



Gifts and Commodities: Exchange and Western Capitalism Since 1700 (Material Cultures)

James G. Carrier

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Three hundred years ago people made most of what they used, or got it in trade from their neighbours. Now, no one seems to make anything, and we buy what we need from shops. *Gifts and Commodities* describes the cultural and historical process of these changes and looks at the rise of consumer society in Britain and the United States. It investigates the ways that people think about and relate to objects in twentieth-century culture, at how those relationships have developed, and the social meanings they have for relations with others.

Using aspects of anthropology and sociology to describe the importance of shopping and gift-giving in our lives and in western economies, *Gifts and Commodities*:

- * traces the development of shopping and retailing practices, and the emergence of modern notions of objects and the self
- * brings together a wealth of information on the history of the retail trade
- * examines the reality of the distinctions we draw between the impersonal economic sphere and personal social sphere
- * offers a fully interdisciplinary study of the links we forge between ourselves, our social groups and the commodities we buy and give.

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