own historical contexts, and by bringing analyses of his work more directly into contact with modes of contemporary criticism. While it is difficult to predict what “Thomas Traherne” will emerge from the Boydell and Brewer definitive edition, there is little doubt that he will be in the very good hands of a new generation of thoughtful and promising young scholars. The essays collected here show a richness of historical engagement and careful textual analysis that promise the new era in Traherne studies should be both exciting and challenging. Whether this will be enough to bring Traherne to center stage in late seventeenth-century studies or leave him in the wings with a few dedicated enthusiasts remains to be seen.


If not quite a luxury good itself, Consuming Splendor with its 48 illustrations certainly is pleasing to the eye. It also offers a wealth of examples that will be of interest to scholars of literature, art history, and history. Levy Peck offers a bold corrective to previous history that sees the eighteenth century as witnessing the emergence of a market for luxury goods. Such a market actually started much earlier in the seventeenth century, Levy Peck argues. Her analysis also seeks to correct the tendency in the previous scholarship to see this market as emerging with the rise of the “middling group” (352). In turning to the seventeenth century, she asks us to consider how the crown and court contributed to this luxury market. In particular, Levy Peck seeks to redirect our attention to King James and the powerful Jacobean aristocracy, who instituted projects to modernize London and England generally. King James had plans to improve urban infrastructure, encourage foreign exchange, and improve the manufacture of luxury goods in Britain itself.

To make this argument, Levy Peck examines the emergence of “shopping” among the upper classes, and elites in particular (chapters 1 and 2), the rise of the new desires for luxury goods among these same groups (chapters 3 and 4), and the increased attention on architectural improvements both in London residences of the elite and in the broader urban landscape (chapter
The chapters as a whole examine how such a taste for luxury items was driven by foreign exchanges, especially with the Continent, but also with the New World. Chapter 6 argues convincingly that luxury goods continued to be consumed and desired in the years of the Civil War and Protectorate. Chapter 7 offers a fascinating case study of one such Englishman's purchase of foreign luxury goods, especially a funeral monument for his wife. The example of his negotiations suggests the degree to which such exchanges had become common, if not yet routine. That there had been contact between the Catholic continent and Protestant England is proven, in part, in seeing the extent to which Bernini refashioned his famed, Catholic Baroque style to accommodate the needs of his Anglican patron. Chapter 8 argues that the Royal Society took a keen interest in luxury goods with an eye toward their manufacture. Returning to her central idea that such a market was driven by the elite, more generally, and the court, more specifically, she argues that the society was not so much the group of “puritan bourgeoisie” that some take them to be, but a group closely affiliated with the most powerful aristocratic families, especially Henry Howard, the Duke of Norfolk.

Through these chapters, Levy Peck argues both implicitly and explicitly that the seventeenth century gives rise to a Habermasian “public sphere.” To those who would argue that it comes into being in the eighteenth century, Levy Peck responds, “I argue that, in many respects, that public was already in place” (352). Her argument depends on employing the word, “public,” often in regard to new architectural spaces. The New Exchange is described as a “new public sphere,” even as one museum is described as offering a “new public space” (52, 157). As she discusses these sites, Levy Peck suggests that a new public space is created when people come together to consume luxury goods. In her discussion of the New Exchange, established in 1609 in London's fashionable West End by Robert Cecil, the Earl of Salisbury, Levy Peck focuses on how it brought ladies out in new ways into a public space. She focuses, then, on how such shopping brought them in contact with others of their social group but also with the shopkeepers, employees, and others who assembled at the site. Perhaps a closer consideration of documents that would demonstrate that news and gossip that were exchanged in such locales would strengthen her claim that the Exchanges did, indeed, create a new public sphere.

Levy Peck makes this same point elsewhere when, for example, she
argues that the new buildings of the Jacobean aristocracy were designed to court “public view” of their collections of luxury items like art (207). Levy Peck considers the intriguing case of John Tradescant. Originally, a collector for the influential George Villiers, the Duke of Buckingham, he subsequently left Villiers’ employ, settled in South Lambeth, and created a museum, “The Ark,” where he “publicly displayed his natural history collections” (157). Here again, Levy Peck offers an argument in which a “public space” is created when a number of people, especially the “well-to-do,” come together to consume luxury items.

Her argument may be, however, that this “public” is created as much by subsequent events than it is by the space of the museum itself. In her discussion of “The Ark,” Levy Peck focuses much more on its afterlife than she does on the site of the museum itself. Not only does she detail how the collection itself formed the basis for the Ashmolean Museum, established in Oxford in 1677, but she also describes in detail the way this collection was represented in the 1656 publication, *Musaeum Tradescantianum*. In focusing on the latter, Levy Peck describes how Tradescant’s son “expand[ed] the audience for his father’s collection to include scientists, artisans, and the nation as a whole” (161). Given the intriguing relationship between the initial site as perhaps a proto-public sphere and the book itself as something that expanded this sphere, more explicit discussion of the relationship would be warranted.

In sum, Levy Peck demonstrates how luxury goods are at the center of crucial cultural shifts of the early modern period. Scholars of race, class, colonialism and social history, to name just a few areas, will find much of value in this work. In this, *Consuming Splendor* may promote the most valuable exchange of all.


“For there must be . . . heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest . . .,” the Scripture asserts categorically, though