mentioned above.
73. Daunton and Hilton, eds., *Politics of Consumption*; see also Trentmann, "Long History."
74. See Furlough and Strikwerda, eds., *Consumers against Capitalism?*; Nonn, *Verbraucherprotest*; Véronique Pouillard, "Catholiques, socialistes et libres-penseurs: Les porte-parole des consommateurs en Belgique (1880–1940)," in *Au nom du consommateur,* ed. Chatriot, Chessel, and Hilton, 262–76. For an expansion of consumption history that includes lesser known goods and actors, see Daunton and Hilton, eds., *Politics of Consumption*.
75. See Marie-Emmanuelle Chessel, "Donne ed etica del consumo nella Francia della Belle Epoque: A proposito della Lega sociale dei consumatori," *Memoria e Ricerca* 16 (May-August 2004): 113–34; Chessel, "Consommation, action sociale et engagement public fin de siècle, des Etats-Unis à la France," in *Au nom du consommateur,* ed. Chatriot, Chessel, and Hilton, 247–61.
76. This problematic has been addressed systematically by Claudius Torp, "Konsum als politisches Problem: Konsumpolitische Ordnungsentwürfe in der Weimarer Republik," in *Politisierter Konsum—Konsumierte Politik*, ed. Jörn Lamla and Sighard Neckel (Wiesbaden, 2006), 41–65.
77. Cohen, *Consumers' Republic;* Michael Prinz, "Vor der Konsumgesellschaft: Pessimistische Zukunftserwartungen, gesellschaftliche Leitbilder und regionale 'Evidenz' 1918–1960," *Westfälische Forschungen* 48 (1998): 511–55.
78. Vera Hierholzer, *Nahrung nach Norm: Regulierung von Nahrungsmittelqualität in der Industrialisierung 1871–1914* (Göttingen, 2010); Michael French and Jim Philipps, *Cheated Not Poisoned? Food Regulation in the United Kingdom, 1875–1938* (Manchester, 2000); Alessandro Stanziani, "Alimentation et santé sous la IIIe République 1870–1914," in *Au nom du consommateur,* ed. Chatriot, Chessel, and Hilton, 135–49; Stanziani, ed., *La qualité des produits en France, XVIIIe-XXe siècle* (Paris, 2003); Kaplan, *Le pain maudit*.
79. See Martin Geyer, *Verkehrte Welt* and especially Claudius Torp, *Konsum und Politik in der Weimarer Republik* (Göttingen, 2011).
80. John Clarke et al., *Creating Citizen-Consumers: Changing Publics and Changing Public Services* (London, 2007).
81. This problematic is being developed inside the Bielefeld project "Das Politische als Kommunikationsraum in der Geschichte" by Vera Caroline Simon. See Ute Frevert and Heinz-Gerhard Haupt, eds., *Neue Politikgeschichte: Perspektiven einer historischen Politikforschung* (Frankfurt am Main, 2005).
82. Willibald Steinmetz, "Ungewollte Politisierung durch die Medien? Die Contergan-Affäre," in *Die Politik der Öffentlichkeit—Die Öffentlichkeit der Politik,* ed. Bernd Weisbrod (Göttingen, 2003), 195–228. See also Alain Chatriot, "Qui défend le consommateur? Associations, institutions et politiques publiques en France, 1972–2003" and Sophie Chauveau, "Malades ou consommateurs? La consommation de médicaments en France dans le second XXe siècle," in *Au nom du consommateur,* ed. Chatriot, Chessel, and Hilton, 165–99.

83. Hilton, *Consumerism.*
84. Jan Logemann convened a transnational workshop on consumer credit in 2010, and is currently preparing a volume based on its results. See Logemann, "Cultures of Credit: Consumer Lending and Borrowing in Modern Economies," *Bulletin of the German Historical Institute,* no. 47 (Fall 2010): 102–6.
85. See Warren G. Breckman, "Disciplining Consumption: The Debate about Luxury in Wilhelmine Germany, 1890–1914," *Journal of Social History* 24, no. 3 (1991): 485–505.
86. Frank Trentmann is preparing a global history of consumption under the working title "The Consuming Passion: How Things have Seduced, Enriched and Changed our Lives."

CHAPTER 2

Research on the History of Consumption in the United States: An Overview

Gary Cross

In many ways, consumer society defines America just as it defines the modern. Curiously, however, the history of American consumer society has flowered only recently and then with a heavy overlay of moral and ideological division. American approaches focus on the social and cultural impact of affluence and are deeply wed to issues of the changing American character, the contradictions between traditional values of simplicity and the virtues or perils of plenty,[1] the historical shifts from the political (or rational and activist) understanding of the consumer to the materialist and psychological meaning of "consumerism," and the impact of consumer goods on class, race, gender, and political identity. All this reflects an abiding debate over whether consumer culture should be associated with "mass culture" or "popular culture." While mass culture suggests passivity, depoliticization, and infantilization in a life increasingly saturated with purchased goods, popular culture implies the liberation, the subversion, and even the empowerment of the group and the individual through consumer choice.[2] The modern jeremiad against consumption in what Daniel Horowitz calls the "new moralism" appears in a disparate social and cultural critique of American affluence that emerged especially after 1945.[3] David Potter's *People of Plenty,* written from the perspective of an elite conservative Yale historian from the South, argues that, despite the gains of material progress, affluence undermined cultural stability. Others from the left like J. K. Galbraith and Vance Packard demanded more balance between private and public spending. These works updated Thorstein Veblen's attack on emulative spending and wasteful consumption as well as provided incisive (if exaggerated) critiques of manipulation in advertising. Since the 1950s, this jeremiad tradition has taken many forms—from critiques of mass culture and advertising to arguments that consumption drives overwork and

disguises choices between more goods and more time free from the market.[4] Many psychologists and even economists have noted that individuality and community experienced only through goods seems to stand in the way of greater happiness and social interaction.[5]

This tradition, of course, has not gone unchallenged. Stanley Lebergott, for example, mocks the jeremiad against consumerism as arbitrary or hostile to progress. Who complains of the comforts of consumption, "housewives or specialists in American Studies?" Human needs are endless and irrepressible and to deny them is to deny our humanity and freedom. There is no disputing taste.[6] The consumer populist argues that consumer culture is democracy's highest achievement, giving meaning and dignity to people where workplace participation, ethnic solidarity, and even representative democracy have failed. Indeed, the "American way of life" in the twentieth century, based on popular access to consumer goods, has replaced the older "American dream" of property and independence. Economists often insist that individual freedom is identical with the subjective desires of consumers. This has long been the perspective of most economists (as well as marketing scholars like George Katona and Ernest Dichter in the 1950s and celebrants of consumer democracy like the historian Daniel Boorstin).[7] But, by the late 1970s, even academic humanists were getting into the act, claiming along with anthropologists that goods were the main way that people communicated meaning with each other. It became fashionable to say that there were no "false needs," that there was no language outside the market, and that youth, minorities, and other subaltern groups resisted and found autonomy in chosen bits of popular culture.[8] Commercial products no longer were makers of passivity and commonness, but ways for individualists to escape the crowd. Even oppressed groups used popular commercial music and fashion to create their own communities and protest the power of the hegemonic classes.[9]

In its most extreme form, almost any self-defining pattern of spending was good. This populist approach often turned old anticonsumerist individualism into consumerist individualism. While the debate between the detractors and celebrants of consumerism seems to have found a dead end, the pessimistic tradition, though reappearing in popular works like *Affluenza,*[10] has probably been hurt the most by the battle. Since the 1970s, advocates of personal and collective limits on consumer desire have lost influence in culture, society, and politics.[11]

But the debate is not dead. Nor did it start in the 1950s, as is sometimes assumed. Americans have a long history of tension between the pursuit of material pleasure and the quest for simplicity. The extraordinary abundance of America's "virgin land," relatively free from the grasp of the privileged few, attracted wave after wave of immigrants and pioneers willing to forgo the familiar and relatively comfortable present for the hope of far greater material rewards in the future. If Max Weber's famous statement that America was born "modern" had any validity, it was that America was born a market. Yet these same settlers brought with them a rich religious and moral heritage that made a virtue of self-control and communities protected from vice and corruption. The

country that has been addicted to alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs has also been the home of Prohibition, antidrug "czars," and early and stringent regulations on smoking (if not firearms). The culture that defined itself by its ever-rising "standards of living" also produced prophets of personal simplicity. This conflict was especially sharp because of the American lack of an elite who elsewhere (especially in Europe) created and perpetuated a cultural alternative to the market. In the early twentieth century, when Americans were breaking traditional rules of frugality and self-control in so many ways, boundaries had to be redrawn to prove that Americans still had rules—thus the moralistic tone of Prohibition and early efforts to control tobacco, especially for women. To a degree, the call for constraint justified indulgence by defining the limits of desire. As many point out, this "Puritan" streak was hypocritical, especially in regard to Prohibition—attacking the consumption of the poor or minorities while tolerating the consumption patterns of the rich.[12] Historians have also noted that Prohibition was an attempt to address a more subtle American dilemma: the existence of all-too-easily accessible and appealing intoxicants in a country where ingredients and opportunities to pack them in bottles were abundant, and where a laissez-faire and highly individualistic society encouraged consumption. Prohibition dealt with a real problem, even if in a biased and unsustainable way. The thirteen-year reign of Prohibition (1920–33) temporarily reduced alcoholism even as it created a disregard for the law and enriched organized criminals.[13]

The experience of the failure of Prohibition has been shared with many other efforts to rein in American desire, as Peter Stearns, for example, points out in his book on the frustrations of American styles of dieting.[14] More broadly, American critics of consumption have usually had an elitist bias. Many understood materialistic desire as primitive, to be surmounted by a higher spiritual culture. They failed to see the ways in which materialism in the twentieth century had become more complex and how the physical and symbolic in goods intertwined. Candy, clothes, and cars all had symbolic meanings that blended with their functions as chemical stimulants, body coverings, and transportation appliances. In some ways, as Jackson Lears notes, commodities became valued less for their utility (for they were seldom fully consumed) than for their meanings as markers of status, participation, identity, progress, or memory.[15]

The second half of the twentieth century proved that the role of goods in defining status (cars, education, vacations, and houses, for example) increased proportionally as basic needs were met. Higher culture did not follow with the satisfaction of physical needs, as the most optimistic of early twentieth-century intellectuals like Simon Patten had hoped. Still, mass consumption did not unleash wild desire as Émile Durkheim and many other conservative analysts had assumed. As Daniel Horowitz notes in his intellectual biography of Vance Packard, the popularizer of anticonsumerist ideas in the 1950s and early 1960s, many critics assumed that consumer culture threatened the cultivated individual. However, as Thomas Frank showed in his history of 1960s advertising, consumer goods magnified individuality rather than induced conformity.[16] And the simplicity advocated by anticonsumption critics became increasingly less appealing

with each successive generation, appearing increasingly as elitist or just cranky. It is arguable that critics had no realistic alternative that so well balanced the personal and the social as did consumerism. Advocates of simplicity and cultivation were far less successful in overcoming the humiliations and divisions of class and other social fissures than was the consumer culture. Consumerism worked so well in meeting immediate needs that Americans found it difficult to want or even to conceive of ultimately more satisfying alternatives. Movements of the Left in the 1960s and of the Right in the 1980s were both critical of consumer culture: liberals attacked manipulative advertising and status-seeking spending while conservatives denounced a hedonism that created class envy and undermined tradition. Yet the celebration of unimpeded self-expression and the rejection of limits on choice on the Left and the promotion of unrestrained entrepreneurship and free markets on the Right actually helped to tear down the remaining barriers to consumerism.[17]

I would argue that both social conformity and individualism emerged from modern consumption, and, at least in the first half of the twentieth century, the social and personal meanings of goods were often in balance. Conformist consumption may have been an essential element in the emerging mass society of the twentieth century, creating shared meanings through the purchase of identical goods: the millions who drove Model T Fords and drank Coca-Cola participated in a common American culture. Yet consumer goods also gave people the means to establish personal identities and break with old ones. These forms of individual expression did not necessarily mean the abandonment of family, friends, religion, or ethnicity. For example, children of immigrants used amusement parks, new foods, and fashionable clothing to distance themselves from their parents without breaking with them. These goods and purchased experiences also gave these newcomers "membership" in an American consumer culture. However, consumerism did not always produce a balance between participation and individuality, a deficit especially evident by the end of the twentieth century. The survival of a jeremiad literature, however diminished, testifies to concerns that consumer culture may have been tilting more to social isolation in recent years.[18]

Themes of American Consumer History

With this backdrop in mind, we need to note that the history of consumer society in the United States has been expressed through a widely disparate literature, often emerging not from a field called "consumer history" or even economic history, but from intellectual history, communications history and theory, and even the histories of race, class, and gender. Part of this circumstance is due to the separation or even absence of economic history from many departments of history in the United States as well as the decline of quantitative history since the 1980s. Note the absence of the works of Carol Shammas and other economic historians—especially of the colonial period or early republic—from the reading lists of many consumer history courses as well as the isolation of economic history

in economics departments and its continued focus on explaining growth rather than the social and cultural implications of this growth. A second factor is the dominance of the profession by historians who came of age in the 1960s and 1970s who are still locked into the race, class, and gender model of analysis and remain in debate with each other (and sometimes themselves) about the relative merits of the jeremiad and populist positions on consumption.[19]

Given its apparent role in generating demand for goods and consumer desire, advertising has long been a central topic for historians. The debate over advertising plays out differences between two classic works, Stuart Ewen's *Captains of Consciousness,* which finds advertising essentially manipulative, and Michael Shudson's *Advertising, The Uneasy Persuasion,* which questions the impact of the commercial message. The debate also figures in the works by Jackson Lears and Roland Marchand, who recognize that many advertising writers believed that they had a cultural mission beyond duping consumers or promoting the interests of their employers.[20] Pamela Laird evades the debate over the impact of ads to explain how the shift from entrepreneurial to corporate management impacted ad messages and styles, while in her study of twentieth-century advertising to women, Katherine Parkin insists that only the ideology of the advertiser—rather than an ad's impact on the consumer—can be discerned in the historical record. Following Marchand's study of corporate advertising in the late 1930s, Cynthia Lee Henthorn shows how ads in the 1940s and 1950s helped to rehabilitate corporate values and sell the American way of affluence. Ads remain a vital source for "reading" the marketing motives of merchandisers, but they also serve as barometers of cultural and social change (especially in studies of gender, race, and generation). Susan Matt's study of the eclipse of traditional moral strictures against "envy" because of ad and marketing appeals to status and fashion goods is an especially interesting use of consumer history to explore cultural change and, in this case, why envy has become an acceptable emotion for shoppers. Only now are historians beginning to look at advertising in the electronic age and the impact of specialized magazines and TV networks.[21]

The revolution in retailing that began in earnest after the Civil War with the department store, chain store, and mail order catalog has been recognized as central to American-style shopping. While general works like those of Susan Strasser (*Satisfaction Guaranteed*) and Tracey Deutsch *(Building a Housewife's Paradise)* and Liz Cohen *(A Consumers' Republic)* for the post-1945 period include discussions of the new retailing, there is much yet to be studied. William Leach's lengthy cultural study of the department store and the labor-focused *Counter Cultures* of Susan Benson are important, but are only beginnings.[22] Urban historians in the tradition of Jane Jacobs, including Ann Satterthwaite, have turned to the history of the decline of community-based retailing in both downtown commercial districts and country stores with the emergence of the mall. Finally, M. Jeffrey Hardwick's *Mall Maker: Victor Gruen, Architect of an American Dream* begins the task of understanding mall design.[23]

Related to this history of retailing is the history of commercial sites of leisure. Cindy Aron and Jon Stern have traced the history of the commercialization of the

genteel resort at hot springs and seasides across the nineteenth century. The histories of the plebeian saturnalian sites of Coney Island and elsewhere are beginning to get attention (for example, Bryant Simon's study of Atlantic City), especially since the collapse of the "old Atlantic City" in the 1960s and the development of gambling after 1976. Disney studies remain too closely attached to the consumer culture debate discussed above, and the subject deserves some fresh treatment, though Karol Ann Marling's edited study on Disneyland as a site of manufactured reassurance has much to offer. The study of tourist consumerism is still undeveloped in the United States compared to the United Kingdom and continental Europe, a fact that may reflect the paucity of vacation time in the United States.[24]

Following the long-established trend in social history of focusing on race, class, and gender (and informed by postmodernist interest in nonmaster narratives), the study of expressions of gender via consumption is flourishing. Those who stand out include Robert Weems for African Americans; Eithne Quinn for rap music; Kathy Peiss, Jennifer Scanlon, and Regina Lee Blaszczyk for women; and Bill Ogersby for men.[25] Historians have also turned to how companies market to parents and children, a topic of huge importance in the cultural formation of consumer society, the transformation of childrearing and parenting, moral panics over youth consumption, and the general bias of American culture toward youth.[26]

Another subject of consumer history research is the consumer as a political actor and, more narrowly, consumer rights movements. Inevitably, the issue of consumer empowerment in the regulation of markets plays a large role in the United States, in part because of the checkered history of regulation and consumer protection in an especially aggressive climate of merchandising. Absent a meaningful socialist movement (excepting some municipal-run utilities), the history of the battle over the scope of regulation (both to set rules of competition and to protect the "free agency" of the consumer) is central to the topic of consumer history in the United States.[27]

Distinctive conditions of capitalist development in the United States have limited the role of political consumer activism and thus historians' interest in these political actors. Producers (northern industrialists or western farmers, for example) have had common interests that were articulated in political struggle, while consumers usually remained dispersed and divided. In special circumstances, however, when producers gained monopolies or limited market information, consumer interests took the political stage. Thus, periodically governments regulated the retail market, placing modest restraints on advertising and product marketing. But historians have often understood these periods as merely part of a broader era of reform (the progressivist movement of the 1890s to 1918, the New Deal of the 1930s, and the Great Society of the 1960s). Historians have usually treated as marginal the more radical implications of consumer movements, especially among those who called for more public interest spending or even for limiting private consumption by reducing working hours and thus output.[28]

Even though the successes of political consumer movements have been modest, the history of regulation remains important. Because informal social and

cultural constraints on consumption have been so weak in the United States—a highly mobile and diverse nation—Americans have relied on law rather than mere social pressure to regulate alcohol, gambling, shop hours, and business zoning. As many historians have observed, a prohibitionary legal culture (often dressed in the language of religion and morality) complemented an exceptionally open market. Nevertheless, in a culture that so highly honored economic growth and freedom to buy and sell goods, consumption could only be corralled under special conditions, and, at that, controls had to be adapted to the prevailing individualism. Cultural historians have documented how the regulation of the consumer market was supposed to (1) preserve the sanctity of the private home as well as religion (as expressed in the blue laws of Sabbatarianism and early restrictions on commercial intrusions in radio and TV ads as well as later controls over phone solicitations), (2) eliminate individual "temptations" inherent in a free-market and affluent society (Prohibition and later draconian laws against psychotropic drug use), and (3) maximize individual choice and knowledge of consumer markets through the regulation of commerce. Even so, none of these forms of regulation have reached their goals in the second half of the twentieth century: the home has become a central site of merchandizing; consumer "temptations" abound; and consumer knowledge of choices has probably not increased much.[29]

Historians have also focused on another form of consumer rights, the demand for price controls (to combat inflation and monopoly gouging) and government-promoted "purchasing power" (to encourage the circulation of money and goods, despite income inequality, to the benefit of wage earners and merchants alike). In a literature dominated by cultural and business history, Meg Jacobs's *Pocketbook Politics* offers a sweeping political interpretation of twentieth-century American consumption. The Great Depression, understood as a crisis of underconsumption by purchasing power advocates, led to widespread demands for the rights of consumers over big business and to the sometimes contradictory policy of both price stabilization and wage increases (the latter through government-encouraged unionization). The postwar breakdown of the consumer rights coalition as well as divisions among intellectuals and policymakers over the costs and benefits of consumerism led to the eclipse of this movement.[30] Jacobs is in the broad tradition of Liz Cohen and Charles McGovern, who explore the emerging twentieth-century identification of American citizenship with mass consumption.[31]

While most studies of consumer politics focus on the twentieth century, Lawrence Glickman finds roots of the idea of the consumer as an active political player from the time of the American Revolution in movements not only for consumer choice and cheaper goods but also for using purchases and boycotts to shape public policy and pressure authorities. He draws on the work of Tom Breen and Joyce Applebee, who see a connection between consumer identity and choice and the demand for political independence in the origins of the revolution. But he traces many movements throughout American history for which the use of the power of consumer choice went beyond the duty to spend or the nebulous sense

of participation in "democratic" consumption communities. For many activists in political consumer movements, the goal was to use buying (or boycotting) as a weapon to shape law and public policy in everything from the abolition of slavery to challenging Japanese power on the eve of World War II. There is room for this work, even though I am skeptical about the long-term impact of political consumer movements on public policy.[32]

American Exceptionalism and Suggestions for Expanding the Field

Like most historiographies, American consumer history is shaped by national history and the presumption of American difference. This tendency was central to the early explorations of Potter and Boorstin, and it continues with the presumption of global Americanization, as in George Ritzer's claim that American methods of standardized production and distribution of commodities have swept the world.[33] Despite frequent calls for comparative and cross-national studies, almost all research is still done within the limits of the nation-state.[34] The still narrow training of new Ph.D.s in single nations and periods continues to miss opportunities for cross-cultural comparisons and wider historical theming. While general theories of the "modernization" of consuming crowds are valuable, affluence and its uses cannot be reduced to a single trajectory and end point. Indeed, it is only by comparing different responses to common technological and economic trends that produced new commodities that we can separate the particular from the "general."

Comparative analysis is hardly unheard of. Pioneer studies of the automobile industry by James Flink and James Laux reveal important historical differences between American and European consumers.[35] On a much broader scale, we have Victoria de Grazia's *Irresistible Empire,* an exploration of how American consumer society transformed European bourgeois civilization and prevailed over its fascist, communist, and even social-democratic alternatives. The United States created a "market empire" in the first decade of the twentieth century that in many ways conquered Europe over the next half century, but which showed signs of disintegrating by the end of the century. Another comparative study by the economic historian Avner Offer shows how American and British paths and rates of commercialization differed in the twentieth century. Jan Logemann makes a strong argument that, despite the growth of supermarkets and spending on domestic goods, Europeans have created a different kind of consumer culture than prevails in the United States. They are more likely to save than take on consumer debt; they spend differently, more on eating out and vacations than Americans; they still resist Walmart plazas and Sunday shopping and often prefer downtown malls to suburban malls; and they invest far more in public consumption than do Americans.[36]

While greater attention to comparative approaches would correct some distortions and shed new light on American consumer history, other impediments to the advance of the field remain. A special problem is the lack of communication between economic historians of consumption and those historians who

pursue the field's prevailing cultural and social approaches. Some areas where collaboration between economic and other historians would be fruitful would be in studies of the relationships between income structures and product patterns, as, for example, in the link between American-sloped income hierarchy and phenomena such as Sloanism and the "full line of cars" designed to cover the broad range of household incomes in the United States.[37] We need more focus on distinct changes in consumer patterns (for example, the decline of the department store "palace" and the rise of the big box store) as well as on the social and economic origins of product adaptation and household penetration.

More broadly, we need to go beyond the dichotomy between the passive (conformist) and active (individualistic) functions of goods to find a deeper understanding of consumption in defining relationships across generations, between the sexes, within and across communities, and even on a global scale. Other functions that goods serve—marking time, substitutes for conversation, compensations for social and cultural losses—need to be explored; and, in these tasks, geographers, anthropologists, and others can help us. Once-fashionable cars, home furnishings, toys, and even popular songs, for example, create nostalgic communities and shape personal memory.[38]

We need to extend our vision beyond the commodity and the consumer to find the linkages between production and consumption. Technologies of production have, of course, impacted what and when goods are commercialized and consumed. (Consider the global development of the production and distribution of sugar and other foods, clothing, and even toys.) Production technologies have also impacted the consumption process (for example, in the parallel rationalization of industry and retailing in the early twentieth century). In this context, an important question is when and why some regions become dominant in producing consumer goods and innovating and when and why others lose these roles. American historians need to enter this literature more actively. We need to develop firmer linkages between consumption and economic power as well as consumption and persistent global inequality. Note, for example, the contributions of Sidney Mintz and Michael Redclift on the relationship between the global production and consumption of sugar and chewing gum.[39]

Finally, I would like to see American historians break a bit from the view that goods are primarily symbolic, that is, that they are representations of status, identity, or rebellion, or that they serve as some other substitute for "conversation." This approach runs across most American consumer history (including my own). But I think it is time to recognize the biological roots of consumption and how modern goods have impacted the body and the senses and the way that we experience the world and privilege or meld sense data. Much consumer history dematerializes consumption and marginalizes the physical impact of goods that over time have become superengineered, ignoring how these products interact with the human body's chemistry and how they create physical needs and displace other forms of consumption and experience. Studies of psychotropic products and efforts to regulate them are common, but they take us just so far in explaining the impact and dynamics of goods that transform our sensual experience.

New works on the senses (including an impressive collection of readers published by Berg) and especially the work of Mark M. Smith should be tapped by historians seeking to understand consumer goods as diverse as canned goods and commoditized media.[40]

The sheer sensual density of modern consumer encounters and their origins and history should not be neglected. Across the last century, manufacturers learned to cram more into a day, not only speeding up all work and shortening production and sales cycles, but also intensifying consumers' encounters with increasingly sensually compressed and complex goods that affect our sight, hearing, taste, and motion. This trend has led not only to unconsumed purchases, many barely tasted, but also to such curious modern behaviors as multitasking on computer and other screens.

There is much opportunity for consumer history research. I am happy that the field is so wide open now, drawing on very different historical traditions and other disciplines. And I hope that it stays that way.

Notes

1. David Shi, *The Simple Life: Plain Living and High Thinking in American Culture* (New York, 1985); David Potter, *A People of Plenty: Economic Abundance and the American Character* (Chicago, 1954).
2. A good overview of this debate is in David Steigerwald, "All Hail the Republic of Choice: Consumer History as Contemporary Thought," *Journal of American History* 93 (September 2006), 385–403.
3. Daniel Horowitz, *The Anxieties of Affluence: Critiques of American Consumer Culture, 1939–1979* (Amherst, 2004).
4. John K. Galbraith's classic is *The Affluent Society* (New York, 1958); Vance Packard, *Hidden Persuaders* (New York, 1957) and Packard, *Status Seekers* (New York, 1961) are good examples of 1950s and early 1960s critiques of advertising and the social impact of suburban consumerism, while Juliet Schor's *The Overworked American: The Unexpected Decline of Leisure in America* (New York, 1993) addresses the impact of increased consumption on the relative imbalance of work and life in modern America.
5. For example, Robert Lane, "The Road Not Taken: Friendship, Consumerism, and Happiness," *Critical Review* 8 (Fall 1994), 521–54.
6. Stanley Lebergott, *Pursuing Happiness* (Princeton, NJ, 1993), 3–11, 60. For interesting commentary on the classic economist's understanding of consumer desire, see Neva Goodwin, Frank Ackerman, and David Kiron, *The Consumer Society* (Washington, DC, 1997), 1–11, 149–58,189–200.
7. George Katona, *The Mass Consumption Society* (New York, 1964); Ernst Dichter, *The Strategy of Desire* (Garden City, NJ, 1960); Daniel Boorstin, *The Americans: The Democratic Experience* (New York, 1973), 89–117, 145–164.
8. The classic is Mary Douglas and Baron Isherwood, *The World of Goods: Towards an Anthropology of Consumption* (New York, 1979). A recent and popular update is Daniel Miller, *Stuff* (Cambridge, UK, 2010). Note also Robert Venturi, Denise Scott-Brown, and Steven Izenour, *Learning from Las Vegas* (Cambridge, MA, 1972); Grant McCracken, *Culture and Consumption: New Approaches to the Symbolic*

Character of Consumer Goods and Activities (Bloomington, IN, 1988); James Twitchell, *Lead Us Into Temptation: The Triumph of American Materialism* (New York, 1999). Critical discussions of this broad approach are found in Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, NC, 1991), chap. 1; David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Oxford, 1989), chap. 2.

9. Robin Kelley, *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class* (New York, 1994), chaps. 1, 2, 7, and especially 8. Note also Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (London, 1979) and John Fiske, *Understanding Popular Culture* (Boston, MA, 1989).
10. John De Graf, *Affluenza: The All-Consuming Epidemic,* 2nd ed. (San Francisco, CA, 2005).
11. I develop this theme in my *All-Consuming Century* (New York, 2000), chaps. 1 and 8.
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CHAPTER 3

The Hidden Consumer: Consumption in the Economic History of Japan

Penelope Francks

By the late twentieth century, for scholars and international tourists alike, Japan had come to represent the archetypal postmodern consumer society. In the heady years of the 1980s bubble economy, Japanese shoppers led the world in their appreciation of luxury brands and high fashion, while consumers everywhere were developing a taste for many of the less expensive, but still distinctive and high-quality goods and services that made up the Japanese lifestyle, from sushi and sake to manga, anime, and Hello Kitty. The collapse of the bubble, ushering in the so-called lost decade of the 1990s, turned the media spotlight away from the conspicuous consumption of those made rich by speculation. Nonetheless, for economists, anthropologists, and cultural commentators, contemporary Japan remains a place where the consumption of goods is a central activity that cannot be ignored in any analysis of the way society works.[1]

As a result, Japanese consumers and their tastes and consumption practices have emerged as the subject of a growing literature in fields ranging from marketing to literary criticism. Historians, however, have been noticeably reluctant to join the ranks of those studying Japanese consumption, with the result that the contemporary Japanese consumer appears as a timelessly modern phenomenon. The assumption that, for Japan and the rest of the world beyond the homelands of the industrial revolution in Europe and North America, consumerism is an alien import, acquired through contact with the global industrial capitalism to which it is inextricably linked, has thus remained largely unquestioned. This is despite the fact that the economic development that made Japan an industrial power even before World War II and that underpinned the postwar "economic miracle" is now clearly seen as having roots that reach back into the eighteenth century, if not earlier, predating the "opening" of the country to significant

contact with the Western industrial world in the mid-nineteenth century. While historians of Europe are busy detailing the consumer revolution that is now seen as a "necessary analogue" to the industrial revolution,[2] Japanese consumers appear to have no history of their own, even though many of the Japanese goods that even international buyers now enjoy have premodern origins and the images that delineate "traditional" Japanese culture—embodied in woodblock prints, geisha in kimonos, and all the trappings of Japanese-style food and drink—clearly derive from a world long ago attuned to the production and use of consumer goods.

The reasons for this neglect of Japanese consumer history probably lie in long-standing historiographical traditions in the study of Japan that have emphasized supply-side phenomena—investment, technical change, business organization—and top-down political history, relegating the mass of ordinary people to roles as (exploited) workers and savers rather than consumers of the growing quantity of goods produced. While literary and artistic historians of the "floating world" of the Tokugawa period (1600–1868) are happy to describe and analyze a culture of consumer goods, even if they do not call it such, economic historians have only quite recently begun to escape the thrall of a particular Marxist framework that viewed the working class, from premodern times through the industrialization process, as too poor to be able to acquire and enjoy anything beyond the "necessities" of consumption. Emphasis on the famed Japanese savings rate has meant that it is the "ambivalence" of Japan's consumers (in contrast to their feckless British and American counterparts) that needs to be explained, diverting attention away from the undoubtedly massive role that consumer expenditure has continued to play in the economy. Insofar as the purchase and use of goods has been considered historically, the emphasis has been on the introduction and diffusion of Western-style products—from meat and Western-style clothes in the nineteenth century to electrical goods during the economic miracle—and the institutions through which they were acquired. The domestic consumption history that formed and conditioned the large and eclectic range of day-to-day goods furnishing Japanese everyday life has remained, for the most part, the preserve of folklorists and museum curators, beyond the scope of economic- and social-history analysis.

This situation has begun to change in recent years, particularly in light of the focus on comparative living standards in the expanding field of global economic history. Kenneth Pomeranz's *Great Divergence* places levels of consumption at the center of East-West comparisons of economic performance prior to the industrial revolution. Hence, his estimates of the availability of consumer products such as textiles and sugar—principally in China but where possible also in Japan—provide key evidence in support of his case for relative equality in standards of living across Eurasia in the eighteenth century.[3] In this context, Japan, as the first non-Western country to achieve modern economic growth, and the only nation on the Eastern side of the "divergence" to take significant steps toward industrialization before World War II, represents a crucial case for understanding the role of consumption in the process of economic development. Historians can therefore no longer ignore the emergence of the active and discerning consumers,

utterly attuned to fashion, branding, and advertising, who throng the consumer paradises that are twenty-first-century Japanese cities.

What follows is an attempt to present a brief outline of Japan's consumption history within the framework of issues that have emerged out of historical study of the consumer in the West, drawing for the most part, of necessity, on literature from a range of disciplines not explicitly concerned with analysis of the role of the consumer in Japanese economic and social development.[4] On this basis, the conclusion brings together the questions that the Japanese case raises as regards the historical role of consumption, thereby suggesting the relevance of comparative and theoretical approaches to a better understanding both of Japan's economic history itself and of its significance in a global context.

The Premodern Consumer in Japan

Studies of Europe and North America have made clear that it was the growth of towns and cities—the sites of the commercial and financial facilities that enabled goods to be produced and sold in ever wider national and international markets—that gave birth to the consumer. Japan was, in fact, almost certainly the most highly urbanized society in the eighteenth century, containing three of the world's largest cities—Edo (later Tokyo), Osaka, and Kyoto—as well as substantial castle towns throughout the country that housed the governing elite of feudal lords and their samurai retainers. Moreover, just as, with the growth in travel for business and pleasure, cities such as London and Paris came to exert nationwide influence as centers of fashion, shopping, and consumer activity in general, so Edo emerged as their Japanese equivalent. The "alternate attendance" system, by means of which the shogun sought to control the hundreds of local feudal domains, required the lords to spend half their time in his capital, Edo, thus obliging them to construct suitable mansions both there and in their castle towns and to travel regularly between the two, accompanied by as impressive a retinue as they could afford. Like the London "season," this system ensured that a significant proportion of the elite and their servants traveled about the country and experienced city life in an atmosphere of competitive consumption that produced the first sightings of many of the features that characterize the consumer in Japan to this day.[5]

Hence, as scholars of the literature and art of the period have always been well aware, eighteenth-century Edo, populated by the governing elite and all those who served their needs, became a city reliant on the market, while Osaka prospered as the commercial hub through which that market was supplied with goods.[6] The feudal lords received much of their tax income in kind (principally rice), which could be used to meet some of their food needs, but the urban lifestyles that they and their samurai were required to pursue could not be supported without recourse to cash purchases. Increasingly, therefore, tax income was converted into money, sometimes at the point of collection from farming villages but more commonly through the emerging national markets in rice and other agricultural products. Networks of merchants, traders, and financiers grew up to

service the market economy, and the commercial classes of the towns and cities also came to represent significant consumers of the expanding range of goods that their activities made available.

As a result, it can be argued, Tokugawa-period cities became characterized by both the infrastructure and the practices and attitudes that scholars of the West now see as key elements in the "birth of the consumer." Shops ranged from neighborhood suppliers of food and drink—rice, fish and vegetables, but also processed items such as sake and soy sauce—and household goods—ceramics, textiles, and furnishing items—to the forerunners of the great department stores of the twentieth century, while large-scale markets and door-to-door tradesmen and peddlers provided alternative retail services. With populations of predominantly single men and more-or-less temporary visitors—from migrant construction workers to visiting samurai at all levels of the status hierarchy—the demand for ready-prepared food was large. High-class riverside restaurants and tea-houses served those who could afford them, while noodle stalls, sushi sellers, and all manner of bars and street sellers catered to a large and diverse market. Leisure activities ranged from the kabuki theater—widely popular and associated with all sorts of theater-related consumer items, such as actor prints and bento picnic boxes—through storytelling and gambling, to everything, high and low, that the pleasure quarters had to offer. Those visiting the great cities—in their lord's retinue or on business or pleasure—needed inns and refreshment facilities along the way and sources of souvenirs that ranged from books, manuscripts, and tea-ceremony equipment to local "brands" of textiles, processed food, and sake.[7]

In light of the widening variety of goods and services on offer, expenditure choices, at least for those prospering from the growing commercial economy, became less and less matters of "necessity" and more and more determined by fashion, taste, and emulation. Work on clothing history demonstrates the enormous scope that the kimono and all its accessories offered for changing fashions and styles. While nouveau riche merchants flaunted their wealth in the form of their wives' and daughters' elaborate silk kimonos embroidered in the latest and highest fashion, the less well-off could rejuvenate their wardrobes with new collars and cuffs, straps on their sandals, and all the many little items that accessorize a "traditional" Japanese outfit.[8] Fashion guidance and transmission was achieved through prints of geisha—the supermodels of their day—and the pattern books and personal advice offered by shops and salesmen. Meanwhile, publishers provided restaurant and shopping guides, recipe books, and style manuals for all those trying to negotiate their way through the world of the market.[9]

Given that their power rested on a system originally designed for a non-commercial economy composed of farmer-producers and a military-based ruling class, the governing authorities of Tokugawa Japan could not but react negatively, in public at least, to the growth of the consumer economy. Sumptuary laws, regulating everything from clothing fabrics to the design of houses and the number of courses in meals, were issued with increasing regularity, as the shogunal government sought in vain to hold back the tide of fashion and emulation.[10] Members of the ruling class, like their counterparts in Europe, fulminated against

the spread of "populuxe" copies of the clothes and accessories that were once their prerogative, complaining that it was becoming impossible to tell master or mistress from servant.[11] Faced with merchants who could afford the most sumptuous of everything, those among the governing samurai class who considered themselves to have more taste, if less money, devised the cool chic known as *iki,* which involved plain but sophisticated colors setting off occasional flashes of red and purple. In novels, plays, and poems, writers bemoaned and gloriously described the fallen world of goods within which it was so hard to be virtuous.[12]

Of course, much of the countryside of Tokugawa Japan remained remote from the centers of fashion, commerce, and shopping that the cities were becoming. Nonetheless, as the growing demand for consumer goods drew more and more rural producers—and the local entrepreneurs and financiers who organized their production and trade—into the commercial economy, some of the goods and practices of urban consumption began to appear in rural towns and even villages, in some parts of the country at least. Samurai retainers and their accompanying servants came back from Edo with new goods and tastes. The better-off landowners-cum-businessmen who were beginning to emerge in the villages, as production for the market expanded, traveled to meet buyers and suppliers and started to develop a taste for the food, clothes, and leisure pursuits that they encountered in the wider world. Meanwhile, small-town shops, traveling salesmen, and peddlers brought dried fish, cakes and sweets, new pots and pans, cotton textiles, footwear, hair ornaments, and all sorts of trinkets and accessories to more ordinary households throughout the transport network.[13] While the majority of rural households—even the better-off ones—continued to meet most of their basic needs through their own cultivation and processing activities well into the twentieth century, few remained untouched by the possibilities of commercial goods as treats, accessories, and simply superior versions of what they could produce themselves.

The generation of historians of Japan that has emerged since the economic miracle has done much to dispel the idea of Tokugawa Japan as a static subsistence economy and to apply the quantitative and qualitative methods of neoclassical and institutional economic history to the Japanese case.[14] They have thereby described both steady agricultural output growth, based on irrigation development and the diffusion of improved technology, and the establishment of manufacturing production networks employing the available labor resources of increasingly "industrious" rural households. It is now generally accepted that, with little population growth and an income distribution probably more equal than that typical of preindustrial Europe, welfare and living standards must, in general, have been improving in both urban and many rural areas.[15] Nonetheless, while scholars of the material and literary culture of the Tokugawa period do not hesitate to discuss the reception and consumption of the objects and artworks they study, economic historians have, by and large, remained wedded to the supply side and have barely begun to consider the circumstances surrounding the purchase of the goods and services being produced in growing quantities and varieties. The preindustrial consumer, whose role in preparing the ground

for the industrial revolution in Europe is now firmly established, thus remains an elusive—though, I would argue, still unmistakable—figure in the study of Japan's economic development.

Overcoming Modernity: The Western Impact and "Traditional" Consumption[16]

It is now clear that Tokugawa Japan was never completely cut off from foreign goods or influences, despite the well-known "closed country" policy of the shoguns. Nonetheless, the forced opening of the country to trade and diplomatic contact with the Western powers that began in the 1850s ushered in a new era in Japan's relationship with the rest of the world and played a major part in inducing the overthrow of the Tokugawa system and the establishment, by the new Meiji government, of industrializing and modernizing goals for the state. In practice, the country was not immediately flooded with the products of the industrial revolution in England and elsewhere, Western traders being much more interested in procuring raw silk and tea for export than in breaking into the domestic market. In due course, imported cotton and other textiles gained a significant, though not overwhelming share of the domestic consumer market, but otherwise imports were concentrated among capital goods, raw materials, and a selection of the exotic luxury goods that could be used to demonstrate one's cosmopolitan modernity.[17] Much more significant, from the point of view of the growth and changing pattern of consumption, was the impact of the opening to the West on domestic product development and the manufacturing and marketing of the whole range of goods out of which Japanese consumers carved their own lifestyle in the modern world.

Nonetheless, it has been the impact and spread of "Western-style" goods that has attracted the most attention among Japanese and English-language scholars alike. Practices such as meat eating and the wearing of Western-style clothes were intensely debated in the media at the time and have continued to fascinate scholars ever since. Fashions for beef or crinolines came and went, however, and the long-term absorption of Western-style products into Japanese lifestyles proved to be a gradual and selective process, heavily conditioned by the patterns of consumption already established in the cities during the Tokugawa period. Men employed in the expanding modern white-collar sector soon abandoned the samurai top-knot and adopted the Western-style suit and all its accessories as working wear. All but the most "advanced" women, on the other hand, continued to dress in Japanese style, even when working in "modern" occupations, but they played with Western-style accessories—shoes, bags, and shawls—as well as hairstyles and makeup as demonstrations of their modernity.[18] Nakanishi has traced the spread of Western-style goods into the countryside during the second half of the nineteenth century, showing how the rural elite, on their trips—increasingly by train—to the cities, picked up clocks, watches, hats, and walking sticks as symbols of their involvement in the national project of modernization.[19]

Meanwhile, however, despite the rapid urbanization and industrialization that took off after the turn of the century, and despite the consequent changes in living environment and family relationships that increasing numbers of households experienced, patterns of consumption continued to develop along the lines laid down in the Tokugawa period. The "rice-plus-side-dishes" meal structure that had come to define the "civilized" lifestyle of the cities—in contrast to the one-pot stews of nonrice grains that continued to constitute the (nutritionally healthier) rural diet—became a badge of respectability for the growing number of urban and suburban households establishing themselves in the industrial cities.[20] Alongside their growing consumption of polished white rice, urban families incorporated into their menus commercial versions of the processed fish, soybean, and vegetable side dishes that better-off households, at least, might once have made for themselves as well as new items, such as (small amounts of) meat, where they fit in. Treats and snacks—cakes, biscuits, and ice cream—provided opportunities for increased sugar consumption without disrupting normal meal patterns, while beer and cigarettes became fashionable accompaniments to both "modern" and "traditional" social activities.[21] While the vast majority of women continued to wear the kimono in and out of the home, its already well-established fashion cycle began to incorporate new imported textile production methods and Western design influences such as art deco and art nouveau.[22] Japanese consumers thus found ways of adopting and enjoying new goods within the structures of a lifestyle already taking shape in the urban world of the Tokugawa period.

Nonetheless, the impact of industrial growth—and the technology, institutions, and infrastructure that went with it—on both the range of goods available and the ways of life within which they could be consumed steadily intensified into the interwar period. With the expansion of the rail network, communications widened and suburban life became a possibility. The suburban train, the tram, and the bicycle enabled people to travel about, for work, social life, and shopping as never before. Newspapers and magazines spread a new awareness of goods, further fostered by the expanding advertising industry, amongst the increasingly literate population graduating from the national education system.[23] Commercial leisure facilities—cinemas, baseball fields, and holiday resorts—opened up new forms of commodified entertainment. Shopping centers became established around the commuter-hub stations of the big cities, offering the experience not just of the department store—where luxury goods in both Western and Japanese style could be discovered and viewed—but also of a whole range of specialist shops, from Western-style bakeries and hat shops to the purveyors of every kind of Japanese food delicacy.[24] Restaurants, offering everything from the most formal Japanese-style multicourse meal to a bowl of Chinese-style noodles or the Japanese version of English-style curry with rice, developed the traditions of their Tokugawa-period predecessors, while the new Western-style cafés opened up the possibility not only of eating a sandwich and listening to jazz, but also of engaging with a new kind of waitress, kimono-clad but bold and flirtatious in a risqué, modern way.[25]

By the interwar period, therefore, new goods and new ways of consuming them were sufficiently apparent to induce both academic and media debates over how to live a "modern life" and growing concerns about the implications of "Westernization" for Japanese identity in a world in which Japan was increasingly coming into conflict with the Western powers—especially the United States—that provided the model for that life.[26] As growing numbers of households came to live in an urban environment—for the most part in small houses or apartments still constructed and furnished along Japanese-style lines—architects and media commentators pondered the kind of house in which a modern Japanese lifestyle might best be lived out, and estates of suburban "culture houses," designed to contain a combination of Japanese- and Western-style rooms, began to be constructed.[27] Here there were sitting rooms and studies where the new white-collar salaryman and his wife could read, play the piano, or listen to their gramophone; separate bedrooms for parents and children; and modern kitchens with gas and electric fittings; but also Japanese-style rooms with tatami-mat flooring, where the family could sit on cushions around their low dining tables to eat meals and relax. Although such houses remained a distant dream for most prewar families, they laid down the lines that conditioned not just the design of residential buildings but also the pattern of consumption carried on within them that the postwar economic miracle was to make possible for the "middle mass" of ordinary households.

For those in the governing and intellectual elites who were increasingly concerning themselves over what it meant to be Japanese in the modern world, however, the double beds, tables, and chairs with which the culture house was furnished represented insidious threats to the "beautiful customs" and aesthetic sensibilities that differentiated Japanese culture from all others.[28] Traditional Japanese arts and crafts were revived, though unavoidably in "modern" forms—craft products as art objects, the tea ceremony as training in etiquette for young women. At the same time, Western-style goods and practices were increasingly frowned upon. The disturbing impact of "Westernization" on traditional gender roles was a particular issue. The double bed threatened to unleash female sexuality, while the lockable front door and modern kitchen of the nuclear family's culture house presaged freedom from the traditional housekeeping role of wives and daughters.[29]

Nonetheless, it was clear to most that the tide of new forms of consumption could not simply be turned back, especially as Japan relied for the military capacity to fight the coming war with the United States and its allies on industrial technology and work practices that were inextricably tied up with global capitalism. Rather, the influences of new goods had to be tamed by Japanese practice. The state, together with many in civil society who worked with it, therefore sought to develop "rational" approaches to consumption. While saving and frugality were undoubtedly heavily promoted and "luxury" was condemned, expenditure (or the saving that would eventually permit it) on goods associated with a productive and healthy Japanese family life was encouraged. Central to this "rational" approach to consumption expenditure was the figure of the housewife,

still the manager of the household's day-to-day life but now armed with education in domestic science, an account book, and the equipment of the hygienic modern kitchen. In this spirit, women's magazines provided recipes incorporating nourishing meat into the dishes husbands might eat; households bought sewing machines on credit so that mothers could make the Western-style clothes deemed sensible and economical for children; and charitable reformers went out into the wilds of the countryside to teach rural women how to "rationalize" their kitchens.[30]

As the economy geared up to war through the 1930s, resources were increasingly diverted from consumption, and day-to-day life became an ever more difficult struggle to acquire the necessities of existence. Once war in the Pacific began in earnest, rationing was introduced, while the black market developed as an unavoidable recourse for many. The fashions of the booming 1920s were put aside, as women were forced to convert their kimonos into the *monpe* trousers that rural workers had always worn in the fields. The radio, if one could get access to a set, became almost the only remaining source of entertainment and news. By 1945, with the cities laid waste by American bombing and hunger ever-present, the pleasures of prewar consumption had become distant memories.[31] They were not forgotten, though, and their conditioning influence on the pattern of postwar consumption soon reasserted itself—despite the dramatic economic, social, and political changes that followed defeat.

The Electrical Household: Consumption through the Economic Miracle and Beyond

In the immediate aftermath of war, Japanese people battled to survive on rations and black-market supplements. However, the economy began to revive through the later 1940s under the influence of the aid and expenditure provided by the U.S.-dominated occupation forces. As American personnel drove their vehicles around the country, dispensing wheat flour, dairy products, cigarettes, and nylons, Japanese consumers learned to like bread, desire cars, and try to brighten up their lives with Western fashions in dress and music.[32] With agricultural output recovering and the factories that had served the war effort turning to domestic consumer-good markets for their salvation, production grew and increasing numbers of people found new forms of employment in the expanding cities and their suburbs. With much prewar housing destroyed or inadequate, new blocks and estates were hastily put up to house the urban workforce. It was thus within the confines of the apartments they contained—tiny, by American standards, at least, but equipped, unlike most prewar housing, with modern kitchens, bathrooms, and the facilities for a nuclear-family life—that the members of postwar households began to construct new lives as consumers.[33]

For such people, now able to establish themselves in stable employment with rising incomes, expenditure on the consumer goods that defined what came to be known as the "bright life" (*akarui seikatsu*) became increasingly possible. While most people continued to sleep on futons spread on tatami matting, new

apartments, like the prewar culture house, often contained Western-style living space that had to be furnished with items unknown in most "traditional" housing. A table-and-chairs set for the "dining kitchen," around which most new apartments were designed, became a major purchase for many new urban households in the 1950s. Above all, though, central to the bright life were electrical goods. The fridge and the washing machine were expensive items, often bought on credit, that nonetheless eventually achieved almost 100 percent household diffusion rates, but smaller electrical items, including toasters, heaters, fans, vacuum cleaners, and, above all, the electric rice-cooker, which revolutionized women's work in the kitchen, were soon to be found in almost every Japanese home.[34] At the same time, though, "labor-saving" electrical goods were by no means the whole story. In fact, the television diffused earlier and faster than many more "rational" electrical appliances.[35]

As their incomes rose, households also found themselves able to spend on a growing and eclectic range of goods alongside their consumer durables, so that domestic consumption expenditure remained a major driver of economic growth through the miracle years of the 1960s.[36] Postwar women quickly abandoned the kimono, and sales of sewing machines boomed, as mothers ran up Western-style items for themselves and their children; meanwhile, their husbands acquired the off-the-peg suits that were the uniform of the salaryman class, to which growing numbers now belonged. Before long, fashions in Western-style clothing were spreading and changing with increasing speed, as advertising and the women's magazine industry popularized both global and homegrown trends. While no such Westernizing makeover took place in dietary structure and per capita rice consumption continued to increase until the mid-1960s, with more and more households adopting urban meal patterns, the "rice plus side dishes" form easily accommodated a widening range of Japanese-style fresh and processed food as well as new items adapted from global cuisines.[37] Alongside commercial versions of the dried fish, pickles, and soybean products that their mothers and grandmothers might have had the facilities and knowledge to make for themselves, Japanese consumers adopted curry, cutlets, and instant Chinese noodles as their own.

The economic miracle thus enabled Japanese households to consume a basket of goods that had expanded dramatically in both quantity and range as compared to its prewar predecessor but that still bore the imprint of a consumption pattern that dated back to the Tokugawa period. In consumption outside the home, too, through the miracle years and beyond, Japanese patterns continued to be conditioned by domestic circumstances, both historical and otherwise, that differed from those prevalent in Western models of the consumer society. For example, much leisure activity remained linked to working life, and expense accounts continued to sustain the sectors of cities populated, as their Tokugawa-period equivalents once had been, by restaurants, bars, and purveyors of every kind of pleasure a man (more rarely a woman) might desire. While most households aspired to own a car, and the majority eventually did so, creating the domestic market in which Japan's car exporters learned their trade, use of the private car

within the densely packed neighborhoods of Japanese cities remained restricted, and the prize possession would spend most of its life parked in whatever tiny space could be found for it.[38] While the first supermarkets were beginning to appear in the suburbs by the 1960s, the small shop and convenience store lived on, protected by legislation, to be sure, but at the same time meeting the needs of the housewife who shopped regularly on foot or by bicycle for fresh produce and who had only limited storage space at home.[39] In fact, even the famed electrical goods and cameras of Hitachi, Matsushita, and Fuji were typically bought from specialist local shops that provided the personal service and reassurance that consumers demanded. As incomes rose and retail facilities developed, Japanese practices of gift giving—at the traditional New Year and midsummer times, but also at Christmas, Valentine's Day, and so on—became increasingly commercialized, creating a significant element in consumer demand, as department stores gave over whole floors to services offering the right gift at the right price for every social relationship.

By the time that miracle growth came to an end in the early 1970s, Japanese households, by and large across the middle mass that they now saw themselves as constituting, had achieved a comfortable and secure lifestyle composed, along the lines already being laid down before the war, of a mix of Western-style and adapted Japanese elements and managed by the housewife from her kitchen, now filled with electrical appliances. Securing this lifestyle had required planning and saving, with bonuses and pay raises accumulated—usually in Post Office savings accounts—in anticipation of the large expenditures that would need to be met over the lifetime of the household, if the bright life were to be secured in the long term. Although, in practice, differences in income and status were reflected in the quality and brands of goods acquired, and although Japanese consumers continued to follow their historical counterparts in taking a great deal of trouble to select the right product from the right shop, the outward image of equality was maintained, instantiated in the mass diffusion of the same set of electrical goods (even if of different brands and designs) and the periodic emergence of nationwide fads and fashions in which everyone participated.

Nonetheless, as economic growth slowed through the crises of the 1970s, Japanese people found themselves beginning to question the direction in which their economy and the consumption choices that underpinned it had taken them, as they had grown richer. Much of their concern focused on the human and environmental costs that miracle growth had involved, but the demand for better housing, improved social amenities, and more leisure time was also beginning to emerge. When economic growth was re-established—if at a more sedate pace—in the 1980s, it was the expenditure required to buy and furnish a better home—ideally a small detached house in the suburbs—and to provide for a fulfilling life for oneself and one's children that preoccupied many. With the value of the yen rising in response to Japan's by now considerable trade surplus, travel abroad and the purchase of luxury branded goods—typically as souvenir gifts—became increasingly feasible, and as the speculative boom of the bubble economy took off after 1985, the exploits of Japanese consumers became legendary, belying

their reputation as savers and "ambivalent" consumers.[40] Nonetheless, alongside such flamboyant conspicuous consumption, the mass of families continued to save, while also spending on furnishings and electronic equipment for their new homes, on cars and foreign holidays, on eating out and enjoying an ever-widening range of leisure activities, and on high-quality, differentiated, and branded versions of the goods essential to the distinctive Japanese lifestyle that history had been creating.

With the collapse of the bubble ushering in the "lost decade" of the 1990s, however, the questioning of consumption and its meaning, which represents a long thread in Japanese intellectual discourse and practice, resumed, though now in new forms. On the one hand, as globalization proceeded, Japanese consumers became increasingly concerned about the provenance and safety of the products they bought, and a consumer movement began to emerge.[41] This push focused on food safety issues—crystallized in a number of large-scale food scares—and largely involved women carrying on the long tradition of the housewife responsible for the management and security of the household. However, national political campaigns on consumer issues proved less successful than local-level activities, and the network of consumer cooperatives has grown to represent a significant element in the consumer market. As deregulation enabled the larger-scale supermarket, selling produce from all over the world, to colonize the high street—though still rarely in situations where shopping by car was a possibility—so consumers turned to organic food and direct sales from known producers in an effort to ensure, through the skills and knowledge of the housewife, a safe and healthy lifestyle.

Meanwhile, on the other hand, the questioning of consumption also took the form of a growing nostalgia for what had been lost in the process of economic development and the promotion, in advertising at least, of the "things other than things" that embodied meaning and value beyond the immediate satisfaction of desire.[42] The local and traditional products associated with a fast-disappearing village life were promoted as niche consumer goods, with department stores giving over large areas to displays of regional foods and crafts, along with the craftspeople who made them. Such nostalgia even extended to the few aspects of the cities that had escaped destruction and rebuilding, with aficionados seeking out long-forgotten old neighborhoods and 1950s-style noodle restaurants.[43] The commodification of a romanticized rural past reached its apotheosis in modern versions of the kettles hanging over fire-pits and the paper walls and windows that had once epitomized rural poverty.

That questioning of consumption could really only take the form of consumer activity—searching out distinctive products in line with current fashions—demonstrates how far Japanese consumers had come in developing a modern consumerist relationship to goods and their meanings. Nonetheless, the thousands who congregate in the most fashionable centers of contemporary Tokyo or Osaka to window-shop, stroll with their friends, and display their individual takes on the latest fashion are the products of a history that began as their Tokugawa-period predecessors came together to enjoy consumption in areas of

shops, restaurants, and leisure facilities located not so very far away from their modern counterparts. The pattern of their consumption and of the infrastructure within which it takes place still bears the traces of meal structures, attitudes to dress, furnishing tastes, and indeed the whole relation of goods to status and social life that began to form in the flourishing cities of the eighteenth century. Since then, consumption practices have been refined to incorporate numerous new goods—domestically produced or introduced through contact with the wider world—and adapted to the changes in technology, living environment, work, and family life that economic growth and industrialization have brought about. The postmodern young consumers of contemporary Tokyo—locked into their mobile phones and iPods, absorbed in computer games or dressing up as their favorite manga characters, and probably not very comfortable sitting on the floor in Japanese-style surroundings—nonetheless display characteristics that cannot be understood except as the product of a long and distinctive Japanese consumption history.

Conclusion: Issues in the Study of the Japanese Consumer

Although a case can surely be made for the significance of the growth of consumption, both as part of Japan's history and as central to understanding contemporary social and economic life, historians of all kinds have barely begun to explore the topic. As a result, the consumer remains hidden in most accounts of Japan's past, so that those studying comparative or global consumption history are reluctantly obliged to ignore the Japanese case.[44] However, a brief consideration of the issues that Japan raises in the context of the wider study of consumption history demonstrates the important role the Japanese consumer might play in furthering study of a key element in economic development worldwide.

As suggested earlier, Japanese economic historians have largely assumed that the "preindustrial consumer" was not a factor in creating the conditions for economic growth and eventual industrialization in their country. That output of both agricultural and manufactured goods expanded, slowly but steadily, through the Tokugawa period is not now questioned, and supply-side study of the growth of industries such as textiles and brewing has progressed rapidly in recent years.[45] What happened to the goods so produced, many of which can hardly be described as "necessities," is rarely touched upon, however. Given the significance now ascribed to "the birth of the consumer" and "the consumer revolution" in creating the preconditions for industrialization in Europe and North America, this neglect cannot but give rise to the assumption that the Japanese case was different. While it is certainly true that Japanese rural households, into the interwar period, continued to grow and process for themselves many of their basic consumption items, a growing share of output was taken up by differentiated and regionally "branded" goods that were destined for the commercial market and that were consumed—in the cities but also increasingly, among the better-off, at least, in the countryside, too—amidst a world of emulation, fashion, and advertising in which buying things was a matter of choice, taste, and enjoyment. What part this

world played, for example, in drawing households into production or labor for the market along the lines suggested by Jan de Vries for Europe, and how this process might have been affected by the specific forms of household organization prevailing in Japan are questions that remain to be investigated.[46]

As a result, the assumption persists that consumerism was a Western invention, inextricably linked to the original form of the industrial revolution and subsequently "exported" to other parts of the world. If the preindustrial consumer did not exist in Japan, then the goods that the preindustrial economy generated cannot be considered consumer goods and it is valid to analyze Japan's consumer history in terms of "Westernization." Hence, in many fields, it is Japan's encounter with Western consumer goods and the culture of modernity that surrounded them that is the focus of attention. Nevertheless, there is growing evidence that "traditional" goods—from rice and soy sauce to kimonos, ceramics, and tatami matting—dominated consumer expenditures up to World War II and even beyond,[47] and that these goods, and the consumption practices that they involved, developed and "modernized"—in terms of production technology, product qualities, marketing, and so on—as consumer goods in the urban industrial world that was emerging by the beginning of the twentieth century. Such goods were not the products of the industrial revolution in the West and, although they may sometimes have borrowed elements of imported technology, were not produced in the large-scale, capital-intensive ways assumed to constitute modern industrialization. Given the argument that the "East Asian path of development," pioneered in Japan but subsequently followed in a number of the later-industrializing countries of the region, was significantly different—being based on labor-intensive forms of technology and household economy—from that observed in the West,[48] it seems increasingly necessary to consider growth and "modernization" in the consumption of the "traditional," "indigenous" goods at the heart of the "industrious revolution" that Japanese industrialization now appears to represent.

Hence, if the consumption history of Japan—as of other nations beyond Europe and North America that have now industrialized—displays distinctive characteristics, the comparative framework within which the role of consumption in history is analyzed needs to be widened to accommodate these cases. Equally, the role of past development in forming the contemporary Japanese consumers whose spending impacts so heavily on the world economy, and whose particular tastes in goods have now spread across the globe, needs much more serious consideration, too. Japanese consumption cannot be left in the ahistorical hands of anthropologists, sociologists, and cultural critics who view the consumer solely in terms of postmodern global consumerism. As the first non-Western society to achieve industrialization and, by now, to have experienced all the stages through to postindustrialization and postmodernity, Japan cannot be ignored in any attempt to understand the role of the consumer—so central to contemporary life beyond as well as within the West—in the process of economic development.

Notes

1. See John Clammer, *Contemporary Urban Japan: A Sociology of Consumption* (Oxford, 1997).
2. As famously described by Neil McKendrick in his seminal paper, "The Consumer Revolution of Eighteenth-Century England," in *The Birth of a Consumer Society,* ed. Neil McKendrick, John Brewer, and J. H. Plumb (London, 1982), 9–33.
3. Kenneth Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence: China, Europe, and the Making of the Modern World Economy* (Princeton, NJ, 2000), especially chap. 3.
4. Evidence cited below is largely confined to material from English-language sources. For a much more detailed account, including full references to sources in Japanese, see Penelope Francks, *The Japanese Consumer: An Alternative Economic History of Modern Japan* (Cambridge, UK, 2009).
5. See Constantine Vaporis, "To Edo and Back: Alternate Attendance and Japanese Culture in the Early Modern Period," *Journal of Japanese Studies* 23 (1997): 25–68.
6. On Edo, Gilbert Rozman, "Edo's Importance in Changing Tokugawa Society," *Journal of Japanese Studies* 1 (1974): 91–112; on Osaka, James McClain, "Space, Power, Wealth, and Status in Seventeenth-Century Osaka," in *Osaka: The Merchants' Capital of Early Modern Japan*, ed. James McClain and Osamu Wakita (Ithaca, NY, 1999), 44–79.
7. Vaporis, "To Edo and Back." See also James McClain, "Edobashi: Power, Space, and Popular Culture in Edo," in *Edo and Paris*, ed. James McClain, John Merriman, and Kaoru Udagawa (Ithaca, NY, and London, 1994), 105–31. On food and restaurants, see Naomichi Ishige, *The History and Culture of Japanese Food* (London, 2001), chap. 5, or, for more detail, Watanabe Minoru, *Nihon shoku seikatsu shi* (Tokyo, 1964). For this and all other titles in Japanese, names are given in the Japanese order, that is, family name first.
8. See Liza Dalby, *Kimono: Fashioning Culture* (London, 2001), chap. 2. A more economic analysis can be found in Tamura Hitoshi, *Fuasshon no shakai keizai shi* (Tokyo, 2004).
9. Matsunosuke Nishiyama, *Edo Culture: Daily Life and Diversions in Urban Japan, 1600–1868*, trans. Gerald Groemer (Honolulu, 1997).
10. Donald Shively, "Sumptuary Regulation and Status in Early Tokugawa Japan," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 25 (1964): 123–64.
11. For examples, see Susan Hanley and Kozo Yamamura, *Economic and Demographic Change in Preindustrial Japan, 1600–1868* (Princeton, NJ, 1977), 89, 157–58.
12. This happened most famously in the works of Ihara Saikaku, for example, *The Japanese Family Storehouse*, trans. G. W. Sargent (Cambridge, UK, 1959), originally published in 1688.
13. See examples in Hanley and Yamamura, *Economic and Demographic Change,* 121–2, 157, and 196.
14. For some of this work now available in English, see Akira Hayami, Osamu Saitō, and Ronald P. Toby, eds., *Emergence of Economic Society in Japan 1600–1859,* vol. 1 of *The Economic History of Japan 1600–1990* (Oxford, 2004).
15. For a detailed survey of living conditions and welfare, see Susan Hanley, *Everyday Things in Premodern Japan* (Berkeley, CA, 1997). Current understanding of Japan's early modern demography, living standards, and household economy in a comparative context relies heavily on the work of Osamu Saitō, recently brought together

in Saitō Osamu, *Hikaku keizai hatten ron* (Tokyo, 2008). For a flavor in English, see his "Pre-Modern Economic Growth Revisited: Japan and the West," Working Paper Series No. 16/05, Department of Economic History, London School of Economics (June 2005), http://www2.lse.ac.uk/economicHistory/Research/GEHN/GEHNPDF/WorkingPaper16-OS.pdf.

16. In the Japanese context, "traditional" goods and practices are typically taken to be those originating in Japan prior to the mid-nineteenth-century opening to contact with the West, while their "modern" equivalents are those introduced from outside subsequent to this contact. The traditional/modern dichotomy is usually therefore mapped onto that between "indigenous" or "Japanese-style" and "Western." More recent work, however, is increasingly coming to show how, on the production side, at least, the dichotomy is far from clear-cut. See, for example, *The Role of Tradition in Japan's Industrialization*, ed. Masayuki Tanimoto (Oxford, 2006). For a more detailed empirical analysis, see Penelope Francks, "Inconspicuous Consumption: Sake, Beer, and the Birth of the Consumer in Japan," *Journal of Asian Studies* 68 (2009): 135–64. On the same issue in relation to South Asia, see Douglas Haynes and Abigail McGowan, "Introduction," in *Towards a History of Consumption in South Asia*, ed. Haynes et al. (New Delhi, 2010), 1–25.
17. In the case of cotton textiles, for instance, at their peak in the 1870s, imports accounted for no more than a third of domestic demand. Osamu Saitō and Masayuki Tanimoto, "The Transformation of Traditional Industries," in Hayami, Saitō, and Toby, *The Economic History of Japan*, 279.
18. For an enjoyable account of Japanese encounters with Western-style goods during the Meiji period (1868–1912), see Edward Seidensticker, *Low City, High City* (London, 1983), chap. 3.
19. Nakanishi Satoru, "Bunmei kaika to minshū seikatsu," in *Nihon keizai shi I: bakumatsu ishin ki,* ed. Ishii Kanji, Hara Akira, and Takeda Haruhito (Tokyo, 2000), 217–823. See also many examples described in the account of the life of a rural family from the mid-nineteenth century onward presented in Gail Lee Bernstein, *Isami's House* (Berkeley, 2005).
20. From the opening to Western contact onward, "civilization and enlightenment" (*bunmei kaika*) represented a key slogan defining the Japanese response to Western society and culture. Although "civilization" clearly involved the appropriate adoption of Western-style goods and practices, rice-based cuisine, with all its historical connotations of upper-class sophistication, was also central to the "civilized" lifestyle that urbanizing and modernizing Japanese people sought. See Penelope Francks, "Consuming Rice: Food, 'Traditional' Products and the History of Consumption in Japan," *Japan Forum* 19 (2007): 147–68.
21. For some examples from the diary of a Kyoto housewife, see Makiko Nakano, *Makiko's Diary: A Merchant Wife in 1910 Kyoto,* trans. Kazuko Smith (Stanford, CA, 1995), for example, 149.
22. For examples, see *Fashioning Kimono: Dress and Modernity in Early Twentieth-Century Japan,* ed. Annie Van Assche (Milan, 2005).
23. On advertising, see Gennifer Weisenfeld, "Japanese Modernism and Consumerism," in *Being Modern in Japan: Culture and Society from the 1910s to the 1930s*, ed. Elise Tipton and John Clark (Honolulu, 2000), 75–98.
24. There is now quite a large literature on the history of the department store in Japan, though as yet little on other forms of retailing. See, for example, Louise Young, "Marketing the Modern: Department Stores, Consumer Culture, and the New Middle

Class in Interwar Japan," *International Labor and Working-Class History* 55 (1999): 52–70; Brian Moeran, "The Birth of the Japanese Department Store," in *Asian Department Stores,* ed. Kerrie MacPherson (Richmond, VA, 1998), 141–76.

25. Elise Tipton, "The Café: Contested Space of Modernity in Interwar Japan," in *Being Modern in Japan: Culture and Society from the 1910s to the 1930s*, ed. Elise Tipton and John Clark (Honolulu, 2000), 119–36.
26. Tetsuo Najita and Harry Harootunian, "Japanese Revolt against the West: Political and Cultural Criticism in the Twentieth Century," in *The Cambridge History of Japan,* vol. VI, *The Twentieth Century*, ed. Peter Duus (Cambridge, UK, 1988), 711–74. For practical examples of the search for a "modern life," see Seidensticker, *Low City, High City.*
27. On the issues surrounding prewar housing design, see Jordan Sand, *House and Home in Modern Japan* (Cambridge, MA, 2003).
28. See Najita and Harootunian, "Japanese Revolt against the West."
29. Sand, *House and Home*, 341–43.
30. On aspects of the "rationalization" of consumption and saving in the interwar period, see Andrew Gordon, "From Singer to Shinpan: Consumer Credit in Modern Japan," in *The Ambivalent Consumer: Questioning Consumption in East Asia and the West*, ed. Sheldon Garon and Patricia Maclachlan (Ithaca, NY, 2006), 137–62; Sheldon Garon, "Fashioning a Culture of Diligence and Thrift: Savings and Frugality Campaigns in Japan, 1900–1931," in *Japan's Competing Modernities: Issues in Culture and Democracy, 1900–1930,* ed. Sharon Minichiello (Honolulu, 1998), 312–34; Simon Partner, "Taming the Wilderness: The Lifestyle Improvement Movement in Rural Japan," *Monumenta Nipponica* 56 (2001): 487–520.
31. For contemporary diary evidence of wartime life and consumption, see Samuel Hideo Yamashita, *Leaves from an Autumn of Emergencies: Selections from the Wartime Diaries of Ordinary Japanese* (Honolulu, 2005). On the black market, see Anke Scherer, "Drawbacks to Control on Food Distribution: Food Shortages, the Black Market and Economic Crime," in *Japan's War Economy*, ed. Erich Pauer (London, 1999), 106–23.
32. On life during the occupation, see John Dower, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Aftermath of World War II* (London, 2000).
33. See Ann Waswo, *Housing in Postwar Japan: A Social History* (Richmond, VA, 2001).
34. For data on the diffusion rates of household goods, see Francks, *The Japanese Consumer*, Appendix Table 7.
35. Simon Partner, *Assembled in Japan: Electrical Goods and the Making of the Japanese Consumer* (Berkeley, CA, 1999), 162–66.
36. According to Ohkawa's calculations, for the period 1953–69, the share of growth in consumption in the overall growth of gross national expenditure as a whole was 49.8 percent (compared with investment: 46.4 percent; government consumption: 5.0 percent; exports: 13.2 percent; imports: -14.6 percent). This was a considerably lower share than in much of the prewar period, but, nonetheless, much more significant than is generally realized. Kazushi Ohkawa, "Aggregate Growth and Product Allocation," in *Patterns of Japanese Economic Development,* ed. Kazushi Ohkawa and Miyohei Shinohara (New Haven, 1979), 21.
37. Katarzyna Cwiertka, *Modern Japanese Cuisine* (London, 2006), 158–59.
38. David W. Plath, "My-Car-ism: Motorizing the Showa Self," in *Showa: The Japan of Hirohito*, ed. Carol Gluck and Stephen Grabaud (New York, 1992), 229–44.
39. David Flath, *The Japanese Economy* (Oxford, 2000), 293–9.

40. See Joseph Tobin, "Introduction: Domesticating the West" in *Re-Made in Japan: Everyday Life and Consumer Taste in a Changing Society*, ed. Joseph Tobin (New Haven, CT, 1992), 1–41. For discussion of a best-selling novel held to epitomize bubble-era consumerism, see Norma Field, "*Somehow*: The Postmodern as Atmosphere," in *Postmodernism and Japan*, ed. Masao Miyoshi and Harry Harootunian (Durham, NC, 1989), 169–88.
41. See Patricia Maclachlan, *Consumer Politics in Postwar Japan: The Institutional Boundaries of Citizen Action* (New York, 2002) and "Global Trends versus Local Traditions: Genetically Modified Foods and Contemporary Consumerism in the United States, Japan, and Britain," in Garon and Maclachlan, *The Ambivalent Consumer,* 236–59.
42. See Millie Creighton: "Something More: Japanese Department Stores' Marketing of a 'Meaningful Human Life,' " in *Asian Department Stores*, ed. MacPherson, 206–30 and "Pre-Industrial Dreaming in Post-Industrial Japan: Department Stores and the Commoditization of Community Values," *Japan Forum* 10 (1998): 127–49.
43. Jordan Sand, "The Ambivalence of the New Breed: Nostalgic Consumerism in 1980s and 1990s Japan," in Garon and Maclachlan, *The Ambivalent Consumer,* 85–108.
44. For example, Paul Glennie, "Consumption within Historical Studies," in *Acknowledging Consumption*, ed. Daniel Miller (London, 1995), 164–203. For a critique of the Eurocentric nature of much consumption history, see Craig Clunas, "Modernity Global and Local: Consumption and the Rise of the West," *American Historical Review* 104: 5 (1999), 1497–1511.
45. See, for example, the case studies collected in Tanimoto, *The Role of Tradition.*
46. See Jan de Vries, *The Industrious Revolution: Consumer Behavior and the Household Economy, 1650 to the Present* (Cambridge, UK, 2008).
47. Ohkawa and Rosovsky estimated that, still in 1955, "indigenous goods," defined as those that would have been available before 1868, accounted for about half of total consumer expenditure. Kazushi Ohkawa and Henry Rosovsky, "The Indigenous Components in the Modern Japanese Economy," *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 9 (1961): 476–501, 488, 492–93.
48. See Kaoru Sugihara, "The East Asian Path of Development: A Long-Term Perspective," in *The Resurgence of East Asia*, ed. Giovanni Arrighi, Takeshi Hamashita, and Mark Selden (London, 2003): 78–123.

CHAPTER 4

Consumption, Identities, and Agency in Africa: An Overview*

Hans Peter Hahn

Introduction: The Cultural Relevance of Consumption in Africa and Elsewhere

Consumption in Africa has been an overlooked issue for a long time. In history as well as in sociology and cultural anthropology, African societies have been seen as providers of globally circulating raw materials, goods, and commodities (like rubber and ivory, but also art and slaves), but rarely has the role of consumers in these societies been considered. Even during the last years, when consumption in Africa became a major topic with regard to increasing fuel consumption and emerging environmental problems, individuals and households in Africa were still marginalized; they were not considered consumers with their own agency and culturally defined patterns and preferences. Although the level of consumption in Africa is quite low, it matters. Increased knowledge on the subject will probably not reveal a specific "African consumption pattern," as different societies on the continent with different levels of wealth have quite divergent consumption preferences. The relevance of consumption in Africa is instead based on the extremely wide range of different needs and desires there, and on the necessity to adapt the goods available to local preferences. Perhaps the one and only particular aspect of consumption is the obvious refusal of producers worldwide to provide specifically adapted goods for markets in Africa. With few exceptions (cloth, beads) the localization of commodities in Africa has been realized through the consumers' own agency. This agency can be linked to the most recent theories of "prosumers" and, as this chapter argues, the appropriation of goods in Africa may become a tool for the further development of current consumer theories.

This chapter focuses on the cultural dimension of consumption. It does so in line with recent trends in consumption studies and with the particular intent

to counter perspectives on economic behavior in Africa as driven by poverty and lack of means. Therefore it assumes that—on this continent much as elsewhere—the significance of consumption goes far beyond the paradigm of "meeting the needs."[1] It constitutes an important field of action that plays a central role in creating and maintaining social order.[2] This inclusiveness of social and cultural dimensions has contributed to the current boom in consumption studies and is of particular importance in Africa. Recent trends in research underscore the most varied aspects of everyday life as forms of specific "consumer cultures."[3] The corresponding theoretical framework, as formulated by Mary Douglas, Baron Isherwood, Pierre Bourdieu, Sidney Mintz, and Arjun Appadurai, among others, makes clear that consumption is relevant to a wide range of anthropological domains.[4]

The significance of consumption goes beyond the moment of consuming, that is, the purchase, use, and using up of goods. Consumption is articulated in specific behavioral strategies.[5] It is a rubric under which meanings, norms, and strategies are ascribed to social norms. Consumption permeates daily life and is subject to a wide range of interpretations. From the perspective of consumption as a social field, human agency changes according to the significance of the consumed goods.[6] By limiting the autonomy of the social actor and giving more relevance to the contexts of the goods, consumption may have a considerable impact on agency.[7] The presence of consumer goods unfolds a social field in which decisions are made with respect to specific conditions. In this wider sense, consumption studies contribute to an anthropology of everyday life.[8] Daniel Miller argues that consumption is currently assuming the power to define and articulate social bonds and distinctions from the domain of kinship.

As Mike Featherstone has put it, consumer culture is one of the core aspects of the contemporary culture of mass consumption societies.[9] Consumption studies do not just focus on the consumed goods but also on the actors who deal with consumption, for consumption is the articulation of the individual's social identity and also a matter of social agency.[10]

Consumers are actors with a specific agency. Consumers show an astonishing "fitness" when appropriating or even resisting specific forms of consumption.[11] Consumption is also about inner conflicts of consumers and a partial loss of control. People never just buy objects; they also become associated and entangled with the values and lifestyles that attach to these objects. Therefore, the ambivalences of new lifestyles and struggles for their redefinition are necessary components of consumption studies, if these studies do not want to fall in the trap of only affirmatively describing the act of consumption.

Most authors examine the various effects of consumption in Africa with regard to the transformation of the goods consumed, the societies involved, and the identities of the consumers. Two questions are relevant in order to identify the specific conditions of consumption in Africa. To what extent is it possible to speak of "consumer cultures" in societies in Africa, where consumption is still on a par with unconventional ways of acquiring goods? Are there any specific features of "consumer cultures" in Africa?

In order to show the specificity of consumption in African societies, I shall start with a metaphor first introduced by Gülitz Ger and Russell Belk.[12] These authors have coined the term “consumptionscapes” to describe the localization of global goods in the “Less Affluent World” (LAW). Based on Appadurai’s concept of “ethnoscapes,” this term stresses the fragmented and heterogeneous character of consumption in a given local society. Goods come from many different regions of the world, and access to these goods as well as their social meanings within society differs depending on the social and economic status of the individuals involved. These differences are highlighted by the metaphor of consumptionscapes, which include specific boundaries and connections. Consumptionscapes exist in every society worldwide, but the barriers are more perceptible in the LAW, and these play an important role in Africa.

Focusing on differences between consumptionscapes in less affluent societies and those with more affluence, Ger and Belk underline the highly unequal relations of power in contexts of consumption in the LAW. These relations are expressed by imbalanced flows of goods.[13] The metaphor of consumptionscapes reflects these circumstances very well. It also draws attention to the fact that new modes of consumption may create new impassable barriers in the landscape. In other words, new modes of consumption may increase inequality.[14] Despite their disadvantaged position, however, consumers in the LAW are neither passive nor do they merely imitate the consumption of Western societies.

There are more beneficial outcomes to be expected from the study of consumption in Africa. Anthropological and historical research may call into question the common but problematic assumption that the birth of the “consumer society” is a singular historical process that took place during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Great Britain.[15] In contrast to this view, a closer look at African contexts may reveal relevant aspects about how consumer societies form in the present. Hence, studies on consumption in Africa might provide valuable insights for the concept of consumption as a whole.

Shortcomings of Current Consumption Concepts

The fact that consumption as a part of everyday life is becoming increasingly relevant even in countries in which many households can barely afford to participate has attracted much criticism, especially regarding questions about “fair consumption” and the “limits of consumption.”[16] This criticism and the subsequent appeals to Western consumers urging a higher consciousness about appropriate modes of consumption are at least a century old.[17] Nevertheless, focusing on the moment of shopping while presupposing the seemingly objective character of goods and shopping is a highly problematic approach. It underestimates the social implications of consumption and undervalues consumer agency.[18] That is why consumption is now viewed as a social field of its own. This new, larger framework leaves behind the conventional criticism of consumption mentioned so far.[19]

These remarks lead to more fundamental criticism of the concept of consumption, namely, the analytical consequences of separating production from consumption. In the eyes of the critics, dissociating these two processes makes it even more difficult to gain critical insight into consumption as a dominant social phenomenon.[20] Criticizing Joseph Miller, Gell notes the limited scope of many consumption studies, which only look at positive acts of consumption and do not consider the complex motives behind possessing—or even not possessing—specific consumer goods.[21] In the same vein, Alan Warde and Angela McRobbie warn that neglecting the biographies of goods to focus exclusively on the moment of individual food use risks constructing overly individualistic images of the consumption and possession of material goods.[22]

Another criticism concerns the lack of awareness about governmental and macroeconomic factors.[23] Typically, producers expect that consumer goods are perceived as bearing messages that contribute to the self-confidence of the buyers. But it is not enough to understand consumer goods only within the terms of reference of their advertising and the intended messages provided by marketing experts.[24] Research on consumption should go beyond the readily provided images of the things consumed and also integrate the macroeconomic dimension. This is particularly relevant with regard to consumption in Africa, as many people have to cope with small incomes and limited resources. The specific conditions of consumption in Africa become most clear when considering the macro level. As the world map of the growth of consumption in the period from 1980 to 2000 illustrates, the African pattern of consumption has not followed the same tendency as in the rest of the world (figure 4.1). Although the last twenty years have

Figure 4.1 Changing levels of consumption worldwide, 1980–2000

been marked by a global increase in consumption, Africa experienced the reverse tendency. Consumption declined in most African countries. This is a reminder that studies on consumption in Africa must also address this global trend.

In fact, several case studies describe the difficulties that African consumers have had coming to terms with harsh economic conditions and thus point to the relevance of the macro level. The resulting problems have been linked by several authors to the structural adjustment programs (SAP) and the everyday experience of economic weakness.[25] For Africa, decreasing consumption is an undeniable fact, and concomitant phenomena are the increasing unavailability of consumer goods as well as important public services like health and education. Therefore, doubts about the relevance of anthropological perspectives on consumption, especially within the often implicitly adopted modern demand theories, are widespread and not without reason. As Jeffrey James underlines, the autonomy of individuals in the LAW and their capacity to design their consumer preferences are often overestimated with regard to uncontrolled advertising and missing information about the use and side effects of consumer goods.[26]

Nevertheless, consumption does have an increasing relevance even in societies with low and stagnating levels like Africa. As consumption in these contexts cannot be sufficiently understood by conventional market theories, anthropology has the chance to show alternative approaches.[27] Thus, James highlights the effects of "disappointment and uncertainty," which are crucial points for understanding consumption in the context of decreasing incomes.[28] In the same vein, James Carrier stresses the shortcomings of conventional consumption theories for the explanation of consumer decisions in "peripheral countries."[29] In the best case, following Carrier, anthropological consumption studies should not explain consumption as such, but use observations about consumption in those societies in order to criticize simplifying assumptions like the economic theories about "rational choice" and "individual decision making." Consumption in Africa cannot be explained with standard economic theories about consumption and the choices of the individual.[30] If research on consumption does not critically examine these underlying assumptions, it amounts to little more than hollow culturalism.

Holistic Perspectives on Consumption in Africa

Those critiques that insist on the macro perspective should be taken seriously. Possibly the best way to react to the associated complexity is by stressing the advantages of the holistic approach.[31] Although linked to the micro level of research, the holistic approach makes it possible to extend case studies in such a way that all kinds of local actions related to goods and commodities are included. This can be accomplished by comparing goods that have been acquired as commodities, that is, as a form of consumption, with goods that have been acquired by other means. As Gerd Spittler shows, other forms of procurement (for example, expeditions, razzias, or begging) can play fundamentally different roles than consumption.[32] The coexistence of consumption and other forms of acquisition in Africa may explain why there are specific modes of dealing with things.[33]

Generally speaking, if consumption is not conceptualized from the alternatives practiced by consumers in everyday life, consumption studies will merely obfuscate the economic conditions of the people in question instead of illuminating them. Therefore, all modes of acquiring material objects as well as the entire range of households' and individuals' material possessions should be included in consumption studies.

Unfortunately, there is a trend in studies on material culture in Africa to select specific domains of consumption that promise to evidence the emergence of localized consumer goods (for example, soap, as below). This kind of narrowing and the subsequent break with the holistic perspective on material culture would represent a kind of dwarfing of the potential of anthropological approaches. The result would be a wide range of branch studies without a deeper understanding of consumer culture and consumer identity.[34] The particular value of a holistic look at material possessions is the direct access to cultural practices, which relativize consumption and throw new light on practices of loaning, shared use, inheritance, and so on. Such modes of unusual interaction (from the point of view of Western consumer societies) have also been described in other comparative studies on Chinese, Russian, and European patterns of consumption.[35] African contexts of consumption are particularly valuable for seeing beyond the seemingly smooth and shiny surfaces of consumer goods. By adopting the perspective of the consumers in Africa as persons with their own agency, the "phantom objectivity" of goods and their apparent autonomy are effectively called into question.[36]

Peter Stearns made some crucial arguments for this from a more historical perspective, referring to the long-lasting traditions of importing goods to Africa.[37] First, Stearns insists, Africa is a continent with a very long tradition of trade with Europe. Global networks and the consumption of non-African goods there have existed since medieval times. Second, Africa differs from East Asia, which has also had contacts with Europe dating far back in history, in that there was never any basic rejection of foreign goods in Africa. While there were periods of discrimination in China and Japan, when trade with Europeans was prohibited by those states, the import of European goods in Africa has hardly ever been subject to restrictions. This was not due to any lack of corresponding state structures in West Africa. On the contrary, for many precolonial states in West Africa, trans-Saharan or transatlantic trade was a crucial economic factor. However, research on the precolonial history of Africa has paid much more attention to exports from Africa, particularly to the New World, than imports to the continent. The question of what Africans in precolonial Africa did with the goods they acquired has largely been ignored.[38]

Despite its close and long-standing involvement in global trade networks, the notion of Africa as a continent that has submitted unconditionally to the expanding capitalistic "world system" following the latter's own logic is misleading.[39] Looking at continuities and discontinuities of consumption patterns in non-Western societies, Marshall Sahlins emphasizes the shortcomings of such a view.[40] Following Sahlins, the consumption of new goods from abroad in places like Africa is never just the result of the expansion of the Western world system

but rather the result of specific historical and local contexts. Therefore, the focus of research should be on continuities, not on the break between the periods before and after contact with Europeans and Western goods.[41] Much in line with these remarks are the frequently overlooked documents about precolonial imports to Africa. There was, for instance, the import of European ceramics in Western and Central Africa from the sixteenth century onward.[42] Fabrics, so-called wax prints based on African artwork patterns, have been produced in Europe for purchase in Africa for more than 150 years.[43] Travelers from the mid-nineteenth century reported about European consumer goods (guns, knives, and fabrics) at markets, for example, Heinrich Barth in the West African Sudan area.[44] These historical continuities contribute to the proper understanding of the long-standing tradition of localizing goods.

The local contexts of contemporary consumption in Africa have two main aspects. They concern, first, contradictory interpretations about the contextualization of material goods in societies with few material possessions and, second, cultural appropriation as a creative process of transforming globally distributed consumer goods into meaningful and locally embedded things.

Consumption, Material Possessions, and Contradictory Interpretations

The pure quantity of material possessions in consumer societies, amounting to several thousand objects per person,[45] is one reason why the term "consumer cultures" seems to befit mainly Western societies. The contrast to the quantity of material possessions in the LAW, including societies in Africa, is obvious. Although anthropologists have only rarely offered precise figures on the quantity of material possessions in the societies under study, the few available records reveal huge differences. In rural households in Africa, material possessions often amount to no more than 100 objects per person.[46]

Despite the limited empirical basis concerning the quantification of material possessions, the supposed average number of things possessed by an individual in a society plays an important role in discussions about consumption, material culture, and their contexts. Some authors suggest that each item decreases in relevance and attached meaning when material possessions increase in number. Gottfried Korff, for example, distinguishes between "hard" and "soft" material structures.[47] The former exist in societies with few possessions and in which each object has many "structural and functional references." On the other hand, soft material structures prevail in societies with quantitatively large possessions. The myriad object forms serve to express the individual's identity.[48]

The comparative ethnographic observations made by Wallendorf and Arnould contradict these interpretations.[49] In the context of very few material possessions in the Republic of Niger, they enquired about the meanings of the most important things. As they found out, the main reason for attaching high value to an object in Niger is not its meaning, but simply the chance to sell it at any time. Not so many "structural references" shape the contexts of the valued things but rather

the possibility of their "recommoditization."[50] However, we have to be careful about the limits of such case studies. Recent work on food and drink, for instance, accentuates the heterogeneity of the images and ideas linked to commodities.[51]

Although each of these interpretations has the capacity to explain certain modes of interacting with things, their validity is limited. In view of the contradictory nature of the theories outlined thus far, current research cannot claim to have developed a general theory of differences between Western societies of mass consumption and consumption in the LAW. Generally speaking, consumer culture research has focused far too much on the potential of ascribing values and contexts to material possessions. In light of the evidence from Africa, it should ask whether this potential to create meaning is universal or not.[52]

Another feature of consumption in Africa is the rapid expansion of material possessions. In many societies in Africa, the number of consumer goods owned by any single individual has at least doubled, if not tripled within the last thirty years. The quantity of enamel and plastic containers, secondhand clothing, and other industrially produced goods often outweighs the number of locally made objects. Again, the approaches attempting to explain these dynamics are contradictory. Concerning the significance of imported goods for local authenticity, Miller assumes that locally embedded objects are not, as a rule, more meaningful than new consumer objects.[53] This assertion is very well illustrated by the impressive list of examples reported by Eric Arnould and Richard Wilk.[54] As they convincingly show, things that were unknown just shortly before the moment of investigation quickly assume specific and highly respected meanings in local contexts. Arnould and Wilk interpret their examples within the framework of communication and Veblen's notion of "conspicuous consumption."[55] They not only show the dynamics of changing meanings and values stimulated by consumption; they also confirm that the new consumption serves primarily hedonistic ends in less affluent societies. Accordingly, expanding consumption is motivated not by genuine needs but by a "desire for luxury."

Wilk has made similar observations on Belize.[56] He sees the consumption of new goods as an expression of the integration of the local society in the context of the metropolis. Jennifer Johnson-Hanks has examined a homologous situation in Cameroon, where computer, Internet, and e-mail changed the marriage market dramatically.[57] Consumption becomes a means for stamping out backwardness and gaining synchronization, something that was unattainable during the colonial period. However, such strategies for overcoming desynchronization by "emulating western consumption" are not universal. Other societies may have other motives for consumption, which should be the subject of specific investigations.[58]

But social distinctions, luxury, emulation, and conspicuous consumption are insufficient to explain the expansion of material possessions in Africa. Colin Campbell criticizes these terms, depicting them as part of a "puritan-inspired rhetoric of need."[59] For Campbell, rhetoric about consumption in the LAW comprises an untenable dichotomy between local goods, which are seen as something good, that is, satisfying needs, and imported goods, which are considered

to be harmful or at least useless luxuries. According to this false puritanical rhetoric, only those things that fulfill locally defined needs are considered legitimate objects of consumption. Anything more is conflated with desires and luxury, and is consequently seen as external to Africa and bad. Campbell's remarks are extremely helpful, as they oppose the research paradigm of "consumption as communication" with a second paradigm, which I provisionally label "changing needs."

Research revolving around these paradigms also constitutes a basic problem in historical approaches to consumption.[60] One discourse of historians addresses the development of needs, including the emergence of new needs and desires through consumption. The second discourse is connected to the German tradition of *Gesellschaftsgeschichte* (history of society) and deals with social distinctions of class, milieu, and lifestyle. In this field, consumption is placed in the framework of communication and semiotics, and Campbell's criticism of puritan-inspired rhetoric corresponds to the discourse about emerging needs. On the other hand, seeing consumption as a factor for social differentiation addresses the paradigm of communication with objects. Trentmann urges historians of consumption to transcend the two discourses and to grant consumption the status of an independent field of research. Like history, anthropology also has both discourses in its research tradition. Authors like Sidney Mintz and Henry Rutz are clearly on the side of discussing the emergence of new needs. On the other hand, Jean Baudrillard, Pierre Bourdieu, Mary Douglas, and others provide widely acknowledged arguments for explaining the social meanings of consumption. In view of this problematic divergence in research, the challenge for consumption studies is to overcome this dichotomy. Anthropology has the capacity to do this, as its methodological approaches permit dealing with quite different aspects of material possessions simultaneously.[61] Stephen Hugh-Jones has shown this in a study on new forms of consumption in the Amazon area. Following his observations, the boundary between the ordinary and luxury should be described on the premises of the emic perspective. Any interpretation of changes in consumption based on generalized definitions of needs and wishes is untenable.[62]

Another relevant case study is Timothy Burke's history of the transformation of industrially manufactured soap from a luxury item to an object of daily use in Zimbabwe; Burke focuses on the relevance of the consumer as an actor.[63] Consumers in Zimbabwe neither knew about the place of manufacture, nor did they have any influence on the form of the product. Only through the definition of local meaning did this object become a local item over the years. Sometimes, the specific context, the distance from the place of manufacture, is the reason behind the special meanings of the goods consumed. Imported tea, for instance, can be adopted as a key component of a "traditional" consumer culture.[64]

To overcome the dichotomy of need and luxury, Georg Ritzer, Douglas Goodman, and Wendy Wiedenhoft propose to focus on particular fields of action in which changing consumption can be observed empirically. Such fields of action may be related to the places or manners of consumption. (How are the goods acquired?) Areas of empirical studies in particular include the people who act as

consumers. Focusing on the consumer as an actor with specific agency within his or her society makes it possible to combine perspectives on communication with those of changing needs.[65]

Cultural Appropriation

Anthropological studies explain how contexts are assigned to global goods, how these goods obtain a specific relevance for the identity of social groups, and which transformations these goods undergo in everyday practices. The concept of cultural appropriation provides a suitable theoretical framework for interpreting these specific dimensions of interactions with things. It is closely related to creolization, as both concepts describe a process of cultural transformation in the context of global influences.[66] However, appropriation differs slightly in its emphasis on action, as becomes clear with the metaphor "work of appropriation."[67] Appropriation comprises all the processes involved in transforming goods into locally specific objects, on the level of material modification as well as the assignment of local meanings.[68] On the macro level, appropriation is opposed to theories of cultural homogenization.[69] Appropriation not only explains the transformation of goods as such, but also the transformation of social identities in these societies. In short, appropriation deals with the persistence of local diversity despite global uniformity.[70]

In the literature, the concept of cultural appropriation has been used in order to explain all manner of dealing with imported goods, starting at the level of material modification. This includes the creative use of plastic among the Algerian Tuareg, the modification of diesel engines and lorries in the Republic of Sudan, and the remodeling of bicycles in West Africa.[71] These examples show how the possibilities of material and technical modification are taken advantage of; they also reveal how the meanings of things are transformed. Appropriation results in the creation of a new object, which is no longer the same as the globally distributed commodity.

Roger Silverstone, Eric Hirsch, and David Morley have elaborated a process-related model of appropriation in order to explain the transformation of technical goods. They have drawn distinctions among the various aspects that comprise this process.[72] They describe material modification, naming, cultural transformation, and cultural incorporation as aspects of appropriation.[73] These aspects may not all be found in every process of appropriation, but they have proved to be a good basis for empirical accounts of the localization of consumed goods.[74]

As the concept of appropriation emphasizes, consumption always involves reinterpretation and the development of counterdiscourses distinct from the dominant understanding of things. This aspect plays a particular role in studies of consumption in Africa during colonial times. Thus, Jean Comaroff describes how the use of European clothing in South Africa was not only a sign of submission to the dominating European power, but also opened up a new socially meaningful space for the expression of independent identity.[75] Comaroff's pioneering work binds together local and global aspects of consumption, and it has

inspired a number of other studies of transformation processes involving clothing in local societies: Margret Hay has studied the history of clothing in Kenya, and Jeremy Prestholdt the history of consumption in Tanzania. Deborah Heath has documented different readings of women's dresses in urban Senegal,[76] and Karen Hansen deals with the reinterpretation of secondhand clothing in Zimbabwe.[77] As she shows, there are socially defined limits for this transformation; not all used clothing acquires the new status of a proper dress. The process of appropriation is always framed by socially controlled conditions.

This list of examples demonstrates the importance of appropriation for everyday life in societies characterized by unequal power relations. In the theoretical framework of postcolonial studies, appropriation can be understood as "action by the powerless."[78] Appropriation may appear to be "imitation," but at the same time it is an articulation of a distinctive identity. It opens up opportunities for new interpretations by first emptying an object of meaning and then assigning it a new meaning.[79] Appropriation not only assigns meanings, but it also contributes to the clarification of relations for the new categorization of everyday objects, for instance, when normal distinctions between tradition and innovation are unsatisfactory.

The unequal power relations that tend to dominate consumption in Africa can be determined by citing some further concepts associated with this term. In the context of consumption, appropriation may also imply "misappropriation," "misuse" rather than use, or the evasion of power in everyday actions.[80] Certeau's theories of the power of everyday actions have great relevance here.[81] If appropriation is understood as an expression of "power over something or someone," it can also be disturbing and painful.[82] Appropriation may also mean stealing or begging or "taking possession of something."[83]

Obviously, the concept of cultural appropriation is very helpful for describing consumption in Africa. It benefits from the conceptual separation of consumption from the sphere of production as the starting point for an unbiased approach to local meanings for and dealings with things. Thus, appropriation as a theoretical framework for understanding consumption opens up perspectives on the agency of local societies in Africa.

Conclusion: Consumption of Everyday Objects in Africa

The challenge for studies of consumption in Africa is to show the local embeddedness of material goods from Western societies. As has been shown in this overview, the concepts of localization and appropriation may serve as valuable tools for doing so.

As Michael Taussig points out, however, contextualization and finding evidence of the transformation of externally produced goods into local goods is only one way of looking at this process.[84] This perspective should be complemented by another point of view, which includes the fact that—in local contexts—many objects are seen as "things of the West" or "objects of the Europeans." In their African context, these objects therefore constitute a statement about Europe.

Consumption in Africa, the consumption of the powerless, thus may become an ironical and alienating commentary on the so-called First World. Therefore, it should also be read as an implicit statement about the West.

The micro-level perspective, which is so important in many of the examples given here, aims to go beyond the problematic paradigms of "communication" and "changing needs" by exploring a holistic approach. The study of consumption and associated everyday practices makes it possible to avoid the problematic overemphasis of the communicative dimension of the goods consumed.[85] Consumption in Africa cannot be explained only in terms of a different set of meanings, but also needs to take into account changing identities and agency. Very often, these changes are only indirectly engendered by new forms of consumption, as the local perception of the consumer goods is far from constituting coherent valuations. Consumption is not just a social phenomenon; it also has to do with economic problems and the materiality of the things consumed. This is why studies of consumption should go beyond the focus on the consumers' actions and the creation of social identity to deal with the things themselves. Giving space to the complexity of the local dealings with objects and the fluidity of meanings is the best way to show how consumption contributes to the diversity and vitality of societies in Africa.

Notes

*This chapter draws heavily on my introduction to a larger collected work on this subject: Hans Peter Hahn, ed., *Consumption in Africa: Anthropological Approaches* (Berlin, 2008).

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PART II

Consumption and Historical Disciplines

CHAPTER 5

The Business of Consumer Culture History: Systems, Interactions, and Modernization

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A *single* business might be a firm or simply the activity by which someone makes a living. *Business,* however, encompasses the collectivity of systems by which people and institutions interact within most modern economies. And, although there are many ways people can acquire the economic means with which to make claims on resources, there is only one way to *purchase* resources, and that is by interacting with businesses. Business history resides, therefore, at the core of consumer culture history, which itself has reflected and energized the processes of modernization. As scholars have wrestled with explaining consumer cultures, early work mainly examined single factors—manufacturers, advertising agents, urbanization, consumers, law makers, regulators, retailers, social and cultural meanings, and so on. Building on these achievements, historians have begun to move toward more complex and integrative *interactive* and *system*-based approaches for tackling historical questions about consumer cultures. Such approaches are particularly apropos because commerce's growth within the larger context of modernization rewarded participants who developed new systems for engagement—between people conducting business in different regions and sectors; between consumers, retailers, and producers; and between different components of the polity, just to name a few. Although business historians once tended to study their subjects as if they functioned as distinct and isolated entities within narrow and closed systems, their work increasingly recognizes that neither businesspeople nor consumers, and certainly not the actions that connected them, ever operated in isolation.

Countless sets of practical problems arose within business operations during the long—and ongoing—march of modernizing consumption, production, and

distribution patterns. By applying an interactive system approach to three such sets of problems from U.S. business history, this chapter will illustrate the analytical benefits of examining how actors of every sort—individuals, groups, firms, and other institutions—addressed those problems, whether in mutual promotion or fierce opposition or realistic compromise. The first application explores how producers hoping to appeal to fashion struggled to assess consumer preferences. The second application examines the business-to-business interactions that generated advertising's modern practices. The third application asks why consumers' assessments of the potential risks and benefits of transactions changed as markets expanded since the late 1800s. Each of these sets of problems illustrates a fundamental aspect of modernization, namely, the development of mechanisms and institutions to facilitate transactions on scales that precluded face-to-face negotiations or information gathering. Some of these mechanisms mimicked traditional interactions, such as advertisements' simulacra that advised us as if they were real people whom we trusted. Other mechanisms included government or industry regulations intended to raise consumer confidence. In each of these applications, no single type of actor or mechanism determined the historical outcomes. None was sufficient, and all were necessary. Thinking systemically about these and other multidimensional interactions offers scholars an effective approach to the components and dynamics of consumer culture that respects its historically complex and contingent nature.

Consumer Culture Feedback Loops

Imagine a group of upper-middle-class men in, say, 1911 staring at an array of china dishware patterns trying to figure out which to produce and market to working-class women! Practices like male industrialists producing pleasurable commodities for unfamiliar women are fundamentally modern, involving chains of transactions across great social and geographical distances. Methods by which some producers of fashion-sensitive goods have constructed such interactive chains inspired Regina Lee Blaszczyk's seminal work at the juncture of business, technology, and consumer culture history. Her first book's title, *Imagining Consumers: Design and Innovation from Wedgwood to Corning,* acknowledges the fundamental difficulties manufacturers faced, and continue to face, as they struggled to compete for the expenditures and loyalties of people who were in so many ways strangers to them. Blaszczyk introduced the term "fashion intermediaries" to refer to "astute consumer liaisons whose jobs entailed studying markets, evaluating tastes, and making product recommendations." Not elite tastemakers, the "most successful" of these intermediaries in home furnishings worked to "understand, interpret, and satisfy women's material expectations," and they succeeded to the degree, she argues, that they attended to "tips from shoppers on which designs would sell."[1] Whether or not these fashion intermediaries actually knew what consumers wanted in a target region, class, or ethnicity, they conveyed a comforting authority to producers and retailers.

Blaszczyk examined modest-sized, flexible batch processing firms that *might* have succeeded through luck and intuition, but that improved their odds if they built feedback systems with fashion intermediaries to help them "imagine consumers." These liaisons always had their ears to the ground, eagerly seeking clues about what women within relevant markets wanted in dishware and kitchenware. Clinton Pierce Case, for instance, was the first specialized crockery buyer for F. W. Woolworth and Co.'s chain of five-and-dime retail stores. At the turn of the twentieth century, he worked directly with crockery makers, such as the Homer Laughlin China Company, offering insights about what millions of working-class women sought and placing orders for carloads of inexpensive dishware. Mr. Woolworth had instructed the chain's buyers to "people-watch," and Case was a master at that. He walked through city streets, window shopping and studying others who looked at store windows. Shoppers' clothes, accents, behaviors, and comments about merchandise inside stores drew his attention, as well. Case assembled feedback from Woolworth store managers, who observed daily what consumers purchased and what they rejected; he also looked over their monthly sales records. Case's store managers occasionally surveyed their customers about preproduction china patterns. This professional fashion intermediary did not rely on intuition but, instead, based his judgments upon mountains of hard-won evidence, and to great effect.[2]

The Homer Laughlin China Company appreciated Case's advice, but other types of industrial producers have operated within different systems, developing different interaction patterns as they wrestled with the communication and feedback challenges of widening distances from their consumers. Large-scale industrialists can operate as what Philip Scranton has identified as either "bulk" manufacturers or "mass and flow" producers. The former produce vast quantities of staple goods, such as cereals and soaps, that consumers might not be able to distinguish from competing brands without a label. The latter's goods, such as automobiles and appliances, tend to be more easily distinguished from each other, but both types of large-scale manufacturers invest in expensive capital equipment and high-volume production methods that do not permit rapid adjustments in response to consumer tastes.[3] In these sectors, managerial strategies often attempt to impose fashion on markets while trying to generate desires in consumers. With whatever frequency they succeed and to what degree, they have fueled a century of intensely political debates about the consequences. Before turning to those debates, it will be useful to distinguish between the marketing problems of various manufacturing sectors and the systems they have developed to address them.

The advantages of interactions between consumers and businesses for marketing outcomes are evident, but those interactions are easier to achieve for some business sectors than others. To think about one extreme of consumer/seller feedback loops, picture a medieval street peddler singing out to sell her family's hot cross buns. No medium or method in the modern marketing feedback armamentarium strikes with the precision and richness of a street crier's daily experience. If potential customers ignored her songs, grumbled about her pastries, or stared longingly at what they could not afford, she knew instantly and might have been

able to adjust the offending variable. Clearly, the closer a producer operates to her consumers and the greater her production flexibility, the tighter and more useful a feedback loop *can* be.

At the other extreme of size and flexibility, how do massive corporations, distant in every sense from their markets, assess consumers' tastes, capacity for spending, and willingness to take risks? Even that master at innovative marketing, Alfred P. Sloan, Jr., found frustrating General Motor's inability to gauge consumer tastes and demand and, then, to respond to sales feedback quickly. As the founder of annual model changes in the automobile industry, Sloan recognized the importance of styling and consumer tastes that Henry Ford finally acknowledged only reluctantly. Nonetheless, no automobile manufacturer could respond as quickly to consumer tastes or produce as many designs as could dishware companies. Massive capital equipment investments and years of planning and engineering for model changes restricted their flexibility. As Sloan wrote, "planners are then remote from the realities of the market place in which their work will be tested." Between the planning of a new design and its debut, "the consumers' taste, income, and spending habits may all have changed radically."[4]

To create GM's perspective on consumers, Sloan favored quantifiable measurements of consumer behavior and preferences. An industry-wide overproduction crisis in 1924 followed immediately upon the previous year's boom, so Sloan instigated GM's development of what he called "techniques of fact-finding and analysis" to help predict demand. During the boom, Sloan had felt torn between slow, inadequate sales data and "salesmen with their optimistic intuitions." Yet he never resolved the tensions between "statistical controls" and "salesmanship." Sales forces worked more closely with individual customers but were decidedly traditional and subjective. The most "modern" of detailed sales figures, however, could not explain underlying cultural, social, or economic factors. To assist in that, during the 1920s, GM initiated surveys and other statistical reporting with which to "imagine consumers."[5] Nonetheless, for decades, management retained product planning wholly within the ranks of GM engineers and styling staff. According to historian Sally H. Clarke, GM gave priority to its "business parameters of production, engineering, and service" precisely because of the difficulties of predicting successful styles for an expensive production process with a long lead time.[6]

The tribulations of product design in the absence of close interactions with consumers demonstrated repeatedly the limits of the objective data that GM accumulated on consumers and the consequences of not seeking different types of information. However carefully and extensively generated, surveys and sales reports could not provide the means by which huge corporations could get feedback from consumers at the level Blaszczyk describes for successful batch producers, much less that of the hot cross buns peddler. Indeed, America's industrial leaders only slowly, and often reluctantly, recognized the value of knowing more about consumers than they could intuit. Industrialists' initial inclinations were to promote themselves and their products without studying their markets' denizens.[7] Henry Ford almost destroyed his company by 1926 with allegiance to

producing a single basic car. Following his traditionalist approach, he produced what he assumed that consumers needed and marketed that according to his own values. After his initial, entirely intuitive resonance with the market faded, he struggled for decades with the tensions between his own inclinations and what the American market came to expect in automobiles. Sloan's approach was also intuitive but happened to be more suitable after 1920. Once GM put a model on the market, it promoted that model through corporate national advertisements, dealers' local ads, and other means; sales and surveys measured its success. This feedback loop was slow, did not reveal much about consumers, and did not permit quick responses in either products or promotional strategies. Nonetheless, this internalist strategy persisted. Even advertising practitioners whose claims to professional stature rested on constructing appeals to consumers turned only with difficulty and reluctance to mechanisms that reached beyond their own class- and sex-based prejudices, and they rarely did so before the late 1920s.[8]

This point returns us to the political question of whether consumers are dupes of manipulative marketers or make every purchasing decision according to tastes that arise outside of the marketplace—polar positions in the debates about marketing's consequences. Thinking systemically about marketplace interactions, however, can avoid either extreme, guiding us toward evaluating multiple necessary factors that alone do not suffice. In that framework, attributing prime mover status, or assessing blame or credit according to one's own political proclivities, is beside the point. Instead, analyses of consumer desire or business success must encompass entire systems, not only consumers and producers, but also all of the intermediaries who carry information and goods between the market's end points. Compiling sufficient historical evidence regarding all of these layers about each and every industry is a daunting project, but as the wealth of research on individual sectors grows, analysts will be able to draw upon it. Ironically, many of the scholars most condemning of corporate impositions on supposedly unwitting populations indulge in a supply-side approach to consumer culture analysis, attributing more power to marketers than they deserve.[9]

An interactive approach can also guide us in using evidence about consumer culture dynamics. For instance, "reading" advertisements as a text for consumer culture has often seemed like a reasonable approach to assessing the effects of marketing plans, and many scholars have taken this path. Yet, if we think in terms of an interactive model of consumer culture, we immediately realize that ads themselves are not interactive, with the exceptions of peddlers and some Internet advertising. On their own, the ads can only tell us what advertisers, that is, the businesspeople who advertise, and their surrogates, such as advertising agencies, decided to disseminate. There was a time when all advertisers produced messages based on a combination of their own intuition and accepted practices—with or without guidance from professionals such as printers. Many small businesses still operate that way. The messages resulting from such practices, whether in the nineteenth century or now, can tell us quite a lot, but only about their creators. Once specialized practitioners increased their influence on the creation process, ads began to take on tones that reflected *their* understandings, values,

and ambitions. Consequently, Roland Marchand has referred to advertisements as a "distorting mirror," not one into which historians can reliably peer to discover consumers' cultural and social values.[10] If we ask, then, what evidence any given advertisement offers us about its audience's values, expectations, or reactions, the answer is nothing. Only if we have evidence of feedback from pertinent audiences—interactions with consumers either before or after a message's dissemination—can we learn about those audiences.

Although growth diminished promoters' personal contacts with consumers, not until the mid-twentieth century did corporate decision makers subscribe to mechanisms for professional interactions with consumers that could approach preindustrial levels of consumer feedback. After World War II, marketers evolved tools for enhancing interactions with consumers that raised their messages' effectiveness and reliability as reflections of their audiences. Thus, although advertising practitioners initially just replaced their clients' intuitions and biases with their own, they came to compete as what I earlier have called "intermediaries between advertisers and consumers." In the late 1880s, Claude C. Hopkins and others began to write about the importance of moving away from the P. T. Barnum approach that operated by "instinct." He urged, instead, studying products, consumers' concerns, *and* consumers' reactions to promotions as the only reliable way to improve selling effectiveness.[11] Since then, marketing professionals have explored a wide array of methods for increasing their knowledge of consumers. Statistical analyses have built pictures of aggregate market behavior, but understanding "people as people," complete with foibles and "non-rational" motivations, which Pierre Martineau distinguished from irrational motivations in the 1950s, required different approaches. These have included various motivation research strategies, such as focus groups. Robert Merton, the eminent sociologist, developed the focus group technique during World War II to provide a comfortable and safe setting in which people willingly conversed about themselves and their experiences. Since the 1950s, businesspeople have used focus groups as tools for interacting with consumers in settings that simulate familiarity, hoping to glean information about tastes, values, and lifestyles in order to boost marketing successes.[12] Even so, historians ought still to use the "distorting mirror" of advertisements with great caution.[13]

Thus, across time and sectors, marketers have interacted differently with their consumers, increasingly trying to predict, measure, and influence purchasing patterns. This task's complexity grew with the increasing distances between producers and consumers that characterize modernizing societies. Over time, purveyors have attempted to approach the peddler's immediate knowledge of her customers. Many of those methods entail systems of interactions between businesspeople of different sectors, as is the case with the advertising trade. Some follow the fashion intermediary model of consumer research that Blaszczyk describes. Others rely on experts and tastemakers, whose assertions regarding consumer preferences may result less from contacts with consumers than from their own inclinations. Professionals conducting focus groups or other motivation research offer other options; Internet feedback beacons called "cookies" now

generate mountains of data about consumer behavior. Of course, with countless products making their ways into markets, some hit the target of consumer preferences by chance, as happens often with music or products promoted with scattershot reach across huge populations. Large-volume producers may bludgeon their ways to marketplace effectiveness with massive promotion campaigns that may or may not be guided by consumer research. An interactive model of analysis can work across this spectrum of strategies, promising insights for both historians and marketing analysts operating in real time.

Modernizing U.S. Advertising

In 1889, Gerhard Mennen concocted a talcum power that the ladies coming to his druggist's shop in Newark, New Jersey, found particularly pleasing. Although Mennen advertised in medical journals with only limited success, he and his extended family did well in local newspapers and by tacking signs to buildings, trees, and fences in their immediate environs. Then, while still overseeing production, marketing, and his retail shop, Mennen took to the road. With a wagon of minstrel players, he traveled through the region, regaling potential customers and passing out samples in true snake-oil fashion. Early on, Mennen also engaged the services of job printers, publishers, and packaging manufacturers to help him promote and distribute his wares. Eventually, his successes required hiring rail and other transport, managing traveling salesmen, and negotiating with suppliers and jobbers. Even then, however, he still closely managed his advertising messages and their distribution, including those messages distributed outside of published media in formats now known as ephemera, such as trade cards, posters, and other free-standing novelties. As was the custom for owners who managed their own firms—and remains so for the many such firms today—Mennen took seriously and personally the messages his firm sent out into the world, and he participated in the many levels of negotiation by which those messages were created and distributed.[14]

Mennen's story was not at all remarkable, except for the troupe of entertainers. His expanding and increasingly complex marketing activities point to the centrality of interactions between individuals in different business sectors as a factor in successful marketing, then as now. Even before Mennen stopped pitching crowds himself, he had to engage growing numbers of both service and product providers. Yet, only in the 1910s did the Mennen family finally give up direct control over message creation, seeking advice from a practitioner outside of the firm and thereby externalizing advertising functions. The transition was not easy, and tensions arose when the J. Walter Thompson (JWT) Company insisted on abandoning Mennen's traditional practices, including its famous logos: the founder's portrait and a rotund baby "with the muscle of John L. Sullivan," as Stanley Resor later described it.[15] Despite the tensions, by the 1910s going to an outside firm was the most likely method for promoting a high-volume, standardized product directly to the national consumer market. Why did Mennen and his manufacturing peers routinely choose interacting with outsiders over relying on employees

whom they could more easily control? What were the advantages of an interactive system between advertisers, media producers, and advertising specialists not working under the same management umbrella, and how do they explain the system that became "modern" advertising?

Business historians have wrestled at length and with great intensity over questions of what "modernization" means in terms of firm structure and management style. For a time, the high-volume, vertically and horizontally integrated, professionally managed corporation model reigned among business historians as the exemplar of a truly modern firm. The power of Alfred D. Chandler's paradigm could not obscure for long, however, the continued vitality and importance of firms that operate differently, even if on various older models.[16] Why is not *any* firm operating successfully in modern times "modern"? This historiographical debate framed research and analysis that can now support a systemic approach that overrides the question altogether. The history of advertising as the public face of modern marketing demonstrates some of the advantages of a systemic approach that does not attempt to declare a single business sector as dominant, but instead explicitly looks for interactions among and between types of firms.[17] Put more emphatically, we cannot understand either the modernization of advertising or its potential for further change without looking at historical interaction patterns within and across systems.

Advertising entails five basic processes: deciding to advertise, creating a message, producing it, distributing it, and paying for it. The first and last steps always remain with advertisers, that is, with the businesspeople who advertise. The other steps, however, can be retained or passed on to others as inclination and fortune allow. As a rule, advertisers—especially firms' founders and owners—remain active in the creative processes long after they have delegated production and distribution of their messages to others. In the late nineteenth century, whether to outsource ad creation, production, and distribution, and, if so, to what sorts of businesses, were open questions; by 1910, they were not. Advertisers, print producers, and advertising practitioners—each sector operating under different business models and structures—together determined the course of this shift and thereby shaped twentieth-century advertising practices for national, brand-name products. One sector epitomized the Chandlerian corporate manufacturers of standardized consumer products, such as talcum powder, cleaning products, canned foods, razor blades, and the like. Printers and publishers fell into a second sector as manufacturers who specialized in skilled, flexible production to order. The sector that included what we now call advertising agents functioned initially as intermediaries between advertisers and media producers. They have since come to pride themselves on creativity—the ultimate in flexible operations, eschewing corporate management models until late in the twentieth century. Following the history of any one of the sectors alone cannot explain the complex of reciprocal changes that advertising's development entailed.[18]

In the course of this development, most advertisers, like Mennen, first turned to external expertise and facilities for producing and distributing the messages that they continued to devise themselves. Street criers and sign makers have,

therefore, served as advertisers since ancient times. Job printers flourished in the 1800s, working both on speculation and on contract to provide a vast array of colorful ephemera and novelty goods. Job printers as well as publishers of newspapers and magazines competed by providing advertisers with the most up-to-date technologies and skills, as well as creative contributions to their patrons' promotional messages. The nineteenth century's rapid advances in printing technologies and practices flowed from that competition, fueled by advertisers who sought appealing and novel formats for their promotions. By *not* internalizing these functions, by *not* investing in costly machines and hiring skilled printers, advertisers left themselves free to search the marketplace for printers and publishers who innovated to attract patronage.[19] In this fashion, businesses that sought standardization in their own production of consumer goods patronized communication trades that offered specialization and flexibility in theirs. Even firms that only sold to other firms relied on catalogs, calendars, brochures, mass mailings, and trade journals. Therefore, the histories of manufacturing firms and printing and publishing firms intertwined so intimately that fully understanding either sector's growth requires weaving the other into the story.[20]

The importance of interactions between types of firms for each sector's development is also striking for U.S. advertising agencies' formative stages between 1880 and 1920. During the late nineteenth century, campaigns for high-volume producers of branded consumer goods that are still well-known, like the Mennen Company, Quaker Oats, Coca-Cola, Procter & Gamble, Sherwin-Williams Company, and the American Tobacco Company, pushed the vanguard of brand-name consumer advertising. These manufacturing and processing firms grew by integration, both horizontal and vertical, minimizing as many uncertainties as possible. Accordingly, they kept their promotional strategies and content development in-house for decades, outsourcing only media production and placement. With rare exceptions, the notoriously successful campaigns prior to the end of the nineteenth century were generated by founders and owners, ranging from what the *New York Times* called the "Patent-Medicine Kings" to Isaac Singer and Cyrus Hall McCormick, whose marketing skills compensated for the inadequacies of their sewing machines and agricultural equipment, respectively. McCormick expressed the general opinion of his peers that "the heads and frequently the originators of their businesses . . . knew more than other men" about their own products. There was, therefore, no reason to patronize a "specialized science" of advertising.[21] Faith in their wares and the power of advertising, combined with grim determination and vivid imaginations, overwhelmed their meeker competitors.

As of 1890, no one could have credibly predicted what advertising practices would prevail twenty years later. Rarely did firms look beyond themselves, their printers, or freelance artists and writers for promotional content or strategies. Nonetheless, as professional managers replaced founding entrepreneurs, as markets became national or international, and as media options grew, firms increasingly sought a competitive advertising edge by working with individuals and firms that functioned best and most creatively when not integrated—including not

only the era's communications media, but also advertising practitioners of various descriptions, even when the latter field was wholly inchoate. With firms competing fiercely within their own sectors, extensive experimentation and innovation occurred in every facet of practices, firm structures, and products, generating a swirling, primordial sea from which the twentieth-century field of advertising crystallized.[22] These interactions fostered rapid evolution toward a system of practices that still operates largely outside of the corporations paying for them. By some analysts' reckonings, this makes the advertising field atavistic, a throwback to precorporate models of business. But, instead, our notions of what "modern" means need updating. By its very nature, advertising embodies—some would say it defines—the up-to-date. It conveys the purportedly "new and improved," and its patrons have always strained to maximize the fashionableness of both their messages and their media. As Henry Sampson explained in 1874,

> In advertising there seems to be always something new springing up, and no sooner do we think we have discovered the last ingenious expedient of the man anxious to display his wares, or to tempt others to display theirs, than another and more novel plan for publicity arrests the attention, and makes its predecessor seem old-fashioned, if not obsolete.[23]

The classic Uneeda Biscuit campaign that began at the very end of the nineteenth century exemplified the fundamental rationale for otherwise integrated firms not to internalize their advertising functions as they modernized. The National Biscuit Company (now NABISCO) had just emerged from the 1898 consolidation of 114 cracker and cookie bakeries across the nation when its management sought outside help for a massive new promotional campaign. The new corporate giant turned to N. W. Ayer & Son, already one of the top U.S. advertising agencies, which operated, as did most for nearly another century, as an owner-managed firm. While the manufacturer worked to standardize packaging and product, the advertising specialists worked to contrive quirky teasers such as "Do you know Uneeda Biscuit?" Together, these two pioneering firms at opposite ends of the flexibility/standardization continuum devised and conducted a groundbreaking campaign that was, in turn, produced by publishers and job printers in the middle of that continuum. Contrary to the standard assumptions that mass production necessitated marketing aggressiveness, this vanguard campaign's successes actually called for building new factories to meet demand.[24] Neither the advertising field nor the mass production of consumer products can be understood without examining such joint operations.

The Uneeda Biscuit case illustrates several advantages of flexibility over predictability—the inverse of why manufacturers internalized so many of their other functions. Decisions and creativity that cannot easily be judged by objective criteria rarely flourish in bureaucracies. As the advertising trade journal *Printers' Ink* explained in 1923, "an advertisement, or a campaign, is not like an automobile . . . . Wholesale standardization will not do. Each campaign is, or should be, a first model." Moreover, this advocate for "modern" advertising pointed out,

proudly, that "Today, the agency begins by admitting that advertising contains intangibilities. It does not promise; it presents possibilities and probabilities."[25] Thus, even as corporate managers relentlessly sought order, control, efficiency, and rationalization within their firms, they turned over their priceless public images to advertising specialists over whom they held minimal sway. The significance of this paradox becomes clear if we imagine scientific management advocate Frederick W. Taylor reacting to department store and advertising powerhouse John Wanamaker's famous rejoinder to criticisms about wasting half his advertising: he would not cut back because he did not know which half was wasted. Furthermore, it is easier for an advertiser to move an account from one agency to another than to dismiss a whole assembly of employees. Again, flexibility is the key. With such a vast array of outside alternatives to choose from, why should any but the most controlling managers not be eager to hire innovations from without that might be stifled within?

Economist Richard R. Nelson has argued for "the economic significance of discretionary firm differences." "Competition," he wrote, "can be seen as not merely about incentives and pressures to keep prices in line with minimal feasible costs, and to keep firms operating at low costs, but, much more important, about exploring new potentially better ways of doing things."[26] Owner-managers of the hundreds of agencies founded during these tumultuous decades had the flexibility to do as they saw fit, and to prosper or not, as advertisers and luck would have it. In 1892, Manhattan alone had at least 288 agencies performing a range of functions in multiple fashions.[27] Neither the field's early leaders nor their competitors knew how the field would mature, and so they speculated and experimented endlessly, even as one advocate tried to reassure patrons in 1900 that "Advertising is no longer an experiment."[28] As individuals within the field watched each other and gauged failures and successes, their practices converged, but never so much as to inhibit flexibility, as integration into hierarchical bureaucracies might have done. Advertising modernized through interactions between the three sectors that commissioned, created, and distributed marketing messages.

Confidence and Modernization

Consumers consider such factors as expected costs, fashions, and product functions when making purchasing decisions. They assess potential risks and gains as well as they can within any circumstance, investing their time, energy, identity, and money according to their best information and judgment. Making such assessments when transactions take place under face-to-face conditions on relatively small scales can be difficult enough. How fully, for instance, could one rely on the town butcher, even if that butcher were one's cousin? Did he use "heavy" weights or make sausages from dubious meat? Modernization's expanding scope and scale for many of life's operations made gauging the balance of risk and gain even more difficult. What if a trustworthy butcher's supply lines lengthened beyond his immediate connections? How could even the most careful consumer pull together adequate information to purchase with confidence when

separated from purveyors by geography and power?[29] Such distances challenged consumers and businesspeople alike.[30]

Thus, a core difficulty of conducting modern business transactions—not only in buying and selling consumer goods but more broadly—has been to acquire sufficient information to warrant decisions when distances preclude direct experience between relevant people or institutions. The eternal benefits of personal experience with counterparts in many professional and business circumstances perpetuate the value of social capital's connections and connectability, yet modernization requires transactions with strangers and unseen entities.[31] Indeed, we can measure a system's "modernity" as the inverse of social capital's weight within it. That is, the stronger the personal ties participants must share in order to have confidence in a business transaction, the less modern is the system in which that transaction occurs. Modernization has, therefore, involved institutional and procedural innovations intended to raise participants' confidence in their counterparts as well as in the very business processes and systems themselves.[32] This is the proclaimed goal of much regulation, both governmental and otherwise, such as by trade organizations. Thus, within the many shifting layers of systems that constitute the marketplace, actors have developed diverse mechanisms and institutions to facilitate their interactions. The fashion intermediaries whom Blaszczyk examined in the chinaware trade, for instance, operated at the nexus of a system with female consumers on one side and male producers on the other. Blaszczyk has argued convincingly for the effectiveness of such human intermediaries and the personal relationships through which their information flowed. Yet more modern data-gathering strategies would rely on less personal and intuitive sources of data, such as surveys and focus groups. Of course, modern is not necessarily better or more effective, even if it raises decision makers' confidence levels.

We can take another look at the professionalization of advertising through this social-capital lens. When Gerhard Mennen began selling his talcum powder, his town and environs bounded his first market. In this local context, his personal reputation served him well. As the local operator of a national franchise store once told me, "customers want to see the boss." Personal reputation could not, however, adequately serve Mennen's full ambitions. Yet, as he and most other nineteenth-century purveyors of processed consumer products expanded their promotional reach beyond areas where their personal reputations carried any weight, they rarely discarded the culture of face-to-face business transactions with consumers, however large their domains grew, as long as they remained sole or primary proprietors.[33] Even now, many owners of small businesses still present their wares and services with their own voices, faces, and names; the combined impulses of pride and reputation remain powerful. Thus, if we look at Mennen's first decades of promotions as well as those of most other proprietors of his century—and the centuries before and since—we see a social-capital model of promotion that presumes the benefits of trading on personal reputation while also seeking to enhance it. Whether consumers purchasing a tin of Mennen's talc hundreds of miles from New Jersey felt reassured by seeing his face on that tin,

we will likely never know. But we do know that he and his peers believed that to be so; another trademark would not do.

The nineteenth-century pioneers of modern advertising were also cultural pioneers. As high-profile figures in modernization's vanguard, they wielded their advertisements as weapons in intense competitions for cultural authority. The messages of "progress" that their ads carried into public arenas conveyed what they saw as their contributions to advances in technological, cultural, and social spheres. Their surnames, faces, places of business, and sometimes even family members and homes graced their messages, conveying pride and inspiring—or so they hoped—confidence in their offerings. Advertising is a product of business culture, and, therefore, when business cultures change, advertising styles and strategies also change. As many of the nation's high-volume producers merged into corporations like the National Biscuit Company in the years just before and after 1900, their internal cultures changed. Owners became stockholders, generally removed from managerial decisions; management, in turn, professionalized. As managers fought their own battles for cultural prestige and business authority, they turned to a new cadre of allies to remake their firms' public profiles. These advertising and public relations specialists, who were shaping their own fields simultaneously, insisted that advertisers forsake their personal identification with their products.[34] "Advertise the goods for sale," declared Nathaniel Fowler in 1900, "and not the folks who sell them."[35] The logic of their dictum evinced their distance from the notion of face-to-face selling of brand-name consumer products. During these transition years, professional modernists had no use for a bygone era's symbols of production and producers in trying to generate consumers' confidence.

Thus, modern advertising practitioners worked assiduously to remove traces of their clients' "Personal Publicity," as a leading copywriter termed it. Some innovative specialists developed "reason-why" techniques to provide ostensibly rational arguments to consumers. Still others, however, replaced producers' names and images with what came to be called "human-interest" trademarks. The Quaker Oats man served as an early and remarkably successful example of this on product labels, in costume at county fairs, and in countless advertisements beginning in 1877. At the end of that century, in direct competition with the inventor of rolled oats as a breakfast cereal, Ferdinand Schumacher, the Quaker Oats man won hands down.[36] By the 1920s, such simulacra were standard fare in American advertising. Although a very real Lydia Pinkham had begun advising women on their health in the 1870s, her identity and advising long outlived her and her reformer's zeal.[37] Betty Crocker and Aunt Jemima remain among the countless characters created to entice and reassure consumers of packaged foods' wholesomeness, often also proffering advice on what products to use and how to use them. With the rise of radio broadcasting, some characters, such as Tom Mix (a real person played by actors), doubled as pop culture heroes and product spokespersons. Some fictive characters served as conduits for advice about consumers' love lives, families, and health in ways that obscured product promotions. Even cartoon figures rose to fame, like Mr. Peanut, the Gold Dust Twins (washing

powder), and the chubby Campbell Soup Kids. The ancient art of the testimonial has flourished, as well, blossoming even beyond its nineteenth-century extravagances, be the spokespersons real or fictional, willing or not, paid or not.[38]

These many techniques found their ways into the public arena of consumer culture as marketers tried to bridge the distances between them and their audiences, distances that could be measured in terms of class, gender, or ethnicity, as well as in miles. Specialists in the new communication fields worked hard on behalf of their patron advertisers at overcoming the gaps in confidence that resulted when buyers had no relationship, contact, or interaction with sellers. So compelling was and is the appeal of interactions, even simulated ones, that the consumer culture is awash in ways for consumers to engage in them. Both social critics and science fiction writers have highlighted the pleasures and dangers of commercial and virtual substitutes for direct human interactions. Perhaps advertising's successes through very real interactions with quite imaginary entities would surprise us less if we considered the power of fictional characters in novels, film, broadcasting, and virtual reality games to garner audiences' intense attention and loyalty. Roland Marchand concluded his *Advertising the American Dream* musing on this phenomenon as a consequence of the "new, 'dehumanizing' scale" of modern life. "Most experiments in personalizing products," he determined, "brought a favorable public response, no matter how transparent the pretense of intimacy," offering people "both a dynamic and a stabilizing influence" that recognized consumers' individual needs, even if on a mass and commercialized scale.[39]

JWT's challenge to the Mennen family over the firm's trademark and logo takes on greater significance in light of these and other cultural and legal changes within American business and across the nation. Would loyal customers still recognize Mennen's products without their time-honored logos? On the other hand, without moving to "modern" symbols and designs, would Mennen's products fail to win the patronage of new, up-to-date customers? Although these were the terms on which Mennen and JWT debated, if we look beyond the business-to-business system in which they interacted, we can see other, entirely different systems that also affected the American consumer culture. Judicial decisions and consumer-oriented legislation became prominent factors in the marketplace about the same time as advertising practices professionalized, and these raised consumers' confidence in the market's offerings in ways that congenial cartoon figures could not. They also supplanted social capital or social-capital emulations as assurances of safety and reliability for nationally marketed consumer products. In theory, consumers no longer needed butchers who were cousins or neighbors once they could buy certified meat. Was it a coincidence that founders' personalized trademarks and logos, like Mennen's face on the talc tin, declined with the rise of regulation? Did consumers gain enough confidence about product safety that they cared less that a respectable gentleman like Mr. Mennen stood behind his product?

The system within which Mennen's first customers purchased their talcum power, like that within which a country butcher made and sold sausage, was

vastly different from the system in which most American consumers made their purchases by 1910. As simpler systems morphed into more complex ones, the numbers of relevant actors increased and information originated farther from consumers. Nothing less than systemic analyses can comprehend the extent and complexity of these changes. Sally H. Clarke achieves this with her study of the first half century of the American automobile market, tracking its evolution through three historical stages that differed dramatically according to the changing relations between many layers of actors. The industry's initial presumptions that drivers should share in the risks of innovation met challenges from drivers, as well as public and private institutions, including insurance companies, auto dealers, and courts. "These contests between consumers and corporations," Clarke demonstrates, "were not byproducts of, but figured directly in the auto market's creation and evolution." Furthermore, the "tension between trust and power in market relations" played out as manufacturers, consumers, and advocates for each weighed costs, safety features, and commercial messages.[40]

Questions about consumer confidence and legal protections, therefore, bring attention to systems outside of businesses' daily activities that profoundly affected those activities. Elite presumptions about consumers a century ago contrasted starkly with the realities of the political economy of consumption. Just as it took decades for advertising practitioners to seek out direct feedback from ordinary consumers, the nation's legal institutions initially slighted consumers' competence. For instance, from the 1870s into the 1930s' New Deal, court decisions against trademark infringement reflected judges' disdain for consumers' abilities to avoid fraud. With total indifference to evidence about consumers' capacity for prudence, judges wrote decisions as if the state's primary concerns pertained to a closed system of competing businesses. Within that system, judges sought to protect respectable businessmen who had built up good reputations that the public could associate with their trademarks. Judges repeatedly declared the consumers' right to be careless. Their dismissal of consumers as not responsible for acting in their own best interests showed that judges were no better at seeing beyond the boundaries of their social and vocational systems than were that era's advertisers or advertising practitioners, or even professional advocates for consumers.[41]

Despite this elite disregard, consumers were not at all passive regarding their own protection and other political issues. Recent scholarship has expanded the range of consumer culture studies by resoundingly revealing the effects of individuals' and organizations' activism vis-à-vis businesses and governance bodies. The multifaceted impacts of voters, consumers, and businesspeople clearly demonstrate that governing institutions are not autonomous, monolithic actors, imposing their will on consumers or businesses. Thus, Lizabeth Cohen has explained how workers came to see themselves as citizens and consumers and, more to the point, to *act* as such. She weaves those roles together, applying a broad frame of reference that does not draw artificial boundaries around people's experiences. Cohen has also traced the growing sense that consumer spending is central to the nation's economic health. Negotiations among and between businesspeople, government policymakers, and consumers have shaped the national system,

even the national landscape. In the current version of the "consumers' republic," she observes that individual interests seem to have trumped earlier, more idealistic goals, but the political consequences of consumer concerns continue. Consumers' interests take center stage, as well, in Meg Jacobs's work on policymaking. "Consumption," she asserts about postwar America, "was replacing production as the foundation of American civic identity." Jacobs features interactions within and between the public and the state, individual citizens and businesses, as she analyzes the complex system to which all of them belonged. Likewise, Lawrence Glickman brings social and political history together with consumer culture history to highlight the roles of "consumer citizens." He traces the applications of spending power along a range of political movements that extended beyond obvious consumer issues to national questions as broad as the prelude to the American Revolution and workers' conditions and civil rights. Robert Weems's classic work has brought the connection between consumer activities and civil rights front and center.[42]

A peak moment for consumer activism came in 1906 with the passage of the Pure Food and Drug Act and the Meat Inspection Act on the same day. The remarkable history of these companion laws illustrates both of this chapter's points, namely, the merits of analysis in terms of interactive systems and modernization's reduction of social capital's influence within those interactions. With each telling of the interwoven stories of these two laws, authors point to some subset of the multiple factors contributing to the achievement, often noting, as did a legal scholar, the "unprecedented convergence" of pressures that resulted in this landmark legislation. That author listed three categories of pressures that contributed to the whole: "consumer, scientific, and industrial support."[43] Another scholar, more interested in cultural phenomena, emphasized Americans' growing obsession with "cleanliness and wholesomeness" as having driven public demands for consumer reform. Anxieties about threats to "physical, mental and moral health" pervaded popular culture in the decades surrounding 1906. As a result, the stories that activists told to arouse public sympathy for industrial workers invariably stimulated consumer protections. Upton Sinclair most famously "aimed at the public's heart" and "hit it in the stomach" with *The Jungle*'s descriptions of Chicago meatpacking, but exposés of sweatshops, bakeries, and chocolatiers had the same effects.[44] Muckraking magazines, reform-minded ladies' groups, and public health advocates challenged the public confidence that industrialists and their promoters were trying to build. All participated in an expanding system of consumer-oriented communications, their spheres intersecting—or, rather, colliding—with each other.

The crisis of confidence that led to the two 1906 reforms dramatically showed that urbanization and distance from suppliers affected how citizens felt about their purchase options. As consumers, they worried that they could not assess the trustworthiness of meatpackers Swift and Armour, off in Chicago stockyards, to the same degree that they could evaluate the local butchers of their childhoods. Information can bestow confidence on a purchase, but even the urban purveyors of meat no longer knew what was in the sausage they sold. The rising skepticism

worried food and drug processors about losing sales both nationally and abroad, and these worries changed the interactions in spheres that were not obvious to the public. Thus, industrialists reduced their opposition to congressional regulations, anticipating correctly that the resulting laws would enable them to redouble their claims to purity and so raise prices, whether or not warranted by the new conditions. Consumers hoped to replace their lost firsthand knowledge of production conditions with secondhand assurances from the state when it granted its imprimatur. Over the years since, in an environment in which it is impossible to rely on personal connections for assessing product risks and benefits, consumers have come to rely on a combination of product identities tied to trademarks plus state and industry regulations. These mechanisms may or may not suffice, as we have recently experienced to our dismay in mortgage and financial markets. For more than a century, each interactive cycle has shown the same basic pattern: public concerns lead to reforms and regulations; the resulting system allows the citizenry to relax; pressure rises to ease regulatory "burdens." A spike in *E. coli* or financial malfeasance begins the cycle of modern regulation anew.

Scholars and Systems

Scholarly fields that are inherently interdisciplinary are the most likely to appreciate multilayered interactions within and between systems, which explains why the history of consumer culture has and will see great progress with such an approach. Historians have already yielded analyses that, in effect, examine interactive systems within consumer history, whether or not they identify themselves as business historians. Notably, historians who work at the crossroads of business and technology have been especially cognizant of interaction and system. For instance, Ruth Schwartz Cowan has tagged as the "consumption junction" the nexus where consumer preferences encounter purveyors' products and services. As consumers select what they want and can afford from among what is available, they send signals that in turn influence succeeding rounds of products and services. Through iterative feedback loops, what comes available to consumers changes, and what consumers expect and are willing to pay for adapts, as well.[45] W. Bernard Carlson's biography of Elihu Thomson makes evident that the most ingenious invention means little unless the results are embedded in networks of social organizations for production and marketing. "Significantly, the linking of technology, organization, and marketing strategy did not take place automatically, driven by inexorable technical or economic forces. Rather," he concluded, "individuals and groups forged those links gradually as they interacted on several levels, making mistakes, changing their approaches, and ultimately developing an appropriate match between the hardware and the business system."[46]

In the last paragraph of his study of the Baldwin Locomotive Works, John K. Brown calls for developing "a new industrial history in which variety, contingency, and choice replace economic, organizational, and technical determinisms."[47] Thinking in terms of systems and interactions offers a way to undertake Brown's challenge in an analogous way to what philosopher of science

Ludwig von Bertalanffy proposed for a dynamic, systemic approach to science. A founder of general systems theory, Bertalanffy traced the sciences from their early attempts "to explain phenomena by reducing them to an interplay of elementary units which could be investigated independently of each other" and that remained unaltered by the "interplay." In every field, progress entailed recognizing and wrestling with "problems of organisation" and interactions within and between systems. Enigmas "in the usual schematisms and pigeonholes of the specialized fields" can open up productively to analysis in which both elements and systems are subject to change by virtue of their interactions.[48] Looking for such "dynamic interaction" holds intriguing promise for business and consumer culture history.

Highlighting interactions within systems precludes teleological and deterministic thinking. Historical contingency reigns. Moreover, this approach recognizes that multiple actors are necessary for any system to evolve (or devolve, as the case may be) and that no single actor or category of actors can determine either change or continuity. Nor does it favor any particular mechanism, such as enterprise, technological innovation, supply and demand, or power relations, for driving history. Complexity trumps reductionism. Presentism also takes a back seat, because an interactive approach presumes that individuals, organizations, and institutions had choices at any given juncture, and it encourages searches for how they assessed their options within their historical and cultural contexts.

Notes

1. Regina Lee Blaszczyk, *Imagining Consumers: Design and Innovation from Wedgwood to Corning* (Baltimore, MD, 2000), 12–13.
2. Blaszczyk, *Imagining Consumers*, 89, 103–6, 110. See also Blaszczyk's edited volume, *Producing Fashion: Commerce, Culture, and Consumers* (Philadelphia, PA, 2008), especially her introductory chapter, "Rethinking Fashion," and her text, *American Consumer Society, 1865–2005* (Wheeling, IL, 2009).
3. For an extended analysis of the importance of flexible production within the overall manufacturing picture in the United States, see Philip Scranton, *Endless Novelty: Specialty Production and American Industrialization, 1865–1925* (Princeton, NJ, 1997). See pp. 10–11 for Scranton's definitions of manufacturing approaches.
4. Alfred P. Sloan, Jr., *My Years with General Motors*, ed. John McDonald with Catherine Stevens (Garden City, NY, 1964), 134–37, 239–41.
5. Sloan, *My Years*, 135–36; Sally H. Clarke, *Trust and Power: Consumers, the Modern Corporation, and the Making of the United States Automobile Market* (New York, 2007), 129–37. See Walter A. Friedman, *The Birth of a Salesman: The Transformation of Selling in America* (Cambridge, MA, 2005) regarding the tensions between advocates for the "art" and "science" of selling as the field professionalized.
6. Sloan, *My Years*, 240–45; Clarke, *Trust and Power*, 177–78, 190–91. See also David Gartman, *Auto Opium: A Social History of American Automobile Design* (London and New York, 1994), especially chaps. 4–5.
7. Pamela Walker Laird, *Advertising Progress: American Business and the Rise of Consumer Marketing* (Baltimore, MD, 1998), chap. 2.

8. Roland Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream: Making Way for Modernity, 1920–1940* (Berkeley, CA, 1985), especially chap. 3.
9. For examples, see Stuart Ewen's once influential but now outdated *Captains of Consciousness: Advertising and the Social Roots of the Consumer Culture* (New York, 1976). See also Jackson Lears, *Fables of Abundance: A Cultural History of Advertising in America* (New York, 1994). Blaszczyk's corpus sits at the opposite end of the explanatory continuum, and Gartman's *Auto Opium* struggles to find a median. Daniel Horowitz calls for a "reciprocal model" in his classic *The Morality of Spending: Attitudes toward the Consumer Society in America, 1875–1940* (Baltimore, MD, 1985), xii, 168.
10. Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream*, xvii.
11. Laird, *Advertising Progress*, 179–80, 254–58.
12. Pierre Martineau, *Motivation in Advertising: Motives that Make People Buy* (New York, 1957); Richard A. Krueger and Mary Anne Casey, *Focus Groups: A Practical Guide for Applied Research*, 4th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA, 2009), 3–4, 144–45.
13. Even in the 1970s and 1980s, when I taught advertising principles to American undergraduates, students typically resisted, even resented, having to learn how to gauge target markets. They wanted to be "creative" according to their own lights. Similarly, the Clio Awards, begun in 1959, have notoriously rewarded advertisements for creativity even when they "sold" poorly or resonated with targeted consumers not at all.
14. Alfred Leif, *The Mennen Story* (New York, 1954), 2–20.
15. "Notes of a Speech Made by Mr. Stanley Resor to New Members of the Company, May 4, 1931," p. 5, J. Walter Thompson Company Archives, Manuscript Department, William R. Perkins Library, Duke University.
16. For an overview of the Chandler thesis and its influences on the history enterprise, see the Chandler memorial issue of *Business History Review* 82 (Summer 2008): 207–315. For alternatives to the Chandlerian model, see especially Scranton, *Endless Novelty*; John K. Brown, *The Baldwin Locomotive Works 1831–1915: A Study in American Industrial Practice* (Baltimore, MD, 1995); and Mansel G. Blackford, *A History of Small Business in America*, 2nd ed. (Chapel Hill, NC, 2003).
17. I developed this argument in detail in "When Uncertainty Had Virtue: Vertical Interaction—Not Integration—in American Advertising, 1880–1920," presented at the Business History Conference, 1999, Chapel Hill.
18. In current parlance, brand-name advertising is the default category of advertising when no term such as "retail" or "trade" modifies the word. The focus here is on the high-profile advertisements for high-volume consumer goods that come first to most people's minds when the topic arises.
19. There were, as always in an immature field, exceptions. For instance, between the Civil War and 1890, James C. Ayer's facilities produced millions of almanacs to advertise his medicinal offerings.
20. Laird, *Advertising Progress*, chap. 3. During the twentieth century, the rise of radio and television, and later the Internet, added new media to the mix without changing its essential dynamics.
21. Quoted in Laird, *Advertising Progress*, 36–37, 49, 51–52.
22. Entrepreneurs operating in periods of flux typically generate innovation at atypical rates. See, for instance, Peter F. Drucker, *Innovation and Entrepreneurship: Practice and Principles* (New York, 1985).

23. Henry Sampson, *A History of Advertising from the Earliest Times* (London, 1874), 597.
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26. Richard R. Nelson, "Why Do Firms Differ, and How Does It Matter?" *Strategic Management Journal* 12 (1991): 61–74.
27. *Trow Business Directory of New York City* 65 (New York, 1892).
28. Mahin Advertising Company advertisement, *System* 1, no. 1 (December 1900): n.p.
29. I find that "confidence" rather than "trust" is stronger in scholarly analysis. See my brief critique of the overuse of "trust" in "Putting Social Capital to Work," special issue, *Business History* 50, no. 6 (November 2008): 688.
30. For the nineteenth-century crisis in interpersonal confidence, see the classic works by Karen Halttunen, *Confidence Men and Painted Women: A Study of Middle-Class Culture in America, 1830–1870* (New Haven, CT, 1982), and John F. Kasson, *Rudeness & Civility: Manners in Nineteenth-Century Urban America* (New York, 1990).
31. Pamela Walker Laird, *Pull: Networking and Success since Benjamin Franklin* (Cambridge, MA, 2006).
32. See Laird, "Putting Social Capital to Work," introductory essay to the special issue of *Business History* by the same title, 685–94.
33. Thus, when James Buchanan Duke built the American Tobacco Company by subsuming proprietary firms, he had to sacrifice his firm's family name and adopt a corporate title without surnames to convince other owners to join. Similarly, other corporate mergers took names like U.S. Steel, Continental Can Company, and International Harvester. Laird, *Advertising Progress*, 194–95, 202, 417n64.
34. Laird, *Advertising Progress*, chaps. 2, 6, 8–10, especially pp. 258, 269–73; Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream*; Marchand, *Creating the Corporate Soul: The Rise of Public Relations and Corporate Imagery in American Big Business* (Berkeley, CA, 1998).
35. Nathaniel C. Fowler, Jr., *Fowler's Publicity: An Encyclopedia of Advertising and Printing* (Boston, MA, 1900), 517–19.
36. Laird, *Advertising Progress*, 250–52, 259, 270–71, 295–97.
37. Sarah Stage, *Female Complaints: Lydia Pinkham and the Business of Women's Medicine* (New York, 1979).
38. Marina Moskowitz and Marlis Schweitzer, eds., *Testimonial Advertising in the American Marketplace: Emulation, Identity, Community* (New York, 2009).
39. Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream*, 358–59.
40. Clarke, *Trust and Power*, 12, 14.
41. Michael J. Pettit, "The Unwary Purchaser: Consumer Psychology and the Regulation of Commerce in America," *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 43, no. 4 (2007): 379–399; Charles F. McGovern, *Sold American: Consumption and Citizenship, 1890–1945* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2006). On the roles of trademarks as hooks from which consumers and sellers can hang associations, see Mira Wilkins, "The Neglected Intangible Asset: The Influence of the Trade Mark on the Rise of the Modern Corporation," *Business History* 34 (January 1992): 66–95.

42. Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919–1939* (New York, 1990); Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York, 2003); Meg Jacobs, *Pocketbook Politics: Economic Citizenship in Twentieth-Century America* (Princeton, NJ, 2005), 2; and Lawrence Glickman, *Buying Power: A History of Consumer Activism in America* (Chicago, 2009); Robert E. Weems Jr., *Desegregating the Dollar: African American Consumerism in the Twentieth Century* (New York, 1998).
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44. Leslie A. Levin, "One Man's Meat Is Another Man's Poison: Imagery of Wholesomeness in the Discourse of Meatpacking from 1900–1910," *Journal of American & Comparative Cultures* 24, no. 1/2 (2001): 1–14. See also Arlene Finger Kantor, "Upton Sinclair and the Pure Food and Drugs Act of 1906," *American Journal of Public Health* 66, no. 12 (December 1976): 1202–5; and Gail Cooper, "Love, War, and Chocolate: Gender and the American Candy Industry," in Roger Horowitz and Arwen Mohun, eds., *His and Hers: Gender, Consumption, and Technology* (Charlottesville, VA, 1998), 67–94.
45. Ruth Schwartz Cowan, "The Consumption Junction: A Proposal for Research Strategies in the Sociology of Technology," in Wiebe E. Bijker, Thomas P. Hughes, and Trevor Pinch, eds., *The Social Construction of Technological Systems* (Cambridge, MA, 1987), 261–80.
46. W. Bernard Carlson, *Innovation as a Social Process: Elihu Thomson and the Rise of General Electric, 1870–1900* (New York, 1991), 12, 350, 361–62; quotation from 350.
47. Brown, *Baldwin Locomotive Works*, 240.
48. Ludwig von Bertalanffy, "An Outline of General System Theory," *British Journal for the Philosophy of Science* 1, no. 2 (August 1950): 134–65; Bertalanffy, *General System Theory* (New York, 1968).

CHAPTER 6

Affluence and Sustainability: Environmental History and the History of Consumption

Frank Uekoetter

At first glance, a chapter on affluence and sustainability would appear to offer a foregone conclusion. There is no sustainability in affluent societies. In the twenty-first century, with few people left who raise doubts about the reality of climate change, it is apparent that the Western style of mass consumption cannot sustain itself in the long run. It thus takes little effort to demonstrate the environmental peculiarity of modern consumer societies. After all, it is based on the massive exploitation of nonrenewable resources. The famous 1972 Club of Rome study on the *Limits to Growth* was only the best-known warning of its kind. In retrospect, one cannot help but wonder what was more remarkable—the study itself or the fact that a study was even necessary for modern consumer society to learn about the environmental limitations of the planet. With the debate over global warming, the environmental toll of consumerism has become familiar all over the world. Hence, it might be tempting to dispense with this topic in familiar fashion—with a compilation of statistics that illustrates the transition of societies to an unsustainable mode of consumption.

This chapter will pursue a different path for two reasons. First, others have already provided us with in-depth descriptions of the quantitative dimension of environmental change, and they have done so with much greater authority.[1] Second, and more crucially, such a discussion would present a somewhat limited impression of what environmental history can bring to a discussion of modern consumer societies. In the past two decades, environmental history has grown from a marginal field with a limited number of issues into a broad movement that focuses on a wide array of topics and trends. As a result, the early fixation on

a kind of counternarrative to traditional tales of progress has moved into the background to be supplemented by themes and issues that suggest additions, revisions, and nuances for the classic theme of decline. This chapter presents six perspectives that environmental history has developed in recent years and outlines their contribution to a more refined history of consumer societies. At the same time, it conceives of environmental history in broad terms and includes a number of scholars who would not see themselves as environmental historians. After all, the focus is on an emerging field, or rather a set of investigations and inquiries that have yet to merge into a self-conscious field of historical research. The concluding remark will try to weigh these recent contributions against the classic narrative of exploitation and elusive sustainability.

Growing Consumption, Growing Efficiency

The massive increase of resource use in the decades after World War II makes it easy to forget that the resource intensity of specific units of consumption has declined notably. In other words, while the total volume of resources consumed has grown, the resources consumed for specific items have actually declined. This is most apparent with the growing number of household appliances. As things like refrigerators or washing machines grew in technological sophistication, energy consumption declined significantly. Such a trend also held true for less conspicuous items. Beverage cans provide a prime example: modifications in design and growing precision in production methods have greatly changed the standard can, with the result that aluminum cans have lost about half their weight during the fifty years since their invention. To be sure, the total amount of aluminum used for packaging, nevertheless, grew threefold from 1959 to 1988, but the increase would have been far greater, if the growing hunger for aluminum in packaging had not been accompanied by a greater efficiency in resource use.[2]

The phenomenon is familiar to environmentalists, because the notion that the growing efficiency of technology will reconcile environmental and consumer concerns has emerged as a standard theme of green rhetoric. To mention but one example, the Club of Rome published a report entitled *Factor Four* in 1997 that described a path to twice as much wealth with half the resources.[3] From the historian's standpoint, the greater worry is that stressing the growing efficiency of resource use can easily lead to a return to simplistic tales of technological progress. If we only point to the growth of efficiency, we will end up with all-too-familiar tales of clever engineers who work out solutions to the challenges society faces. Yet the history of technology provides numerous ways to add necessary nuance to these stories, and any scholar who stumbles across the growth of resource intensity is well advised to look into it.

One might point out that aluminum cans took the place of steel ones, which had required a much lower energy input. Furthermore, growing resource efficiency may have encouraged wasteful behaviors. In the case of beverage cans, a key issue is the cultural shift toward a "waste mentality" that permitted the abandonment of reusable containers. A critical scholar may also want to look into

the impressive recycling quotas more closely: with the growing amount of waste, recycling has changed from a marginal field for small companies, often run by ethnic minorities, into a global big business.[4] Finally, the growth of efficiency is clearly a finite process, quite unlike the trajectory of consumer desires.

Furthermore, gains in efficiency do not necessarily decrease the overall environmental impact of a given technology. Environmentalists like to point out that, as motor vehicles have become more fuel-efficient, they have also become bulkier and heavier, with popular SUVs providing the latest example. Nor is this "rebound effect" a recent phenomenon. For instance, it is well known that in the development of household technology, labor-saving devices went hand in hand with higher standards of care and cleanliness. Furthermore, household appliances bolstered the integration of women into the job market. As Ruth Schwartz Cowan has written, "Modern household technology facilitated married women's workforce participation not by freeing women from household labor but by making it possible for women to maintain decent standards in their homes without assistants and without a full-time commitment to housework."[5] In other words, the presumed liberation from tedious work opened the door for new social obligations and economic rationales.

This point is all the more important since teleological narratives arguably present a particular challenge for consumer historians. Environmental historians are thus well advised to stress the ironies of progress narratives. For example, when the Federal Republic of Germany launched a massive construction program for nuclear power plants in the late 1960s, it did so on the basis of energy forecasts that envisioned a dangerous scarcity of power plant capacities in the future. When much of that construction program was scrapped due to pressure from nuclear activists in the 1980s, managers found that the antinuclear movement had forestalled a massive overinvestment. There simply would not have been any need for the additional reactors.[6] It is also important to note that many pollution problems actually declined with the rise of consumer society. Indications are strong that the early wave of protest, often directed at visible pollutants, was merely a by-product of consumerism, as people refused to accept dirt and other nuisances less readily when all sorts of products made life better and easier all the time. The shift towards antipollution rhetoric that was also directed at consumerism in general did not occur until the second stage of environmentalism.[7]

Consumer and Environmental Protest: Different Roots, Common Goals?

With that, this chapter has already touched on a second theme: the connection between consumer and environmental protest. Both movements had deeper roots but flourished in the decades after World War II, and some people were active in both camps. The best example was Ralph Nader. After his famous critique of the U.S. automobile industry in *Unsafe at Any Speed*, he went on to found a study group to examine the issue of air pollution. The report was published in 1970, well-timed for the surge of interest in environmental issues that year.[8]

Similarly, Vance Packard's critique of planned obsolescence in *The Waste Makers* was open to both consumerist and environmentalist readings.[9] Both the consumer and environmental movements were defined by an anticorporate strand; they were engaged in a joint struggle against a business community that had arguably reached the apogee of its legitimacy in the late 1950s. Finally, both movements lobbied national governments for political support. As a result, some scholars have covered both movements in their work, notably Daniel Horowitz in *The Anxieties of Affluence*.[10] However, it is interesting that Horowitz touches on both movements in an even broader context, as his book also includes figures like Martin Luther King, Jr., and Jimmy Carter, who were not prominent in either movement. Horowitz is clearly an exception to the general circumstance that the link between the consumer and environmental movements has received insufficient scholarly attention. The *Encyclopedia of World Environmental History*, for example, does not contain entries for either Ralph Nader or Vance Packard, though both are mentioned in the article on the "consumer movement."[11] Carolyn Merchant does not mention Packard in her *Columbia Guide to American Environmental History*, and she mentions Nader only once—as the founder of the New York Public Interest Research Group.[12] To be sure, Robert Gottlieb's *Forcing the Spring* mentions Nader more often, but he devotes only a single sentence to Packard, a remarkable choice for a book on the environmental movement that explicitly seeks to broaden our understanding of environmentalism.[13] "In the literature emerging in reaction to the rise of new social movements of the 1960s, consumerism has not widely entered the 'pantheon of protest,' " Matthew Hilton observed in his recent study of global consumer activism.[14] Characteristically, studies of German environmentalism routinely ignore consumer protection initiatives like the Stiftung Warentest and its influential journal *test*.[15]

The environmental history of France offers an exception, thanks to Michael Bess and his book, *The Light-Green Society: Ecology and Technological Modernity in France, 1960–2000*. There is some irony in this historiographical development, for the much-touted early beginnings of interest in the environment in the *Annales* school have not led to a strong tradition of environmental history in France. However, the scarcity of scholarly tradition has probably played out positively, insofar as Bess has been able to bring together fields that are separate in other countries. He discusses environmental movements as well as consumerism and ecoconsumerism, thus providing a broad, rich narrative. Many of the topics he covers touch on both environmentalism and consumer society in France—for example, the rise of France's nuclear complex and the development of the rapid train system TGV. One can only hope that his work will inspire similarly broad endeavors for other countries.[16]

Evolutionary History

It is obvious that modern consumer societies were based on a huge variety of new products. Less obvious is that some of these products were based on plants and animals, so the shifts in consumer preferences had repercussions for flora and

fauna. Linking nature with the places of production and consumption is not a new endeavor, as Bill Cronon demonstrated the potential of this link in *Nature's Metropolis* in 1991. Looking at nineteenth-century Chicago, Cronon showed how the rising hub of the American Midwest drew in and transformed wood, grain, and livestock.[17] Readers of the volume will have little doubt as to the transformative abilities of capitalism; however, it is worth noting that Cronon said little about the genetic resources at stake. Thanks to Chicago, grain may grow more abundantly, and trees no more, but the plants as such remained unchanged.

In recent years, environmental historians have continued where Cronon left off. Modern consumer societies change not only the usage patterns of plants and animals but also the biological entities themselves. Edmund Russell has dubbed this nascent field "evolutionary history": with their impact, intentional or not, humans became agents of evolution.[18] To be sure, this approach has implications far beyond consumer history, but it seems that the history of mass consumption is particularly well advised to monitor implications of this kind because of their massive impact on a broad range of natural commodities. Roger Horowitz, for example, shows how the boom in poultry production after 1945 depended on breeding heavier and meatier chickens. Breeding the "chicken of tomorrow" that poultry industry boosters so prolifically advertised ultimately pushed all other varieties to the margins. This evolutionary process helped to reduce the cost of chicken meat, but it also narrowed the chicken gene pool dramatically. Consumer choices and clever marketing thus produced a notable shift in the evolution of the chicken.[19]

The trajectory of the "chicken of tomorrow" was by no means peculiar. In the German context, the development of pig species is particularly revealing. For example, the Angler Sattelschwein, a breed with a high fat ratio, was in high demand during the hunger years immediately after 1945, representing 14.2 percent of the German pig population in 1950. However, its share shrank to a paltry 0.5 percent only twenty years later as consumers came to abhor fat pork and demanded lean meat from other breeds.[20] Another kind of pig, the Schwäbisch-Hällisches Landschwein, almost became extinct during the postwar years because of its high fat ratio. In the end, a courageous initiative from breeders came to the rescue, rebranding the disliked fat-rich meat as an attractive ecological product for green consumers.[21] A key part of this story was artificial insemination, which opened a host of reproductive possibilities for prime animals.

Thus, from the standpoint of evolutionary history, the growing diversity of consumer societies was accompanied by a narrowing of the gene pool among cows, pigs, chickens, and other domesticated animals. The loss of biodiversity was directly connected to modern consumption habits. In fact, one could make this argument even more powerful if one followed food chains and production methods to trace the original product. Michael Pollan has done that in a masterful fashion, arguing that the industrial food chain depends greatly on the output of America's Corn Belt. "The great edifice of variety and choice that is an American supermarket turns out to rest on a remarkably narrow biological foundation

comprised of a tiny group of plants that is dominated by a single species: *Zea mays*, the giant tropical grass most Americans know as corn."[22] Research in evolutionary history is only beginning. Describing and analyzing this trend toward unsettling uniformity deserves more scholarly attention.

Toward an Environmental History of Tourism

Historians have long recognized tourism as a key element of modern consumer societies. After all, mass tourism was a twentieth-century innovation, the result of rising affluence and increasing vacation time.[23] Thus, the history of tourism has implications far beyond ecological issues, and yet it seems worthwhile to reflect on the place of tourism in environmental history. Journals from environmental organizations reveal the topic's ambiguities. Many of these journals feature travel reports along with advertising for (usually) "soft," "environmentally benign" tourism. At the same time, it is a given that the environmental toll of mass tourism is by no means marginal: much of what Jost Krippendorf noted for alpine tourism in his critical *Die Landschaftsfresser* of 1975 is common wisdom nowadays.[24] In the age of long-range jet travel, local devastation has found a global complement: tourism is often the biggest factor in the carbon footprint of Western people.

Against this background, can we take some solace from the fact that tourism has also raised awareness for environmental problems in other countries? One might hope that this is the case for the readers of environmental movement journals, at least to some extent; however, the general outlook is probably bleak. Decades of mass tourism to Spain have not inspired any great awareness of the perils of desertification or, more generally, the problems of arid regions. At the same time, the rain forest has emerged as a key theme of environmental debates in Germany and elsewhere in spite of the fact that relatively few people have actually traveled there. When Bernhard Grzimek produced his famous film *Serengeti Must Not Die* in the late 1950s, few people could actually imagine taking a trip to Africa themselves.[25] The divergence between Germany's environmental dreamlands and their favored tourist destinations is striking.

The theme at hand gains sharper contours when we look at environmental movements in earlier times. It turns out that the environmental critique of mass tourism has roots that reach back into the nineteenth century. For example, Ernst Rudorff, who defined key themes of German conservation rhetoric in a scathing essay in 1880, reserved some of his staunchest remarks for rich but bored travelers who saw nature as simply one more thing that could entertain them.[26] Since then, a dislike of tourism has been a defining feature of the German conservation movement: the only proper way to experience nature was to go hiking individually or with a partner. Hiking in large groups, by contrast, was derided as "horde walking" [*Hordenwandern*].[27] While English conservationists forged a close alliance with tourism, their German colleagues preferred to grumble about the hustle and bustle that disturbed the holy silence in nature.[28]

Similar voices existed in other countries, as James Bryce's famous essay on whether cars should be allowed in Yosemite demonstrates.[29] However, it is

characteristic that cars were admitted, nonetheless, and tourism became a key ally for the national park movement. In fact, the alliance was so close that, during the unsuccessful Hetch Hetchy campaign to prevent dam construction in Yosemite National Park, preservationists drew on financial and political help from railroad companies.[30] Furthermore, tourism was about not just getting people to the treasured spots but also designing those places in an aesthetically pleasing fashion. In her tellingly entitled *Building the National Parks,* Linda Flint McClelland described how the experience of pristine, wild nature depended on the sensitive construction of buildings, roads, and trails.[31] So far, German scholarship has paid only scant attention to similar activities. The regional "beautification societies" of the late nineteenth century usually come across only as a prelude to the "real" conservation movement that gathered around 1900. It is revealing that while the intellectual construction of nature has been studied intensively, the material construction of experiences with nature, for example, through hiking associations or alpine societies, has remained a marginal issue in environmental history.

Histories of the Green Consumer

The acronym LOHAS has emerged as characteristic of the first decade of the twenty-first century. It stands for "Lifestyle of Health and Sustainability," but it alludes to a trend that has deeper roots than its newspeak might suggest. After all, if we see styles and distinctions as crucial features of consumerism, there is no reason why nature should be excluded from the same sociocultural game. In fact, nature was sometimes crucial to lifestyles long before the age of mass consumption—just think of spa towns in the early modern era.[32] Thus, one could easily leave the field to cultural historians, if it were not for a specific question. Are some societies more prone to including nature in their lifestyles than others? If so, what would that say about environmentalism in those countries?

Once more, this chapter cannot help but stress gaps in the research. For example, many aspects of the German *Lebensreform* or Life Reform movement have been studied, yet the picture remains unclear. While there are signs that the "return to nature" theme was stronger in Germany around 1900 than in other countries, we still await a systematic comparison.[33] Regrettably, most environmental historians have discussed environmentalism on the level of ideas and policies, while ignoring how the depth of environmental commitments was often most evident in the realm of lifestyle choices. One can capture a great deal of German history in the twentieth century through a discussion of muesli and wholegrain bread.[34]

The connection between lifestyles and consumption found its most extreme expression in the formation of distinct communities of like-minded people. Vegetarians from Berlin founded a distinct "Fruit Garden Colony" in Oranienburg, christened it "Eden," and turned it into a hub of the Lebensreform movement, where followers in white robes and sandals tended to fruit trees. (Later on, they became more moderate and carnivorous.)[35] The Swiss town of Ascona and its Monte Verità became so important for the counterculture of the early 1900s that it even inspired English-language publications about the "Mountain of Truth."[36]

Postwar environmentalism encouraged a resurgence of such activities, including a shopping guide for the counterculture, the *Whole Earth Catalogue*.[37] The vast literature on these movements often mirrors a certain partisan spirit, but, nonetheless, offers a wealth of information for consumer historians. For instance, the *Hippie Handbook*—an interesting publication in itself—talks about consumption on almost every page, offering insights like the following: "Composting, just as brown rice and bell bottoms, was an integral part of the hippie culture."[38]

However, it also might be wise to pursue the topic below the level of full-fledged lifestyles. For example, Christof Mauch and Thomas Zeller recently published a volume that looks at roads, landscapes, and the experience of driving from an environmental history perspective. The book focuses more on the American side, where automobility and freedom became intimately connected, but it also includes articles on Germany, Italy, and Great Britain. At the same time, the authors keep an eye on what roads meant for landscapes. One article looks at highway beautification in the 1960s, an important political theme during the rise of environmentalism that looks petty only in retrospect. With that, the driver's seat emerges as a key place for perspectives on "the world beyond the windshield," and it only benefits the volume that the lines between environmental history, cultural history, and the history of technology blur in the process.[39]

Commodity History

The history of commodities has emerged as a booming field of research in recent years. A number of monographs put a certain commodity at the center of their narrative, and many of these commodities are popular consumer products like cotton or bananas.[40] Most of these books seek an audience beyond scholarly circles, and some have reached broad audiences. Mark Kurlansky's books on cod and salt are probably the best-known examples.[41] The methodological implications of commodity history are discussed only sporadically, and certainly not in the monographs themselves, which usually hail their protagonists rather naively as plants or commodities that "changed the world."[42] Many books sidestep conceptual issues by promising a "biography" in their title, thus suggesting that commodities have life histories that render deeper questions about actors, causes, and periodization pointless. Nonetheless, the trend is probably more than a shallow fashion, as some scholars have taken up the ball, too. For example, Sven Beckert is currently writing a global history of "the empire of cotton," while Ines Prodöhl is working on a history of soybeans.[43]

In retrospect, one may categorize Sidney Mintz's influential *Sweetness and Power* as a pioneer study of commodity history. Of course, Mintz saw his book as an anthropological inquiry, but it reveals not only the power plays surrounding sugar production in the Caribbean but also the power of the substance itself. In fact, the subtitle promises reflection on "the place of sugar in modern history." Mintz links the context of cane sugar production with consumer preferences in England, arguing that sugar moved from a luxury product to an everyday commodity that boosted the calorific value of the workers' diet.[44] Christoph Maria

Merki has pursued a similar path with his study of saccharin, an artificial sweetener.[45] In fact, sugar and its substitutes are useful subjects for demonstrating the merits of commodity histories, as the craving for sweetness is arguably a human constant that is open to change but not abolition.

On a more general level, one may take this as a cue that commodity histories have the greatest potential when the substance in question has a peculiar advantage, unique or rare characteristics that frame its interaction with humans. It is worth noting that, more than seventy-five years ago, the special characteristics of coffee inspired Heinrich Eduard Jacob to write a "biography" of coffee, which was recently republished.[46] A less conspicuous, but no less interesting example of such a distinctive substance is aluminum, as Luitgard Marschall shows in her recent study of this commodity. Not known in its pure form until the nineteenth century, aluminum first became a special metal for military purposes because of its light weight. With the expansion of aluminum production during World War I, huge production capacities became solutions in search of problems, inspiring a frantic search for new outlets in consumer products. However, the ensuing boom of aluminum products would have remained temporary, had not the metal met the needs of an increasingly mobile consumer society. Thus, Marschall's characterization of aluminum as "the metal of modernity" is apt.[47]

A second approach to commodity history is to trace the repercussions of specific substances in everyday life. The potential of this approach has been obvious since Wolfgang Schivelbusch linked coffee, Protestantism, and capitalism as well as chocolate, Catholicism, and the aristocracy in *Tastes of Paradise*.[48] While studies of this kind are probably closer to cultural history than environmental history, some scholars have taken approaches that emphasized ecological implications. John Soluri did so in his impressive study of banana production and consumption in Honduras and the United States.[49] Also worth studying are those inconspicuous items that play far more crucial roles than meet the eye. Sterling Evans provided a model with his in-depth study of twine. Much has been made of the binder as a crucial agricultural implement, but Evans stresses that cutting grain with a binder created a need for a strong thread to hold stalks of grain together for threshing. As it turned out, the best binder twine was made of henequen and sisal from the Yucatán Peninsula of Mexico. This circumstance drew Mexico, Canada, and the United States into a form of mutual dependency that Evans labels the "henequen-wheat complex."[50] In other words, a closer look at a specific product and its natural history can reveal hidden connections. In this way, studies of commodities can demonstrate a subversive power that has always been a hallmark of good environmental history scholarship.

Conclusion: Many Different Stories or One Big One?

There is no scarcity of sophisticated approaches to environmental history that add necessary nuance to the history of consumer societies. But how do we weigh these diverse approaches against the problem of resources that the introduction to this

chapter briefly touched upon? What about the exploitation of fossil resources for the sake of consumerism on an unprecedented scale? It is important to note that while the previous six sections have looked into relatively recent developments in environmental history, studies on the history of energy and resource use have grown increasingly rare in the twenty-first century. Books like Daniel Yergin's *The Prize* or Jean-Claude Debeir's *In the Servitude of Power* are now twenty years old, and they have not found worthy successors. The topic has gone out of fashion, and it remains to be seen whether the recent frenzy over resources and "peak oil" will inspire a new wave of interest.[51] In any case, the enormous hunger for resources is a powerful undercurrent of consumer history, and it deserves a prominent place in our narratives.

Few graphs show the effects of this hunger more clearly than the famous Manau Loa Curve, which is also known as the Keeling Curve after Charles David Keeling, who played a crucial role in its creation (figure 6.1). Since 1958, researchers have measured the ambient carbon dioxide concentration at the Manau Loa Observatory, which the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration maintains on the island of Hawaii. The ensuing curve is a cornerstone of the theory of global warming nowadays, as it shows the steady increase of ambient carbon dioxide concentrations. For historians of consumer societies, the curve is a stark reminder of the steady, monumental trend that lies behind the diversity and abundance of consumer products. Carbon dioxide is the most important end product of consumption, and so it is crucial to note that, since the start of measurements, the trend has only been upward. The only downturns have been seasonal, the result of declining rates of photosynthesis during the winter.

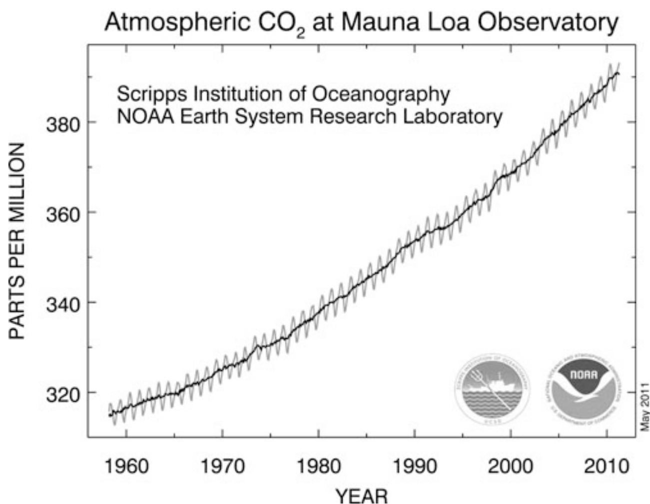

Figure 6.1 Keeling Curve

Source: http://www.esrl.noaa.gov/gmd/ccgg/trends/.

Neither economic crises nor efforts to increase the efficiency of resource use have left a notable effect on the overall trajectory.

The problem is that all of these things are so plainly (and painfully) apparent that researchers seeking new and innovative perspectives have shunned the topic. Will Steffen, Paul J. Crutzen, and John R. McNeill made for a notable exception recently when they argued that we have witnessed a "great acceleration" in the environmental footprint of humanity since the mid-twentieth century; they used the increase of carbon dioxide emissions as the crucial piece of evidence.[52] It takes a broad perspective indeed to capture the scale of environmental exploitation that went along with consumerism, and to understand the fierce momentum that resource use has gained in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century. So are the six perspectives discussed above merely crests of foam that the strong tide of unsustainable resource exploitation is carrying on its back? At times, the most obvious storylines may also be the most important ones.

Notes

1. See, for instance, Rolf Peter Sieferle et al., *Das Ende der Fläche: Zum gesellschaftlichen Stoffwechsel der Industrialisierung* (Cologne, 2006) and Christian Pfister, ed., *Das 1950er Syndrom: Der Weg in die Konsumgesellschaft* (Bern, 1995).
2. Luitgard Marschall, *Aluminium—Metall der Moderne* (Munich, 2008), 48, 50.
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CHAPTER 7

Consumption Politics and Politicized Consumption: Monarchy, Republic, and Dictatorship in Germany, 1900–1939

Hartmut Berghoff

Consumption is not only about cultural values, lifestyles, and market interaction but also about politics. Shaped by institutions, laws, and ideologies, consumption interacts with political power to legitimize or delegitimize governments. States can control available supplies and prices and define acceptable forms of consumption. The burgeoning field of consumption studies, however, has devoted relatively little attention to these political implications.

Although "bringing the state back in" has been standard in much historiography since the 1980s,[1] studies on consumption history have often left the state out. The demand for histories that included the state was directed against the predominance of structuralism in the social sciences, but the paradigm did not shift toward political history, because cultural history experienced a stupendous rise at the same time. The upsurge in the history of consumption essentially coincided with cultural history's boom, so that discourse analysis and explorations of visual representation in the political arena, taste, identity, distinction, ethnicity, and gender dominated the new field of consumption history.[2] Neoliberalism, the prevailing ideology of the 1980s and 1990s, likewise directed attention away from political intervention, as it held that modern governments ought to minimize market interference and focus on empowering consumers' individual choices. In other words, state intervention looked increasingly out of place and, therefore, less rewarding to study than trendier historical topics.

Nevertheless, over the past thirty years, several substantial publications have acknowledged the state's salience for consumption as well as consumption's

far-reaching political implications. Interest has grown in consumer associations, consumer protection, and ethical consumption, which all reverberate powerfully in politics.[3] Gunnar Trumbull suggests a typology of national consumption regimes analogous to the varieties-of-capitalism debate, which has confined itself to regimes of production, labor relations, education, and training. Trumbull uses the term "consumer capitalism" for a "political economy in which the institutionalized interests of consumers set the terms for government policy formation and for company-level product market strategies."[4] He finds that "consumer capitalism" in France and Germany took shape in the 1970s in response to growing affluence and market intransparency.

Martin Daunton and Matthew Hilton deal with moral critiques, consumer representation, modes of provision, and the interrelationship of citizenship, the state, and consumers in various Western countries since 1800.[5] Hartmut Berghoff's edited collection on consumer policy covers aspects of regulation in twentieth-century Germany from agrarian protectionism, censorship, advertising under the Nazi regime, and regulated consumer goods markets in West Germany to the GDR's ill-conceived attempts to create attractive youth apparel.[6] Kate Soper and Frank Trentmann show how consumption-related issues have encouraged political activism, which refutes the Frankfurt School's conclusion that mass consumption engendered passive, depoliticized consumers. They also stress the dichotomy between communitarian and individualistic schools of thought, which explains many controversies revolving around collective responsibilities versus individual freedom. Civil society, with its voluntary associations and grassroots activism, they argue, mediates between, on the one hand, the state and other official regulators (like local, regional, and supranational authorities) and, on the other, the market. Their case studies reach from the antislavery and fair trade movements, environmentalism, the antiglobalization drive, and consumer boycotts to civic disobedience.[7]

Several studies link consumer protests to changes in political regime such as the end of colonial rule in North America, India, China, and South Korea.[8] That consumer goods such as tea and homespun cloth have acquired symbolic value, capable of instilling a sense of national belonging, assumes crucial importance in these studies. For example, one argues that consumer dissatisfaction contributed to the GDR's demise.[9] Although the standard of living was relatively high, East German shortages looked worse when compared to West Germany, and most East Germans watched West German television. East Germans' frustration was compounded by the regime's promise—like the Soviet Union's—that it would surpass capitalist consumption levels. A central part of the Cold War was the race for political legitimacy via superior consumption. The Soviet Seven-Year Plan for 1958–65 pledged that the USSR would match the United States in consumer goods in the 1960s and give away luxury products by 1980. The GDR planned to overtake West Germany in the per capita consumption of the most important consumer goods by 1961. In the 1950s, Washington sponsored exhibits of U.S. household goods to demonstrate the superiority of the American way of life.[10] East European leaders, however, denounced this model as wasteful and

unsustainable, arguing that the rational consumption patterns of socialism would stimulate a healthy economy and society. As part of this effort, consumers had to be educated to subordinate individual preferences to collective needs.[11] When these ideas turned out to be utterly unrealistic, socialist parties silently abandoned their grand visions of abundance and used privileged access to Western-type consumer goods for selective gratification, especially for their elites. This policy, however, unleashed expansive and unfulfillable desires. Moreover, it stirred up envy and made the majority of the population feel cheated and left behind, which further undermined political stability.

For the United States, Liz Cohen describes how changing perceptions of consumers' societal roles likewise transformed the definition of the state's responsibilities and boundaries. The New Deal formally incorporated consumer representatives into the political process to use their influence to pull the United States out of the depression and implement wartime controls, but the tide turned after 1945. In a push to return to a free-market economy, politically active "citizen consumers" were marginalized. The new ideal was "customer consumers" who limited themselves to maximizing their individual economic interests in the marketplace. In the 1950s and 1960s, the United States turned into a "consumers' republic" based on free markets and the promise of universal access to ever more consumer goods. This culture, in turn, shaped the political sphere, which remodeled itself according to the logic of the market and the demands of acquisitive consumers.[12]

This chapter sets out to demonstrate that analyzing the history of twentieth-century consumption without "bringing the state back in" is impossible. It will show that the state is an independent agent that, although influenced by various external forces, strongly shaped consumption while it responded to the expectations of its citizens. In advanced consumer societies like the late twentieth-century democracies, the "politician," according to Daniel Miller, has become "the servant of the consumer" because "elections are now fought increasingly over the issue of who can most efficiently . . . 'deliver the goods.' "[13] This interaction between state and consumers can be analyzed in any modern society, however, not just in democracies.

The German case is particularly revealing, as the state traditionally played a strong role. Germany never embraced market liberalism in the same way as Britain or the United States. Instead of the notion of the "free agent" capable of living up to the principle of "caveat emptor," the early modern concept of *gute Policey* lived on in Germany in many ways. Literally "good policy" and a cognate of "policing," the German expression meant that the authorities were responsible for guaranteeing an all-encompassing order for the community. It aimed at social control and extended to all sectors of the economy and the society, including consumption, for which it set different rules for different social strata. In the nineteenth century, these ideas diminished in importance as, generally speaking, industrialization and deregulation went hand in hand. But many old-style regulations were slow to die and, even after their abolishment, influenced expectations and mentalities. The state in Germany looked very different from

what Anglo-Saxons termed "government."[14] It had a strong bureaucracy and highly esteemed civil servants who were paid from revenue raised through a fairly comprehensive system of taxation. These officials legitimized themselves as wise regulators and superior providers of public goods. The army and police were almost ubiquitous forces of order, respected and dreaded. Germany also pioneered a system of social insurance in the 1880s, even if its benefits were very modest at first. It is hard to decide whether it was primarily the state's influence or simply gains in general welfare due to industrialization that caused the number of social protests, which had peaked in the hungry 1840s, to decline sharply after 1850.[15]

This chapter concentrates on the first third of the twentieth century, when the nineteenth-century's dramatic advances in living standards seemed to be threatened and a fundamental "crisis of modernity" occurred.[16] This period is all the more interesting, because the issues discussed in the above-mentioned publications on various other countries culminated in Germany as it lived to see three different political systems within only 20 years: monarchy, republic, and dictatorship. Each of these regime changes was linked to experiences of deficient provisions, and these experiences had significant repercussions on the consumption policies pursued by the new authorities.[17]

This chapter asks how important consumption was for these political systems. How were consumers positioned in them? Under what circumstances did their political influence change? Did the state provide for or override their interests? This chapter begins with a sketch of the abundant consumption-related problems that haunted the late German Empire and the Weimar Republic, and a section detailing National Socialism's rhetorical and ideological responses follows. Finally, the dictatorship's actual consumption policies are reviewed, especially its attempt to balance the economic pressures of rearmament with the need to secure political loyalty.

Rising Living Standards and the Discovery of Modern Consumption Politics, 1900–1914

In celebrations inaugurating the twentieth century, optimism reigned supreme. People had experienced tremendous progress in the previous fifty years. Hunger had been overcome as a normal part of the economic cycle, which marked a new epoch in consumption history. The industrial growth-generating forces of the 1850s raised the masses from the misery of the 1840s. The emerging industrial economy generated robust, long-lasting growth. Crises still occurred but no longer caused famines, because productivity gains in domestic agriculture and globalized food markets had secured the food supply. The money economy pushed back the production of goods by consumers themselves, who instead increasingly bought products on the market. Real income and life expectancy rose significantly as working hours fell.[18] The telegraph and telephone sped up communication. The railway network covered ever more areas. In the 1880s, the welfare state began to form, which at least modestly protected people

against elementary life risks, so that the pressures to economize began to ease. Still, the vast majority of people had little money left over to spend as they wished.[19]

Even though the standard of living that German workers enjoyed continued to be lower than in England and America, there were noticeable gains. This explains the multitude of euphoric predictions that the twentieth century would unleash the tremendous powers of production and make prosperity possible for all. August Bebel anticipated that the new chemical means of food production, highly productive "big businesses," and nationwide electrification would put an end to need, and that canteens and laundromats would reduce women's workload. People's ability to consume would increase to such a degree that crises and unemployment would be kept at bay. In 1914, the Social Democratic Party (SPD) even prophesied that all workers would eventually possess their own cars, ships, and airplanes.[20]

The increasing standard of living rendered the Marxist theory of pauperization less persuasive. Although the SPD's conventions sounded a different note in practice, the party came to believe that workers' standard of living could be improved without a revolution. From the 1890s, the SPD presented itself as the representative of urban consumers and was able to extend its constituency well into the lower and sometimes even into the middle ranks of the middle class. Ensuring subsistence consumption formed the core of its campaign, especially the fight against "hunger tariffs," that is, high import duties on grains and meat. But indirectly the party's message was also about consumption beyond the necessities, because the leeway people had for such spending depended essentially on the prices of foods. The discourse centered around gains in consumption, and so the battle for resources between urban consumers and rural producers grew more explosive. Most of these conflicts—which often played out in the streets—shifted from bread to meat and coffee. Again, this underscores Germany's increased standard of living, as regularly eating meat and drinking coffee had come to be regarded as symbols of a decent existence.[21]

Increasingly, consumers became a relevant political factor. To be sure, their interests did not usually receive priority, but they grew noticeably more important. The debates of 1894 and 1902 on the customs tariffs demonstrate this, even though agrarian protectionism eventually prevailed. Rising prices for beets, milk, butter, coffee, and meat triggered numerous protests and involved many housewives in the political process. Consumer cooperatives, together with over 2 million members in 1914, numbered among the empire's largest organizations.

For the state, consumer politics, though increasingly relevant, remained a secondary concern. As ever more people purchased their food at anonymous, transregional markets, the profound deficits in health and consumer protection were no longer acceptable. As a result, control structures for foods were developed that drastically reduced the incidence of false packaging and poisoning. The Fair Trade Law of 1896 made it an offense to flagrantly mislead customers about product qualities and quantities, giving consumers some legal protection for the first time. Although the empire's policies on taxes and duties continued to

discriminate against consumers, they gave the SPD effective leverage to mobilize voters and advocate for compensation, be it through social reforms or tax concessions. Indeed, in 1906 and 1913, the empire implemented a policy of increasing its revenues solely by raising excise duties and purchasing taxes. The introduction of an inheritance tax and a capital gains tax as federal taxes marked important and highly disputed turning points, even though the burden on the wealthy remained quite modest at first. In 1906, a controversial inheritance tax was rejected, but the customs duty on coffee was raised by 50 percent, leading the SPD and consumers to protest vehemently. At the same time, welfare benefits, like pensions for widows and orphans, better health insurance, and the ten-hour workday, improved, which can be seen as compensatory measures. All in all, by 1911 the SPD had developed a clear strategy to use consumer interests to push for democratization of the empire. Although this goal was not reached, the expansion of the welfare state and the first changes in tax policy bore testimony to partial successes of this strategy.[22] The future seemed bright in 1914. Poverty was retreating, and consumers' rising political clout would, many hoped, give them an ever larger piece of a growing pie in the near future.

Consumption Politics Moves Center Stage: A Decade of Supply Crises, 1914–1923

World War I shifted priorities from distributing a rising surplus to safeguarding resources for sheer survival. Before the war, Germany had imported roughly one-fourth of its food supply and many essential raw materials. With the disintegration of world trade and the Allied naval blockade, Germany felt shortages immediately after the war began. By 1916, these shortages had developed into a general food crisis. The return of hunger—a problem people thought had been overcome—was all the more traumatic as most people had grown up in a world where the food supply was secure. The state was likewise unprepared. Having made no plans, it now had to rapidly develop and implement consumption regulations on a large scale. A free market would have led to extreme social injustices and the collapse of the home front. Therefore, the authorities seized ever greater shares of agricultural produce, distributed these products, and also set price caps. Yet the task was so complex and the shortage so great that the situation deteriorated. Hours-long lines, empty shelves, and miserable product quality became everyday issues. The black market expanded in scope, penalizing working-class families, primarily, and protests and riots ensued.[23]

As the state needed a population both able and willing to fight for the fatherland, it could not ignore these protests. Consumers had become a key political constituency that politicians had to regard with the utmost care. Thus, the state sought to improve procedures for distributing goods. In its political views, the public increasingly came to accept the idea of "war socialism." Nonetheless, the armed forces held civilians in disdain and demanded great sacrifices of them. The ongoing shortages weakened many people so much that they became chronically ill or died prematurely, although only a few civilians actually starved to

death during the war. In 1918, the situation came to a head when the exhausted population finally directed its rage at the armed forces and the government. The years of hunger and the state's failure to provide for the population played an important role in the revolution of 1918–19. It was primarily consumers who, in their need, had renounced their loyalty to the monarchy.

The Weimar Republic inherited a host of very difficult issues from the monarchy, so hopes of rapidly raising the standard of living had to be disappointed. The monarchy's legacy ran the gamut from a gigantic deficit to hyperinflation, from state burdens resulting from the war, like providing for invalids and survivors, to the perpetual crisis of agriculture. In addition, politics continued to be unstable, and consumers' needs became a concern for the new authorities, as well. Consumers gained political clout with the establishment of consumer agencies [*Verbraucherkammern*]—semiofficial advisory and lobby organizations—and by being allowed to dispatch representatives to the Preliminary Imperial Economic Council. However, consumers did not manage to become fully incorporated into the republic's political machinery. They were mainly represented by the cooperative movement, which grew to unprecedented strength and encompassed 3.6 million members in 1927, or about one-fifth of all households. Consumer protection improved when labeling stipulations for important foodstuffs were introduced in 1916 and extended by the Food Law of 1927. In 1918, a requirement was also established that synthetic foods as well as substitute and artificial products be registered before introduction to the market.

Subsistence consumption remained uncertain until 1923. Any significant rise in the standard of living was precluded by ongoing shortages in the system of food rationing, which was maintained until 1921, in some areas until 1923; by the loss of large agricultural regions to other countries; by the transition from creeping to trotting to galloping inflation and, finally, in 1922–23, hyperinflation; and by the drive to export that inflation spurred as well by the limitations on imports it posed. For one thing, the inflationary process dragged ever more people into poverty and aggravated social conflicts, including between producers and consumers and between those with tangible assets and those with cash savings. Moreover, with the devaluation of money, the most important instrument in the system of economic and social order collapsed. Old values like frugality and moderation lost all meaning. Consequently, mass culture experienced an unprecedented boom. "Dance madness," fashion, film, popular fiction, sexuality, sports, and music became ever more attractive.[24] The true winners in the inflation were those who understood its mechanisms and single-mindedly increased their stash of tangible assets and foreign currency or profited from the black market. As one paper put it, the "lifestyles" of the workforce were "sinking daily": "While [the workers] can no longer find enough to eat . . . another part of the population is languishing in the lap of luxury."[25] Shortages and the uprisings they provoked continued to occur daily. A highly explosive debate revolved around whether forced rationing of most foods should end. When agriculture and trade prevailed, consumers had to endure painful price increases. Nonetheless, it is difficult to determine what was in consumers' best interest, since the highly regulated

economy had prompted farmers to withhold their products from the market and send them instead to the deeply antisocial black market. Liberalization eliminated this problem and led to the normalization of the food supply. Therefore, even the co-ops supported the end of economic controls, although consumers were outraged by the new prices, which, in addition, continued to be pushed higher by inflation.

Pseudo-Prosperity, Contested Dreams of Abundance, and Renewed Hardship, 1923–1933

High expectations for the revolution of 1918–19 deepened people's general disappointment with the Weimar Republic. Many had assumed that democracy would reward the little man—after suffering through the war and after the revolution from below, he was due compensation. Moreover, the dazzling role model, the United States, became ever more present during the "Roaring Twenties," and consumption developed into a central political factor. As the welfare state was constitutionally secured, the republic actively worked to allay problems. Never before had a German state perceived itself to such an extent as the guarantor of minimum social standards, its benefits reaching hitherto unimaginable heights. This sociopolitical offensive immediately affected consumption because the state now set minimum subsistence levels. Social transfers allowed a much broader swath of the population to engage in discretionary spending. Tax policy shifted to raise direct taxes like income and wage-withholding taxes faster than indirect taxes on consumption. However, since the tax burden rose overall and many consumers became subject to wage-withholding tax, the relief was minimal. The situation for businesses and wealthy citizens clearly worsened. In 1919, a steep inheritance tax was implemented that taxed children and spouses for the first time. The Erzberger Finance Reform of 1920 raised the highest income tax rate from 4 to 60 percent.[26]

In the years of economic stabilization (1924–28), the economy approached something like a "first run-up to a revolution in consumption,"[27] driven primarily by public funds, especially from municipalities. Using tax revenues and loans, authorities built housing and developed local transit systems as well as gas and electricity networks.[28] Easy-to-use gas stoves and heaters replaced cumbersome, dirty coal-burning stoves. Electric appliances and indoor plumbing simplified housework and saved time. New parks, sports facilities, swimming pools, and theaters expanded the range of leisure activities available. Many municipalities perceived themselves as pioneers of modern times. However, these projects overextended the cities financially, as they required large loans to complete. Policies shifted in a correspondingly dramatic fashion in 1929, when the overly indebted cities could no longer obtain loans. Subsidized progress came to a halt, and the municipalities utilized their few remaining funds for soup kitchens and shelters.[29]

Publically sponsored programs were not the only reason for increased consumption in the stabilization phase. Cultural, technological, and commercial

dynamics interacted to foster consumption-oriented attitudes. For example, with the end of censorship after the empire, new journals mushroomed, and popular literature, radio, and cinema flourished. Germans used mass media like never before, which led to the "Dirt and Smut Law" (*Schund- und Schmutzgesetz*) of 1926. This law was to protect the public from the dangers of mass media consumption. The state closely monitored radio, essentially nationalizing it in 1932. Hollywood films exhibited new kinds of consumer goods and lifestyles, contributing to the expansion of perceived needs. In 1925, quotas were temporarily set to protect the German film industry.[30] Big cities, especially Berlin, became centers of sociocultural experimentation that upset conservatives and heightened the experiential contrast between urban centers and "the province."

Before the Great Depression, growth in purchasing power, which would not have been possible without the forced arbitration of work conflicts and the expansion of the welfare state, spurred optimism and raised the standard of living. Fordism, however far it was from being implemented in Germany, became an increasingly important point of reference. Ford's autobiography, published in German in 1923 and soon a best seller, seemed to demonstrate how lasting prosperity for all could be achieved. This shimmering vision was highly controversial, though. Since the empire's demise, debates about the legitimacy of new forms of consumption had raged, reaching a peak after 1924.[31] Both the society and the state were uncertain whether consumption should serve primarily to meet basic needs or whether its expansion beyond this was legitimate. Consumption's hedonistic release from constraints seemed to undermine Germany's strength, whereas a simpler lifestyle appeared healthier and more authentic. The Great Depression further fueled this uneasiness about modern consumption. Chancellor Brüning, believing that simple lifestyles would help heal Germany, further exacerbated the accompanying decline in the standard of living by enacting deflationary policies. Many other voices also suggested that unemployed urban workers return to the countryside.

Supply-side economics dominated economic policy. Only a few experts favored demand-side policies, like Labor Minister Rudolf Wissell (SPD). Believing that the logic of mass production technologies required more consumption, he considered wage hikes unavoidable. "Otherwise, the . . . broad masses' lack of needs will become the economy's downfall . . . When products need to move, then the path to the consumer must be opened up."[32] Some economists, mainly from the left side of the political spectrum, called for emergency projects and an increase in money supply, which the unions later supported. The SPD, however, denied "artificial life-extending measures" to capitalism. Arguments against credit-financed job-creation programs included the risk of inflation and the consequences for reparations, whose reduction would be less likely and less substantial when the allies learned about Germany's ability to run such extensive social programs. Thus, such programs remained very small under Chancellor Brüning. Only under his successors von Papen and Schleicher did they grow in 1932 to a noticeable though still modest size. Most state leaders had little regard for consumption and despised the consumer—especially Brüning. Like soldiers

in the war, he believed, the civilian population had to make sacrifices for the fatherland. This "Hunger Chancellor" regarded restructuring public budgets and reducing social benefits, salaries, and prices as the appropriate crisis strategy.

In 1932, more than one in three workers were unemployed. Ever more Germans were dependent on local welfare services, though neediness was very narrowly defined, embittering millions. Many people could no longer afford enough food to subsist and lost their homes. Those who managed to keep their homes often could not heat them sufficiently. Rates of illness, criminality, and suicide rose. The masses' gains of 1924–28 were all quickly lost as the people suddenly found themselves facing a subsistence crisis—six years after the end of the last hunger phase—which, therefore, eroded the political foundation of the republic.[33]

Looking back on the first third of the twentieth century, five observations stand out: (1) The hopes for a better life that had arisen in the prewar boom, the revolution, and the stabilization phase were bitterly disappointed. Nonetheless, they remained very present over the long term. (2) The repeated traumas of life-threatening supply crises made a deep impression on people. (3) There was fundamental uncertainty about modern consumer society, which could be regarded as a curse or a blessing. (4) The frustrations and losses engendered resentments, for example, toward "pushers," war profiteers, Jews, foreigners, inflation speculators, and so on. This atmosphere encouraged people to feel disadvantaged and excluded from the amenities of modern living as the lures of mass consumption grew more present in the media. Ironically, such sentiments were often combined with an outright rejection of mass consumption, urbanism, and modernism. (5) The effects of all these circumstances were even more acute because people were continuously subjected to change: rising living standards before 1914, war and hunger crisis, hyperinflation and the loss of savings, stabilization and the first seeds of future prosperity, the bursting of this bubble of promise and the renewed subsistence crisis in the Great Depression—all this occurred in less than twenty years. These experiences helped draw many people to a political alternative that promised solutions to all the issues that had been troubling German consumers since 1900.

A Völkisch Consumer Modernity: Promises of Abundance and Reconciliation

Prior to 1933, the National Socialist Party lacked a clear stance on consumption. This catch-all party of protest skillfully tailored its messages to suit very different constituencies, supporting this strategy with a vague, inconsistent, and frequently revised party program. As it addressed the interests of nearly every group in the German electorate, its members ranged from agrarian romantics and other cultural pessimists to technocratic modernists and sheer opportunists.

The party got its first taste of the penetrating power of demand-oriented economic policy when it doubled its votes in July 1932 with Gregor Strasser's "Emergency Program" (*Sofortprogramm*), which promised massive work-creation

projects. Hitler took up this issue, as his goal was power, and ultimately any means to attain it was all right. In 1933, expenditures for work creation shot up, accompanied by a bombastic propaganda campaign.[34] Moreover, the dictator combined work creation with consumer incentives. In September 1933, he sharply distinguished his own views from Brüning's deflation policy and all demands for frugality:

> We must, above all, combat the ideology of having no needs . . . , that is, the cult of primitiveness emanating from communism . . . This ideology rests upon . . . an abject, ferocious attitude . . . . What is decisive is not that all restrict themselves, but that all make an effort to go forward to improve themselves. The German economy can only survive when a certain living standard is secured and when the German people enjoy a certain level of civilization.[35]

In 1934, Hitler proclaimed that after remedying unemployment, "raising the standard of living" would be his highest priority: "We do not want to become a primitive Volk, but rather one with the highest possible standard of living." As in the United States, everyone was to "be given the opportunity to climb the ladders."[36] In 1933–34, when his power was still far from stable, Hitler basically made three promises. First, he announced that he would overcome the Great Depression with a demand-oriented policy; the state would create jobs and raise purchasing power. Second, he promised to surmount people's discomfort with modern consumer society by directing its dynamic into politically correct channels, but then further kindling the consumption thus tamed. A clear ideological guideline was supposed to resolve the contradiction between people's fascination with modern consumer society and conservative-völkisch reservations. Third, in a great empire ruled by Germany, Hitler planned to fulfill the people's hopes for prosperity, which had been repeatedly and bitterly disappointed.

Whereas liberalism promises all people prosperity sooner or later, Hitler reserved this vision for the "master race" alone. High "racial value" and sufficient *Lebensraum* (living space) constituted the decisive variables in the eternal battle of the races for scarce resources. The so-called Aryan race could win the struggle for survival only if it were "healthy" and in possession of enough space and natural resources.[37] For Hitler, this struggle was a zero-sum game. His apocalyptic reasoning was dominated not by effusive optimism like Ford's, which promised to solve scarcity with productivity gains, but by deep, social-Darwinist pessimism that regarded the demise of whole races as unavoidable. A race could only secure its continued existence and a high standard of living by means of predation, exploitation, and racial selection. Hitler believed that one part of humanity could prosper only if another suffered misery and extermination.[38] But the standard of living of the superior race should rise substantially. To "lead a life analogous to the American people," Hitler said, German *Lebensraum* needed to be expanded far beyond the borders of 1914. An integral part of this vision was the depopulation of broad swaths of Eastern Europe or the enslavement of its inhabitants. Although Hitler's stance on the United States wavered, this country was his actual point of

reference. Ultimately, he strove to "make headway against"[39] it and overtake its standard of living.

In contrast to Weimar's culturally pessimistic elites and the agrarian romantics in his own party, Hitler did not want to create a frugal society rooted in the soil. He believed, instead, in a special kind of modernism that would benefit the chosen few. For him, nothing was inherently wrong with modernism. On the contrary, he even wanted to exceed the most audacious expectations and create a mass-motorized völkisch consumer society with the greatest of comforts. Indeed, he dwelt on visions that were remarkably close to Bebel's ideas of socialist mass consumption. After the war, Hitler planned to build millions of high-tech dwellings and utilize "the achievements of technology" where they were lacking most:

> the housewife shall get relief! . . . Not only does the block of apartments have the nursery school in the immediate vicinity, the housewife shall no longer need to bring the young ones there herself; she pushes a button and the nurse appears to pick up the children. The housewife shall no longer need to carry the rubbish down the steps or bring up the fuel, either—all that must be done by means of equipment in the flat. The alarm that wakes her in the morning shall, at the same time, boil the water one needs for breakfast, and all that sort of thing that makes life easier.[40]

Hitler wanted to achieve this by means of standardization. Technological upgrades for households, however, were not to serve as expressions of individualism; rather, the result would have been dull uniform dwellings. Hitler's collectivist visions of luxurious living stand in sharp contrast to the liberal model of modern consumer society, which embraces variety and individual choice as core values.

Fritz Nonnenbruch, one of the party's leading economic writers, outlined the Nazi vision of the affluent society. He contrasted "the racial dynamics of the German Volk" with "capitalism turned static." The new state would "unleash" technology and impose the highest standards of performance. Whole landscapes would undergo large-scale transformations. "All that is fossilized, narrow-minded, tight . . . will be pushed back." Sentimentalities and a lack of resources would no longer matter. The Aryan race deserved a "superabundance" of goods, which the National Socialist economy would deliver, Nonnenbruch continued. "The economy of abundance breaks down the small, narrow . . . fence for those who cannot stand it behind the fence." However, Nonnenbruch offered few details about how this boundless consumption would work in practice. Rather, his few concrete remarks suggest somewhat modest, monotonous living conditions. Fashionable and individualized lifestyles were out of the question. He emphasized the security of provisions, "simple presentation," and "practical average quality."[41]

Even Hitler made promises of abundant consumption alongside demands for simplicity and austerity. He repeatedly maintained that consumption had no absolute priority and that, to start with, there would be very little leeway. In his posthumously discovered *Second Book*, he emphasized the priority of basic consumption and securing foodstuffs; he had little regard for luxury consumption. He believed that it was reasonable to demand temporary renunciation—even if

it was extreme—as long as there was no famine. Goebbels distinguished between Nazi consumer society and the degenerate "civilization racket" of capitalist states. He envisioned a synthesis of völkisch racism, agrarian roots, and ultramodern lifestyles. The völkisch consumer society was to be guided by politics and grounded in concepts of race. Consequently, it would expunge the perceived defects of liberal consumer society.[42]

The fundamentals of National Socialist thought on consumption were the exclusion of those who were "strangers to the Volk" and the integration of those who were socially weak and racially pure; the renunciation of mass consumption, but also its unleashing; harsh sacrifices now and rich rewards in the future. Idealistic and ideological appeals to do with less or without, the conquest of *Lebensraum* by means of war, and the brutal suppression or elimination of "inferior" peoples delimited the requirements for future prosperity.

The Restrictive Dictatorship: The Scantiness of Life during the Rearmament Drive, 1933–1939

Turning from the ideological discourse to the empirical dimension of consumption in the "Third Reich," the regime appears essentially to have been a dictatorship of deprivation, especially when we look at the most fundamental spheres of consumption. Germany was heavily dependent on imports of food and raw materials. From 1933 on, ever more of the country's scarce currency reserves were earmarked for imports critical to rearmament, so the regime cut food and textile imports. Yet as demand was rising, food supply crises occured in 1934 and 1935–36. Moreover, people continually faced shortages of particular goods like fats. Shoes, textiles, furniture, and many other common items were also in short supply. The regime appealed to its citizens to beat scarcity by consuming less and reducing waste.

Foreign-trade and currency controls were efficient instruments for dramatically reducing imports. Quotas for processing raw materials and direct interventions in production were introduced. In 1934, the regime slammed the brakes on the rapidly expanding textile industry, scaling back imports and weekly work hours and prohibiting new investments. By September 1939, the amount of raw cotton available for primary processing was about a fifth of the level of 1934. The compulsory use of alternative materials was supposed to mitigate the reduced supply of natural fibers, but many were of extremely poor quality. Moreover, this requirement to mix materials systematically cheated consumers, because the previously mandated labeling rules ceased to apply; indicating the exact composition of materials was immediately banned.[43]

The four-year plan of 1936 tried to overcome the nation's limited resources regardless of cost and lessen the discrepancy between armament and consumption. It saw "German raw materials" eliminating the imperative to go without. Moreover, domestic production of foods and raw materials for textiles increased, but these measures failed to noticeably relieve shortages. The same was true of the government's extensive efforts to steer consumption by teaching consumers

to use products in an autarky-compatible way. The regime tried to create "consumer citizens" ready to sacrifice personal comfort for the benefit of their nation and race.[44] Like none of its German predecessors, the Nazi regime politicized consumption, expecting consumers to accept inferior substitutes and shortages in the collective effort to regain national strength. It no longer considered housewives private citizens who primarily cared for their families, but counted them "among the most important shock troops in the fight for German alimentary autarky" as their "mode of shopping and consuming" put them "on the front line" of the nation's struggle.[45] The housewives, however, had their own ideas about what to buy and to eat. They remained unwilling to develop a "political stomach" and resented any forced modifications of their shopping lists.[46] Nevertheless, until 1939, the state resisted rationing—the next step that economic conditions called for—even though early forms of it, such as buyer lists that limited sales to regular customers and limited the quantity of their shopping, had been used in shops since 1935. From 1938, the regime used territorial expansion to solve this problem, as new territories would allow it to appropriate additional resources. This was to be the strategy of the future.

Chronic scarcity led to price surges. In light of their socially explosive force and the fresh memories of the traumatic hyperinflation of 1922–23, the regime was quick to seek countermeasures. First, it appealed to the business world to exercise self-discipline, but with little effect. Similarly, it revived the Office of the Commissioner for Price Administration that had been established in the Weimar Republic. However, the agency remained a paper tiger. Terror directed at individual "price boosters"—in 1933 and 1935, hundreds of retailers were temporarily incarcerated and some of them even placed in concentration camps—only contained the upsurge for a short time. In this phase, old demands made by consumer protection agencies and small retailers' associations were taken up. The Sales Law of 1933 limited discounts to 3 percent and prohibited adding bonuses to purchases. Nevertheless, the shortages led, in practice, to ever more of the forbidden package deals and hidden price hikes. With the crisis that the four-year plan of 1936 reacted to, the regime switched over to regulating prices. The newly formed Commissioner for Price Formation wielded extensive authority. In the fall of 1936, he enacted a general price freeze, which categorically prohibited price increases but allowed exceptions with his authorization. By 1940, about 7,000 exceptions had been permitted. Moreover, businesses proved creative in finding ways around the regulations. For example, they introduced new products or variants that had no fixed prices, and low-cost merchandise disappeared so that consumers could only find more expensive goods. Finally, with prices remaining the same, producers lowered the quality of their goods by using cheaper materials.[47]

In some sectors, however, the regime implemented comparatively effective measures. Bread prices were highly symbolic, so Hitler intervened personally and banned price increases, actually achieving a stable price below the Weimar level. Behind this success lay strict controls, subsidies, and additional imports when supplies fell short, but also state-sanctioned quality reductions: potato starch and

cornmeal were mixed into the flour, which was not milled as finely. In 1937, moreover, the price commissioner coerced various sectors to reduce their prices, such as name-brand food producers, and the electrical and chemical industries. In these cases, too, loss of quality must have followed.[48] All in all, the regime managed to prevent runaway prices, but the actual results failed by far to meet expectations. Scarcity could not be hidden, nor could market forces be suspended. Constant worry about shortages and the sense that prices were too high were a general part of life, as was the awareness that one could not get by without gray and black markets.

Concessions and Temptations: The Political Neutralization of Scarcity, 1933–1939

The Nazi regime did not pursue a stringent policy of austerity. Instead, autarkic and pro-consumerist impulses coexisted. The dictatorship tried to mediate between ideology, rearmament, and populism. It steered a middle course between implementing severe cuts in civilian consumption, on the one hand, and, on the other, partially conceding more consumption in some sectors as well as promising spectacular forms of future affluence. Concessions can be found primarily in sectors that did not exacerbate currency problems—for example, domestic tourism, entertainment, and leisure. In its first years, the regime even inaugurated a broadly based campaign for increased civilian consumption. It knew that its power base was feeble and that unemployment had to be reduced quickly to gain loyalty. It used classic job-creation programs, deficit spending, and other measures to bolster purchasing power. People were supposed to buy more, and, above all, buy German-made goods (figure 7.1).

In one advertisement, a working-class man and an upper-class woman shook hands. Her purchase of luxuries gave the common man work and bread.[49] As this image implied, for the Nazi state, social reconciliation was both possible and desirable by means of consumption. For example, a credit plan implemented by the regime made it possible for young married couples to buy furniture and household effects—on the condition that the woman gave up her job. Everywhere, propaganda prompted people to buy. Completely new—especially electrical—products were pushed onto the market. The state emphatically encouraged households to acquire electricity. The primary purpose of the 1934–35 Electro campaign by a state-backed alliance of electricity suppliers and retailers was to market end products. The figures for electricity consumption and sales of electrical appliances demonstrated the success of the campaign.[50]

One area in which the regime encouraged increased consumption was leisure-related spending. Mass tourism expanded by leaps and bounds. The regime doubled vacation entitlements, gave it to groups hitherto excluded, and spread a discourse of universal entitlement.[51] As most Germans spent their vacations within Germany, tourism placed little burden on the balance of payments and directed demand toward domestic services and away from foreign goods and the overburdened food sector. All in all, individual tourism was more important than

Figure 7.1 Kaufhof advertisement, ca.1934: "Every purchase creates jobs"

the collective arrangements of the Strength-through-Joy organization. The dictatorship wanted to preserve spheres of apparent normalcy and impart a feeling that life had improved. In spite of and probably also because of the many collective leisure activities and obligations, people thoroughly enjoyed individual free time. The steep rise of amateur photography, for instance, was partly related to this.[52] The growth in sales of products like tents, record players, and recreational watercraft similarly points to the importance of leisure-related individualistic consumption. The "American way of life" continued to be popularized in numerous films and magazines. Coca-Cola, the unchallenged icon of American consumer culture, took firm root in Germany.[53]

The Nazi regime also encouraged the consumption of audiovisual media on a new scale. Millions of households obtained radios, aided by substantial market interventions. The state stipulated a maximum price for the People's Radio, waiving fees, offering reductions, advertising on a massive scale, and forcing manufacturers into a consortium of twenty-eight companies. Between 1933 and

1941, the number of households with radios roughly tripled, from 4.4 million to 13.3 million or from 24 percent of all German households to 65 percent—a leap that would have been inconceivable without the state's intervention.[54] German broadcasters took listeners' desire to be entertained seriously and tried to fulfill it. Ideological reservations about Western music had only a limited effect on programming.

The number of cinemas rose considerably from 1935 onward. For the first time, this medium made its way into many rural areas, too. Although it took until 1936 for ticket sales to surpass the level of 1928–29, a sharp increase then followed until 1939. This boom can be attributed, first, to state-decreed prices and discounts and, second, to the growing need many Germans felt to escape reality for at least a few hours. Goebbels admired Hollywood pictures and understood how to distract people and convey "the illusion of freedom and well-being."[55] So entertainment without explicitly political content dominated the screens, although racism was present in a subtle way. From a purely economic standpoint, the media offensive fit well into a consumer policy subordinated to military spending, because producing film and radio programs was relatively inexpensive, at least when calculated on a per capita basis.[56]

In view of the popular mood, the regime avoided sharp tax increases and relied more on running up the national debt, which, it hoped, war booty would pay off later. Its tax policy practically reversed that of the empire. In a nutshell, it taxed greater wealth and higher salaries more heavily but went easy on consumption. In addition, there was open discrimination against Jews, whom the regime excluded from the Volk. Of those included in the supposed master race, corporations, bachelors, and the wealthy were taxed most heavily, while families and farmers fared better. Between 1933–34 and 1938–39, revenues from corporate taxes rose by a factor of ten, from income and capital gains tax by a factor of six, whereas wage-withholding tax, which principally affected workers, increased only by a factor of three. Yet the regime taxed consumption even less than the mass of socially weaker citizens. Revenues from duties and consumption-related taxes grew merely by 48 percent, which, in light of the 80 percent increase in national income (1933–38), alleviated the fiscal burden on consumption in real terms.[57]

All in all, the Nazi regime had little constructive energy; the promised alternative to Western models of consumption did not emerge. When the regime did introduce alternatives, as with fashion, they were absurd disasters, and it quietly returned to Western (in this case French) models. In the end, Germans had to make do with imitations, usually with shoddy, low-cost ones at that.[58] A key characteristic of the regime was its propensity to make promises it could not deliver on in ways that made people believe in their imminent fulfillment. This *virtual consumption* was a tremendously effective means of manipulating and cheating citizens.[59] The broadly advertised foreign tourism provides a prime example: it was supposed to be accessible to all but was actually open to very few. The Volkswagen, like most Volk products, only existed in propaganda, but this propaganda tapped the pulse of the age (figure 7.2). The regime's successful staging of virtual consumption shows that it understood how to manipulate

Figure 7.2 Volkswagen illuminated

Source: Catalog entitled *Führer durch die mitteldeutsche Industrie-Ausstellung 1938: Wille und Werk im Lande der braunen Erde*, Halle, edited by the Gauleitung of the NSDAP Halle-Merseburg.

people's desires and employ the expansive dynamic of modern consumer society to achieve its own ends.

The regime promoted motorization primarily to produce a mass psychological effect in a field with tremendous symbolic potential and to satisfy Hitler's personal predilection. Building the autobahn demonstrated the regime's will to shape society and its power to do so, but it also upheld its visions of prosperity and modernity. It constituted a first, highly visible step toward the National Socialist society of the future that would value mobility, recreation, and consumption as never before. The "roads of the Führer" created the infrastructure of a mass-motorized consumer society and thus lent credibility to the regime's promises despite the shortages people experienced every day.

The autobahn system also held out other promises: it suggested that Germans could spend their free time in ways previously limited by time and space, and it implied that the dangers of progress that cultural pessimists abhorred could be neutralized. The new roads were to blend harmoniously into their natural

surroundings. Under the new order, the Nazis claimed, nature would be controlled without being damaged. In practice, this concept proved to be completely unrealistic, especially given the hectic rate of planning and construction. By the time construction was halted in 1941, about 2,400 miles of highway had been completed. The autobahn network was far ahead of its time and unmatched anywhere in the world. Neither civil nor military use of the roads justified the massive investment made in them at the expense of the railway, the most important mode of transport, especially for the military. This neglect of the useful but propagandistically uninteresting railways would exact its revenge during the war. This self-degradation is indicative of the regime's deep irrationality and its inability to set clear priorities. Had the state's sole priority been to prepare for war, it would have directed these substantial investments into the railway system or straight into armaments.[60]

Conclusion

In the empire, consumer politics long played only a secondary role. Producers—especially the powerful agrarian magnates and heavy industrialists—dominated economic policy. At first, consumers, blatantly penalized by tax and customs policies, had few advocates and were poorly organized. This situation began to change after 1900 when the SPD took on consumers' interests and succeeded in mobilizing voters with consumption-related campaigns. Initial modest successes and the cautious expansion of the welfare state pointed in a new direction, albeit without making consumers a central political factor.

This situation changed during World War I, which demanded tremendous restrictions on consumption but also a home front able to fight a "total war." Under these circumstances, the state assumed maximum responsibility. Its failure to secure even moderately fair and sufficient provisions was a leading cause for the regime change of 1918–19. Thereafter, consumption forever remained focal to German politics. Although most consumers continued to experience distress and scarcity, the republic tried to accommodate their interests along with the expansion of welfare provisions. Thus, public subsidies greatly spurred the growth of consumption in the postinflationary years. Yet, as neither the state nor its citizens could agree on the legitimacy of mass consumption, many central political controversies in the Weimar Republic revolved around problems of scarcity and prosperity—the former more real than the latter.

Hitler promised to cut the Gordian knot by providing mass consumption without the inherent evils of "decadent liberalism." Proclaiming an ideologically and morally sound affluence that was to be restricted to Aryans, Hitler believed that the master race, which would profit from racial privileges, could lay claim to the highest living standards on earth. For all others, he envisioned exclusion and exploitation.

With the regime's policies, consumers experienced extreme contradictions every day. In the Janus-faced reality of the Nazi dictatorship, German consumers had to grapple with harsh shortages while they were offered alluring

new products. They had to do without margarine, butter, or new clothing but could buy radios and cameras and dream about cars and Mediterranean cruises. In short, they experienced deprivation and enticement simultaneously. Promoting highly symbolic products, the regime neglected precisely those mundane items people needed most. Moreover, it offered virtual consumption to assuage the widespread discontent with scarcity. The resulting situation—expanding demand for luxuries without secured provision of basic necessities—was profoundly abnormal in the history of consumption. For years, the regime had propagated visions of abundance and legitimized mass consumption without ever fulfilling these promises. One legacy of the dictatorship was the memory of this prolonged experience of expanding but frustrated desires. This explains why consumer politics assumed such a prominent role in both German states—and in their rivalry—after 1945. Whether dictatorships or democracies, the histories of modern consumer societies cannot be written without the state.

Notes

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CHAPTER 8

Consumption and Space: Inner-City Pedestrian Malls and the Consequences of Changing Consumer Geographies

Jan Logemann

"The regional shopping center came to Europe with a bang," the *New York Times* observed upon the opening of the Main-Taunus Center near Frankfurt in June 1965.[1] An earlier headline on the same topic read, "The American way of life has made a new breakthrough in West Germany."[2] Such boisterous claims reflected contemporary perceptions of "Americanization" in the realms of retailing and consumption. There were also more measured voices, however, skeptical about the economic prospects of the new shopping center.[3] Furthermore, the overall desirability of shopping centers, especially from the perspective of urban geography and development, seemed far from clear to many West Germans. In December 1966, an advertisement for a guided tour of American cities geared to German city planners and retailing experts underscored this point:

> It is an obvious development that our expanding cities are growing increasingly and visibly sick in their centers. The reasons for this are manifold. Because of too much traffic, noise, and bad air, the consumer no longer has any incentive to make the cumbersome trip into the city. Thus, the consumer is about to leave downtown behind. The United States took too long to recognize such trends, which have devastated their city centers, and they are now forced to pursue radical solutions. We would do well to learn from the American experiences.[4]

This Hapag Lloyd advertisement spoke to a central aspect of the rise of mass consumption during the twentieth century—its impact on the spatial layout of societies.[5] New forms of shopping and consumption transformed metropolitan landscapes, urban environments, and public spaces.

A recent "spatial turn" in the historiography of consumption has begun to explore the spatiality of consumption practices in a variety of ways. Both *representations of space,* embodied in the visions of retail and urban planners, and the everyday *spatial practices* that construct consumer spaces and their social meanings are being increasingly studied at the level of the store and shopping street, and in the context of the city as a whole.[6] The spatial layout and design of stores has long interested historians of consumption, who, for example, see the traditional service counter as a barrier between the customer and the goods that was surmounted by enticing, sumptuous department store interiors and efficient, convenient supermarket aisles.[7] More recently, the planning of shopping streets and larger configurations of stores has received increased scholarly attention, especially in the United States. Over the course of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the relationship between retailers and consumers as well as the public nature of consumption spaces was continuously renegotiated as public markets gave way to storefront-lined streets and, later, shopping centers, and strip malls.[8]

The "spatial turn" has received diverse historiographical impulses. It has benefited from the growing interest of architectural historians and historical geographers in consumption. Environmental historians have contributed by asking about the spatial footprint of changing consumption practices. Suburban sprawl and other trends in the consumption of housing and transportation inform the historical study of consumer geographies. Perhaps most promising are efforts in the cultural history of everyday life (*Alltagsgeschichte*), whose practitioners consider spatiality as it shapes historical experience and social practices. Ultimately, the study of consumer geography also engages questions of space and community—in political, social, and cultural terms.

Especially for the second half of the twentieth century, we need to ask about historical alternatives to the dominant spatial pattern of consumption in the United States, including the shopping centers and big-box stores at the center of many present-day jeremiads. The American model was certainly influential in the global development of consumption practices in the past century, as Victoria de Grazia shows in *Irresistible Empire*.[9] In many ways, however, the geography of consumption presents one area in which the United States remained a peculiar case. Despite numerous cross-border transfers, as Alexander Sedlmaier points out, the story of recent retail developments is not just about increasing homogenization and uniformity but rather includes a variety of local adaptations that have resulted in new retailing forms.[10] Transnational and comparative perspectives on the spatial transformation of consumer societies thus offer one important avenue for future research.

This chapter compares developments in West Germany and the United States from the 1950s to the early 1970s in order to raise broader issues concerning space and consumption. Drawing on a larger project that engages the changing spatial configuration of shopping and retailing in Germany and the United States after World War II, it examines both the vibrant transatlantic debate on the geography of consumption and the manifold local and national responses to it.[11] In part, this means studying the ideas about and designs for retail spaces by

retail managers, city officials, and urban planners. Since consumer spaces were not simply planned, but rather emerged from a complex process of negotiation that also included consumers, shopping streets and other public places of consumption need to be understood as socially constructed spaces of everyday social and community interaction. Thus, this chapter looks at the spatial practices of consumers as they appropriated shopping spaces and made them their own through routine acts of everyday shopping, in the process constructing and transforming retail spaces. Specifically, this chapter focuses on the creation of pedestrian malls (or *Fussgängerzonen*), which emerged between 1950 and 1970 as a conscious West German effort to avoid some of the negative aspects of suburban mass consumption that Hapag Lloyd's American tour for German planners highlighted.

The transatlantic comparison reveals a wide array of similar problems and debates with partially different results. The rise of pedestrian malls in postwar West Germany thus raises broader questions about the spatial development of consumer societies. How did the urban/suburban contrast affect the economic development of retailing structures and local business communities on each side of the Atlantic? What consequences did this contrast have for metropolitan communities, and how did changes in commercial space affect the everyday experiences of consumers in shared public spaces? Were there discernible political consequences for urban communities, for example, with regard to support for public spending on metropolitan services and public spaces? What was the environmental impact of changes in the spatial organization of consumption? West Germany (and other European countries) offered a historical alternative to American-style geographies of mass consumption that contributed to divergent developments in retail structures, consumption patterns, urban and suburban planning, as well as their politics, social meanings, and environmental effects. Furthermore, emphasizing the spatial aspect of consumption allows new perspectives on the existing literature about retail transformation, the politics of consumption, as well as the social meaning and environmental impact of mass consumerism.

The Transatlantic Rise of Pedestrian Malls

Inner-city pedestrian malls were largely a product of postwar mass consumption—both in West Germany and, with less success, in the United States.[12] Contrary to notions of convergence and "Americanization" in the realm of consumption, these two countries followed different paths to integrate mass consumption within the spatial layout of their cities. The United States became a predominately suburban consumer society after World War II, stereotypically centered on two-car families, sprawling developments of ranch houses, and the suburban shopping centers and strip malls that supplied them. West Germany, by contrast, remained a much more urban consumer society. More densely populated, this nation of consumers continued to live mainly in apartments, and it shopped on foot in neighborhood stores or by taking public transportation to

downtown stores. To be sure, the reality of postwar shopping was more complex and varied on both sides of the Atlantic than this ideal-typical contrast between a suburban and an urban consumer society suggests. Still, a comparative look at aggregate national data on housing and retail development justifies this simplification for the present purpose despite important regional, social, economic, and ethnic differences. Several factors contributed to this transatlantic divide in postwar geographies of consumption, including public policy approaches (for example, zoning regulations and tax incentives), differences in the structure of the retail industry, and divergent consumer attitudes. This chapter focuses on the role of urban planning and, more specifically, the planning of inner-city pedestrian malls.

The first such pedestrian shopping streets emerged in West Germany during the 1950s in the context of postwar reconstruction. In 1953, the city of Kassel inaugurated the most noted early pedestrian street, Treppenstrasse. Much like many other German cities, Kassel had devised a plan during the late 1940s to rebuild its inner city, which had been devastated during the war. To accommodate anticipated modern traffic demands, which German planners in the early postwar period usually projected with an eye on American developments, a new circular road pattern was set up to enclose the inner city. Treppenstrasse was to provide pedestrian access from the train station to the main business street at the core of the city, which planners envisioned becoming the "realm of the pedestrian."[13] The city council unanimously voted to create a fully pedestrianized shopping street, because "the increase in automobile traffic makes it necessary to reserve the urban core solely for the pedestrian."[14] This experiment—and its expansion a few years later—received nationwide attention in the press, which celebrated Kassel's city center as an "oasis for pedestrians."[15]

The early introduction of pedestrian areas during the 1950s was not simply an attempt to "modernize" German cities and make them suited to the demands of the automobile, however. Planners and commentators also stressed the "calming" effects of traffic-free zones. Such language betrayed underlying concerns about the modern, commercial "mass city" of the twentieth century, which were especially prevalent among conservative and educated elites.[16] These can be seen in attempts to discursively link the newly created pedestrian streets to Western (or *abendländische*) traditions. Images of Venice, the public places of other early modern cities, and even the Greek agorae were repeatedly invoked. The development of pedestrian shopping streets at the core of postwar cities in West Germany was thus, from its inception, also an attempt to embed modern mass consumption within a more traditional urban framework.

It was American city planners, however, who early on discovered the potential of pedestrian malls to revive struggling central business districts. During the 1950s, many American cities were already experiencing the negative side effects of an increasingly suburban consumer culture. As suburbs began to sprawl, retailers in central business districts had to compete with outlying shopping centers that were mushrooming across the country.[17] By the end of the decade, America's downtowns and main streets—central locations that had once been

prime real estate and the heart of community life—saw a significant decline in retail traffic. American city planners soon found themselves looking in envy at their European colleagues. Traveling to Europe during the late 1950s, they marveled not only at modern public housing projects but also at inner-city shopping districts bustling with life.[18] Experiments with traffic-free areas in the centers of German and other European cities caught the eyes of American observers. Pedestrian malls, they thought, might hold the key to reversing the decline of downtown centers.[19]

Architect Victor Gruen, an émigré from Vienna who ironically had made a name for himself as a leading designer of suburban malls in the 1940s and early 1950s, became one of the key figures to promote pedestrian malls in the United States. Inner cities, Gruen argued, had to learn from the new suburban competition that he had helped to shape. Their shopping districts required redesigning so that consumers would want to stay and linger.[20] In a 1957 talk before the American Planning and Civic Association, Gruen outlined his vision for the main street of the future: "The surface of the city center will belong exclusively to the pedestrian . . . . Thus a new measure of compactness and cohesion for the urban center can be reached, similar in character to the one found in older European cities."[21] Gruen wanted to design urban commercial spaces that would both provide the urban community with a center and ensure the economic survival of traditional downtown retailers.

Kalamazoo, Michigan, was one of the first American cities to implement such plans. Hit by rapidly declining retail sales due to suburban competition in 1956 and 1957, the business community of Kalamazoo commissioned Gruen's firm to design a plan to convert its main business street into a pedestrian walking mall. The mall, built in 1959, was a tremendous success for the city and its retailers, and it mustered national attention. Kalamazoo—now "Mall City USA"—became a model for similar projects in Fresno and other cities across the United States.[22] However, pedestrian malls would not become the nationwide phenomenon during the 1960s that its proponents had hoped for. Indeed, many American cities quickly ended experiments with traffic-free zones for a variety of reasons. Frequently, local business communities mounted opposition, fearing even greater declines in sales, should their customers be unable to drive directly to the store. As surveys among consumers in American pedestrian malls showed, this concern was not unfounded. The vast majority of shoppers reached downtown in their own cars. Especially middle-class consumers, by now already underrepresented in cities, were unwilling to switch to public transportation, and mass transit itself was rapidly declining in postwar American cities. Survey respondents repeatedly complained about limited parking space. Furthermore, they voiced concerns about their safety, crime, and "the element of people" in downtown areas. Such attitudes also reflected the importance of race in postwar American urban development.[23] Especially after race riots played out in the downtown and neighborhood shopping streets of numerous cities during the 1960s, few white, middle-class consumers were inclined to envision American urban centers as any sort of oasis.[24]

As American pedestrian malls struggled, Victor Gruen and others warned European cities to avoid repeating American mistakes. At a 1968 congress on commerce and urban planning in Brussels, Gruen emphasized the negative aspects of suburban shopping centers and touted his plans for pedestrian business districts as an alternative.[25] German observers were already attuned to Gruen's concerns, and the "death of the American city" had become a commonplace in the German debate on urban planning.[26] German city planners and retailing experts traveled to the United States by the scores. Besides those offered by Hapag Lloyd, other study tours were organized by federal and local administrations as well as by retailing and planning experts.[27] By the mid-1960s, America had become an example of urban planning gone wrong.

A "deluge of American shopping centers" and a lack of comprehensive planning were identified as root causes for the American problem, while the survival of inner-city retailing emerged as a central force in the debate about Fussgängerzonen (literally, pedestrian zones) in 1960s Germany.[28] As the first suburban shopping centers appeared in what Germans evocatively call the "green meadow," the open countryside outside city limits, many towns stepped up efforts to develop pedestrian areas. Günther Schütze of the Institute for Commercial and Urban Planning (*Institut Gewerbebetriebe im Städtebau*) observed after a trip across the Atlantic, "If today much money is invested in the United States to maintain downtowns (despite earlier developments toward the shopping center), this should at least give reason for pause in the German case. Is the move to the shopping center not a detour that requires enormous economic resources, which could actually be employed more efficiently [elsewhere]?"[29]

By the end of the decade, several German cities were not only planning single pedestrianized shopping streets, but entire networks of them. The city of Munich set the most pathbreaking example in the 1960s. With the 1972 Olympic Games in mind, the city planned a network of pedestrian streets in its center. Championed by Mayor Hans-Jochen Vogel, a leading critic of American urban development patterns, the Munich plan envisioned a system of pedestrian areas connected to public transportation. Its proponents hoped to recreate the urban center in its "old glory" for citizens and tourists alike.[30] Centered on Marienplatz, a square in front of city hall, the largest contiguous pedestrian mall in Europe was built between 1967 and 1972.

A survey conducted among Munich citizens in 1969 revealed vast differences in the role that downtowns played for German and American consumers at the time. Over 80 percent of respondents in Munich indicated that they routinely shopped while visiting the city center. They not only visited department stores and specialty shops, but in surprising numbers still bought goods for everyday use. Many complained about crowded sidewalks or too few benches and similar amenities on downtown streets. A lack of parking spaces, on the other hand, was not as high a priority as it was for consumers on the other side of the Atlantic. Indeed, the majority of respondents used public transportation to reach downtown. At least 20 percent occasionally even came on foot.[31] Under such circumstances, the development of pedestrian malls met with widespread public enthusiasm and promised to keep urban consumers in city centers.

By 1970, ninety-six Fussgängerzonen existed in Western Germany, and many other cities were planning them. By 1973, their number had risen to 214.[32] These pedestrian malls presented an urban alternative to the suburban shopping malls that had exploded in number across the United States during the same period. The reason for their relative success in West Germany lay partly in conscious urban planning that brought city officials and retailers together. The ways in which consumers made use of existing shopping spaces also figured in the equation, as did different consumer attitudes toward urban centers.

A broader metropolitan context of regulation and development further helped pedestrian malls to flourish in postwar West Germany but not in the United States. American middle-class consumers moved to the suburbs in large numbers in the decades after World War II, encouraged in part by the absence of zoning regulations and the presence of policies that subsidized mortgages and road building while permitting only minimal public expenditures on urban apartment housing, mass transit, and other urban public goods. By contrast, despite an increase in single-family homes and automobiles during the West German "miracle" years, substantial public spending on social housing programs, street cars, and other public goods kept average German consumers more closely connected to the traditional downtown retailing core as well as to urban neighborhood shops. This urban/suburban divide in retailing geographies exemplified by the pedestrian malls had more far-reaching ramifications.

Geography of Consumption: The Impact on Retailing

Differences in the geography of consumption had significant *economic implications* for the structure and development of the retailing industry as a whole. The postwar decades transformed the spatial configuration of the retailing sector in both the United States and Western European countries.[33] These changes were partly a consequence of overall urban development, which necessitated adaptations in retail. Sprawling suburban subdivisions in the United States and new housing developments in European cities created demand for new stores, and the increasing automobilization of consumers meant that expanding retail space alone was not enough. Parking spaces were also needed. Inner-city merchants pushed for the creation of downtown parking garages, but it became more and more difficult to compete in light of the cheap land offered in suburban locations. The size of stores expanded, too. The widespread introduction of self-service introduced a whole range of new demands on the organization of retail space. Furthermore, retailers carried an increasing number and expanded range of products. A trend toward one-stop shopping ultimately led to the big-box discounters exemplified by Walmart, which average between 108,000 (discount store) and 186,000 (supercenter) square feet of retail space with additional space for hundreds of parking spaces.[34] Such land-use patterns were unthinkable earlier in the twentieth century, when department stores—then the largest retail form in terms of sales area—were expanding upward rather than outward.

Land-use patterns in retailing did not develop uniformly across nations, however. The suburbanization of American consumer culture contributed to a

process of retail concentration symbolized by large supermarkets and regional shopping centers that was unmatched in West Germany well into the 1970s and 1980s.[35] While a suburban pattern of distribution came to dominate the American metropolitan landscape in the postwar decades, inner-city retailing declined. Just before Christmas 1970, *Time* ran a story entitled "Down and Out Downtown," which painted a bleak picture. "At stores along the main streets of the nation's cities . . . the mood of the merchants was anything but festive . . . . The downtown merchants—who have to cope with crime, grime and the transport snarls of the central city—are being hurt the worst." Traditional specialty stores and department stores were closing all over the country from Manhattan to San Francisco and from Dallas to Detroit. Meanwhile, the piece reported, "Suburban branches have begun to stay open on Sundays to accommodate a rush of shoppers."[36]

Most new suburban developments in the United States severely restricted shops and other commercial outlets. Retail businesses were often zoned out, hampering the development of smaller stores in new neighborhoods. Federal Housing Administration regulations that demanded the construction of retail centers in new subdivisions that the agency helped to develop also tended to promote the construction of larger shopping centers.[37] Low-income urban neighborhoods, on the other hand, were often ignored altogether. Stores that did locate there tended to sell lower-quality goods at higher prices because of limited competition.[38] Consumer advocate Frederick Sturdivant saw racial conflicts such as the 1965 Watts riots as partially rooted in the "presence of an inefficient, unethical business community in ghetto areas," which remained dominated by "inefficient Mom & Pop stores."[39]

The corner grocer was indeed an institution of bygone days to most American suburbanites in the 1970s. The automobile and the shift from daily to weekly shopping had helped to speed up the rise of large chain supermarkets. Especially in many smaller and midsize cities across the United States, once lively Main Streets gave way to boarded-up storefronts, and downtown real estate values plummeted. At a time when Disneyland's Main Street USA constructed a nostalgic and powerful image of the center of small town communities, the traditional retailing structure was losing out to supermarkets and shopping centers.[40]

In West Germany, by contrast, even large-scale new housing projects on the urban fringes often integrated small retailers such as butchers and florists within walking distance and usually also provided mass transit connections to downtown shopping districts.[41] One example was the Neue Vahr area of Bremen. Constructed during the late 1950s, Neue Vahr was one of the largest urban developments of its time, comprising roughly 10,000 apartments in several neighborhoods. Within these neighborhoods, planners included several decentralized clusters of stores to provide groceries and other necessities of daily life. At the heart of this development, Finnish architect Alvar Aalto designed a larger shopping center, Berliner Freiheit. A survey among residents of Neue Vahr in the early 1970s revealed consumption practices in this new urban district: 83 percent of daily goods were purchased within the district; 47 percent of residents shopped

daily, 40 percent every other day, and only 13 percent just on weekends. The residents of this new development, the study observed, had retained an "urban shopping style."[42] This style, the numbers also suggested, was still less the family affair that it was becoming in the United States and more the exclusive domain of women.

Such new neighborhood centers as well as inner-city shopping streets allowed more traditional specialty retailers to fare much better in West Germany than in the United States, even though they encountered some of the same challenges. The mere quantitative differences between German and American retailing in the postwar decades were revealing. While the U.S. population in 1965 was roughly three times that of Western Germany, the number of retail businesses was just over twice as high (1,350,000 in the United States compared to 600,000 in West Germany).[43] Furthermore, unlike in the United States, the overall number of retailing outlets in variety goods and groceries actually grew in West Germany after the war (from 246,041 in 1939 to 304,683 in 1961).[44] Even though retailing in postwar Germany shifted away from "full-service," family-owned and operated stores to independent, self-service stores that were often organized in voluntary chains, the level of concentration did not compare to the suburban retailing landscape in the United States, which saw an increasing shift to big-box retailers. Shopping centers accounted for only 4 percent of total retail sales in West Germany as compared to over 40 percent in the United States in the early 1970s.[45] To be sure, state regulations on shopping hours and price maintenance also contributed to divergent developments in retail structures, as did still different cultures of shopping in the first decades after the war. Nonetheless, urban planning and spatial consumption patterns were central to the development of retailing.

Pedestrian malls did their part in keeping German middle-class consumers in the city. To ensure the economic survival of downtowns, city officials and urban planners in Germany often worked in close cooperation with inner-city retail businesses. The transformation of Bremen's Sögestrasse into a pedestrian street was one such example of converging interests. In this case, the city's reconstruction association (*Aufbaugemeinschaft*) emerged as the driving force for commercial planning. Founded after the war, the association brought retailers, property owners, and independent architects together to facilitate reconstruction by mediating between public and private interests.[46] Since 1946, the association published a periodical called *Der Wiederaufbau* (literally: reconstruction), which not only addressed local projects and problems but also surveyed the broader German discussion on postwar urban planning.[47] By the 1960s, the publication devoted a lot of attention to the problem of retail planning in the context of urban development.[48] Planners and downtown merchants alike emphasized commercial planning because of growing concerns about shopping centers and the concerted push for pedestrian malls. In the Bremen case, retailers along Sögestrasse decided, in 1967, to call for a planning competition to pedestrianize the busy shopping street. According to the editors, the project was part of "the momentous task for the business community and the city administration to come

together for the construction of a competitive downtown for the future."[49] The Aufbaugemeinschaft had begun pushing for such a plan already in 1946, and in 1958 they had organized an exhibit featuring "exemplary [pedestrian] shopping streets" in Kassel, Kiel, Cologne, and Rotterdam.[50] The threat of possible competition emanating from plans for the first suburban shopping centers now lent new urgency to such plans, and a pedestrian mall was finally constructed, financed jointly by the city and adjacent businesses.[51]

Some urban historians have estimated that retailing space in German inner cities doubled between 1960 and 1970. In the face of rising sales, Heinz Hermans, then manager of the Cologne chamber of commerce, explained in 1972, "In Cologne one does not talk about pedestrian streets. One has them! . . . Amazingly, furniture stores which today often move out to the green meadow [in other cities] decide to settle in the pedestrian streets in Cologne . . . . Since automobile traffic was banned, retail sales there have grown by 30 to 40 percent. This revival of the inner city is not only to the benefit of the owners of stores, restaurants, and amusement facilities, but also to that of the urbanity and the prestige of the city as a whole."[52] While retailing forms changed in postwar West Germany and pedestrian malls would eventually become home to the kind of chain retailers found in suburban American shopping malls, differences in the geography of consumption contributed to a different pace and path of retail modernization in West Germany that defies narratives of outright "Americanization."

Geography of Consumption: Commercial Space as Social Space

Hermans' exuberant observations on the "urbanity" of Cologne point to a further implication of the spatial differences between American and West German mass consumer societies—their impact on community life and *the urban public sphere*. Historians of consumption have increasingly emphasized the social nature of shopping spaces. Some have echoed public concerns that the increasing individualization of shopping patterns and the growing commercialization of urban space in the latter part of the twentieth century have begun to undermine the traditionally important public and community functions of these spaces.[53] However, there need not be an inherent contradiction between commercial and other uses of space. In fact, the mix of both has long been characteristic, particularly for European conceptions of urbanity.[54] Furthermore, present-day concerns about the decline of urban public spheres through commercialization should not let us forget that stores and shopping streets have often been contested spaces in which practices of exclusion, segregation, and protest involving retailers and customers alike have played out. Historians should not take too nostalgic a view of Main Street and the corner grocer.

Shopping spaces as social spaces developed differently in postwar Germany and the United States. The debate regarding the "malling of America" frequently emphasizes the disappearance of public space. Private shopping malls contributed to a metropolitan environment, as Lizabeth Cohen has suggested, "in which

people were no longer brought together in central market places and parks, and public buildings that surrounded them but, rather, were separated by class, gender, and race in differentiated commercial sub-centers."[55] Indeed, many suburban shopping centers attracted a fairly homogenous white, middle-class clientele by the 1960s.[56] Did pedestrian malls in Germany present an alternative to this trend by keeping more consumers inside urban public spaces?

That was what many of the contemporary proponents of pedestrian malls hoped. Inner cities, they argued, should once again become a focal point of urban living. The notion that local retailers could and should be central to the community life of a vibrant city, small town, or neighborhood became commonplace among urban planners and sociologists by the late 1960s and early 1970s, as they abandoned the long dominant paradigm of a functionally separated urban development and began—following Jane Jacobs, among others—to appreciate the social life of small, mixed-use urban spaces.[57] Next to retailing, studies found, the ideal pedestrian mall should also include a residential population, restaurants and cafes, public meeting places, and cultural highlights.[58] Pedestrian malls, many planners in Germany hoped, would ensure that inner cities remained part of the public sphere, a place for social interaction beyond mere commerce.

Gruen and others had hoped for the same outcome for early shopping centers, as well, which to Gruen were more than just retail outlets. In his 1960 *Shopping Towns USA,* he envisioned a larger purpose for them: "By affording opportunities for social life and recreation in a protected pedestrian environment, by incorporating civic and educational facilities, shopping centers can fill an existing void . . . . They can provide the needed place and opportunity for participation in modern community life that the ancient Greek Agora, the medieval market place and our own town squares have provided in the past."[59] The planning of shopping centers would create spaces in which both retailing and a genuine suburban community life could flourish—for example, by including community rooms.[60] Such visions often clashed with economic realities, however, and shopping centers routinely controlled access to their facilities (for example, by forbidding "loitering"), or they attempted to limit the exercise of free speech there.[61]

Commercially run suburban malls thus hardly became another *Piazza del Popolo,* as one city official described the pedestrian-only Schildergasse in Cologne in a 1971 radio feature: "Here the stream of people can spread itself out. On the street, hippies display silver jewelry for sale—jealously observed by shop owners but democratically defended by letters to the editor in local dailies."[62] The city of Munich described its pedestrian mall with similar enthusiasm in 1972: "The city as a community has regained its center. Everybody looking to see something, in search of excitement, life, and discussion congregates here. You can observe the most beautiful girls, those wearing traditional costumes, backpackers, all sorts of original characters, people who bring their concerns—political or religious—to the public, discussion groups, long-haired youths and many old people . . . "[63] While these words read like the urban boosterism one would expect to find in a tourist brochure, they also spoke to a prominent strand in the discourse of postwar West German urban development that tried to contain modern

mass consumption within an integrated metropolitan framework. In outlining the 1971 urban development law (*Sädtebauförderungsgesetz*), Minister for Urban Development Lauritz Lauritzen stated that one primary goal of urban policy was to create a space in which "people of different views and interests can meet and congregate." Community centers, urban squares, and pedestrian malls were needed.[64] From this perspective commercial pedestrian malls were interpreted as democratic and diverse places of everyday social interaction.

To be sure, critical voices pointed out the limitations of these public spaces in German inner cities, which included peddlers or street musicians interfering with the self-perceived interests of local business owners.[65] Critics further charged that the widespread emergence of pedestrian areas in city centers across West Germany contributed to a rather problematic transformation of urban space, because urbanity itself was becoming defined primarily in terms of consumption. The recreation of historical settings was likened to the creation of "Potemkin villages" and "German-style Disneylands."[66] Did West Germany's pedestrian malls represent less a public space and more a sales area—albeit one with a local and historic facade?

In assessing postwar geographies of retailing on both sides of the Atlantic, one should not romanticize the "lost" traditional retail spaces in downtowns and neighborhoods. As research into the cultural history of everyday life suggests, relationships between shop owners and customers frequently entailed conflict. Stores and shopping streets were not only places of casual or constructive community interaction but they also served as locations and staging grounds for social and political struggles and practices of exclusion and persecution—perhaps most dramatically in Germany under the Nazis or in the American South during the era of Jim Crow.[67] The commercialization of downtown shopping streets in recent decades should be considered in this broader context. The development of shopping centers and pedestrian malls is part of a larger, more ambiguous narrative of twentieth-century retailing that defies overly simplistic interpretations of "decline" or "modernization." While the critics of pedestrian malls raised important concerns, it can be argued from a comparative and historical perspective that such streets, by and large, helped West German cities avoid the increasingly segregated, socially fragmented character of metropolitan development that Cohen has observed for the United States. To assess the complex relationship between the commercial and the social, more research is needed on the community functions that spaces such as stores and shopping streets actually served in everyday life.

Geography of Consumption: Public Goods and the Consumer-Taxpayer

The stronger social "embedding" of consumption within a public sphere represented by European pedestrian malls may have had more far-reaching political consequences. Especially American historians have recently underscored the political dimension of twentieth-century mass consumption. Consumption became integral to concepts of citizenship, disposable incomes a central focus of

political contestation, and consumer-driven growth a central paradigm of postwar American politics.[68] A growing literature on the local, metropolitan dimension of twentieth-century political developments now offers consumer historians another geographic vantage point from which to consider the political impact of changing consumption patterns. Particularly the rise of suburbia and its increasingly affluent consumer households have shaped the debate over consumer politics.[69]

From a comparative perspective, divergent metropolitan developments contributed to different political dynamics on each side of the Atlantic. Particularly attitudes toward publicly supplied goods—and, by extension, toward the role of the state—were influenced by the consumer geographies of each country. West Germany and the United States found two very different answers to the 1960s debate over balancing private and public consumption that Kenneth Galbraith and others had initiated. Galbraith's 1958 *Affluent Society* noted American shortcomings in urban infrastructure in light of its postwar superabundance of private consumer goods.[70] There existed a gap between public and private consumption that resonates in American politics to this day.

The middle-class American consumer-taxpayer living in the suburbs of fragmented metropolitan areas increasingly left the city behind both as a consumer and as a citizen. Indeed, American consumers who could afford to move to the suburbs were given strong incentives to do so by lower tax rates in communities that did not have to support a wide array of public services. The result was a growing divide between suburbs and core cities with consumers remaining in the old urban centers bearing the brunt of the negative side effects. Cities called for the annexation of new suburban communities to minimize the fiscal impact of white, middle-class outmigration, arguing that "[t]he greatest bargain in America today is the economic and cultural benefits enjoyed by perimeter residents who live near one of our large cities . . . without having to bear financial responsibility."[71] Suburbanites were increasingly unwilling to sacrifice part of their disposable income for mass transit, urban development, and other tax-financed public services that had become more and more disconnected from their daily life experiences.

The commitment of American "consumer-taxpayers" to public goods thus declined in the postwar decades. Particularly after their middle-class status had become increasingly precarious during the stagflation of the 1970s, many suburban homeowners who once might have supported the New Deal state (which in many cases enabled their move to the suburbs in the first place) now grew wary of a federal government that appeared to threaten their social position through taxation and racial integration.[72] As Matthew Lassiter argues, suburban Americans increasingly opposed public spending as they came to believe "that their tax dollars subsidized both the rich and the poor and . . . [they] denounced the liberal elites and the welfare cheats with equal fervor."[73] The mounting grassroots anti-tax conservatism that came to the fore in the 1970s and 1980s had roots in the country's postwar suburbs.[74]

The phenomenon of a suburban "silent majority" was much less pronounced in West Germany during the 1970s, in part because this country's consumer

geography was different from that of the United States. West German, middle-class consumers not only continued to live in comparatively more densely settled urban areas, often as renters rather than homeowners, but also tended to shop within the confines of their own city and neighborhood. They benefited more directly from urban public goods such as mass transportation and even publicly funded housing developments, and they displayed greater willingness to pay a tax premium for the benefits of an urban public sphere.

Continued commitment to public transportation in German society—even under conditions of newfound affluence—became evident in the late 1960s, for example, when mass transit emerged as a hotly contested issue in the student protest movement. Violent demonstrations erupted in the city of Hannover in 1969 when the local transit company, Uestra, announced plans to raise fares. Demonstrators organized a grassroots boycott of trolleys and instituted a car-pooling system. Participating drivers put a red dot on their vehicle to indicate their willingness to take extra passengers. While calls by radical student organizations in Hannover, Heidelberg, and other cities for the complete elimination of fares failed to gain traction, public opinion was largely sympathetic to their cause.[75] The protests had tangible results. In Hannover, the city bought Uestra and improved service by networking metropolitan transit and instituting a unified fare structure.[76] Perhaps more importantly, the student-led protests sensitized a new generation of middle-class Germans to the importance of public transportation. The protests put mass transportation squarely on the map in the growing debate on urban quality of life in the age of mass consumption.

This episode underscored a generally more accepting attitude toward public goods among West Germans that can, in part, be traced to the country's postwar geography of consumption. While the debate over private affluence and public poverty inspired by Galbraith bore little fruit in 1960s America, the Social Democratic government in Bonn formulated a comprehensive vision of consumer policy by 1970 that reached from traditional consumer goods regulation to public consumption and urban development—and that featured pedestrian malls.[77] Urban development itself became a "collective" consumer good of central importance for the quality of life in an affluent society. In 1972, Munich's mayor, Hans-Jochen Vogel, found widespread support for his critique of the American consumption model: "The crisis is most severe where output, gross national product, and consumption per capita is highest: in the United States . . . . I am unequivocally calling for limiting the growth in consumption and for a better financial endowment of our community, which means a higher tax rate . . . We must decide on our priorities: the continued rapid growth of private consumption or the expansion of our educational system, public transportation, hospitals, retirement homes, and kindergartens."[78] Significantly, Vogel, who a year later became federal minister of urban development, had been a driving force behind the pedestrian shopping streets in Munich. Planning for commercial development in postwar West Germany thus took place in a political environment that put a higher premium on urban quality of life and public goods.

As recent local studies of American political history such as Lassiter's show, urban development and the geography of consumption are closely tied to more general support for public programs and spending. The successful organization of both consumers and retailers can be instrumental in achieving larger metropolitan goals. In the 1960s, political scientist Anthony Downs observed that the cost of public goods in modern democracies (that is, taxes) were very real to consumers, while benefits were often "remote from those who receive them either in time, *space,* or comprehensibility."[79] This phenomenon became especially pronounced in the United States after World War II, and the comparative perspective with West Germany underlines the historical significance of urban geography for striking a balance between private and public affluence.

Geography of Consumption: The Environmental Costs

As we have seen, pedestrian shopping streets were the result of efforts to aid the survival of inner-city retailers. They were also meant to promote community interaction in the urban public sphere and were regarded as a public good to enhance the urban quality of life in affluent societies. Finally, the popularity of pedestrian malls was reinforced by new environmentalist critiques of modern consumption patterns beginning in the early 1970s. In contemporary historiography, the study of consumption geography has benefited from the recent growth of environmental history, which grew out of these critiques.

Studies of the environmental impact of postwar consumerism have included the proliferation of wastes and tremendous increases in energy use.[80] Consumers' use of space as a natural resource figures in studies on the impact of tourism and increased mobility. Geographies of consumption are also important to the study of environmental inequalities and quality-of-life differences.[81] Postwar historians of the United States emphasize the environmental impact of suburbanization and urban sprawl. The massive expansion of single-family homes with air conditioners, septic systems, and two-car garages led to a tremendous increase in commuter traffic, water and energy consumption, as well as land-use patterns that completely reshaped existing landscapes and ecosystems. For all its negative consequences, however, the suburbanization of affluent consumers helped increase awareness of environmental problems and may well have contributed to the takeoff of the American environmental movement by the late 1960s.[82]

Not just suburbs but also city centers faced environmental challenges that were vigorously debated on both sides of the Atlantic. Pedestrian streets came to be seen as keys to improving the urban environment. Much like expanded mass transit systems, proponents hoped for pedestrian areas to become urban leisure environments free of traffic congestion and pollution. Again, the sprawling American metropolis appeared not as a model but rather as a dystopia in the German discourse.[83] The focus on revitalizing the urban center was part of a broader return to the ideal of urban density in city planning. Pedestrian malls symbolized an emerging vision of metropolitan consumption that could

link consumer retailing to a more sustainable urban environment with public transportation and other public goods.

The differing environmental impacts of the contrasting spatial patterns of mass consumption that developed in West Germany and the United States after World War II remain prominent. Differences are measurable in overall energy usage, for example, which in 2006 amounted to 178 million BTUs per capita in Germany as opposed to 335 million BTUs per capita in the United States.[84] There is little doubt that the American consumption model is exceptionally energy intensive.[85] While certainly not the only factor, differences in the geography of consumption—from housing patterns to transportation and the design of shopping spaces—continue to contribute to significant transatlantic variations in the environmental footprints of modern consumer societies.

Conclusion

The postwar spread of mass consumption produced not a unitary "American-style" geography of consumption but rather a variety of different spatial patterns. To be sure, one should not exaggerate these differences. Anyone familiar with German pedestrian malls, for example, knows that today they are often just as dominated by chain stores as their suburban counterparts. In Germany, too, big-box stores such as Ikea have sprung up at the urban periphery over the past few decades. Their proliferation in former East Germany has been a particular cause for concern among commentators since the 1990s.[86] Moreover, critical observers such as David Harvey argue that suburban malls and inner-city shopping streets in Europe and the United States are merely two different expressions of the same kind of postmodern leisure environment.[87] Still, spatial differences between the American, suburban version of a modern consumer society and its German, more urban alternative have been quite real and have had significant economic, social, political, and environmental ramifications.

The pedestrian malls and shopping centers of the postwar decades form but a small part of the transatlantic story of consumption spaces in the twentieth century. In many respects, European and North American cities followed different paths.[88] While their story is entangled with complex global processes of transfers, exchanges, adaptations, and convergences on the levels of both metropolitan development and mass consumer culture, these processes did not produce uniform results. Instead, spaces of consumption were shaped and adapted both nationally and locally. Further research in this direction should bring the pronounced appreciation for local space in the historiographies of both everyday life and the cultures of retail spaces into fruitful dialogue with the growing historiographical attention paid to transnational exchanges. Where we shopped, how we got there, and the other things we did in these spaces formed vital aspects of twentieth-century life that helped shape the world in which we live today. It is important to understand the historical alternatives, the paths taken and not taken, and their consequences for the everyday lives of consumers. Whether we look at retail structures, the relationship between public and private spending,

or environmental costs, consumption historians can ill afford to neglect the geographic dimension of consumption.

Notes

1. "European Developers Turning to Suburban Shopping Centers," *New York Times,* June 14, 1965, 51.
2. "West Germany Gets Shopping Centers," *New York Times,* January 15, 1965, 53.
3. See, for example, "Das Wagnis auf der grünen Wiese," *Der Volkswirt* (May 8, 1964): 832; "Ein Experiment auf der grünen Wiese," *Die Absatzwirtschaft* (May 1964): 584.
4. "USA Studienreise für Städtebau und Städteplanung," *Der Aufbau* 20, no. 3 (December 1966): 39.
5. While I mainly focus on the geography of consumption in metropolitan areas as the central arena of modern consumer societies, regional and rural consumption patterns have also received some well-deserved attention by historians. On dramatic shifts in the regional supply chains of retailers, for example, see Shane Hamilton, *Trucking Country: The Road to America's Wal-Mart Economy* (Princeton, NJ, 2008).
6. For a good theoretical discussion of the spatial dimension of consumption, see the introduction to Jon Stobart, Andrew Hann, and Victoria Morgan, *Spaces of Consumption: Leisure and Shopping in the English Town, c. 1680–1830* (London, 2007).
7. See, for example, James Mayo, *The American Grocery Store: The Business Evolution of an Architectural Space* (Westport, CT, 1993); Uwe Spiekermann, *Basis der Konsumgesellschaft: Entstehung und Entwicklung des Modernen Kleinhandels in Deutschland, 1850–1914* (Munich, 1999); William Leach, *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power, and the Rise of a New American Culture* (New York, 1993); and Susan Porter Benson, *Counter Cultures: Saleswomen, Managers, and Customers in American Department Stores, 1890–1940* (Urbana, IL, 1986).
8. See, for example, Helen Tangires, *Public Markets and Civic Culture in Nineteenth-Century America* (Baltimore, MD, 2003); Erika Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure: Women in the Making of London's West End* (Princeton, NJ, 2000); and especially Alison Isenberg, *Downtown America: A History of the Place and the People Who Made It* (Chicago, 2004).
9. Victoria de Grazia, *Irresistible Empire: America's Advance through Twentieth-Century Europe* (Cambridge, MA, 2005).
10. Alexander Sedlmaier, "From Department Store to Shopping Mall: New Research on the Transnational History of Large-Scale Retail," *Jahrbuch für Wirtschaftsgeschichte,* no. 2 (2005): 9–16.
11. See my currently titled *Trams or Tailfins: Public and Private Prosperity in Postwar West Germany and the United States* (Chicago, 2012).
12. The following discussion of pedestrian malls as an alternative to suburban shopping centers draws in part on Jan Logemann, "Einkaufsparadies und 'Gute Stube': Fussgängerzonen in westdeutschen Innenstädten der 1950er bis 1970er Jahre," in *Stadt und Kommunikation in bundesrepublikanischen Umbruchszeiten,* ed. Adelheid von Saldern (Stuttgart, 2006), 103–22. On the history of pedestrian malls in Germany, see also Rolf Monheim, *Fußgängerbereiche und Fußgängerverkehr in Stadtzentren in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Bonn, 1980); Joseph Hajdu, "Pedestrian Malls in West Germany: Perceptions of their Role and Stages in their

Development," *Journal of the American Planning Association* 54, no. 3 (1988): 325–35; and Carmen Hass-Klau, *The Pedestrian and City Traffic* (London, 1990).
13. See Hansdietmar Klug, "Städtebauliche Planung für Fußgänger zur Erneuerung der Innenstädte," *Bauen und Wohnen* 21, no. 4 (1967): 149–56.
14. "Treppenstrasse: Einsprüche abgewiesen," *Kasseler Post,* February 5, 1952.
15. See, for example, "Innenstadt bleibt Oase der Fußgänger," *Hessische Allgemeine,* September 30, 1961.
16. One prominent example is Adolf Abel, *Regeneration der Städte* (Zürich, 1950).
17. On the development of shopping centers in the United States, see, for example, Richard Longstreth, *City Center to Regional Mall: Architecture, the Automobile, and Retailing in Los Angeles, 1920–1950* (Cambridge, MA, 1997); Nancy Cohen, *America's Marketplace: The History of Shopping Centers* (Lyme, CT, 2002).
18. See "U.S. Cities Held Lagging—Expert Back from Europe," *New York Times*, October 5, 1958. On Gruen, see Jeffrey Hardwick, *Mall Maker: Victor Gruen, Architect of an American Dream* (Philadelphia, PA, 2004).
19. On pedestrian areas in the United States, see Roberto Brambilla and Gianni Longo, *For Pedestrians Only: Planning, Design, and Management of Traffic-Free Zones* (New York, 1977); Harvey Rubenstein, *Pedestrian Malls, Streetscapes, and Urban Spaces* (New York, 1992); and Kent Robertson, *Pedestrian Malls and Skywalks* (Aldershot, 1994).
20. "Merchants Lose Downtown Blues," *New York Times*, February 27, 1955.
21. Victor Gruen, "Main Street 1969," *American Planning and Civic Annual* (1957): 16–21.
22. See Brambilla and Longo, *For Pedestrians Only*, 119–26; "Kalamazoo Mall Gathers Acclaim," *New York Times,* October 4, 1959; and C. H. Elliot, "Long-Term Benefits of a Shoppers' Mall," *American City* (March 1964): 91–92.
23. Downtown Research and Development Center, ed., *Public Attitudes Towards Downtown Malls: A National Opinion Research Survey* (New York, 1975).
24. On the links between the 1960s race riots and downtown shopping, see Isenberg, *Downtown America*, ch. 6, and Frederick Sturdivant, *The Ghetto Marketplace* (New York, 1969).
25. See Günter Schütze, "Internationaler Kongress 'Handel und Städtebau' in Brüssel," *Der Aufbau* 21, no. 2 (May 1967): 10–12.
26. See, for example, Alexander Mitscherlich, "Die Stadt der Zukunft," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung,* May 2, 1967 and Klug, "Städtebauliche Planung." Such concerns represented a dramatic departure from earlier German discourses on urban development during the 1950s, which often referenced the United States as a model for modern urban planning. See Jeffrey Diefendorf, "American Influences on Urban Developments in West Germany," in *The United States and Germany in the Era of the Cold War, 1945–1990,* ed. Detlef Junker (New York, 2004), 1:587–93.
27. See, for example, Erwin Thomas, *Einzelhandel im Städtebau: Shoppingcenters in den USA—Europäische Konsequenzen* (Frankfurt am Main, 1964), a report of a trip organized by the Rationalisierungskuratorium der deutschen Wirtschaft in cooperation with the Bundeswirtschaftsministerium and the Hauptgemeinschaft des deutschen Einzelhandels.
28. Herbert Dix, "Städtebauliche Erneuerung im Widerstreit der Interessen," *Der Aufbau* 20, no. 3 (December 1966): 17–18.
29. Günther Schütze, "Innerstädtische Geschäftszentren oder Shopping-Centers?" *Der Aufbau* 19, no. 1 (May 1965):11–12.

30. Siehe Baureferat München, *München—Fußgängerbereiche in der Altstadt* (Munich, 1972).
31. Data published by the Münchener Forums 1969 based on a survey commissioned by the *Süddeutschen Zeitung* and the *Münchener Merkur;* cited in Harald Ludmann, *Fußgängerbereiche in Deutschen Städten: Beispiele und Hinweise für die Planung* (Stuttgart, 1972), 14–15.
32. Rolf Monheim, *Fußgängerbereiche*, 274.
33. The development of late twentieth-century retailing has received more historiographical attention. For the United States, see Mayo*, American Grocery Store*, and for West Germany see, for example, Abdolreza Scheybani, *Handwerk und Kleinhandel in der Bundesrepublik: Sozioökonomischer Wandel und Mittelstandspolitik 1949–1961* (Munich, 1996) and Ralf Banken, "Schneller Strukturwandel trotz institutioneller Stabilität: Die Entwicklung des deutschen Einzelhandels 1949–2000," in *Economic History Yearbook,* no. 2 (2007): 117–46.
34. Wal-Mart *2009 Annual Repo*rt, 15.
35. For the numerical decline in different retail trades during the postwar decades, see U.S. Bureau of the Census, *The Statistical History of the United States: From Colonial Times to the Present* (New York, 1976), 843–45. See also "Status of Small Business in Retail Trade (1948–1958)," Staff Report to House Select Committee on Small Business, December 16, 1960 (CIS-NO: 86–2 H5033), 18–19.
36. "Down and Out Downtown," *Time* (December 7, 1970): 87.
37. N. Cohen, *America's Marketplace*, 24–25.
38. "Consumer Problems of the Poor: Supermarket Operations in Low-Income Areas and the Federal Response," Hearings before House Committee on Government Operations, October 12, 1967 (CIS-NO: 90 H2312–7). The hearing came in response to charges that Safeway stores in Washington, DC systematically upped their prices on days before welfare payments were disbursed.
39. Frederick Sturdivant, "Better Deal for Ghetto Shoppers," *Harvard Business Review* 46 (1968): 130–39.
40. The architectural transformation of many main streets has since been partially reversed by the 1966 Historic Preservation Act. Ironically, the Disney image of Main Street has subsequently influenced not only preservationists, but also designers of suburban shopping centers. See Richard Francaviglia, *Mainstreet Revisited: Time, Space, and Image Building in Small-Town America* (Iowa City, 1996), 145–67, and William Kowinski, *The Malling of America: An Inside Look at the Great Consumer Paradise* (New York, 1985), 64–73.
41. Freie Hansestadt Bremen, Projektgruppe Vahr, "Entwicklungskonzept für die Neue Vahr," concept study, March 11, 1974, archived in Bremer Zentrum für Baukultur. See also Janpeter Kob et al., *Städtebauliche Konzeptionen in der Bewährung: Neu Vahr Bremen* (Göttingen, 1972), 58–69, and Wulf Tessin, "Zum Entwicklungskontext der Stadtteilsiedlungen in den sechziger Jahren," in *Massenwohnung und Eigenheim: Wohnungsbau und Wohnen in der Grosstadt seit dem Ersten Weltkrieg*, ed. Axel Schildt and Arnold Sywottek (Frankfurt am Main, 1988), 494–512.
42. Kob et al., *Städtebauliche Konzeptionen,* 58–69.
43. Bruno Tietz, *Konsument und Einzelhandel: Strukturwandel in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland von 1950 bis 1975* (Frankfurt am Main, 1966), 504.
44. See Bruno Tietz, *Unterschiede und Wandlungen der regionalen Handelsstruktur in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland 1950 und 1961* (Opladen, 1967), 136–45.

45. See Erich Greipl, *Einkaufszentren in der Bundesrepublik: Bedeutung sowie Grundlagen und Methoden ihrer ökonomischen Planung* (Berlin, 1972), 74, and Horst-Joachim Jaeck, *Das Shopping Center,* vol. II, *Geschichte des Shopping Centers* (Berlin, 1979), 70–74.
46. Similar associations existed in many German cities. For the Bremen case, see Gerhard Iversen, "Das Bremische Beispiel," *Der Wiederaufbau* 5, no. 1/2 (June 1951): 1.
47. Published since 1963 as *Der Aufbau*, the periodical continues to this day as a forum for urban development and regional planning.
48. One issue, for example, was devoted almost solely to this topic: *Der Aufbau* 20, no. 1 (April 1966): 1–15.
49. Editorial, *Der Aufbau* 20, no. 1 (April 1966): 13.
50. Gerhard Iversen, "Vorbildliche Verkaufsstrassen in deutschen und ausländischen Städten," *Der Wiederaufbau* 12, no. 3 (1958): 2–8.
51. See the special edition covering the Sögestrasse competition, *Der Aufbau* 21 (November 1967). Some form of joint financing was common in the construction of German pedestrian malls.
52. Attachment to "Fußgängerbereiche in Köln" (1972) in Historisches Archiv Stadt Köln, Acc. 1714.
53. The notion of decline is particularly pronounced in Ann Satterthwaite, *Going Shopping: Consumer Choices and Community Consequences* (New Haven, 2001). See also Lizabeth Cohen, "From Town Center to Shopping Center: The Reconfiguration of Community Market Places in Postwar America," in *American Historical Review* 101 (1996): 1050–81.
54. See Barbara Henderson-Smith, "From Booth to Shop to Shopping Mall: Continuities in Consumer Space from 1650 to 2000" (PhD diss., Griffith University, 2002).
55. L. Cohen, "From Town Center to Shopping Center," 1079. For a discussion on the public/private relationship in postwar German shopping malls, see Walter Siebel, "Zum Wandel des öffentlichen Raums—Das Beispiel Shopping-Mall," *Stadt und Kommunikation,* ed. Saldern, 67–82.
56. See, for example, survey results published in Steven Paranka, *Shopping Center Effects on Small Business* (Akron, 1964). Of the total respondents in 1964, 6.9% stated an annual family income under $3,000 (as opposed to 20% of families in the 1962 national average), 14% stated $3,000-$5,000 (19% nationally), 31.7% stated $5,000-$7,500 (versus 25% nationally), and 28.9% stated $7,500-$10,000 (15% nationally). Income groups above $10,000 were represented only slightly above the national average.
57. See, for example, Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York, 1961) and the work of William H. Whyte, *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces* (New York, 1980).
58. "Fußgängerzonen als Standortfaktor," *Kommunalwirtschaftliche Informationen* 4 (1972): 24–28.
59. Gruen and Smith, *Shopping Towns,* cited in N. Cohen, *America's Marketplace*, 32.
60. See Gruen and Smith, *Shopping Towns*, 21 and 23–24. Gruen's publication illustrated such hopes by juxtaposing images of the Southdale Center with photographs of people dancing in the streets of Paris. Gruen frequently referred to European cities and retail developments such as the Lijnbaan in Rotterdam, the English New Towns, and Vaellingsby near Stockholm.
61. See Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York, 2003), 275–78.

62. Hans Schmitt-Rost, "Neue Völker Wandern. Zustände im Kölner Fußgängerparadies" (1971), Historisches Archiv Stadt Köln Ef 121.
63. Baureferat München, *München—Fußgängerbereiche*.
64. Lauritz Lauritzen, *Die Zukunft Unserer Städte: Analysen, Ziele, Lösungen* (Bonn, 1971), 9.
65. Deutscher Industrie- und Handelskammertag, *Einkaufsmagnet Fußgängerzone* (Bonn, 1979), 17–18, and D. Garbrecht, "Fußgängerbereiche: Ein Alptraum?" *Baumeister* 11 (1977): 1052–53.
66. "Eine Zukunft für die Vergangenheit," *Der Spiegel* (June 17, 1974): 54.
67. See, for example, Paul Steege et al., "The History of Everyday Life: A Second Chapter," *Journal of Modern History* (2008): 358–78. With regard to retailing and consumption, the recent scholarship of Andrew Bergerson, Belinda Davis, Kathrine Pence, and Paul Steege is of particular significance for Germany. For the United States, see Tracey Deutsch, "Untangling Alliances: Social Tensions Surrounding Independent Grocery Stores and the Rise of Mass Retailing," in *Food Nations: Selling Taste in Consumer Societies*, ed. Warren Belasco and Philip Scranton (New York, 2002), 156–74. The work of historians of everyday life also overlaps with research into retail development by historical anthropologists such as Norbert Dannhaeuser, *Two Towns in Germany: Commerce and Urban Transformation* (Westport, 1996).
68. See, for example, L. Cohen, *Consumers' Republic*; Kathleen Donohue, *Freedom from Want: American Liberalism and the Idea of the Consumer* (Baltimore, 2003); Meg Jacobs, *Pocketbook Politics: Economic Citizenship in Twentieth-Century America* (Princeton, 2005); and Charles McGovern, *Sold American: Consumption and Citizenship, 1890–1945* (Chapel Hill, 2006).
69. On the growing political importance of suburbia, see Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right* (Princeton, 2001); Becky Nicolaides, *My Blue Heaven: Life and Politics in the Working-Class Suburbs of Los Angeles 1920–1965* (Chicago, 2002); and Matthew Lassiter, *The Silent Majority: Suburban Politics in the Sunbelt South* (Princeton, 2006).
70. John Galbraith, *The Affluent Society* (Boston, 1958).
71. Cited in Lassiter, *Silent Majority*, 184.
72. This argument is suggested in particular by Nicolaides, *My Blue Heaven,* ch. 7.
73. Lassiter, *Silent Majority*, 302.
74. On the suburban roots of modern American conservatism, see McGirr, *Suburban Warriors.*
75. See, for example, "In Hannover fährt keine Straßenbahn," *Süddeutsche Zeitung,* June 13, 1969; Jürgen Eick, "Die Null-Tarife," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung,* July 12, 1969. The issue of trolley fares was framed as part of broader fight for consumer interests with regard to public and private goods: "What happens today with regard to trolley fares could happen tomorrow to rents, broadcasting dues, train and mail tariffs, or prices for beer, meat, electricity . . . " See also "Solidarisierung: Mit Lustgewinn," *Der Spiegel*, no. 29 (1969): 41–42; "Kostenlose Beförderung utopisch," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung,* August 6, 1969.
76. "Die Utopie der ÖTV," *Die Zeit,* July 30, 1971.
77. See Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft und Finanzen, *Bericht der Bundesregierung zur Verbraucherpolitik* (Bonn, 1971).
78. Hans-Jochen Vogel, "Bei den Regeln gewinnt kein Bürgermeister das Spiel," *Frankfurter Rundschau*, July 5, 1972, 12.

79. Anthony Downs, "Why the Government Budget Is Too Small in a Democracy," *World Politics* 12 (1960): 547 (emphasis added).
80. See, for example, Susan Strasser, *Waste and Want: A Social History of Trash* (New York, 1999) and Christian Pfister, ed., *Das 1950er Syndrom: Der Weg in die Konsumgesellschaft* (Bern, 1995).
81. Andrew Hurley, *Environmental Inequalities: Class, Race, and Industrial Pollution in Gary, Indiana, 1945–1980* (Chapel Hill, 1995).
82. On the ecological consequences of suburbanization, see especially Adam Rome, *The Bulldozer in the Countryside: Suburban Sprawl and the Rise of American Environmentalism* (Cambridge, UK, 2001).
83. *Alexander Mitscherlich*, "Die Stadt der Zukunft," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, May 2, 1967, and Hansdietmar Klug, "Städtebauliche Planung."
84. See Energy Information Administration, *International Energy Annual 2006*, http://www.eia.doe.gov/pub/international/iealf/tablee1c.xls.
85. See, for example, David Nye, *Consuming Power: A Social History of American Energies* (Cambridge, MA, 1998).
86. See Elmar Kulke, "Entwicklungstendenzen suburbaner Einzelhandelslandschaften," in *Suburbanisierung in Deutschland: Aktuelle Tendenzen*, ed. Klaus Brake, Jens Dangschat, and Günther Herfert (Opladen, 2001), 57–69.
87. David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Cambridge, UK, 1989), 66–98. A similar critique can be found in Werner Durth, *Die Inszenierung der Alltagswelt: Zur Kritik der Stadtgestaltung* (Braunschweig, 1977).
88. The geography of consumption has emerged as a central aspect of broader structural differences between European and North American cities in the twentieth century. See Hartmut Kaelble, "Die Besonderheiten der europäischen Stadt im 20. Jahrhundert," in *Die europäische Stadt im 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. Friedrich Lenger and Klaus Tenfelde (Cologne, 2006), 25–44.

CHAPTER 9

Continental Europeans Respond to American Consumer Culture: Jürgen Habermas, Roland Barthes, and Umberto Eco

Daniel Horowitz

In the middle of the twentieth century, new ways of looking at consumer culture emerged in America and Western Europe that emphasized pleasure, symbolic communication, skepticism about moralistic judgments, and an exploration of the relationship between producers and consumers. Writers began to see popular culture as the locus of aesthetic creativity and rich meanings. They took consumer culture seriously without fully embracing it, as they mixed fascination, irony, criticism, and detachment. From the mid-1950s to the early 1960s, three European writers offered especially suggestive approaches. Jürgen Habermas wrote essays that both worked within and mildly challenged the framework that his mentors Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno had offered in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944). In *Mythologies* (1957), Roland Barthes explored the ways commercial performances and advertisements conveyed symbolic meanings. The literary critic and philosopher Umberto Eco pondered the strengths and weaknesses of popular culture, much of it from the United States, as he revealed, like Barthes, what it meant to use sophisticated literary and philosophical approaches to understand mass media in new ways.

However, in the 1950s and in some cases much later, for Americans their writings were lost in translation. Even now some of the relevant essays by Habermas remain unavailable in English. Barthes' book was published in France in 1957 but not in English until fifteen years later, and then only in a somewhat abbreviated version. The relevant essays by Eco began to appear in translation in 1966, but

some not until much later. Their writings appeared at a time when elite critics stood in opposition to American popular culture, while most Europeans eagerly watched American films, listened to American music, and found in American consumer goods the comfort and ease they longed for.[1] Significantly, these appreciative writings came from outside the usual realms of intellectual, political, and cultural authority: the Roman Catholic Church, traditional cultural elites, and the Communist Party.

To lesser or greater degrees, these authors went against the grain of the widely accepted framework within which many American intellectuals understood commercial culture. Implicitly or explicitly, they challenged the moralistic approaches that dominated debates in the United States from at least the 1830s until well into the 1960s. They complicated the sharp separation of levels of culture that New York intellectuals of the postwar period had insisted upon. Moreover, they asked whether consumers were as passive as many cultural critics suggested and instead advocated a somewhat reciprocal relationship between producers and consumers. Finally, instead of seeing commercial culture bringing about moral degradation, they emphasized the possibility that it involved pleasurable expressiveness, rich meanings, and symbolic communication. To be sure, none of these writers took such positions unequivocally. It was precisely the complicated and rich nature of what they wrote that made their arguments so suggestive.

Germany: Habermas

In the 1950s, Jürgen Habermas (1929-) started to work his way hesitantly toward developing a theory of consumer society.[2] He offered a critique of both the Christian Democratic Union's emphasis on free markets and the Social Democrats' vision of egalitarian abundance promoted by centralized planning. Habermas, Tony Judt has remarked, saw West Germany as "a democracy without democrats" whose citizens "had vaulted with shocking ease from Hitler to consumerism," in the process salving "their guilty memories by growing prosperous."[3] From 1956 to 1958, he worked in Frankfurt as Theodor Adorno's research assistant at the Institute of Social Research. Horkheimer, disturbed by Habermas' embrace of more radical aspects of Marxism, succeeded in getting him dismissed from the institute. Habermas left Frankfurt but in 1964 returned to the institute as Horkheimer's successor.

Beginning in 1952, Habermas worked as a freelance journalist, in the next half-dozen years writing on a variety of subjects in newspaper articles. Only now are some of these essays no longer lost in translation, since I had them translated while working on this project.[4] In these essays, Habermas was wrestling with issues Adorno and Horkheimer had raised, especially in their 1944 essay "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception." There they had emphasized the inescapable power of capitalism to control people's lives, not only in the realm of production, as more traditional Marxists had asserted, but also in the realm of consumption. Leisure, amusement, movies, and popular music—often thought of as sources of pleasure and play—turned out to be realms in which

capitalism systematically oppressed as powerfully as it did in factories. If there was any hope, they argued, it lay in avant-garde high culture.

Habermas pondered the implications of new patterns of technology, production, and consumption. To a considerable extent, his journalistic essays reflected his agreement with the vision offered by Adorno and Horkheimer. He argued that what seemed to some to be the freer or more democratic postwar system in fact masked the powerful force of strengthened, administered systems of control by corporations and the state.[5] He explored how consumption, now reliant on "amusement apparatuses," had become work. As he wrote in 1957, drawing on David Riesman's discussion of play as work, a "false transfer of the work morale into the sphere of consumption" meant that aspects of "the work compulsion" were transmuted "ironically into those of a consumption compulsion."[6] He explored the differences between radio, television, and movies as technologies that shaped experience.[7] He showed how contemporary technology intensified human alienation by disconnecting people from the physicality of industrial processes.[8] Technology thus produced alienation in the realm of consumption, for example, in the ways modern automobiles, with their emphasis on ease, eroded the chance for surprise and intense pleasure.[9] Pointing forward to his later, more fully developed concerns about threats to public life, he explored how the commercialization of leisure, seen in festivals and commemorations in contemporary Germany, tried unsuccessfully "to recreate the rhythmic harmony of a joyful community."[10]

In contrast, Habermas found reason for cautious optimism about the relationships between culture and capitalism. He criticized those, both in Nazi and in West Germany, who demeaned the ability of ordinary citizens.[11] He wondered whether new, more cooperative ways of organizing work could produce a somewhat more open society.[12] He called for an embrace of authentic play, disassociated from the imperatives of production.[13] He hoped that innovative industrial design might encourage "fantasy and initiative" in people's relationships with what they purchased.[14] If he found little hope of liberation from television or movies, he located in contemporary, experimental radio plays, as he later would find in early modern public spaces, ways to counter the authority of capitalism and the state. By juxtaposing "different realms of reality, real and unreal spaces," these plays opened up room in which artists and listeners might operate with more freedom and imagination.[15] To counter the power of alienating technology, Habermas emphasized the creativity of art: not just avant-garde modern, but also that developed by industrial designers, cartoon animators, and modern architects. Bringing together art and technology would help recover the "thing character" of industrial processes and make people more aware of the objects in their daily lives, thus allowing consumers to use objects for their own human ends rather than those prescribed by the sphere of production.[16] If modern cars were alienating, then Habermas mentioned two alternatives. One was the bumper cars he had witnessed at a carnival, for which driving involved "liberating breakthroughs, brazenness, cleverness, cunning, pedantry, and elegance." The other example was hot rodders who drove in the American desert exhilarated by "fantasy, sensibility,

individual willfulness, and desire to be a medium for mechanical excitations."[17] When he talked of public celebrations, he mentioned the fluid "borders between spontaneous folk festival and manipulated hype." Moreover, he took some comfort from what he saw as "the mistrust of great stylizations, understatement, and the 'fractured attitude' towards celebratory pretension—as reactions to manipulated celebratory acts and emptied-out, late-bourgeois festival conventions." Here the young Habermas expressed a longing for authentic celebration and community not readily available under the more "fractured" conditions that obtained in the contemporary world.[18]

In scholarly essays published in 1954 and 1958, which, like his newspaper articles from that time, have never before been translated into English, Habermas began to work out some of these ideas in more philosophical terms, as he offered hints of the ways he was trying to challenge the pessimism of Horkheimer and Adorno. In 1954, he published "The Dialectics of Rationalization: On Pauperization in Production and Consumption."[19] Here he worked to come to terms with a realization of the challenges that the increasing affluence of the German working class and growing middle class posed to traditional Marxism. He drew on writings of what later became known as the Frankfurt School as well as conservative German nationalists. Much of his essay was a dense, pessimistic discussion of what he called "pauperization," the ways in which major industries under modern capitalism used technology to make the lots of workers worse, even as their wages rose. Experiments to improve labor's morale were only a social therapy that served to subject workers to technologically imposed rationalization. Higher wages did not compensate for pauperization and alienation. In addition, the ability of workers to use in their leisure time what they produced as workers, rather than providing genuine enjoyment, only served to bind them even more tightly to the economic system. The artificial mobilization of needs was more or less a trick to encourage greater productivity. Consequently, mechanized conditions of work and increased consumption only served to reinforce one another. Continually referring to American conditions, Habermas emphasized how accelerated consumption and affluence undermined the true value of objects of desire.[20]

Yet Habermas found reason for guarded optimism. He discussed European and American experiments in which workers received more control over their work. Such innovations demonstrated that workers were more productive if they had a major say in decisions about their working conditions. Giving workers more responsibility would enable them to understand how what they were doing fit into a larger process and to see how they could "consciously contribute" to the creation of a product. All these changes, Habermas wrote, would result in less alienation. Indeed, they could foster "enthusiasm for work" and greater performance and profitability. In addition, reductions in advertising would make responsible consumer choices and the proper enjoyment of goods more likely. Pointing to the sleek and innovative industrial designs by the American Raymond Loewy, Habermas explored how entrepreneurs and designers could educate consumers to appreciate the unique properties of commercial goods. More effective industrial design could thus enhance the autonomy of consumers.[21]

In a second article, his 1958 "Sociological Notes Concerning the Relationship of Work and Leisure," Habermas again offered both pessimistic and slightly hopeful analyses. On the one hand, he asserted that under modern conditions, free time was an illusion because the dynamics of production controlled the nature of leisure. Capitalism and mechanization increasingly determined people's lives outside the sphere of production in a situation in which leisure was ascendant over work. He worried that the pursuit of a higher standard of living might condemn workers "to a status of neobarbarians jollied along in the cage of consumer culture." Yet Habermas raised the possibility of pleasures outside the realm of work—hobbies as well as jobs in charitable, religious, and cultural organizations—although even there the imperatives of industrial activity played a significant role. Nonetheless, he imagined that in the realm of leisure there was some hope. The enjoyment of real abundance would require a changed attitude to consumption in which self-restraint counteracted the tendency to equate leisure with materialism. Under prosperous conditions, this aestheticism would "give individuals back their freedom to acquire that which is respectively appropriate" and thus provide "the actual condition for satisfying real needs." Moreover, automation could mean that a shorter workweek for laborers might reduce the prestige of work, open up more genuine free time, and thus enhance the value of cultural and political activities. Habermas held out the hope that truly free time could lead to "the conscious participation of the broad masses" in social life, through which people would regain control of their lives to fulfill "the promise that we can redeem that happiness which is possible here and now."[22]

In late 1950s and early 1960s, Habermas began to turn his attention to questions about the public sphere. Thus, in *Structural Transformation* (1962), he worked within the Frankfurt School tradition, again pushing mildly against its pessimism. He focused on the modernization of the West and not the Americanization of Western Europe, even if he was acutely aware of American influence on German politics and culture. He highlighted the way many Americans—William Randolph Hearst and Edward Bernays, for example—had developed the innovations that undermined a genuine public sphere. With reservations and a suggestion on how to remedy the situation, he accepted the notion that modern mass media had helped erode the importance of public space and undermine both freedom and democracy. In the eighteenth century, the press played a crucial role in supporting a public sphere; by the twentieth, mass media had undermined the vitality of the public sphere. Again drawing on Riesman in a way that turned the American author's cautious optimism about consumer education into relatively bleak pessimism, Habermas wrote of how "the culture of harmony" subjected the public "to the soft compulsion of constant consumption training."[23]

Thus not unlike what Adorno and Horkheimer had done when they discussed the power of the culture industry, Habermas argued that a whole range of forces came together by the middle of the twentieth century to form a powerful mixture. The mass media and the welfare state made citizens increasingly passive and undermined the possibility of "rational-critical debate" in "the manufactured public sphere," with the commercialization of public space greatly weakening

any prospect of participatory democracy. Under these powerful conditions, the citizen became a consumer, experiencing a sense of self not through democratic participation but by making purchases in an increasingly affluent society. At a few moments, Habermas explored how a true public sphere might be re-established. He wondered whether greater affluence might foster the "increasing plurality of interests." Writing in somewhat vague and hedged language in the book's final sentence, Habermas asserted that real change was still possible in the bourgeois public sphere; "whether the exercise of domination and power persists as a negative constant, as it were, of history—or whether as a historical category itself, it is open to substantive change." In important ways, Habermas was recoiling against the way bourgeois citizens, who had participated in a public arena of the eighteenth century, had become consumers without any effective role as citizens in the twentieth century.[24]

In his writings of the late 1950s and early 1960s, much earlier than many scholars assume,[25] Habermas was trying to figure out what it meant to reformulate what Adorno and Horkheimer had written in a very different context. Like them, he saw modern, capitalist production and consumption operating together to forcefully oppress human aspirations. Yet, again and again, Habermas worked to develop a position that, much more than that of his mentors, mediated between the extremes of apologetics and despair. To be sure, his alternatives to the iron cage of producer and consumer capitalism were often not fully developed. Nonetheless, he was working toward an understanding of liberation fostered not by the avant-garde, but in the experimental reaches of the culture of ordinary people and that produced by industrial designers. Unlike Adorno and Horkheimer, Habermas did not believe that modern capitalism mobilized mass media to dominate consciousness in a totalizing manner. If modern mass media had severely limited a vital public sphere, there was some hope that affluence might mitigate the worst effects of mass media and open up room for vital democracy. He located these possibilities in animated comics, artists who experimented with popular culture, industrial designers, hot rodders, and experiments in restoring the balance between work and leisure. To put it more broadly, Habermas was trying to figure out how to overcome the alienation of consumers as workers by emphasizing passion, imagination, and citizenship.

France: Barthes

In *Mythologies,* published in France in 1957 but not translated into English until 1972 (and in its full original version not until 1979), Roland Barthes (1915–80) offered a compelling way to analyze everyday objects and phenomena. He drew on the semiotics of Ferdinand de Saussure, Marxist analysis, and his own sustained engagement with literary criticism. He presented penetrating analyses of advertisements and spectacles that connected consumer culture, race, class, and citizenship. He probed the meaning of the relationship of the French with their colonies as filtered through consumption. He focused on the images themselves, albeit without neglecting to join their production and consumption. Behind

the specifics of his case studies stood an argument that bourgeois society used commercial goods and experiences to turn the historical into the natural, in the process obfuscating the reality of power relations. Moreover, his approach involved an exploration of the complexities of the relationships between high and low cultures. Like Habermas in Germany and Eco in Italy, he used sophisticated ideas to understand apparently simple examples of popular culture.[26]

Barthes divided his book into two parts, the first a series of short essays and the second a more theoretical piece titled "Myth Today." In that latter section, what became clear were the fruits of his interest in semiotics, which he drew on to explore how language worked to generate myths by evoking a system of communication. Semiotics enabled Barthes to distinguish between denotation, the supposedly self-evident meaning, and connotation, the implied one. There were three key terms here: the signifier (a word or image, with his choice being some roses), the signified (what roses mean—passion or romance), and the sign (the association of the signifier and signified—what he called "'passionified' roses"). Barthes' most intriguing example came from a cover of *Paris Match*:

> A young Negro in a French uniform is saluting, with his eyes uplifted, probably fixed on a fold of the tricolour. All this is the *meaning* of the picture. But, whether naively or not, I see very well what is signifies to me: that France is a great Empire, that all her sons, without any colour discrimination, faithfully serve under her flag, and that there is no better answer to the detractors of an alleged colonialism than the zeal shown by this Negro in serving his so-called oppressors. I am therefore faced with a greater semiological system: there is a signifier, itself already formed with a previous system (*a black soldier is giving the French salute*); there is a signified (it is here a purposeful mixture of Frenchness and militariness); finally, there is a presence of the signified through the signifier.

The power of this system lay in its ability to promote a process Barthes called "frozen speech"—the way myth, through language, steals and neutralizes—in this instance, how "the Negro's salute thickens, becomes vitrified, freezes into an eternal reference meant to *establish* French imperiality."[27]

In the first section of *Mythologies,* Barthes offered short, intensive analyses of specific icons and a complicated unearthing of their aesthetically rich and larger meanings. The essays ranged widely across the contemporary landscape, zeroing in on such phenomena as a court case, detergents, toys, movie stars, and food. By focusing on everyday life, Barthes' essays formed part of an effort among French intellectuals to come to terms with the dramatic modernization that began in the mid- to late 1950s.[28] He interpreted commercial images and performances as texts, much as an anthropologist might read a ritual enacted by a tribe. In economical and at times opaque prose, he linked high and low culture, demonstrating how philosophy and literature illuminated and paralleled the meanings of the mundane and crassly commercial. Thus he connected "the function of grandiloquence" of the spectacle of wrestling with the power of classical theater to evoke themes of suffering or justice.[29]

He focused on how the excessive, flamboyant, and superficial enabled language to distort or steal meaning. He emphasized how artifice, the display of the body, sexuality, and sensuality were core features of much popular culture. He talked of a travel writer as having "a good fleshly body" and of Garbo's image plunging "audiences into the deepest ecstasy, . . . when the face represented a kind of absolute state of the flesh." Professional wrestling, though superficially understood as a sport, was in fact a "spectacle of excess" filled with overflowing emotion. Similarly, a striptease performed by a woman might in commonsense terms be about sexuality, when, in fact, it was about precisely the opposite—the desexualization of the female body. What seemed sexual in a Parisian striptease ended with a naked body regaining "a perfectly chaste state of the flesh." Thus Barthes understood culture as a series of dramatic, spectacular, and symbolic acts conveyed through texts people encountered in their daily lives. Attentive to the language, representations, symbolic meanings, and surface texture of images, he showed how the ordinary embodied myths that served as key components of a system of communication.[30]

For Barthes, the analysis of specific cultural artifacts and moments thus pointed to larger social meanings. An advertisement for a laundry detergent or the cover of a popular magazine provided a window into how contradiction and dialectic revealed the fissures between appearances and social reality. Capitalism, imperialism, and the class system deployed symbolic systems to transform the physicality of objects and the ordinariness of the quotidian into powerful instruments of social control. Thus, Barthes ended his analysis of laundry products by cautioning his readers not to forget that corporate power to shape the consumer's experience stood behind seemingly innocent images. The "euphoria" evoked by an advertisement that celebrated a soap's power, he wrote, "must not make us forget that there is one plane on which *Persil* and *Omo* are one and the same: the plane of the Anglo-Dutch trust *Unilever*." Significantly, Barthes' focused on this European company and two of its products during what historian Victoria de Grazia has described as the "detergent wars," when the products of the European Unilever competed with those of American corporations, Procter and Gamble and Colgate-Palmolive. Barthes might have jumped on the anti-American bandwagon and held up Tide instead of Persil or Omo as the representative of a consumer culture that mystified capitalism's methods. Instead, he focused on a powerful Anglo-Dutch company and its products.[31]

Barthes was paying attention not to the United States but to the relationship between France and its colonies by connecting consumer culture with nationhood and citizenship. Exploring the nexus between the colonization of everyday life and the decolonization of North Africa, he linked the symbolic power of consumer items with what it meant for even nonwhites to belong to a nation when he wrote that for French people "to believe in wine is a coercive collective act," a universality that implied conformity. Writing at a time when the French were continuing to tighten their control over their colonies, Algeria especially, he understood the dynamics that connected consumer culture, nationalism, and imperialism. Central to the production of abundant wine, the "totem-drink" of

France, was the way French capitalism in Algeria imposed "on the Muslims, on the very land of which they have been dispossessed, a crop of which they have no need, while they lack even bread." Similarly, the young man who appeared on the cover of *Paris Match* saluting the French flag made natural and thereby powerful the *egalité* and universal sense of Frenchness deployed in the defense of the French empire. Class also played a key role in giving symbols power. Symbolic systems enabled the bourgeoisie to identify itself with the nation—to gain compliance from the petite bourgeoisie. Consequently, "the bourgeoisie is constantly absorbing into its ideology a whole section of humanity which does not have its basic status and cannot live up to it," he insisted, "except in imagination, that is, at the cost of an immobilization and an impoverishment of consciousness." The vehicles that carried the symbolic meaning of daily life—newspapers, films, pulp stories, politics, as well as casual talk about weddings, meals, and clothes—were "dependent on the representation which the bourgeoisie *has and makes us have* of the relations of man and the world."[32]

Myths thus changed culture and history into nature, the factual into the transcendent, the particular into the universal and ideological, in the process shrouding the social order in a haze of mystification. People, he remarked, "resented seeing Nature and History confused at every turn" and therefore "wanted to track down, in the decorative display of *what-goes-without-saying,* the ideological abuse which, in my view, is hidden there." Among his most compelling examples of this process was the photographic exhibit, developed in the United States as "The Family of Man" but shown in Paris as "The Great Family of Man." The exhibit's theme was that universality prevailed despite the distinctiveness of individual cultures, "Man is born, works, laughs and dies everywhere in the same way," Barthes wrote as he cast a skeptical eye on its message. Then he pointedly asked "why not ask the parents of Emmet Till, the young Negro assassinated by the Whites what *they* think of *The Great Family of Man*?" as he referred to the August 1955 killing of a fourteen-year-old African American in the Mississippi Delta, allegedly for whistling at a white woman. Again and again, Barthes drove home the point about history, nature, and mystification. When he wrote of Hachette's *Blue Guides,* he found in them the "disease of thinking in essences, which is at the bottom of every bourgeois mythology of man." At their best, myths were fluid, their meaning contingent, with Barthes likening them to a "constantly moving turnstile" through which traveled a series of continually shifting meanings.[33]

Forces were at work that turned myth into depoliticized or "frozen speech," making the symbolic systems that people encountered daily the means by which power in the society was organized and sustained. Reflecting the producerist ethic common to writers steeped in Marxism, Barthes used the "language of man as a producer" as the "one language that is not mythical." For Barthes, in these years on the noncommunist left, language was important to understand because it was the means by which corporations and the state maintained their power. His analysis extended not only to canonical texts but also to performances and advertisements, an analysis of which revealed how symbols were connected to power

relations. The lessons his exercises provided demonstrated how an active reader (so very much unlike the passive consumer) resisted by playfully interpreting mythologically encrusted commercial messages and thereby uncovered the social system's ideologies. Thus, myth as stolen and depoliticized speech, driven by class dynamics, state imperatives, and corporate power, emptied reality of all complexity, contradictions, tragedy, history, and politics. As Barthes wrote in 1953, an analysis of myths provided "the only effective way for an intellectual to take political action."[34]

If *Mythologies* was a very political book, its author hardly engaged in the anti-Americanism typical in the 1950s of many of those on the left.[35] Barthes wrote his book precisely at a time when the French left opposed America's policies in the Cold War and America's exportation of its consumer culture, which many feared was eroding French cultural autonomy and replacing it with materialism, conformity, and corrosive popular culture. In contrast, in the mid-1950s, French public opinion was strongly positive about the United States, especially the way it provided a model of a society that embraced the pursuit of a higher standard of living.[36] Indeed, about the time of the book's publication, Barthes traveled to New York, and his initial response involved an appreciation of Manhattan's modernity—so much so that, when he returned to Paris, he tried to persuade his mother to buy a modern household appliance.[37] A number of his essays focused on American cultural products—more prominently in the original French edition and its 1979 translation into English than in the 1972 English edition. At least three of the essays that did not appear in the 1972 version—on Billy Graham, Elia Kazan's *On the Waterfront,* and Bernard Buffet's New York—took on American subjects, but did not emphasize that they represented a threat to bring to France an Americanized popular culture. Rather, the first two focused on the consequences of American anticommunism.[38] Barthes was working not against worries about an American invasion but on precisely the opposite—the tendency among French writers to assume that problems came from the outside.[39]

Moreover, the essay on Buffet's paintings of Manhattan involved a not unalloyed appreciation of America and a critique of France's provincial anti-Americanism. The artist's depiction of New York as "a petrified, infantile necropolis" would not, Barthes thought, "unsettle many prejudices"; rather it "confirms the Frenchman in the excellence of his habitat." To Barthes, New York was a "marvelous city"—alive and compelling. In contrast, Buffet's depictions followed "in the wake of our venerable moralists, for whom the refrigerator is antipathetic to the soul." For Barthes, Buffet's reaction to Manhattan evoked the notion that "we are bored when we are comfortable, in short, according to the most reactionary remark of human history, the alibi of all exploitations, that 'money doesn't make happiness.' "[40]

Italy: Eco

If the brilliant and epigrammatic discussions of contemporary commercial culture and its unmasking of iconic meanings in Barthes' *Mythologies* had that telling

combination of a feel for the pleasures of consumer culture and penetrating, detached analysis of its meanings, the same can be said of Umberto Eco's essays on popular culture of the late 1950s and early 1960s. Indeed, in 1993, when Eco wrote the preface to a 1963 collection of his own essays, he remarked that "from the point of view of literary genre," they were like those in *Mythologies*. He went on to say that the similarity was a result of coincidence, since when he started writing the essays in 1959, he had not yet come across the 1957 book by Barthes. Yet emblematic of the convergence of approaches across national boundaries, many of the essays, short explorations of cultural texts, resembled what Barthes had offered. More generally, Eco's writings on popular culture revealed so many key elements of his considerations of popular culture in the late 1950s and early 1960s: the commitment to analyze its texts seriously by using sophisticated literary and philosophical techniques rather than highly charged moral ones; an explication of the power of conventional forms; an exploration of the relationship between producers and consumers of contemporary media; an emphasis on sexuality and symbolic communication; and a complex combination of appreciation, engagement, and ironic detachment.[41]

Eco's writings on popular culture began in earnest in 1959.[42] From then until the mid-1960s, he published a steady stream of essays on comics, television, and detective fiction. Central to Eco's considerations was figuring out the relationship between intellectuals and the cultures they studied. His 1962 "Industry and Sexual Repression in a Po Valley Society" reveals his intellectual playfulness, his challenge to cultural hierarchies, and his parodying of works by Ruth Benedict or Margaret Mead. Eco wrote as if he were an anthropologist from a tribe in Tasmania. Adopting the stance of "cynical relativism," he parodied the way Italians participated in soccer matches as tribal rituals infused by racial tensions; worshipped the machine; engaged in acts of creative destruction; and danced in sexually repressed, ritualistic ways that were both obscene and chaste. At the end of the essay, he contrasted the Church as a secular institution "intent on earthly rule" with Industry, "a spiritual power, bent on winning souls, on propagating mysticism."[43] The leaders of Industry participated in "ascetic retreats called 'board meetings,' during which they sit for many hours, in gray habits, . . . hollow-eyed from fasting, to debate disembodied problems connected with the mystical purpose of the association: the 'production' of objects as a kind of ongoing reenactment of divine creation." The theological basis of Industry relied on rituals in which members of the priestly class "hasten to part with their 'merits,' diminishing their own value to make a gift of it to others, in an impressive crescendo of tension and hysterical *raptus*." Eco concluded the essay with a discussion of scores of monks who lived in monasteries, "silent, shy men" who preached "obscure and prophetic crusades, accusing those who live in the world of being 'lackeys of neocapitalism' (an obscure expression, characteristic of their mystical speech)."[44]

A year later, Eco offered a critique of the position of many European and American critics of mass culture. Titled "The End Is at Hand," Eco's short essay was a scholarly spoof set in classical Athens on the eve of its Golden Age.

Aristotle's *Rhetoric,* Eco wrote with tongue in cheek, "is nothing less than a catechism of marketing, a motivational inquiry into what appeals and what doesn't." Similarly Aristotle's *Poetics,* with its emphasis on mimesis, enabled readers to understand "mass-man" who, "enamored of his own appearance, . . . will be able to enjoy only what *appears* real" and "will take pleasure only in *imitation*." Eco told the story of triumph of "mass-man, citizen of democratic Athens, smug in his own cheap tastes," satisfied "with the noise in which he encloses himself like snail [sic], the 'distraction' which he has raised to the level of a religion" and a creature of "the culture industry," who was "too content with its achievements to listen to the voice of wisdom." In contrast stood a philosopher "who knew that wisdom was too precious a treasure to be placed at everyone's disposal."[45]

As the reference to "culture industry" suggests, Eco had in mind a critique of Adorno and Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment,* which first appeared in Italian in 1962. In 1964, Eco published his more extended analysis of the relationships between intellectuals and popular culture in an essay titled "Apocalyptic and Integrated Intellectuals: Mass Communications and Theories of Mass Culture." Although he was skeptical about such a dichotomous classification and, in fact, believed the two groups occupied complementary positions, Eco, nonetheless, distinguished between apocalyptic critics and integrated ones. Members of the second group, on whom Eco spent little time in his essay, worked in the media and offered optimistic paeans rather than theoretically informed, critical analyses. In contrast, apocalyptic critics, on whom he focused much more fully, offered dramatic warnings that emphasized how threats to elite culture led to decadence. He singled out, among others, Adorno and Horkheimer. Ironically, he made clear that he was indebted to apocalyptic writers, "without whose unjust, biased, neurotic, desperate censure" he could not have developed most of his ideas. He accepted as givens many of their key insights. He agreed that in a mass-culture society "members of the working class consume bourgeois cultural models believing them to be the independent expression of their own class." Finally, he sided with those who knew that popular culture offered narratives that had "absolutely no connection with the situations actually experienced by its consumers but which, despite this, come to represent for them model situations."[46]

If Eco credited apocalyptic intellectuals with important insights, his criticism of them was biting. They falsely assumed they were above but not in a world of mass media, with their books and essays "the most sophisticated product on offer for mass consumption." Turning the tables on them by continually using Marx against what he saw as "the pseudo-Marxist theories of the Frankfurt school," Eco asserted that their "indiscriminate use of a fetish concept such as 'the culture industry' basically implies an inability to accept" the possibility that humanity could alter the course of history. They offered their readers "consolation" by making it possible to "glimpse, against a background of catastrophe, a community of 'supermen' capable, if only by rejection, of rising above banal mediocrity." By their giving so much power to producers and so little to consumers of mass culture, as well as by contrasting "the lucidity of the intellectual in his solitude" with "the stupidity of mass man," they failed to see that "the only way the cultural

operator can carry out his function is by entering into an active and conscious dialectical relationship with the conditionings of the cultural industry." Eco also cast a skeptical eye on the divisions apocalyptic intellectuals made between levels of culture, insisting that advocates of high culture saw mass culture as a subculture "without realizing that this mass culture still shares the same roots as 'high' culture." In addition, Eco pointed out how southern Italians talked back to their television sets. He commented on "the viewers' reaction" as having "a critical and active nature," how "the revelation of a world that is still a possibility rather than an actuality for them can provoke rebellion, realism." This led him to suggest that the production and reception of mass culture involved "unpredictable outcomes" that challenged the usual assumption about the relationship between producers and consumers as well as that between high and low cultures. Eco thus remained cautiously optimistic about mass culture, suggesting that, as members of the working class became more active participants in public life, there occurred "the broadening of the social base of information consumption."[47]

Eco offered a penetrating analysis of the way apocalyptic intellectuals went about studying cultural texts—or more precisely not studying actual examples but criticizing them nonetheless. They denounced the products of mass culture without carefully analyzing them or how consumers actually used them. Indeed, he remarked as he drove his points home, apocalyptic criticism "resembles the barely disguised manifestation of a frustrated passion, a love betrayed, or rather, the neurotic display of a repressed sensuality, similar to that of a moralist who, in the very act of denouncing the obscenity of an image, pauses at such length and with such voluptuousness to contemplate the loathsome object of his contempt that his true nature—that of a carnal, lustful animal—is betrayed." Instead, he called for empirical examinations of media, their production, and their reception. He advocated an approach that defined both "the extent to which the form is determined by the objective conditions" of transmission and how reception varied with historic and sociological conditions.[48]

Although at times he sounded like an apocalyptic intellectual himself, Eco took a position between the two types. In 1961, he made clear his own identification as a man of culture, a person, he wrote, "aware of his surroundings, who knows how to discriminate within a hierarchy of values continually undergoing revision."[49] His more extended presentation of his own position came in his 1962 essay "Form as Social Commitment."[50] For an intellectual to understand commercial culture, he asserted, it was necessary to encounter it "as hostile and extraneous" but also to "implicate oneself in it." Eco saw human engagement with the products of commercial culture, such as an automobile, as having an erotic dimension. "The extension of our body into the object we touch, the humanization of the object and the objectification of ourselves" was an inevitable and to-be-welcomed aspect of human history. The combination of distance and engagement that Eco insisted on in human relationships to mechanization and commercialism, not unlike what Barthes had articulated, was central, for it made possible a commitment to act in the world at the same time that it made people aware of the dangers of excessive integration.[51]

In *The Open Work* (1962), but elsewhere as well, Eco shifted the terms of discussion about texts set by others, especially apocalyptic intellectuals. For him, the initial question was not whether a text belonged to high or low culture, or somewhere in between, or whether it represented good taste or bad. Rather, he wondered whether any texts, including those in the realm of popular culture, were closed or open. Representing a fixed and ordered cosmos, a closed work—whether of premodernist high culture or contemporary mass media—was predictable, unambiguous (or, when ambiguous, fixed by conventions), and univocal. The plots were repetitive, the formulas set, and the characters one-dimensional.[52] In contrast stood open works—key modernist texts such as the novels of Franz Kafka, the music of Karlheinz Stockhausen, paintings by Jackson Pollock, or the sculpture of Alexander Calder. In these instances, artists placed the audience in an active position, capable of interpreting an ambiguous or unfinished text in multiple ways. Open works, by breaking with conventions, were indeterminate, ambiguous, and able to provide multiple meanings.[53] The differences between open and closed texts had a vaguely spelled-out political dimension. In contemporary society, he wrote, most people, "unable to elude the systems of assumptions that are imposed" from the outside, were part of a conformist mass society shaped by "a passive acquisition" of ways of understanding the world that came from the acceptance of conventional wisdom. In contrast, open texts could play a "liberating role" by pointing people "toward the reconquest" of "lost autonomy at the level of both perception and intelligence."[54]

Most of the popular culture Eco analyzed was closed.[55] One of his most extensive discussions of such popular culture came out in his analysis of the comic strip *Superman.* Eco wrote of how this superhero "must necessarily become immobilized in an emblematic and fixed nature which renders him easily recognizable." The comic strip's plot involved "recurrent stock situations," "the iterative scheme as a redundant message," and "the circular, static conveyance of a pedagogic message which is substantially immobilistic." Eco went on to connect the closed nature of the strip to its limited ideological reach. "The plot must be static and evade any development," he argued, "because Superman *must* make virtue consist of many little activities on a small scale, never achieving a total awareness," with evil involving attacks on private property and good equated with acts of local charity. These commitments in turn revealed the "concept of 'order' which pervades the cultural model in which the authors live," rather than, Eco seemed to mean without being explicit, a vision that involved utopian attempts to reconstruct the social order.[56] Indeed, elsewhere he talked of *Superman* as "a paragon of high moral standards untouched by political concerns."[57] In other words, there was a relationship between the formulaic narrative structure and cautious ideology of *Superman* comics, as there was with most popular culture: its commitment to formulas was part and parcel of the way it reinforced conformity and undermined a sense of historical change.

Although Eco considered most contemporary popular culture closed, at times his judgments were more positive. Thus, in 1963, he published an almost

rhapsodic analysis of Charles Schulz's Charlie Brown comic strip, *Peanuts.* Eco acknowledged that most comics were "bound by the iron rule of the industrial-commercial circuit of production and consumption." Yet he also recognized that some artists—Schulz and Jules Feiffer, for example—"managed to alter profoundly their consumers' way of feeling; and these artists, working within the system, performed a critical and liberating function." Thus he hailed Schulz as a poet whose work had "the capacity of carrying tenderness, pity, wickedness to moments of extreme transparence, as if things passed through a light and there were no telling any more what substance they are made of."[58] Similarly, when he came to discuss television, the field in which he had worked in the 1950s, Eco saw closed, formulaic programs and considered the possibility of more open, experimental ones, even in commercial venues. At one end of the spectrum stood programs that celebrated the petit-bourgeois everyman, like the Italian version of "The $64,000 Question."[59] In contrast were live broadcasts, like of the 1956 wedding of Prince Rainier of Monaco and Grace Kelly, which were assembled by an editor from shots taken by multiple cameras and thus, at their best, were improvisational montages subject to chance and open to interpretation. In this they resembled artistic forms Eco appreciated for their open qualities—the jam sessions performed by jazz musicians and cinema vérité. Eco was not entirely convinced that live television, subject to both commercial pressures and audience expectations, would necessarily fulfill its promise as an open text. But if it did so, following the experimental movies of Michelangelo Antonioni, it could undermine the notion of a fixed plot and force an audience member "to judge, or at least to question, the persuasiveness of what he sees on the screen."[60]

Eco also explored the relationships between producers and consumers of popular culture. For example, he explained how Ian Fleming responded to both a mass and a sophisticated audience, over time tailoring his narrative "purely from reaction to popular demand." Eco insisted a close reading of Bond novels revealed that a "message does not really end except in a concrete and local reception which qualifies it." Likewise, in his essay on *Superman* comics, Eco explored why a hero with such abundant powers appealed to readers. Deprived of an ability to control the means of production, people needed a hero who embodied the power that "the average citizen nurtures but cannot satisfy." The reader could draw a sense of power from the figure of Superman. Through "self-identification" with the mild-mannered reporter, an accountant, Eco wrote, as he offered his father's profession as the example, "harassed by complexes and despised by his fellow men . . . secretly feeds the hope that one day, from the slough of his actual personality, a superman can spring forth who is capable of redeeming years of mediocre existence."[61]

In ways that mixed playfulness and seriousness, Eco also explored the relationship between levels of culture, in the process challenging a simple dichotomy of high and low. His most extended consideration of these relationships came in his 1964 essay "The Structure of Bad Taste." "All these supercilious condemnations of mass taste," he argued, as he pointed to elite critics of popular culture, "neglect the average consumer (present in just about all of us)" who turns to

popular media "in the hope that it may evoke a few basic reactions (laughter, fear, pleasure, sorrow, anger) and, through these, reestablish some balance in his or her physical or intellectual life." Their denunciation of mass culture and the people who consumed it "turns mass consumers into a generic fetish, . . . while totally ignoring the great variety of attitudes present as the level of mass consumption." Eco offered a rich and provocative analysis of avant-garde, high, low, and mid culture—not as separate, competing elements but operating reciprocally or dialectically with each other. The producers of kitsch and midcult, such as comic books or knickknacks, "borrow new elements and unusual solutions" from high culture. Indeed, consumers of kitsch might "catch on to a . . . stylistic element" that maintained some of the "original's nobility." Nor did the transfer operate in only one direction, with borrowings by low from high. As he often did, Eco ended his essay on a note that was both optimistic and ambiguous. The dialectic between different kinds of cultural products, he remarked, allowed "for the possibility of new procedural interventions," of which the final and "falsest" was "the restoration of an apparent adherence to the timeless value of Beauty, which is generally only a cover for the mercenary face of Kitsch."[62]

Although he expressed it quietly and often indirectly, there was a politics to Eco's analysis of the relationships between open/closed, producer/consumer, and high/low in popular culture.[63] Open works, by breaking conventions and liberating the audience from fixed expectations, created the possibility of social change. Closed works, in contrast, fostered conformity and closed off possibilities of social change. With their reliance on formula and repetition, they were conservative in form. Connected to this was their espousal of conservative positions. For example, *Little Orphan Annie* "becomes for millions of readers the supporter of a nationalistic McCarthyism, a paleocapitalist classism, a petty bourgeois philistinism ready to celebrate the pomps of the John Birch Society."[64] And as Peter Bondanella has noted of Eco's discussions of Milt Caniff's *Steve Canyon* and Al Capp's *Li'l Abner,* they offered a "belief in the possibility of reform and progress" combined "with an absolute faith in the American political and social system itself."[65]

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Compared with what Adorno and Horkheimer had written in 1944, Habermas broke fresh ground. He offered a rich analysis of the dynamics of production and consumption. He located renewal not among artists but among ordinary consumers and industrial designers. More so than Habermas, Barthes and Eco offered pathbreaking analyses of popular culture. Unlike their German counterpart, neither Barthes nor Eco had to wrestle so mightily with the legacy of the Frankfurt school. Influenced by literary criticism, which opened up more new paths than philosophy at the time, the French and Italian writers took seriously the craft, creativity, and ingenuity that went into the creation of mass media. They insisted on the importance of making discriminating distinctions and engaging in careful analysis before jumping to judgments, especially highly charged moral ones.

They relied on modernist high culture to probe what they saw as the complicated meanings of commercial culture. Above all, they shifted the terms of the debate—from high/low or elevating/degrading to a position in which serious analysis and playfulness combined to take the place of cultural ladders and moral condemnation. This was precisely the kind of complicated and nuanced judgment through which Barthes and Eco offered fresh and provocative interpretations that mixed appreciation and detachment.

Notes

1. This summary draws on Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945* (New York, 2005), 13, 220–37, 324–53, 377–80.
2. A good place to start in the vast literature of Habermas is Rolf Wiggershaus, *The Frankfurt School: Its History, Theories, and Political Significance,* trans. Michael Robertson (Cambridge, MA, 1994), 537–66.
3. Judt, *Postwar,* 276.
4. In the scholarship on Habermas in English, there is not much beyond the mention of his journalistic essays of the 1950s and relatively little on his early philosophical essays published between 1954 and 1958. William Outhwaite, *Habermas: Critical Introduction* (Stanford, 1994), 6, states that in his 1950s journalism, Habermas offered "a 'left' alternative to the technological determinism" prevalent among many German intellectuals. See my forthcoming *Consuming Pleasures: Intellectuals and Popular Culture in the Postwar World* (Philadelphia, 2012).
5. Jürgen Habermas, "Für und Wider: Der Mensch Zwischen den Apparaten," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, September 6–7, 1958, 48. For translations of Habermas I am grateful to Herwig Friedl, Katharina Motyl, and especially Conor McNally.
6. Jürgen Habermas, "Können Kondumenten spielen?" *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, April 13, 1957, Feuilleton, 1.
7. Jürgen Habermas, "Des Hörspiels Mangel ist seine Chance," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, September 15, 1952, 4.
8. Jürgen Habermas, "Der Moloch und die Künste: Gedanken zur Entlarvung der Legende von der technischen Zweckmäßigkeit," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung,* May 30, 1953, 20.
9. Jürgen Habermas, "Auto fahren: Der Mensch am Lenkrad," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung,* November 27, 1954, 29–30.
10. Jürgen Habermas, "Man möchte sich mitreißen lassen: Feste und Feiern in dieser Zeit,“ *Handelsblatt,* February 17, 1956, Feuilleton, 4.
11. Jürgen Habermas, "Die Masse—das sind wir: Bildung und soziale Stellung kein Schutz gegen den Kollektivismus? Das Gift der Menschenverachtung," *Handelsblatt,* October 29, 1954, Feuilleton, 4.
12. Habermas, "Für und Wider," 48.
13. Habermas, "Konsumenten," 1.
14. Jürgen Habermas, " 'Stil' auch für den Alltag: Die 'Industrieformung' nutzt und hilft dem Konsumenten," *Handelsblatt,* September 23, 1955, 4.
15. Habermas, "Hörspiels," 4.
16. Habermas, "Moloch," 20.
17. Habermas, "Fahren," 29–30.

18. Habermas, "Man möchte," 4.
19. I have been unable to find much written in English on this essay; but exceptions are Andrew Edgar, *The Philosophy of Habermas* (Montreal, 2005), 4; Wiggershaus, *Frankfurt*, 540–41; and Paul Gottfried, "The Habermasian Moment," *Journal of Libertarian Studies* 19 (Spring 2005): 52.
20. Jürgen Habermas, "Die Dialektik der Rationalisierung: Vom Pauperismus in Produktion und Konsum [1954]," in *Arbeit, Freizeit, Konsum: Frühe Aufsätze* (The Hague, 1973), 3–26.
21. Habermas, "Dialektik,"10.
22. Jürgen Habermas, "Soziologische Notzien zum Verhältnis von Arbeit und Freizeit [1958]," in *Arbeit*, 77 and 79.
23. Jürgen Habermas, *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* [1962], trans. Thomas Burger and Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, MA, 1989), 175, 188, and 192. John Durham Peters, "Distrust of Representation: Habermas on the Public Sphere," *Media, Culture and Society* 15 (Oct. 1993): 541–71, offers a probing analysis of the way Habermas, in *Structural Transformation* and his later work, worked against Adorno and Horkheimer's negative views of mass media.
24. Habermas, *Structural Transformation*, 215, 179, 217, 232, 234–35, and 250. Around 1960, Habermas also began to publish a series of essays brought together in Jürgen Habermas, *Theory and Practice* [1963], trans. John Viertel (Boston, 1973), in which he addressed many of the issues he discussed in *Structural Transformation.* Especially important on issues of work and leisure is chap. 6: "Between Philosophy and Science: Marxism as Critique," originally published around 1963. The footnotes for the 1973 English translation contain many references to works published between 1963 and the early 1970s, which makes it likely that the essay in translation was also revised. For this reason, I have not relied on it for evidence of positions Habermas took in the early 1960s. The way in which Habermas emphasized the change of the citizen into consumer underscores the importance of the transformations that historian Lizabeth Cohen has suggested for postwar America: see Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York, 2003), 8–9.
25. See, for example, Matthew G. Specter, *Habermas: An Intellectual Biography* (New York, 2010).
26. Roland Barthes, *Mythologies,* trans. Annette Lavers (1957; New York, 1972) and Roland Barthes, *The Eiffel Tower and Other Mythologies* (New York, 1997). Again, the literature on Barthes is vast, but a good place to begin is Michael Moriarty, *Roland Barthes* (Stanford, 1991).
27. Barthes, *Mythologies*, 109, 113, 116, and 125; emphasis in original.
28. Kristin Ross, *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Decolonization and the Reordering of French Culture* (Cambridge, MA, 1995), 4–7.
29. Barthes, *Mythologies,* 16.
30. Ibid., 31, 56, 15, and 84–85.
31. Ibid., 38, emphasis in original; Victoria de Grazia, *Irresistible Empire: America's Advance through Twentieth-Century Europe* (Cambridge, MA, 2005), 420.
32. Barthes, *Mythologies*, 59, 58, 61, 116, 140, 141, and 140; emphasis in original. On the link between the colonization of everyday life and the decolonization of Algeria, see Ross, *Fast Cars,* 7.
33. Barthes, *Mythologies,* 11, 100–101, 75, and 123, emphases in original.

34. Barthes, *Mythologies,* 125, 146, 143, Roland Barthes, "Maîtres et esclaves," *Lettres nouvelles* (March 1953): 108, quoted in Jonathan Culler, *Roland Barthes* (New York, 1983), 40. For a discussion of Barthes' politics, see Louis-Jean Calvet, *Roland Barthes: A Biography,* trans. Sarah Wykes (Bloomington, 1995), 118–20.
35. Among the many works on French anti-Americanism, the most recent is Philippe Roger, *The American Enemy: A Story of French Anti-Americanism*, trans. Sharon Bowman (Chicago, 2005).
36. Michel Winock, "The Cold War," 74–75, in *The Rise and Fall of Anti-Americanism: A Century of French Perception,* ed. Denis Lacorne, Jacques Rupnik, and Marie-France Toinet, trans. Gerald Turner (Basingstoke, UK, 1990), 74–75.
37. Calvet, *Barthes,* 128.
38. Barthes, *Eiffel Tower,* 39–45 and 63–66.
39. I am grateful to Judith Surkis for this suggestion.
40. Barthes, *Eiffel Tower,* 149, 151, and 152. On the relationship between his life (especially his genteel poverty and homosexuality) and analyses, see Roland Barthes, *Roland Barthes,* trans. Richard Howard (Berkeley, 1994), 45, 63, and 164; Calvet, *Barthes,* 89 and 97; D. A. Miller, *Bringing Out Roland Barthes* (Berkeley, 1992), 6 and 31; Harold Beaver, "Homosexual Signs (In Memory of Roland Barthes)," *Critical Inquiry* 8 (Autumn 1981): 99–119; Robert K. Martin, "Roland Barthes: Toward an 'Écriture Gaie," ' in David Bergman, ed., *Camp Grounds: Style and Homosexuality* (Amherst, MA, 1993), 282–98; Graham Allen, *Roland Barthes* (London, 2003), 98–99 and 106–107.
41. Umberto Eco, preface to *Misreadings,* trans. William Weaver (San Diego, 1993), 1. The best places to begin with Eco are Peter Bondanella, *Umberto Eco and the Open Text: Semiotics, Fiction, Popular Culture* (Cambridge, UK, 1997); Norma Bouchard, "Eco and Popular Culture," in *New Essays on Umberto Eco,* ed. Peter Bondanella (Cambridge, UK, 2009), 1–16; David Robey, "Umberto Eco: Theory and Practice in the Analysis of the Media," in *Culture and Conflict in Postwar Italy: Essays on Mass and Popular Culture,* ed. Zygmunt G. Baranski and Robert Lumley (Houndsmills, UK, 1990), 160–77; Gary P. Radford, *On Eco* (Belmont, CA, 2003), especially 39–43; Christine Ann Evans, "Eco's Fifth Column: The Critic of Culture Within the Precincts of the Popular," in *Umberto Eco's Alternative: The Politics of Culture and the Ambiguities of Interpretation,* ed. Norma Bouchard and Veronica Pravadelli (New York, 1998), 241–56. Writing about Eco poses a series of challenges, among them the relative lack of secondary works on him in English; the fact that translations are often partial or, especially for his early writings on popular culture, non-existent; and Eco's own penchant for continually revising what he wrote, thus producing unstable texts. For a discussion of some of these issues, see Bondanella, *Eco,* xi-xvi. Adam Arvidsson, *Marketing Modernity: Italian Advertising from Fascism to Postmodernity* (London, 2003) provides a discussion of the worlds in which Eco's writings took place.
42. Eco published on media even earlier: Umberto Eco, "Problemi estetici del fatto televisivo," *Atti del III congresso internazionale di estetica* (Turin, 1956). Although it is not always easy to date these essays with full confidence or to be sure that the English translations are the same as the original Italian versions, I rely on the following texts: the essays in Umberto Eco, *Diario Minimo* (Milan, 1963); Umberto Eco, "The Myth of Superman [1962]," first English publication in *Diacritics* 2 (Spring 1972): 14–22, and then printed, with some minor changes, in Umberto Eco, *The Role of the Reader: Explorations in the Semiotics of Texts* (Bloomington, 1979), 107–24; Umberto

Eco, "Rhetoric and Ideology in Sue's *Les Mystères de Paris* [1965]," first published in English as "Rhetoric and Ideology in Sue's *Les Mystères de Paris,*" *International Social Sciences Journal* 14 (1967): 551–69 and in a revised version in Eco, *Role*, 125–43; Umberto Eco, "Narrative Structures in Fleming [1965]," first published in English in Oreste del Buono and Umberto Eco, *The Bond Affair* (London, 1966), 35–75, and then published, with revisions, in Eco, *Role,* 144–72; Umberto Eco, "A Reading of Steve Canyon," published in Italian in Umberto Eco, *Apocalittici e Integrati: Comunicazioni di Massa e Teorie della Cultura di Massa* (Milan, 1964) and first published in English in *Twentieth Century Studies* 15/16 (December 1976): 18–33; Umberto Eco, "The Structure of Bad Taste" published in *Apocalittici e Integrati* and then in Umberto Eco, *The Open Work,* trans. Anna Cancogni (Cambridge, MA, 1989) 180–216; Umberto Eco, "Apocalyptic and Integrated intellectuals [1964]," originally published in *Apocalittici e Integrati* and then appearing in Umberto Eco, *Apocalypse Postponed,* ed. Robert Lumley (Bloomington, 1994), 17–35; Umberto Eco, "The World of Charlie Brown [1963]," originally published as the introduction to the first volume of "Peanuts" cartoons, *Arriva Charlie Brown!* and then in English in Eco, *Apocalypse,* 36–44. For his more theoretical works, I am relying on Umberto Eco, *Opera Aperta: Forma e Indeterminazione Nelle Poetiche Contemporanee* (Milan, 1962), essays which appear in Eco, *Open Work*; Eco, *Role*; and Umberto Eco, "The Poetics of the Open Work," *Twentieth Century Studies* 12 (December 1974): 6–26.

43. Umberto Eco, "Industry and Sexual Repression [1962]," in Eco, *Misreadings,* 71 and 89.
44. Eco, "Sexual Repression," 90–93, emphasis in original.
45. Umberto Eco, "The End Is at Hand [1963]," 111, 113, and 95–97, in Eco, *Misreadings.*
46. Umberto Eco, "Apocalyptic and Integrated Intellectuals: Mass Communications and Theories of Mass Culture [1964]," in Eco, *Apocalypse,* 18, 34, 25, 29, and 30.
47. Ibid., 18, 24, 22, 18, 23, 22, 30, 31, and 32; emphasis in original.
48. Ibid., 27, 25–26, and 32.
49. Umberto Eco, "Verso una civiltà della visione," in *Pirelli: Rivista e informazione* 1 (Jan. 1961), quoted in Robert Limley, "Introduction," to Eco, *Apocalypse*, 2.
50. Umberto Eco, "Form as Social Commitment," in Eco, *Open Work,* 123–57.
51. Ibid., 131–32.
52. Umberto, Eco, "Openness, Information, Communication," in Eco, *Open Work,* 51.
53. Umberto Eco, "The Poetics of the Open Work," in Eco, *Open Work,* 9.
54. Eco, "Openness, Information, Communication," 83.
55. The "Contents" of Eco, *Role,* listed the essays on Superman, Fleming's novels, and Sue's stories as "Closed": Eco, *Role,* v.
56. Eco, "Superman," 15, 20, 21, and 22; emphasis in original.
57. Eco, "Apocalyptic and Integrated," 19.
58. Eco, "Charlie Brown," 38–39 and 36.
59. Umberto Eco, "The Phenomenology of Mike Buongiorno [1961]," in Eco, *Misreadings,* 156–64, with the quote on 158.
60. Umberto Eco, "Chance and Plot: Television and Aesthetics," in Eco, *Open Work,* 109–10 and 122.
61. Eco, "Superman," 59, 75, 14, and 15.
62. Eco, "Structure of Bad Taste," 194, 195, 187, 188–89, and 216; the essay appeared in *Apocalittici e integrati,* published in Italian in 1964. However, the copyright page

of *Open Work,* where the essay appears in translation, offers a more ambiguous dating (1962 or 1964): Eco, *Open Work,* iv.

63. This summary of Eco's politics emerges more clearly in David Robey, "Introduction," to Eco, *Open Work,* xvi-xvii, than it does in Eco's own words.
64. Eco, "Charlie Brown," 38.
65. Bondanella, *Eco*, 56.

PART III

Case Studies

CHAPTER 10

"God's Own Consumers": Billy Graham, Mass Evangelism, and Consumption in the United States during the 1950s

Uta Andrea Balbier

Billy Graham appeared on the cover of *Time* magazine for the first time on October 24, 1954. Inside, readers found an article on the preacher's revival meetings, youthful looks, and middle-class lifestyle. It described Graham's passion for golf, his use of high-tech equipment while preaching, and the rustic, eight-room house in Montreat, North Carolina, where his wife, Ruth, raised their four children.[1] A year later, *Life* magazine ran a photo essay on the Grahams.[2] It showed the husband playing golf, walking the dog, and sitting at the family table, where the mother of the house served dinner. Graham's public persona and his very ministry were bound up in the American middle-class lifestyle of the 1950s that he and his family embodied.

This issue of *Time* was part of a broader trend in the early 1950s, when America's latest religious revival hit the covers of *Time, Life,* and *Newsweek,* and when daily papers such as the *Los Angeles Times,* the *New York Times,* and the *Chicago Tribune* joined the choir. Billy Graham was a central figure in this movement. He held his first revival meeting in Los Angeles in the fall of 1949. By then, the Southern Baptist preacher was thirty-two years old, held a degree from Wheaton College, was an ordained minister, had traveled the world for the evangelical organization Youth for Christ, and was now ready to claim center stage in a burgeoning national revival.[3] Between 1949 and 1954, he preached to some twelve million people. In the summer of 1957, he held a sixteen-week "crusade" at Madison Square Garden in New York, selling out its 20,000 seats nearly every night.

Revival meetings were a common feature in American evangelism. Dating back to the First Great Awakening, they were tied to charismatic preachers such as Jonathan Edwards, Dwight L. Moody, and Billy Sunday, all of whom influenced the religious landscape of the United States. Revivals occurred when the discrepancy between societal modernization and religious doctrines had widened so much that religious adjustment to the surrounding culture was necessary.[4] Adjusting to the rising consumer culture had presented a challenge to devout Protestants time and again since the days of the Puritans; however, the 1950s proved to be a watershed in the relationship between religion and consumerism in America. Then evangelicals not only accepted consumerism but embraced it.

Graham delivered evangelical messages that combined Christian faith and consumerism at events that met the needs and expectations of the new suburban consumers. He combined traditional evangelism with a style and language derived from consumer society in a way that his predecessors had never before attempted, not even Billy Sunday in the 1910s. Graham mixed traditional religious yearning for transcendence and community with stardom and marketing techniques designed to stir a religious sense of belonging within America's white middle class. In so doing, he changed evangelical practices and convictions, which became detached from traditional religious meanings and instead filled with meaning derived in no small part from consumerism. Graham's flock did not just function as a religious community but also as a community of white middle-class consumers, for whom his revival meetings served as spaces for social display and bonding.[5]

Hope and Desire: Religion in the American Consumer Society

American exceptionalism has often been discussed in the context of religion and consumption. Therefore, it is no wonder that combined research of both phenomena dates back to the beginning of the twentieth century, when Max Weber published *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1905).[6] Weber was haunted by the question of whether certain religious beliefs manifested themselves in special forms of economic productivity. Only recently has his work been revived in the United States with a volume entitled *Market, Morals, and Religion,* which explores the apparent contrast between the development of a capitalist economy and the values of modesty and financial restraint that characterized Weber's Puritans.[7]

Time and again, historians of religion have shown that this inconsistency can be traced back to the early days of commercialization in the United States. Even before the Civil War, attitudes toward the emerging capitalist order were highly contested, for example, in the antebellum North, as Stewart Davensport shows in *Friends of the Unrighteous Mammon*.[8] Davenport analyzes a broad spectrum of clerical attitudes toward capitalism, from support to criticism. He demonstrates, however, that the majority of Christians accepted the new order as God-given and embraced their apparent right to consume. A personal desire for wealth was seen as stabilizing the nation and, therefore, desirable. Dealing with the poor

and containing excessive consumption that was incompatible with the commandments of a Christian life remained the only theological and social challenges for early evangelicals. From the perspective of the history of consumption, religion was even a pillar upon which the new economic order could solidly rest. The belief in a better life, received through the grace of God, combined religious and economic hopes and desires. Therefore, observes William Leach, "from at least the 1850s onward, many Protestant Americans, perhaps the majority, believed in the compatibility of religion and commerce and that both were moving on a fast track towards progress."[9]

Many churches tended to embrace market logic to promote their beliefs within an overall religious competition that flourished in the absence of established churches. The First Amendment protected and nourished religious pluralism by prohibiting the establishment of any religion. At the same time, it created a religious market in which churches and denominations fought for their share of the faithful according to the market logic of society at large. This market-oriented understanding of the country's religious landscape is explored in depth by Roger Finke and Rodney Stark in *The Churching of America, 1776–2005: Winners and Losers in Our Religious Economy*.[10] According to them, churches competed for believers (read: consumers) in an open spiritual market. Churches marketed their beliefs as goods and, in turn, believers made rational decisions about which religious offer to accept.[11] The book has stirred much criticism, especially since it reduces religion to a commodity stripped of spirituality and truth. It has also been criticized, because religion in the United States proved to be especially prosperous in the Bible Belt, which is the region in the United States with the highest degree of religious homogeneity, being predominantly Southern Baptist.[12]

Indeed, churches do not just compete with other churches but also for market share in the culture at large. Laurence Moore makes this point in *Selling God: Religion in the Marketplace of Culture.*[13] He argues that religious movements, churches, and preachers from the eighteenth century on provided spectacles and booklets, later movies and other forms of modern entertainment, in order to gain broader acceptance as cultural players. These religious entrepreneurs created a demand for religion and reconciled evangelical revivalism with the logic of the market. In so doing, they shaped the evolving consumer society in the United States.[14] Their impact can also be seen in the opposition they inspired. Already at the end of the nineteenth century, the first religious countermovement to the creation of a religious consumer society emerged with the African-American Holiness Movement. It attacked the close relationship between religion and consumerism manifested in black preachers acting as salesmen who offered not only booklets and pamphlets but also elixirs and devotional objects.[15]

Moore shows how the religious advertising sector exploded in mainstream Protestantism at the beginning of the twentieth century with manuals appearing entitled *Principles of Successful Church Advertising* (1908) and *Handbook of Church Advertising* (1921).[16] From the First Great Awakening in the eighteenth century on, the spread of Bibles and sermons and the staging of revival events was a business that drove the development of religion and the media sector. The

better one performed and advertised, the better one sold.[17] Beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, however, mass evangelism in particular underwent significant changes due to the rapid rise of consumerism.

Dwight L. Moody, the leading revivalist at the end of the nineteenth century, turned evangelism into big business. He advertised his revival meetings in the entertainment columns of newspapers, and millions came to hear him. Donations of hundreds and thousands of dollars financed his revival meetings, which cost up to $45,000 each.[18] In the 1910s, the young revivalist Billy Sunday stepped into Moody's footsteps. Contemporary critics of Sunday's massive revival meetings observed that the entertainment factor had increased in comparison to Moody's work. Conservative critics pointed out that there was no need for the "fashionable church" that Sunday presented in his revival meetings.[19] During his revivals, he impressed his followers not just with fiery sermons but also by jumping on the pulpit or smashing a chair to capture his audience's attention. For one observer in the *New York Times,* religion transmuted into consumable entertainment in Sundays' evangelical mission: "They were going after souls as a successful commercial corporation goes after sales."[20]

Like his many evangelical predecessors, Sunday preached personal success as an index of God's favor. He presented such success in the context of class membership. Contributing to Sunday's campaign, his biographer, Elijah P. Brown, portrayed him as the middle-class family man strolling in his backyard, his dog alongside him. By presenting himself this way, Sunday helped fuse religious conversion with notions of a middle-class American lifestyle. Religion, consumerism, and nationalism joined forces in American evangelicalism.[21]

John M. Giggie and Diane Winston dedicate an edited volume to this turning point in the relationship between religion and consumer culture in the United States at the turn of the century.[22] Exploring the interplay among religion, urbanization, and commercial cultures, the volume's contributors show that consumption and religion were not opposing poles. Rather, they were productive companions that influenced each other and prospered. The incorporation of consumer goods and popular entertainment in missionary work as well as the exploitation of modern marketing and advertising techniques generated fresh expressions of religiosity and produced new spiritual identities.

The emergence of an affluent consumer society in the 1950s helped shape the religious landscape in the United States even further, as Robert S. Ellwood shows in *The Fifties Spiritual Marketplace*.[23] Based on the supply-side approach used by Finke and Stark, Ellwood describes the spiritual market of the 1950s as offering both individuality and mass experience as well as social conformity and religious competition. Further insight into the interplay of the particular social and emotional composition of the 1950s white middle class and its religious and political preferences is offered in Lisa McGirr's *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right*.[24] Other works, especially on the ministry of Robert Schuller, founder of the first drive-in church in Orange County, mark the 1950s as a decade that gave birth to new forms of religious communities, religious merchandising, and religious broadcasting.[25]

This trend peaked in the 1970s with the development of religious merchandising businesses in the United States that no longer sold exclusively religious items such as Bibles, rosaries, and prayer books, but also everyday items of consumption with a religious message on them. These included "Jesus Loves Me" bumper stickers and mugs with the Ten Commandments. Competition for religious market share gained even more momentum with the explosion of the media market in the second half of the twentieth century.[26] These new trends in religious marketing, broadcasting, and community formation both fueled and were fed by the ministry of Billy Graham.

Selling Religion to Middle-Class Consumers

The lives and identities of American consumers changed rapidly after World War II. Between 1945 and 1960, the gross national product expanded by 250 percent. By the mid-1950s, nearly 60 percent of all American households made enough money to count themselves among the rising middle class. By contrast, only 31 percent had done so in the 1920s. At the same time, American society had transformed into a service society with a growing number of white-collar employees, including salesmen, tellers, accountants, and managers. The service sector also included women, many in secretarial and sales positions, for instance. These new consumers did not just benefit from higher incomes but also from several other changes. Plastic made the production of consumer merchandise cheaper, if less durable.[27] Federal investment into military research did not just produce new suburban centers, but also new entertainment technology as a byproduct of the development process that took place in research facilities. Highway construction, also funded with taxpayer dollars, facilitated the suburban settlements that became the societal signature of the United States in the 1950s. In these suburbs, many young families fulfilled their dream of owning a house. The G.I. Bill awarded substantial benefits to returning veterans, helping them attend college and climb the social ladder. In addition, the low-interest, government-insured mortgages made available by the bill made home ownership possible for millions.[28]

These socioeconomic changes produced the affluent consumer, whose individual acts of consumption amounted to expressions of economic power based on personal taste. Consumption became increasingly a social act of identity formation. At the same time, as its critics argued, conspicuous consumption gave birth to a depoliticized and passive mass culture. Life in suburbia was characterized by a new anonymity. Social particularization caused by the move to the mushrooming suburbs and the disappearance of individual happiness in a standardized workforce dressed in gray flannel suits added to a feeling of emptiness and forsakenness.[29] A growing sense of loneliness and loss of community caused sales figures for tranquilizers to skyrocket. In addition, psychoanalysis boomed in the 1950s. Self-help guides such as Norman Vincent Peale's *The Power of Positive Thinking* fed the masses. The new suburban middle class started a spiritual journey, which was also reflected in rising church membership. In 1952, the

Revised Standard Version of the Bible made it to the top of the nonfiction bestseller charts. In the same year, the National Council of the Churches of Christ in America announced that 57 percent of the population belonged to a church or congregation. These were record numbers.[30]

This contradictory social setting, marked by both hopes and fears, was the stage upon which Billy Graham launched his large revival meetings in the 1950s. These events both satisfied and reflected consumer needs for individuality and belonging in the context of a mass society. With language like "Billy Graham invites you," their marketing emphasized not the mass character of the revival but the individual participant. The posters that advertised the prayer meetings taking place during the revival gave Christians the feeling that their unique contributions could make a difference. Especially when inviting the new converts to step forward at the end of every revival meeting, Graham asked each individual to make a choice. This individual act of choosing comported with the mindset of suburban, middle-class consumers.

In this way, the setting of the revival meetings contributed to the formation and self-affirmation of the new middle class. Graham addressed his followers in the vernacular of a salesman; he invited Hollywood stars and athletes to join him on the podium to symbolize the connection between religion and contemporary popular and consumer culture; and he presented himself as a member of the middle class, as a man with whom his followers could identify.

His first revival meeting in Los Angeles in 1949 showed the new standards of American evangelicalism generated by the transforming media and consumer culture. The tent in which Graham preached could accommodate an audience of 6,000 people. Called the "Canvas Cathedral," it was the largest revival tent ever used up to that point. A group of influential businessmen in Los Angeles sponsored the crusade and made the impressive marketing possible. The crusade was announced via billboards, flyers, and newspaper advertisements, and the strategy proved successful.[31] Within eight weeks, 350,000 people had come to hear Graham preach, paving the way for his national and subsequent international success.

Graham's extensive use of the media to market his campaigns contributed to his triumph. He gave several interviews and turned conversions of public figures at his crusades into media scoops. Weeks before his arrival, his team stirred the media's interest. Grady Wilson, Graham's marketing manager, contacted the Stars Christian Fellowship Group. This organization of faithful radio and television stars provided Graham with access to the glamorous world of Hollywood. One of Graham's first media conversions was the radio reporter Stuart Hamblen.[32] Later he converted the war hero and former track and field champion Louis Zamperini, which the *Los Angeles Times* announced in its headline.[33] Graham made the headlines again when the media discovered that he had converted an associate of gangster boss Mickey Cohen. Indeed, the media speculated for several days about whether Graham had secretly met with Cohen himself.[34] Graham made use of his friendships with the rich and famous to the end of his career.

The most popular of these relationships might have been his close friendship with Johnny Cash.[35]

The national media attention garnered by the Los Angeles crusades helped explain the growing crowds that came to the ensuing crusades in Boston, Portland, Washington, Atlanta, and Seattle. In 1954, Graham held his first revival meetings in London and several European cities. His missionary success story reached a new peak in the summer of 1957, when he held a crusade for several weeks in New York City.[36] This campaign was one of the first major media events on American television. It stood in the ritualistic tradition of earlier evangelical events and included traditional music, preaching, and the call forward to accept Christ; however, this New York crusade set new standards in American evangelism. It lasted sixteen weeks and was not just the longest, but also the most expensive crusade ever in American religious history. Two million people attended the meetings, and the Billy Graham movement announced 56,767 converts after the last service.[37]

The cost of the crusade had been calculated at $900,000, but this number was greatly exceeded. The breakdown of the costs showed the importance of advertising and marketing, which at $250,000 absorbed over a quarter of the original estimate.[38] This money went into 650 billboards, 35,000 window signs, and 40,000 paper inlays for telephone dials with the inscription "Pray for Billy Graham."[39] Especially the telephone inlays showed how Graham's PR team played with the style and features of contemporary consumer society. However, not only the aesthetics of marketing but also Graham's intensive use of the media set him apart from his predecessors.

Watching and Praying: Religion in the Media

No other medium has had as rapid and profound an impact on religious life in the United States as television. Preachers made use of radio broadcasting from the early days of that medium, but television went on to shape entirely new religious communities. In 1947, there were an estimated 60,000 television sets in the United States. By 1950, nearly 4 million households owned television sets, and by 1955, 31 million households spent an average of five hours a day watching television.[40]

Its use of media became one of the Billy Graham campaign's most striking features. In 1950, Graham founded the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association (BGEA), which organized the planning and financing of his crusades. It soon opened several media channels to address the growing media audience in the 1950s. Graham broadcast his radio program "Hour of Decision" weekly, and he published the magazine *Decision*. In 1952, the BGEA opened its own production company, World Wide Pictures, which produced and sold evangelical movies and television shows.[41] Graham also accompanied his crusade with press interviews.

He broadcast the "Hour of Decision" from his hotel room, and ABC carried the last fourteen weeks of the New York crusade live on television from coast to coast, turning Graham into the first televangelist. Graham was willing to pay for the possibilities that the new medium opened for mass evangelism. The contract between the BGEA and the American Broadcasting Company was worth $400,000.[42] Instead of the scheduled four evenings, the crusade was transmitted live seventeen times. The way that Graham used the media to advertise his mission and communicate with Americans in front of their television sets was another typical outcome of the cultural atmosphere of the 1950s.

The arrival of television was not just a new technical opportunity. It influenced how the crusades were orchestrated, and it gave birth to new religious communities. While taking photographs at Billy Sundays' revival meetings had been forbidden, the presence of television cameras characterized and shaped Graham's campaigns. He communicated with the cameras, and his awareness of their presence influenced how he moved on stage. At the climax of his events, when he called the audience to step forward to accept Christ as their Savior, he also addressed viewers in front of their television sets. In so doing, he created religious communities that connected the masses in the revival stadium with the ones watching at home. Indeed, after the first broadcasts, Graham received several thousand letters from his television audience, and hundreds of his viewers described how they had converted in front of their television sets.[43]

Another medium also helped turn the figure of the preacher into a popular cultural icon: Graham fit perfectly into the glossy magazines of the 1950s. *Life* and *Time* had been founded after Billy Sunday had already stepped down from the pulpit, so only some artistic sketches and posed pictures exist of the earlier preacher today. In the 1950s, however, at the peak of photojournalism, *Life* and *Time* competed for the best shots of the new religious icon. Their articles on him highlighted his handsomeness, tall body, wavy hair, and bright smile. Graham was a preacher with star qualities, and his huge air miles account confirmed his membership in the new jet-set generation. The articles that focused on his masculinity contributed to a "sexually charged atmosphere" at his revival meetings.[44] Newspapers amplified this impression by publishing images of hysterically cheering girls who were present whenever he appeared at airports, at train stations, or on sidewalks. The phenomenon was not just witnessed in the United States but all over the world. On May 1, 1959, the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported, "Police were called to control hundreds of excited people—many of them teenage girls—who swarmed around Dr. Graham's car after the meeting." On February 2, 1959, the same newspaper observed, "women reached out to touch his raincoat as he walked smiling through the dense crowd outside the stadium."[45]

Time and *Life* also provided the stage upon which Graham could perform his version of a happy middle-class family life. Pictures depicted him playing golf, relaxing in front of the fireplace, and enjoying the company of his family at the table with his wife, Ruth, serving dinner. He described his personal life in such detail in interviews that he turned his family into a billboard picture of middle-class domesticity and modesty. In this context, Ruth Graham became a striking

example for the 1950s stay-at-home mom. Pictures of her appeared in which she was ironing her husband's shirts during the New York crusade.

Another important layer of Graham's self-stylization was his itinerary and mode of travel. One remarkable change in the consumer society of the 1950s—apart from television and suburban housing—was increasing mobility by air.[46] Graham joined the club of jet-set travelers with appearances all over the United States and also in European metropolises, including London, Berlin, and Paris. The international press that covered his international crusades in 1954 provided an enormous number of pictures that showed Graham stepping off a plane or walking down the gangways of transatlantic cruise liners. Often he was accompanied by his beautiful wife, and piles of luggage completed the picture.

Graham himself celebrated the new mobility of the 1950s, which bolstered his iconic middle-class image. The press contributed to this image of a modern itinerant preacher. One German newspaper observed, "Billy Graham is a missionary in our time. He operates with microphones and spotlights. He travels in an airplane from one big city to another, from one continent to another!"[47] By 1945, while still working for the evangelical movement Youth for Christ International, Graham had already logged at least 135,000 miles and received United Airlines' designation as its top civilian passenger.[48]

Consuming and Believing: The Emergence of a New Religious Community

Graham's use of marketing and advertising was tailored to the aesthetics of a particular segment of American society. Therefore, the sharpest contrast to his predecessors lay in the identity of the community of followers that he shaped. Never before had a revival preacher placed such strong emphasis on conformity. Never had religious, political, and class identities so completely overlapped in such a large group of followers. Never had the lifestyle of one social class influenced the creation of a religious community in such obvious ways. Indeed, it is fair to say that Graham's mission emerged from the dialectical interplay of the production of class and religious communities.

The pictures from the New York crusade in 1957 showed an audience that looked similar to those in Los Angeles and Chicago, for example. Even though these cities were complex ethnic melting pots, Billy Graham's audiences were predominantly white. As a sociological survey of the New York crusade showed, even the black and Latino populations living within easy reach of the Garden attended the event in remarkably marginal numbers.[49] A large part of the Garden, approximately 7,500 of the 19,000 seats, was instead filled with members of so-called delegations, that is, church-organized suburbanites who traveled in chartered busses to the event. The large effort that members of the crusade team invested in the organization of transportation emphasized the social class that the campaign targeted.

In addition to the homogeneous composition of the audience in terms of race and ethnicity, the staging of the event was also tailored specifically to the needs of

white Protestants. It fulfilled the middle class' need for anonymous and standardized religious entertainment. Screaming out loud in the middle of the service was deemed inappropriate. Cliff Barrows, Graham's master of ceremonies, announced the ground rules before the beginning of the service: "And if somebody says something that makes you feel like shouting for joy," he said, "for the sake of your neighbor just make it a silent prayer deep in your heart."[50] The reference to the neighbor seems like an allusion to the predominant suburban lifestyle, but it was even more important in racial terms. Barrows drew a clear line between the affirmed white religious culture and the swinging and exalted atmosphere in many African American churches. The aforementioned sociological observation of the crusades reached the same conclusion: "both the conventionality and the barring of emotion maintain the aura of middle-class respectability which those who come resolved to make a decision have been led to expect; they find nothing too emotional and unusual for their tastes; there is little to threaten them."[51] Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. had for very good reason called 11:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. on Sunday the most segregated hour in America. Graham's crusades did not bridge this divide. While he always stated that his revival meetings were open to everyone, their setting, rituals, and atmosphere did not appeal to many nonwhite Protestants.

Graham's message targeted the white middle class as the solid custodian of the American way of life. Graham cooled down the once exclusive fundamentalist rhetoric and fiery style established by preachers such as Jonathan Edwards and Billy Sunday, who had preached fire and brimstone. Graham sold hope and salvation. He did not ask for social responsibility, but instead confirmed the rightness of his followers' way of life.[52] Furthermore, Graham's condemnations of materialism, describing his consuming followers as empty and unfulfilled by the American way of life, was composed for the ears of a certain segment of society. The shallowness arising from a life between television set, golf course, and shopping mall was probably unknown in the lives of people in the white, African-American, and Latino underclasses.

Like those of his nineteenth-century predecessors, Graham's sermons did not in any way question capitalism as the correct, God-given material order. This trend was especially manifest in Graham's focus on individual conversion as a solution to the world's social problems. In sharp contrast to Catholic social teaching, for example, Graham insisted in his book *Peace with God,* published in 1954, that Christians could not achieve salvation through "right living" or social work, but only by accepting Christ as their Savior.[53] This part of his theology led to the allegation that Graham's mission lacked any sense of social responsibility.[54]

This impression of Graham's general acceptance of consumerism was underscored by his use of the everyday vernacular of a salesman to drive his message home. In fact, he had been a salesman before becoming a preacher. In the summer after high school, he got himself a job as a Fuller Brush salesman and outsold every other salesman in North Carolina. Hence, he knew how to sell by speaking the buyers' language. Early in his crusades, he developed an idiom that addressed American consumers as such. His benchmark quote, situating him within the

realm of marketable religion and first published in *Time* magazine in 1954, was: "I am selling . . . the greatest product in the world; why shouldn't it be promoted as well as soap?"[55]

He integrated metaphors of consumption into his religious language again and again. His predecessor Billy Sunday had already started to make use of advertising language in the 1910s. Graham followed this tradition but customized it to consumer needs in the 1950s. Asked once how he imagined heaven, Graham answered, "We are going to sit around the fireplace and have parties and the angels will wait on us and we'll drive down the golden streets in a yellow Cadillac convertible."[56] This description evoked images of suburban coziness and modern mobility. Asked on another occasion how he imagined "the Rapture," meaning the second coming of Christ, he declared that when it occurred, all the gravestones would pop up like popcorn on a stove.[57] With this language, Graham related to the consuming American middle class. He spoke directly to the quotidian needs and dreams of consumers and was able to offer validation and legitimacy to their lifestyle, thereby fulfilling their desire to find their place in America's rapidly evolving society.

One outstanding example for this rhetorical strategy was Graham's sermon on "God and Golf."[58] Delivered in Atlanta, Georgia, on May 29, 1968, to 160 professional golfers, it exemplified his masterful technique of identifying with his middle-class audience. After an appreciative description of the American golf scene, he connected to his audience by saying, "every twelve months we are losing some $50,000,000 worth of balls (I have contributed my share!)."[59] He implied no accusation against such waste but instead the message that he was one of them.

He then went on to talk about the similarities between golfing and leading an exemplary Christian life. He played with images of the right stance, the proper grip, and that Christians as golfers needed to be dedicated, practice regularly, and play by the rules. Even though he delivered the message to only a select audience of golfers, he then published it in the evangelical *Decision* magazine and as a booklet. It was a message that the American middle class—which by then populated 8,000 golf courses all over the United States—could relate to. At the same time, it was a major shift in evangelical rhetoric. Even though Billy Sunday had achieved stardom as a baseball player before taking the pulpit, he rarely used sports metaphors. Graham was the first who fully embraced sport as part of the American popular and consumer culture, going so far as to mix his sacred message with secular metaphors.[60]

The media picked up on the image of Graham as a salesman. During his New York crusade in 1957, one journalist described his impression of Graham: "Well-tailored in a gray summer suit, white shirt and gray and purple tie, the blond, wavy-haired Billy spoke with the punch, poise and magnetism of a super salesman, rather than the fire of an old-time evangelist."[61] At the beginning of his career, Graham had dressed colorfully and star-like, but he soon abandoned these outfits in favor of the compliant aura of "the man in the grey flannel suit" that became the dominant image for business culture in the 1950s. In fact, Graham staged his crusades as serious sales events and addressed his followers

as consuming middle-class citizens. At the end of his sermon, when he called the audience to individual conversion, Graham used the language of a salesman who closes the deal. At the New York crusade, he described conversion in terms of a business transaction. If you want to start a new life, he shouted at the audience, "it will cost you something. It doesn't come cheap. It cost Christ his blood, God his son, and it will cost you your sins." You have to give up sin to get something in return, he explained. Salvation was an individual transaction in which God was the producer, Graham was his salesman, and each audience member was a consumer.[62]

Conclusion

Graham was *the* salesman of religion in the 1950s, and he was successful because middle-class consumers could identify with him and his lifestyle. The societal meaning of Graham's religious campaign arose from the fact that shared belief as shared consumption created a sense of social belonging. Indeed, the shared consumption of religion produced a sense of belonging in terms of both religion and class. Graham provided a new form of bonding for the suburban middle class on its spiritual journey. He offered these Americans a set of beliefs and rhetoric that took their identity as American consumers seriously. This trend did not go unchallenged, however. In 1955, Eugene Carson Blake, by then president of the mainstream National Council of Churches, accused American Christians of confusing "the American way of life with the kingdom of God." He asked, "Do you really think God is an American?" Of course, he did so in a popular glossy magazine, *Look,* taking his cue from Graham.[63]

Graham's unique way of communicating with the American middle class, dropping brand names and relating to consumer items, was taken up by his son Franklin, who stepped into the father's missionary footprints. In 2002, Franklin Graham came on stage during a revival festival held in Florida. According to one report, "He is wearing an extraordinary outfit. On his head is a baseball cap with a red Ralph Lauren polo-pony logo. His shirt is blue denim, and over his heart is another bright red Ralph Lauren polo pony.... Mister Graham is not shy about commenting on his choice of sartorial affiliation. Yes, he proudly says, that's Ralph Lauren."[64] The report also mentions that the television cameras in attendance focused from time to time on the logos. Graham's son had adopted his father's language. Symbols of consumption supported modern religious bonding.

Modern American religious life developed between the sacred and the profane, producing unique hybrids that combined spiritual and secular functions and experiences. Spiritual seekers might be lured into a revival by modern marketing and still find their religious home there. Preachers might sincerely preach on social responsibility and still sell their beliefs in the marketplace of religion and culture. On the one hand, this mixture of the sacred and the profane seems to explain the persistence of religion in the twentieth century, even though theories of secularization continue to predict its demise.[65] On the other

hand, changes in religious behavior during the twentieth century were shaped by changes in consumption patterns. Consumption became easier; the variety of goods increased; marketing came to be less about content and more about image; and choice turned into the catchword of the time. These transformative processes resulted in the emergence of a postmodern spiritual market that was founded on the behavioral patterns of consumption and choice.[66]

Notes

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2. *Life*, December 26, 1955, 100–103.
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4. William McLoughlin, *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform* (Chicago, 1978).
5. For theoretical reflections on consumption and religion, see Vincent J. Miller, *Consuming Religion: Christian Faith and Practice in a Consumer Culture* (New York and London, 2004).
6. Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Stephen Kalberg (Los Angeles, 2002).
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8. Stewart Davensport, *Friends of the Unrighteous Mammon: Northern Christians and Market Capitalism, 1815–1860* (Chicago, 2008); Mark Noll, ed., *God and Mammon: Protestants, Money, and the Market, 1790–1860* (Oxford, 2002).
9. William Leach, *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power, and the Rise of a New American Culture* (New York, 1993), 213.
10. Roger Finke and Rodney Stark, *The Churching of America, 1776–2005: Winners and Losers in Our Religious Economy,* 2nd ed. (New Brunswick, NJ, 2005).
11. Carl L. Bankston, "Rationality, Choice, and the Religious Economy: Individual and Collective Rationality in Supply and Demand," *Review of Religious Research* 45, no. 2 (2003): 155–71.
12. Detlef Pollack, "Introduction: Religious Change in Modern Societies—Perspectives Offered by the Sociology of Religion," in *The Role of Religion in Modern Societies,* ed. Detelef Pollack and Daniel V. A. Olson (New York and London, 2008), 1–22, especially 12.
13. Laurence Moore, *Selling God: American Religion in the Marketplace of Culture* (New York and Oxford, 1994).
14. Moore, *Selling God*, 64.
15. John Giggie, "Refining Religion: Consumerism and African American Religion in the Delta, 1875–1917," in *Dixie Emporium: Consumerism, Tourism, and Memory in the American South,* ed. Anthony Stanonis (Athens, GA, 2008), 137–74.
16. Moore, *Selling God,* 213–14
17. David Paul Nord, *Faith in Reading: Religious Publishing and the Birth of Mass Media in America* (New York and Oxford, 2004).
18. William G. McLaughlin, *Billy Sunday was His Real Name* (Chicago, 1955), 40.
19. Ibid., 17.
20. Ibid., 73.

21. David Morgan, "Protestant Visual Culture and the Challenges of Urban America during the Progressive Era," in *Faith in the Market: Religion and the Rise of Urban Commercial Culture,* ed. John M. Giggie and Diane Winston (New Brunswick, NJ, 2002), 37–56.
22. Giggie and Winston, eds., *Faith in the Market.*
23. Robert S. Ellwood, *The Fifties Spiritual Marketplace: American Religion in a Decade of Conflict* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1997).
24. Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right* (Princeton, NJ, 2001).
25. Dennis Voskuil, *Mountains into Goldmines: Robert Schuller and the Gospel of Success* (Grand Rapids, 1983) and James Penner, *Goliath: The Life of Robert Schuller* (New York, 1992).
26. See Steward M. Hoover and Lynn Schofield Clark, eds., *Practicing Religion in the Age of the Media: Explorations in Media, Religion, and Culture* (New York, 2002); Heather Hendershot, *Shaking the World for Jesus: Media and Conservative Evangelical Culture* (Chicago and London, 2004).
27. Regina Lee Blaszczyk, *American Consumer Society, 1865–2005: From Hearth to HDTV* (Wheeling, IL, 2009), 180–263.
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31. Aikman, *Billy Graham*, 66.
32. McLoughlin, *Billy Graham*, 46.
33. *Los Angeles Times*, November 1, 1949.
34. *Los Angeles Times*, November 16, 1949. The conversion of Jim Vaus, who found his way out of crime with Graham's help, was turned into a motion picture entitled "Wiretapper" in 1955 by World Wide Pictures; see Heather Hendershot, *Shaking the World*, 180–82.
35. Billy Graham, *Just as I Am: The Autobiography of Billy Graham* (New York, 1997).
36. Curtis Mitchell, *God in the Garden: The Amazing Story of Billy Graham's First New York Crusade* (1957; repr., Charlotte, NC, 2005).
37. McLoughlin, *Billy Graham*, 149.
38. *New York Times*, May 10, 1957. The rest of the money was spent on minor entries like team and special staff housing, office operations, and spiritual follow-up care.
39. Mitchell, *God in the Garden*, 32.
40. Blaszczyk, *American Consumer Society*, 234.
41. Lippy, *Being Religious*, 197; Hendershot, *Shaking the World*, 181.
42. *New York Times*, May 19, 1957.
43. Mitchell, *God in the Garden*, 118–29.

44. Judith Smart makes this point in "The Evangelist as Star: The Billy Graham Crusades in Australia, 1959," *Journal of Popular Culture* 33, no. 1 (1999): 167.
45. Both quotes: ibid., 170.
46. Anke Ortlepp, *Cultures of Air Travel in Postwar America* (forthcoming).
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49. Kurt Lang and Gladys Lang, "Decisions for Christ: Billy Graham in New York," in *Identity and Anxiety: Survival of the Person in Mass Society,* ed. Maurice R. Stein, Arthur J. Vidich, and David M. White (Glencoe, IL, 1960), 416.
50. Mitchell, *God in the Garden*, 50.
51. K. Lang and G. Lang, "Decisions for Christ," 422.
52. McLoughlin, *Billy Graham*, 91.
53. Finstuen, *Original Sin*, 82.
54. That is the dominant verdict in Michael Long, ed., *The Legacy of Billy Graham: Critical Reflections on America's Greatest Evangelist* (Louisville, KY, and London, 2008).
55. *Time*, October 25, 1954, 8.
56. Martin, *Prophet,* 126.
57. Ibid., 125.
58. Billy Graham, "God and Golf," published by the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, Minnesota 1968. Copy held in the Billy Graham Center Archives.
59. Ibid.
60. Robert Higgs, *God in the Stadium: Sports and Religion in America* (Lexington, KY: 1995).
61. Quote in Mitchell, *God in the Garden*, 55.
62. For this part of the sermon, see a broadcast from the New York Crusade at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7i95RXDyY70, especially minutes 6:00–9:00.
63. *Look*, September 20, 1955.
64. James B. Twitchell, *Shopping for God: How Christianity Went from Your Heart into Your Face* (New York, 2007), 154.
65. See Steve Bruce, *God is Dead: Secularization in the West* (Malden, 2007). For the phenomenon of desecularization, see Peter L. Berger, *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics* (Grand Rapids, MI, 1999).
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CHAPTER 11

A Historical Herbal: Household Medicine and Herbal Commerce in a Developing Consumer Society*

Susan Strasser

Like people in many parts of the world today, Americans before the twentieth century—and, in rural communities and immigrant neighborhoods, well into it—practiced remnants of traditional herbal medicine, understood as common knowledge. Doctors, midwives, and family nurses in the American colonies used imported barks and resins along with the produce of local fields and forests; medicinal substances have been at the cutting edge of global commerce as long as there has been any global commerce at all. As a consumer society developed during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the commodification of herbal medicine was complicated by both manufacturers' and consumers' changing understandings of science, nature, and expertise. Plant drugs were at the vanguard of scientific concerns at the beginning of this period. Discovering and describing them were passions for C. S. Rafinesque, the Bartrams, and other pioneering botanists of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, while Justus Liebig and other ground-breaking chemists learned to extract consistent drug molecules from plant materials, and eventually to synthesize them. The nineteenth-century trade in medicinal substances—minerals as well as plant products—was central to a broader international commerce that sourced natural substances and traded them to manufacturers of drugs, oils, paints, and other products. And the businesses that produced commercial medicines, freely available to consumers without prescription, developed marketing and advertising techniques that set cultural standards for both advertising and drug consumption, and provided models for other firms.

For a scholar of consumer culture, the history of herbal medicine offers an intriguing window on a type of consumption that is extraordinarily personal,

involving consumers' decisions about caring for their own bodies and those of family members. Before medical insurance and modern hospitals, healing was a kind of gendered domestic work. Birth and death both happened at home, and most Americans stayed there when they were sick—nursed by mothers, sisters, wives, and daughters who diagnosed ailments and prescribed first-level remedies. Only sometimes did most families pay for help from doctors or other more experienced healers. Administering herbal remedies—plants and products made from plants, used for medicine in every civilization—was central to that work. Women grew medicinal plants in their kitchen gardens, foraged for them in nearby woods and fields, and bought plant preparations from local healers, apothecaries, drug stores, medicine shows, and eventually the Sears catalog.

Like other household products, commercial herbal medicines—whether self-prescribed or recommended by a family member, licensed physician, or unlicensed neighborhood healer—stand at the interface between the public and the private, produced in factories for use at home. The manufacture, distribution, and sale of medicines involved the economic relationships of households and the domestic consequences of scientific developments and global commercial ventures. The history of plant medicines provides an example of the cultural process of commodification, the expansion of market relations, the replacement of the handmade and the homemade by commodities, the conversion of household skills into commercial goods and services, and the transformation of the population from producers into consumers.

The history of herbal medicine in a developing consumer culture is a history of herbalists, herbal products, and trade in medicinal plants—one that dovetails with new work in the history of medicine that focuses on commercial relationships and on the nature of medicine and health in consumer society, casting medical history as a story of commercialization rather than professionalization.[1] Medicalization is a form of commodification with manifestations in both goods and services, substituting professional care for self-care and the care of intimates, as well as replacing homemade products with commercial ones. For historians of consumption, then, herbal medicine—a kind of product universal to all cultures and times—offers a study in commodification notable for its relationship to professionalization and the cultural triumph of science as well as the commercialization of domestic work.

Medical and Commercial Importance of Plant Drugs

Before the invention of aspirin in 1897, there was nothing to alleviate pain besides plant medicines. Willow bark and meadowsweet offered mild relief, and plenty of respectable people used drugs made from the stronger and more reliable opium poppy. Before sulfa drugs were developed during the 1930s, the fastest and most effective antimicrobial agents were derivatives of mercury and arsenic, and numerous doctors and patients chose less toxic plant medicines. Before government regulation, when anybody could put anything in a bottle, call it medicine, and sell it, quacks and legitimate healers alike made fortunes

bottling preparations made from plants. And long before the Internet, people suffering from pain and discomfort consulted herbals, almanacs, home medical manuals, and magazines for information about medicinal plants that might help them.

Herbal treatment was not an alternative to seeing a doctor, nor did it suggest dissatisfaction with professional care. All kinds of American physicians prescribed plant drugs, and commercial medicines were formulated with those same plants. *Merck's 1901 Manual of the Materia Medica,* which listed "all those . . . drugs and chemicals . . . in current and well-established use in the medical practice of this country," included plant materials now generally considered cooking ingredients (such as cardamom seeds and ginger root), the materia medica of modern herbalists (including golden seal and valerian), some herbs and chemical derivatives from plants now considered street drugs (like marijuana and heroin), and derivatives still employed by physicians (such as morphine and atropine, a derivative of belladonna used in ophthalmology and—off-label—in hospice care).[2] These substances had long histories of effective use in clinical practice, though only a few were as fast-acting or powerful as the synthetic drugs that eventually supplanted most of them. They were the drugs that Merck sold, along with Parke-Davis, Eli Lilly, and other early pharmaceutical companies. These firms still sell some plant and plant-derived drugs, but they garner greater profits from the patentable products of modern biochemistry.

For those with the information, medicine could come from the backyard and forest as well as from merchants who profited from selling it. If patients or their mothers knew the fields and forests, if they grew herbs in kitchen gardens, or if they consulted a local herbalist, they might employ local medicinal plants in crude form—cleaning and boiling roots, or infusing leaves and flowers to make healing teas. Consumers could also buy medicinal plants from all over the world, dried or made into medications, as well as commercial medicines compounded with multiple plants or with mineral and animal substances. Colonial apothecaries imported medicines from England, many of them made from plant drugs originating in Africa, South America, and the Middle East.

During the early years of the new nation, American botanist-explorers sought native plant sources for medicine, while both domestic and global trade expanded steadily, in plant materials as in everything else. Throughout the nineteenth century, commercial medicine makers were at the forefront of commerce. They sold proprietary medicines that were compounds of multiple herbs, sometimes mixed with mineral drugs. Innovators in marketing techniques, many proclaimed that their products had powers superior to those of professional physicians. By the turn of the twentieth century, self-dosage commercial medicines were under attack by reformers intent on establishing commercial and professional standards for consumer products in general and medicines in particular.

From the beginning of the American colonies, herbal medicines had a substantial market. Medicinal plants from all over the world passed through the London markets to be traded to colonial apothecaries and, later, the network of American drug wholesalers and manufacturers. Many raw drug traders also handled dye

plants, and the elaborate letterheads of nineteenth-century American wholesale drug dealers almost always listed paints for sale, too. Among the most popular medicinal plants were dried Cape aloes (*Aloe* spp.) from South Africa, used internally as laxatives, and Peruvian or Jesuit's bark (*Cinchona* spp.), the natural source of the alkaloid quinine and the antimalarial drug of choice for hundreds of years. The bark, native to the Amazon rainforest, was first sent to Europe in the 1630s, soon after indigenous Peruvians demonstrated its virtues to Jesuit missionaries. Peruvian bark quickly became a staple of global trade and of the materia medica of all kinds of healers. The colonial Maine midwife Martha Ballard, well known to historians from Laurel Thatcher Ulrich's *A Midwife's Tale,* purchased bark along with other imported medicines such as aloes, licorice, and myrrh from local physicians. She administered them to her patients, though she preferred plants she could grow or gather. As an antimalarial, Peruvian bark was extraordinarily valuable to Europeans colonizing the tropics, and its discovery prompted Europeans and Americans to explore other parts of the New World in hopes of equivalent contributions to the pharmacopoeia. Quinine was first isolated from cinchona bark in 1820.[3]

Cotton Mather and Benjamin Rush, the most famous doctors of the colonial era, used such plant medicines, as did all of their contemporaries, many of whom (especially in the countryside) dispensed drugs rather than writing prescriptions. Botanical medicines dominated the early editions of the *United States Pharmacopoeia* and the materia medica of doctors of all stripes, including both "regular" physicians and those who subscribed to the nineteenth-century medical movements usually characterized as alternative sects or schools. Two of the best known of these movements used botanical medicines exclusively. The Thomsonians followed healing practices propounded by Samuel Thomson (1769–1843), who sold both a book explaining his diagnostic methods and a line of remedies. Thomson himself insisted that laypeople could become knowledgeable enough to heal themselves, but some followers set themselves up as Thomsonian doctors. One of these, Wooster Beach, eventually broke with Thomson and is generally considered the founder of the Eclectics, a group of botanical physicians that established medical schools and journals that were respected by many in the late nineteenth century. Indeed, the most prominent Eclectic drug-manufacturing firm was headed by a president of the American Pharmaceutical Association.[4]

Self-Dosing, Domestic Medicine, and Local Healers

Like people today, Americans in the past diagnosed and prescribed for themselves and their children, partners, and aging parents. They cleaned and bandaged small wounds, and they sought relief for arthritis and the common cold. But they also suffered from some different ailments. Without access to fresh vegetables during the winter, they developed digestive problems that they addressed with tonics. Doing physical labor on farms, in factories, or in homes with open fires, they might seek expensive medical assistance when they broke bones or contracted

serious diseases, but bruises, muscle strains, and burns were everyday events that called for liniments and salves. Viral and bacterial infections were grounds for bed rest and hot liquids.

Most nineteenth-century Americans depended on a kind of care that has largely disappeared: women whose primary work was in their homes tended to the sick. Medical care was an essential part of housekeeping.[5] Neither diagnosis nor prescription nor patient care nor the preparation of medicine was the sole province of expensive licensed professionals. Most home caregivers worked on their own authority, independently of doctors, except in extreme emergencies. Prescription coexisted with self-medication and herbal commerce with backyard medicine. When family members took sick, caregivers had to evaluate symptoms and calculate their options. They usually began with homemade remedies and the bland recipes for invalids that can be found in most nineteenth-century cookbooks. They grew medicinal herbs in kitchen gardens and brewed simple remedies like peppermint tea. They consulted books of domestic medicine, as well as the countless manuals and pamphlets put out by the companies that made commercial medicines, to learn about commercially available herbal remedies, both single plants and compounded medicines.[6]

Some women took to medicine more than others—as some did to sewing, cooking, or cleaning—and exchanged their remedies and services for money or the fruits of other women's labor. Some found and collected wild plants; some cultivated medicinals in their gardens; some bought dried herbs and herbal preparations from retail or wholesale druggists; most probably did all of these things in various seasons and at different times in their lives. Their skills included local knowledge of the medicinal plants that grew nearby, and they competed for consumers' money with a range of other practitioners, both women and men, and with commercial preparations.

With varying levels of clinical experience and knowledge about anatomy, physiology, botany, and pharmacy, most local healers employed plants empirically, doing what seemed to work best to counteract symptoms, according to their own experience and the information they found in herbals, almanacs, and medical guides. Some, like Martha Ballard, were skilled midwives. Others were known to their neighbors as botanical pharmacists. Sharla M. Fett argues that southern plantation slave quarters "harbored many botanical experts. . . . A former slave from Maryland recalled, 'The old people could read the woods just like a book. Whenever you were sick, they could go out and pick something, and you'd get well.' " One South Carolina planter's son recalled Eliza Nelson, a slave who roamed the woods to dig up roots and returned home to make medicine that had a reputation among whites and blacks alike.[7] At the end of the nineteenth century, Sarah Orne Jewett offered a fictional version of a local healer in Almira Todd, the "learned herbalist" described in *The Country of the Pointed Firs* (1896). Mrs. Todd grows herbs in her garden and gathers wild ones; she brews "humble compounds . . . in a small caldron on [her] kitchen stove." Herself the daughter of a Maine country physician, Jewett described Mrs. Todd as "upon the best of

terms" with the village doctor, who discusses cases with her, though he does not believe in all of her remedies.[8]

Development of a Market

The earliest wholesale drug firms, located in port cities on the East Coast, obtained plant materials from all over the world, generally through London, and from a developing domestic herb trade centered in Appalachia near the primary habitat of many wild medicinal plants. As American commerce in medicinal plants began to develop, roots and flowers were traded for cash or manufactured goods at country general stores, which sold them to wholesalers, often the same ones who supplied the stores with teakettles and molasses. These practices endured into the twentieth century in the cash-scarce Appalachian region.[9]

During the 1850s, Calvin Cowles, a merchant in Wilkes County, western North Carolina, bought crude drugs from nearby general stores that collected them from customers who brought in roots, leaves, and flowers for barter. Cowles sold thousands of pounds of plant material to the urban wholesale drug firms that supplied pharmacies in the North and West, until the Civil War ended his communications with his customers. "We doubtless do a larger Botanic business than any house south of the Potomac," he boasted early in his career. He sent samples of plants he wanted to country storekeepers, along with reminders that he also carried manufactured products for them to sell.[10] American ginseng (*Panax quinquefolium*) was the engine of this trade, the most valuable of the many medicinal plants native to the Appalachians. Hardly used in North America but prized in China, it had provided a valuable resource for trade with the Far East since before the American Revolution. At Cowles' own store, he let customers settle their accounts with ginseng.[11] People came in with eggs and furs as well as herbs, and left with cotton yarn, cups and saucers, knives and forks.[12] Some brought him hundreds of pounds of plant material.[13]

Cowles both bought from and sold to several of the herbal medicine businesses operated by the communities of the United Society of Believers, better known as the Shakers, who grew medicinal herbs in every one of their villages in New York, New England, and the Midwest. Herbal medicine was at least as big a business for the Shakers as their famous furniture, and the Shaker herb businesses developed decades earlier than the chair business. Nearly all Shaker communities sold herbs and herbal preparations, and herbs were instrumental in developing the Shaker brand image.[14]

Most Shakers lived entirely apart from conventional society, but a few—the Trustees—did business with the outside world. They sold herbs in bulk to (and sometimes bought herbs from) the developing urban wholesale drug merchants, and they also retailed plant medicines in the shops where Shaker communities sold neighbors and tourists a variety of farm products and the excess from the Shaker women's household work and kitchen gardening. Early in the nineteenth century, the Shakers had developed an international reputation for the quality of their garden seeds and plant medicines, and for pioneering innovative packaging

and production methods. Two Shaker doctors began to systematize the business during the 1820s, and, within two decades, Shaker communities were shipping thousands of pounds of dried plant material and thousands of bottles of herbal extracts and other prepared medicines annually. In 1841, the men took over the extract business, declaring that it had gotten "too laborious" for the women to handle. They soon built new production facilities with state-of-the-art equipment, and they expanded distribution, with a Shaker Depot on John Street in New York City's herb district.

Even as domestic production increased, American wholesale drug firms continued to deal internationally, especially in ginseng (the primary export herb), opium (far and away the most potent and reliable painkiller in a time before aspirin, steroids, or nonsteroidal anti-inflammatories), and Peruvian bark. Retail druggists sold imported and domestic herbs, single plants and compounds, and, at their soda fountains, herbal tonics such as root beer and Coca-Cola. So did the up-and-coming fortune makers of retailing—department stores and mail-order houses.

The story of American herbal medicine complicates our understanding of commodification: this is not a simple tale of homemade goods moving to the market. Commodifying botanical substances posed special issues. As connoisseurs of coffee and homegrown tomatoes know well, different plants of the same species and variety can look, taste, and smell different, and may contain different proportions of the many active chemicals, depending on soil, weather, latitude, altitude, and cultivation methods. Harvesting practices mattered: the season when roots were dug, the ripeness of berries, the gathering techniques. Moreover, roots and leaves might be misidentified, and plants that were easy to find or roots that were easy to dig up might be substituted for rare or labor-intensive ones. And even high-quality herbs could be damaged in storage or shipment, and might arrive moldy or full of insects. All of these considerations mattered to people making money from plants, and they posed a fundamental production challenge for manufacturers pursuing branded marketing of standardized products. The contents of every bottle they made needed to be identical to every other one, like every bar of Ivory soap, so that consumers who liked it and came back for more would be satisfied that they had obtained the same product. It was easier said than done.

The commodification of herbal medicine was also complicated by both manufacturers' and consumers' changing understandings of science, nature, and expertise. Science and industry were developing chemical derivatives of traditional substances, and, eventually, completely synthetic drugs. The commercial triumph of the chemical and drug industries coincided with the cultural triumph of science, and with professional control over diagnosis and prescription, which distinguished medicines from other kinds of products. Scientific development was incorporated into a larger vision of progress that celebrated the modernity of consumer products in general, and especially products that solved age-old medical problems. Central to that vision were commercialized relationships to nature and bodies as well as commodified perceptions of the natural (including "the body" as a concept).

Proprietary Medicines

Although the Shakers originally packaged single herbs for sale, after the Civil War, they, like many more secular companies, promoted herbal compounds, combinations of plants that appeared on drugstore shelves as proprietary or "patent" medicines. Already innovators in the commercial production and distribution of individual medicinal plants, Shakers now became leaders in the commercial medicine industry, selling compounds with secret formulas: Norwood's Tincture, Mother Siegel's Curative Syrup, and a number of medicines branded with the Shaker name. During the last decades of the nineteenth century, the drug field split into factions. Medicinally potent plants were processed and sold both by the companies that eventually triumphed in the modern pharmaceutical business and by the makers of secret formula proprietary medicines. Proprietary medicine makers sold branded products, many but not all of them plant-based, using new marketing techniques that rested on establishing direct relationships between manufacturers and consumers and on developing a new kind of product, consisting of the object, its packaging, and its branded image. Drug companies that labeled themselves "ethical"—like Merck and Parke-Davis—sold a wide range of products, herbal and nonherbal, single plants or chemicals and compounds. They published the formulas of their compounds, however, and marketed them exclusively to physicians and druggists.[15]

Most historians use the terms "proprietary" and "patent" medicine interchangeably, although "patent medicine" was almost always a misnomer, since a patent application would require a manufacturer to reveal the formula. Most manufacturers kept their formulas secret and instead sought other protections, such as trademarks, patents on containers, and copyrights on labels and promotional materials. Prescriptions were not legally required for any drug, and the line between nineteenth-century proprietaries and physician-prescribed medicines was by no means clear. From the consumer's standpoint, proprietary medicines were formulated with the same plants, minerals, and solvents that physicians used. Indeed, many physicians prescribed proprietaries. The American Medical Association adopted resolutions against secret formulas at nearly every annual convention. Still, medical journals not only carried ads for patent medicines but used public relations materials from the proprietaries as editorial matter.[16]

Commercial medicines and their entrepreneurs have been a favorite topic for historians of advertising, who describe how intense competition and the development of transcontinental and international markets motivated these energetic entrepreneurs to develop new marketing techniques. Proprietary medicine makers had to argue for the unique merits of their remedies, and their innovative advertising was intended to associate their products with their claims in consumers' minds. Pamela Laird portrays these businessmen as the originators of branding, selling goods in consumer-sized packaging (for which generic, bulk merchandising methods were inadequate) and suggesting their efficacy by means of trade names, emblems, and symbols for reassurance or potency.[17] Medical advertising, writes Daniel Pope, "was the proving ground for persuasive

techniques like testimonials, story-form ads, and vivid illustrations. The intense competition among medicine manufacturers impelled them to be energetic, sometimes inventive, advertisers."[18] Jackson Lears points out that they were the "chief clients" of nineteenth-century advertising agencies "and, indeed, the very basis of many agencies' success."[19]

But advertising historians have not concerned themselves with the products that these firms sold. Describing commercial medicines as utterly harmless or incredibly harmful or sometimes both, they have relied almost exclusively on James Harvey Young's 1961 *Toadstool Millionaires,* also a standard text for historians of medicine. Young trumpets his contempt for the products: he "votes against patent medicines" and characterizes them as "quackery," "an anti-rational approach to one of the key problems of life," and "hazardous," although he concedes that some sellers might have meant well.[20] Most historians charge nineteenth-century commercial medicine makers with fraud, that is, with selling nostrums by making false or exaggerated claims. They attribute any therapeutic results to alcohol, addictive drugs, or the placebo effect. And they dismiss purchasers as "the ignorant, the superstitious, and those on whom regular physicians had given up hope," in the words of the only scholarly book about medicine shows. Proposing that patent medicines be understood in terms of advertising that promised metamorphosis, Jackson Lears declares that their appeal "depended on the persistence of magical thinking."[21] The arguments are well known and often repeated, echoing both Young and such historical voices as *Collier's* muckraker Samuel Hopkins Adams and *Ladies' Home Journal* editor Edward Bok, the two campaigners whose writing informed the struggle for the 1906 Pure Food and Drug Act.

Yet nineteenth-century patent medicines were not placebos as placebos are now understood. Knowing that many complaints resolve without treatment, and accepting that cures had not been found for many diseases, physicians and other healers had for centuries issued prescriptions intended to provide comfort to patients rather than cure them. Doctors began to analyze the placebo effect once the triumph of scientific medicine demanded explanations for cures attributable to what had always been understood as the art of healing. Moreover, by the mid-twentieth century, the testing of new remedies in clinical drug trials required the use of inert substances for comparisons. There may be some truth to the placebo charge, but patent medicines were not inert; their formulas incorporated plants and minerals that had long been understood to affect human bodies.[22]

Contrary to the image propounded by historians today and muckraking reformers at the height of the campaign to prohibit alcohol, there was a legitimate reason for the alcohol in commercial herbal preparations. Alcohol is the most powerful of the solvents commonly used to extract chemical constituents from roots, barks, leaves, flowers, and resins. Plant medicines may also be prepared with vinegar, water, oil, or glycerin, but none of these substances extracts as wide a range of constituents. Alcoholic extractions of plant materials do not ferment, as water-based ones do, and alcohol excludes such undesirable components as gums, mucilage, and mineral salts. Moreover, patent medicines offered

an unpleasant and expensive way to get drunk, and most consumers probably took them as directed, by the spoonful, rather than swigging them.[23]

The campaign against patent medicines was in large part an attack on self-dosing, undertaken during a period when the medical profession (like American culture in general) was dominated by discourses of science, professionalization, and expertise. Even today, however, self-dosing with over-the-counter remedies is the initial response of most people to pain and discomfort. By the middle of the nineteenth century, nationally advertised medicines might well have been regarded as more modern than folk remedies. Like television viewers encountering commercials, consumers of nineteenth-century commercial medicines were not necessarily fooled by exaggerated claims. Some took medicine not for the major ailments the ads claimed the products would cure, but for lesser symptoms. And some caregivers and patients purchased remedies to alleviate suffering in illnesses they understood as incurable. Perhaps nothing they could buy would actually cure tuberculosis, but neither could a doctor, and some proprietary remedy might make a patient more comfortable at far less expense than a doctor's visit.

Licensed physicians charged high fees and relied on the so-called heroic techniques of bleeding and purging with heavy metals. Early licensing laws did not require medical degrees; the term "doctor" was used by a wide range of practitioners long after licensing was established; and medical consumers had little information about physicians and other healers beyond word of mouth. Antibiotics and modern surgical techniques were not yet in anybody's repertoire, with or without a license or medical degree. No wonder people calculated their options and purchased commercial remedies. "I am giving both children Scoville's Blood and Liver Syrup now," one nineteenth-century Kansas woman wrote to her mother in New York. "It may take a dozen bottles—but that is a comparatively small doctor's bill—and it may be the means of saving their lives, for Scrofula [a form of tuberculosis transmitted by infected milk] is a terrible malady."[24]

Sarah Stage's feminist analysis of Lydia Pinkham's Vegetable Compound, an extremely popular proprietary medicine for women sold around the world for many decades, is a notable exception to the historians' dismissiveness. Stage suggests that many Americans were skeptical of those who called themselves "regular" physicians, charged high fees, and relied on bloodletting and mercury prescriptions. To understand why women took this medicine, she writes, "one must look closely at the options available to them. Not until women could be convinced that the medical profession offered safe, effective treatments that were accessible and economically feasible would they abandon patent medicine. In the absence of readily available, valid medical therapies the Vegetable Compound made sense."[25]

To go further than Stage: many commercial herbal medicines, including Lydia Pinkham's Vegetable Compound, were themselves readily available, valid therapies that should be understood as what we now call over-the-counter medications. Like today's purchasers of Nyquil and Alka-Seltzer, many—probably most—people who bought nineteenth-century proprietary medicines sought relief from everyday ailments that they did not consider consequential enough to merit a

doctor's attention. And like people looking for relief today, they may have bought a first bottle because they believed the advertising, but if they came back for a second, they presumably thought it had done some good.

There is no doubt that Lydia Pinkham's sons and their agents were guilty of exaggerated claims that the Vegetable Compound would cure all manner of severe complaints. The earliest advertising featured sensational "scare heads," headlines that trumpeted the horrors of illnesses supposedly curable by the Compound. "Thousands Dying Annually from Causes to the World Unknown," read one, while another blamed a Connecticut clergyman's murder on his wife's "insanity brought on by 16 years of suffering with female complaints."[26] And while Lydia Pinkham might have resisted her son Dan's idea that the market should be enlarged to include men by advertising the Compound for kidney problems, advertisements before she died proclaimed, "For the cure of Kidney Complaints of Either Sex This Compound is Unsurpassed."[27]

But Lydia Pinkham herself was a local healer who prescribed all kinds of remedies, including her Compound, her other packaged products, other companies' proprietary medicines, and medicines made from individual plants; she did not regard the Vegetable Compound as a cure-all suitable for serious issues.[28] And whether women who were gravely ill corresponded with the real Lydia or, after her death, the imagined one created by the company, serious cases represented only a fraction of the market that this medicine captured—the market for a medicine to address common "female troubles." We need not construe women looking for relief from menstrual cramps and hot flashes as drunks or dupes of commercial messages. Lydia Pinkham's Vegetable Compound contained herbs now commonly prescribed for those symptoms by herbalists and naturopathic physicians and used by their patients and women who self-prescribe on the advice of friends, books, and the Internet. Four of the five plants in the original formula (which survives in Lydia Pinkham's handwriting) are long-standing female tonics in Europe and the Middle East.[29]

The coexistence of inflated advertising and quackery with credible methods of healing is one of the intriguing complexities of the study of herbal medicine. Before the 1906 Pure Food and Drug Law, which regulated the labeling of medicine bottles but did not regulate their contents, counterfeiting pervaded all levels of the herbal trade, from crude drugs to bottled formulas. Because medicine could be made on a small scale with little capital investment, it was particularly attractive to charlatans and quacks, and there were many. Lydia Pinkham began in her kitchen, and remedies could be produced in a hotel bathroom to be sold at a traveling medicine show. With such low barriers to entry, with huge potential markets of suffering customers, and with many examples of successful firms of all sizes, medicine making and remedy selling attracted rogues as well as dedicated and talented healers.

Medicine shows, promotions for commercial medicines that brought live entertainment to American towns of all sizes, followed in the long tradition of the mountebank and introduced American audiences to the concept of sponsorship. Small, marginal shows performed on the street; larger ones set up

tents or appeared in rented halls, depending on the season. The "doctor," the central and necessary character, delivered the sales pitch. He shared the stage with sword swallowers, magicians and musicians of all kinds, and stock characters borrowed from blackface minstrel shows. The pitch was neither an interruption nor an interval to be endured. It was itself entertainment, intended as much as the music to help hold the crowd. Most medicine shows were free, and those that did charge cost less than comparable entertainments without commercial interruption.[30]

Many of these shows traded on the idea of the healing powers of nature, a trope particularly powerful during a period of industrialization. They represented this healing nature with portraits or caricatures of Native Americans at the same time that American troops were killing Indians in the West. The largest of these companies, the Kickapoo Indian Medicine Company, ran shows that offered a medicinal version of Buffalo Bill's Wild West, featuring mock powwows and authentic chants and dances, as well as standard vaudeville and circus acts, fireworks, music, and free medical consultations.[31] It is easy to see the shows solely as entertainment and to understand whatever medicine was offered or practiced as nothing more than quackery. Yet, even here, the story is more complicated: medicine-show "doctors" had to have something to offer sick people, and some of them apparently tried to learn some medicine.[32]

As both muckrakers and historians have charged, the biggest proprietary medicine firms made fortunes off people's ailments and sometimes their desperation, whether or not these companies sold effective medicine. And Americans who wanted to make decisions about treating their maladies without consulting professionals had to find their way in a marketplace defined and framed by the manufacturers and by the irrational powers of imagery, whether these consumers bought effective remedies or quack concoctions. This coexistence of the quack and the knowledgeable healer brings us into a borderland where the distinction between "true" and "false" is slippery—the realm where advertising resides. In fact, as many historians of advertising have demonstrated, the proprietors of these medicines were pioneers in the methods of that realm.

Regulation

Beginning with the 1906 Pure Food and Drug Act, making, selling, and buying medicine was more constrained by government regulation than were most other commodities. Despite the campaign against patent medicines carried out by *Collier's* muckraker Samuel Hopkins Adams and *Ladies' Home Journal* editor Edward Bok, drug reform was less central than food safety to the provisions of that law, which required only that medicines be unadulterated and labeled accurately. But the magazine articles were a first volley in a still ongoing war on self-dosing, addiction, and recreational drug use.

Before 1914, the government made no distinction between medicines freely available for use in self-dosing and those requiring professional supervision. Consumers bought the medicines they wanted. If they could afford to pay, or if they

were desperate, they consulted physicians and other practitioners for help in diagnosis and prescription. The control enacted that year, the Harrison Narcotics Act, regulated most sales of coca, opium, and their derivatives, and it limited the quantity of those substances that proprietary medicines could contain. But it remained legal to sell opium in weak preparations, as well as cocaine in liniments and ointments for external use.

Opium (*Papaver somniferum*) was both the most effective painkiller and one of the most powerful plant medicines available. Surely the most commercially successful of herbal remedies, it was used extensively by all kinds of healers. Especially in the form of laudanum (an alcohol preparation), opium—the dried latex emitted by a scored poppy pod—was a staple of home medicine for inducing sleep, calming coughs, counteracting diarrhea, and alleviating pain. As one of many herbal medicines, it was considered a powerful drug, but relatively uncontroversial. Most patients and all healers understood the possibilities of overdose, tolerance (increasing amounts might be required to produce the same effect), and dependence (withdrawal might be problematic). Some users succumbed, but many people took small amounts from time to time without any of those results. The Shakers and others attempted to grow it commercially in the United States, but most opium was imported. Its chemistry was investigated early in the nineteenth century, and the developing pharmaceutical industry soon went to work on producing its most useful component alkaloids, including morphine and codeine.

Before it was stigmatized as a controlled substance, coca (*Erythroxylon coca*), "the divine plant of the Incas," was used both in whole leaf—most famously in early formulations of America's best-known soft drink—and as the source of the alkaloid cocaine. In 1885, a year before Coca-Cola was first marketed, Parke-Davis sent thirty-year-old Henry Hurd Rusby exploring in South America for wild coca and other plants that might make promising new drugs. Rusby later taught at the Columbia University pharmacy school, and he published a memoir of his jungle experiences as well as thousands of scientific papers. As an active member and as president of the American Pharmaceutical Association, he worked on professional issues ranging from nomenclature and standards to the value placed on clinical experience in the construction of the *United States Pharmacopoeia*. Within a few years of Rusby's first trip to South America, cocaine, employed therapeutically for a range of diseases and touted as a miracle anesthetic, was becoming controversial, alarming commentators who described and decried its use as a recreational drug. The subsequent racialized vilification of both cocaine and the coca leaf, and the rush to regulation, conflated the plant with the alkaloid, creating an icon for problematic unregulated drugs.[33]

In the 1880s, Parke, Davis & Company offered cannabis (*Cannabis sativa*) in three forms—packages of pressed, dried herb; a liquid preparation; and pills, coated with sugar and gelatin, in three dosages.[34] By the turn of the century, they offered several more preparations of the drug, including chocolate-coated tablets of cannabis extract. "We Test Them Physiologically," the company informed readers of *The Pharmaceutical Era,* explaining that they had rejected

over 30,000 pounds of cannabis in one year "on the cogent ground of defective activity, or complete inertness."[35] "Cannabis is used in medicine to relieve pain, to encourage sleep, and to soothe restlessness," explained the 1926 edition of the *United States Dispensatory,* a 1,792-page reference work for pharmacists and physicians. But the *Dispensatory* complained about the great variability among samples of the drug, and it questioned the claims Parke-Davis and other companies made about their products' standardization.[36] By that time the drug was illegal for nonmedical purposes in many states; it was first classed with narcotics in federal legislation in 1929. The racialized and xenophobic campaign against marijuana led by Harry Anslinger (for 32 years the Commissioner of the Federal Bureau of Narcotics), subsequent tax laws, and the decline of all kinds of herbal medicines made medical use anathema for half a century.[37]

Decline and Revival

By the time of the early twentieth-century campaigns against coca and cannabis, Lydia Pinkham's Vegetable Compound and Parke-Davis's herbal products were being eclipsed by the development of chemical drugs, biological agents, and other powerful modern pharmaceutical products. The attack on self-dosing with commercial medicines, which had begun with the food and drug reformers before the 1906 law, would be taken up by consumer advocates in the 1930s. Isolated and synthesized chemical drugs were suited to rational manufacture and distribution. They did not mold or dry out, and each batch was identical to the ones made before and after. Moreover, they were stronger, faster-acting, and more therapeutically predictable than plant-based medicines.

By 1929, when Robert and Helen Merrell Lynd published *Middletown,* their classic sociological study of Muncie, Indiana, herbal medicine had become old-fashioned. The authors devoted the first part of the chapter entitled "Keeping Healthy" to ridiculing all forms of self-care and all kinds of commercial medicine except that practiced by members of the Indiana Medical Association. Writing before widespread health insurance coverage, they suggested that the self-dosing they disparaged was primarily practiced by their working-class informants, but they acknowledged that even some business-class families continued to "treasure" (and presumably use) domestic medicine manuals.[38]

For the next thirty years or so, medical authorities and the media disparaged botanical medicines. The lore of herbal healing was kept alive by folklorists and ethnobotanists, and by gardeners who described traditional remedies in their publications without confessing belief in their efficacy. American gardeners relied especially on the publications of two British herbalists, Maude Grieve and Hilda Leyel. Grieve, the proprietor of Whin's Vegetable Drug Plant Farm and School of Medicinal Herb Growing in Buckinghamshire, wrote a series of erudite pamphlets on individual herbs that were published in book form as *A Modern Herbal* in 1931. Leyel, who edited the book, founded the British Society of Herbalists, operated a herb shop on London's Baker Street, and wrote many other herb books.[39]

Republished in 1971, *A Modern Herbal* made an important contribution to the revival of American herbal medicine during the last decades of the twentieth century. The movements that have come to be known as "the sixties" challenged chemical drugs along with other products of the military-industrial complex, as women's health activists and hippies revived practices that had nearly—but not entirely—vanished. Now herbal products are again for sale at every drugstore, the objects of fads and the subjects of marketing gimmicks. Information on growing, processing, and using medicinal herbs is freely available on the Internet through a well-developed international community of listservs, blogs, and podcasts. Doctors' offices display posters warning patients of potential interactions between herbs and prescription medications. Large pharmaceutical firms print some of those posters, but they also sponsor bioprospecting expeditions, sending explorers to tropical rainforests in search of new plant drugs.

This revival was a reaction to a well-developed consumer culture that had come to influence even the once sacrosanct professional relationship between doctor and patient. At the same time, it was a part of that culture, replete with advertisements, marketing schemes, fads, and fashions. Although physicians and pharmaceutical companies (now mostly out of the herb business) responded with publicity warning of the dangers of self-dosing, consumers purchased herbal products on their own, according to diagnoses and therapeutic decisions made without professional advice.[40] The resurgence of herbal medicine thus serves as an example of consumer resistance to what medical historian Nancy Tomes calls the long-term contraction "of patients' powers of therapeutic and economic self-determination."[41]

Notes

*This chapter is a preliminary discussion of the issues in my forthcoming book, tentatively of the same title. Although most of the citations below are historiographical, the overall stance draws on primary research at the Schlesinger Library, Harvard University; the Lloyd Library; the American Institute for the History of Pharmacy, University of Wisconsin; Dumbarton Oaks; the Hagley Museum and Library; Winterthur Library; the University of North Carolina; the North Carolina State Archives; and the Library of Congress.

1. The distinction is made by Nancy Tomes, "An Undesired Necessity: The Commodification of Medical Service in the Interwar United States," in *Commodifying Everything: Relationships of the Market,* ed. Susan Strasser (New York, 2003), 98.
2. Merck & Co., *Merck's 1901 Manual of the Materia Medica; A Ready-Reference Pocket Book for the Practicing Physician and Surgeon* (New York, 1901), in Collection 101, Box 55, Lloyd Library.
3. On Peruvian bark, see Fiammetta Rocco, *The Miraculous Fever Tree: Malaria and the Quest for a Cure that Changed the World* (New York, 2003); Saul Jarcho, *Quinine's Predecessor: Francesco Torti and the Early History of Cinchona* (Baltimore, MD, 1993); on Martha Ballard's use of imported medicine, see Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *A Midwife's*

Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard, Based on her Diary, 1785–1812 (New York, 1990), 359–63.

4. See Alex Berman, *America's Botanico-Medical Movements: Vox Populi* (New York, 2001); John S. Haller, *Kindly Medicine: Physio-Medicalism in America, 1836–1911* (Kent, OH, 1997); Haller, *Medical Protestants: The Eclectics in American Medicine, 1825–1939* (Carbondale, IL, 1994); Haller, *The People's Doctors: Samuel Thomson and the American Botanical Movement, 1790–1860* (Carbondale, IL, 2000).
5. On domestic medicine see Guenther B. Risse, Ronald L. Numbers, and Judith Walzer Leavitt, *Medicine without Doctors: Home Health Care in American History* (New York, 1977); Lamar Riley Murphy, *Enter the Physician: The Transformation of Domestic Medicine, 1760–1860* (Tuscaloosa, AL, 1991); Emily K. Abel, *Hearts of Wisdom: American Women Caring for Kin* (Cambridge, MA, 2000).
6. See Charles Rosenberg, "Medical Text and Social Context: Explaining William Buchan's *Domestic Medicine*," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 57 (1983): 22–42; Rosenberg, "John Gunn, Everyman's Physician," introduction to *Gunn's Domestic Medicine: A Facsimile of the First Edition* (Knoxville, TN, 1986), vxxi.
7. Sharla M. Fett, *Working Cures: Healing, Health, and Power on Southern Slave Plantations* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2002), 69, 73–74.
8. Sarah Orne Jewett, *The Country of the Pointed Firs and Other Stories* (New York, 1981), 4.
9. See C. O. Ewing and E. E. Stanford, "Botanicals of the Blue Ridge," *Journal of the American Pharmaceutical Association* 8 (1919): 16–26; Edward T. Price, "Root Digging in the Appalachians: The Geography of Botanical Drugs," *Geographical Review* 50, no. 1 (January 1960), 1–20; Gary R. Freeze, "Roots, Barks, Berries, and Jews: The Herb Trade in Gilded-Age North Carolina," *Essays in Economic and Business History* 13 (1995): 107–27.
10. "We doubtless . . . ": Letter, February 27, 1851. Samples: Letter, March 18, 1851, to [Dr.] M. Norton. Both in Letterpress Book A, Calvin J. Cowles Papers, PC111.25.1, North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh (hereafter cited as Cowles Raleigh).
11. Margaret Hendrix account settled in part with "sang" [ginseng], Folder 20, December 1856, Calvin Josiah Cowles Papers, Southern Historical Collection, Manuscripts Dept., Wilson Library, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill (hereafter cited as Cowles CH).
12. See vol. 67, Cowles CH. This is a large leather-bound book, marked DAY BOOK on the spine. For barter activities, see, for example, entries for November 12, 1852 (Riley Triplette, Allen Estes, and Anna Biars) and 29 December 1852 (Alley Dula, N. Lewis, Hugh Nelson, Joel Brown, and James Gilbert).
13. See vol. 73, Cowles CH. This is a small leather and cardboard book that records barter from January 2, 1854, to December 31, 1856. Many people brought both furs and roots.
14. On the Shaker herbal medicine businesses, see Amy Bess Miller, *Shaker Herbs: A History and a Compendium* (New York, 1976); Theodore R. Schatzki, *The Site of the Social: A Philosophical Account of the Constitution of Social Life and Change* (University Park, PA, 2002), especially 25–38; Stephen J. Stein, *The Shaker Experience in America: A History of the United Society of Believers* (New Haven, CT, 1992), 133–48.
15. See James Harvey Young, *The Toadstool Millionaires: A Social History of Patent Medicines in America before Federal Regulation* (Princeton, 1961), 40–41. On the

development of trademark, see Susan Strasser, *Satisfaction Guaranteed: The Making of the American Mass Market* (New York, 1989), 44–52.

16. David L. Dykstra, "The Medical Profession and Patent and Proprietary Medicines during the Nineteenth Century," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 29 (1955): 408–9.
17. Pamela Laird, *Advertising Progress: American Business and the Rise of Consumer Marketing* (Baltimore, 1998), 18–19. Paul Duguid makes a persuasive case that the brand concept was developed earlier, in "Developing the Brand: The Case of Alcohol, 1800–1880," *Enterprise & Society* 4 (September 2003): 405–41.
18. Daniel Pope, *The Making of Modern Advertising* (New York, 1983), 232.
19. Jackson Lears, *Fables of Abundance: A Cultural History of Advertising in America* (New York, 1994), 97.
20. Young, *Toadstool Millionaires*, vii–viii.
21. Brooks McNamara, *Step Right Up* (Jackson, MS, 1995), 34; Lears, *Fables of Abundance*, 43.
22. See Suzanne White, "Medicine's Humble Humbug: Four Periods in the Understanding of the Placebo," *Pharmacy in History* 27 (1985): 51.
23. See John Uri Lloyd, Wolfgang Ostwald, and Walter Haller, "A Study in Pharmacy," *Journal of the American Pharmaceutical Association* 19 (October 1930): 1081; John Uri Lloyd, "Eclectic Fads, No. 2—Alcohol Not 'An Eclectic Fad,' " *Eclectic Medical Journal* 80 (March 1920): 1–8.
24. Quoted in Emily K. Abel, *Hearts of Wisdom: American Women Caring for Kin* (Cambridge, MA, 2000), 73.
25. Sarah Stage, *Female Complaints: Lydia Pinkham and the Business of Women's Medicine* (New York, 1979), 10.
26. See ads in the scrapbook, vol. 556, microfilm roll 1, Lydia E. Pinkham Medicine Company papers, Schlesinger Library, Harvard University. These were also reproduced in "*Life* Visits the Lydia Pinkham Factory," *Life*, copied in Charles H. Pinkham, "Advertising Volume I, 1875–1953" (Lynn, 1953), vol. 328, p. A-53, microfilm roll 1, Lydia E. Pinkham Medicine Company papers, Schlesinger Library, Harvard University.
27. See, for example, *The Saturday Evening Post*, May 21, 1881, 15, and January 28, 1882, 15; *Peterson's Magazine*, July 1881, 90; *The Woman's Journal*, January 7, 1882, 7.
28. Susan Strasser, "Commodifying Lydia Pinkham: A Woman, a Medicine, and a Company in a Developing Consumer Culture," ESRC/AHRB Cultures of Consumption Programme, working paper 32 (April 2007), 10, http://www.consume.bbk.ac.uk/working_papers/Strasserlydia1704.doc.
29. For a discussion of the plants, see Strasser, "Commodifying Lydia Pinkham," 11–14.
30. Brooks McNamara, *Step Right Up,* rev. ed. (Jackson, MS, 1995), 19, 54.
31. On Kickapoo, see McNamara, *Step Right Up*, 73–95.
32. For a discussion of the complexities, see Susan Strasser, "Sponsorship and Snake Oil: Medicine Shows and Public Culture," in Marguerite S. Shaffer, ed., *Public Culture: Diversity, Democracy, and Community in the United States* (Philadelphia, PA, 2008), especially 105–12.
33. See Joseph F. Spillane, *Cocaine: From Medical Marvel to Modern Menace in the United States, 1884–1920* (Baltimore, MD, 2000).
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the History of Pharmacy. “Improved Forms of Administering Standard Medicine,” 8, in Parke, Davis & Co. Brochures, Lloyd Library 101/67/24.

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36. Horatio Wood et al., *The Dispensatory of the United States of America*, 21st ed. (Philadelphia, MD, 1926), 280.
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39. Maud Grieve, *A Modern Herbal; The Medicinal, Culinary, Cosmetic and Economic Properties, Cultivation and Folk-Lore of Herbs, Grasses, Fungi, Shrubs, & Trees with All Their Modern Scientific Uses*, ed. Mrs. C. F. Leyel, 2 vols. (New York, 1931).
40. See Terri A. Winnick, “From Quackery to ‘Complementary’ Medicine: The American Medical Profession Confronts Alternative Therapies,” *Social Problems* 52 (2005): 38–61; Frank Davidoff, “Weighing the Alternatives: Lessons from the Paradoxes of Alternative Medicine,” *Annals of Internal Medicine* 129 (December 15, 1998), 1068–70.
41. Nancy Tomes, “Patients or Health-Care Consumers? Why the History of Contested Terms Matters,” in Rosemary A. Stevens, Charles E. Rosenberg, and Lawton R. Burns, *History and Health Policy in the United States: Putting the Past Back In* (New Brunswick, NJ, 2006). 85.

CHAPTER 12

Science, Fruits, and Vegetables: A Case Study on the Interaction of Knowledge and Consumption in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Germany

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Introduction: Knowledge, Science, and Consumption Studies

Modern consumption cannot be understood without reflecting on the knowledge structure of societies, market actors, commodification, and consumer goods.[1] Consumption was and is knowledge-based, which from the late eighteenth century increasingly meant science-based. Advances in science led to a new understanding of the world, its laws, and its resources. These developments changed modes of producing, distributing, and marketing goods. They created new experiences, practices, mentalities, desires, fears, and symbols. Therefore, consumer societies were always knowledge societies.

One problem in analyzing consumer societies as knowledge societies is that "knowledge is frozen into machinery," as sociologists Hartmut Böhme and Nico Stehr have famously observed.[2] Historians are often interested only in specific elements of the machinery, whether the inventors or producers, the cultural context, the political functions and consequences, the consumers, or the purchased goods and their images. In analyzing these elements, scholars are in danger of examining only the aesthetic or functional facade, not their basics and origins.[3] In a way, this is a consequence of our specific historical expertise, which often does not take into account that a world made of knowledge is a world dominated primarily by the knowledge of the natural sciences. Consumption history needs

interdisciplinary expertise—or at least sensitivity—far beyond the traditional education of historians.[4]

Such general assumptions, influenced mainly by sociological approaches, must be tested with the help of empirical case studies. The history of nineteenth- and twentieth-century German nutrition offers an attractive testing field. On the one hand, nutrition was and is still the most important sector of consumption. On the other hand, eating and nutrition are basic social phenomena that permit exploration of the relationships among changing forms of knowledge, the establishment of new markets and institutions, and new patterns of consumption.

Inventing the Nutrient Paradigm: The New Knowledge Structure of Nutritional Science in the Mid-Nineteenth Century

In the field of nutrition, a paradigm shift occurred in the middle of the nineteenth century. Although the "chemical revolution" began in the late eighteenth century, the first steps toward a modern nutritional science were taken during the 1830s in France, Denmark, and the Netherlands, where nutrients—proteins, carbohydrates, and fats—were denominated and analyzed.[5] But it was not until the 1840s that Justus von Liebig formulated a new model of "nature" based on the idea of a metabolism of energy equal for plants, animals, and human beings.[6] Liebig constructed life as a set of "material facts." The Giessen professor strictly classified nutrients on the basis of their chemical composition, assigning them distinct functions and values. He understood protein as a "plastic" nutrient necessary for building up the human body. On the other hand, he viewed carbohydrates and fats as essential to the operation of the body for breathing and power. With polemical reasoning and bolstered by popular instinct, Liebig managed to establish his vision of nature in science, in the economy, and increasingly in everyday bourgeois life. His practical works on agriculture, especially on new methods of chemical fertilization, were crucial to his success.[7]

This was a paradigm shift. Food was no longer understood as an integral part of human life and health, but as a combination of nutrients. This knowledge, propagated by nutritional scientists, established a new hierarchy of knowledge to rationalize and improve everyday behavior and traditional eating habits. Based on empirical evidence, this scientific knowledge grew more specialized in theory, methodology, and language. The aim of science was no longer to understand man-made reality comprehensively, but to gain control over the human environment, food, and man himself.[8] Eating was defined as the ingestion of nutrients, and the human body was seen as analogous to the steam engine, which needed fuel to function.[9] Food became nutrition, which was defined by experts.

This new objective or explicit scientific knowledge replaced older forms of practical or implicit knowledge. Its success was not limited to laboratories but became more and more important for producers and entrepreneurs. Scientific knowledge made it possible to handle the material "food" in a new and different way. Foodstuffs were increasingly dissociated from their traditions and cultural settings, while the nutrient content established a new ranking of consumer goods.

This nutrient paradigm, however, did more than change the significance of foodstuffs. It expanded the ways in which raw materials could be used. Nutrients could be isolated and recombined. On the basis of this new paradigm, innovative technology was developed that made it possible to analyze and optimize every single part of products and their production process. The result was a wide range of new processed foodstuffs symbolizing scientific progress and the victory of human knowledge over nature. Cash crops like potatoes, wheat, corn, and rye were no longer consumed as food items in their own right but became an invisible part of an ever-growing number of new food products. In the late nineteenth century, the dominant use of corn, for instance, changed from eating the corn on its cob or as corn meal to consuming corn syrup, corn flakes, and corn oil, while cornstarch became an omnipresent ingredient in processed food products.[10] The nutrient paradigm led to goods with standardized content and taste and enabled branding and new conceptions in advertising. Corn, for instance, became Kellogg's cornflakes, Karo syrup, Cottolene, or Mazola oil. This new scientific knowledge was essential to securing a supply of food for a quickly growing and ever more urbanized population. However, it also created new insecurities and quality differences unknown in the prescientific centuries. Preservatives, dyestuffs, flavors, and industrial surrogates changed the way daily food was perceived, while scientists and producers created new myths based on one-sided dreams of rational artificial nutrition that would feed human machinery. The nutrient paradigm allowed both: a new transparency and hidden forms of food adulteration, trust in foods and growing distrust in consumer markets.

Before World War I, this close relationship of science and science-oriented food production was quite successful, but it did not yet change German food patterns fundamentally. Markets and practices were still dominated by the subjective or implicit knowledge of consumers, although the market share of branded processed foods was nearly 25 percent.[11] This was a remarkable change, but the relevance of traditional foodstuffs and food habits remained high.

Science-Based Nutrition: Changing Attitudes toward Fruits and Vegetables

The recent importance of fruits and vegetables in German diets highlights the relevance of the nutrient paradigm for business, the state, and consumers. Today, these foodstuffs have become symbols of a healthy diet in all Western countries. Numerous projects are trying to encourage people to consume at least five portions or 400 g of fruits and vegetables per day, a goal set by the World Health Organization in 1990 to reduce cancer, diabetes, and obesity.[12]

Such promotion tries to change food patterns that go back to the preindustrial era. Although the German food system was changing fundamentally since the late eighteenth century, at that time the role and function of fruits and vegetables remained stable.[13] In 1780, perhaps 5 percent of private consumption was spent on fruits and vegetables—a quarter of the expenditures on rye and rye bread.[14] With the exception of rough vegetables, fruits and vegetables were perceived

as perishable and not very nourishing, complicated and expensive to preserve, and—important at that time—a product of unsteady and insecure agricultural output.

Before science took command, fruits and vegetables had four main functions. First, they were seasonal foods, typical of the harvest time. Preservation became more important during the eighteenth century, but mostly vegetables were stored and eaten during winter and spring, while fruit drying was limited by the existence of storage rooms.[15] Second, they were typical side dishes to improve the variety of a quite monotonous diet, based predominantly on grain and grain products, and—later—on potatoes. This was part of a more general change to modern eating patterns. In the early modern period, the later term for vegetable—*Gemüse*—was still an expression for diet in general.[16] Third, fruits and vegetables were social markers. Mainly tropical fruits and fine vegetables of specialized horticulture were part of the representative food culture of the nobility and the emerging urban middle classes.[17] Finally, both foodstuffs were recognized and discussed as health food. In the middle of the eighteenth century, for example, the largest Berlin hospital, the Charitè, managed nearly 30 hectares of farmland. The crops were used mainly for ambulant patients, but hospitals normally were market-oriented producers, as well. Most of the plants were preserved to guarantee a healthy diet during winter and spring.[18] At the same time, fruits were used in dietetics to refresh and quench invalids, cool fever, support the diuretic function, and activate the appetite.[19]

All in all, fruits and—apart from some nourishing products—vegetables, as well, were integral elements of a monotonous and, in some respects, insufficient diet based predominantly on plants. Although limited by seasonal availability and high prices, the public perception of these foodstuffs was positive, because they were palatable and sweet variations in the daily diet. Therefore, it was easy to increase per capita consumption, if agricultural production, storage, and market supply could be improved. Consequently, not science, but economic, technological, and organizational improvements built the foundation of their growing relevance for the daily diet.[20]

Vegetable consumption grew constantly until World War I.[21] Agricultural production tripled and per capita consumption nearly doubled from 37 kg in 1850 to more than 60 kg in 1913 (figure 12.1). This was at least two-thirds of current consumption. Regional products dominated. Germans preferred different sorts of cabbage, roots, carrots, onions, and cucumbers.[22] Fruit consumption was much lower, but it doubled between 1850 and 1914, mainly because of intensified horticulture. Apples, plums, pears, and cherries were the dominant products. Tropical fruits had only minor relevance, although new cooling techniques had enabled railway transport and international trade since the 1890s.[23]

There were mainly three reasons for these growing levels of consumption. First, nineteenth-century Germany was characterized by a transportation revolution. Improved roads, waterways, and the installation of a new railway network enabled market integration and rapidly decreasing freight rates. The growing urban demand, based on purchasing power and the division of labor, led to a new

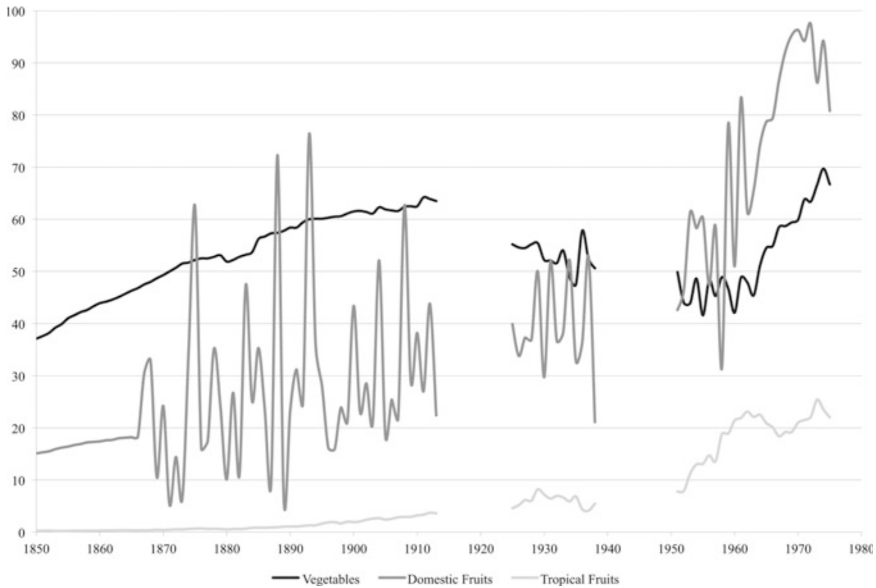

Figure 12.1 Available amount of vegetables (without legumes), domestic fruits, and tropical fruits in Germany, 1850–1975 (kg per head and year)

Source: Hans J. Teuteberg, "Der Verzehr von Nahrungsmitteln in Deutschland pro Kopf und Jahr seit Beginn der Industrialisierung (1850–1975): Versuch einer quantitativen Langzeitanalyse," in *Unsere tägliche Kost: Geschichte und regionale Prägung*, ed. Hans J. Teuteberg and Günter Wiegelmann (Münster, 1986), 225–89, here 236–37 (with some corrections).

supply network based on a growing number of market-oriented producers—and later on a network of agricultural cooperatives, new forms of wholesale trade, and a rapidly growing network of retailers. Although markets and street hawkers preserved their important function in the food supply, rising consumption was mainly guaranteed by new specialty shops.

These new economic institutions benefited from scientific innovations, but, second, they were directly based on the rationalization and intensification of horticulture.[24] This was, above all, the result of the practical work of producers, in the beginning mainly of pomologists, who established local and regional networks of free associations to improve the quality and yields of fruits and vegetables. However, although pomology was defined as "science, which deals with the knowledge of fruits, their production and use,"[25] it was still a knowledge regime that focused on classification systems to describe existing fruits and establish general rules on soil and horticulture. In contrast to agricultural science based on Liebig's chemical reduction of the material world, pomology was still understood as "pleasant favorite studies" driven by aesthetics and "passion."[26] Although these practitioners introduced a growing variety of new plants and established regional networks of tree nurseries, they failed to build up large-scale production and an efficient supply chain (figure 12.2).[27]

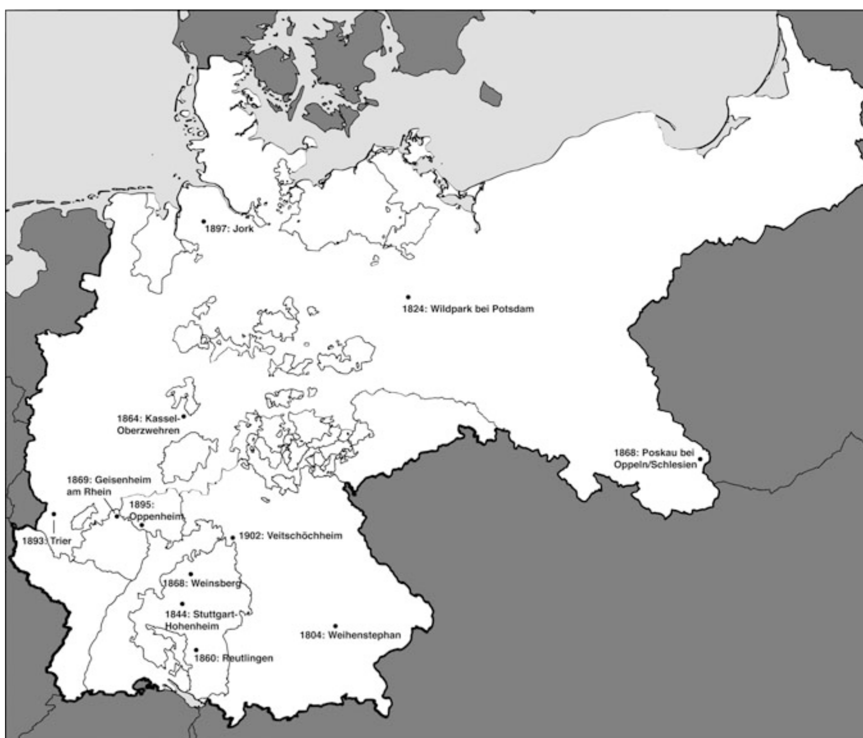

Figure 12.2 Professionalization of agricultural research: experimental stations for pomiculture in nineteenth-century Germany

This changed with the professionalization of agricultural research, although the adoption of Liebig's nutrient paradigm was accompanied by fierce academic struggles. Organic chemists established a chemical and nutrient-based understanding of plants and agricultural production.[28] While the first experimental stations were still dominated by pomological description, the focus changed during the 1860s.[29] Chemically trained agricultural scientists analyzed, first of all, the chemical composition of soil and plants. They promoted new ways of fertilizing and new types of fertilizer in order to increase productivity. Breeding became more important, although it was still dominated by practical work. Aside from the experimental stations for pomiculture, the German Agricultural Society promoted different and more productive seeds, and it financed cultivation experiments all over the country.[30] In central and northern Germany, new commercial seed-breeding companies established market-driven institutions of knowledge production, which tried to offer new seeds for general, not only regional use.[31] They benefited from the rediscovery and application of Mendel's laws of genetics after the turn of the century.[32] Founded in 1908, the Society for the Promotion of German Plant Breeding strengthened the increasing relevance of a nutrient-based understanding of fruits and vegetables.[33] In the same period,

the rise of the chemical industry supported the establishment of pest management and the use of chemical pesticides, although, at first, producers were often concerned about the toxic consequences.[34] However, in contrast to the United States, for instance, German fruit and vegetable production was still dominated by practitioners before World War I, and only an eighth of the supply was produced by specialized farms with standardized products.[35]

At that time, market orientation was still underdeveloped: pomology, agricultural science, and traditional values of peasants met in focusing predominantly on the products. However, growing competition from Dutch, Danish, and U.S. competitors pushed ideas of large-scale production, standardization, and quality controls to all sectors of the supply chain even before World War I.[36] But such debates had only limited results, even if packages were improved and producer cooperatives gained importance. The heterogeneity of regional varieties and the lack of adequate criteria for scientific norms were still limiting broader revisions in fruit and vegetable marketing. Before World War I, however, agricultural science had defined the fundamental problems of this economic sector. Consumers were attracted by fruits and vegetables, in general, and the higher quality of imported goods, in particular. The modernization and intensification of horticulture seemed to open good marketing opportunities and be guided by the anticipated desires of consumers.

This assumption—agricultural marketing in Germany developed no earlier than the 1920s—was backed by a third reason for the growing consumption of fruits and vegetables. From the late nineteenth century, science-based heat conservation made an astonishing career. However, economical preserves were produced mainly by consumers themselves, not industry, which only accounted for about 1 kg per head per year of canned fruits and vegetables before World War I.[37] Cans were used at home from the 1870s onward, but the breakthrough came with market-oriented, science-based innovations like the Weck system, which was introduced in the late 1890s.[38] This heat sterilization system offered an easy way to preserve fruits and vegetables and was promoted with the help of small cookbooks, advice literature, direct sales, and demonstrations in schools and public halls.[39]

In spite of growing consumption, however, fruits and vegetables were still perceived as "weak" food, consumed only as side dishes or desserts. Scientific knowledge supported this traditional perception. Fruits and vegetables had few calories and little protein and fat. Therefore, they could not be staple foods or even important elements of a nourishing diet.[40] They were luxuries, unnecessary for the functioning of the human body, although quite helpful for dietetics and recreation.[41] Paradoxically, science backed traditional public values, because research, even in experimental stations, concentrated predominantly on proteins, fats, and carbohydrates. The chemical composition of those nutrients called "ash" or "cellulose"—today a well-defined group of several thousand nutrients, including vitamins and minerals—was still terra incognita.[42] At the same time, hygienists and doctors identified new risks in eating unwashed, unripe, or moldy plants.[43] Cleanliness in fruit and vegetable shops and the quality of

canned products (after the death of several consumers) became scandalizing public topics.[44] Widespread greening with copper led to growing scientific and public concerns about being poisoned by industrially processed food.[45] Although fruits and vegetables were widely used in diets, especially against constipation and obesity, their healthy image was damaged before World War I.

Scientific knowledge was therefore ambivalent and influenced the consumption of fruits and vegetables in contradictory ways. On the one hand, the growing fruit and vegetable consumption was based on new applied agricultural science. Scientific knowledge was crucial for the establishment of not only local or regional but even national and international markets of fruits and vegetables. Canning, preservation, and new consumer goods (jam, for instance) decoupled the consumption of the fragile products from the seasons—even if similar practices were still usual for the domestic sphere. On the other hand, nutritional science itself perceived fruits and most vegetables as only a "weak" side dish. The nutrient paradigm led to a stronger polarization of foodstuffs, according to, above all, their protein content. Although the intense struggles between vegetarianism and mainstream nutritional science led to a growing acceptance of fruits and vegetables as a pleasurable and even healthy part of the daily diet, the preference for nourishing foods with high protein content was backed by the everyday belief that protein was the main source of strength, vitality, and masculinity. Consequently, the small minority of vegetarians was perceived as unnatural—consuming the wrong way.[46] More importantly, such everyday beliefs caused severe problems in promoting more frugal eating patterns.

This ambivalent situation was changed fundamentally by the denomination of vitamins by Casimir Funk in 1911. Although it took more than a decade before German scientists accepted the existence of this new group of nutrients, the effect in public was remarkable in the long run. From the early 1920s, fruits and vegetables became fashionable foodstuffs, because vitamins and mineral nutrients were understood as symbols of health. Producers used the vitamin content as a crucial argument for promoting fresh and processed fruits and vegetables. Vitamin deficiency and disease were directly linked—and consumers and science wondered whether there was a comparable connection between fruit and vegetable consumption and health. For nutritionists, this was only a further differentiation of their knowledge. But, in fact, it was a revolution because the hierarchy of foodstuffs and dishes changed completely. Based on intensified research, the so-called New Nutrition Science favored a much higher consumption of (fresh) fruits and vegetables.[47] The traditional caloric recommendations of protein were replaced by broader advice, now including not only proteins, fats, and carbohydrates, but vitamins and minerals, as well.[48] In the early 1930s, the League of Nations started to recommend fruits and vegetables as "protective" food, essential for any healthy diet.[49]

The vitamin doctrine led to intensified and, in some respects, scientifically based marketing. Fresh food benefited, while canned products became a potential health concern.[50] This had severe consequences for production, transport, storage and promotion, and for the foodstuffs themselves. Their image had suffered

during World War I. Horticulture was neglected because, in contrast to medical advice, the nutritional policy focused on the most important German caloric cash crops, namely, potatoes, rye, wheat, and sugar beets.[51] From 1915–16, fruits and vegetables were increasingly used to close the growing gaps of supply. Housewives were encouraged to cultivate them first in private gardens, then on formerly uncultivated soil. Additionally, wild plants were supposed to be collected to stabilize the home front.[52] Nutritional propaganda focused on the taste of fruits and vegetables to be used to overcome the monotony of rationed food. The growing lack of seeds, fertilizers, storage facilities, and jars, however, led to increasing quality problems and shrinking results for all the decentralized digging, picking, and harvesting. After the end of the Allied blockade and the rationing system, most consumers purchased nourishing food to regain an average loss of 20 percent body weight during the war. The effects of the vitamin doctrine and the new definition of the association between fresh plants and health, therefore, did not become relevant for the mass market until the early 1920s.

At that time, German producers were already seriously hit by undercapitalization, the end of import restrictions, and the international agricultural crisis. During the war, they had intensified their cooperation with scientists and state officials.[53] Peasants made more use of applied sciences for their production, and new marketing institutions promoted fruits and vegetables as essential staple foods of a palatable and healthy diet.[54] Science, business, and the state changed the market structures to increase the consumption of German fruits and vegetables. From the mid-1920s, such efforts were accompanied by new tariff barriers, which limited, first of all, the imports of tropical fruits to Germany and led to higher prices—with contradictory effects for consumption. New obligatory regulations were introduced, based on the chemical content, the nutritional value. From 1930, newly established grades of goods forced producers to concentrate on a shrinking number of seeds and products.[55] They resulted from intense cooperation among science, business, and the state, and they were grounded on substantial experiences with regional standardization, starting in 1923. Grades favored large-scale production, mechanization, a shrinking number of varieties, and reduced costs per unit.[56] During the Great Depression, the improved economies of scale and the higher efficiency of standardized production was supported by science, business, the state, and even consumers.

On the other hand, fruit and vegetable producers tried to learn from Dutch, Danish, U.S., and Italian competitors by diversifying their production according to the desires of urban consumers. After the end of inflation, the seller's market ended and new efforts were necessary to sell not only bulk foods, such as potatoes or wheat, but also more refined goods such as butter, eggs, fruits, and vegetables.[57] For instance, rough vegetables lost market share, and finer products such as lettuces became more important. This change was part of a broader trend from stored and more durable varieties (cabbage, cucumbers, carrots, and kohlrabi) to fresh vegetables. But even the raw vegetable fashion at the end of the 1920s could not reverse the negative trend in consumption.[58] High prices and deficits in the supply chains, first of all deficits in storage, led to shrinking

sales compared to the prewar period, while the consumption of domestic fruits increased slightly and the amount of tropical fruits doubled. The diverging paths of the figures were based on a growing variety of fruit processing. Fruit juices were promoted as "fluid fruit," fresh and with high vitamin content, while the war economy established jam as a common spread, especially in western and central Germany.[59] Again, scientific knowledge had an ambivalent effect. On the one hand, consumers were attracted by the "healthy" vitamin and mineral content; on the other hand, their sensitivity to product quality grew significantly. German producers suffered as a result, because they were still not able to supply large-scale markets with standardized goods in average and high quality.

As a consequence, specialization and capital outlay increased.[60] Again, state-financed research was intensified. As a national center of research, the Biological Reichsanstalt in Berlin, established in 1898, strengthened its research on pests and fungi. Pest control was mechanized, while pesticides were still poisonous and ineffective. Lime, copper, nicotine, and mercury, among others, were employed—their use being strictly criticized by alternative experts, who talked of "poisoned food."[61] Additionally, public concerns about industrial processing, caused by additives, residues, or the lack of vitamins, remained important.[62] In achieving goals like uniformity and attractive appearance, scientific knowledge produced new risks, although public concerns were well known. The experts in science, business, and politics all shared the same knowledge, the same understanding of producing and promoting fruits and vegetables. Neglecting the ever-growing sector of home gardening and food preservation, they were convinced that their superior knowledge would succeed. Less intensive alternatives of production were tested, but without any lasting effect. A good example for this was biological phytosanitary, which spread during the 1920s but could not replace chemical pesticides.[63] At the same time, plant breeding was intensified.[64]

National Socialist food policy intensified these developments, because vitamins were crucial for the nation's health and shrinking dependence on foreign food imports was important for any military expansion. Both axioms resulted from detailed analysis of German food policy during World War I. Therefore, domestic fruit and vegetable production was strongly supported during the 1930s and mainly during the first years of World War II. At that time, expenditures for agricultural research reached new heights.[65]

The Nazi government favored a more regional and seasonal diet, with higher portions of rye, potatoes, and domestic fruits and vegetables. Due to the perishable nature of these goods, domestic preservation was successfully promoted, while the canning industry was supported by publically financed research. A good meal was supposed to be homemade with fresh ingredients, including home-preserved dishes.[66] In 1941, nearly every German household used heat preservation.[67] Concurrently, however, industrial canning made only slow progress after World War I.[68] Despite intensified advertising and improved heating technology, canned fruits and vegetables were perceived as a cheap but unhealthy product, poor in vitamins.[69] For its part, the Nazi government also supported new drying

technology.[70] More importantly, its four-year plan in 1936 marked the beginning of the buildup of a new freezing industry in preparation for war.[71]

Frozen food—mainly fish, at first, but then increasing amounts of peas, spinach, and soft fruit—was presented in the form of producer brands and distributed by a small number of shops with refrigerators.[72] The products contained high vitamin content and no preservatives, and poisoning was unknown. Although most of the production was consumed by the army, the output of 1941 was not surpassed before 1961. Furthermore, the 1930s saw two important innovations crucial for the postwar development. On the one hand, the jam industry, established in the late nineteenth century, had become important in the daily diet of Germans.[73] Consumption quadrupled during the 1930s, an effect of governmental subsidies. On the other hand, fruit juice became an important issue of public health propaganda and consumption. Firms and technology of the 1930s were decisive for the increasing consumption after World War II.

Another important break was closely linked to the growing complexity of nutritional science and its knowledge of essential nutrients. From the mid-1920s, consumer education and advertising changed significantly. Scientific knowledge was supposed to replace traditional forms of subjective knowledge. New professions of knowledge communicators were established to explain the findings of nutritional science and to rationalize the consumer domestic sphere and consumer purchasing habits. The traditional form of addressing the public was communicating scientific knowledge in the form of books, brochures, and popular articles. These efforts were informative, but science promoted itself primarily as a system of superior knowledge to be adopted by ordinary laymen. This message did not reach the majority of consumers and was, moreover, unsuccessful, because people had other priorities than science when managing their daily lives and budgets.

From the 1920s, new forms of communication were taken up. National exhibitions on health, household, and nutrition attracted millions of consumers during the late Weimar period. They were examples for an immense number of regional exhibitions promoting regional food products based on their quality, taste, and healthfulness.[74] Information was mostly linked with normative appeals. Campaigns called "German Weeks" used the word "German" to create a surplus of trust and identity. This tactic helped to attract attention; however, such campaigns generally failed, if additional advantages were not also emphasized. As a consequence, consumer education during the Nazi era combined a general aim, for example, to avoid the waste and deterioration of fruits and vegetables, with practical tips for everyday situations. Such campaigns were set by new groups of experts, above all, female household scientists. They combined the domestic and the scientific spheres in developing a broad range of popular advice and visualized messages.[75] However, such communication was driven by scientific ideas of "rational" eating patterns used for the "national" interest.[76] Consumers were simply supposed to learn and do what science and the state proclaimed. In spite of advanced techniques and communication forms, the results of such nutritional

education were limited. The high and—from the regime's perspective—costly demand for tropical fruits in the 1930s was a good example.[77]

During the postwar era, recommendations for consuming more fruits and vegetables were still based on their nutrient content and the scientific concept of "health."[78] In spite of a remarkable number of efforts, direct effects could not be measured. According to agricultural market research, the rising consumption figures were primarily a result of the new competitive market society, slowly growing purchasing power, and fundamental social changes.[79] From the 1950s, there was a shift to "modern" eating patterns, including less plant and more animal food. The consumption of staple foods such as potatoes and bread decreased rapidly, while eating patterns diversified strongly. However, vegetable and especially fruit consumption grew quickly.

This development had four major reasons. First, it was a consequence of the retail revolution, which allowed not only new presentation forms but also broader offerings. Self-service and bigger stores, mainly supermarkets, enabled new storage and cooling techniques, which were decisive for the delicate vegetable products.

Second, like in the nineteenth century, the postwar era was characterized by intensified market integration based on improved transport technology and shrinking tariff barriers. The per capita consumption of cheap canned tropical fruits and vegetables rose to nearly 20 kg in the early 2000s.[80] While most of the agricultural market was strictly regulated by German and later also European policies, fruits were an important exception. Italy and especially France with its colonial possessions were interested in intensified exports to Germany. Based on improved cooling techniques, fresh tropical fruits were integrated into German daily diets from the early 1960s on and became common dishes. As a consequence, the regional structure of consumption changed rapidly. German crops were perceived as cheap, but not very tasty elements of the daily diet, while differently promoted foreign products became more prestigious. Homegrown plants such as cabbage, apples, plums, or legumes had severe image problems.

Third, increased consumption was based on fundamental changes in household work and equipment. The main re-innovation was frozen food, which started another victory march at the end of the 1950s, when the chain of cold storage units was again established and refrigerators at home became usual. New forms of purchasing, storing, and cooking were possible. At the same time, home preservation remained important, although it lost significance beginning in the late 1950s.[81] Even today, more than 40 percent of German households preserve food, mainly fruits.[82]

Finally, processed food saw a growing market share. Fruits and vegetables were increasingly combined with other ingredients and even nutrients, because food technology had developed cheap and safe ways to freeze, heat, dry, concentrate, fortify, and recombine single food items. Juices and yogurts are good examples of this hidden presence of "healthy" foodstuffs based on scientific recommendations.[83]

Today, fruits and vegetables are vital foods of German daily diets, although their growing consumption was always accompanied by critical public debates over the quality of fruits and vegetables and the consequences of intensified production and distribution. Nutritional science and public health experts recognized and discussed these problems from the beginning, but their risk perceptions differed from those of laymen. At the same time, they criticized the changing diet patterns for excessively high portions of fat, sugar, and protein. Based on the nutrient paradigm and a materialistic understanding of health, scientists, business, and the state are promoting a doubling of fruit and vegetable consumption—a development that already occurred in the post–World War II era. Although rational from their point of view, consumers do not heed such advice because, in their understanding, health is a multidimensional concept that cannot be reduced to correlations between nutrient intake and disease rates. They realize the ambivalence of scientific knowledge, which increased output and average product quality, but at the same time caused many unintended problems. The majority of consumers accept the imperatives of science, but a sizeable minority—accompanied by counterexperts who have different ideas about how to plant, store, and promote fruits and vegetables—still propagate their own knowledge on the variety, quality, taste, and value of foodstuffs and their embeddedness in tradition, region, practice, and everyday life. Many "green" trends of the current mainstream economy are based on such kinds of conflicting knowledge.[84]

Conclusion

The case study of fruits and vegetables both supports and changes the introductory thesis on the close interaction of knowledge and changes in consumption.

First, the steady growth of consumption before World War I was the result of improvements in the supply chain, based on improvements in horticulture, transport, and distribution. But it was accompanied by the preindustrial understanding of fruits and vegetables as a "weak" side dish and an affordable luxury, well accepted by the majority of consumers. Nutritional knowledge backed this perspective and recommended different foodstuffs with high protein and fat content.

Second, the importance of scientific knowledge changed with the vitamin revolution. Now fruits and vegetables became essential and "strong" dishes, necessary for everyone's health and well-being. Advertising and marketing propagated the new scientific knowledge backed by the German state. The experts of science, business, and politics formed an "iron triangle" based on a new normative ideal of science-based nutrition that was characterized by high vitamin content and German origin. Different actors argued in the same way with the same knowledge. The main differences were not among these partners but between them and the majority of consumers, who still followed their own traditional subjective forms of knowledge, which were embedded in daily practices, a clearly gendered domestic sphere, and the expertise of women in cooking, preserving, and health care.

Third, in spite of the advice of the iron triangle, science-based nutrition did not become popular during the 1930s and 1940s. Although most consumers accepted the experts' health claims, they changed their consumption only if fruits and vegetables were tasty alternatives or if food scarcities—for instance, because of the quality of meat—pushed them to these product groups.

Nonetheless, the cooperation of the iron triangle established, fourth, a structure for knowledge production and diffusion that is still relevant today. In the experts' eyes, science and increasingly the economy produced "objective" knowledge relevant to regulate people, markets and societies, and a market-driven innovation process. The state largely financed this work, standardizing and regulating markets on the basis of the nutrient paradigm. Based on the relevant forms of knowledge, the state could claim to work for the best of society and consumers. During the twentieth century, however, scientific knowledge became more and more heterogeneous, so that not only consumers had trouble placing their trust in science-based nutrition.

Fifth, at least since the late 1920s, science-based nutrition has been characterized by ambivalence and uncertainty, driven by heterogeneous risk scenarios and the unrealistic belief that nutrients—not man himself—are decisive for a healthy and rational way of consumption. In a market society, this has also meant a larger variety of processed food and a broader range of science-based products. Although nutritionists and quality producers still claim a kind of hierarchical knowledge, its relevance for market success is limited.

Notes

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CHAPTER 13

An Ambivalent Embrace: Businessmen, Mass Consumption, and Visions of America in the Third Reich

S. Jonathan Wiesen

It is tempting to associate consumption exclusively with democracy. Many important works in the field of consumer studies focus on the United States and post–World War II Western Europe, and the former is often cast as the paradigmatic example of consumer society.[1] We tend to assume that economic opportunity and wide access to goods and services depend on a basic level of political openness and plurality.[2] Consumption, however, is not limited to democratic settings. It has also existed under fascist dictatorships, which have used shopping and leisure opportunities to bind their populations to their political visions and to inspire them toward hard work and sacrifice.[3] Historians have found the relationship between National Socialism and consumption particularly intriguing, for in his quest to build a racially pure "people's community" (*Volksgemeinschaft*), Adolf Hitler appeared to be moving in the opposite direction from the United States.[4] The Nazi leadership welcomed certain features of consumer society—like modern manufacturing, advertising, and retailing technologies—but rejected the social and political expressions that came to be associated with mass consumption: cultural hybridity, the commercialization of public life, and opportunities for activism among self-conscious consumers.[5]

National Socialism differentiated itself from American political and economic models, but that did not mean that Germans turned a blind eye to developments across the Atlantic. This chapter looks more closely at their assessments of the United States during the Third Reich. In particular, it focuses on economic leaders who had a large stake in understanding "American" forms of consumer society and the business opportunities they provided. It explores two institutions

in which business leaders addressed these themes: the local Rotary Club, where elites met to discuss the issues of the day, and a national marketing organization, the Society for Consumer Research (GfK or *Gesellschaft für Konsumforschung*), in which economists and market professionals explored the attitudes and purchasing behaviors of the masses. Both examples allow the historian a glimpse at not only the practical manifestations of consumption in the Third Reich, but also the economic and cultural discussions that surrounded them.

In looking at consumption in the Third Reich, this chapter does not seek to determine which features of the German economy endured, changed, or broke down under fascism, or which resembled those of the United States.[6] Nor does it judge whether Nazi Germany itself constituted an actual "consumer society."[7] Rather, it analyzes the National Socialist economy as a cultural realm in which a range of actors—from economists and corporate leaders to advertisers and marketing experts—tried to reconcile their interest in the United States with the advent of a new political order that radically diverged from the American one. This attempt at reconciliation precipitated a number of questions: Was the United States worth emulating as an economic and cultural model? How could the identities of Germans as modern consumers be squared with their identities as members of the racially pure Volk? How could the various economic and cultural freedoms associated with mass consumption and production (freedoms to produce, consume, and engage in leisure) be sustained in a setting in which political rights (like voting and expressing dissent) were narrowing? In taking up these questions, one may see how consumption fed into National Socialist aims. Even under a racist dictatorship, business leaders called upon a language developed in a more democratic setting—individual rights, international citizenship, consumer desire—and tried to give it meaning in a National Socialist context. In this endeavor, perceptions of the United States loomed large. Ultimately, in their engagement with mass consumption and America, businessmen lent an air of normalcy to a violently racist regime.

Mass Consumption and Nazi Germany

The last two decades have witnessed an explosion of literature on mass consumption. Some of the most interesting work explores the political power of consumer boycotts, the function of gender and race in the purchasing act, and the relationship between notions of citizenship and the seemingly mundane act of shopping.[8] Within this literature, the relationship between Germany—as a late-to-unify economic powerhouse—and the United States has received sustained attention. Scholars have recognized that the modern German economy developed in a distinctly transatlantic setting. Beginning in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, they have shown, Germans shifted their gaze away from the British model of industrialization toward the U.S. one, encountering a new economic regime dictated by both mass production and mass consumption. As historians like Mary Nolan have shown, attempts to define and direct the German economy in the twentieth century took place under the ever more powerful shadow of the

United States. German leaders debated whether it was possible for Germany to borrow from the Fordist model of mass production and mass consumption without losing the country's uniqueness and its famous commitment to the production of high-quality goods. In the Weimar years, businessmen and politicians tackled this theme with passion, taking study trips to the United States, experimenting with American advertising and marketing techniques, and writing books on the durability of German economic traditions during a period of American cultural ascent.[9]

German economic leaders' interest in the United States was partly fueled by the desire to increase productivity and maximize business opportunities. But it also took its force from larger discussions about mass society that had come to the fore toward the end of the nineteenth century. Since the 1880s, Europeans and Americans showed a steady interest in mass or crowd psychology, mass psychosis and hypnosis, mass communications, mass movements, mass culture, mass manipulation, mass democracy, and strange words like the "mass brain" in the German advertising world.[10] The number of articles devoted to *"Die Masse"* in Germany alone is astounding. Through much of the last century, people looked for and spotted "mass men" (*Massenmenschen*) everywhere: schoolteachers in their students, psychoanalysts in their patients, and parents in their jazz- or rock-and-roll-enthusiast children.[11] This was a transatlantic, indeed transnational, obsession.

Business leaders claimed an interest in these cultural discourses because they considered themselves closest to the phenomenon of "massification" (*Vermassung*), providing, in their own minds, material comforts and manufactured goods in an increasingly "leveled out" industrial society.[12] From the fin de siècle onward, they read and discussed works by crowd psychologists like Gustave Le Bon, Sigmund Freud, and Spanish philosopher Ortega y Gasset. They watched as new cultural forms that had been perfected in the United States—the cinema, the beachfront, the dancehall—made their way across the Atlantic, and they wondered what their popularity would mean for the German economy and for their self-understanding as bourgeois elites.[13]

These questions were especially common during the Weimar years, but they did not disappear upon the advent of National Socialism. On the contrary, they were echoed by the Nazi regime, which sought to stake out its own position on mass culture and consumption. On the one hand, the very success of National Socialism depended on the promise of mass consumption: Hitler was determined to pull Germany from the depths of depression and provide a widespread abundance that would allow the Volk to thrive. Indeed, the Nazis aimed not simply to better the lives of average Germans, but to overtake the United States' standard of living.[14] On the other hand, the Nazi leadership looked askance at the cultural and political practices associated with the American consumerist model. The United States represented an easy foil for Germany, with its ethnic diversity and social tensions, and National Socialism devised an alternate vision of a racially and socially homogenous consumer society.[15] In short, the Nazis sought the wealth of consumer society without the commercial crassness, racial diversity, and cultural

plurality associated with the United States. Unlike in America, argued Nazi economic publications, consumption must not take the form of "wasteful spending," and it had to serve a higher purpose, namely, the enrichment of the German race during its struggle for global and racial dominance.[16]

While the Nazis hoped to surpass the United States in levels of consumption, their own political and economic policies made this difficult in practice. For if they were determined to build a prosperous civilian economy, this goal was secondary to the preparation for war. Nazi Germany is thus marked by contradictory images. On the one hand, the 1930s witnessed normalized consumption that accompanied economic recovery; shopping and leisure activities abounded as the country moved beyond the depression. Indeed, after World War II, Germans looked back on the prewar Third Reich as a time of opportunity, when an "economic miracle" translated into great moments of material pleasure.[17] Germans of even basic means wandered through the shopping emporia, filled the cafés on Berlin's famous Ku'damm thoroughfare, and traveled the countryside on family vacations or state-sponsored tours.[18]

On the other hand, increasing shortages, ersatz products, and declining quality became the hallmarks of prewar Nazi Germany. The removal of Jews from business life, the enactment of price controls, and limits on competition revealed the foundations of the economic recovery in the 1930s to be, in historian Peter Hayes's words, "autarky and armaments."[19] With the proclamation of the Four-Year Plan for war readiness in 1936, German companies focused on raw materials procurement and economic self-sufficiency. Consumer durables and luxury items did not disappear, but consumption became associated with the regime's sponsorship of "Volk products" like radios, refrigerators, and not-yet-available Volkswagens.[20] Per capita consumption never reached Weimar levels, and the Nazis' visions of immediate abundance gave way to promises of future gratification. In preparation for a wartime economy, the Nazi regime engaged in different forms of "consumption control" by mandating thrifty household and energy decisions and admonishing consumers and businesses to save and recycle everything from old clothes to used coffee grounds.[21]

This contradictory picture provides a challenge to historians who are trying to determine the contours of the consumer economy in the Third Reich and whether it generated popular support for the regime. Historian Götz Aly's controversial thesis that Hitler created a "consensus dictatorship" marked by consumer-friendly schemes and personal enrichment is exaggerated. It underestimates shortages in the German economy, it downplays the extent to which people supported Nazi ideology regardless of economic well-being, and it reduces political consent to crass materialism.[22] But Aly is right that the economic recovery of the 1930s had wide political resonance. Even if consumption in Germany never reached levels in the United States and consumers were often disappointed by the goods on offer, the Nazi regime could confidently claim that it had ushered in a comfortable, postdepression economy, to be enjoyed by those deemed racially fit.

Business Leaders, Rotary Clubs, and Mass Consumption

How did business leaders respond to the opposing impulses of creating a materially rich consumer economy and preparing for war? Certainly, the broader contradictions within Nazi economic policy made it difficult for businesses to predict their own fates in the Third Reich. The regime, for example, swore to uphold the interests of shopkeepers and small businesspeople, but its policies generally favored larger producers, particularly those whose products had a military purpose.[23] It promised to sanitize public space of crude forms of commercial capitalism (by, for example, banning billboards, radio advertisements, and certain product plugs), but it promoted modern and indeed American styles of print advertising.[24] And while the Nazis celebrated the spirit of German craftsmanship, they also tried to rationalize and mechanize companies according to innovations in the United States. In short, while the Nazis always promoted "German" forms of commercial behavior, they were happy to exploit "American" practices when it suited them.

For business leaders, then, Nazi commercial policies translated into both opportunities and limitations. Department stores, which had been stripped of their Jewish owners, found great prospects for selling to a public with increasing levels of disposable income. And manufacturers of finished goods—such as perfumes, textiles, and household durables—could experiment with new forms of marketing, from flashy window displays to clever advertising slogans.[25] Yet with the closing off of foreign markets and accompanying sources of raw materials, the diversity and quality of finished goods and foodstuffs suffered, and shortages rendered such innovations almost meaningless. Inflation ate up consumers' extra buying power, and war eventually led to the removal of favorite goods from the shelves altogether.

Given this complicated reality, businessmen spent much time reflecting on the meaning of consumption under Hitler. They did so in a number of venues—at board meetings, in professional publications, and in employee magazines. Obtaining access to these reflections, however, is a difficult task. For a period of political synchronization and ideological self-censorship, one cannot gain unmediated access to business leaders' hopes and fears. Moreover, one must avoid generalizing about business attitudes. The interests of retailers differed from those of manufacturers, big industrialists had a different agenda than local merchants, and economists disagreed about the best ways to assure economic growth. Finally, in the Third Reich much depended on the economic sector to which a company belonged and whether its goods were prioritized by the regime.[26]

Despite a growing censorship apparatus and the diversity of business interests, we can still gain access to business-related discussions that transcended company size and market segment. For example, national business journals spoke to a wide range of economic interests, and business schools disseminated a variety of perspectives about the economy.[27] Even with increasingly ideological conformity in the Third Reich, these publications revealed a wide range of interests, not all

of which reflected Nazi political priorities. An especially rich source of business attitudes existed in an elite men's club in which social and cultural leaders mixed and mingled. Victoria de Grazia has introduced scholars to Germany's Rotary Clubs, where elites after World War I explored ideas about consumption, international relations, and the cultural power of America. Rotary drew businessmen into the company of intellectuals and artists to socialize and discuss the meaning of bourgeois elitism in the age of the masses. Because Rotary functioned in both Weimar and Nazi Germany and its members left detailed minutes of their discussions, the organization provides a particularly clear view into elite attitudes during a time of upheaval.

German Rotary clubs were founded in 1905 in the United States, and the movement came to Germany in 1927 through the efforts of former Chancellor Wilhelm Cuno, who founded the first club in Hamburg. Dozens of other clubs followed, and by the end of the Weimar Republic most large German cities supported a Rotary Club, in which economic, political, and cultural elites came together to fraternize and to discuss the meaning and practice of international citizenship. In the late Weimar and into the Nazi years, professors, scientists, and industrialists met over weekly lunches to discuss the social and intellectual issues of the day. Thomas Mann joined Club Munich, future West German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer was a member of Club Cologne until 1933, and most clubs could boast the participation of musicians and artists. Despite its appeal to a wide range of professionals, Rotary was dominated by businessmen, who saw in the organization an opportunity to make contacts with like-minded individuals. They included members of the IG Farben and Degussa chemical companies, directors of the large electrical firms AEG and Siemens, and management from hundreds of large and middle-sized manufacturers in other sectors. Hugo Henkel, owner of the company that manufactured Persil laundry detergent, was a Rotarian, as were members of the Oppenheim banking family and economist Walter Eucken.[28]

The onset of National Socialist rule in 1933 forced Rotarians to reconcile themselves to confusing directives from the state regarding the status of clubs and lodges. There were continual signals that Rotary, unlike freemasonry, could find a place in a radically nationalist setting despite its devotion to international camaraderie. But this adaptation to Nazism came at a painful cost. Some clubs lost over half their members, those who were either Jewish or unwilling to adapt to the ideological demands of the new regime.[29] Yet Rotary Clubs continued to attract elites, particularly businessmen who saw the opportunities for professional networking and gentlemanly sociability.

During the 1930s, many Rotarians embarked on an "internal emigration," by which they privately and quietly rejected the tenets of Nazism, while others tried to merge their self-understandings as members of the bourgeois elite with the precepts of the racial state. The themes of culture and consumption were significant for both groups, for many Rotarians felt that elites had specific obligations toward the wider population in the age of the masses—to provide them with consumer opportunities and to school them in the values of hard work

and sacrifice. Indeed, argued some, Rotary and National Socialism had a natural affinity, since both were devoted to the ideals of "Service above Self," Rotary's motto. Before 1933, this maxim had meant service both to the nation and in the creation of international goodwill. Under National Socialism, however, many Rotarians applied the service ideal to the Nazi racial hierarchy. While they still embraced the principle of service to humankind, they gave it at once a more flexible meaning and a distinctly nationalist one: service to the Volksgemeinschaft, the country, and—notable for businessmen—the customers. All were part of the same phenomenon.

Their notion of customer service was significant. Rotarians suggested that they had a unique mission under National Socialism to understand customers and, by extension, consumers. Whether it was during a visit to an autobahn construction site or in welcoming foreign colleagues to the 1936 Berlin Olympics, Rotarians spoke of the necessity for elites to understand the needs of the masses for leisure travel, entertainment, and finished goods. They spoke about the ethical obligations of manufacturers, retailers, and shop owners to treat customers with respect and create the economic conditions for the flowering of a socially engaged consumerism. They lectured on the morality of consumer products as cultural goods that would serve the larger community, and then by extension humanity.[30]

This interest in consumers and consumption manifested itself in Rotarians' ongoing engagement with the United States. Even as Hitler was diverting Germany from an American model of democracy, Rotarians traveled to the United States to see the home of mass commercial culture. During the Nazi years, Rotary's business leaders visited Henry Ford's Rouge River plant in Michigan to witness and debate the feasibility of bringing together mass production and mass consumption. Representatives of the cigarette industry visited companies like American Tobacco Company and Philip Morris to see how Americans produced a fundamental consumer commodity. Rotarians also traveled to Macy's department store in New York, Marshall Field's in Chicago, and Woolworth's discount chain to discuss the merits and dangers of "Jewish" forms of capitalism and the threat that mass retailing represented to independent owners.[31]

What is striking about these Rotarian travel reports is the continuity in thinking throughout the interwar years, as German business leaders reflected on the challenges of importing American commercial culture into a more "traditional" economy. Before and after 1933, Rotarians reported on the remarkable consumer opportunities in the United States, but they simultaneously emphasized the incompatibility of American market capitalism with Germany, where quality products and the ethos of the craftsman and shopkeeper still reigned supreme.[32] After 1933, they also peppered their reflections with more overt expressions of racial prejudice. American society was defined by ethnic tensions, the overweening power of "Jewish" interests that were unfairly boycotting German products, and a raw commercialism. If this was the face of modern consumer society, these Rotarian observers did not want it for Germany.

Like the Nazi regime, these businessmen who wrote travel reports wanted the advantages of mass consumption—increased sales opportunities and more efficient production methods—without the cultural decadence and other expressions of "Americanism" that accompanied them.[33] In short, Rotarians' thoughts on America and consumption reflected long-standing tensions—the attraction and the repulsion, the interest in expanding profits without compromising product quality, the desire to guard Germany against the excesses of American capitalism, and the anxious protection of their social positions—and combined such concerns with the Nazi regime's new racial priorities. With explicit reference to Hitler's "Führer principle" of leadership, they called for greater attention to the material needs of the populace, while also defending their status as elites who stood above the masses in order to educate them.[34]

Rotarians' attempts to combine their bourgeois norms with a devotion to National Socialism were short-lived. Germany's forty-two clubs—increasingly denounced as "internationalist"—dissolved themselves in 1937. The Nazi regime felt that Rotary induced divided loyalties and was ultimately a foreign presence in a state that favored national and racial unity. The regime essentially pressured Rotary out of existence: party members were forbidden from being Rotarians and vice versa, and in consultation with the Rotary International office in Chicago, the German clubs disbanded. Despite this ignominious ending to Rotary Germany, for members themselves this dissolution was not a foregone conclusion. Many Rotarians, particularly those who joined after Hitler's coming to power, sincerely believed that they could resolve long-standing tensions between elites, masses, and consumers under the new regime. They saw in Rotary an opportunity to merge their inherited notions of bourgeois elitism with the Nazis' devotion to a society based on individual achievement, sacrifice to the community, and racial homogeneity. Rotary became an impoverished and troubled organization after the dismissal and resignation of its early illustrious members; it was not, in the end, a success story. But for those who stayed on, Rotary remained a social and cultural laboratory in which the business community and other elites could experiment with different understandings of the Volksgemeinschaft, at once populated by businessmen, consumers, and mass men.

The Society for Consumer Research and the United States

When business leaders in the Third Reich reflected on the meaning of mass consumption, they did not do so only as an intellectual exercise. For most economic elites, "consumption" had a direct bearing on companies' ability to sell products and on the health of Germany's economy. One organization that combined the practical work of promoting goods with the intellectual explorations that Rotarians engaged in was the Society for Consumer Research. In contrast to Rotary, it never suffered a break or dissolution, and it never tried to overtly combine its raison d'être with Nazi ideology. But it provides another example of how an interest in mass consumption and America spoke to larger cultural and political questions under National Socialism.

The GfK, Germany's largest market research organization today, was established in 1934 under the auspices of Professor Wilhelm Vershofen, an economist, novelist, and seasoned America observer.[35] At the University of Nuremberg, Vershofen built around himself a circle of economists that included, most famously, future West German Chancellor Ludwig Erhard. The GfK was also the brainchild of Wilhelm Mann, a director of IG Farben and future sales director of Bayer AG. As president of the GfK, Mann worked with an advisory board that included the executives of a number of foodstuffs, finished goods, and retailing outfits, such as Dr. Hillers (peppermints), Kaffee Hag (decaffeinated coffee), Dr. Oetker (foodstuffs), Kaufhof (department store), and AEG (industrial and consumer electronics). These individuals came together not simply to talk about the marketing of products but also to confront the larger cultural and economic implications of mass consumption. They defended brand names against cheap imitation products, assessed the positive and negative effects of advertising, probed the nature of consumer desires, and explored the merits of applied psychology in consumer research.[36]

Throughout the 1930s and until the end of World War II, large- and midsized firms hired the GfK to gauge the reception of their products and chart the resonance of their company names. Correspondents interviewed consumers in their homes and went undercover into drug stores, mentioning a product name to see what reaction they got. They then wrote up their reports, which included assessments of how people of different ages, professions, regions, genders, and economic means responded to Germany's products. The GfK prepared reports on, among other things, Persil laundry soap and Opel cars, popular brands of cigarettes, favorite products for personal hygiene, and the importance of the Bayer Cross logo in marketing.[37] The goal of all these reports was to hear, according to the leitmotif of the organization, the "voice of the consumer" (*die Stimme des Verbrauchers*).

Like Rotary, the GfK was in some ways an American import—in this case, market research. The 1920s had witnessed a number of innovations in this field in the United States, with full-service advertising agencies like J. Walter Thompson and individual firms investigating consumer psychology and purchasing habits.[38] Upon its foundation, the GfK devoted numerous pages of its publications to developments across the Atlantic, usually with a critical eye. The Nuremberg economists critiqued the Gallup organization's simple "yes or no" approach to polling, and they asserted that Americans' paeans to democracy masked a general level of social and cultural conformity in U.S. society. Even in the midst of total war, when American bombs were raining down on German cities, the GfK engaged intently with American forms of marketing and consuming. In 1943, GfK associate Carl Hundhausen combed through American advertising journals and Sears Roebuck and Montgomery Ward department store catalogues to see how widespread time-saving household appliances were in the United States and to determine if they would be compatible with Germany's producerist ethos.[39]

Despite their fascination with the American market, GfK associates were eager to assert their independence from American business and scholarly norms. They

insisted that the GfK was working in a distinct German intellectual vein and not for big business as such. The GfK enterprise, they claimed, belonged to the humanities, far removed from the scientific empiricism that they felt defined the American approach. Importantly, too, they looked askance at the hyperindividualism bred by American mass consumption. Rejecting a *homo economicus* model, they instead saw their work as a means of capturing people in all their social and spiritual complexity. Articles in GfK publications emphasized that "the object of consumer research is the human being—how he behaves, not the goods he consumes."[40] The *Mensch*—the human being—who stood at the center of the GfK enterprise was a figure who maintained his rights as an individual consumer in need of material comforts and status, but who was always grounded in the community.

Here the work of Rotary and the GfK both came together and diverged. In contrast to the Rotarians', the GfK's intellectual project was never about defending elitism. But Rotarian businessmen and GfK economists, nonetheless, observed the human being in similar terms: locating wishes, desires, and social relationships within a larger national or international community. In short, both organizations were sites where men of the economy used intellectual categories inherited from pre-Nazi years to understand mass society and the role of the consumer within it. An obvious irony is that these business leaders were debating the meaning of mass society and mass consumption at the exact moment that a mass political movement was taking hold in their own country. Arguably, the idea of America as the supposed model of cultural and economic massification allowed business elites to bracket the reality of political massification in Germany.

Ultimately, both organizations saw their members take up questions that dealt not only with the broad phenomenon of mass consumption but also with its specific relationship to German society. Drawing on the German sociological notion of *Verstehen* or "understanding," the GfK associates expected to use different means to reach the consumer, and, more significantly, to find different consumers than those populating the United States. The Rotarians held a similar view. The German consumer was a modern shopper, with thoughts and behaviors like anyone's in an advanced industrialized country. But this consumer was not a "mass man"—a slave to fashion and other conformist trends imposed by the hyperdemocracy of the Anglo-American world. In Germany, the consumer was an individual who found existential meaning in his or her own accomplishments at work or in the home as a member of familial, local, and national-racial communities. Nor did this German squander household income on cheap, mass-produced goods; the German consumer bought well-crafted finished goods that exemplified the ethos of German quality manufacturing, even if these goods were produced on the assembly line.

These assessments of the United States were not specific to either Germany or the Third Reich per se. They reflected long-term European skepticism of American market capitalism.[41] But over the course of the Third Reich, they became inflected with the Nazis' political and racial priorities. It was not simply the case that Germany might not easily assimilate American consumerist

norms. Rather, as Hitler pushed for a German-dominated Europe, the tropes of German industrial and cultural superiority served as justifications for Nazi economic aggression; according to Nazi publications, Europe stood only to benefit from the imposition of German values.[42] And while not every businessman embraced Nazi ideals, most realized that German imperialism provided new economic opportunities through the creation of markets in occupied Europe. Indeed, during World War II, the GfK set up a branch in Vienna that conducted market research in the occupied areas and puppet states of Southeastern Europe.[43] The brutal practices of conquest were thus packaged with a combination of traditional appeals to German industrial ingenuity and scholarly rigor, on the one hand, and newly minted forms of racism, on the other. Here, then, the United States served as an object of curiosity, an economic system to be culled for manufacturing and marketing insights, and a countermodel to Germany's racially pure and socially harmonious Volksgemeinschaft. The United States was a useful foil for Germans in the Third Reich—one that enabled them to understand broader developments in consumer capitalism and more specific political developments in Germany.

One must not overstate the extent to which business elites used National Socialist language. Members of the GfK were not "blood and soil" theorists, and their chief intellectual pursuits mirrored those of their counterparts abroad—selling strategies, applied psychology, and retailing innovations. And despite their skepticism, Rotarians recognized the appeal of their movement's spiritual home, the United States, as a business-friendly and vibrant modern society. But their reflections on the United States were compatible with the regime's priorities precisely because the Nazis themselves did not aim to jettison mass culture and consumption but rather to utilize them for their own political purposes. The Nazis' "reactionary modernism" combined an appreciation of production and consumption innovations—and thus a superficial "business as usual" in the consumer economy—with a retrograde cultural vision based on raw racism and nationalism.[44] The United States thus provided the Nazis with the tools to create a counterversion of consumerist modernity.

Conclusion

A focus on business leaders in Nazi Germany and their understanding of mass consumption and America raises a number of questions: How might an analysis of these discussions illuminate our understanding of consumption in the Third Reich? What might these elite explorations tell us about the nature of business complicity during this period? Finally, what does this focus on the years of the Third Reich say about longer trends in the German economy of the last century? In answering these questions, three dynamics in the business-state relationship stand out: compatibility, autonomy, and continuity.

Let us begin with compatibility. Clearly, in both examples, but especially for Rotary, business leaders felt that their self-understanding as elites and their paternal relationship to the masses could be bolstered by a regime that nominally

spoke of the end of "class society" but also promoted a hierarchical "achievement community" (*Leistungsgemeinschaft*).[45] Producers could merge their own social and intellectual elitism with the regime's professed respect for consumers, who would supposedly have access to butter even as the country manufactured guns. This was not an American version of mass production and mass consumption. Rather, it was a socially engaged, "German" consumerism that centered on an enduring quality ethos and a respect for the collective. Implementing this vision, of course, proved impractical, especially as the civilian economy withered during World War II. But, for a time, political and business leaders and the state could dream of an abundant, nazified consumer society free from the deficiencies of the American model.

The second dynamic is autonomy. Much of the recent research on the Nazi economy has dealt with the regime's ability to redefine and control the economy, or to use economic concessions to build social consensus, as in Götz Aly's work.[46] But by looking at nonstate and nonparty institutions, albeit ones that had links to the regime, we can locate spaces where elites were able to carry on discussions about mass consumption relatively independently of political developments. This autonomy, of course, had limits. By the time World War II began, the regime's austerity measures translated into unfavorable market conditions for civilian producers. Ideology—whether manifested in racial persecution or the bellicose search for "living space"—gained the upper hand over pragmatism, and the measured autonomy that businessmen and consumers enjoyed was replaced by belt-tightening measures and limited commercial opportunities under a war economy. But even until the last days of the war, business leaders spoke an international language of marketing, production, and consumption that did not reflect the immediate priorities of the state.

This point speaks to the third dynamic: continuity. In their explorations into mass consumption, businessmen drew on a vocabulary that preceded 1933, and they mobilized it to their own benefit. Discussions of purchasing habits, a defense of German quality, and a part embrace, part rejection of American business norms—these were familiar features of pre-Nazi discussions, and they would again be part of West German discussions in the 1950s and 1960s about the optimal economic order.[47] The Nazis were able to sell their political vision to the German people precisely because they maintained these continuities. Neither could they nor did they desire to dispense with the practices and discourses associated with consumer society, and the familiarity of the Nazi commercial vision (combined with the recovery from the Depression) allowed Germans to lend support to a regime that promised even more economic bounty.

Thus, by focusing on discourses that superficially hailed from beyond the boundaries of the "racial community," one discovers the mechanism by which businessmen created, through a transnational dialogue about mass production and mass consumption, the image of the normal in a highly abnormal setting. This continuity in language ultimately benefited the regime. When we think of business complicity in the Third Reich, we think of Aryanization, war production, and compulsory labor.[48] But we can also witness less direct mechanisms of

support, as social actors and cultural figures—in this case businessmen—created a sense of the everyday, the prosaic, and the pedestrian through a seemingly "politics-free" zone of consumption.

What made this construction of a "politics-free zone" significant was not that it was successful, effective, or real. Rather, it was significant precisely because politics was never really absent. In its power to persecute, the state also had the power to leave people alone, to stoke their hopes and fantasies, to give them a sense that they could reconcile their private aims as consumers with a racist utopianism. Economic leaders were crucial to this endeavor. Through producing, advertising, marketing, and presenting themselves as engaged leaders, businessmen helped to sustain the economic and political order. During the Third Reich, company owners, executives, and market researchers presided over cultural discourses that were seemingly detached from racism and persecution, but that also provided the narratives of normalcy that sustained the power of the regime to carry out its own violent mission.

With this focus on business and consumption during Third Reich, we are still left with a number of questions that speak to long-term developments in twentieth-century Germany. Did the Nazis' social provisions serve as a basis upon which a postwar "consensus capitalism" could be built in the Federal Republic of Germany? Did the continuation and flourishing of organizations like the GfK, and the continuity of economic elites after 1945, expose a dark underside to the "Economic Miracle" of the 1950s and 1960s? Did the basic survival of capitalism during the Third Reich—even with increased state intervention and total war—reveal the unique durability of a "German" model in the twentieth century? Such questions are beyond the purview of this chapter; however, at the very least, they remind us that twentieth-century consumer societies had many guises, some democratic and others fascist. Moreover, in these very different political contexts, leaders struggled with the same questions about how to provision and entertain the population and enlist its support. In short, a new vocabulary of twentieth-century capitalism, defined increasingly by mass consumption, transcended political boundaries and historical caesuras and empowered different regimes to pursue their disparate interests. Whether during periods of economic turmoil or growth, whether under democracies or dictatorships, twentieth-century elites recognized that their fates were tied to a new and powerful actor: the consumer.

Notes

1. On consumption in the United States and Europe, see, for example, Lawrence Glickman, *Consumer Society in American History: A Reader* (Ithaca, NY, 1999); Victoria de Grazia, *Irresistible Empire: America's Advance through 20th-Century Europe* (Cambridge, MA, and London, 2005); and Martin Daunton and Matthew Hilton, *The Politics of Consumption: Material Culture and Citizenship in Europe and America* (Oxford, 2001). On Germany specifically, see Michael Wildt, *Am Beginn der "Konsumgesellschaft": Mangelerfahrung, Lebenshaltung, Wohlstandshoffnung*

in Westdeutschland in den fünfziger Jahren (Hamburg, 1994); and Alon Confino and Rudy Koshar, "Régimes of Consumer Culture: New Narratives in Twentieth-Century German History," *German History* 19, no. 2 (2001): 135–61. For an effective questioning of terms like "consumerism" and "consumer society," see Frank Trentmann, "Beyond Consumerism: New Historical Perspectives on Consumption," *Journal of Contemporary History* 39, no. 3 (2004): 373–401.

2. On political activism and consumption, see Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York, 2003), especially 18–61.
3. On Italian fascism and consumption, see Adam Arvidsson, *Marketing Modernity: Italian Advertising from Fascism to Postmodernity* (London, 2003), 1–64; and Victoria de Grazia, *The Culture of Consent: Mass Organization of Leisure in Fascist Italy* (Cambridge, UK, 1981).
4. On National Socialism and consumption, see Hartmut Berghoff, "Enticement and Deprivation: The Regulation of Consumption in Pre-War Nazi Germany," in Daunton and Hilton, *The Politics of Consumption*, 165–84; Shelley Baranowski, *Strength through Joy: Consumerism and Mass Tourism in the Third Reich* (Cambridge, UK, 2004); and Uwe Spiekermann, "Vollkorn für die Führer: Zur Geschichte der Vollkornbrotpolitik im Dritten Reich," *1999: Zeitschrift für Sozialgeschichte des 20. und 21. Jahrhunderts* 16 (2001): 91–128. For a good introduction, see also Christian Kleinschmidt, *Konsumgesellschaft* (Göttingen, 2008), 110–30.
5. On German perceptions of America in the Third Reich, see Phillip Gassert, *Amerika im Dritten Reich: Ideologie, Propaganda und Volksmeinung, 1933–1945* (Stuttgart, 1997) and Hans-Dieter Schäfer, "Amerikanismus im Dritten Reich," in *Nationalsozialismus und Modernisierung*, ed. Michael Prinz and Rainer Zitelmann (Darmstadt, 1991), 199–215.
6. The literature on the Nazi economy is too vast to cite. For good introductions, see Avarahm Barkai, *Nazi Economics: Ideology, Theory, and Practice* (New Haven, CT, 1990) and Mark Spoerer "Demontage eines Mythos? Zu der Kontroverse über das nationalsozialistische 'Wirtschaftswunder,' " *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 31, no. 3 (2005): 415–38.
7. On the periodization of consumerism in modern Germany, see Konrad Jarausch and Michael Geyer, *Shattered Past: Reconstructing German Histories* (Princeton, NJ, 2003), 269–316.
8. See, for example, the essays in Frank Trentmann ed., *The Making of the Consumer: Knowledge, Power and Identity in the Modern World* (Oxford, 2006) and in Susan Strasser, Charles McGovern, and Matthias Judt, eds., *Getting and Spending: European and American Consumer Societies in the Twentieth Century* (Washington, DC, 1998).
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