Selling Modernity

ADVERTISING IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY GERMANY

Pamela E. Swett, S. Jonathan Wiesen, and Jonathan R. Zatlin, EDITORS

WITH A FOREWORD BY VICTORIA DE GRAZIA

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Duke University Press Durham and London 2007

Printed in the United States of America on acid-free paper ♾
Designed by Heather Hensley
Typeset in Dante Monotype by Tseng Information Systems, Inc.
Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data appear
on the last printed page of this book.

FOR JACK, NATHANIEL, DANIEL, LEORA, AND MAX

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FOREWORD

From all of the hullabaloo attending the inauguration of the International Advertising Congress at Berlin on August 11, 1929, Germany looked to be the pacesetter of twentieth-century merchandising. With its booming economy, the Weimar Republic was the fulcrum of European commerce. Its fifth largest city, Leipzig, hosted the world's oldest and biggest trade fair, its twice-yearly expositions of hundreds of thousands of craft and industrial wares attracting buyers from a hundred lands. Its capital, Berlin, was home to artistic circles bubbling over with the cultural irreverence on which the new marketing professions thrived. True, the congress's logo, "Advertising: the key to world prosperity," was an American advertising man's conceit. But a Berliner had come up with the logo design in the shape of a key so palpably phallic that it gave a jolt of visual testosterone to the whole proceedings.

That 1920s Germany stood at the forefront of world advertising culture looked plausible on other grounds as well. There were those 80 million German speakers, the largest language concentration in Europe and the most literate as well, and, if a third or more didn't live in Germany itself, that was fine too, for they still promised to be good markets for the country's export-oriented economy. There was also Germany's legacy as homeland to Gutenberg's print revolution, a legacy still visible in its global leadership in the typographic arts, lithography, and packaging design. There were the vibrantly colored posters affixed to the downtown kiosks that spoke of a merchandising tradition comfortably at home on the city streets. There was the upstart *Sachlichkeit* aesthetic, superbly combining utility and modernist beauty in an iconoclastic struggle against the rhetorical conventions of academic design. Finally, there was the multitude of German artists ready to engage with modern advertising, some out of the con-

viction that it represented a new avant-garde, others because it could pay handsomely. From the memoirs of the prudish Elias Canetti, a visitor to late 1920s Berlin, we have the unsettling image of Bertolt Brecht lounging at the Café Schlichter, boasting of the copy he had composed for Steyr and the automobile he had received as compensation.

But notoriously, advertising is about illusions. The disquieting reality was that the United States, not Germany, was the force driving the internationalization of advertising. It was the bedrock of the American profession, the famous 4-A's (the American Association of Advertising Agencies), that had initially promoted periodic international congresses, and the decision to hold this one, the first on the Continent for the first time in 1929, coincided with the installation in Europe's capitals of some of the biggest American advertising agencies. American-style advertising signaled the advent of an altogether new industry, whose basic unit of enterprise, the full-service agency, was capable of taking a new product and turning it into a high-profile brand, armed with the belief that advertising was a science, and the business a high-minded, reputable profession. Above all, American advertising presented itself as the mouthpiece of a new language, accustoming people to speak about the things they appeared to have in common and enriching their conversations about the things they adored or abhorred with visual images and idiomatic expressions. Abroad, as at home, American corporate advertising was in every way at the cutting edge of the capitalist dialectic of creative destruction.

The Weimar statesman Hans Luther spoke to the deep cultural disquiet created by American advertising when at the opening ceremonies he addressed his compatriots about "the need to make a home in both the world of the present and that of the future." Advertising was "the language of this new world," the former chancellor insisted. But as much as Germans will "want to learn from other lands which already possess a much richer experience in this language," there should be no doubt that "we also desire to develop the German dialect of this language and we want to do this in a German spirit and through German artistic sensibility."

With these words, Hans Luther captured a point that is central to *Selling Modernity*, namely, that advertising had to be treated as much as a cultural question as a business proposition. Advertising may appear to be about selling goods. But that is only one ambition. Whatever its form or technique—the handout or poster, the press insert, radio ditty, mail-order catalogue, or website pop-up—it has long been the expression of a complicated dialogue about the meaning of

market relations, one mediated by specialists with diverse interests to balance. Advertisers themselves, as the contributors to this wide-ranging book so vividly illuminate, hankered after professional dignity, social status, and income. And these acquisitions depended in turn on cultivating business relations with clients and gaining the confidence of the public whose own growing expertise they were under constant pressure to probe, test, and master. Rightly, this book speaks in the plural of cultures of advertising—for the practices of advertising were highly rarified at the same time as they penetrated into the very interstices of societies, so much so that even as early as the 1920s, they emerged as a signally important signifier of modernity. How that happened will have to be told again and again, from myriad perspectives, lest we never fully grasp how advertising messages in the world today and on a global scale have become as inescapable an element of the societies we live in as the air we breathe.

The great virtue of this book is to speak of this cultural complexity from the perspective of the history of twentieth-century Germany. In common with a whole transnational cohort of young historians, its authors move from the premise that the visibility and power of the consumer economy in contemporary societies calls for a detailed, wide-ranging history of its origins. The main point here is that in twentieth-century Germany, this development was exceptionally fraught—out of fear that hyperaggressive modernity would eradicate time-honored traditions, internationalism was irreconcilable with local knowledge, soulless science would destroy disinterested art, and the monstrous commodification of everything would splinter apart the bonds of human community. It was also fraught because the internationalization of advertising culture spearheaded by American "best practices" took place in Europe against the background of a full-blown bourgeois commercial culture, based on craft industry, segmented regional markets, deep social fissures, abiding distress at a moneyed culture, and wracking political and racial conflict. Against this background, we have a book whose authors are in dialogue with one another and with the many voices that today speak to the history of consumer culture, so that by its end we have taken a big step toward knowing how the trends in the arts and technologies of advertising were bound up with the fate of Germany.

Reading this volume as a generalist, I was especially struck by three elements that give a particular German cast to the history of selling practices which today appear practically universal, so much so that differences really appear to be only a matter of national stereotypes—or in any case, not intertwined with the grand narrative of Europe's fall and recovery over the past century.

One element surely is the impact on advertising of the vexed tradition of thinking of culture as *Kultur*. In the land of Kant and Nietzsche, where cultural wars were fought with the semiotic equivalents of Big Berthas and Blitzkriegs, how could advertising culture not be deeply implicated? On the one hand, what could be more odious to a culture that saw the "beautiful as that which gives us pleasure without self-interest" than the crassness of publicity? On the other, what could be more attractive than a cultural form whose acolytes delighted in stripping away the hypocrisy of bourgeois aesthetics and debunking the asceticism that denied the masses all of the real pleasures of life? In sum, there were awesome cultural stakes in inventing a local vernacular: from the conflict over the "Americanization" of local practices and the engineering of big brand marketing of foreign and national products, to finding a language to legitimate the lust in sex toys.

Inevitably the second element distinguishing the history of advertising in Germany is the role played by National Socialism. How did a regime known for its mastery of political propaganda deal with the best practices of publicity? It is a surprise, surely, to hear from the mouths of some of the most distinguished advertising experts in the United States that the Nazis had done "one good job" in eliminating "advertising abuses," or that the dictatorship's regulation of the advertising profession represented "probably . . . the most advanced legislation to be found in this field." The only caveat from this American perspective of the late 1930s was that it would have been more admirable, following the American corporate model, if regulation had come about through the profession rather than top-down from the state. No doubt about it: the Nazi regime well understood that yet one other means to enhance its totalitarian grip lay in reestablishing political power over the slippery terrain of the commercial public sphere. Its claim to have purged the market of the manipulations of foreign and Semitic elements by bringing transparency and truth to the advertising profession was part and parcel of a far more ambitious politics of building a mass market based ostensibly on the public celebration of the people's needs rather than on the covert workings of the price mechanism. Advertising had a central role to play in a market that pretended to modify the class-divisive nature of cultural goods and distribute scarce resources by rewarding and depriving consumers according to their place in the *Volksgemeinschaft*'s hierarchy of utility and race. The effects on any number of levels were catastrophic, spelling the eclipse of those practices where, indeed, Germany had been leader; the persecution, exile, and death of Jewish artists and an aesthetics favoring populist realism spelled the death of German

modernism, the restoration of the Gothic script, the end of Germany's superiority in the experimental typography that had yielded Bernhard Kursiv, Locarno, Ultra Bodoni, Memphis, Beton, Neuland, Prisma Capitals, and Futura in favor of the more conventionally eclectic American usage of fonts. However, for those in the profession itself, who handily continued working under the Third Reich and went on to thrive in postwar Germany, it was not a bad trade-off that, thanks to National Socialist regulatory powers, a disreputable profession of hucksters had been turned into a highly disciplined corporation of professionals, one that could be trusted to communicate wisely and effectively with a Volk that had been transmogrified from hagglers into heroes.

The third anomaly that strikes the reader is the bifurcated history of advertising as a result of Germany's postwar division. From the perspective of the 1950s, as industry picked up, we have the phenomenon of two countries working from similar legacies, yet experiencing the development of advertising cultures in ways that could not have been more distant from each other. So in the Federal Republic of Germany, advertising picked up and boomed with the miracle years. In the recognition that West Germany would be the fulcrum of the revived Western European economy, the biggest U.S. advertising firm of all, J. Walter Thompson, moved its European headquarters from London to Frankfurt in 1956, making the newly skyscrapered city the capital of continental corporate advertising. However squeamish West German political leaders were about advertising, which in its excess seemed to be inappropriate for the social market economy or a venerable *Kulturnation* (however far it had fallen from that ideal), the bottom line was that West Germany itself, as the European pivot of the Western Alliance, was a fabulous advertisement for the Western standard of living in the struggle against the totalitarian asceticism of the Soviet way of life. We have in this book marvelous evidence of the paradox that Coca-Cola flourished under the Third Reich; this fact is at least as noteworthy as the fact that it became the political signifier of the change of regime as one passed from one side of the Brandenburg Gate to the other.

And in the German Democratic Republic we have to face the paradox that austere socialism was by no means antithetical to advertising, and vice versa. In the five-year plans, there was space for advertising. After all, advertising was an art, or at least it had been, and in East German commercial design circles, it continued to touch base with Bauhaus ideas of the modernistic function of advertising; in its terse language, not only would it signal the advent of the modern, but it would tidily link consumers to supply. Very effectively, it would thereby

contribute to the utopia of real existing socialism by harnessing desires to needs and needs to the constraints and possibilities of the planned economy.

Ultimately, from the vantage point of the economy of desire revealed through its advertising culture, contemporary Germany could be said to have become a completely normal Western nation. Marketing experts might highlight any number of small anomalies; likewise ethnographers, cultural tourists, and historians. But no element of German advertising is so original that we could argue that it is significantly different from the practice found in other European nations today, nor for that matter from its Madison Avenue progenitors. Meanwhile these progenitors have lost their own peculiarities, as they themselves have fallen prey in recent years to aggressive corporate takeovers by giant European-based global conglomerates.

In sum, *Selling Modernity* is to be complimented for clarifying that the reconstruction of the history of advertising, that most pivotal and fascinating dimension of market culture, cannot be treated as a linear or unproblematic process. Time and again, the contributors have developed just the right case to illuminate the ferociously contentious struggles over the meaning of market culture. The razzle-dazzle of commodity culture is at home with dismal inequality, and the champagne bubbles of advertising creativity fizzle away amid the sledgehammer destructiveness of capitalist progress. Knowing the particular turbulence experienced in the development of commercial culture in twentieth-century Germany brings us closer to comprehending the turbulence of mass consumer society generally and today as much as ever.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book has its origins in an interdisciplinary workshop on German advertising and public relations held at McMaster University in November 2003. During a fruitful three-day meeting, European and North American scholars representing a variety of fields (history, art history, film studies, and environmental studies) met to share their newest insights on the historical and cultural significance of advertising and product promotion. This collection of essays, while primarily a work of history, seeks in a modest way to draw together those interdisciplinary interests and lay a foundation for future studies.

The workshop was possible due to the generosity of a number of institutions: the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada, the Offices of the Provost and Vice President of Research at McMaster University, the Faculty of Humanities and the History Department at McMaster University, the History of Medicine Unit at McMaster University, the Humanities Foundation at Boston University, the Canadian Centre for German and European Studies, and the Holocaust Education Foundation. The editors would also like to thank the following graduate students for their assistance leading up to the event and for making sure it all went off without a hitch: Heather Nelson, Steve Bunn, and Jeff Hayton. Matt Leighninger and Said Ahmad should also be thanked for their numerous airport runs to pick up and drop off participants.

In the two years that followed the conference, other individuals and funding agencies contributed greatly to the completion of this book. In addition to the sustained support of the organizations already mentioned, the College of Liberal Arts at Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, provided funds to support the completion of the index. Our two anonymous readers at Duke University Press offered thoughtful critiques and encouragement that have been essential

in improving the individual contributions and helping us write the introductory chapter. Lindsey Anderson put together a thorough bibliography of secondary sources while we prepared our introduction. Steve Bunn and Bradley Coates assisted in the editorial work, and Ruth Pincoe lent her expertise to the writing of the index.

We would also like to express our gratitude to those presenters and commentators from the workshop who are not represented in this volume but who helped us all think about the broader themes of the collection and improve our own analyses. We also thank Reynolds Smith at Duke University Press for believing in the project and helping us see it through to publication. Finally, Claudia Koonz was instrumental in first nudging us to pursue this larger project at a German Studies Association annual meeting in 2001, and she has continued to provide support and critiques throughout the entire process. We are most grateful.

PAMELA E. SWETT, S. JONATHAN WIESEN,
AND JONATHAN R. ZATLIN

INTRODUCTION

In 1959 economist and market researcher Wilhelm Vershofen noted a curious phenomenon in West Germany: "There are still contemporaries who fundamentally reject advertising." In the midst of the "Economic Miracle," this fact was indeed puzzling. Consumer goods were flooding shops and showrooms, and West Germans were enjoying the fruits of the country's postwar recovery. Yet at the same time, critics were denouncing advertisements as psychologically manipulative, vilifying their creators as sinister brainwashers, and dismissing advertising as an expensive and ineffective medium that drove up the price of a product. Against this backdrop, Vershofen drew attention to an odd paradox: critics of advertising were dismissing the very practice they "freely took advantage of."[1]

Today such sweeping rejections of advertising are harder to find. Companies take for granted the necessity of using advertising for the effective marketing of goods and services. Indeed, by 2004 advertising alone accounted for 1 percent of the global gross domestic product, and the figure continues to rise.[2] Advertising serves not only an essential economic function in advanced industrial societies, but plays cultural and social roles as well: European moviegoers look forward to a half hour of product promotions before a feature film; many Americans watch the National Football League's Super Bowl Championship "just for the ads"; ad slogans permeate the language of popular culture; and there are annual awards throughout the world for the best television commercials, radio spots, Internet ads, and even in-flight airline promotional films. Yet popular and scholarly critiques of advertising—its strategies, its pervasiveness, its effectiveness—have by no means disappeared.

Public unease and professional skepticism toward advertising in Germany over the past century serve as a useful starting point for a broader exploration of one of capitalism's most inventive, protean, and intrusive mediums. The ethical and economic objections to advertising reflect a long-standing ambivalence about consumer capitalism in a country that, ironically, has been home to some of its most successful expressions. In addition to examining the reception of advertising, however, the essays that compose this volume also investigate the broader political, social, and cultural work of the Germans who commissioned and created advertisements. The volume is premised on the idea that images of a company and its products not only define the retail landscape and inform consumer habits; they also reflect and contribute to the formation of individual and national identities, discourses on politics and morality, and discussions of the individual's relationship to free-market and planned economies. In their own ways, all these essays investigate how advertising served symbolic functions in the various political and ideological settings of twentieth-century Germany. Although the authors pursue different aspects of German advertising, each arrives at a similar conclusion: that advertising gave expression to the anxieties and opportunities produced by modern consumer society.

The story of advertising's ubiquity and influence is by no means unique to Germany. Indeed, much scholarly work has been done to address similar themes in other countries, most notably the United States, which was home to the greatest innovations in advertising over the past century. But Germany's turbulent history offers a uniquely illuminating case study of advertising's power to disseminate messages of economic stability and individual security during periods of intense change. Marked by the end of an empire, two world wars, two democracies, and two dictatorships, modern German history is defined in a more pronounced fashion by the ruptures and continuities found in other advanced industrial societies. At the same time, the sheer intensity and violence of these transformations set off German history as distinctly traumatic, and thus offer an opportunity to assess the power and endurance of commercial imagery in the most extreme circumstances. Amid these dramatic transformations, "the consumer" always existed as a powerful presence—one with whom the German state, private institutions, and companies regularly sought to communicate. Throughout the modern era advertisers and those who hire them have attempted to disseminate values and promote lifestyles to individuals in their capacities as citizens, shoppers, travelers, workers, and women and men. But what makes the German case so fascinating is the rapid succession of different political and economic systems

and, in turn, the often blurry lines between the ideological aims of the state and corporate self-promotion. Against this tumultuous historical backdrop, the durability of successful companies and brand names stands out. We are drawn to ask how specific advertising tropes, such as the treasured "Made in Germany" stamp of quality, survived even as political and social systems failed.

This question does not mean to suggest a triumphant, liberating trajectory of brands outliving compromised ideologies. In fact, the essays in this volume call into question assumptions that innovations in advertising and the increasing use of this medium furthered the unfolding of an egalitarian consumer society based on an individual's access to greater goods and economic freedoms.[3] Nor does this volume claim to be able to "read history" through advertisements. As Roland Marchand argued in his pathbreaking work on American advertising in the 1920s and 1930s, advertisements are less a reflection of social reality than of the "fantasies and aspirations" consumers harbor or, for that matter, that image makers *want* them to harbor at given historical junctures.[4] In short, the contributors to this volume presume the *production* of advertising is itself infused with cultural and social meaning.

In addressing the theme of advertising broadly, the essays in *Selling Modernity* are informed by the explosion of literature on "consumer society" and "consumption" over the past decade. This scholarly interest reflects a profound shift in intellectual perspective away from the process of producing commodities and toward an analysis of their distribution and use. Some of the most interesting new work explores such themes as the political power of consumer boycotts, the function of gender in the purchasing act, and the relationship between notions of citizenship and the seemingly mundane act of shopping.[5] The great interest in consumption studies has reawakened scholars to the importance of material goods and their images as sites of historical meaning. Scholarship after the so-called iconic turn has manifested itself in a focus on diverse forms of imagery—from political campaign posters, to industrial design, to advertising.[6]

Though related to these scholarly trends, this volume differentiates itself from much of this recent literature in its focus on advertising as a bridge between production and consumption. Instead of emphasizing the social and political behavior of consumers and patterns of consumption, *Selling Modernity* highlights the actors who had the greatest stake in successful merchandising. "Selling" is, after all, a gerund, and one question is "Who is doing it?" Company managers, advertising executives, copywriters, graphic artists, market researchers, and salespeople—all of these actors have helped shape the depiction of a company's prod-

ucts, reputation, and visions of modern life. Rather than collapsing advertising into debates over the nature of consumption, the essays in this volume imagine product promotion as emerging as much out of debates internal to manufacturers and distributors as to the demands of consumers. German advertising has not been a neat exercise in economic rationality; ideology has often trumped profit seeking, and the advice of advertising and PR firms sometimes has had surprisingly little impact on corporate strategy. Any study of German advertising must approach consumers, corporate leaders, and advertisers as social actors whose motivations cannot be reduced solely to political and economic calculations.

While advertising is not only a visual medium, this volume does pay close attention to posters, flyers, and especially newspaper and magazine advertising.[7] Yet the essays are informed by an understanding of corporate communications that goes beyond just the visual presentation of a product or service. Public relations and marketing are now receiving the attention of scholars, who are revealing how companies rely on more varied ways of promoting products and reputations than advertising alone, from the use of press releases to the commissioning of company histories.[8] While this volume does not devote itself systematically to PR and marketing, its essays do consider some of these nonvisual forms of company and product promotion. Thus *Selling Modernity* hopes to challenge the understanding of advertising as "advertisements" in a narrow sense. Advertisements do represent the most obvious form of company publicity. But companies promote their products and reputation through a multitude of media. Billboards, radio broadcasts, tourism films, postcards, folk festivals, newsreels, cultural events in factories, refreshment booths at exhibitions, flag parades, airline livery, souvenirs, and the visual spectacle of the cityscape all appear as "sites of selling," where institutions—whether companies or the state—promote not only manufactured goods, but ideologies and lifestyles.

Understanding advertising and corporate communications more broadly in Germany depends to some degree on the history of transatlantic perceptions, misperceptions, and adaptations of theory and method.[9] Over the course of the twentieth century, German corporations and advertisers argued that U.S. advertising techniques must be modified to suit the particularities of German society.[10] America represented big profits and a large consuming public, but to many Germans those consuming masses also represented a feminine, soulless society.[11] In very different political contexts, corporations' attempts to translate American expertise into a German vernacular were aimed in part at shoring up Germany's economic autonomy in the face of U.S. dominance of world markets. The engagement with American methods, however, also uncovered a deep-seated am-

bivalence toward modernity. Corporate imagery had to sell, yet in a way that did not weaken this sophisticated, culture-rich society. The critique of modernity, and materialism in particular, cut across the German political spectrum and resided uneasily alongside the growing cross-cultural exchange between these two economic powerhouses.

This obsession with America commingled with specific attempts to work through the legacies of German authoritarianism. If cultural pessimists on the right saw advertising as the harbinger of a cultural catastrophe, with its origins in America, the left, particularly in the aftermath of World War II, also saw the medium as reinforcing culturally debilitating trends, with potentially serious political implications. The most trenchant assessments of advertising from the left were formulated by Frankfurt School theorists. Writing in American exile, Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno famously denounced the "culture industry" for subordinating artistic creation to the profit motive. In their classic work *The Dialectic of the Enlightenment* (1947), they charged advertising, along with film, radio, magazines, and various forms of popular music, with harnessing cultural references to help manufacturers promote their products and the lifestyles associated with them. This unscrupulous manipulation of cultural production subjugated the mind's freedom to the needs of the market just as surely as manufacturers yoked the body's strength to the requirements of industry.

More important, however, Horkheimer and Adorno argued that the culture industry's sophisticated marketing tools enabled it to transform even resistance to capitalism into money-making schemes. Because of its ability to co-opt dissent for the purpose of turning a profit, advertising helped stabilize the rule of "monopoly capital"; it depoliticized systemic conflicts, weakened resistance to economic injustice, and permitted the more effective "administration" of needs and desires along the way. For this reason, Horkheimer and Adorno "came to feel that the culture industry enslaved men in far more subtle and effective ways than the crude methods of domination practiced in earlier eras."[12]

Although abstract in its formulations, the Frankfurt School provided some of the most powerful assessments of advertising, which continue to inform intellectual critiques of mass culture. In a more alarmist fashion, the depiction of advertising as a form of psychological and social control also found its way into popular literature. Most famously, Vance Packard's *Hidden Persuaders* (1957), translated into German as the best-selling *Die Geheimen Verführer*, offered a dire warning that the "shock troops of the advertising world are subtly charting your inner thoughts, fears, and dreams so that they can influence your daily living."[13] Packard-inspired pundits found opponents in theorists like Ernest Dichter,

whose best-selling *Strategy of Desire* (1960) offered a staunch defense of advertising through his innovations in motivational research. Dichter, an Austrian émigré writing in New York, also used psychoanalysis to understand the seemingly irrational behavior that lay behind the purchasing act. But he defended advertising as a scientific means of addressing people's latent needs and desires. According to Dichter, motivational research and its application in advertising did not "manipulate" people into purchasing specific goods or "twist their unconscious," but rather "provided a bridge between the consumer and the manufacturer."[14] Although Dichter's representation of individual needs rested on ahistorical assumptions about their transparency, his attempt to refocus the task of advertising on consumer preferences forced companies to research their target groups more carefully, rather than simply churn out new products without imagination or insight into the consumer's psyche.

These cold war–era discussions are worth highlighting as key expressions of the fertile intellectual work unleashed by the spread of advertising. As the following contributions will show, these theoretical explorations into humans' needs and vulnerabilities span the entire course of the twentieth century. But the broader point is that scholarly and popular understandings of advertising reflected larger concerns about the meanings of mass culture and social engineering in the twentieth century.[15] In Germany and abroad, advertising became a point of crystallization for a larger obsession with the implications of social equality, the erosion of high culture, and the ability of more and more people to access goods and services that were once the sole property of social and economic elites. Over the course of the twentieth century, Victoria de Grazia has argued, the bourgeois regime of European commerce succumbed to the revolutionary dynamic of America's "Market Empire," and more and more Europeans had access to consumer goods.[16] Whether this transformation was due to the sheer force of American cultural imperialism, or to some larger process of "Westernization" or "modernization," continues to provoke debate.[17] But whatever the origins, advertising was at the epicenter of what was a seismic historical shift.

From the German Empire to the Wende*: A Short Survey of German Advertising*

Although the United States offered a new model, the very first rumblings of this seismic shift predate World War I and America's significant influence on the European continent and within Germany. Rapid industrialization in Germany

after unification began a period of growth for advertising, and by the 1890s the major companies in Germany had begun to advertise their products in a serious way. Even then it was often the owners or, more commonly, the sons or younger brothers of owners who directed the publicity of their companies—and under that general heading the advertisement of products—rather than professionally trained advertisers. It was the members of this younger generation, already convinced of the power of mass media and at ease with the developing consumer society, who overcame their predecessors' principle that "the product sells itself" (*Die Ware lobt sich selbst*).[18]

At the start of the new century, the founding of the Werkbund in Munich (1907) ushered in a new attention to industrial design and the aesthetics of advertising.[19] Some advertisers began to call for uniform training and qualifications as a way to gain recognition for their profession, achieve status as members of the *Bildungsbürgertum*, and overcome the lingering public image of advertising as underhanded. Encouraged by larger trends toward specialization, the first trade journals and associations for advertisers emerged by the turn of the century, and the first independent ad agency was founded in Berlin in 1897.[20] Against this longing for scientific expertise, however, others set a more romantic vision of the creative artist. They argued that advertising was not something that could be taught, but that the advertiser was born with an artistic gift that had to be cultivated. By comparing themselves with artistic geniuses, and thus their work with visual art, these early advertisers hoped to access a different path to social status in Wilhelmine society.[21] All advertisers—salesmen and artists alike—could agree, however, on one thing: their work had a particular connection to the metropolis. Even those who prioritized the aesthetic aims of their work insisted that their designs unveiled a new urban worldview, and so they rejected the tradition-bound art academies as well as business-minded training.[22] This internal debate would not easily be resolved. Distracting advertisers from the task was the harsh criticism they faced from outside their own circles. In addition to old concerns about the truthfulness of ads, the new urban language spoken by advertisers contributed to their critics' distaste for the medium. Images and slogans defaced the cityscape, they complained, shouting at consumers in crass and even scandalous ways.

Historians view World War I as a watershed for modern advertising because it introduced new visual propaganda strategies and generated expressionist and dadaist art forms that thrived on shock value.[23] Yet the conflict also served to interrupt the growth of the field within Germany.[24] Advertisers in all belligerent

nations could put to rest questions about their social allegiances by serving the cause of war, such as designing posters that sold war bonds. After 1918, advertisers in the victor nations improved their social standing during the transition to a peacetime economy. In contrast, advertisers in the defeated nations were tarnished by their cooperation with the old regime. In Germany, for example, their participation in state-sponsored propaganda that had deceived the public about the inevitability of victory strengthened the hand of those who criticized the manipulative intent of image makers. Furthermore, the war's toll on Germany's human resources interrupted the profession's development. Although advertisers gained useful training during the war, the curtailment of the production of nonessential goods, the conscription of many young men who would have chosen emerging career opportunities in advertising, and the economic crisis that came on the heels of defeat meant that it was 1923 before the German advertising industry regained its prewar level of production.[25]

By the end of the 1920s, however, purveyors of brand-name products, retailers, and even heavy industry, which had shown little interest in advertising before World War I, had set up in-house departments to manage their images in the marketplace. As Dirk Reinhardt notes, at the close of the decade a large retailer with five hundred men and women on its payroll was likely to employ twenty-five to thirty of them in the advertising of its wares.[26] In Berlin alone on the eve of the Depression, three thousand electric advertisements lit up the night sky.[27] Along with the extension of educational and employment opportunities after the war, interest in the science of advertising also surged. Research centers and publications were founded that examined the psychological impact of color, lighting, size, and other aspects of form and content on the consumer.[28] At the 1929 meeting of the International Advertising Association in Berlin, the German representative Dr. Alfred Knapp welcomed the growing sophistication of practitioners and called for further systematic study of the methods and impact of advertisements.[29] Science, Knapp believed, had won out over art as the bedrock of the industry.

The 1929 meeting in Berlin also capped off a decade in which German advertisers and other corporate publicity experts traveled widely and participated in both continental and transatlantic dialogues and associations. Nonetheless, many Germans still worried about advertising's effects on society, in particular the willingness of companies and ad agencies to follow styles set beyond Germany's borders, some of which had been imported by offshoots of U.S. and British agencies, such as the Berlin office established in 1927 by the American

agency J. Walter Thompson. From the start of the Weimar Republic the images offered in advertisements reflected the promise of the new era: a youthful, socially mobile, and technologically modern society. If the republic was the crucible of modernity, then advertising was one language of experimentation that Germans interacted with on a daily basis during the 1920s. Yet providing the visual and textual vocabulary of the new age did not provide a secure or stable identity for the industry. Even those who supported the so-called American-style ads and consumerism demanded some recognition of German cultural traditions and worked hard to negotiate this ground. This struggle became much harder to maintain by the end of the republican era, when the economic crisis seemed to weaken the arguments for international styles and open markets, and significant decreases in expenditures on advertising resulted in large layoffs at agencies and in-house ad departments. The branches of large British and American agencies established just a few years earlier were all closed or sold off to German managers in the early 1930s because their largely non-German clientele had drastically slashed their budgets for product promotion in the collapsed German market. Throughout the Depression, advertising professionals maintained publicly that ads were the "key to the prosperity of the world,"[30] but privately many worried about the industry's future.

After the Nazis seized power, the new regime prioritized image making in all its forms, including advertising. By establishing a state ad council in 1933, the government sought to control all aspects of an industry still tarnished by claims of unethical business practices and foreign influence. The mandate of the Werberat der Deutschen Wirtschaft (Advertising Council for the German Economy) was to end debates about advertising by regulating everything from who practiced in the industry, to rate scales for tiny classified ads, to the content of ad copy and design. Under the ad council's guidance a *Deutsche Werbung* (German Advertising) would emerge to represent racial ideals and business practices thought lost to cosmopolitan decadence and greed. After the purging of Jews from the profession, the challenge posed to those who were allowed to practice as ad writers or company publicity experts was to offer images that promoted and satisfied individual desires without running afoul of the communal interests of the *Volksgemeinschaft* (racial community).[31] Though the council struggled against those within the government who challenged its authority and faced an overwhelming task controlling all advertising media, the Werberat continued working toward these goals until the collapse of the regime.

Though the Third Reich was "unabashedly productivist" in nature from its

start, the implementation of the Four-Year Plan in 1936 further intensified the race to prepare for war and reduce wages and consumer goods production.[32] Yet in the same year the Führer also oversaw the plans for the opening of the Höhere Reichswerbeschule (Reich Advertising Academy). The first of its kind in Europe, raved members of the National Socialist Association of German Advertising Practitioners, the school boasted a multidisciplinary program, spanning the newest innovations in marketing techniques to art and design.[33] The Four-Year Plan found its own ways to affect the lives of Germany's advertisers. Long before the onset of hostilities, many advertisers found themselves well-trained propagandists engaged in the "struggle against waste" and other threats to the racial community. Many ad writers voluntarily incorporated such national slogans into their work; others were drafted into working for Propaganda Ministry campaigns to teach consumers how to conserve household products that were also essential to the military campaign, such as laundry detergent. The Reichswerbeschule, which the regime had touted so proudly and which sat in the heart of Berlin's most famous shopping district along the Kurfürstendamm, was destroyed by aerial bombardment in 1943. Its destruction meant little, however, since the widespread inability to produce consumer products in the last years of the war (particularly due to shortages of workers, raw materials, and transportation) meant that advertisers were doing little more than reminding consumers of their brand names in anticipation of a time when the shelves would again be full.

The immediate postwar years saw the continued scarcity of products to consume (and thus to advertise), a lack of paper and machinery necessary to produce ads, and a shortage of money to buy the few items on sale. Massive wartime damage in Germany meant the absence of a vibrant urban landscape so essential to advertising—from shopping centers, to kiosks in train stations, to the sides of buses and trolleys. Most contemporaries in the West remember the Currency Reform of 1948 as the turning point—the "Zero Hour"—for advertising, ending about five years of a relatively ad-free existence. The new Deutschmark precipitated a sudden abundance of consumer merchandise, and popular brands trumpeted their own triumphant return.[34] Having ceased production in World War II, for example, Persil laundry detergent proudly declared in 1950 that "Persil is back" ("Persil ist wieder da").[35] Along with commercial advertising, graphic designers found new work in advertising the benefits of the Marshall Plan and, a few years later, aiding government and industry campaigns to publicize the benefits of the social market economy.[36] Despite the break with National So-

cialism, once again a German state found itself working closely with industry to promote a particular ideology and a broader ethical vision of the economy.[37]

The messages conveyed by West German ads during this period mirror this transformation from an economy of scarcity to one of rapid growth.[38] According to Ingrid Schenk, from 1948 to 1951 ads reinforced the return to the peacetime production of goods and the passing of an era of shortages. From 1951 to 1955, advertisers tapped into the German penchant for saving, encouraging people to buy consumer durables with the assurance that "a short-term purchase could carry long-term savings," such as with refrigerators or other household appliances. In the second half of the 1950s, as the benefits of the economic boom began trickling down to the general public, ads were no longer about selling a new economic system or encouraging people to buy at all. Rather, in these years luxury items were transformed into necessities, as cars and other goods once deemed the property of the bourgeoisie now were portrayed as indispensable to a modern, more mobile consumer society. Finally, in the 1960s advertisements highlighted how these new "necessities" were even better in quality than a decade before.[39]

This schematic approach to West German product advertising is overly general, but it nonetheless reflects the reality that increasing material abundance found expression in advertisements. Newfound prosperity did not, however, mean new messages. In the conservative 1950s, advertisements drew on long-standing, transnational tropes about the family.[40] The housewife was coded as the primary consumer, and ads spoke to her desires for time-saving appliances and luxuries presumably paid for out of her husband's wages. Social reality, however, was more complicated than social values; despite images reflecting a conservative distribution of roles, women continued to enter the workforce and thus had their own need for professional attire and accessories not directly tied to their roles as homemakers and wives.[41] Likewise, in the 1950s, the so-called hidden consumer—the man—could not be underestimated in his desire for cigarettes, watches, and fancy suits.[42] Consequently, 1950s advertising was perhaps at its most creative in the fashion and cosmetics industry, providing people with outward displays of both conformity and an individuality that presumably had been absent in the Nazi years.

If the 1950s was the decade of "economic miracles" for both the nation and the individual household, it was also a time when the advertising profession itself underwent major changes. A key change was in attitude. According to Harm Schröter, in Germany there "was a new realization that production and sales

could be supplemented by an *appropriate* advertisement."[43] The suddenness of this insight may be overstated, but in accordance with this increasing attention to the profitability of advertising, "American"-style full-service agencies began operation. In 1952 five of these companies came together to form the Gesellschaft Werbeagenturen (German Association of Full-Service Advertising Agencies). Like the American Association of Advertising Agencies, membership represented the highest badge of honor for an ad agency.[44] Around the same time, the American advertising firm J. Walter Thompson made its triumphant return to Germany, setting up shop eventually in Frankfurt, where it competed with German agencies for major accounts like Kodak, Pan American Airlines, Pepsi-Cola, Kellogg's, and Kraft foods.[45] J. Walter Thompson was, in turn, instrumental in founding Aktion Gemeinsinn (Community Spirit in Action), a charity initiative modeled directly after the Advertising Council in the United States. It depended upon the donations and volunteer work of advertisers to conduct socially conscious ad campaigns, from the first year's urgings to "Help the Housewife" (1959) to 1961's drive to make the public more sensitive to its oldest members.[46]

The coming of the full-service agency has been depicted as the first wave in the "Americanization" of the West German ad industry (the second being marketing).[47] Despite the arrival of an American import, advertisers themselves still complained of a lack of respect for their trade that they felt their counterparts across the Atlantic enjoyed. In response to this crisis of confidence, advertisers called upon their colleagues to create "advertisements on behalf of advertising" by selling the moral virtues and effectiveness of their profession.[48] They portrayed advertising as a noble calling, seeing themselves as pioneers who blazed new paths in the image making so essential to the material well-being of West German citizens.[49] They drew upon notions that harked back to the Wilhelmine era of the advertiser as creative genius, less affected by the bottom line than in the United States. The new economy of West Germany was still comparatively less geared toward consumer goods than in the United States, and thus advertisers perhaps felt more justified in claiming to embody a unique personality within an "old world," productionist economy. In addition, the "Made in Germany" quality ethos persisted, explicitly contrasting itself to the supposedly poorer quality mass-produced goods from across the Atlantic through its embrace of an artisanal ideal.

The tensions that defined the 1950s—a burgeoning ad industry, public skepticism toward advertisements, and advertisers' own attraction to and dismissal of America—were neither new nor confined to this decade. They persisted into the

1960s, when West Germans continued to assimilate advertising into their everyday lives, and the business world witnessed the demise of old firms that had not taken advantage of advertising.[50] During this decade, ads became more playful and creative, and more about enjoyment—enjoyment not only of the lifestyles depicted in ads but also enjoyment of the ads themselves. The 1960s saw Volkswagen, with its off-beat advertisements, become a favorite car of young people and the counterculture, yet the decade also witnessed attacks by "1968ers" on the advertising industry.[51] Cold war debates about "totalitarian" forms of psychological manipulation gave way to critiques of a so-called consumption terror (*Konsumterror*) that an overly materialist society had generated. Ads were seen as both the cause and the effect of a smug overproduction and overconsumption—a critique that carried over into the 1970s.[52]

These criticisms did not slow expansion and innovation within the industry. Already in the 1960s, for example, marketing had become a staple of company promotion, and the 1970s saw a refinement of marketing and consumer research techniques, such as pre- and posttests to diminish the risk of advertising flops. Television advertising brought increasing profits to companies, and the globalization of the ad industry during the last decades of the twentieth century indicated that "German advertising" was now inextricably bound to technological innovations in a shrinking world.

Despite the gradual adaptation of German companies to international advertising norms, we return to questions of continuity and rupture unique to German history. The years 1945 and 1948 may serve as zero hours in the imagination of the German public, but early advertisers in the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) shed their pre-1945 traditions only slowly.[53] The Zentralausschuss der Werbewirtschaft (Central Federation of the German Advertising Industry), established in 1949 as an umbrella organization of ad agencies and professionals, easily accepted advertisers who had worked under the Nazi regime's Werberat, some even considering this earlier era as one which prioritized truth and consumer education over profit making.[54] Postwar advertising entrepreneurs like Hanns Brose, for example, saw his work on behalf of the West German economy (such as the 1950s campaign "The Scale," promoting the social market economy) as a continuation of his *Gemeinschaftswerbung* (communal advertising) under National Socialism.[55] Books on branding and marketing generated in the 1930s, such as Hans Domizlaff's *Die Gewinnung des öffentlichen Vertrauens* (Winning the Public Trust), found lasting life in the FRG.[56] Finally, advertisements that were produced during the Third Reich were often reused or updated in the postwar

years.[57] These similarities and continuities are significant, as they speak to the persistence of cultural attitudes, business practices, and professional personnel from the Nazi years and before. But they also reveal the durability of advertising as a medium, the messages and techniques of which transcend specific political settings. Despite troubling continuities in ideology and personnel, advertising in the FRG no longer served a fascist state, but a more democratic political and economic order open to continued criticism about its use and abuse of commercial images.

If state-sponsored and commercial advertising thrived in West Germany despite widespread skepticism about its practices, advertising enjoyed a far more precarious position in the German Democratic Republic (GDR). Even though they enjoyed official support through the 1960s, campaigns advocating socialist commodities and lifestyles never successfully dispelled questions about their political effectiveness, economic value, or doctrinal probity. Some leaders of the Socialist Unity Party (SED) championed the use of advertising to regulate consumer demand, while others viewed it as an inherently capitalist invention that had been rendered unnecessary by economic planning.

Throughout the GDR's existence, East German critics of advertising consistently argued that it was nothing more than the business of confusing the desirable with the necessary. Capitalist commercials employed rhetorical deception to generate what one commentator termed "false or illusory needs . . . needs [that] are deformed, manipulated, and in part artificially manufactured to suggest illusions to working people about their real situation in society."[58] Western advertising concocted a shoddy caricature of the public sphere, underwritten by product placement and profit seeking rather than an egalitarian transparency. In addition to its manipulative content, communist theoreticians contended that advertising performed the vital task of stabilizing capitalist economies. Because markets were unable to regulate themselves, the argument ran, producers were forced to supplement them with noneconomic instruments to ease inventory crises and bring demand into equilibrium with supply. According to this view, advertising helped gloss over the contradictions inherent in capitalism by bringing the customer to the commodity.

The East German denigration of capitalist advertising as fraudulent yet essential had much in common with similar critiques articulated by other Soviet-style regimes.[59] What distinguished the GDR from its socialist allies was the SED's evolving response to a class enemy competing for political legitimacy in the same national space. Thus, the SED tried to discredit its capitalist competitors by re-

casting the GDR as a haven from the invasive commercialism of West Germany. To this end, the party maintained that socialist advertising served a primarily educational role. As an official guide to the planned economy published in 1970 put it, socialist advertisements should "arouse attention and interest," but their didactic content took precedence over their entertainment value or commercial utility; their goal was to "eliminate false ideas and errors," which they were to achieve by being "objective and truthful as well as rational and effective."[60]

Accordingly, East German ads rarely made use of emotional appeals, avoided eroticism, and refrained from exploiting children.[61] The ruling party ran ad campaigns that advocated personal hygiene (such as children's dental care), informed the population about changes in diet (including innovations in nutritional science), and sought to convince citizens to cease engaging in behavior harmful to themselves and others (such as drinking alcohol to excess).[62] Even commercials for consumer goods rarely spotlighted the products themselves, emphasizing instead the communal benefits of the social activities constructed around them.[63] For example, in a feeble attempt to foster gender equality and convince men to help women with household chores, a mail-order catalogue depicted a man standing next to a new washing machine and saying, "Now I'm washing the clothes!" Likewise, when the party finally authorized the use of TV commercials in 1959, it sought to "praise socialist lifestyles" as an alternative to the models of consumption broadcast on West German television that were attracting East Germans westward in droves.[64]

Because the line between consumer advocacy and political propaganda was murky, socialist advertising often aimed less at selling a specific product than at promoting the regime that manufactured it. Window displays, brochures, flyers, and magazine ads often featured communist political slogans alongside consumer goods and messages, such as "The Party Is Right" juxtaposed with an informational blurb like "Wear Shoes That Fit Well."[65] Well into the 1960s, the integration of political ideology into the East German sales pitch reflected the regime's political priorities and simply ignored consumer preferences. East German advertisers frequently made use of rhetorical misdirection to regulate the balance between supply and demand. The SED often tried to divert attention away from shortages by advocating the substitution of scarce for plentiful consumer goods.

At the same time that advertisers were busily perfecting their practices, however, the SED's ideological reservations about advertising reasserted themselves. A few weeks after the Berlin Wall went up in August 1961, for example, the Coun-

cil of Ministers declared that "advertising and fashion shows contradict socialist society." The council slashed advertising budgets for factories in half and closed the studio that produced commercials for the cinema. Television advertising managed to escape the budget cuts, but the council made clear its suspicion that "the useful effects of many ad campaigns stand in little relation to their costs."[66]

Not two years later, however, advertising was granted a reprieve. In support of his program of economic reform, SED chief Walter Ulbricht demonstrated a willingness to harness capitalist instruments to achieve socialist ends.[67] Paradoxically, moreover, the construction of the Berlin Wall fostered the hope that economic planning would succeed now that it was no longer hampered by Western influence. As one communist official formulated it, advertising would now reach those East Germans "who still harbor doubts about socialism and try to elude ideological influence."[68] As a result, the GDR aired a record number of TV commercials.[69]

As Ulbricht's control over the party weakened toward the end of the 1960s, however, his opponents became bolder in their attempts to eliminate advertising, which they linked to the more troubling aspects of his reforms.[70] A perceived decline in the quality of the ads themselves lent credibility to their objections. By the 1960s, the radical edge of East German advertising, once sustained by links to the Bauhaus and constructivism, had given way to bald imitation of West German products, impoverished in conception as well as execution. Even the trade journal *Neue Werbung* complained about the quality of advertisements copywriters and graphic designers produced. For want of good commercials, East German television simply rebroadcast tried and true ads, even though oversaturation turned off consumers.[71]

By the 1970s, East German advertising was mired in an intellectual and political crisis. Yet it was the struggle for leadership of the party that brought about its actual demise. At the fourteenth plenum of the Central Committee in 1970, Erich Honecker and his supporters launched a full-scale attack on Ulbricht's reforms. Playing on the growing unease over the existence of advertising in the socialist state, Honecker depicted the East German advertising industry as a politically unreliable partner in the struggle against West Germany. Under Ulbricht's stewardship, Honecker alleged, advertising in the GDR had become too much like capitalist advertising.[72]

By the fall of 1971, Honecker was in control of the party apparatus, and he immediately set about dismantling the ad industry. Without warning, the only trade journal for advertisers, *Neue Werbung*, ceased publication.[73] Around the

same time, a consensus developed among economic planners that advertising was no longer an effective instrument of economic control. In 1975, the Ministry of Trade and Supply issued a ban in the form of cost-cutting measures that withdrew all financing for advertisements of every kind.[74] In February 1976, East German television broadcast its last commercials, and advertising for consumer goods ceased. The East German state continued to issue information urging East Germans to improve their health as well as propaganda praising socialism and touting East German industry, such as posters and billboards promoting synthetic materials produced in East Germany. For all intents and purposes, however, Honecker's GDR functioned without commercial advertising, which distinguished it even from its communist allies.

As we now know, the political fiat against advertising did not resolve a central problem encountered by every industrialized state, namely, how to balance the needs of industry against the needs of individual consumers. If socialist advertising before 1976 failed to force consumer behavior to conform to the SED's ideological conceptions, eliminating it altogether hardly did away with the reality of East German consumer preferences. And as the revolution of 1989 made clear, the regime's failure to convince East Germans that there was something ennobling about an ascetic consumer model contributed greatly to its collapse.

Leitmotivs and Essays

The essays in this volume consider the processes by which corporate communications have been generated and the strikingly different contexts in which advertising decisions have been made in Germany throughout the twentieth century. Rather than focusing on consumers and patterns of consumption, the essays are distinguished by a shift in perspective toward the producers of product promotion. The contributors emphasize that in their search for profits, company owners, executives, and advertisers often had the most to gain in understanding the consumer market and, by extension, the importance of selling products, lifestyles, and ideologies. In their use of corporate sources, these essays have opened up the venerable topic of production along a new line of inquiry.

Along with this shift in narrative focus, moreover, has come a new methodological approach. Rather than treating "culture" and "business" as distinct, the essays bring the two together to provide a more complete context for understanding the advertising images, the motivations for producing them, and the intellectual and political discourses that surrounded them. Kevin Repp's and Corey Ross's essays, in examining professional advertising journals in Wilhel-

mine and Weimar Germany, remind us that advertising was not only a business practice, but also an artistic enterprise and a cultural lightning rod that drew together designers, social critics, and intellectuals, all of whom closely studied mass consumer culture, the effects of American business models, and the ethical consequences of advertising. Repp analyzes the growing fascination with racialized discourse in the Wilhelmine period, while Ross traces the growing influence of the transatlantic cultural exchange on the look and content of German advertisements.

Holm Friebe also draws our attention to the business and intellectual paradigms that informed advertising during the Weimar and Nazi periods. By examining the understudied figure of Hans Domizlaff, whose ideas about branding continue to influence German advertisers, Friebe shows how the practical world of selling products was always framed by cultural debates about mass psychology and political propaganda. Like Friebe's piece, Jeff Schutts's essay on Coca-Cola under the Nazis also demonstrates clearly how advertisers' work in the public sphere was in the service of both corporate and political persuasion. The Nazis introduced at once a communitarian and an ethnically exclusive vision of advertising's role in society, and Schutts explores the impact of this vision through the racial politics of the soft drink's marketing strategies.

Shifting to the democratic setting of the FRG, Elizabeth Heineman and Guillaume de Syon also bring unique corporate perspectives to larger political and cultural themes. In her study of erotica entrepreneur Beate Uhse, Heineman reveals the business strategies and political context that informed the controversial yet profitable trade in sex aids in postwar West Germany. We learn who the consumers of sex and hygiene products were, and we also discover how much sales depended on Uhse's biography as a former World War II pilot, family woman, and sexual reformer. Meanwhile, de Syon traces the rebirth of airline travel after World War II in the FRG and explores the particular challenges Lufthansa faced as it sought to lure holiday and business travelers back to a country deeply associated with mass murder.

As these essays demonstrate, the business of production and advertising was never far from politics—and, by extension, the state. To some degree, the omnipresence of the state in this volume reflects Germany's long tradition of workers and producers looking to the government to protect their interests or, alternatively, being forced into political servitude. Accordingly, a number of essays in this volume directly reveal how thin the boundaries were between commercial promotion and state propaganda. Michael Imort demonstrates how the social