# The Globetrotting Shopaholic

# The Globetrotting Shopaholic: Consumer Spaces, Products, and their Cultural Places

Edited by

Tanfer Emin Tunc and Annessa Ann Babic


Cambridge Scholars Publishing

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*As always: for those we have lost and loved along the way*

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# PREFACE

Tanfer and Annessa have known each for eight years now, and in that course of time have spent numerous hours discussing their work, lives, heartbreaks, and the things they love. Annessa comes from a working-class background; Tanfer does not. Tanfer helped educate Annessa on the beauty of a Coach handbag (now they both own *cough cough* a few), and Annessa told Tanfer stories about stretching a penny so far you could see straight through it. Many of our best conversations have come from window shopping, long lazy ambles through Port Jefferson, NY, and enjoyable explorations of Ankara, Turkey. Some of our best questions concerning sources and theory emerged during our shopping excursions. Annessa's favorite shopping memory is when Tanfer stepped in fish at a market in Ankara. She tried to hide her disgust, while Annessa cackled uncontrollably at her friend's unfortunate mishap.

What happened recently, however, supercedes the horror of the aforementioned "day of fish decay." In July 2008, Tanfer came to New York, and we did what we always do. We talked about life, Annessa's recent breakup, and our work. We had not seen each other in eight months, so we had a lot of catching up to do. We headed to Huntington Village. Downtown Huntington used to be a happening place, with sidewalk vendors, folks on afternoon strolls, and assorted characters singing and laughing in the street. What we found instead was a sad and decrepit ghost town. So we bailed on the Huntington Depression, and headed to Walt Whitman Mall. While there, we went into Macy's. As luck would have it, a delightful shoe clearance was going on. Annessa bought a pair of gold jacquard slip-on sandals with a shiny gold Coach buckle. She promptly put them on, shedding her just as fashionable Anne Klein high-healed sandals. For the rest of the afternoon she skipped through the mall chanting "Look at my pretty new shoes!" Even though the mall created some special memories for both of them that day, it was clear that the same culprit was responsible for the decay of their beloved Huntington.

The idea for this anthology emerged in January 2007, while wandering through Ankara's AnkaMall in an effort to escape the snowy winter weather. As we thought of what we could present at the American Studies Association of Turkey's annual conference, the mall atmosphere spoke to

us. That was when we decided to study the concept of consumer space. Since consumer society is one of Annessa's areas of specialization, she began the preliminary research on the project. We then crafted a call for papers, and the rest is history. Neither one of us thought our rambling ideas would end up as an anthology, but life tends to throw delightful curve balls.

For most of this project, Tanfer has been in Turkey and Annessa in New York. Emails, online chats, numerous drafts sent back and forth, and a few insanely expensive phone calls have helped us complete this book. We finally got to put our hours of window shopping, aimless conversations, and all-around friendship into a project that has shaped each of us. Thus, the work that lies before you represents both an academic endeavor and a journey of self-realization. It is a synthesis of thoughts on two processes—globalization and the evolution of consumer culture—that have been circulating in our minds for years. We have woven our personal joys into our academic research, and have approached this anthology with the same enthusiasm we apply to the rest of our lives. We hope the reader finds in these pages the same amusement, and introspection, we have discovered.

As with all major undertakings, this anthology is not the result of one individual's hard work and determination. Rather, it is the result of collaboration between many talented and visionary people. The editors would each like to express their thanks to various people who helped sculpt this project, as well as their lives. I (Tanfer) would like to thank my colleagues from Hacettepe University's Department of American Culture and Literature. This project would not have come to fruition without their continued support of my academic endeavors. I would also like to extend special words of appreciation to the Dean of the Faculty of Letters at Hacettepe University, Musa Yasar Saglam, whose confidence in my abilities have propelled me through the major milestones of my career over the past few years. I also thank my parents, Sevilay and Hussein Dave Emin for their unwavering support, and my husband, Gokhan Tunc, for enduring months of isolation and neglect as we compiled this anthology. Last, but not least, I would like to thank my co-editor, Annessa Babic, for her friendship, and for sharing her numerous academic talents with me.

I (Annessa) would like to thank my colleagues at Old Dominion University for welcoming me into the department. I would also like to thank Gene Lebovics, Sara Lipton, and Jim Matray, all of whom deserve a special place of gratitude in this anthology. They answered emails, advised on how to "sculpt" a book proposal, and conveyed enthusiasm and

energy about the project when I most needed it. Jen Zuniga and Nelson Boyle listened to me drone on about my own essay, and many of the pieces in here. In various ways, they made my life much easier. Matt Schoenbachler first helped me coddle my love of history, and, in a way, he is a big reason I do what I do. The anthology begins with a memoir from my friend Peter Phillips. Peter died tragically in July 2007, so he is not here to see his words in print. However, prior to his death, I briefly chatted with him online about using part of an email he had sent me. He said I was "kind," and that of course I could use it. I can only hope he is pleased with the reproduction of his words here. Peter I still miss you, and I am saddened to know that I will not have an ecstatic email from Belize upon the release of this book. I can hear your words now, "Babic, you did it! And look at me, I'm in there too!"

My parents are often confused as to what I study. Well, Mom and Dad, this book is an example of some of what I do. I hope you are as thrilled as I am, and I honestly believe that this is a sign of more good things to come. Even though my brother and his partner are gone, if they were here, they would be sorely offended not to be mentioned in my acknowledgements. Bubs, you got my last line.

The editors of *Globetrotting Shopaholic* would jointly like to thank the staff at Cambridge Scholars Publishing. Without their support and interest in this burgeoning field, this project would have stalled in the brainstorming phase. We hope that this marks the beginning of many more collaborations.

Last, but not least, we would like to thank all the individuals whose work appears in this anthology. Hailing from different disciplines (and continents for that matter), these scholars generously shared both their academic, and personal, experiences with consumption, while patiently enduring many grueling cycles of readings and revisions. We only hope it was half as cathartic for you as it has been for us!

Tanfer Emin Tunc and Annessa Ann Babic
Long Island, New York
July 2008

# INTRODUCTION

*We drove up the northern highway through [Belize's] Corazal District all the way up its two-lane black top and sugar cane fields. The cane trucks are constantly losing pieces of cane and the cars crush them. So the road has black slicks of sugar all the way up to the Mexican border. Probably the sweetest tasting black top in the world.*

*If felt great to be back in Mexico after seven years. But it's not the Mexico of Cuernavaca and Mexico City, or the dusty northern border I lived on in Las Cruces. It's a Caribbean city, and it is the first time I have seen Mexican Rastafari. That was a new one for me. So I was able to practice Spanish and eat tacos el pastor and arachera alambre, but it didn't FEEL like the Mexico of mi sangre y corazon. Kind of off in a way.*

*It's odd going up to a real city and hanging out at a mall and having real coffee and Mickey Ds after living in a small town with no street lights or asphalt two-lane roads. They have a Sam's Club right on the Caribbean Sea, and the American big box store culture of super size. It was great!! Kind of a culture shock. I went with the Vice Principal and her husband and daughter and one of our students. On the way home I was thinking that if you go to one mall, you have seen them all. But on the other hand, it was nice to hang out in AC all day, drink real coffee and get away from the mud and the heat of Belmopan.*

*It opens up the debate in my mind about what I really need in life. Do I really need a mall and Sam's and a thirteen theater Cineplex? Maybe not Sam's and the mall, but I sure to miss going to the movies. So I think I can live without the civilized accoutrements of life like McDonald's, and Starbucks and Wal-Mart. It's a nice day trip and cool way to shock myself out of the stress of the school semester and to practice mi espanol, but I was sitting on my porch drinking coffee this morning with my dogs thinking, "ya know this is pretty darn good too."*

*Peter Phillips*
*April 2006*
*Belmopan, Belize* [1]

[1] Email to Annessa Ann Babic from Peter Phillips. April 2006. Personal communication with the author.

The above story came from a friend who willingly gave up the lavish riches of the United States to teach high school in Belize. There he made very little money, and lived without modern conveniences like the fast-food restaurants, shopping malls, and paved roads that most Americans have come to know as second nature. Peter loved his life in Belize, and when he sent this story to me I looked at it and thought "Wow, that would make an excellent piece on consumer society." Peter's prose highlights the differences between living in cities and towns with an abundance of procurable ready-made goods, but it also makes one wonder what shopping means around the world. Are malls in Mexico any different than malls in Melbourne? How, and why, do people shop in different countries? Moreover, what do consumer goods, spending habits, and conspicuous consumption indicate about a culture, society, or generation?

The thrust of the literature on consumer space and society focuses on product labeling, marketing techniques and approaches to branding, as well as how mass consumer culture has reshaped individuals' interactions with needs and desires. *The Globetrotting Shopaholic* departs from this discourse by examining both consumption venues and the cultural, political, and social reasons why we consume. It elucidates international trends in consumption politics, and how they impact the creation of consumer spaces, which, in this book, take the form of numerous global loci including Canada's West Edmonton Mall, Japanese theme parks, shopping venues in the Philippines, and expat boutiques in Budapest. Using a wide range of epistemological frameworks including cultural ethnography, historical analysis, literary theory, sociological dissection, anthropological examination and philosophical ruminations, this multidisciplinary collection conveys how material objects and lifestyles are accumulated and represented internationally, and how consumer goods and spaces define who we are as human beings.

## Consumer Spaces, Products, and their Cultural Meanings

No matter where they are located on the planet, all consumption venues exhibit the same goal: to lure consumers and provide them with goods—some necessary, others not—via the exchange of money. Scholars like Jackson Lears have remarked that consumption patterns are thus based on the simple premise of "lure and excitement." Under this configuration, the symbolic meanings of material goods often supersede

their functional value.[2] Advertising entices the consumer, but peers, neighbors, and celebrities make products *desirable.* Advertising manipulates emotions and creates untapped desires: it suggests beauty through the hottest shade of eye shadow, attractiveness through the newest slimming corset, and envy through the glorification of the latest red sports car. Consequently, purchasing provides a sense of comfort—almost redemption—for the buyer because it reinforces one's social framework. Shopping provides an exploration of desire, and a fulfillment of responsibility; it commodifies our guilt and pride, as well as our successes and failures.[3]

While other works have addressed the rise of consumer society, the desires that drive conspicuous consumption, and the impact of factors such as class, ethnicity, and gender, very few have coupled their findings with a global perspective.[4] Earlier works, such as Tyler Cowen's *In Praise of Commercial Culture*, established the theoretical foundation of "capitalism as a legal framework based on private property and voluntary exchange," and made the connection between "commerce, industry, technology, and markets." Scholars have also revealed that the world's most affluent societies consume the largest amount of non-pecuniary enjoyments.[5] However, they very rarely ventured beyond the borders of North America in illustrating their observations. Susan Strasser, Charles McGovern, and

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[2] Jackson Lears, *Fables of Abundance: A Cultural History of Advertising in America* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), 5.

[3] Ibid.; Jean Kilbourne, *How Advertising Changes the Way We Think and Feel* (New York, London, et al.: Touchstone, 1999); Thomas Hine, *I Want That!: How We All Became Shoppers (A Cultural History)* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2002), ix–xv.

[4] These studies include: Juliet B. Schor and Douglas B. Holt, eds., *The Consumer Society Reader* (New York: The New Press, 2000); Don Slater, *Consumer Culture and Modernity* (New York: Polity Press, 1997); and Daniel Miller, et al. *Shopping, Place, and Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1998). Some of the prominent works on consumption and gender are: Roger Horowitz and Arwen Mohun, *His and Hers: Gender, Consumption, and Technology* (Charlottesville, VA and London: University of Virginia Press, 1998); Anne M. Cronin, *Advertising and Consumer Citizenship: Gender, Images, and Rights* (New York and London: Routledge, 2000); Kathy Peiss, *Hope in a Jar: The Making of America's Beauty Culture* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1998); and Jennifer Scanlon, *Inarticulate Longings: The Ladies Home Journal, Gender, and the Promises of Consumer Culture* (New York and London: Routledge, 1995).

[5] Robert Kuttner, *Everything For Sale: The Virtues and Limits of Markets* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998), 3; Tyler Cowen, *In Praise of Commercial Culture* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1998), 2.

Matthias Judt's *Getting and Spending: European and American Consumer Societies in the Twentieth Century* attempts to discuss consumption within a larger framework by examining consumer society from a variety of geographical and political standpoints. It also posits consumption as a social phenomenon that catalyzed the rise of capitalism in the West.[6] However, once again, the focus is mainly on the US and Western Europe.

Anthologies on consumption and gender have faired far better in terms of presenting a broad-based global perspective, yet they, like *Getting and Spending*, fall short of providing a true international survey. Jennifer Scanlon's *The Gender and Consumer Society Reader* critiques consumer culture by conceptualizing it as the "water we swim in," and conveys how consumption leads to a decline in social values.[7] Her work covers a wide breadth of topics, including the promotion of women's spheres and racialized commodities. However, it primarily focuses on the United States, Great Britain, and its former colonies.[8]

Other works dealing with gender have also made strides in exposing the role of niche consumerism, but have, like previous works, remained too narrow in their focus. Lawrence Glickman's *Consumer Society in American History* examines the attainment of status through political consumption (e.g., consumption and unions).[9] Similarly, Dana Frank's *Purchasing Power: Consumer Organizing, Gender, and the Seattle Labor Movement, 1919-1929* and Lizabeth Cohen's *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939* also illustrate how consumption helped forge a political and social identity not only for male and female union workers, but also for immigrants.[10]

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[6] Susan Strasser, Charles McGovern, and Matthias Judt, *Getting and Spending: European and American Consumer Societies in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press 1998), 2, 5, 6.

[7] Jennifer Scanlon, ed. *The Gender and Consumer Society Reader* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2000), 1, 3.

[8] The anthology predominantly covers the United States with one article (each) on London, the British Commonwealth, Jamaica, and the Caribbean.

[9] Lawrence B. Glickman, *Consumer Society in American History: A Reader* (Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press, 1999). Examples of works on niche/political consumption include: Arlene Dávila, *Latinos Inc.: The Marketing and Making of a People* (Berkley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 2001); and James B. Twitchell, *Branded Nation: The Marketing of Megachurch, College Inc., and Museumworld* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004).

[10] Dana Frank, *Purchasing Power: Consumer Organizing, Gender, and the Seattle Labor Movement, 1919–1929* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994); and

Nan Enstad's *Ladies of Labor, Girls of Adventure: Working Women, Popular Culture, and Labor Politics at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* is significant because it uses the lenses of class and gender to place working women in their social and political contexts as consumers. Her discussion highlights the central conflict of consumer culture: it promotes luxurious abundance, yet remains unaffordable to the average citizen-worker. Enstad's study, which focuses on American working girls during the turn-of-the-twentieth century, illustrates how young women "bought into" the myth of consumption—a trap which still exists today: many spent their wages on five dollar French heels and fashionable clothes instead of food and even shelter. Andrew Hurley also broaches the subject of class and consumption by showing how the rise of trailer parks, family-oriented and cost-conscious diners, and cheap entertainment venues, such as bowling alleys, allowed working-class individuals the opportunity to secure vestiges of the American Dream.[11]

Although Enstad's and Hurley's works, and those like them, continue to build upon the discourse of consumer culture, they still do not address the important issue of globality. Lizabeth Cohen probably provides the best attempt at approaching the subject of globalization in *A Consumer's Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* which, like Mark Gottdiener's *New Forms of Consumption: Consumers, Culture, and Commodification*, deciphers the cultural and social meanings behind mass consumption venues such as shopping malls.[12] As Cohen illustrates, the expansion of suburbia and the rise of democratized spending led to the spread of shopping malls, which, in the West, reconfigured residential landscapes and shifted consumption from urban centers to the local community. However, while this model may explain consumption habits in western industrialized nations, it does little to elucidate how, and why,

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Lizabeth Cohen, *Making A New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919–1939* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

[11] Nan Enstad, *Ladies of Labor, Girls of Adventure: Working Women, Popular Culture, and Labor Politics at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999) and Andrew Hurley, *Diners, Bowling Alleys, and Trailer Parks: Chasing the American Dream in Postwar Consumer Culture* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), 5, 9, 15–19. Also see Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in the Turn-of-the-Century New York* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986) for a study examining the rise of leisure culture in relation to consumption, gender, and labor.

[12] Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumer's Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 2003); Mark Gottdiener, *New Forms of Consumption: Consumers, Culture, and Commodification* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000).

individuals spend their money elsewhere (in Nigeria, or the jungles of Ecuador, for example). Moreover, such a narrow focus on malls as "the" place to shop also marginalizes other culturally-important, alternative spaces such as flea markets, gay pride parades, tourist gift shops, or even megastores like Home Depot and Wal-Mart.[13]

## Pursuing the Globetrotting Shopaholic

This anthology helps fill some of these scholarly voids by accentuating the important point that understanding international consumer spaces is essential to defining the culture of consumption. It reflects on the meaning of consumption in the age of globalization, and discusses, at great length, how elements of consumption (i.e., the ways in which we spend our money and the venues in which we consume) are internalized by societies, thus becoming cultural signifiers. Essays on topics such as patriotic products, gay and lesbian advertising campaigns, tourism and consumption, and maternity shopping not only convey how consumption has been manipulated for both personal and political reasons, but also illustrate that consumer space is continuously evolving and, as a result, defying standardization. For some, consumption may be a trip to the local mega mall; for others, it might be shopping at the local organic market or purchasing goods that are linked to a political cause. Either way, it is undeniable that consumption, especially in the twenty-first century, fills a multitude of niches, and is an integral part of identity politics. If, as Jon Goss contends, "you are what you buy," then to a certain extent we have all become globetrotting shopaholics, searching for the next object to buy, whether it be homegrown, or imported from half way around the world.[14]

This anthology is a welcome edition to the scholarly literature, especially given the current climate of eco-friendly living and shopping, and the trend of boycotting companies and products that support contentious political causes. Many works tell readers how to be eco-friendly, politically conscious, and cost efficient, but very few analyze how human actions impact, and are impacted by, global society. The Green Movement began in earnest in the early 1970s, and nearly forty years later, has become a part of our everyday consumer lives. Eco-

[13] Susan Strasser, "Woolworth to Wal-Mart." *Wal-Mart: The Face of Twenty-First Century Capitalism*, ed. Nelson Lichtenstein (New York: The New Press: 2006).
[14] Jon Goss, "The 'Magic of the Mall': An Analysis of Form, Function, and Meaning in the Contemporary Retail Built Environment." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 83: 18–47; Lane Crothers, Globalization and American Popular Culture (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2007): 25.

friendly cars, hybrids, natural fibers, pesticide-free food, energy-saving appliances and light bulbs, handbags made from recycled license plates or candy wrappers, organic feminine hygiene products, and biodegradable condoms are just some examples of commonly known (and lesser known) green products currently on the market.[15] Why are these products so popular? The ecoist in us would like to say that we are becoming more and more aware of our carbon footprint and our impact on future generations. Unfortunately, however, this is not the case. Global human behavior (examples of which will be explored in this anthology) suggests that while some consumers are genuinely concerned about the environment, others are just "keeping up with the Joneses," mimicking a superstar, or simply indulging in the purchase of wants, rather than needs.

In her recent *Washington Post* article, writer Monica Hesse summarizes the tenuous place of eco-consumption in modern society in one sentence: "It's done with the best of intentions, but all that replacing is problematic."[16] Here, she refers to the new trend of replacing home goods that are not green with eco-friendly products. While many middle and upper-class Americans have embraced this new lifestyle (most working-class individuals cannot afford the higher priced merchandise sold by organic/green stores), many have done so without considering the waste that this transition is creating. Instead of using products until they break or wear out, or recycling them in multifunctional ways, Americans are continuing to participate in a new cycle of consumption. The only aspect that has changed is *what* they are consuming. A quick Amazon.com search for green living books will produce more than a thousand titles, while the term "eco chic" registers twelve pages of choices.[17] Al Gore's international environmental work has undoubtedly fueled the movement over the past decade, but it is clearly too early to become excited about green living since this new lifestyle choice is still in its infancy, and most likely to experience some bumps (and awful failures) along the way.

When Do-It-Yourself (DIY) hit the American market in the 1950s, most consumers did not know what to *do* with the products. Early critics said that DIY would fail, but mega stores like Home Depot and Lowes now dominate the American landscape. These stores provide tips, products, services to install items (usually when consumer attempts fail),

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[15] There are lines of eco-friendly condoms (e.g., Naturalamb), lubricants, and even lingerie. www.greendaily.com has a list of eco-friendly sex products for sale around the globe. Last accessed August 4, 2008.

[16] Monica Hesse, "Greed in the Name of Green to Worshipers of Consumption: Spending Won't Save the Earth," *Washington Post,* March 5, 2008, C01.

[17] Test search performed on July 27, 2008.

and lists of local consultants. It is very possible that green consumption will also follow the same trajectory (especially as consumers become more invested in costly eco-friendly products, like Hybrid automobiles). As many of the chapters in this anthology illustrate, consumption is a continual process—one that is subject to trial and error, as well as success and failure. Thus, we should take the excitement about green living with a grain of salt (preferably organic).

This anthology is divided into three sections, each of which examines, in great detail, different aspects of global consumption. Part I, which focuses on fringe markets, politics, and identity, begins with Annessa Babic's discussion of patriotic consumption. In her chapter, she dissects numerous types of patriotic products and advertisements, and problematizes the meaning of patriotic merchandizing. Millie Creighton's chapter explores how the consumption of *Anne of Green Gables* products in Japan has framed Japanese perceptions of Canada. Daniel Farr and Gretchen Guenther's chapter on gay and lesbian marketing delves into the complex relationship between gender, sexuality and consumption. Brett Westbrook's chapter, which completes Part I, extends many of the same arguments made by Farr and Guenther by scrutinizing the normative femininity and consumer culture that pervades the reality television show "Tim Gunn's Guide to Style."

Part II expands on the theoretical framework outlined in Part I by providing readers with an intricate, global examination of consumer spaces and the culture of buying. These chapters, which range from personal reflections to ethnographic studies, compel the modern shopper to rethink how we create, perform, and internalize social signifiers through the goods we purchase. Tanfer Emin Tunc's chapter, which discusses consumption in the works of American writer F. Scott Fitzgerald, elucidates that the symbiotic relationship between the consumer and the consumed (i.e., "you are what you buy") serves as the foundation of the alienation, disillusionment and spiritual emptiness associated with modern materialism. Jennifer Le Zotte continues our foray into consumer spaces with her study of flea markets and their liminal place in American society. Robin O'Brian and Veronica Davidov critique consumption within the tourist industry, and problematize the commodification of native peoples in Mexico and Ecuador, respectively. Using fieldwork conducted in Budapest, Hungary, Brigette Thompson draws critical conclusions about gender, socio-economic status, and American expat consumption. Amparo Pamela H. Fabe, Peter Clandfield, and Michael Angelo Tata complete this section with their chapters on mall culture in the Philippines, Canada, and the United States.

The final segment of this anthology, Part III, takes a closer look at how, and why, products are consumed in various locations around the world. While Ayokunle Olumuyiwa Omobowale's chapter explores the social, economic, and cultural place that *tokunbo* (or imported second-hand vehicles) have in Nigeria, Africa, Elizabeth Johnson examines the African American hair care industry and the construction of race-identity in the United States. Through a series of fascinating interviews, Meredith Nash focuses on the burgeoning Australian maternity industry, while the final chapter in this anthology, written by Sara Stevens, dissects the logistical consumption junction that is Home Depot.

# PART I:

# FRINGE MARKETS:
# POLITICS, IDENTITY, AND CONSUMPTION

# CHAPTER ONE

# BUYING AND SELLING A PIECE OF THE AMERICAN PIE: THE USES, DISUSES, AND SPACES OF PATRIOTIC CONSUMPTION

ANNESSA ANN BABIC

Since the US flag's inception, it has been suffused with ambivalent sentiments, mystery, awe, reverence, and contempt. Political and legal debates have frequently shocked and divided the American public over uses concerning the national banner, and the US Congress has embarked on several failed attempts to amend the US Constitution with a flag protection amendment.[1] As congressional and media debates demonstrate, acceptable uses of the American flag are still socially and constitutionally contested and undefined. In times of war and national crisis, wearing and displaying the flag on one's person is acceptable, but defiling the flag in political protest is frequently scorned. Moreover, in 1907, the US Supreme Court declared that states have the right to prohibit using Old Glory in advertising. However, since World War II, there have been very few cases addressing uses of the American flag in marketing. Officially, commercial uses of the flag do not exist, but its likeness can be seen daily in the United States—in car lots encompassing their property with Old Glory, and in the fashion and home décor lines of Tommy Hilfiger and

[1] The text of the proposed amendment reads as follows: "The Congress and the States shall have the power to prohibit the physical desecration of the flag of the United States." Kenneth J. Cooper, "House Approves Amendment on Flag Desecration Measure Would Override High Court Rulings, Let States and Congress Outlaw the Act," *Washington Post*, June 29 1995, A7. The main reason that the amendment has not passed the US Senate is because many Senators feel that the language is too vague, leaving leeway for future disputes over its intended meaning and usage. In the Senate debates, legislators used examples of clothing and advertising to exemplify this point. Senators remarked that a small lapse in personal hygiene could make a flag bathing suit a form of desecration.

Ralph Lauren, both of whom regularly use the flag with respect to their products.[2]

This chapter examines various aspects of patriotic consumption, while critiquing the spaces in which the nation and flag are purchased. Aspects of the free market shape this discussion, particularly issues relating to how products find their market niche, and who enables items to become viable products—the consumer, creator, or advertiser. One of the key questions in this chapter asks if there a limit to patriotic commercialization. However, the central query looks for a sense of meaning (if any) for the uses of products celebrating the nation. More specifically, this chapter looks at advertisements, products, and museums that go beyond standard flag bumper stickers, decals, or purchasing campaigns to buy "Made in the USA" merchandise in order to examine how consumers, creators, and advertisers construct, and derive meaning from, spaces of patriotic consumption.

## Columbia's Legacy

Popular examples of contemporary patriotic products are American flag bathing suits, cigar wrappers that reveal an American flag when unrolled, bumper stickers, and red, white, and blue fake eyelashes. Slogans like "Be Safe. Sleep with a Soldier" are sold on t-shirts, and nostalgic images like Rosie the Riveter abound. Little Earth Productions once sold a series of recycled belt buckles that used classic advertising and propaganda images. Some of these belt buckles had images of World War II factory workers, and slogans like "Built by Betty."[3] These products represent key aspects of consumer culture that require further examination, especially since national symbols in marketing function as familiar markers during the purchasing process. These gestures can appeal to the visual field, or one's sense of pride in the nation.[4] Patriotic consumption is a vast topic that can be dissected in many ways—from buying

[2] *Halter v. Nebraska*, 205 U.S. 34 (1907) and Carolyn Marvin and David W. Ingle, *Blood, Sacrifice, and the Nation: Totem Rituals and the American Flag* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 298. In this landmark case, the Court declared that state's rights prevailed over the individual. The case derived from Halter's use of flag imagery on beer bottles sold in Nebraska.

[3] Little Earth retired the line of belt buckles in 2005. See Figure 1.1. Little Earth specializes in making eco-friendly goods. Their products are made from a minimum of fifty percent post-consumer material.

[4] Marvin and Ingle, *Blood Sacrifice and Nation*, 299 and 302.

"American made" to purchasing, using, and displaying products with the American flag on them—but the meanings of patriotic buying are what makes it manifestations so intriguing.


**Figure 1.1: Little Earth Productions**
Belt buckle from Little Earth Productions, Circa 1995.
Photograph property of author. Used with permission.

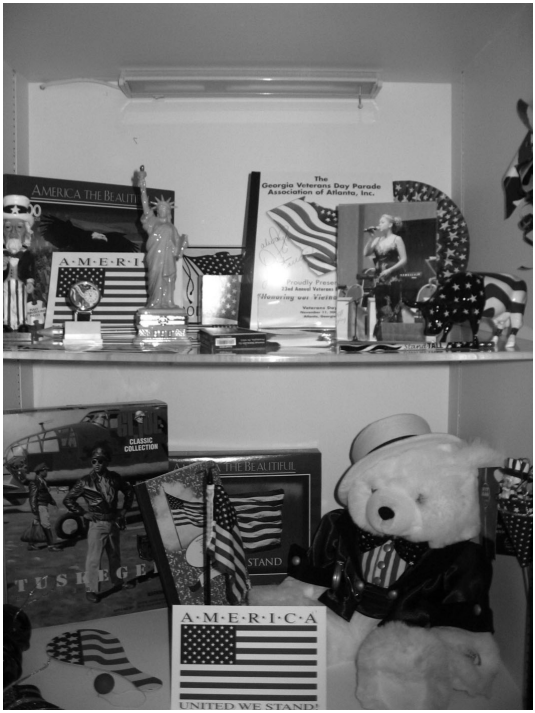


**Figure 1.2: Museum of Patriotism, Atlanta, GA**
Display of patriotic items to purchase or collect.
Photograph property of author. Used with permission.

## Lady Columbia's Continued Place

Lady Columbia, initially a symbol for the infant nation in the 1770s, is an appropriate symbol to begin this discussion of patriotic consumption. As one of the oldest national images in the United States, the figure of Columbia initially represented liberty and progress.[5] In 1792, the year of the Columbia tercentenary, British Americans sought to disassociate themselves from England, and used the Columbia image to represent their

[5] To see a depiction of Columbia see the logo for Columbia-Tri Star Pictures. The author does not have permission to reproduce it here.