

Buying into Change: Mass Consumption, Dictatorship, and Democratization in Franco's Spain, 1939–1982. By Alejandro J. Gómez del Moral. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2021. 366 pp., 9 photos, 12 illus., 1 table, index. Hardcover, \$65.00. ISBN: 978-1-4962-0506-3.

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Reviewed by Ana Rosado Cubero

In this book, *Buying into Change: Mass Consumption, Dictatorship, and Democratization in Franco's Spain, 1939–1982*, Professor Alejandro Gómez del Moral tackles an underexplored field in Spanish economic history: the development of mass consumption, shedding light on the spread and social impact of overseas influence. The book combines the history of management of an iconic department store, Galerías Preciados, with publicity material that appeared in Spanish fashion magazines.

Scholars have separated Franco's regime (1939–1975) in Spain into two clearly differentiated periods. The first covers the autarkic years between 1939 and 1959, dark years after the civil war when Franco's government pursued economic self-sufficiency, minimized international connections, and permitted only essential international trade. The second period, beginning around 1959 and lasting until the end of his regime, was triggered by the initiation of an economic stabilization plan, as the previous economic system had become untenable. Thereafter, economic growth, or “developmentalism,” through central planning, occupied pride of place in the economic policy of the Franco regime.

This book is structured in chronological chapters, which makes reading the historical background easier. Chapters 1 and 2 examine the genesis of mass consumption during the autarkic period, focusing on women who adopted fashionable lifestyles. Chapters 3 and 4 explain the professionalization of commercial food distribution and advertising in Spain. Chapter 5 examines department stores as part of the post-stabilization economic plan to integrate Spain into Western European and North American professional settings. Finally, a long epilogue reflects on the radical sociopolitical changes that took place in Spain in the aftermath of the dictatorship.

In the autarkic atmosphere of the first decades of Franco's dictatorship, the cornerstone of the economic system was to unify and centralize all the economic policies of the state through effective coordination. As Gómez del Moral shows, the tentacles of the first Francoism reached all corners of society, influencing the behavior of Spanish women, who were forced to submit to male authorities. Similarly, the reference to “norms,” which were published and disseminated, is overwhelming when showing the behavior that employees should comply with. The author describes the era and the various economic and social players

very well. He finds reliable references that allow us to believe that the relationship of Galerías Preciados (a clothing store) with Francisco Franco himself was analogous to his relationship with the Church, which deserves to be highlighted. Franco was very Catholic, so the analogy refers to the reverence that was given to him. The history and competition between two big retailers, El Corte Inglés and Galerías Preciados, are a classic in Spanish business history because they were located on the same street in Madrid, and their owners, Pepín Fernández and Ramón Areces, competed vigorously in business (it is said that they also competed for a woman). Del Moral sheds new light on this story.

During the transition to international integration, according to the book, some new magazines were published to encourage openness and to display the mass consumption that came from America. The targeted consumers could be none other than the wives of the leaders since the majority of the population lived at subsistence level. For this reason, mass consumption must have been a true unknown to the population, because they barely had any money to buy food, let alone magazines.

The 1960s was the decade in which foreign pressures also pushed the Spanish economy into the global market. Finding a niche in the international panorama, even in Europe, was the main goal for the isolated Spain of that period; advertising was the path that led to modernity, and other things changed, too. For instance, banks could not afford to lose business, and so began to offer credit to women for the purchase of goods—mainly household appliances. From a present perspective, that idea might make you smile, but turning the Spanish woman who endured the Franco regime into a consumer was not an easy task in 1960s Spain.

Unfortunately, the complex network of state and private-sector interrelationships continued until Franco died and a new era began for the Spanish economy. As the author shows, the regime continued to earn money as an intermediary for the distribution of clothes, food, and so on until its disappearance. We must not forget the “clientelism,” a term describing the largely discretionary nature of the economic decisions made at this time, which proved difficult to end with democracy.

The book might have made a brief mention of censorship during Franco’s regime, such as the control over any publication, including publicity, or the rules around the length of skirts and necklines, because the work refers to clothing retailers needing to comply with standards of decency. Modernization relaxed some of the canons of the so-called National Catholicism, and fortunately there was no turning back.

Gómez del Moral has excavated evidence from dispersed and varied sources. Indeed, the book rests on impressively deep archival anchors.

Any historical research with eighty pages of annotated notes (many of which would fit perfectly into the body of the text) shows a remarkable quality of work that deserves to be congratulated.

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Capitalism and the Senses. Edited by Regina Lee Blaszczyk and David Suisman. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2023. 312 pp., 21 b/w images. Hardcover, \$65.00. ISBN: 978-1-5128-2420-9. doi:10.1017/S0007680523000508

Reviewed by Robert Gordon-Fogelson

Capitalism is a notoriously fickle concept, the subject of innumerable studies each with its own definitions and parameters. At the most recent Business History Conference, the provocatively titled session “Is Capitalism a Useful Category of Analysis?” stimulated debate about the term’s expository value and its utility as a framework for research and pedagogy. The twelve essays in *Capitalism and the Senses*, edited by Regina Lee Blaszczyk and David Suisman, are valuable precisely because they give substance to capitalism’s often obscure contours and inner workings. Based on two conferences, one at the Harvard Business School in 2017 and the other at the Hagley Museum and Library in 2020, *Capitalism and the Senses* examines how twentieth-century businesses harnessed the senses for commercial profit and shaped sensory experience in the process.

The book builds on a rich literature in sensory studies pioneered by an interdisciplinary group of scholars who have worked to denaturalize the senses, establishing them as historically contingent and socially constructed. It contributes to this literature by revealing how economic actors were instrumental in the modern construction of the senses. It focuses on the twentieth century, when businesses faced with growing competition became increasingly invested in marketing and merchandising techniques and capitalized on the senses for their commercial potential. It therefore advances a vein of business history rooted in the work of Alfred Chandler, Jr., and concerned with the structures of capitalism, or what Chandler called the “visible hand” of management