

'Market Day' Abstracts

Leo Martin (School of Historical Studies, University of Melbourne, PhD candidate)

The Castlemaine Market Building: Function to Form

This paper will trace the history of the Northern Market Building in Castlemaine. In particular, it will focus upon the fight to preserve the market (1945-1972) and draw a distinction between local protesters who typically wished to maintain the market use and 'out of towners' who focused upon preserving its physical structure. The final section of the paper will reflect upon what the ultimate retention of the building's form but loss of its use says about the way in which we understand and value commercial heritage sites.

Peter Sherlock (School of Historical Studies, University of Melbourne, ARC postdoctoral fellow)

The Market for Monuments: England 1560-1660

Monuments to the dead were one of the most widespread, enduring and visible forms of cultural patronage in early modern England. Both their material form and social meanings were hammered out through a series of relationships involving the exchange of money, models, ideas and beliefs. This paper explores how monuments were created and interpreted in the cultural marketplace with particular reference to the impact of the 'Renaissance'. I argue that monuments were produced by a range of 'authors', including patrons and masons, subjects and consultants, clergy and antiquaries. The sources of their form and meaning reveal a society characterised by pastiche and imitation in which originality was not a valued commodity.

David Llewellyn (School of Historical Studies, University of Melbourne, PhD candidate)

Utilitarian Melbourne?

The sale of land in Australia was first implemented as an across-the-board policy as a result of agitation by Edward Gibbon Wakefield and his supporters, the philosophical radicals. Melbourne was the first city in Australia, and probably in the world, to be established under this new regime. The system was based on an economic critique of the way in which empire was conducted. Wakefield has been described as the father of the British empire, yet his, and the utilitarian, relationship to the establishment of Melbourne remains largely unrecognised.

Bernard Mees (University of Melbourne/RMIT University)

Cultural Aspects of the History of the Australian Securities Industry

Over the last three years I have been working towards producing a history of the Australian securities industry since World War II. Australian economic and business history is generally dominated by three approaches: the historical case-study approach favoured in economics and finance departments; the history of heroes and achievement represented in commissioned corporate publications; and the spectacle of failure approach produced by finance journalists such as Trevor Sykes. The resultant picture of business history generally fails to engage with broader social and cultural issues. I will present some suggestions on how a culture-focused approach can enrich the historical study of the Australian securities industry.

Kim Humphery (School of Global Studies, Social Science and Planning RMIT University)

Australian Consumerism: The Colonial Origins of Contemporary Concerns

Over the past decade or more a revitalised critique of western consumerism has emerged. While almost all contemporary critics talk of the need for an environmentally sustainable mode of consumption, many also focus on how consumerism undermines our sense of wellbeing, contributes to a culture of overwork and instantaneous gratification, underscores a cultural homogenisation of life, and fragments communities and social relationships. These are timely warnings, but they are ones that have a long history. In fact, in the Australian context the rampant consumerism of the Australian populace has, since the early colonial period, colonised the mind of the social critic. This certainly demonstrates something of the nature of Australian social commentary. It also invites us, however, to reflect on the complex historical trajectory of modern 'cultures of consumption' and on the very particular ways in which Australians have been, and to continue to be, enmeshed with the material world.

Karolina Kurzak (School of Historical Studies, University of Melbourne, PhD candidate)

The Polish Version of the Luxury Debate & the Challenges to the 'Birth of a Consumer Society Thesis'

The history of luxury, and, in particular, the eighteenth-century debate on, and reinterpretation of, the idea of luxury, has been closely linked to the story of the so-called 'birth' of consumer society and culture in early modern Europe, the latter having dominated approaches to the history of consumption in the West in the last few decades. In line with the significant challenges to this historiography that have emerged in recent years, the conventional thinking around luxury has also begun to be questioned. My paper discusses aspects of my own research into the history of the 'luxury debate' in Poland in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as a means to both further this re-examination and explore its various meanings and consequences.

Lewis Mayo (Asia Institute, University of Melbourne)

From Smooth to Rough - A Contribution to the History of Textures and Networks.

This paper (sic) examines the social trajectories of two categories of fibrous objects, one smooth - silk - and the other rough - paper - in the medieval Chinese-Central Asian borderlands. It examines how far the different circulatory destinies of these two objects might or might not be paired with their physical structures. As a contribution to the cultural history of economies, this work examines how roughness and smoothness might not only prescribe the social trajectories of things, but might also describe the textures of the transactions through which those things circulate.

Tracey Griffiths (School of Historical Studies, University of Melbourne, Masters candidate)

Honour and Profit in Renaissance Venice

In renaissance Venice, sumptuous displays of decorative textiles were requisite at bellissimi marriage ceremonies and other wedding-like festivities, such as the ceremonial entries of dogaresse and distinguished visitors, and the annual Marriage of the Sea. For these events, palace facades, gondolas and banqueting tables were draped with valuable tapestries, oriental carpets and other luxurious textiles. While such lavish displays honoured the participants in the ceremony, and the city of Venice as a whole, they also contributed, both directly and indirectly, to the profits of the traders who dealt in such items.

Heather Dalton (School of Historical Studies, University of Melbourne, PhD candidate)

A Fortune in Soap

In the first quarter of the sixteenth century a small group of English merchants were involved in the manufacture of white soap in Seville. This paper looks at why the soap industry was so lucrative in the sixteenth century, how these Englishmen became involved in the industry in Spain, and the impact their involvement had on their hometowns in England.

Jacqueline Dickenson (School of Historical Studies, University of Melbourne, ARC Postdoctoral Fellow)

'Stuff History': The Role of Advertising in the Construction of the Past

Recent debates about the teaching of Australian history in our schools demonstrate that representations of the Australian past are highly contested. Such debates have largely ignored the ways in which the past is represented in mass media, including in advertising material. This paper argues that the ways in which the past is represented in advertising material must be considered in any appraisal of public perceptions of history in general, and Australian history in particular. An examination of recent advertising campaigns indicates that the nostalgic appeals, simplistic, linear storylines, and stereotypical representations presented in advertising campaigns serve to cement popular demands for fixed and uncontested versions of past events, and that this has significant implications for understandings of the past in contemporary Australia.

David Slucki (School of Historical Studies, University of Melbourne, PhD candidate)

Marxist Millionaires in Melbourne: Bundists and the Shift into the Jewish Middle-Class

My paper will look at issues surrounding the upward mobility of Australian Jews after the Second World War. I will focus in particular on the Jewish Labour Bund and how it reconciled its Jewish socialist ideology with the fact that its leaders and many of its members were becoming - or already were - independently wealthy. By the turn of the century, it had become a thoroughly middle-class organization. Among the questions I will explore is how can a socialist be a millionaire? How did this upward mobilization of a community impact on its cultural activities and its self-perception? Did Bundist political and cultural theory rely on Jews being downtrodden?

Anne McLaren (Asia Institute, University of Melbourne,)

Books in the Chinese Marketplace: Consuming Virtue and Passion

Books have been sold in Chinese marketplaces from at least the first century CE. By the early seventeenth century books of all kinds were so numerous in China's affluent south that they induced something akin to the 'print anxiety' noticed in the West in a parallel era. Social critics felt that there are too many books, too many bad books, and too many people of the wrong social class or gender who were now able to read them. In this paper I will discuss the conventional discourse about study, books and virtue and ask the question what happened to this discourse when books and book marketplaces became dramatically more plentiful in the late imperial period, with a focus on the burgeoning marketplace for books in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. It is argued here that the inherited discourse of "arduous reading" for the acquisition of Confucian virtue now competed with an emerging discourse based around stirring the emotions or passions of the reader.

David Bennett (School of Culture and Communication, University of Melbourne)

Rethinking Libidinal Economy

In 1999, Woodmansee and Osteen identified as 'the New Economic Criticism' a growing body of discourse-analysis devoted to showing how economic concepts have shaped knowledge in the human sciences - with concepts such as 'exchange', 'value', 'investment', 'credit' and 'capital' entering disciplines as diverse as ethics, aesthetics, logic, linguistics and literary studies, even as such disciplines were being constructed as mutually distinct and discrete from economics itself. A notable absence from their show-case volume of New Economic Criticism, however, was any discussion of the role of economic models and metaphors in the history of sexual psychology. My project undertakes such a history.

Mary Tomsic (School of Historical Studies, University of Melbourne)

Australia, Home Movies and the Market Place

Home movie making is, in part, a commercial activity. It can be understood as a leisure pursuit requiring continual consumption. At the same time, home movie making is also a means of creativity. Since the 1920s amateur filmmakers have been able to construct and screen their visions and versions of the world. As part of my research into home movie making in Australia, I am interested in exploring how amateur filmmaking equipment was sold, marketed and supported by the dominant Eastman Kodak company internationally and specifically in Australia. This is one way in which to measure the far-reaching impact of film culture in modern society, as well as see the place of Australia within an international market for home moviemaking equipment.

Stephen Wheatcroft (School of Historical Studies, University of Melbourne)

The Role of Markets in the History of Famines

I have a particular interest in the comparative history of famines, which, following the work of Amartya Sen, has to incorporate an interest in the role of markets on famines. My work on Russian and Chinese famines certainly indicates the great importance of excessive and forced procurement. But it also emphasises an association with faulty harvest estimates ('Plan constructivism' in Russia, 'the winds of exaggeration' in China) at a time when there were also severe harvest shortfalls and supply imbalances.

Shannon Woodcock (History Programme, La Trobe University)

Trading magic for life: Romani Survival in the Market Places of Transnistria 1942-1945

In 1942, the Romanian dictator Ion Antonescu deported more than 42 000 Roma and 260 000 Romanian Jews to ghettos and death camps in Transnistria. While Jews were organised into forced labour and given rations, Romani deportees were left to die of typhus and starvation in the impoverished and war-devastated Ukrainian townscapes. This paper uses oral and archival sources to explore how starving and sick Romani deportees played on stereotypes of "Gypsies" as seductive and psychic to gain local clients and survive the war.