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Forschungs- und Literaturbericht

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Networks of Supply and Elite Consumers in England and Germany, c. 1750–1830

Versorgungsnetzwerke und Elitenkonsum in England und Deutschland, ca. 1750–1830

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Abstract: This comparative study explores the consumption practices and systems of supply of elite families in England and Germany from the middle of the eighteenth into the early nineteenth century. The paper focuses on three key elements of elite consumption – silverware, livery, and wine – to tease out important aspects of the elite’s use of consumer goods as a means of self-expression and for the construction of status. The study identifies important differences as well as similarities between English and German retail systems and in doing so further questions the notion of a single model of retail development: Germany was not a stage behind England on a linear development trajectory, but was instead characterised by a dispersed yet integrated system of retail centres. The complex interplay of local, regional and national systems of supply highlighted in this study has implications far beyond these elite families and invites a reassessment of the prevalent notions of consumption history.

JEL-Codes: N 33, P 25, P 46, R 22

Keywords: Household Consumption, Retail Systems, Social Elites, Konsum, Haushalt, Adel, Einzelhandel

In 1809, Karl von Dillen, the *Oberhofintendant* and de facto *Oberhofmarschall* (high steward) of the Württemberg court, had a large account to settle. Friends, relatives and agents had shopped for him and his wife at the best boutiques in

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Paris, buying chinaware, shoes, perfume, hats and haberdashery as well as victuals such as oysters, vinegar and mustard for a total of almost 3,000 francs.¹ In later years, the Dillens acquired from Paris two marble chimney pieces (weighing 759 kilograms), decorative vases and clocks, more shoes, feathers, dresses and other fashion items.² Their purchases underline the standing of Paris as a pan-European metropole as well as the extensive networks of connections that characterised European elite consumer culture.³ Concentrating on these extraordinary purchases, however, means missing the bulk of shopping and consumption practices even of the elite: the receipts from Parisian shopkeepers make up only a small portion of the hundreds of bills conserved at the Württemberg State Archive in Stuttgart as part of the Dillens' estate.⁴ The vast majority are recurring bills from artisans in Stuttgart and Ludwigsburg for clothing, tableware, equine equipment, household furnishings, and food and drink. In some cases, they amount to nothing more than a couple of guilders paid for a salad bowl or five horse brushes;⁵ but they also record the delivery of important pieces such as a "chandelier in the Parisian style", made by the Ludwigsburg tinsmith Distelbart and costing 720 guilders, and even a stately carriage, which involved 13 different craftsmen and ran up a consolidated bill of 1,424 guilders.⁶

Taken together, these bills tell a fuller and more complex story of local, regional and international systems of supply; of concerns with quality and service, and of consumption practices as a means to display status, but also resulting from personal preferences and the practicalities of everyday life. Such household accounts and collections of bills offer a unique opportunity to learn more about the processes and patterns of supply that formed the backbone of consumption, but which hitherto have seldom been used in this way. Whilst scholarly attention has focused primarily on what household accounts can tell us about the charac-

1 Hauptstaatsarchiv Stuttgart (HStAS), Q3/13 Bü 4, Conti aus Paris.

2 HStAS, Q3/13 Bü 1-3.

3 See, for example: *C. Sargentson*, *Merchants and Luxury Markets. The Marchands Merciers of Eighteenth-Century Paris*, London 1996; *N. Coquery*, *L'Hotel Aristocratique. Le Marché du Luxe à Paris au XVIIIe Siècle*, Paris 1998; *Idem*, *Tenir Boutique à Paris au XVIIIe Siècle. Luxe et Demi-Luxe*, Paris 2011; *J. Ilmakunnas*, *The Luxury Shopping Experience of the Swedish Aristocracy in Eighteenth-Century Paris*, in: *D. Simonton/M. Kaartinen/A. Montenach (Eds.)*, *Luxury and Gender in European Towns, 1700–1914*, London 2015, pp. 115-131.

4 The Dillen records are contained in two estate records and an extensive family archive, all of them held at the Hauptstaatsarchiv Stuttgart: HStAS, Q3/7, Q3/8, Q3/13.

5 HStAS, Q3/13 Bü 1, bill by glassmaker Wilh. Wickel, Stuttgart, 11.4.1810; HStAS, Q3/13 Bü 3, bill by brushmaker Johann Georg Hanselmann, Stuttgart, 8.2.1814.

6 HStAS, Q3/13 Bü 1, bill by Distelbart, Ludwigsburg, 10.4.1810; HStAS Q3/13 Bü 1, collected bills for carriage, 25.10.1812.

teristics of household spending,⁷ we use them here to explore both the geography of the spending choices made by an important group of prime consumers in England and Germany⁸ and what this reveals of the broader geographies of retail systems in the two countries. In particular, we are concerned with the influence of a metropolitan centre in shaping these choices and geographies.

1 Histories of Consumption and Supply

Frank Trentmann has described consumption as “a mirror of the human condition”.⁹ Historians of the eighteenth century have peered closely into this mirror, looking for a clear image of the nascent consumer society sketched out by Neil McKendrick nearly 40 years ago.¹⁰ Unsurprisingly, historians of Britain have been in the vanguard, identifying the precocity and middle-class character of its consumerism: this was, in McKendrick’s view, a democratisation of consumption that preceded and fed into large-scale industrialisation. It involved the consumption of new types of goods (especially so-called colonial goods) and the emergence of new social practices.¹¹ As geographical and sometimes chronological research horizons expanded, numerous other studies have confirmed similar patterns and trends in the Low Countries and elsewhere.¹² There has been a

7 See for example R. Reith/L. Pichler-Baumgartner/G. Stöger (Eds.), *Haushalten und Konsumieren. Die Ausgabenbücher der Salzburger Kaufmannsfamilie Spängler von 1733 bis 1785*, Salzburg 2016. Exceptions are J. Whittle/E. Griffiths, *Consumption and Gender in the Early Seventeenth-Century Household. The World of Alice Le Strange*, Oxford 2012; J. Stobart/M. Rothery, *Consumption and the Country House*, Oxford 2016.

8 Germany is here used as a generic term for the German speaking lands which until 1806 formed part of the Holy Roman Empire of German Nation. The examples used in this study are drawn from the Rhineland and Württemberg.

9 F. Trentmann, Introduction, in: *Idem* (Ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Consumption*, Oxford 2012, pp. 1-19, here p. 1.

10 N. McKendrick, *The Consumer Revolution of Eighteenth-Century England*, in: *Idem*/J. Brewer/J. Plumb, *The Birth of a Consumer Society. The Commercialization of Eighteenth-century England*, London 1982, pp. 9-33.

11 L. Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour and Material Culture in Britain 1660–1760*, London 1988. For a similar study of France, see A. Pardailhé-Galabrun, *La Naissance de l’Intime. 3000 Foyers Parisiens, XVIIe–XVIIIe Siècles*, Paris 1988.

12 W. Smith, *Consumption and the Making of Respectability, 1600–1800*, London 2002; M. Overton/J. Whittle/D. Dean/A. Hann, *Production and Consumption in English Households, 1600–1750*, London 2004; Anne McCants, *Poor Consumers as Global Consumers. The Diffusion of Tea and Coffee Drinking in the Eighteenth Century*, in: *Economic History Review* 61, 2008,

tacit assumption that other parts of Europe followed a similar trajectory to Britain, perhaps preceding it (in the case of the Dutch Republic), but generally following behind, often with a considerable time lag.¹³ Until recently, most studies of Germany have suggested a limited engagement with this world of goods before the nineteenth century,¹⁴ a line of argument that is surprisingly similar to much older narratives of Germany as the perpetual latecomer in the process of industrialisation and nation building. The latter view has been challenged over several decades by empirical research that has highlighted the importance of regional industrial development and the uneven process of industrialisation – work which chimes with the persistence of regional identities in the age of nationalism, and demonstrates that economic, social and cultural integration was a multi-faceted process.¹⁵ However, it is only very recently that scholars

pp. 172-200; *B. Blondé*, *Conflicting Consumption Models? The Symbolic Meaning of Possessions and Consumption amongst the Antwerp Nobility at the End of the Eighteenth Century*, in: *B. Blondé/N. Coquery/J. Stobart/I. Van Damme (Eds.)*, *Fashioning Old and New. Changing Consumer Patterns in Western Europe, 1650–1900*, Turnhout 2009, pp. 61-80; *J. Poukens*, *Old and New Luxuries in Town and Country in the Eighteenth-Century Habsburg Netherlands*, in: *K. Bruland/A. Gerritsen/P. Hudson/G. Riello (Eds.)*, *Reinventing the Economic History of Industrialisation*, Montreal 2020, pp. 213-28.

13 *S. Schama*, *The Embarrassment of Riches. An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age*, Berkeley 1988; *R. Sandgruber*, *Die Anfänge der Konsumgesellschaft. Konsumgüterverbrauch, Lebensstandard und Alltagskultur in Österreich im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert*, Wien 1982; *H. Kaelble/J. Kocka/H. Siegrist (Eds.)*, *Europäische Konsumgeschichte. Zur Gesellschafts- und Kulturgeschichte des Konsums (18. bis 20. Jh.)*, Frankfurt/Main 1997.

14 *M. Prinz (Ed.)*, *Der lange Weg in den Überfluss. Anfänge und Entwicklung der Konsumgesellschaft seit der Vormoderne*, Paderborn 2003; *S. Ogilvie*, *Consumption, Social Capital, and the “Industrious Revolution” in Early Modern Germany*, in: *Journal of Economic History* 70, 2010, pp. 287-325; *S. Hirbodan/S. Ogilvie/R. Regnath (Eds.)*, *Revolution des Fleißes, Revolution des Konsums. Leben und Wirtschaften im ländlichen Württemberg von 1650 bis 1800*, Ostfildern 2015; *C. Kleinschmidt/J. Logemann (Eds.)*, *Konsum im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, Berlin 2021. On the different traditions in the Anglophone, French and German historiography and its consequences for consumption history see *M. Prinz*, “Konsum” und “Konsumgesellschaft” – Vorschläge zu Definition und Verwendung, in: *Idem*, *Der lange Weg in den Überfluss*, pp. 11-34.

15 *S. Pollard (Ed.)*, *Region und Industrialisierung. Studien zur Rolle der Region in der Wirtschaftsgeschichte der letzten zwei Jahrhunderte*, Göttingen 1980; *E. Schremmer (Ed.)*, *Wirtschaftliche soziale Integration in historischer Sicht. Arbeitstagung der Gesellschaft für Wirtschafts- und Sozialgeschichte in Marburg 1995*, Stuttgart 1996; *H.-W. Hahn*, *Die Industrielle Revolution in Deutschland*, München 2011, S. 98-107; *J. Brophy*, *The End of the Economic Old Order: The Great Transition, 1750–1860*, in: *H. Walser Smith*, *The Oxford Handbook of Modern German History*, Oxford 2011, pp. 169-194; *C. Applegate*, *A Nation of Provincials. The German Idea of Heimat*, Berkeley 1990; *H. Walser Smith*, *Germany, a Nation in its Time. Before, during, and after Nationalism 1500–2000*, New York 2020.

working on material culture have begun to assess German consumer history outside the constraints of an English model of development.¹⁶

Within the vast body of literature on the so-called consumer revolution, three areas have particular relevance to our analysis. The first comprises attempts to understand or theorise the underpinning motivations of consumers. Motivation was seen by McKendrick primarily in terms of emulation, fed by the dynamic driving force of fashion.¹⁷ Whilst others have rightly questioned this emulation model, arguing amongst other things that imitation should not be read as emulation,¹⁸ it is abundantly clear that aspirational spending was important in many households, both in England and Germany. Yet, as Hannah Greig's analysis of London's *Beau Monde* makes clear, keeping in fashion was not simply about being modish: it also signalled rank and status.¹⁹ To understand the ways in which modes of consumption signalled social standing, historians have drawn on a variety of theorisations of distinction. The most influential – not least because they place consumption practices at the heart of their thinking – are those of Thorstein Veblen and Pierre Bourdieu.²⁰ Both emphasise how status was cemented and signalled through personal accomplishments and tastes, and the consumption of certain types of goods. Crucially, these things were learned and enacted expressly in order to reproduce social distinctions: this was defensive rather than emulative consumption. In Britain, these ideas have been linked to notions of character, for example in terms of masculine elites; in Germany, they are tied more closely to the ways in which status and

16 C. Fertig/U. Pfister, Coffee, Mind and Body. Global Material Culture and the Eighteenth-Century Hamburg Import Trade, in: A. Gerritsen/G. Riello (Eds.), *The Global Lives of Things. The Material Culture of Connections in the Early Modern World*, London 2016, pp. 221-240; J. Schmidt-Funke (Ed.), *Materielle Kultur und Konsum in der Frühen Neuzeit*, Köln 2019; K. Siebenhüner/G. Schopf/J. Jordan (Eds.), *Cotton in Context. Manufacturing, Marketing and Consuming Textiles in the German-speaking World (1500–1900)*, Köln 2019.

17 McKendrick, *Consumer Revolution*, p. 11.

18 C. Campbell, Understanding Traditional and Modern Patterns of Consumption in Eighteenth-century England: a Character-action Approach', in: J. Brewer/R. Porter (Eds.), *Consumption and the World of Goods*, London 1993, pp. 40-57.

19 H. Greig, *The Beau Monde. Fashionable Society in Georgian London*, Oxford 2013, pp. 36-47. See also D. Roche, *The Culture of Clothing. Dress and Fashion in the Ancien Regime*, Cambridge 2002.

20 T. Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class. An Economic Study of Institutions*, Basingstoke 1912; P. Bourdieu, *Distinction. A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, London 1984.

national identity were linked through the forms of consumption promoted in publications such as *Journal des Luxus und der Moden*.²¹

The second key strand in the literature comprises studies of retailing. For a long time, eighteenth-century retailing was overshadowed by the apparently more dramatic changes seen in the nineteenth century, most notably department stores and multiple retailers. A growing body of work – again focused on north-west Europe – has changed our understanding of retailing in this period. The work of Hoh-Cheung and Lorna Mui, and Carole Shammas in the 1980s and 1990s demonstrated the existence of growing, dynamic and complex retail systems in England; a picture confirmed for the Low Countries.²² Geographical analyses have shown that these retail systems, based on dense networks of towns, were hierarchically structured and spatially integrated, with London playing a key role in articulating a national system of supply.²³ The shops themselves, once thought of as gloomy and unappealing places of mundane exchange, have had their shutters thrown open by scholars to reveal sophisticated social and economic spaces.²⁴ Surprisingly, there is very little comparable work on Germany,

21 *Campbell*, Character-action Approach; *H. French/M. Rothery*, Man's Estate. Landed Gentry Masculinities, 1660–1900, Oxford 2012; *Stobart/Rothery*, Consumption and the Country House, pp. 109-39; *M. North*, Genuss und Glück des Lebens. Kulturkonsum im Zeitalter der Aufklärung, Köln 2003; *D. Purdy*, The Tyranny of Elegance. Consumer Cosmopolitanism in the Era of Goethe, Baltimore 1998; *A. Borchert/R. Dressel (Eds.)*, Das Journal des Luxus und der Moden. Kultur um 1800, Heidelberg 2004.

22 *H.-C. Mui/L. Mui*, Shops and Shopkeeping in Eighteenth-Century England, London 1989; *C. Shammas*, Pre-industrial Consumer in England and America, Oxford 1990; *B. Blondé/I. Van Damme*, Retail Growth and Consumer Changes in a Declining Urban Economy: Antwerp (1650–1750), in: *Economic History Review* 63, 2010, pp. 638-63; *D. Van Den Heuvel/S. Ogilvie*, Retail Development in the Consumer Revolution: the Netherlands, c.1670–c.1815, in: *Explorations in Economic History* 50, 2013, pp. 69-87; *C. Lesger*, Shopping Spaces and the Urban Landscape in Early Modern Amsterdam, 1550–1850, Amsterdam 2020. In France, attention has focused much more squarely on Paris – see *Coquery*, L'Hotel Aristocratique; *Coquery*, Tenir Boutique à Paris.

23 *F.J. Fisher*, The Development of London as a Centre of Conspicuous Consumption in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries, in: *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 30, 1948, pp. 37-50; *E.A. Wrigley*, A Simple Model of London's Importance in Changing English Society and Economy 1650–1750, in: *Past and Present* 31, 1967, pp. 44-70. For a more recent analysis, see *J. Stobart/A. Hann/V. Morgan*, Spaces of Consumption. Leisure and Shopping in the English Town, c. 1680–1830, Abingdon 2007

24 *C. Walsh*, Shop Design and the Display of Goods in Eighteenth-century London, in: *Journal of Design History* 8, 1995, pp. 157-76; *Sargentson*, Merchants and Luxury Markets; *N. Cox*, The Complete Tradesman. A Study of Retailing, 1550–1820, Aldershot 2000; *A. Hann/J. Stobart*, Sites of Consumption. The Display of Goods in Provincial Shops in Eighteenth Century England, in: *Cultural and Social History* 2, 2005, pp. 165-87; *Lesger*, Shopping Spaces.

where the focus has remained very much on the role of the great international fairs, developments in particular towns or of individual retail businesses, and the continued importance of itinerant dealers, especially in rural areas.²⁵ Underpinning this neglect is the assumption that little changed in German consumption before the early decades of the nineteenth century – at least beyond the great cities – and that, without a metropole like London or Paris to act as a stimulus or forerunner, German cities and retailers were inevitably rather backward in their development.²⁶

Bringing together these two research strands is a growing interest in the processes, practices and spaces of shopping. As shops have been revealed as complex and sophisticated places, the processes of exchange that went on within them are increasingly recognised as having had important social and cultural as well as economic dimensions.²⁷ Shopping could be a pleasurable activity as well as a mundane duty: it was about looking and choosing as well as buying. Historians have thus positioned shopping and shops within wider processes of leisure and urban improvement – again an association initially made in England but since explored for other parts of Europe.²⁸ The implications of this for

25 W. Reininghaus (Ed.), *Wanderhandel in Europa*, Hagen 1993; U. Spiekermann, *Basis der Konsumgesellschaft. Entstehung und Entwicklung des modernen Kleinhandels in Deutschland 1850–1914*, München 1999; U. Pfister, *Vom Kiepenkerl zur Karstadt. Einzelhandel und Warenkultur im 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhundert*, in: *Vierteljahrschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte* (VSWG) 87, 2000, pp. 38–66; P. Kriedte, *Stadt und Land im frühneuzeitlichen Detailhandel*, in: *Die alte Stadt* 29, 2002, pp. 102–126, S. Ogilvie/J. Maegraith/M. Küpker, *Krämer und ihre Waren im ländlichen Württemberg zwischen 1600 und 1740*, in: *Zeitschrift für Agrargeschichte und Agrasoziologie* (ZAA) 59, 2011, pp. 54–75 and 102–126; H. Homburg, *German Landscapes of Consumption, 1750–1850. Perspectives of German and Foreign Travellers* in: J. Furnée/C. Lesger (Eds.), *The Landscape of Consumption. Shopping Streets and Cultures in Western Europe, 1600–1900*, Basingstoke 2014, pp. 125–156.

26 This stance is also reiterated in the most recent publication on German consumption history. See C. Kleinschmidt, *Von der exklusiven zur inklusiven Konsumgesellschaft. „Industrious Revolution“ und Anfänge des Massenkonsums (1770–1918)*, as well as R. Banken/C. Kleinschmidt/J. Logemann, *Absatz und Reklame. Die Anfänge von modernem Einzelhandel und die Werbung bis zum Ersten Weltkrieg*, both in: *Kleinschmidt/Logemann, Konsum*, pp. 11–56; pp. 191–207.

27 Cox, *Complete Tradesman*; J. Stobart, *Sugar and Spice. Grocers and Groceries in Provincial England, 1650–1830*, Oxford 2013, pp. 190–214, *Coquery*, *Tenir Boutique à Paris*.

28 P. Borsay, *The English Urban Renaissance. Culture and Society in the Provincial Town, 1660–1770*, Oxford 1989; Stobart/Hann/Morgan, *Spaces of Consumption*; J. Furnée, *Our living Museum of Nouveautés. Visual and Social Pleasures in The Hague’s Shopping Streets, 1650–1900*, in: *Furnée/Lesger, The Landscape of Consumption*, pp. 208–231; A. Chatenet-Calyste, *Feminine Luxury in Paris. Marie-Fortunée d’Este, Princesse de Conti (1731–1803)*, in: *Simonton/Kaartinen/Montenach, Luxury and Gender*, pp. 171–89.

the shopper have been examined both in terms of the range of social and economic skills deployed, and the ways in which these skills, and the shops patronised, reflected the character and status of the individual shopper.²⁹ Such considerations were of particular significance for social elites, as Aurelie Chatenet-Calyste notes for eighteenth-century Paris,³⁰ yet these elites occupy a somewhat equivocal position in studies of shopping and consumption more generally. On the one hand, there is a growing number of studies focusing on the shopping practices of the aristocracy and on the ways in which country houses were provisioned.³¹ On the other hand, historical studies of consumption tend to focus on the middling sort as the driving force and defining element in a consumer society. This highlights a double paradox. First, studies of elites are somewhat separate from the mainstream of historical work on retailing and consumption: they are seen as leaders of fashion, but they are ultimately a rather hazily defined *other* to which the middling sort aspired. Second, despite their role as prime consumers and fashion leaders, elite consumption (especially for the home) is most often viewed in terms of high-order goods and linked to a conception of their residences as treasure houses to be understood in terms of art history and collecting rather than consumption. This ties in with older notions of equating the elite with (morally questionable) luxury; indeed, the pursuit of luxury has been characterised by Werner Sombart as a key driver in economic transformation.³² Everyday practicalities and provisioning are largely ignored by researchers, especially for Germany: a situation that is all the more remarkable given the rich archival material available for elites in both England and Germany.

The aim of this paper is to address this lacuna, inserting landowning elites into the history of consumption by exploring the retail systems through which they were supplied with a range of consumer goods. However, we go beyond this by offering a comparative analysis with the aim of answering three key questions. First, what was the structure and geography of these supply systems: how did they differ between England and Germany, between different members

²⁹ Walsh, *Shop Design and the Display of Goods*; *Stobart/Rothery, Consumption and the Country House*, pp. 196-228; *Ilmakunnas, Luxury Shopping Experience*.

³⁰ *Chatenet-Calyste, Feminine Luxury in Paris*.

³¹ These include: A. Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors. At Home in Georgian England*, New Haven 2009; Whittle/Griffiths, *Consumption and Gender*; *Stobart/Rothery, Consumption and the Country House*; Greig, *Beau Monde*; J. Ilmakunnas/J. Stobart (Eds.), *A Taste for Luxury in Early Modern Europe*, London 2017.

³² W. Sombart, *Luxus und Kapitalismus*, München 1913. See also M. Berg/E. Eger (Eds.), *Luxury in the Eighteenth Century. Debates, Desires and Delectable Goods*, Basingstoke 2007; T. Meyer/R. Reith (Eds.), "Luxus und Konsum". Eine historische Annäherung, Münster 2003.

of the aristocracy, and according to the goods being acquired? Second, what do the patterns of supply tell us about retail systems more generally: is there evidence of supra-regional integration in Germany and what does this say about the importance of metropolitan centres? Third, how did the different supply systems and practices impact upon the elite's use of consumer goods as a means of self-expression: were their terms of reference local, regional or metropolitan, and what does this tell us about their expression of status?

To answer these questions, the analysis is focused on three sets of goods, chosen to highlight different aspects of elite consumption: [1] silverware, a key *old luxury* and status symbol with high material value, yet also the subject of fashion changes and substitution by silverplate and high-quality porcelain; [2] livery, which signalled status to the outside world and was cumulatively high cost, yet also involved involuntary and indirect consumption by servants; [3] wine, important for traditions of hospitality and in signalling status, but also an everyday consumer good, especially in wine-making regions. These were things that landowners sometimes shopped for in person and sometimes via correspondence with the supplier. In noble households, stewards undoubtedly had a hand in the process, but choices were almost invariably made by their employers.³³ To explore the supply systems used to acquire silverware, livery and wine, evidence is drawn from the household accounts and collections of bills for a variety of families in both countries: from the very wealthiest nobles with influential positions at court to the local gentry.

To be sure, English and German elites – and the aristocracy or nobility in particular – varied greatly in economic and political power. Our comparative analysis rests on the idea that these families held functionally and socially comparable positions in their respective countries.³⁴ At the top of the hierarchy are the Leighs, a family in the highest wealth bracket and established members of the British nobility, they had a large country house in Warwickshire and a villa in suburban London; the Salm-Reifferscheid-Dycks, from the highest echelon of the lower German nobility and independent rulers in their principality, they were very wealthy and owned a grand country house (Schloss Dyck), a town house in Cologne and they rented another in Aachen; and the Nesselrode-Ehreshovens, an *old family* and high ranking among the lower nobility, they were wealthy and

³³ See *Stobart/Rothery*, *Consumption and the Country House*, pp. 239-58.

³⁴ *J. Canning/H. Wellenreuther (Eds.)*, *Britain and Germany Compared. Nationality, Society and Nobility in the Eighteenth Century*, Göttingen 2001; *J. Leonhard/C. Wieland (Eds.)*, *What Makes the Nobility Noble? Comparative Perspectives from the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Century*, Göttingen 2011.

well-connected, with a country house in Ehreshoven and a substantial town house in Düsseldorf. Slightly lower down the hierarchy were the Newdigates, occupying the lowest tier of the British aristocracy, but wealthy on the basis of landownership and income from coal mines and with a house in central London (useful to Sir Roger when an MP) and a country house in Warwickshire; the Adelmans, who enjoyed an independent status as imperial knights, but had only limited resources at their disposal; and the Dillens, recently ennobled, who owed their position and wealth exclusively to the first Württemberg king who gifted the family a country house, Schloss Dätzingen, although they lived mostly at court in Stuttgart and Ludwigsburg. Below these families in terms of status and wealth were the Gibbards, untitled county gentry with a modest income, who lived in a manor house in Bedfordshire.

Empirical material is drawn from account books and household accounts for the following families and periods: Salm-Reifferscheid-Dyck (covering 1806–1830), Nesselrode-Ehreshoven (1774–1804), Adelman (1796–1826), Newdigate (1743–1796), and Gibbard (1816–1829). We also utilize collections of receipted bills, numbering over 2,500 for the Leigh family (for the period 1763–1806) and 1,100 for the Dillen family (for 1806–1817).

As these families lived in different countries and regions, they paid for goods and kept their accounts in a variety of currencies. The Reichsgulden (fl.) was the fundamental currency of accounting in Southern Germany, whereas in Northern Germany the Reichstaler (Rtl.) was more widely used for book-keeping.³⁵ The conversion rate between Reichsgulden and Reichstaler was 1.3, at times 1.5 fl., to 1 Rtl.; one Pound Sterling was approximately 6 Reichsgulden 40 Kreuzer (£3 equalled 20 fl.) or 4 Reichstaler 25 Stüber (£9 equalled 40 Rtl.). A better idea of the local buying power of these different currencies can be gained from some relative prices. At the turn of the nineteenth century a kitchen maid in the Rhineland could expect to earn 20 Reichstaler per year (plus board and lodging) and in Württemberg, the pay rate was similar but in Reichsgulden. In England, the same kitchen maid might earn £6: about one-third more, indicating a higher cost of living. We will use the analogy of the kitchen maid earnings to indicate relative prices throughout this study.

Whatever currency they used, it is important to note that, despite the reputation of the aristocracy as bad payers, the families scrutinized here did pay

35 On the different currencies and for conversion tools see <http://www.pierre-marteau.com/currency/converter>, 10.8.2021; *W. Trapp/T. Fried*, *Handbuch der Münzkunde und des Geldwesens in Deutschland*, Stuttgart 1999.

their bills, even if the bills were received with a time lag of several years.³⁶ Quite often, elite customers maintained an open account with their suppliers that was either settled at the end of the year or after a substantial amount had been run up. Intermittent payments were sometimes made to reduce the bills somewhat and to preserve good and trusting relations with suppliers, but the families, or more often their stewards or secretaries, determined when a bill should be paid.

2 Geographies of Supply

In traditional economics, consumer behaviour is modelled in terms of effort minimisation. This means a person will visit the closest possible point of supply to fulfil their need: low order goods are available and purchased locally; higher order goods are only available in higher order centres and the consumer must therefore travel further to acquire them.³⁷ Such models are of course simplistic, yet they provide a useful way of organising the following discussion.

Beginning with an undoubtedly high-order good, silverware is an archetypal *old luxury*: a high-cost positional good that marked both wealth and status.³⁸ As might be expected, therefore, London dominated the English aristocracy's purchases of silverware throughout the eighteenth century and beyond. Through the 1760s and 1770s, Sir Roger Newdigate bought a range of table- and ceremonial-ware from the London silversmiths Parker and Wakelin, before switching his patronage briefly to Pickett and Rundle of Ludgate Hill and then to John Nodes of New Bond Street, before returning to Wakelin, who was by then in partnership with Garrard, in 1787.³⁹ Edward, fifth Lord Leigh of Stoneleigh Abbey in Warwickshire, patronised the London silversmith Thomas Gilpin in the mid-1760s – as his family had done in the 1730s to the 1750s. When Lord Leigh's sister, Mary, became life tenant of the Stoneleigh estates at his death in 1786, she turned to

³⁶ See, for example, HStAS, Q3/13 Bü 1, correspondence with Georg Armbruster, Altenried 1812; HStAS, Q3/13 Bü 3, correspondence with Elise Goldschmied, Karlsruhe 1814. For a fuller discussion of aristocratic attitudes to credit see *J. Itmakunnas/A.S. Overkamp/J. Stobart*, To their credit: The aristocracy and commercial credit in Europe, c. 1750–1820, in: *Journal of Modern European History* 2, 2024, pp. 246–264.

³⁷ For fuller discussion, see *Stobart/Hann/Morgan*, *Spaces of Consumption*, pp. 26 f.

³⁸ On old and new luxury, see *J. de Vries*, *The Industrious Revolution. Consumer Behaviour and the Household Economy, 1650 to the Present*, Cambridge 2008, esp. pp. 48–50.

³⁹ Warwickshire County Record Office (WCRO), CR136/v/136 – accounts, 1763–96.

Thomas and Robert Makepeace of Lincolns Inn Fields, buying silverware from them through the 1780s and 1790s.⁴⁰

Augsburg had long held a similarly dominant position to London, when it came to silverware across the German lands, so it is unsurprising that, at the time of his wedding to Sabina Maria Josepha Princess of Rubempré in 1738, August Eugen Bernhard von Salm-Reifferscheid-Dyck looked to Augsburg for a gilded coffee set, a silver toilette and a new surtout (centrepiece) for their table.⁴¹ Yet in 1775, their nephew Johann Franz von Salm-Reifferscheid-Dyck declined his brother-in-law's offer to broker an advantageous deal with an Augsburg silversmith and to have designs prepared by the latter. Instead of using his family connections, the young count chose to place repeated orders for plate and cutlery with the Düsseldorf silversmith Friedrich Jakob Teichmann. Not only was Teichmann located much closer to Schloss Dyck, he had also previously supplied substantial pieces of jewellery for Johann Franz's wife.⁴² A generation later, the recently ennobled Karl von Dillen and his wife acquired their silverware from suppliers to the Württemberg court, profiting from the local promotion of the dukes, later kings, of Württemberg. In 1815, the Dillens employed the *Hofsilberarbeiter* Christian Sick in Stuttgart to make 36 table covers, costing 1,190 guilders – the annual wages of about 60 kitchen maids; true to their ostentatious style, the Dillens had the items gilded and engraved with their coat of arms.⁴³ Ten years previously, they had ordered a fine pair of candlesticks from the same supplier,⁴⁴ but they also patronized another Stuttgart silversmith named Hirschvogel during the same period. Between 1807 and 1814, he provided the Dillens with a variety of silverware worth 2,576 guilders, including another two sets of cutlery, comprising 24 covers each.⁴⁵ For decorating pipe heads with silver, Karl von Dillen turned to yet another silversmith, Bros. Becht in Heilbronn, on several occasions in 1815 and 1816.⁴⁶

Even as the Dillens were ordering these things, silver had already lost some of its appeal as a marker of status and taste. Their silverware generally comprised

⁴⁰ See, for example: Shakespeare Centre Library and Archives (SCLA), DR18/5/4251, DR18/5/5695, DR18/5/5809, DR18/5/5858, DR18/5/6046. Robert Makepeace was originally from Newcastle upon Tyne, but moved to London in the 1780s.

⁴¹ Archiv Schloss Dyck (ASD), Blaue Bände 503, fol. 557-560.

⁴² ASD, Blaue Bände 467, fol. 597 f.; ASD, Blaue Bände 503, fol. 547-555.

⁴³ HStAS, Q3/13 Bü 3, bill by Christ. Sick, Stuttgart, 9.3.1815.

⁴⁴ HStAS, Q3/13, Bü 4, bill by Christ. Sick, Stuttgart, 6.1.1806.

⁴⁵ HStAS, Q3/13 Bü 5, settlement of bill, Hofsilberarbeiter Hirschvogel, 5.11.1816.

⁴⁶ HStAS, Q3/13 Bü 2, entries on 4.12.1815, 7.3.1816, 14.4.1816; HStAS, Q3/13 Bü 3, bill by Bros. Becht, Heilbronn, 22.6.1815.

accessories such as candle sticks or tea urns; for dinnerware they ordered a full dining set from the French Imperial porcelain manufactory at Sèvres (1809).⁴⁷ Much the same can be seen with the Gibbard family. Their lower social standing may have precluded large-scale spending on silverware, but silverplate would have been well within their means, and earlier generations of middling households had frequently possessed small items of silver.⁴⁸ It is telling, therefore, that the Gibbards' purchases of tableware were of porcelain, made by the Staffordshire company Spode and Copeland, but ordered from their London showrooms.⁴⁹ In England, London remained the key point of supply for high quality tableware, regardless of its place of manufacture.

Livery was both an expected provision for male servants and an important public statement of wealth and status. Coachmen, grooms and footmen were clothed in a manner appropriate to their roles, but also for display. Sir Roger Newdigate's accounts give us the most comprehensive picture of spending and indicate that his outlay on livery between 1763 and 1795 was about half that for his own and his wife's clothing. Spending rose from about £36 per annum in the 1760s to round £68 per annum by the 1790s.⁵⁰ There is little detail on the nature of the livery bought, but it routinely comprised a frock coat and waistcoat, leather breeches, a hat or cap and boots, and it appears that a fresh set was acquired almost every year.⁵¹ Mary Leigh, by then responsible for the Stoneleigh estates worth £13,643 per annum, spent even larger sums on livery.⁵² Between 1786 and 1800, she laid out a total of over £1,200: about £85 per annum or the equivalent of 13 kitchen maids' wages. For her servants at Stoneleigh Abbey – mostly park- and game-keepers – she acquired in 1789 a variety of clothing, including “4 blue kersey cloth great coats with scarlet cloth cuffs & capes & trimmings, 4 green hair shag frocks, scarlet cloth waistcoats & trimmings, 2 cotton parragon frocks & waistcoats & trimmings” at a total cost of £32 13s.⁵³ Around

47 HStAS, Q3/13 Bü 4, shipping bill for china, 23.9.1811.

48 *Weatherill*, Consumer Behaviour and Material Culture, Table 2.1.

49 Bedfordshire Library and Archives (BLA), GA61, various bills from Spode & Copeland.

50 WCRO, CR136/v/136 – accounts, 1763-96.

51 A bi-annual cycle was more common in Britain: see *M. Waterson*, *The Servant's Hall. A Domestic History of Erddig*, London 1980, p. 169. In Prussia and elsewhere in the German-speaking lands, servants' regulations (*Gesindeordnung*) stipulated that servants should be supplied with new livery at regular intervals, a bi-annual cycle being commonly expected.

52 Mary Leigh had been jointly responsible for the estate since her brother, Edward, fifth Lord Leigh, was declared insane in 1774: see *Stobart/Rothery*, *Consumption and the Country House*, pp. 20, 142.

53 SCLA, DR18/5/5842.

the same time, she also bought “4 dress livery laced suits” (at £7 8s. apiece) for her footmen and “a scarlet cloth laced jacket and waistcoat” (at £5 15s.) for both her coachman and postillion.

Decking out servants with clothes appropriate to their masters’ social standing and aspirations was so important in Germany that in 1778 the *Leipziger Intelligenz-Blatt* devoted an article to the topic, detailing just how much one had to spend on one’s servants.⁵⁴ The table of calculations directed at the imagined “lover of household economy” showed an average sum of about 54 Reichstaler (the equivalent of two kitchen maids’ wages) for a set of braided clothes and hat, a sum that is reflected in many country house accounts. The Adelmans, who enjoyed the status of imperial knights but were perennially short of money, spent roughly 50 Reichsgulden per set of livery, excluding shoes and stockings.⁵⁵ In the Rhineland, the significantly wealthier Nesselrode family provided their servants with hats trimmed with silver braid, each costing about 6 Reichstaler, but later opted for gold trimming, raising the cost to 14 Reichstaler per hat.⁵⁶

The similarities between the livery acquired by German and English aristocratic families are quite striking; so too are parallels in the geography of supply, with patronage of tradesmen in metropolitan and regional centres being complemented by purchases from local providers. As with other goods, London dominated the acquisition of livery by the Leighs and Newdigates: Mary Leigh bought livery for her footmen, grooms and coachman from the family business run by William, Edward and Sophie Fell on St Martin’s Lane, London, and the three main suppliers of livery to Sir Roger Newdigate – Joseph Warden, David Jones and Stephen Penny – were all London tailors or drapers with whom he had long-term accounts. Similarly, Karl von Dillen consistently looked to Stuttgart and Ludwigsburg for livery, buying from the drapers Rapp and Finckh and the tailor T. Hauser in Stuttgart, and Gottlieb Ch. Spaeth (draper) and T. Fr. Siegmann (tailor) in Ludwigsburg. For several decades, Karl Franz von Nesselrode-Ehreshoven patronized Karl Hieronymus Farina, a fashionable haberdasher in Düsseldorf. Between 1775 and 1795, Farina supplied the Nesselrode-Ehreshovens with a total of 231 hats, complete with trimmings, along with bright red cloth, trimmings for livery waistcoats and jackets, and miscellaneous items such as hair powder,

54 Anon., *Etwas von Bedientenlivreen*, in: *Gnädigst privilegiertes Leipziger Intelligenz-Blatt*, 28.3.1778, pp. 105-114.

55 Staatsarchiv Ludwigsburg (StAL), PL 12 II Bü 1927, bill by Georg Häfelin, Ellwangen, 18.8.1797.

56 Landesarchiv Nordrhein-Westfalen Abt. Rheinland (LA NRW R), Nesselrode-Ehreshoven Nr. 2166, fol. 152v.-153r.

hair pins and even a comb, all ensuring that their servants were impeccably turned out.⁵⁷

Retailers in major cities – such as Fell, Hauser and Farina – dominated the supply of livery (the total spent on livery at Farina's shop by Nesselrode-Ehreshoven over this period amounted to 3,596 Reichstaler), but local suppliers were also patronized. Sir Roger Newdigate regularly acquired livery breeches from William Nuthall of nearby Atherstone; Edward Leigh bought livery from the Coventry drapers Roberts and Arnold, and Robert Hughes, and Mary Leigh purchased livery for her Stoneleigh servants from William Butler, who was most likely from the nearby town of Kenilworth.⁵⁸ The Salm-Reifferscheid-Dycks consistently employed the shoemakers Peter Triebel, Anton Sick, and his successor Johannes Sick in Damm, Wilhelm Sick in Stessen, and the tailor Heinrich Fischer in Aldenhoven: all located within a three-kilometre radius of Schloss Dyck. In the previous years, the family had also ordered livery cloth from both the draper Jakob Winter in nearby Hemmerden and the merchant Peter Islas in Hülchrath.⁵⁹ At the same time, the Salm-Reifferscheid-Dycks preferred to order hats and trimmings from suppliers in Düsseldorf, demonstrating a certain choosiness in this important item of livery. In later years, they also increasingly relied on the draper Josten & Breuer in Neuss who supplied a large range of woollens in various colours, reflecting an increased need for a continuous and diverse supply.

Due to variations in local production, wine occupied a different place in English and German consumption practices. In Germany, it was a staple of early modern diets and, like beer, formed an important substitute for often-polluted drinking water. Vineyards were cultivated wherever the climate permitted, with the resulting product often being rather sour and weak in alcohol content, so drinking wine was not per se an expression of refinement or elite taste. However, choosing particular wines, cultivating certain drinking rituals, and using choice retailers could give wine this extra meaning and add to its general role as an intoxicant and social lubricant. In England, where wine drinking was characteristically a practice of the elite, the choice of wine and possession of appropriate equipage were more straightforwardly marks of social distinction.

The most cost-effective way to obtain wine was, of course, to cultivate it on family-held land. In the Rhineland and in Württemberg, both traditional wine-growing regions, quite a few nobles produced their own wine, both as a source

57 *Ibid.*, fol. 140r.-185r.

58 SCLA, DR18/5/3381, DR18/5/3421, DR18/5/3604, DR18/5/3641, DR18/5/3709, DR18/5/3787, DR18/5/4082.

59 ASD, Rentamtsbuch Nr. 6-35.

of income and for consumption, despite the often rather low quality of the wines produced, especially in Württemberg.⁶⁰ For instance, the Woellwarth family, imperial knights like the Adelmans, owned a vineyard at their Kleiningersheim estate on the Neckar. They were content to drink almost exclusively their own wine, although they did try to improve the quality by maturing some of it over several decades.⁶¹ The Adelmans themselves satisfied their demand for large quantities of Neckar wine as well as the occasional bottle of Rhenish wine, French claret or sweet Mediterranean wine, by purchasing locally and cheaply.⁶² Even for special occasions such as a ball at their country house, the variety of wines offered by local inns was deemed satisfactory. The attraction of this arrangement was reinforced by the convenience of running an open account with local innkeepers.⁶³ In short, elite wine consumption in Württemberg was very much a local affair. This was true even for the noble upstart Karl von Dillen who appreciated many aspects of fine living: he bought local wines, but chose mature vintages.⁶⁴ Dillen also used his position at the Württemberg court to provision his household with wine, buying both ordinary wine for cooking as well as expensive burgundy from the court's cellar at a small surcharge.⁶⁵

Elsewhere in Germany and especially in England, wine consumption carried more social significance and nobles shopped far more widely for their wine, looking to local, metropolitan and even international suppliers. The Nesselrode family bought wines from the regional centre of Düsseldorf, including barrels of Malaga or white burgundy from the mercer Julius Caesar Farina,⁶⁶ or directly

60 K. *Andermann*, *Adlige Wirtschaften auf dem Lande. Zu den ökonomischen Grundlagen der Ritterschaft in der frühen Neuzeit*, in: K. *Andermann* (Ed.), *Rittersitze. Facetten adligen Lebens im Alten Reich*, Tübingen 2002, pp. 167-190; C. *Krämer*, *Rebsorten in Württemberg. Herkunft, Einführung, Verbreitung und die Qualität der Weine vom Spätmittelalter bis ins 19. Jahrhundert*, Ostfildern 2006, pp. 123-142, 208-216.

61 StAL, PL 9/3 Bü 1462.

62 *Ibid.*; StAS, P10 Bü 538.

63 StAL, PL 12 Bü 1844, Ball account, 1789. Various accounts show that the Adelmans kept an open account or *büchle* with a number of local innkeepers and that they received wine on a continuous basis. See StAL, PL 12 III Bü 131; StAL, PL 12 II Bü 1856.

64 HStAS, Q3/13 Bü 5, bill by Johann Peter Buchlers seel. Söhne, Gerlachsheim, 1.2.1813, for three barrels of 1804, 1783 and 1775 Tauber wine. A barrel of the 1804 vintage wine cost 120 fl., the 1783 one cost 400 fl. and was the most expensive. The Dillens' purchases of rhenish and burgundy were far less extensive.

65 HStAS, Q3/13 Bü 2, bill by the Hofkasse, 27.10.1816; HStAS, Q3/13 Bü 4, bill by Gott. Schnabel, 30.12.1822.

66 LA NRW R, Nesselrode-Ehreshoven, Nr. 2166, fol. 177 v., 176 v. Julius Caesar Farina inherited the business from his father Karl Hieronymus Farina.

from French wine merchants.⁶⁷ English landowners also drew on dealers in provincial towns, but it was London merchants who enjoyed the lion's share of business, even with gentry families like the Gibbards. Between 1816 and 1829, they bought a total of just over £86 of wine from two retailers in nearby Bedford: a substantial amount, but dwarfed by the £406 paid to two London suppliers. The sums were significant for a family of relatively modest means, but the range of wines recorded in the accounts and bills was quite limited.⁶⁸ Further up the social hierarchy, the Leigh family unsurprisingly spent more and consumed a greater variety of wines; yet they were similarly dependent upon London merchants, most notably Robert Kilsha who supplied Edward, fifth Lord Leigh, with £269 6s. of wine in three separate orders placed during 1763 and 1764. Three decades later, Mary Leigh, was dividing her time between her country estate in Warwickshire and her London house in Kensington Gore. It is noteworthy that her main orders for wine were placed with the Coventry wine merchant John Villers, probably because Stoneleigh Abbey was the place where she did the majority of her entertaining.

This geographical concentration on London, contrasts with the multiplicity of centres involved in supplying the Salm-Reifferscheid-Dycks in the Rhineland. In the early nineteenth century, this family shopped for their wine with various merchants in Neuss, Gladbach and Cologne. The Neuss merchant Josten became a favourite provider of Ahr and Moselle wine, billing the Salm-Reifferscheid-Dycks for a total of 625 Reichstaler between 1809 and 1814. Another 780 Reichstaler spent on French claret and Rhenish wine were distributed among three different merchants in Cologne, none of whom could establish themselves as a long-term supplier to this family. This status was achieved by the Aachen wine merchant, Louis Colin, who supplied both the Salm-Reifferscheid-Dycks' townhouse in Aachen and Schloss Dyck with a wide variety of alcoholic beverages, ranging from *vin ordinaire* (burgundy) and wine for the servants by the barrel, to fine clarets, champagne, madeira, malaga and German white wines by the bottle. Between 1816 and 1826, Colin delivered wine costing an impressive total of 4,178 Reichstaler, eclipsing by far any other supplier. Choosing this merchant must have been a very conscious decision, as it meant transporting the wine further and carrying it by road rather than by river, which would have been much cheaper.

The dominance of Louis Colin and the breadth of supply recorded in the Salm-Reifferscheid-Dyck accounts was similar to that of Robert Kilsha at Stone-

67 LA NRW R, Nesselrode-Ehreshoven, Nr. 1808, fol. 20-23, 34 f.

68 BLA, GA5-90, collection of bills.

leigh Abbey. He supplied the Leighs with claret, champagne and burgundy from France; white port, Lisbon and Madeira from Portugal; mountain wine from Spain, and rhenish from Germany.⁶⁹ A large order placed shortly before the fifth Lord Leigh came of age in 1763 included 948 bottles and over a dozen hogsheads (large barrels) of wine, forming the basis of an impressive wine cellar.⁷⁰ In terms of demand, this points to Leigh's broad and refined palate (no doubt developing under the advice of his uncle and guardian, William Craven) and the variety of social occasions at which he would have planned to serve good quality wines. On the supply side, it highlights the broad network on which Kilsha could draw to supply wines from different parts of Europe.

In summary, when looking at the supply of silverware, livery and wine altogether, the most striking difference in elite supply systems in England and Germany is the overweening importance of London in the former. English elites looked either to the metropole or to local towns and villages to meet their demands. As we saw at the start of this article, court nobles like Karl von Dillen also liked to tap into a metropole's plethora of exquisite goods by shopping in Paris. However, his everyday shopping practices, just like those of other German nobles, were focused on local and especially regional suppliers. Shopping for luxury items in Germany was thus a far more decentred affair than in England. Despite this major difference in consumption practices, the relationship between elite consumers and their suppliers were remarkably similar in the two countries: they were often long-term and involved the supply of goods of considerable cumulative value. This was especially true for silverware, but livery and wine bills could also accumulate. On the other hand, none of the elite families studied here relied solely on one supplier; most chose different suppliers for different items at different times. In all cases, however, the nature of the goods and the size of transactions meant that trust was very important to both parties.

3 Retail Systems

In both England and Germany, there was a clear hierarchy of retail centres onto which the shopping practices of the elites were mapped. Their household accounts make it clear that a range of basic goods and services were available in local villages. The Gibbard family employed tailors in Sharnbrook, where they

69 SCLA, DR18/5/4295.

70 SCLA, DR18/5/4055.

lived; they were also able to acquire meat, bread and other provisions from tradesmen in the village, as Lucy Bailey demonstrates.⁷¹ Sharnbrook was clearly a small service centre, capable of supplying many of the everyday needs of a gentry family. Much the same was true of Kenilworth, a large village from whence the Leigh family acquired a range of tailoring services; they also had craftsmen such as blacksmiths and masons near at hand, whilst their housekeeper undoubtedly purchased the varied provisions that appear in her accounts at farms and villages surrounding Stoneleigh Abbey.⁷²

Scholars have long been aware of the presence of shops in English villages, even if we lack detailed knowledge of their stock, business practices and numbers.⁷³ Our analysis makes clear that this was similar in the Germans lands. In Württemberg, innkeepers played a dominant role in supplying victuals and supplementing domestic production, as becomes most clear with regard to beverages.⁷⁴ The majority of the beer and wine consumed was also produced within the region and traded locally; indeed, the presence of inns in most villages made wine one of the most widely marketed commodities in the region. However, innkeepers were also able to supply wines from outside the region: the Adelmans could access Neckar, Rhenish, French and Mediterranean wines from local suppliers, ordering for example on January 4, 1780, 16 bottles of burgundy, 2 bottles of Malaga and 3 bottles of rhenish wine from the inn *Zum goldenen Adler* in Ellwangen.⁷⁵ More than forty years later, this practice had not changed, the *Adlerwirth* in Hohenstadt providing Clemens Wenzeslaus von Adelman with several bottles of rhenish.⁷⁶ Local innkeepers also played an important role as suppliers of meat: the proprietors of both the *Hirsch* and the *Adlerwirth* (both in Hohenstadt) supplied the Adelmans with pork, beef and veal over several decades.⁷⁷ Such long-lasting relationships with local suppliers can also be found

71 L. Bailey, Consumption and Status: Shopping for Clothes in a nineteenth-century Bedfordshire gentry household, in: *Midland History* 36/1, 2011, pp. 89-114; L. Bailey, Squire, Shopkeeper and Staple Food: the reciprocal Relationship between the Country House and the Village Shop in the late Georgian period, in: *History of Retailing and Consumption* 1/1, 2015, pp. 8-27.

72 StAL, DR18/5/2150. See also *Whittle/Griffiths*, Consumption and Gender, pp. 50-55, 72-84.

73 For recent studies, see J. Stobart/L. Bailey, Retail Revolution and the Village Shop, c. 1660–1860, in: *Economic History Review* 71/2, 2018, pp. 393-417; Stobart, Sugar and Spice.

74 On the role of innkeepers as petty retailers see also *Kriedte*, Stadt und Land, p. 111.

75 StAL, PL 12 II Bü 1912, bill by Joseph [Rather], Ellwangen, 15.1.1780.

76 StAL, PL 12 II Bü 1858, entries 7.4.1824, 29.11.1824.

77 StAL, PL 12 II Bü 1912, bill by Anton Jettinger, Hohenstadt 20.9.1780; StAL, PL 12 III Bü 131 (1805-06); StAL, PL 12 III Bü 141 (1815-16). The household accounts of the intermediate years do not give the provider's name but the regularity of the purchases suggests a close and trusting relationship. See StAL, PL 12 III Bü 303; StAL, PL 12 III Bü 305; StAL, PL 12 III Bü 306.

in the Rhineland. At Schloss Dyck, between 1806 and 1825, the staff's meat was supplied by two butchers in nearby Hemmerden, whilst that for the noble family came from three different butchers in Neuss, who provided a greater variety of meats but at a slightly higher price.⁷⁸ Tailors and shoemakers were also widespread. At Schloss Dyck, for instance, the local tailor Heinrich Fischer was often on hand for mending breeches, renewing a coat lining or repairing other garments.⁷⁹

Such local provision was directly linked to the nearby noble residence; but local was a relative term. The Dillen family had their country residence at Dätzingen, yet spent most of their time at the court in Stuttgart or Ludwigsburg. Acquiring goods locally could thus mean shopping in one of three different places. As we have already noted, the Dillens bought wine in rural Württemberg, but also from the court cellars, often depending on their location at the time. The Nesselrode-Ehreshoven family owned a stately home 30 kilometres from Cologne, but spent most of their time in Düsseldorf where Karl Franz von Nesselrode acted as the chancellor of the Duchy of Berg. The impact of personal mobility on consumption is still more apparent with the English elite, many of whom spent much of the winter season in London. Sir Roger Newdigate's duties as an MP kept him in London for months on end, so patronising local suppliers meant shopping in and around Whitehall rather than in Warwickshire where his country house was located.⁸⁰ Much the same was true of Mary Leigh, who acquired an array of everyday goods, including coal, meat, poultry, fish and candles from suppliers close to her town house in Kensington Gore, where she generally lived from October to May.⁸¹ In this way, the economic boost that an aristocratic residence might have on the local rural economy, including retailers, could be intermittent and muted, depending on the family's physical presence at a given place. If absences became too prolonged, this could lead to complaints from local suppliers who might have felt themselves slighted.⁸²

However we define local for these mobile elites, our analysis shows that the English and German retail systems had many similarities at this level. Further up the retail and urban hierarchy, however, important differences emerge. As early as the 1960s, F. J. Fisher and Tony Wrigley argued for the importance of

⁷⁸ ASD, Rentamtsbuch Nr. 1-16.

⁷⁹ ASD, Rentamtsbuch Nr. 15, bill by Heinrich Fischer, Aldenhoven, 16.1.1815; ASD, Rentamtsbuch Nr. 21, bill by Heinrich Fischer, Aldenhoven, 6.4.1818.

⁸⁰ *Stobart/Rothery*, Consumption and the Country House, pp. 251-255.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 213.

⁸² P. Borsay, The Landed Elite and Provincial Towns in Britain, in: *Georgian Group Journal* 13, 2003, pp. 281-94.

London in moulding an integrated supply system and in nurturing national economic and social integration.⁸³ Our evidence in many ways confirms their arguments, but this national integration might be seen as constraining regional development, given that London effectively short-circuited the retail system, limiting the importance of regional centres, at least for elites. There were, for example, at least four silversmiths in Birmingham by the late eighteenth century and the town had been an assay centre since 1773; yet both the Leighs and Newdigates ignored this nearby regional centre and ordered silverware from London craftsmen. Much the same was true for livery and wine: some retailers in local towns were patronised, but the vast majority of spending occurred in London shops. For example, Sir Roger Newdigate's account books record 96 transactions with at least fifteen different wine merchants;⁸⁴ yet the only provincial dealer mentioned was a Winchester merchant who regularly sent wine to Oxford, no doubt in connection with Newdigate's duties as MP. London's dominance makes sense for an MP who spent much of the year at his London home, but the preference for metropolitan retailers continued even after his retirement from Parliament in 1780. This reflects the way in which consumption might become habitual, but also indicates a reliance on the specialist expertise and commercial links enjoyed by these tradesmen.

A nationally integrated retail system and a metropolitan centre with international reach seems to have come at a price for secondary centres, at least as far as the shopping practices of elites were concerned. In the German-speaking lands, by contrast, the multi-centred nature of the Holy Roman Empire, the strongly regional nature of economic development, and the presence of princely residences in a great number of places, allowed specialised artisans and retailers to thrive in a variety of towns and helped to create a more decentred retail system. It is possible to detect nascent metropolises, but these tended to be for particular products and their influence faded rather than strengthened over time. For instance, until the last quarter of the eighteenth century, the silversmiths of Augsburg manufactured high-quality items for both Catholic and Protestant churches and supplied the silverware used at numerous courts in the German lands and elsewhere in Europe.⁸⁵ By 1800, however, the patronage of regional manufacturers by various territorial rulers led to a dispersal of high-class

83 Fisher, *Development of London*; Wrigley, *Simple Model*.

84 WCRO, CR136/v/136 – accounts, 1763–96.

85 H. Selig, *Die Kunst der Augsburger Goldschmiede 1529–1868*. Meister, Marken, Werke, München 1980; L. Seelig, *Höfische Pracht der Augsburger Goldschmiedekunst*, München 1995.

suppliers across several regional centres.⁸⁶ Equally, whilst London, Amsterdam and especially Paris were important points of supply for German elites, their market penetration was limited. As we noted at the beginning of this article, Karl von Dillen made numerous purchases in Paris, but the bulk of his spending took place in German towns, which were quite capable of meeting most of his family's needs and wants. Equally, whilst French wine merchants solicited customers by sending *commis voyageurs* to the Rhineland to acquire direct orders, French wines could be bought in Cologne or Düsseldorf, or in numerous small towns, including Emmerich or Wesel.⁸⁷

Throughout the German lands, there was effectively a network of regional centres: these were perhaps lacking the international standing of London or Paris, but were quite capable of serving elites and other social groups with a full range of high-end, as well as everyday goods. This is important for two reasons. First, it questions the notion of a single model of retail development: the German lands were not a stage behind England on a linear development trajectory; rather, they were characterised by a decentralized yet interconnected system of retail centres. Second, this decentralized retail system persisted despite national integration in the nineteenth century: Munich, Hamburg, Dresden and Cologne formed significant retail counterweights to Berlin in a way that was not true of Manchester, Birmingham and Newcastle. These English towns grew as important regional centres, but could never come close to challenging London, despite the emergence of large provincial department stores and growing civic boosterism in the second half of the nineteenth century.⁸⁸

4 Supply Centres, Metropolises and Status

Consumer goods can be used to construct and project self, not least in ways that bolster and display status.⁸⁹ Here it is worth noting how silverware, livery and wine were all used as markers of wealth, rank and taste by the families studied.

⁸⁶ Seelig, *Höfische Pracht*, p. 48.

⁸⁷ LA NRW R, Nesselrode-Ehreshoven, Nr. 1808, fol. 20-23, 34 f.; LA NRW R, Hueth Akten I Nr. 824, fol. 89-92; G. Schwerhoff, *Köln im Ancien Regime 1686–1794*, Köln 2017, pp. 199-200.

⁸⁸ One measure of this is the number of department stores: see J. Stobart, *Global and Local: Retail Transformation and the Department Store in Britain and Japan, 1900–1940*, in: *Business History Review* 92/2, 2018, pp. 257-259.

⁸⁹ Campbell, *Character-action approach*; Bourdieu, *Distinction*; Veblen, *Theory of the Leisure Class*.

In large part, this was tied to the material and aesthetic qualities of the goods themselves. Whilst the *old luxury* exclusivity of silver was being eroded by the development of plateware, its importance as a status symbol endured. For one thing, silver was a major investment and thus a statement of wealth: the full dining set that Johann Franz and Augusta Maria von Salm-Reifferscheid-Dyck bought from Jakob Teichmann in 1776 weighed about 16 kilograms and cost 10,525 Reichstaler (equivalent to the annual wages of 526 kitchen maids), whilst in 1788 Mary Leigh was billed £1,031 7s. 3d. (the equivalent of the annual wages of 170 kitchen maids) by Robert Makepeace for a single silverware order.⁹⁰ Silverware could also be engraved with the family coat of arms to display rank, which is exactly what Mary Leigh did with all her silverware, despite her lack of a formal title.⁹¹ Less intuitive is the way that owning silverware displayed taste, however, receipted bills show that old and unwanted items were regularly traded in for pieces that were newer and more fashionable. Mary Leigh received £534 4s. against her 1788 bill from Makepeace, who supplied silverware described as *threaded*, in stark contrast to the rococo pieces previously bought from Thomas Gilpin in the 1760s.

Livery also communicated rank and status in a very public manner; but it is best read as anti-fashion, with colours and trimmings that spoke of ostentation rather than gentlemanly restraint: these were, after all, clothes for servants not their aristocratic employers. The quality of the materials and the fit of the clothing were important, especially given the emphasis placed on the physical characteristics of footmen's bodies. Thus we see Mary Leigh paying 9s. 6d. to a London tailor for "ripping to pieces a claret colour frock suit and [having it] greatly altered for a new postilion & made to his size".⁹²

Wine was an everyday commodity for many, but it was also an essential for elite hospitality and conviviality. Better quality and especially imported wines demonstrated taste and discernment. Providing guests with choice beverages of a certain vintage – the older the better – and presenting (political) patrons with select bottles were important both in maintaining and displaying elite status and allowing the aristocratic family to participate in a pan-European, even transatlantic elite culture.⁹³

90 ASD, Blaue Bände 503, fol. 535f.; SCLA, DR18/5/5809.

91 This also demonstrates that women as well as men were concerned with dynastic spending, contra the argument in *Vickery*, *Behind Closed Doors*, pp. 106-129.

92 SCLA, DR18/5/6098.

93 A. *Graham*, *Connoisseurship, Consumption, Company, and James Brydges, First Duke of Chandos, 1705–13*, in: *The Huntington Library Quarterly* 80/4, 2017, pp. 539-557; D. *Hancock*, *Oceans of Wine. Madeira and the Emergence of American Trade and Taste*, New Haven 2009.

With all these products, quality was important and buying from the right supplier in the right location was a key marker of that quality. London was a constant point of reference in advertisements, lauded as the centre of fashion and the origin of the most desirable and best quality goods, and it dominated the purchases of the Leighs and Newdigates.⁹⁴ Much the same had been true of Augsburg silver until its pre-eminence was eroded in the late eighteenth century; but Cologne, Stuttgart and Düsseldorf were clearly places that added an extra attraction to goods that were often available more locally. Part of the attraction as shopping centres that these major cities had in common, was the breadth of choice that they offered to the wealthy consumer. They offered a variety of silversmiths, high-class drapers, wine merchants and the like, allowing elite customers to demonstrate their distinction and taste when choosing the best supplier as well as the best goods.

In some ways the status of London as retail centre was self-sustaining: shops and goods were considered better simply because they were in or from London. However, the reputation of individual retailers, and the attraction of buying from them, was built around a range of constituent factors, including the skill, expertise and reach of the retailers. This is evident in the way that Sir Roger Newdigate bought different wines from various London merchants: claret came mostly from Allan & Co., J. Bateman supplied port and sometimes madeira, and mountain wine was bought from R. Remon.⁹⁵ This degree of specialisation was made possible by the scale and reach of the London market, and it enhanced the reputation of both individual retailers and the metropole as a whole. This mutuality of personal and place reputation is still more apparent in the importance attached to maintaining London showrooms by regional manufacturers, most famously Josiah Wedgwood from Staffordshire, Matthew Boulton (Birmingham), and Gillows (Lancaster). A presence in London was essential in enabling these high-status businesses to reach their target customers.⁹⁶ High status German manufacturers, dispersed across a number of cities, increased their visibility by advertising in publications such as the *Journal des Luxus und der Moden* – which circulated throughout the German lands – and by presenting their goods to a wide audience at the important international fairs in Frankfurt

94 J. Stobart, Selling (through) politeness: Advertising Provincial Shops in eighteenth-century England, in: *Cultural and Social History* 5/2, 2008, pp. 309-328.

95 WCRO, CR136/v/136 – accounts, 1763-96.

96 M. Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure in Eighteenth-century Britain*, Oxford 2005, pp. 145-153.

and Leipzig.⁹⁷ Provincial retailers like Bros. Mohr in Dinkelsbühl mentioned the Frankfurt trade fair as a source of their goods when corresponding with customers; this gave reassurance that they would supply fashionable merchandise chosen from the best selection available.⁹⁸

The greatest marks of distinction for retailers could be found in royal or noble endorsement, announced on trade cards and on illustrated bill heads. Davies and Lee of Conduit Street in London, for instance, declared themselves as *Hatters to Her Majesty*, which may have been instrumental in Mary Leigh choosing them as suppliers of livery hats.⁹⁹ Indeed, the Leigh archive is littered with bills from retailers advertising similar credentials, amongst them Josiah Wedgwood, Darling and Thompson (engravers and print sellers), Hatchett & Sons (coachmakers) and Henry Clay (japanner). Whilst German craftsmen and retailers did not yet make use of trade cards with similarly elaborate illustrations, they too reminded customers of their good connections by signing their bills with the addendum *purveyor to the Court*. Such endorsements gave consumers confidence in the quality of the goods and the services being provided: buying from these suppliers might also mean that some of the kudos of royalty rubbed off on the buyer. Karl von Dillen, himself only recently ennobled, followed this kind of reasoning by drawing exclusively on artisans in Stuttgart and Ludwigsburg who had distinguished themselves as purveyors to the court.

Aristocratic landowners were also conscious of the benefits of buying from suppliers with an established reputation for serving other members of the social elite. The London silversmiths Parker and Wakelin, for instance, were well-known as suppliers to many titled families across England, and Karl Hieronymus Farina, the fashionable Düsseldorf haberdasher, supplied several elite families, including Karl Franz von Nesselrode-Ehreshoven.¹⁰⁰ Just as Johanna Ilmakunnas argues for Paris, elites in London, Düsseldorf and elsewhere were well aware of the reputation of certain shops and tradesmen.¹⁰¹ A more specific form of endorsement was to use the same supplier for livery and for the noble family's own clothing. The Fells had provided Edward, fifth Lord Leigh, with drapery and tailoring in the 1760s before supplying livery to his sister Mary Leigh, whilst Sir Roger Newdigate's key suppliers of livery – Warden, Jones and Penny – also

⁹⁷ Purdy, *Tyranny of Elegance*; Borchert/Dressel, *Das Journal des Luxus und der Moden*; Homburg, *German Landscapes*.

⁹⁸ StAL, PL 12 II Bü 409.

⁹⁹ SCLA, DR18/5/6097.

¹⁰⁰ H. Clifford, *Silver in London. The Parker and Wakelin Partnership, 1760–1776*, New Haven 2004.

¹⁰¹ Ilmakunnas, *Luxury Shopping Experience*.

provided cloth and clothing for his own body.¹⁰² Similarly, Karl Franz von Nesselrode-Ehreshoven and his wife bought livery from Farina's Düsseldorf shop, but also acquired from him expensive accessories like East Indian handkerchiefs, silk stockings and golden buttons as well as high-end fabrics such as Genoese velvet and Lyonese silks. The Adelmans ordered fine cloth for themselves as well as woollen cloth for the valet's outfit from Bros. Mohr in Dinkelsbühl,¹⁰³ and Karl von Dillen made use of artisans in both Ludwigsburg and Stuttgart, as well as a small number of drapers delivering directly to the respective local tailors, for his personal apparel, military uniforms and livery.¹⁰⁴ Of course, there was convenience in having all tailoring work done at one place, but the impact of livery as a marker of status was undoubtedly underlined if it was well-made by known and trusted craftsmen.

To summarise, it is clear that what marked the superiority and desirability of metropolitan goods, fashions and taste could also be written onto the suppliers who sold luxury goods and services to the elite.¹⁰⁵ London suppliers were preferred because they offered choice and high quality, but also because they carried an established reputation for supplying royalty or other aristocratic families. In turn, buying from such suppliers served to bolster and display the customer's taste and distinction. The same was true of Paris where high-status retailers and craftsmen who enjoyed royal and noble patronage were sought out by the aristocracy from across Europe, as the Dillens' purchases there demonstrate.¹⁰⁶ We argue that these same qualities were found in regional centres in the German lands, albeit to a lesser extent. Buying from suppliers in Düsseldorf or Stuttgart was not simply a matter of availability, it also reflected both the quality of the goods available there and the variety and reputation of retailers and craftsmen. Again taking Dillen as an example, there was kudos in acquiring goods from suppliers in Stuttgart and Ludwigsburg who also furnished the count and king, as well as reassurance that their goods were of the highest quality.

¹⁰² SCLA, DR18/5/2210; WCRO, CR136/v/136 – accounts, 1763–96.

¹⁰³ StTAL, PL 12 II Bü 409.

¹⁰⁴ StAS Q3/13 Bü 1; Q3/13 Bü 2; Q3/13 Bü 3.

¹⁰⁵ See *Greig*, *Beau Monde*, esp. pp. 32–62 for discussion of elite consumption in London.

¹⁰⁶ See also *Coquery*, *L'Hotel Aristocratique*.

5 Conclusion: Reintegrating the Elite into Consumption History and Re-evaluating National Retail Systems

The vanguard of consumption history focussed on the democratisation process of consumption and how this improved the lives of a growing body of people in the eighteenth century. The elite did not figure much in this Whiggish narrative as their lives seemed good enough already, with homes full of beautiful artefacts and bodies adorned with handsome clothes. As all their personal comforts were already satisfied, the elite did not feature prominently in narratives of progress which, even in recent publications, still present an evolution from an imagined exclusive consumer society to one that is supposedly inclusive.¹⁰⁷ However, as our analysis has shown, studying the elite's consumption practices and supply systems reveals their importance within broader narratives and processes. The elite were not living in a world apart, but rather played a role in building structures and establishing practices that were or would become part-and-parcel of the lives of the wider population.

By juxtaposing the practices of English and German elites, important features of two very different retail systems can be discerned. London dominated English elite shopping, but this does not mean that every nation had to have a similar metropole on its path to a modern consumer society. Rather, as Clé Lesger, Jan Hein Furnée and Ilja Van Damme have argued, shopping and retailing need to be carefully historicized and studied in their specific local and regional context.¹⁰⁸ The German system of regionally dispersed retail centres has as much to tell us about the development and structure of retailing in Europe as the nationally integrated English system that has long been held up as the standard. It is no coincidence that even in England the role of regional and seemingly obsolete features of retailing, such as fairs, are being reassessed.¹⁰⁹ The regional supply systems observed in Germany could provide the full range of consumer goods required even by the elite. This was not an immature retail system nor was

107 Kleinschmid/Logemann, Konsum.

108 Furnée/Lesger, Introduction, in: Furnée/Lesger, *Landscape of Consumption*; I. Van Damme, *Reinterpreting Shopping in the Enlightenment. Retail Practices, Consumer Experiences, Governance*, in: *History of Retailing and Consumption* 5/3, 2019, pp. 195-204.

109 J. Davidson, 'Here Mirth and Merchandise are mix'd'. *Buying and Selling at the English Provincial Fair reconsidered*, in: *History of Retailing and Consumption* 5/3, 2019, pp. 242-260.

Germany backward or its development retarded, just because it lacked a single integrating metropole; instead, it moved along its own trajectory.

Both in England and in Germany, the importance of elites in driving forward the development of a consumer society can be observed on several levels. By patronising the village shop and local artisans, they drew a steady stream of goods and services into the countryside. Far from being the privilege of the elite, shopping at regional centres was practised by the wider population. Elite customers encouraged shop owners to stock more exclusive items which were then available to other customers as well, so long as they had the means to pay for them. Conversely, elite households also bought large quantities of mundane items, supporting their (local) availability. Moreover, the complex web of local, regional and metropolitan points of supply was by no means exclusive to the top echelon of society: thanks to advertisements, correspondence shopping and growing personal mobility, these were increasingly open to the middling sorts. Finally, shopping on different levels of the supply hierarchy was particularly easy for people living in Germany, as they could tap into a system of regional centres that could meet the needs, wants and desires of the elite.

The practices of the elite thus reveal important building blocks of a nascent consumer society. Moreover, the ways in which they ascribed particular social significance to certain suppliers not only served to heighten the prestige of these retailers and craftsmen, but also underscored the importance of the cities in which they were located. In England, this served to reinforce London as the centre of gravity; in Germany, this weight was dispersed across a broader range of regional centres. In short, the shopping practices of elites both reveal the structure of retail systems and played a key role in shaping these systems.

Further studies should address questions about the regional variation of supply systems and retailing venues, particularly in Germany, as well as the influence of external factors such as territorial boundaries, tariff walls or trade restrictions. At the moment, it can only be assumed that, particularly during the Napoleonic Age, these were relevant factors for retailers and suppliers along the Rhine as well as in Southern Germany. Also, it is necessary to factor in the income situation of both German and English elites in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. If it holds true that the German nobility experienced a period of economic stress during this time period, what did this mean for individual consumption patterns? The important differences in income and prices between England and Germany, that were touched upon at the beginning of this study, also need to be incorporated into future studies of consumption history.

Bionotes

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