

pline attempting to move beyond harried preoccupations with levels of modernization and evidence of secularity. For in the daily practice of their religion at Lourdes the simple faithful were concerned with neither of these, precisely because this practice so relentlessly broke down the barriers between their traditional faith sensibilities and the apparently irresistible allurements of industrial commerce. Kaufman's intelligent study therefore asks historians to consider how matter, when invested with spirit-bearing potential by a vividly imaginative church, might produce a lived religious experience as meaningful and genuine as it was nakedly consumerist. Richly illustrated throughout, this book is another impressive release from Cornell University Press on the complicated interdisciplinary history of modern religion and it is recommended as a provocative step forward in the study of Catholic piety.

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*Luxury & Pleasure in Eighteenth-Century Britain.* By Maxine Berg (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005. xviii plus 373 pp. \$45/cloth).

In the seminal work *The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialization of Eighteenth-Century England* (1982) Neil McKendrick articulated what was tantamount to a new period in English history, one of a consumer revolution.<sup>1</sup> Although others had reckoned with the notion, none had used his kind of hyperbole—a “consumer boom” which “reached revolutionary proportions”—in describing England late in the eighteenth century. He noted that it entailed “such a convulsion of getting and spending, such an eruption of new prosperity, and such an explosion of new production and marketing techniques, that a greater proportion of the population than in any previous society in human history was able to enjoy the pleasures of buying consumer goods.”

That McKendrick's driven shoppers spent not only for “necessities, but decencies, and even luxuries” encapsulates the theme Maxine Berg pursues so expertly in *Luxury & Pleasure*. In it she utilizes the tools of cultural and social as well as economic and technological history in exploring “the invention, making, and buying of new, semi-luxury, and fashionable consumer goods during the eighteenth century (p. 15).” Her introductory chapters (Part I)—subsumed under the broader heading of *Luxury, Quality, and Delight*—treat the “Delights of Luxury”; “Goods from the East” (silks, calicoes, chinaware, lacquer cabinets, and the like) and “Art and Invention” (which contains a superb account of nations engaged in design competition). Berg devotes Part II to manufactures—notably to that of elegant flint glass, porcelain, and metal objects, all of which served as props for genteel living and for those who esteemed “politeness” above all other human traits. In the final segment Berg explores shopping and marketing in “Men and Women of the Middling Classes: Acquisitiveness and Self-Respect”; “Shopping as a Place to Go”: Fashion, Shopping, and Advertising”; and “Mercantile Theatres: British Commodities and American Consumers.” While these labels effectively denote chapter substance, they

hardly convey the verve of the author's presentation and delightful surprises she brings to amplify the narrative of consumption.

Berg by no means limits her study to enumerating stuff—however delicious the details about her ornaments of delight—the product revolution, and marketing strategies. She is also concerned with the broader issue of periodization—the juxtaposing of the grand narrative of a consumer revolution to that of an industrial one—and the global dimensions of eighteenth-century consumption. Just how does the notion of a consumer revolution square with an industrial one in characterizing Britain's late eighteenth century? Her conclusion, briefly put, is that *luxury* and *pleasure*—notably objects which extoll “the virtues of quality, delight, fashion and taste, comfort and convenience, and variety and imitation” (p. 21)—are the missing links in conventional constructs of an industrial revolution. She continues: Quality goods, bought as luxuries, served as the ornament and pleasure of life for a newly emergent middle class in the eighteenth century. These were the goods made by labour, tools, engines, and machines in factories, workshops, and dwelling houses, all those processes that we know so well of early industrial Britain. Newly designed and invented, they were the stuff of a product revolution we are only beginning to reveal. To really understand the industrial revolution we need to analyse the products and the people who bought them” (p. ix).

Although Berg hints at this consumer/industrial revolution dichotomy in the first lines of her preface, she is less explicit in the present work than elsewhere. She provides a fuller account in her article “Consumption in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Britain”.<sup>2</sup> In this she wonders why economic growth lagged during a period of presumed industrial growth and consumer spending. Her conclusion is that economic historians have themselves lagged in doing their home work: while they pondered such imponderables as economic growth and the standard of living, social and cultural historians discovered taste, fashion, and invention. The latter discerned that a broad middle class liberated by labor-saving inventions in the household had the time and means for affordable luxuries and novelty. This clamor for *things*—expertly crafted and stylish household furnishings and chic clothing—suggests that the label *consumer revolution* is a more apt one in describing England's late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries than that of *industrial revolution*. Although Berg's CEHMB comments seem relevant here, the conclusions to be drawn from *Luxury & Pleasure* are broader still than merely a comparative study of consumer and industrial change.

Berg's pronouncements on globalization are crucial in this respect: “In the eighteenth century a global trade in luxuries and manufactured consumer goods provided not just the labour and the materials that went into making of new goods, but the designs, fashions, and sophisticated marketing that shaped the product development of the period. Consumer products, if not consumption more broadly, were forged then in a global economy. The world history of the products and their production processes is vital to any history of consumption and consumers; it is equally vital to our current understanding of globalization (p. 331)”.

*Luxury & Pleasure* is an important interpretative work, a neat blend of analysis, that of customs accounts, business papers, letters, and marketing materials

on one hand, and evaluation of a vast array of secondary works on the other. The author has shown that consumption is a considerably more complex phenomenon than has generally been depicted in the historical literature of the last two decades. Without ignoring the role of economic historians in this important narrative, Berg has taught them the merit of injecting design, taste, and fashion in their calculus of appraising economic change. By doing so she has made consumption more intelligible for all of us.

*Luxury & Pleasure* contains interesting illustrations—some thirty-three of portraits, luxury items, and much else; twenty-three tables varying from import and export details, wills, patents, and wages to prices of Wedgwood pottery and Sheffield plate—and twenty-five pages of excellent bibliography.

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## ENDNOTES

1. My citation refers to the Indiana U. Press, Midland Book paperback edition (1985), p. 1.
2. *Cambridge Economic History of Modern Britain*, I (2004), 357–87.

*Consuming Splendor: Society and Culture in Seventeenth-Century England.*

By Linda Levy Peck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005. xvi plus 431 pp. £25).

The general consensus among social historians has been that the eighteenth century—or at least the “long eighteenth century” from c.1660 to c.1820—saw middle-class consumers creating a new kind of luxury consumption through new wants, new goods, new ways to sell them, and new social amenities. This view also reinforced the theory of the development across the same period of a new, essentially bourgeois, “public sphere” of reading, discussion and participation. Linda Levy Peck proposes instead a different chronology with a significantly different emphasis, outlining the rise of luxury consumption between c.1600 to the 1670s. *Consuming Splendor* tells of new ways to shop, above all in London; of royal patronage, notably by James I, of luxury trades such as the import of porcelain and of manufactures such as silk and tapestries; and of new aspirations shaped by print, often imported, and travel to the European continent, which often resulted in new expenditures on buying, building, furnishing and collecting paintings and sculpture. Gardens and the collecting of rare plants became widely fashionable among aristocrats, gentlemen and merchants. She shows how objects such as funeral sculpture moved across cultures and countries, from Rome to Chelsea, and how early science, particularly after the foundation of the Royal Society, both enabled and underpinned new forms of luxury consumption. More scientific knowledge of botany was built on the founda-