Shopping and Historical Archaeology: Exploring the Contexts of Urban Consumption

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Despite a tradition of consumer studies in historical archaeology and other fields, few historical archaeologists have addressed how the place or act of shopping may affect our understanding of goods recovered from the archaeological record. Yet, historical accounts of shopping suggest that different market places were the scenes of very different social and consumer dynamics. With a focus on the archaeology of working-class life, this paper explores whether shopping is important to historical archaeology and how it may be distinguished in the archaeological record.

INTRODUCTION

While studies of pricing, consumption and ‘consumer choice’ are abundant in historical archaeology, there are few studies which consider the market place or the processes of shopping. Shopping is any activity in which a consumer considers – with the intention of purchasing – an item or range of items, offered by a retailer for sale at an agreed price. Consumers can shop from their kitchen table when they leaf through catalogues to order new furnishings, or can shop for hours, inspecting the range of goods on offer in department stores and open-air markets without making a single purchase.

In the post-medieval, Western world, shopping has become the primary means of obtaining articles required for daily life and thus the starting point in the broader cultural practice of consumption. By the time of the Victorian era, the places where shopping transactions occurred had become physically and culturally distinctive environments. In some cases, these were distinguished on the basis of class, for example, the department store for the middle class and the open-air market for the working classes.1

The case that shopping has been overlooked in the vast collection of studies on consumption was first noted by the author during the course of research undertaken for a BA honours degree at the University of Sydney in 1999.2 This paper explores the contexts of shopping starting with what is known historically, and with artefacts from the Cumberland and Gloucester Streets site in the Rocks, NSW, what may be known archaeologically. Not all kinds of shopping are addressed3, and the paper is focussed on urban shopping in working-class Sydney. It is not the intention to provide the final word on the subject, rather present preliminary research undertaken to assess whether shopping does matter to the field of historical archaeology.

HISTORICAL ARCHAEOLOGY AND STUDIES OF CONSUMPTION

At the broadest level, the processes behind the task of shopping have been on the research agendas of historical archaeologists, anthropologists and historians since the 1970s in the form of ‘consumer studies’. Early studies were largely concerned with present-day consumption practices and called for a radical revision of how researchers approached the world of goods. Wedged out of the world of simplistic, income-dependent economics and thrown into the realm of cultural anthropology, goods were ‘set back into the social process’ and consumption became a legitimate field of study.4 Anthropologists, economists, historians and archaeologists in North America and the United Kingdom, such as Pierre Bourdieu, Mary Douglas, Baron Isherwood and Daniel Miller among others, rejected the condemnatory overtones of nineteenth-century perspectives of ‘conspicuous consumption’. Rather, they realised the integral role of mass-produced goods in the ‘process of social self-creation’ in which they were considered to be ‘directly constitutive of our understanding of ourselves and others’.5

Anthropological and sociological studies opened the door for historians and historical archaeologists to move away from traditional studies of commodities in the strictly economic or income-dependent sense and study the relationship between people and their goods. The great strides made in the way scholars understood their own societies’ socio-economic relations, were adopted into the study of the material world of the past.6

At the same time, historical archaeologists were responding to a call from the broader archaeological community for greater contextualisation when interpreting material from the past. These two influences have fused into a concern for ‘human agency’, well summarised by Mary Beaudry, Lauren Cook and Stephen Mrozowski:

Attention to historical and cultural context allows human beings an active role in creating meaning and in shaping the world around them; they are seen to interact with their environment rather than simply react to it. Material culture is viewed as a medium of communication and expression that can condition and at times control social action.7

Many of these issues are echoed by Cook, Yamin and McCarthy who set down a ‘redefinition of consumption’ in historical archaeology in 1996, titled ‘Shopping as Meaningful Action’. Their primary concerns were broad and conceptual: to assert that ‘material items are often consciously and intentionally used by people to communicate conceptions of self to others’. Every shopping ‘act’ was seen to be ‘a social dance in which carefully constructed meanings, roles, and statements are exchanged, acted out and negotiated’. They made reference to three places of shopping: the market of the pre-industrial town, urban arcades, department stores and catalogues. The authors consider these places to be ‘invested with both economic and symbolic power’ and do not address whether some, such as the department store, may be more consciously symbolic than others. Their central concern is perhaps not the act of shopping but the ideology of consumption and its relationship to identity.8

Susan Henry’s model for consumer behaviour9 provides an excellent summary of the general approach to consumption in historical archaeology, based on contemporary economic and marketing theories. The kinds of consumer needs on which Cook et al. were focussed would be included in ‘Social’ or ‘Ego’ needs, which are ‘Internal Influences’ in Henry’s model (see Figure 1). This model broadens the scope and clarifies the different elements of the complex decision-making
process, forcing the consideration of the range of needs and desires, beyond the limitation of income. However, the market place is not recognised among the twenty-one factors affecting consumer decision-making. While the market, in the general sense of the range of available goods is acknowledged, the act of hopping is described as 'Acquisition', the enactment of a decision made prior to a shopping excursion.

While the influence of 'consumer studies' began at a conceptual level, at least one volume of work in historical archaeology has turned its attention to methodology. Suzanne Spencer-Wood's 1987 edited volume *Consumer Choice in Historical Archaeology* aimed to develop middle-range analyses of the relationship between material culture and socio-economic status and found that this relationship was not consistent. Historical archaeologists contributing to the volume attributed the cases where artefact analysis did not meet their historically based expectations to three factors: ethnicity, market (meaning the general availability of goods in non-urban regions) and the problems of measuring socio-economic groupings in the archaeological record. Despite their technical, middle-range approach, shopping is little discussed in the volume, although it was recognised that in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century North America, consumer goods were bought through wholesale, retail or second-hand markets.

While the mechanics of shopping and the physical market place are overlooked by broader consumption-based approaches, there are two historical-archaeological studies which address the impact of the local store.

In 1996, Ann Smart Martin examined household goods listed in probate and store records from eighteenth-century Virginia. She observed the tendency of less affluent customers of the North American frontier to purchase one or two items of crockery throughout the year from the local store. Wealthier customers, having more funds at their disposal, purchased several vessels at once. Others are known to have ordered large quantities of goods directly from London. Martin speculated that the apparent interest in matching wares by more affluent consumers was simply an effect of buying in bulk, rather than an example of taste or preference for matching sets.

A more explicit example of the impact of the market place, is Paul Mullins' recent study of archaeological assemblages of African-American consumers in the years after the abolition
of slavery. He demonstrated that African-Americans of all socioeconomic classes purchased national-brand preserved goods exclusively, rather than locally produced goods. In post-Civil War America, the white American marketeer or shopkeeper could, and sadly did, short-supply or adulterate the food of African-American shoppers. Consequently, these consumers modified their shopping strategies, as a direct result of the nature of the market place.

In both these cases, the place and act or process of purchase has an important impact on the goods selected. They are, however, specific examples that offer only the general lesson that the market place or style of shopping can affect decisions to purchase in unexpected ways. While to date, broader studies of consumer behaviour have focussed on rejecting traditional approaches to consumer studies, it is perhaps time to start exploring other dimensions of consumption, including the activity of shopping, and the impacts these may have on the interpretation of the archaeological record.

THE CONSUMER 'REVOLUTION'

It is known from historical records and the detailed work of several historians that, from the early eighteenth century, major changes occurred in consumption practices, places and the suite of consumable items on offer, in Britain, America, France and other parts of Europe. In fact, the changes were so great that many historians consider them to constitute a 'consumer revolution', a companion catalyst to the industrial revolution. New discoveries and improved processes of manufacture brought a whole suite of household goods and 'luxury' items within the reach of families described as 'middling', that is, the kind of families who became the middle class in the nineteenth century. At the same time middlemen (soon to be known as Shopkeepers) intercepted the formerly direct relationship between producer and consumer. The verb 'to shop' came into existence and significantly, shopping went indoors, from open markets and workshop lean-tos into a new range of purpose-built stores.

By the end of the nineteenth century, department stores had become a supreme form of urban shopping, compete with their own microcosmic physical and cultural environment. Utilising the latest styles and products of architecture and design, interior fittings (mirrors, glass cabinets, lighting and lifts) were carefully selected to 'educate and flatter the taste and sensibilities of the shopper'. William Leach has argued that in America, from this new environment emerged a 'culture of consumption', an 'urban and secular one of colour and spectacle, of sensuous pleasure and dreams'. While the diaries of wealthy women at the turn of the century were filled with endless lunches, shopping expeditions and purchases in the department store, less affluent women simply travelled the escalators and extolled 'a few pennies' on the cheapest candies possible. Leach argued that poorer shoppers aspired to the luxury and spectacle of this new shopping environment. In some cases, the department store was transformative and consciously used to construct a new identity. A young Jewish immigrant to Boston, Mary Antin, declared in 1912 that she was partaking in the process of Americanisation when she and her sister exchanged their 'hateful homemade European costumes ... for real American machine-made garments' from the 'dazzling beautiful palace called a “department store”'.

Some colonial shoppers, such as Ann Smart Martin's eighteenth-century consumers and some affluent Australians, removed themselves from this immediate, physical environment by ordering directly from London stores. In effect, this is a global and dislocated market place which has little impact on decisions to purchase individual items, because the consumers do not physically interact with the environment. Trade catalogues also provided a similar mode of shopping removed from the physical environment of the store, which was used extensively by consumers in regions distant from cities and towns. The market place effectively moved into the home and the decision-making process for the purchase of many goods came under the suggestive influence of lithographs and price lists rather than the place and people of the department store.

Australian historians Frances Pollon and Beverley Kingston have identified similar developments on the local scene. They describe the rise of department stores in the cities and inner-city suburbs, such as Sydney's Iredale & Co. (later Lasseters), Farmers and Graziers, Mark Foy's, Anthony Hordern & Sons, David Jones and Grace Brothers. Kingston has argued that while the luxuriousness of French and English 'palaces of consumption' was played down by the practical antipodean middle class, the most successful retailers in Sydney all maintained the type of environment that was a 'vague idea of shopping in London or Paris'.

According to Leach, the American department store was not a place for working-class consumers who sadly 'passed the windows of city retail stores, which revealed to them an unobtainable world of luxury' and this seems to be true also for Australia. Kingston has written that uncertainty in working and living conditions in Melbourne in the 1880s 'tended to discourage the accumulation of household or other possessions' and most 'necessary' shopping took place at local markets, cheap grocers or corner stores. Yet, by the early twentieth century, 'variety stores' such as Coles (the one-shilling, later two-and-sixpence store) were offering non-essential goods to less affluent consumers, in response to:

... the hunger for more, and more affordable, consumer goods in working-class suburbs where families were on the brink of respectability, moving beyond necessities like food and clothing to small items which made life more comfortable, housekeeping easier and more versatile, or gave the satisfaction of personal adornments.

The rise of the one-shilling store may also be attributed to the production and supply of goods. By the end of the century, mail order catalogues displayed a preoccupation with quality and ranks of quality, suggesting that in addition to high-quality goods, some goods were simply produced to be cheap. The catalogues by Sydney-based household furniture trader A Hall & Co. (1897) and Feldheim, Gotthelf & Co., also in Sydney (1905) and Lasseters (1911), all contain examples of goods offered with two or three choices of quality. For example, Lasseters, the 'Universal Providers', offered fully cut spirit decanters for 12s 6d, half-cut for 7s 6d and plain for less than half the price of the fully cut: 5s 6d. Feldheim, Gotthelf & Co. offered 'Superior' and 'Common Quality Dressed Jointed Sleeping Dolls'. Hall & Co. offered five furnishing suites for cottages ranging from £10 9s 6d to £103. The latter suites not only had more items, but the selected items were more elaborate; a 'Best Kapok Top Mattress ... 1st quality' in place of a simple 'Wool Mattress' or a 'Marble Top Washstand with tile back' and a freestanding towel rack, rather than a plain 'Pine Washstand, Towel Rail fitted'.

This kind of price-ranking set the stage for the ranking of consumers, from those who could afford the best quality to those who chose to pay for a cheaper approximation of the same type of good. The Myers store's 'bargain basements' and bargain trading days, at times provoked tension between 'the kind of customer who came looking for the “real bargains” to be found in the basement and those who were in search of quality upstarts'. In 1893, Louisa Lawson wrote that it should be:

... part of a girl's education to [learn how to] shop...
These few historical snippets suggest that in the nineteenth century, working-class shopping practices were associated with a sense of vulgarity, a greedy indulgence of cheap trash that strikes a distinction to middle-class, department-store shopping.

This derisive perception is also apparent in Louis Stone’s (1871–1935) Sydney-based novel Jonah which detailed the unhappy rise of a Cardigan Street larrakin to wealth and respectability. It is thought to have been written in 1908 (published 1911), based on the Stone’s memories and ‘painstaking observation’ of life in the industrial Sydney suburb of Waterloo where he lived and taught school children from 1889 to 1893. Stone recreates a scene at Paddy’s Market, the ‘huge bazaar of the poor’ where ‘no caprice of the belly … [nor] … want of the naked body’ could not be gratified by customers who ‘counted in pence’. The stalls were packed with a jumble of second-hand and damaged goods:

... the drift and refuse of a great City. For here the smug respectability of the shops were cast aside, and you were deep in the romance of traffic in merchandise fallen from its high estate—a huge welter and jumble of things arrested in their ignoble descent from the shops to the gutter.

At times a stall was loaded with the spoils of a sunken ship or the loot from a city fire, and you could buy for a song the rare fabrics and costly dainties of the rich, a stain on the cloth, a discoloured label on the tin, alone giving a hint of their adventures.

Stone insinuates that some items purchased at the market mattered little to shoppers when he portrays ‘the stream of people’:

... clutching in their arms fowls, pot-plants, parcels of groceries, toys for the children, and a thousand odd, nameless trifles, bought for the sake of buying, because they were cheap.

The considered of the novel here should not be read as reversion to the old ‘slum’ vision, but the probability that the activities described are accurate even if the derisive overtones are unjust. That is, working-class consumers probably did purchase second-hand and damaged goods from markets, and shopping at the markets was probably related just as much, if not more, to amusement and social interaction, as to the commercial purchases of individual items.

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SIGNATURE OF RETAILING?

Research undertaken by historians in Australia and globally shows that the nineteenth century was a period of transition in the practices of shopping, from the small-scale retailer in the
eighteenth century to the department and later variety stores of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Historically, there were social distinctions between these kinds of stores and their shoppers. The questions now to ask are: can archaeology shed any light on these distinctions? Can distinctive retail enterprises such as David Jones or Paddy's Market be distinguished in the archaeological record?

Some of the marks of market-bazaar shopping as described in Stone's novel — 'a stain on the cloth, a discoloured label on the tin' — are too ephemeral to hope for survival in the archaeological record. Others, such as manufacturers' and retailers' names on coins, buttons, bottles and jars endure in the domestic assemblages of many excavated sites, including the Cumberland and Gloucester Streets site.

The Cumberland and Gloucester Streets site, in the upper, northwestern slopes of the Rocks, was excavated in 1994 by a team of archaeologists assembled by Godden Mackay Logan Heritage Consultants (then Godden Mackay Heritage Consultants) on behalf of the site owner, the Sydney Harbour foreshore Authority (then the Sydney Cove Authority). The archaeological investigation of the site is notable for its detailed historical research and contextualisation.

This research has revealed the presence of small shops buying and selling second-hand goods and grocery stores on the site, throughout the mid- to late-nineteenth century. For all but three of the years between 1861 and 1880, pawnbrokers occupied 108 and 110 Cumberland Street and eight 'dealers' in nine different houses were listed in occupancy records from 1861 to 1879. Seventeen fruiterers, grocers and 'provision' storekeepers were listed in five buildings from 1851 to 1915. With the Susannah Place grocery store (1845 to c1930), another on Cribbs Lane and the door-to-door salesmen who sold vegetables, rabbits, fish, milk and bread, residents did not have far to walk for their groceries or some household goods. However, no dealers or pawnbrokers were listed after 1880. It may be that these stores re-located elsewhere after 1880 or that pawnshops and small-scale retailers died away and were survived by centralised markets, such as Paddy's Markets, or other predecessors of the variety store.

In addition to the historical resources, the archaeo logical features and assemblages of the site are impressive. Five houses in particular provided remarkable assemblages. Ranging in size, form, aspect and amenity, these houses provided an excellent basis for a study undertaken by the author as a BA honours thesis on the relationship between houses and their assemblages. The houses were located at 128 Cumberland Street (1833–c1931), 1 Caraher Lane (c1850–c1902), 4 Caraher Lane (c1849 or c1858–c1907), the rear of the Whalers Arms Hotel at 95 Gloucester Street (late nineteenth century–c1902) and 4 Cribbs Lane (c1854–1915). Altogether, approximately 80 000 artefacts were retrieved from the yards, cesspits and under the floors of these houses. They provide a considerable data set with which to explore the evidence of shopping.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: 'Retail' buttons marked with the manufacturer's name or slogans such as 'Best Quality', 'Extra Superior Quality' or 'Our Own Make'. (Some manufacturers buttons also had slogans.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Retailer/Manufacturer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product Slogans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of all buttons</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Individual Artefacts

One of the most explicit suggestions of retailing in these assemblages is the collection of commercial tokens. These small copper and bronze tokens were manufactured by retailers from 1849 to 1868 to be used as currency in their stores, usually in denominations of a penny or half penny. From the five houses on the Cumberland and Gloucester Streets site came tokens from H. Cohen's Monster Clothing Hall, Sydney (1857), a Sydney tobackist (undated), and a souvenir token by Hanks and Lloyd Australian Tea Mart, Sydney, to commemorate the opening of the Sydney railway in 1855. There were also interstate examples: a Tasmanian pawnbroker, T Friedman (1857) and Robert Hyde & Co.'s General Marine Store, Melbourne (1861). While these tokens may appear to be the most obvious class of evidence for shopping practices, they cannot be considered representative of, and may well be completely unrelated to, where the occupants of each house actually shopped. As the date of their deposition is unknown (any time between 1833 and c1931 in the case of 128 Cumberland Street), it is possible that these tokens were used as game pieces long after they went out of circulation, just as Chinese coins are known to have been used for gambling.

Buttons also bear the names of retailers. At the Cumberland and Gloucester Streets site, there were buttons made by some of the earliest retail giants such as D Jones, Anthony Hordern & Sons, Farmers & Graziers and Mark Foys and many others which are not so well known or may be the name of manufacturers rather than retailers, including examples from the United Kingdom. One button from 1 Carahers Lane was marked 'Oriant Line' and was probably from David Jones which advertised its 'Oriant Line' of trousers and other clothes for men and boys in the 1880s and 1890s. This range of clothes was marketed toward a diverse range of men (office workers, squatters, sportsmen, bushmen) on diverse budgets (trousers could be bought for £1 7s 6d or 7s 6p).

Other buttons and hair combs which are stamped with slogans such as 'Best Quality', 'Extra Superior Quality', or 'Improved Patent' suggest participation in changing consumption patterns which promoted quality and innovation in the mass-produced market in the second half of the nineteenth century, at least at a general level.

Despite their representation of a range of retailers, these buttons represented only 51 of the 1 178 buttons from five houses, and 39 of these came from 1 Carahers Lane (see Table 1 and Figure 4). This is too small a quantity to suggest that the residents of 1 Carahers Lane shopped at department stores more than their neighbours did. There may be other reasons why buttons were found under the floor: they perhaps were lost when repaired or laundered for other consumers by seamstresses working from home. This is perhaps overly cautious and, as department stores did stock clothing that was not marked with retailers' names, it may be that several of the other 1 169 buttons were purchased from department stores.
Thus, it may be suggested that while some residents did shop at department stores for clothing or personal items, this is unlikely to have been the main source of shopping.

A few items in the assemblages suggest that in addition to 'quality-conscious' items, some goods were worn and may have been bought second-hand or simply produced 'cheap'. For example, fifteen upholstery tacks from 1 Carahers Lane were identified by their heads only (the shafts were missing) suggesting they popped off items of furniture. Given that few tacks were found elsewhere, one might suggest that 1 Carahers Lane had cheap or old furnishings, subject to intensive use. Seventeen glass artefacts from 1 Carahers Lane and 128 Cumberland Street were noted as having wear marks distinctive of their usage and another 13 with marks which could be usage-wear or post-discard wear, but such items were not found in other houses under study. While such wear mostly occurred on alcohol bottles (suggesting their reuse for other purposes, or frequent refilling from the pub), some usage wear was noted on a wine glass and decanters from 128 Cumberland Street and one of the lamps from 1 Carahers Lane.

While it is difficult to infer 'poor quality' or aged goods suggestive of market-bazaar or second-hand trading from these few examples, more extensive and systematic analysis of breakage points or usage wears on other artefact assemblages may return definitive results about the quality or
degree of use of some goods. Such results may suggest the predominance or otherwise of goods made ‘cheap’ or those purchased second-hand.

Archaeological variability and the urban market place

The analysis of commercial tokens and buttons attempts to isolate a particular type of market place by revealing the names of specific retailers. The quantification of artefacts with slogans and usage-wear attempt to draw more general indications of broad trends in shopping and consumption, but are limited to specific groups of artefacts. In the case presented above, neither is successful.

Taking yet another step back from the specific to general by considering the material assemblages of each house as a whole, it may be possible to identify overall strategies of consumption which were linked to or facilitated by types of market places. Overall, assemblages from the five houses on the Cumberland and Gloucester Streets site suggest variability on two levels: some variability among the assemblages and variability between the assemblages and their homes. Both are discussed below.

Mismatched ceramics

Variability within the Cumberland and Gloucester Streets site assemblage can be seen, for example, in the small number of matching sets of tea cups and saucers and other tablewares. Matching crockery is suggestive of a considerable investment in a whole, or significant portion of, a dinner set rather than purchasing items by the piece on an as-need basis. The greater the diversity of function of matching sets found in archaeological contexts (eg tea wares and table-serving vessels), the more likely it is that the consumers owned or used a substantial portion of a crockery set.

Among the 4 760-odd ceramic sherds recovered from these houses, only 13 cases of matching sets were found and eight of these were in 1 Carahers Lane (see Table 2). Many of the sets were composed of table-serving or eating vessels and vessels for which a function could not be identified, although 1 Carahers Lane had examples of matches between table and serving wares and table and tea wares. The same pattern also appeared in different colours, in the same or different houses, as listed in Table 3. No. 4 Cribbs Lane and the rear of 95 Gloucester Street had no matching sets at all. This strikes a very different pattern to the ceramic vessels recovered from privy deposits from middle-class New York, dating to the 1860s and 1870s. In his study of these deposits, Robert Fitts found 30 sets relating to six houses, many of which were matches between table and tea sets.48

As discussed above, Ann Smart Martin argued that less affluent consumers in rural North America purchased goods in smaller quantities, and therefore were less likely to have matching vessels. It may be that consumers living in the five houses at the Cumberland and Gloucester Streets site also purchased table and teawares in small quantities, possibly from market places or pawn shops where items of the same pattern were unlikely to be there several weeks or months later. Customers shopping here would be more likely to purchase items piece by piece, and get a different pattern each time. This practice was continued in twentieth-century variety stores such as Coles which sold Johnson Bros crockery by the piece when it opened in 1914.49 This kept prices under one shilling and probably catered to existing shopping strategies, which were perhaps limited by income and for this or other reasons, did not favour matching sets.

Variety in the assemblage as a whole

Mismatched ceramics are a specific case of variability which may be related to shopping at market bazaars or second-hand stores. Taking yet another step back from individual artefacts to the material assemblages as a whole, other evidence of ‘mismatching’ becomes apparent which, arguably, is the product of market-bazaar or second-hand trading. Put simply, the domestic assemblages of working-class housing are considered to fit poorly within the small, crowded and inadequately serviced dwellings in which they were found.50 This was the case at the Cumberland and Gloucester Streets site, where the structural foundations confirmed a level of inadequacy of housing and amenity, but artefact assemblages indicated that residents had access to a range of items of domestic comfort.

While this pattern was certainly true across the whole site, it was also visible on a house-by-house basis where ‘better’ goods were not necessarily found in the ‘better’ houses.51 For example, some of the best jewellery, a range of table-serving vessels, and decorative wares were recovered from 1 Carahers Lane, a small back-lane dwelling. The same number of combs, perfume bottles and other items of personal care were recovered from this home and 128 Cumberland which was a free-standing house that survived the ‘slum’ demolitions of the early-twentieth century. No. 4 Carahers Lane, a dwelling smaller than 1 Carahers Lane that had no cesspit and was probably built as horses stables, contained the most toothbrushes, and the outbuilding of the Whalers Arms Hotel, contained a finely decorated vulcanite pendant amidst an otherwise sparse assemblage.52 These houses and artefact assemblages compose a suite of material culture that present

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decoration Type</th>
<th>Pattern name</th>
<th>128 Cumb</th>
<th>1 Cara</th>
<th>4 Cara</th>
<th>4 Cribbs</th>
<th>95 Gl R</th>
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<tr>
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<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td></td>
<td>'Germ'</td>
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<td></td>
<td>' Asiatic Pheasants'</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td></td>
<td>'Albion'</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Floral</td>
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<td>'View over lake'</td>
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<tr>
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<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
inconsistent evidence for domestic comfort and potentially, socio-economic grouping.

Class and 'cohesive' assemblages

In some studies, this evidence for personal or domestic comfort has been referred to as small 'indulgences' or 'luxuries' and attributed to emulation of middle-class domesticity. For example, Leach wrote that when less affluent women purchased imitation jewels, artificial silk and furs and cheap perfume, they were partaking in 'both the luxury and the theatrical behaviour of the rich.' Beaudry et al. concurred, arguing that 'humble aspirations to middle-class status' were reflected in household ceramics and 'deliberate choices of women to purchase imitation jewellery'. Mrozowski et al. have described hair combs as 'small luxuries [which] were probably prized possessions that aided personal hygiene'. While these terms are belittling—the pride of a mill worker’s possessions being a mere comb, and one to remove nits at that—they at least attempt to explain a class of goods that historical archaeologists have traditionally not expected to find on the shopping list of the urban poor.

These goods are expected in the domestic assemblages of the middle class. Comparing etiquette manuals and domestic-advice literature (which were an important tool for middle-class social reproduction) with archaeological assemblages from the privies of white-collar, middle-class New Yorkers, Robert Fitts has described middle-class living as a 'culture of conformity'. Fitts established that these middle-class consumers of the 1860s and 1870s purchased morally uplifting 'Gothic' whitewares in preference to the transfer-printed wares which dominated contemporaneous working-class assemblages. He identified other aspects of the domestic assemblage described in advice literature such as flower pots, floral or leafy decorative motifs on house fittings, and educative toys in the archaeological remains. These items suggest conformance to well documented middle-class traits including the admiration of nature and the early education of good manners and industrious behaviour to children. By conforming to acceptable middle-class codes of genteel consumption, they were in effect 'keeping up with the Joneses'.

Such a pattern of consumption cannot be clearly recognised in the five houses on the Cumberland and Gloucester Streets site. While several of the items described by Fitts were present, such as table settings (which were often mismatched), cups and plates with moralising or educative slogans ('moralising china'), some items of personal adornment and home furnishings, they were usually less elaborate and their numbers much smaller than Fitts' middle-class assemblages. While their numbers are small, they should not be considered 'luxuries' or 'indulgences'.

It may be, that this overall pattern of apparent inconsistency is the signature of a 'baazar of the poor' or second-hand trading, in contrast to Fitts' middle-class consumers who shopped in the centralised department stores of New York. That is, if the goods on offer to working-class people were second-hand and damaged as Stone has suggested, then the collection was assembled by haphazard delivery and recycling processes, rather than strategic marketing ones: carts that happened to have accidents; second-hand items that were used, unwanted and given away or sold at different stages in their use-history. This would have an impact on the selection of goods bought by consumers and consequently, the remains of that selection: the archaeological assemblage. The pattern might be an unexpected collection of finer things such as perfume bottles, table settings (probably mismatched), thimbles and toy dolls, alongside bullets and alcohol bottles and perhaps lacking in others of personal or domestic hygiene, as was the case at the Cumberland and Gloucester Streets site. These are a mix of items which, without consideration of the process of their acquisition, may suggest different value systems and together do not form a picture which may be read as a 'cohesive' culture, as can be read from middle-class assemblages.

However, there are other explanations for this apparently inconsistent suite of material. In the case of the five houses on the Cumberland and Gloucester Streets site, the assemblages are from conglomerate household deposits and may be argued to reflect the consumer choices of many tenants, rather than the diverse consumer strategies of a few. Importantly, the tenancy turnover at the Cumberland and Gloucester Streets site was high at times, but in some cases quite stable. While there were many short-term tenants, long-term tenants were resident in four of the five houses, occupying these homes for at least 10, and up to 25 years over the course of the building's history. Nonetheless the impact of tenancy turnover should not be ruled out at this stage of research.

At this point, the possibility that the market place did have a significant impact on consumption strategies, and that the result of this is visible in the mass assemblage of material left for archaeologists' inspection, permits at least two observations to be made.

Firstly, it may be argued that the seeds of the variety store and bargain basements of twentieth-century consumption, were in the market bazaars of the nineteenth century. Archaeology provides insight into some of the specific consumer strategies such as the purchase of ceramics by the piece that have been recorded in the archives of large twentieth-century commercial enterprises such as Coles, but were only sporadically preserved in the records of individual storekeepers in the nineteenth century. This allows the linkage of two consumer arenas that cannot be traced through historical records alone. Research to date is not extensive enough to test or challenge the argument that the variety store...
developed in response to the needs of working-class families who 'were on the brink of respectability' as historian Beverley Kingston has suggested. However, further archaeological research may well reveal that consumers had been purchasing non-essential commodities 'which made life more comfortable' from a more traditional shopping environment for many years, and the seeds of 'respectable consumption' were already at play at the market bazaar.

Regardless, the consideration of the market bazaar as a primary market place for working-class consumers achieves at least one thing: it traces working-class consumption, often seen in the context of middle-class emulation, to the places from which goods were carried into the home and grounds the decision to purchase in a localised cultural environment. This does not imply that individual consumers may or may not have treasured or used these goods as a means of aspiring to middle-class domesticity. Rather, it makes it clear that the commodities which found their way into working-class homes, began their 'life histories' in a 'regime of value' immersed in sociability and spectacle, rather than the impressive but rigid and socially competitive environment of the department store.

CONCLUSION

This paper has explored two dimensions of shopping and archaeology. One is the historical context of the department stores, market bazaars and second-hand stores of nineteenth-century Sydney. The other is based on potential archaeological indicators of retail transactions from five houses at the Cumberland and Gloucester Streets site and the extent to which these artefact assemblages can be used as a measure of actual shopping excursions.

Historical research to date demonstrates that there were differences in the social and consumer dynamics of different market places and from archaeological research focussed on working-class market places, this difference is likely to be detectable in the archaeological record. While at the level of individual artefacts the archaeological data set presented above has limited capacity to identify the places where goods were purchased, at a broader scale, the 'signature' of the market-bazaar or small-store trading of second-hand or second-quality goods, is arguably visible. If this identification is correct, it may be suggested that the market bazaar played a role in creating assemblages that today are found 'mismatched' or apparently lacking cohesion but which once composed the domestic environment of working-class people.

These patterns may be the product of other factors such as tenancy-turnover and require further research. Additional historical research at the contextual and individual level may provide the kind of independent data required to substantiate the archaeological patterns and eliminate presently unknown variables. Such records may be sought in bankruptcy files which often include receipts of goods purchased and unpaid, store records or personal accounts, should these survive. If such records can provide better details of where people shopped, this information may be compared and contrasted with the archaeological record and used to test the ideas presented here.

I argue that shopping does have a role in the interpretation of domestic assemblages in historical archaeology, although this role is one of acquisition, not use. A discussion of shopping enlightens only the first stage in an object's life history and does not necessarily encompass the use of a practical household tool or treasured object. Market places did not determine consumption practices, but facilitated particular consumer strategies. In the case of the market bazaar, the likelihood that clothing, tableware and furnishings were bought cheap from market stalls wedged between cock
dights and pea-soup stands, does not preclude consumers from adopting consumption strategies that sought to emulate middle-class dress and domestic life.

However, it does make clear that the life history of goods in the possession of working-class consumers began in an environment of working-class, not middle-class, values and activity. The review of urban market places in this paper requires a reconsideration of the use of terms such as 'indulgence' and 'luxury', realising instead that such items, bought at a market bazaar or second-hand store, were part of everyday life for many working-class people. It also shifts our perception of working-class culture as outward-looking and emulating to one of internal social reproduction, that moves toward a more accurate reflection of the motivations and practices of working-class people.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

While begun during my honours year in 1999, the research presented here has been substantially revised and developed, with the assistance of several readers who reviewed the several drafts of this paper. Many thanks to Sarah Colley, Iain Stuart, Richard Mackay, Tracey Ireland, Aedeen Cremin and an anonymous referee for their time, comments and encouragement.

The Cumberland and Gloucester Streets site was excavated in 1994 by Godden Mackay Logan, at the instigation of the Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority. Artefact analysis was undertaken by a team of specialists, and artefacts discussed in this paper were analysed by Graham Wilson (ceramics), Martin Carney (glass), Nadia Iacono (miscellaneous artefacts), Kate Holmes (metal) and Wayne Johnson (coins and medals). Detailed historical research and contextualisation was undertaken by Grace Karssens, Project Historian.

NOTES

1. In this paper, class is defined as a group of people sharing similar occupations, economic freedoms or restrictions, and behaviours. The latter is considered to be primarily gestural but enhanced by material possessions, and the ultimate decider of acceptance into the group. Historians and archaeologists tend to allocate class categories by the occupation of the male head of the household: a labouring or physical trade for the working class; or, clerical or managerial occupation for the middle class. (For discussion, see Fitzgerald 1987: 108–109.) There are gradations of status within these classes, based on heritage or wealth, for example. Within the 'working class' there was an important distinction between skilled and unskilled workers, leading many scholars to describe the group as the working classes rather than class. Importantly, behavioural characteristics of class are seldom observable concurrently in the archaeological and historical records.


3. While briefly mentioned, the following forms and means of shopping are not considered in detail: grocery stores; trade catalogues; 'dealers'; door-to-door salesmen.


See for example Diana Di Zerega Wall (1991) who drew on Bourdieu's study of the 1950s French middle class and applied his model to nineteenth-century New York.

Cook et al. 1996: 59, 60.

Henry 1991: 5.

Spencer-Wood 1987: 1. Here the term market is used in the general, economic sense, rather than a market place.

Martin 1996.


Leach 1984: 320.

In Leach 1984: 335.


Leach 1984: 320.


Kiernan c1990.


The idea of studying working-class people from the 'inside out' is a development of the approach to understand history from the bottom of Western social structures, rather than the 'top down'. (Beaudry et al. 1991: 163) Orser (1996: 161-164) has argued that 'outsiders' can never really be on the 'inside' (cf Karskens 1999a, Beaudry et al. 1991 and Mrozowski 1996). While Stone wrote with the perspective of a person 'inside' the community, privy to its secrets (see Kiernan c1990), his derogatory perspective alerts present-day researchers to the bias of his middle-class, outsider's viewpoint.


Godden Mackay 1999.

Godden Mackay 1999 (Vol 3); Appendix A.

Residents of the Rocks and Millers Point in the early decades of the twentieth century describe grocery salesmen who sold vegetables, rabbits, fish, milk and bread, door-to-door (FitzSimons 1988: 52-3), and probably operated in the nineteenth century.

For further details of the houses and assemblage contexts see Godden Mackay 1999 or Crook 1999: Chapters 3 and 4.


Johnson 1999: 262.

Illustrated Sydney News Nov 26, 1881 and The Dawn Nov 1, 1895, p 15.

Iacono 1999: 49.


This has been observed at the neighbourhood level by several authors, for example Karskens 1999b, Thorp 1993 and Yamin 1997.

The task of determining that one house or artefact is better than another is a challenging one and open to much debate. The criteria used in the study of five houses was developed from existing strategies to distinguish necessities, items of comfort and luxuries, and does not purport to be a definitive assessment, rather a framework with which to analyse and interpret large assemblages. For discussion, see Crook 1999: 27-29 and 38-39.

Crook 1999: 16-18, 30, 61, 78.

Leach 1984: 327; Beaudry et al. 1991: 167; Mrozowski et al. 1996: 55; see also Thorp 1994: 5.1.2.

Fitts 1999.


For discussion in the context of these five houses, see Crook 1999: 22-25.

Godden Mackay 1999 (Vol 3): Appendix A.

The two main histories of shopping (Pollon 1989, Kingston 1994) make little reference to small-scale retailers and concentrate on the large, and mostly surviving corporations such as Coles, David Jones and Anthony Hordens and Sons, for which large archives of company records have been preserved.


Appadurai 1986: 15.

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