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**LAWRENCE B. GLICKMAN, *Consumer Society in American History: A Reader*
(Ithaca, NY & London: Cornell University Press, 1999).**

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The publication of a reader on the history of American consumer society has been expected for some time. Particularly in the United States, studies of consumption and consumerism have proliferated to such an extent that the analysis of material culture has almost become a discipline in itself. This is not the desire of Lawrence Glickman, however, as he introduces his welcome volume with a statement that the history of consumption should be firmly rooted alongside, and in relation to, more established histories of class, gender, ethnicity, politics and everyday life. This approach is reflected in the articles chosen, almost all of which focus on the more political aspects of consumer behaviour rather than on the images of the consumer constructed through advertising and other forms of popular culture.

The book mixes the agenda-setting works of established historians and cultural critics (e.g., Williams' *Keywords*; Baudrillard's *Consumer Society*; and Campbell's theory of modern hedonism) with case studies provided by younger scholars (Weens on black consumerism; Sanchez on Mexican-American music) and historians not usually associated with works on consumption (Axtell on the consumerism of American Indians; Greenberg on black American boycotts), as well as statements made on the nature of consumerism by journalists and activists (Berry's 'The pleasures of eating'; Waldman's 'The tyranny of choice'). The readings appear in five sections organised under the themes of the rather vague 'frameworks and definitions', consumerism in the early modern period, class and gender, consumerism since World War II, and a final 'critiques and celebrations'. These divisions are at times arbitrary since there is much crossover between sections as most of the essays touch on the issues highlighted in the introduction: America's unique relationship with consumer society; work; gender; incorporation and difference; and organised non-consumption. They are all then superbly complemented by Glickman's bibliographic essay which neatly surveys all the literature on the history of the politics of consumption.

This emphasis on political issues immediately makes it clear that Glickman's reader is rather more specifically directed than his title suggests. The articles have been chosen not because they represent the range of approaches to American consumer history, but because they exemplify a type of analysis which Glickman approves of. Even within this field, a number of works which have focused on consumption and the labour movement (Gary Cross' *Time and Money*) and the centrality of consumerism to American culture (Warren Susman's *Culture as History*) have been omitted. Instead, there appears a number of works not actually on American history (essays by Campbell, Fallows, Appleby and Agnew) and a couple which are not obviously on consumer topics (Fallows' explanation for the successful performance of the Asian economies; Schor's call for shorter working hours). Also, and particularly with Sweincicki's 1998 analysis of masculine consumption, there are some specific case studies reprinted in full which perhaps it would have been better either to have waited a few years to see if they stand up to future academic scrutiny or to have at least been edited in order to have included

a wider range of other works. Pressures of space presumably account for the selection of essays on post-war America: while 21 pages are given to Moorhouse's (admittedly excellent) article about the care given by men to hot rod cars, it is odd that extremely little appears on the Consumer's Union or the state's involvement in consumer protection legislation.

In many ways, then, Glickman's collection is something of a missed opportunity to publish a genuine reader on American consumer history. However, in focussing on the politics of consumption as actually expressed and articulated by ordinary consumers from the American revolution through to the present day, Glickman has provided a group of essays potentially more representative of future explorations into consumer society. Because of this, and despite the inevitable omissions and unnecessary inclusions, his book will be an extremely useful introduction to the current research on consumer history.

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