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Consumption Norms and Everyday Ethics

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Acknowledgments

This book marks the end of a long journey through which I sought to understand what appeared to me to be puzzling aspects of consumption. It began in my grandparents' kitchen, when my grandmother's efforts to convince my mother to dress in a more elegant way developed into a heated debate on what social position our family should aim for and what a proper woman should look like. It seemed odd that such a petty issue could bring to the surface deep tensions and generate intense emotions. The journey led through the Consumer Behavior and Sociology departments at the Budapest University of Economics, and subsequently through the Department of Sociology at the London School of Economics, where I dedicated my PhD research to the topic. Finally, it led to the writing of this book in which I summarize the answers I reached on the way. I could not have completed the journey without the help, feedback and encouragement I received from a number of people. I would like to thank Don Slater for his support during my years at LSE and for the discussions through which what first seemed like an uncrossable jungle of consumption theory gradually turned into an English landscape garden. While living in London, coffees and dinners with Zsófi Barta and talking with Kati St Clair were indispensable. I thank the participants of the Culture/Society workshop in Budapest, in particular Zoltán Kacsuk and Gábor Vályi, for their comments, which helped me make the last stages of the journey. Finally, I am particularly grateful to my husband, Virgilio, for being a loving companion all the way and for making sure that I did not settle down on the hospitable islands of Procrastination, Self-Doubt and Confusion.