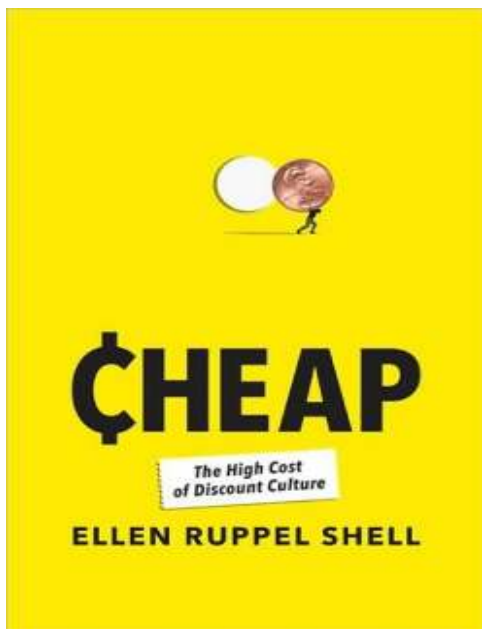


SIMULTANEOUS RELEASE

LIBRARY JOURNAL ★ REVIEW



Read by Lorna Raver

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Ellen Ruppel Shell is a correspondent for the *Atlantic Monthly* magazine and has written for the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, *National Geographic*, *Time*, *Discover*, *Seed*, and dozens of other national publications. She is the author, most recently, of *The Hungry Gene*, which was published in six languages. She is a professor of journalism at Boston University, where she codirects the graduate program in science journalism.

Lorna Raver, named one of *AudioFile* magazine's Best Voices of the Year, has received numerous Audie Award nominations and *AudioFile* Earphones Awards for her narrations. An accomplished stage actress, she has also guest-starred on many top television series and stars in director Sam Raimi's film *Drag Me to Hell*.

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ELLEN RUPPEL SHELL

CHEAP

The High Cost of Discount Culture

An *Atlantic* correspondent uncovers the true cost—in economic, political, and psychic terms—of our penchant for making and buying things as cheaply as possible.

From the shuttered factories of the rust belt to the look-alike strip malls of the sun belt America has been transformed by its relentless fixation on low price. This pervasive yet little examined obsession is arguably the most powerful and devastating market force of our time—the engine of globalization, outsourcing, planned obsolescence, and economic instability in an increasingly unsettled world.

Low price is so alluring that we may have forgotten how thoroughly we once distrusted it. Ellen Ruppel Shell traces the birth of the bargain as we know it from the Industrial Revolution to the assembly line and beyond, homing in on a number of colorful characters, such as Gene Verkauf, founder of E. J. Korvette, the discount chain that helped wean customers off traditional notions of value. The rise of the chain store in post-Depression America led to the extolling of convenience over quality, and big-box retailers completed the reeducation of the American consumer by making them prize low price in the way they once prized durability and craftsmanship.

The effects of this insidious perceptual shift are vast: a blighted landscape, escalating debt, stagnating incomes, fraying communities, and a host of other socioeconomic ills. That's a long list of charges, and it runs counter to orthodox economics which argues that low price powers productivity by stimulating a brisk free market. But Shell marshals evidence from a wide range of fields to upend the conventional wisdom. *Cheap* also unveils the fascinating and unsettling illogic that underpins our bargain-hunting reflex and explains how our deep-rooted need for bargains colors every aspect of our psyches and social lives.

KEY POINTS/MARKETING

- National broadcast media campaign
- First serial in the *Atlantic Monthly*

PRAISE FOR CHEAP

"Lorna Raver is an apt narrator for this title...her voice has the mature quality of one who may have seen some of the events she recounts." —*AudioFile*

"This highly intelligent and disturbing book provides invaluable insight into our consumer culture and should be mandatory [listening] for anyone trying to figure out our current financial mess." —*Publishers Weekly* ★ Review

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