



# The Insatiability of Human Wants: Economics and Aesthetics in Market Society

By Regenia Gagnier

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## The Insatiability of Human Wants: Economics and Aesthetics in Market Society By Regenia Gagnier

What is the relationship between our conception of humans as producers or creators; as consumers of taste and pleasure; and as creators of value? Combining cultural history, economics, and literary criticism, Regenia Gagnier's new work traces the parallel development of economic and aesthetic theory, offering a shrewd reading of humans as workers and wanters, born of labor and desire.

*The Insatiability of Human Wants* begins during a key transitional moment in aesthetic and economic theory, 1871, when both disciplines underwent a turn from production to consumption models. In economics, an emphasis on the theory of value and the social relations between land, labor, and capital gave way to more individualistic models of consumerism. Similarly, in aesthetics, theories of artistic production or creativity soon bowed to models of taste, pleasure, and reception.

Using these developments as a point of departure, Gagnier deftly traces the shift in Western thought from models of production to consumption. From its exploration of early market logic and Kantian thought to its look at the aestheticization of homelessness and our own market boom, *The Insatiability of Human Wants* invites us to contemplate alternative interpretations of economics, aesthetics, and history itself.

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### Editorial Review

#### From the Inside Flap

Combining cultural history, economics, and literary criticism, Regenia Gagnier's new work traces the parallel development of economic theory and aesthetic theory, offering a shrewd reading of humans as workers and wanters, born of labor and desire. The story told in *The Insatiability of Human Wants* begins in the 1870s, a key transitional moment in aesthetics and economics, when both disciplines underwent a turn from production to consumption models. In economics, an emphasis on the theory of value and the social relations between land, labor, and capital gave way to more individualistic models of consumerism. Similarly, in aesthetics, theories of artistic production or creativity bowed to models of taste, pleasure, and reception. Using these developments as a point of departure, Gagnier deftly traces the shift in Western thought from models of production to models of consumption.

#### About the Author

**Regenia Gagnier** is a Professor of English at the University of Exeter. She is the author of *Idylls of the Marketplace: Oscar Wilde and the Victorian Public* and *Subjectivities: A History of Self-Representation in Britain, 1832-1920*.

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