



How German Is She?: Postwar West German Reconstruction and the Consuming Woman (Social History, Popular Culture, and Politics in Germany)

Erica Carter

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The 1950s have passed into the history books as the period of the Federal Republic of Germany's so-called "economic miracle"; yet attention to women's roles in economic reconstruction has until now been negligible. In this book, Erica Carter explores how the development of a "social market economy" after 1949 gave a new centrality to consumers as key players in the economic life of the nation, and, in that process, gave women a new public significance.

Public attention focused in particular on the nation's housewives, who were to train the populace for entry into a new world of consumer prosperity. Carter investigates this focus from two perspectives: in part 1, she tackles the political economy of postwar West German consumption, and in part 2, she looks at representations of the consuming woman across a range of popular cultural forms. Since visual imagery is discussed at length, the book is lavishly illustrated with advertisements, fashion photographs, film stills, and documentary photography from the period.

How German Is She? also makes a distinctive contribution to questions of national identity. While many historians agree that nationalism was a spent force after 1945, Carter argues that concepts of nationhood survived in the rhetorics of public policy and in popular culture of the period. In this context, national and efficient consumption became a housewife's duty, not just to husband and family, but to the postwar "nation." The book will be of primary interest to scholars and students in German studies, women's studies, and cultural studies.

Erica Carter is Research Fellow in German Studies, University of Warwick.

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