

predominantly working-class groups, for instance Jehovah's Witnesses, was vigorously suppressed. However, the argument about the greater or lesser share of "workers" among adherents of Nazism turns, in part, upon one's narrower or else more inclusive definition of the term; and, in this case, on the occupational structure of the community being investigated. Osterode counted a large blue-collar element (but few Catholics), and was correspondingly slower to accord the NSDAP a majority than a predominantly Protestant civil service or upper middle-class electorate would have done. Suffice it to say that the author's frequently reiterated thesis of the relative immunity of workers *per se* to the appeal of Nazi ideology is not always persuasive: the minuscule number and dogmatic fanaticism of the Witnesses probably accounts at least as much as their social origins for their systematic persecution by the Gestapo. Notwithstanding this interpretative disagreement, the chapter on the sect, which happened to have a disproportionately numerous following in Osterode, is one of the book's most original.

It also includes, among many other highlights, a lengthy socio-economic history of the town's Jewish populace stretching from their medieval background to their gradual expropriation in the course of the thirties; and a revealing exposure of the military-industrial complex that emerged in Osterode after 1942 to prop up the German war effort — a prime example of the exploitation by rapacious capitalism of the opportunities for profit offered by the Third Reich. On the other hand, the disappointingly sketchy treatment of Osterode's educational institutions focuses upon personnel changes in 1933, but says nothing about the function of the schools in indoctrinating their pupils for democracy, or fascism. The final narrative chapter on the town's capture by advancing American troops in April 1945 seems intended mainly to satisfy the otherwise unexceptionable right of local history as well to be written for its own sake (26). Much detail in it, however, could be trimmed from a very desirable English version of the book. Not so the appendix of 45 statistical tables which clearly outline the results of each election held in Osterode from 1912 until 1934; the same applies to the fine selection of photographs of the town and its chief personalities, although the portfolio could be placed in a more logical location than (apparently) just dropped into the middle of a chapter. Last but not least, and by no means to be taken for granted in a book published in Germany, Professor Struve has provided an adequate index. All in all, this volume amply attests to the value of applying the historiographical knowledge, resourceful imagination, and analytical skill of a first-rate practitioner "even" to the tale of an obscure German *Kleinstadt*.

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Whitney Walton — *France at the Crystal Palace. Bourgeois Taste and Artisan Manufacture in the Nineteenth Century*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992. Pp. xii, 240.

Whitney Walton uses the French experience at The Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations, held in London in 1851 and universally known then and since as the Crystal Palace Exhibition, to focus her exploration of the taste and consumption patterns of the French bourgeoisie in the first half of the nineteenth

century and to analyze their effect on the development of French industry and economic policy.

The exhibition was greeted as the confirmation both of the benefits of machine production and of British industrial leadership, of which the great and much-admired glass and iron exhibition building was a fitting example. However, the consumer goods displayed therein suggested that new techniques and materials were likely to be used, not to produce a new and appropriate industrial style, but to imitate styles of the past and make available at affordable prices the richness and ornament which had once been associated with wealth and status. Elaborate carved furniture reproduced in papier-mâché, gutta-percha, and cast metal was much admired. Clearly, the middle classes were, as yet, neither sophisticated nor self-confident enough to abandon the fashions of the past sanctioned by tradition and the elites. The age of mass production and consumption seemed destined to be cheap and tasteless, at least in Britain.

However, if the British seemed to welcome the age of mass production and consumption, even if it were imitative, cheap, and tawdry, the same was not true for the French, who won many medals for design in traditionally produced furnishings, textiles, and those luxury items known as *articles de Paris*. Their success at the exhibition confirmed their preference for traditional craftsmanship and convinced them that their superior designers and artisans might ensure France a viable future without following Britain into mass production, an idea suggested some years earlier by, among others, Michelet in *The People*.

The mass market which was beginning to emerge in Britain did not exist in France. Because most of the French population was still rural and relatively poor, the bourgeoisie dominated the market for consumer goods. As Walton explains, the desire of the bourgeoisie to establish its legitimacy as a ruling class, while at the same time distinguishing itself both from the aristocracy and the workers, led it to develop its own "taste", combining traditional methods of production with comfort, convenience, and the avoidance of "aristocratic" extravagance. True, richness of ornament still appealed as a sign of wealth and social distinction, but honest hand-made simplicity, if that was all the consumer could afford, was preferable to mass-produced elaboration.

Taste was closely linked to domestic warmth and privacy and the material comfort associated with the bourgeois home. Walton gives quite detailed accounts of the evolution of the design and furnishing of bourgeois apartments, illustrating them with inventories of the possessions of several families. Among her interesting conclusions is the idea that the continued French preference for the fireplace rather than the more efficient stove was the result of the fact that the mantelpiece provided an ideal situation for the display of the family's most cherished and expensive articles of decoration.

Given the fact that domesticity had traditionally been a feminine concern, it is not surprising that furnishing the home was a woman's responsibility. What is, perhaps, unexpected is Walton's view that British women were given much less authority in this areas than French women, who were allowed more or less free rein. It was they who purchased most of the articles of furniture and decoration, thereby setting the standards of "taste" and establishing patterns of consumption. The taste of bourgeois women, who dominated the market for consumer goods in France, was, therefore, an important factor in preserving traditional methods of manufacture when

many manufacturers might well have preferred to follow the British into mass production.

The continued demand for traditional items meant that artisanal skills were maintained in France when they were disappearing elsewhere. Walton gives interesting details about the manufacture of such things as wallpaper and fans by traditional methods and explains how new techniques were introduced in some sorts of manufacture. Surprisingly, it was in the luxury crafts of gold and silver and in bronze casting that the new technology found its most important uses. Walton describes some of the new techniques, including those for producing table flatware invented by Christofle.

Walton's concluding section is devoted to the economic conclusions drawn from the Crystal Palace. Perhaps the most important analysis of French achievement at the Exhibition was the long critique by Léon de Laborde, a member of the Institut, curator at the Louvre, and member of the jury for the exhibition. It was published in 1856 both as the final volume of the jury report on the exhibition and as a separate book, *De l'union des arts et de l'industrie*. Basing his conclusions on a complicated and debatable historical thesis, Laborde argued that France's industrial future depended on the transformation of public taste and proposed that the state should use a variety of means and institutions to indoctrinate the French with an elitist aesthetic.

Economists, too, drew conclusions from the Crystal Palace. They had long been arguing that free trade would lead to industrial growth, relieve the poverty of French workers, and avert the threat of socialism. Industrialists, however, had feared the influx of cheaper British goods. The example of French success in London seemed to add weight to the free trade position. The medals awarded to French products gave evidence of their international appeal, while it was thought that French bourgeois consumers would not buy the cheap machine-made British goods. The experience of 1851 thus played its part in convincing Napoleon III to sign the Cobden-Chevalier free-trade treaty with Britain in 1860.

Walton's study illustrates the critical, yet often overlooked, role that consumption and taste play in economic and industrial evolution and suggests that the different paths taken by France and Britain were the result of social and cultural differences between the two countries. It could also lead to the conclusion that it is simply wrong to assume that the British example should be considered the norm and that France was industrially and economically retarded. Walton's argument about the aesthetic and economic importance of bourgeois women in nineteenth-century France fits nicely with the conclusions of Debora Silverman in her recent study of the *Art nouveau* and may suggest one reason why women seemed more content with their situation in France than in Britain.

While the book might seem at the very first glance somewhat peripheral to the concerns of many readers, it should be of quite general interest, bringing together as it does aesthetic, social, economic, technological, political, and gender issues. Walton has a clear and lively style. She carefully prepares her readers by summarizing her arguments in the introduction and recapitulating them in the conclusion. The volume is well produced, and the publisher is to be congratulated for allowing real footnotes rather than endnotes. One might only regret that there are so few illustrations, when so many things described arouse our curiosity.

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