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Merchants And Luxury Markets: The Marchands Merciers Of Eighteenth-Century Paris



Synopsis

"Makers of nothing, sellers of everything" is how official records define the marchands merciers of eighteenth-century Paris. These merchants were centered around the rue St. Honoré, identified then, as now, with the luxury trades for which Paris was already internationally famous. They established trading rights in items like fans, wigs, mirrors, and even ink, all of which were supplied to markets that were fashion-driven and likely to expand rapidly. Through an examination of inventories and other records, Sargentson offers a new perspective on the history of consumption, painting a fascinating picture of the marketplace for luxury goods during the fifty years that preceded the Revolution. Her text raises important questions about the life cycle of objects and the way they were valued; the trading options of merchants who operated within narrow margins of credit and cash flow; and the relations between the different groups jostling for position and advantage.

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