

Constructing Femininity in the Early Cold War Era

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In 1963 Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*, examining the unnamed malaise that seemed to have befallen American housewives, posed the question about women after 1945 that has haunted feminism ever since: "Why did women go home again?"¹ Friedan seems to be able to document a sudden shift, around 1949, in American women's understanding of their own possibilities; after a half-century of agitation for women's increased opportunities in the public arena, women in the United States were now content to confine their activities only to the domestic sphere. In Germany, national socialism had, of course, constricted women's ability to participate in domains defined as male, though it also encouraged women to take part in Nazi-sponsored activities outside of the home; under the desperate conditions of the immediate postwar era, however, *Trümmerfrauen* in West Germany took charge of most areas of daily life until—or so the story goes—their men came back and they meekly resumed their old submissive domestic roles again. (As many feminist and other scholars attentive to class issues have pointed out, such narratives ignore the fact that many working-class women in the United States and the Federal Republic of Germany [FRG] were compelled to continue working outside the home after 1945, though the kinds of jobs available to them may have shifted—but this is not the point that my essay pursues.) From the earliest days of the women's movement in the FRG, feminists there, like their American sisters, puzzled over the question of their mothers' betrayal: Why did West German women also return to the home?

Though it is not my project here, it would be very easy to describe how "American" West German feminism is; from the earliest translated *Raubdrucke* of the U.S. women's liberation movement to Suhrkamp's feminist series entitled—in English—"Gender Studies,"

Anglo-American feminist theory and, to some degree, practice have been responsible for determining the emphases and analyses of feminism in West Germany. With a little help from Engels, Bebel, and Simone de Beauvoir, this has also been the case with respect to the terms feminists used to understand their—and our—mothers' confinement to the domestic arena. At least since the beginning of the industrial era—and not, of course, just in feminist texts—men's realm has been considered to be the public, the modern, and the historical, while the domestic world to which women were restricted was the private, traditional, timeless, and unchanging. But, oddly, though U.S. and West German feminists have employed similar categories to describe women's condition post-1945 and prefeminism, the particular explanations for *why* women went home again have remained resolutely national. Thus West German women's retreat into domesticity, for instance, has been viewed as a response to the turmoil of the 1945–47 period in Germany—though women's redomestication in the late 1940s seems to have assumed very similar forms in all the Western industrialized countries.

In this essay I want to investigate two issues. First, I want to suggest that our feminist understanding of our mothers' "return to the home" as a retreat from public politics to a timeless realm of traditional domesticity is at best an oversimplification, if not outright wrong. I want instead to regard women's experiences in the postwar period not as extrinsic to, but as fundamentally connected to, the general history of their time. Second, I want to investigate the degree to which it is possible to adduce supranational explanations for changes in women's situation in the late 1940s and, more specifically, how the new definitions of femininity in West Germany in the postwar era might be connected to or influenced by larger imperatives of the U.S. occupation of Germany and the early cold war. That is, I want to explore how American the construction of West German femininity in the early cold war era might be.

A number of recent studies begin to help us understand these issues. In his book *More: The Politics of Economic Growth in Postwar America*, the economic historian Robert M. Collins explores how and why U.S. policymakers became centrally and single-mindedly committed to the pursuit of a policy of expansive economic growth in the period after 1945. In the immediate postwar era, Collins observes, "the growth regime expressed in the arena of political economy the ascendant values of modern consumer culture," and those values, he argues, "would so thoroughly color American life for the remainder of the twentieth

century that most Americans assumed that the consumer culture *was* America and vice versa.”² Collins concurs with the German historian Charles Maier’s assessment that this “politics of productivity” was also the “American organizing idea for the postwar economic world,” a policy that, among other things, explicitly aimed at convincing European working-class parties and workers themselves that economic growth could and should supplant class politics.³ Collins thus emphasizes that the policy of economic growth based on “consumption, more consumption” so energetically and determinedly pursued by the U.S. government was not a substitute for political ideology but rather was its embodiment and expression.⁴ In *An All-Consuming Century*, the American historian Gary Cross advances an argument about economics and ideology that elaborates upon Collins’s. Cross maintains that the victorious ideology of the twentieth century in the United States and increasingly across the globe is that of American consumerism: “the belief that goods give meaning to individuals and their role in society”; “a choice, never consciously made, to define self and community through the ownership of goods.”⁵ To be sure, he argues, consumerism is so centrally intertwined with all other aspects of U.S. society “that it is difficult for Americans to consider any serious alternatives or modifications to it” (5), and they accept as natural the trade-off between the effort they invest at the workplace and the freedom they have to purchase consumer items with the money they earn. Cross traces the steps in the triumph of consumerism through the century with a particular emphasis on how Americans’ “exuberant spending on cars, houses and appliances” after 1945 “confirmed a form of domestic consumption that today we associate with the 1950s, but that in fact had roots in the longings of the 1930s” (67). As numerous manufacturers emphasized in the wartime advertisements that Cross cites, this culture of ever-expanding domestic consumption was the content defining the American Way of Life. This was, one advertiser proclaimed, what World War II was all about: “For years we have fought for a higher standard of living, and now we are fighting to protect it against those who are jealous of our national accomplishments” (84). Collins and Cross suggest that a politics of both productivity and consumerism, promoted by powerful government forces *and* widely supported by the populace, characterized both the postwar period in the United States and the policies the United States attempted to encourage elsewhere.

How do women figure in this picture of postwar prosperity? They are not mentioned in Collins’s study and play only a minor role in

Cross's. Again, several suggestive studies point us in promising directions. In a review of Cross's book, Lawrence Glickman stresses more strongly than Cross himself "that the consumerism of the postwar years was not hedonistic but 'domesticated,' focused on the suburban home and the nuclear family."⁶ He faults Cross for failing to investigate the role of women since, "[a]s men and women's organizations recognized early on, women have performed the vast majority of the unpaid labor of consumer society: the shopping, budgeting and refashioning of older items" (36). In *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era*, Elaine Tyler May also emphasizes, beyond the tasks connected to consumption itself, the range of social and psychological needs met by the domestic unit vis-à-vis a new postwar order that seemed full of possibilities but also replete with dangers and insecurities ranging from nuclear war and communism to workplace alienation and juvenile delinquency. "The legendary family of the 1950s," May tells us, "complete with appliances, station wagons, backyard barbecues, and tricycles scattered on the sidewalks, represented something new. It was not, as common wisdom tells us, the last gasp of 'traditional' family life with roots deep in the past. Rather, it was the first whole-hearted effort to create a home that would fulfill virtually all its members' personal needs through an energized and expressive personal life."⁷ From such observations, we might tentatively conclude that the accusations earlier feminists directed at their mothers' generation were falsely formulated. Postwar women neither "returned" to the traditional home, nor did they retreat from the public arena into a timeless domestic world oblivious to the course of general history; rather, women after 1945, in their specifically female way as wives, mothers, and household managers in a newly configured domestic unit, took on a role of central importance to postwar economic expansion, progress, and the triumph of the American Way.

Two studies addressing the situation of postwar women outside the United States also suggest that the analytical framework earlier feminist scholars used to understand postwar women elsewhere may also have misrepresented their intentions and experiences. In an examination of women in Australia after 1945, Lesley Johnson challenges Friedan's narrative of women's subjection in *The Feminine Mystique*. In Johnson's view, Friedan's book "told the story of women's emancipation in the form of the classical account of the emergence of the modern subject."⁸ Friedan decries women's entrapment in the traditional, private, and secure realm of the suburban home and calls upon them to dare to embrace the freedom to define themselves in the more

risky public arena of work and political life. But Johnson's own research on Australian women shows, in contrast, that housewives after 1945 explicitly understood themselves as participating in the creation of the new postwar world. Thus, Johnson argues:

In certain contexts in the 1940s and 1950s, home represented for women the site of their agency. Defined as the suburban house with its modern appliances, planned spaces, garden, and comfortable domestic existence, it constituted the sphere of everyday life which they were actively involved in making. . . . Their capacities and responsibilities in this sphere gave women a stake, as they saw it, in the life of the nation and in building modern life in Australia.⁹

If women's embrace of domestic consumerism in the post-1945 period is indeed a transnational phenomenon taking place in many countries with market economies, Johnson's study of women in Australia raises provocative questions about women's purported "return to the home" that may also be relevant for women in the United States and West Germany.

More specific to the German situation, Erica Carter's *How German Is She?* (a book whose very title, of course, suggests an application broader than that of the FRG) views West German women after 1945 not as the hapless, victimized objects of an expanding consumerism but "as the hegemonic model of a new consuming citizen."¹⁰ As such, they, like their contemporaries in Australia, made a contribution to national recovery via both the physical and cultural labor they invested in consumption and in their role as cultural agents producing meaning and value. Indeed, Minister of Economic Affairs Ludwig Erhard had emphasized in 1953 that women's role as guardians of consumption, spending the money men earned, was crucial to the *Wirtschaftswunder*. The *Wille zum Verbrauch* Erhard so often touted "was the engine that drove uninterrupted output, economic rationalization, efficiency, and gains in productivity; as 'economics ministers' of their families, women controlled the throttle."¹¹ West German market analysts also remarked on "the new status of women as chief purchasers in the family unit," calculating that women were responsible for disposing of 70 to 80 percent of family income.¹² Carter observes as well that women's capacity for thrift and rational household management was a crucial factor in "the accumulation of capital savings for major family purchases—kitchen gadgets, media technology, fittings, and furniture" (55) and thus from the early 1950s onward was an essential element in the devel-

opment of the German consumer economy. Like Johnson in Australia, Carter concludes that the housewife's role in consumption functions as a "*public* contribution to national reconstruction" and, though it cemented a hierarchical gender division of labor, also "offered women a route to public agency" (71).

How did it happen that, around the world, postwar women in industrialized societies based on market economies embraced *this* construction of femininity rather than some other? As May has emphasized, even a society organized around consumption could have chosen a different course:

The Great Depression of the 1930s brought about widespread challenges to traditional gender roles that could have led to a restructured home. The war intensified these challenges and pointed the way toward radical alterations in the institutions of work and family life. Wartime brought thousands of women into the paid labor force when men left to enter the armed forces. After the war, expanding job and educational opportunities, as well as the increasing availability of birth control might well have led young people to delay marriage or not marry at all, and to have fewer children if they did marry.¹³

But in the 1950s the "housewife marriage" seemed the form of domestic organization best suited to support what Cross has termed Americans' "unacknowledged decision to build a consumer culture around personal products" (250), and American women both actively chose and were vigorously encouraged to embrace the model of female domesticity that seemed best to anchor that familial structure. Vice President Nixon made precisely that point in his famous 1959 "kitchen debate" with Khrushchev. Strolling with Khrushchev through the model home displayed at the American exhibition in Moscow, Nixon insisted vehemently that consumer choice was the form in which Americans experienced democracy and freedom and that the suburban home, where housewives presided over consumption, comprised the essence of the American Way of Life. "To us," Nixon maintained, "diversity, the right to choose . . . is the most important thing. . . . We have many different manufacturers and many different kinds of washing machines so that housewives have a choice. . . . Would it not be better to compete in the relative merits of washing machines than in the strength of rockets?"¹⁴ In his formal speech opening the exhibition, Nixon emphasized the 44 million families in the United States who

owned 56 million cars, 50 million television sets, and 143 million radios, three-quarters of whom also owned their own home. Like U.S. housewives, I want to argue, women in industrialized countries around the world who wished to claim such consumer wonders for themselves also actively embraced the ideal of female domesticity as the most effective way to assure that they, their families, and their nations would also be able to claim their share of the American Way.

And, indeed, as a wide range of commentators have shown, this project was not even a new idea but rather an expansion and intensification of an old one: the connection of femininity, consumer goods, modernity, and the American Way of Life can be traced back at least to the 1920s, if not before. Emily Rosenberg has documented government, corporate, and individual efforts to facilitate American economic expansion by “spreading the American dream” that stretch back to at least the 1890s.¹⁵ Mary Nolan has shown that, by the Weimar period, “America” was generally taken to represent “the physical appropriation [of nature], social transformation, and economic development, built on new technologies, ways of organizing production, and approaches to management and marketing.”¹⁶ Despite the rhetorical anti-Americanism of the Nazis, Hans Dieter Schäfer has demonstrated, access to American consumer items and culture was widespread during the Nazi era, and Rainer Zitelmann argues convincingly that Hitler’s conception of America deeply influenced his thinking about consumption practices under national socialism.¹⁷ There is no reason not to assume that the tension Victoria de Grazia discerns among Italian women between fascist and commercial cultural models in Mussolini’s Italy was not also at play in Hitler’s Germany.¹⁸ In the German imagination, “America” had also enabled a dangerous empowerment of consuming women, both in the form of the “new woman” enthralled with mass consumption and the competent middle-class woman who held a job and “managed a modern home, replete with appliances and canned goods.”¹⁹ Tellingly, Nolan observes, in the postwar period “[w]omen, long considered susceptible to the dangerous allures of Americanism, were expected to negotiate its adoption” (19). On the other hand, in conceptualizing postwar women as conscious agents deliberately engaged in the process of rebuilding their nation, it is also possible to understand their actions as manifesting a continuity rather than a rupture with national socialism, which also mobilized women’s domestic efforts for the common good. For, as Michael Wildt argues, the transformation of West Germany into a

consuming nation during the course of the 1950s demanded a particular engagement from women: “Consumers, or more specifically, housewives, had to acquire all sorts of new habits. They had to navigate through a complex, unstable, and confusing new world of commodities; learn the new language of advertisers; and decipher the various semiotic codes underlying the presentation of goods.”²⁰ But, as Wildt also emphasizes, it was the transformation of West Germany into the affluent society of the *Wirtschaftswunder* that helped to induce its citizens to embrace new political ideals: “The perspective of more welfare, economic growth, and a gradual but steady rise in the standard of living created not only consumers but also democrats” (315).²¹

In the past decade, a number of historians of gender in West Germany have produced pathbreaking studies exploring questions of postwar domesticity and women’s agency. Together with Carter’s examination of the constitution of West German women as subjects of consumption, Robert Moeller’s *Protecting Motherhood* argues for the centrality of conservative gender politics and policies to the course the FRG charted in the 1950s. In *What Difference Does a Husband Make?* Elizabeth Heineman expands on Moeller’s observations to demonstrate that marital status (particularly whether they could be defined as “women standing alone”) profoundly affected women’s possibilities in postwar West Germany (and was of remarkably little relevance in East Germany), while her essay “The Hour of the Women” shows how after 1945 the purported activities of women—conceived variously as industrious *Trümmerfrauen*, promiscuous *Amiliebchen*, or benighted rape victims—were deployed as metaphors that helped to shape emerging West German identity.²² These studies, however, examine West German women’s lives in the 1950s solely within a national context. More recently, Uta Poiger and Maria Höhn have begun the work of exploring the U.S. impact on the post-1945 period: Poiger’s *Jazz, Rock, and Rebels* explores American culture’s effect on postwar East and West German culture, including gender relations among rebellious youth, and Höhn’s *GIs and Fräuleins* pursues the consequences of “fraternization” for debates over gender policy in the 1950s, but their investigations focus mostly on informal and unofficial contacts between Americans and West Germans.²³ Here, though, I want to maintain that, particularly in the late 1940s and 1950s, the FRG can be understood only very imperfectly if U.S. pressures to conform to American policies are not taken into account—and those pressures also affected women. As the cold war took shape, U.S. wartime propaganda organizations

were given new life, and the United States Information Agency (USIA) and the CIA were given the task of managing the government's so-called information programs or of subsidizing organizations that were already pursuing activities in the national interest. Though those organizations hatched any number of conspiracies in the early postwar period, it is not necessary to attribute the construction of a new model of West German femininity to a deliberate conspiracy. Instead, other deliberate, though somewhat more indirect, forms of pressure influenced the choices that West German women would make. As, in the aftermath of the war, the U.S. government aggressively took upon itself the task of creating what Rosenberg has termed "a more integrated, liberalized, and regulated world system, one which could presumably offer prosperity to those who cooperated and punishment to any who remained outside and who tried to create a restricted sphere of interest,"²⁴ West German women en passant, so to speak, were also induced to embrace a construction of femininity then conceived as most apt to produce the model of prosperity the Americans promoted.

Certainly, as Höhn emphasizes, the presence of huge, healthy, and overfed GIs in postwar Germany left a strong impression on many young West German women, whom they would immediately relate to the pleasures of consumption, as GIs distributed chocolate, chewing gum, nylons, and other delicacies to the *fräulein* of their choice and often to her entire family. Reinhold Wagnleitner, who as a young Austrian boy profited from GI beneficence, recalls: "It was not long before those *Fräuleins* and many other European women began to look like their American sisters, wearing more colorful dresses than European women had worn before, using American makeup, and pressing their figures into American-modeled brassieres which formed huge conic breasts that made even the real ones appear artificial." And, Wagnleitner continues, throughout Europe the United States was represented by Europeans themselves as a consumer paradise for women:

Not only conservative publications but also socialist and trade union journals insisted that the *average* woman in the United States could afford beautiful dresses, wear makeup all the time, take a bath every day, run a functional household with washing machines and vacuum cleaners, and rule over a modern kitchen with gas or electric stoves, mixers, refrigerators, and even dishwashers; work was minimal because American women used canned or frozen food they had bought in supermarkets in great quantities and brought home to their suburban houses in their cars.²⁵

Such tales suggest that the European construction of America was itself in part responsible for women's choice of a way of life that seemed to promise what America had to offer.

But the United States of the early cold war era was not prepared to leave the task of informing a recovering Europe about the American Way of Life to lively European fantasies alone. An aspect of the Marshall Plan's European Recovery Program (ERP) much neglected by scholarship is its propaganda dimension. The German edition of the *Reader's Digest*, which began publishing in 1949, and the *International Herald Tribune* enjoyed Marshall Plan subsidies,²⁶ but the Economic Cooperation Administration (ECA), which managed the ERP, also seized upon a much wider, and wilder, variety of mechanisms to encourage acceptance of the principles that the Marshall Plan promoted, including newspapers, pamphlets, postcards, postage stamps, stickers, exhibitions at industrial fairs, competitions, radio programming, movies, and puppet shows. Traveling exhibitions were carried by auto caravan, ships, and trains. A fifteen-car "Train of Good Will and Peace" carrying products produced by more than 350 West German manufacturers toured West Germany in 1950 and 1951 and was visited by more than 1.3 million Germans in its stops at fifty cities and towns. The "Train of Europe," which left Munich in 1951 and ended up in Vienna in 1953, used four of its seven cars as exhibition areas, while a fifth car was used as an auditorium for films and puppet shows. All ERP-sponsored activities (including the construction of the Limburg Dam in Austria, which assured that the Austrian housewife "no longer needs to worry of a breakdown in the supply of electricity") were lavishly documented by photographs that were then distributed widely.²⁷ Early on, the occupying military government had arranged for U.S. documentary films dealing with topics ranging from malaria to the New Deal's Tennessee Valley Authority to be shown in a range of venues from movie theaters to schools, town halls, and the outdoors, by 1951 reaching, it was claimed, about 2 million people a month. The documentary films were also frequently shown together with U.S. feature films and a newsreel, "Welt im Film," whose viewing was compulsory through 1949.²⁸ After the onset of the ERP, U.S.-focused documentaries were supplemented by over two hundred films that documented the achievements of the Marshall Plan.²⁹ "Prosperity Makes You Free" was the slogan posted on the Marshall Plan trains; the Marshall Plan message was "You Too Can Be Like Us." Paul Hoffman, administrator of the ECA, recalled in his memoirs, "They learned that this is the land of full shelves and bulging shops, made

possible by high productivity and good wages, and that its prosperity may be emulated elsewhere by those who will work towards it.”³⁰ It was a lesson that was not lost on West German women.

In a memo to the U.S. military administration in Germany, Billy Wilder, on his way to Berlin to direct *A Foreign Affair*, argued that U.S. efforts to promote reeducation via the use of documentaries was doomed to failure and that feature films à la Hollywood would perform such propaganda tasks much more effectively.³¹ During the war, the director of the U.S. Office of War Information had expressed a similar opinion: “The easiest way to inject a propaganda idea into most people’s mind is to let it go in through the medium of an entertainment picture when they do not realize that they are being propagandized,”³² while Gerald Mayer, head of the International Division of the Motion Picture Association, connected Hollywood film directly to the promotion of the consumption of American products:

The modern American motion picture, almost beyond any possible comparison with other items of export, combines considerations of economic, cultural and political significance. . . . No one has ever attempted to calculate—and it would probably be an impossible task—the indirect effect of American motion pictures on the sale of American products, not only on display, as it were, but in actual demonstrated use. Scenes laid in American kitchens, for example, have probably done as much to acquaint the people of foreign lands with American electric refrigerators, electric washing machines, egg-beaters, window screens, and so on, as any other medium. . . . There has never been a more effective salesman for American products in foreign countries than the American motion picture.³³

Writing in the fall 1950 issue of *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Walter Wanger, head of Walter Wanger Pictures, Inc., proclaimed that the film industry represented a “Marshall Plan of ideas.”³⁴ Very aware of the power its product wielded, the Hollywood film industry in the postwar era was able to cut an extremely advantageous deal with the U.S. government, achieving a guarantee that all foreign costs would be repaid in Marshall Plan dollars and that Washington would pay an additional \$25,000 for every film exported to European markets.³⁵ The film industry had very strong ties to the State Department and was frequently not loath to cooperate on specific issues, such as rereleasing Ernst Lubisch’s *Ninotchka* on the eve of the Italian election in order to discourage Italian voters from supporting the communists, removing

scenes and withholding films from export that were deemed not to portray the United States in the best possible light, and producing a series of explicitly cold war films in the early 1950s. On the other hand, as Paul Swann observes, it was for the most part very difficult to use Hollywood films to promote specific U.S. policies abroad: "In practice, the only thing that was certain was that the effects of American motion pictures overseas were uncertain and unpredictable."³⁶

It is, of course, quite impossible to determine how deliberately Hollywood might have promoted a new model of domestic femininity and to what degree factors exterior to Hollywood might have influenced the film industry's decisions. Certainly, American businessmen were quite aware that the housewife marriage was highly beneficial to the postwar capitalist order. Friedan herself cites a 1945 marketing study that determined that the "Balanced Homemaker" was, "from the market standpoint, the ideal type. . . . Since the Balanced Homemaker represents the market with the greatest future potential, it would be to the advantage of the appliance manufacturer to make more and more women aware of the desirability of belonging to this group."³⁷ It is clear, however, that beginning around 1940 the portrayal of women in Hollywood film changed quite suddenly, with a new emphasis on domesticity emerging at the very time when real American women were following the example of Rosie the Riveter. Susan Hartmann has maintained that the war decade represented "the greatest assault on female careerism" ever, with films of that era favorably portraying women who give up a career for marriage while condemning women who try to combine the two.³⁸ In his study "Hollywood and the Politics of the American Way," Lary May discerns a new category of female figure in his movie plot samples from the war years, a "woman who identified her personal goals with realizing the dream of 'patriotic domesticity,'" a formula that increased from zero in 1940 to over 35 percent of all plots by 1948.³⁹ May also shows that other films of the same period "tame" mass consumption by making it "the locus of a new dream of private freedom" (147). Many of the films of the early to mid-1940s that May examines were also included among the relatively small group of films (only 112 by September 1948) that Heide Fehrenbach cites as approved for exhibition in the U.S. zone in the first post-war years.⁴⁰ Carter identifies film as a crucial medium that "not only provided a forum for the articulation of collective and/or national identities; more than this, through tie-ins, for example, between film, fashion, advertising, and the women's magazines, it acted as a symbolic vehicle for new models of consuming femininity."⁴¹ Doubtless

this is entirely true, but the examples she gives—three melodramas that address “a crucial postwar feminine transition . . . of the female protagonist from luxury consumer to bourgeois housewife”—are all German-made films. Interwoven in each of those films, Carter tells us, is the narrative of national transformation that is the topic of her book, “the story . . . of West Germany’s transition to a proto-American society of mass consumption.” But what Carter leaves entirely out of her story may be one of its most important aspects, the role that a variety of American influences played in turning the FRG into that “proto-American society of mass consumption,” with Americanized German women as its consuming subjects.⁴²

So let me ask the question posed in Carter’s title: “How German is she?” Carter intends the title of her book to highlight the tension between female conformity to a national ideal of domestic femininity in the service of economic recovery *and* possibly more subversive desires not so easily accommodated within the narrative of the *Wirtschaftswunder*. That may well be the case, but to me the book’s title strikingly evokes the topic of this collection—How American is it?—and points toward the non-German pressures that induced West German women to embrace this construction of femininity rather than some other. As the FRG was urged, encouraged, and also compelled to conform to the economic principles of what, to put the best face on it, one might term its American benefactor, so were individual West Germans, in the smaller realm of the family and everyday life, to decide for themselves that, as in America, the possession of ever more consumer items was the road to happiness and that forming themselves into the subjects and citizens likely to reach that goal was the optimal path to pursue, for women as well as for men. The *Wirtschaftswunder*, with women at the household helm, is, of course, the German version of the American Way of Life. How American is she? If “America” is taken to signify the American Way of Life, the model of domesticated modern consumerism that the *Wirtschaftswunder* tried to emulate, we might wish to answer in the following way: *mutatis mutandis*, very.

NOTES

1. Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: Dell, 1970), 61.
2. Robert M. Collins, *More: The Politics of Economic Growth in Postwar America* (New York: Oxford, 2000), 38–39.
3. Collins, 22.

4. Collins, 39, xi.
5. Gary Cross, *An All-Consuming Century: Why Commercialism Won in Modern America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 1, 5.
6. Lawrence Glickman, "The 'Ism' That Won the Century," *Nation*, December 4, 2000, 33–38.
7. Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1988), 11.
8. Lesley Johnson, "'As Housewives we [sic] Are Worms': Women, Modernity, and the Home Question," in *Feminism and Cultural Studies*, ed. Morag Schiach (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 477.
9. Johnson, 488–89.
10. Erica Carter, *How German Is She? Postwar West German Reconstruction and the Consuming Woman* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), 9.
11. Cited in Robert G. Moeller, *Protecting Motherhood: Women and the Family in the Politics of Postwar West Germany* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 139–40.
12. Carter, 65.
13. Elaine Tyler May, 8–9.
14. Cited in Elaine Tyler May, 17–18.
15. Emily Rosenberg, *Spreading the American Dream: American Economic and Cultural Expansion, 1890–1945* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982).
16. Mary Nolan, "America in the German Imagination," in *Transactions, Transgressions, Transformations: American Culture in Western Europe and Japan*, ed. Heide Fehrenbach and Uta G. Poiger (New York: Berghahn, 2000), 13.
17. Cf. Hans Dieter Schäfer, *Das gespaltene Bewußtsein: Deutsche Kultur und Lebenswirklichkeit, 1933–1945* (Munich: Carl Hanser, 1981), and Rainer Zitelmann, *Hitler: Selbstverständnis eines Revolutionärs* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1987).
18. Victoria de Grazia, "Nationalising Women: The Competition between Fascist and Commercial Cultural Models in Mussolini's Italy," in *Cultural Transmissions and Receptions: American Mass Culture in Europe*, ed. R. Kroes, R. W. Rydell, and D. F. J. Bosscher (Amsterdam: VU University Press, 1993).
19. Nolan, 16.
20. Michael Wildt, "Changes in Consumption as Social Practice in West Germany during the 1950s," in *Getting and Spending: European and American Consumer Societies in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Susan Strasser, Charles McGovern, and Matthias Judt (Washington, DC: German Historical Institute and Cambridge University Press, 1998), 313.
21. See also Michael Wildt, *Am Beginn der "Konsumgesellschaft": Mangelersahrung, Lebenshaltung, Wohlstandshoffnung in Westdeutschland in den fünfziger Jahren* (Hamburg: Ergebnisse, 1994).
22. Elizabeth D. Heineman, *What Difference Does a Husband Make? Women and Marital Status in Nazi and Postwar Germany* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); and "The Hour of the Women: Memories of Germany's 'Crisis Years' and West German National Identity," *American Historical Review* 101, no. 2 (April 1996): 354–95.
23. Uta G. Poiger, *Jazz, Rock, and Rebels: Cold War Politics and American*

Culture in a Divided Germany (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); Maria Höhn, *GIs and Fräuleins: The German-American Encounter in 1950s West Germany* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

24. Rosenberg, *Spreading the American Dream*, 191.

25. Reinhold Wagnleitner, "Propagating the American Dream: Cultural Policies as Means of Integration," in *Exporting America: Essays on American Studies Abroad*, ed. Richard P. Horwitz (New York: Garland, 1993), 329.

26. Cf. Hinrich Becker, *Das Beste aus Reader's Digest: Ideologische Grundzüge in der Zeitschrift Das Beste aus Reader's Digest: Untersucht an den Jahrgängen 1949/50, 1973, 1979/80* (Kiel: n.p., 1984); and Paul Swann, "The Little State Department: Washington and Hollywood's Rhetoric of the Postwar Audience," in *Hollywood in Europe: Experiences of a Cultural Hegemony*, ed. David W. Ellwood and Rob Kroes (Amsterdam: VU University Press, 1994), 185.

27. Hans-Jürgen Schröder, "Marshall Plan Propaganda in Austria and Western Germany," in *The Marshall Plan in Austria*, ed. Günter Bischof, Anton Pelinka, and Dieter Steifel, *Contemporary Austrian Studies* 8 (New Brunswick: Transaction, 2000), 213–19.

28. Michael Hoenisch, "Film as an Instrument of the U.S. Reeducation Program in Germany after 1945 and the Example of 'Todesmühlen,'" *Englisch Amerikanische Studien* 4 (June 1982): 201.

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30. Cited in David W. Ellwood, *Rebuilding Europe: Western Europe, America, and Postwar Reconstruction* (London: Longman, 1992), 227.

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32. Reinhold Wagnleitner, *Coca-Colonization and the Cold War: The Cultural Mission of the United States in Austria after the Second World War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 229.

33. Cited in Wagnleitner, *Coca-Colonization*, 227.

34. Cited in David W. Ellwood, "Introduction: Historical Methods and Approaches," in *Hollywood in Europe: Experiences of a Cultural Hegemony*, ed. David W. Ellwood and Rob Kroes (Amsterdam: VU University Press, 1994), 6.

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41. Carter, 176.

42. Carter, 179.