

writing about Canada has been adequately covered by Françoise Lejeune's 2012 *The Feminine Experience in the Margins of the British Empire*; her study, though, published by Edwin Mellen Press, looks primarily at a handful of well-known writers, such as Susanna Moodie, Frances Wright, Catherine Parr Traill, and Anna Jameson. Furthermore, while much can be inferred about masculinity from the writings Little explores, he refrains from giving gender as much weight as he does other categories, a choice based primarily on his argument that men's use of the picturesque (a genre he argues has been associated with women's travel writing) makes gender somehow less salient. Such an argument, though, at the very least does not take into account the different degrees of ease with which white, middle-class men travelled in the nineteenth century. Moreover, rather than provide more nuance to the frameworks set out by earlier scholars in the field who analyzed the imperial dimensions of men's travel writings, Little instead prefers simply to contradict them (particularly Mary Louise Pratt's work). Yet, much recent scholarship in journals such as *Studies in Travel Writing* and *Journal of Tourism History* on the history of gender, travel, tourism, and imperialism has provided such nuance, demonstrating that the theoretical baby need not be thrown out with (or by) the empirical bathwater. It is, I think, telling that those previously published essays in this book did not appear in such journals: a different set of readers might have pushed Little to refine or complicate his arguments and insights.

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LIVERANT, Bettina—*Buying Happiness: The Emergence of Consumer Consciousness in English Canada*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2018. Pp. 291.

*Buying Happiness* traces transformations in Canadian consumers from the late nineteenth century to the 1960s. It is a long-range study that historicizes the moral economies of spending in this period. Bettina Liverant argues that Canadian consumer society evolved in historically specific ways. She identifies key moments when the lines between being a citizen and a consumer begin to blur. The author has meticulously drawn from varied sources and collates them in inventive ways. The overall argument and its supporting claims are convincing and substantive. My sole frustration is with the book's organization. The book is designed to flow chronologically, and it does not serve her arguments well. Using chronology as an organizing principle obfuscates the themes. I could see a graduate student quickly skipping to the sixth chapter, which, in sharing its title with the book, would seem to hold its main matter. Therein lies a risk of the reader missing nuance, and of the book appearing to be yet another study of the role of women in postwar North Atlantic reconstruction. Unlike the book, this review is organized thematically in its discussion of *Buying Happiness's* key claims.

One major thread running through the book describes how the state, using social surveys, mapped consumption across different social classes. Such data aggregation helped the state intervene in home economics. Surveys helped the government—through advertising, signs, and pamphlets—encourage shoppers to track spending, eliminate impulsive buying, monitor prices, and report infractions. By the end of the First World War, this transformation was complete, and an individual's spending choices took on nationalist hues. Statistics provided a seemingly objective approach to anxieties about rising prices, inflation, and debt. Standard of living, as a concept and currency for data, determined the political significance of consumption in interwar Canada. Depression-era food riots fuelled the first official use of this index, in the form of a state report. The report collated working class poverty and demands for minimum wages, transforming citizens to consumers. By the time of the national elections in 1935, the term “consumer” emerges as a generic term, “less politically charged than ‘labour’ with the potential to reach across party loyalties already shaken by the economic crisis” (p. 102). Statistical research in the consumer patterns of industrial families helped abate labour disputes and strikes.

Another theme throughout relates to the persons behind the numbers: the self-fashioned Canadian intellectual and his (I'll discuss Liverant's gender analysis below) analysis of consumer behaviour. The author draws similarities between differing groups of social commentators, all of them of Anglo-Saxon origin and working as nonindustrial professionals: writers, clergymen, authorities on social reform, academics in growing universities, civil servants, and consultants to expanding governments and industry (p. 16). They described the effects that rising earnings had on families. Such commentaries manifested elite anxieties about class differences and growing urbanization.

Conservative commentators talked of an idealized agrarian past. Malthusian fears of scarcity held fast as new non-Anglo-Saxon immigrants entered the country (p. 18). Ironically, after the Depression-era scarcity and resultant rioting, the Conservative leader and Prime Minister Richard Bennett attacked industrial price fixing in the 1935 elections. He lost to the Liberal candidate William Lyon Mackenzie King, who blamed state mismanagement rather than capitalism for the economic crisis. The election marked the importance of citizens' consumer rights. It helped frame peoples' buying capacities as fundamental to Canadian welfare economics.

A sharp increase in popular magazines, films, and cheaply produced novels was the result of a larger literate population. The intellectual elite distanced itself from this mass-produced culture and saw themselves as critics of mass production (p. 64). They abhorred profit, wrote in journals with limited circulation, penned poetry—which was even more inaccessible than prose—and bought art that had an “anti-modern” aesthetic (p. 75). Liverant locates the Group of Seven in this move towards venerating natural landscapes over city living. Quite like the Hipsters today, in defining itself as opposed to popular taste, elite culture also found relevance in the emerging consumer economy. Liverant convincingly draws a lineage between the “folk” practitioners of the early 1900s to Marshall McLuhan's critiques of consumerism in the 1960s.

Finally, and significantly, Liverant argues throughout that English Canadian consumerism was gendered. High culture was framed around masculinist attributes wherein men had the brawn to earn money and the brains to talk politics. Many of the magazines that the elite scoffed at were aimed at women. They specialized in advising women in budgeting for the family. Such women-centered advocacy was integral to the Canadian economy under the Universal Price Freeze during and after the Second World War. Spending money was a moral act, and the wife was to uphold her nationalist duty by ensuring thrift. Concurrently, postwar reconstruction encouraged women towards “cautious consumerism” (p. 155). Economic rebuilding was conceived in spending terms in the form of vouchers and cash payments (p. 153). The wartime responsibility of the state to offer free housing was lifted, and the onus of making housing affordable for all families, regardless of income, rested on municipalities. Both Right- and Left-leaning ideologues agreed on the need for the state to control individual spending behaviour (p. 152). By the 1960s and the Cold War, thrift equaled price control, which suggested Communist influence.

The book uses statistical surveys, sociological studies, novels, newspaper editorials, and women’s magazines as archival evidence. It successfully displaces the reader’s attention from consumption to the social location of the consumer and those commenting on it. The innovative pairings of novels with sociological studies and discussions of family budgets illustrate the author’s creativity. Liverant avoids Marxist phraseology in the book. The decision is consistent with her unease with using a singular framework and thus potentially missing unique characteristics of the Canadian consumer (p. 112). Drawing instead from Mary Poovey’s work on the managerial state in *A History of the Modern Fact* (1998) and Warren Susman’s cultural history of consumption in United States in *Culture as History* (1984), the author locates Canadian consumer society in a mix of surveys, needs, and aspirations. The risk in such an approach is recreating the unease that her historical actors share concerning class struggle and inequality. The conspicuous absence of families of colour and the racial divide in her analysis is perhaps a collateral outcome of such an approach; what her archival actors missed, she misses too, apart from a slight nod on p. 113. This racial blind spot is also evident in Liverant’s classification of Canada’s intellectuals in the first two chapters. Liverant’s abstract description of the intellectuals commenting on societal spending renders invisible, the fact that they are all rich, white males.

It is also worth noting that the book offers some opportunity for the scholarly community today to reflect on their distaste for for-profit research. The animosity informing early twentieth-century debates between economists and market researchers is somewhat akin to that contemporary academics have for research with a profit motive today. Therefore, it is pertinent to locate high intellectual labor in the same commoditized economy as the policy-driven research for specific audiences and markets. *Buying Happiness* is a useful intervention that shows the superficiality of such a binary.

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